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***Another brick in the wall? Youth protest and non-protest political claim-making in nine European countries***

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**ABSTRACT:** *The implementation of austerity and neoliberal policies has disrupted everyday life for a significant number of Europeans, especially among young people. Rising tuition fees, labor market reforms, levels of unemployment, precarious working conditions, and discontent toward the political status quo have contributed to increase moral panics and outrage, which have often triggered mass protests. This article analyses whether and to what extent young Europeans express their demands via protest claims across nine European countries (N = 4,525). We argue that examining political (institutional and discursive) opportunities and claims' attributes (such as actors, issues, targets) is important to understand whether a youth-related claim takes a protest form or not.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Political opportunities, protest, youth participation, Claims analysis, European politics*

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The 2008 global economic recession and the Eurozone crisis did not hit all the EU countries to the same extent. In some countries, the economic crisis and its consequences were relatively constrained, and they quickly recovered, others are still struggling. The implementation of austerity policies disrupted the everyday life of a significant percentage of Europeans, including young people. Rising university tuition fees, labor market reforms, levels of unemployment, precarious working conditions and discontent towards the political status quo affected the life of the European youth. Austerity's consequences are related not only with marginalization from education, training and work, but also with the reduction of active youth participation in the civic life of their communities, to their transitions, and to their sense of belonging (Kelly and Pike 2017). Moreover, neoliberal policies feed on long-term dynamics of social class configuration and shifting social bases of conflict. In order to refer to a new class-in-the-making across Western democracies that moves in and out of jobs, enduring perpetual insecurity in jobs that provide little meaning to their lives, scholars and commentators alike have referred to "the precariat" (Standing 2011).

While a stream of literature suggests that young people in established democracies have turned their back on formal political participation and they are apathetic regarding the major problems of the era (Foa and Mounk 2016; Farthing 2010; Soler-i-Martí 2015 young people are willing to engage in alternative forms of political participation, including street protest (Sherkat & Blocker 1994; Epstein 2015; Earl et al. 2017). Importantly, worsening socio-economic and political conditions contributed to increase popular outrage and trigger mobilization in the shadow of the Great Recession, especially in the form of mass protest, where youth was overrepresented (della Porta 2015).

Scholars have long recognized the broader political contexts and economic circumstances as factors that can provide opportunities (and/or threats) for collective action (Kriesi et al. 1995; McAdam et al. 1996; Goldstone and Tilly 2001; Kousis and Tilly 2001; Tarrow 2011). Social movements usually resort to performances in the streets and/or the media that air certain extra-procedural claims to an audience, involving governments and public opinion (Tilly 2008). Discursive constructions, symbolic configurations and resonating frames of political opportunities and threats are determinants of whether and how political demands are articulated in the public sphere (Gamson and Meyer 1996; Koopmans and Statham 1999, 2010; Cinalli and Giugni 2016a,

2016b). However, we know little about the role of discursive and political opportunity structures in accounting for different types of claims making.

We argue that the combination of both discursive and structural political opportunities is crucial to understand the forms of youth claims making. We examine how different national contexts affect youth-related claims, and to what extent different features of youth-related claims making activities influence whether a claim takes a protest form or not.<sup>1</sup> This article draws on an original dataset collected under the EURYKA project, consisting of 4,500 randomly chosen youth political claims from nine European countries<sup>2</sup>

The article is structured as follows: We first introduce political (both institutional and discursive) opportunity structure theories and their importance to understand the public claims making sphere. Second, we introduce the determinants of youth protest claims. We then present our data, the methodological design and analyze the drivers of youth protest claims. Finally, we summarize our key findings in the conclusion, signaling some avenues for further research.

## Structural and discursive political opportunities for mobilization

Social movements interact with political institutions in diverse arenas. The features of these interactions affect not only the form and intensity of the challenge but also its probabilities of success (McAdam et al. 1996; della Porta 2015). Within the political process approach, political opportunity theories focus on specific national configurations of political institutions and alignments that shape movements' levels of mobilization, organizational configurations, strategies, repertoires of action, trajectories and outcomes. Broad contextual changes (e.g., regime change), features of political institutions and their ability to implement reforms and concessions, policing strategies, allies' availability, and the strength/ stability of opponents are windows of

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<sup>1</sup> Non-protest claims include political decisions, verbal statements, civic engagement and empowerment actions.

<sup>2</sup> Funded under the EU's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, EURYKA ('Reinventing Democracy in Europe: Youth Doing Politics in Times of Increasing Inequalities') is a cross-national research project which provides systematic and practice-related knowledge about studies how inequalities mediate youth political participation (<https://www.unige.ch/sciences-societe/euryka/home/>).

opportunity for social movements (Kriesi et al. 1995; Gamson and Meyer 1996; McAdam et al. 1996; della Porta 2015; Tarrow 2011). Along with the concept of opportunities, Goldstone and Tilly (2001) introduced the concept of “threats”, which is defined as the cost that a social group has to incur because of the protest participation or the cost that the same group expects to suffer if does not take action. The interplay of opportunities and threats shapes mobilization processes: while political opportunities invite participation, threats hinder action.

However, the structural and institutional understanding of political opportunities became “a sponge that soaks up virtually every aspect of the social movement environment” (Gamson and Meyer 1996: 275). Some scholars have emphasized the informal, cultural, symbolic, and discursive aspect of political opportunities (Gamson and Meyer 1996; Koopmans and Statham 1999, 2010; Koopmans et al. 2005). In fact, political opportunities have two main dimensions: *institutional* and *discursive*. The latter puts emphasis on the visibility, political legitimacy, collective identities and claims of specific actors in the public sphere. Discursive opportunities have been proven to impact mobilization dynamics across a wide array of cases, including the evolution of right-wing violence in Germany (Koopmans and Olzak 2004), the integration of migrants and Muslims in Europe (Cinalli and Giugni 2013, 2016c) and the political successes of the U.S. Women's Jury Movements (McCammon et al. 2007). Indeed, “the study of the political, legal, and administrative contexts of opportunity structures goes side by side with the study of discursive constructions that actors contribute to shape through their interventions in the public domain” (Cinalli and Giugni 2016b: 430). Besides looking at evolving institutional opportunities, we will also look at how discursive political opportunities unfold.

Claims analysis goes beyond protest-centric event analyses that show “a deficient appreciation of public discourse as a medium of social conflict and symbolic struggles”. The research objects are acts of political claims making in a multi-organizational field (Koopmans and Statham 1999: 205; Koopmans et al. 2005).<sup>3</sup> While protest events often consider the interplay between institutional political opportunities and action variables (i.e., *protests*), claims relate an interpretative scheme

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<sup>3</sup> An instance of claims making consists of “the purposive and public articulation of political demands, calls to action, proposals, criticisms, or physical attacks, which, actually or potentially, affect the interests or integrity of the claimants and/or other collective actors” (Koopmans et al. 2005: 254).

variable (i.e., *discursive frames*) to the dominant sets of cultural and political norms (Koopmans and Statham 2010; Koopmans et al. 2005). For instance, Diani and Kousis (2014) use claims to assign common meanings to different episodes of collective action, connecting public (protest) events in 2010-2012 Greece and austerity measures (Diani and Kousis 2014).<sup>4</sup> While the share of protest actions over all claims bearing on issues pertaining to the crisis increased from 2008 to 2012, Cinalli and Giugni (2016b) show such trend is small across several European countries. The authors further suggest that it is not so much the recession but rather the implementation of austerity policies that pushed people to the streets (Cinalli and Giugni 2016b). Based on the same database, Giugni and Grasso (2016) find that both relative deprivation and social spending have a positive effect on protest actions (as opposed to other forms of claims). However, the disproportionality index leads to a decrease in protest claims making, confirming the political opportunity argument that the more proportional electoral systems lead to more protest activities.

All these contributions share a similar feature: political opportunity theories are used to shed light on the prevalence and distribution of protest claims making performances in the public arena. However, an assessment of the determinants of (youth) protest claims relative to other forms of claim-making is still missing. In the following, we develop testable hypotheses that shed light on the relationship between youth protest claims making and the claims' addressees, the issues that raised, the framing and changing national institutional contexts.

## Youth protest claims making

Economic changes and instability are key factors behind mass dissent (Kousis and Tilly 2001). The neoliberal crisis and the implementation of austerity opened windows of opportunity for several episodes of mass mobilization in distant parts of the globe yet, the Great Recession disrupted everyday life for a significant proportion of Europeans, especially young citizens (Bradford and Cullen 2014; Kelly and Pike 2017). Austerity has increased youth marginalization on different grounds, including education, training and work, but also community involvement and subjective belonging (Kelly and Pike 2017). Rising university tuition fees, rocketing levels of

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<sup>4</sup> On the verge of the Greek state bankruptcy, the Greek Government, the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Forum agreed upon three bail-out packages, 2010-2015. Involving austerity measures, structural reforms and privatization of government assets, each signed agreement was known as 'Memorandum of Understanding'.

unemployment, precarious working conditions, anxiety and dashed expectations in terms of social mobility might have contributed to increase discontent towards the political status quo among young people, fueling grievances and leading many to voice outrage and organize dissent. Indeed, young people and students were among the core groups of protesters in the protest that unfolded during the Great Recession (Roberts 2015; Reimer 2012). Although young Europeans are marginalized in political and economic spheres, they are more educated and informed than older generations (Williamson 2014); thus their mobilization potentials might have got activated. Accordingly, we expect that in the last few years

*H.1. Protest claims have become a large part of the youth public claims making arena.*

The Great Recession and ensuing consequences have affected legal norms, institutional structures and practices, as well as discourse configurations. However, neither the depth of the crisis nor the level of (youth/precarious) popular mobilization remained constant between countries (della Porta 2015; Grasso and Giugni 2016), thus depending on domestic circumstances. Young people often met austerity and neoliberal policies implemented in different European countries with dissent (Reimer 2012; Roberts 2015). Contending with welfare state retrenchment and European Central Bank policing, thousands flocked to the streets during the “Blockupy Frankfurt” mobilizations (Mullis et al. 2016). In Italy and Spain students were at the forefront of anti-austerity mobilizations (Zamponi and Fernández González 2017). A hostile environment in Greece with youth unemployment above 50%, pushed many Greeks to engage in street protests (Kretsos 2014). In general, many citizens organized to fight precarious working conditions (Mattoni 2016). In short, preliminary evidence suggests European youth were active in light of anti-austerity and employment-related mobilizations in the preceding years. Hence, we will test whether:

*H.2.1. Youth-related protest claims are more likely when claims refer to socioeconomic-employment issues.*

Throughout the 2000s, there have been several mass campaigns and waves of mobilization targeting education policies across the world, both in the European context (including Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom) and elsewhere (Canada, Chile and South Africa). Despite changing dynamics of mobilization across space and varying impacts on the political agenda and policy arenas (Cini 2018), there was a generalized reaction against marketization in higher education

(Marcucci and Usher 2012). Marketization entails introducing market-oriented competitive elements into the provision of student education; it implies granting institutions more autonomy from government oversight, and supplementing public funding of universities with private sources, including (often dramatic) increases in tuition fees (Klemenčič 2014: 398). Austerity measures following the 2008 global financial crisis only reinforced such reforms. Many governments reduced public funding for universities. Even in contexts where public spending remained constant (or increased), higher education institutions were forced to compete for public resources and increase revenues from private sources (Marcucci and Usher 2012). As Klemenčič argues, the neoliberal reforms in higher education “have deepened and widened the ‘pool of grievances’ in many societies and demand for protest has been on the rise” (2014: 407-8). Given the salience of neoliberal reforms in higher education and student protests, we hypothesize that:

*H.2.2. Youth-related protest claims are more likely when claims refer to educational issues.*

Studies of political engagement have shown concern about political participation habits of young age groups (Hooghe and Boonen 2016). Levels of electoral turnout, trade union/ party membership, and involvement in formal political activities rank low among the younger cohorts; these rates might be declining even further (Whiteley 2011). Longitudinal studies have shown that younger generations are to an important extent responsible for the decline in voter turnout and in other forms of formal political participation (Franklin et al. 2004, Delli Carpini 2000)— though some recent studies have noted that youth participation in elections might be gradually increasing (Fisher 2012). Yet, the lack of youth participation in formal politics is not associated with general socio-political apathy. Young people are not disengaged, they do socialize and become politically active in different ways: youth engagement is not declining but changing form (Earl et al. 2017). Young people are willing to embrace non-institutional forms of political participation, e.g., online activism, participatory politics, volunteering, political consumption, and so on (Dalton 2011; Earl et al. 2017).

Regarding youth’s propensity to resort to protest forms of action, there are alternative approaches. On the one hand, protest activities might have become a normal part of the repertoire of political engagement in Western democracies (Meyer and Tarrow 1998). Young people would be more

likely to see political participation as a continuum that ranges from the most formal and routinized types of actions to extra-institutional activities. On the other hand, younger cohorts' engagement in protest may be related to changing meanings of citizenship and malfunctioning institutional mechanisms that are no longer effective at channeling citizens' demands (Dalton 2011). The specific understanding of political interest, which is directly oriented to political issues and causes that are relevant in young people's everyday lives (Soler-i-Martí 2015), may mediate the youth's willingness to protest. Extra-representational forms of participation, including protest, are more amenable to cause-oriented political interest than to other classical measurements of interest in politics (Soler-i-Martí 2015; Rossi 2009).

In short, young people a) are not characterized by political apathy but they try to find new forms of (both online and offline) political participation, b) are likely to protest provided contentious issues are relevant to their everyday lives. Given citizens mobilize upon opening windows of opportunity, protest claims making performances would more readily follow when young actors perceive their interest and rights are at stake. We will test whether

*H.3. Youth-related protest claims are more likely when the claims' positioning towards youth-related issues is negative.*

We know that “contentious politics occurs when ordinary people— often in alliance with more influential citizens and with changes in public mood— join forces in confrontation with elites, authorities, and opponents” (Tarrow 2011: 6). Also, protest activity still is the main repertoire of social movements, and a good indicator of the overall level of contention within given spatial and time limits (Kriesi et al. 1995). Several protest campaigns that unfolded across Europe over the past years tackled social, economic, welfare, labor and educational issues (Bermeo and Bartels 2014; della Porta 2015). The issues the protest claims focus on are linked to the addressee of such claims. While the salience of these issues had its origin in the domestic austerity policies decided by national governments, in some other cases (especially in Southern Europe and Ireland) it was the result of bargaining and compromise (or dictate) between national governments and supranational institutions, including the European Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund (della Porta 2015). Either way, many European national governments and state authorities ultimately implemented neoliberal policies, which made them a

key target of protest actions opposed to such measures (Peterson et al. 2015; Pianta and Gerbaudo 2015). Unleashing a major change in the discursive and institutional political opportunity structures, the recession and ensuing socio-economic and political consequences led to contestation that sought to redress political decisions being made at government level. Accordingly, we hypothesize that,

*H.4. Youth-related protest claims are more likely when state actors are the claims' targets.*

*H.5. Youth-related protest claims are more likely in countries that were hit the hardest by the crisis.*

## Data

Analysis reported in this article relies on an original dataset consisting of 4,500 youth-related political claims from nine European countries collected in the context of the cross-national EURYKA project (namely France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland and the United Kingdom). 500 claims were randomly selected and coded from five newspapers (100 claims per newspaper) in each country, covering the 2010-2016 time span (EURYKA 2018). The unit of analysis is the *youth-related political claim*, defined as strategic interventions made by youth actors or other groups or collectives related to interests or rights of young people. Hence, we include claims actors (e.g., politicians, civil society actors, education-related actors, etc.) put forward provided they relate to the interests or rights of young people (EURYKA 2018).

Claims can take several forms, including political decisions (law, governmental guideline, implementation measure, etc.), verbal statements (public speech, press conference, parliamentary intervention), non-protest and civic engagement/empowerment actions (education and counselling actions programs/ projects, solidarity economy actions/initiatives, etc.) or protest activities. We create a dummy variable by aggregating all kinds of possible forms of protest actions that have youth as actors or objects of the claims (EURYKA 2018). Protest claims encompass the following three categories: a) demonstrative protest actions (e.g., collection of signatures, demonstrations,

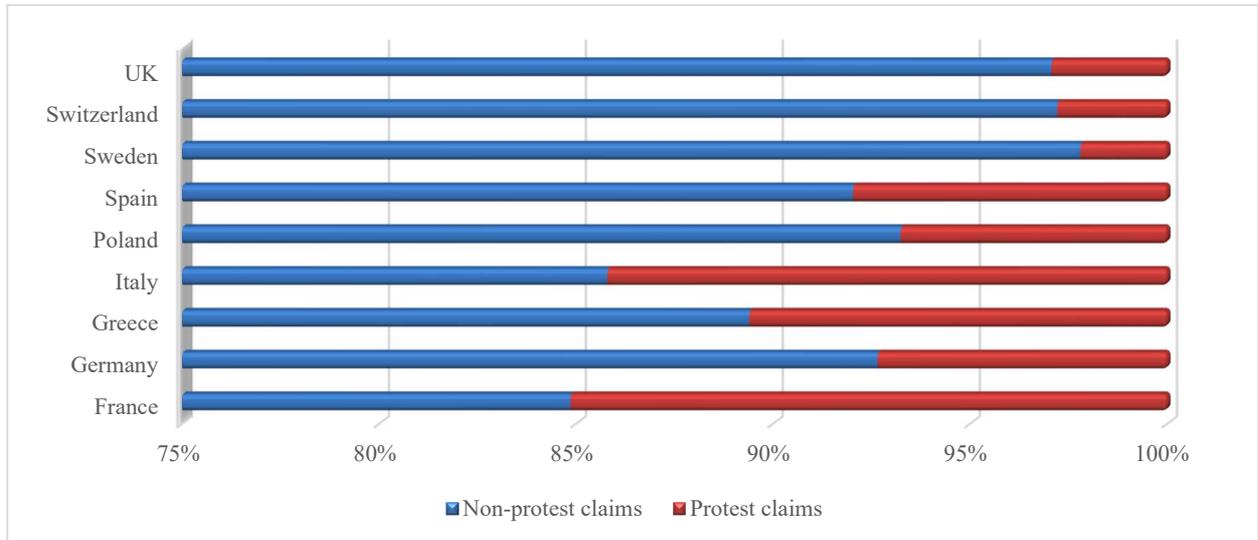
rallies, symbolic demonstrative actions), b) confrontational protest actions (e.g., strikes, occupations, blockades, boycotts, hunger strikes), and c) violent and sabotage protest actions (e.g., threats or calls to use violence, destruction of property, physical violence against people, sabotage, etc.).

From a descriptive and exploratory standpoint, we first split the total claims into two groups, protest claims (n= 351) and non-protest claims (n= 4,174), and compare their distinctive features. In the second explanatory part, we test the previous hypotheses. Through logit regression models, we explore the determinants of youth protest claim-making, controlling for claims' issues, actors, addressees, positioning towards youth objects and country-fixed effects.

### Empirical findings and discussion

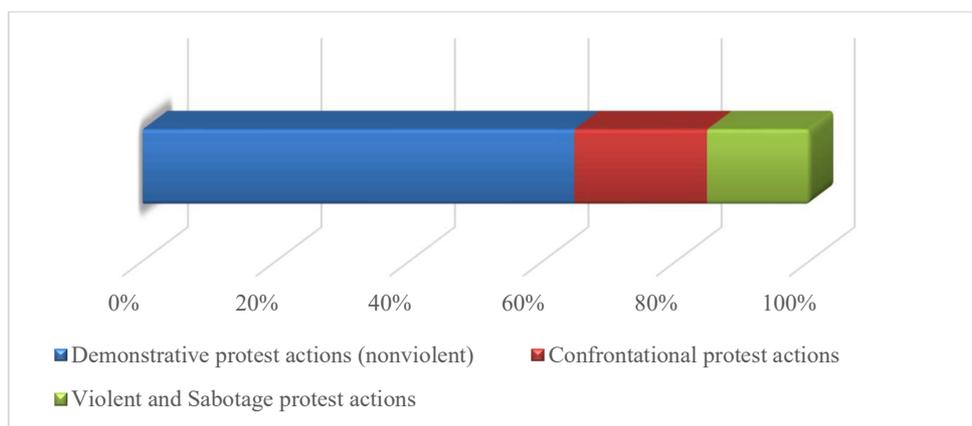
Consistent with earlier findings based on Political Claims Analysis (Koopmans et al. 2005; Cinalli and Giugni 2016b), we find that protest claims represent only a small amount of the total claim-making performances in the public sphere. When confronted with non-protest forms of action (political decisions, verbal statements, civic engagement/ empowerment actions), only a small portion of public debate in general— and political conflict in particular— actually involves protest-making, circa 8%. However, some interesting variation can be spotted across countries (Figure 1). While in France and Italy nearly 15% of the total claims have a protest form, protest claims account for barely 3% of claims in the UK, Switzerland and Sweden. In between these extreme cases, one tenth of claims in Greece take a protest form; similarly, protest claims represent about the 8% of the total claim-making activities in countries such as Spain, Germany and Poland.

Figure 1. Claims forms by Country (n= 351)



Focusing on protest claims, almost two thirds (65%) take the form of demonstrative protest actions such as collecting signatures, demonstrating, engaging in symbolic demonstrative actions, etc. (Figure 2). Approximately 20% of the protest forms can be classified as confrontational protest actions, which includes actions such as striking, occupying, blockading, boycotting or resorting to hunger strikes. Finally, 15% of claims have a violent protest form, including actions such as threats or calls to use violence, actual violence against people, limited or large property destruction sabotage and hacking.

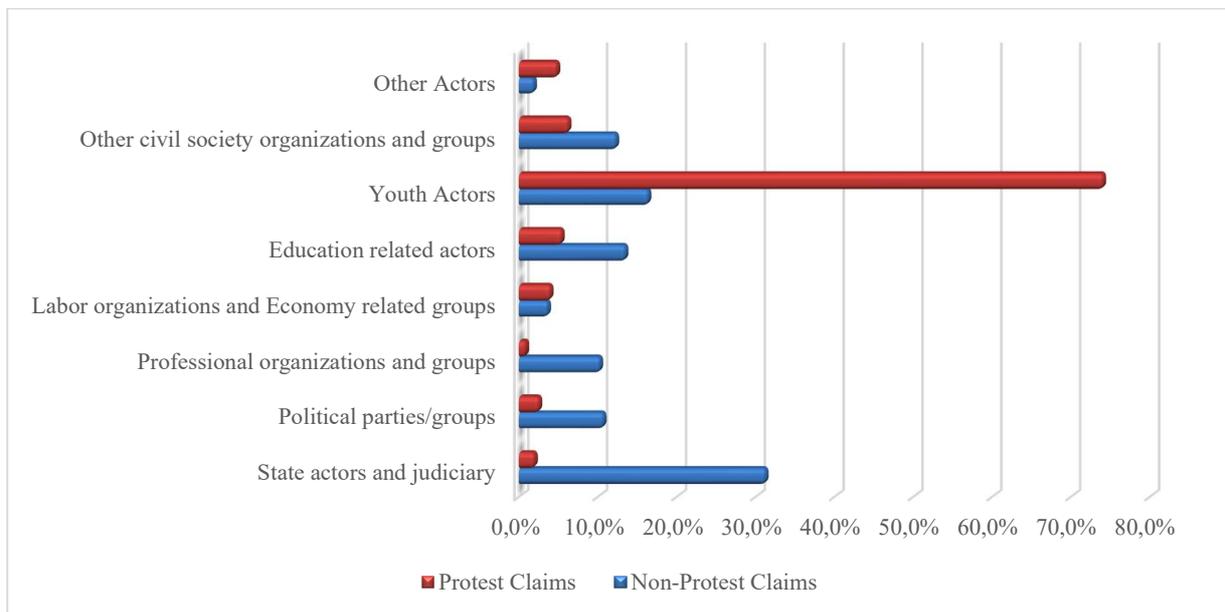
Figure 2. Distribution of protest claims by subtypes (n= 351)



Regarding the type of claimants (Figure 3), we find the most salient claimants are the government and other state agencies (29%), followed by youth actors (approximately 21%). This finding is

relevant and counterintuitive: given the youth-related nature of the EURYKA claims data, one would expect that claims put forward by youth actors would have more visibility. However, we find that the overall presence of youth voices in the mainstream press is small, as the vast majority of youth-related claims are made by non-youth actors (79%). By comparing the protest-related with the non-protest claims, we observe different patterns. When it comes to protest claims, youth actors are by far the most salient group (73%), delivering two thirds of the protest claims. They are followed by civil society and education-related actors (that represent only 6.5% and 5.5% of the protest claims, respectively). In sharp contrast, the largest group of claimants within non-protest claims are state actors (31%), followed by youth actors (16.5%). In sum, youth actors tend to regularly resort to protest claim-making activities but state actors are the main claimants when these take a non-protest form. The lower likelihood of state actors resorting to protest forms of action is hardly surprising. Importantly, there is a strong asymmetry of young claimants' relative weight depending on whether these claims take (or not) a protest form.

Figure 3. Claimants by Claim type



Note:  $N$  protest claims = 351,  $N$  non-protest claims = 4.147

At a first glance, we can observe the issues most often raised in youth-related political claims are related to the neoliberal reforms that took place in most EU countries during previous years (Table 1). Most of them are linked to education (33.1%), followed by issues related to welfare, social

benefits and social well-being (14%), and also to socioeconomic and employment issues (13.3%). Unlike the actors of claims, the patterns of issues remain fairly constant when the two (protest and non-protest) groups of claims are examined. Protest claims tend to raise more socioeconomic and employment issues along with issues related to law and order, and political participation. On the other hand, issues such as welfare, social benefits, social well-being and creativity and culture, violence and abuse are mentioned more often in non-protest related claims.

Table 1. Issues raised by Claim type

	Non-Protest Claims n=4.174	Protest Claims n=351	Chi-square test	Total N=4.525
Education	33,0%	34,2%	.202, p=.653	33,1%
Other Issues	11,2%	16,8%	9.856, p=.002	11,6%
Socioeconomic and Employment	13,2%	15,1%	1.037, p=.039	13,3%
Political Issues	8,8%	10,0%	.580, p=.446	8,9%
Law and Order, Crime	5,8%	8,8%	5.058, p=.025	6,1%
Welfare, social benefits, social well-being	14,5%	8,3%	10.505, p=.001	14,0%
Violence and Abuse	6,6%	4,0%	3.605, p=.058	6,4%
Creativity & culture	6,9%	2,8%	8.636, p=.003	6,6%

Looking at the addressees of the claims (Table 2), the broad picture shows that more than one in each three claims target state actors (34.9%). About one fourth of the total claims address other actors such as the general public, parents, etc. As for the comparison between the two groups of claims, since protest actions normally target state actors and power holders, one would expect that the vast majority of protest claims would address them. In fact, two in each three protest-related claims addresses state actors and/or the judiciary. ‘Other actors’ stand out as the second highest group of addressees among the protest claims. Although the main addressee of non-protest related claims remains state actors, they do so to a much lesser extent (32.2%). Moreover, the distribution of non-protest related claims is more proportional across categories, as they also address youth and other actors to a moderate extent (22.6% and 27.2%, respectively).

Table 2. Addressees of the claims by Claim type

	Non-Protest Claims n=4.174	Protest Claims n=351	Chi-square test	Total N=4.525
State actors and judiciary	32,2%	66,4%	166.337, p=.000	34,9%
Political parties/groups	4,2%	4,6%	.080, p=.777	4,3%
Education related actors	7,9%	8,0%	.001, p=.975	7,9%
Youth Actors	22,6%	5,7%	55.276, p=.000	21,3%
Labour and civil society organizations	5,8%	3,4%	3.402, p=.065	5,6%
Other Actors	27,2%	12,0%	39.105, p=.000	26,0%

With regards to the positioning towards the objects of claims (i.e. the group of actors whose everyday life or interests are impacted by the claim), in general youth actors receive more claims with a positive than a negative orientation and, compared to non-youth actors, the debate is less polarized. These findings are constant for the subset of non-protest claims. However, closer observation of protest claims reveals that 1) the pro- youth claims are nearly double the anti-youth claims, 2) the position towards non-youth actors is almost zero but the standard deviation is .92, suggesting the number of pro- and anti- claims that have non-youth actors as objects is similar with high polarization in the debate.

Table 3. Means of Position\* regarding the Object of the claims by Claim type

Type of Claim		Mean	N	Std. Deviation
Non-protest claims	Non-youth Actors	0,44	254	0,787
	Youth Actors	0,52	3919	0,731
Protest claims	Non-youth Actors	0,04	137	0,919

	Youth Actors	0,53	214	0,791
Total	Non-youth Actors	0,30	391	0,856
	Youth Actors	0,52	4133	0,734
	Total	0,50	4524	0,748

\* Position of the youth-related claim can take three values, -1 when the claim affects the object negatively, 0 when the claim is neutral/ambivalent, +1 when the claim is pro-object.

Through descriptive and explorative analysis, we have hitherto emphasized the major features of the protest claims compared to claims that take non-protest forms. Next, we use logistic regression models to shed light on the determinants of protest claim reporting in the press (Table 4). Regarding the issue-related hypotheses, our results offer mixed empirical evidence. We can confirm our H.2.2 hypothesis of a positive association between the education issue and protest claims. Having education as an issue, relative to not having it, increases the probabilities of having a protest claim in the press by 0.62, *ceteris paribus*. Indeed half of the protest claims in countries such as Greece, Spain, Italy and Poland have education reform as an issue. In line with prior findings (e.g., Cini 2018), this may suggest that neoliberal reforms in education could push people to resort to protest, and these activities are likely to be reported in the press.

Contrary to our expectations, socioeconomic issues do not have statistically significant effects on the presence of protest claims in the press. Hence, we cannot confirm H.2.1. An unexpected finding is that ‘other issues’ category, which includes issues related to migration, refugees, mental and sexual health, traffic safety, has a positive and statistically significant effect on protest claim-making. A claim being associated with this category doubles the probabilities of having a protest claim. Contending with simplistic views that emphasize the apathetic character of the youth, findings in Table 4 suggest that young people resort to protest claim-making both for issues that touch them directly, such as education, but also for issues that affect society at large. Importantly, youth politics add on other sources of discrimination and exclusion (e.g., social class, migrant origin disabilities, etc.), thus adopting intersectional approaches to youth studies is relevant.

With regards to the actors, youth claimants are positively associated with protest-related claims. As for the size of the effect, having youth (relative to non-youth) actors is associated with a 0.93 increase in the probabilities of having a protest claim. The strong correlation between youth actors

and protest suggests that these actors are more determined to resort to protest forms of action than other groups in order to redress their grievances and claim their rights and interests.

Turning to the addressees, findings are in line with our expectations and the literature, showing a positive relationship between protest claims and state actors as targets of the protest. Protesters normally challenge power holders, especially when the claims' issues are related to education, welfare and socioeconomic reforms that are the responsibility of the state. Relative to non-protest claims, state actors as addressees of the claim is associated with a 0.82 increase in the likelihood of having a protest claim reported in the press, confirming our fourth hypothesis (H.4).

When it comes to explaining the propensity of youth-related claims to take a protest form, the country where the claim is made is an important factor to take into consideration. Taking the UK as the baseline category, newspapers are more likely to report protest claims in Germany, Poland, Spain, and especially, in France, Greece, and Italy. Note, however, the (negative) coefficients for Swiss and Swedish press are not statistically significant. When it comes to explaining protest claim reporting in the press, relative to the UK, claims with a protest form are more likely in some countries that were hardly hit by the crisis (e.g. Italy, Greece, Spain) but also in some others where the effects of the recession were more moderate (e.g. France, Germany, Poland). Thereby, evidence in support of the H.5 hypothesis is only mixed.

Finally, regarding the claims with negative position towards youth people, evidence goes in line with hypothesis H.3. Relative to a positive positioning of the youth's object of claims, negative framing increases by 0.75 the probabilities of a claim taking a protest form in the public sphere. Political claims being negatively disposed toward the rights and the interests of young Europeans are positively associated with protest performances.

Table 4. Logit regression

	B	S.E.
<i>Issues</i>		
Education	0,456**	(0,174)
Socioeconomic and Employment	0,129	(0,245)
Other Issues	0,722**	(0,223)
<i>Claimants</i>		

Youth Actors	2,587***	(0,147)
<i>Addressees</i>		
State actors and judiciary	1,485***	(0,152)
<i>Country of coding<sup>+</sup></i>		
France	0,999***	(0,344)
Germany	0,947*	(0,377)
Greece	1,169**	(0,353)
Italy	1,516***	(0,342)
Poland	0,883*	(0,366)
Spain	0,731*	(0,359)
Sweden	-0,346	(0,480)
Switzerland	-0,140	(0,450)
<i>Position<sup>5</sup> towards Youths as Objects<sup>++</sup></i>		
Anti-youth object position	1,125***	(0,173)
Neutral youth object position	0,095	(0,201)
Constant	-5,719	(0,348)
N	4.305	
Pseudo R squared	0,365	

*Notes: Coefficients are log odds ratios. Unless otherwise stated, all predictors and determinants are dummy variables. Standard errors in parentheses, <sup>o</sup>  $p < 0.10$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , <sup>+</sup>The UK is the reference category (multinomial variable), <sup>++</sup>Pro-youth object position is treated as the reference category (multinomial variable).*

## Conclusion

Drawing on institutional and discursive political opportunity theories, in this article we have tried to shed light on the characteristics and determinants of youth-related protest claim-making in the public sphere. While the Great Recession and Eurozone crisis bred institutional instability and may have increased opportunities for youth-related protest actions, instances of claims making that take a protest form are still rare. In line with prior findings (Giugni and Grasso 2016; Cinalli and Giugni 2016b), our random original sample of 4,500 claims from nine European countries reveals that on average protest actions amount to only 8% of the total claims made in the public sphere, also in times of recession. Potential explanations for the low presence of protest among youth-related forms of claim-making could be that either the media tends to underreport youth-related protest

<sup>5</sup> As the positioning variables are dummies, we have given a 0 value to the claims that have non-youth objects. Alternatively, recoding these claims as missing values does not substantially change our findings.

claims or they do not engage much in such activities (potentially in favor of alternative forms of social participation, such as voluntarism, civic engagement, etc.). Further research is needed to shed light on the role of these and other mechanisms in explaining levels of youth-related protest claims making.

With regards to the addressees of protest actions, the most frequent ones are state actors and power holders that advanced and implemented neoliberal policies. In other words, protest activities unfolded in the public national sphere, contending with the (national) government that ultimately implemented austerity policies. Notwithstanding supranational or transnational actors driving many policies, consistent with the literature of Europeanization in social movements and collective action, the bulk of protest activities still remains national in scope (Caiani and della Porta 2009). Moreover, when youth interests and rights are at stake, claims in the form of protest are more likely to follow.

In a context dominated by welfare retrenchment and rising neoliberal reforms, claims related to education were more likely to take a protest form than a non-protest form. Some cross-country discontinuities are noteworthy, and merit further research. For instance, the proportion of protest actions in France and the South European countries covered tends to be higher. While many of the youth-related protests in France have been led by excluded minorities who live in the (rather marginalized) suburbs, including the riots in 2013, most protests' issues in Southern Europe are associated with the educational and socioeconomic reforms applied by the governments in the course of the EU driven neoliberal policies.

In summary, the Great Recession and ensuing austerity policies led to a major transformation in the political opportunity structure in many advanced democracies. The opening of institutional and discursive windows of opportunity not only facilitated claim-making activities but also had an impact on the form these claims took. In a context dominated by material hardship and neoliberal policies, youth-related protest actions represent a small amount of claims making activities in the public sphere. However, young actors as claimants, educational issues, state actors as targets and claims focused on youth interests and rights are associated with a larger prevalence of youth-related protest actions.

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