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Youth participation in context: the impact of youth transition regimes on political action strategies in Europe

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Abstract
This article examines the impact of youth transition regimes (YTR) on the political participation strategies of young people from 26 locations in 12 European countries. The central hypothesis is that the way that youth transitions take place in different European contexts determines the position of youth as a group in the system of social relations that Bourdieu calls the 'social space'. Depending upon this position, young people may be more inclined to participation through institutional channels or political protest, or, in contrast, remain inactive. Thus, the specific context of youth in each society (measured through the exposure to risk and vulnerability, the length of the pathway to adulthood and the role of the welfare state) plays a crucial role in defining young people's political action strategies. Multilevel logistic analysis using the MYPLACE survey, the specific operationalisation of the YTR and other aggregate control variables reveal that YTR centrality is a very important contextual predictor for explaining different forms of political participation among young people in Europe.

Key words
Youth, political participation, youth transition regimes, social space, contextual effects.

Introduction

Recent research on youth political participation has been shaped by empirical evidence of a decline in institutional political involvement and the emergence of other forms of participation such as protest and political consumerism. This has led scholars to focus on identifying generational change (see: Dalton, 2007; Zukin *et al.*, 2006; Norris, 2004; Franklin, Lyons and Marsh, 2004; Putnam, 2000) and on how young people understand politics in post-industrial societies (see: Manning, 2013, 2010; Rossi, 2009; O'Toole, 2003; Henn *et al.*, 2002). However, rarely has this literature taken into consideration the cross-national variation in participation patterns among young people; this has resulted in a variety of differing conclusions about their preferred forms of political participation (García-Albacete, 2014). When we examine young people's levels of institutional participation and protest, as we do below, we see that there is a significant divide in Europe; while, in Southern Europe, young people tend to protest as the dominant mechanism of participation, preferring it over more institutionalised forms, in certain parts of Northern Europe we find the opposite pattern. Moreover, in the new democracies of Eastern Europe, we generally find low levels of participation regardless of the type of participation that we are analysing.

Thus, while the data show contextual differences in participation strategies to be highly relevant, the influence of contextual elements (particularly those specific to young people) on youth participation has gone unnoticed.

In this article, we focus on the effect of youth transition systems or regimes on the variation in political participation patterns of young people in Europe. Youth trajectories are shaped by a system of socio-economic structures, institutional arrangements and cultural patterns referred to as 'regimes of youth transitions' (Walther, 2006) or 'transition systems' (Smyth *et al*., 2001; Niemeyer, 2007). The sociology of youth has devoted much effort to the comparative analysis of transition models including when young people leave the parental home, form new families or pass from education to the job market (Bynner and Roberts, 1991; Holdsworth and Morgan, 2005; Jurado, 2001) and also to the public policies that shape these pathways to adulthood (Harsløf, 2005; Ertl, 2006; Niemeyer, 2007).We know that the way that transitions take place and the role of the welfare state in different national contexts determines a certain way of 'becoming an adult' in each society (Van de Velde, 2008). Thus, youth transition regimes have a crucial role in defining the position that young people as a group play in the system of social relations in each society (or, employing Bourdieu's terminology, in defining the different positions that youth takes in the 'social space'). Young people's position in the social space determines their opportunities and expectations and shapes their practices. However, even if we know that in different European countries youth transitions follow different paths, these transitions have rarely been taken into account as a contextual variable in empirical models of youth political participation[i].

The central hypothesis of this article is that young people's dominant strategies of participation in society are shaped by youth transition regimes that determine the position of youth as a group in the social space and the individual and social resources available to them. Thus, the specific context of youth plays an important role in defining

the opportunities for young people to choose to participate through institutional channels or political protest, or to remain inactive.

To confirm these arguments empirically, we use data on patterns of political participation among young people (understood as individuals between 16 and 25 years of age) in 26 locations in 12 European countries collected from a survey carried out as part of the European FP7 MYPLACE project[ii]and various secondary statistical sources from these countries. In the first part of this article, we develop an analytical framework by exploring how different youth transition regimes place young people in different positions in the social space according to each country and how this shapes their participation patterns. We then explain our empirical strategy and present the data and key variables. In the subsequent section, we discuss the results of a multilevel analysis conducted in order to determine the influence of individual and contextual factors on participation strategies. Finally, we present our key conclusions.

Theoretical discussion: youth transition regimes and the position of young people in the social space

In order to understand the mechanism by which the model of youth transitions in a given society influences youth participation strategies, we borrow a basic idea from Bourdieu's groundbreaking work: the social space. Bourdieu (1979, 1985, 1989) used the idea of social space to represent the system of economic, social, cultural and symbolic relationships established in a society. The position that agents (individuals and groups) take in this space is determined by the distribution of resources; specifically, by the volume of economic, cultural, social and symbolic capital available and by each agent's share of these forms of capital (Bourdieu, 1989: 16-18). As such, their position in the social space is determined by the accumulation of material and subjective resources, which they use to occupy more central, important or powerful places within this space, on the one hand, or more peripheral and unprotected positions on the other (Bourdieu, 1985). According to this perspective, the position that young people as a group occupy in the system of relationships of a given society forms the basis for their options for feeling more or less integrated and, as such, for seeing themselves as more important, or more peripheral, political players in their social systems.

Youth is a time when individuals undergo a process of integration into the system of social relationships that constitutes the social space. Achieving independence from the family, joining the labour market and assuming the life of an adult in general should be accompanied by incorporation into spaces of greater social centrality and importance. In fact, traditional explanations of young people's patterns of participation are closely linked to the gradual adoption of roles of greater integration in the social space that come with age; as individuals take on adult roles, they gain civic skills and experiences that make them more interested in public matters and in developing the skills necessary for participating in them (Strate *et al*., 1989; Milbrath and Goel, 1977). The work, family and home-related aspects of transitions from youth to adulthood cause individuals to integrate into the central spaces of social life and arouse their interest in how society and politics work (Benedicto and Moran, 2007).

However, the road to adulthood has undergone significant changes that can affect how young adults integrate into the social and public space. In recent decades, the sociology of youth has emphasised increased flexibility and less standardisation in young people's trajectories (Stauber and Walther, 2006; Serracant, 2012). Situations of reversibility and breaking with linearity foster the growth of uncertainty and vulnerability and make it hard for young people to attain a solid place to collectively build their social position and their identity (Furlong and Cartmel, 1997; Mills, Blossfeld and Klijzing, 2005). The prolongation of these transitions makes youth itself longer. As a result, this peripheral social position is considered increasingly to be a fixed situation rather than a transitory stage. Young people are creating their social and political identity in a context of greater fragmentation and uncertainty and with less collective points of reference (Benedicto, 2013). However, these changes have different effects on young people in different countries (Nico, 2014). As we show below, there are significant differences between countries regarding the level of vulnerability and lengthening of youth transitions and the role played in both by the welfare state. It seems, therefore, that this gradual process of incorporating young people into more central and important positions in the social space has been shaped in different ways according to the youth transition regimes in each country. This has an impact on patterns of political participation for young people.

The following sections provide evidence on the existence of different youth transition regimes across Europe and develop the theoretical framework of our hypothesis discussing how this can explain differences in the positions of youth in the social space and their participation patterns. Here, we consider two dimensions of youth transition systems (the way that youth transitions occur and the role of welfare states) to see their impact on the position of youth in the social space and how it shapes participation strategies.

Youth transition regimes: vulnerability and length

Here we examine how youth transitions take place in different European countries. To do so we consider crucial aspects that affect young people's perception of their own role in society: exposure to risk and vulnerability; and the length of the pathway to adulthood.

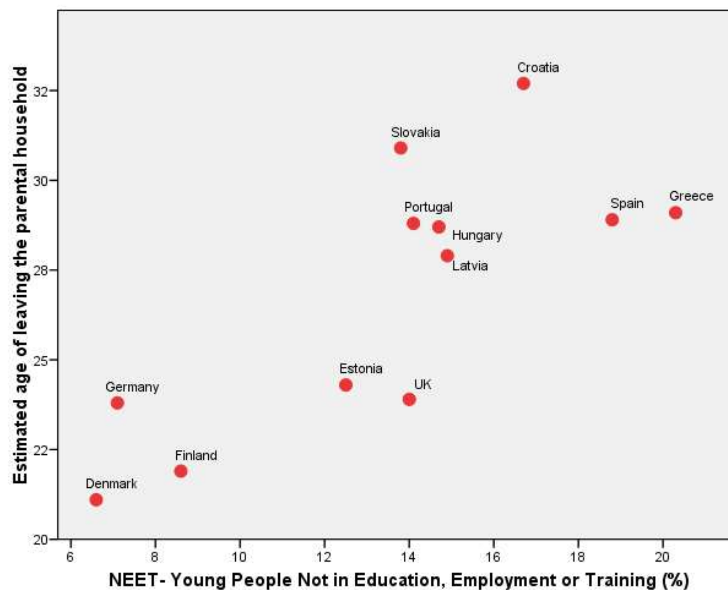
The different transition regime models are key mechanisms for distributing resources and exposing young people to situations of risk and vulnerability (Alegre, 2010). In countries with universalistic welfare regimes, the individualisation and de-standardisation of trajectories to adulthood is accompanied by training opportunities and an effective system of social protection. Thus, situations of risk are minimised and uncertainty does not necessarily lead to vulnerabilisation. In corporatist systems, there is also an effective system of protection more linked to education and especially to 'finding one's place' in the job market (Van de Velde, 2008). In transition regimes with welfare models with less government influence, opportunities for transition and security depend more on the market and on the family (Alegre, 2010; Moreno and Marí-Klose, 2014). This makes young people more subject to situations of risk, uncertainty and marginality throughout the paths they take to adulthood. The experience of structural vulnerability may cause apathy to increase and even stoke mistrust towards social and political institutions (Benedicto, 2013). Thus, it can be expected that in transition regimes that foster situations of vulnerability, young people are perceived to have a less central position in the social

space, whereas in countries where transitions have more protection and security mechanisms, young people feel more integrated and identify more with the institutions.

Second, transition regimes mark the tempo of young people's life stories. Even though transitions have become longer everywhere in recent decades, there are significant differences according to country. There is a clear relationship between exposure to risk and how quickly transitions are completed. For example, the decision to leave the parental home is closely linked to having one's own income and a certain feeling of security in being able to maintain that status (Aassve, Billari and Ongaro, 2001, Iacovou, 2011). The lengthening of these transitions in some countries may mean that circumstances associated with youth are not experienced as transitory aspects, but structural ones. Indeed, García-Abacete (2014) suggests that transformations in patterns of youth participation in Western Europe may arise more from the lengthening of youth than from any generational change. What is clear is that in contexts where transitions take place later, young people have more time to internalise the position associated with youth in the social space and make it their own.

To show how young people are situated with regard to youth transitions in the countries studied, we chose two indicators represented in Figure 1.To capture the different incidence of vulnerability in young people's pathways to adulthood, the NEET indicator was used. And to demonstrate the lengthening of transitions, the estimated average age that young people leave their parental home was used. It is important to note that one of the changes to youth transitions in recent years consists precisely in the fact that there is no clear border marking the end of transitions such as leaving the parental home (Machado, 2001; EGRIS, 2000). Many young people leave home for studies or work and return later. However, the indicator of the estimated average age is still valid for our purpose as it does not identify the exact moment of the 'final' transition but instead differentiates the different rhythms of transitions across European countries.

Figure 1. Vulnerability and length of youth transitions in Europe



Source: Metadata in Euro SDMX Metadata Structure (ESMS) and Labour Force Survey, Eurostat

As seen in Figure 1, there is a certain linearity in the relationship between vulnerability and the lengthening of transitions, which is that leaving the parental home is closely linked to the achievement of a certain degree of financial security (Aassve, Billari and Ongaro, 2001; Iacovou, 2011). Therefore, societies that offer more security to youth transitions are also societies where they happen sooner. In Denmark, Finland and Germany, transitions happen quickly and situations of vulnerability are less common. In Estonia and the United Kingdom, the age that young people leave home is low, but levels of vulnerability, expressed by youth in NEET situations, are rather high. The rest of the countries have young people leaving home later combined with high levels of vulnerability. There are especially high levels of youth in NEET situations in Greece and Spain. In these last two countries, the perception of vulnerability and uncertainty combines with a longer youth to encourage the idea that the precarious social situation of young people is in fact structural (Serracant and Fabra, 2013). Following the rationale of our hypothesis, in these countries the peripheral position in social space should lead young people to lower levels of activism -particularly institutional participation- compared to countries where young people live in more stable contexts.

Youth transition regimes: generosity and age-orientation of the welfare state

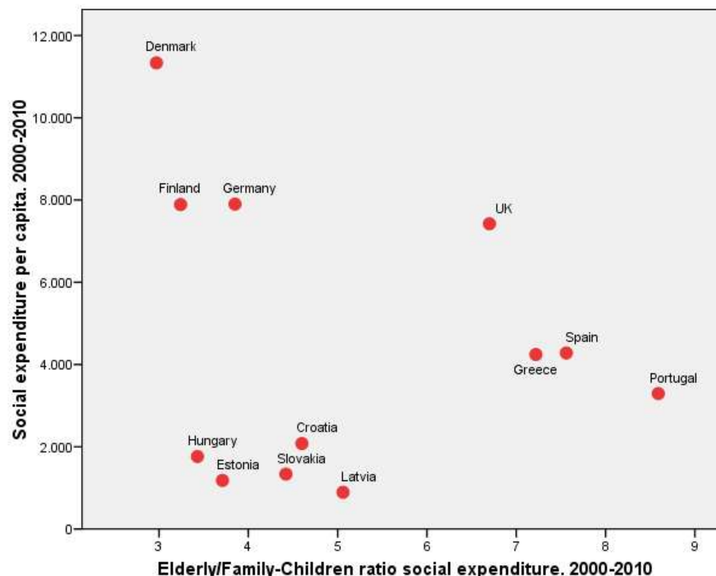
The role of the welfare state is crucial in framing the opportunities and expectations of young people in their transitions. In this section, we discuss how the characteristics of different welfare states in Europe shape youth transitions and situate young citizens with regard to the social space and how they adopt different forms of political participation. We know that social policies can be thought of as lines of action pursued by states that may have potential effects on the political scene. Some authors have referred to this potential effect in politics as 'policy feedback' (Skocpol and Amenta, 1986). Public policies not only affect citizens' political predispositions, but also their political actions (Mettler and Soss, 2004).

We can find two arguments to explain the association between the generosity of welfare states and political participation (Ferrer-Fons, 2005). First, social policies create beneficiaries interested in maintaining and expanding these policies (Taylor-Gooby, 2001). Citizens living in welfare states that provide a high level of de-commodification (Esping-Andersen, 1990)[iii] may collaborate with political institutions to a greater extent than their counterparts in residual welfare states. A generous welfare state may give incentives to its beneficiaries to participate to defend their interests in a political system that is open and permeable to its demands. The second argument is related to the values and expectations that citizens internalise under the umbrella of the welfare state's public policies. Policy designs shape citizens' personal experiences with government and therefore influence processes of political learning and patterns of political belief (Mettler, 2002; Mettler and Soss, 2004: 62-63). Rothstein and Stolle (2003) argue that in welfare states where most programmes are universalistic, citizens tend to share a perception of more impartial institutions, which may produce high levels of external political efficacy and institutional and social trust among people.

Granted, the generosity of the welfare state is not enjoyed by different social groups in the same way. Some studies have shown how different welfare models in Europe have specific types of impact on youth transitions (Walther, 2006; Van de Velde, 2008; Harsløf, 2005). Specifically, Julia Lynch (2001, 2006) has measured how different countries of the OECD distribute their social spending based on age, demonstrating a great variability among countries. In the different forms of measurement that Lynch proposes, Mediterranean welfare states always appear as countries where spending is targeted more at older people. However, universalistic welfare regimes are where spending is most balanced among different age groups. This breakdown does not appear spontaneously but, as Mari-Klose (2012) demonstrates in the case of Spain, is closely linked to political factors and specifically to the political system's permeability to the interests of young people.

Therefore, when weighing the influence of the welfare state, and specifically of its generosity, on youth participation strategies, we must take two dimensions into account: the development and generosity of the welfare regime itself;and the age-orientation of this generosity. Figure 2 uses the indicator of per capita social expenditure to show the generosity of welfare regimes. In order to measure the age-orientation of the welfare regime, an indicator was created from Eurostat social expenditure data inspired by Lynch's 'elderly/non-elderly spending ratio' (Lynch, 2001)[iv]. The indicator uses Eurostat social protection data and compares social spending on 'Old-age' and 'Survivors' programmes with that on 'Family-children'; countries with a higher ratio are those where expenditure is targeted more towards the elderly while countries closer to value 1 have more balanced spending with regard to age.

Figure 2. Generosity and age-orientation of social expenditure in Europe



Source: Metadata in Euro SDMX Metadata Structure (ESMS), Eurostat

Figure 2 shows clear patterns that correspond to the different welfare regimes identified in the literature (See eg: Esping-Andersen, 1990; Gallie and Paugam, 2000). The countries

of Southern Europe (Spain, Portugal and Greece) have a medium-low level of expenditure overall but are distinguished by being where spending is most geared towards the elderly. The expenditure of the United Kingdom is also rather elderly-oriented, although with significantly greater spending per capita. However, the countries of Northern Europe, and Denmark in particular, are where social expenditure is greatest and more oriented to programmes that benefit younger age groups. The post-communist democracies of Eastern Europe have the lowest expenditure, though they also have a balanced age-orientation. In countries where the state plays an important role in providing welfare, and where social policies are also aimed at the young, the state sends youth a message of integration into the system. Therefore our hypothesis holds that in these contexts, young people identify more with institutions and, as a result, tend to participate through the mechanisms they offer. In contexts where the state is less present, or where public expenditure is clearly geared towards other age groups, young people are positioned further from the institutional system and will be inclined to choose strategies of inactivity or protest.

Having explained the mechanisms that make the different youth transition regimes situate young people in positions of greater or lesser centrality in the social space, we now test the hypothesis that these different positions have an impact on patterns of political participation of youth through empirical analysis. In the following section we present the analytical strategy and specify how the different dimensions of political participation and the centrality of young people in youth transition regimes are operationalised before presenting a discussion of the findings.

Research design: data and empirical strategy

In this paper we use individual and aggregate data. The individual data used for the analysis come from the survey of the FP7 MYPLACE project. This survey is an ideal source of information for several reasons. First, it is a survey aimed at young people from 16 to 25 years of age that collects information particularly adapted to this cohort. Secondly, it contains questions that measure a very broad range of political action that improves the operationalisation of our dependent variables. Finally, its multilevel structure provides a good opportunity for analysing contextual factors. The survey was carried out at two contrasting locations in 14 different European countries (four in the case of Germany, with two in former East Germany and two in former West Germany) with approximately 600 individuals[v]. The structure of the individual data from the different locations allows the inclusion of local contextual variables that comparative country-based studies usually cannot address and that we know can be useful in the more immediate context of individuals explaining their predispositions for participating.

In terms of context, the data emanates from two different sources. The location data comes from the MYPLACE project. However, we have included also national indicators in our analysis that primarily come from Eurostat and other aggregate databases. The variables used and their sources are described in detail below.

Multilevel estimates are used since the structure of the data of the MYPLACE survey allows individual and contextual factors to be included in the same model. This type of analysis is appropriate for data when observations of the sample are not independent; in our case, the survey respondents are nested within 26 localities and we assume that a

significant part of the different patterns of political participation are explained by contextual factors associated with these locations. These 26 locations are also nested within 12 countries. This could justify a three-level analysis, with the understanding that the observations among locations are not independent from each other either, but grouped into countries. However, the number of countries is too small for this type of study (Maas and Hox, 2005; Bell *et al*., 2010) and the structure of the data has characteristics that minimise the possible problems stemming from not taking this third level of country into account. A failure to consider the grouping of the localities into countries could cause the results to underestimate the standard errors, especially when the number of units in a cluster is significantly higher than others or when the units within each cluster are very similar (Hox, 2010). None of these conditions occur in the MYPLACE data; there are always two locations per country (except in the case of Germany, where there are four). Regarding the similarity of the locations, the criterion for choosing the locations was that they contrasted in terms of socio-economic conditions[vi]. Therefore, we opted for a two-level analysis with 26 locations and approximately 600 individuals in each location. As we explain below, the multilevel estimate uses logistic regression due to the dichotomic nature of the dependent variables.Here we explain the operationalisation of the different variables that we use in the empirical analysis and show some of the first descriptive findings.

Dependent variables: political action strategies

Until the 1970s, studies of political participation using individual survey data, focused almost exclusively on electoral behaviour, but following Verba and Nie's (1972) broadening of the definition of political participation, many approaches to categorising different forms of political participation have appeared. Although expressed in different ways, a persistent criterion for categorising types of participation relates to the level of integration of forms of participation in the institutional political system (see eg: Barnes and Kaase, 1979; Teorell, Torcal and Montero, 2007). Some recent research into youth participation uses this same criterion to explain the evolution of forms of participation. Norris (2004), for example, distinguishes between citizen-oriented actions, linked to institutional politics, and cause-oriented ones, aimed directly at social and political issues of interest. In general, the studies indicate that the vast majority of young people feel a certain degree of alienation from institutional politics, while more direct forms of social and political involvement such as protest and political consumerism are growing (O'Toole, 2003; Zukin *et al*., 2006; Dalton, 2008; Manning, 2013).

For our purposes, while using the same criterion, we distinguish between (1) institutional participation, grouping different actions of participation aimed at institutions and integrated into the system and (2) protest, which contains more forms of participation that, on the contrary, aim to challenge the institutional system and does not use channels of political representation. We explicitly included (3) passivity in the study as a way for young people to relate to politics because we are interested in discovering the individual and contextual mechanisms that favour political inactivity. We are especially interested in seeing how youth transition regimes may or may not favour greater contexts of passivity.

The Myplace survey contains a range of political actions that we could include in our categories of participation. However, for the purpose of our research we have opted to select only those actions that better differentiate between institutional participation and protest. In our analysis we are more interested in differentiating different strategies of political action rather than focusing on global levels of participation. Barnes and Kaase (1979) differentiate between conventional and unconventional participation and the majority of classifications in political participation have followed a similar method distinguishing between those forms that are more integrated in the formal political system and those that are developed outside the formal political system and which usually challenge it[vii]. Here this distinction is particularly useful as we expect young people living in more integrated contexts to be more prone to participate through institutional forms while protest has a more complex relation to youth transition regimes. As Painter-Maine (2014) emphasises, protest can be an expression for challenging elites but also a consequence of a growing repertoire of participation for integrated citizens. In the first case, we would expect more protest in contexts where youth transition regimes lead young people to peripheral positions and, in the second, protest should complement other forms of participation in contexts where young people have a central position in the social space

These participation strategies are employed here through the three following dummy variables: (1) institutional participation refers to young people who claim to participate in at least one political party or union or who have participated as volunteers in an electoral campaign or contacted a politician or local councillor in the last twelve months[viii]; (2) protest refers to young people who have participated in at least one demonstration or a strike or that who have occupied buildings or blocked streets or railways; and (3), the indicator of inactivity refers to young people who claim they have not performed any of the aforementioned actions.

In Table 1, we show how these forms of political involvement are broken down as a percentage of overall youth in each location ordered by country[ix].

Table 1. Political action strategies of youth per location

		Institutional participation	**Protest**	**Inactivity**
Croatia	Podsljeme (Zagreb)	18.9	23	66.4
	Pescenica Zitnjak (Zagreb)	13	19.6	72.1
Denmark	Odense East	52.1	28.6	36.6
	Odense Centre	54.2	21.6	36.3
Estonia	Narva area	20.3	9.1	75
	Tartu	24	20.5	63.4
Finland	Lieksa and Nurmes	23.7	7.7	71
	Kuopio	46.3	9.8	49.8
Germany (western)	Bremen	27.5	48	41.4
	Bremerhaven	21.4	38.6	53.9
Germany (eastern)	Jena	28.6	41.8	47.5
	Rostock	29.6	39.6	47.5
Greece	New Philadelphia (Athens)	9.5	40.2	58
	Argyroupouli (Athens)	13.1	38.5	57
Hungary	Downtown Sopron	2.2	1.3	97.2

	Downtown Ozd	3.2	0.8	96.3
Latvia	Agenskalns (Riga)	14.5	10.5	80.2
	Forstate&Jaunbuve (Daugavpils)	6.5	4.2	91
Portugal	Lumiar (Lisbon)	14.1	26.8	65.1
	Barreiro	6.1	18.4	79.8
Slovakia	Rimavska Sobota	11.8	5.7	84.5
	Trnava	13.7	14.5	78.3
Spain	Vic	17.8	75.5	22.8
	SantCugat del Vallès	19.3	74.3	23.6
United Kingdom	Coventry	27.5	23.1	61.6
	Nuneaton	19.6	14	71.5
Average locations		20.6	23.5	64.2

Source: MYPLACE survey, 2012-13

The data on different forms of participation indicates the diversity of participatory strategies according to the locations studied. There are some locations in the study with very high levels of all forms of political activism, especially the four German cities. In the locations in the Mediterranean countries, especially in Spain and Greece, participation through protest clearly dominates, while young people who participate institutionally are nearly insignificant. At the other extreme, in the city of Kuopio, in Finland, there is practically no political protest, whereas half the young population participates institutionally. There are quite a few locations where the majority strategy is inactivity. Prominent in this regard are the cases of Sopron and Ozd in Hungary and of Daugavpils in Latvia, where the level of inactivity is over 90 per cent. Therefore, when we examine patterns of participation in different places in Europe, we see great variation.

Independent variable: centrality of young people in youth transition regimes (YTRs)

We discussed above how different aspects that characterise youth transition regimes (YTRs) affect the position that young people have as a group in the social space. Our thesis is that this position shapes their patterns of political participation since it defines their material and psychological distance from spaces of social and political importance. Therefore, our independent variable is not just the type of youth transition regime but the centrality of this position in the social space that these regimes reserve for youth.

Studies of transition regimes usually take countries as a unit of analysis (Raffe, 2014). The form that YTRs adopt is obviously closely tied to state-linked welfare models, public policies and political traditions (Niemeyer, 2007; Alegre, 2010). However, by framing a young individual's opportunities and expectations, the effect that the YTR has may also be influenced by the local context. The criterion for selecting the two locations in each country of the MYPLACE project (while trying to capture contrasting socioeconomic situations, among other factors) makes it an especially good idea to measure the location-level variation of some characteristics of the YTR.

To do so, a synthesis variable was created that includes the four key national-level indicators described above and three new aggregate location-level indicators taken from the MYPLACE survey. The different indicators, which appear in Table 2, correspond to the YTR dimensions defined above: length and vulnerability in youth transitions; and welfare state generosity and age-orientation. The variation in terms of location is included in

dimensions of length and vulnerability in the transitions since the characteristics of welfare state generosity and age-orientation are invariably shared by the locations of a single country. To create the resulting variable 'centrality of young people in YTRs', the dimensions of the seven indicators were standardised; the minimum value was assigned to situations with longer or more vulnerable transitions, less welfare state generosity and social spending more oriented towards the elderly; the maximum value was assigned to contrary situations[x]. The resulting variable is a scale from 0 to 10 in which 0 indicates a transition system that puts young people in a position of maximum distance from spaces of social centrality and 10 represents the position of greatest centrality.

Table 2. Dimensions and indicators of centrality of young people in YTRs

	Length of youth transitions		Vulnerability in youth transitions			Welfare state		**Centrality of young people in YTRs (0-10 scale)**
						Generosity	Age-orientation	
	(L) Young people living out of parental household (%)	(C) Estimated age of leaving the parental household (years)	(L) Youth unemployment (%)	(C) NEET (%)	(L) Households with financial difficulties (%)	(C) Social expenditure per capita. 2000-2010 (€)	(C) Elderly/ Family-Children ratio social expenditure. 2000-	
Odense Centre (DK)	77.8	21.1	4.8	6.6	6	11,334	2.97	**9.76**
Odense East (DK)	69.3	21.1	8.3	6.6	7.6	11,334	2.97	**9.40**
Jena (GER)	82.8	23.8	1.6	7.1	8.7	7,900	3.85	**8.86**
Rostock (GER)	78	23.8	2.8	7.1	10.5	7,900	3.85	**8.69**
Kuopio (FI)	75.7	21.9	4.1	8.6	18.5	7,888	3.24	**8.65**
Bremen (GER)	44	23.8	3.6	7.1	8.7	7,900	3.85	**8.07**
Lieksa & Nurmes (FI)	33	21.9	4.2	8.6	13.6	7,888	3.24	**7.97**
Bremerhaven (GER)	47.8	23.8	7.8	7.1	13.5	7,900	3.85	**7.84**
Coventry (UK)	63.7	23.9	11.6	14	20.6	7,422	6.70	**6.28**
Tartu (ES)	35.2	24.3	4.1	12.5	19.6	1,181	3.71	**6.16**
Nuneaton (UK)	30.5	23.9	17.5	14	21	7,422	6.70	**5.39**
Narva area (ES)	25.6	24.3	15.4	12.5	36.4	1,181	3.71	**5.10**
Sopron (HU)	8.6	28.7	3.9	14.7	24.9	1,763	3.43	**4.96**
Agenskalns (LAT)	39.7	27.9	4.2	14.9	33.9	892	5.06	**4.87**
Trnava (SK)	11.9	30.9	8.2	13.8	35.2	1,337	4.42	**4.11**
Forstate & Jaunbuve (LAT)	29.8	27.9	10	14.9	50	892	5.06	**4.08**
St. Cugat (SP)	7.9	28.9	3.9	18.8	17.4	4,280	7.56	**3.94**
Ozd (HU)	18.4	28.7	13.9	14.7	62.9	1,763	3.43	**3.88**
Vic (SP)	20.9	28.9	10.7	18.8	20.2	4,280	7.56	**3.79**
Lumiar(POR)	20.9	28.8	11.7	14.1	23.8	3,295	8.59	**3.78**
Podsljeme (CR)	3.5	32.7	12	16.7	13.8	2,078	4.60	**3.75**
Pescenica (CR)	7.9	32.7	16.9	16.7	20.3	2,078	4.60	**3.46**
Barreiro (POR)	17.3	28.8	12.4	14.1	42.1	3,295	8.59	**3.31**
Rimavska Sobota (SK)	13	30.9	21.4	13.8	57.8	1,337	4.42	**3.04**
New Philadelphia (GR)	10.8	29.1	16	20.3	76.1	4,244	7.22	**2.11**
Argyroupouli (GR)	7.6	29.1	19.2	20.3	67.1	4,244	7.22	**2.09**

(L) Location indicator // (C) Country indicator

Source: MYPLACE survey 2012-2013 for location indicators and Eurostat for national indicators.

The findings portray a spectrum of different situations regarding the position of centrality in the social space of young people in the various YTRs at each location. As expected, the countries' locations have very similar positions even though we also see significant differences coming particularly from local vulnerability indicators. The locations are ordered from more to less centrality. Roughly speaking, the locations of the Scandinavian countries and Germany present the highest levels of centrality, followed by the locations in the UK and, though with more variation, in the Baltic countries. Next come most of the locations in Eastern Europe, while Mediterranean locations are those scoring the least centrality with our indicator.

Control variables

Other independent variables are added to the model that the literature has identified as important for explaining patterns of participation (especially among the general population) and serve a control function. On the individual level, we control for socio-demographic variables such as age and sex, as well as key variables for participation including the level of education (having completed secondary school) and the social class of family of origin (a variable with 8 values that we treat as continuous and that shows the level of education and professional status of the mother and father). We include variables that reflect the individual situation with regard to youth transitions; whether individuals live independently of the parental household and their activity status (studying, working, inactive or unemployed). We collect two political attitudes: being interested in politics (dummy variable); and the level of satisfaction with how democracy works (on a scale of 0 to 10). Finally, we also add the variable of participating in formal or issue-oriented organisations[xi].

With regard to the variables of context, we include the total population of the location's surrounding urban area[xii] to consider the rural/urban effect. A dummy variable is added that shows if any type of election was held in the year prior to the survey in order to bear in mind the mobilising effect of electoral processes and if the city has a university[xiii]. The overall percentage of young people that participate in formal political and issue-oriented organisations is also collected as a contextual variable indicating the level of association density in the location[xiv]. The impact of the crisis on the young people of each country is observed through the indicator of growth in long-term youth unemployment in 2007-2012[xv]. Finally, an indicator of the years that the country has been a democracy[xvi] is added to gain a measure of the level of democratic tradition, which may also have an impact on participatory practices.

Empirical discussion

Table 3 presents, first, the variance components to see how the logistic regression models of the three participation variables evolve as we introduce new elements. The empty model is a regression with random intercept that we use only to show that there is a significant part of the variance (above 20 per cent in all three cases) that is explained by differences of location. As such, it confirms that it is important to take both individual and contextual factors into account. The next models show the variance components when we introduce individual variables. The fact that some high levels of variance attributed to the

location are maintained (see intra-class correlation) indicates that contextual differences continue to be important, especially when we consider the composition effect. This means that the variance between locations is not due to the different characteristics of the individuals in each location, but to factors linked to the location itself. At this point, we note that the intra-class correlation remains much higher in the case of protest than in the case of institutional participation. This leads us to the idea that protest is more linked to contextual factors while institutional activism is a form of involvement with more similar patterns across the different European locations. Furthermore, compared to the empty model, by introducing the individual variables, the variance attributed to locations dropped by 40.3 per cent for institutional participation and only 15.9 per cent for protest. This means that the different individual characteristics of young people based on their location explain the different levels of institutional participation much better than protest, which must be attributed overwhelmingly to genuinely contextual elements.

Table 3.Variance components of regression models explaining participation strategies

		Empty model	With individual level variables	With individual and location level variables		
				without YTR centrality	with YTR centrality	with YTR centrality and interactions
Institutional participation	σ (location level)	0.830	0.495	0.240	0.166	
	-loglikelihood	62824	64920.2	65004.2	64999.1	
	Intra-class correlation	0.201	0.131	0.068	0.048	
Protest	σ (location level)	1.806	1.518	1.015	0.792	0.778
	-loglikelihood	63275.7	64874.4	65096.7	65099.8	65131,207
	Intra-class correlation	0.354	0.316	0.236	0.194	0.191
Passivity	σ (location level)	1.284	0.986	0.640	0.339	
	-loglikelihood	58787.3	60532.4	60649.8	60627.2	
	Intra-class correlation	0.281	0.231	0.163	0.093	

Source: MYPLACE survey, 2012-2013 for individual and location variables and Eurostat for national variables.

The next models, in Table 3, include the contextual variables and we can see how the explained variance improves. We present a model without the variable of centrality of young people in YTRs to discover its impact on residual variance according to location. The findings indicate that the variable of centrality greatly helps to explain the differences between locations regarding participation strategies; it lowers residual variance by 30.8 per cent for institutional participation, 22 per cent for protest and 47 per cent in the case of passivity.

Finally, Table 4 presents the substantive findings of the final multilevel logistic regression models. With regard to the influence of the individual variables, in general predictable results appear such as the positive influence on participation arising from the level of education and the social position of the family, interest in politics and participation in organisations. The variables associated with the personal situation in youth transitions give mixed results. It seems that situations of greater dependency (like living with one's parents or being a student) favour participation in protest, while those of greater

independence (like living on one's own and working) tend towards institutional participation. Moreover, being inactive or unemployed favours passivity. Finally, it should be stressed that the feeling of dissatisfaction with how democracy works favours all forms of activism. Satisfaction with democracy and one's relationship to participation has been interpreted variously based on the context (Canache *et al*., 2001). In some cases, satisfaction with democracy has been associated with a greater predisposition to vote (Kopp, 2001), while in others a critical attitude towards the system is considered to increase political protest (Kaase and Marsh 1979; Fuchs and Klingemann 1995). Our findings show that dissatisfaction with how democracy works favours participation in its different forms. The context of the economic recession probably strengthens the link between critical attitudes and participation among young people.

Table 4. Individual and contextual determinants of participation strategies of youth

		Institutional participation		**Protest**		**Passivity**		**Protest** (with interactions)	
		Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4	
Intercept		-5.344	***	-7.660	***	7.052	***	-7.833	***
Individual variables									
Age		0.040	***	-0.006		-0.029	***	-0,005	
Sex (female)		-0.189	***	-0.103	**	0.131	***	-0,107	**
Secondary education		0.179	***	0.188	***	-0.225	***	0,185	***
Social class of origin		0.086	*	0.305	***	-0.241	***	0,304	***
Living out parental home		0.138	**	-0.232	***	0.070		-0,23	***
Activity	Studying	-0.303	***	0.123	*	0.081		0,126	*
	Unemployed or inactive	-0.348	***	-0.037		0.270		-0,033	
	Working (ref.)	ref.		ref.		ref.		ref.	
Political interest		0.877	***	0.626	***	-0.743	***	0,818	***
Satisfaction with democracy		-0.023	**	-0.102	***	0.065	***	0,098	***
Participation in formal org.		0.811	***	0.461	***	-0.695	***	0,728	***
Participation in issue-oriented org.		0.873	***	1.025	***	-1.022	***	0,877	***
Contextual variables									
Population of the urban area		0.000		0.000		0.000		0,000	
Elections in the last year		-0.007		0.915	*	-0.518		0,916	*
University in the location		-0.204		0.387		0.064		0,378	
% of formal political org. in the location		0.019	*	-0.042	*	0.009		-0,042	*
% of issue-oriented org. in the location		-0.021		0.047	*	-0.004		0,047	*
Crisis impact (long-term unemployment 07-12)		0.058	**	0.231	***	-0.204	***	0,232	***
Democratic tradition (years of democracy)		0.001		0.001		0.000		0,001	
YTR centrality		0.330	***	0.613	**	-0.661	***	0,649	***
Cross-level interactions									
Political interest * YTR centrality								-0,037	*
Satisfaction dem. * YTR centrality								0,001	
Part. formal org. * YTR centrality								-0,047	**
Part. issue-oriented org. * YTR centrality								0,025	

n level1= 12.843 // n level2= 26

Sig. *p<0,1 **p<0,05 ***p<0,01

Source: MYPLACE survey, 2012-2013 for individual and location variables and Eurostat for national variables.

With regard to the contextual variables, neither the size of the population, the existence of a university in the town or city nor the democratic tradition is significant once the other variables have been controlled for. However, if some kind of election was held, there is a statistically significant coefficient in the protest model. Organisational density also has an impact on young people's propensity to participate; this indicates the importance of access to the collective resources of the social environment such as social networks and organisational resources (Huckfeldt, 1979; Knoke, 1990; Rosenstone and Hansen, 1993; Putnam, 1994). Even so, the types of groups must be differentiated; where there are more issue-oriented organisations and movements, young people tend to use political protest. The presence of formal associations favours institutional participation, but at the expense of protest. The impact of the crisis, measured through a rise in long-term youth unemployment, is revealed as one of the most decisive contextual variables. The effect is significant and positive when referring to institutional participation, but especially so for political protest. It seems that young people in the environments most affected by the crisis have reacted with more mobilisation. This corresponds to the individual effect of satisfaction with democracy; it seems that mobilisation strategies are favoured in contexts where the crisis has had a greater impact and where attitudes are more critical of how the system works.

In relation to our key variable, the effect of young people's position in the social space based on the transitions system, the variable of YTR centrality appears significant in all models. The YTR contexts where young people have more peripheral positions, with longer and more vulnerable transitions and less support from the welfare state, favour the strategy of passivity. However, social contexts in which young people have positions of greater centrality favour participation through both institutional forms and political protest. Models 1 and 3 indicate that the effect of centrality in YTRs for institutional participation and passivity is quite clear. In both cases, the intra-class correlation (0.048 and 0.093, respectively) indicates that the models explain a significant part of the variance in contextual terms. In the case of protest, however, it is easy to think that the relation with centrality in YTRs is not so linear. In fact, protest is a form of participation associated with circumstances of greater confrontation with the political and social system than institutional participation (Marsh, 1977; Dalton, 2002) and, as a result, is closer to groups less integrated into the system. As such, we should expect the positive relation between centrality in YTRs and protest given in model 2 to be more complex. For this reason we ran another multilevel regression (model 4) for protest which includes variables of interaction between YTR centrality and a range of individual level variables.

In particular, we present the interaction of centrality with the individual variables in the model that have a political nature: two political attitudes (political interest and satisfaction with democracy); and two variables of collaboration with political organisations (participation in formal organisations and participation in issue-oriented organisations). The reason for including these interactions is to see if these different indicators of individual political involvement have different effects on protest according to the nature of YTR. The interaction of the YTR centrality indicator with satisfaction with democracy and with participation in issue-oriented organisations does not seem significant. However, political interest and involvement in formal organisations does have a differentiated effect on political protest, depending on centrality in the YTRs. The negative coefficient in both interaction variables indicates that the more central the

position of young people in YTR, the less influence both interest in politics and participation in formal organisations have. In other words, in contexts where young people have a peripheral position in social space the fact of being individually involved in the political life (through showing interest in politics or participation in formal organisations) is more important for explaining participation in protest actions. In these contexts of the greater precariousness of youth, the fact of being involved in formal politics also leads to more confrontational political action, while in contexts where young people feel more integrated in spaces of centrality, protest is less associated with being politically involved.

Nevertheless, coefficients indicate that even if these interaction effects exist, they are not very powerful. In fact, Table 3 shows that even in the model with interactions, the residual variance for protest continues to be much higher than in the other participation strategies. This leads us to understand that unlike the other participation strategies, protest is a type of activism that is much more affected by very specific contextual circumstances (such as agents' strategies, the response of the elites, cycles of temporary mobilisation, etc.) that are more difficult to collect with extensive research strategies than with case studies (Ferrer-Fons, 2005). However, the introduction of interaction variables provides better understanding of the complexity of factors that intervene in protest strategies.

Conclusions

Youth transition regimes not only define the framework of material opportunities in which young people undertake their school-work transitions or the process of leaving their parent's home and living on their own. The different patterns of youth transition regimes set up cultural models of normalcy that frame their psychological orientations (Walther, 2006). For Bourdieu (1979, 1985, 1989), the position that individuals and groups occupy in the social space determines their material, cultural and symbolic resources, which they use to participate in the system of social relations.

In this article, we have seen how there is great diversity in the transition systems in Europe(based on elements such as exposure to risk, the length of young people's pathways to adulthood and welfare state generosity and age-orientation) that put young people in a position that is relatively integrated into the system of social relations. Based on estimates of multilevel models that take individual and contextual factors into consideration, we have demonstrated empirically also how this position of greater or lesser centrality in the social space is an important factor for defining young people's strategies of political participation. Specifically, societies where YTRs give young people positions of greater centrality tend to favour participation (and particularly institutional participation). However, in contexts where YTRs place young people in more peripheral positions, passivity is usually the dominant strategy. Political protest has a more complex relation to YTRs: on the one hand, the most integrated YTRs favour protest like any form of participation; on the other hand, it seems that in more precarious YTR contexts, the fact of being politically involved is a more determining factor for protest as, probably in these contexts, political involvement is more associated to feelings of grievance. In any case, our analysis also showed the limitation of extensive research strategies for analysing protest since compared to other forms of political action, it is a type of participation closely linked

to highly specific and variable contextual circumstances where the temporary perspective is also very relevant.

The link that this paper establishes between the discipline of comparative youth transition studies and the literature of political participation is a key and novel contribution to understanding young people's relationship to politics. Recent research has sought explanations of generational change in young people's forms of political participation (see Dalton, 2007;Zukin*et al*., 2006; Norris, 2004; Franklin, Lyons and Marsh, 2004). Studies have also stressed how changes in post-industrial societies, individualisation and the information society are changing young people's understanding of politics (see: Benedicto, 2013; Manning, 2013, 2010; Rossi, 2009;O'Toole, 2003; Henn *et al.*, 2002), but the influence of contextual elements specific to young people on their participation has gone unnoticed. The data, however, show that the differences in participation strategies according to the country and location in question are highly relevant. Taking YTRs into account as apriority contextual factor complements other contributions in the literature on the effects of context on participation, which usually refer to the whole population.

Europe is experiencing a period in which economic crisis has heightened destandardisation, exposure to risk and uncertainty in young people's pathways to adulthood (Cairns *et al.*, 2014; Dietrich, 2012). Economic and political reforms stemming from the crisis also have an impact on the response that welfare states give to the needs of youth transitions. Therefore, it must be borne in mind that one of the consequences of the youth transition models emerging in this period of change may clearly affect the political strategies of young people and how they participate with regard to democracy.

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Endnotes

[i] Some recent studies have addressed the issue of the influence of destandardisation and lengthening of youth transitions on youth political attitudes and participation at the individual level. See, for example: García -Albacete, 2014; Benedicto, 2013;Soler-i-Martí and Sánchez, 2013; Smets, 2010.

[ii]MYPLACE data from the following countries are drawn on in this article: Croatia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Portugal, Slovakia, Spain and the United Kingdom.

[iii] De-commodification takes place 'when a service is rendered as a matter of right, and when a person can maintain a livelihood without reliance on the market' (Esping-Andersen 1990: 21-22).

[iv] Lynch (2001, 2006) proposes several more complex indicators that include other types of social expenditure aimed at unemployment, housing, education or healthcare. The results of these indicators keep the order of the countries mostly unchanged after considering the age-orientation of their social expenditure.

[v] For our analysis, we do not use surveys in Russia and Georgia. We opted for including only European Union countries in order to reduce variation in the macro-political context and to ensure comparability of national data that manly come from Eurostat. Bearing this in mind, our study is based on approximately 15,000 surveys conducted in 26 different locations in 12 countries.

[vi]A comparison of the differences between locations in each country based on the survey can be found in an overview report from the project, available at: http://www.fp7-myplace.eu/documents/WP4D4-5overviewreportv1.pdf

[vii] See, for example, the distinction between representational and extra-representational participation in Teorell, Torcal and Montero (2007) or citizen-oriented and cause-oriented in Norris (2004) or elite-directed and elite-challenging participation inn Inglehart and Welzel (2005).

[viii] We have chosen not to include voting in the institutional participation indicator because we would lose many cases as our sample begins at 16 years old. In addition voting is influenced by some legal and institutional factors (such as compulsory voting, electoral system, etc.) that would distract from the focus of analysis.

[ix] The percentages of each row do not add up to 100 per cent because there are individuals that can be included in both dimensions of activity: institutional participation; and protest. This group of individuals ranges from 0.3 per cent in Ozd (Hungary) to 17.9 per cent in Jena (Germany).

[x] In order to measure the statistical reliability of the new indicator, we calculated Cronbach's alpha of the seven items once they were standardised. The result (α=0.902) shows strong internal consistency.

[xi] Participation in formal organisations includes participating or cooperating in religious or church organisations, national or local youth parliaments or councils, national cultural organisations, student unions or local or neighbourhood associations. It does not include political parties or trade unions because they are part of the dependent variable. Issue-oriented organisations refer to environmental organisations, animal welfare groups, peace organisations, human rights organisations, women's organisations and anti-globalisation movements.

[xii] In some cases, locations correspond to whole urban centres, but in others they are neighbourhoods or districts of larger cities.

[xiii] The information for these three contextual variables comes from a database created as part of the MYPLACE project with demographic and socio-political information on the locations.

[xiv] To obtain these data, we take the aggregate data by location from the same MYPLACE survey.

[xv]Taken from the Labour Force Survey, Eurostat.

[xvi] The 'years of democracy' variable is taken from the following database: https://sites.google.com/site/joseantoniocheibub/datasets/democracy-and-dictatorship-revisited. For a discussion of the same, see Cheibub *et al.*, (2010).