

## Multiple Faces of Conventional Political Activism: A Youth Council Case Study

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In the opening *move*, the authors describe the current state of knowledge and set the context for the study.

### Abstract

Youth political participation via state-sponsored institutional settlements has always been considered a goal of youth policies, representing a means of creating politically active and caring citizens. Throughout Europe, however, the number of politically active young people seems to be diminishing, with youth frequently described as apathetic and disengaged. While a growing body of academic research has concentrated on exploring the reasons behind political inactivity, this article explores the motivation and activities of some of the young people who are involved in institutionalised youth organisations, asking if the meanings behind institutional political participation are undergoing a process of change together with the rest of the society. Based on qualitative in-depth interviews, participant observation and analysis of documents (including online communication) collected as part of the research project MYPLACE, we examine the meanings young people attach to their participation. We show that the character of these organisations and motivations behind participation are miscellaneous; sometimes strikingly similar to the forms of participation not traditionally associated with political activism but rather ascribed to disengaged youth.

In the third sentence the authors establish the *research gap*.

Here, the authors describe data and methodology and provide a summary of their observations. In doing so the study contributes to the *research gap* identified earlier.

**Keywords:** youth, conventional institutional political participation, individualisation, post-socialist society, Estonia.

Note how the authors use the *self-mention* “we” when describing their methodology and findings. This type of *self-mention* is typical across disciplines when describing methods.

### Introduction

Youth has always been a paradoxical social category in political studies – at times of rebellions and revolutions, young people tend to be the ones singled out as causing trouble on the streets and in need of taming. Yet, when they sit on their hands and refuse to become involved in everyday social or political activities, researchers (and politicians) seem to be just as concerned. During recent decades, interest in the latter – disengaged and apathetic youth – seems to be gradually growing in academic research. Discussion on youth political participation is heterogeneous, but one could categorise these developments into two general trends. In the first, researchers speak about engaged and disengaged youth, look for reasons for apathy and ways to bring young people back into politics. The second, and more recently emerging trend tends to divide youth into engaged in traditional (conventional) political participation and unconventional/ participation with other (new) means. That is, scholars have noted that although young people are shifting away from what is considered to be traditional political participation, many of them are active in new ways, and the forms of political participation they prefer have significantly changed (Beck, 2001; Farthing, 2010; Kiisel, Leppik & Seppel, 2015; Pilkington & Pollock, 2015).

While several studies have focused on the reasons behind youth disengagement and the changed nature of activism, participation in conventional political youth organisations, and meanings and motivations for this form of engagement, has gained less attention. Thus, stemming from this

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