

CONTEXTUAL DETERMINANTS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN DEMOCRATIC COUNTRIES¹

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INTRODUCTION

Political participation is described as one of the basic conditions of functioning democracy (Dahl 1998, Verba et al. 1995: 2, Norris 2002: 5), and the quality of democracy and its ability to connect citizens with political leaders has become an important political issue today. In this regard, question of what factors determine citizens political participation in democratic countries becomes highly relevant. The opening argument of this paper asserts that contemporary political participation research does not offer a satisfying answer to this question. When explaining political participation, the literature refers to individual resources such as money or education, political values, and activity in civil society that are seen as the main determinants of popular participation in politics (Armingeon 2007, Verba et al. 1995, Norris 2002, Dalton 2005: Chap. 3 and 4). This paper does not deny the significant role of these factors, but at the same time it warns that those factors alone cannot account for the whole puzzle of political participation. It argues that circumstances have an indisputable influence on political participation, and therefore a contextual perspective has to be introduced to the political participation research. Specifically, it will focus on contextual factors accounting for cross-country variation in political participation.

In order to specify the contextual determinants, the paper draws on social movement literature, particularly the Political Process Approach that provides a concept of political opportunity structure (mainly Kriesi et al. 1995). On this basis, this paper assumes that the

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level and the form of political participation in democracies are affected by institutional design of a respective state and prevailing strategies used by its political elites. Summed up, this paper tries to answer the question of why citizens of democratic countries participate in politics with reference not only to widely-studied individual characteristics, but also to the setting of the national political opportunity structure in a given country.

The paper will shortly review traditional explanations of political participation first. Then it will introduce contextual theory of political participation that is able to explain cross-country differences in political action. The section describing data and methods used will come after. Subsequently the analyses will be presented: first the cross-country differences in political participation will be displayed and then traditional theories of political participation will be tested (section individual level effect). Then bivariate analyses of contextual factors influence on political participation will be explored. After this examination complete multilevel model with contextual effects will be tested.

TRADITIONAL EXPLANATION OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

Why do people participate in politics? Researchers usually study social characteristics and political attitudes that are seen as predispositions of political participation, and involvement in social networks that implies availability of citizens to the request for participation (Armingeon 2007, Brady et al. 1995, Dalton 2005: Chap. 3 and 4, Norris 2002, Rosenstone and Hansen 2003, Teorell 2003, Verba et al. 1995).

Predispositions

As many studies have shown, people have to be predisposed to take part in politics (Brady et al. 1995, Verba et al. 1995, Verba et al. 1978, Armingeon 2007, Norris 2002, Rosenstone and Hansen 2003). Rosenstone and Hansen (2003) call these factors a personal aspect of participation. Norris (2002) talks about individual level determinants of political participation in this regard. More specifically, there are two types of predispositions related to political participation. These are individual resources such as education and money on the one hand and political attitudes and motivations such as political interest or subjective efficacy on the other hand. Verba, Scholzman and Brady (1995: 16, also Brady et al. 1995: 271) use labels “can’t” and “don’t want to” for these two types of predispositions as explanations of why people do not participate in politics.

The first type of predispositions – individual resources (“they can’t”) – consists of socio-economic status (SES) characteristics such as level of education, income and age as

explanatory factors. Verba and his colleagues (1995) claim that the individual level political activities differ in what resources they require to be performed. Simultaneously, these resources such as time, money and skills are unequally distributed in a society. As Rosenstone and Hansen (2003: 12) explain, people who have enough money, time and skills devote more resources to politics, since it is easier for them to afford it. Generally, already first studies have shown that the wealthier, middle-aged, educated, religious and married men (rather than women) are more likely to participate in politics than others (Armingeon 2007, Verba et al. 1995, Verba et al. 1978).

The second type of predispositions is political motivations and attitudes (“don’t want to”) that lead people to political participation (Pattie and Seyd 2003, Dalton 2004, for review, see Armingeon 2007). Researchers study a number of attitudes such as political interest (Armingeon 2007), political trust (Dalton 2004), strong political opinion, subjective efficacy (Rosenstone and Hansen 2003, Armingeon 2007) and the sense of citizen duty (Dalton 2008, Armingeon 2007) as the determinants of political participation. These studies show that people, who are more interested in politics, think that they are able to influence policy outcomes, place themselves at the ends of the left-right scale and feel citizen duty will be more involved in politics.

Mobilizing Channels

In addition to predispositions, researchers of political participation focus on social networks that are mostly studied through membership in voluntary associations. There are various theories explaining the well-established finding of the correlation between associational membership and political participation (Teorell 2003, Stolle 2007). Social capital theory is among the most prominent ones (Putnam 1995, 2000, for review, see Stolle 2007). Putnam (2000: 19) claims that social networks among individuals produce trust and reciprocity. He assumes that a higher level of social capital – activity in civil society that produces trust and reciprocity – leads to a higher level of political participation. However, other researchers have shown that this argument does not hold universally. Especially scholars, who included cases different from the US and Canada in their analyses as well, point out that the expected relationship between trust and political participation is not present (Norris 2002, Teorell 2003, Armingeon 2007).

A different approach views social networks as a means of political mobilization rather than a source of social capital. This approach emphasizes the role of ‘mobilizing agencies’ in Norris (2004) words such as political parties, civic groups, associations, churches and media

that recruit people to participate (Rosenstone and Hansen 2003, Norris 2002, Verba et al. 1995, Teorell 2003). Verba et al. (1995) mean exactly this type of explanation when they name the third reason of nonparticipation as “nobody asked.”

Rosenstone and Hansen (2003) distinguish between the direct and indirect types of mobilization. Direct mobilization includes canvassing on the streets, TV campaigning, direct mails and phone calls. Indirect mobilization takes place through social networks individuals are embedded to. Citizens are indirectly mobilized by their family members, playmates from their football team or in church they belong to. Involvement in social networks implies that a particular person is available and that s/he is reachable to the request for participation.

This paper will use groups membership index to indicate channels for mobilization. This additive index counts four values scale measuring activity in group (active member, inactive member, former member and not member) for three types of associations and one other category. Frequency of political discussion will be also included as a mobilizing channel. Again additive index counting frequency of political discussion with others and attempt to convince others of one’s political opinion.

TOWARDS CONTEXTUAL EXPLANATION OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

By and large, the above presented explanatory model does more or less a good job in explaining the differences among individuals in one context. However, it does not have much to say about variation in political participation over time, or across countries, nor can it explain why this explanatory model works better in one country than in another one. More specifically, the individual resources cannot account for differences among countries as there is very similar distribution of, for example, age and gender in all democratic countries. Simultaneously, social networks are not sufficient to explain contextual variation because they are nothing more than channels through which people are available and can be mobilized. These channels, such as membership in voluntary associations, are rather stable over time and the fact that people are available through them does not necessarily mean that these channels are employed permanently. Even those people with a high value on this factor do not demonstrate all the time or sign five petitions a day but do so only in some situations. These “situations” therefore are exactly what have to become an object of study. Precisely speaking, the overall context of political participation has to be taken into account to explain political participation as a whole.

Contextual variation in political participation activities other than voting has not yet been an object of study (but see Dalton and van Sicle 2005, Rosenstone and Hansen 2003,

applied to political involvement see van Deth and Elff 2004, applied to membership in political organizations see Morales 2009). This perspective has been widely applied only to voter turnout explanation (Blais 2000, Jackman and Miller 1995, Norris 2002) and not to analysis of other forms of political participation like campaigning, taking part in demonstrations, or signing a petition. Exactly this theoretical gap in political participation research presents the main focus of this paper.

In order to give a contextual explanation of political participation, the paper draws on the social movement literature. Authors working within this approach have introduced a widely applied tool for the study of social movements/popular contention – the concept of political opportunity structure (POS). The political opportunities can be defined according to Tarrow (1998:76-77) as “consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success or failure.” A great discussion accompanies this concept. Some authors criticize its ambiguity or its unsatisfactory application, or question its explanatory power (Gamson and Meyer 1996: 275, Goodwin and Jasper 2003); others work on clarification of this concept (Kriesi 2004, McAdam 1996, Meyer 2004, Meyer and Minkoff 2004, Tarrow 1996).

Generally, there are very little quantitative studies and no standard measurement of POS exist. The vast majority of research that uses the POS framework is case studies that explain the *development* of one social movement/contentious mobilization in one country (Costain 1992, Tarrow 1989, McAdam 1982, Meyer and Minkoff 2004). This longitudinal design sees aspects that change over time in one polity, or one policy-issue area, as political opportunity determinants, while keeping the general structure constant. A few other available studies are concerned with cross-country comparison of social movements or contentious politics (Kitschelt 1986, Kriesi et al. 1995). They compare overall opportunity structures across national polities.

Although longitudinal changes in political participation are also important, this paper focuses only on cross-country explanation. The reason is that the overall context in which participation takes place is supposed to have significant impact on its level. This overall context is deeply rooted in the national polity characterized by specific institutional settings and national political culture. Specifically, using the POS framing, the question is whether a system is *generally* open for most of its citizens that can take part in politics.

There is no study focused on an explanation of cross-country variation in individual level political participation (but see Dalton and Sicile 2005). However, a handful of available

contentious politics studies concern themselves with a comparison of social movements or contention politics across national polities (Kitschelt 1986, Kriesi et al. 1995). These studies develop in Tarrow's (1996: 43-45) words the "state-centered" perspective on political opportunities, which investigates the influence of overall institutional design of a political system on forms of collective action. A number of authors point out that explanations that are provided by the political opportunity structure framework are the most suitable for purposes of these cross-national comparisons (Koopmans 1999).

This paper draws on work by Kriesi and his collaborators (1995) who studied contentious politics in four West European countries (France, Germany, Netherlands, and Switzerland). To account for the level and the form of social movements' activities, these authors introduced two conceptual sets of national polity determinants: *formal political institutions* and *prevailing strategies* (Kriesi et al. 1995, for review see Kriesi 1999).

Political institutions

Regarding political institutions, Kriesi et al. (1995) claimed that the openness of the political system is a function of the state's strength that "implies a multiplication of state actors and, therefore, of points of access and decision making" (Kriesi et al. 1995: 28). The authors distinguish between weak and strong states, explaining that weak states that do not concentrate power in one center are characterized by a greater degree of formal access and a more limited capacity to act (Kriesi et al. 1995: 25). This environment creates a facilitative effect as more access points connote a higher number of possible channels to influence politics, and lowers state capacity to act, so that the costs for political participation decrease (Kriesi et al. 1995: 41). As a result, this design encourages a higher level of political action and will facilitate more moderate types of action that are low-cost. At the same time, thanks to institutionally ensured channels of engagement participation is likely to be successful.

On the contrary, in a strong state, activists face a powerful centralized authority that has a high capacity to act and channels for involvement are not institutionalized (Kriesi et al. 1995: 45). This situation largely increases the costs of political participation that leads to a low overall level of political participation and citizens will have to use more costly strategies to affect politics, which means protest types of action. The chances of success are also low, as the state usually has enough capacity to deal with challengers.

Kriesi and his collaborators' analysis actually shows that weak states such as Switzerland experienced a higher level of moderate types of action such as signing a petition or taking part in a campaign, and a lower level of protest types like taking part in a

demonstration or a strike. The case that represents a strong state in their sample is France that displays the lowest overall level of mobilization and the highest portion of protest types of action (Kriesi et al. 1995: 45). On this basis we can hypothesize the influence that the strength of the state will have on individual political participation.

The institutional design hypotheses:

The weaker an state is, the higher the overall level of political participation.

The weaker an state is, the more moderate types of political participation and the lower the level of protest types of political participation.²

Prevailing Strategies

As pointed out above, Kriesi et al. (1995) take into account also cultural aspect of political opportunity structure that they study under the notion of prevailing strategies. Some authors criticized the original studies of POS that emphasized the formal institutional design and overlooked a cultural dimension of the environment (Goodwing and Jasper 1999). They argue that not only institutional (formal) opportunities are important for contentious politics, but also cultural circumstances such as existing culture beliefs and practices matter.

Kriesi and his colleagues' concept of prevailing strategies reflects the dominant cultural model of "procedures that members of the political system employ when they are dealing with challengers" (Kriesi et al. 1995: 33). They distinguish between states that employ exclusive strategies, which are confrontational and polarizing, and states that utilize integrative procedures, which are facilitative, cooperative and rely on integrative strategies (Kriesi et al. 1995: 33-34). Inclusive strategies lead to a higher overall level of mobilization and more moderate types of action as confirmed in the case of Switzerland. They explain that integrative regimes have a facilitative effect, as they rely more on cooperation with non-state actors or even subsidize the non-governmental sector, and are friendly to public engagement (Kriesi et al. 1995: 41). The costs of participation are lowered this way, as informal channels for participation are open and engagement is welcomed. At the same time, inclusive states send a message that they are ready to respond to citizens' demands that are expressed by their action. The success chances are thus high in inclusive regimes. This high likelihood of success increases the overall level of mobilization and leads to more moderate action.

² In this paper only the hypothesis connected to overall political participation will be tested.

Exclusive strategies, on the other hand, imply lower level of mobilization in general and a higher level of protest types of action which is represented by France in their analysis. The reason is that exclusive states do not facilitate a high level of citizens' engagement in politics. They do not support people getting involved in politics and do not provide them with proper channels to take part. In this situation, when people can not anticipate positive reactions from the political system, the costs of participation are much higher than in inclusive states, as citizen engagement is not enabled by the political regime. As a result, citizens participate less than in inclusive states and only implement more costly protest forms of action (like demonstrations) to have their voices heard. Additionally, success is unlikely in exclusive states, as political elites do not "care about" policy projects coming from the outside of the state. To be successful, activists' goals have to be forced on to the regime by (more costly) protest types of action, as other means are neither available nor effective.

On this basis, the presupposed influence of prevailing strategies on political participation can be derived.

*The more integrative a state is, the higher the overall level of political participation will be. The more integrative a state is the more moderate and the lower the level of protest types of political participation will occur.*³

DATA AND METHODS

This theoretical model of political participation, which includes more levels of explanation, requires multi-level design and appropriate statistical techniques. Hence multilevel modeling will be used in this paper. Multilevel approach expects that there are hierarchical effects influencing first level phenomenon (see Hox 2002, Kreft and Leeuw 2006). Specifically in this study, the outcome and traditional factors influencing political participation measured are measure at the individual level of respondents (first level). At the same time the individuals are nested in countries that are characterized by contextual factors (second level) that should influence political participation of individuals. Multilevel modeling using HLM6 will be employed here since it is able to analyze multi-level data.

The individual level data come from international individual survey ISSP 2004. The number of included countries is 23. The county-level characteristics measuring political opportunity structure were supplemented into this data set. The Democracy Time-series Data database was used for Fiscal decentralization and Effective number of parties (see Norris

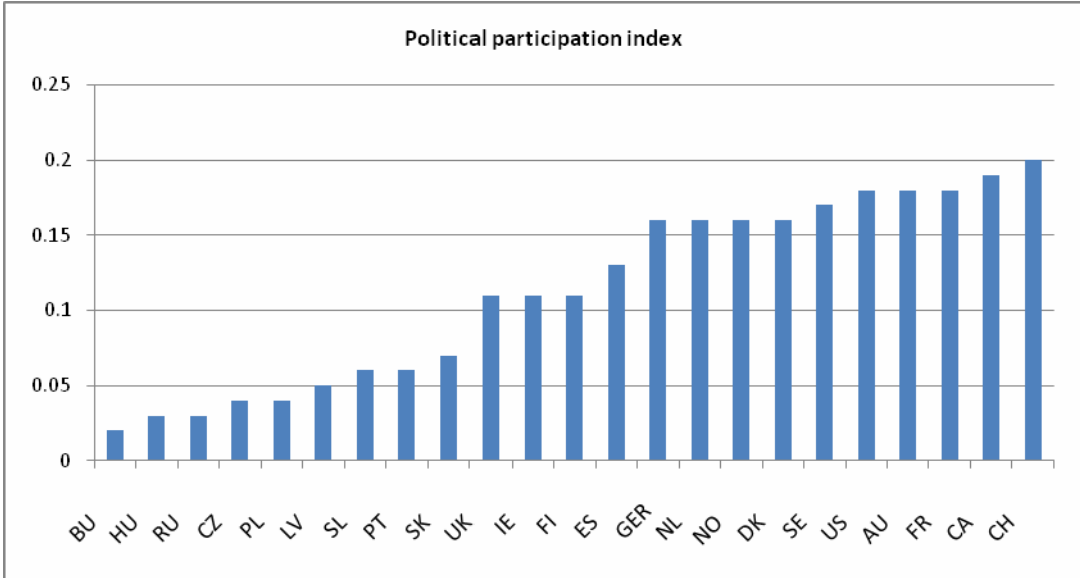
^{3 3} In this paper only the hypothesis connected to overall political participation will be tested.

2008). Political Constraints indicator comes from POLCON Database (see Henisz 2002). Corporateness was coded according to Jepperson (2002).

ANALYSES

This research defines political participation according to Teorell et al. (2007: 336) and Rosenstone and Hansen (2003: 4) as “every action of ordinary citizens directed toward influencing some political outcomes: distribution of social goods and norms.” Drawing on this definition various types of activities fall under political participation from attending demonstration, over boycotting to contacting politicians. Although voting also belongs to political participation according to this definition, this paper will not include this type of activity since it is inherently different from all of the other types of political participation and it is supposed to have different structural-level determinants (Blais 2000, Jackman and Miller 1995, Norris 2002). Graph 1 presents a basic description of political participation in North American and European democracies under study. Specifically it shows mean of Political participation index made of nine activities covered by ISSP 2004.

Graph 1: Political participation in western democracies



Source: ISSP 2004.

Mean of Political participation index (min=0, max=1). Additive index of 9 activities undertaken in the previous 12 months. Activities: Signed a petition, boycotted or deliberately bought certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons, took part in demonstration, attended a political meeting or rally, contacted, or attended to contact, a political or a civil servant to express your views, donated money or raised funds for a social or political activity, contacted or appeared in the media to express your views, joint an internet political forum or discussion group, belong to a political party.

As we can see the difference in average political participation across countries is not trivial. The Swiss that score on the highest level of political participation (0,2) are ten times more active than the least engaged Bulgarians (0,02). We can see that post-communist countries together with Portugal and United Kingdom belong to group of countries with lowest average level of political participation. Ireland, Finland and Spain seem to be second group of countries whose citizens engage in politics not so much. Citizens of other old democracies participate in politics on average more with USA, Austria, France, Canada and Switzerland at the top.

Traditional model of political participation (Individual level effects)

Previous section indicated that there is a difference among countries in political participation. This notion is statistically supported by the Intra-class Correlation Coefficient (ICC) of 13 % displayed at the bottom of table 1. The ICC figures a proportion of variance in political participation accounted for by country membership (Kreft and Leeuw 2006). Simply said, it clearly shows that the national level explanation of political participation cannot be overlooked since some variation in political participation is caused by the national level factors.

Model 1, 2 and 3 displayed at the table 1 tests predispositions (resources and attitudes) and mobilizing channels. These models are already multi-level ones since they control for variation at the country level, however only individual level factors are introduced into the analysis. Since this paper is not primarily interested in individual level explanation the interpretation will focus only on influential factors that matter for political participation the most.⁴

Model 3 tests the whole traditional model including predispositions and mobilizing channels factors. Model 3 Betas indicating the power of individual explanatory factors show that membership in social groups and political discussion are the strongest explanatory factors. The relationship between political participation and both indicators of mobilizing channels is positive which means that more “channels” lead to more participation. Regarding predispositions, the most influential political attitude factor is unsurprisingly interest in politics. People who are more interested in politics also tend to participate more in politics.

⁴ The second reason why the interpretation will focus on the explanatory power of individual independent variables is also that all of the introduced factors are significant thanks to the large number of cases included in the analysis. In this situation even very weak effects appear to be significant but do not add much to the explained variance. From this reason also Beta coefficients will be interpreted since they describe explanatory power of individual factors included in a respective model.

Age included in resources is the last influential factor. We can see that the relationship is negative which means that younger people participate more in politics. The other factors that should effect political participation according to traditional theory are significant but not as powerful as the four above mentioned. Regarding the explained variance the traditional model was able to account for 16 percent of variation at the individual level and at the same time managed to decrease unexplained variation at the national level as well (38 %). It seems that some of the individual level factors also vary cross-nationally.

Table 1: Predispositions, Mobilizing channels and political participation

	Model 0	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
variables	B	B	Beta	B	Beta	B	Beta
intercept	0,115	0,119		0,110		0,102	
PREDISPOSITIONS							
SES							
woman		-0,003	-0,010	0,012	0,036	0,018	0,054
ISCO		-0,001	-0,180	-0,001	-0,105	-0,001	-0,060
Years of Education		0,001	0,057	0,001	0,049	0,001	0,048
Age		-0,001	-0,063	-0,001	-0,095	-0,001	-0,095
MOTIVATIONS							
Citizen Duty				0,016	0,088	0,010	0,055
External Efficacy				0,010	0,063	0,006	0,042
Social Trust				0,019	0,084	0,014	0,060
Political Interest				0,042	0,212	0,021	0,106
Internal Efficacy				0,015	0,097	0,011	0,067
political trust				0,008	0,043	0,008	0,042
MOBILIZING CHANNELS							
Group membership						0,061	0,264
Political discussions						0,031	0,154
Random part							
σ^2_e	0,02439	0,02360		0,02439		0,02046	
σ^2_{u0}	0,00371	0,00319		0,00371		0,00138	
Unexplained variance 1 st level	86,8%						
Explained variance 1 st level		3,2%		7,7%		16,1%	
Unexplained variance 2 nd level	13,2%						
Explained variance at 2 nd level		14,0%		41,5%		62,8%	
Total explained variance	0%	4,6%		12,2%		22,3%	

Significance is not displayed since all factors and variance components are significant at $p < 0,001$.

Bivariate Analysis of Contextual Effect

The analyses presented above showed the effect of individual level factors on political participation controlling for the country level. About a half of country level variance remains

unexplained and possible country differences in the effect that individual level factors can have on political participation have not been explored. As stated in the theoretical part of the paper this study will try to find contextual explanation in political opportunity structure framework. Regarding national context the institutional design and prevailing strategies have been introduced as the main dimensions of national political opportunity structure. Institutional design refers to multiplication of state actors and therefore is related to the degree of formal access and the capacity of the state to act (see above). Kriesi et al. (1995: 28) claim that strength of the state is a function of two factors: territorial centralization and horizontal separation of power that includes separation among powers and separation within powers.

Institutional Design - Territorial Centralization

Territorial decentralization is generally seen as transfer of power, resources and decision-making from the central government to local and regional authorities (Schneider 2003: 33, Kriesi et al. 1995: 28). Political opportunity structure proponents suppose that with growing territorial decentralization the number of access points for political action increases and hence we can expect more popular mobilization in decentralized polities.

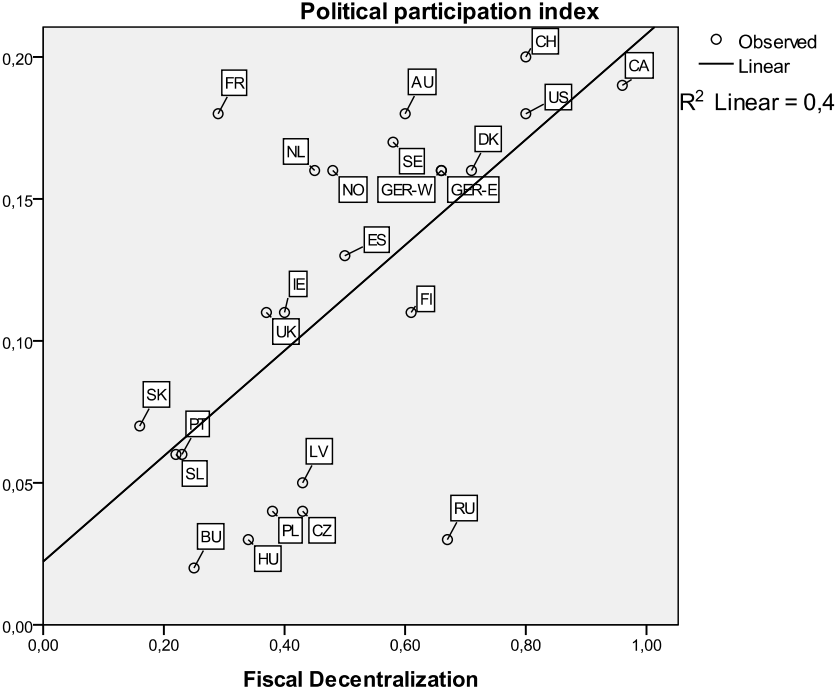
Common way to measure territorial centralization is to distinguished between federal and unitary states. However, as some authors have shown (e.g. Norris 2008), these two categories do not precisely indicate the level of decision-making decentralization since dramatic differences exist within the two groups in power that the local political authorities actually have. Hence more sophisticated measure of territorial decentralization are needed. Schneider (2003) developed a measure of three related but separate dimensions of decentralization: fiscal, administrative and political decentralization. This article uses fiscal decentralization that indicates the share of subnational expenditures and revenues based on data from IMF/WB (Schneider 2003: 36). This measure meets the purpose of what is meant by territorial decentralization the most since it measures actual power the local and regional authorities have. The stronger a state is, the more centralized it is; this in turn means that local and regional authorities distribute less money.⁵

Figure 2 displays a relation between fiscal decentralization of a state and political participation. As we can see, the relationship is positive, strong, and linear. The cases of Russia and France seem to be outliers. If these cases are deleted from the analysis, the

⁵ The values of Fiscal Decentralizations are factor scores based on confirmatory facotr analysis and standardized to range from 0 to 1.0 (see Schneider 2003).

relationship is even stronger (explained variance increases to 0,66). Generally, our hypothesis seems to be supported for now: the higher decentralization of a state the higher overall level of political participation. In other words, weaker states in the sense of vertical centralization imply higher citizens activity in politics.

Graph 2: Political participation and Fiscal Decentralization



Institutional Design - Horizontal Separation of Powers

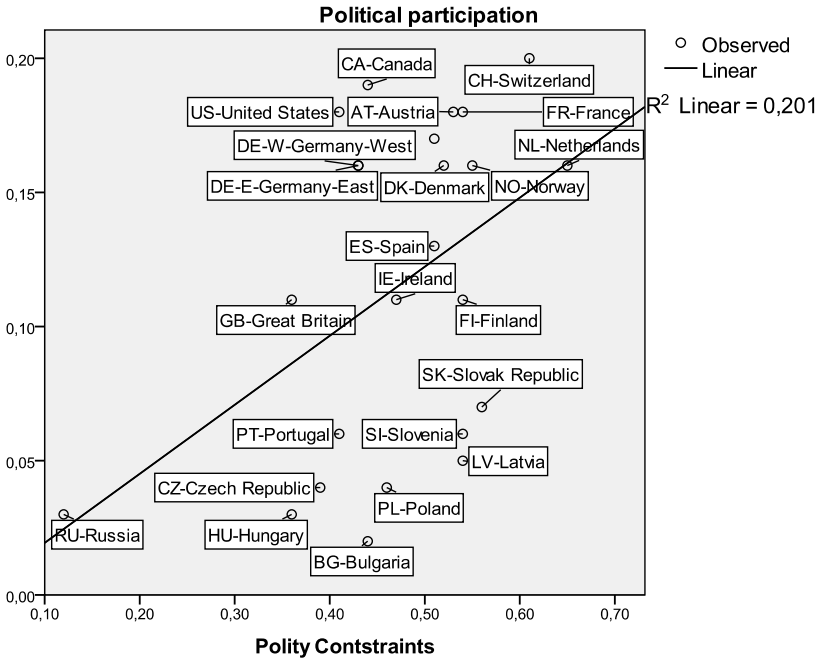
Separation of powers refers to horizontal de/centralization of the state. The number of access points and capacity to act is indicated by the level of separation of power among parliament, the executive, and the judiciary and by separation of powers within each of these branches (Kriesi et al. 1995: 28-29).

Separation of powers is usually classified into three types of systems: parliamentarism, presidentialism and semipresidentialism. However, like in case of federalism-unitary state typology, this classification is criticized that it is not able to detect actual separation of power among individual state bodies (e.g. Norris 2008, Elgie 1996, Tsebelis 1995). Moreover there is not much variation among democratic countries using this simple three-category classification. This research has to use more detailed measures of power separation that is able to capture number of more or less independent power centers at the horizontal level of a state. For these purposes a large number of scales and indexes measuring various aspects of

presidentialism and parliamentarism can be used. This paper makes use of Political Constraint indicator that measures separation of powers in more detail (Henisz 2000). Henisz’s indicator captures both formal and effective separation of powers within a political system. It is construed by number of independent veto points in the system and measures also effective power of these points that is dependent on actual political affiliation of specific actors in these positions (Henisz 2000: 5).

Figure 2 displays a relation between political participation and horizontal separation among powers measured by Political Constraints indicator. As we can see, Russia is an extreme case that strongly raises the linear relationship and the effect of political constraints on citizen participation in politics. Still, even when Russia is excluded the positive relationship remains. Generally, the expected influence of higher number of independent power centers in political system on overall level of political participation seems to be supported. There is evident positive relationship between horizontal powers separation and level of citizens activity in politics. What is striking is that as in the case of territorial centralization the effect of political opportunity structure on political participation seems to be linear. Somewhat surprisingly there is not some value of political opportunity structure openness in which political participation would stop further increasing.

Graph 3: Political participation and Separation among Powers (Political Constraint)

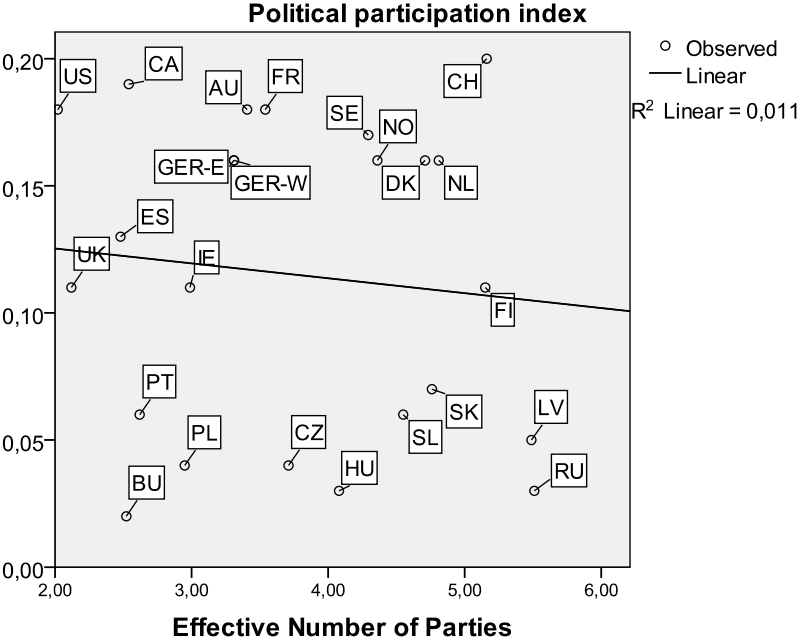


Institutional Design - Separation within Powers

Regarding separation of powers within the executive and parliament, political parties should play the crucial role in explaining social movements' mobilization (Kitschelt 1986, Kriesi et al. 1995: 29). A higher number of parties in parliament means a higher number of access points to the political system. The effective number of parties can be used as an indicator of parliamentary separation of powers (van Deth and Elf 2001, in relation to social movements, see Özler 2008).

As displayed in graph 3 the separation within powers does not influence overall political participation very much. Effective number of parties has very weak or nonexistent effect on political participation. Contrary to horizontal and vertical separation of state institutions presented above, the number of targets that are available in parliament for political action does not make people participate more or less in politics.

Graph 4: Political Participation and Effective number of parties



Prevailing strategies

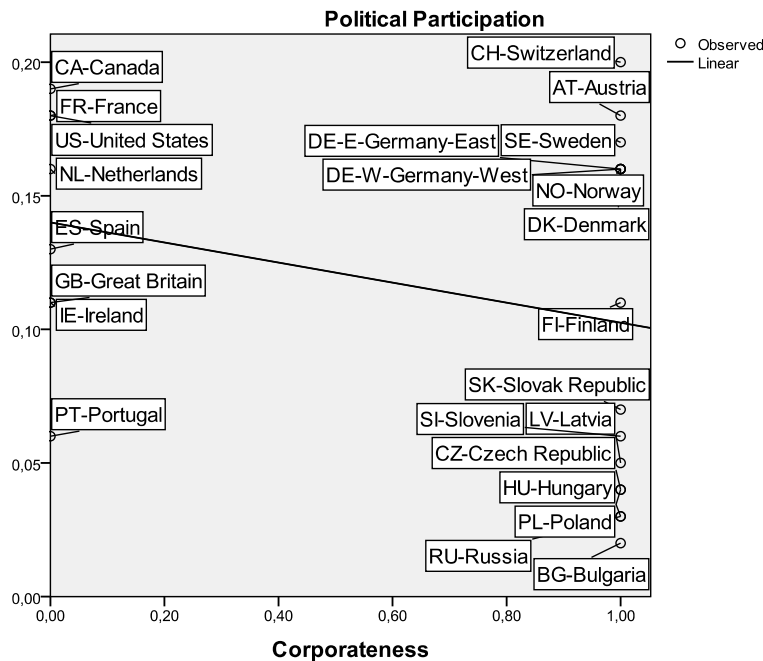
Kriesi et al. (1995) describe prevailing strategies as dominant procedures that are used by political elites when they are dealing with opponents. This concept is the least clear and Kriesi et al. do not provide a precise definition. The prevailing procedures of the state can be seen also as the strategies used when the state deals with civil society, various associations and voluntary actions of citizens etc. In this respect, indicators such as the level of corporatism, strength of trade unions, or portion of state budget designed for the support of the civil society

organizations can be taken into consideration. Van Deth and Elff (2001) measure “structure of interest mediation” by summary indicator composed by Lijphart’s index of interest group pluralism/corporatism and Lane and Erssons’s Consociationism and Corporatism indexes. Although these indicators are widely used to indicate corporatism or interest representation they cannot be used in this analysis since the post-communist countries have not been included in the measurement.

This study applies strategy of Schofer and Fourcade-Gourinchas (2001) who study “corporateness”, developed by Jepperson’s (2002), to account for cross-country variation in associational membership. Drawing on historical difference in state consolidation paths, Jepperson distinguishes between corporate and non-corporate states (called associational societies). Simply said, in the first group of countries corporate structures (based on class, occupation etc.) have remained and social life is based on these organized groups and collectives. In the second group of polities corporate structures were weakened and more integrated societies based on individualism rather than on collectivities emerged (Jepperson 2002: 65). According to Schofer and Fourcade-Gourinchas (2001: 813-814), in corporate countries a state supports collective actors and corporate structures work as intermediary institutions that encourage social participation.

When we look at graph four we can see rather opposite results in case of political participation. Corporateness seems to be connected with lower political participation. Possible problem is that all of the post-communist countries together fall into the category of corporate states and at the same time show low political participation. If post-communist countries are excluded the relation between corporateness and participation is opposite and weaker.

Graph 5: Political participation and Corporateness



Multilevel Explanation of Political Participation

Aggregate level bivariate analysis presented above has shown relationship between political participation and contextual factors. Drawing on this analysis, territorial centralization, separation among powers and prevailing strategies matter for citizens activity in politics. As regards institutional setting design, both indicators fiscal decentralization and political constraints have positive effect on the level of political participation as expected by the theory that hypothesizes higher level of citizens political engagement with more open political opportunities structures. Different results were shown for prevailing strategies. In this case the bivariate analysis showed opposite effect of state inclusiveness than the theory expected. On average countries with high corporateness system score lower on political participation index than countries with low corporateness. Finally, separation within powers, namely number of target points in the parliament, did not seem to play much role for political participation.

Table 2 displays multi-level linear regression that includes together with above presented individual level factors also the contextual determinants. The continuous factors were introduced into the analysis as grand-centered (mean equal to zero). The intercept is then a grand mean indicating average political participation from the total sample for people who score average values on the independent factors.

From model 4 to model 6 three contextual factors are introduced into the analysis one by one. We can see that fiscal decentralization matters for individual level political participation even though influential individual level factors are controlled. Fiscal

decentralization is a strong factor that achieves Beta coefficient value similar to other explanatory variables. It is positive which means that political participation is higher in countries that are more decentralized. The very same interpretation holds for political constraints. It actually matters for political participation and has expected direction: the more political constraints, i.e. independent veto players, the more political participation when controlling for predispositions and mobilizing channels. The effect of corporateness is also significant. However, it is weaker and contrary to theory negative. People with average age, average political interest and average involvement in mobilizing channels participate more in politics in non-corporate states than in corporate ones. This result should be treated in caution since it is not sure what this indicator actually measures (see above). For further analysis it will not be included. Another reason is that it will help general reliability of the model since the number of countries is low and the number of possible explanatory factors is limited.

After the examination of the direct effect that the political opportunities structure has on political participation the random slope of the most influential individual level factors – mobilizing channels – was explored. Tests of random slopes for group membership and political discussion, which means that the effects of these factors can vary among countries, were significant. In other words, it means that effect of mobilizing channels on political participation is stronger in some countries than in others. The question is why. Drawing on social movement theory, we can expect that POS can be the national characteristic that influences the effect of mobilizing channels. As mentioned in theoretical discussion, social movements and other mobilizing agencies such as politicians or friends are supposed to mobilize individuals into political action. POS theory was primarily developed just for this type of actors, specifically social movements, and drawing on it we should expect these mobilizing agents to act according to the openness of political opportunity structure also.

Of course, we cannot test the effect of mobilizing agents behavior since we do not measure it. However we manage to measure mobilizing channels that are employed for popular mobilization according to the theory. Model 7 brings the results. With the introduction of random slopes and interaction effects, the model tests the common influence of contextual and individual level factors on the outcome. It also examines the effect of contextual factors on the random slope of the individual level explanatory variables. Simply said, we can say how much the national level factor accounts for varied effect of specific individual level independent variable.

Section Cross-level effects in Table 2 displays significant interaction effects of mobilizing channels indicators and institutional design factors (Appendix shows these effects

graphically). As we can see, all of Beta coefficients for these interactions are really strong and positive. Specifically, the effect of membership in groups and associations grows with fiscal decentralization of a country. In other words, involvement in civil society groups plays a bigger role for political participation if someone lives in a country characterized by vertical decentralization than in centralized one. As shown in row Explained variance for random slope membership, the fiscal decentralization is responsible for 50 percent of membership effect variation among countries. Regarding group membership, the horizontal separation among powers did not have a significant effect on its random slope.

Table 2: Multilevel model of political participation

variables	Model 4		Model 5		Model 6		Model 7	
	B	Beta	B	Beta	B	Beta	B	Beta
intercept	0,110		0,110		0,130		0,121	
PREDISPOSITIONS								
SES								
Age	-0,001	-0,110	-0,001	-0,110	-0,001	-0,110	-0,001	-0,106
Motivations								
Political Interest	0,026	0,130	0,026	0,130	0,026	0,130	0,025	0,129
MOBILIZING CHANNELS								
Group membership	0,066	0,283	0,066	0,283	0,066	0,282	0,061	0,262
Political discussions	0,033	0,162	0,033	0,162	0,033	0,162	0,034	0,171
CONTEXTUAL EFFECTS								
Fiscal Decentralization	0,093	0,110	0,101	0,119	0,100	0,118	0,105	0,123
Political Constraints			0,145	0,111	0,143	0,108	0,109	0,083
Corporateness					-0,030	-0,086		
CROSS-LEVEL EFFECTS								
Membership*Fiscal Decent.							0,042	0,156
Pol. Discussion* Fiscal Decent.							0,068	0,267
Pol. Discussion *Pol. Constraints							0,081	0,242
Random part								
σ^2_e	0,01958		0,01958		0,01958		0,01908	
σ^2_{u0}	0,00108		0,00087		0,00067		0,0098	
$\sigma^2_{u \text{ membership}}$							0,00063-0,0003	
$\sigma^2_{u \text{ pol. discussion}}$							0,00058-0,00018	
Explained variance 1 st level	19,7%		19,7%		19,7%		21,8%	
Explained variance at 2 nd level	70,9%		76,5%		81,9%		73,6%	
Expl. var. random slope discussion							69%	
Expl. var. random slope membership							52,4%	
Total explained variance	26,5%		27,2%		28,0%		30,6%	

Significance is not displayed since all factors and variance components are significant at $p = 0,05$.

In case of political discussion we can see significant interaction effects with both institutional design indicators. Political discussion leads to more political participation in more decentralized countries as well as in countries with more political constraints. In other words, for people with average age and political interest, political discussion brings different results (more political participation) in more decentralized countries with more veto players at horizontal level than in centralized countries. Moreover, these two POS indicators managed to explain over 75 percents of political discussion random slope variance among countries.

The other important finding is that contextual factors keep their significance and still matter for political participation although interaction effects are introduced. It means that

political opportunity structure has its independent direct effect on political participation and does not happen only through mobilizing channels as displayed in theoretical model

CONCLUSIONS

The goal of this paper was to present more complete theory of political participation that would incorporate contextual perspective. The paper demonstrated that political context has to be taken into account not only from theoretical reasons but also because of empirical findings showing that country level variation in individual political participation exists. Together with traditional explanations such as predispositions and mobilizing channels the contextual theory of political participation was presented. Drawing mainly on social movement theory and its concept of political opportunity structure cross-country explanatory factors of National context were introduced. The paper then focused on National context that was divided at conceptual level according to Kriesi et al. (1995) into Institutional Design and Prevailing strategies. The theory expected openness of political opportunity structures in both of these dimensions to increase overall level of political participation.

After the descriptive part, test of traditional model of political participation and aggregate level bivariate analyses, the full multilevel model of political participation was tested. The analysis showed that type of polity where one lives matters for his/her political participation. Both dimensions of National context Institutional design and Prevailing strategies significantly effect political participation. Specifically, with growing territorial decentralization and growing horizontal separation among powers (Institutional design) and in corporate countries (Prevailing strategies) people participate more in politics. Moreover, the analysis showed that Institutional design characteristics influence the individual level explanatory variables included as mobilizing channels. Specifically, higher involvement in mobilizing channels has a higher influence on political participation if someone lives in a country with more open political opportunity structure (more decentralized and more horizontal veto players). In other words, these networks such as membership in associations or political discussions work differently in various contexts. This finding could point at a different role that mobilizing agents such as social movements and other actors play in different institutional settings.

LITERATURE

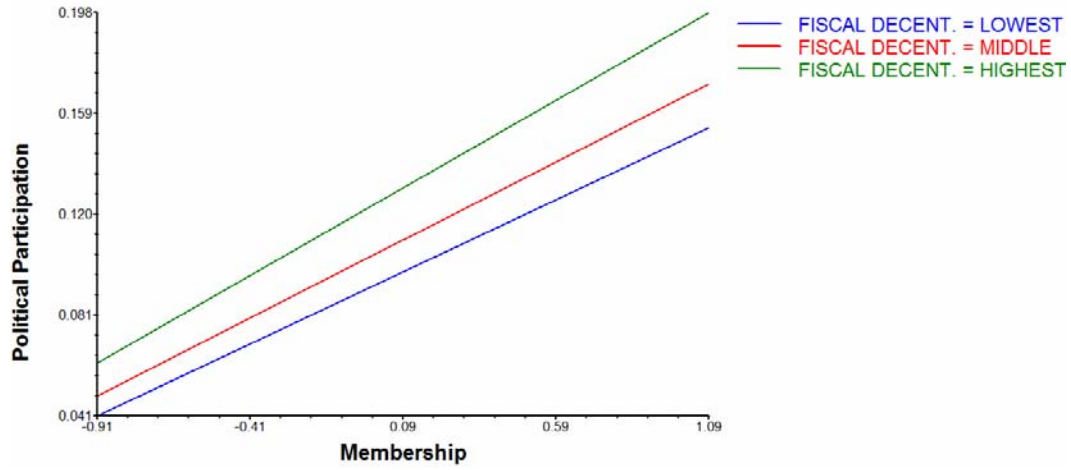
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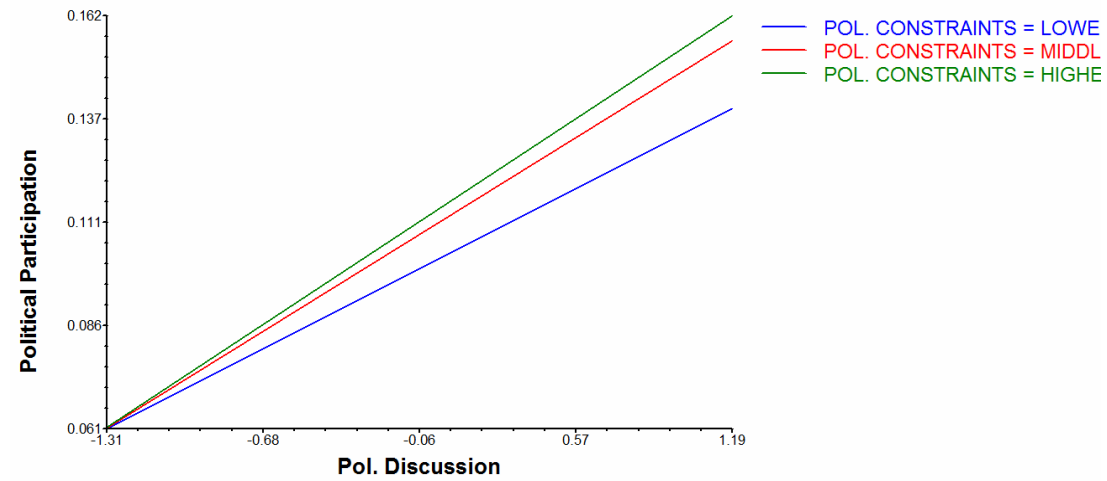
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APPENDIX

Graph 1: Varied effect of Group membership on Political Participation in 3 groups of Countries by Fiscal decentralization



Graph 2: Varied effect of Political discussion on Political Participation in 3 groups of countries by Political Constraints



Graph 1: Varied effect of Political discussion on Political Participation in 3 groups of Countries by Fiscal decentralization

