Youth Partnership

Partnership between the European Commission
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What do I care for?
Social Values of Young People Compared

Magda Nico
Pool of European Youth Researchers
Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology, University Institute of Lisbon
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In 2019 the EU-Council of Europe youth partnership launches Perspectives on Youth Online. This project aims to launch debates on topics of relevance to youth policy and practice that are not necessarily at the centre of the agenda but that have important implications for initiatives on the ground. The project kicks off with a research paper on social values of young people, based on the European Social Survey and the European Value Study aiming to cover as many countries in geographic Europe as possible. So we have asked the sociologist Magda Nico to look into these important databases and to analyse what statistics and numbers actually tell us about young people's social values – which categories reflect the biggest differences and how that could be interpreted. We hope this will be the basis for an interesting series of discussions with the policy, research and practice communities in the field of youth in the coming months.

We invite you to read and debate the findings of this research as part of the Perspectives on Youth online!

1. Introduction

Social values were a big thing in the 1990s for European social sciences. The development of the scientifically recognised World Values Surveys and European Values Surveys (Inglehart et al. 2000), the International Social Survey Programme and the European Values Study (among other surveys and other sources of data and debate) provided researchers and theorists from different social science areas with the legitimacy and data to map social values all over the world, identifying how related they are with each other, what different configurations of values are there, and how these configurations were unequally distributed across the territory and welfare state regimes. People's values regarding life, gender, family, immigration, security, "others", provisions, environment, and many other topics have indeed been under scrutiny since the 1980s, especially with recourse to quantitative and comparable measures and statistically consolidated indicators such as those spread out through the above-mentioned surveys. Prominent authors such as Inglehart and Schwartz identified, through dimension reduction statistical strategies, constructs able to encapsulate trends and dimensions of values. These dimensions are internally coherent, meaning that they represent how certain values stick together, or not. This was useful to distinguish, for example, those that in the same dimensions lend towards one "extreme" or the other, towards conservatism or post-modernity, for example.

Although implicitly present in the studies of and with young people, social values issues, research and arguments have been, in the context of youth studies and in the context of the "European youth", taking slightly different, sometimes overlapping, routes:

i) They have functioned as an assumption. This assumption was that young people were the only or the most important agents of social change and that "cultural evolution" (Inglehart 2018) was uni-directional, or that it is possible to have an "evolutionary perspective" on social values (Welzel and Inglehart 2010: 47). Young people (and the specificity of their social values) would then provide us a peek into the (direction of the) future: toward secular-rationality, self-expression, post-modernity, tolerance, democracy, openness. Albeit alternative methods and theories around World Values Survey data have been discussed since (Haller 2002), the mentioned approach has constituted the theoretical and research-wise "concentrated" use of the social values concepts and analytical model. It has contaminated and biased the understanding of young people's values as the 1990s' results became sort of "carved in stone", only put in question later by dramatic and/or unexpected world-wide events (Brexit referendum, Trump's election, etc.). So the assumption was that young people would be without a doubt and inevitably the voice of tolerance for the future.

ii) They have also been used as a "motto". In the scope of the so-called "European values", social values have been marketed and disseminated in various campaigns, activities and publications in the field of youth although its agenda has been more

centred on topics like learning mobility, youth work, digitalisation – means to achieve the social values, but perhaps not as much the social values *per se*. This has been the political and practical use of the social values concepts, namely through "respect for human dignity and human rights", "freedom", "democracy", "equality" and "the rule of law". The extent to which these campaigns and activities impact on people that do not share these values in the first place – at least in terms of visible and public discourse with these values – is questionable. One may question if these programmes have not been working as self-fulfilling prophecies, even if self-contained and circumscribed to the already members of a field/sector, in the sense that they tend to reach young people that already share these core values and circulate in NGOs that develop activities in this regard.

Other than these two routes of uses of the concept of social values among young people, it is possible to verify that it has not been performing a prominent role in youth research, with the exception of a) some countries, such as Russia (Guroca 2002; Siegmunt and Wetzels 2017), Croatia (Ilišin and Potočnik 2018) or China (Sung and Wang), where the specificities of these different political contexts might still justify the more detailed analysis of intergenerational changes in social values; and of b) topics such as environment (Glicken and Fairbrother 1998), family (Gillies 2000); or lifestyle and activism (Leung and Kier 2008). Other exception of the use of "social values" in the literature was c) the use of the "Generation gap" famous concept of the 1960s, which was based on the fact that, between two generations – in the sense of parents/grandparents and children/youth – the distance in terms of social values would be very large and generations would see the world in different lights and have considerable distinct visions for it.

Without validating this critical approach with "grounded theory", the idea of this paper is indeed to descriptively map social values in Europe among young people "today" without the agenda of relating these values with theoretically popular concepts such as agency or reflexivity, or "useful" political concepts, such as participation. In this paper, there is no agenda of using young people as guinea pigs for explaining the Brexit result of the UK referendum to leave the EU, Trump's election in the context of the minority of absolute votes, the election of the far-right presidential candidate Bolsonaro in Brazil, the feminist and human rights movement #MeToo, or other political phenomena or social movements (such as anti-guns movements led by young people in the US, or Greta Thunberg's global climate protest movement, for example). Data used here also does not always allow a true contextualisation of these phenomena. Nonetheless, these movements and phenomena might help us illustrate trends in the social values in Europe, reason why they are, whenever appropriate, mentioned.

A critical view on these uses of the concept and of the data on social values gathered here thus allows us to analyse the social values of young people today without assuming:

1) Their *uniqueness* compared with the social values displayed by young people of other cohorts and with current older people. This will be done by escaping the "fetish of the present" which Goodwin and O'Connor (2014) warned youth researchers about.

2) Their *coherences with one another*, namely the ones captured by predefined theoretical models (Table 1). This will be done by following the idea that "persons are plural" (Lahire 2002) and that their values are likely to not be synchronised in predictable ways.

The ultimate goal of this paper is indeed to grasp what – independently of action, participation or mobilisation – lies beneath the surface of "behaviour", what young people believe in and think as being important for their world and life. For that purpose, we use data from the European Social Survey from 2016 and data from the European Values Study from 2008.[1]

Table 1: Dimensions of Social Values

	Hofstede Theory of global values	Schwartz/Davidov approach	Inglehart Studies of world values	Nico (based on Schwartz) Human values for young people
Dimensions	Power Distance Individualism vs. Collectivism Masculinity vs. Femininity Uncertainty Avoidance Index Long-Term Orientation[SEP] Indulgence vs. Restraint	Embeddedness Hierarchy Mastery Affective Autonomy Intellectual EgalitarianismHarmony	Traditional vs. Secular-Rational Survival vs. self-expression	Freedom and Solidarity Order and Security Ambition and Recognition Fun and Adventure

Source: Adapted from Tausch 2015.

After a brief introduction of the goals, structure and methods used in this paper, as well as the data available and used and the methodology followed, this paper will address: 1) social values compared with each other (only among young people) in Europe; and 2) social values in different countries, in different social strata, at different ages; 3) whenever relevant, results will be also compared by gender and by working and studying status and other socio-demographic variables. This paper concludes with some messages to take home, simultaneously summarising the results found.

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1. In this paper, we are not necessarily interested in testing pre-established adult-oriented models of social values, such as the ones on the first three columns in Table 1 (Hofstede's, Schwartz/Davidov's or Inglehart's approaches). Instead, we used the Human Values Scale, and other measurements of social values, to compare and characterise the values expressed exclusively by young people. We reached the four dimensions of social values by using a data reduction statistical method, aimed at aggregating variables with correlation among them. We also analysed other values (about environment, social benefits, and concern about "others") without developing this technique, simply using the average responses (usually of disagreement scales, as is common in social values measurements). In the measurement of social values, the most common practice (used also here both in the ESS and in the EVS) is to ask the respondents to identify the level of agreement with a certain sentence or identification with a certain characterisation of an individual, in the following way (more details in Table 2):
- minimum value (usually 1): maximum agreement or maximum identification;
- maximum value (which may vary between 4 and 7 points Scales): minimum agreement or minimum identification.
This data reduction technique is used on several occasions in this paper, whenever we have a relevant number of indicators measuring the same construct and we want to reduce the information to a few dimensions. In that sense, factor analysis is a method of data reduction. Instead of analysing each one of the, for example, 23 sentences (each one representing a specific value) of the "Human Value Scale" of the European Social Survey, we first analyse how these 23 values are aggregated, how patterns of answers lie beneath them, how these values gather around a yet unobserved but more macro construct. We want to identify a simpler structure for the variation of the answers, and factor analysis helps us reach that new, more simple, structure. It is aimed at identifying latent variables that exist although they are constituted by unobservable correlations between the original variables. Here, the original values relate to human values, environmental values, gender values, etc. We aim to find subgroups of these sets of values. These values should be considered in one of the dimensions, and represent the correlation between the factor and the variable. The values represented in the tables of the factor analysis are called loadings, they vary between 0 and 1 and only the ones shaded are considered for the respective component. Their interpretation is used to group the original variables and to determine the latent variable that is common to them. The name of that new variable is given by the researcher (it is not a statistical procedure). The variance explained is the total variance explained by each factor, and it is useful to determine what factors explain the most from the variability of the answers. Only after new variables are created based on the latent ones found can the averages be found, analysed and in some cases, crossed with other variables (such as sex, age, employment situation).

An important note to make here concerns the fact that this paper attempts at age comparisons, but does not develop a longitudinal or time-series analysis (not always possible anyway, since some of the modules are rotating or one time applied). Comparisons within countries and groups are also limited to the sample sizes.

From *Character* to *Personality*

There has been an argument that shifted in the last century from the importance attributed in life, from "character" to "personality". Psychologists distinguish character from personality by attributing the external self (what you are to others, to the world, and how you perform what you are), and the internal self. While" character" refers to moral and mental qualities, and to ethical values, "personality" is more associated with behaviour and appearance and the supposed "outstanding characteristics".

The rising importance of personality has been influencing the youth field through:

- the idea that agency (performative role) of the young individuals always has greater impact on the course of their lives than the structural context in which their lives unfold. This has made the individualisation thesis particularly popular in the youth research field, compared to other social sciences fields (discussion in Nico 2017);

- the moral idea that you must participate in society, that opinions must be heard or they are useful, that everyone should have this personality.

The argument here is that, no matter the visibility that social values can have in one time and place, it's their composition that matters the most.

2. Data and methods

While it is not by simply asking in a survey about social values that one will get the essence of people's behaviours or the true foundation of their attitudes, and if social desirability may determine the politically correct answers people offer when asked about important issues, it is still clear that this is a good – if not the best – tool to investigate general patterns in social values and to develop comparisons between different groups of people.

In this paper two complementary datasets will be used:

1) The last available round of the European Social Survey, from 2016. "The European Social Survey (ESS) is a biennial cross-national survey of attitudes and behaviour established in 2001. The ESS uses cross-sectional, probability samples which are representative of all persons aged 15 and over, resident within private households in each country" (official ESS webpage).[2] The survey measures the

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2. In the European Social Survey, answers are collected via face-to-face CAPI interviews in all the participating countries. The response rate target is 70%, fieldwork period is 4 months,, and there is close monitoring of fieldwork progress (ESS official site). The ESS core scientific team provides "guidelines, training materials, as well as individual feedback and support to countries" (ESS official site). Samples of the respondents are representative of all persons aged 15 and over, and all countries aim for a minimum effective achieved sample size of 1 500 or 800 in countries with less than 2 million population (ESS official site, section on Sampling).

attitudes, beliefs and behaviour patterns of diverse populations in Europe. Not all European countries actually participate in the ESS, which why a complementary dataset had to be used.

2) The second dataset used here is the European Values Study, the last available round being from 2008. "The European Values Study is a large-scale, cross-national, and longitudinal survey research program on basic human values. It provides insights into the ideas, beliefs, preferences, attitudes, values, and opinions of citizens all over Europe. It is a unique research project on how Europeans think about life, family, work, religion, politics, and society" (official EVS webpage). This dataset is not updated, nor is it longitudinal, so the impact of recent, structural or macro events (such as the financial crisis for instance) are not possible to detect and measure. The use of the dataset has, nonetheless, the advantage of including other European countries not included in the ESS survey, thus providing a larger geographical breadth.

The datasets are not comparable, for the following reasons:

- not the same year and thus not the same historical context;

- not the same sample design;

- not the same variables and measurements.

Due to the geographical limitations of the European Social Survey, and the fact the data of the European Values Study is not as up to date, we had to choose geographical breadth over comparability of different sets of values. The following table summarises the data from one set and the other. Due to restrictions regarding updated data, Haller's (2002: 153) principle, which states that "Comparative research needs to start with an explicit theoretical focus even more than research within one nation does" could not be strictly followed.

Table 2: Datasets used and their variables and characteristics

Data set	N	Countries	Dimensions	Variables and Measurement	Questions
ESS 2016	23 countries N= 44387 (without weights applied)	Austria, Belgium, Czech Republic, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Lithuania, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russian Federation, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, United Kingdom	Human Values Scale (section H) ("person very much like me" to "person not like me at all")	Creative, Rich, Equality, Admiration, Security, New Things, Obedience, Tolerance To Difference, Humility, Good Time, Freedom Of Decision, Help Others, Successful, Safety, Adventures, Proper Behaviour, Respect, Loyalty, Nature, Family, Fun Scale of measurement: 1: Very much like me 2: Like me 3: Somewhat like me 4: A little like me 5: Not like me 6: Not like me at all	Now I will briefly describe some people. Please listen to each description and tell me how much each person is or is not like you. Use this card for your answer (Very much like me, Like me, Somewhat like me, A little like me, Not like me, Not like me at all): - - *Important to understand different people* - *Important to help people and care for others' well-being* - *Important that people are treated equally and have equal opportunities* - *Important to be loyal to friends and devote to people close* - *Important to care for nature and environment* - *Important to be humble and modest, not draw attention* - *Important to make own decisions and be free* - *Important to behave properly* - *Important to live in secure and safe surroundings* - *Important to do what is told and follow rules* - *Important to follow traditions and customs* - *Important that government is strong and ensures safety* - *Important to get respect from others* - *Important to be successful and that people recognise achievements* - *Important to show abilities and be admired* - *Important to be rich, have money and expensive things* - *Important to think new ideas and being creative* - *Important to seek fun and things that give pleasure* - *Important to have a good time* - *Important to seek adventures and have an exciting life* - *Important to try new and different things in life*
			Socio- demographic profile of the respondent (section F)	Sex, Age (age was recoded between young people – up until 30 – and older people), condition towards studying or working, country	

EVS 2008	Countries considered here: 24 (some are the same as in ESS). N= 65972	Albania, Austria, Armenia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Belarus, Croatia, Cyprus, Northern Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, Montenegro, Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, North Macedonia, Great Britain, Northern Ireland, Kosovo	Important Aspects in Life ("very important" to "not important")	Scale of measurement: 1: Very important 2: Quite important 3: Not important 4: Not all important	Please say, for each of the following, how important it is in your life: Work Family Friend and acquaintances Leisure time Politics Religion.
			Concerned with population	Immediate family, people neighbourhood, people own region, fellow countrymen, Europeans, humankind, elderly people, unemployed people, immigrants, sick and disabled, poor children Scale of measurement: 1: Very much 2: Much 3: To a certain extent 4: Not so much 5: Not at all	To what extent do you feel concerned about the living conditions of: immediate family people neighbourhood people own region fellow countrymen Europeans humankind elderly people unemployed people immigrants sick and disabled poor children.
			Environment	Giving part of income, approaching the limit of people, interference produces disastrous consequences, human ingenuity insures earth remaining fit, nature is strong enough to cope with impacts of industry, humans were meant to rule over nature, if things continue we will experience a catastrophe Scale of measurement: 1: Agree strongly 2: Agree 3: Disagree 4: Disagree strongly	I am now going to read out some statements about the environment. For each one, can you tell me whether you agree strongly, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with it? - We are approaching the limit of the number of people the earth can support. - When humans interfere with nature it often produces disastrous consequences. - Human ingenuity will ensure that the earth remains fit to live in. - The balance of nature is strong enough to cope with the impacts of modern industrial nations. - Humans were meant to rule over the rest of nature. - If things continue on their present course, we will soon experience a major ecological catastrophe.
			Socio- demographic profile of the respondent	Sex, Age (age was recoded between young people – up until 30 – and older people)	

3. Social values mapping

3.1. Human values

This analysis begins with mapping the consensus and lack thereof in the various social and human values tackled. This will be done by necessarily comparing two maps: one concerning only young people, the other excluding young people. The aim is to verify how specific the overall positioning of young people is when it comes to social values. The Human Scale Items ("The ESS questionnaire includes a well-established 21-item measure of human values, which was developed by the Israeli psychologist, Professor Shalom Schwartz. The 'Human Values Scale' is designed to classify respondents according to their basic value orientations. The Human Values Scale has been included in every ESS round to date" (official ESS site)) available at the ESS dataset will be used for this purpose.

One important note to have in mind in this analysis is that it is asked how similar is a person to whom it is "important to …" the respondent and that the lower the mean answer, the higher the similitude, the smaller the difference. This is to say that the lower the averages represented in these graphs, the more similar the respondent perceives themselves to the person described in the survey.
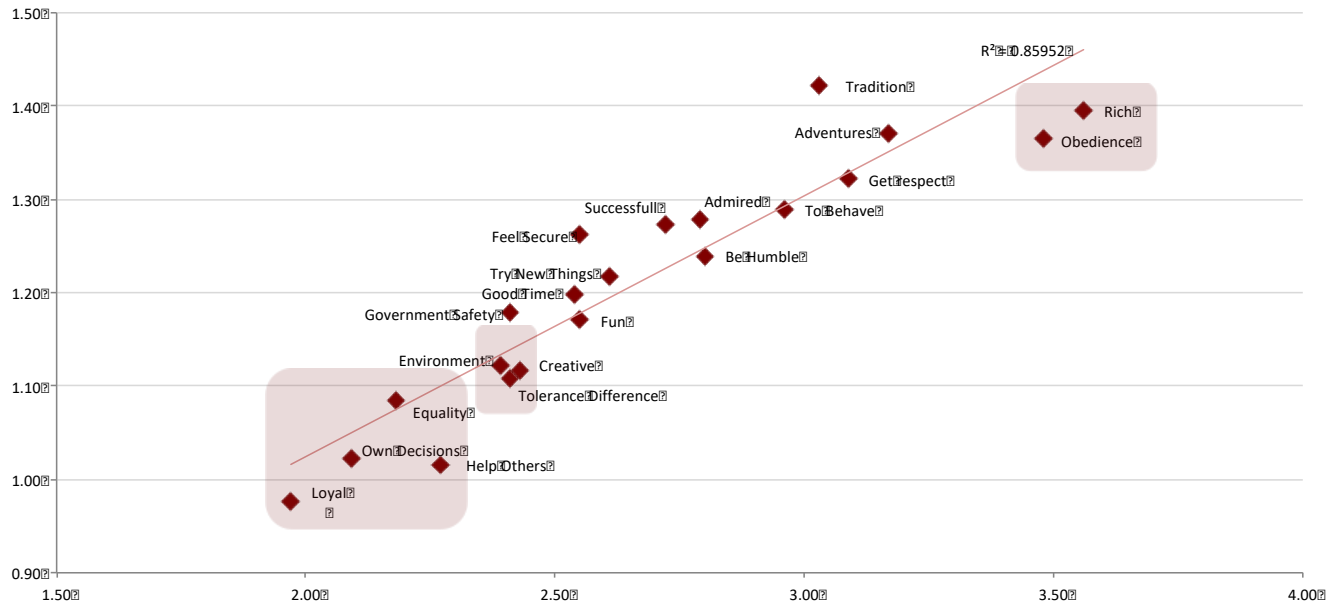
The analysis of Figure 1 brings to light the fact that the higher the average difference between the person described and the respondent, the less the consensus (the greater the variability of the answers) towards it. This linear relation is very good, as it explains 85% of the variability of young people's answers to these items (R^2= 0,85925). These results are not necessarily counter-intuitive, but still, from time to time, abandon conceptions of how "young" people are, or "always" are: at the front row of social, progressive change, as was previously mentioned.

Starting at the bottom of this linear relation, we see that items such as "the importance of people being treated equally and have equal opportunities", "Importance of making own decisions and be free", the "importance of helping people and care for others' well-being" and the "importance of being loyal to friends and devote to people close" are considered quite similar to the respondents in a rather consensual way (compared to other items). This tendency is followed closely by the "importance of caring for nature and environment", the "importance of thinking new ideas and being creative" and the "importance of understanding different people". Equality, tolerance and freedom are values one would expect young people to be leaders at, and this fortunately is the case.

On the contrary, the following items display a high difference between the young respondent and the person described in the survey to be compared with: the "importance of being rich, have money and expensive things", the "importance of seeking adventures and have an exciting life", the importance to "do what one is told and follow rules" and the "importance of following traditions and customs". This means that young people feel that they are much more similar to people concerned when it comes to loyalty, helping others, equality, tolerance, creativity, autonomy of decisions, and they do so in a rather consensual way, then they feel empathy or similarity with people that think being rich, successful and obedient is important.

Of course this may bring the "social desirability" effect to the table, in the sense that when it comes to values such as these, it is possible that young people tend to be more "politically correct" than older people.

Figure 1: How different are you from people that give importance to these human values (15-30 year olds)

(mean and standard deviation on the scale from similarity to difference)[3]

Source: European Social Survey 2016 (Weight used: Design*Population Size)

Older people agree more on what they are not, while young people agree more on what they are. This can be verified when comparing this distribution among older people (more than 30 years old) in Figure 2, where we can see greater consensus around certain items.
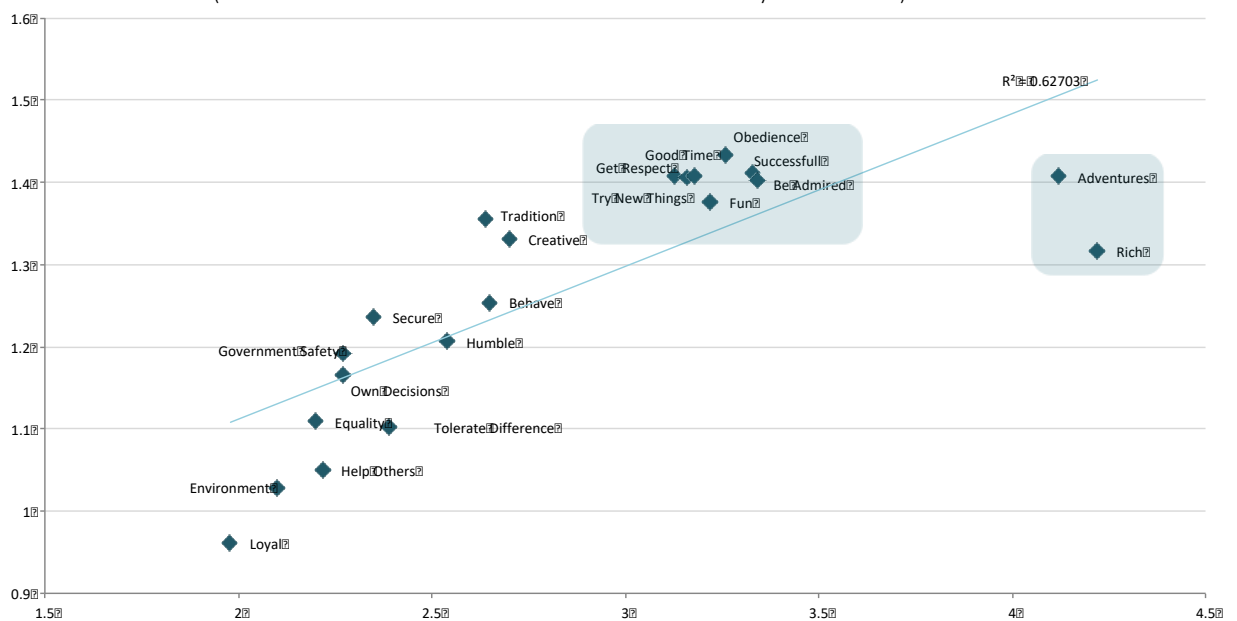
In fact, the same linear relation, but this time among older people, only explains about 62% (against 85% among young people) of the variability of the answers of people over 30. This means the diversity of the answers of young people are easier to define than for people over 30. In terms of values, overall, young people are more homogeneous. We find a quite different pattern. An important group of (less incoherent substantially) items appears, but it is one characterised by lack of consensus and by opposition. This means these are characteristics to which older people mostly refer as not being similar to (in average), but they tend to disagree on that regard (despite the high average). These are: the "importance of having a good time", the "importance of trying new and different things in life", the "importance of seeking fun and things that give pleasure", the "importance of getting respect from

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3. Mean: average that is calculated by adding up all of the given data and dividing by the number of data entries (in this example, the lower, the closer the respondent feels with the person described in the question).
Standard deviation is a measure that is used to quantify the amount of variation or dispersion of a set of data values (in this example, the higher, the less the consensus around the mean value).

others", the "importance of doing what one is told and follow rules", the "importance to show abilities and be admired", the "importance of being successful and that people recognise achievements", the "importance of having a good time", the "importance of trying new and different things in life", the "importance of seeking fun and things that give pleasure" and the "importance of getting respect from others".

To summarise, young people have more consensus on what they feel similar to, and older people agree more on what they are *not* similar to. Young people tend to define themselves affirmatively, while older people tend to define themselves by opposition (what they are not).
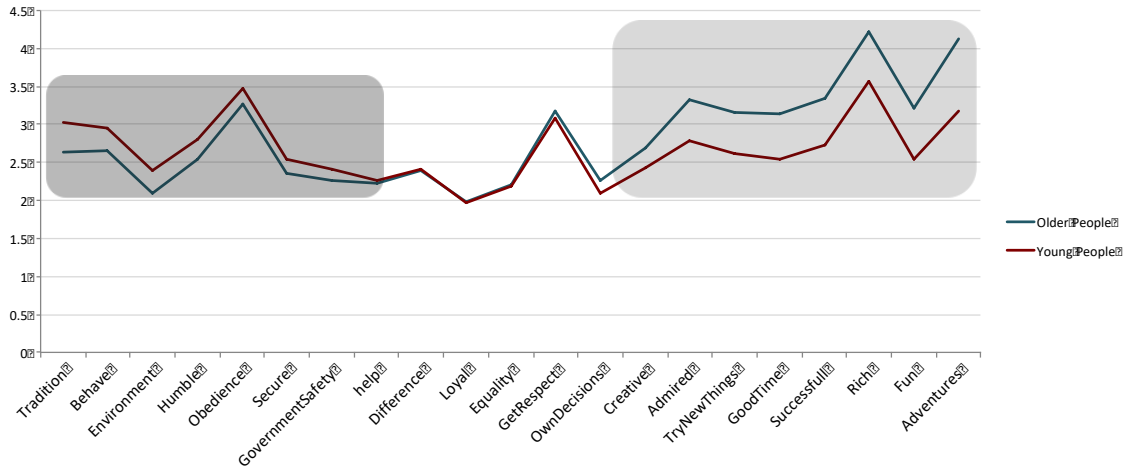
Figure 2: How different are you from people that give importance to these human values? (30+ year olds)
(mean and standard deviation on the scale from similarity to difference)

Source: European Social Survey 2016 (Weight used: Design*Population Size)

If we simply analyse and compare the average importance attributed to the items mentioned above (Figure 2), Inglehart's scale ican be easily found. We can verify that older people identify more with conservatism and traditionalism (attributing higher levels of similarity to tradition, behaving properly, being humble, obedience, and security than younger respondents), while younger respondents are the ones displaying human values more associated with our preconception of being young: assuming similarity with people who like adventures, want to have fun, want to be rich and successful, like having a good time, trying new things and being creative.

Figure 3: How different are you from people that give importance to these human values (young people and older people compared) (average on the scale from similarity to difference)
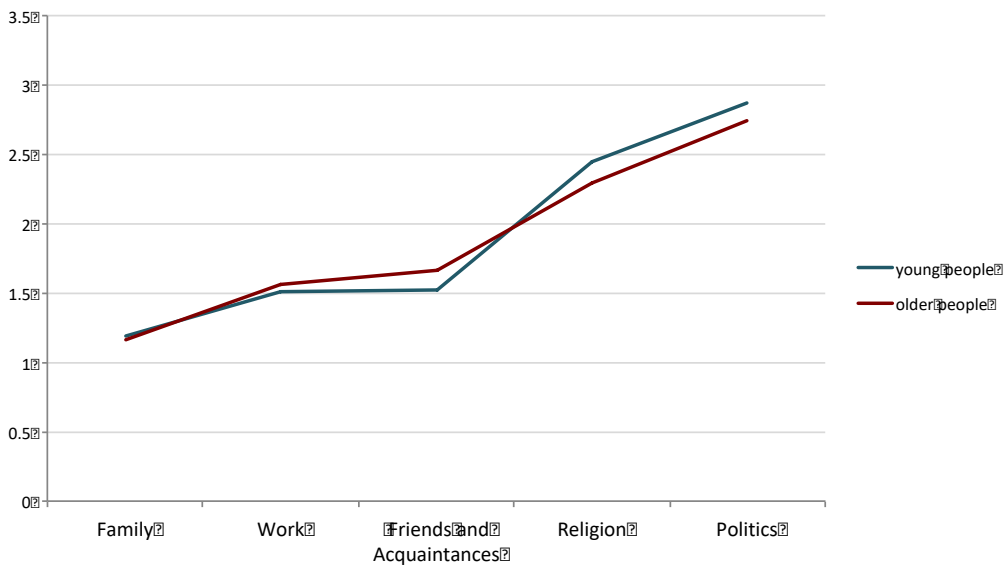

Source: European Social Survey 2016 (Weight used: Design*Population Size)

3.2. Important aspects in life

For these next sets of values, we are going to use the European Values Study of 2008, since it is the last EVS dataset with all the European countries released. This is not directly comparable with the ESS data, as already mentioned, but aims to provide analysis on different variables also referring to social values.

Figure 4: How important is …. in your life? (young people and older people compared) (average on the scale from "1" very to "4" not at all in a similarity to difference scale)

Source: European Values Survey 2008 (Weight used: weight_g)

One relevant set of information is the one reference to what spheres of life people are giving the most importance to, and, furthermore, if the rankings of young and older people differ significantly. People were asked how important family, work, leisure time, politics, religion, and friends and acquaintances are in their life (Figure 4). As we can verify, the importance attributed to family, then work, then friends, then religion and then politics is descending and transcends age groups. As such, both for younger people and for older people, politics is a means to guarantee rights and well-being in all other spheres of life and not a sphere standing on its own importance.

3.2. Environmental values

Social bottom-up youth movements are currently known. But how is the "big picture" on social values concerning environment? With a data reduction technique we were able to identify three dimensions: the one where the belief is that "everything is fine the way it is, humans don't need to do anything, nature can handle it, the planet is ours to destroy"; the second one is the opposite of this and agrees with claims that "humans have to stop the path to destruction of the planet"; and the third one is "contributing with own income to resolve environmental problems". Each of the three components explains between 15% and 25% of the total variability of the answers given in this regard.

We can see that the agreement with all the dimensions is similar among them, and between the agree (2) and the disagree (3) points of the scale. The co-existence of such contradictory environmental values is (was, in 2008) a worrying aspect. Ten years have passed since this data, and the environment is now both on the political agenda and among young people's major concerns. Action was (already) needed in 2008.

Table 3: Components of attitudes towards the environment (15-30 year olds)
(Factor Analysis, Varimax Rotation)

	Bystander's effect	Action is needed	Tax contribution
Nature is strong enough to cope with impacts of industry	.815	-.140	.055
Humans were meant to rule over nature	.743	-.075	.073
Human ingenuity ensures earth remaining fit	.741	.087	-.031
Interference produces disastrous consequences	-.085	.835	-.087
If things continue we will experience a catastrophe	-.105	.780	.126
Approaching the limit of people	.096	.568	.333
Giving part of income	.043	.128	.947
Variance explained	**25.7%**	**24.0%**	**14.9%**
Mean for the young population	**2.63**	**2.01**	**2.22**
Total variance explained	**64.5%**		

Source: European Values Survey 2008 (Weight used: weight_g)

4. Social values compared

4.1. Human values compared

The above-presented analysis highlights the need to analyse how interrelated these human values are, how coherence is latent among them, and how the answers are organised around these constructs. This was done through a data reduction technique (factor analysis, performed in SPSS). First the coherence around these various items was found. Then, its aggregation is used to tackle the differences across and effects caused by variables such as gender, countries, political positioning on a left-right scale,[4] and conditions related to education and employment. It is essential that the social values of (young) people are always put in the social context where they are produced. Failing to do so is succumbing to the illusion of having "evidence" for whatever purpose. Analysing is necessarily comparing and holding certain social conditions of existence accountable for the inequalities and "cultural evolutions" (Inglehart 2018) they may produce.

How interrelated are social values?

By developing a data reduction method to grasp the dimensions that aggregate young people's responses to the mentioned human values items (which explains 49% of the total variance of the responses), it was possible to identify four different components specific to young people (Table 4):

1. Freedom and solidarity. This component is the one that explains the most out of the variability of the answers (13.8%) (not to be confused with being the one with the highest level of attributed similarity). It encapsulates tolerance and understanding of people that are different from what one is familiar with, to the idea of solidarity with the world's well-being, to the idea of equal opportunities for everyone, loyalty to significant others, but also to the importance of caring about the environment and having freedom to make own decisions. This seems to be the component most associated with the *European Values* on one hand, and to the moral values disseminated by different religions in Europe on the other. But this component may also be the most affected by the tendency to the well-known "social desirability" tendency when responding to surveys.

2. Order and safety. This component is the second to explain the most out of the variability of the answers (13.5%). It encapsulates the idea of order and predictability in society, by referring to the importance of behaving properly, of living in safe surroundings, of having a strong government that ensures safety, the importance of following rules, costumes and traditions. This is a component that shouts *conservatism.* This component is anti-agency.

3. Ambition and recognition. This component is the third to explain the most out of the variability of the answers (10.7%). It encapsulates many of the characteristics used in the *individualisation*

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theories, such as being creative and unique, being admired, having money and expensive things, having others know you and respect you. But it also has to do with medium- or long-term ambitions, that have to do with being seen, being known, being recognisable, being "notorious". This constitutes the "personality" shift mentioned above.

Table 4: Components of human values for young people (15-30 year olds)
(Factor Analysis, Varimax Rotation)

	Freedom and solidarity	Order and safety	Ambition and recognition	Fun and adventure
Important to understand different people	**.733**	.057	.016	−.016
Important to help people and care for others' well-being	**.698**	.197	−.048	.159
Important that people are treated equally and have equal opportunities	**.647**	.029	.027	.068
Important to be loyal to friends and devote to people close	**.593**	.208	−.011	.265
Important to care for nature and environment	**.475**	.238	.209	−.042
Important to be humble and modest, not draw attention	**.416**	.406	−.399	.038
Important to make own decisions and be free	**.401**	−.043	.310	.367
Important to behave properly	.153	**.738**	−.028	−.004
Important to live in secure and safe surroundings	.124	**.634**	.150	−.007
Important to do what is told and follow rules	.023	**.633**	.114	−.120
Important to follow traditions and customs	.060	**.613**	.065	.043
Important that government is strong and ensures safety	.223	**.540**	.214	.078
Important to get respect from others	−.080	.497	**.468**	.114
Important to be successful and that people recognise achievements	.064	.314	**.680**	.151
Important to show abilities and be admired	.105	.233	**.664**	.123
Important to be rich, have money and expensive things	−.365	.294	**.538**	.231
Important to think new ideas and being creative	.417	−.089	**.536**	.133
Important to seek fun and things that give pleasure	.077	.063	.032	**.811**
Important to have a good time	.051	.034	.047	**.774**
Important to seek adventures and have an exciting life	.077	−.118	.296	**.607**
Important to try new and different things in life	.356	.017	.294	**.445**
Variance explained	**13.8 %**	**13.5%**	**10.7%**	**10.5%**
Total variance explained	**49%**			

Source: European Social Survey 2016 (Weight used: Design*Population Size)

4. <u>Fun and adventure</u>. This component is the one that explains the least out of the variability of the answers (10.5%). It falls quite easily in the *hedonistic category*, of young people wanting to have a good time, fun, adventures and new things. It seems to have more to do with the present – the individual, ego-centric here and now – than with future plans or ambitions (such

as the ambition and recognition component), or with long-term concerns and basic human (and character) principles such as the ones encapsulated in the freedom and solidarity component.
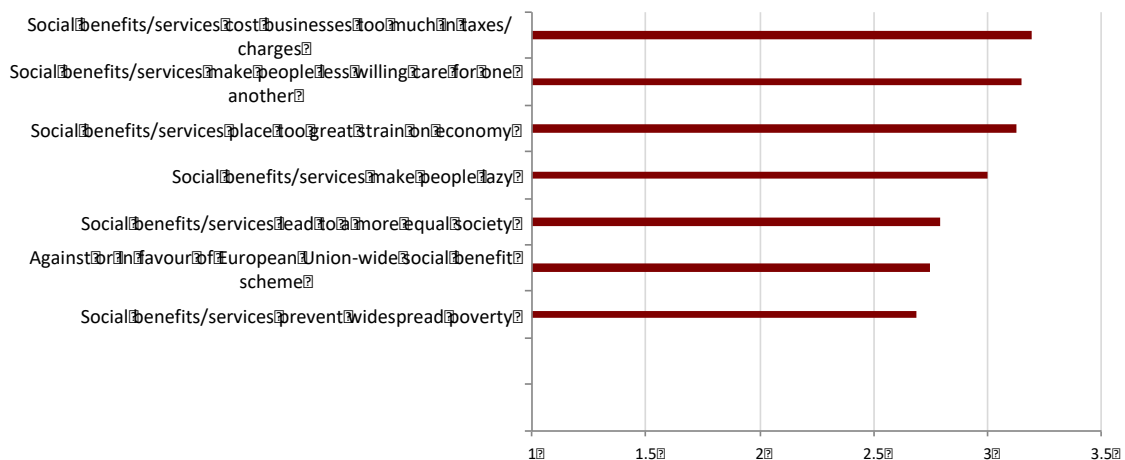
Opinions about social benefits

Other types of values may have to do with the way people thought the state (and everyone that contributes via taxes to its sustainability) should contribute to rising the economic well-being of others (Figure 5). In the ESS this means analysing opinions about the utility of social benefits. We can see that all sentences present identical levels of agreement, but we can distinguish two sets of values:

- one set of values on which young people tend to disagree more: that social benefits cost businesses too much in taxes, that it makes people less willing to care for one another, and that it places too much strain on the economy;
- another set of values holds a lower level of disagreement, being situated more in the centre of the scale (value 3): this means young people tend to somewhat agree on average to social benefits leading to more equal society, to agree with the existence of a European Union-wide social benefit scheme, or with the statement that social benefits prevent widespread poverty.

The message to take home is that, on average, young people do not agree or disagree with the possible macro positive or negative effects of social benefits. They do not have, therefore, a strong opinion about it, which may lead us to the hypothesis that it may be due to lack of information about it, social awareness of some issues, lack of empathy or economic solidarity with others, etc. They may lack the reasoning of linking social values to economic policies.

Figure 5: Opinion about social benefits (young people only) (scale from agreement to disagreement)
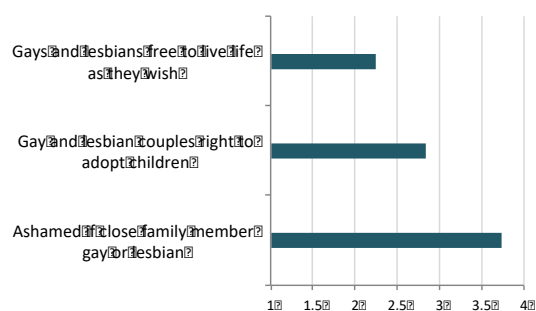

Source: European Social Survey 2016 (Weight used: Design*Population Size)

The rights of gay and lesbian persons

When it comes to the rights of gay and lesbian persons, it is clear that most people disagreement with the shame one would feel with having a close family member being gay or lesbian (in a scale where the higher disagreement is 5, the average reached is almost 4). As to the other sentences, one can see that although the agreement with gay and lesbian persons having the freedom to live as they wish is relatively high (not reaching 2.5 of disagreement), this does not necessarily happen with the right to adopt children (it almost reaches the centre of the scale, which is a relatively high level of disagreement). So to sum up: in general, according to young people's opinion in 2016, gays and lesbians should be free to live their lives as they want, there is no big problem to have someone gay or lesbian in the family, but adoption seems to be the most difficult barrier to overcome in the access of social rights. As is known, the family and "familistic" sphere is the least permeable to gender equality (that is true between heterosexual and LGBTQ+ populations, and between men and women in heterosexual relations). Change in the private sphere is the most slow.

Figure 6: Opinion about gays and lesbians (young people only) (scale from agreement to disagreement)

Source: European Social Survey 2016 (Weight used: Design*Population Size)
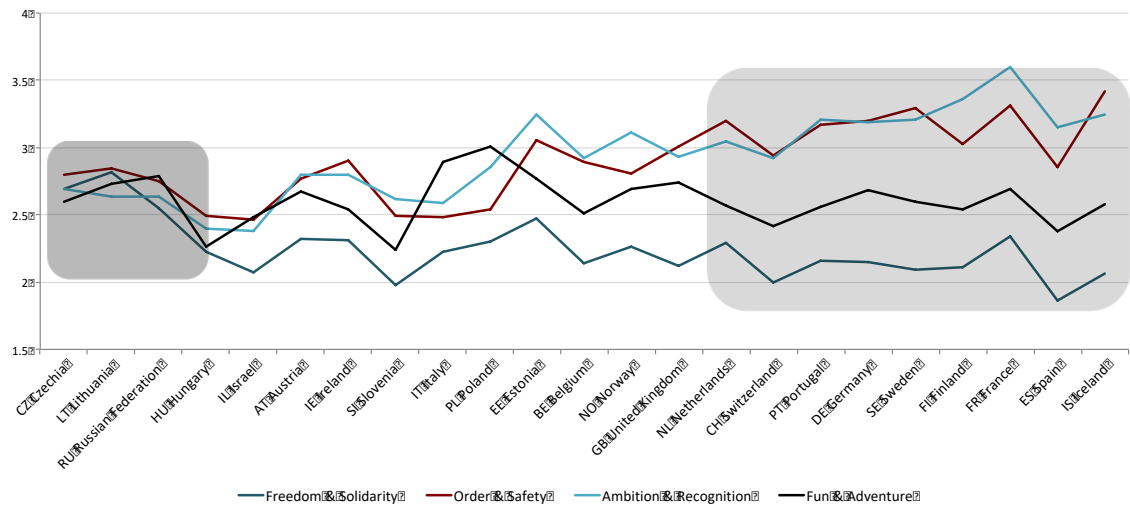
Mapping social values in Europe

But how are the human values mentioned distributed across the European countries (Figure 7)? It is possible to identify several distinctive characteristics of this distribution:
- Group 1) One has to do with the amplitude of the differences in the importance attributed to the different set of values. We can see that in countries such as the Czech Republic, Lithuania, the Russian Federation and Hungary, the identification with all the sets of values is relatively high and it is equally so.
- Group 2) This contrasts a great deal with countries such as Spain, France, Sweden, Iceland, Finland, Germany and Portugal where the identification with values of order and safety and ambition and recognition are fairly close and low, but they are distant from both fun and

adventure on one hand, and freedom and solidarity on the other (where the identification is high).

- Group 3) All other countries present a distinct high identification with the values of freedom and solidarity, while other sets of human values are slightly lower.

Figure 7: Components of human values items for young people (15-30 year olds) in ESS participant countries (scale from agreement to disagreement)
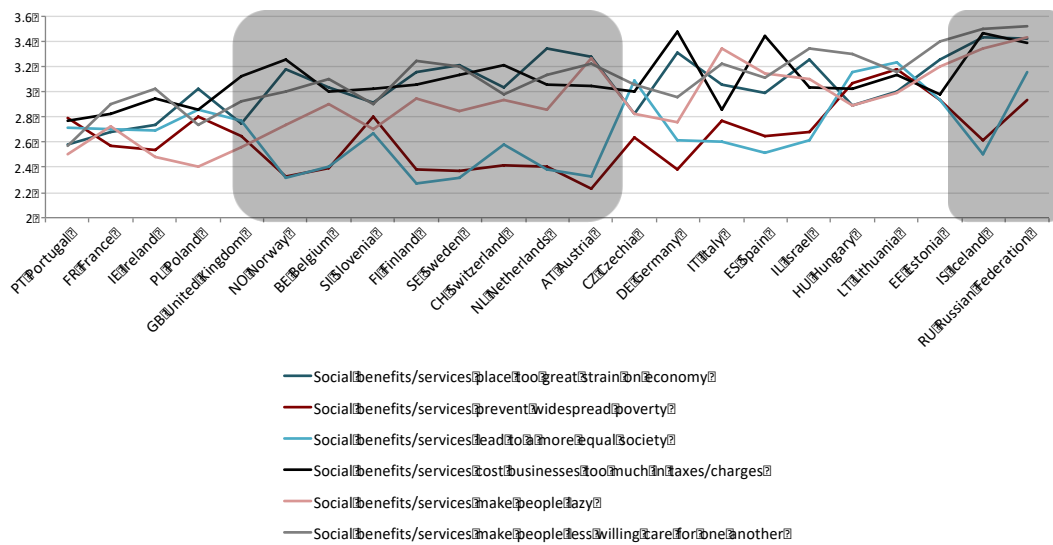

Source: European Social Survey 2016 (Weight used: Design*Population Size)

Countries in the second and third groups mentioned are those where the co-existence of order and safety on one hand, and ambition and recognition on the other, are clearly distinct from the values of freedom and solidarity. This optimist scenario is corroborated with the consensually high – across all European participating countries in that regard – identification with core human values such as freedom and solidarity. But let's not forget this is not true in all the countries. Other countries (in the first group above mentioned) have a worrying co-existence of what could be considered contradictory human values and as such dividing factors among young people in Europe.

The above-mentioned tendency to have higher levels of agreement for the positive assessment of social benefits is not the same across Europe. In countries such as Portugal, France, Ireland, Poland and the UK we can see a more balanced agreement to all the sentences, showing that the two sides of the state (intervening or not) are present in these societies and among young people. These two sides of the state are present but not in extreme ways. So there doesn't seem to exist a youth divide on this subject. On the contrary, in countries such as the ones marked in Figure 8, there is a higher level of disagreement with the negative sides and impacts of social benefits.

Figure 8: Opinion about social benefits (young people only) (average of agreement)
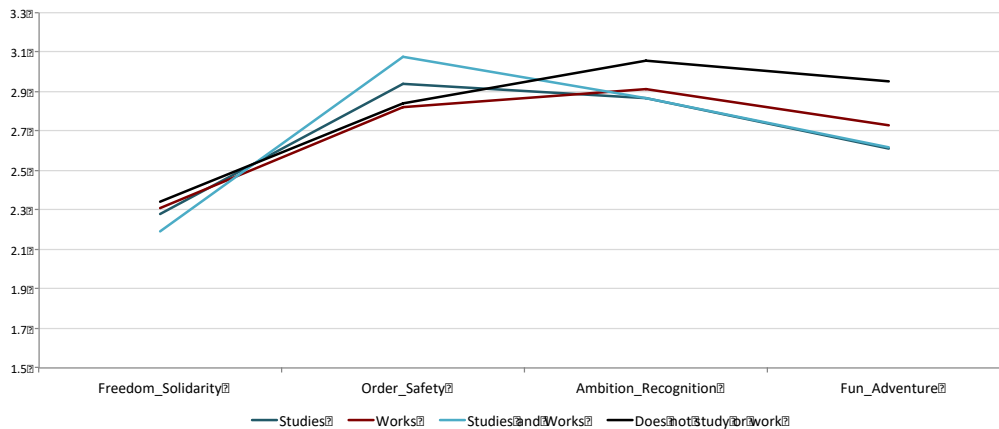

- Social benefits/services place too great strain on economy
- Social benefits/services prevent widespread poverty
- Social benefits/services lead to a more equal society
- Social benefits/services cost businesses too much in taxes/charges
- Social benefits/services make people lazy
- Social benefits/services make people less willing care for one another

Social values, working and studying

Interpreting the effect of education and social class is inevitable when trying to contextualise social values orientations. But interpreting the effect of education and social class on such a large but incomplete territory, where countries have different educational levels and distinct social stratifications, would be perhaps irresponsible. Instead, the approach followed here is to compare the effects of different status (currently studying, currently working, currently studying and working, currently neither working nor studying) in the importance attributed to different sets of human values.[5]

Again we find that the identification with the values of freedom and solidarity is consistently higher and does not present nuances per type of activities currently developed (Figure 9). Order and safety counts with higher identification valued by those who study (just study or, even more so, study and work), while ambition and recognition is something that is much more valued by those who are currently not working or studying than by the other types statuses. Lastly, fun and adventure is valued very differently according to the group of activity considered. Young people that are not working nor studying are the ones that value the most this component, followed by people already working.

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5. Gender does not produce a significant effect, that is to say there are no differences in the importance attributed to different sets of human values by men or women.

Source: European Social Survey 2016 (Weight used: Design*Population Size)

4.1. With whom I am concerned?

The European Values Survey offers us the possibility to analyse which social groups young people are concerned with. We have found three distinct groups (Table 5).

1. Society and humanity. This component is the one that explains the most out of the variability of the sample (30%). It relates to the most abstract and general concerns with others, namely the ones that share territory (planet, region, continent, etc.). It is also the one with the highest mean of disagreement.

2. Vulnerable other. This component relates to social categories that express certain degrees and manifestations of social vulnerabilities, and explains about 30% of the total variability. Answers in this component relate to coherent concerns about sick and disabled persons, the unemployed, the elderly and poor children. It refers to social and demographic issues that are transversal to all societies and thus collect concern and social consciousness from the population, namely the young population.

3. Significant other. This component is the one that explains the least out of the variability of the sample (14%). It reveals the concerns with the people emotionally and daily close by, such as family or neighbours.

What we can see when we analyse how concerned young people are with these different sets of population is that the further away from their intimate sphere this population is, the least young people are concerned with it. Since the average varies between "very concerned" to "not at all concerned" we verify that young people are first and foremost concerned with their immediate family and their neighbourhood (between "very much concerned" and "very concerned"); second with vulnerable groups (between "much" and "to a certain extent"), and last with society and humanity in a more broad and
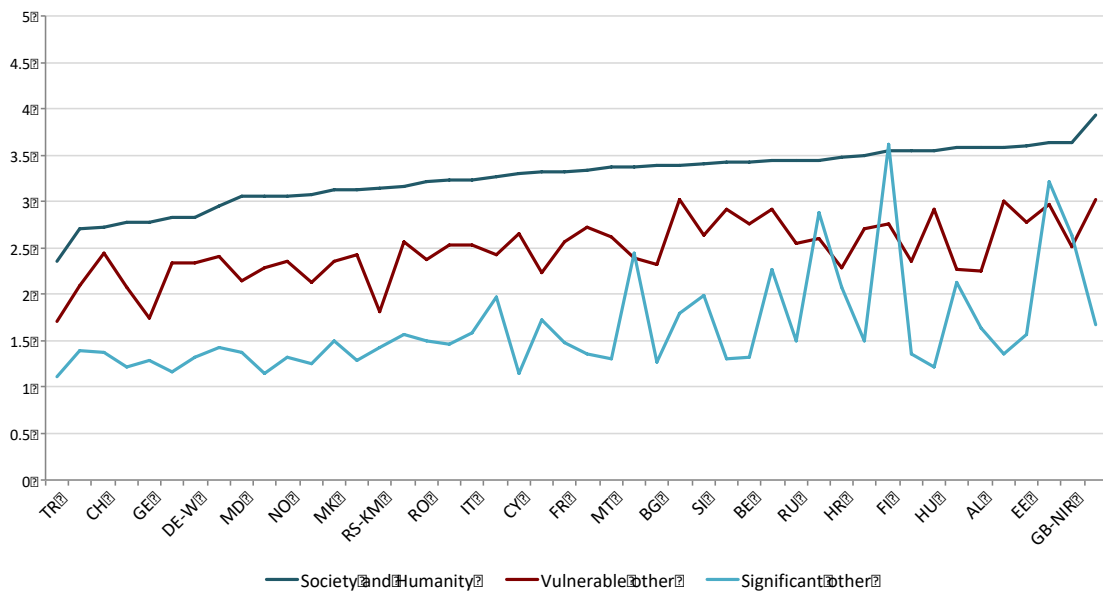
abstract way (between "to a certain extent" and "not so much"). This tendency is very much transversal to the European territory, as can be seen in Figure 10.

Table 5: Components of groups of people one is concerned with (15-30 year olds)
(Factor Analysis, Varimax Rotation)

	Society and humanity	Vulnerable other	Significant other
Are you concerned with: Europeans	**.876**	.145	.080
Are you concerned with: humankind	**.836**	.230	-.060
Are you concerned with: fellow countrymen	**.773**	.248	.319
Are you concerned with: people own region	**.723**	.237	**.452**
Are you concerned with: immigrants	**.524**	**.488**	-.032
Are you concerned with: sick and disabled	.185	**.885**	.113
Are you concerned with: poor children	.147	**.873**	.105
Are you concerned with: elderly people	.211	**.809**	.215
Are you concerned with: unemployed people	.274	**.773**	.129
Are you concerned with: immediate family	.030	.143	**.867**
Are you concerned with: people neighbourhood	**.559**	.209	**.612**
Variance explained	**30.4%**	**29.9%**	**13.9%**
Mean for the young population	**3.2593**	**2.4386**	**1.6188**
Total variance explained	**74.2%**		

Source: European Values Survey 2008 (Weight used: weight_g)

Figure 10: Components of concerns by country (15-30 year olds) (average)

Source: European Values Survey 2008 (Weight used: weight_g)

5. Messages to take home

From "personality" back to "character"

In this paper we wanted to analyse how young people feel about certain issues in their life in society, and how they see themselves as persons. This is a relatively different approach than the one frequently and recently taken: more focused on action, on participation, on impact, on results, on voices that are heard (as opposed to internal voices). In the author's opinion, it's necessary to come back to these ideas of social values and of "character" (in a psychological sense). With or without agency, with or without participation, social values are what ultimately shape the course of the world, led in its turn by the youngest population. Life is not a TED talk. It is not a performance. This paper is just a small contribution to the study of social values among young people, instead of the visibility social movement or civic participation based on these values gathers in the public sphere.

Youth is an age effect

The idea that "youth is an age effect" serves to highlight that youth – from contemporary generations or past generations - has consistently presented more democratic and progressive values than older groups of people, but this tendency seems to decline or reverse when the individuals reach an older age (at least from what is possible to infer from non-longitudinal data). There is in fact a window of opportunity to mobilise loyalty, solidarity, and equality, strong and consensual values towards human and social causes. With age, concerns and priorities change significantly. The clock is ticking.

Social values are socially conditioned

Social conditions of existence are factors of social values. Whether people work, study and work, neither study nor work, or simply study does affect significantly the levels of importance they attribute to different social values. This means that the way of being is determined by the short- or long-term concerns one has experienced or is experiencing in life. And this means no youth policy or youth intervention should, if responsible, ignore or neglect young people's social background and present.

Social benefits benefit *society*

Although not highly optimistic, results show that the positive effects of social benefits (in people's lives) gather relatively high agreement form most of the countries, more than the negative effects (on economy) do. Young people thus seem to be oriented towards the governmental obligations to redistribute wealth on behalf of less unequal societies, through the attribution of social benefits.

"Life is life", what's age got to do with it?

Just like the song of the 1980s, results show that people from all ages give importance first to family, then to work, to friends, to relations and then and only then to politics. In my opinion, politics or political participation should be seen as a means to improve well-being in the areas of life that young people, and people in general, really care about. And not as an end in itself.

Where the line is (still) drawn

Some of the values towards gay and lesbians were possible to identify among young people. Although being ashamed for a relative being gay or lesbian gathers low agreement, and the belief that gay and lesbian persons should be free to live as they want gathers high agreement; the idea that gay and lesbian persons should be free to adopt children is (still) borderline. This is still where the line is drawn when it comes to equality of LGBTQ+ rights.

The plural meanings towards the planet

Similar levels of explanation and consensus regarding the planet and the environment (with averages not particularly low and not particularly high) co-exist among young people. When it concerns the environment, there seems to be a fragmented youth: part is indifferent, part is activist, part thinks action should be indirect (through taxes).

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