
MYPLACE



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WP5: Interpreting Participation (Interviews)

Deliverable 5.3: Country-based reports on interview findings

ESTONIA

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Contents

1. Introduction.....	5
1.1 Historical overview.....	5
1.2 Political developments.....	6
1.3 Research sites.....	8
1.3.1 Ida-Viru County.....	8
1.3.2 Tartu County.....	9
2. Methods and data.....	11
2.1 Data collection and sample.....	11
2.1.1 Interviewee selection and demographic profile.....	12
2.2 Data analysis.....	15
3. Key Findings.....	17
3.1 History.....	17
3.1.1 ‘Us’ and ‘Them’ in Remembering.....	17
3.1.2 Socializing the remembering.....	20
3.2 Perceptions of society, politicians, and political system.....	23
3.2.1 Attitudes towards politics and politicians.....	23
3.2.2 Perception of problems, tensions, and inequalities in the society.....	24
3.2.3 What is there to do for someone like me?.....	25
3.3 Institutionalised (political) engagement.....	26
3.3.1 Voting activity.....	27
3.3.1.1 Making a voting decision.....	29
3.3.2 Participation in youth organisations and engagement in political parties and youth sections.....	31
3.4 Grassroots activism.....	33
3.4.1. Participation through the Internet.....	33
3.4.2 Petitions.....	35
3.4.3 Boycotting or buycotting.....	36

3.4.4 Participation in public meetings and demonstrations.....	39
3.4.5 Possible risk-taking or involvement in radical protests or movements	41
3.5 Conclusions	42
4. Future analysis.....	46
4.1 Cross-case analysis.....	46
4.2 Triangulation with other datasets	46
5. References.....	48
Appendix	51

1. Introduction

1.1 Historical overview

Estonia was first established as an independent state in 1918 in the aftermath of the 1917 Russian revolution which brought to an end the imperial Russian regime. The political and economic elite of Estonia, however, had been mainly German even under the Czarist regime, since Estonia had been under German cultural influence since the crusaders' invasion in the 13th century. This is important to note, because it demonstrates that Russian geopolitical influence on Estonia needs to be set in the context of even closer historical, cultural influences from Germany; this may also be a factor in explaining the persistent segregation of the ethnic Russian community in Estonia. The first period of independence, however, lasted only until Estonia was incorporated into the Soviet Union in 1940, which was followed by occupation by German troops. After the defeat of Hitler's army, Estonia was re-united with the Soviet Union in 1944. Immediately following World War II Estonia experienced the full brutality of the Stalinist regime including harsh repressions and deportations to Siberia.

Along with the Soviet regime, large-scale industrial plants and factories in the North-Eastern part of the country and in the larger cities were established. Their output was directed to the markets of the entire Soviet Union. The factories and plants operated as independent systems, with their own child day-care-, recreational-, training facilities and so on. The labour force for these enterprises was drawn mainly from Russia, Belarus and Ukraine. As a result of Soviet industrialisation and Russification, the ethnic composition of the country changed considerably; the share of Slavic population in Estonia increased from 8% to 35%. In some North-Eastern regions (Ida-Viru County) of Estonia, Russian became the only language of communication as the Russian-speaking population constituted more than 90% of the inhabitants there. When Estonia regained independence in 1991, large all-Union enterprises lost their markets in the former Soviet Union. Consequently they also lost their role as providers of social services and social security. As a result, the entire North-Eastern part of the country lost most of its economic and social well-being. In addition, Russians were largely held responsible for the Soviet regime in discursive fields and thus, stigmatized.

The information fields of the Russian-speaking community and Estonians differ. While Estonians prefer media channels in Estonian, Russians tend to favour Russian information channels, which often are produced in Russia (75% of Russian-speakers claimed to follow Russian media channels, though Estonian-produced Russian information channels are used by 75% as well. However, only 32% admitted reading news in Estonian (Vihalemm, 2011). Thus, the opinions and dispositions of the two main ethno-linguistic groups differ and are shaped by media that represent rather diverse cultural fields.

1.2 Political developments

Over a short period of time in the 1990s Estonia faced fundamental changes in most areas of society. It has been called a 'laboratory of reforms' (Saar and Helemäe, 2006) as a liberal market economy along with parliamentary democracy were established at a rather quick pace. The crucial posts in government throughout the post- independence period have been held mainly by Central-right-wing or liberal parties. In the Economic Freedom Index, Estonia was ranked 13th in 2013, positioning the country among one of the freest economies in Eastern Europe and in the former Soviet Union (Heritage Foundation, 2013). In 2004, Estonia became a member of the European Union and NATO and in 2007 joined the Schengen Area. At the beginning of 2011, Estonia adopted the Euro and became the 17th Eurozone member state.

Estonian civic activism has been rather passive during the two decades after the restoration of independence. One of the recent studies in Estonia indicated that 51% of the informants have never been members of any civic organizations and only 31% were (active or passive) members of a civic association (Kodanikeühiskonna uurimis ..., 2012)². Earlier studies have shown similar results, indicating that the participation in the activities of civic society organisations has not increased in the recent period.

The only widespread violent protest to take place in Estonia after re-independence occurred in 2007. One of the most popular memorials of World War II (the memorial to the unknown soldier known also as the 'Bronze Soldier') in Tallinn became a source of tension from the beginning of the 21st century as a focus of annual 'Victory Day' celebrations (9th May). These tensions peaked when in April 2007 over the decision to relocate the statue from the city centre of Tallinn to the cemetery for war victims. The relocation caused unrest and street riots, attended mostly by Russian-speaking young people. During the protests, 44 protesters and 13 police officers were injured; 1 protester died as a result of their injuries in hospital.

The year 2012 was extraordinary in terms of civic activism. Over the course of the year Estonian society experienced several different public initiatives. The first occurrence emerged in connection with the higher education system reform initiated by one of the core election slogans of one of the coalition parties – free university education for all. Young people were dissatisfied with the government's final reform plan according to which students who were eligible for free education could no longer study part-time (which had become a common practice since many students had to work). This led students to campaign against the reform and culminated with protest demonstrations organized by the Estonian Students Union January 2012.

² Additionally 14% participated in the activities of a church or religious association, 6% were members of a trade or vocational association, and 9% claimed to be members of a political party.

Another remarkable civic initiative – *ACTA³ demonstration* – took place in February 2012, organised against the government’s plan to join the Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement. Peaceful demonstrations were organized in Tallinn and Tartu simultaneously with other demonstrations held in more than 200 European cities (Laan, 2012). The ACTA protests are considered to be the biggest public demonstrations in Estonian history (Krjukov, 2012) since the regaining of independence. Over 6,500 people participated in the protest demonstrations, which is a remarkable number in the Estonian context. The reason why the protests gained such a scope, however, may owe much to the arrogant comments by the Estonian Prime Minister. The latter received a negative reaction in the media due to his response to journalist at a press conference, when he declared that people who are afraid of losing their Internet freedom (related to ACTA) ‘should stop eating seeds’ and ‘should wear a foil hat’ to ‘protect their mind’ from such stupid ideas. His words led to widespread resistance in society, especially among young people.

In Spring 2012, there was another political scandal concerning the financing of the ruling Estonian Reform Party. A long-term member of the party claimed in a newspaper article to have funnelled roughly 7,500 Euros in questionable donations to the Reform Party (Tammik 2012; Rudi 2012). His assertions were confirmed by some other Reform Party politicians. This scandal initiated another civic movement called ‘Stop the Deceitful Politics’ (*Aitab valelikust poliitikast*). The movement began in the social media in October declaring itself to be against corruption and in favour of honest and transparent politics in Estonia. The movement organised several demonstrations at the end of 2012 in Tallinn and Tartu.

These developments progressed further in Charter 12 (*Harta 12*), a public appeal initiated by 17 Estonian public figures, which drew attention to weaknesses in the leadership of Estonia. Charter 12 was a public Internet-based petition which collected 17,000 signatures in eight days. All these processes led the President of Estonia to summon a meeting of the representatives of third sector organizations and political parties, cultural figures and political scientists (President, 2013). The meeting aimed to discuss the need for reforms in the political system. It was decided that in Spring 2013, a public joint creation of recommendations to encourage democracy in Estonia would be handed over to the Estonian Parliament. It laid the foundation for the Peoples’ Assembly Think Tanks⁴ at the beginning of 2013. Both of the last initiatives were very Estonian oriented and were criticised in the media for excluding the Estonian-Russian community. In one way or another, all these events were brought up in the research interviews.

³ The Anti-Counterfeiting Trade Agreement (ACTA) is a ground-breaking initiative by trading partners to strengthen the international legal framework for effectively combating global proliferation of commercial-scale counterfeiting and piracy. In addition to calling for strong legal frameworks, the agreement also includes innovative provisions to deepen International cooperation and to promote strong intellectual property rights (IPR) enforcement practices. (Office of the United States Trade Representative, 2013)

⁴ The People’s Assembly (Rahvakogu) is an online platform for crowd-sourcing ideas and proposals to amend Estonia’s electoral laws, political party law, and other issues related to the future of democracy in Estonia. The Assembly focuses specifically on five questions: the electoral system, political parties, competition between the political parties and their internal democracy, financing of the political parties, strengthening the role of civic society in politics between the elections, and stopping the politicization of public offices. (Rahvakogu, 2013)

1.3 Research sites

Research was conducted in two research sites. Selection of research sites was guided by (1) the potential of the location for understanding youth socio-political (extremist) activism, and (2) the contrast between the locations in terms of the socio-economic characteristics and ethnic-cultural composition of the population.

Background research undertaken for WP1 identified two possible forms of populist radical movements that might emerge in Estonia today. Firstly, 'conventional' right wing activism rooted in racist ideology, and second, extremist activism that might develop out of inter-ethnic tensions between the Estonian and the Russian/Slavic populations. On this basis two regions were selected for empirical research for both the quantitative survey (WP4) and semi-structured interview (WP5) elements of the project. These regions were: Ida-Viru County in north-eastern Estonia and Tartu County in southern-central Estonia. Within Ida-Viru County in-depth interviews were carried out in three towns: Narva, Sillamäe and Kohtla-Järve. In the southern-central region of Estonia, the interviews were carried out in Tartu city.

Narva, Sillamäe and Kohtla-Järve are urban areas with a predominantly Russian population living on the socio-economic periphery and, at least partially, supporting anti-Estonian and pro-Soviet Union ideas. A high proportion of the population is elderly. Tartu is a larger urban settlement with a largely Estonian population located centrally and characterized by quite nationalistic ideas. Tartu has a high proportion of young people among its population.

In 2012, the unemployment rate was 17.5% in Ida-Viru County and 8.2% in Tartu County (7.8% in Tartu). In 2012, average income in Ida-Viru County was 723 EUR/month and in Tartu County 837 EUR/month. At the national level, average income in 2012 was 887 EUR/month (Statistics Estonia, 2013).

1.3.1 Ida-Viru County

The region, which was formerly an integral part of the Soviet Union industrial complex, enjoyed privileged conditions under the Soviet regime because of its industrial significance. Today, however, the region is characterized by high unemployment, an aging population, low income, out-migration of young people, high crime rates and a generally poor economic outlook for future.

Ida-Viru County (Homepage of Ida-Viru County 2013) has been a stronghold of anti-Estonian ideas and movements throughout the period following the restoration of independence. In the early 1990s, in the early days of the restoration of Estonian independence, radical ideas of separating Ida-Viru County from Estonia were promoted and in July 1993 a referendum on acquiring the status of autonomous region independent of the rest of Estonia was organized in

Narva and Sillamäe by the city councils. In Sillamäe 99% of people voted to become an autonomous region. However, the referendum was declared illegal by the Supreme Court and had no juridical consequences (Õiguskantsleri kantselei 2008; Liim 2007).

Narva (Homepage of Narva 2012) is the third largest city in the country. During WW II, heavy battles occurred in and around Narva. The most devastating event was the bombing of 6 March 1944 by the Soviet Air Force, which destroyed the old town. When German forces left the town at the end of July, 98% of Narva had been destroyed. After the war, in the early 1950s, the Soviet authorities demolished the areas devastated to make room for apartment buildings. Narva was turned into an industrial town (manufacturing, energy industries), and industrialization attracted an influx of migrants from other parts of the Soviet Union, mainly from Russia. The fall of the Soviet Union resulted in high unemployment and related social problems. At the beginning of the 2000s, Narva experienced a sharp increase in the spread of HIV when 150-200 new cases were registered annually. Many people, especially young people, have left the town: its population decreased from 83 000 in 1992 to 57 500 in 2013.

The other two towns – Sillamäe (Homepage of Sillamäe 2013) and Kohtla-Järve (Homepage of Kohtla-Järve 2013) – have a similar history. After World War II, they were turned from small settlements with a couple of thousand inhabitants into large industrial towns, populated mainly by workers of Russian and Ukrainian origin who settled there. After the restoration of Estonian independence, the towns lost their industrial significance and social problems emerged (high unemployment, criminality, HIV, etc.).

Narva, Sillamäe and Kohtla-Järve are quite similar to each other and to North-Eastern Estonia in general in terms of economic situation and social, cultural and ethnic composition of population and outlook for the future.

1.3.2 Tartu County

In terms of socio-economic development, the area around Tartu (Homepage of Tartu County 2013) is characterized by a relatively educated labour force, low unemployment and high income, low criminality, a high number of young people who moved to, or chose to remain in, the city for education (a number of universities and high-ranking high schools are located in Tartu), innovative and high tech production and good recreational areas and places.

The population living in the southern and central part of the country has been relatively strongly supportive of Estonian nationhood and independent statehood; this is evident from election results (Estonian National Electoral Committee 2013). The ideas of territorial separation that found positive reception in Ida-Viru County have not found any support in this part of the country.

Tartu (Homepage of Tartu 2013) is the second largest city in Estonia and the cultural, administrative, economic and entrepreneurial centre of Southern Estonia. The first written records of Tartu date from 1030. Tartu University was founded in 1632. Estonian national spirit is strongly associated with the city of Tartu. Historically, it was the centre of the national awakening and ideas and pursuits of statehood. The first song festival was held there in 1869 (song festivals later became a significant symbol of ethnic revival) and prominent national, political, and cultural figures were active in Tartu. During the Soviet period, Tartu was a closed city because it hosted Soviet military air base, including nuclear bombers. In this period, despite the pressure of Russification and Sovietization, education and art organisations and public figures managed to retain their national spirit.

Tartu remains characterized by national sentiment but has not become a base for extremist or racist groups. Few incidents of a racial or ethnically motivated nature took place approximately 10 years ago, but they had no serious consequences and no similar attacks have taken place in recent years.

2. Methods and data

2.1 Data collection and sample

The research is based on sixty in-depth qualitative interviews with young people of age 16-26 years and from two research sites in Estonia: Tartu County (29 interviews); and Ida-Viru County (31 interviews). The interviews were carried out with young volunteers from the MYPLACE quantitative survey research. The interviews were in-depth interviews concentrating on the meanings and attitudes young people attach to participation and their experiences of it. The fieldwork in Estonia took place from 14th November 2012 until 5th March 2013⁵. Prior to the fieldwork, a pilot survey was carried out in order to ensure usability of the common research schedule in the local context. The pilot survey took place in June and July 2012.

Four interviewers carried out the interviewing process. Two were core members of the MYPLACE project team; the others underwent training by the WP5 Country Lead during the pilot period of the research. The training included interview schedule introduction, interviewing process observation and test interviews in the presence of the supervisor. In all, three interviewers were involved in the Tartu County and one in Ida-Viru County. All of the in-depth interviews were based on common interview schedule for the project, which was translated into Estonian and Russian. Small nationally-specific modifications were made to common interview schedule e.g. nationally-specific examples to prompt interviewees if they struggled to understand the question. No additional questions were included, however, as this necessity did not emerge during pilot research. No visual elicitation tools were used during interviews; the pilot research showed that, in the Estonian context, using visuals did not help interviewees to speak about difficult topics, but, rather, forced them to reflect on issues that they had not recognised spontaneously themselves.

The interviewing language depended on the native language of the informants. Consequently, all interviews in the Tartu County were carried out in Estonian, while in the Ida-Viru County the interviewing language was Russian (except for one interview in Estonian). The interviewers used their native language. The duration of the interviews varied greatly between the two field sites. In Tartu County, the average interview duration was 79 minutes, while in the Ida-Viru County the duration was 54 minutes. The average interview duration across both sites was 66 minutes – the shortest interview lasted for 31 minutes and the longest for 2 hours and 22 minutes.

⁵ In Tartu County, the 1st interview was conducted on 15th November 2012 and the last on 5th March 2013. In the Ida-Viru County, the 1st interview was conducted on 14th November 2012 and the last on 3rd March 2013.

2.1.1 Interviewee selection and demographic profile

Interviewee selection was a two-stage process. The initial volunteer recruitment process was carried out by WP4 quantitative survey interviewers⁶ and all participants were offered a small incentive (a 5 € cinema voucher). The final selection was carried out by the MYPLACE WP5 team. In all, seven aspects of volunteers' profiles were considered: political participation and tolerance scores (as per project level guidance), age, sex, ethnicity, citizenship and education. The purpose of the selection was to ensure variety in the in-depth interview sample, as the aim was to interview a wide range of young people in order to access the spectrum of different aspects and meanings of youth political and civic engagement. Thus, young people with different socio-demographic backgrounds and different levels of political activism and tolerance were asked to participate in the research. However, while some variety in the political participation and tolerance level as well as in the socio-demographic background of informants was achieved, the volunteers who eventually agreed to be interviewed tended to have similar socio-demographic backgrounds. Below the final respondents set for the in-depth interviews is described and the similarities and differences from the MYPLACE WP4 survey sample demographic profiles are highlighted.

In terms of gender, the final sample was imbalanced – across the two field sites, 37 male and 23 female participants were interviewed. However, this is in line with the composition of the list of volunteers (on which there were more males than females) and with the quantitative survey sample (WP4) demonstrating the same trend. On the level of individual field sites, sample coherence (between WP4 and WP5 samples) was achieved in case of the Ida-Viru County, while in case of the Tartu County the in-depth interview sample contained somewhat more male participants.

As regards the informants' age, difficulties were encountered in recruiting younger participants who tended to decline the in-depth interview. Nevertheless, across both field sites, 15 interviewees were from the youngest group (16-20 years), 22 interviewees were 21-23 years old, and 23 interviewees belonged to the oldest age group (24-25 years). This compares to an even split between the three cohorts in the WP 4 sample; across both sites, each group had 31-36% of the informants. In both sites, somewhat more informants from the oldest age group participated in the WP5 interviews compared to WP4.

Ethnicity and citizenship status were also imbalanced at individual and cross-site levels. Across both sites, a total of 34 interviewees were ethnic Estonians and 24 were ethnic Russians. The majority of interviewees were Estonian citizens (47) but the respondent set included also five Russian and two Ukrainian citizens as well as six stateless persons. In Tartu County, all but one informant - a Ukrainian citizen - were Estonian citizens. Thus ethnic diversity is confined to the interviewees from Ida-Viru County. In Tartu County, all but one informant was ethnic Estonian

⁶ The MYPLACE quantitative survey data collection procedure in Estonia was carried out by subcontracted professional polling company.

and this group thus constituted 97% of interviewees, while in Ida-Viru County ethnic Russians made up the majority (in WP5: 77%; WP4: 87%). These differences, however, correspond to research sites⁷ themselves and to the list of volunteers generated from MYPLACE WP4 quantitative survey.

The informants' employment status in the final WP5 sample is more or less balanced. In all, 17 informants were employed full-time and 23 informants were studying on a full-time basis. As concerns individual field sites, only three informants (10%) from Tartu County were employed full-time, while in the case of the Ida-Viru County the number was 14 (45%). The same trend emerged from the WP4 sample: relatively more informants from Ida-Viru County were employed full-time (39%) as compared to being in full-time education (32%) while in Tartu County the respective percentages were 23% and 61%. This, however, corresponds to the situations in the research sites (see also `Research sites`). While Tartu County is characterised by a high number of young people in education, Ida-Viru County is characterised by overall low income and high unemployment rate.

As concerns education, the follow-up sample achieved heterogeneity overall – all educational levels (with the exception of Doctoral degree) were represented. In terms of secondary education, the sample corresponded to the WP4 survey sample. The most significant difference between the two respondent sets lies in higher education. Among survey participants, 13% of the informants from Tartu County and 12% of the informants from Ida-Viru County had higher education, while in case of the in-depth interviews only five informants (17%) from Tartu County had completed higher education (Bachelor's degree), as compared to nine informants (29%) from Ida-Viru County (Master's degree (2), Bachelor's degree (7)). Thus, although Tartu County is the seat of several high-quality higher education institutions (including the University of Tartu) and the overall educational level is higher, the in-depth interview sample does not reflect this. Slight differences also emerged in case of vocational education after basic education. In Tartu County, 4% of WP4 informants had completed vocational education after basic education compared to 11% in Ida-Viru County, but a single informant (3%) from Ida-Viru County participated in the follow-up interviews.

For further details about the follow-up interviewees' socio-demographic profile, see Table 1 below.

⁷ Based on the Population and Housing Census (2011), the ethnic composition in Ida-Viru County is approximately 77% Russians and 20% Estonians while in Tartu County it is approximately 85% Estonians and 13% Russians. (www.stat.ee)

Table 1. Interviewees' socio-demographic profiles overall and by field site⁸

Demographic profile		Total	Tartu County	Ida-Viru County
Gender	male	37 (62%)	16 (55%)	21 (68%)
	female	23 (38%)	13 (45%)	10 (32%)
Age	16-20	15 (25%)	11 (40%)	6 (19%)
	21-23	22 (37%)	9 (31%)	11 (36%)
	24-25	23 (38%)	9 (31%)	14 (45%)
Employment status	In full-time employment	17 (28%)	3 (10%)	14 (45%)
	In part-time employment	3 (5%)	2 (7%)	1 (3%)
	Unemployed	3 (5%)	1 (3%)	2 (7%)
	In full-time education	23 (38%)	13 (45%)	10 (32%)
	In part-time education	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
	Working and in full-time education	8 (13%)	5 (17%)	3 (10%)
	Working and in part-time education	2 (3%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)
	Not Known ⁹	4 (7%)	4 (14%)	0 (0%)
Nationality	Estonian	34 (57%)	28 (97%)	6 (20%)
	Russian	24 (40%)	0 (0%)	24 (77%)
	Ukrainian	2 (3%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)
Citizenship	Estonian citizenship	47 (78%)	27 (93%)	20 (65%)
	Russian citizenship	5 (8%)	0 (0%)	5 (16%)
	Without citizenship	6 (10%)	0 (0%)	6 (19%)
	Other	1 (2%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
	Not Known	1 (2%)	1 (3%)	0 (0%)
Education	Master degree	2 (3%)	0 (0%)	2 (6%)
	Bachelor's degree	12 (20%)	5 (17%)	7 (23%)
	General secondary education	17 (28%)	12 (41%)	5 (16%)

⁸ Due to low number of informants and rounding of percentages, in some cases the percentages total slightly over or under 100%.

⁹ 'Not Known' categories (hereinafter) implies to missing answers and errors in the completion of socio-demographic data sheets.

	Vocational education after secondary education	11 (18%)	3 (10%)	8 (26%)
	Vocational education after basic education	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
	Basic education	16 (27%)	9 (31%)	7 (23%)
	Less than basic education	1 (2%)	0 (0%)	1 (3%)
Family status	Single	46 (77%)	25 (86%)	21 (67%)
	Married or living with partner	10 (17%)	2 (7%)	8 (26%)
	Not Known	4 (7%)	2 (7%)	2 (7%)
Residential status	Live at home with parent(s)	26 (43%)	14 (48%)	12 (39%)
	Live at home with other relatives e.g. grandparents	4 (7%)	2 (7%)	2 (6%)
	Live independently alone	4 (7%)	0 (0%)	4 (13%)
	Live independently with own partner/ children	11 (18 %)	4 (14%)	7 (23%)
	Live independently with friends	7 (12%)	5 (17%)	2 (6%)
	Not Known	8 (13%)	4 (14%)	4 (13%)

2.2 Data analysis

For data analysis, all collected interview materials were transcribed and coded using Nvivo 9.2 software. Two coders were involved in the process. The research material from Ida-Viru County (in Russian) was coded by the interviewer (a native Russian speaker) who conducted the interviews in that field site while Tartu County interviews were coded by a native Estonian speaker and member of the interviewer team in that field site. This coding method was chosen in order to ensure that all nuances based on language specificity were captured.

The coding process itself consisted of three stages. The first level included separate open coding (Charmaz, 2006) of some of the interviews from both field sites – in all, 11 interviews. After this, the two individual coding trees were compared and merged based on similarities in the emerging topics. At the next stage, the coding process was completed using both open and axial coding methods – this ensured that categories already existing were not double-coded, and also left open the possibility for new codes and categories to emerge. During the last stage, the two coding trees were once more reviewed, similar codes combined and the coding trees merged. The final coding tree consisted of 30 second level nodes (not self-populated) and approximately 550 first level nodes.

The data interpretation process was carried out by Estonian MYPLACE team members. The report aims to interpret young people's experiences and attitudes towards history, society, and political/civic engagement. The report highlights some significant trends in youth behaviour; whenever possible, the two research sites are compared by drawing out both their similarities and divergences. The data analysis is illustrated with extracts from interview materials and relevant additional MYPLACE quantitative survey data is drawn on where this helps illuminate differences between field sites. All interview extracts are identified by the informant's pseudonym (in order to assure his or her anonymity), age, and field site.

3. Key Findings

3.1 History

3.1.1 'Us' and 'Them' in Remembering

As mentioned in the introduction, the two groups interviewed live in somewhat diverse information fields, and thus they have developed different identities and collective memories (Halbwachs 1992). What is considered worth remembering, and how it is presented, is socially situated and depends on different discursive practices (Corsten 1999) that are prevalent in the information fields surrounding different social and ethnic groups. The groups researched at the two sites do not consume the same information channels. In Ida-Viru County respondents were included in the media sphere of the Russian Federation and Russian-language media in Estonia, while in Tartu County respondents consumed mainly Estonian channels. On the state level, Estonia and Russia have rather different understandings of the history of the 20th century, thus, there are certain sensitive periods and events that are understood somewhat differently among the two groups as well. Moreover, the lines of interpretation are blurred and how and what is remembered also differs within the communities themselves.

The most controversial period causing debate and political confrontation in Estonia has been World War II and its aftermath, the occupation of Estonia (incorporation into the Soviet Union), the deportations to Siberia, the Soviet period and the regaining of independence in 1991. While the Estonian official memory policy treats the Soviet troops as an occupation force, and the victory over the German army as the beginning of the dark era of occupation (and the source of suffering), the Russian-speaking community tends to view the event in terms of victory in the Great Patriotic War¹⁰ and the Soviet troops as liberating the country from fascist invaders. Thus, the anniversary of the end of the World War II¹¹ has always been a day loaded with different meanings among various memory communities; these contested meanings came to a head with the revolt in 2007.

The understanding of history among the ethnic Estonian memory community tends to be similar or close to the official memory policy, while the Russian-speaking community is inclined to share a version that is stigmatised at the official memory policy level. One of such examples is the celebration of the May 9th as the day of victory over Nazi Germany. As the same events brought forth the annexation of Estonia and the period of 'lost independence' in hegemonic discourse, these events are ideologically overloaded with contested meanings. However, the Russian-speaking community does not often understand the celebration as an ideologically

¹⁰ World War II is referred to in Russia as the 'Great Patriotic War'.

¹¹ In Russia (and in parts of former Soviet Union) it is celebrated on May 9th, not 8th, as in other parts of Europe.

driven act against the official policies of Estonia, but rather as a way of remembering on a community level. Thus, the stigmatization can cause the feeling of alienation among the Russian speaking minority, a sense of being not heard or being considered a second rate group. One such example is the following interview extract from Alek:

[...]so, these old soldiers from the Second World War get together. Well, let them meet – why can't they reminisce about these days? A certain country [a reference to Estonian official memory policy] is against it. When Russians simply meet – nobody ever tells them anything, you see, they just meet and that's it. But as soon as Estonians meet, these Finns and all... [a reference to gatherings of Estonian veterans who fought with German troops or in the Finnish Winter War] But really, what of it, they are old people, they fought together, side by side, covered each other, helped out... Let them meet in peace. Let them sing their songs and dance and drink – there is nothing wrong with it (Alek, 24, Ida-Viru County)

The interview extract is indicative, firstly, of how personal meanings attached to the past are in conflict with state interpretations. Rather than giving these meetings a political meaning of communist ideology winning over the Nazi, Alek interprets them in the sense of individuals getting together to reminisce about their personal experiences about a shared past in an act that is condemned by the state on a political level. At the same time, it illustrates how the informant sees his own ethnic community as left out ('nobody ever tells them anything, you see') and as deprived of the basic human right to gather in public – a right accorded to other ethnic groups.

The feeling of being left out was expressed by other informants. Katerina, for example, notes this in relation to the unrest of April 2007. Even though she herself agreed with the government's decision to relocate the Bronze Soldier statue (usually resisted by Russian-speaking community), she notes that her community was ignored and the basic principles behind the removal were not explained.

The April 2007 events are often constructed among both groups in terms of an ethnic conflict: Russian-speaking informants refer to those responsible for relocating (often termed 'removing') the memorial as 'Estonians' while Estonians refer to those protesting against it as 'Russians'. Though the government consists indeed of ethnic Estonians, and the majority of those charged responsible for the unrest consisted of members of the Russian-speaking minority, the responsibility for these acts, and the stigmatisation is sometimes generalized to the entire ethnic group by the other. However, not all respondents follow this ethnic division and although criticism of the government is found mainly among the Russian-speaking group, there are informants from Tartu County who disapprove of the government's decision:

But... really... in my mind the statue [Bronze Statue] is not important, but this occasion... what it provoked between Estonians and Russians [...] a negative perception you know... that Estonians and Russians are like in conflict with one

another, right? [...] I think they should have just sought more dialogue... like... between Russians and Estonians... to explain the reasons for the World War II... (Oskar, 25, Tartu County)

Again, the informant refers to conflicting interpretations of the World War II. For many Estonians, it is hard to perceive that the outcome of the war could be treated with a tone of victory as, according to the hegemonic mnemonic history, this was the start of one of the harshest periods of history characterised by the loss of the statehood and Stalinist repressions. Often, celebrating these events as a victory is viewed as celebrating the loss of Estonia. Oskar, however, calls for a more balanced understanding and explanation of the broader context to both sides of this ideologically driven discourse.

Distancing from the Estonians (and referring to Estonians as 'them', not 'us') does not mean always that the 'other' is seen as negative. Alek, although complaining about discrimination towards war veterans, admires the ability of Estonians to regain independence without violence:

Well, they really did well, somehow managed it all, I like this, the way they coped – without a single shot. In Latvia, Lithuania many people died, but in Estonia no one died and this is basically like a miracle and... I'm glad about it! (Alek, 24, Ida-Viru County)

One of the tendencies among the informants in Ida-Viru County is to look aside from Estonian history as it sometimes stigmatizes Russian-speaking minority. In these cases, the basis for shared memory is created by reference not to events related to Estonian national history but those of a grander scale. Some informants suggested that Estonian history was marginal, and thus not worthy of interest. One gets the sense that these youngsters feel part of something bigger:

Yes, I did not like history lessons; I liked to listen about... I think I would even have liked to hear more about Russian history, the country is very rich in all kinds of events, but already in our secondary school Estonian history like prevailed, well, I wasn't so interested. (Olya, 23, Ida-Viru County)

Many informants from Ida-Viru County also indicated that they are not necessarily tied to Estonia in the future, so they preferred concentrating on cosmopolitan topics that are not parochially tied to a small country. The reluctance to study Estonian history can stem from other factors, such as the struggle to understand the language, which often overshadows the subject itself.

3.1.2 Socializing the remembering

The act of remembering as a moral duty was expressed by both groups although the reasons and emphases varied. Many among the Russian-speaking group expressed the necessity to honour those who had fought during the World War II (the veterans) for making it possible for their generation to live in an era without wars. The glorification of the victory in World War II and its connection to the contemporary peace was not made among Tartu County informants, who tended to see the war and its aftermath rather as an era of suffering. However, appreciation of the sacrifices made by the previous generations for the wellbeing of current generations was voiced by informants in Tartu County as well:

INT: but why is [history] important in your opinion?

RES: yes... because for me... like one's own state and this thing, you know, that people have at one point strived to make something like this happen, like, to become an independent state in the world. Like, if this state didn't exist, we would be part of some other state... (Karl, 24, Tartu County)

According to MYPLACE survey data, being interested in history differs considerably in Tartu and in Ida-Viru counties. While in Tartu County, 30% of respondents claimed to be 'very interested' in history, only 7% of youngsters in Ida-Viru County chose that answer. There, as much as 39% admitted not to be interested in history at all (only 5% of Tartu County respondents claimed to be disinterested in the subject).

In line with MYPLACE survey data, one could find in the interviews those who were not particularly interested in history or the issues of the past. Yet, in both ethnic groups there were others who, despite being interested in the past, were keen that some parts of history should be 'forgotten', like sufferings such as deportations. Again, opinions varied; some informants considered deportations to be a crucial part of history, but suggested that the victimization of the nation based on these events may sometimes go too far. For instance, Rael from Tartu County suggested that, to her, the martyr-centred perception of the deportations prevents people from seeing the events in a broader context or prevents them planning the future. Ivar, in contrast, said that it would be better for everybody to forget the deportations altogether:

... because there is nothing beautiful in it. [...] Rather one could accept it, yes, it happened... and... now get on with making sure it doesn't happen again. But to reproach someone for it or something. I think, it doesn't make sense! [...] people can get offended [...] like, when in the history of some state there are for instance mass murders... or something... then this rather discredits the state [...] and worse, if other states remember it. To my mind, it would be nice if everyone forgave (Ivar, 24, Tartu County)

While Rael referred to the society's tendency to over-victimize the nation and thus ignore some more important things and the future, Ivar aims to soothe the current tensions in society. The powerful image of victims tends to create an urge to blame someone or something for the

sufferings, and the informant seems to indicate that the Russian-speaking community in society might be offended by this. In his view, forgetting means forgiving.

The conflicting versions of history, however, are also visible among the two groups. Though some informants in Tartu County oppose the victimizing or overly national versions of history, they still tend to accept the official memory policy version of the turbulent time in the 1940s. Among the Russian-speaking group the picture is more heterogeneous in this respect. Many admit that the truth is hard to determine, but there are also youngsters who believe in the version cultivated by Soviet official propaganda, that is, that the Soviet army 'liberated' Estonia after the WW II (rather than being involuntarily incorporated into the Soviet Union). However, even when indicating that the dissolution of the Soviet Union was an unwanted development, it is not seen in the framework of Estonia's regained independence in 1991. It is recognised however that these events were rooted in developments that went beyond the Estonian Republic. Below, Ruslan interprets the collapse of the Soviet Union as the source of numerous ethnic conflicts across the entire post-Soviet space and, thus, as negative:

Everything would have been fine... in the Soviet period, there were so many people and all of them like in peace... was it really necessary for everyone to break up and start fighting each other like... here and there, in Caucasia and so on... and this Afghanistan also [...] well, Estonia has not been at war with anybody... in my opinion... (Ruslan, 22, Ida-Viru County)

As construction of the past is part of the socialization experience and basis of national identity, it is quite natural that the understanding of history depends on home and school. The two ethno-linguistic groups live in quite segregated worlds in this respect. Among both groups, one can find cases when informants express discrepancies between the public version of history and the interpretation of the past at home. For example Oliver from Tartu County talks about his mother who was deported to Russia during the Soviet period yet opposes the common (public) perception that one should blame Russians for these repressions. Oliver's mother had urged him to have a more open attitude towards the other ethnic group. Among the Russian-speaking group, tensions between how the past is made sense of in school, home and public discourse are stronger. In some Russian schools, teachers discourage young people from reading some parts of the school text books and the versions of those text books also contradict the past that is socialized at home. Sometimes it causes confusion:

I mean of course it is necessary, necessary to know your history, to remember it, it's just that... to be frank, remembering my history lessons at school, it was like: 'So, children, we open this page', we turn some pages and some more, then 'This page you don't have to read at all...' [...] I don't know what to believe. I mean we listen to father, listen to grandmother [...] well, like in my generation there are people who get good grades at school, but that does not mean that we know history well [...] (Katerina, 25, Ida-Viru County)

This situation - when a teacher encouraged pupils to reject what was presented in the textbook – was described by a number of informants. The inconsistency between what circulates within the ethnic community and discourses encountered in public may stem from the victimization discourse described by some Tartu County informants above. The Estonian official mnemonic narrative tends to present Russia as the cause of most of the sufferings in Estonian history. Presenting the past in the form of accusations towards Russia, the state which some members of Russian-speaking community identify with, can undermine confidence in that particular version of history.

Socialisation of the past does not take place only in history lessons. Many informants from Ida-Viru County recalled several events organised by the school to commemorate the end of World War II. In some schools, visits to war veterans were organised, some held parades to place flowers at the monument. Visiting the veterans establishes a kind of personal contact with those passing on the memory. This perhaps raises awareness of the past more effectively: in this case, memory has a particular face and voice (as opposed to dull text books which are questioned by teachers anyway). Some schools, however, were opposed to such socialisation practices. Some informants were not allowed to attend the parades, so they watched them from the school window. This indicates that the socialization practices that surround young people do have an effect on them, even if they are not part of them. Banning attendance at something that pupils from other schools participate in, can create the opposite effect; a wish to attend these practices. More effective than determining what can and cannot be attended, would be to explain the meanings of these mnemonic practices.

As expected, family was also an important socialising agent of history. Among both groups young people reflected upon several historic events that they celebrated in one way or another with their family. Positioning their family story against the backdrop of the general historical framework is also important. When speaking about deportations, many informants mentioned whether their family had been affected personally or not. The presence or absence of such experience in some cases led to participation in the commemoration of related anniversaries or, conversely, lack of interest in them. Sometimes, character traits were explained by reference to the influence of the past:

And this Russian rule affected my family, too, it has left its mark. Though from close family circles nobody was deported I guess but, [...] they took our livestock from us and... I don't remember exactly how it all was but nevertheless it made the life of my grandparents and great-grandparents significantly harder. And all this of course has influenced me as well, because my grandmother was born right after the war. They are such reserved people... a bit negative and all this has been passed on to me as well. (Elis, 21, Tartu County)

The past surrounds young people at home, at school, in the media and in society. However, encountering a multiplicity of meanings attached to the past, they have to decide on their own interpretation of history. The findings of this study suggest young people do not accept these

versions of history uncritically but, on the contrary, actively take part in constructing the past themselves.

3.2 Perceptions of society, politicians, and political system

It has been claimed that the borderline between the political and apolitical, private and public is becoming increasingly blurred. Previously non-political, albeit social, behaviours have acquired a political meaning (e.g., consumption: what to eat, what to wear, where to live). Key social institutions and traditions are gradually losing significance (for example, education does not guarantee an affluent life and 'family' needs not be a couple with children, etc.). Consequently, politics has been re-defined and given a broader meaning, such as in concepts of life-politics (Giddens 1991) or sub-politics (Beck 1998). People are required to take more responsibility for their lives and social regulation is increasingly accomplished by private agents (Holzer and Sorensen 2003). In the following section, how young people perceive politics is discussed, after an initial analysis of how the concepts of 'politics' and 'the political' are perceived more generally.

Even though theoretically 'the political' is a broad and diverse concept, young people in both field sites tended to understand these two concepts in very conventional terms. The words used most frequently when describing politics included the following: 'party, ministries, parliament, government, faction, power, state, management of society'. The words 'politicians, ministers, members of parliament members' were used as well; even some specific politicians were mentioned, such as Andrus Ansip (the Prime Minister of Estonia and Chairman of the Estonian Reform Party) and Edgar Savisaar (the Mayor of Tallinn and Chairman of the Estonian Centre Party).

[...] still, the first idea that comes to my mind when I think about something political is that it is something that those statesmen solve and something that thus very indirectly affects me, that it is out of my reach [...] (Tarmo, 21, Tartu County)

A minor difference between the two field sites was that in Ida-Viru County young informants also named political institutions and politicians of the Russian Federation, while informants from the Tartu County made no connections to foreign countries. This is probably caused by the different media contexts in which young people are located – since Russian-speaking youth consume Russian media, the concepts 'politics' and 'political' are interpreted through Russian political figures and institutions.

3.2.1 Attitudes towards politics and politicians

The concepts of 'politics' and 'politicians' have strongly negative connotations. Informants tended to speak about 'corruption' and 'conflicts'; they used the words 'bothersome, biased,

dirty, dissemble, hypocrisy' to describe politics and politicians. They note that in politics, 'dishonesty, dissembling, corruption, and pursuit of personal benefit' are paramount. Thus, in some cases, the informants are opposed to the political system, and this may culminate in a lack of trust towards politicians, political institutions, and in some cases even towards the political system in general.

I don't know, it seems to me, that ... there has emerged, a kind of slight rift, between the government and people or ... that a kind of distrust has arisen [...] these political decisions do not ... reach the people in such a direct way [...] so then questions arise and ... doubts. That ... that maybe they, those men who have been elected, are not doing their job properly. (Ivar, 24, Tartu County)

As described in the introduction, the year 2012 was politically and socially significant in many ways and probably influenced the informants from Tartu County who tended to refer quite a lot to the political funding scandal and related topics (Charter 12, People's Assembly Think Tanks).

Relatively few positive associations were made with politics. However, the informants doing so did not deny the problems and shortcomings that society faced in the field of politics, but were somewhat more optimistically inclined; they noted, for example, the positive aspects of politicians' work and recognised their contribution to the development of the society.

I am very satisfied in general with what our country is doing, that, just like I said, [...] that, really this austerity has helped Estonia a lot and we are doing well and with how we have integrated ourselves into the European Union, and well, there are now minuses for me also, a few, still this Greece issue and whether we should help a country that cannot manage itself [...] (Tarmo, 21, Tartu County)

3.2.2 Perception of problems, tensions, and inequalities in the society

While in young people's minds the recent political scandals revealed the tensions between politicians and between politicians and people, young informants noted a range of problems in current society. This was the same for both Estonian-speakers and Russian-speakers; however, the latter tended to emphasize ethnic tensions somewhat more, while youth from Tartu County paid more attention to socio-economic inequalities. They were also more aware of the various tensions and inequalities in the society, such as religious and regional tensions and inequalities between generations.

The informants also discussed various political solutions to the problems raised above. Young people tended to express the opinion that the state should do more in order to improve the situation – for example, guarantee wages that are fair, adopt a proportional tax system, encourage the development of free enterprise, etc. Others (in both field sites), however, argued that it is not possible to solve these problems centrally, as they are linked to the

development of society, to a specific time, or depend on people themselves. In order for change to come about, it is suggested that people should change their attitudes, make an effort or contribute more through voluntary work. Such views reflect the liberal mentality supported by the centre/right wing governments' policies that have prevailed in Estonia after restoration of independence. Critically-minded informants indicated their awareness of individualized responsibility (as discussed earlier) and claimed that the government had no means for improving the situation.

[...] unemployment benefits actually should not be very high [...] people would just think that well ... if I get approximately the same amount of money like for sitting at home then, well, why should I go [...] I'll do some moonlighting somewhere [...] maybe a person should have to struggle a bit before he gets that it is up to him to manage and to do something. (Age, 22, Tartu County)

It was also suggested that the current state of society, including socio-economic inequalities, corruption and tensions in political culture, is the legacy of history, especially of the Soviet Union.

[...] responsible were, I don't know ... the leaders of the Soviet Union of the '50s, '60s, who like simply developed it [corrupt political system] and it has lingered on [...] there are, well, abuses of power and all kinds of other stuff ... it's like, in some sense, if you have had to fight that hard to get somewhere, maybe it seems like ... once you have got there, you can exploit it, but that's not the right attitude ... but I think that this has started to change for the better, actually. (Simmo, 24, Tartu County)

Since this informant had not personally experienced the former political system, his perception of it has been transmitted via a range of socialization channels including school, media and adults (such as parents). Thus, here again, the importance of intergenerational memory transmission is evident. At the same time, the younger generation nonetheless generates its own understanding of the Soviet period which, partially at least, contradicts the views of their parents.

3.2.3 What is there to do for someone like me?

Young people's perceptions about the degree to which they can influence politics and society vary. The interviewees who discussed this issue tended to associate the opportunities with conventional participation, for example, joining a political party or its youth section in order to try to make a difference. Simply being an exemplary citizen, voting in elections, staying in Estonia and working and paying taxes was also seen as a contribution.

Other possibilities suggested included grassroots-level activities – for example, participation in protests and demonstrations in order to convey the message of dissatisfaction to politicians, or

conveying the message by leaving the country, but also participating in voluntary work and trying to change society via these structures. It was suggested also often that changing something starts with making improvements to your own life. Thus Liisa from Tartu county suggests change should be brought about by people ‘...themselves, for example, through everyday activities change something a little. Even by being polite to other people or treating them in a friendly manner.’

It was also suggested that young people do not have the power required. Therefore, in order to make changes or have an impact on society they need assistance from people already in power: a leader who makes it all happen with help from followers supporting the idea and willing to participate.

If there is some sort of political situation and only I think that it should be resolved like this ... there is no sense in doing anything, because alone ... what can I do, you know? But if, well, there have to be other people who think the same. (Kristel, 25, Tartu County)

Several other reasons were mentioned as to why young people are unable to influence politics or issues of concern in society. Young people from Ida-Viru County tended to be a little more sceptical and stressed passivity, stereotypical or prejudicial attitudes towards youth, the need to have authority, and lack of competence as hindering factors.

First of all, nobody’s going to suddenly take you somewhere where you can change something. You have to prove yourself somehow, write a number of projects and really make yourself visible – and this is quite difficult, since in our society trust is invested in specific people already [...] and somebody new is not trusted the same way. (Dimitri, 22, Ida-Viru County)

Among the interviewees, overall confidence in young people’s ability to influence political structures tended to be rather low. Young people stay within the established structures and personal initiative to act is rare. The success-centred mentality prevailing in Estonia to some extent inclines youth towards maximization of personal opportunities while the competitive labour market, declining social benefits and the risk of losing one’s job, or not finding employment in the first place, means that many young people remain pragmatic, individualistic and conservative.

3.3. Institutionalised (political) engagement

Political participation in the narrow sense refers to activities that take place in connection with political decision-making through electoral processes and related institutions. Besides voting and campaigning, it includes activities linked to the administrative system, political parties and their youth sections: membership in a party, running for office, volunteering for a campaign, contacting officials etc. (Birch 2002: 104; Nelson 1993: 720-22). Other youth-specific

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Deliverable 5.3: Country-based reports on interview findings–Estonia

Page 26 of 52

organisations can be included in this category as well, such as youth councils and organisations involved in political processes. The consensus model of democracy would include in addition ‘participation’ membership and participation in interest-based organisations that exist side by side with political parties (trade unions, NGOs, chambers of commerce and the like) (Zucha et al. 2004). Although protesting and other such activities could be considered as political participation, it should be noted that, in this section, traditional participatory activities, such as participation in elections, political parties and youth organizations, are discussed as forms of ‘institutionalised engagement’ while more informal, grassroots participation, such as protesting, is explored later.

3.3.1 Voting activity

Participation in elections was quite popular; many young informants had voted in local government and/or parliamentary elections. However, there were also regional differences; MYPLACE survey results indicated quite low participation in Ida-Viru County (27.9% in the latest national elections and 29.1% in local government elections) compared to Tartu County (47.1% and 31.8%, respectively).

A range of reasons were given during interviews for arriving at particular voting decisions. Some perceived voting in elections as a more or less effective form of political participation, and the reason for voting was to influence the future and (hopefully) bring about some changes in society. Others were not so optimistic, but still regarded voting as necessary; some informants from Tartu County claimed that voting at least gives the right to express discontent or criticize politicians if they failed to meet expectations or fulfil their election promises.

Attitudes that are much more sceptical were also expressed. Some perceived voting as a simple formality that does not actually change anything in the society or politics. In the MYPLACE quantitative survey, around 12% of the informants in both field sites considered voting or non-voting as equally pointless. According to Armand from Ida-Viru County, although everyone has the right to express his or her opinion, not everyone’s voice will be heard:

I don’t know, it’s most likely in order to ... keep a clear conscience, like if I voted – that’s it, no one can blame me for anything. I mean, unless your votes are discarded, I can no longer, I mean I voted... In principle, I’m satisfied with what they are doing and haven’t noticed anything negative so far. (Armand, 21, Ida-Viru County)

The practice of voting in elections can also result from socialisation, be influenced by significant adults (such as one’s parents) and thereby become a ‘self-evident action’ that does not require extensive consideration, as Simmo explains in the next extract. In this case, parents are regarded as role models who encourage participation in political processes.

this has somehow been so self-evident, but, well, I think that here the most important thing is what comes with you from home. Since my parents always go, it feels that there is no other way [...] and I have always been interested in it as well (Simmo, 24, Tartu County)

The reason for voting need not be connected to a desire to change society; it can also be rooted in morality. Especially in Tartu County, informants described the motivation for voting in elections as a question of honour – as one's duty or a privilege attached to being a member of society. In Ida-Viru County, however, this linkage between morality and voting in elections was absent from respondents' narratives. A possible reason for this is that the electoral legislation of Estonia allows stateless persons and foreign citizens to vote only in local government elections and not in the national parliamentary elections and, in the Ida-Viru County, stateless persons and foreign (mainly Russian) citizens constitute a significant proportion of the population. On the other hand, no strong or overtly negative attitudes or disappointments were expressed in connection with the voting restrictions. The exception to this were a few remarks suggesting that the electoral legislation meant elections in Estonia cannot be considered fair, since a considerable percentage of the population does not have the right to vote and thus have their voices heard by the state structures.

Not all of the eligible young informants had voted in elections. In addition to informants whose citizenship status made participation impossible (in the latest national elections, according to MYPLACE survey 1% of Tartu County and 44% of Ida-Viru County respondents were not eligible due to citizenship status), some of the interviewees from Ida-Viru County had deliberately abstained from voting. The main reason given was similar to the suggestion above that voting was a purely formal practice, which is that voting has no influence. They were convinced that domination by the two largest parties (Centre Party and Reform Party) would continue and elections would not change anything.

Imagine like... a shitty Lada, and currently the Reform Party is behind the wheel, and the Centre Party rides shotgun, if they were to change places, the Centre Party would be driving, but the shitty car remains the same ... for this reason, like whether you vote or not, it doesn't matter changing something here is very difficult, because ... like enlightened ideas are fine, but if you implement them, it's like you had the best intentions, but everything still turned out like in Russia¹². (Katerina, 25, Ida-Viru County)

The reasons for non-voting need not be politically motivated. Thus, lack of time and interest were also mentioned even though voting opportunities in Estonia are very flexible¹³ and

¹² Here the informant employs a popular saying which refers to a situation, that even though might be based on a good idea in theory, in practice it would never work.

¹³ In Estonia, advance voting is possible for one week before the elections (the one-week period starts ten days before the Election Day and ends three days before Election Day). In the first four days, voting is possible in county seats (at any polling division). In the next three days and on Election Day, one can vote at his or her polling division based at his or her registered

participating in elections is not a time-consuming effort. Therefore, such excuses might reflect a wider passivity or lack of information regarding the ways in which votes can be cast.

Willingness to participate in upcoming elections was affected by a lack of belief in the possibility of making a difference and in political culture, mainly due to last year's political developments and scandals. Young people are disappointed because of the scandals (corruption charges brought against politicians) and the way the scandals have been treated by the political elite and the ruling party (responsibility is being evaded, there have been no resignations from office, etc.). This has undermined young people's confidence and trust in political structures, especially in Tartu County. Nevertheless, some younger informants adopted a more positive attitude, emphasising the novelty of the situation and the will to acquire new experiences.

INT: Definitely go? Why, why you are so sure, that you will go?

RES: I simply want to... see what is going on there, how it is done and [...] see it with my own eyes (Silvia, 19, Tartu County)

Finally, some interviewees from Tartu County argued that the simple act of voting cannot be regarded as political activism, while others disagreed with this and considered the act of voting as their personal experience and involvement in political sphere.

3.3.1.1 Making a voting decision

Party preferences differed greatly between the two field sites. While interviewees from Ida-Viru County mostly preferred the two major parties ('Estonian Centre Party' and 'Pro Patria and Res Publica Union'), young informants from Tartu County drew a more complex picture (mentioning four major parties, an electoral coalition, and an independent candidate as their preferred choice). MYPLACE survey data reflect that in Ida-Viru County, youth favoured the Centre Party¹⁴ (58.6% of the votes in local government elections, 73.6% in national elections), while in Tartu County the largest proportion of respondents voted for the Reform Party¹⁵ (41.3% and 39.7%, respectively).

Despite the differences in party preferences, the reasons behind voting were quite similar. The decisions were not always well-considered. Some of the informants at both sites recalled having made their voting decisions based on image, good media coverage, notoriety (electoral candidates known mainly from the entertainment sphere), or election promises made during election campaigns. It seems that some of the interviewees took quite seriously even the most

residence. Additionally, Estonia has successfully introduced e-voting, thereby providing an easy and quick way to vote virtually from anywhere. Owners of Android-driven cell phones can check their vote using mobile service.

¹⁴ Estonian Centre Party (Eesti Keskerakond) is a centrist and social liberal political party in Estonia, and is the largest opposition party in parliament (it currently holds 21 of 101 seats in the Riigikogu).

¹⁵ Estonian Reform Party is a liberal political party in Estonia which is currently the largest party in parliament (it currently holds 33 of 101 seats in the Riigikogu).

populist promises made by the parties. Karl, for example, explained that he had watched electoral broadcasts on television and decided to vote for those parties that offered something that 'would improve my own living conditions' (Karl, 24, Tartu County).

Voting decisions had also been based on personal contacts with political parties or politicians or influenced by recommendations. In the latter case, those referred to were trusted people, including teachers, parents, friends or peers.

INT: Oh... and how did it feel?

RES: very good... well, I don't know, I didn't feel anything, simply voted and that's it... for the Centre Party or how do they call it, my friend's father is there [member of party] I like voted for them [...]

INT: You mean that ... you voted solely because you had a... familiar face there...

RES: Well, I like know him well, his father... I have like communicated with him and... he is like a wise person altogether... and that's why I voted for him... (Misha, 22, Ida-Viru County)

The opposing opinion – that voting decisions have to be grounded - was also expressed in interviews in both field sites. Among the most important aspects, trust and satisfaction with the party or politicians arising from their previous political achievements in the region were mentioned.

we have an electoral alliance that has been behind the wheel for a long time [at local level], so to say, but at the same time the situation is the other way around if compared to the state [national level] that I am very satisfied with what they have done in [Names town]; it works in [Names town]; we do better than all the other neighbouring rural municipalities (Tarmo, 21, Tartu County)

Also, it is claimed that information about party programmes and background is sought and evaluated before the elections (previous achievements, current programme, fulfilment of election promises, etc.). In general, this is not a systematic and intensive activity, but some young interviewees claimed to have engaged in it before elections in order to familiarize themselves with the programmes of different parties and with the current situation in politics and society. Additionally, some informants might also make their voting decisions based on ideological aspects. To some extent, such decisions are based on a match between the ideological platforms of the parties and their own ideological views.

And this is still why I have usually voted for the Reform Party... it is that they... like seem to comply with my views the most... like with my personal interests, but... but at the same time like... like there isn't [laughs] simply anything much better to vote for, actually. (Ivar, 24, Tartu County)

The latter case was rare and it would be misleading to conclude that the informants thoroughly

understood the differences between parties, their positions on the right-wing/left-wing, liberal/conservative scale. This tended to be confusing, especially in Ida-Viru County, and it seems that young interviewees are not used to thinking about political parties in such categories. They even tended to believe that parties are quite similar and differ only in some aspects. Nevertheless, they did not suggest that to have parties that were similar ideologically, or even a one-party system would be better for society; a plurality of opinions and parties was strongly preferred in both field sites.

3.3.2 Participation in youth organisations and engagement in political parties and youth sections

Participation in youth organisations tended to be the most popular type of activism among interviewees from both sites. In most cases, this means long-term participation in secondary school or university student councils, but it may also cover taking the role of class president or participation in student corporations, student societies, and youth parliaments. To some extent, informants from Tartu County associated participation in youth organisations with political activism; this was based on the organisations' activities that sought to change society or specific youth (or education) related fields, as well as on the organisations' work-related contacts with politicians, as described by Tarmo:

I was sent to this general meeting of the Estonian School Student Councils' Union, which is [...] on the school student level, one of the largest like, so to say, political events, where we passed some kind of general regulations and stuff like that [...] Tõnis Lukas [former Minister of Education and Research] gave a speech and Indrek Teder [former Chancellor of Justice] gave a speech [...] in this sense, this is my involvement with politics [...] I have been like, in School Student Councils' Union politics, participated a bit, I know that they have also some influence on state politics, they are listened to, to some extent [...] (Tarmo, 21, Tartu County)

The reason for joining youth organisations' activities on a regular basis is the desire to make changes in the organisation and in politics in general. Some young people are motivated by concrete ideas regarding what and how to improve society, while others are simply willing to make an effort. The opportunity to join the organisation, participate in discussions and generate solutions to different problems and shortcomings generate positive emotions and a sense of importance among informants. In order to participate in social and political processes, young people generally expect immediate recognition and confirmation that their contribution is important and will bring results. In addition, in Ida-Viru County, the young informants also mentioned the aspect of entertainment, as well as the importance of keeping their peers out of trouble. Another positive outcome pointed out by some young people from Tartu County was the development of critical thinking – the ability to evaluate various (political) processes and make judgements.

Contacts with politicians and political institutions (see quotation above) can also give rise to negative attitudes. Some of the young people discussed the threat that youth organisations could become extensions of political parties, carrying out their political agenda. Youth organisations sometimes lack independence in decision-making, and the influence of political parties could become overwhelming. This could result in contradictions between the members and leaders of the organisations and lead to resignations.

In addition to participation in youth organisations, young people from both field sites had had some experience with parties or their youth sections, although this type of activism was rather uncommon or rarely discussed. The MYPLACE quantitative survey reflected the same trend: only 5.8% of youth from Tartu County (and even less in Ida-Viru County – 2.6%) claimed to be members of a political party or its youth section.

The reasons for joining a party and the related experiences were quite varied; in some cases, ideological or political challenges were not the motivating factors. Decisions to join had been based on matching worldviews, but also on good lobbying skills or even on spontaneous decision or emotional impulse. On the other hand, ideology-based decisions are valued most with respect to joining a political party or its youth section. Frivolous decisions and entertainment-driven memberships were criticized and knowledge-based decisions preferred; as Ege noted, that if she were to think of joining a party then she would ‘specifically look up every party’ before making a decision (Ege, 23, Tartu County).

Due to lack of personal experience, most of the discussion was devoted to the reasons for not joining a political party. Young people from Tartu County mentioned insufficient competence and morality-related reasons (going against own principles). Informants from Ida-Viru County perceived language barriers (insufficient official language knowledge) as a significant obstacle to active participation. Russian-speaking interviewees also tended to be more sceptical about the meaningfulness of party membership. Informants from both sites highlighted similar pragmatic (lack of interest in politics, lack of free time required) and emotional, cognitive reasons (incompatibility with one’s personality, lack of interest) as those cited in relation to voting decisions. The informants also emphasised the importance of the personal recruitment process – inactivity has been associated with the simple fact that no one had tried to recruit them. Young people tend to be responsive to a personal approach (as already shown earlier); it could be speculated that this could make them responsive to (and easy-to-mobilise by) populist and extremist groups also.

As regards attitudes towards participation in political parties or youth sections, considerable criticism and disappointment were linked to recent political developments and scandals (the way the scandals have been dealt with; the parties’ inconsistency with their ideological outlooks). This negative attitude was often extended to encompass politics and political activism in general. Especially among informants from Tartu County, complaints about participation in youth sections were related often to their lack of independence and power in Estonia. For example, Juhan finds that the youth sections of Estonian political parties have no

actual influence on the society and politics:

My experience with it is that the majority of it is such brainwashing, like ‘read a lot of books and be good kids’. That actually... has very little to do with politics [...] How can I put it? It seems to me that the most important idea of those youth sections is to expand youth sections... the idea is that...that it is necessary to expand, it is necessary to find new voters or future party members (Juhan, 19, Tartu County)

The informant also points out the importance of intellectual challenges – although these were not present in the youth sections based on his experience, such challenges could constitute another pragmatic reason for young people to join and participate in political organisations.

3.4 Grassroots activism

Besides traditional political activism, the informants participated in society in different ways. In this section different forms of grassroots activities (as opposed to top-down activities) are analysed; these activities largely correspond to cause-oriented repertoires as opposed to citizen-oriented actions (Norris 2007). It is important to note here that protesting in the wider sense (including strikes, boycotts, petitions, occupation of buildings, mass demonstrations, etc. (Barnes and Kaase 1979) is no longer marginal – it is a mainstream, everyday activity connected to lifestyle choices. An important characteristic of cause-oriented repertoires is that they have broadened to include ‘consumer’ and ‘lifestyle’ politics, where the precise dividing line between the ‘social’ and ‘political’ is further blurred. As Giddens (1991) suggested, life-political issues will acquire increasingly greater importance in institutional politics. However, the mechanism that transforms lifestyle choices into elements of a political agenda are still vague – ‘life-political problems do not fit readily within existing frameworks of politics, and *may well* stimulate the emergence of political forms which differ from those hitherto prominent’ (Giddens 1991). This section does not discuss the degree of real impact of a ‘third way’ or of implicitly life-political issues but focuses rather on young people’s engagement in domains that stand on the borderline of lifestyle choices and political activism, such as social participation through the Internet, petitions, consumer choices, and participation in various meetings and demonstrations.

3.4.1. Participation through the Internet

Since mid-2000s, revolutionary development of information technology solutions has influenced various levels of society all over the world. In Estonia, it coincided with movement out of the ‘transition’ culture of the 1990s into a network society. The most important change ushered in by technological development was the decline in the influence of media corporations and official institutions. The web environment supports global communication and blooming of niche media, but it also broadens the possibilities for activism. The simplest form

of political participation for modern youth is to express a demand opinion by signing petitions or simply 'liking' actions or subjects that seem important.

Well, on Facebook, I don't know, there are many different things that I have 'liked' and other things.... Directly, I don't know, like participated in some bigger projects but who knows, maybe I have 'liked' something that has grown into something bigger, you could even be unaware of it yourself! (Gerli, 18, Tartu County)

However, how political such personal self-expression is depends on the viewpoints of the individual engaged in it. As exemplified by Oskar from Tartu County, he does not quite believe that his activities on Facebook could lead to social change.

I have 'liked' some of these activities on Facebook and like that... like joined it ... being against ACTA and all these... but Facebook... I don't believe it changes anything, even though there are people who think that Facebook will change the world. (Oskar, 25, Tartu County)

In general, informants from Ida-Viru County tended to be more sceptical about the impact of Internet activism – especially regarding the likelihood of such activities reaching politicians or leading to possible change. Several interviewees considered any kind of Internet activism useless; according to Alexander, it could be interpreted as a form of escapism.

To me, it seems that only people who have nothing to do get involved in it. It seems to me like this... they are some kind of obscure activists, it would be better for them to do some work instead – that's what it seems like to me. (Alexander, 25, Ida-Viru County)

On the other hand, to broaden the concept of political participation, simple political discussions in the company of friends and acquaintances can be interpreted as indirect political activity. It seems that such discussions arise most easily in Facebook, propelled by some political event covered by the media or a newspaper article.

When there is a topic that like interests me, for example, on Facebook somebody has posted on the wall, then I will, for example, read this article, right. Basically it works, if it hadn't have been there, then I would not have read it, but I am not myself like active in this sense. (Kristel, 25, Tartu County)

Easy access to information certainly encourages young people to think about social and political issues; various topics are more likely to spark interest among them, partly because of (attractive) videos and the like.

INT: How did the information about this reach you anyway?

RES: I remember I started watching these videos on YouTube, which were made by the Anonymous or this Legion, so to say [...] And after that all kinds of information came from there, then I looked around in the Internet, did some more research. (Gerli, 18, Tartu County)

Distributing information personally is certainly a more intense activity that requires more input. According to MYPLACE quantitative survey 10% of the respondents from Tartu County and 2% of the respondents from Ida-Viru County had uploaded political material to the Internet (including social networking sites such as YouTube/Twitter/Facebook). The quotation below suggests that sharing is often performed by people who are active in many ways or takes place when people feel especially attached.

I know a couple of people who constantly share stuff, one of them is the former president of the Students' Union who all the time shares like these political articles and what Ministers have said, so I read these from time to time. I have very rarely shared something myself. For example, I remember that a couple of days ago I shared this video with a very strong message... this video against bullying. I felt that the problem is serious and it is necessary to do something there and have my voice heard too. (Tarmo, 21, Tartu County)

For people mostly interested in social issues and expressing opinions, various (voluntary) Internet portals are conveniently available (based on MYPLACE quantitative survey 11 % of informants from Tartu County and 6% of informants from Ida-Viru County had written an opinion article published in the Internet or otherwise).

3.4.2 Petitions

In the Estonian context, signing petitions is related to communication through the Internet. Electronic petitions in the Internet have made this option easily accessible for the public. Petitsioon.ee is an Internet forum launched in 2010 by Central Union of Estonian Proprietors (MTÜ Eesti Omanike Keskliit) in order to facilitate participation in the society. Anyone can initiate petitions to be signed by like-minded individuals, organise actions or poll about relevant issues in society.

Even though signing petitions could be considered a rather common activity in the broader Estonian context over the last few years, this was not quite the case among the informants. However, MYPLACE quantitative data reflect relatively high participation in Tartu County – at least 21% of Tartu County and 8% of Ida-Viru County respondents had signed petitions, while 6% and 5% of the respondents from the respective counties had collected signatures themselves. For people who are interested in particular developments within society, the first opportunity for showing this interest is the aforementioned web site, as stated by Ly from Ida-Viru County.

When this Charter 12 started, it was very interesting. We immediately joined the petition or I am not sure how to say it. When they did something about it in the Internet, Petitsioon.ee, or something, then we joined. (Ly, 23, Ida-Viru County)

However, this site is in Estonian, so people whose Estonian is not good enough cannot participate. In Tartu County, the petition topics mentioned most frequently were associated with environmental issues, urban planning, and education; Charter 12 and support for farmers and teachers were mentioned several times. In Ida-Viru County, the issue mentioned most often was protesting against the partial transfer of Russian secondary schools to teaching in Estonian.

The level of commitment upon signing petitions varied – in some cases, young people carefully considered what to sign. At the same time, young people might sign petitions without really understanding the issue and/or under the influence of an adult (parent).

Several informants in both sites had rather vague memories regarding the petitions they had signed; this possibly indicates that the petitions had not been taken that seriously. On the other hand, the convenience of making one's voice heard through the Internet encourages people to express their opinions on issues that matter in everyday life; this is exemplified by Lembit's vote against the plan to destroy a park in his neighbourhood.

We have this Raja park and now they plan to build apartment blocks there. I like sports, I am used to running there in summer, and when they opened the petition in the Internet, I signed that I am against this construction plan. (Lembit, 17, Tartu County)

The difference between the sites greatly depends on the cultural context and language. As mentioned above, the web site petitsioon.ee is in Estonian only and Russian-speakers do not have an equivalent environment. Only one of the informants from Ida-Viru County, whose native language was Estonian, had had experiences with petitions similar to those of the informants from Tartu County.

3.4.3 Boycotting or buycotting

The majority of people interviewed in both locations were not too active in either boycotting or buycotting. The main reason for not showing attitudes or political beliefs through consumption was financial; price, above all, determined young people's consumer choices. Nevertheless, in Tartu County, young people tended to express more interest toward consumption as a way of influencing society as compared to informants from Ida-Viru County. MYPLACE survey data also show that 16% of the respondents from Tartu County and 4% of respondents from Ida-Viru County stated they had boycotted or purchased products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons.

Young people from Ida-Viru County also expressed sceptical attitudes during the in-depth interviews or tended not to think in categories of boycotting and buycotting. As Lyubov, for example, explained that he 'could not imagine that some country could insult' him 'so deeply that' he 'would give up the goods'. (Lyubov, 22, Ida-Viru County)

Young people from Tartu County were better informed regarding the connections between consumer choices and political or ethical circumstances. As Ege admits, although she had no experience of this kind of activism, she would consider it:

I haven't arrived there yet, but more because I haven't seen information like that anywhere, about some specific product. [...] Don't know, but if I really cared about some idea and not buying would support this idea, then I would perhaps participate in this. (Ege, 23, Tartu County)

Where people had made political or ethical consumption choices, the reasons given for this action were most frequently related to environmental views and human rights. People were interested in ecologically friendly products, both because of their own health and because of the concern over poor living conditions of animals or working conditions of people. As stated by Kristel, she abstains from consuming products manufactured through exploiting animals or children.

For example, this type of fish is being raised in a way that in my opinion is completely abnormal and for example eggs... I always bought there [an implication to foreign country where she had lived for a short period of time] these... which are from hens that can run around outside... that are not kept in some 20 cm sized cages... and... for example I do not buy Indian nuts [...] I have heard that... Basically, they are being cleaned by some nasty chemicals and some small kids in India do that [...]. I don't go straight to the Internet to find out more on how things are done or this and that. But I do look into this food issue quite often. (Kristel, 25, Tartu County)

Most of the 'buycotters' preferred Estonian products since they believed that local products are of better quality and at the same time it allows them to express their patriotism; as 16 year Georg from Ida-Viru County explained that he 'mainly tries to buy Estonian products' because he thinks 'these are of high quality, reliable' and he doesn't 'think they would like cheat on the inhabitants of their own country'.

In the case of environmental-friendly consumer choices, it can be claimed that the personal aspect is successfully connected to the social aspect. People's lifestyle choices also become tactics for social change – they expect ecological or local Estonian products to be better for their own health, but through this choice, they can also contribute to the Estonian economy or fair production in third world countries.

At the same time, some informants claimed that the importance of ecological products can be overemphasised and is not worth pursuing, especially if this was financially difficult. Especially in Ida-Viru County, the informants also expressed sceptical views and saw 'Made in Estonia' as another trademark that is not necessarily genuine. Even if people acknowledge the importance of supporting for their own country, the final determinant of the decision is money.

Say 'Estonian Flag Label' or like 'Made in Estonia', food products... the basic principle remains the same... I mean if I see that a product is of high quality but costs less [I will buy it], because patriotism or not, the possibilities of the population should somehow be considered, I mean if I don't have the extra three Euros required to pay for something[Estonian food which is more expensive], I will not pay it... (Armand, 21, Ida-Viru County)

Choosing products by their country of origin could also be linked to one's identity in other ways. Some informants avoided buying products from some specific countries (for example, Russia), since they felt that 'feeding an authoritarian regime through taxes' would be against their worldview and values. As stated by Simmo, avoiding or preferring products from certain countries helps him to identify himself as a European citizen, which is probably important for him.

I still prefer to buy Estonian things and more broadly like European things, in this sense I feel this European identity too in myself, so let's say that if I could choose [among products] with equal prices or even if the European thing would cost a bit more than a Chinese or an American one, then I would still prefer the European one. (Simmo, 24, Tartu County)

Interviewees who admitted that they could not really afford boycotting on daily basis due to economic restrictions still made some choices that they considered important. Corporations (especially American) offering low quality products were often avoided.

If you're a student, you cannot really afford that [...] I don't go to McDonalds as a matter of principle. [...] McDonalds is like a huge American conglomerate and I don't really know how good the quality of their products is. (Tarmo, 21, Tartu County)

The reason behind differences in acknowledging the idea of boycotting or buycotting might be that the Estonian media follow global trends more closely or that in Tartu County, the seat of several universities, people are more aware of the possible ways of participation through travelling, international media consumption, or education.

3.4.4 Participation in public meetings and demonstrations

In the Estonian context, street demonstrations and protests have been rather uncommon as compared to most European countries. The only real riots took place in 2007 (sparked by the relocation of the Unknown Soldier statue known also as the 'Bronze Soldier'). This, however, has changed over recent years and this has influenced the research findings significantly. According to MYPLACE survey data, 18%/8% of respondents in Tartu County/Ida-Viru County had attended a public meeting dealing with political or social issues, 17%/6% had participated in demonstrations, 8%/3% in flash mobs, and 5%/5% in strikes. Based on in-depth interviews, participation in public meetings was considered important from the viewpoint of democracy and freedom of speech.

I think it's a good thing that people speak openly about their opinions and we have freedom of speech and democracy after all. I think it's normal that things like this happen. In my opinion, there should be more, so the state would hear what people think of issues like these. (Lembit, 17, Tartu County)

Experiences related to that kind of participation differed radically in the two sites. In Tartu County, it was the form of participation mentioned most often of all grassroots-level activisms. The informants mostly referred to the protests in 2012 against education reform, against the leading party in Estonia, and against ACTA. The latter two became combined in the Estonian context.

I am really against ACTA, well, I don't believe in copyright at all [...] this really was a positive experience, so many people were against it because... young people... that's understandable, but my parents were as well... uhm ... they were protesting there too. Maybe older people were protesting against the... Reform Party... kind of like against Ansip's [Prime Minister of Estonia] government. (Oskar, 25, Tartu County)

At the same time, only a limited number of informants from Ida-Viru County had public demonstration-related experiences; the revolt in April 2007 was mentioned most often. Some of the informants had made an effort to go to Tallinn, although without a clear purpose or plan. People in the streets expressed themselves 'as if they were at a wild party' – this expression was used several times by the informants (in 2007, similar expressions were used by Russian-speakers in media interviews and public discussions).

Well, purely coincidentally in 2007, as a coincidence, well, a friend invited me, but it somehow turned out that the crowd [...] without any preparations, if they had wanted like, I don't know, to overthrow... preparations would have been required. Something like, at least some kind of fireworks, but, damn, everybody went along as if they were going to a party [...] thanks to Ansip, everybody remembered... remembered about the statue. (Lev, 25, Ida-Viru County)

Others became involved in demonstrations more accidentally in their hometown.

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Deliverable 5.3: Country-based reports on interview findings–Estonia

Page 39 of 52

Once, when those April events took place... we needed to go through the Astri shopping centre... well, and we went there... and all this movement started... the youth was running, and the police were chasing them... and it somehow turned out so that we also had to run away. (Afanasy, 21, Ida-Viru County)

Another reason for protests in Ida-Viru County was the partial transfer of Russian schools to teaching in the Estonian language. The only more recent protest mentioned in Ida-Viru County was associated with the rise in electricity prices. In addition to people who had actual experiences, informants from Ida-Viru County stated that they were ready for participation in protests or demonstrations if the topic were important, but did not express overly strong belief that this would change anything.

Young people from Tartu County were informed of upcoming events through social networks and were at least passively interested in the issues.

For example, I knew, well, on Facebook I looked up some event, there was I think this event against the higher education reform, and in any case, hundreds of people will go there [...] and I hope that these people who go there, they will make some noise also on my behalf. (Tarmo, 21, Tartu County)

In many cases, informants expressed their interest in specific events (especially ACTA-related protests), which they had missed for various reasons. Others expressed their readiness to protest in favour of matters they considered important. In both sites, there were people who had never participated in demonstrations and considered this kind of protest useless, stupid or dangerous.

RES: When I watched the news, then it was like that basically every day there was some protest and I have not seen anything changing.

INT: So it's like pointless?

RES: Well, not like pointless, but not with very much point either, rather it gets you into trouble. [...] I have heard that the police have arrested people. (Silvia, 19, Tartu County)

On one hand, involvement in demonstrations, attitudes, and awareness of recent large-scale and new activities in the Estonian context once again suggests that ethnic Estonians and the Russian-speaking minority live in different information spaces. On the other hand, all of these events took place in Tallinn or Tartu, while in Narva and in the neighbouring regions such demonstrations are extremely rare.

3.4.5 Possible risk-taking or involvement in radical protests or movements

Since many informants perceived the current situation in Estonia as rather unfair, some of the opinions expressed suggest that in order to change something in society, more demonstrations and protests are required.

I have told everybody who complains that things are really bad, that if you do not protest, then you actually have to be that peasant who eats potato peelings. The Greeks and everyone are protesting now [...] but Estonians do not find time for that, but find time to go drinking. [...] If 10% of the people who say something about these issues on the Internet showed up at meetings, there would be a big crowd!
(Mart, 25, Tartu County)

As stated by Mart in the quotation above, the people living in Estonia are not always active enough to fight for a better life and mostly resort to complaining without making any actual effort. As also exemplified by Rael from Tartu County, acknowledgment of the need for activity does not necessarily mean becoming personally active.

People's voices would not be heard, they can't express their opinion in any other way than by protesting [...] nobody listens to them [...] Myself, I am not so into these issues that I would actually go out there, protesting. (Rael, 24, Tartu County)

However, many informants in both sites claimed that in exceptional situations, especially if Estonia's independence was threatened, they would be prepared to sacrifice their well-being, for example like Sandra expressed 'when this risk is really that high that our independence could again disappear' (Sandra, 20, Tartu County). Russian-speakers from Ida-Viru County tended to refer more to their peer group or highly valued role models when thinking about what situations would be merit risk-taking.

When Lauristin [Estonian politician and social scientist] comes out on the streets, starts chanting [...] when somebody from the professorial elite comes out and starts chanting something, when Lotman [Estonian literature researcher, semiotician and politician] comes out on the street, perhaps then I will see that oh, they have come out, this means that things are bad or so on. (Armand, 21, Ida-Viru County)

Interviewees in both research sites did not have any personal experiences with extremist or radical movements. Neither did they had much information about that and did not express sympathy towards ideas about possible radical movement. Answers to the question about possible involvement in radical or violent protesting were mostly negative in both sites. As expressed by Ly, people tend to believe that it should be possible to resolve all issues by discussion and radical violence is not the best way of achieving one's aims.

INT: you are Estonian and another state language is imposed, let's say, Russian?
RES: I would still do nothing. We can like go on strike, so to say, but why assault someone physically? I don't understand. (Ly, 23, Ida-Viru County)

The informants considered that involvement in violent and dangerous events that can bring nothing but harm is not worth it.

For example, what can be dangerous? Going out onto the streets, yelling things there? Yes! Hang out a banner of some kind – yes. Something that involves the police – I don't think so. I'm not dumb, why do something so stupid? (Yelena, 26, Ida-Viru County)

When the interviewer proposed some extreme examples of what might happen, the young informants (especially from Ida-Viru County) tended to see emigration as a solution to the situation, but excluded violent protests. Informants from Tartu County expressed more readiness to protest in critical situations or for something that was personally important to them. However, several people stressed that political issues could never be so important to justify risking one's well-being.

3.5 Conclusions

One of the most important aims in Estonia after leaving the Soviet Union was the restoration of national independence and nation-state construct; as a result, one-third of the population, those who were not ethnic Estonians, were left aside and lost their status relative to Soviet times. Estonia's 1992 Citizenship Law left a majority of the country's Russian-speakers without citizenship. The Russian-speaking minority became disadvantaged in several ways including suffering relative economic deprivation, spatial segregation and a weaker position on the labour market compared to ethnic Estonians.

With regard to citizenship, the situation in Estonia has somewhat improved. The law has been amended subsequently¹⁶, to make it less discriminatory and the number of members of the

¹⁶ § 13(4) was added to the Citizenship Act. § 13(4) and passed 08.12.1998. (4) A minor under 15 years of age who was born in Estonia after 26 February 1992 is granted Estonian citizenship by naturalisation if: 1) his or her parents apply for Estonian citizenship on his or her behalf, provided the parents have lawfully resided in Estonia for at least five years at the time of submission of the application and are not recognised by any other state to be citizens of that state in accordance with the legislation in force; 2) the single or adoptive parent applies for Estonian citizenship on behalf of the minor, provided the single or adoptive parent has lawfully resided in Estonia for at least five years at the time of submission of the application and is not recognised by any other state to be a citizen of that state in accordance with the legislation in force.

Also conditions for obtaining Estonian citizenship have been simplified. According to § 6. 2), passed 08.07.2006, an alien who wishes to acquire Estonian citizenship by naturalisation must: 2) have lawfully and on a permanent basis resided in Estonia on the ground of a long-term residence permit or by right of permanent residence for six months (previously for one year) from the day following the date of registration of the application for Estonian citizenship. § 8) was also added, passed 10.12.2003, concerning the reimbursement of language training expenses (Citizenship Act 2013)

Russian-speaking minority qualifying as Estonian citizens has increased. On the other hand, the research reported here suggests that there are still two different communities in Estonia, separated by language, and by the public sphere which influences young people's opportunities, experiences and self-reflections. This division between the two communities and their different interpretation of history determines most of the perceptions and activities of young people. In general informants from Ida-Viru County tended to be less informed about different topics, less active in society, more pessimistic about their possible influence and more dependent on their peers, compared to informants from Tartu County. This could be connected to developments that started in the nineties, from which point ethnic Estonians have been the initiators of the social change while many Russian-speakers have perceived changes in society as imposed from outside and threatening their identity. It is possible to interpret the relative passivity of Russian speaking youth as a result of that.

How to interpret history is not self-evident to young people, and existing interpretations are criticized and neutralised in a number of ways by informants in both sites. Although there are two different mnemonic communities - Russian-speakers tend to oppose the hegemonic treatment of history that stigmatizes their ethnic group and the informants from Tartu County tend to tie national identity to Estonia's past - young people perceive the tensions caused by history, and adopt a range of strategies to overcome them. Some de-politicize interpretations of the past (elderly people just get together to remember the times they fought together vs the official version of commemoration of the start of Estonian occupation). Some call for dialogue while others call for ending labelling and stigmatisation on ethnic grounds, and call for a more balanced treatment of history. The different versions of the past can cause confusion, which can result in a lack of interest in history, but it can also lead to a deeper interest in the past, or it can lead to a search for more heterogeneous or balanced memories. Interpretation of history also influences the development of identity as well as attitudes and behaviour.

'Politics' was perceived by informants in both sites in a rather conventional and traditional way – young people associated it with parties, ministries and members of parliament. The only difference between the locations was that, in Ida-Viru County, young people did not focus only on Estonian politicians and on local politics, but approached these issues more widely, including also examples from Russia. Most of the connotations with politics and politicians were negative and associated with hypocrisy, arrogance, and with the alienation of politicians from people. Scandals and protests during recent years probably influenced these attitudes, especially among Estonian speakers, as Russian-speakers' critical views towards Estonian politicians and politics might have a longer history. Also, it is possible to discern a slight difference between the perceptions of ethnic Estonians and Russian-speakers. Thus, even though Estonians criticize politicians, they do not distinguish themselves from the state or nation; the division is articulated as 'we, Estonian people' against 'them, alienated politicians'. Russian-speaking young people from Ida-Viru County in some cases, however, distinguished 'us, Russian-speakers' from 'them, Estonians and their state'.

Critical views were also connected with several problems in Estonian society which were perceived somewhat differently in the two sites. Besides socio-economic problems, which were emphasised in both sites, informants in Ida-Viru County tended to stress the tensions between ethnic groups while in Tartu County they paid attention to a larger variety of tensions and inequalities related to religion, gender, sexual orientation etc. The latter indicates again that Russian-speakers from Ida-Viru County perceive their position in Estonian society as marginal and as a major determinant of their problems.

Some young people had rather vague ideas about the different Estonian political parties. In some cases (more in Ida-Viru County) informants could not make a difference between right and left wing politics. However, the majority of interviewed people participated in elections even though they doubted that their vote could actually change anything. For ethnic Estonians from Tartu County voting was sometimes considered a matter of duty or just seen as a self-evident action. Russian-speakers from Ida-Viru County occasionally perceived elections as unfair while many Estonian inhabitants cannot participate since they are formally 'non-citizens'. Another possible explanation for a relatively modest participation in elections in Ida-Viru County is that the younger generation of Russian-speakers tends to identify with cosmopolitan ideas, and for ethnic Estonians, national identity tends to be more important; something which is also reflected in previous studies (e.g. Kalmus and Vihalemm, 2008).

Regarding grassroots activities, people tended to be the most engaged when something had a personal significance for them. Informants tended to read or share materials in social networks that really touched them, to sign petitions when the issue concerned their neighbourhood and started to make environmentally friendly consumer choices related to changes in their personal life. However, especially in connection to consumption, the personal and the political were sometimes connected – for example consuming environmentally friendly (and/or local) food would be, in the eyes of a consumer, beneficial for both personal health as well as for 'making the world a better place'. As grassroots activities imply personal or group activities, the difference between the two sites was particularly visible. Russian-speakers from Ida-Viru County were less involved and less informed about different opportunities. The latter is not only caused by the young people themselves, but also partly determined by the fact that there are less spaces for participation; the lack of a space for the Russian speaking population like petitsioon.ee is a vivid example of this. This might be understood as evidence that the Russian-speaking population in Estonia believes that organizing something like that in Russian would be ineffective because petitions in Russian would not be listened to in society. Although economic conditions restricted participation (especially politically motivated consumption) in both sites, the negative influence of low salary or unemployment is probably felt more strongly among young people in Ida-Viru County.

In the Estonian context, easy access to the Internet for most people has, on the one hand, facilitated grassroots activities as voicing one's opinion in social networks or signing petitions is very easy, and people have a lot of information if they are interested. On the other hand, giving a sign or 'like' on the Internet might give people a feeling of contribution and become an excuse

not to go further with concrete demands or protests. Opportunities on the Internet do not bridge the two language-based communities, while the Internet sites differ according to language.

Experiences in participating in demonstrations were radically different in the two sites - interviews demonstrate that Russian-speakers in Ida-Viru County have been largely excluded from critical movements and public discussion that have taken place in recent years in Estonia. Young people in both sites tended to be ready for further protest if a cause was meaningful for them. However, possible involvement in radical or violent movements was mostly excluded as an option. Russian-speaking young people, who are often less attached to Estonian society because of their cosmopolitan identity, tended to see emigration as a better option in the event of problematic social situations. Radical protests were perceived with less enthusiasm. Ethnic Estonians were somewhat more ready to take risks, but not ready for violence.

4. Future analysis

4.1 Cross-case analysis

The analysis revealed two distinct issues: firstly, the different segregated (ethno-linguistic) communities; and secondly young people's low civic and political activism due to the feeling of alienation from the society. While both issues exist in other European societies, the first one has its own specific character, its reasons being very tightly connected with Estonian history, and it is perhaps comparable only with the Latvian case¹⁷.

The second issue, especially if focusing on grassroots activities, could be comparable with other Eastern European countries as well, except for Croatia where social conditions in recent history and in terms of the level of activism have been different due to its relative independence during the Soviet period.

4.2 Triangulation with other datasets

An issue which overlaps with WP2 is the transmission of intergenerational memory: how the problematic periods are passed on in families, and if controversial issues related to the past are eased in the family context, or on the contrary, exacerbated. Furthermore, it would be interesting to analyse deeper if young people seek to overcome the tensions and if, what strategies young people use to do that and how do they rework their past.

Another important issue is the civic and political engagement of young people. A lot of young people feel that they are not capable of initiating any social change or that civic participation is futile in making a society a better place for them. Looking at the forms and motivations of the young people who are involved in several civic or political initiatives, we can see the reasons motivating their participation. This data could be useful to compare with politically active youth groups involved in WP7 ethnographies.

And, finally,, the in-depth interview analysis and data from WP4 quantitative survey might very effectively complement each other. Survey data give wider background to issues discussed in

¹⁷ We are aware, however, that while the two countries share some significant similarities, the role and position of Russian-speaking community has also differences. Russian-speaking community existed in Latvia already pre-World War II, which means that unlike in Estonia, their identity may be more rooted in Latvia. Also, the social position of the Russian-speaking community is different, as they seem to have more 'voice' in society (being more visible in political sphere and business). Yet, the tensions are not missing: the language reform in Latvian schools caused several civic protests (which also indicates the Russian-speaking community is more organised in this respect). We consider these aspects worth looking into.

interviews and attitudes or meanings young people give to their behaviour. Also emerging themes and aspects from survey research can be described and elaborated through in-depth interview analysis.

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Appendix

Table 1. Citizenship statistics, 15-29 year olds, 31.12.2011

	Estonian	Russian	No citizenship	Other citizenship	Russian as mother tongue
Ida-Viru County	66%	16%	18%	0%	-
Narva	58%	23%	18%	0%	98%
Tartu County	97%	1%	1%	1%	-
Tartu	96%	1%	1%	2%	14%

Source: Statistics Estonia (2013) Statistical Database, Available at: www.stat.ee

Table 2. Population statistics, 01.01.2013

	Total population	Percentage of 15-25 year old people
Tartu	97 117	19%
Narva	57 650	11%
Sillamäe	13 942	11%
Kohtla-Järve	36 377	11%

Source: Statistics Estonia (2013) Statistical Database, Available at: www.stat.ee

Table 3. Average monthly income of working population in 2012 (EUR/month)

Tartu	859
Narva	662
Sillamäe	725
Kohtla-Järve	725

Source: Statistics Estonia (2013) Statistical Database, Available at: www.stat.ee

Municipality development index is a composite measure which characterises wellbeing of its residents and the general potential of a municipality to undertake developmental actions on its territory. The index does not characterise quality of municipal services. Rank position of the survey sites in the municipality development index:

Table 4. Municipality development index

	A	B	C	
	2012	2005-2008	2009-2012	Change C-A
Tartu	10	9	5	-4 places
Narva	92	77	102	-25 places
Kohtla-Järve	83	72	79	-7 places
Sillamäe	71	78	85	-7 places

Altogether 227 municipalities were ranked. Tartu is located in top-10 of the ranking scheme, towns of North-Eastern Estonia much lower. Over last few years, Tartu has moved downward 4 places, other towns notably more, especially Narva (Noorkõiv and Loodla, 2013).