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Patterns and Types of Youth Activism in Two Contrasting Locations in Estonia

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Abstract

While some decades ago it was believed in European countries that the state should take the responsibility of assuring its citizens' well-being (social citizenship), nowadays it is believed that individual autonomy and activism should have a more prominent role in well-being. This perspective raises questions about how large share of young people is socially and politically active and how is involvement in different activities correlated. Is activism predominantly cumulative with relatively few being relatively active or, instead, are relatively many involved in a relatively few activities?

The article explores youth activism patterns in two contrasting locations in Estonia. The analysis uses survey data collected in project MYPLACE, which contain a rich set of activism indicators. For establishing patterns of youth activism, cluster analysis is used. Analysis results show a considerable concentration of social and political activism in a relatively small fraction of young people while large part of young people is completely inactive or active only lightly. As a result, only a relatively small proportion of young people has the potential to make its interests and needs visible and politicised so that these could be taken into account. Such activism patterns are likely to lead to increasing inequalities instead on more just and equal society.

Keywords: job insecurity, predictors, consequences, European Social Survey.

Introduction

This article sets out to explore patterns in activism among young people in Estonia, focusing on two specific communities: one is a predominantly Estonian area and the other a principally Russian-speaking community. The findings emerging from the analysis of our data can provide us with an indication of the extent to which different groups of young people within these two contrasting communities live up to the expectations of a liberalist welfare regime or diverge from these norms in regard to their political participation preferences.

Putting this work into a broader context, we know that during the last decades welfare states changed significantly across Europe. These changes are embedded in the global economic environment and have national level manifestations. In this process, the role of citizens and states is changing, with the rights and responsibilities of each partner in the provision of social protection modified to be more compatible with the altered global environment. As a part of these profound shifts, the meaning and role of youth activism in society and politics has also changed. Central to this process is the gradual replacement of a collective model of supporting youth via social protection with the idea that each individual is responsible for securing their own well-being. Hence, the role of the state is less one of directly financially supporting young people but rather one of ensuring that individual rights are guaranteed, so that all are in an equal position to pursue the project of well-being. The

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state is seen as the actor that smoothes out or at least alleviates the structural problems that can not be effectively addressed by individuals, thus creating the conditions for individual agency to act within those constraints in the pursuit of individual life goals and life plans. Under the contemporary conditions of increased uncertainty and new social risks, individual agency acquires more significance as Beck, Giddens and other researchers have argued (see also Allaste & Cairns, 2016).

Estonia is among the group of European countries characterised by minimal spending on social protection, thus representing a liberalist understanding of welfare provision. Whether one looks at social protection expenditures or at expenditures that could be seen as directed towards the activation of people, its levels of welfare spending are significantly lower compared to many other European countries. While the logic behind promoting the investment state model is that a shift from social spending to social investments will be beneficial in the long run, what we actually see in Estonia is low social protection rates and similarly low rates of social investments. Interpretation of the situation is straightforward – responsibility for well-being is placed to a large extent on the shoulders of individuals. Under such circumstances, being active in the labour market as well as in third sector organisations and vis-à-vis political organisations can be seen as the (only) way to secure some economic welfare, which is a prerequisite of social inclusion in a wider sense. However, doing so can be seen as a challenge for young people because their labour market position is relatively vulnerable and their voices in collective decision-making processes frequently absent.

The population of Estonia is demographically fractured and divided into separate communities by language. Ethnic Estonians tend to have an advantaged position in society compared to Russian speakers in many ways, especially in respect to the labour market: for example, the share of managers and top-rank specialists among Russian speakers is lower than among Estonians (Saar & Helemäe, 2015). Since the beginning of the 2000s, average incomes of Russian speakers have been approximately 80% of the income of Estonians, and the percentage living under the poverty line is 1.3 times higher than the average, with the gap increasing between 2009 and 2013 (Saar & Helemäe, 2015). The chosen research design acknowledges this contrast, explaining the adoption of a dual case study approach in the MYPLACE quantitative survey.

Theoretical framework: social investment state and citizen activation

Economic prosperity and poverty, social inclusion and exclusion, participation and activism are all among the main dimensions of citizenship, a concept that denotes membership in a political community. In Europe, the republican understanding of a membership based on duties and rights had changed to a liberalist rights-based understanding of citizenship by the end of the 19th century. Progression from civil to political to social rights as outlined by T. H. Marshall in the middle of the 20th century was an important catalyst and conceptual innovation on the way towards building a modern social welfare state. Though early social protection schemes already existed in the 19th century, a massive change in the direction of expanding social protection came about after the publication of Marshall's formulation of social citizenship (Marshall, 1950, pp. 8-17). It argued that people from different social backgrounds have the right to live in accordance with the prevailing living standards (Mouffe, 1993; Pierson & Leimgruber, 2010, p. 42; Kuhnle & Sander, 2010, p. 64). In the modern social welfare state, all members of a community had the right to enjoy similar welfare, and it was the task of the state to smooth out the effects of the market forces that created inequalities. To guarantee quality of life, a wide spectrum of centrally managed programmes were put in place to target interruption of income (retirement, unemployment, sickness or disability), mismatch between income and need during the life-cycle (e.g., during childhood), and also areas in which state provision was widely recognised as desirable (e.g., health and education). The range of social groups who were protected also increased rapidly, with welfare state reaching its apogee in the 1970s and 1980s (Stephens, 2010, pp. 520-521).

In terms of grand ideologies, the European social welfare state can be said to be rooted in the liberal conception of citizenship, which built on the rights of the individual, not socialist or communitarian understandings of society (see Turner, 1992).

In the fourth quarter of the 20th century, the degree and nature of welfare provision started to change, because of endogenous and exogenous factors. Social protection systems, which were created to protect people against traditional social risks, increasingly had to face new social risks that they were not programmed to handle. Those risks include the obsolescence of skills and a higher probability of job loss for larger parts of society and different age cohorts, uncertain returns on higher education, loss of earnings due to demographic reproduction, changes in the size and composition of families, with a reduction of the capacity to provide 'in house' care. The capacity of welfare systems to deal with these risks was limited due to financial constraints, which in turn were corollary to liberalisation and globalisation (Hemerijck et al., 2013, pp. 1-11). The new risks to be addressed required new approaches from society, including changes in social protection systems.

Part of the reaction to the challenges was to leave more responsibility for well-being to individuals. It was believed that states and social protection systems were not fit to meet societal challenges and that their role had to decrease while the role of individuals increased. This was a deep ideological change, not merely a technical shift. Since social protection essentially is a redistribution of wealth in society, the welfare state is also a set of understandings of social justice and redistribution for the provision of welfare (services), which also narrates the relationship and roles of states and citizens (Aidukaite, 2004, pp. 20-25).

The new beliefs of what is a good and just society are outlined in the social investment state paradigm. Although in general there is a shift back towards more liberal views emphasising individual autonomy and independence, with well-being achieved through the market economy (Holmwood, 2000; King & Ross, 2010, pp. 52-57), the picture is more nuanced. Shifting the balance from securing well-being through the automatic provision of benefits to a range of measures focusing on activating people to take more responsibility for their well-being is the main key feature of the social investment state model. In this model, the state is seen to provide directly or assure the provision of services that support the development of skills that were deemed necessary in labour market participation as well as for civic activism (Soysal, 2012, pp. 1-6). That means more spending on education (especially early childhood education), family policy (parental leaves, family services like universal day care and pre-school attendance), new measures focused on helping people find jobs (training, counselling and job placements), and preventative health measures.

In the long run, this is expected to increase the economic performance of a nation. It also means that at any given moment, individuals who depend on passive transfers (e.g., pensioners) receive less support. Obviously, for the investment model to function and yield expected returns, active cooperation from people is required. Active participation in provided opportunities is a key citizenship obligation, not taking place according to or solely depending upon one's personal choice (Brettschneider, 2008, pp. 19-29). Provision of education and skill formation opportunities that lead to increasing individuals' capability to be an active member of society is also seen as a virtue in itself, giving it moral value. In the Capability Approach by Amartya Sen, which is among the building blocks of the social investment model, well-being is viewed as depending on one's capability "to undertake actions and activities that they have reason to value, and be the person that they have reason to want to be" (Robeyns 2011).

At the same time, this position carries a threat to the well-being and security of vulnerable groups: ethnic minorities, young people, the elderly, people from remote areas and disabled and other marginalised members of society. These are the people who may lack the skills, rights, motivation and the capabilities to perform sufficiently well in the labour market or in third sector organisations, which are now acquiring a more prominent position in society (Soysal, 2012, pp. 14-17; Cahn, 2012). However, it is recognised that well-being at an aggregate level rests on cooperation, mutual trust and

long-term relationships between social actors, and that market forces still need to be controlled (King & Ross, 2010, pp. 52-57). Therefore, while the state does not have the responsibility to assure well-being and a high quality of life to all citizens, it still has the duty to alleviate structural inequalities.

Social protection in Estonia

Due to the complexity of recent history, classifying the CEE post-socialist/communist states, including Estonia, into existing welfare models is not an easy task. There is no common agreement on whether these countries represent a separate category or whether they can be categorised using already existing classification schemata (Aidukaite, 2011; Kerem & Pöder, 2013). In the period following Estonia regaining its independence in 1991, radical political, economic and social reforms were carried out. Estonia chose the path of political liberalism and a minimalist public administration system, with the social protection system following the same path. In 2012, Estonia was labelled an immature neoliberal capitalist state, wherein social groups are weakly organised and poorly represented (Norkus, 2012, pp. 22-30).

Compared to other European countries, social protection expenditure has remained at a low level. Purju (2008) points out that in the three Baltic nations, expenditure from national budgets aimed at supporting households or individuals in case of partial or complete loss of income was the lowest in the European Union: in 2005, Estonia spent 12.3% of its GDP on social welfare compared to a European average of 26.2%, with the highest expenditure in Sweden at 32% of their GDP (see also Aidukaite 2012; Väli 2009). Between 2002 and 2012, Estonia spent from 12.1% (2006, 2007) to 19% (2009) of its GDP on social protection, while spending in the Eurozone countries ranged from 26.8% (2007) to 30.4% (2012) of GDP (Eurostat, 2015a). Expenditure on labour market policy in general was even lower: between 2003 and 2008, Estonia spent 0.2% of its GDP on average, while the EU28 average was 1.4%. There was a steep rise in 2009, which reflects the onset of the economic recession, when the GDP shrank but labour market expenses increased. From 2011 to 2013, the country spent 0.7% of GDP on labour market policies, while EU28 spent 1.5%. Concerning policy measures that are directed to activation (active labour market policies), Estonia spent 0.04% of its GDP from 2003 to 2008, while the EU28 spent 0.4%. After the economic crisis, expenditure increased to 0.15%, which is still approximately three times less than the EU28 average of 0.44% (Eurostat, 2015b). Expenditure on education from 2002 to 2011 was, however, roughly equal to the EU average at around 5% of the GDP (Eurostat, 2015c). However, the main consequence is that being among the countries with the lowest social protection expenditure places a significant share of social protection and welfare on the shoulders of individuals.

Young people are an integral part of society and also live under the conditions of the liberal social welfare regime. Indeed, since the year 2000, unemployment rates among 15-24 year olds have been notably higher than equivalent rates for the 24-69 age group and increased at a notably quicker pace during the economic crisis of 2008 (Statistics Estonia, 2015). Examination of central cross-sectorial youth policy documents reveals respective values and viewpoints expressed also at the highest level. Indeed, the Estonian Youth Field Development Plan 2014-2020 foresees activating and empowering young people and providing support to personality development as the main goal of cross-sectional youth policy (Ministry of Education and Research 2014). This has been the position of youth policy since its inception in the middle of 2000s, when the country's first youth strategy saw the provision of support to skill formation and assuring participation opportunities as the main goal of national youth policy (Ministry of Education and Research, 2006).

Positions outlined in the Estonian strategical documents on youth issues coincide with the values, perspectives and points of view of a larger institution: the European Commission. In the last two decades, the European Commission has played an increasingly important role in codifying and encouraging socio-political activism and participation among young people (see European Commission 2001: 12; European Commission 2009: 8). There is a range of channels through which the EC and the

state interact and coordinate policies affecting young people (see EC, 2015, pp. 22-30; Dibou, 2013; Haar & Copeland, 2011). In the EC youth field policy initiatives, the social protection aspect, which has received relatively less attention, a position that has led researchers to ask whether the emphasis on youth active citizenship advanced by the EC veers too far into civic activism and neglects youth social inclusion issues (Hoikkala, 2009, pp. 13). Indeed, this may already have happened, and the fragile situation of the youth has already been noted (Klijzing, 2005; Mills et al., 2005, pp. 423-427; Walther, 2006; ILO, 2012).

Researchers have also argued that the concept of social citizenship is still relevant for youth citizenship(s) (Mackinnon 2001, p. 253; Smith et al., 2005, p. 426; Harris, 2010, p. 304). However, the poor labour market integration of the youth is also acknowledged as a problem by the EC. For instance, in 2013 it launched the Youth Guarantee scheme in response to this youth situation, which identifies young people as a disadvantaged group in the labour market, who need to be supported to ensure later competitiveness (European Commission, 2013). To account for structural inequalities, youth policy documents also foresee a range of measures to alleviate the inequality of resources that are necessary for participation. These include acknowledging differences between the employed and unemployed, rural and urban, minority/immigrant and native background (Dolejšiova, 2009, p. 8-14).

The research question

Against the backdrop of these developments, participation in social, political and social policy processes is becoming more salient for all members of society, but in particular for young people who, according to research, are among the vulnerable groups and already are bearing the consequences of the neo-liberal turn. Also, decisions taken now will influence their life for decades to come.

These general reflections lead us to consider how young people fit into this situation, where the responsibility for one's well-being and social protection is left to a large extent with the individuals themselves. A range of citizenship models describes the ways and patterns of a decent life. Though in each model citizen activism and participation is seen in a specific way, the models tend to share a common understanding that minimal levels of activism are not compatible with contemporary models of citizenship (Newman & Clarke, 2009, pp. 154-169). This assumption seems to be especially prevalent in the Estonian case, where we see that social protection and activation expenditures are many times lower than in many other European countries. Therefore, we wish to confirm or refute this situation through our evidence, also asking whether young people are active enough? Obviously there will be a considerable variation in the rates of participation in different activities, so the question needs to be reworded to account for such variation: how many young people are active and how actively are they participating? This means that we need to consider how widespread participation is and also what is its intensity within individual biographies. This position defines the question to be explored empirically: does the observed participation come in separate forms of activism from all young people or predominantly from a small percentage of young people involved in multiple actions? This implies looking for evidence of cumulative and specialised activism (Rose & Waldahl, 1982).

Empirical analysis

Empirical analysis was conducted using data gathered from the MYPLACE survey conducted in Tartu (n=585) and Narva, Sillamäe and Kohtla-Järve (n=596) (see more detailed Allaste & Cairns, 2016). The selection of indicators includes a range of participation forms – from voting in national elections to participating in a flash mob, participation in a political party to violent confrontation with a political opponent. With the exception of voting in national and local elections, respondents indicated their

participation (yes/no) in a concrete form or organisation within the last year. In the case of elections, respondents indicated participation in the most recent elections. Altogether 36 indicators were included. For a full specification of indicators, see Appendix 1.

Cluster analysis was used in the data analysis. This exploratory data analysis method is designed to form groups of objects based on the degree of their similarity so that similar cases appear in one cluster and dissimilar cases, correspondingly, remain in different clusters. In our case, dividing respondents into groups is based on the degree of their similarity in terms of activism patterns. Squared Euclidean distance was used to estimate the similarity (or dissimilarity) of survey respondents. Ward's method was used to merge survey respondents into clusters (Everitt et al., 2011, pp. 77-78). To determine the number of clusters, a knee (or elbow) method was used to come up with a rough estimate of the number of clusters (Aldenderfer & Blashfield, 1984, pp. 53-58; Salvador & Chan, 2004). The final selection of the number of clusters was done using the principle of parsimony, which led to preferring a solution with a smaller number of clusters and the principle of interpretability according to which the solution has to be intelligible in the conceptual framework.

Results: Tartu

In the Tartu region, five clusters were identified. Below are the given cluster descriptions, which provide indications of the size of each group and defining characteristics in terms of patterns of political participation. Cross-tables with percentages describing the cluster profiles are provided in Appendix 2. The names assigned to the groups express the constituent features of the groups. Since in both locations some of the groups shared similar features, they also bear the same name and are repeated for different locations.

Conventional and civic activists

This group constituted 21% of the sample in Tartu and was characterised by an above average level of activism in general. As the name of this cluster implies, those within the group tend to participate in politics through relatively traditional means; for example, voting, contacting a politician, attending political meetings, signing a petition, distributing leaflets with political content, uploading political materials and participating in human rights organisations, with participation in protests also widely reported. This list constitutes a mix of activities that are associated with electoral processes on the one hand and civil society on the other. In terms of social and demographic background, the group was constituted of older young people (93% were 20 years or older, in the sample 67% were 20 years old or older), relatively few reported living together with parents (48% vs 61%), educational attainment in the group was high, as 23% held a university degree (sample average 12%), and only 11% had less than secondary education (41%).

Household composition and educational attainment can be explained by age – a relatively large proportion of the group was already old enough to have finished education and live separately from their parents. This may be explained by a relatively high percentage of young people in Tartu, who had moved to the area to obtain either secondary or tertiary education, leaving behind their family of origin in another location. Despite an already high educational attainment and older age, 63% were still in education (60% in the sample) and regarding social class, based on parents' education and employment status, this group was from a higher occupational background: 34% belong to the highest class (average 22%) and 31% to the lowest (46%). In short, this is a group of socially and politically active, well-educated young adults, many of whom already live independently of their parents. Their parents' high education may also play a role in them being education oriented and encouraging receptivity to social and political themes.

The least involved

This group constituted 40% of the sample in Tartu and was characterised by a notably lower level of activism than the sample average; in fact, below average participation rate in any organisation or activity is the defining feature of the group. However, participation in a political party and/or in a church organisation was reported by the same percentage as in the sample mean. In terms of social background, it was mainly comprised of 15-19 year olds (51%, sample average 33%), 69% lived with their parents (61%, sample average). Relatively few held a university degree (8%, sample average 12%), and many had obtained only primary education (57%, sample average 41%). In spite of a relatively low educational attainment level and young ages, only 64% reported still being in education (sample average 60%).

This is a group that on the surface appears socially and politically inactive. From a statistical point of view, these young people can hardly be said to represent active citizens: on the contrary, they conform more closely to the familiar stereotypes of apathy and disinterest. This view is strengthened by the selection of indicators in the questionnaire, which cover a wide range of activity types, leaving little room for doubts as to whether we managed to capture a clear majority of relevant forms of activism. However, the relatively young age of the groups allows a hypothesis that members of the group will develop high activism as they mature. As such, this group should be considered a target group for activation measures.

Organisational activists

The group constituted 16% of the sample in Tartu and was characterised by a level of activism close to the sample average. However, the activism profile of the group was very clearly tilted toward voluntary associations and civic organisations; affiliation with such organisations was three to four times higher than the sample average. Interestingly, political party and/or church involvement was reported by similar percentage as in the sample on the average, meaning that these two organisational types were unpopular among members of this group. This further indicates that their orientation toward civic activism is on a relatively small scale or cause-based voluntary associations. Participation in other forms of activism was reported by a very low percentage of respondents in this group. The group was slightly younger than the entire sample. Relatively few reported living together with a partner (16%, sample average 23%) or having university degrees (8%, sample average 12%) or general secondary education (29%, average 37%), with many not yet completing secondary schooling (51%, average 41%). In this group, the percentage of unemployed was the highest (8%, sample average 4%). Interestingly, in terms of their parents' social class, this was the least advantageous group as 54% of them were classified as coming from the lowest social class background (sample average 46%) and 11% as coming from the highest class background (average 22%).

The activity and social background profiles of this group suggest that this group is constituted of young people who are to some extent pursuing 'alternative futures', which may involve activities outside mainstream institutions or education and employment in 'normal' organisations. Instead, they prefer to get involved in solving concrete social and political issues, which may start from local and national levels and reach European and global levels, by being active in voluntary associations. For this reason, and unlike the previous two clusters, the young people found in this group might more credibly be regarded as engaging in active citizenship due to their orientation towards this form of civic engagement. However, the fact that the group is small suggests that such a position is the exception not the rule.

Non-organisational and multiactivists

The group constituted 8% of the sample in Tartu and was characterised by a level of activism that was more than two times higher than the sample average. This group was the smallest, and also the most active. Participation rate in non-organisational and non-electoral behaviours was up to six times higher than the sample average, but participation rate in organisations was close to sample average and turnout rate in elections below sample average. This group was characterised by a relatively high percentage of young men: 61% (sample average 49%). It was also the youngest group with 47% in the 15-19 years old age group (sample average 33%) and 14% in the 24-26 years old age group (average 31%). Many lived together with parents (73%, average 61%), only 4% had a university degree (average 12%), and 58% had obtained less than secondary education (average 41%). Characteristically to their young ages, among them the employment rate was low, 14% (sample average 31%), and their rate of being in education was high (79%, average 60%).

Involvement in a range of activities indicates that they still are searching for their 'own way' of participating and are not sure how to channel their energies. This interpretation is backed up by their demographic and social status background (the young age of the group, living together with parents, high rate of educational involvement and low employment activity), showing that they have had relatively little time to experiment with various forms of being active. Nevertheless, it seems that they have made a choice to be active and involved in society, and that these actions are will crystallise into participation in the future. Therefore, as with the previous group, we could conceivably argue that this group displays potential for becoming a socially and politically active group. However, due to it is characteristically small scale and incipient rather than fully realised activism, the pattern the existence of the group can not be seen as a promise of active citizenship for youth in general.

Voters only

The group constituted 14% of the sample in Tartu and was characterised by a relatively high percentage reporting voting in national and local elections (although not in student elections) but abstaining from other participation forms. This group was mainly women (57%, sample average 51%) and was the oldest with only 2% being in the 15-19 year old age group (average 33%) and 50% in the 24-26 year old age group (average 31%). 35% lived with a partner (average 23%), and 20% had children (average 9%). It is a fairly highly educated group, with the percentage of people with a university degree, post-secondary and general secondary education being above sample average. 54% of them work (sample average 31%), 2% are unemployed (average 4%) and 34% are in education (average 60%). In terms of their parents' social class, this group has a relatively low social class background as 55% were classified as low social class (average 46%) and 17% as high class (average 22%). Relatively large numbers in this group reported quite poor living conditions: 28% said they found it very difficult or difficult to cope with present income (sample average 20%).

This group represents a group of young people, many of whom have already entered three main transitions to adulthood (from school to work, from child to parent, from parental home to own household). Their time is filled with responsibilities and their energy is used up on daily tasks, so they feel exhausted and find no time for serious political activities other than voting, which is one of the least demanding forms of participation. In addition, their parents' background also seems to not be favouring high levels of activism.

Results: Narva

In Narva, three distinct groups were distinguished by the cluster analysis, which are as follows.

Multiactivists

The group constituted 22% of the sample in Narva, characterised by high involvement in all organisations and forms of activism. Turnout in elections was relatively low but slightly exceeded the sample average. This group is fairly young – only 32% of this group was in the 24-26 year old age group (sample average 46%), many live with their parents (83%, sample average 72%). Relatively many have good education, with a university degree reported by 16% (sample average 12%), and general secondary education by 30% (average 20%). Most of them are still in education (57%, average 32%) and few are employed (31%, average 44%), but also few are unemployed (6%, average 15%). Most say that they live comfortably on present income (23%; 14%). Many are Estonian citizens (76%, sample average 59%). Regarding social class index based on parents' education and labour market position, it is markedly higher than that of the sample average: 22% are classified as being from the highest class background (sample average 11%) and 58% from the lowest class background, while the sample average was 67%.

Among the members of this group, a small fraction can be distinguished, with 2% of the sample having a similar activism profile. This small sub-group is notably more active than the rest of the multiactivists. In terms of social background, the group is similar to the main group except in age and activity status. Relatively many of the small group are employed (64%; average 44%), none of them are in the 15-19 age group (sample average 20%). The main group was relatively young and still in education rather than in employment. The group is highly educated, with 45% having a university degree (sample average 12%), 46% having general secondary education (average 20%), and none having less than general secondary education (average 36%). Also, disproportionately many have the highest social class background (36%, sample average 11%) so it is not surprising that a very high percentage report living comfortably with their present income (36%, sample average 14%). In addition, 91% of them are citizens of Estonia, which is very high compared to average in Narva (59%). In sum, the description of this group resembles a classical group of politically and socially active people: they are highly educated, come from a high social class background, and are legally members of a political community.

The least involved

This large group constituted 48% of the sample in Narva and was characterised by very low involvement in all organisations and forms of activism. This group was somewhat younger than the sample on average. It is the least educated group, with only 6% having a university degree (12% in the sample) and 48% less than secondary education (sample average 36%). The percentage of unemployed is the highest (20%, sample average 15%), and the percentage of citizens is the lowest (46%, sample average 59%). This group is also characterised by the lowest social class background, as 74% can be classified to the lowest class (sample average 67%) and 7% to the highest class (average 11%). This group is another near textbook example, this time not of the politically active but rather of an apathetic population. They do not involve themselves in any activities, their educational background is low, their parents' education is low, and their parents' status in the labour market is also low. As such, they represent a group that needs to be addressed by activation measures to help them achieve some minimal level of activism.

Voters only

The group constituted 30% of the sample in Narva, characterised by low involvement in all organisations and forms of activism except voting in national and local elections. Election turnout rates in this group were the highest among the three groups: national elections 59% (average 28%), local elections

72% (average 32%). This is the 'oldest' group, characterised by a low percentage of 16-19 year olds (3%, sample average 20%) and a high percentage of 24-26 year olds (63%, average 46%). Many live with a partner (35%, average 23%) and have a child or children in their household (23%, average 15%), and relatively few live with parents (65%, average 72%). Characteristically, many have obtained vocational education after secondary education (45%, average 32%) and few have primary education or less (9%, average 26%). Many are employed (60%; average 44%) and few are in education (16%, average 32%). Also, relatively large numbers are stay-at-home (parents, caregivers) (10%; 6%).

As with their Tartu peers, this group represents a group of young people among whom many have started their own family and working life. These daily demands leave less time to be involved in voluntary associations and activities. However, due to their relatively high level of education, they still have an interest in social and political matters and go out to cast a ballot in local or national elections, which is not a very demanding activity. As such, they can not be seen sufficiently active now, though this group certainly has potential to become more active expert citizens at some point in the future.

Summary and discussion of results

In the theoretical section, developments and circumstances of the current social environment were outlined. In the situation of low social protection, expenditure levels in Estonia and the wider ideological background behind it, provision of individual welfare and protection against social risks is seen to be the responsibility of individuals. It is seen that individual activism transforms into well-being and protection against the realisation of numerous risks of contemporary society through individual and collective level mechanisms. The role of the state is to provide the means to develop one's skills and other personal features that would be useful in the pursuit of well-being.

The exploratory analysis of young people's activism patterns in two localities in Estonia was carried out using clustering technique and survey data from the end of 2011 and beginning of 2012. The cluster analysis yielded several interesting findings relevant to our goal of seeking to understand youth socio-political activism in Estonia.

First, we can see that if isolated, relatively few of the groups provide strong evidence of widespread activism of young people, as imagined by agencies such as the European Commission and the national government, and which would be compatible with the everyday realities in Estonia. On the contrary, both locations showed fairly significant cumulative distribution of activism, where large groups of inactive or minimally active young people were more prevalent. While it may be the case that younger young people have not yet reached this stage, on the whole, there was scant evidence across the two research locations that young adults as a social category were also engaged to a degree that would allow them to be regarded as active citizens.

Second, in both locations there were also small groups that consisted of young people who were very active. This may be looked upon as encouraging at the individual level. However, at a societal level, the limited size of the groups combined with the large size of the groups of passive young people appears to be another form of inequality that is likely to contribute to the growing inequality in well-being.

Third, the aggregate level of activism was lower in Narva. This means that young people in this area have notably less potential to be heard and seen by other actors in the society, including the central and local government. At the same time, the situation of youth in Narva in terms of education and labour market participation was less well off than in Tartu.

Fourth, in respect to divergence between the two research sites, we can see that there is less diversity in terms of the number and size of clusters in Narva. In Tartu two additional categories emerged which display a significant element of specialisation: organisational activists and non-organisational activists. The presence of the organisational activists group cannot be explained by a

higher concentration of NGOs in the Tartu region. The populations of Ida-Viru County and Tartumaa County are virtually equal (Ida-Viru county: 149,483 inhabitants, Tartumaa County 152,188 inhabitants) and so are the proportions of all NGOs in Estonia (Ida-Viru county 9% of all NGOs, Tartumaa County 12%. Also, 72% of NGOs use Russian as one of their working languages (Rikmann et al., 2014, pp. 13-15).

In considering the consequences of this analysis, we can argue that a large proportion, if not a majority, of those surveyed were not involved or were only minimally involved in social and political discussion. As a consequence, they may have little chance to contribute to debates regarding their own well-being. Also, it is often the case that the least active members of society are some of the most potentially socially vulnerable or least well-equipped in terms of human, social and economic capital to compete in a liberal economy. On the other hand, a high accumulation of participation is more likely to be found among young people who are educated and who come from well-to-do families. A higher rate of activism on the part of young people with better-off background means that they have more opportunities and higher capability to push their interests forward and get positive reactions to them.

Whether the captured inequality of activism has resulted from the relatively recent change to a free market economy still needs further research. It may be the case that activism follows a more general socio-economic dynamic, with the most able the most likely to politicise their interest. Their activism, even when directed towards outwardly laudable societal or charitable goals, may therefore be ultimately divisive, a factor leading to a less equal society rather than an example of moving towards greater social inclusion.

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Appendix 1: Coding of variables

There are different ways of being politically active. During the last 12 months, how often have you done the following?

1. Volunteered in an election campaign
2. Contacted a politician or local councillor (e-mail / phone / SMS / letter / fax etc)
3. Attended a public meeting dealing with political or social issues
4. Signed a petition
5. Collected signatures
6. Given a political speech
7. Distributed leaflets with a political content
8. Boycotted or bought products for political, ethical or environmental reasons
9. Written political messages or graffiti on walls
10. Worn a badge with a political message
11. Participated in a demonstration
12. Participated in a strike
13. Donated money to support the work of a political group or organisation
14. Written an article, e.g., in a student newspaper, organisation journal, the internet or a blog
15. Written or forwarded a letter/an email with political content
16. Participated in a violent political event
17. Occupied buildings or blocked streets / railways
18. Participated in a 'flash mob' (a spontaneous demonstration organised by social media)
19. Uploaded political material to the internet (including social networking sites such as Youtube / Twitter / Facebook)
20. Voted in student union elections

In the case of each activity, activism was recorded on a 4-point scale, ranging from 'never' to 'three times of more'. The scale was recoded to a dichotomous scale so that 'never' was given the value 0 and all other categories were given the value 1.

I will read you a list of organisations. Please tell me for each organisation if you are a member. Also, please tell me if – during the last 12 months – you have participated in an activity arranged by this organisation or if you have done voluntary work for this organisation.

1. A political party / youth section of a political party
2. Religious or church organisation / religious youth organisation
3. Trade Union / youth organisation of a Trade Union
4. National or local Youth Parliament
5. Environmental organisation
6. Animal welfare group
7. Peace organisation
8. Human rights organisation
9. National cultural organisation (for instance diaspora or ethnic minority organisation)
10. Women's organisation
11. Anti-globalisation organisation or movement
12. A student union
13. Local category (for instance, a neighbourhood association)
14. Militarised youth organisation (Noored Kotkad, Kodutütred)

In the case of each organisation, activism was recorded by three dichotomous variables:

- member (yes/no),
- participated in activity (yes/no),
- done voluntary work (yes/no).

Based on the three variables, a single compound variable was developed: if any of the three variables was checked, the new variable obtained value 1, otherwise it was 0.

Some people do not vote for one reason or another. Did you vote in the last [country] national election?

Did you vote in the last local elections?

- Yes / No

Social background variables

Age

- 16-19 year olds
- 20-23 year olds
- 24-29 year olds

Gender

- Male
- Female

Activity status

- 1 In full-time paid work
- 2 In part-time paid work
- 3 In education
- 4 Unemployed and actively looking for a job
- 5 Unemployed, wanting a job but not actively looking for a job
- 6 Permanently sick or disabled
- 7 In community or military service
- 8 Stay-at-home, looking after children or other persons
- 9 Other

Education

- 1 PhD
- 2 Master's degree
- 3 Bachelor's degree
- 4 Vocational education after secondary education
- 5 General secondary education
- 6 Vocational education after primary education
- 7 Primary education
- 8 Less than primary education
- 9 Other

Social class based on parents' education and employment

A three-step procedure was used to develop this variable. In step one, four dichotomous variables were developed from the following four original variables:

- mother's education: mother had obtained tertiary education (yes/no),
- father's education: father had obtained tertiary education (yes/no),

- mother's employment position: Mother was employed in higher administrative or professional occupations when respondent was 14 years old (yes/no);
- father's employment position: Father was employed in higher administrative or professional occupations when respondent was 14 years old (yes/no).

In step two, the mean value of the four variables was computed; the variables ranges from 0 (neither father nor mother had obtained tertiary education and neither father nor mother was employed in higher or administrative occupations) to 1 (father and mother had obtained tertiary education and father and mother were employed in higher or administrative occupations).

In step three, the variable of mean values was recoded using the following cutting points:

0=0=parents' low social class

1=.1 thru .34= parents' low-medium social class

2=.5= parents' high-medium social class

3=.66 thru 1= parents' high social class

Perceived coping on income

- 1 Living comfortably on present income
- 2 Coping on present income
- 3 Finding it difficult on present income
- 4 Finding it very difficult on present income

Household composition

Living with:

- Partner, husband or wife? Yes/no
- Children (yours or your partners)? Yes/no
- Parents? Yes/no

Citizenship

Are you a citizen of this country?

- Yes/no

Appendix 2: Profiles of activism types

Narva

| | multi- activists | least active | voters only | sample average |
|---|---------------------|-----------------|----------------|-------------------|
| Voted in national elections | 40% | 2% | 59% | 28% |
| Voted in local elections | 38% | 4% | 72% | 32% |
| Participated in political party | 22% | 0% | 2% | 5% |
| Participated in church, religious organisation | 11% | 6% | 0% | 5% |
| Participated in trade union | 9% | 6% | 2% | 5% |
| Participated in youth parliament | 14% | 1% | 2% | 4% |
| Participated in environmental organisation | 16% | 1% | 1% | 4% |
| Participated in animal welfare organisation | 8% | 0% | 1% | 2% |
| Participated in peace organisation | 3% | 0% | 0% | 1% |
| Participated in human rights organisation | 3% | 0% | 0% | 1% |
| Participated in national cultural organisation | 2% | 1% | 1% | 1% |
| Participated in women's organisation | 2% | 0% | 1% | 1% |
| Participated in antiglobalisation organisation | 1% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Participated in student union | 76% | 1% | 0% | 17% |
| Participated in local community organisation | 6% | 0% | 0% | 2% |
| Participated in militarised youth organisation | 6% | 0% | 0% | 2% |
| Volunteered in an election campaign | 23% | 1% | 13% | 9% |
| Contacted a politician (e-mail / phone / SMS / letter / fax etc) | 25% | 5% | 2% | 8% |
| Attended a public meeting dealing with political or social issues | 26% | 3% | 3% | 8% |
| Signed a petition | 22% | 1% | 10% | 8% |
| Collected signatures | 19% | 1% | 1% | 5% |
| Given a political speech | 9% | 1% | 0% | 2% |
| Distributed leaflets with a political content | 16% | 0% | 1% | 4% |
| Boycotted | 12% | 1% | 3% | 4% |
| Written political messages or graffiti on walls | 4% | 1% | 1% | 2% |
| Worn a badge with a political message | 9% | 2% | 2% | 4% |
| Participated in a demonstration | 12% | 0% | 11% | 6% |
| Participated in a strike | 13% | 1% | 3% | 4% |
| Donated money to support the work of a political group or Organisation | 5% | 1% | 1% | 2% |
| Written an article, e.g., in a student newspaper, organisation journal, the internet or a blog | 27% | 0% | 2% | 6% |
| Written or forwarded a letter/an email with a political content | 16% | 0% | 0% | 4% |
| Participated in a violent political event | 2% | 0% | 1% | 1% |
| Occupied buildings or blocked streets/railways | 2% | 0% | 1% | 1% |
| Participated in a flash mob | 9% | 2% | 1% | 3% |
| Uploaded political material to the internet | 6% | 1% | 0% | 2% |
| Voted in student union elections | 56% | 1% | 3% | 13% |
| Overall activism level (average of percentage reporting involvement in the listed activities and organisations) | 16% | 1% | 5% | 6% |

| | | | | |
|--|-----|-----|-----|------|
| Male | 64% | 72% | 68% | 69% |
| Female | 36% | 28% | 32% | 31% |
| 16-19 year olds | 28% | 28% | 3% | 20% |
| 20-23 year olds | 41% | 31% | 34% | 34% |
| 24-26 year olds | 32% | 41% | 63% | 46% |
| Lives together with partner, husband or wife | 17% | 18% | 35% | 23% |
| Lives together with children, own or partner's | 9% | 12% | 23% | 15% |
| Lives together with parents | 83% | 72% | 65% | 72% |
| University degree | 16% | 6% | 17% | 12% |
| Vocational edu after secondary | 19% | 30% | 45% | 32% |
| General secondary | 29% | 16% | 18% | 20% |
| Less than secondary | 35% | 48% | 20% | 36% |
| Employed | 31% | 40% | 60% | 44% |
| in education | 57% | 31% | 16% | 32% |
| Unemployed | 5% | 20% | 14% | 15% |
| Stay-at-home, looking after children or other persons | 5% | 4% | 10% | 6% |
| Other | 2% | 6% | 0% | 3% |
| Low social class | 57% | 74% | 63% | 67% |
| Low-medium social class | 13% | 11% | 14% | 12% |
| High-medium social class | 8% | 7% | 13% | 9% |
| High social class | 22% | 7% | 10% | 11% |
| Living comfortably on present income | 23% | 12% | 9% | 14% |
| Coping on present income | 51% | 44% | 60% | 51% |
| Finding it difficult to cope difficult on present income | 16% | 25% | 19% | 21% |
| Finding it very difficult to cope on present income | 9% | 19% | 12% | 15% |
| Citizen of Estonia | 76% | 46% | 67% | 59% |
| <hr/> | | | | |
| Group size, n | 129 | 283 | 184 | 596 |
| Group size, % | 22% | 48% | 30% | 100% |

Tartu

| | conven- tional and civic activists | in actives | organ- isational activists | non-or- ganisa- tional activists | voters only | sample average |
|---|---|---------------|----------------------------------|---|----------------|-------------------|
| Voted in national elections | 89% | 18% | 24% | 33% | 100% | 47% |
| Voted in local elections | 67% | 11% | 11% | 10% | 64% | 30% |
| Participated in political party | 11% | 10% | 8% | 8% | 2% | 9% |
| Participated in church, religious organisation | 16% | 8% | 9% | 2% | 0% | 8% |
| Participated in trade union | 11% | 1% | 17% | 8% | 1% | 6% |
| Participated in youth parliament | 5% | 2% | 22% | 4% | 6% | 6% |
| Participated in environmental organisation | 16% | 0% | 27% | 10% | 5% | 10% |
| Participated in animal welfare organisation | 17% | 3% | 26% | 8% | 13% | 11% |
| Participated in peace organisation | 2% | 0% | 6% | 2% | 0% | 2% |
| Participated in human rights organisation | 5% | 1% | 4% | 0% | 0% | 2% |
| Participated in national cultural organisation | 5% | 1% | 6% | 4% | 2% | 3% |
| Participated in women's organisation | 2% | 0% | 7% | 0% | 0% | 2% |
| Participated in antiglobalisation organisation | 0% | 0% | 2% | 4% | 4% | 1% |
| Participated in student union | 34% | 10% | 67% | 29% | 20% | 27% |
| Participated in local community organisation | 9% | 2% | 31% | 12% | 5% | 9% |
| Participated in militarised youth organisation | 10% | 6% | 22% | 22% | 7% | 11% |
| Volunteered in an election campaign | 3% | 1% | 0% | 20% | 1% | 3% |
| Contacted a politician (e-mail / phone / SMS / letter / fax etc) | 26% | 2% | 2% | 59% | 0% | 11% |
| Attended a public meeting dealing with political or social issues | 39% | 8% | 5% | 73% | 0% | 18% |
| Signed a petition | 39% | 17% | 6% | 43% | 2% | 20% |
| Collected signatures | 3% | 4% | 2% | 41% | 1% | 6% |
| Given a political speech | 4% | 2% | 2% | 31% | 0% | 5% |
| Distributed leaflets with a political content | 9% | 0% | 2% | 24% | 0% | 4% |
| Boycotted | 30% | 11% | 6% | 59% | 1% | 17% |
| Written political messages or graffiti on walls | 2% | 0% | 1% | 18% | 0% | 2% |
| Worn a badge with a political message | 23% | 4% | 4% | 53% | 4% | 12% |
| Participated in a demonstration | 28% | 13% | 3% | 61% | 4% | 17% |
| Participated in a strike | 8% | 4% | 5% | 14% | 2% | 6% |
| Donated money to support the work of a political group or organisation | 5% | 3% | 6% | 14% | 4% | 5% |
| Written an article, e.g., in a student newspaper, organisation journal, the internet or a blog | 21% | 4% | 5% | 55% | 0% | 12% |
| Written or forwarded a letter/an email with a political content | 20% | 5% | 3% | 39% | 6% | 11% |
| Participated in a violent political event | 1% | 0% | 0% | 2% | 0% | 0% |
| Occupied buildings or blocked streets/railways | 1% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 0% |
| Participated in a flashmob | 14% | 6% | 1% | 27% | 0% | 8% |
| Uploaded political material to the internet | 20% | 2% | 4% | 41% | 0% | 9% |
| Voted in student union elections | 66% | 25% | 5% | 53% | 2% | 29% |
| Overall activism level (average of percentage reporting involvement in the listed activities and organisations) | 18% | 5% | 10% | 25% | 7% | 11% |

| | | | | | | |
|--|-----|-----|-----|------|------|------|
| Male | 46% | 49% | 53% | 61% | 43% | 49% |
| Female | 54% | 51% | 47% | 39% | 57% | 51% |
| 16-19 year olds | 7% | 51% | 41% | 47% | 2% | 33% |
| 20-23 year olds | 52% | 24% | 33% | 39% | 48% | 36% |
| 24-26 year olds | 41% | 25% | 26% | 14% | 50% | 31% |
| Lives together with partner, husband or wife | 23% | 23% | 16% | 20% | 35% | 23% |
| Lives together with children, own or partner's | 7% | 7% | 11% | 4% | 20% | 9% |
| Lives together with parents | 48% | 69% | 58% | 73% | 55% | 61% |
| university degree | 23% | 8% | 8% | 4% | 18% | 12% |
| vocational edu after secondaty | 5% | 9% | 12% | 4% | 24% | 10% |
| general secondary | 61% | 26% | 29% | 33% | 41% | 37% |
| less than secondary | 11% | 57% | 51% | 58% | 17% | 41% |
| Employed | 32% | 27% | 27% | 15% | 54% | 31% |
| in education | 63% | 64% | 62% | 79% | 34% | 60% |
| Unemployed | 2% | 4% | 8% | 4% | 2% | 4% |
| Stay-at-home, looking after children or other persons | 2% | 4% | 3% | 2% | 10% | 4% |
| Other | 1% | 1% | 0% | 0% | 0% | 1% |
| Low social class | 31% | 48% | 54% | 40% | 55% | 45% |
| Low-medium social class | 22% | 16% | 15% | 21% | 12% | 17% |
| High-medium social class | 13% | 15% | 21% | 15% | 16% | 16% |
| High social class | 34% | 21% | 11% | 23% | 17% | 22% |
| Living comfortably on present income | 32% | 32% | 35% | 41% | 29% | 33% |
| Coping on present income | 48% | 50% | 45% | 39% | 43% | 47% |
| Finding it difficult to cope difficult on present income | 16% | 14% | 17% | 18% | 26% | 17% |
| Finding it very difficult to cope on present income | 4% | 3% | 2% | 2% | 2% | 3% |
| Citizen of Estonia | 99% | 99% | 99% | 100% | 100% | 99% |
| Group size, n | 122 | 236 | 95 | 49 | 83 | 585 |
| Group size, % | 21% | 40% | 16% | 8% | 14% | 100% |