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Young people and politics in Eastern and Western Europe

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Reihe Soziologie

Sociological Series

Young people and politics in Eastern and Western Europe

Christian Haerpfer, Claire Wallace und Reingard Spannring

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Christian Haerpfer, Claire Wallace und
Reingard Spannring

July 2002

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Founded in 1963 by two prominent Austrians living in exile – the sociologist Paul F. Lazarsfeld and the economist Oskar Morgenstern – with the financial support from the Ford Foundation, the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education, and the City of Vienna, the Institute for Advanced Studies (IHS) is the first institution for postgraduate education and research in economics and the social sciences in Austria. The **Sociological Series** presents research done at the Department of Sociology and aims to share "work in progress" in a timely way before formal publication. As usual, authors bear full responsibility for the content of their contributions.

Das Institut für Höhere Studien (IHS) wurde im Jahr 1963 von zwei prominenten Exilösterreichern – dem Soziologen Paul F. Lazarsfeld und dem Ökonomen Oskar Morgenstern – mit Hilfe der Ford-Stiftung, des Österreichischen Bundesministeriums für Unterricht und der Stadt Wien gegründet und ist somit die erste nachuniversitäre Lehr- und Forschungsstätte für die Sozial- und Wirtschafts-wissenschaften in Österreich. Die **Reihe Soziologie** bietet Einblick in die Forschungsarbeit der Abteilung für Soziologie und verfolgt das Ziel, abteilungsinterne Diskussionsbeiträge einer breiteren fachinternen Öffentlichkeit zugänglich zu machen. Die inhaltliche Verantwortung für die veröffentlichten Beiträge liegt bei den Autoren und Autorinnen.

Abstract

This paper considers the kind of political engagement among young people in Eastern and Western Europe, based upon a sub-sample of 16-25 year olds from the World Values Survey1995-1997 (N=7740). By taking a broad view of politics to include political involvement, political action, civil and political participation, democratic mindedness, the role of “new politics” and faith in the political system, it is found that young people are both interested and active in politics. The paper considers how these different aspects of politics are associated together along with the regional and demographic variations. The analysis shows that young people are not generally disengaged from politics (as many have claimed) and that those who are most engaged are those with more education, with higher social class and who are male rather than female. The exception is with environmental politics where women are both more active and more concerned than men. The analysis also found that in general, young people in Eastern Europe are less engaged in politics than those from Western Europe, including both conventional and unconventional political activity. Finally we draw up a typology of the different kinds of political profiles of young people and from this we argue that young people are not disengaged from politics, but rather that their involvement in politics takes a variety of different forms. Furthermore this analysis suggests that we need to look at “lifestyle” politics as an important field of political action rather than only traditional political engagement such as voting or joining political parties.

Zusammenfassung

Basierend auf einer Analyse des World Value Surveys 1995-97 beschäftigt sich dieser Artikel mit verschiedenen Formen politischen Engagements 16- bis 25-Jähriger in Ost- und Westeuropa. Dabei wird der Begriff des Politischen sehr weit gefasst, um politisches Interesse, politische Aktivitäten, zivile und politische Partizipation, Demokratiebewusstsein, Vertrauen in politische Institutionen sowie neue Formen von Politik miteinzubeziehen. Der Artikel untersucht, von welchen Faktoren diese Aspekte beeinflusst werden und wie die einzelnen Aspekte zusammenhängen. Die Analyse zeigt, dass Jugendliche nicht generell von Politik entfremdet sind, wie viele behaupten. Vor allem Jugendliche mit höherer Bildung, aus höheren sozialen Schichten und männliche Jugendliche sind involviert. Eine Ausnahme besteht bei Umweltschutz und –politik, wo Frauen aktiver und besorgter sind als Männer. Ein weiteres Ergebnis ist, dass Jugendliche in Osteuropa weniger in Politik involviert sind als in Westeuropa, und zwar sowohl in Bezug auf herkömmliche als auch auf unkonventionelle Politik. Schließlich wird eine Typologie von politischen Profilen herausgearbeitet, die zeigen, dass Jugendliche nicht schlechthin apolitisch sind, sondern sich in vielen verschiedenen Formen politisch interessieren und engagieren. Die Ergebnisse deuten eine Entwicklung von „Lifestyle-Politik“ an, die eine größere Bedeutung für politisches Handeln hat als traditionelles parteipolitisches Engagement.

Keywords

Youth, „new politics“, participation, democratic mindedness, environmentalism

Schlagwörter

Jugend, „neue Politik“, Partizipation, demokratische Werte, Umweltbewußtsein

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A range of studies have suggested that young people are losing interest in mainstream politics (see Wilkinson and Mulgan 1995 for a review). It is said that young people see politics as boring and irrelevant for their lives; that they lack knowledge about politics and do not have access to many forms of political institutions and decision making; that they distrust politicians in particular and that there is a lack of opportunity for young people to engage in politics (White, Bruce, & Ritchie, 2000). This is particularly the case with the "socially excluded" or the young unemployed who show much lower levels of political participation and a disinclination to vote (Banks et al., 1992).

One explanation put forward is the decline of traditional institutions, such as Trade Unions and another is that social mobility may have eroded the traditional forms of political socialisation (Bynner, Chisholm, & Furlong, 1997). However, some have suggested that although young people may have turned away from mainstream politics, they are nevertheless concerned with a range of issues which could be called “political” in the broader sense and these would include environmental concerns, animal and human rights, gender and racial discrimination, sexuality, gay and lesbian politics, health and so on (Wilkinson and Mulgan 1995, Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998, Furlong and Cartmel 1997, Bynner et al. 1997a). In other words, it is the “new social movements” rather than conventional politics that attract young people.

In general, political interest is affected by levels of education (the higher the education, the more interest), level of affluence and church attendance (Lagos and Rose 1999, Banks et al. 1992, Bynner et al. 1997b). We might also expect this to affect political participation: the more integrated one is into society, the more might one take an interest in how it is run. Age and gender also affect young people’s relation to politics. Younger people are less interested than older ones and women less than men (Furlong and Cartmel 1997, Bynner et al. 1997). We might expect interest in politics to be associated with high levels of political participation and it is often assumed that this would lead to producing better citizens - ones that are more informed, integrated into society and democratic in their orientation. Certainly, at an individual level, active political engagement in a variety of different organisations leads to personal growth (Eden and Roker 2000). On the other hand, active engagement and a desire to change the world (often, perhaps mistakenly, associated with youth) can also take anti-democratic forms and have less desirable consequences, for example in the participation in neo-Nazi and xenophobic or nationalist organisations (Virtanen, 2000; Hilden, 2000).

A number of people have argued that there has been a general value shift in many societies in the direction of greater political tolerance, especially with regard to gender, gay and lesbian rights and even tolerance of ethnic and other minorities (Bynner et al. 1997a) and that young people are leading the way in this respect (Inglehart 1990, Inglehart 1997). There are indeed a number of studies that point to the effect of generations on political attitudes (Mannheim, 1952; Braungart, 1990; Rose & Carnaghan, 1994). If this is the case, we would

expect that the momentous political changes of the last decade will have affected the politics of the young people in Eastern and Central Europe.

However, the evidence seems to suggest that in Eastern and Central Europe young people are especially alienated from politics. Although they helped to bring down the former Communist regimes through dramatic acts of protest and demonstrations (and have participated in overthrowing some of the post-communist regimes the same way), it seems that after the revolution they quickly demobilise once more and are less and less visible in politics either as voters or as actors (Kovacheva and Wallace 1994). They are perhaps more concerned about personal mobility and survival (Roberts and Jung 1995). Indeed, they have even lost the token political representation that they had under the former Communist regimes through the various youth organisations (Wallace and Kovatcheva 1998, Kovatcheva 1995). Furthermore, many are disillusioned with a transition that brought only war, chaos and hardship to many countries, along with a new breed of corrupt politicians.

However, most of these studies are confined to only one country and mostly they consider only conventional forms of political engagement such as voting, joining political parties, discussing or having an interest in politics. This means mostly party politics, which does not attract large numbers of young people. Hence we aim to look at young people's political engagement comparatively and taking a broader view of politics.

These ideas raise the questions: if young people are less conventionally integrated into the political system, are they more likely to participate in direct political action? That is, if, as in Western Europe they can participate in mature democratic structures, perhaps they have less need to resort to the kind of direct action associated with youth protests in Eastern Europe on certain occasions? On the other hand, maybe they are not interested in conventional politics at all, but are rather absorbed in new social movements and other kinds of political action?

In this paper we will consider the forms of political participation, involvement, interest and action of young people in Europe. Through using the World Values data set (1995-1997) we are able to compare young people in Eastern and in Western Europe. In doing so, we will address four questions raised by the literature:

a. Are young people disengaged from politics and politically cynical? Is it the case that they do not participate in politics, do not discuss it and regard it as something not relevant for them? This may be a problem of young people being insufficiently integrated into the political system.

b. Do young people engage in "new politics" such as consumer activism and ecological movements rather than conventional politics?

c. Is engagement with politics associated more with those in higher education, with men rather than women and with people from higher social classes as has been found in many national level surveys in the UK? Is this pattern also found elsewhere in Europe? Are the unemployed elsewhere also politically disaffected as is the case in studies carried out in the UK?

d. Is it the case that young people in Eastern Europe are more politically cynical and disengaged than their counterparts in the West?

In order to answer these questions, we have taken a broader view of politics to include a whole variety of expressions of political engagement and we have looked especially at regional differences in European societies. Hence, we look at political involvement, democratic mindedness, political action, political participation, civic participation, new politics and political legitimacy. Then we look at the relationships between these forms of political engagement and finally we try to develop a typology of how young people fall within these different forms of political engagement in Europe.

Concepts used in the research

In order to consider the various kinds of political activities of young people, we have looked at a range of different kinds of political behaviour and attitudes.

a. Political involvement

This is means interest in politics, whether young people discuss politics with their friends, and whether they think politics is important.

b. Democratic mindedness

This considers what kind of politics young people espouse and is particularly interesting in former communist regimes or former authoritarian regimes, such as Spain. Here we can look at attitudes to democracy and approval or disapproval of alternatives, such as army rule or a strong leader.

c. Political action

Political action can include either conventional political actions, such as voting or direct political actions, such as attending a demonstration or occupying a building. Political action can be further sub-divided according to whether young people approve of such a form of

political action, whether they would potentially do such a thing or whether they had actually done such a thing.

d. Political participation

This is concerned with whether young people participate in political parties and political movements. Here we can distinguish between being a passive or an active member of an organisation.

e. Civic participation

Civic integration means the membership and participation of young people in civil society associations such as youth clubs, cultural associations, sports clubs or churches.

f. New politics

New politics is interpreted as participation in various kinds of environmental activities. This could include consumer activism of various kinds, such as recycling produce, as well as signing petitions, attending meetings and contributing to environmental organisations. Hence new politics focuses not just upon new political movements, but also upon how people express their politics through such things as consumer activism and how they develop a politically grounded lifestyle (Nava 1992).

g. Political legitimacy

Political legitimacy means the trust of respondents in various kinds of political institutions. That is, how much confidence they have in a variety of different public institutions, thus producing a legitimacy of the body politics through the mass public.

Data set and methods used

This paper is based on an analysis of the third wave of the World Value Survey, which was carried out between 1995 and 1997. The data base was limited to young people aged 16 to 25 in the European countries. Because of the relatively small sample size of this target group we clustered the countries into European regions.

- *The North West* (N=518) includes Norway (164), Sweden (163) and Finland (191).
- *The North East* (N=527) is the Baltic region including Lithuania (168), Latvia (217) and Estonia (142).

- *Central West* (N=296) is represented by West Germany (133) and Switzerland (163).
- *Central East* (N=854) includes Hungary (116), Czech Republic (137), Slovak Republic (148), Poland (149), East Germany (112) and Slovenia (192).
- *The South West* is represented by Spain (N=1596).
- *The South East* (N= 990) includes Albania (201), Croatia (221), Macedonia (165), Montenegro (37), Bosnia Herzegovina (180) and Serbia (186).
- Bulgaria (179), Rumania (218) and Moldova (157) belong to the *Black Sea Region* (N=554).
- *The East* (N=926) includes Tambov (part of Russia) (67), Belarus (315), Ukraine (316) and Russia (228).
- *The Caucasus Region* (N=1479) includes Georgia (445), Armenia (541) and Azerbaijan (493).

The total number of young Europeans in our study is 7740.

Where possible indexes were constructed, putting together a range of variables and in these instances, a principle component factor analysis was first carried out to see how such variables were associated along one dimension and which should be excluded from the index. In some cases, more than one index emerged using this method. We then looked at the associations with each of these indexes: what demographic characteristics in terms of age, sex, town size, (subjective[1]) social class, education and employment patterns were associated with each index? We also looked at the regions and how these different kinds of political actions and behaviour varied across regions. This information is shown in a series of charts. We then looked at how these different indexes were associated together and finally we put them all into a principle component factor analysis in order to look at what underlying patterns could emerge and to construct a typology of political behaviour of European youth.

[1] We have used subjective social class rather than objective measures because young people are difficult to classify in a social class – they have not yet reached their class of destination, so to say, and their class of origin (parental social class) is not recorded in this survey.

Results

1. Political Involvement

We used three different indicators of political involvement: interest in politics, whether the respondent discussed politics with their friends and finally whether they considered politics to be important. Below, we consider each in turn before constructing the index.

Interest in politics; only around one third (35%) of young people are interested in politics; the majority are not interested.

Discussing politics: another indicator for political involvement is whether young people discuss politics with their friends. 34% of the respondents never discuss politics with their friends, 56% do it occasionally and 10% do it frequently

Importance of politics: 75% of the respondents say that politics is not important in their life. For 25% politics is important.

For constructing the index, the principal component analysis extracted one component only. The index of political involvement therefore consists of all three indicators: interest in politics (.869), politics is important (.802) and discussing politics (.780).

Chart 1: Political Involvement by region

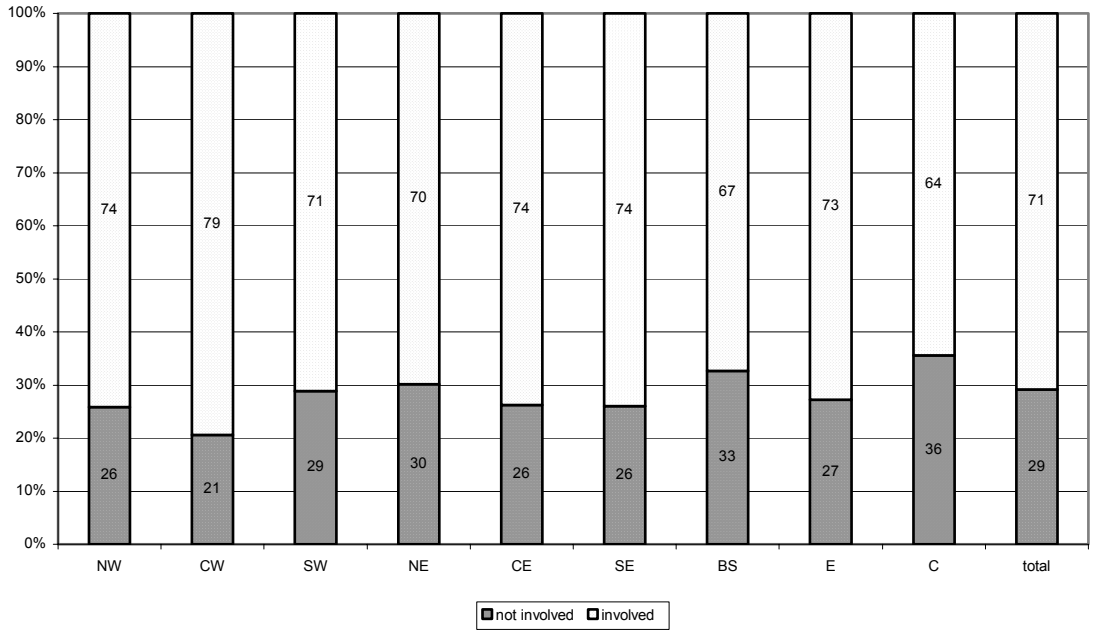


Table 1: Political Involvement by demographic variables

Age	0,104**	fulltime employment	0,006
Gender	0,080**	parttime empl	0,030*
education	0,160**	selfemployed	0,008
upper class	0,084**	students	0,077**
lower middle class	-0,012	unemployed	-0,066**
working & lower class	-0,060**	size of town	0,022

** = significant at the .001 level, * =significant at the .05 level

Here we find that the results reported in the UK are also valid across Europe. Men are more involved in politics than women, higher class people more than lower class, more educated and older youth more than less educated or younger youth. Finally, unemployment has a particularly negative effect upon political involvement. There is no obvious East-West divide in political involvement. Those in Central West, Central East; South East and Eastern Europe have the strongest levels of political involvement (See Chart 1). Those in the Caucasus and Black Sea region the least. Between one quarter and one third of youth in Europe are politically involved, but the majority do not discuss politics, are interested in politics or think that politics is important.

2. Democratic mindedness

In order to construct an index for democratic mindedness, we took into account preferences for certain types of political systems. The respondents were asked whether they think that “a strong leader”, “experts”, “the army” and “democracy” is a good or a bad thing. Democracy is seen as a good way of governing the country by 90% of young people. Experts come second with 58%, followed by a strong leader (35%). 12% think that an army rule would be a good way of governing their country. In addition, we considered a number of questions about democracy itself including if democracy means that the economic system runs badly, if democracy leads to indeciseveness and too much squabbling, if democracies are not good at maintaining order and if it is after all its problems, the best form of government.

Now turning to the various questions about democracy, 30% of the respondents agree with the statement “*in democracy, the economic system runs badly*”. The second attitude is expressed by the statement “*democracies are indecisive and have too much squabbling*” and 47% of the respondents agree with it. The statement “*democracies aren’t good at maintaining order*” is approved of by 35%. However, 87% of the respondents still agree that “*democracy may have problems but it’s better than any other form of government*”.

The variables were recoded so anti-democratic attitudes are always coded with low figures and pro-democratic values with high ones. A principal component analysis with principle components analysis reveals 3 components: “democrats”, who support the democratic system and think that democracy is better than other kinds of government, “sceptics” who think that democracy is bad for the economy, not good at maintaining order and subject to indecision and squabbling, and anti-democrats who prefer a strong leader, experts to run the government and army rule.

Table 2: Factor analysis of democratic mindedness

	Component		
	“Sceptics”	“Democrats”	“Anti-democrats”
strong leader	0,145	0,244	0,718
experts run govt	0,158	-0,361	0,668
army rule	0,056	0,243	0,682
democratic sys	0,253	0,774	0,077
democ:bad econ	0,776	0,227	0,143
democ:indecision	0,851	0,087	0,091
democ:no order	0,792	0,167	0,124
democ:better	0,167	0,761	0,148

The index of democracy correlates positively with gender, age and the upper and upper middle class, with the part-time employed and the students. There is also a positive correlation with education and the size of town. In the North West, the Central West and the South West the index is high, while it is low in the North East, the Black Sea and the East [chart 2]. There is therefore more or less an East-West divide in this respect. The Western European regions correlate positively with the democratic attitude and negatively with anti-democratic and sceptical attitudes. The Eastern European regions show the opposite pattern. Exceptions are the South East, where there is a positive correlation with anti-democratic attitudes but a negative correlation with scepticism, and the Caucasus region where there is only one significant and negative correlation with anti-democratic attitudes.

Chart 2: Democratic mindedness by region

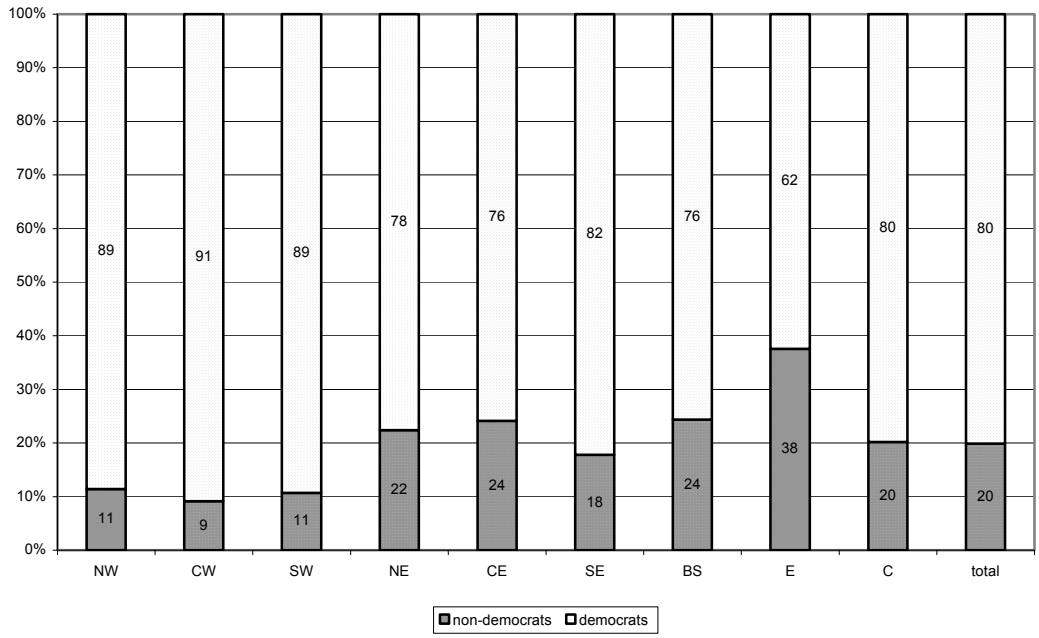


Table 3: Democratic mindedness by demographic variables

	Democrats	Anti-democrats	Sceptics
Gender	0,035**	-0,021	-0,021
age	0,063**	-0,054**	-0,045**
education	0,151**	-0,161**	-0,130**
upper class	0,076**	-0,062**	-0,064**
lower middle class	0,003	-0,004	-0,010
working	-0,069**	0,057**	0,066**
fulltime employment	-0,042**	0,019	0,048**
Part-time empl	0,032**	-0,039**	-0,030*
selfemployed	-0,020	0,041**	-0,008
students	0,149**	-0,109**	-0,123**
unemployed	-0,060**	0,052**	0,045**
size of town	0,047**	-0,054**	-0,047**

** significant on a .01 level * significant on a .05 level

Anti-democratic and sceptical attitudes are stronger among the younger the respondents, the lower their educational level and the smaller the town they live in. The part-time employed and the students tend not to be antidemocrats or sceptics – rather they are democrats. The unemployed are likely to be anti-democrats or sceptics but not democrats. The full-time employed tend to be sceptics, while the self-employed tend to be anti-democratic. The higher the social class the less likely is an anti-democratic or sceptic attitude.

Hence, democratic mindedness seems to fit the same pattern as political involvement: higher social classes, higher educated, older young people and males are more likely to be democratically minded. Unemployment has a very detrimental effect on attitudes to democracy and we find the highest democratic mindedness in Western Europe, where democracies are well established and taken for granted, rather than in Eastern Europe where they are not so well embedded and where experiences have not always been good. Anti-democrats are more often found among the unemployed, the low educated, those from rural areas and working or lower class youth and this corresponds with research on right wing and xenophobic tendencies among German youth (Heitmeyer 1992).

3. Political action

For political action, we considered first of all propensity to vote and signing a petition: that is, *conventional* political actions. We found that 90% of the young people are voters, 10% non-voters and 28% of the respondents have already *signed a petition* whilst 39% say they might and 34% would never sign a petition. Signing a petition is something which the older respondents have already done. However, the younger respondents have the highest percentage of “might”-answers, so that the proportion of respondents who would never sign a petition is distributed fairly evenly among the age groups.

Secondly, we considered *unconventional* political actions such as, joining a boycott, attending a lawful demonstration, joining a strike or occupying a building or using violence for political reasons. The numbers undertaking unconventional political actions were much lower. Respondents were asked whether they have ever joined a boycott, attended a lawful demonstration, joined a strike or occupied a building. WE found that 22% have attended a demonstration but other kinds of political action are not taken very often: boycotts by 9%, strikes by 7% and occupations by 2%. Demonstrations are the kind of political action which is most feasible for the young respondents: 45% say they might attend a demonstration and 37% might join a boycott. 29% think they might join a strike and 20% might occupy a building.

Political action is rarely taken in the Black Sea and Caucasus region as well as in the East. In the South East, Central East and North East political action is equally rare with the exception of signing a petition. This is done more frequently than in the Black Sea, Caucasus

region and in the East, but less frequently than in the western regions of Europe. The North West, Central West and the South West have the highest participation rates in petitions, demonstrations and boycotts. The South West also has the highest percentage of young people who have joined a strike and occupied a building. We cannot say therefore, that young people in the East are more likely to resort to unconventional politics whilst those in the West (in well established democracies) are more likely to use conventional strategies. Rather, conventional and unconventional forms of political action belong together since those who take part in conventional political actions are also more likely to take part in unconventional actions. Both are most likely to be found in Western Europe.

The principal component analysis identifies one component. Hence, the index of political activism is the sum of the political activities which the respondents have already done. The index of potential political activism expresses the number of activities which the respondents said they might do. Political activism is stronger among the older, men, the highly educated, the part-time employed and students, the upper and upper middle class respondents as well as among young urban people. It correlates negatively with the lower middle class and unemployment.

Chart 3: Political activism by region by region

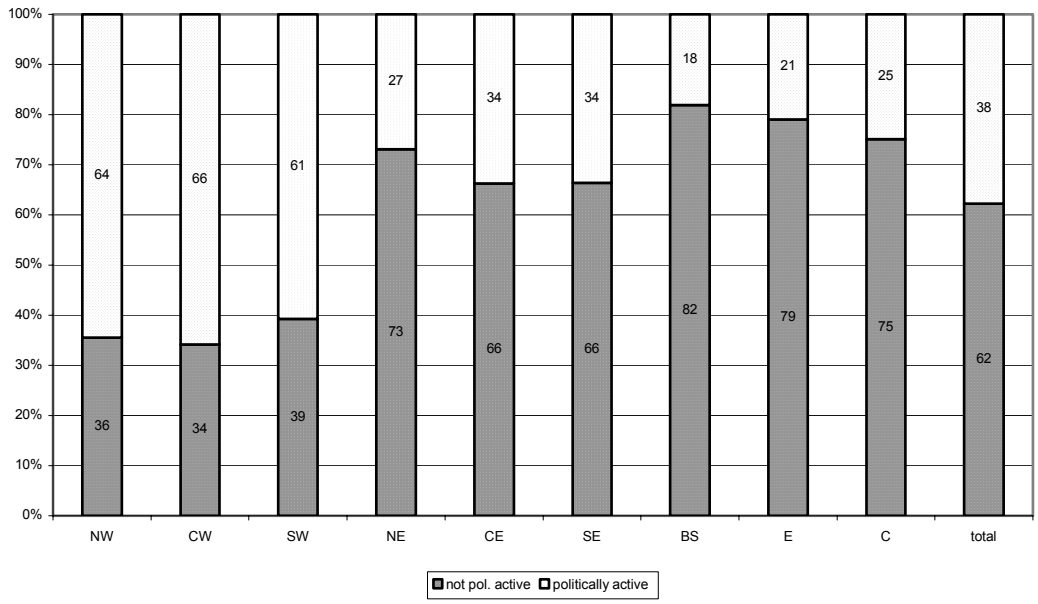


Chart 4: Potential political activism by region

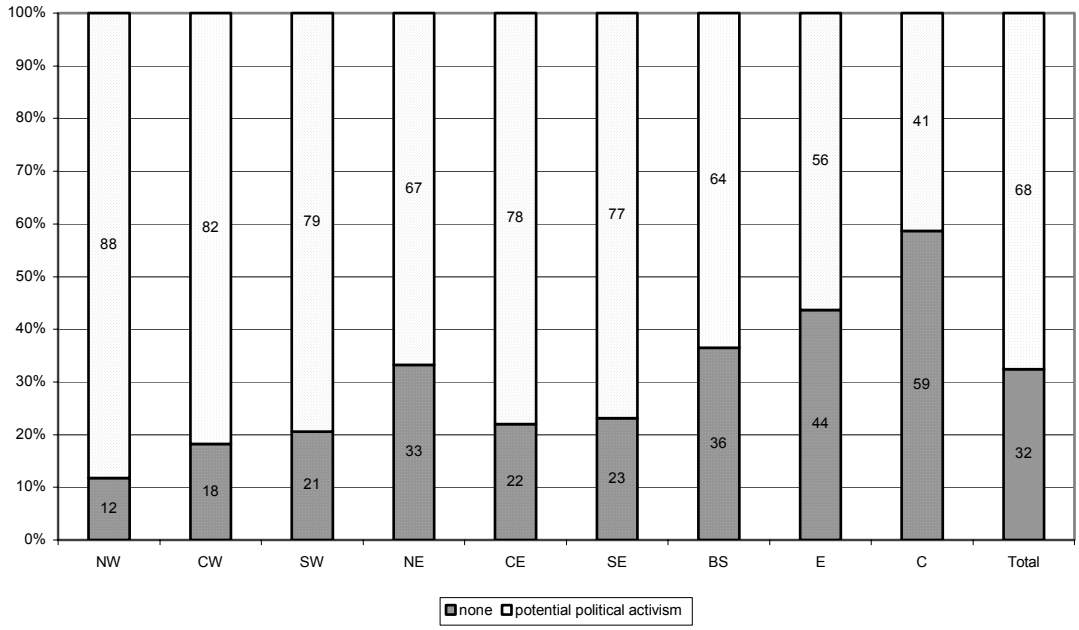


Table 4: Political activism and potential political activism by demographic variables

	pol activism	potential pol activism
Gender	0,043**	0,092**
age	0,088**	-0,012
education	0,132**	-0,044**
upper class	0,096**	0,036**
lower middle class	-0,071**	-0,049**
working	-0,009	0,020
fulltime employment	-0,055**	-0,014
parttime empl	0,067**	0,019
selfemployed	-0,007	-0,014
students	0,127*	0,081**
unemployed	-0,052**	-0,020
size of town	0,107**	0,000

** significant on a .01 level * significant on a .05 level

In general, potential political action takes the same forms as actual political action, except that older people are more likely to have actually done the thing that is questioned about, whilst younger young people would only support the idea. Political action follows the same patterns that we have outlined for other kinds of political engagement, according to social class, education, sex, town size and unemployment. Those in Western Europe score higher on this index than do those in Eastern Europe.

4. Civic and political participation

Respondents were asked a range of questions as to whether they were passive or active members of a range of formal organisations. We wondered if there was a difference between the more political organisations such as political parties and trade unions and the more civic associations such as churches or sports clubs (although these can be political too under some circumstances). In order to consider the differences between political and civic participation we first of all did a factor analysis to see if these different kinds of participation should be grouped together and we found that there was indeed a difference. The principal component analysis extracted two components which can be classified according to participation in civic or political organisations[2].

Component 1 (Participation in civic organisations) includes:

Active membership in the church or other religious organisation (.554)
Active membership in sports organisations (.571)
Active membership in arts and music organisations (.632)
Active membership in charity organisations (.452)
Active membership in other organisations (.456)

Component 2 (Participation in political organisations) includes:

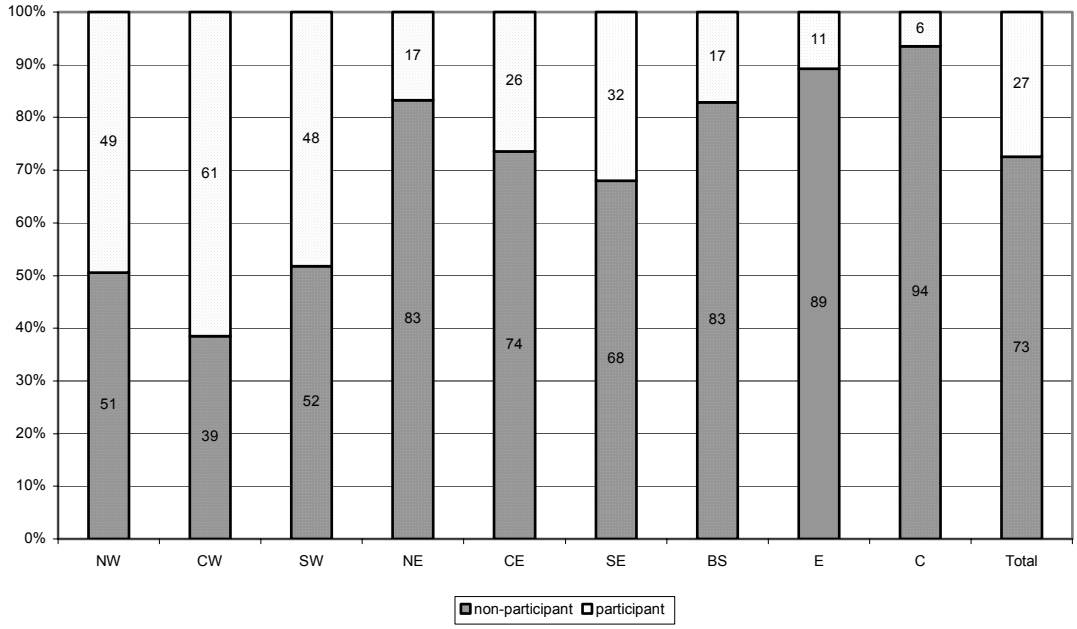
Active membership in the trade union (.567)
Active membership in political parties (.659)
Active membership in environmental organisations (.486)
Active membership in professional associations (.438)

We found that 72% of the respondents do not participate in any of the civic organisations. 20% participate in one civic organisation and 8% in two or more. Participation in civic organisations is higher among men, among the better educated and upper and upper middle class young people. The part-time employed and students are also the more frequent

[2] Here we concentrated upon active participation rather than passive membership. Elsewhere we have analysed the relationship between the two *(reference withheld)*.

participants, while the lower middle class respondents, the full-time employed and unemployed do not participate in civic organisations. Civic participation is high in the North West, the Central West and the South West. It is low in the Eastern European regions [see chart 4.3.]. The relationship between civic and political participation is explored elsewhere *(see names withheld to preserve confidentiality).*

Chart 5: Civic participation by region



There was much less participation overall in political than in civic associations: 93% of the respondents do not participate in any of the political organisations. 6% participate in one, 1% in two or more. Participation in political organisations increases with age. It is higher among the upper and upper middle class respondents, the full-time, part-time and self-employed. Participation is low among the lower middle class young people, the unemployed and among young people in larger cities. Political participation is high in the South West and low in most of the Eastern European regions.

Chart 6: Political participation by region

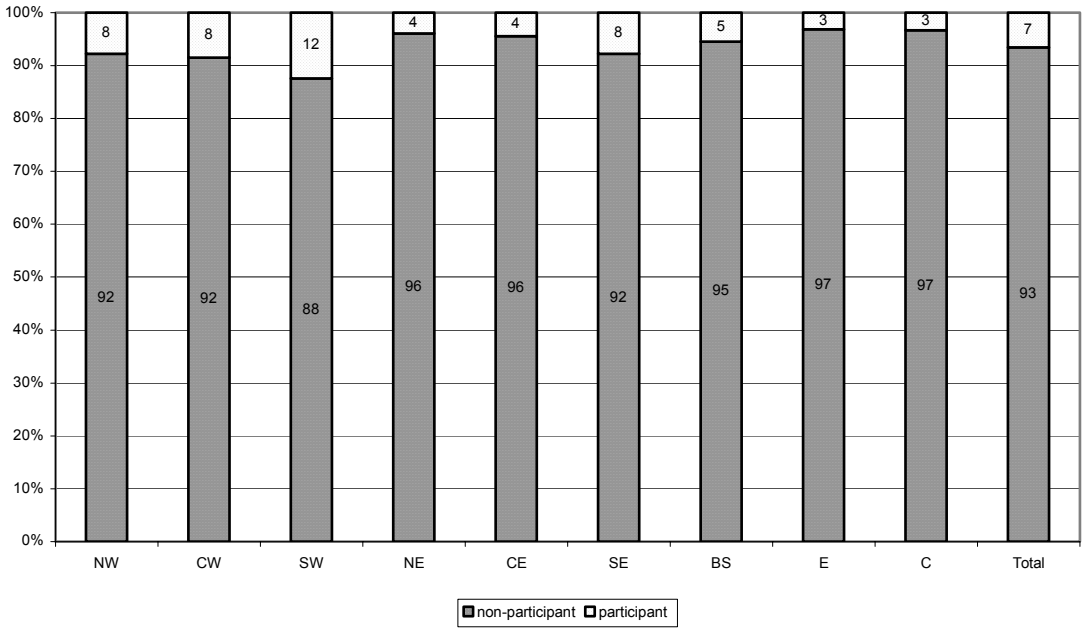


Table 5: Participation in civic and political organisations by demographic variables

	paticipation in civic org.	paticipation in political org.
Age	-0,007	0,051**
Gender	0,056**	0,020
Education	0,035**	0,012
fulltime employment	-0,044**	0,042**
parttime empl	0,039**	0,027*
Selfemployed	-0,020	0,043**
Students	0,139**	-0,022
Unemployed	-0,074**	-0,025*
upper class	0,106**	0,041**
lower middle class	-0,074**	-0,039**
working class	-0,013	0,005
size of town	0,008	-0,036**

In general, civic and political participation follow the same patterns that we have seen for other kinds of political engagement. It is associated with gender, education, employment status, social class and region.

5. New politics

Many would argue that young people are more concerned about "new politics" including new social movements and politically conscious lifestyles and behaviour. Here we have concentrated upon ecological movements and lifestyles as an example of new politics and we look at several dimensions:

Ecological behaviour and values: Individual actions to protect the environment are fairly common: 41% of the respondents have already chosen household products that they think are better for the environment and there were more women among them than men.

Recycling: Recycling could be seen as one way in which young people might develop a politically sensitive lifestyle. Nearly half (45%) report having reused or recycled something rather than throwing it away. Again, more women than men have done this.

Reducing water consumption could also be seen as an aspect of a politically sensitive lifestyle. Altogether, 42% have tried to reduce water consumption for environmental reasons. Again, more women have done this. The distribution across the regions is slightly different here with the South West scoring highest (62%), followed by the Central West (58%). The North West scores lowest (24%). Obviously, water conservation is not as much of an issue in the North as in the South of Europe.

Other environmental actions. Attending a meeting or signing a petition aimed at protecting the environment is not very common (13%). Respondents of the Central West (35%) and the South West (26%) score highest on this item.

Contributing to an environmental organisation is not very common, either (9%).

All these variables were used to construct an index of environmental activity. "Some activity" means that the respondent has carried out one or two of the activities, "a lot" means he/she has carried out 3 to 5 activities. Environmental activity varies with gender: 47% of the female and 45% of the male respondents have done some, similarly, 22% of the women and 18% of the men have done a lot. Environmental activity increases with age and also with the size of town. Respondents in the upper and upper middle class as well as working class do more for the environment than middle class young people. Similarly, those with the highest and lowest levels of education do more than their peers with a medium level education. The part-time employed and students most active. The South West has the highest percentage of young

people who do a lot (44%), followed by the North West (32%), the Central West (25%) and the Central East (26%).

Chart 7: Environmental activity by region

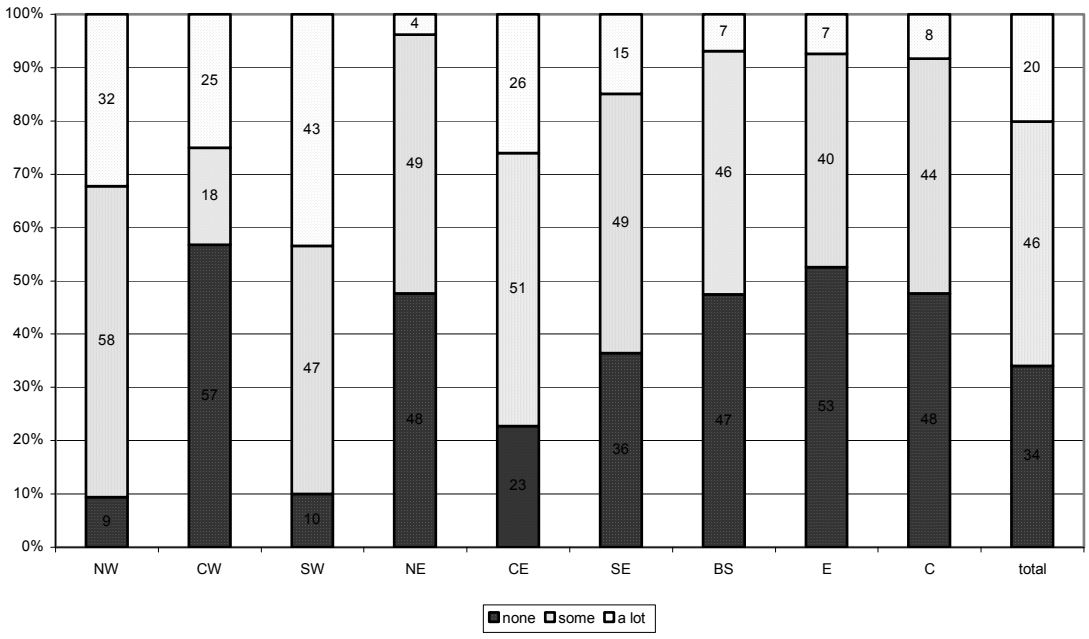


Table 6: Environmental activity by demographic variables

age	0,085**	fulltime employment	-0,038**
Gender	-0,072**	parttime empl	0,072**
education	0,021	selfemployed	-0,007
upper class	0,076**	students	0,097**
lower middle class	-0,109**	unemployed	-0,062**
working class	0,048**	size of town	0,079**

** significant on a .01 level * significant on a .05 level

Concern about environmental issues can also be expressed in environmentally aware attitudes as well as behaviour. For example, in the willingness to pay more taxes if the extra money were used to prevent environmental damage (70% agree). Disagreement increases with age. The higher the subjective social class the more young people agree with this statement. Genderwise, more women express this willingness. As for the employment groups, the part-time employed and students are at the forefront, while the self-employed are last. With respect to the regions, it is the South West (79%) and the North West (77%) where

young people are most willing to pay more taxes in order to support the environment. In the North East they express the least willingness (58%).

Another attitude indicating environmental awareness is being willing to pay higher prices to help protect the environment. More than half (54%) of the young respondents are also prepared to pay prices which are 20% higher than usual if it would help to protect the environment. The upper and upper middle class is most prepared to pay higher prices as are women, the part-time employed respondents and the students. This variable reaches a high percentage in the South West only (74%). All other regions vary between 51% (Central West) and 43% (North East).

More than half of respondents also agree with the statement that there should be a priority on protecting the environment even at the expense of economic growth: 54% of the respondents place priority on protecting the environment, even if it causes slower economic growth and some loss of jobs. By contrast, 38% think that economic growth and creating jobs should be the top priority, even if the environment suffers to some extent. More women and more upper and upper middle class prioritise the environment. There are interesting differences between the regions. In the North West the environment has high priority. Here, 61% agree that “protecting the environment should be given priority, even if it causes slower economic growth and some loss of jobs”.

Engagement in the “new politics” seems to follow the same pattern as other kinds of political engagement in terms of class, education, region, town size and so on. However, there is one important exception here: women are more engaged than men. This may be because women are more often responsible for consumption in the family, which may have made them more influenced by this kind of engagement (Littig 2001). One important factor is that although young people may not join organisations or engage in demonstrations in large numbers, more than half are environmentally aware in their attitudes and around 40% engage in behaviour which is environmentally aware such as recycling. We could say therefore that an important part of young people’s political attitudes and behaviour concerning the new politics are more a matter of lifestyle than conventional political engagement (Nava 1992).

6. Political legitimacy

Political legitimacy is measured by confidence in institutions which are analysed through a variety of questions asking about trust. Confidence in institutions varies considerably. Political parties score particularly low with only 19% of the respondents having “a great deal” or “quite a lot” of confidence in them. These are followed by other political institutions such as the labour unions (31%), the parliament (34%) and the government (37%). Ranging in the middle are the civil service (39%), the press (39%), the legal system (44%), the women’s

movement (44%) as well as the police and television (45% each). Organisations, which enjoy most confidence, are major companies (47%), churches (50%), armed forces (51%), the European Union (52%), the United Nations (59%) and above all the Green/Ecology movement (60%).

In order to see which kinds of trust or confidence were associated together, we once more did a principle components factor analysis and found the following results. Trust in the political system was one component (parliament, government, labour unions, political parties), trust in law and order (civil service, legal system, police, armed forces) another, trust in alternative movements (ecological movements/Greens, women's movement) and third, trust in transnational organistaions (European Union, United Nations), a fourth component is trust in the media (press, television), and a fifth and sixth component included the church and major companies. We have concentrated upon the first four components in our analysis because they could be described as "political".

Here we find differences between social groups depending upon which aspect of legitimacy we are considering. Women have more confidence in alternative movements than men. The younger respondents have more confidence in the political system, transnational organisations and the media than the older respondents. The higher the education the more confidence in the political system, transnational organisations. On the other hand confidence in law and order is higher among the less well educated. The full-time employed have confidence in law and order, while the part-time employed and unemployed do not. The part-time employed and the students have confidence in alternative movements, but not the self-employed and the unemployed. The unemployed are sceptical of the transnational organisations.

Young people in the North West, the Central West and the Caucasus have confidence in the political system, while those in the other regions do not so much. Confidence in the political system is especially low in the South West. Law and order is something in which the respondents in the North West, the Central West, the South East and the Black Sea have confidence. Alternative movements are trusted in the North West, the Central East, the South West and in the East, but not in the South East, the Black Sea and the Caucasus. Young people in the Central East and the Black Sea region trust in transnational organisations, while their peers in the South West and the South East do not. In the North East, the Black Sea and the Caucasus, young people have confidence in the media. Their peers in the Central West, the South West and the South East have no confidence in the media. There was therefore no obvious regional pattern with these variables.

Table 7: Confidence in different public institutions by demographic variables

	political system	law&order	alternative m	transn. org
Age	-0,026*	-0,004	-0,020	-0,056**
Gender	0,002	0,009	-0,111**	0,017
Education	0,024*	-0,090**	0,011	0,042**
fulltime employment	-0,011	0,056**	0,016	0,014
parttime empl	0,003	-0,024*	0,045**	0,021
Selfemployed	0,004	0,004	-0,053**	0,022
Students	-0,003	-0,021	0,035**	0,007
Unemployed	0,010	-0,038**	-0,060**	-0,051**
upper class	0,054*	0,031*	0,020	0,020
lower middle class	0,064**	0,026*	-0,031**	0,027*
working	-0,114**	-0,054**	0,016	-0,045**
size of town	-0,075**	-0,089**	0,053**	0,032**

** significant on a .01 level * significant on a .05 level

Chart 8: Confidence in the political system by region

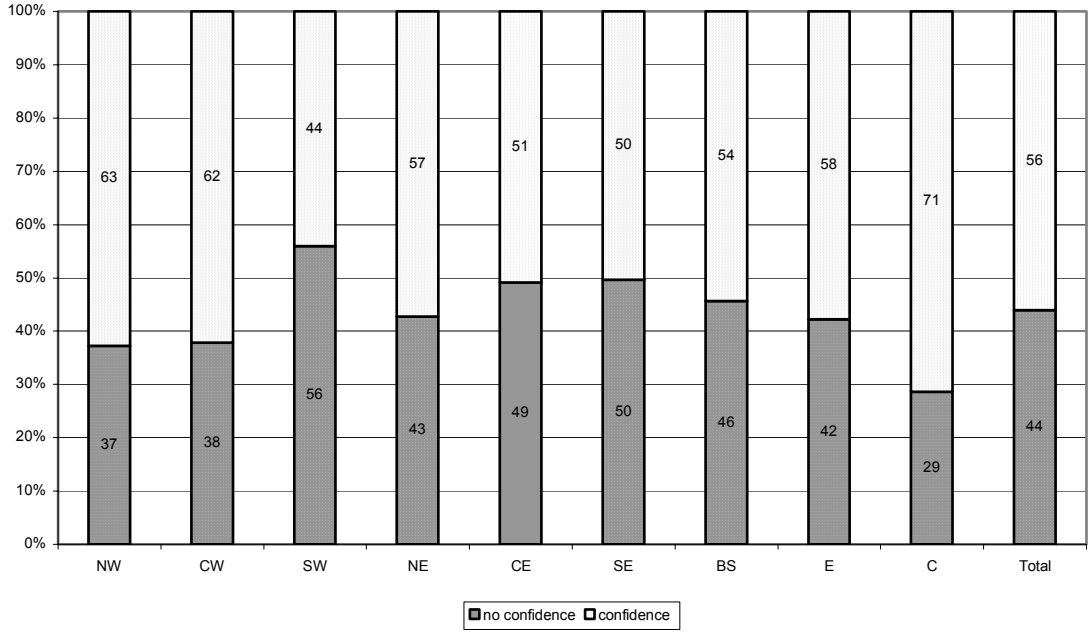


Chart 9: Confidence in law and order

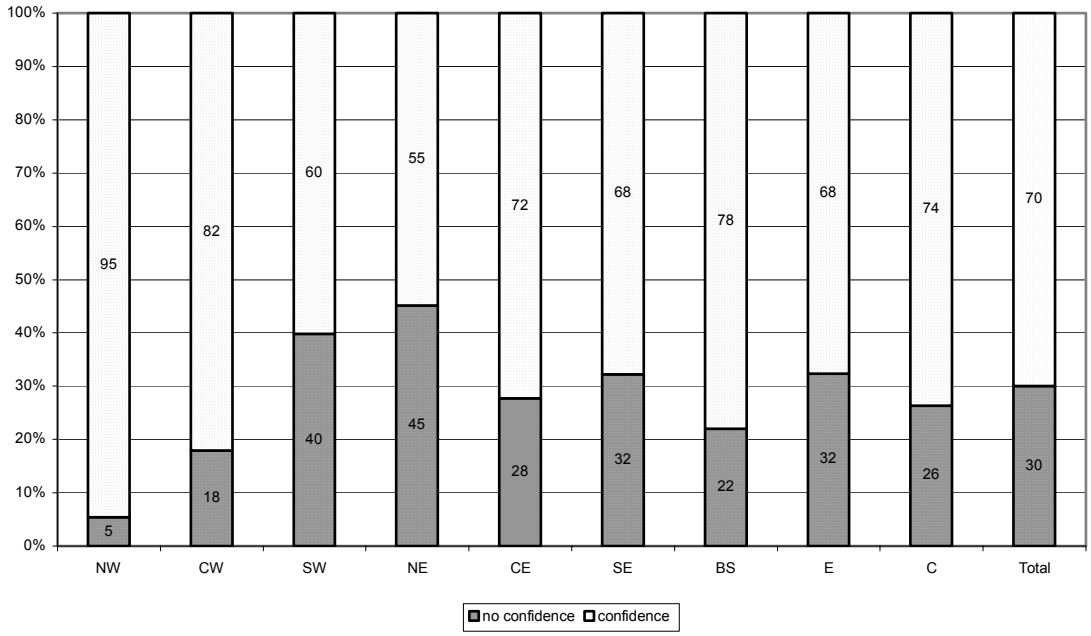


Chart 10: Confidence in alternative movements

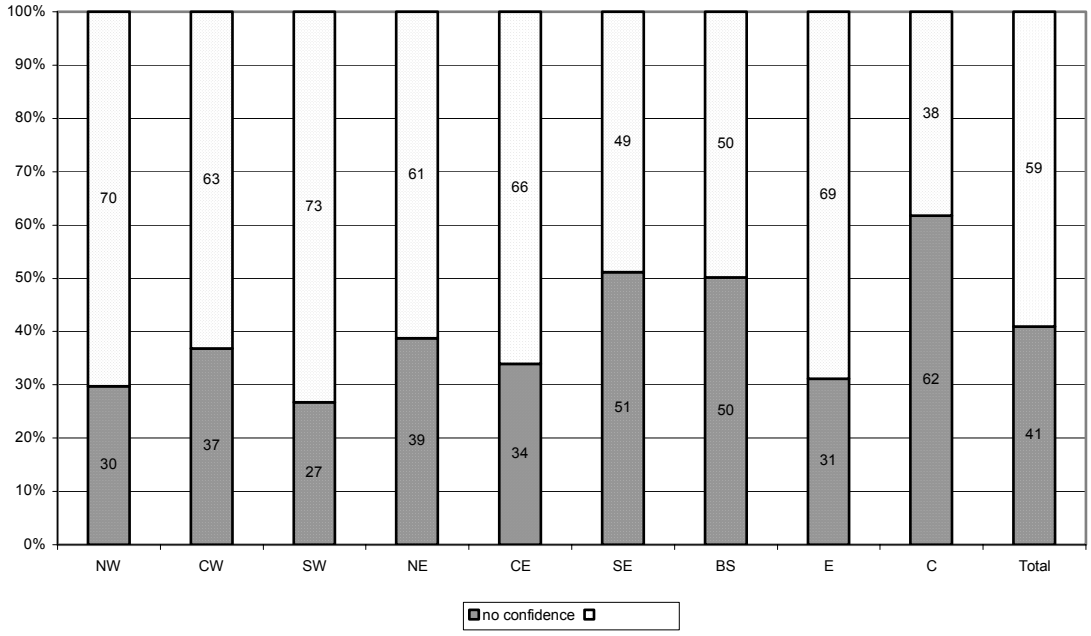
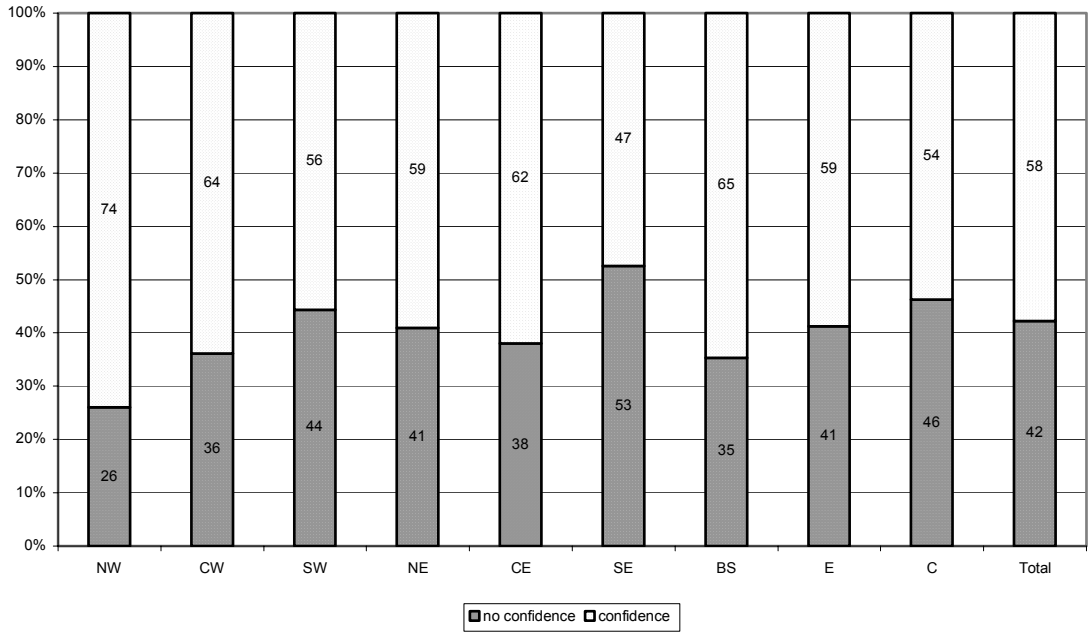


Chart 11: Confidence in transnational organisations



How do the different forms of political behaviour and attitudes relate to one another?

In this section of the paper, we consider how these different kinds of political behaviour and attitudes are associated with one another. Here we present a correlation matrix.

a. Political involvement

Political involvement correlates significantly with several the other indices. Political involvement is associated with political participation, democratic mindedness, political activism, confidence in the political system, and environmental activism.

Politically involved young people are also politically active, are potentially politically active, they are integrated in formal political organisations, they participate in civil and political organisations, they have a lot of confidence in the legitimacy of the system, especially of the political system and they are active for the benefit of the environment. Lastly, they are also very democratically minded.

b. Democratic mindedness

Democratic mindedness has a very strong relationship with political involvement, activism and civic participation. It also correlates positively with environmental activity and negatively with the justification of violence. Political participation and confidence in the legitimacy of the system also have a positive but rather weak correlation. Anti-democrats and sceptics show very similar correlation patterns which are the exact opposite of the correlation pattern with the democrats: no political involvement, no political activism, violence is rather legitimate, no environmental activism and no civic and political participation, no confidence in many systems and institutions. With respect to confidence there are some exceptions in that the anti-democrats do have confidence in law and order, in transnational organisations and in the media.

The index of democracy is strongly associated with civic participation, political activism, political involvement and environmental activity It would seem that those who support democracy are also rather active and involved in politics generally as well as being involved in the “new” politics.

c. Political action

The politically active young people are even more strongly integrated and participate more in civil and political organisations than the politically involved. There is also a strong correlation with environmental activism. However, the politically active have very little confidence in the legitimacy of the system apart from the legitimacy of alternative movements. The democratic mindedness of these people is equally as strong as the politically involved.

The index of political activism is associated both with civic and political participation, with political involvement and with environmental activities.

d. Civic participation

Participation in civil organisations correlates with confidence in the legitimacy of the system, particularly with the legitimacy of alternative movements. One exception is the media, which is not trusted by those who participate in civil organisations. Democratic mindedness is very strong among these young people. Participation in political organisations has a strong relationship with environmental activism and a positive but weak relationship with confidence in the system and democratic mindedness.

Here we can see that the index of civic participation is strongly correlated with political participation, and with political and environmental activism. It is less strongly correlated with confidence in alternative political movements and with democratic mindedness. It seems that civic participation and “new politics” are somehow related. The index of political participation is strongly related to civic participation (as was described already above), but also with political activism, political involvement and environmental activity. In other words, those who participate in political organisations are very active politically generally as well as being involved in the new politics.

e. Political participation

Integration in formal organisations correlates with political involvement and activism, as noted above, and with activism for environmental issues. The relationship between democratic mindedness and confidence in the legitimacy of the system is significant, but nor very strong.

f. Political legitimacy

Confidence in the political system is associated with confidence in other institutions as well , as well as with political involvement. Confidence in law and order is likewise associated with

other kinds of trust in institutions. This is also the case with confidence in transnational organisations and confidence in the media. These kinds of confidence questions are not associated with much else apart from general confidence. However, the exception is confidence in environmental organisations which is associated with environmental activism and civic participation. The new politics was also interesting. Here we see that environmental activism was a very good indicator of political engagement generally: The environmentally active, were also likely to participate in civic as well as political organisations, they were democratically minded, they were very politically active and politically involved. They also had confidence in alternative political movements.

Table 8: Pearson Correlations between different forms of behaviour and attitudes

	pol. Involvement	democrat	Anti democrat	democr. sceptic	pol. activism	petition (done)	boycott (done)	demonstr. (done)	strike (done)	occupation (done)	potential political activism
political involvement	1,000	0,199**	-0,145**	-0,166**	0,255**	0,215**	0,161**	0,185**	0,104**	0,073**	0,130**
democrat	0,199**	1,000	-0,663**	-0,777**	0,171**	0,188**	0,048**	0,129**	0,033**	0,016	0,155**
antidemocrat	-0,145**	-0,663**	1,000	0,327**	-0,164**	-0,150**	-0,044**	-0,136**	-0,062**	-0,018	-0,081**
democr. Sceptic	-0,166**	-0,777**	0,327**	1,000	-0,106**	-0,117**	-0,025*	-0,087**	-0,004	-0,017	-0,084**
political activism	0,255**	0,171**	-0,164**	-0,106**	1,000	0,718**	0,643**	0,756**	0,591**	0,397**	-0,064**
petition (done)	0,215**	0,188**	-0,150**	-0,117**	0,718**	1,000	0,335**	0,328**	0,154**	0,103**	-0,008
boycott (done)	0,161**	0,048**	-0,044**	-0,025*	0,643**	0,335**	1,000	0,307**	0,273**	0,206**	-0,078**
demonstration (done)	0,185**	0,129**	-0,136**	-0,087**	0,756**	0,328**	0,307**	1,000	0,384**	0,195**	-0,084**
strike (done)	0,104**	0,033**	-0,062**	-0,004	0,591**	0,154**	0,273**	0,384**	1,000	0,316**	-0,096**
occupation (done)	0,073**	0,016	-0,018	-0,017	0,397**	0,103**	0,206**	0,195**	0,316**	1,000	-0,070**
potential political activism	0,130**	0,155**	-0,081**	-0,084**	-0,064**	-0,008	-0,078**	-0,084**	-0,096**	-0,070**	1,000
using violence	-0,021	0,099**	-0,078**	-0,045**	-0,023	0,009	-0,038**	-0,013	-0,037**	-0,017	-0,035**
particip. in civic org	0,099**	0,151**	-0,123**	-0,096**	0,235**	0,234**	0,104**	0,171**	0,066**	0,108**	0,097**
particip. in pol. org	0,126**	0,038**	-0,036**	-0,029*	0,155**	0,112**	0,093**	0,116**	0,083**	0,090**	0,008
environmental activism	0,166**	0,197**	-0,180**	-0,128**	0,322**	0,292**	0,161**	0,257**	0,116**	0,099**	0,114**
conf in political system	0,121**	0,075**	-0,039**	-0,089**	-0,047**	-0,033**	-0,019	-0,058**	-0,027*	-0,029*	-0,038**
conf in law&order	0,068**	0,022	0,054**	-0,030**	-0,057**	0,010	-0,028*	-0,093**	-0,074**	-0,042**	0,004
conf in altern. movem.	0,061**	0,083**	-0,029*	-0,048**	0,118**	0,093**	0,065**	0,095**	0,024*	0,043**	0,099**
conf in transnational org	0,055**	0,093**	0,024*	-0,091*	-0,022	-0,018	-0,013	-0,014	-0,036**	-0,040**	0,057**

** significant on a .01 level * significant on a .05 level

Table 8: Pearson Correlations between different forms of behaviour and attitudes

	using violence	particip. civic org	in particip. pol. org	in environmental activism	conf political system	in conf law&order	in conf alternative m	conf in transnational org
political involvement	-0,021	0,099**	0,126**	0,166**	0,121**	0,068**	0,061**	0,055**
democrat	0,099**	0,151**	0,038**	0,197**	0,075**	0,022	0,083**	0,093**
antidemocrat	-0,078**	-0,123**	-0,036**	-0,180**	-0,039**	0,054**	-0,029*	0,024*
democr. Sceptic	-0,045**	-0,096**	-0,029*	-0,128**	-0,089**	-0,030**	-0,048**	-0,091**
political activism	-0,023	0,235**	0,155**	0,322**	-0,047**	-0,057**	0,118**	-0,022
petition (done)	0,009	0,234**	0,112**	0,292**	-0,033**	0,010	0,093**	-0,018
boycott (done)	-0,038**	0,104**	0,093**	0,161**	-0,019	-0,028*	0,065**	-0,013
demonstration (done)	-0,013	0,171**	0,116**	0,257**	-0,058**	-0,093**	0,095**	-0,014
strike (done)	-0,037**	0,066**	0,083**	0,116**	-0,027*	-0,074**	0,024*	-0,036**
occupation (done)	-0,017	0,108**	0,090**	0,099**	-0,029*	-0,042**	0,043**	-0,040**
potential political activism	-0,035**	0,097**	0,008	0,114**	-0,038**	0,004	0,099**	0,057**
using violence	1,000	-0,025*	-0,033**	0,019	0,031	0,035**	-0,026*	0,013
particip. in civic org	-0,025*	1,000	0,258**	0,240**	-0,004	0,052**	0,102**	0,018
particip. in pol. org	-0,033**	0,258**	1,000	0,139**	0,019	0,019	0,044**	0,004
environmental activism	0,019	0,240**	0,139**	1,000	-0,025*	0,021	0,190**	0,012
conf in political system	0,031**	-0,004	0,019	-0,025*	1,000	0,469**	0,157**	0,241**
conf in law&order	0,035**	0,052**	0,019	0,021	0,469**	1,000	0,139**	0,236**
conf in altern. movem.	-0,026*	0,102**	0,044**	0,190**	0,157**	0,139**	1,000	0,293**
conf in transnational org	0,013	0,018	0,004	0,012	0,241**	0,236**	0,293**	1,000

** significant on a .01 level * significant on a .05 level

A typology of the political engagement of young people

As the last part of our analysis, we put together each of our indexes to see how they associated with each other in order to reveal the underlying groups or clusters that could then be developed into a typology. The typology divides young people according to four main dimensions: integration or the lack of it into the political system and civic organisations, democratic versus non-democratic support, environmental activism and values and trust-distrust of different institutions. The model explains 56% of the variance, which is rather a lot.

Types of political attitudes and behaviour

1. Good citizens

The first group we might define as “good citizens”. They are well integrated into both civic and political associations, they are very democratically minded, they are interested in politics and are politically active as well. They are environmentally conscious and active in this respect too. They have a reasonable amount of trust in different public institutions, especially alternative political movements.

2. Compliant citizens

This group are not active at all, are not democratic and are quite likely to be anti-democratic. They do not participate organisations and are not particularly environmentally active. However, they have strong faith in all the public institutions. We could hypothesise that they would comply with a variety of different kinds of regime, whether democratic or non-democratic

3. Anti-system activists

This group do join a variety of organisations and are also very politically active. They are likely to hold environmental ideas but to have little faith in public institutions except for alternative movements. They are not necessarily democratic and many are anti-democrats or sceptics. We can imagine them campaigning in Seattle and in Gothenburg against global capitalism.

4. Political conformists.

The next group are members of political and civic associations (strongly integrated), especially political organisations, but they are neither democratic nor anti-democrats. They are negatively associated with environmental behaviour and values but they have

confidence in law and order and in the political system (although not in alternative political movements or transnational organisations). These are rather the members of conventional political parties.

5.Non-conformist political activists

This group are very politically interested and involved and are strongly politically active. However, they are not democratic, even rather anti-democratic, do not participate in any conventional organisations, are not environmentally friendly and do not have confidence in public institutions. We could imagine that the right wing extremists could be found in this group.

Table 9: Factor analysis of political engagement

Component Matrix

	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
index political involvement	0,453	0,051	0,136	0,265	0,490
index democracy	0,768	-0,263	-0,505	-0,007	-0,080
index of passive membership	0,254	0,027	0,310	0,197	-0,320
index participation comp1	0,413	-0,017	0,373	0,195	-0,411
index participation comp2	0,259	0,010	0,397	0,403	-0,343
conf in political system	0,205	0,674	-0,258	0,266	0,046
conf in law&order	0,155	0,710	-0,152	0,291	-0,063
conf in alternative m	0,323	0,457	0,145	-0,499	-0,062
conf in transnational org	0,207	0,577	-0,153	-0,165	0,057
x strong pol activ (rec119-122)	0,405	-0,157	0,454	-0,012	0,368
x pol activ (rec210, rec118)	0,474	0,009	0,291	0,106	0,466
index environmental activity	0,516	-0,039	0,383	-0,244	-0,102
x environmentalist attitudes	0,336	0,172	0,177	-0,546	-0,122
x antidemocrats	-0,592	0,329	0,349	0,007	0,087
x democr. sceptics	-0,636	0,192	0,504	-0,022	0,057

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
a 5 components extracted.

Total variance explained: 56%

Discussion

Let us now return to our original four questions. The first was: are young people politically disengaged? Very few young people join political organisations, but nearly all of them vote. Less than one half of young people engage with politics to some extent, even if only a tiny minority of them join political parties or political movements. The majority will vote, believe in the legitimacy of the system and about 45% support environmental concerns. Although this is less the case in Eastern than in Western Europe, and even within Western Europe, there are important differences, we cannot say that young people are disaffected. Longitudinal evidence from the UK implies that in fact young people are more politically interested and informed than in the past (Frazer and Macdonald 2000). We could say therefore that young people are not necessarily politically disengaged, but we need to look at the forms that this engagement takes.

The second question was: are young likely to engage in new alternative politics? Here the answer is yes – at least with regard to environmental activism, for which we have data. Environmental concerns engaged more young people than any other set of variables that we identified (apart from voting), although some may be involved in consumer activism in terms of recycling or choosing which products to buy according to environmental criteria. Although not many young people had engaged in political action of a conventional kind, around 40% carried out environmentally friendly activities as part of their lifestyle and the environmental issues found support among more than half the population of young people. We could say therefore, that we should take a broad view of politics before dismissing young people as apathetic. This support was especially strong in the North Western and Central Western parts of Europe. Environmental consciousness has yet to penetrate very deeply into Eastern and Central Europe, despite having been part of the popular protest against Communism.

The third question was: does political engagement follow the pattern of previous studies (mainly in the UK) in terms of being more likely to involve young people of a higher social class, higher education, more male than female, more urban than rural? The answer is yes on all indicators apart from environmental activism, where it was women rather than men who were the most concerned. Does new politics imply new gender relations in politics? If women are alienated from conventional politics, they have found a role here. Another exception seems to be with anti-democrats who are more likely to be lower class, lower educated and unemployed. This certainly fits the profile of many neo-fascist young people described in other studies (Heitmeyer 1992). In particular, the unemployed were most alienated from politics in nearly all indicators apart from anti-democratic attitudes. We could say therefore, that disengagement from economic life perhaps also leads to disengagement from politics.

The fourth question was: are youth in Eastern Europe more disengaged than those in Western Europe? The answer is yes. On nearly every indicator, young people in Eastern Europe were more disengaged than those in Western Europe. However, we have to look also at the different regions of Eastern Europe which exhibit strong variations. In the South East (former Yugoslavian) region, for example, young people were heavily engaged in civic and political organisations. This has to do with the ethnicisation of civil society in that region and the fact that young people join the organisations related to their own ethnic group *(reference withheld)*

A further question that we raised was that if young people were integrated into conventional political structures through established and mature democracies, they would perhaps be less inclined to resort to unconventional political activities such as joining a strike or occupying a building. The hypothesis in this respect would be that in Eastern Europe, where such democratic forms of representation are not well established, young people would be more likely to resort to direct forms of political action. In fact this proved not to be the case. In the countries where there was the most conventional political engagement (through joining organisations for instance) such as in the North West (Scandinavian) regions of Europe, there was also the most direct action and support for direct action. Mature democracies encourage critical and active young people. In Eastern Europe, by contrast, young people were more likely to be disengaged from all forms of political action.

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