

Building the Better Future: Youth Solidarity and Alternative Participation in Europe

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Focus:

- Youth alternative participation in contemporary Europe
- In pursuit of transnational solidarity

Young people in today's world I

- **Problems:** minimal employment prospects, inadequate basic public services, high levels of debt, shortages of affordable adequate housing, a lack of access to (affordable) education, poor provision of physical and mental health care, non-existent or under-funded youth services, poor policing, prejudices, and considerable intergenerational inequalities.
- **Neoliberal turn:** reductions in many key state welfare programs, accompanied by 'a punitive turn' and new forms of authoritarianism in youth justice and welfare + privatization, marketization + cuts to public spending on (higher) education and the rise in tuition fees

Young people in today's world II

- Technology and particularly the increasing use of information and communication technology in the labour market has exacerbated existing tensions and conflicts in the economy, while amplifying **inequality**.
- Young people facing manifold crises – double transition
- Governments failed young people – young people are taking action into their own hands by engaging in politics themselves (Pickard, Bessant, 2018)
- The myth of non-participation?

Participation in a nutshell

- ‘The widespread use of the term [...] has tended to mean that any precise, meaningful content has almost disappeared; “participation” is used to refer to a wide variety of different situations by different people’. Pateman (1970)
- Often referred as a spectrum (full-partial, ladders etc.)
- Often viewed in the context of power
- Conventional/formal/traditional vs. **unconventional/non-formal/alternative**

Intro to alternative youth participation

- Since the 1970s (New Social Movements), - much talk of a crisis of the representative model of democracy (see Crozier, et al., 1975)
- Participatory models of democracy - the importance of 'real' citizen participation in a democracy, and criticise the reduction of participation to the periodic voting in or out of different elites.
- **Democratic paradox:** Young citizens are the most likely to criticise the state of their political systems and apparently disengage from it, they are also the most likely – to a significant degree – to hold extremely ambitious and idealist notions about what democratic participation should be like and about how involved they actually say they want to be (Bruter and Harrison,

Alternative forms of participation

- Characterized by informality, issue-based goals, horizontal organization, and intermittent and micro-level engagement (Crowley & Moxon 2017)
- The line between public and private space is blurred
- Spaces are not invited, rather created
- Young people favour issues that are connected to the development of their own identities and self-determination

Some characteristics of emerging ways of participation include:

- **Focused on a single issue**
 - Such as environment, gun control, etc.
- **Often non-hierarchical grassroots movements**
 - Such as School Strike for Climate, etc
- **Use of online tools**
 - Such as TikTok, Instagram, Whatsapp, Telegram, X, etc
- **Recurrence of street protests**
 - Such as pro-democracy protests in Hong Kong, global climate strikes or March for our Live, etc

What motivates young people to participate?

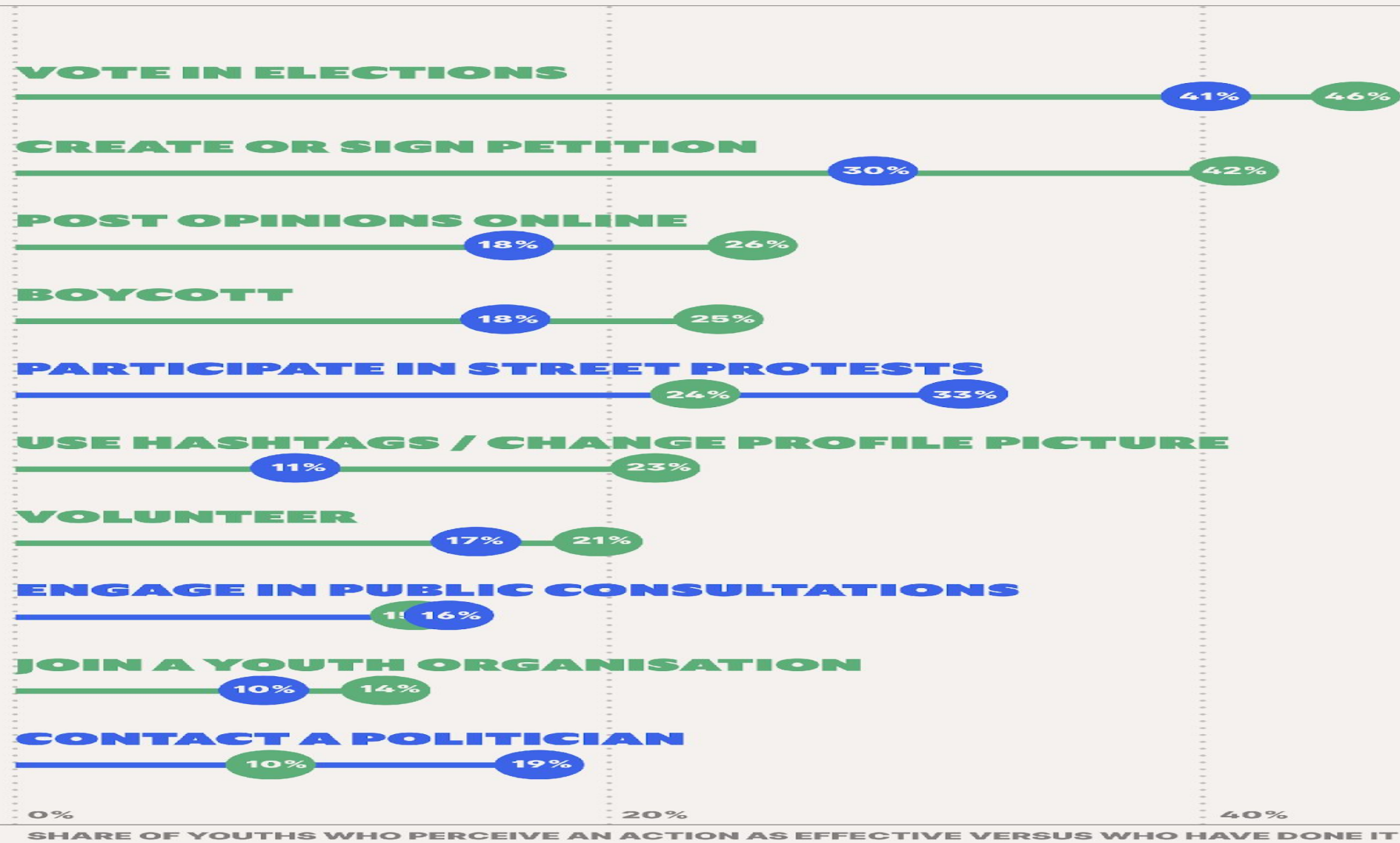
1. Proximity to the event, value or idea – (younger) YP find easier to get motivated regarding concerns that are real, material and intermediate; older YP - more abstract and global
2. When they are listened and explained why sth can(not) be done
3. Acting together (Ansted et al, 2013)

Data:

- **Most of young respondents in the 2021 Youth Survey said:**
 - **they discuss politics with friends or relatives (85 %)**
 - **they understand how the national government of their country works (58 %)**
 - **They feel that do not have much influence over important decisions, laws and policies affecting them - they have more say in their local government (47 %) than in the national government (40 %) or at the EU level (30 %).**

THE GAP BETWEEN 'PERCEPTIONS' AND ACTIONS

There is a gap between what young people **perceive** is effective and their **actions**. For example, 33% believe in street protests, but only 24% have done it. On the other hand, 42% have created or signed petitions, but just 30% perceive it as effective.



Transnational solidarity examples I

Online Activism

- Social media as a platform for advocacy and global issues (e.g., #FridaysForFuture, Black Lives Matter)
- Empowering youth to participate from remote areas
- Cross-border collaboration and exchange of ideas

**BLACK
LIVES
MATTER**

Art, Music, and Film as Vehicles of Global Connection

- Youth using art, music, and film to share stories of struggle and hope
- International art collaborations (e.g., street art movements)
- Connecting youth across different cultures through creative mediums



Transnational solidarity examples II

Volunteering and Cultural Exchanges

- Global volunteering programs (e.g., UN Volunteers, Peace Corps)
- Cultural exchange programs building mutual understanding and empathy
- Erasmus+ and European solidarity corps - promoting European and global solidarity



Community-Based Youth Initiatives for Change

- Grassroots organizing for local and global impact
- Examples: Youth environmental movements, education drives, refugee support
- Bridging local efforts with global causes



Transnational solidarity examples III

Youth Advocacy on the Global Stage

- Youth participating in global policy (e.g., UN Youth Envoy, climate summits)
- Influencing global decision-making processes
- Advocacy groups pushing for youth voices in key global issues



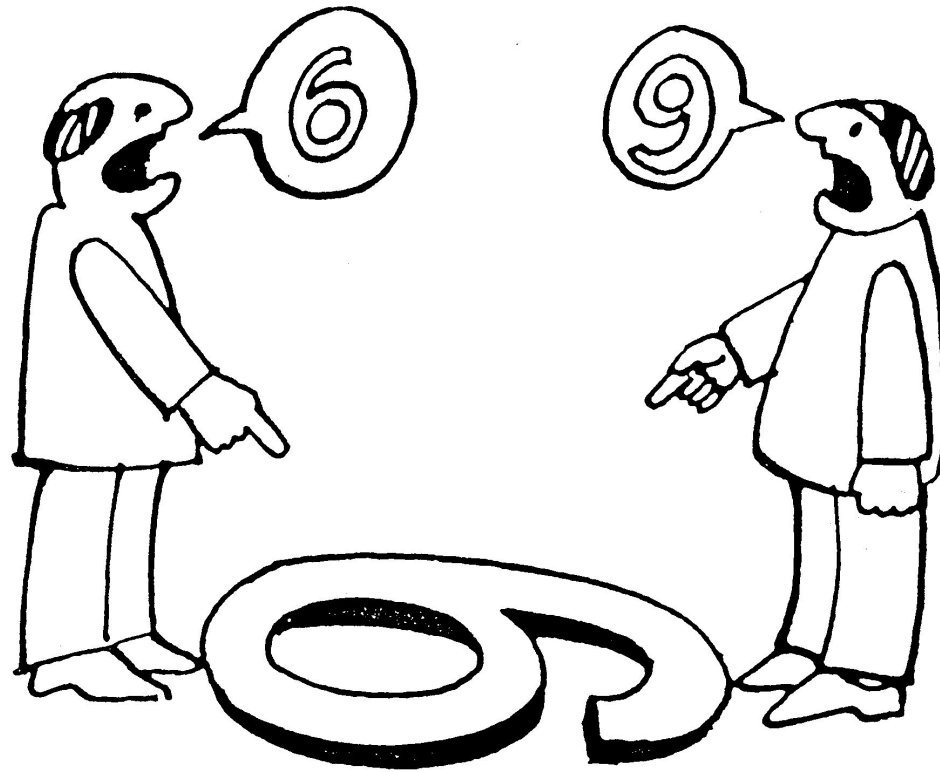
United Nations
Office of the Secretary-General's
Envoy on Youth

Tech-Driven Participation

- Youth leveraging technology for global collaboration
- Crowdsourcing solutions to global issues (e.g., open-source climate solutions)
- Using apps, podcasts, and virtual platforms for mobilizing global youth



Conclusion



Or simply 69

