Intergenerational Justice Review

Issue topic:

How attractive are political parties and trade unions to young people? (Part II)

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In April 2019, Greta Thunberg made TIME Magazine's 100 Most Influential People of 2019 list. The 16 year-old climate activist, who has also been nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize, started a movement that saw a multitude of student protests and school strikes around the world centred on action against climate change. TIME Magazine quoted her saying, "We can't save the world by playing by the rules, because the rules have to be changed." With her engagement, Thunberg inspired thousands of youth activists to join her in her efforts and has thus put not only climate change on the political agenda but also the political participation and representation of the young. And this even though Thunberg and many of her fellow protesters do not yet enjoy (full) voting rights in their respective countries.

Just like the previous issue of the Intergenerational Justice Review, this one is also dedicated to the topic of the underrepresentation of younger people in political decision-making. The first two contributions in this issue pay particular attention to the existence – or lack thereof – of networks and contacts in politics that seem to be important for political representation.

Daniel Stockemer and Aksel Sundström's article titled "Youth's underrepresentation in the European Parliament: Insights from interviews with young Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)" reports results from qualitative interviews with 23 MEPs on the factors contributing to the success and failure of young people to enter the European Parliament. They find that, in general, three common themes or complaints amongst the successful young MEPs, irrespective of their party affiliation: "(1) a general reluctance within parties to nominate young candidates, (2) young candidates lacking the necessary contacts in parties to get elected, and (3) young candidates having too little experience to gain nomination for an electable seat." Despite these heavy criticisms of established politicians and (party) structures, the authors also summarise some more hopeful suggestions by respondents centring around the role of party youth organisations.

The second contribution, by Emilien Paulis, also highlights the important role of networks and contacts, yet already at an earlier stage: when joining a political party. Drawing on social network and political participation theory and novel survey data from Belgium, Paulis explores what network patterns contribute to young people's enrolment in a political party. He discovers strong social ties between young party members and suggests that this indicates "a certain exclusivity in recruitment patterns of political parties". In addition, his analysis also points out that a highly homogenous network composition is a statistically significant predictor of joining a political party. Overall, Paulis, similar to Stockemer and Sundström, suggests a review of institutional processes and structures within established political organisations such as parties in order to promote a more diverse and above all younger profile of politically active citizens.

The final contribution in this issue offers insights from an online survey conducted among young adults in Germany suggesting that these respondents were indeed politically interested and felt willing to assume responsibility through participation.

As a consequence, Philipp Köbe concludes from his analysis that the supply-side of political organisations is the main problem in the underrepresentation and not so much young people's lack of engagement. His four specific recommendations to political organisations follow very much from this conclusion: (1) providing transparent and suitable information to meet young people's interests and demands; (2) lowering the electoral threshold for parties' parliamentary representation to improve the representation of minority opinions; (3) expanding youth-friendly opportunities for political participation such as video conferences and social media usages in order to reach out to the appropriate groups; (4) improving the efficiency and impact of political decision-making to reward political engagement amongst young people. Köbe finally suggests a steering instrument for political organisations to help them achieve these goals.

In the book review section, we continue the theme of political participation and representation of the young. Simon Pistor reviews the book Youthquake 2017: The Rise of Young Cosmopolitans in Britain (Palgrave Macmillan, 2019) by James Sloam and Matt Henn. The book investigates youth political participation in Britain around and after the Brexit referendum in 2016 and is built around the new notion a "youthquake" – a term initially introduced by British media to describe the surprising success of the movement behind the Labour Party but later on also becoming Oxford Dictionaries' 2017 word of the year.

Pistor writes that Sloam and Henn expand the concept of a youthquake in their book to "youthquake elections" – "ones in which dramatic changes in how many young people vote, who they vote for and how active they are in the campaign have, quite literally, shaken up the status quo" (Sloam/Henn 2019: 8). Using this concept, the book's central claim is that it was a youth movement based on a broader appeal to the needs of young people (especially by the Labour Party) which spiked the higher voter turnout among young people.

Pistor's review of the book is unequivocal: using methods from comparative politics, the authors provide a "very interesting argument" and "a clear empirical case for the youthquake during the 2017 General Election in the UK". Pistor also welcomes especially two implications of the book: (1) many young British people are not as politically disenfranchised as general wisdom holds (and there is much more to be said about that); (2) many of them are not only cosmopolitans but also British cosmopolitans interested and engaged in national politics. Overall, Simon Pistor concludes that Sloam and Henn's book is "an empirically rich and informed study", which might suggest that the key to future democratic successes does indeed lie with the young.

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Youth's underrepresentation in the European Parliament: Insights from interviews with young Members of the European Parliament (MEPs)

by Daniel Stockemer and Aksel Sundström

Abstract: Why do political parties elect so few young deputies? Given that the quantitative literature has at best only partially answered this question, we decided to conduct a qualitative investigation. Taking the European Parliament as a case for study, we examined this question through interview research with some of the young MEPs who served between 2014 and 2019. Our respondents, who answered various open-ended questions, suggest that the young are so few in number both because they lack contacts within the party and are seen as lacking experience. In addition, it appears that few parties have established pro-active measures to promote young candidates.

Keywords: *Youth, Parliamentary representation, Parties*

Introduction

Young people are starkly underrepresented in parliaments. Despite the fact that they make up over 20%, and in some countries 30, 40 or even 50% of the eligible voting age population, young legislators only make up less than 10% of the elected members in national parliaments across the globe (Stockemer/Sundström 2018). The empirical referent for this study, the European Parliament (EP), is no exception to this rule. In the current 2014-2019 parliament, youth representation – that is, the presence of MEPs aged 18 to 35 at the time of election – stands at a rather pitiful 11.4% (Stockemer/Sundström 2019).

Contrary to the representation of other groups, such as women, the presence of young deputies has also not increased over time. Indeed, the EP saw its female presence more than double from 16.6% for the first elected parliament in 1979 to more than a third of members in the 2014 parliament election (European Parliament 2018). Yet there was no meaningful increase over the same period in the representation among MEPs of the age cohort of 18 to 35 years old. In that first parliament, young deputies made up 9.1% of the deputies.[1]

What explains this consistent underrepresentation? Since the predominantly quantitative literature has not offered any convincing explanation to this question, we decided to ask those young deputies that have been elected to Brussels and Strasbourg, why they think so few of their young colleagues have succeeded and what role different party characteristics might play in this. The answers to our open-ended questions suggest three hurdles. First, young parliamentarians think that they are so few in number because they lack both the necessary contacts within the party leadership and experience. Second, many of the elderly party elites seem reluctant to hand over their seat to a young colleague. Third, and contrary to other groups such as women, respondents suggest that few proactive measures are currently employed to boost young candidates.

This short article is structured as follows: in the next section, we very briefly situate our study in the budding literature on youth representation and present our methods. Next, we explain our results. Finally, we summarise our main findings and offer some avenues for further reflection.

> In the current 2014-2019 parliament, youth representation – that is, the presence of MEPs aged 18 to 35 at the time of election – stands at a rather pitiful 11.4%.

The existing literature on youth representation

There is agreement in the empirical literature that men aged 50 to 65 still dominate national parliaments (Murray 2008; Kissau et al. 2012). Several studies also explicitly confirm that the age group 18 to 35 is the least represented of all age groups in legislatures, and the most underrepresented compared to its share in the population. For example, Stockemer and Sundström (2018) not only show that the average parliamentarian is eight years older than the average citizen, but also that young deputies are largely absent from our legislatures. For instance, in the world's parliaments (lower houses where applicable) young adults aged 35 and below at the time of election still make up fewer than one in ten parliamentarians. An IPU (2014) report further highlights that the percentage of young legislators aged 30 years and under at the time of election stands at a miniscule 2%.[2]

There is also agreement in the literature that this flagrant underrepresentation of the young is problematic both from a normative and policy perspective (Tremmel et al. 2015). Normatively, it is problematic if the political system systematically denies a group access to the decision-making bodies (Henn/Ford 2012). As such, young people's underrepresentation goes against the ideal of a fully democratic society, where ideally all members have equal rights, responsibilities and duties (Ottaway 2003). More practically, research has established that young people in aggregate hold different views to older generations in the realms of environmental protection, spending priorities and social questions such as abortion or same sex marriage (McEvoy 2016). If young people are not given adequate representation, their views on these important topics would likely be silenced. This, in turn, might have dire consequences on young people's support for democracy and their interest in participating in the political process (Wattenberg 2015).

> [T]he average parliamentarian is eight years older than the average citizen.

Given the negative repercussions of the low representation of young people, it is of utmost importance for research to further understand what are the beneficial and harmful conditions for

young people's (under) representation. Yet, existing research has so far struggled to propose the determinants that could achieve a higher legislative presence of the young. Aside from some consensus that proportional representation electoral systems moderately boost the representation of young legislators (see Joshi 2013; 2015; Stockemer/Sundström 2018), the literature lacks a deeper understanding of what the favourable conditions are that boost the presence of young people in parliament. Most macro-level country factors – including youth quotas, economic development or the age distribution in the population – do not turn out to be either statistically significant or substantively relevant in models that seek to explain young people's representation (e.g. Reynolds 2011; Joshi 2013; Stockemer/Sundström 2018). The same applies to party characteristics such as the age of the party leader, the age of the party, the size of the electoral party support, and the political ideology of the party. While the different features of a party organisation should matter for the type of candidates that become successful, they too have no systematic bearing on the age of parliamentarians in the EP (see Sundström/Stockemer 2018). What then explains a party's reluctance, or in some cases the lack thereof, to nominate and elect young deputies? We think that a qualitative setting is best suited to answer this question as the literature is in need of developing further explanations for why parties do not nominate more young deputies. As a first step, we thought it a good idea to explore the perceptions of young MEPs about the underrepresentation of their age group and focused on the role played by political party organisations. In detail, we contacted young current MEPs and interviewed them, using open-ended questions related to two larger themes: (1) perceptions about the reasons for young politicians' underrepresentation in the EP, and (2) perceptions about discrimination against young candidates in their party. We reached out to a sample of 130 MEPs that were 40 years of age and below at the time of the 2014 EP election in May and June 2017, with three reminders (the latest in November 2017). In total, 23 MEPs responded, either by email or by telephone. While this amounts to a relatively low response rate, we nevertheless believe that their replies are valuable. Our respondents come from a variety of backgrounds; they are broadly dispersed, coming from a wide variety of countries across the EU, and they are from small as well as very large parties. We also note that they represent parties of various ideological spectra and are roughly split into men and women. Despite these characteristics of our sample, we are aware that our relatively small sample might not be 100% representative of the population of young deputies, neither might it represent the views of candidates that did not get elected. However, what these interviews can do is to provide us with some (alternative) explanations about why there are still so few young politicians in the European Parliament and elsewhere.

> [Y]oung people's underrepresentation goes against the ideal of a fully democratic society, where ideally all members have equal rights, responsibilities and duties.

Results

Three themes stick out the most from the interview data: (1) a general reluctance within parties to nominate young candidates, (2) young candidates lacking the necessary contacts in parties to get elected, and (3) young candidates having too little experience to gain nomination for an electable seat.

The reluctance to include young people

The finding that stands out the most is that some respondents mention that there is an insensitivity towards young individuals in their parties. While only a few people openly stated that they, or young individuals in general, are discriminated against in their party, our respondents made subtle complaints with regards to the party's tendency to favour older individuals' nominations. For example, one of the respondents from a party in Eastern Europe stated that: "I believe that many people in the party still have to understand that there is place in party politics for new ideas and the exchange of views between generations." Another young MEP from a former Communist country admitted that the situation is complicated for young individuals within their party. Another respondent stated in a more straightforward way that her party has a poor record of bringing young people to elected seats: "It is de facto more difficult for a person in their 20s than for an older one. Sure, it is." Similarly, a respondent from a party in Southern Europe expressed the view that the rather old elites in her party do not feel any need to nominate young individuals. A final illustrative example is a respondent from a larger social democratic party who mentioned that the party's youth organisation is working towards introducing quotas for young people on lists for the EP, but that this proposal has been met with "reluctance" from the party leadership.

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The disadvantage of lacking contacts

Another reoccurring theme among respondents is a reference to specific recruitment mechanisms for candidate lists, which might directly disfavour young candidates. For example, one of the respondents reported that in order to be considered for the lists, candidates have to collect 30 signatures from party officials, a task that is easier to fulfil for experienced politicians, who have been in the party for decades and thus have a large network from which they can draw support. In contrast, younger individuals might lack this network and thus might have a much harder time to fulfil this requirement. Similarly, a respondent from one of the largest parties in the EP stated that connections in the party are tremendously important: "If you run against elderly candidates who have worked in the party for longer, that is an issue. They are more known. They know more about how to do politics." Another MEP mentions that even in her organisation – which in fact is a green party, often assumed in the literature to be more beneficial to young politicians – contacts among members in the party are important if you seek nomination for an electable position: "I think that people often underestimate that you have to spend several years to build up trust in the party." Altogether, what these responses point to is that party hierarchies are still difficult to penetrate for young individuals. In other words, formal and informal connections and networks within parties still seem to matter in many parties; as long as these hierarchies remain important, young candidates might have problems gaining nominations and elections.

The obstacle of having too little experience

Another related theme in the interviews is that of political experience – a factor that can easily be used by party elites to disqua-

lify young politicians. For example, a respondent from a smaller party explained: "Young people often meet the prejudice that if you are young you have less competence. …if a new member enters a meeting and that person is very young, of course there is a difference in treatment." Similarly, an interviewee voiced such perceptions about young people being described as less suitable for advancement in her party: "Yes. Because you have not been engaged for long, you have not held assignments, you are not known in the party and are you are considered inexperienced." Another respondent, from a left-wing party, stated that "you are not experienced enough" is like hearing a mantra for young candidates. Finally, one of the respondents, coming from one of the EU founding countries, describes the difficult road towards candidacy as follows: "I am convinced that young members are at a disadvantage in [party x], because it is a very old organisation with well-established power structures, which means that members are usually expected to work their way up from the municipal to the state level and then to the national or European level. This takes time."

This quote summarises the dilemma mentioned in several accounts facing young individuals: in order to be nominated for a potentially successful candidacy to the EP, they must have occupied some important positions in the party before being a viable contender. Yet, gaining all these experiences at an early age is naturally difficult to achieve for young individuals. From a theoretical perspective, the observation that experience is a necessary condition to gain a seat in Strasbourg and Brussels is important, in that it invalidates the assumption of the second order election model that a seat in the EP can be a good training ground for young MPs (cf. Meserve et al. 2009). Rather, the interviews underline that a seat in the EP is quite attractive for senior politicians, even if they have not held elected office in Strasbourg and Brussels before. Some quantitative calculation confirms that the median age of a freshman MEP is 49, less than two years younger than the average age of all MEPs.

> [F]ormal and informal connections and networks within parties still seem to matter in many parties; as long as these hierarchies remain important, young candidates might have problems gaining nominations and elections.

In fact, those young individuals who have made it to Brussels and Strasbourg have frequently already had impressive political careers before being elected to the EP. To highlight this, one of the respondents, from a Southern European party, was elected to the regional council at the age of 23, president of the national youth wing of party at the same age, a member of the party's national board at the age 24 and then elected to the European Parliament when he was 28 years old. Of course, such careers are the exception rather than the norm and very few individuals will ever have such impressive political résumés at the end of their 20s or in their 30s. As described by a respondent: "To get any elected position in my party you have to have had membership for a decade or more…You cannot renew politics, if you only give chances to people having been in politics there is only a type of people that can be elected and not young people." This quote indicates that as long as requirements for nomination for electable positions remain as extensive – or merits are valued in this way

– youth representation will probably also stall at current levels. Several interviewees mentioned that there needs to be a "shift in mentality" among party elites, towards recognising that the new perspectives which the young may bring to the table are needed.

> Several interviewees mentioned that there needs to be a "shift in mentality" among party elites, towards recognising that the new perspectives which the young may bring to the table are needed.

Parties' youth organisations: one way forward to break the vicious cycle of young people's underrepresentation?

The interviewees point to a vicious cycle of youth representation. Parties of all colours are reluctant to nominate young candidates; these young politicians lack the necessary experience as well as party- and political capital to be strong contenders for a seat in Strasbourg and Brussels. It will be difficult to break this vicious cycle of youth underrepresentation. One way to do so might be via parties' youth organisations. As mentioned before, these groups often lobby the leadership by proposing policies – such as youth quotas on lists – and try to promote candidates from their ranks. Yet such strategies are seldom successful and there is considerable variation across parties on how well the youth wing is organised or how big it is, in relation to other groups or members in the party. But these youth organisations can be an important push factor to overcome the hurdles of nomination. For example, one respondent, who is a member of a conservative party in West Europe, largely attributes his successful nomination to the relative strength of his party's youth organisation: "It does not surprise me that, generally, many of the candidates that are active in this wing often fare well…Despite the lack of formal experience, they have still done many years in the youth organisation…It has a stronger standing and identity among members than other groups, such as the women's group, and can help youths get nominated."

Another respondent provides insight in why certain youth organisations are successful in supporting young candidates. Importantly, she describes how there is a vote in the youth wing's annual congress coordinating which candidates to support formally when approaching the mother party that constructs the lists for EP elections: "This joint support has made the organisation much more influential and without this it would be even more difficult to be elected as a young candidate."

Future comparative research on youth representation would therefore benefit from focusing further on the role of youth organisations. Appropriate questions would be: What is the relative standing and strength of the youth organisation in relation to the mother party? What kind of strategies for influence exist and which ones are more successful than others? Under what circumstances are party elites willing to include demands from youth organisations to include young candidates for electable positions?

Some (more) signs of improvement in youth representation

There are some budding signs that youth representation might be improving, albeit slowly. For example, several interviewees see two potentially positive developments in this regard. First, in the 2014 election some new parties – such as the Five Star Movement in Italy and Podemos in Spain – entered the European Parliamentary arena. As noted by one of the respondents, these parties not

only have a radically different political agenda than the traditional mainstream parties, they have also been created by young citizens. The parliamentary caucuses of these parties also consist, to a large part, of members in their 20s and 30s.[3] In fact, according to one of these parties' young members, his low age was more of an advantage than a disadvantage to get elected.

Second, some of the established parties have apparently adopted some pro-active measures to support young party members. For example, several of the interviewees report that their parties offer workshops for young party members to prepare them for political office. Probably most promising, two of the respondents report that their party has adopted quotas on their lists to promote young individuals. According to them, their parties have a quota of 10% and 30% youths respectively. Since we could not independently verify this information, it suggests that this might be an informal procedure.

Conclusion

Judged from the hair colour of most members, the European Parliament – like many other parliaments across the globe – is a "silver" parliament.[4] The majority of MEPs are aged 50 and above, and the young cohorts have a limited representation. Over the past 40 years of the parliament's existence, this picture of a largely grey parliament has not changed. Despite some positive signs, such as the adoption of proactive measures by some parties, as well as the emergence of new and younger parties (e.g. Podemos and the Five Star Movement), this dominance of elderly politicians is unlikely to change dramatically in the near future. It seems from the interviews that recruitment practices in favour of experienced politicians with a broad network are entrenched. Young politicians will continue to face hurdles to break into these networks, even more so because youth do not have a sufficiently large voting power to pressure parties to include an adequate number of young adults on electoral lists (Prainsack/Vodanovic 2013).

> A possible force that might help young politicians to gain more representation is youth organisations within parties. It appears that, if tightly organised, these youth organisations can successfully pressure some parties to select certain young candidates for electable positions.

A possible force that might help young politicians to gain more representation is youth organisations within parties. It appears that, if tightly organised, these youth organisations can successfully pressure some parties to select certain young candidates for electable positions. Yet neither this pressure, nor the aforementioned emergence of new parties, nor some lukewarm proactive measures by the parties themselves, will guarantee that young adults are as highly represented as their share in the population would demand. We think that the only quick fix to resolve the flagrant underrepresentation of youth is through the use quotas. Quota schemes have helped other disadvantaged groups, including women and ethnic minorities, to increase their shares in parliament (Bird 2014; O'Brien/Rickne 2016), and they could also help young candidates. Not only would a youth quota of 10 or 20% directly boost youth representation, it would also signal to young people in general that they have a place in politics. Yet the political will in Europe and elsewhere does not seem to be there.

Research on youth underrepresentation should also continue, at an even faster pace. Through interview research, we have confirmed that recruitment to political office has remained very traditional. Candidates must have the necessary political and party capital to be considered for a seat. Despite other qualities, such as ever increasing education, more often than not, young candidates do not have this political capital. There might yet be more to discover and we encourage others to expand this discussion. Qualitative research could for example focus on young candidates who unsuccessfully ran for a seat, to explore their experiences as well. Other quantitative and qualitative studies could look at the representation of young adults at different levels, including at the regional and the local level. Future research should also focus on the supply side, and ask prospective candidates what they think parties can do to help persuade them to run.

Notes

1 The representation of the 35 years old and below cohort at the time of election was as follows for the seven elected parliaments so far: 9.1% (1979-1984), 9.9% (1984-1989), 6.2%(1989-1994), 7.1% (1999-2004), 12% (2004-2009), 9.1% (2009-2014), 11.4% (2014-2019) (see Stockemer/Sundström 2019).

2 See also IPU 2016.

3 E.g. the average age of incoming MEPs in Podemos and the Five Star Movement in 2014 was 37 and 38 years respectively.

4 See Sota 2018.

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What's going around? A social network explanation of youth party membership

by Emilien Paulis

A *bstract: Because people do not join political parties in a social vacuum but rather in close relation with their peers, this paper explores how the structure and composition of interpersonal, social networks affect youth party membership, and questions the answer's implications for recruitment. The structure does not affect statistically the young citizens' probability of becoming party members, as the process depends to a high degree on their proximate network core, e.g. their relatives, pointing towards a certain exclusivity in recruitment patterns and giving insight also on why they might stay away from conventional politics. A homogeneous composition matching with a high social and political profile is a pattern that has a considerable impact on their odds of joining a party, stressing that social networks can work in reproducing social and political inequalities, confining recruitment targets to the national population's most "usual suspects", and thereby explaining some difficulties faced by party organisations. Drawing on these findings, the conclusion discusses strategic considerations for Belgian parties.*

Keywords: Youth, Party membership, Social network, Interpersonal relationship

Introduction

The celebration of the 50th anniversary of May 1968's events recalled that younger generations can generate large, mass social and political movements, by asking for more involvement and influence on the way politics is conducted. More broadly, May 1968 constitutes an historical shift in citizens' mentalities and attitudes towards traditional politics and embodies the materialisation of a latent citizen dissatisfaction challenging traditional institutions, which does not seem to have vanished since then. Notwithstanding, citizens' commitment to traditional politics, crudely measured through union and party membership, as well as more frequently through turnout, is clearly on the wane in most Western democracies (Norris 2002; Dalton 2008; Van Biezen et al. 2012). Looking at the decline of party membership more closely, both demand- and supply-side explanations are proposed (Kölln 2014; Van Haute/Gauja 2015). On the one hand, the erosion of parties' recruiting capacity suggests a decreasing organisational density and less societal penetration, which are taken as indicators of party change or decline (Katz/Mair 1995; Van Biezen et al. 2012). This broadly negative picture about party membership could illustrate a larger democratic crisis, a gap between citizens and politics, questioning the role of these organisations as representative institutions. The progressive undermining of representative systems and their elites' legitimacy consequently reinforces the wider process of citizen disillusionment and partisan dealignment (Webb 2006; Dalton 2013; Smith 2014). The gap with the youth could be even deeper, especially regarding traditional parties embodying the "old politics" (Quintelier 2007; Mycock/Tonge 2012). This younger population segment is more interested in al-

ternative and less institutionalised forms of participation, undercutting parties' role as vehicles of their participation (Norris 2002; Loader et al. 2014). It is worth noting the exception of green parties, which stand out by being the party family recruiting the most among younger age cohorts and exhibiting positive trends in terms of membership figures over time in Europe (Delwit 2011; Van Haute/Gauja 2015). Furthermore, party membership decline is accelerated by the emergence of the Internet, social media and new technologies, which have decoupled the avenues and channels through which the citizens' voice might be heard, and thus affected the organisation and recruitment function of political parties (Dalton/Wattenberg 2000; Gibson 2017).

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On the other hand, the literature agrees with a common feature: people who are male, older, better educated, politically interested, trusting of institutions, satisfied with democracy, identified with a party, and/or involved in civic participation are all the more likely to join a party (Seyd/Whiteley 2004; Heidar 2007; Van Haute/Gauja 2015). This main finding reflects the well-known social and political inequalities inherent to political participation and a certain lack of representativeness of party members. Hence, it is empirically acknowledged that younger people are less likely to join a party (Hooghe et al. 2004; Quintelier 2007) as they would be less concerned with and interested in politics, less politically knowledgeable, more apathetic, or participate less in other social or political activities (Roker 2005; O'toole et al. 2003). If it is puzzling to find out that macro evolutions – providing citizens with generally better access to resources of all kinds – have not translated into an increase of party members (Persson 2014), it is all the more intriguing regarding younger generations, which are supposed to have benefited the most from recent advances.

What this calls for is to look for alternatives to aggregate-level patterns or individual-level dynamics driving party membership, especially regarding younger citizens who have *de facto* less resources and whose participation might be triggered and mediated by other factors. This paper puts the emphasis on one important and less systematically explored meso-level factor, interpersonal networks, and questions how it affects the chances of joining a party. The paper contends that individuals' political attitudes and behaviours do not form randomly, in a social vacuum, but in close relation and interaction with significant social peers. Hence, it is argued that it is not individual characteristics *per se* that matter for understanding party mobilisation, but rather individuals' features in relation with the characteristics of their proximate social environment. More specifically, social networks are expected to play

all the more in the process of younger citizens' party mobilisation for two reasons: (1) their political attitudes and behaviours are less stable, more volatile, and therefore more subject to peer-influence (Settle et al. 2011); (2) they reported proportionally the "someone asked" reason for joining as more important than their older fellows in this dataset (Paulis 2018).

The paper focuses, first, on the effect of the network structure (size/density), which is used as a proxy for social integration. Larger and denser networks are expected to increase the chances of joining a party. Second, the impact of network composition is explored in two areas: one hypothesis relates to the network nodes' social and political attributes and their homogeneity (in terms of political attitudes and socio-demographics), whereas another expectation pertains to attributes of the ties. Networks tending towards more similarity on high-level of attributes (positive attitudes, high socio-demographic profiles) are expected to affect positively the odds of joining a political party, reflecting that social networks could tend to reinforce participation inequalities rather than overcome them. Moreover, family ties are expected to remain the main channel of party membership for younger citizens. It would, it seems, point toward a certain exclusivity in recruitment patterns of political parties, despite macro socio-economic evolutions and organisational attempts that should have diversified the gates to enter parties as a member. These hypotheses are tested using cross-sectional survey data gathered online in 2016 among a representative sample of Belgian citizens (based on age, gender and region of residence). Furthermore, party membership appears a relevant dependent variable to measure young citizens' conventional participation in Belgium given that voting is compulsory.

> [I]ndividuals' political attitudes and behaviours do not form randomly, in a social vacuum, but in close relation and interaction with significant social peers.

Theory

The paper tries somewhat to bridge the divide between the supply- and demand-side of party membership studies. Demand-side studies are interested in explaining party membership fluctuations as a result of macro-level societal evolutions or anchored in party organisation theories, whereas major accounts at the individual level (supply side) are inspired by classic theories of political participation (Leighley 1995). The "General Incentives Model" (Seyd/Whiteley 1992, 2002; Whiteley/Seyd 2002; Whiteley et al. 2006) provides tools for addressing issues such as who joins (resource model: socio-economic status), why (rational choice model: incentives and motivations), and what opinions they hold (socio-psychological model: political attitudes). Seyd and Whiteley's ground-breaking investigations on British party members sparked many other single-case (e.g. Gallagher et al. 2002; Heidar/Saglie 2003; Pedersen et al. 2004; Den Ridder et al. 2011; Lisi/Espritio Santo 2017) or comparative applications (Heidar 2007; Van Haute/Gauja 2015). All point towards a key empirical finding: higher socio-economic status and positive political attitudes make people more likely to join a party. If these explanations are robust, especially to account for youth party membership (Bruter/Harrison 2009), few contributions have really questioned how social networks might play a part in reproducing (or overcoming) social and political inequalities, mediat-

ing the membership process and thereby affecting the recruiting patterns of political parties.

> Larger and denser networks are expected to increase the chances of joining a party.

While references to "social networks" in the main explanations of party membership can be found, to our knowledge, none used systematically Social Network Analysis (SNA) as theoretical and methodological background to operationalise the concept. A social network is defined as "a set of relationships between actors, or sets of actors" (Wasserman/Faust 1994). The adoption of such an approach supposes agreement with four essential assumptions: actors and their actions are viewed as interdependent rather than independent, autonomous units; relational ties between actors are channels for the transfer or "flow" of resources (either material or nonmaterial); models focusing on individuals view the network structural environment as providing opportunities for or constraints on individual action; network models conceptualise structure (social, economic, political and so forth) as lasting patterns of relations among actors. Political scientists studying conventional participation have long been dominated by the individualism of their field (Lazer 2011). This is intriguing as there is a strong SNA-based sociological tradition that stresses the influence played by networks in the process of involvement in unconventional forms of participation (Diani/McAdam 2003), which might have been applied to study conventional participation and engagement in political parties. Secondly, Columbia scholars laid the foundations for a network approach of traditional political behaviours, for instance with their two-step flow of communication theory that stresses the role of influential others in channelling political information between mass media and ordinary citizens. Some scholars have nonetheless reread the classic school of social influence through the lenses of social network theory and analysis (Eulau 1980; Knoke 1990; Huckfeldt et al. 2004; Zukerman 2005; Sinclair 2012), using genuine network data that were missing in the past. Overall, this line of research emphasises social networks and their features as significant factors shaping the process of electoral mobilisation (voting and campaign involvement) and vote choice. The influence of kinship, friendship, or weaker social ties as channels for political engagement is also a central topic of discussion (La Due Lake/Huckfeldt 1998; Zúñiga/Valenzuela 2011). Hence, these modern network theories of political participation and social influence provide interesting alternative theoretical avenues to cope with youth party membership, focusing either on the effects of network structure or composition (Knoke 1990).

> [T]his line of research emphasises social networks and their features as significant factors shaping the process of electoral mobilisation (voting and campaign involvement) and vote choice.

In terms of structure, social network size and density can be used as a proxy for social integration, which has been demonstrated to impact positively the odds of participating in the political process (Knoke 1990; La Due Lake/Huckfeldt 1998; Teorell 2000; McClurg 2003; Sinclair 2012). An extensive social network supposes more connections to other social peers and extends the chances

of being related to people who are themselves already politically engaged and likely to affect the mobilisation process. Interpersonal networks allow the effective recruitment of people in political activities by helping exchanges of relevant political information and enlarging the exposure to, as well as understanding of, politics (Huckfeldt et al. 2004), reinforcing participation as a desirable social norm (Bond et al. 2017), and encouraging the circulation of various resources' (Jan 2009; Lim 2008; Lin 2008). Furthermore, a denser network, where peers know each other to a larger extent, supposes more fluid exchanges of information, but also more social cohesiveness, trust and pressure (Burt 2005), patterns that can affect the chances of joining, especially if those peers are already affiliated. In so far as younger citizens rely generally on smaller networks than their older fellows, the first hypothesis expects from those with larger and denser social networks to encourage party membership *(H1)*.

In terms of composition, the focus can be, *first*, on the ties binding the network and the attributes of these relationships. To account for the fact that networks connect individuals who are tied to each other in varying degrees of closeness and intimacy, scholars distinguish between "strong" and "weak" ties (Granovetter 1973). The first ones are durable and established with intimates who provide support, are frequently in touch or are kin (Marsden 1990), whereas the second imply more social distance and less frequency of contact. Both types are shown to affect political participation (Lim 2008; Zuniga/Valenzuela 2011). Although early studies on personal influence emphasised the power of strong-tie networks for political recruitment (Katz/Lazarsfeld 1955), weak ties have become more prominent and more relevant for political participation as a result of the socio-economic modernisation process that tends to decrease social distance between individuals (Huckfeldt et al. 1995). While there is evidence supporting an increasing significance of weak ties for political involvement, the influence of strong relations must not be dismissed as sources of mobilisation in conventional participation (Zuckerman 2005; Cross/Young 2008). Networks dominated by strong ties tend to face less political disagreement and generate more participation in representative institutions (Mutz 2002). The second hypothesis expects family ties to remain the most significant channels of youth party membership *(H2)*. Nonetheless, the mobilising role of strong ties could mean also that parties are quite exclusive in their recruitment patterns (Cross/Young 2008) and that if the family network core is not connected to politics, this configuration might be a crucial source of non-political engagement among young people.

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Second, social networks of all kinds tend towards homophily in their composition (birds of a feather flocks together, or the echo chamber effect): people sharing similar characteristics, or attributes, tend to cluster together within social networks (McPherson et al. 2001; Lazer et al. 2009; Evans/Fu 2018). Social network effects are tricky to grasp because networks do not form randomly. Individuals are at once "creators and captives" of their social networks: they generate intentionally their networks throughout

their life, and form ties with similar and like-minded others (social selection), but these networks, in turn, provide constraints and opportunities on their life choices (social influence). Adapted to the political realm, a dynamic process of co-evolution between individuals' political attitudes and behaviours and their networks can be found: they tend to become more similar to and to comply with their network fellows in terms of political views, but they also look for politically similar others. This paper is interested in the effect of homogeneous network composition, leaving aside the issue of network diversity. It assumes that homophily, or the congruence that may exist in a network –meaning that ego (survey respondent) and alters (network peers) are similar on a given attribute (same views, values, opinions, socio-demographic profile, etc.), and that these attributes are positive (e.g. congruent on a high level of interest or satisfaction) – might be an important factor influencing the odds of joining a party among the youth. Homophilic networks converging towards a higher level of social and political attributes are expected to increase the chance of a young citizen joining a party *(H3)*. The hypothesis is discussed, nonetheless, as to whether social networks might actually work in reproducing social and political inequalities, embedding and confining people in a highly homogeneous environment, and thereby bringing less diversity in party recruitment patterns (similar "high" profiles predominantly recruited by parties).

> [I]f the family network core is not connected to politics, this configuration might be a crucial source of non-political engagement among young people.

Data and methods
Data collection
Acknowledging that it is a widespread, conventional technique to collect and generate information on party membership (Scarrow/Gezgor 2010; Whiteley 2011; Ponce/Scarrow 2016) and social networks (Marsden 2011; Crossley et al. 2015), the paper capitalised on a cross-sectional survey to gather original data. It was conducted online by an external company (Qualtrics) between June and July 2016 among a non-random quota sample of 2,801 Belgian citizens, based on the Belgian population's characteristics (gender, age, and region of residence). Regarding networks specifically, relying on an online survey platform *"substantially reduces the costs, time and fatigue in managing the complex questionnaire required for data collection of ego-centered data"* (Manfreda et al. 2004: 295), and moderates the face-to-face or phone-call interviewer effect (Eagle/Proeshold-Bell 2015). Moreover, it could lead sometimes to a better quality and reliability of network data (Coromina/Coenders 2006; Matzat/Snijders 2010).

Two main components were encompassed in the design of the questionnaire. First, traditional sets of questions existing in survey research into political participation (Gibson/Cantijoch 2013) were used to collect information on the respondents themselves: their political behaviours (party membership and other forms of participation), political attitudes (satisfaction, interest, and party identification), and socio-demographics (gender, education, and age). Second, as the primary purpose was to capture social networks as the main independent variable, the most critical methodological issue was to generate network data for each respondent. This type of network survey measurement supposes collecting

egocentric, personal network data, as everything is elicited from the perspective of one respondent (ego). The research opts for the most common and straightforward tool to reach them: the name-generating procedure (Burt 1984), consisting in a three-step process.[1]

First, the "name-generator" elicits a list of individuals' names on the basis of a specific social interaction. In this study, respondents were asked to name up to 10 "significant others", i.e. people who are particularly important to them and with whom they have regular contact (Crossley et al. 2015). Second, the "name-interrelater" asks about potential connections between these "alters" (i.e. whether they know each other). This step enables the egocentric network to turn into small sociometric networks and to bring network density into the equation (Aeby 2016). These two first steps are essential as they allow researchers to map the structure of the network and then to reach related indicators (network size and density). Third, the "name-interpreter" consists in collecting information (attributes) about network nodes and relationships (network composition). On the one hand, respondents had to specify in a pre-defined list of nine social ties how they were connected to their network peers.[2] On the other, they reported, for their peers, similar information to what they did for themselves: socio-demographics (age, gender, education), political attitudes (interest, satisfaction, party identification) and behaviours (party membership and other forms of political participation).[3]

The Belgian population constitutes a relevant and fruitful empirical case to investigate the network mechanism of (youth) party membership for two reasons. First, voting being compulsory, the main measurement of (youth) conventional participation is party membership. Second, although Belgian parties have faced membership loss (Van Haute et al. 2013), they have been less affected than other Western democracies (Scarrow/Gezgor 2010). The proportion of the national population affiliated to a party remains rather significant, probably due to the historical societal penetration of mass Belgian parties in their own pillar (Deschouwer 2012). Moreover, membership in youth party organisations being a crucial pre-requisite for a political career in Belgian politics (Hooghe et al. 2004), it means that parties do recruit younger citizens via, among other things, their youth organisations. Therefore, there are samples of (young) party members that can be reached prospectively or retrospectively in order to test new hypotheses.

> Homophilic networks converging towards a higher level of social and political attributes are expected to increase the chance of a young citizen joining a party.

Data analysis

Once collected, raw survey data were cleaned and split into two distinct datasets. The first one includes only network data collected through the name-generating procedure, organised to be computed in E-Net software (Haglin/Borgatti 2012). The latter permits one social network analysis treating the 2801 networks, visualising them and exporting derived structural as well as compositional variables. The second dataset centralises both network-level (IV) and individual-level (DV) derived variables in order to run summary and multivariate analyses via standard statistical software (SPSS).

Data description, operationalisation and bivariate statistics
Dependent variable: party membership
Not surprisingly given existing empirical contributions in the field (Bruter/Harrison 2009; Bennie/Russel 2012), the survey emphasises young citizens' low level of involvement in political parties (see Figure 1 below). Among the 18-35 years' cohort, 4.3% of respondents reported to be currently affiliated to a political party. In contrast, this figure rises to 7.2% for older categories, which points to a generational difference in favour of the oldest, all the more if former members are counted too.
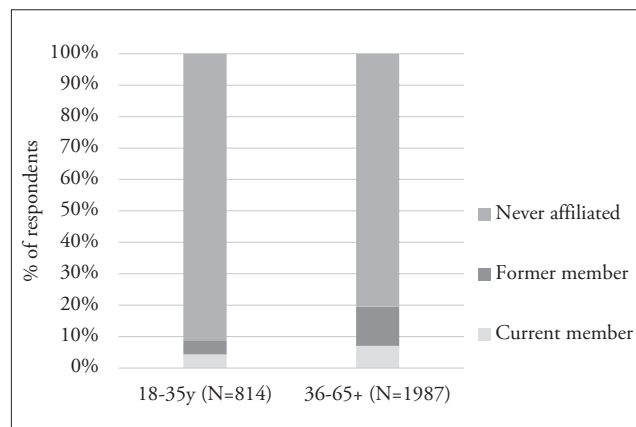

Figure 1: Party membership differential between young and old respondents

Figure 1 illustrates the distribution of party members among the sample of respondent according the two age groups guiding the empirical analysis. It points out respondents' low level of involvement in Belgian political parties, notably among the youth.

From this information, one binary dependent variable "party membership" was recoded for each respondent (see Table 1). To satisfy analytical requirements and overcome the small N of current young members, as well as given their singular profiles compared to the rest of the population (Paulis 2018), respondents who have never been formally affiliated to a political party and never socialised in a party organisation were distinguished from former and current members (0 never affiliated; 1 former/current member). The dependent variable's binary form led to the performance of logistic regressions in order to gauge the effect of different independent variables, i.e. social network structure and composition.

		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev
Party membership	18-35y	814	0	1	.09	.281
	36-65y+	1987	0	1	.18	.384
	Total	2801	0	1	.15	.359

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of party membership (DV)

Independent variables: social network structure and composition
Regarding network structure, two indicators are taken into account as a proxy for social integration. First, network size refers to the number of people named in the name-generator. It ranges from 1 to 10 for respondents who took the opportunity to the full and named 10 network peers.[4] On average, respondents named between 6 and 7 "significant others" (6.2). Second, social network density describes the connectivity among respondents' social networks, based on the ties reported in the name-interrelater. The

		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev
Network size	18-35y	814	1	10	5.9	3.525
	– Member	70			5.8	
	– Non-member	1631			5.9	
	36-65+	1987	1	10	6.3	3.495
	– Member	356			6.7	
	– Non-member	1631			5.9	
	Total	2801	1	10	6.2	3.508
Network density	18-35y	814	0	1	.49	.351
	– Member	70			.55	
	– Non-member	1631			.48	
	36-65+	1987	0	1	.52	.347
	– Member	356			.53	
	– Non-member	1631			.51	
	Total	2801	0	1	.51	.348

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of network structure (IV)

indicator ranges from 0 to 1, when all the nodes are connected to each other and form a perfect "clique". The mean value for the whole population (.51) suggests that, on average, half of potential ties were effective in the observed networks. This relatively high density ratio reflects the very social nature of networks mapped in this research and the pre-dominance of strong ties in respondents' proximate environment (see below), which suppose *de facto* more chances for alters to know each other and consequently to be tied to each other. Bivariate analyses suggest that younger respondents have slightly smaller and less dense networks than older ones (see Table 2). More striking is how "old" party members have larger networks compared to younger members and older unaffiliated citizens, whereas young party members stand out from the rest with much denser networks.[5] Hence, multivariate analyses should help in untangling whether the effect of network size and density has to be distinguished at the network structural level.

Data description becomes more interesting when looking at the composition of social networks. Regarding the attributes of relationships, relatives (spouse, DNA and extended family) represent more than 42.4% of the people named by the respondents, pointing to the prominence of strong ties. In contrast, weaker social ties are less frequently named as significant others. Eight continuous independent variables summarise the number of alters in each category (see Table 3). When disaggregating between the two age groups, younger respondents tend to name fewer relatives belonging to their extended family, more friends, and less weak ties (members met in the organisation, professional advisors or acquaintances). Interestingly, taking party membership into account, if young party members report fewer friends than young non-affiliates, the reverse holds for older members. Overall, bivariate analyses support the idea that younger, and, above all, older party members present more tie diversity in their networks, reporting proportionally fewer close relatives and more distant social relations, and suggesting the potential role of weak ties.

Regarding the attributes of network nodes, Tables 4 and 5 put in perspective the descriptive statistics of the social (Table 4) and political (Table 5) features of respondents and their alters. In terms

		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev	p value ANOVA
Spouse	18-35	814	0	1	.46	.518	.217
	– Member	70			.41		
	– Non-member	744			.47		
	36-65+	1987	0	2	.44	.511	
	– Member	356			.48		
	– Non-member	744			.43		
	Total	2801	0	3	.4	.513	
DNA family	18-35	814	0	10	1.16	1.465	.423
	– Member	70			.9		
	– Non-member	744			1.18		
	36-65+	1987	0	10	1.13	1.665	
	– Member	356			1.04		
	– Non-member	744			1.15		
	Total	2801	0	10	1.1	1.609	
Extended family	18-35	814	0	9	.79	1.382	.000
	– Member	70			.76		
	– Non-member	744			.8		
	36-65+	1987	0	10	1.1	1.692	
	– Member	356			1.1		
	– Non-member	744			1.1		
	Total	2801	0	10	1.03	1.615	
Friend	18-35	814	0	10	2.42	1.5	.025
	– Member	70			2.2		
	– Non-member	744			2.4		
	36-65+	1987	0	10	2.17	2.454	
	– Member	356			2.4		
	– Non-member	744			2.1		
	Total	2801	0	10	2.24	2.511	

Table 3: Descriptive statistics of network composition: social ties (IV)

		N	Min	Max	Mean	Std Dev	p value ANOVA
Colleague	18-35	814	0	8	.53	1.193	.859
	– Member	70			.6		
	– Non-member	744			.5		
	36-65+	1987	0	10	.5	1.214	
	– Member	356			.4		
	– Non-member	744			.5		
	Total	2801	0	10	.51	1.208	
Organisation member	18-35	814	0	8	.16	.633	.000
	– Member	70			.3		
	– Non-member	744			.1		
	36-65+	1987	0	10	.37	1.172	
	– Member	356			.3		
	– Non-member	744			.6		
	Total	2801	0	10	.31	1.049	
Professional advisor	18-35	814	0	7	.18	.682	.000
	– Member	70			.2		
	– Non-member	744			.1		
	36-65+	1987	0	10	.37	1.009	
	– Member	356			.4		
	– Non-member	744			.3		
	Total	2801	0	10	.31	.930	
Acquaintance	18-35	814	0	2	.02	.151	.046
	– Member	70			.06		
	– Non-member	744			.02		
	36-65+	1987	0	7	.04	.306	
	– Member	356			.06		
	– Non-member	744			.04		
	Total	2801	0	7	.04	.270	

of socio-demographics (gender, age and education), the profiles of respondents and alters are quite similar. Three observations deserve to be stressed, however. First, respondents tend to name to a larger extent alters belonging to the same age group as themselves. Second, younger respondents reported higher levels of education for themselves and their alters than older participants, indicating the younger generations' better access to education. Third, the gender gap in favour of male party members (Van Haute/Gauja 2015) is confirmed and all the more supported regarding younger party members, while both young and old party members reported proportionally more females in their networks than unaffiliated respondents. Given the theoretical argument developed by the paper, the EI index of homophily (Crossley et al. 2015) is applied to measure the similarity, or congruence between ego and alters on each socio-demographic attribute. Despite relatively similar mean values for ego and alters, the index indicates networks converging rather towards social heterophily (negative scores). There is a slight contrast between younger and older citizens' social networks, with the former facing somewhat more homophily in terms of age than the latter. Furthermore, respondents identified as unaffiliated have more homophily in their network than non-members when education is scrutinised, while young party members obviously stand out from older party members (as well as other respondents) with much less gender homophily. When jumping to political attitudes, if respondents are more interested in politics than satisfied with the way democracy works, this observation is valid also for their alters. Obviously, party members display more positive political attitudes for themselves and their close environment than unaffiliated respondents, and this trend is even more marked among younger members. The

indexes of attitudinal homophily computed on that basis reveal that respondents' networks tend more towards political heterophily (negative scores), and again despite the very similar mean values for ego and alters. However, the EI index for party identification is very close to zero (-.1) and turns positive (i.e. homophilic) when party members are distinguished from other respondents. Interestingly, the homophily based on party identification is stronger among young party members. Finally, in terms of political behaviours, one variable controls for exposure to party membership. The mean value is as low (.1) as for respondents, but logically increases when networks of both younger and older party members are distinguished. Almost a half of their alters for which information is available tends to be generally affiliated to a party as well.

Overall, descriptive and bivariate statistics suggest three important nuances to our first expectations, which are assessed through the next multivariate models. First, if party members have generally larger and denser networks than unaffiliated citizens, it does not seem to be the case for young party members, but should rather be related to older members' structural patterns. Second, in so far as party members have more tie diversity in their networks, weaker social ties might be also relevant channels of party membership. Third, party members display, in fact, less homophily than unaffiliated citizens within their social networks, except when political satisfaction and, above all, party identification are scrutinised. Hence, multivariate analyses further question whether it might be that homophily, to affect party membership, is mediated by the level of the concerned attribute. To answer this, two types of independent variables were finally computed. Respondents were reorganised into categories according to the feature of their network composition in two ways (see the distribution in Figure 2):

					Ego	Alters	Homophily		
		N	Min	Max	Mean	Mean	Min	Max	Mean
Age	18-35	814	1	3	1.4		-1	1	-.219
	– Member	70			1.4				-.291
	– Non-member	744			1.4				-.213
	36-65+	1987	1	3	2.2		-1	1	-.334
	– Member	356			2.2				-.313
	– Non-member	744			2.2				-.331
	Total	2801	1	3	1.9		-1	1	-.3
Gender	18-35	814	0	1	.4	.4	-1	1	-.281
	– Member	70			.7	.4			-.351
	– Non-member	744			.4	.5			-.274
	36-65+	1987	0	1	.5	.4	-1	1	-.272
	– Member	356			.6	.4			-.235
	– Non-member	744			.5	.5			-.280
	Total	2801	0	1	.5	.4	-1	1	-.275
Education	18-35	814	1	4	2.7	2.6	-1	1	-.389
	– Member	70			2.9	2.7			-.431
	– Non-member	744			2.7	2.6			-.385
	36-65+	1987	1	4	2.5	2.5	-1	1	-.392
	– Member	356			2.7	2.7			-.408
	– Non-member	744			2.5	2.5			-.388
	Total	2801	1	4	2.6	2.6	-1	1	-.391

Table 4: Descriptive statistics of network composition (IV): social attributes

					Ego	Alters	Homophily		
		N	Min	Max	Mean	Mean	Min	Max	Mean
Political interest	18-35	814	1	4	2.5	2.5	-1	1	-.2
	– Member	70			3.1	2.8			-.4
	– Non-member	744			2.4	2.4			-.2
	36-65+	1987			2.7	2.5			-.2
	– Member	346			3.2	2.7			-.3
	– Non-member	1631			2.6	2.4			-.2
	Total	2801			2.6	2.5			-.2
Political satisfaction	18-35	814	1	4	2.3	2.4	-1	1	-.6
	– Member	70			2.6	2.7			-.4
	– Non-member	744			2.2	2.3			-.6
	36-65+	1987			2.1	2.1			-.7
	– Member	346			2.2	2.3			-.6
	– Non-member	1631			2	2.1			-.7
	Total	2801			2.2	2.2			-.7
Party identification	18-35	814	0	1	.7	.7	-1	1	-.1
	– Member	70			.9	.9			.4
	– Non-member	744			.6	.7			-.1
	36-65+	1987	0	1	.7	.7	-1	1	-.1
	– Member	346			.8	.8			.2
	– Non-member	1631			.6	.7			-.1
	Total	2801	0	1	.7	.7	-1	1	-.1
Party membership	18-35	814	0	1	.2	.1			
	– Member	70				.5			
	– Non-member	744				.1			
	36-65+	1987	0	1	.2	.1			
	– Member	346				.4			
	– Non-member	1631				.1			
	Total	2801	0	1	.1	.1			

Table 5: Descriptive statistics of network composition (IV): political attributes

first, whether the network that they belong to tends to be homophilic on a given social or political attribute (i.e. positive EI score recoded into 1, versus the other, 0), and, second, whether this network tends to be "positively" homophilic, meaning congruent on a higher score or categories (1: yes; otherwise, 0)

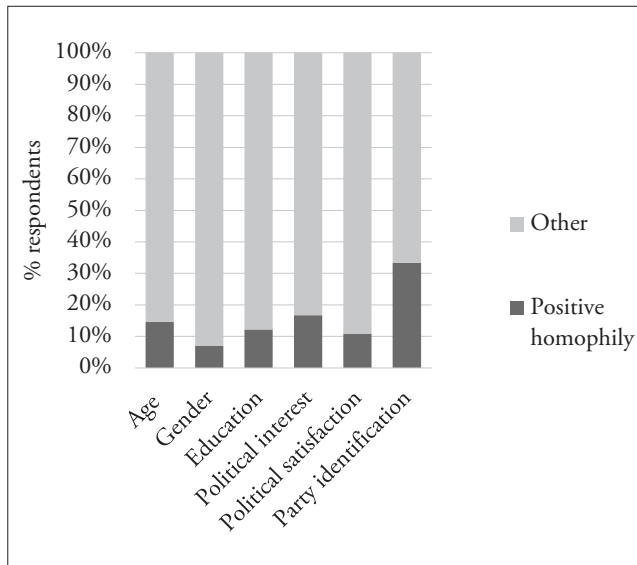*Attribute homophily (binary)*
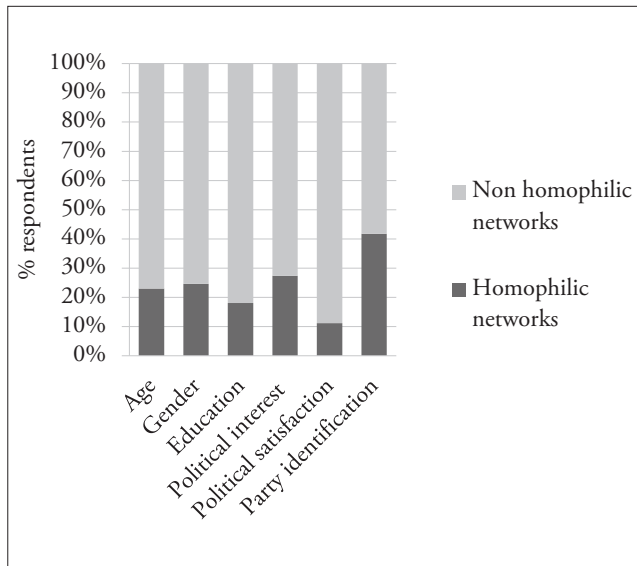
Positive attribute homophily (binary)

Figure 2: Distribution of (positive) attribute homophily (IV)

The upper figure illustrates the distribution of homophilic networks on each social and political attribute among the sample of respondents, operationalised as binary variable (1=homophilic network, i.e. positive EI index - dark grey; 0 = heterophilic, i.e. negative EI index – light grey). The lower figure shows the distribution of the variables measuring more specifically when homophily coincides with higher attribute scores or categories (dark grey).

The following paragraphs present the results of two sets of empirical models. The first one (M1) focuses on the effect of network structure (size and density) and one component of network composition: social and political homophily. The second (M2) looks more closely at the effect of social ties on the chances of joining a party.

Multivariate analysis
Network structure
The first set of models' output (M1) presented by Table 6 suggests interesting results regarding the effect of network structure on the probability of joining a party. Both social network size and density follow the positive relation expected by the theoretical hypothesis, although it is statistically significant only regarding network size. Furthermore, the model confirms the nuances implied by bivariate analyses. On the one hand, social network size increases positively the odds of party membership, but this effect prevails significantly only for older respondents. On the other hand, network density seems to affect more youth party membership when coefficients and odds ratios are considered. However, the relationship turns out to be never statistically significant in the model. These results do not provide enough empirical evidence supporting our first hypothesis (H1) but suggest one major observation: the effects of network size and density must be distinguished, as the former affects to a larger extent older citizens' party membership, whereas the latter seems more relevant to approaching youth party engagement. It will be further argued that this finding should, in fact, be discussed in the light of the nature of ties binding the structure. Indeed, network size is a relevant variable to consider in the process of party membership when people get older and have built larger interpersonal networks. Larger networks suppose more weak ties, more alters belonging to different social circles and are thus less likely to know each other because of their social distance (picturing a larger network horizon). This situation translates into sparser networks for people under 35 years, a less important effect of density, but more of network size. From this, as already suggested by bivariate statistics, a pool of weak ties might be expected to be the determinant for a network to trigger party membership, but rather for older people. Overall, our finding is in line with those showing that a larger set of relations *per se* is a determinant for being integrated into the political process, enlarging the pool from which the mobilising trigger can be activated, diversifying and or reinforcing surrounding political views, attitudes, beliefs or norms (McClurg 2003). Nonetheless, the analysis shows that this effect holds mainly for older citizens and not for the youth. In contrast, the latter have smaller networks, dominated by strong ties, therefore implying more density likely to affect their party mobilisation. Having denser rather than larger networks might be hypothesised as a crucial explanation of why young people tend to get involved (especially if this dense network is made up of politically active agents), but also to remain aside from politics. As the influence on party membership comes rather from strong ties (see below), or (a rather small number of) very close peers who probably know each other because they are kin (which explains the higher coefficient for network density among the youth, meaning more social pressure to conform), if this proximate micro-environment is not positively orientated towards politics, a phenomenon that is increasingly recognised at the aggregate and individual level in Western democracies (Norris 2011; Ezrow/ Xezonakis 2016), there are great chances that this young person will remain isolated from the political process by the effect of social influence and pressure.

If controlling for network peers' party membership, the significant effect of network size remains stable, and is even reinforced. It thus provides empirical support that the higher the proportion of alters that are party members in a network, the higher the

chances for ego to join a party as well. This finding is replicated across all age categories and confirms a major trend stressed by innovation studies (Rogers 2003), epidemiology (Valente 1995), but also by election network scholars studying voting contagion (Nickerson 2008): being exposed in a larger extent to a certain behaviour in a social network increases the odds for the network nodes to comply with each other and adopt the same behaviour.

Network composition: social homophily

The regression model reveals important findings regarding the role of social homophily in the process of joining a party. In absolute terms, citizens relying on a socially homophilic network show a negative propensity to be affiliated to a political party. In contrast, what seems to matter to turn party member is rather having a diverse network in terms of age (highly see [6]), gender (relatively s.) and education (negative coefficient but n.s). Looking more closely at the results for both age groups under scrutiny (18-34y vs 35-65+), the analysis allows some refinement of the above-mentioned effects. First, although a larger coefficient for younger respondents, age homophily prevents significantly more membership among older respondents. Second, the negative relationship between gender homophily and party membership turns out to be statistically significant only for young participants, stressing the other way around how gender diversity might appear as a crucial feature to trigger youth party membership. Third, education homophily turns statistically significant for older respond-

							18-34		35 and more			
Network structure	B (SE)	OR	B (SE)	OR	B (SE)	OR	B (SE)	OR	B (SE)	OR	B (SE)	OR
Size	.029 (.017)	1.136	.106*** (.024)	1.112	.088*** (.124)	1.092	.032 (.059)	1.032	.079*** (.025)	1.082	.127*** (.026)	1.136
Density	.159 (.173)	1.172	.115 (.179)	1.122	.124 (.183)	1.133	.470 (.385)	1.600	.069 (.189)	1.072	.119 (.198)	1.126
Network composition												
Social homophily												
Age			-.296 (.158)	.744	-2.158*** (.456)	.116	-4.623 (3.177)	.010	-2.039** (.490)	.130	-1.929*** (.481)	.145
Gender			-.211 (.156)	.810	-1.251** (.475)	.286	-3.444* (1.580)	.032	-.865 (.490)	.421	-1.086* (.503)	.337
Education			-.448** (.168)	.639	-.887 (.596)	.412	1.156 (1.335)	3.177	-1.309* (.645)	.270	-.544 (.628)	.581
Political homophily												
Interest			-.158 (.133)	.854	-2.554*** (.536)	.078	-5.429*** (1.700)	.004	-1.985*** (.523)	.137	-1.649*** (.540)	.192
Satisfaction			.400** (.164)	1.492	-2.060 (3.57)	.127	2.838 (8.091)	17.074	-3.812 (4.012)	.022	-3.290 (3.759)	.037
Identification			1.076*** (.118)	2.932	.027 (.311)	1.027	-.681 (.991)	.506	-.104 (.323)	.901	.424 (.320)	1.528
Social homophily (+)												
Age					.872*** (.186)	2.393	3.938 (2.732)	41.336	.730** (.316)	2.076	.690*** (.197)	1.994
Gender					2.027* (.861)	7.591	5.661* (2.691)	287.504	1.493 (895)	4.452	1.552* (.916)	4.722
Education					.196 (.218)	1.217	-.491 (.477)	.612	.344 (.238)	1.411	.094 (.233)	1.099
Political homophily (+)												
Interest					.835*** (.171)	2.305	1.740*** (.523)	5.700	.629*** (.168)	1.876	.551*** (.175)	1.734
Satisfaction					.959 (1.435)	2.610	-.961 (3.243)	.383	1.647 (1.615)	5.189	1.459 (1.512)	4.302
Identification					1.073*** (.313)	2.923	1.981* (.991)	7.247	1.138*** (.328)	3.122	.316 (.327)	1.372
Membership exposure											2.578*** (.181)	13.174
Constant	-1.944*** (.157)	.143	-2.799*** (.195)	.061	-2.614*** (.196)	.073	-3.184*** (.409)	.041	-2.297*** (.328)	.101	-3.346*** (224)	.035
χ2	152.826		206.723		176.995		60.170		139.965		222.350	
R2 Nagelkerke	.3		7.9		13.8		18.8		11.4		27.1	
N	2801		2801		2801		814		1987		2801	

Table 6: Logistic regression table (M1) – DV = party membership (binary)

ents only (negative coefficient), meaning that networks which are homogeneous in terms of education decrease older respondents' probability of membership. Interestingly, the coefficient for education homophily turns positive for the youngest but is not statistically significant.

Although these findings point towards more prominence of social heterogeneity playing the process of joining a party, the part of the model taking into consideration whether social homophily is "positive", i.e. revealing homogeneity in higher categories of social attributes, does provide another story compared to the previous step. The results emphasise how networks' homogeneous social composition can work in sparking party membership, but actually by reproducing, at the network level, aggregate and individual-level social inequalities well-known in party membership studies – especially regarding the involvement of the youth as well as the male bias. Overall, the more network congruence on higher categories of age (highly s.), gender (relatively s.), and education (positive coefficient but n.s.), the more ego's chances of joining a political party. These results corroborate, at least partially at this point, the second hypothesis about the effect of homophily: when social homophily with higher socio-demographic background is observed, the statistical relationship with party membership turns positive. These results can be read in the light of membership shortage and interpreted as showing that, in fact, most party organisations are doomed to recruit predominantly among the most "usual suspects" (Campbell 2013) of their national population: the oldest, the men and the most educated. The social networks of their current members connect them to a pool of prospective members that have largely the same social profile, struggling therefore to diversify their social basis and to reach alternative targets that might join the organisation. Disaggregating between both age groups, some refinements can be put forward. First, positive age homophily encourages significantly only the membership of older respondents, and this is so despite a larger coefficient for the youth. Overall, (positive) age homophily does not encourage or impede statistically the youth party membership process in our model. In contrast, second, homophily based on the male sex greatly increases the odds of joining for young people, while the smaller, positive coefficient of the older group does not remain statistically significant. It implies that the individual-level gender bias in favour of the men found in many party membership studies works also at the level of social networks, but affects statistically significantly more the membership process of young respondents. Finally, although never statistically significant, the homophily based on higher level of education displays a positive relationship to party membership throughout the model, turning nonetheless negative when young citizens are strictly analysed. The latter observation might be related to studies showing that the aggregate increase of education levels did not translate into more membership at the individual level (Persson 2014), especially among the youth. In the same way, we might argue that a higher network-level of education for younger generations does not coincide with a higher probability for them to join a party - and might even imply the opposite relations (negative coefficient, but n.s.), because educational attainment is probably a merely individual-level characteristic: citizens attend school and earn diplomas "alone". Education is thus an issue for what social networks can bring to our explanation of political participation, except if we think about the status conferred by the education en-

vironment (Campbell 2013). One hypothesis to further explore seems that nowadays young people are embedded in networks where the level of education plays a less determinant role for driving their behaviours towards political parties than was the case for their older fellows, mainly because it does not confer on them the same social status.

> The social networks of their current members connect them to a pool of prospective members that have largely the same social profile, struggling therefore to diversify their social basis and to reach alternative targets[.]

Network composition: political homophily

Regarding political homophily, the results must be distinguished depending on the type of political attitudes, as they are more contrasted. First, the relationship between homophily based on political interest and party membership is the most clear-cut. If the analysis supports rather that relying on homogeneous networks in terms of political interest *per se* decreases the odds of joining a party - all the more for younger respondents (larger negative coefficient than older ones) – when the level on which the similarity occurs is taken into account (i.e. positive or not), the outcome shows that homophily based on higher levels of political interest does increase the chances of joining a party, especially among younger respondents who have a higher positive coefficient and odds ratio than older ones. Second, regarding homophily based on political satisfaction, results are more difficult to grasp. The variable measuring homophily based on this attitude in absolute terms loses its statistical significance and becomes negatively associated with party membership when the term measuring whether the homophily is positive (congruence on higher levels of satisfaction) is included. Despite being not statistically significant, the last step of the model gives some empirical credit to the idea that similarity on higher levels of satisfaction affects positively the chances to be recruited by a political party. It seems to hold, however, more for old than young respondents, for which the coefficient turns negative when the analysis is run independently. Hence, the results suggest that it might be negative homophily (i.e. on lower levels of satisfaction, suggesting that ego is importantly exposed to a feeling of disenchantment towards democracy in his/her micro-environment) that is rather a network pattern that spurs youth party membership. In contrast, when young people tend to be homogeneously surrounded by positive feelings towards democracy, they probably do not feel the need or interest to mind the gap and engage themselves in institutionalised politics. More largely, other analyses performed on these data have shown that how people perceive their network in terms of satisfaction is a crucial determinant for explaining why citizens favour protest forms of political participation as well as identifying with more extreme parties (Paulis/Close 2018). Third and finally, in absolute terms, homophily based on party identification increases the chances of joining a political party. The positive coefficient nonetheless loses its statistical significance in favour of the variable measuring whether the congruence takes place on a positive score of identification (meaning that network fellows similarly identified with a party). Indeed, the latter variable is highly statistically significant, even when younger and older respondents are distinguished. The odds ratio and the coefficient support a stronger impact on youth party membership though. From this, it can be interpreted again

that parties are quite exclusive in their recruitment as they enlist from among the "usual suspects" of their national population: the most interested (significantly more among the youth), the most satisfied (except for the youngest) and those who identified with a party (slightly stronger among the youth). The political homogeneity of their current members' social networks prevents them from reaching alternative political profiles and diversifying the political views that are integrated into their organisation.

> [W]hen young people tend to be homogeneously surrounded by positive feelings towards democracy, they probably do not feel the need or interest to [...] engage themselves in institutionalised politics.

The empirical analysis clearly demonstrated that, to a certain extent and under certain conditions, homophily can be a network compositional configuration that affects party membership by reproducing, at the network level, social and political inequalities usually established by individual or aggregate patterns, supporting the third hypothesis (H3). Controlling for the proportion of party members in the network did not modify significantly our findings, except that network variables related to party identification quite logically lose their statistical significance. More importantly, it allows our general model to double the Nagelkerke-explained variance from 13.8% to 27.1% (see Table 6).

Network composition: social ties
To avoid overloading the first, a second set of models (M2) is developed to answer which type of ties is the most important channel of youth party membership. Single terms (see Table 7 below) pertaining to the different social ties included in the first step suggest that respondents who mention more acquaintances have a higher probability of being a party member, but that this effect is mainly true of older respondents. We have earlier argued that this might be closely related to the effect of network size, the impact of which on party membership also holds only for older respondents. The latter having larger networks, they have also a higher likelihood of reporting social distance in their networks, and therefore of having the presence of acquaintances affecting positively their probability of joining a political party. More interestingly, when the interac-

	B (S.E.)	OR	B (S.E.)	OR	B (S.E.)	OR	18-34y		35-65+	
							B (S.E.)	OR	B (S.E.)	OR
Spouse	.154 (.105)	1.167	.263* (.113)	1.300	.111 (.141)	1.118	.399 (.359)	1.490	.066 (.158)	1.069
DNA relative	-.047 (.036)	.954	.030 (.037)	1.030	-.076 (.049)	.927	-.290 (.155)	.748	-.056 (.052)	.945
Extended family	.022 (.033)	1.022	.064 (.035)	1.063	-.008 (.045)	.992	-.107 (.147)	.467	-.016 (.048)	.984
Friend	.033 (.021)	1.034	.082*** (.023)	1.086	.003 (.028)	1.003	.007 (.065)	1.007	.013 (.032)	1.013
Colleague	-.012 (.045)	.988	.012 (.049)	1.012	-.069 (.065)	.933	-.058 (.157)	.944	-.073 (.073)	.929
Member	.215*** (.040)	1.240	.173*** (.045)	1.189	.059 (.065)	1.060	.133 (.239)	1.142	.007 (.072)	1.007
Advisor	.058 (.053)	1.081	.070 (.057)	1.035	.041 (.075)	1.042	.234 (.196)	1.264	-.099 (.094)	.906
Acquaintance	.288 (.157)	1.333	-.042 (.174)	.959	.732** (.246)	2.079	1.407 (1.057)	4.085	.665** (.256)	1.944
Peers' membership			3.380*** (.211)	29.372	1.698*** (.323)	5.465	2.166*** (.574)	8.726	1.523*** (.429)	4.588
Spouse X membership					.800 (.447)	2.225	-1.084 (.923)	.338	1.471** (.575)	4.352
DNA relative X membership					.731*** (.215)	2.077	1.112** (.413)	3.040	.773** (.262)	2.167
Extended family X membership					.383* (.189)	1.466	.963 (.536)	2.620	.306 (.206)	1.357
Friend X membership					.494*** (.114)	1.639	.388 (.222)	1.474	.453** (.134)	1.573
Colleague X membership					.324 (.236)	1.383	.498 (.452)	1.645	.376 (.291)	1.456
Member X membership					.444* (.216)	1.559	.014 (.546)	1.014	.617* (.268)	1.853
Advisor X membership					.061 (.268)	1.063	-1.807** (.837)	.164	.904* (.399)	2.469
Acquaintance X membership					-2.067** (.836)	.127	-1.777 (2.143)	.169	-2.274* (1.078)	.103
Constant	-1.948*** (.113)	.143	-2.752*** (.143)	.064	-2.359*** (.145)	.094	-3.001*** (.355)	.050	-2.147*** (1.61)	.117
χ²	298.319		369.270		265.528		71.642		178.913	
R² Nagelkerke (%)	2.3		18.5		22.6		25.1		24.3	
N	2801		2801		2801		814		1987	

Table 7: Logistic regression table (M2) - DV = party membership

tion term between the type of ties and alters' party membership is considered, the analysis does not confirm that acquaintanceship with party members conveys membership to ego, confirming somehow that reporting a larger pool of acquaintances appears as a corollary pattern of having a larger network size, which both *per se* affects positively the odds of joining a party (for older citizens only). Nonetheless, in contrast, the party membership of two other weaker connections (advisor and organisation member) appears to be statistically significant and positively related to party membership, although the impact remains significant for older respondents only. This finding reinforces the argument that weak ties are relevant channels triggering party membership, but that networks as a vector of social capital become effective when people get older (larger networks, more weak ties).

It does not mean so far that the influence of strong ties must be denied. The regression table (Table 7) puts forward that there is evidence to claim that party membership is also driven by people to whom citizens are closely connected, especially among the youth (supporting H2). Among the older generation, the spouse's party membership is the first channel of membership, whereas youth party membership is boosted by the affiliation of DNA and extended family. As suggested earlier, this might also explain why network size is not statistically significant for younger respondents (but also why they had a larger positive coefficient for network density). The structure of their networks influences much less their odds of joining than its composition. From this, it might be argued that a major reason for explaining why young people stay away from traditional politics is because their proximate network core (i.e. their family and relatives) does not connect them to these traditional organisations, and that only a small proportion of the "privileged" is. Cross and Young (2008) suggested the hypothesis that access to parties through family members might have, in fact, increased in importance in recent decades, as more than 50% of party members under 25 years old who were surveyed in their research reported to have been recruited through family connections, compared to only 9% among older members. This striking generational discrepancy is deservedly questioned as to whether youth party membership would mirror an increased exclusivity in party recruitment patterns, despite many attempts to diversify and ease the barriers for entering these organisations. In that sense, youth party membership would respond nowadays more to a family habit, or tradition, than a genuine political commitment. The case of Belgium in itself can also help to untangle the significant role played by family ties. First, there is a high proportion of "filiations" ("son/daughter of") that can be found among politicians, candidates, and members, from the local to the national level (Wauters/Van Liefferinge 2015). Even if it has never been systematically quantified in a longitudinal manner or explored from a cultural point of view, this phenomenon greatly questions the diversity of the profiles that are drawn by Belgian political parties, feeding sometimes among ordinary citizens the image of "dynastic bias" within parties (Dal Bó et al. 2009). Second, the pillarisation of Belgian society has long implied that membership via relatives was a common way to join political parties for younger members, who were then directly enlisted on behalf of their parents, or indirectly via various satellite organisations (Van Haute et al. 2013). Furthermore, since the membership process became more individualised, membership fees are generally lowered as long as other relatives join or are already members.

Conclusion

In a context where traditional political participation is in decline, this paper addressed whether social networks, as sets of interpersonal relationships among individuals, are relevant channels for party membership, and in particular among the youth. Based on original cross-sectional survey data (N=2,801), the analysis explored how the structure and the homogeneous composition of citizens' social networks can generate or impede their engagement in a political party, with a specific comparison between young (18-34 years) and older citizens (35-65+). Three major findings concerning youth party membership can be summarised and further discussed in the light of their implications for recruitment, thereby contributing to both the supply- and demand-side of party membership literature.

First, compared to older respondents, party membership of younger citizens was not statistically influenced by the network structure. It was explained by the fact that the process is mostly driven by proximate social peers, to which they are tied via strong ties. Hence, second, the dominance of strong ties in the youth party membership process was seen as evidence of a certain exclusivity in recruitment patterns of political parties, which is likely to give insight on why many young citizens stay away from institutionalised forms of participation (highly dependent on the social and political composition of their proximate network core, i.e. their family). Indeed, third and finally, the homogeneous nature of their network composition, especially when the network is congruent to a high social and political profile, was shown to affect significantly their probability of joining a party. Nonetheless, the analysis showed that, under certain circumstances, social networks do affect the reproduction of social and political inequalities, confining recruitment targets to the most usual suspects of the population, and thereby explaining some of the difficulties of recruitment faced by Belgian party organisations.

> [S]ocial networks do affect the reproduction of social and political inequalities, confining recruitment targets to the most usual suspects of the population[.]

Given the picture drawn by this paper, a perspective to consider in order to deal with the lack of youth involvement in traditional politics is to continue promoting institutional arrangements that are likely to ensure the enlargement, diversification and fostering of young adults' social networks throughout their schooling, and hence not only among the "most usual" suspects. Encouraging the development of exchanges between school classes of different neighbourhoods, the democratisation of mobility for students and early young workers, or indeed the interpersonal meeting of experts, politicians, social workers or professionals might be different aspects of a strategy to lower the time that network size might become effective in the political mobilisation of these categories of the population. In terms of social profiles, along with a continuous work towards the youth in general, an important target for Belgian political parties should be young women (18-35y.) and their friendship networks, in as much as the network gender bias affects statistically significantly more the younger respondents' membership process. This makes all the more sense given new institutional rules implemented in Belgium, which try to ensure more gender diversity in politics (Van Der Dussen 2013). A long-term targeted strategy on social media might be one way to cope with this chal-

lenge in practice. In terms of political profiles, the results recorded hypothesised that political parties attract young citizens that are integrated in networks of people homogeneously not satisfied with the way Belgian democracy is currently working. However, behind this positive sketch, an important undertaking would be to see which types of parties are joined when the network homogeneity tends towards dissatisfaction with democracy. Moreover, it would appear that political parties could actually try to mobilise more among networks that homogeneously embedded young people in a positive attitude towards democracy. More pragmatically, young party members joining political parties and being surrounded by people who tend to be politically interested and who identify with a party, fighting against the negative citizen perception of parties (exacerbated currently in Belgium because of various controversial issues and frequent government crises) by, among other things, improving the diversity and representativeness of elected officials (and not only of candidates) – thereby attracting wider identification – or by promoting newer forms and practices of democracy – thereby attracting more interest – might be represent a positive thread to follow in the attempt to mobilise through networks where apolitical and/or less interested young citizens are found. Finally, given that family ties are the most relevant channels of youth party membership, a last strategy to consider in order to break with the image of "dynasties" sometimes attached to Belgian parties is to work continuously on activating weak ties between their current members, among other things, by organising *ad hoc* social and mentoring activities (offline) or by using online tools that can help these political organisations to reach new and younger voters, supporters and members via the online friendship and acquaintanceship networks of their current members.

Notes

1 The appendix summarises the whole procedure, the exact wording of the question, and the derived variables' operationalisation stemming from this process of network data collection. For the appendix, see page 23.

2 Spouse, close relative (DNA family), member of my extended family, friend, colleague, member of an organisation to which I belong, professional advisor, acquaintance, or other.

3 Please note that one item ("I don't know") was added for each question, except for socio-demographics. Alters for which information was unknown were removed from derived measurements. Alters' descriptive statistics refer only to valid per cent. Hence, respondents for whom the information on a given attribute is unknown for the whole network were recoded as missing.

4 Respondents had to specify at least one name to carry out the whole survey.

5 Bivariate ANOVA tests statistically significant when comparing network size means by categories (p=.001), but not regarding density (p=.091).

6 Please note abbreviations shown in brackets from this point on: "s." (statistically significant) and "n.s." (non statistically significant).

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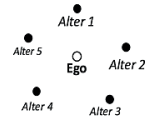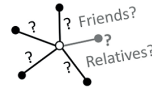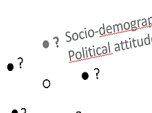
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Appendix - Network data collection and operationalisation

Name-generating procedure		Survey question	Network structure		Network composition		Network composition (derived)	
			Size	Density	Homophily (EI index)	Attribute	Homophily	Positive homophily
1) Name generator	List of significant social peers (alters)	Could you give us the first names of maximum 10 people who are particularly important in your life, with whom you socialised during the last 6 months?	N social peers					
2) Name interpreter	Nature or strength of the ties between the respondent and the alters (ego-alters ties) Social and political attributes of each alter	Below, there is a list of ways people can be tied to each other. Some people can be connected through different ties at the same time. For instance, someone could be your sister, belonging to the same sports club as you, but also be your work colleague. For all the people you named in the first question, could you specify the type of tie(s) that mainly link(s) you (the most salient)? Traditional questions about socio-demographic background, political attitudes and behaviours. Exact same question wording and answer items for ego and alters. NB: "I don't know" added for alters.			Egos whose alters are mostly similar to them with respect to social and political attributes will have high homophily scores (+1) while those with more heterophily in their ego-networks will have a value closer to -1.	Mean value by network around each tie attribute Mean value by network around each node attribute	EI index recoded into binary form. 1= homophilic network; 0 = heterophilic network.	Whether homophily occurs on high attribute scores or categories; recoded into binary form: 1= yes; 0= no.
3) Name interrelater	Ties among alters, i.e. whether they know each other (or not)	Could you specify if the people you named know each other?		Actual ties divided by potential ties				

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How political organisations can become more attractive to young adults

by Philipp Köbe

Abstract: This article deals with the relationship between the attractiveness of political parties and the younger generation. A recent survey of the attitudes of 15 to 25 year-olds revealed that young people are both interested in political issues and willing to assume responsibility through participation. Due to the increasing individualisation in our society, the offers of political organisations must match the needs of the younger generation. Lesser options should be developed that offer a multitude of opportunities in different spheres of participation, and these options must be carried into the relevant media of young people with sufficient information. An instrument in the form of an evaluation model is offered to the political organisations to help them excercise control.

Keywords: Intergenerational justice, Political participation, Next generation, Participation, Politics

Developments

The party landscape – not only in Germany, but also throughout Europe – is currently undergoing a major process of change. In the Handbook of German Political Parties (Decker 2017: 3-7), developments are constantly updated and analysed. It concludes that the popular parties are increasingly shrinking and that some voters are turning away from political parties as a whole, or at least turning to smaller collective movements at certain points. After the Second World War there was a phase of new formation (Niedermayer 2017b: 101-120); at the beginning of the 1950s, this was followed by a consolidation phase, which finally led to a three-party system that lasted for several decades. In the recent past, this has developed into a multi-party system. Today seven parties are represented in the German parliament. In the course of the development of parties, the alienation of citizens from the parties is often described, but this cannot be conclusively explained or confirmed. Although there has been a decline in the number of members since the 1980s, this criterion alone does not go far enough. For example, the 2009 party member study[1] shows a different picture, according to which citizens were not disengaged from the parties (Spier/Klein 2011: 33-39). The reasons given are, on the one hand, the arbitrary reference point of the 1970s as a reference value for the number of party members and, on the other hand, the less relevant focus on quantitative characteristics,

where the qualitative participation of the members to realise the interests of their own reference group in the political discourse would have been more to the point. In the light of the results of this study, the equation of fewer party members corresponding to less participation is wrong.[2]

> In the light of the results of this study, the equation of fewer party members corresponding to less participation is wrong.

Voter turnout is also an important characteristic of the willingness to participate. The higher turnout (Federal Election Commissioner 2017) of 76.2% in the 2017 federal elections compared to 2013 (71.5%) and 2009 (70.8%) is diametrically opposed to the above-mentioned thesis of the alienation of citizens from politics. The role of the Alternative für Deutschland (AfD) – a particularly controversial party classified as right-wing populist – was significant. The AfD was able to mobilise the majority of non-voters and has produced a new dynamic in the party system (Decker 2017: 29-31). This can be seen in particular in the movements among the parties. It could thus be assumed that new parties have a positive effect on participation and are conducive to democracy. The Greens (Bündnis 90/die Grünen) provided further evidence for this thesis with their entry into the Bundestag a few decades ago. Moreover, the Greens are the only party with a net increase in members over a longer period of time (Niedermayer 2017a: 41).

> According to [the life cycle theory], voter turnout is initially high among first-time voters (1), but then drops when young adults can vote for the second and third time (2). However, this trend is reversed over time (3) and only slowly falls again from around the age of 60 (4).

The question arises as to what role young people play in these developments. A great lack of interest of young people in politics and any associated topics is asserted in the media; particular focus is placed on a relatively low turnout compared to other population groups. The Shell Youth Study also largely found this (Albert et al. 2015: 5f.). With the help of the Allbus study, however, it was possible to refute this hysteria, which had been exaggerated by the media (Abendschön/Roßteutscher 2011: 70-75). The basis for this refutation is the life cycle theory, according to which voting behaviour changes over the course of a lifetime, as shown in
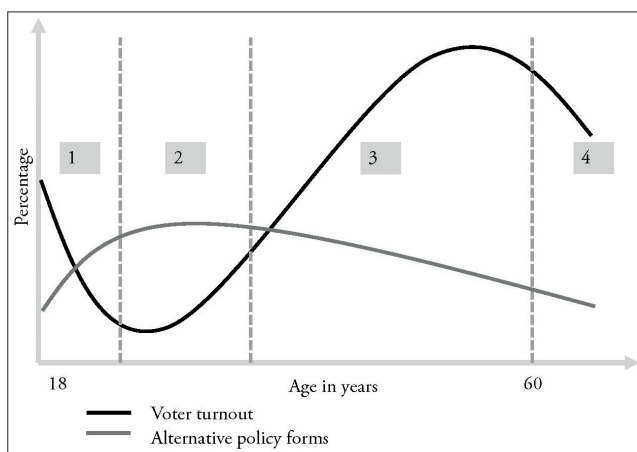

Figure 1: Life cycle model

Figure 1. According to this theory, voter turnout is initially high among first-time voters (1), but then drops when young adults can vote for the second and third time (2). However, this trend is reversed over time (3) and only slowly falls again from around the age of 60 (4).

The Allbus study shows that this behaviour can be observed across all ages in the comparison groups. According to this study, it is not a recent phenomenon, but has been taking place for decades following this pattern. Consequently, it cannot be said that young people today do not participate in political processes, which has always been the case in certain phases of life. In addition, there is another important aspect: alternative forms of politics. This is because alternative forms of politics increase significantly during the correspondingly low election turnout period (2) (Allbus 2008: ZA 4570). These alternative forms of politics include participation in demonstrations, support for petitions – especially online – and involvement in youth or citizens' initiatives. It is thus a form of participation that is not close to the traditional political arena, but is intended to influence political processes and decisions.

> [Y]oung adults at a certain age substitute political activities by giving less consideration to elections and giving higher priority to alternative forms of politics

Thus, it can be concluded that young adults[3] at a certain age substitute political activities by giving less consideration to elections and giving higher priority to alternative forms of politics. A related aspect is the strong individualisation and secularisation of society and its changing social milieus (Niehuis 2011: 7-11). This leads – and has led in the past – to a fragmentation of the party system and numerous new parties have been added in the last two decades. In the case of young adults, the individualisation process is already at a much more advanced stage than in the case of older groups (Calmbach et al. 2016: 459-463). This raises the question of whether the programmes of popular parties or long-established political organisations such as big trade unions still adequately cover the scope of the young population. Or whether, for organisations, a clearly fragmented structure with much more individual solutions could provide better answers for this target group. As the party member study has already shown, citizens are willing to get involved and also identify with their organisation if they can exert influence and have a say in the programme (Spier/Klein 2012: 50-59). In the end, however, it depends on the content of the programme and whether it can be representative. In a highly individualised society, the content must also fit young people, not the other way around. It is therefore the task of the political organisation to change itself programmatically in order to reach young citizens and encourage them to participate.

Future trends

The developments and challenges described above have numerous causes that are the subject of controversy in research. It is often stated, for example, that "politics" does not act in the interests of the citizens or that it is about an elite that is above the line and does not sufficiently know and understand the problems of the citizens – especially of the younger generations (Niehuis 2011: 7-11). Surveys show that citizens are increasingly reluctant to trust politics to solve future problems or notice a lack of clear vision for future issues in parties and organizations (Niedermayer 2017a: 118-123).

Megatrend: Sustainability

Sustainability plays an important role for young people as they want to be able to live on our planet many decades from now. In addition to an attractive environment to live in, this also affects our finances and the potential for strong social cohesion. These things can only be guaranteed if today's policies also provide for the next generation and take their concerns into account. The discrepancy that results from politics being more geared to short-term action is fundamentally contradictory to sustainable development. The fact that the remaining life expectancy of the younger generation is significantly higher than that of many politicians could also be seen as a negative factor. Nevertheless, the German government has recognised the problem and developed its own national sustainability strategy. The implications of the 63 indicators evaluated therein are at best sobering, even though the Chancellor sells the result of the sustainability strategy launched in 2002 as a success until 2016 (Federal Government 2016a: 35-40). So far, only one-third of the targets have been achieved and a further 10% are on the right track. A further third of the targets have fallen well short of fulfilment, and a further 14% are heading in the completely wrong direction. The German government's sustainability strategy is typical of the urgent future problems that are not being taken seriously, while new tasks are constantly being added. The refugee and migration issue, for example, was not a priority on the agenda in 2002 but now dominates much of the agenda. The causes of the refugee and migration crisis were already foreseeable in recent decades. The political parties and politicians will have to tackle these problems in a more focused way and will have to focus more on sustainability aspects – and they will be judged on this. The fight against the causes of emigration in the countries which refugees are fleeing also plays a decisive role, a fact that has been clearly underestimated in recent years.

> Sustainability plays an important role for young people as they want to be able to live on our planet many decades from now. In addition to an attractive environment to live in, this also affects our finances and the potential for strong social cohesion. These things can only be guaranteed if today's policies also provide for the next generation and take their concerns into account.

In the meantime, the Federal Government of Germany has changed the original course of its sustainability strategy (Federal Government 2018: 8-12). The indicators mentioned above are no longer relevant; instead the government is oriented towards the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) of the United Nations. A particular point of criticism here is that the indicators for intergenerational justice do not play a part in the 17 SDGs, suggesting that intergenerational justice has been dismissed as unimportant. But overall, past legislative periods have also shown that sustainability was not particularly important to the Federal Governments. This can be demonstrated, among other things, by the sluggish implementation of the energy transition, an increase in income inequality (Federal Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs 2017: 5-8) and an expansion of expensive pension benefits (Haerder 2018). Similarly, the consumption of resources must be adjusted in order not to further damage nature and the environment and thereby threaten the livelihoods of millions of people (Dröge 2015: 5f.). However, a programme of decarbonisation – a complete abandonment of the use of fossil fuels – by the end of this century (Federal Ministry for the Environment 2016) is not sustainable. It makes a mockery of all subsequent generations to delay the completion of this process – as decided at the climate conference in Paris in 2015 – until the year 2100, in other words 82 years. The end of the Second World War was only 73 years ago and even this event is barely tangible for young people today. The generations to come will not look favourably upon this failure, which will further underline the shattering effect and urgency of the issue.

> What we know for certain is that digitisation will decisively change people's working lives and that global connectivity will make it even easier to carry out activities in other regions of the world.

Megatrend: Digitisation

The current controversial topic of industry 4.0 and the associated changes in the world of work are an issue that will affect the younger generation in particular on a massive scale. What we know for certain is that digitisation will decisively change people's working lives and that global connectivity will make it even easier to carry out activities in other regions of the world. It remains to be seen whether the loss of about 50% of all currently existing jobs (Frey/Osborne 2013: 44f.) or a dominance of the Chinese in the global economy (Bertelsmann Stiftung 2016: 3) will occur. The transition must be made in the right direction as from today. The education system must be geared to the coming decades, and job profiles and which qualifications will be needed in 10 to 20 years' time are burning questions. Expenditure on research and development and the expansion of the digital infrastructure will also be central factors of success in the future.

Megatrend: Social Change

Demographic developments will change the population picture in Germany considerably in the coming years. With the retirement of baby boomers and further migration, Germany will become both older and more diversified. Appropriate framework conditions must be created for this. Is it a good idea to send people who are able to work into retirement at the age of 67, where they might spend more than 20 years of their old age? That was not the concept of the state pension insurance. And how can migrants and asylum seekers be integrated as well and as quickly as possible so that their skills can be put to meaningful use in the labour market? How often will people have to acquire a new qualification in the coming decades? These questions can only be answered with a wide range of educational opportunities and government support for qualification. Otherwise, the social systems will come under pressure under the demographic burdens currently forecast (Fugger 2016: 3f.). On the other hand, the labour market is developing into a supplier market. This means that companies must increasingly strive for a good workforce and offer ever better opportunities to reconcile work and leisure or family life. Due to the growing individualisation of young people, the demands on companies will continue to increase and alternative concepts, such as universal basic income, will continue to gain importance. How our society will work and live together in the future, and which life models and which working time models will prevail, must be given high priority in the political discussions of today.

Further topics

Urbanisation also poses enormous challenges for Germany's major cities. Young people are attracted to cities, while in rural regions, the infrastructure such as schools and hospitals is increasingly disappearing (Federal Government 2016b: 9-11).

And finally, the subject of Europe has also become more topical than it has been in recent years. Now that the UK has decided to withdraw from the European Union and many nationalistic governments in Southern and Eastern Europe are assuming government responsibility, the political actors must develop answers and a new vision for Europe (European Commission 2017: 8-10). The involvement of the younger generation is particularly important in this context from the perspective of democracy. The achievements of democracy and freedom could come under pressure after many decades of stability on account of this changed political situation. While in Europe major parties are more or less beginning to dissolve and new autocratic/nationalistic-oriented forms of government are gaining ground, parties, politicians and actors of political organisations should take countermeasures in the interest of a common community of values, which should also be preserved for future generations. To this end, the younger generations must be more actively and proactively involved in processes.

Theses

After taking a closer look at the developments and future trends, the question arises as to what influence these perspectives have on young people and how political actors can better integrate the next generation than before. Therefore, three theses have been formulated, which will be confirmed or refuted by the following survey.

Thesis 1: Young adults experiment with various political participation options in the initial phase and thus reduce their voter turnout.

Young people may initially turn away from conventional political parties after the first election in which they vote. This could be due to the fact that they have not yet gained sufficient experience – positive or negative – with parties and politicians and have a certain basic confidence in their ability to act. Thus, by extension, young adults do not see it as necessary to vote or become involved in party member organisations, as they do not have the necessary information to make a well-considered decision. Instead, this group of people tries out the alternative spectrum of Attac, Campact and Greenpeace. Potentially, however, they will later become more involved in the political environment of the conventional parties and voter turnout will rise again.

> While in Europe major parties are more or less beginning to dissolve and new autocratic/nationalistic-oriented forms of government are gaining ground, parties, politicians and actors of political organisations should take countermeasures in the interest of a common community of values, which should also be preserved for future generations. To this end, the younger generations must be more actively and proactively involved in processes.

Thesis 2: The need for individualisation of young citizens demands more opportunities for participation and diversity of content by political organisations.

As young people increasingly want to fulfil themselves and individual needs become more and more important, the offers of political organisations must match the expectations of young people. As a result, increasing fragmentation in the party landscape is to be expected and, if necessary, a target group-oriented specialisation of political organisations is also necessary. For example, young voters with environment-oriented liberal preferences may be more likely to place their crosses with the ecologically democratic party (ÖDP) than with the Greens if the programme is more suited to their attitudes. This could lead to many more parties entering parliaments in the coming years.

Thesis 3: Young people are only willing to participate if they can exert sufficient influence on developments through their commitment.

Today's young people are focused on using their time efficiently. Therefore, they will tend to weigh up exactly what engagement really brings them something, and what they can actually make a difference with. The opportunities for young people to participate must therefore be significantly improved so that their motivation is rewarded with success in the implementation of the concepts they have developed. If no such successes occur in the medium term, the commitment will quickly be adjusted in light of their evaluation of the activities. Conversely, quick successes in particular will have a binding character and motivate young adults to continue their commitment.

Survey

Methodology

In order to be able to answer the theses, a quantitative survey was conducted among young people aged 15 to 25 living in Germany. The aim of the survey was to obtain an overall picture of young people's attitudes to politics in general and to political organisations in particular. However, the focus was on a superficial rather than a more in-depth analysis. The insights gained in the survey can be used for further questions and provide an ideal basis for constructive research projects. The survey was structured in such a way that a distinction can be made between participants with political commitment and participants without political commitment. In addition, gender, age, educational attainment and place of residence (federal state) were surveyed. The latter structure is subdivided into various topic complexes in order to obtain information about the attitudes of the participants. The first step is to reveal the level of information, personal commitment and identification with the groups addressed. The second step involves asking questions about topics relevant to the future and the interest in helping to shape them. In the third step, the accessibility by which the participants were activated or can be reached by the respective actors is determined. There are four answer categories available for each answer, which are based on a unipolar rating scale. In order to simplify the answer by the participant, a verbalised rating scale was completely omitted, as this could not be used for all questions in the same way. Similarly, no numerical rating scale was used, to prevent incongruent answers. Instead, a simple character-based rating scale with the positively associated characters plus (+) and the negatively associated characters minus (-) is used. This was intended to make it easier for participants to answer the questionnaire by making it clear whether they agree or disagree with a statement. Finally, it had to be taken into account that some participants may have been answering such a questionnaire for the first time in their lives.[4]

The survey was conducted online via a survey portal.[5] The dura-

tion of the survey was one month in 2018.[6] The participants were mainly addressed via social media. A total of 198 people took part in the survey; 165 of them responded in full. With a total eligible population of 9.7 million potential target-age participants, the survey cannot be considered representative. 50.9% of the participants were male, while 49.1% were female. The real gender distribution of this age group in Germany is 52.6% male to 47.4% female citizens (Federal Office of Statistics 2018). The distribution of the participants according to old federal states (West Germany) and new federal states (East Germany) is 82.4% (West) to 17.6% (East) and thus almost reflects reality with a distribution of 82.6% (West) to 17.4% (East). The federal states indicated in the survey do not provide a representative picture in the detailed evaluation. The question of the current or highest educational attainment also does not meet the representative requirements and will therefore play no role in the evaluation.[7]

Results

The results of the various topics are presented below. The overall results of all participants are shown in a graph, while the individual results for the sub-groups of "engaged" (e) and "not engaged" (ne) are added in brackets. The subgroup "e" represents those participants who have indicated a corresponding commitment in the survey, and the subgroup "ne" therefore the participants without a commitment.[8] Figure 2 shows how well the survey participants are informed about policy issues. It is particularly striking that many questions were answered with a very high approval rate of over 80%. For example, 37.6% (e=82.1%; ne=23.8%) of the participants stated that they were strongly interested in political topics (++) and a total of 81.5% (e=100%; ne=75.4%) gave positive feedback on political interest (++; +). Only just under 5% of the participants stated that they had no interest at all in political topics (--). An extremely high level of positive approval (++; +) was also given to the question of the understanding of democracy with 95.8% (e=100%; ne=94.4%). It must be mentioned here that the concept of democracy had not been clearly defined. Thus, there could be a discrepancy between the perspective on knowledge about the functioning of democracy and the actual

level of knowledge. In addition, the high approval of the survey due to the above-average ratio of high school students and high school graduates could distort the picture. Furthermore, the question concerning regular information about current developments achieved broad approval (++; +) of 84.8% (e=100%; ne=80.2%). About one in five respondents who were not engaged expressed negative agreement (--; -) and were therefore not informed about current issues. It is also pleasing to see that about 50.3% (e=66.7%; ne=45.2%) inform themselves thoroughly (++) about the parties before an election. Overall, more than 80% (e=97.4%; ne=77.8%) also rate this question positively. It is interesting to note that among engaged participants, politics is much more often a topic (e=89.7%) at home than among non-engaged participants (ne=59.5%), so that a total of about two-thirds of participants answered this question positively (++; +).

Again, the higher level of education may overstate this. The question on policy in the school sector is answered equally by both groups. Also the question of accessibility via social media does not show a clear result that there is hardly any change across the participant groups. In fact, not even half of the young people are reached by political organisations or politicians via social media. The next block shows the engagement of young people themselves and related aspects – as shown in Figure 3. As a result, slightly more than half (e=74.4; ne=46.0%) are volunteers (++; +) or engaged in some way. The interest in becoming more involved was positively answered by about three-quarters of the respondents (e=76.9%; ne=72.2%) across all groups. There is thus a great willingness to participate. This is also shown by the deeper question of commitment when there is more scope for shaping the future. A majority of 64.2% (e=74.4%; ne=61.1%) would actually become more involved if they could actively participate in shaping things. Strong group differences can be seen in the participation or attendance of political events. Only a minority of 22.4% (e=61.5%; ne=10.3%) take part. However, participation in events represents only a small part of political or democratic participation. For this reason, questions were also asked about democratic procedures, such as the election of a class spokesperson or family voting. In both groups, the answers to the office of class or student spokes-
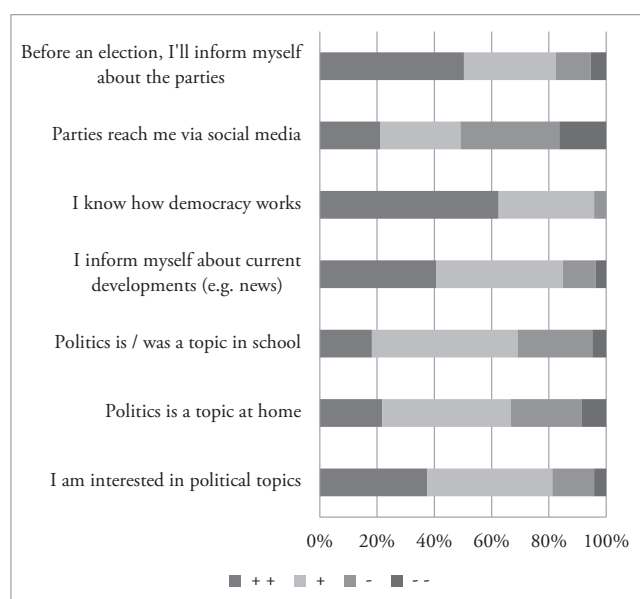

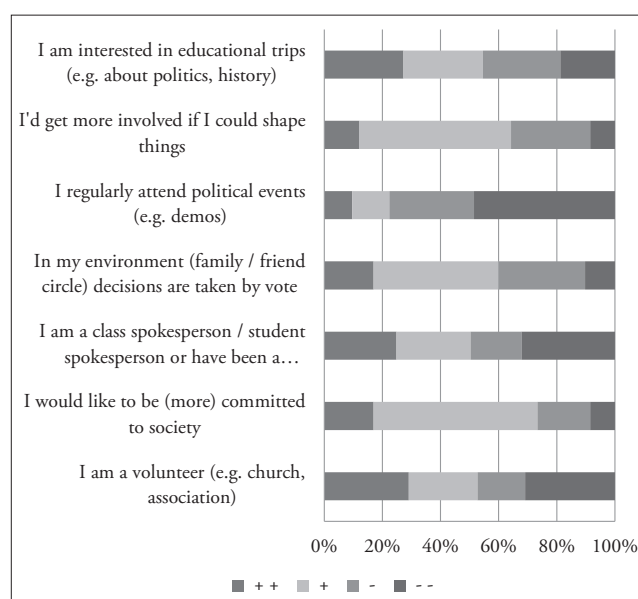*Figure 2: How well are you informed about political topics?*

Figure 3: How far do you engage yourself / would you like to engage yourself?

person are roughly the same at around 50%. This also applies to the question of voting among friends and relations. Also, there the question is answered positively across groups (++; +), with about 60% agreement. This shows that young people are quite familiar with democratic procedures and practice them to some extent. The possibility of participating in educational trips, such as those offered by the parties' youth organisations or by organisations close to trade unions within the framework of summer trips or winter camps, meets with a varying response. Only 27.3% (e=66.7%; ne=15.1%) of respondents have a strong interest (++). In contrast, 18.8% (e=0%; ne=24.6%) have no interest at all (--) in such an offer.

The third block of questions deals with the identification of respondents with political organisations. Generally, political parties or politicians are widely known among young people. 87.9% (e=94.9%; ne=85.7%) answered this question positively (++; +). A majority of at least two-thirds (e=89.7%; ne=58.7%) can also identify with the political content of the parties. Only about every twentieth (e=2.6%; ne=4.8%) cannot identify at all (--) with the political content of parties. Accordingly, a considerable proportion of 80.6% have already elected or would vote for corresponding parties or politicians (++; +). The proportion of engaged respondents is as high as 92.3%. When asked about the actual support of a party or organisation in a discussion, 94.9% of the respondents would represent it in debates. In the case of the non-engaged, this is 64.3% (++; + in each case). Because of the broad identification with certain political actors or organisations, the negatively formulated questions do not meet with broad positive approval. Only about one in five (e=12.8%; ne=21.5%) answered that no party represents its own interests (++; +). And only about a third of those questioned (++; +) share the question of the distancing and untrustworthiness of politicians. The engaged give a slightly better testimony to the actors here. The approval ratings for untrustworthiness and dissociation are about 15% (++; +). Overall, it can thus be stated that identification with political organisations, parties or politicians is relatively high. Because of the proportion of people with higher education, there could, however, also be a slight overestimation of approval here.
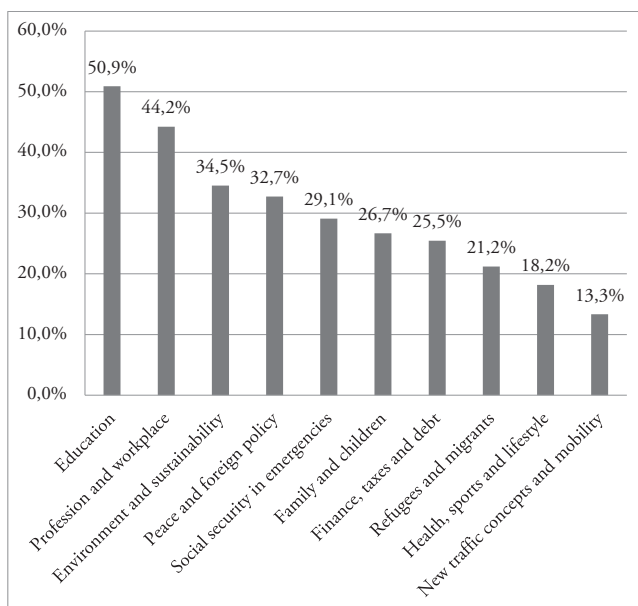
As the survey progressed, the topics that young people are currently most interested in and that they would like to help shape were raised. In the survey, three topics could be selected on an equal footing without any rank. Figure 4 summarises the results. According to this, "education" is the most important topic for the 15 to 25 year-olds with about 51%. Second place goes to the topic "profession and workplace" with 44.2%. It is possible that these topics are particularly in focus, among other things, because they are very present in the current life situation of the target group. For example, they have just finished school or are about to graduate and will soon be entering working life or have recently done so. Third place is not surprisingly taken by the topic "environment and sustainability". The less prioritised topics are "new traffic and mobility concepts" ranked last (13.3%) and "health, sports and lifestyle" second last (18.2%). This could be related to the fact that illness and mobility are not paramount issues for young people.

The picture between East and West Germany is slightly different. Accordingly "profession and workplace" (48.3%) as well as " environment and sustainability" (44.8%) are the top themes for young East Germans, while for young West Germans the topic "education" dominates very strongly (54.4%). The topic of "finances, taxes and debts" is also much more important to the young West Germans (28.7%) than to the young East Germans (10.3%). It is also particularly surprising that the problem of "refugees and migrants" is given higher priority in West Germany than in East Germany, which is in diametrical contrast to surveys and media reports. The result could be attributable to the age group or to the above-average level of education.

In order to deepen the setting of topics, the willingness to participate in shaping the respective topics was also asked. Even across groups, there are essentially only minimal differences in the willingness to participate between the engaged and the not engaged. Of particular interest is also the reason why young people get involved or under what circumstances they might get more involved. For this purpose, the motives were asked in the survey, separately according to existing or non-existing commitment. Figure 5 shows the results of the young engaged. Analogous to the preferences already established above, the participants are par-
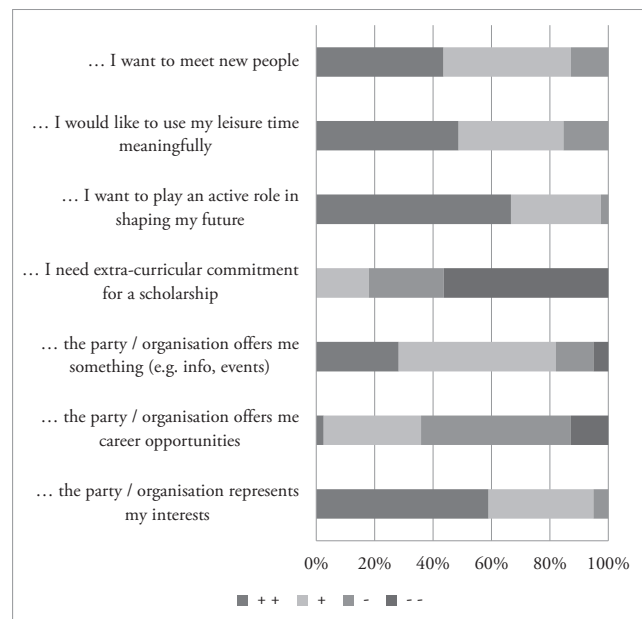

Figure 4: Topics ranked by importance

Figure 5: I am in a political party / organisation because …

ticularly engaged (++) when 59% of their interests are represented in the organisation. Influencing future-oriented actions and decisions also plays a central role with a very high approval rate of 66.7% (++). The social aspects are also very important to the respondents (++). For example, 43.6% use their engagement to get to know new people and 48.7% want to spend their free time meaningfully. On the other hand, the offers of the parties do not play a decisive role with regard to scholarship opportunities or career opportunities. On the contrary, far more than half (56.4%) vehemently reject a commitment to scholarships (--) and 12.8% decisively rule out a commitment to career opportunities (--).

On the other hand, the motives of the not engaged were also asked about, and what could bring them into a political organisation. The question of interest representation is answered in a similarly positive way here as with the engaged, with an overall positive approval (++; +) of more than 80%. Analogous to the above-mentioned question of shaping the future, the answers were also positive overall with 84.1% (++; +) in relation to the genuine opportunities for participation. An important criterion for those who are not engaged is the time factor. Three-quarters of the respondents would sometimes be willing to get involved if they had more time. Only 7.9% would not aspire to commitment even with more free time (--). The statements on more money, scholarship opportunities, career opportunities and special offers do not reveal any clear tendencies. They were each answered about half positively and half negatively. However, 27.8% would never (--) commit themselves to a scholarship and 13.5% to career opportunities. The tendencies between the groups of engaged and not engaged thus go in a similar direction.

Finally, the accessibility of the respective survey group was asked about, i.e. how they can best be addressed by the actors of political organisations. Unfortunately the "Other" option was chosen most frequently, which does not allow any conclusions to be drawn. Respondents may not have remembered the exact situation, so none of the multiple choices were certain. In second and third place were "friends" (23.1%) and "direct contact" (15.4%). Not only schools (2.1%), but also clubs and associations (10.3%) played a less influential role in commitment.
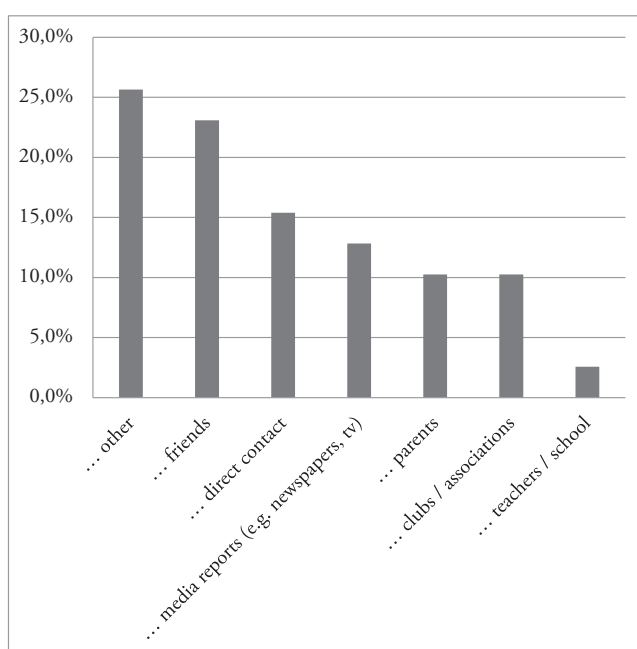

Figure 6: I became active in a political party through ...

Also the not engaged were asked about their reachability. The church, parents or associations would normally only be able to address those under 21 years of age. However, these various sources do not have very promising results due to the low preferred accessibility. On the other hand, "direct contact" (20.6%), "media reports" (19%) or "friends" (17.5%) are regarded as more suitable channels. Thus it can be shown that in both groups direct contact and contact by friends would most probably lead to commitment.

Considerations and conclusions

In the preceding analysis, conclusions were already hinted at, which are to be further examined here. In the following some correlations are explained; they show a high correlation coefficient according to statistical standards.[9] There is a positive correlation (0.722) between the general interest in politics and the observation of current developments, for example in the media. There is also a positive correlation between those interested in politics and knowledge of politicians or political organisations (0.571) and their identification with the contents of these (0.520). In contrast, there is a high negative correlation among those interested in politics with regard to their untrustworthiness (-0.228) or with the statement that no party represents their interests (-0.216). Thus, it can be shown that those interested in politics obtain appropriate information and gain a differentiated picture of parties and political organisations. Less surprising is the positive correlation that respondents who are informed about current developments also know how democracy works (0.511) and that they also know corresponding actors (0.549). Overall, this shows that the information factor plays a major role. The more information available to respondents, for example about a party's programmes, the greater their commitment in the next step. The survey shows that very high numbers of young adults are indeed of the opinion that there are political organisations in favour of their own interests. Given the broad spectrum of political parties in Germany, it can be assumed that there is something for everyone. There is a positive correlation in particular with regard to identification with an organisation if it represents the interests of the participant (0.540). This continues with the statement that the corresponding party was also elected (0.408) and that the positions of the organisation would be represented in a discussion (0.565). This makes it very clear that a distinct identification can take place among young people if the offer of the party or political organisation fits the needs and questions of the surveyed person. There is also a high positive correlation between the organisations' offerings, for example in the form of events, and participation in such offerings (0.566). This proves that young people actually perceive one when the appropriate offers are made to them. The process leading to identification is thus opened up by a good information basis, and by a customised range of participation opportunities to bind an organisation, which is then also loyally represented to the outside world. The thesis of young people's lack of interest in politics or political organisations could thus be refuted once again. The right offers and topics are decisive for the success of winning over these people. The focus is on topics that affect the everyday lives and living conditions of young people, such as education, career entry, the labour market and sustainable development. New transport concepts or health care play a subordinate role. After all, the affected group of people is less frequently affected by illness and nowadays is less likely to have their own car. Ultimately, it is

important to be able to reach the target group with your messages. The best way to do this is to contact them directly or to recruit them through friendly contacts. An approach via social networks or video podcasts was not classified as particularly target-oriented.

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Recommendations for action

On the basis of the available survey results, the three theses can now be examined and solutions formulated. The previous developments and theoretical aspects are also included. First of all, it can be said that the image of parties and politicians held by the interviewees is significantly better than can be heard in the media discussion. There is broad confidence in the capacity of political organisations to act. In addition, young adults are well informed about current developments and a large part of them are also involved with political issues and the parties before an election. Similarly, the majority of respondents have already voted once. The survey was unable to clarify whether the young generation is substituting political engagement with alternative political formats. Nor is it clear whether the interviewees intend to expand their commitment in the future. It can, however, be assumed that, on the basis of life cycle theory, this expansion of participation will automatically occur in the coming years among the group of people surveyed. The time factor plays a decisive role here. A not inconsiderable proportion of respondents stated that they would increase their commitment if more time was available. If the current situation in life does not permit open time windows for a corresponding commitment, this could change as a result of a change in the life situation in old age. The thesis that young adults try out various political participation options in the initial phase and thus reduce their voter turnout could thus not be fully confirmed.

Recommendation for action 1: Provide precisely fitting information
Good access to information is crucial for participation. Young adults want to inform themselves and do so. A high degree of transparency and information suitable for young people, for example via the relevant channels for young people or through influencers, is a key success factor in conveying the information credibly.
The respondents indicated that in any case there is a political organisation representing their interests. Very few said that they did not have a mouthpiece for their interests. As a result, the offer is already broad enough and there is a party, organisation or platform for everyone. A further path to fragmentation will therefore not necessarily be essential. However, the offers of the political organisation are not sufficiently available or are not sufficiently used. There may be some catching up to do here. For this reason, political parties, for example, should focus more on what activities appeal to the younger generation and how they can use their time in a meaningful and participatory way. The party system has already expanded due to the election successes of the Greens in the 1980s, the Left in the 2000s and the AfD in the recent past. It is quite possible that other parties will be added in the coming years if young people turn more to those parties that best represent their interests. In the European Parliament, for example, the

Piratenpartei (Pirate Party), die PARTEI and the NPD, among others, were able to move in because the electoral threshold of the European Parliament is only 3%[10], which means that smaller parties can also move in. This result shows that other parties can also achieve a high number of votes.

Recommendation for action 2: Lowering of the electoral threshold in the German parliament
It could therefore make sense to lower the blocking electoral threshold for national parliaments as well, in order to offer more room for other parties. This could lead to an enormous gain in participation if parties with minority opinions are also integrated into political processes. Furthermore, for a young citizen, the question could arise as to why, for example, they should give their vote to the Tierschutzpartei (animal protection party), which then does not count anyway. If, however, the voter only feels represented by this party, his willingness to vote could fall as a result. For the established parties this scenario is likely to be a catastrophe, since a further increase in the number of parties in the parliaments – even if their successes are still too small – is likely to exacerbate the difficulties of forming a government.

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The Federal Constitutional Court has also had to deal with the electoral threshold several times in the context of the elections to the European Parliament (BVerfG, judgement of the Second Senate of 26 February 2014 – 2 BvE 2/13 – recitals 1-116). This essentially involved weighing up the principle of equality of voting rights (Article 3 I GG) and equal opportunities for political parties (Article 21 I GG). The concerns lie in the fact that the formation of a stable government can be jeopardised by a low electoral threshold. This is because new parliamentary groups could form in the European Parliament, resulting in greater fragmentation. This development is partly welcomed by the judges. After all, it could improve political discourse. However, it is questioned whether the constitutional principles benefit everyone who stands for election in the same way. In their judgement, the judges argue that the 3% electoral threshold does not intervene as intensively in the equality of voting rights and the equal opportunities of the parties as the former 5% electoral threshold. However, it does not follow from this that the interference in equality of voting rights also associated with the 3% electoral threshold would be negligible and would not require any justification. A seat in the European Parliament can already be obtained with about 1% of the votes cast, so that the electoral threshold becomes effective in practice. Since an electoral threshold is not currently required in German European electoral law, i.e. such justification is already fundamentally lacking, it is not a question of the appropriateness of the 3% clause.
The thesis that the individualisation of young citizens demands more opportunities for participation and diversity of content from the political organisation could not be explicitly confirmed. However, there are serious indications that the creation of additional options does justice to the individualisation principle of the young generation. Accordingly, the options and offers for participation should be expanded rather than limited.

Recommendation for action 3: Expansion of youth-friendly provision and participation opportunities

Young adults today use different tools to the ones that the established political organisations have used for a long time. They also want to use their communication methods in their activities in political parties. More decentralised opportunities should also be created. Many parties have already introduced interactive video conferences and use social media to communicate and share information. These activities are going in the right direction. However, they need to be constantly reviewed and expanded. Services must keep pace with digitisation. In addition, it should be constantly questioned what appropriate measures create added value for young people. Simplicity and efficiency are important keywords. Long paper applications are not an adequate way of increasing participation.

Respondents clearly stated that they would like to get more involved. This statement is closely linked to the demand that they actually want to make a difference. Many respondents can also identify with political organisations, especially those that are already involved. It can be assumed that their existing commitment has led to a commitment to the organisation and identification. Accordingly, the thesis that young people are only willing to participate if they can exert sufficient influence on developments through their commitment can be clearly proven. It also coincides with the results of the party member study. As already mentioned above, the amount of time spent plays an important role. Since young people have a wealth of leisure activities on offer and want to spend their time sensibly in addition to school and work, their commitment must have a very high degree of effectiveness.

Recommendation for action 4: Real involvement in shaping processes

Time is very valuable for young people, especially in the 15–25 year-old age group, who are in a decisive phase of change in their lives. They want to help shape this process and invest time in it. But this investment must also pay off. In the medium term, endless decision-making processes and lengthy discussions will prevent young people from becoming involved in a participatory
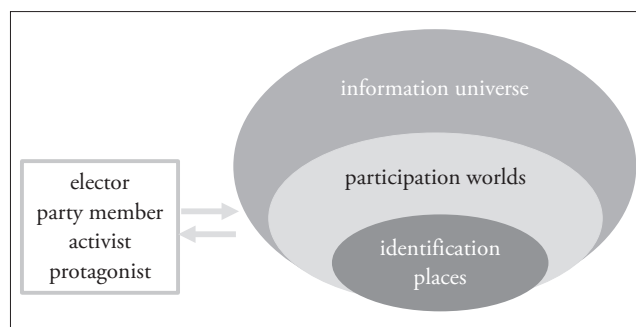

Figure 7: The three dimensions of engagement-binding

way. On the one hand, speed must be increased. On the other hand, the effects of an activity must be measurable.

The information obtained from the two previous chapters allows a division into three dimensions, as shown in Figure 7. On the one hand, information is very important. Only with this can young people make decisions about whether, when and how they want to participate. In addition, the information is absolutely necessary in order to find out which political organisation represents their own interests or meets their needs. This dimension can be called an information universe. The next level offers opportunities for participation. These should be provided by the respective organisations about which the young adults have informed themselves extensively. The added value of these participation options must be correspondingly high. This dimension can be described as participation worlds. The third dimension is the places of identification. They are fixed points in the coordinate system with which young adults can identify. They are the result of a successful participation process. Once a strong connection to these places has been established, the young generation will stay with them and will not leave so quickly. The places of identification are the result of their work in the political organisation.

Steering instrument

The following section describes how to achieve success step by step. The young generation, as voters, party members, activists or actors, is in constant exchange with political organisations. This
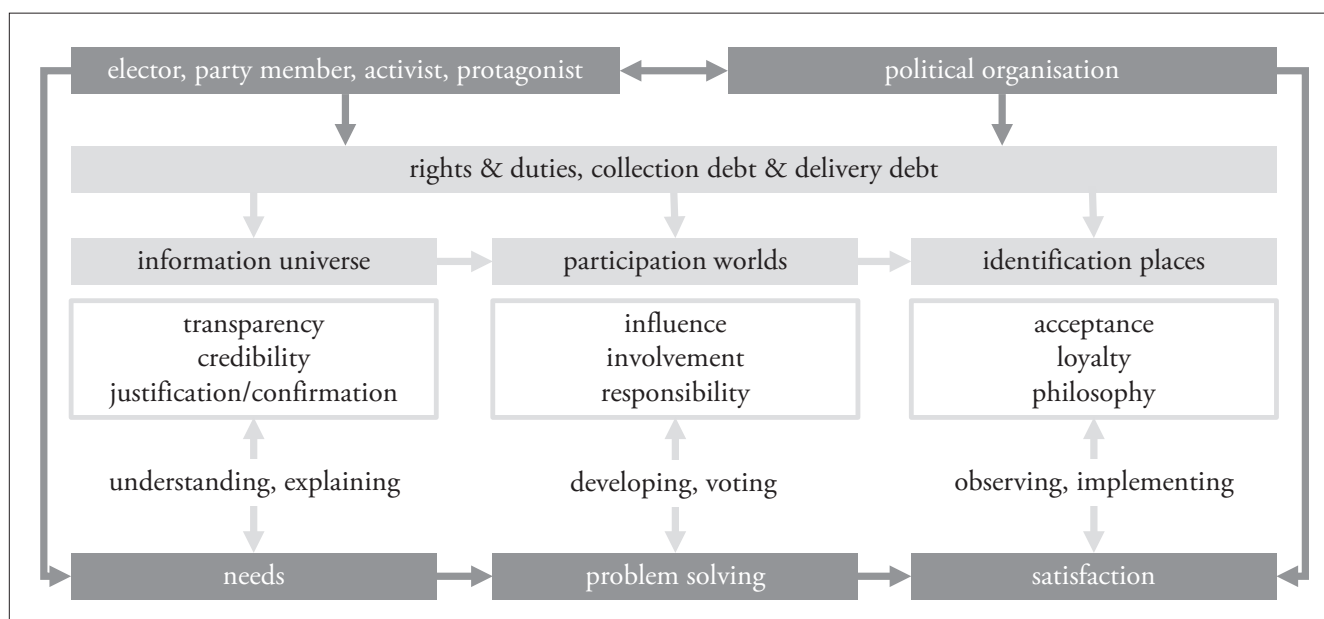

Figure 8: Systematics of the development stages for the realisation of success

gives them rights and duties as well as a debt to collect and bring to the table. Young citizens have the right, but also the duty, to participate in the democratic processes of their country. To do this, they must obtain information and tell the actors what concerns them. Conversely, the actors have the right and the duty to carry out the corresponding actions as requested by of the citizen, for example as a result of an election. Within this framework, they must provide information and ask about the needs of (young) citizens. It is particularly important for the information to be transparent, for the actors to maintain their credibility and to justify their actions, and themselves to be committed to values and ideologies. In case of doubt, the actors must explain certain information in more detail, while the young citizens must question the facts. Stakeholders must understand the needs of young people. In the sphere of participation, there must be scope for influence, real participation and the option of taking responsibility. Solutions to problems must be developed jointly so that individual actors or elite working groups do not alone decide on concepts or programmes. Rather, it matters all the more that there is real coordination and not just a superficial possibility of influence. Due to today's technical possibilities, for example, many votes can be carried out quickly and cost-effectively among many members. In order to reach an appropriate level of identification, a high degree of acceptance is necessary. Only when the processes of participation function satisfactorily will the young person develop a bond with his or her organisation and remain loyal to it. At first, this loyalty will be questioned again and again, until finally a sustainable commitment will emerge, if the previous prerequisites are satisfactorily fulfilled. The political organisation must always defend this bond by keeping its promises and implementing the concepts it has developed. Figure 8 shows the systematics of these development stages.

In order to be able to control this system as a political organisation in a target-oriented way, an instrument is necessary. This can be in the form of an evaluation model, based on the Balanced

Scorecard. A Balanced Scorecard is a control instrument of strategic management (Kaplan/Norton 1996: 44-46). It was developed in order to be able to steer different entrepreneurial areas with a relatively small number of key figures. For this purpose, four perspectives are taken, which belong to the decisive success factors. The basis of entrepreneurial success are the employees. Through them the company can learn and grow, because the employees are the knowledge carriers and their qualifications strongly influence the success. This is presented as an internal process perspective. Here it is important that quality and efficiency reach an appropriate level. From the customer's perspective, these characteristics are particularly important in order to strengthen or improve customer loyalty. This means that the desired key figures can also be achieved from a financial perspective, such as a certain return on sales. The Balanced Scorecard model can be adapted very well for a political organisation.

The role of employees is played by the members of the organisation – whether it is a party, a trade union or another initiative. The focus here is on understanding the needs of the members and developing concepts. The development stages mentioned above take their course. The implementation of the concepts and a good organisational structure, from which all members benefit, creates strong member loyalty. This is continued externally. The members behave loyally and loyalty can also be transferred to other voters or new trade union members due to the needs-based concepts. Loyalty also develops in external relations. This gives rise to political power that can be translated into a large factional strength or government participation in the case of a party. Trade unions could have a better bargaining position if there is support and pressure from many loyal members. Finally, these prospects need to be assessed conclusively. The evaluation model modified in Figure 9 is intended for this purpose. It shows the relationships between the individual perspectives and provides information on the success factors. The dimensions of the engagement commitment, the de-
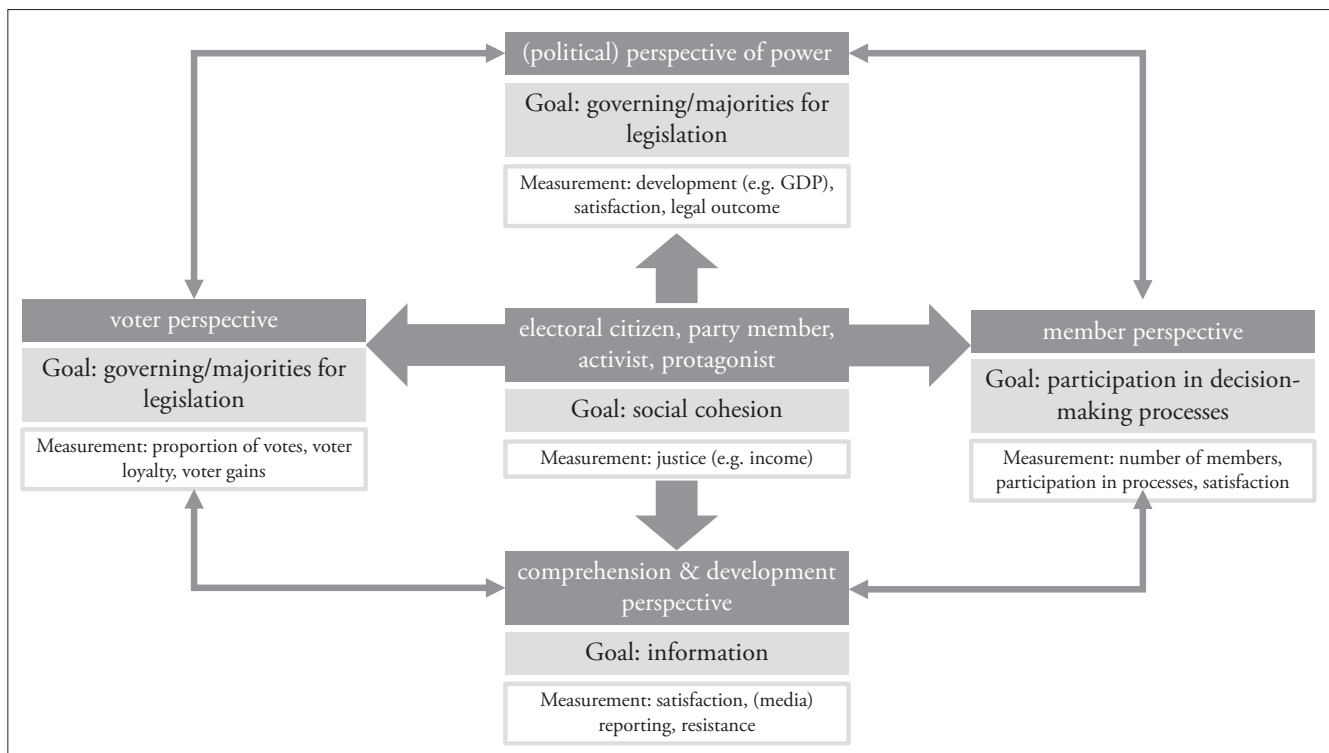

Figure 9: Evaluation model of political success factors

velopment stages of the realisation of success and the evaluation must not be regarded as individual parts, but as a system that accesses all these elements and connects them with each other. The valuation model in Figure 9 shows in detail the interrelationships for one party. However, the model can also be applied to any other political organisation. Likewise, the goals and measurement criteria are only given as examples.

Using such a model, the individual objectives can be defined for the various perspectives and adjusted at regular intervals. The targets are measured using criteria that are regularly reviewed and aligned in a similar way to the German government's sustainability strategy. This results in a steering instrument that enables political organisations to steer their own interests in the desired direction and to achieve the higher goal of retaining power – for whatever purpose. It is a general instrument that is not explicitly tailored to young people. However it could be used by the youth organisations of political parties and trade unions to start with the younger generation. It is precisely through such an instrument that political organisations have the opportunity to ideally control the participation of young people and to better understand their needs. The exchange is simplified and a quick countermeasure in the detection of misconduct is possible. In order to incorporate the points mentioned in the theses into the organisational process in the future, the evaluation model offers the opportunity for all political actors to bring about the involvement of the younger generation in an appropriate way.

Discussion

The first part of this paper shows how it was possible to briefly review the main developments on the basis of which a survey was then carried out among young people aged 15 to 25 in Germany, as described in second part. The non-representative survey provides information on young people's attitudes towards political issues. The statements partially reflected the findings from the first part of the paper. The confirmation of the theses was partially successful. However, further research is necessary to examine the facts in more detail. The results of the survey must be critically questioned at this point. As already mentioned, the representativeness of the sample is not sufficient to make a conclusive statement about the behaviour and attitudes of the target group. Rather, the survey represents only a small part of the target group. In this case, the high proportion of young adults with a higher level of education should be mentioned. A generalisation of the results cannot therefore be fully affirmed. There is undoubtedly a risk that the results will be distorted by the uneven distribution of the sample. Therefore, the results can only be used as reference points. However, it can again be said that many statements had a clearly positive or negative tendency and that certain conclusions can be drawn from them. These could be used to answer the theses. It can be said quite clearly that a general rejection or a general disinterest of the target group in the political discourse is not applicable.

The survey has shown that the megatrends mentioned have a significant share in the issues of young adults. The main focus is on the future world of work and the training perspective. This topic is particularly important for young people, both in East and West Germany. Since no concrete answers to digitisation and globalisation are currently being given by political parties and trade unions, this point must come into focus even more than today in order to give answers to the next generation. Those who are about to decide on a training place or a course of study must be given an orientation as to how the country will be positioned in relation to the labour market in the future. In particular, it should be possible to involve young people in the identification process, since they will be the ones who will secure future prosperity in Germany and pay into the social security systems. In addition, the topic of education was explicitly mentioned as one of the most important topics in the survey. This also goes hand in hand with the megatrends that will require people to change their flexibility at different stages of their lives. Here, too, the next generation will demand concrete answers on how to deal with the changes and the deepening of lifelong learning in our society.

Finally, the megatrend of sustainability was also named as the third most important topic with regard to environmental issues. The megatrends can thus be found in the results of the survey as a whole. The environment was one of the most important aspects of sustainability, before peace and migration. To what extent the complexity of sustainability in relation to refugee movements and crises in other regions of the world is known among the respondents cannot be answered here in more detail. However, current developments and commitment to environmental causes show that sustainability is particularly important to young people. This aspect shows that young people do not wait for governments to act on the issue of sustainability, but instead get involved themselves or take part in demonstrations. The Greens have been experiencing a gradual increase in approval at federal and state level for about a year now. It remains to be seen whether this effect will persist in the long term and whether the Greens – especially through the voices of the young – will play a greater role in the political spectrum in the long term. However, the megatrend will continue to occupy the next generation, as the survey also showed.

> Numerous options are available to the organisations to involve young people in their structures with activities, projects, debates or broad information offerings, thus increasing their own attractiveness for this target group. Under no circumstances can we continue to proceed in the same way as in the past. The young generation will insist on new approaches and the political organisations must give them platforms to develop.

Some aspects can only be answered in retrospect. In any case, courageous steps should be taken to increase the willingness to participate – which undoubtedly exists on a large scale. It has been shown how young people can be motivated to participate step by step, up to and including commitment to an organisation. Numerous options are available to the organisations to involve young people in their structures with activities, projects, debates or broad information offerings, thus increasing their own attractiveness for this target group. Under no circumstances can we continue to proceed in the same way as in the past. The young generation will insist on new approaches and the political organisations must give them platforms to develop. These possibilities can also be controlled. It must be clear to the political organisations that the target group will always be active and that new initiatives and movements may emerge which could not work in favour of the established parties and organisations and pursue their own interests. This may lead to further fragmentation of the party spectrum. Such a development could cause further major

problems for the established parties. Current developments in some European countries already show these tendencies. In Italy, for example, a government fed by former marginal parties was installed in 2018. If the political organisations in Germany want to oppose such a development, the proposals submitted should be taken into account. On the other hand, the question of lowering the threshold from 5% to 3% in the German parliament could be an adequate way to increase participation in political parties. This would give more consideration to participation in smaller organisational units and would also create more diversity of opinion in parliament. Young people would be able to better fulfil their individual will to develop through involvement. This would, however, increase the fragmentation of the parties and probably make it even more difficult to form a government in the future. Accordingly, such a scenario is not to be expected.

In view of this fact, the Recommendation for Action deals primarily with an instrument for governance in established organisations. An evaluation model as a steering instrument was derived from a proven management method and tailored to the needs of a political organisation. With the help of the measures mentioned it is possible to sustainably increase the attractiveness of political organisations for the younger generation. Management instruments have the advantage that they provide a quick overview of current situations with standardised key figures and can be used to derive options for action. An instrument based on a Balanced Scorecard could thus provide the organisations with an adequate control tool with which a sustainable development of the organisation can also be promoted over a longer period of time. It is recommended that the concept should be implemented as quickly as possible.

Notes

1 For the party member study of 2009, around 17,000 members from all six parties represented in the German Parliament were interviewed in a representative postal survey and an accompanying telephone population survey was conducted. The party member survey was repeated in 2017. In the study, 17,000 members of the CDU, CSU, SPD, DIE LINKE, Bündnis 90/Die Grünen and the FDP were interviewed in writing, and 1,000 party members, 1,000 former party members and 1,000 non-party members were interviewed in in a telephone population survey. No publications were available at the time of preparation of the paper.

2 No definite accruals or reductions are made. In the study, the terms are classified in the same way as in standard literature (definitions are not discussed in detail).

3 The terms young adults, young people, the younger generation and youth are used synonymously in this paper and refer in each case to the group of people between 15 and 25 years of age affected here. An exact classification into certain generation classes has not been undertaken here.

4 cf. Menold/Bogner 2015: 3-5.

5 The survey was carried out on the website of the portal www.umfrageonline.de.

6 The survey took place from 1 May to 31 May 2018.

7 Age groups (per year), federal states, educational qualifications were not included in the evaluation due to the lack of representativeness of the individual data. The federal states were aggregated to East and West Germany. Two age groups were formed for the age groups (under 21 years; over 21 years). Both are only taken into account to a limited extent in the evaluation.

8 Various other studies have dealt with the inclusion of young people in politics. In 2015, the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung conducted a study on the political and social participation of young people. The results were taken up in various articles – among others, from the Gille/De Rijke/Gaiser (2017). In addition, the Tremmel/Rutsche collection (2016) provides numerous insights into the political participation of young people.

9 A selection of relevant statements was made whose correlation coefficient has a high significance. The correlation coefficients in brackets show a significance level with p-values smaller than 0.05. The calculated values shown are larger than the critical value of a t-distribution with a significance level of (α = 0.05). It should be noted that significance is not easily detectable due to the relatively small sample size. However, the corresponding level of significance was achieved for the statements mentioned above.

10 In the 2019 European elections, Germany did not apply an electoral threshold.

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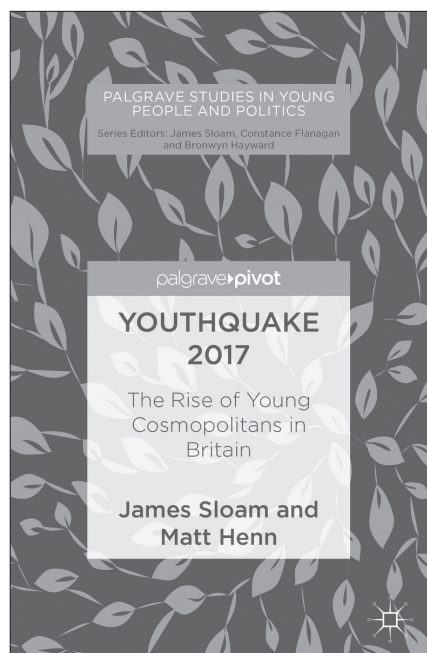
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James Sloam / Matt Henn: Youthquake 2017: The Rise of Young Cosmopolitans in Britain

Reviewed by Simon Pistor

One might argue that the 2016 British European Referendum and its Brexit vote has brought about two distinct results. First, the vote produced the UK's historic decision to leave the European Union. However, after three years of political conundrum, we still don't know whether the UK will – or can – eventually follow through on its decision. At this point in time, the political, economic, and social fallout of Brexit is everybody's guess. Second, in an attempt to secure a better negotiation position for the UK, the then-prime minister Theresa May called for a General Election in June 2017. Instead of a triumphant victory for the Conservative Party, the campaign saw a surge of the Labour Party under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn. Even though ultimately losing out, the movement behind Labour's surprising success was labelled a *youthquake* by British media – even prompting the Oxford Dictionaries to declare *youthquake* their word of the year for 2017. These (ongoing) political developments prompted James Sloam, Reader in Politics and International Relations at Royal Holloway University in London, and Matt Henn, Professor of Social Research at Nottingham Trent University, to write a very timely book. Their *Youthquake 2017: The Rise of Young Cosmopolitans in Britain* challenges widespread narratives about the politically uninterested youth. Using the toolsets of comparative politics, Sloam and Henn's overall claim is that it was a youth movement based on a broader appeal to the needs of young people (especially by the Labour Party) which spiked the higher voter turnout among young people. Their book introduces the notion of a "youthquake" as an analytical concept within electoral and youth studies.

In the first chapter, Sloam and Henn sketch their theoretical and comparative framework. They do not only consult electoral results but also broader social and political changes over the past decades. Sloam and Henn argue that the 2017 UK General Election was a "transformative election" (1). On the one hand, age – and not class – was the most important predictor of voting intentions. On the other hand, Young Millennials changed the political landscape of Britain dramatically (1). In line with Inglehart's "post-materialist thesis", Sloam and Henn argue that an individualisation of values and lifestyles led to an intergenerational cleavage in voter behaviour (2). The conceptual strength of Sloam and Henn's approach lies in their categorising young British voters as "young left-cosmopolitans" (3) who tended to be in favour of remaining in the European Union and mostly voted for Labour candidates in the 2017 British General Election. Sloam and Henn argue that the dominance of austerity politics and the rise of authoritarian-nationalist forms of populism led to the politicisation of Young British Millennials (7). For these young people, cultural as well as postmaterial issues, such as environmental protection, national identity and immigration, have become ever more important (7). The aim of Sloam and Henn's study is to conceptualise and put to the test the very notion of a youthquake. It is used to "describe seismic political activity that seems to be inspired by younger citizens" (8). They recognise the broader basis of the OED definition of youthquake but add a further layer to it. Sloam and Henn usefully expand the definition with the components of elections: "We would add that 'youthquake elections' are ones in which dramatic changes in how many young people vote, who they vote for and how active they are in the campaign have, quite literally, shaken up the status quo" (8). As their last chapter shows, there is strong empirical evidence pointing to the 2017 UK General Election as a "youthquake election".

In chapter two, Sloam and Henn provide a theoretical framework for their empirical case studies. Their overall argument is that young people are frustrated by mainstream politics and that they therefore seek out forms of political engagement other than traditional voting, which results in new forms of political activism. They focus especially on youth participation and how it is influenced by the larger developments on a global scale. Under the subheading of "shifting tectonic plates", they theorise the embeddedness of youth political engagement in political, economic, and social change (20-23). But they put a stronger focus on theories of youth participation in politics (24-28). Here they argue that social media has become a decisive factor in electoral politics (26). They argue that in the case of youthquake, social media was a driving force for left-wing politics and campaigns (26).

At the heart of the book lies the conceptualisation of "young cosmopolitans" (32-35). The authors emphasise the "cultural turn" which distinguishes younger from older generations but also the "leftward drift" of young people in the wake of prolonged economic austerity since 2008 (32). The key insight of the conceptualisation of young cosmopolitans is the following: "Cosmopolitan values apply to many, but not all, young people. …cosmopolitan-left individuals are very likely to hold university

degrees, and to be students and women. Conversely, old, white males with low levels of educational attainment are least likely to possess these views" (34). Sloam and Henn present "young cosmopolitans" as a distinct political force united by common values and positions. These include "postmaterial issues", such as Brexit, immigration and the environment, and "material issues" such as healthcare and housing (34f.). Sloam and Henn conceptualise young cosmopolitans in opposition to "authoritarian-nationalist forms of populism characterised by UKIP, Donald Trump and elements of the British Conservative Party" (35).

In chapter three, Sloam and Henn present the transformation of political participation and engagement by the youth. In line with Inglehart's postmaterialist thesis they call it a "silent revolution", because participation changes from defending material interests to negotiating new cleavages (53-57). Sloam and Henn argue that there is also a socio-demographic cleavage alongside the postmaterialist cleavage (59-63). They conclude by arguing for an intergenerational gap across the past major General Elections: "the predominant electoral cleavage was generational, with young people considerably less likely than their older contemporaries to vote at the General Elections in 2001, 2005 and 2010" (64).

In the fourth chapter, the authors turn to the 2016 EU referendum. Sloam and Henn put the historic Brexit vote into the larger historical context in the form of the rise of populist and neo-nationalistic forces across the globe. Even though the Brexit vote can be aligned within these political developments, Sloam and Henn point out that the case is more difficult in the Brexit case: "The EU referendum result was…defined by socio-economic cleavages *and* cultural conflicts. But the decision to leave the European Union was more nuanced than this would suggest" (72). Referenda, as they argue, are always a "plebiscite" on the popularity of the incumbent government. Furthermore, "internal cultural dynamics" (72) within the UK were also at play. The authors make the case that young people in favour of the Remain campaign are characterised by "cosmopolitan-left values and attitudes, as illustrated by their concerns for the economic consequences of a potential Brexit and by their strong support for cultural diversity" (73). Sloam and Henn present a convincing link between populism, cosmopolitanism and the question of Europe (73-75). They claim that anti-establishment sentiment against the EU are prevalent both in "authoritarian-nationalist and cosmopolitan-left politics" (74). The authors also take a close look at youth engagement during the EU referendum. Referring to YouGov studies, they show that the EU has not been a hot button issue for young people in the wake of the EU referendum. Furthermore, Sloam and Henn conceptualise young "Remainers" as cosmopolitan-left. To the authors the most compelling argument for this is that a vast majority of young Remainers (89%) agree that a wider diversity of culture are positive for Britain (81): "This paints a picture of young Remain voters as postmaterialistic, cosmopolitan liberals, who were at ease with cultural heterogeneity" (82).

On the one hand, one might interject that there were simply not enough young Remainers. On the other hand, there is enough evidence to suggest that young people were indeed energised – and politicised – by the Brexit vote (84-86). Sloam and Henn show the intragenerational differences in the young people. They argue that the young Remainers are best captured as *cosmopolitan-left* citizens. Sloam and Henn conclude their discussion thus:

"Young, well-educated, politically engaged individuals could be considered to be both winners and losers of globalisation. Whilst emphasizing the growing gap between the super-rich and everyone else, these young cosmopolitans tend to hold postmaterialist concerns over issues such as the environment and embrace the cultural diversity which defines their societies" (86).

In chapter five, the authors come to the most important example for their argument, the 2017 General Election in Great Britain. The election results saw improvements for the Conservative Party (42% and up 5.5 points in comparison to 2015). Yet the Labour Party came closer than most expected with a result of 40% which was up 9.6 point from 2015 (92). In line with their overall argument, Sloam and Henn claim: "We argue that principal driving forces behind the result included the increase in youth engagement and activism during the campaign and the vote, as well as the switch in youth support to the Labour Party and Jeremy Corbyn as standard-bearers for cosmopolitan-left sentiment" (92). They discuss the 2017 General Election in regard to several aspects: parties and youth mobilisation, youth turnout, the large support of young people for the Labour Party, and the policy dimension of the election.

Sloam and Henn use a content analysis to conclude that Labour paid more attention to young people than any other mayor party did in their respective manifestos (93-95). Labour was more successful in getting their message across to young people (96). Sloam and Henn argue that Labour's social media strategy has been a large factor in their success (96-98). In addition, Jeremy Corbyn's candidacy and leadership came across as "authentic and principled" (98). Sloam and Henn further acknowledge that Labour's success can also be ascribed to the structural changes enforced under Ed Miliband's party leadership from 2010 to 2015. During this period, the party explicitly spoke to young people with their party programme "Refounding Labour: A Party for the New Generation" (98). According to the data presented by the authors, a broad appeal to younger voters led to mobilising and engaging them. Young people turned out to vote in higher numbers than in previous elections, but nonetheless their turnout still was significantly lower in comparison to older age cohorts (99f.). As a second feature of the 2017 General Election, Sloam and Henn diagnose a "turning left" (101-104) of the younger cohorts, with massive wins for Labour in the 18-24 age group (62% for Labour vs 27% for the Conservative Party) as well as in the 25-34 and 35-44 year olds. Sloam and Henn add: "The youthquake extended beyond the youngest cohort" (101). What is surprising is that Brexit was not the leading policy issue for young people, rather the NHS was most often mentioned as the most important single issue in the 18-24 cohort. Vice versa, Brexit was the most important single issue for the over-65 cohort (104-106). Sloam and Henn convincingly present evidence for a correlation between young left-leaning people and the Remain campaign (106). They conclude this chapter by arguing in favour of the youthquake narrative. In the 2017 General Election they see a long-term *generational effect* as well as a short-term *period effect* at work (109). Young people vote differently to old people. With their analysis Sloam and Henn show that age and not class is the most decisive predictor of voting priorities. Yet they do not overlook *intragenerational differences* in their focus on young people. They conclude: "Clearly not all young people could be considered as participants or fellow travellers in this cosmopo-

litan-left movement, and it is much less reflective of young white men from poorer backgrounds with low levels of educational attainment" (109).

In the sixth chapter, the authors conclude by recapping their argument and by tying their findings back to the broader general political climate. Political entrepreneurs must act to engage with young people in the face of the rising challenges to democracy: "Frustrated by the practice and outcomes of mainstream democratic politics and the record of successive governments in office, many young people have become increasingly attracted to new – often postmaterialist – political agendas and new styles of politics in a search for alternative ways to actualise their political aspirations" (120f.). As the authors argue, the 2017 youthquake can be viewed as a reaction to these developments. Young people tend to be more open to multicultural concerns, they are astute to global inequalities, and they therefore develop a rather internationalist or cosmopolitan worldview. Yet, even though the authors are cautiously optimistic, they remain aware of a possible "cultural backlash" by young people who do not hold similar political views or are in different socio-economic backgrounds: "The future and momentum of the youthquake remains uncertain. The emergence of the new left-cosmopolitan group of young people has a mirror-image in the appearance of an economically-insecure left-behind group of young people who don't share the same progressive values" (122). Sloam and Henn end on a cautious note by concluding that democracy in post-industrial times seems to be at a crossroads (123-125).

Overall, Sloam and Henn present a very interesting argument and provide a clear empirical case for the youthquake during the 2017 General Election in the UK. Maybe the young cosmopolitans proved wrong Theresa May, who once claimed that a citizen of the world is a citizen of nowhere.[1] Young British people tend to be interested in national politics and to have a sense of cosmopolitan belonging. To remind readers of that on an empirical basis is welcome and promising. Sloam and Henn succeed at providing an empirically rich and informed study which goes beyond the usual lamentation of a politically disenfranchised youth – a story which we have become accustomed to hear in the public sphere. If democracy is at a crossroads, maybe the key to transformation is indeed found within young people and their transforming efforts in what politics and political activism mean today.

Notes

1 May, Theresa (2016): Keynote Speech at the Conservative Party Conference 2016. In: The Independent [Online]. https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/theresa-may-speech-tory-conference-2016-in-full-transcript-a7346171.html. Viewed 26 May 2019.

*Full disclosure: The authors of the reviewed title are both members of the IGJR editorial board.

Call for Papers: IGJR issue 1/2020: Housing crisis: How can we improve the situation for young people?

The Intergenerational Justice Review (www.igjr.org) is a peer-reviewed English language journal, reflecting the current state of research on intergenerational justice. The IGJR publishes articles from humanities, social sciences, and international law. The journal is released biannually and employs a double-blind peer review process. Its editorial board consists of about 50 internationally renowned experts from ten different countries. IGJR is indexed under Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ).

The topic of issue 1/2020 (which is planned to be the first part of a double issue) will be

"Housing crisis: How can we improve the situation for young people?"

We welcome submissions to the issue 1/2020 that analyse the housing situation of the young generation.

Topic outline

In many European countries, and especially in large cities and university towns, affordable housing is a pressing and sometimes explosive issue.

In the debate about such questions as home ownership or rent increase caps (*Mietpreisbremse* – German: *rent brakes*), the intergenerational perspective is often forgotten. But different generations are affected in noticeably different ways. Rising rent and purchase prices and the failure of housing construction programmes make it ever more difficult for young people to access the housing market. The quality of housing is a key factor in living standards and wellbeing, as well as an integral element of social integration, yet in 2014 a total of 7.8% of young people in the European Union (aged between 15 and 29) were in severe housing need, 25.7% of the young people in the EU lived in overcrowded households, and 13.6% lived in households that spent 40% or more of their equivalised disposable income on housing (Eurostat 2016).

In response to the 2008/9 financial crisis, government programmes for public and social housing aimed at the poorer parts of the population were cut back, leading to diminishing access to affordable housing, especially in urbanised areas. For young people, this means that they have to pay higher rents. Today, therefore, they often live longer in their parental homes, or in the private rental sector, than previous generations (Ronald/Lennartz 2018).

What is often referred to as a "housing crisis" can certainly be seen as a question of intergenerational justice, because the baby boomers had easier access to housing or to the means to finance it. Today, the baby boomer generation benefits from housing inequality in two ways: through property values and rental income. At the same time, with pension systems under pressure because of ageing populations, the ownership of residential property has become an important component of old-age provision (Helbrecht/Geisenkauser 2012).

Younger generations, on the other hand, are disadvantaged in two respects: today's increased demand leads to further pressure on the housing market in the low-price segment, which in turn leads to an increase in the rent burden for lower and middle income groups, and also makes the purchase of residential property more difficult. In many parts of Europe, such as the Southeast of the UK, in the 1980s the average cost of a first home was three to four times the annual average salary; today it can be ten or twelve times the annual average salary.

From this perspective, it can certainly be argued that the housing market situation is not intergenerationally fair. And in many European countries, ownership of real estate has become a much greater source of wealth inequality between generations than salary differentials.

This gloomy picture of housing and home ownership is, however, by no means universal. Statistics point to significant differences between countries, and international comparisons show that successful housing policies are possible. An EU comparison shows that the percentage of households managed by a person aged 18–29 who spends 40% or more of their disposable income on housing costs ranges from 1.3% (in Malta) to 45.4% (in Greece) (Leach et al. 2016). It is clear that some countries perform significantly better than others in providing affordable housing for the next generation.

Articles could approach the topic through a broad range of questions, including:

- How did the housing crisis come to be and how can housing inequality for young people be improved?
- Why are some countries better than others at providing affordable housing for the next generation? What are the similarities and differences? What lessons can be drawn from cross-country comparisons?
- What political levers, such as subsidies, could be introduced to help the younger generation achieve more affordable and long-term housing security? Is the German Mietpreisbremse a successful instrument for this and how does it affect the young generation?
- Planet vs. people: It is often suggested that the solution to the housing crisis is to build more homes, but this raises the question of encroaching on green spaces and the environmental impact that this implies. How can that tension be resolved? How can urbanisation and the housing market become more environmentally friendly?
- Another solution is to use existing housing stock more efficiently. Can government policy help to bring this about, for example by incentivising the fuller occupation of large houses with unused spare bedrooms, or by discouraging the ownership of second homes through higher taxation? What is the potential

of new forms of housing, such as shared housing, multi-generational housing, homeshare (housing for help)?

- How does homelessness affect young people in particular and how can it be combated?
- How can those who work in the media be encouraged to address this topic?

Submission Requirements
Submissions will be accepted until 31 December 2019.
Articles may be submitted electronically through the IGJR homepage (see "Submissions").
Articles should be no more than 30,000 characters in length (including spaces but excluding bibliography, figures, photographs and tables). For details, see the author guidelines: http://www.igjr.org/ojs/igjr_doc/Author_Guidelines.pdf

Demography Prize: Note that this topic is closely related to the subject of the next Demography Prize promoted by the Foundation for the Rights of Future Generations (FRFG) and the Intergenerational Foundation (IF). The prize is endowed with 10,000€ and has 1 December 2019 as its deadline. Young researchers may also wish to participate in this essay competition, and it is hoped that this edition of the IGJR will contain a selection of the best prize submissions in English. More information is available on www.if.org.uk under >Research >Prizes and on www.intergenerationaljustice.org under >Academic Awards >Demography Prize.

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For more details about the Demography Prize 2019, go to the website of the Intergenerational Foundation (www.if.org.uk, see under "Research") or the Foundation for the Rights of Future Generations (www.intergenerationaljustice.org, see under "Academic Awards").

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