

Economic Crisis and Levels of Political Participation in Europe (2002-2010): The Role of Resources and Grievances

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Abstract

In this article we examine the effect of the recent economic crisis on political participation levels in Europe. As the civic voluntarism model and grievances theory predict different effects of economic downturn on political participation, the crisis provides us with a unique context to evaluate the explanatory power of these two theories. We find that, when investigating a period of eight years (2002-2010), economic growth is positively associated with non-institutionalised political participation, which is in line with the civic voluntarism model. However, when focusing on the changes in political participation that occurred between 2008 and 2010 we find that rising unemployment is associated with rising levels of non-institutionalised political participation, suggesting that grievance theory is especially useful in exceptionally negative conditions as suddenly imposed grievances can lead to various forms of protest behaviour. We argue that these shock experiences can lead to momentary peak periods of mobilisation.

Keywords: economic crisis, political participation, grievance theory, civic voluntarism model, European Social Survey

Introduction

The financial and economic crisis that emerged in Europe in 2008 led to the loss of millions of jobs resulting in a rising unemployment rate (Verick 2009; De Grauwe and Ji 2013). Especially in countries that were worst hit by the economic crisis, massive protests erupted as governments and the European Union apparently were being held responsible for their lack of determination to address this financial crisis (Anduiza et al. 2013; Hooghe 2012). Based on the literature on political mobilization, however, it is not clear whether the emergence of an economic crisis stimulates or depresses political participation. Advocates of grievance theory would argue that threatened economic interests function as a major incentive for political engagement (Gamson 1968; Wilkes 2004). The civic voluntarism model, on the other hand, would predict that the economic crisis will have a negative effect on the availability of resources that are required to participate in politics (Verba et al. 1995).

It is clear that both approaches lead to contrasting assumptions about the impact of the economic crisis on participation levels. *Grievance theory* has a long tradition within the social movement literature (Barnes et al. 1979; Gamson 1968; Geschwender 1968; Gurr 1970; Runciman 1966). The basic idea in grievance theory is that personal dissatisfaction and grievances stimulate political participation and particularly protest behaviour. Grievances can be defined as ‘feelings of dissatisfaction with important aspects of life’ (Klandermans et al. 2001, 42) such as living standard, income, employment, etc. The recent economic crisis offers a good case to test the validity of grievance theory as the economic downturn is likely to lead to the occurrence of grievances that stimulate actors to voice their discontent. On the other hand, however, it has been documented repeatedly that actors require resources to be able to participate politically. In particular, the *civic voluntarism model* states that there will be a positive relationship between having access to material resources and the level of political activity. Hence, both approaches lead to different expectations. While grievance theory predicts that scarcity of resources will be associated with grievances and protest, the civic voluntarism model leads to the hypothesis that a lack of material resources will depress levels of participation.

In this article, our aim is to ascertain whether these approaches help us to understand the effect of the economic crisis that emerged in 2008 on political participation levels. The crisis provides us with an extraordinary opportunity to test the effect of economic indicators on participation patterns. In order to test whether economic grievances are indeed associated with higher levels of political participation, we use cumulative data from the European Social Survey (ESS 2002-2010) and from the World Bank. Combining these datasets offers us the opportunity to compare the

situation before the crisis with the situation up to 2010.¹ Conducting a multilevel analysis allows us to examine whether the effects of economic crisis on political participation vary for the 26 countries included in the ESS. We will investigate a broad set of participation forms that, in line with the theoretical literature, can be classified in two broad categories: institutionalised and non-institutionalised forms of political participation (Stolle and Hooghe 2011). This distinction can essentially be traced back to the classical distinction between conventional and unconventional forms of political participation (Barnes and Kaase 1979). However, as Marien et al. (2010) point out, numerous unconventional forms of political participation have become mainstream over the years with as a result that the degree of institutionalization of participation acts now should be regarded as the main classification criterion (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001; Dalton 1996, 2000). Institutionalised forms of political participation are related to the electoral process and organized by the political system (Hooghe and Quintelier 2014). Non-institutionalised forms of political participation, on the other hand, represent potentially elite-challenging forms of political participation which are not organized by the political system. As grievance theory deals mainly with protest behaviour, we can expect that economic downturn will be positively associated mainly with non-institutionalised forms of political participation.

In the following sections, we first briefly review the literature on grievance theory and the civic voluntarism model. Subsequently, we present data and methods, before we elaborate on what the results imply for the evolution and nature of political participation in Europe.

Economic indicators and political participation

Political participation can be considered as essential for the legitimacy of democratic political systems. Verba et al. (1995, 1) boldly state: ‘democracy is unthinkable without the ability of citizens to participate freely in the governing process’. Schlozman et al. (1999) enumerate three main reasons to attach a positive normative status to political participation. First of all, the act of political participation will have positive consequences for the participants themselves, as it contributes to the development of their individual capacities and sense of political self-efficacy. Second, political participation has a positive effect on democratic orientations and skills that facilitate cooperation within communities and the production of public goods. Finally, political participation serves as a vehicle through which citizens communicate their interests, needs and preferences and through which they put pressure on public officials to take those interests into account. Therefore, almost all of the literature, will agree on the claim that high levels of political

participation are to be preferred from a democratic point of view. There is quite some anecdotal evidence suggesting that the economic crisis has led to an upsurge of protest behaviour in Europe, especially in the countries of Southern Europe that were hit most severely by economic hardship and rising unemployment rates. In Greece, Spain, Portugal and Italy, demonstrators have massively taken to the streets to express their frustration on the way their governments handle the economic crisis. In this study, the main question we want to investigate is whether these protest actions have been an ephemeral phenomenon, or whether we can actually discern a structural impact of the economic crisis on participation patterns in Europe.

Grievance theory provides valuable insights into the relation between economic hardship and political participation (Barnes et al. 1979; Gamson 1968; Gurr 1970). The *grievances model* predicts that grievances are a strong incentive for collective action and protest behaviour if they are translated into political demands (van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013; Wilkes 2004). Rising poverty and unemployment levels therefore should lead to more protest. The grievance model, however, is not just based on the absolute level of hardship, but can also be based on the relative level of perceived deprivation (Klandermans et al. 2008). Relative deprivation is defined as the perceived discrepancy between the expectations of actors about the goods and conditions of life to which they believe they are justifiably entitled, on the one hand, and the degree to which they think they can obtain and keep these goods and conditions on the other hand (Gurr 1970). Citizens compare their own situation with specific expectations such as their past or their expected future situation, the situation of reference persons or a normative standard such as social justice or norms of equity (Folger 1986; Klandermans et al. 2001; van Stekelenburg and Klandermans 2013). If this comparison leads to the conclusion that one is not receiving what one is legitimately entitled to, feelings of relative deprivation arise. Relative deprivation, therefore, can be based on a number of causes, like an absolute or relative decline in the rate of social and economic progress, the collapse of established patterns of community organization and belief systems and a perceived or real incapability of governments to maintain social order or to take necessary measures to return to it (Gurr 1970).

It is a very likely assumption that an economic crisis will strengthen feelings of relative deprivation. The fact that the economic crisis developed so rapidly, with rather dramatic economic and social consequences, renders it likely that this crisis will lead to 'suddenly imposed grievances' (Walsh 1981), that are expected to lead most strongly to protest behaviour. Within the European Union average unemployment rate rose from 6.7 per cent in March 2008 to 8.9 per cent in May 2009 leaving at that time, 21.5 million EU citizens without a job. Rising levels of

unemployment and job insecurity can be associated with feelings of relative deprivation in two different ways (Kelly and Breinlinger 1996; Klandermans et al. 2001; Klandermans et al. 2008; Runciman 1966). On the one hand, individuals affected by the worsening condition on the job market might experience *individual relative deprivation*, meaning that they are personally affected by the consequences of the economic crisis (e.g. loss of income, job security, housing, social status). This form of deprivation is based on a personal comparison as the individual feels that s/he is deprived relative to the generalized other. On the other hand, rising unemployment can also lead to *group or collective relative deprivation*, i.e. the assessment that one's social group is deprived of what it is legitimately entitled to relative to other groups. This type of deprivation emerges when the members of a group perceive that 'social forces are developing in a way that will prevent them from realizing their interests' (Van Dyke and Soule 2002, 499). Collective relative deprivation increases the likelihood to engage in various forms of political participation, whereas individual relative deprivation rather leads to individual responses (Kawakami and Dion 1995; Kelly and Breinlinger 1996; Kinder and Kiewiet 1979; Smith and Ortiz 2002).

These different reactions to deprivation can be explained by different causal attributions that are made. Individual relative deprivation tends to be attributed to one's own personal characteristics and limitations. Therefore, individuals are likely to choose individual strategies to improve their situation. However, if individuals are convinced that their fellow group members share their ordeal it is rendered more likely that they do not feel personally responsible. Instead, the responsibility for this grievance is attributed externally (Appelgryn and Nieuwoudt 1988; Kelly and Breinlinger 1996; Klandermans 1997). With regard to collective deprivation it can be expected that the collective assessment of the economic crisis in a particular country affects levels of political participation. Consequently, we can expect that especially in countries that were strongly affected by the economic crisis, collective relative deprivation is associated with an increase in levels of political participation (Kriesi 2012). In line with this reasoning we expect a contextual effect of the crisis on levels of political participation. Following the theory on collective relative deprivation, this reasoning leads to the first hypothesis:

H1: There is a positive relation between economic crisis and the level of political participation.

It has been argued that the individuals who are most likely to become engaged in collective action are those who perceive a combination of individual and collective deprivation (Foster and Matheson 1995; Runciman 1966; Walsh 1981). Foster and Matheson (1995, 1173) suggest this double relative deprivation reflects 'a qualitatively different experience' compared to individual relative deprivation. It is suggested that when individuals realize that deprivation occurs not only

to themselves but also to other members of the group, their motivation to become involved in collective action increases. Thereby they stress that the double deprivation does not result from simply adding up individual and collective deprivation, it rather originates from a multiplicative interaction between the two types of relative deprivation. Following this logic we expect that in counties that have suffered strongly as a result of the economic crisis, especially those who have personally experienced deprivation will be most likely to participate. For those individuals collective deprivation becomes immediately relevant to their own situation and for them ‘the personal becomes political’ (Foster and Matheson 1995, 1168). In line with this reasoning we test the following hypothesis:

H2: The positive relation between economic crisis and the level of political participation becomes stronger for individuals who also experience personal deprivation.

The *civic voluntarism model*, on the other hand, leads to a contrasting set of expectations. One of the most important determinants of political action is the availability of resources (Brady et al. 1995). As such, this approach can be interpreted as being indebted to the insights of the older resource mobilisation theory, that emphasized that social movement organisations are confronted with the task of mobilising sufficient material resources to lead to protest behaviour (McCarthy and Zald 1977; Obershall 1973). Although this approach was later on criticized for starting from a narrow instrumental outlook on protest behaviour (Buechler 1993), the fundamental insight that participation does require the presence of at least some level of material resources has been taken up in subsequent research, most notably in the civic voluntarism model. The civic voluntarism model states that citizens who have time, money and the civic skills to be active in politics will use these resources to become more active (Berinsky 2002). Access to money and other material resources therefore should be associated with higher levels of political participation (Verba et al. 1995). This model challenges the claim that economic grievances will stimulate political participation. Given that the available pool of resources is shrinking in times of economic hardship, the civic voluntarism model would predict that political participation declines. In economically difficult periods, citizens might increasingly focus on their own situation rather than spending their shrinking pool of resources on political involvement (Muñoz et al. 2014). Hence, in times of economic hardship, with lower income levels, raising poverty rates and loss of employment (de Beer 2012), citizens are assumed to withdraw from the political arena. This argumentation leads to the third, competing, hypothesis:

H3: There is a negative relation between economic crisis and the level of political participation.

In sum, based on grievance theory we expect the economic crisis to trigger feelings of relative deprivation which are translated in increased political participation. However, the economic crisis reduces the available resources for political participation challenging this prediction of increased participation. Therefore, using the case of the recent economic crisis, we investigate which of these two competing theories is best able to predict the effect of the crisis on participation levels. These hypotheses will be tested, using data from the European Social Survey and from the World Bank.

Data, Method and Measurement

We rely on data from the European Social Survey (ESS) for individual level data and on World Bank for country level data. The ESS is a representative, biannual and comparative cross-sectional survey, which started in 2002 and is conducted in more than twenty European countries. The ESS was chosen as a data source because it contains a wide range of indicators for political participation, because the data are comparable over time as well as across the different countries and because the ESS is known for its high standards concerning survey design and data collection (ESS 2010; Lynn 2003). In particular, we will explain changes in the levels of political participation based on changes in economic indicators. The dataset includes information from the 26 countries for which we have data for the fifth round of the ESS (2010): Belgium, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine and the United Kingdom.

The data structure is hierarchical as individuals are nested within countries. Such a hierarchical data structure requires multilevel modelling (Snijders and Bosker 1999). Ignoring the hierarchical nature of the data would result in underestimated standard errors which might lead to type I errors (Steenbergen and Jones 2002). Apart from its ability to estimate standard errors correctly, multilevel modelling also allows us to determine the direct effects of the country-level explanatory variables while controlling for the individual characteristics of the respondents. As the dependent variables are binary (participating versus not participating) we use logistic multilevel models. Before we proceed with the construction of these multilevel models we offer a description of the variables included in the analysis.

Dependent Variable: Political Participation

In line with the literature on political participation we distinguish institutionalised from non-institutionalised political participation. The European Social Survey contains items for both types of political participation. Respondents were asked whether they participated in the following forms of engagement during the last 12 months: contacting a politician or other government official, working in a political party or political action group, signing a petition, taking part in lawful public demonstrations and boycotting certain products. Moreover, the respondents were asked whether they are a member of a political party. In order to evaluate the dimensionality of this set of six indicators, an exploratory factor analysis was conducted (see Table 1).

Table 1. Exploratory factor analysis of the political participation scale

<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Factor 1 Institutionalised</i>	<i>Factor 2 Non- institutionalised</i>	<i>Uniqueness</i>
Contacted a politician	0.485	0.262	0.571
Worked in a political party/ action group	0.852	0.131	0.147
Signed a petition	-0.015	0.767	0.424
Taken part in demonstration	0.115	0.624	0.525
Boycotted certain products	-0.070	0.676	0.585
Party member	0.893	-0.156	0.315

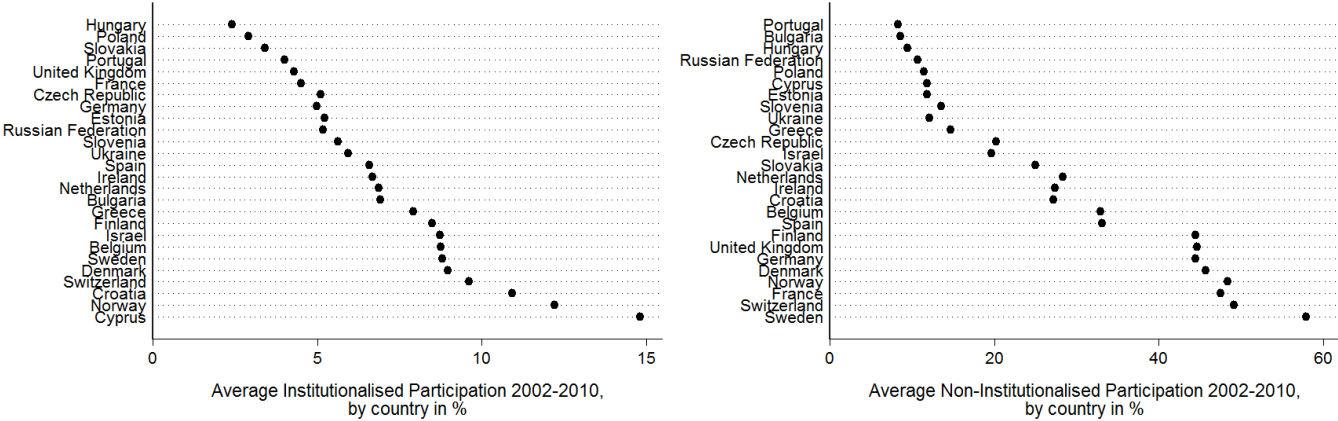
Note: Entries are the result of exploratory factor analysis with the restriction to retain two factors based on Eigenvalues and Promax rotation. Factor loadings >0.6 are in boldface. Since the participation variables are dichotomous, the exploratory factor analysis has been accomplished based on a tetrachoric correlation matrix (Gorsuch 1974). *Source:* ESS, 2002-2010.

The results of this factor analysis show that contacting a politician is the only item where factor loadings are lower than 0.6. For this reason, contacting a politician is left out for further analysis. By contrast, the other items load highly on one of the two factors and so we find empirical evidence for a distinction between institutionalised (Factor 1) and non-institutionalised political participation (Factor 2). Working for a political party or action group and being a member of a political party load on Factor 1, while signing a petition, taking part in a lawful demonstration as well as boycotting certain products load on Factor 2. Cross-loadings remain limited.

Based on these results we constructed two sum scales and, because of the skewed distribution, subsequently dichotomized both variables, distinguishing those respondents who were active in at least one of the participation forms during the past year (coded 1) from those who did not engage in any form of participation in that period (coded 0). These binary variables for institutionalised and non-institutionalised political participation, which vary quite substantively across the 26 European countries (Figure 1), are used as dependent variables. The Figure shows

that participation levels tend to be highest in the Scandinavian countries, while they are lower in Southern and Eastern Europe.

Figure 1. Average political participation per country (ESS 2002-2010)



Note: Average percentage of the respondents participating in institutionalised and non-institutionalised forms of political participation (2002-2010), 26 countries, European Social Survey Cumulative File (2002-2010). Data are weighted with design weights.

Independent Variables: Measuring the Economic Crisis and Economic Development

To assess the impact of the economic crisis, we included four objective country-level measures and four individual-level measures. First, we attempt to assess economic development more generally, over a period of eight years. Therefore we have included two measures that capture the fluctuation of the unemployment rate from its mean and of GDP per capita from its mean during the 2002-2010 period. Including the deviation from the country-specific mean allows us to include change over time, while disregarding the absolute level of unemployment or GDP/capita for that specific country. Second, we include the change in the unemployment rate and the change in the growth rate of real GDP per capita (annual accounts, in hundreds of dollar) for the most acute phase of the economic crisis, i.e., the 2009-2010 period. For the change in unemployment we rely on the national unemployment rates in percentage of the total labour force. Both measures are obtained from the World Development Indicator Dataset of the World Bank (2014). Whereas the dependent variables for political participation are measured in 2010, we include time-lagged indicators for the economic crisis, in order to strengthen the causal

inferences: the positive or negative changes in the unemployment rate between 2009 and 2010 and, the change in GDP per capita between 2009 and 2010.

In order to measure the effect of the economic crisis on the individual level, we include four variables. Two of them (the level of education and satisfaction with income) seem particularly relevant for the civic voluntarism model whereas the other two (satisfaction with the functioning of the economy and an individual's position in the labour force) appear more suitable to evaluate the effect of deprivation on an individual level. First, we include an individual's level of education, as those with higher education credentials on average also have a more privileged access to resources. We recoded this variable into three broad categories: 1) no formal or only primary education, 2) secondary education and 3) tertiary education. Second, we include respondents' satisfaction with their family income, which serves as proxy for actual family income. We opted for this measurement because the direct question on the total household income is plagued by high rates of item non-response.

Third, we include an individual's satisfaction with the general state of the economy, assuming that respondents that suffer personally as a result of the economic crisis will be less satisfied with the state of the economy in their country compared to those who were not personally affected. Finally, we include a categorical variable for the respondent's position in the labour market. This variable is recoded in such a manner that respondents who are in paid work form the reference category whereas the other three categories are dummy coded. These three dummies capture: 1) students², 2) the unemployed and 3) respondents who are not part of the labour force such as people doing housework³. In the context of the relative deprivation theory, the unemployed are of particular interest as they can be directly affected by the crisis. However, we do not know whether respondents lost their job coinciding with the economic crisis that started in 2008. In the analysis of political participation in 2010 we therefore provide a more precise estimate by distinguishing between those who became unemployed since the crisis started in 2008 and those who were already unemployed at that moment of time. Our assumption is that the long-term unemployed, who have lost their job long before the economic crisis of 2008, are less likely to identify as a 'victim' of this specific crisis period since long term unemployment cannot be considered as a 'suddenly imposed' grievance.

Control Variables

On the individual level, we control for characteristics that previously were found to be related to political participation. We control for sex since previous studies have shown that men are more

likely to participate in institutionalised forms of political participation than women (Burns et al. 2001) whereas women are more inclined to engage in non-institutionalised forms of political participation than men (Micheletti 2003; Stolle and Hooghe 2011). Furthermore, age represents an important control variable that is expected to have a different effect on political engagement depending on the form of participation. We know that older citizens are more likely to become active in institutionalised forms of political participation (Putnam 2000; Verba et al. 1995) whereas younger age groups have a preference for non-institutionalised participation forms (Marien et al. 2010; Norris 2002). In addition, we control the level of political interest of respondents given that previous research has shown that high levels of political interest are positively associated with political participation (Verba et al. 1995). Finally, we include a variable that controls for whether a respondent lives in an urban or a rural region, with the expectation that especially with respect to non-institutionalised political participation, urbanites are more exposed to those types of activities.

It has to be remembered, however, that we are not interested in explaining the absolute level of political participation, but rather in explaining the changes that occur as a result of the ongoing economic crisis. Therefore, on the country-level we introduce a variable that controls for the previous levels of institutionalised and non-institutionalised participation. These variables represent the country-average of respectively institutionalised and non-institutionalised participation over the past ESS rounds and therefore allow to include a control for the standard level of participation in each country. With the inclusion of the average level of political participation from previous years we essentially complement our logistic multilevel model with the characteristics of a conditional change model (Menard 2007). This allows us to investigate to what extent the level of participation in 2010 deviates from the previous average levels for that country, as we assume these changes can be related to the financial and economic crisis. In doing so, we control indirectly for other country-level variables that might affect political participation, which is why this procedure also represents a very conservative and at the same time parsimonious approach. Only what cannot be traced back to the standard background level of political participation in a country remains as object of study. The test is conservative, as it will detect only significant deviations in the 2008-2010 period and effects with a more limited amplitude will not lead to significant results. More detailed information about all variables that are included in this analysis can be found in Appendix.

Results

First, we analyse changes over the entire 2002-2010 observation period for institutionalised participation (Models I-III in Table 2). We start the analyses with a null model (Model I) in which the variance in institutionalised political participation is split into two components: the variance between the respondents within each country (individual-level variance, σ_e^2) and the variance between the different country observations (country-level variance, σ_{u0}^2).⁴ The results indicate that the lion's share of the variance in institutionalised participation is found on the individual level (93.8 per cent of the entire variance). Only 6.2 per cent of the variance in institutionalised participation is found on the second level, which accounts for the variance between the different countries and the variance between the different time points. This means that individual characteristics are much more important in explaining institutionalised participation than country-level characteristics.

The results of this analysis are in line with previous research as it shows that men and the highly politically interested respondents are more active in this form of political participation. For age we find a curvilinear effect, meaning that the probability to participate rises throughout adolescence and early adulthood, peaks in the middle-age groups and falls again with older age. Students also tend to be significantly more active in institutionalised participation. Regarding our variables of interest we find that both the higher educated and the ones who are more satisfied with their household income are more likely to become active in institutionalised forms of political participation, which is in line with the civic voluntarism model. Satisfaction with the economy and unemployment, which serve as indicators for individual deprivation, do not affect the probability to become engaged in institutionalised political participation. Turning to the country level, it can be observed that the changes with regard to unemployment and with regard to GDP/capita are not significantly related to levels of institutionalised participation. As such, there is no support for the deprivation theory and only limited support at the individual level for the civic voluntarism model. When including the year of the survey as an independent variable it can be observed there is a downward trend over time.

Subsequently, in Models IV-VI of Table 2 we turn to non-institutionalised participation. The null model (Model IV) shows that, compared to institutionalised political participation, clearly more variance of non-institutionalised forms of political participation is found on the second level, namely about 18 per cent ($\sigma_{u0}^2 = 0.721$, $\sigma_e^2 = 3.29$). Country-level variables play thus a more important role for explaining non-institutionalised forms of political engagement and this too is in line with previous research (Hooghe and Quintelier 2013).

Table 2. The effect of economic development on political participation (2002-2010)

	Probability of Political Participation					
	Institutionalised			Non-institutionalised		
	I	II	III	IV	V	VI
Overall intercept	-2.679*** (0.092)	-6.815*** (0.173)	-6.769*** (0.170)	-1.120*** (0.167)	-4.535*** (0.102)	-4.662*** (0.100)
<i>Individual-level variables</i>						
Sex (Male = 1)		0.240*** (0.019)	0.240*** (0.019)		-0.197*** (0.011)	-0.196*** (0.011)
Age		0.024*** (0.003)	0.024*** (0.003)		0.040*** (0.002)	0.040*** (0.002)
Age ²		-0.000** (0.000)	-0.000** (0.000)		-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)
Political Interest		0.930*** (0.012)	0.930*** (0.012)		0.533*** (0.007)	0.534*** (0.007)
Urbanization		-0.166*** (0.008)	-0.166*** (0.008)		0.084*** (0.005)	0.083*** (0.005)
Satisfaction with income		0.063*** (0.013)	0.063*** (0.013)		0.041*** (0.008)	0.041*** (0.008)
Level of education ⁽⁺⁾						
Primary education		-0.086* (0.035)	-0.087* (0.035)		-0.423*** (0.022)	-0.421*** (0.022)
Tertiary education		0.216*** (0.022)	0.215*** (0.022)		0.453*** (0.013)	0.454*** (0.013)
Satisfaction with economy		0.005 (0.004)	0.005 (0.004)		-0.046*** (0.003)	-0.047*** (0.003)
Position within labour force ⁽⁺⁺⁾						
Student		0.319*** (0.048)	0.319*** (0.048)		0.442*** (0.025)	0.446*** (0.025)
Unemployed		-0.051 (0.049)	-0.051 (0.049)		-0.133*** (0.026)	-0.130*** (0.026)
Not in labour force		-0.174*** (0.028)	-0.174*** (0.028)		-0.146*** (0.016)	-0.146*** (0.016)
Year ⁽⁺⁺⁺⁾						
2004		-0.068 (0.038)	-0.104*** (0.031)		-0.082*** (0.023)	0.016 (0.019)
2006		-0.054 (0.045)	-0.103** (0.032)		-0.109*** (0.027)	0.015 (0.019)
2008		-0.157** (0.059)	-0.232*** (0.031)		-0.282*** (0.036)	-0.103*** (0.018)
2010		-0.230*** (0.052)	-0.300*** (0.032)		-0.262*** (0.031)	-0.077*** (0.019)
<i>Country-level variables</i>						
Average institutionalised participation (2002-2010)		14.465*** (1.787)	14.499*** (1.797)			
Average non-institutionalised participation (2002-2010)					5.511*** (0.259)	5.542*** (0.259)
Δ GDP per capita		-0.000 (0.000)			0.001*** (0.000)	
Δ Unemployment rate			0.003 (0.006)			-0.015*** (0.003)
σ_{u0}^2	0.216	0.066	0.067	0.721	0.041	0.041
Deviance	96,426	87,039	87,041	217,560	201,476	201,494

Note: The dependent variable is the probability to engage in institutionalised (Model I-III) and in non-institutionalised (Model IV -VI) forms of political participation. Entries are logit coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses) of a multilevel logistic regression. Models I - III include 200,093 individuals on the first level and models IV - VI include 200,653 individuals on the first level. All models include 26 countries on the second level. ⁽⁺⁾ The reference category is secondary education. ⁽⁺⁺⁾ The reference category is in paid work. ⁽⁺⁺⁺⁾ The reference category is 2002. Sign.: * < 0.05, ** < 0.01, *** < 0.001.

Here too, we can observe that especially the highly educated and those who are satisfied with their income tend to participate in these activities. However, those who are dissatisfied with the state of the economy are also more likely to participate and this is a marked difference between this analysis for non-institutionalised participation compared to the previous analysis on institutionalised participation. Additionally, and in line with the civic voluntarism model, the unemployed are significantly less likely to become engaged in this form of political participation compared to those that are in paid work. Turning to the country level, we find that a rise in GDP/capita levels is positively associated with political participation, while a rise in unemployment levels is negatively associated with the participation levels. Both the results on the individual as on the country-level are therefore in line with the third hypothesis, and they support the civic voluntarism model. If more resources become available across society (as seen by the rising level of GDP/capita), apparently citizens use these resources to participate more strongly in politics.

A counter-argument, however, could be that the observation period that is included in the analysis reported in Table 2 is too long to allow us to gather insights into what has specifically happened following the economic crisis that erupted in 2008. Indeed, most observations in this dataset are based on surveys that were conducted during ‘normal’ economic circumstances. To address this concern, we repeat the analysis, but this time taking into account only the 2010 data. This test allows us to ascertain whether the suddenness of the imposed grievances indeed has an effect. If the economic crisis would have had any effect on participation levels, it is most likely that we would find these effects in the year 2010. In order to be able to test the hypotheses, we present the results of a number of logistic multilevel analyses in the following section. We present first the results of the analysis that includes institutionalised political participation as a dependent variable (Table 3) before we continue with an analysis of non-institutionalised political participation (Table 4).

We start the analysis by including all control variables in the regression analysis (Table 3, Model I). The results confirm previous studies. Comparing the effect of the individual level variables in 2010 with the effect of the individual variables in the previous analysis based on the full set of survey data for the period 2002-2010, we find that age and being a student no longer affect the probability to become engaged in 2010. Also regarding the variables of interest we find some changes compared to the analysis that covered the period from 2002 to 2010. For the level of education, only tertiary education seems to matter. Those with primary education are no longer less likely to engage compared to those with secondary education. Also, satisfaction with income

has no longer a significant effect on institutionalized political participation. Satisfaction with the economy and unemployment still does not seem to play a role in explaining the probability to become involved in this form of political participation. Regarding the country-level, just like in Table 2, we do not observe a significant effect of changes in the unemployment level (Model II) in society. And also the change in GDP per capita between 2009 and 2010 does not affect the probability to become active in an institutionalised manner (Model III). We can thus conclude that institutionalised political participation has neither been affected by a country's general economic development from 2002 up to 2010 nor by the economic crisis.

In a next step, we repeat the same analysis for non-institutionalised political participation (Table 4). First, we introduce the control variables (Model I). The results confirm what we have found in Table 2, as women are more likely to engage in non-institutionalised forms than men. According to expectations, urbanites are more likely to participate. Subsequently, the variables of interest and two crisis variables at the country level are – one by one – added to the regression analysis. On the individual level, we find that the level of education and satisfaction with income positively affect the probability to become engaged, which can be counted as evidence for the civic voluntarism model. However, independent of the other personal characteristics, respondents who are less satisfied with the state of the economy are more likely to become engaged, which is in line with individual deprivation. Concerning the unemployed we find that the long-term unemployed are significantly less likely to take action than those who are in paid work. Yet, this is not the case for those who became only recently unemployed (potentially because of the crisis), which is again in line with individual deprivation. Looking at the contextual effects, the change in GDP per capita is introduced in Model III, but this proves to be not significant. The change in unemployment rates between 2009 and 2010 (Model II), on the other hand, has a positive effect on non-institutionalised participation and this supports the grievance theory and thereby the first hypothesis. This supports the claim that collective relative deprivation is positively related to political action, independent of the individual situation of the respondent for which we control. So for this in-depth analysis of 2010, we arrive at different conclusions than for the overview of the entire 2002-2010 period, and here the results are more in line with grievance theory. Apparently, an acute phase of economic downturn can have different effects than what we observed for the entire 2002-2010 period, as these suddenly imposed grievances seem to have a direct effect on participation levels.

Table 3. The effect of the economic crisis on institutionalised political participation in 2010

	Probability of Institutionalised Political Participation		
	I	II	III
Overall intercept	-6.445*** (0.218)	-6.579*** (0.269)	-6.557*** (0.266)
<i>Individual-level variables</i>			
Sex (Male= 1)	0.298*** (0.041)	0.290*** (0.042)	0.290*** (0.042)
Age	0.010 (0.006)	0.008 (0.008)	0.008 (0.008)
Age ²	-0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)	0.000 (0.000)
Political interest	0.997*** (0.026)	0.959*** (0.027)	0.959*** (0.027)
Urbanization	-0.136*** (0.017)	-0.154*** (0.017)	-0.153*** (0.017)
Satisfaction with income		0.035 (0.028)	0.034 (0.028)
Level of education ⁽⁺⁾			
Primary education		-0.104 (0.078)	-0.119 (0.079)
Tertiary education		0.258*** (0.047)	0.255*** (0.046)
Satisfaction with economy		0.016 (0.010)	0.017 (0.010)
Position within labour force ⁽⁺⁺⁾			
Student		0.111 (0.108)	0.112 (0.108)
Unemployed (< two years)		-0.165 (0.116)	-0.165 (0.116)
Unemployed (> two years)		-0.441 (0.257)	-0.442 (0.257)
Not in labour force		-0.153* (0.062)	-0.155* (0.062)
<i>Country-level variables</i>			
Average institutionalised participation (2002-2008)	11.918*** (1.677)	11.334*** (1.713)	12.108*** (1.730)
Change in unemployment (2009-2010)		0.065 (0.044)	
Change in GDP per capita (2009-2010)			-0.004 (0.002)
σ_{u0}^2	0.062	0.064	0.062
Deviance	18,668	18,600	18,599

Note: The dependent variable is the probability to engage in institutionalised forms of political participation: The probability to participate in no activity (=0), the probability to participate in at least one activity (=1). Entries are logit coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses) of a multilevel logistic regression. All models include 46,882 individuals on the first level and 26 countries on the second level. ⁽⁺⁾ The reference category is secondary education. ⁽⁺⁺⁾ The reference category is in paid work. Sign.: * < 0.05, ** < 0.01, *** < 0.001.

Following the double deprivation theory (Foster and Matheson 1995; Runciman 1966), we would expect that in countries that were strongly affected by the crisis, those individuals are particularly motivated to become active, who suffer also personally under the consequences of the economic crisis. Consequently, we tested whether the effects of satisfaction with the economy and being unemployed since less than two years on non-institutionalized political participation vary across the 26 countries. For satisfaction with the economy, this is indeed the case. We therefore included two cross-level interactions to evaluate whether this variance can be explained by the country's economic situation. The effect of satisfaction with the economy on participation should, according to this argumentation, be particularly strong in countries that were severely affected, as in those countries 'the personal becomes political' (Foster and Matheson 1995, 1168). However, Model IV and V as well as the plotted interactions (see Figure A, Appendix) show that the cross-level interactions were not significant, indicating that there is no evidence for the double deprivation theory. The analysis seems to suggest that collective relative deprivation also works independently of an individual's personal situation.

Table 4. The effect of the economic crisis on non-institutionalised political participation in 2010

	Probability of Non-Institutionalised Political Participation				
	I	II	III	IV	V
Overall intercept	-4.648*** (0.158)	-5.014*** (0.199)	-4.806*** (0.188)	-4.981*** (0.206)	-4.804*** (0.193)
<i>Individual-level variables</i>					
Sex (Male= 1)	-0.155*** (0.023)	-0.137*** (0.024)	-0.138*** (0.024)	-0.140*** (0.024)	-0.140*** (0.024)
Age	0.039*** (0.004)	0.043*** (0.004)	0.043*** (0.004)	0.043*** (0.004)	0.043*** (0.004)
Age ²	-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)	-0.001*** (0.000)
Political interest	0.588*** (0.014)	0.515*** (0.014)	0.515*** (0.014)	0.515*** (0.014)	0.515*** (0.014)
Urbanization	0.110*** (0.010)	0.081*** (0.010)	0.081*** (0.010)	0.082*** (0.010)	0.082*** (0.010)
Satisfaction with income		0.043** (0.016)	0.045** (0.016)	0.040* (0.016)	0.040* (0.016)
Level of education(+)					
Primary education		-0.470*** (0.047)	-0.471*** (0.047)	-0.475*** (0.047)	-0.476*** (0.047)
Tertiary education		0.482*** (0.027)	0.481*** (0.027)	0.478*** (0.027)	0.478*** (0.027)
Satisfaction with economy		-0.056*** (0.006)	-0.056*** (0.006)	-0.065*** (0.014)	-0.055*** (0.010)
Position within labour force(++)					
Student		0.475*** (0.054)	0.475*** (0.054)	0.475*** (0.054)	0.476*** (0.054)
Unemployed (< two years)		-0.036 (0.059)	-0.035 (0.059)	-0.035 (0.059)	-0.033 (0.059)
Unemployed (> two years)		-0.329** (0.123)	-0.327** (0.123)	-0.312* (0.123)	-0.311* (0.123)
Not in labour force		-0.131*** (0.035)	-0.131*** (0.035)	-0.131*** (0.035)	-0.131*** (0.035)
<i>Country-level variables</i>					
Average non-institutionalised participation (2002-2008)	4.888*** (0.403)	5.495*** (0.415)	5.353*** (0.462)	5.583*** (0.428)	5.389*** (0.472)
Change in unemployment (2009 – 2010)		0.152** (0.054)			
Change in GDP per capita (2009-2010)			-0.004 (0.003)		-0.001 (0.003)
<i>Cross-level interaction</i>					
Satisfaction with economy * Change in unemployment (2009 – 2010)				0.007 (0.009)	
Satisfaction with economy * Change in GDP per capita (2009-2010)					-0.001 (0.000)
$\sigma_{\mu 0}^2$	0.101	0.093	0.113	0.122	0.146
$\sigma_{\text{Satisfaction with economy}}^2$				0.002	0.002
Deviance	45,967	45,265	45,270	45,240	45,244

Note: The dependent variable is the probability to engage in non-institutionalised forms of political participation: The probability to participate in no activity (=0), the probability to participate in at least one activity (=1). Entries are logit coefficients and standard errors (in parentheses) of a multilevel logistic regression. All models include 46,984 individuals on the first level and 26 countries on the second level. (+) The reference category is secondary education. (++) The reference category is in paid work. Sign.: * < 0.05, ** < 0.01, *** < 0.001.

Discussion

In this paper we seized upon the opportunity offered by the recent economic crisis to investigate the effect of economic hardship on participation levels in Europe. Within the literature, two alternative theoretical frameworks provide insights on the way economic indicators might be related to participation. While the grievance model suggests that (relative) deprivation will lead to more participation, the civic voluntarism model argues that material resources are an essential prerequisite for participation. As we started from an agnostic point of view, we developed the analysis in such a manner that we could detect whether economic downturn has a positive or a negative effect on participation levels.

In a first step, covering the entire 2002-2010 observation period, the findings tend to support the civic voluntarism model, as a countries' rising prosperity levels were associated with higher levels of non-institutionalised political participation. This is also supported on the individual level as an individual's resources (i.e. the level of education and satisfaction with income) are positively related to political participation. Apparently, if resources are abundant, citizens will devote at least some of their resources to various acts of political participation. In this regard, it is theoretically relevant that this effect is significant for non-institutionalised participation. Theorists on value change, from Inglehart on, have always claimed that affluent, self-expressive generations will develop a preference for non-institutionalised forms of participation, as these forms are much better adapted for expressing their value patterns. Covering a longer period of time, and a large amount of data, therefore these results tend to support the civic voluntarism model.

Following up on the argument that the financial crisis that developed from 2008 onwards should be considered as highly exceptional, in a second step, we investigated the participation levels in the year 2010, when the 5th wave of the European Social Survey was conducted. At that moment, numerous European societies were confronted with rapidly rising unemployment levels. Indeed, when we only look at the 2010 figures, results are not in line with what we find for the overall observation period. In 2010 there is a strong positive relation between the rise in unemployment levels in the preceding year and levels of non-institutionalised political participation. A rapid

growth in unemployment levels, therefore, seems to be associated with a wave of protest behaviour and other forms of participation as a result of these suddenly imposed grievances. It is difficult to understand this phenomenon from a civic voluntarism model: as unemployment rises, most citizens will have fewer material resources that would allow them to participate, while in reality we find a positive relation. The grievance model, on the other hand, can explain this trend as it can be assumed that a lot of this protest behaviour actually was directed at government policies with regard to unemployment. From a grievance perspective, therefore, citizens clearly felt deprived, and they wanted to convey a message about their grievance to national and supra-national political decision-makers. In this process, collective relative deprivation seems to play a particularly important role. These suddenly imposed grievances seem to operate mainly on the collective level: citizens in countries with a substantial rise in unemployment become more inclined to participate in a non-institutional manner - regardless of their own individual level of satisfaction with the economy or unemployment status.

While we set up this paper as a test between two alternative theoretical frameworks, the results of the analysis reveal a more complex reality. An analysis covering a longer period of time provides the strongest support for the civic voluntarism model, while a more specific analysis on one specific survey wave, in the middle of the economic crisis, tends to be more in line with grievance theory. How can these findings be reconciled? Self-evidently, it has to be acknowledged that the first analysis on the entire period 2002-2010 should be considered as more robust, for the simple reason that more observation points could be included. It does look promising to consider the civic voluntarism model as a baseline model if we want to explain structural and long term determinants of participation levels. Those that are well off have more resources that they can also use to participate. This holds at the individual level, as we have seen that those with high educational credentials and those who are more satisfied with their income tend to participate more intensively, while the unemployed tend to be more passive with regard to non-institutionalised political participation. This also holds at the country level, as most of the previous research has shown that participation levels are much higher in the wealthy countries of Europe than in those with a lower GDP/capita level. The current analysis suggests that this also holds on a longitudinal level, as an increase in income levels is associated with higher levels of non-institutionalised participation. The exception we find to this pattern is that citizens who are less satisfied with the state of the economy are more likely to become involved in non-institutionalized manners. Apparently engaged citizens are characterized by a combination of resources and dissatisfaction on the individual level.

When we focus on the 2010 data, however, a different picture emerges as now the grievance theory is supported, especially with regard to unemployment. It has to be remembered that especially in 2009 unemployment levels rose in a very dramatic manner in numerous European societies. Public opinion reacted rather strongly to this sudden rise, with as a consequence a significant rise in levels of non-institutionalised participation. When interpreting these findings, it has to be kept in mind, however, that the 2009 rise in unemployment was highly exceptional and for some countries even historically unprecedented. Apparently, public opinion reacts rather strongly to this kind of shock experiences, and this can lead to more protest, as could be clearly observed in countries like Spain, Portugal, Italy, Greece and France. This kind of dramatic and sudden changes can indeed lead to the occurrence of ‘suddenly imposed grievances’ (Walsh 1981) and this kind of shock apparently can overcome the standard pattern of a positive relation between resources and participatory behaviour. In the long run, however, it needs to be stressed that this kind of behaviour is highly exceptional and our findings suggest that it indeed requires a highly unusual level of grievances in order to have an effect on participation levels. Moreover, while deprivation can explain our findings on the country-level, on the individual level we find again a combination of deprivation and resources. Both the education level as dissatisfaction with the state of the economy have a positive effect on participation levels.

The sudden impact of an economic crisis clearly seems to lead to protest behaviour. Such an argumentation is in line with what has been described as ‘suddenly imposed grievances’. Walsh (1981, 18) for instance suggests that ‘the aggrieved collectively must have some threshold level of resources able to be activated when perceived grievances increase dramatically.’ Simultaneously, it can be argued that the shock of the unprecedented rise in unemployment is so strong that actors do mobilize against it, while they would not necessarily do the same if a society is confronted with endemically high levels of unemployment. Our results are therefore in line with previous research on social movement mobilisation, indicating that moral shocks, exactly because of their sudden impact on collective resources and social norms can lead to protest waves (Jasper and Poulsen 1995; Jasper 1999; Walgrave and Manssens 2000). In general, however, it does remain difficult to use these moral shocks or suddenly imposed grievances to construct long term periods of enduring mobilisation and high participation levels.

It has to be acknowledged that this is a rather speculative way to explain our findings. Nevertheless, it is important to note that there might not be a singly Holy Grail in our quest to investigate the relation between economic indicators and participation levels. In fact, our findings suggest that both theoretical approaches can help us to solve part of this research problem and in

this case, we align ourselves with the work of Wilkes (2004) who also argued that both approaches should be combined. The available evidence of our longitudinal analysis suggests that the civic voluntarism model could be considered as a kind of default explanation for political participation, as in a vast majority of research there is positive association between material status and participatory behaviour. Only in the case of sudden and highly impactful shocks, we might speculate that grievance theory offers a better explanation for the occurrence of mostly protest behaviour. Almost by definition, however, these sudden shocks will be exceptional in most societies.

Obviously, further research is necessary to ascertain whether this explanation is valid. It should be further investigated whether the findings of this study indeed can be generalized to other shock experiences of comparable magnitude. Longitudinal research should also be able to ascertain whether these effects of external shocks are indeed limited in time, and after a certain period of time give way to the 'default' civic voluntarism model. Indeed, looking at it from a historical perspective, there are hardly any examples of societies where endemically high levels of economic hardship and unemployment were associated with equally high and stable levels of protest behaviour. Looking back at the first formulations of the grievance theory, it can be observed that they deal with highly exceptional cases of hardship and protest. While looking at civic voluntarism as a good weather theory, while grievance theory would be better equipped for rough and stormy periods in a country's history, might be intuitively appealing, it is clear that further research is necessary to ascertain whether both theoretical approaches can indeed be combined in such a manner.

Appendix

Table A: Descriptive statistics of variables included in the analysis of political participation from 2002 to 2010 (Table 2)

Variable	Number of Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min.	Max.	Missings in %
<i>Dependent Variable</i>						
Institutionalised Political Participation	218,774	0.066	0.248	0	1	0.62
Non-institutionalised Political Participation	217,970	0.290	0.454	0	1	0.99
<i>Individual-Level Variables</i>						
Sex (Male =1)	219,869	0.460	0.498	0	1	0.12
Age	218,965	47.633	18.557	13	123	0.53
Level of Education						
Primary Education	219,016	0.142	0.349	0	1	0.51
Secondary Education (Ref.)	219,016	0.594	0.491	0	1	0.51
Tertiary Education	219,016	0.264	0.441	0	1	0.51
Satisfaction with income	214,079	2.895	0.896	1	4	2.75
Political Interest	219,463	2.369	0.904	1	4	0.31
Position within labour force						
In paid work (Ref.)	216,296	0.494	0.500	0	1	1.75
Student	216,296	0.087	0.282	0	1	1.75
Unemployed	216,296	0.056	0.229	0	1	1.75
Not in labour force	216,296	0.363	0.481	0	1	1.75
Urbanization	219,386	3.126	1.229	1	5	0.34
Satisfaction with economy	214,271	4.292	2.504	0	10	2.67
<i>Country-Level Variables</i>						
Δ GDP per capita	26	1.446	75.551	-277.381	251.600	0
Δ Unemployment rate	26	-0.086	2.224	-6.733	7.978	0
Average Institutionalised Participation (2002-2010)	26	0.066	0.026	0.024	0.148	0
Average Non-Institutionalised Participation (2002-2010)	26	0.290	0.157	0.083	0.579	0

Note: In total, the dataset contains 220,140 respondents in 26 countries.

Source: ESS Cumulative Data Round 1- Round 5 (2010).

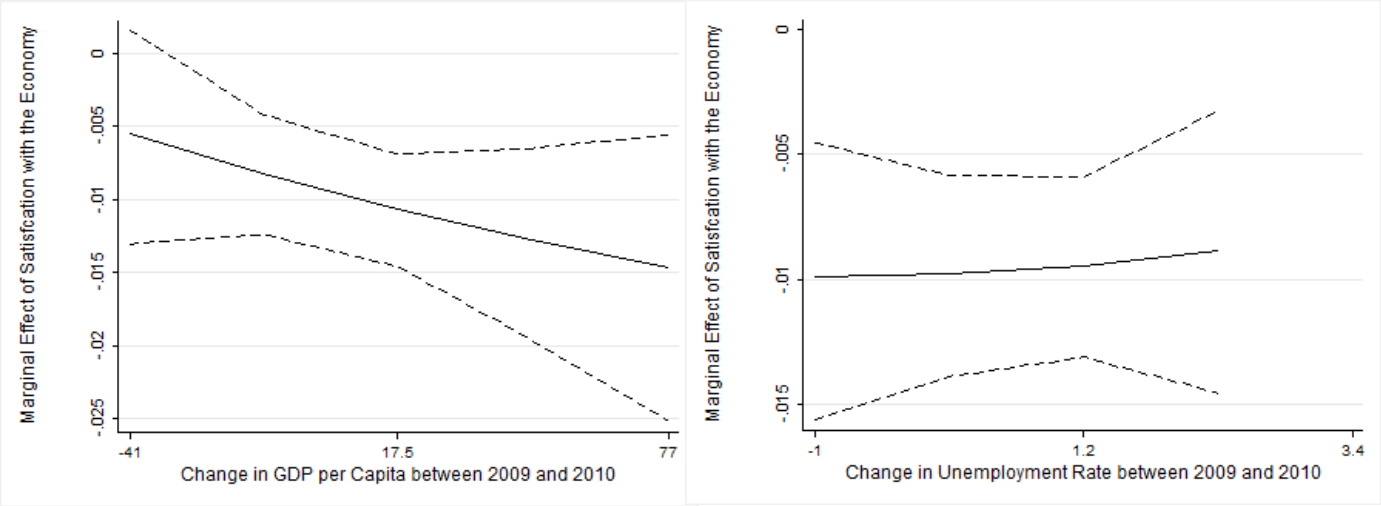
Table B: Descriptive statistics of variables included in the analysis of political participation from 2010 (Tables 3 and 4)

Variable	Number of Observations	Mean	Standard Deviation	Min.	Max.	Missings in %
<i>Dependent Variable</i>						
Institutionalised Political Participation	50,560	0.058	0.235	0	1	0.44
Non-institutionalised Political Participation	50,405	0.256	0.436	0	1	0.74
<i>Individual-Level Variables</i>						
Sex (Male =1)	50,760	0.457	0.498	0	1	0.04
Age	50,669	48.380	18.762	14	102	0.22
Level of Education						
Primary Education	50,536	0.132	0.338	0	1	0.48
Secondary Education (Ref.)	50,536	0.592	0.491	0	1	0.48
Tertiary Education	50,536	0.276	0.447	0	1	0.48
Satisfaction with income	50,112	2.800	0.928	1	4	1.32
Political Interest	50,525	2.318	0.921	1	4	0.50
Position within labour force						
In paid work (Ref.)	50,128	0.467	0.499	0	1	1.29
Student	50,128	0.090	0.286	0	1	1.29
Unemployed (< 2 years)	49,450	0.048	0.213	0	1	2.62
Unemployed (> 2 years)	49,450	0.012	0.108	0	1	2.62
Not in labour force	50,128	0.371	0.483	0	1	1.29
Urbanization	50,681	3.174	1.247	1	5	0.20
Satisfaction with economy	49,661	3.913	2.522	0	10	2.21
<i>Country-Level Variables</i>						
Change in unemployment rate (2009-2010)	26	1.000	1.296	-1	3.4	0
Change in GDP per capita (2009-2010)	26	2.293	24.877	-40.677	76.981	0
Average Institutionalised Participation (2002-2008)	26	0.070	0.029	0.023	0.161	0
Average Non-Institutionalised Participation (2002-2008)	26	0.271	0.154	0.081	0.587	0

Note: In total, the dataset contains 50,781 respondents in 26 countries.

Source: ESS Round 5: European Social Survey Round 5 Data 2010.

Figure A. Marginal effect of satisfaction with the economy on the probability to become involved in non-institutionalized political participation depending on change in economic indicators



Note: Effect of satisfaction with the economy on the probability of non-institutionalized political participation, depending on change in economic indicators, 2009-2010. Other continuous covariates and sex are set at the sample mean, categorical variables are set to their mode. Simulations were used to obtain confidence bands.

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Endnotes

¹ It has to be noted that in the 2012 ESS questionnaire, the question about being a member of a political party was no longer included. Therefore it was not possible to include the results of the 2012 wave in this analysis.

² In particular, this variable captures the potential future labour force, as it comprises not only respondents who indicated that they are in education but also respondents who are in community or military service.

³ This variable includes respondents who indicate that they are permanently sick or disabled, retired, or doing housework, looking after children or other persons.

⁴ The error variance in logit models is fixed to $\text{Var}(\epsilon | x) = \pi^2/3$. Respectively, the first –level residual variance σ_e^2 in multilevel logit models is by assumption $\sigma_e^2 = \pi^2/3 \approx 3.29$ (Snijders and Bosker 1999, 225).