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RESEARCH ARTICLE

POLITICAL DISSATISFACTIONS AND CITIZEN INVOLVEMENT
Political participation in Europe during the early stages of the economic crisis

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the links between three kinds of political dissatisfaction and four types of political participation during the early stages of the economic crisis in 2008-2009. Since economic crisis exacerbates negative political attitudes and thereby strains the legitimacy of the political system, it is important to examine how citizens convey their grievances to political decision makers during such crisis. Recent decades have witnessed changes in patterns of political participation entailing that citizens abstain from traditional political participation in favor of non-institutionalized activities, but the implications for democracy are disputed since it is unclear what drives non-institutionalized participation. To ascertain what the changes mean for democracy during times of economic crisis, it is helpful to distinguish different kinds of political dissatisfaction with diverse implications for democracy. The data comes from the fourth round of the European Social Survey and include a total of 47489 respondents in 25 European democracies. The results suggest that only some kinds of political dissatisfaction affect the propensity for political participation while others lead to passivity. Additionally, political dissatisfaction is not necessarily a major driving force behind the popularity of non-institutionalized participation since satisfied citizens are also involved in these.

KEYWORDS: Democracy, Economic crisis, Political disenchantment, Political dissatisfaction, Political participation

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1. Introduction

Even before the recent economic downturn became a reality in Europe, the negative prognoses caused people to worry about their future economic safety. This also potentially impaired the functioning of representative democracy since economic turmoil exacerbates negative political attitudes (Stoker 2006). Already before the economic downturn most European countries had experienced growing levels of political dissatisfaction and the economic crisis further decreased support for the political systems (Armingeon and Guthmann 2014).

To ensure that no demands go unnoticed, which could further exacerbate the initial dissatisfaction; it is imperative that political decision makers remain attentive to all grievances during economic crisis. This makes it important to study patterns of political participation since these activities are the primary mechanism whereby political demands are channeled into political decision making (Christensen 2013). Political decision makers can ease the concerns by remaining attentive and give all demands due concern, even though it is impossible to accommodate all demands (Esaiasson and Narud 2013).

Economic hardship provides incentives for collective action (Gamson 1968; Barnes, Kaase et al. 1979), but what matters is not only that dissatisfied citizens mobilize, how they do so is also of importance. Recent decades have seen changing patterns of political participation that entail decreasing levels of voter turnout and involvement in political parties combined with a concurrent increase in participation in elite-challenging protest activities (Barnes, Kaase et al. 1979; Norris 2002; Stolle et al. 2005). While some see the changes as positive for democracy (Inglehart 1997; Rosanvallon 2008), the changes have caused concern among scholars and practitioners. Traditional political activities are inherently connected to the proper functioning of representative democracy, but their replacements frequently occur outside the formal political arena and are less obviously politically relevant activities (Micheletti and McFarland 2011; Esaiasson and Narud 2013; van Deth 2014). Political decision makers therefore do not pay equal attention to all forms of political participation (Hooghe and Marien 2014), which is part of the reason why the peripheral activities are unable to sustain the proper functioning of representative democracy (Stoker 2006; Mair 2006; Hay 2007; White and Ypi 2010).

While negative political attitudes are recognized as a leading cause for the changes in political participation (Inglehart 1997; Norris 1999; Rosanvallon 2008), it remains unclear what kinds of political dissatisfaction are channeled into the political decision making through political participation. To understand what various political activities entail for democracy, it is helpful to consider political dissatisfaction a question of kind

rather than degree. Satisfied citizens who engage in political action do not question representative democracy as such, whereas similar activities driven by discontent with the functioning of the system pose a challenge to the viability of the system, especially during times of crisis.

This study therefore examines the links between four attitudinal profiles and four kinds of political participation during the early phases of the global economic crisis that started 2007. The data are from the fourth round of the European Social Survey from 2008 (ESS Round 4 2008) and include 25 countries and 47489 respondents. The results show that different kinds of political dissatisfaction have different consequences for political behavior. Furthermore, satisfied citizens are also highly active in activities that are frequently considered elite-challenging, which calls into question the implications of these activities for democratic stability during economic crisis.

2. Political participation and dissatisfactions during times of crisis

The financial crisis started in the USA in 2007 and rapidly became a global problem as economic performance declined all over the world. The economic turmoil quickly caused worries in Europe and thereby also affected democratic stability since the declining economic performance caused negative political attitudes as the inability of governments to deal with the challenges led citizens to question democracy and central political actors (Armingeon and Guthmann 2014). Even though this dissatisfaction in the short term was directed at specific political actors and incumbent governments, it could in the long run undermine the legitimacy of the entire political system (Easton 1965; Dalton 2004, 11-13).

To confront these challenges, it is important for representative democracy that citizens convey their grievances to their elected representatives so they can react to the demands and thereby maintain political legitimacy. Here various acts of political participation play a central role since they establish channels of communication between citizens and decision makers and improve the responsiveness of the representative system (Christensen 2013). Citizens can be expected to be more politically active during times of economic or political crisis since the grievances caused by the turmoil provide strong incentives for collective action (Gamson 1968; Barnes, Kaase et al. 1979). Furthermore, the link between political dissatisfaction and political participation could strengthen in times of economic crisis when there is a greater likelihood of achieving a critical mass of citizens who are ready to engage in political action to voice their concerns.

However, what matters is not only that citizens become politically active; how they do so is also of importance. Traditional political activities maintain a direct link between citizens and elected decision makers and have thereby help keep the latter accountable to the former. It has therefore caused concern that citizens increasingly eschew involvement in conventional or institutionalized political activities revolving around election campaigns and political parties (Stoker, 2006; Hay 2007). This has not meant a uniform decline in political participation since it is accompanied by a simultaneous increase in unconventional or non-institutionalized participatory activities (Barnes, Kaase, et al. 1979; Inglehart 1997; Norris 2002; Micheletti and McFarland 2011). These activities include clearly politically relevant activities such as demonstrations (Norris et al. 2006; Hutter 2014), but also activities with a more ambivalent political status that do not aim to influence formal political decision makers or include clear political demands (Teorell et al. 2007; Micheletti and McFarland 2011; van Deth 2014). Since the participants themselves define the modus operandi, these non-institutionalized activities function according to a different logic than the institutionalized activities where the authorities define the principles of operation (Christensen 2013, 104). While some claim that the developments benefit democracy (Hardin 1999; Norris 1999; Rosanvallon 2008), sceptics question whether the new activities can sustain the functioning of representative democracy between elections (Mair 2006; White and Ypi 2010).

The changes in patterns of political participation are connected to a simultaneous increase in political dissatisfaction. Over time, citizens have grown more assertive and less likely to quietly accept political decisions, which sustain the popularity of elite-challenging political activities since citizens who are dissatisfied tend to choose elite-challenging and unstructured activities over traditional institutionalized activities (Gamson 1968; Inglehart 1997; Kaase 1999; Rosanvallon 2008; Dalton and Welzel 2014). Economic grievances are also often channeled through non-institutionalized activities (della Porta and Mattoni 2014); although some argue that these issues are more likely to lead to institutionalized participation instead (Hutter 2014). Even if there is little evidence that citizens are growing less politically active, the quality of participation nonetheless suffer since elected decision makers are less likely to pay attention to the new activities that often occur outside the formal political arena (Hooghe and Marien 2014). By failing to give participants a proper say in the political decision making, their popularity could ultimately erode the legitimacy of the democratic systems.

This discussion shows the necessity of recognizing different types of political participation to recognize what citizen involvement entails for democracy. While most studies agree that political participation is a multifaceted concept where different activities

form different modes of participation, there is little agreement on the proper dimensionality of participation. Most empirical studies use factor analysis to examine the dimensionality of the data (Verba et al. 1971; Barnes, Kaase et al. 1979; Parry et al. 1992; Jankowski and Strate 1995; Teorell et al. 2007). Some results indicate that political participation is two-dimensional, distinguishing between conventional and non-conventional participation (Barnes, Kaase, et al., 1979), voting and campaigning (Jankowski and Strate 1995) or institutionalized and non-institutionalized participation (Marien and Christensen 2013). Other studies indicate that more modes are necessary to adequately capture the phenomenon (Parry et al. 1992; Teorell et al. 2007). These diverging results largely depend on what activities are included based on the definition of political participation and the data at hand. Since there are important differences in the theoretical conceptualization of what ought to count as political participation, the empirical indicators differ considerably. Hence, this empirically guided approach cannot establish the proper dimensionality of participation as long as there is no agreement on what activities ought to count as political participation.

A more theoretically guided approach is offered by van Deth (2014). He also acknowledges the important differences between political activities in terms of their locus, targets and motivations (van Deth 2014, 353-360), but offers a comprehensive theoretical typology of political participation including four types of political participation. Type 1 includes activities placed firmly within the formal political sphere voluntarily performed by citizens and thereby corresponds to institutionalized participation. Typical examples include activities within political parties or contacting political decision makers. The three other types of participation identified by van Deth correspond to different kinds of non-institutionalized participation. Type 2 includes activities taking place outside the formal political sphere, but nonetheless clearly aimed at formal political decision makers, as for example acts of protests such as demonstrations and civil disobedience. The third type of participation aims to solve collective or community problems even when the activities are not necessarily aimed at formal decision makers, such as involvement in organizations and networks that work to resolve local problems. The fourth and final type of political participation is the most controversial activity to regard as political participation since the status hinges on the motivations of the participants. An example is political consumerism, where people buy or refuse to buy products out of political concerns (Micheletti 2003; Stolle et al. 2005), but this category also includes various politically motivated online activities that do not fall under the other categories. This typology thereby highlights the central differences between political activities that should be acknowledged to understand what messages the activities convey during a crisis.

In addition to this, it is necessarily to unravel the relationships between political participation and dissatisfaction. There are different ideas about what political dissatisfaction and closely related concepts entail (Torcal and Montero 2006; Torcal 2011). It is here understood broadly as negative attitudes towards the political system and actors, which means it is possible to identify at least two different dimensions of relevant political attitudes (Geissel 2008; Christensen 2014; Denk et al. 2015). The first dimension concerns political support, which has traditionally been considered an important prerequisite for democratic legitimacy (Easton 1965; Almond and Verba 1963). The second dimension labelled subjective political empowerment concerns the extent to which the individual feels willing and able to affect political matters, has to some extent been neglected in most studies of the link between political dissatisfaction and behavior (Geissel 2008, 39-40).

Previous efforts examining the link between political attitudes and behavior have mainly focused on the impact of specific attitudes (Kaase 1999; Norris 2002; Dalton 2004; Torcal and Montero 2006; Marien and Christensen 2013). These studies generally assume a relatively straightforward relationship where negative attitudes diminish involvement in traditional or non-institutionalized participation in favor of new forms of elite-challenging or non-institutionalized participation. Although these studies provide important insights into the link between political dissatisfaction and activism, they generally fail to acknowledge that mixes of attitudes can have entirely different consequences for whether and how people become politically active (Gamson 1968; Hooghe and Marien 2013).

One way to examine how mixes of attitudes affect behavior is to study interactions between attitudinal dimensions (Hooghe and Marien 2013). An alternative approach is to identify different citizen profiles based on mixes of attitudes (Almond and Verba 1963; Geissel 2008; Abdelzadeh and Ekman 2012; Amnå and Ekman 2014; Denk et al. 2015). This provides additional insights into the connections between attitudes and behavior by conceptualizing the problem as a matter of kind rather than degree. For the current topic, it can shed light on what sorts of dissatisfaction promote participation in different political activities and thereby their implications for democracy (cf. Christensen 2014). This becomes clear when contrasting descriptions of critical and disenchanted citizens found in the literature. While both are expressions of political dissatisfaction, critical citizens are seen as beneficial for democracy (Inglehart 1997; Norris 1999; Rosanvallon 2008), whereas disenchanted citizens are alienated from and even hostile to politics and therefore constitute a democratic problem (Stoker 2006; Hay 2007). It is therefore important to establish what sort of dissatisfaction nourishes political activities to understand their implications for democracy. This becomes even

more important during political and economic turmoil when the possible consequences become even more acute.

What different political activities entail for democracy is still disputed. It is common to assume that traditional or institutionalized participation is good for democracy while elite-challenging or non-institutionalized participation challenges the legitimacy of the system (Crozier et al. 1975). However, this approach does not adequately capture the implications for democratic legitimacy. For example, the electoral success of right-wing extremist parties in several European countries (Mudde 2007) is political dissatisfaction channeled into the political system through type 1 participation. Nevertheless, few would argue that this is a sign that all is well for democracy since these parties are generally considered a challenge for democracy. In a similar vein, demonstrations can be both system-supportive and system-challenging depending on the topics and the motivations of the participants (Norris et al. 2006; Christensen 2014). This shows that institutionalized or non-institutionalized activities are not inherently good or bad for democracy. To understand what the activities entail, it is necessary to establish who performs the activities and the attitudes motivating their involvement. Satisfied citizens who demonstrate do not challenge the modus operandi of the political system, whereas the same activity performed by disenchanted constitute a challenge for democracy since it signals discontent with how the whole system functions which could ultimately erode system legitimacy.

The aim of this study is to examine links between different kinds of political dissatisfaction and types of political participation during the early stages of the economic crisis. The empirical section examines the following broad hypotheses based on the existing literature on the link between political dissatisfaction and participation in times of economic crisis:

H1: *Kinds of political dissatisfaction have a negative link to type 1 participation and positive links to involvement in types 2-4 during economic crisis.*

H2: *Low economic performance has positive links to political participation types 1-4 during economic crisis.*

H3: *Low economic performance strengthens the linkages between political dissatisfactions and participation types 1-4 during economic crisis.*

3. Data and variables

The data come from the fourth round of the European Social Survey from 2008 (ESS Round 4 2008). The field work for this round was carried out during 2008 and 2009 and

the data therefore give an impression of political attitudes during the early stages of the economic crisis and how these were translated into political action. At the same time there is sufficient country level variation in economic conditions to explore the impact of these on behavior since all participating countries were still not affected by the economic turmoil. This round of the ESS is also the last that includes a sufficient number of attitudinal indicators to capture the proposed framework of attitudinal profiles (more below), meaning it is not possible to examine the same linkages at a later stage of the economic crisis. Hence, while these cross-sectional data do not make it possible to settle the direction of causality unequivocally, it provides a unique possibility to examine the links between kinds of political dissatisfaction and political activities during times of crisis. Since the study is restricted to European democracies, Turkey, Israel, Russia and Ukraine are excluded from the study since they are (semi-)authoritarian systems and/or located outside of Europe. This leaves 25 countries and 47489 respondents, although some respondents are excluded from the analyses due to missing data.

The dependent variable is political participation. The analyses examine four political activities between elections that are typical examples of each of the four types of political participation identified by van Deth (2014): *Party involvement* (Political participation type 1); *Demonstrations* (Political participation type 2); *Organizational involvement* (Political participation type 3) and *Boycotting* (Political participation type 4). That the focus is on activities between elections entails that the focus is more on how citizens try to address particular decisions of formal decision makers (cf. Esaiasson and Narud 2013). All four variables are coded as dichotomous variables 0/1, where 1 indicates having performed the activity in question within the last 12 months.

To operationalize the central independent variable – kinds of political dissatisfaction – the respondents are classified according to their political attitudes. Previous studies have suggested different typologies (Geissel 2008, Abdelzadeh and Ekman 2012; Amnå and Ekman 2014; Denk et al. 2015), but only few of these have been used in a comparative European perspective. The classification therefore follows Christensen (2014), and categorize respondents based on their levels of political support (political trust + satisfaction with democracy) and subjective political empowerment (political interest and internal political efficacy). The respondents are classified into four discrete categories with a cluster analysis; the results of which are shown in table 1.

Table 1 – Cluster analysis of political attitudes

		Dimension 1: Political support				Dimension 2: Subjective empowerment				Total	
		Political trust		Satisfaction w. democracy		Internal Political Efficacy		Political Interest			
		Mean	*(SD)*	*Mean*	*(SD)*	*Mean*	*(SD)*	*Mean*	*(SD)*	*N*	*%*
Cluster	**1) Satisfied**	0.59	(0.13)	0.73	(0.14)	0.63	(0.18)	0.71	(0.19)	11076	25.6
	2) Unsupportive	0.27	(0.16)	0.36	(0.21)	0.55	(0.20)	0.72	(0.14)	10722	24.8
	3) Disempowered	0.45	(0.16)	0.62	(0.16)	0.36	(0.18)	0.24	(0.16)	11381	26.3
	4) Disenchanted	0.15	(0.13)	0.26	(0.17)	0.42	(0.24)	0.21	(0.17)	10055	23.3
	Total	0.37	(0.22)	0.5	(0.25)	0.49	(0.23)	0.47	(0.29)	43234	100
	Eta^2	0.56		0.55		0.22		0.69			

Note: Entries show the mean values of the four variables for the four clusters with standard deviations (SD) in parentheses. The clusters are the results of a two-step cluster analysis with log likelihood distance measure and Schwarz's Bayesian criterion. All variables coded 0–1 (1 highest positive attitude).

The first attitudinal profile includes satisfied citizens with relatively high scores on both dimensions, which means they support the political system but also feel willing and able to take an active role in political matters. The second profile includes unsupportive citizens, who have low levels of political support combined with high feelings of empowerment and thereby resembles critical (Norris 1999) or assertive citizens (Dalton and Welzel 2014) by being dissatisfied with the functioning of the system but willing to try to change this by taking an active role. The third cluster contains disempowered citizens, who reverse this combination since they have high levels of support and low levels of empowerment. This combination resembles the description of citizens in Stealth Democracy (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 2002); although the high level of support presupposes that these respondents think that the current system functions. The fourth and final profile includes disenchanted citizens with low levels of political support and subjective political empowerment, who constitute the most severe democratic problem (Stoker 2006; Hay 2007).

The eta2-scores show that this classification captures a substantial part of the variation in the four constitutive variables and that the typology therefore provides an adequate classification of the respondents based on these attitudes. The four profiles are in the analysis operationalized as a categorical variable where each profile constitutes a category and the group of satisfied constitutes the reference category in the regression analyses.

The economic situation is operationalized using two central economic indicators at the country level. The annual growth of GDP is important since economic wellbeing in modern capitalist societies requires high economic growth, and this is measured with

the annual growth rate of GDP. The rate of unemployment is an important complement since it provides a more direct threat to the wellbeing of individuals when unemployment, or the risk thereof, increases in society. This is measured with the annual level of unemployment in percentage of the labor force.

The impact of the economy is also measured at the individual level since macro factors can affect individuals differently and some feel that their economic situation is untenable even when the economic conditions at country level are respectable. To probe this aspect of the economic situation, the models include a variable measuring satisfaction with household income.

Table 2 – Descriptive statistics

Variable	Observations	Mean	SD	Min	Max	VIF
Political participation						
Party involvement	47340	0.04	0.19	0.00	1.00	N/A
Demonstrations	47334	0.06	0.24	0.00	1.00	N/A
Organizational involvement	47316	0.13	0.33	0.00	1.00	N/A
Boycotting	47242	0.14	0.35	0.00	1.00	N/A
Citizen profiles						
Satisfied	11076	0.26	0.44	0.00	1.00	REF
Disempowered	11381	0.26	0.44	0.00	1.00	1.73
Unsupportive	10722	0.25	0.43	0.00	1.00	1.69
Disenchanted	10055	0.23	0.42	0.00	1.00	2.01
Total	43234					
Economic indicators						
GDP growth	47489	4.64	2.35	0.11	10.49	1.38
Unemployment	47489	7.28	2.80	2.50	12.70	1.38
Feelings household income	47032	0.63	0.30	0.00	1.00	1.49
Control variables						
Corruption	47489	6.65	1.86	3.70	9.40	2.18
Age	47342	0.48	0.18	0.15	1.23	1.25
Gender	47459	0.46	0.50	0.00	1.00	1.03
Education	47373	0.52	0.33	0.00	1.00	1.23
Party identification	46537	0.50	0.50	0.00	1.00	1.18
Voted	47041	0.72	0.45	0.00	1.00	1.22
Social trust	46910	0.50	0.20	0.00	1.00	1.38
Social life	47225	0.65	0.27	0.00	1.00	1.13
Life satisfaction	47237	0.67	0.23	0.00	1.00	1.41

Note: Entries show descriptive statistics for the variables at the individual level. Unweighted data.

The main part of the analyses consists of a series of multilevel logistic regression models that examine the link between the forms of dissatisfaction and involvement in the four types of political participation to establish what forms of dissatisfaction are tied to what activities. As is customary, continuous variables have been centered around the grand mean to increase the stability of the models.[1] The models presented include several control variables to ascertain that the relationships are not spurious. This includes the socio-demographic characteristics age, gender and education, which are known to affect political behavior (Verba et al. 1995). The models also control for prior political involvement of the respondents by including party identification and whether the respondents voted in the latest general elections. Finally, to control for the respondents' general attitudes towards their life situations, the models also include generalized social trust, how social they are and general life satisfaction. At the country level, the models control for the level of corruption as an indicator of the general quality of governance.

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics for all variables while information on the coding of variables is in appendix 1. The VIF scores show no reason to suspect problems with multicollinearity since all scores are below 2.5.

4. Analysis

As a first step in the analyses, table 3 displays distributions of citizen profiles, political participation and economic conditions for all countries in the study to give an idea of country level differences in these regards.

There is considerable variation in the distribution of the citizen profiles across countries. Satisfied citizens generally form the majority or the major share in Northern Europe, but the three forms of political dissatisfaction combined form an overall majority. Nevertheless, there are important differences in what kind of dissatisfaction dominates. The disenchanted citizens are plentiful in Southern and Eastern Europe, while unsupportive citizens form the largest group in countries such as France, Great Britain and Poland. While disempowered citizens constitute large shares of the populations in most countries, they only form the largest group in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Belgium and most noticeably Spain, where they form 48 per cent of the population. Hence while political dissatisfaction is widespread, there is no particular kind of dissatisfaction

[1] The multilevel analyses are performed with the help of the runmlwin module in Stata 13 and MLwiN 2.34 (Leckie and Charlton 2013).

that dominates in Europe, as also noted by Denk et al. (2015). This indicates important differences among the countries in what political dissatisfaction entails for democracy.

Table 3 – Country level distributions of attitudinal profiles and political participation

	Kinds of Citizens (% belong)				Political participation type (% performed)				Economic conditions		
Country (n)	Satisfied	Disempowered	Unsupportive	Disenchanted	1: Party involvement	2: Demonstrations	3: Organizational involvement	4: Boycotting	Annual GDP Growth (%)	Unemployment (%)	Satisfaction income (mean 0-1)
BE (1760)	26.2	33.7	23.8	16.4	4.3	7.4	21.1	11.1	2.9	8.4	0.7
BG (2230)	4.5	5.3	47.1	43.2	3.6	4.0	1.8	3.5	6.4	7.3	0.3
CH (1819)	54.3	29.5	11.9	4.4	5.0	7.8	13.1	25.0	3.9	4.5	0.8
CY (1215)	44.1	35.1	12.3	8.5	8.7	2.3	6.5	6.1	5.1	4.4	0.6
CZ (2018)	9.0	40.9	12.6	37.5	2.3	4.5	9.0	7.4	5.7	6.7	0.6
DE (2751)	33.5	21.3	31.2	13.9	3.8	8.1	25.9	31.1	3.3	8.8	0.7
DK (1610)	69.2	20.0	8.8	1.9	4.5	9.3	24.7	21.5	1.6	4.2	0.9
EE (1661)	19.6	24.8	29.3	26.3	3.0	2.1	5.3	5.6	7.5	3.9	0.6
ES (2576)	19.2	48.1	13.8	18.9	2.9	15.9	9.5	7.9	3.5	11.0	0.7
FI (2195)	42.6	38.5	11.6	7.3	4.1	2.5	34.1	30.3	5.3	7.2	0.7
FR (2073)	21.2	25.7	32.4	20.7	3.8	15.3	15.2	27.7	2.3	8.6	0.7
GB (2352)	26.6	21.8	33.5	18.1	2.2	3.8	6.6	24.2	3.6	5.0	0.7
GR (2072)	11.5	28.0	21.4	39.1	4.2	6.1	4.0	14.4	3.5	12.7	0.5
HR (1484)	9.0	20.5	25.7	44.8	5.1	7.9	9.1	17.1	5.1	11.1	0.6
HU (1544)	5.9	12.9	35.0	46.2	0.8	1.8	5.1	5.9	0.1	7.6	0.5
IE (1764)	20.6	18.7	37.1	23.6	4.7	9.8	16.5	13.5	5.2	4.2	0.7
LV (1980)	3.2	14.1	35.0	47.7	1.1	6.5	2.8	5.2	10.0	5.6	0.4
NL (1778)	53.0	25.9	16.8	4.2	3.4	3.3	26.2	9.4	3.9	3.6	0.8
NO (1549)	43.9	38.1	11.2	6.9	6.1	7.2	27.9	22.5	2.7	2.5	0.8
PL (1619)	13.4	22.5	33.9	30.3	2.6	1.5	5.9	4.5	6.8	10.3	0.6
PT (2367)	9.3	27.5	23.1	40.1	1.3	3.7	2.7	3.2	2.4	9.6	0.5
RO (2146)	17.3	20.1	30.2	32.4	5.9	4.2	3.0	2.8	6.0	5.4	0.5
SE (1830)	49.2	29.1	14.9	6.8	4.4	6.4	27.0	37.3	3.3	6.6	0.8
SI (1286)	21.5	26.8	32.5	19.2	3.3	1.6	1.6	5.1	6.9	5.9	0.7
SK (1810)	21.2	30.6	25.9	22.3	1.9	1.7	5.7	6.9	10.5	12.5	0.6
TOTAL (47489)	25.8	26.6	24.5	23.1	3.6	6.1	12.6	14.4	4.6	7.3	0.6

Note: Entries are percentages belonging to the categories in question. Data weighted with design weight. Satisfaction income coded 0-1 with 1 indicating higher satisfaction.

When it comes to the political activities, the changes in patterns of political participation are clearly evident since involvement in political parties (Type 1) is generally the least popular activity, while more people participate in non-institutionalized activities (Types 2-4) with boycotting being most popular in most countries closely followed by organization activities.

There are noticeable differences in the economic conditions among the countries included. While some countries have already low growth and high unemployment, others are still thriving economically. These differences are also reflected in the scores for satisfaction with income, where there are considerable differences in the mean scores among the countries. While some countries, most notably Denmark, have high levels of satisfaction with household income, there are clearly other countries such as Bulgaria where the low mean score indicates that large proportions of the populations feel they are struggling economically.

To further explore the link between attitudes and behavior at the individual level during economic crisis, table 4 displays differences in the activity levels among the four citizen categories.

Table 4 – Percentages having performed each activity within citizen profiles

	Activity (% has done)			
Citizen group	**Party involvement**	**Demonstrations**	**Organizational involvement**	**Boycotting**
Satisfied	7.5	7.9	24.2	23.0
Disempowered	1.2	4.4	9.5	9.7
Unsupportive	5.3	9.1	14.3	19.5
Disenchanted	1.3	4.0	5.0	8.9
Total	3.8	6.3	13.4	15.3
χ^2 (value, DF, p)	(858.8, 3, 0.000)	(353.8, 3, 0.000)	(1887.3, 3, 0.000)	(1238.3, 3, 0.000)
Eta	0.14	0.09	0.21	0.17
Cramer's V	0.14	0.09	0.21	0.17
ANOVA (F, p)	(292.0, 0.000)	(119.2, 0.000)	(657.7, 0.000)	(424.7, 0.000)
N valid cases	43207	43199	43192	43119

Note: Entries show percentages within each citizen category having performed political activities. Data weighted with design weight.

The statistical tests all indicate significant differences between the groups in how many have performed the different activities. However, somewhat contrary to expectations, the satisfied citizens are most active in three of the four activities, the exception being demonstrations, where the unsupportive citizens are more active. The least

active group of citizens is the disenchanted, who are least active in three of four activities while the disempowered are marginally less likely to be active in political parties. It should be noted that dissatisfaction in either form does not seem to be a necessary driving force behind either kind of non-institutionalized participation. Furthermore, there are important differences in the behavior of the three forms of dissatisfaction, which shows that different kinds of political dissatisfaction do not necessarily lead to similar behavior during economic crisis.

Table 5 – Multilevel logistic regressions examining explanations for political participation

	PARTY INVOLVEMENT		DEMONSTRATIONS		ORGANIZATIONAL INVOLVEMENT		BOYCOTTING	
	B (SE)	P	B (SE)	P	B (SE)	P	B (SE)	P
Fixed effects								
Individual level								
Constant	-4.37 (0.13)	***	-3.47 (0.14)	***	-2.81 (0.13)	***	-2.36 (0.12)	***
Citizen group (ref Satisfied)								.
Disempowered	-1.38 (0.10)	***	-0.55 (0.07)	***	-0.57 (0.05)	***	-0.60 (0.04)	***
Unsupportive	-0.19 (0.07)	**	0.36 (0.06)	***	0.07 (0.04)		0.34 (0.04)	***
Disenchanted	-1.22 (0.11)	***	-0.43 (0.08)	***	-0.62 (0.06)	***	-0.23 (0.05)	***
Satisfaction income	0.23 (0.12)	*	-0.29 (0.09)	**	0.30 (0.07)	***	0.13 (0.07)	
Age	0.05 (0.17)		-1.86 (0.14)	***	0.03 (0.10)		-0.79 (0.10)	***
Gender (ref. Female)	0.24 (0.05)	***	-0.03 (0.04)		0.27 (0.03)	***	-0.23 (0.03)	***
Education	0.59 (0.09)	***	0.70 (0.07)	***	0.88 (0.05)	***	1.06 (0.05)	***
Party identification (ref No)	1.33 (0.08)	***	0.59 (0.05)	***	0.43 (0.03)	***	0.46 (0.03)	***
Voted (ref No)	0.55 (0.09)	***	0.17 (0.06)	**	0.40 (0.05)	***	0.22 (0.04)	***
Social trust	-0.28 (0.16)		0.83 (0.13)	***	0.52 (0.10)	***	0.08 (0.09)	
Social life	0.84 (0.12)	***	0.81 (0.10)	***	1.04 (0.07)	***	0.24 (0.07)	***
Life satisfaction	-0.06 (0.15)		-0.13 (0.12)		0.24 (0.09)	**	-0.14 (0.08)	
***Country leve*l**								
GDP growth	0.01 (0.03)		-0.10 (0.06)		-0.03 (0.06)		-0.03 (0.05)	
Unemployment	-0.04 (0.03)		0.06 (0.05)		0.06 (0.05)		0.11 (0.04)	*
Corruption	-0.11 (0.05)	*	0.02 (0.09)		0.31 (0.08)	***	0.38 (0.08)	***
Random effects								
var(cons)	0.10 (0.03)		0.367 (0.11)		0.33 (0.10)		0.29 (0.08)	
Countries	25		25		25		25	
N	43130		41083		41072		41013	
ICC	0.028		0.100		0.090		0.080	
2log-likelihood	-39792.9***		-18199.7***		4874.02***		14416.2***	

*Note: Entries are coefficients (B) from multilevel logistic regressions with standard errors (SE) in parentheses. Data weighted with design weight. Significance (P): * p<0.05, '' p<0.01, '''p<0.001.*

The following analyses turn to multivariate analysis in the form of multilevel logistics regressions shown in table 5, where H1 and H2 are examined in four models, one for each type of participation.

For the categorical variable classifying citizens into groups, the satisfied citizens are the reference category, meaning the results show how the three kinds of dissatisfaction differ from the satisfied citizens in their propensity for taking part in the political activities.

For involvement in political parties, the negative estimates for each form of dissatisfaction entail that belonging to either of these groups lowers the probability of being active within political parties compared to being satisfied. However, the effects are noticeably stronger for the disempowered and the disenchanted, whereas the unsupportive resemble the satisfied to a larger extent, as was already shown previously.

For the non-institutionalized activities, the estimates are generally significant but the effects do not confirm the expectations since the estimates for the disempowered and the disenchanted are consistently negative. This entails that these forms of political dissatisfaction lead to a lower likelihood of involvement in all three of the non-institutionalized activities when compared to the group of citizens who are satisfied. The estimates for the unsupportive to a larger extent live follow expectations since the positive estimates for demonstrations and boycotting suggest a higher extent of involvement than the satisfied in these activities.

Hence the results for H1 are only partly in line with expectations since the links between kinds of political dissatisfaction and participation are more complicated than expected. While all three kinds of dissatisfaction lead to a lower propensity for involvement in political parties (Type 1 participation), thereby satisfying the first part of the hypothesis, being either disempowered or disenchanted also entail a lower extent of involvement in demonstrations, organizational involvement or boycotting (Types 2-4). The straightforward relationship suggested by previous literature does not hold for different kinds of political dissatisfaction since it only the unsupportive citizens who transfer their engagement to non-institutionalized participation.

For H2 concerning the effects of the economic indicators on participation, there is only one significant effect for the country level indicators GDP growth and unemployment, which is a positive estimate of 0.11 suggesting that a higher level of unemployment as expected increases the likelihood that people engage in political boycotts. The estimates for economic conditions are otherwise non-significant, meaning economic conditions at the country level are not important predictors for the propensity for political participation in three of the four types of participation.

This does not, however, entail that the economy is completely irrelevant for political participation since feelings about household income at the individual level has consequences for political involvement in three of the political activities; the exception being boycotting. Nevertheless, even in this case the results generally contradict the assertion that economic hardship promotes participation. It is only for demonstrations where a negative relationship exists, meaning economic hardship as expected makes demonstrating more likely. But for party activism and organizational involvement, it is those who feel better off economically who are more likely to become involved. There is therefore little to suggest that economic hardship is connected to increased political participation, meaning H2 can be rejected. If anything, the contrary seem to be the more likely outcome since those who feel they are doing well economically are more likely to participate.

H3 concerns whether the economic conditions shape how kinds of political dissatisfaction are translated into political activism. This is examined with a series of multilevel random effects models for each type of participation, where each model includes an interaction term between the kinds of dissatisfaction and an economic indicator at the country level. Based on the results, figures 1a-1i show the developments in predicted probabilities for involvement in each activity for kind of citizen as a function of changes in the economic conditions.[2]

For party involvement, there is a significant interaction term for the disenchanted. Figure 1a shows that this entails that the disenchanted becomes less likely to be involved in parties as the economy grows at a faster pace, whereas the satisfied becomes somewhat more likely to engage as the economy expands at a faster pace. In other words, and although the disenchanted are not particularly likely to be active, they become more so during economic crisis. Hence, the disenchanted opt for political parties to channel their grievances to the decision makers when the economic situation looks bleak. For unemployment, there is no evidence of a similar effect since all kinds of citizens become less likely to become involved as unemployment increases.

There are no significant interaction effects for demonstrations, and accordingly the slopes for the four groups in figure 1d and 1e are fairly similar and indicate that demonstrating becomes more of an option for all four groups in times of economic crisis whether measured with GDP growth or unemployment. As shown previously, regardless of the economic situation, the unsupportive are most likely to be involved, the satisfied are the second largest group to attend demonstrations, while the disenchanted and disempowered are the least likely to be active.

[2] Separate models were run for each economic indicator meaning each model included one interaction. The estimates and standard errors for the constitutive variables in each model can be seen in appendix 2.

There are more significant interaction effects for organizational involvement, where a significant estimate exists for the interaction between GDP growth and the group of disempowered while there are two significant estimates for the unemployment rate; for disempowered and unsupportive (albeit only at a lenient 0.10 threshold). The implications are similar for both indicators of the economic conditions; as the economic conditions worsen (lower GDP growth or higher unemployment), all groups becomes somewhat more likely to engage in organizational activities. However, the impact is more acute for the disempowered when it comes to GDP growth in figure 1f since their willingness to be involved in organizations decrease more sharply as the economy grows at a faster pace. For unemployment in figure 1g, the impact is less acute for the disempowered since the change in predicted involvement is less drastic as the level of unemployment increases. The activity level of the unsupportive, on the other hand, increases more drastically as the level of unemployment increases. It is interesting to note that at lower levels of unemployment, the satisfied citizens are most likely to be involved in organizations, but when the level of unemployment exceeds about 6 per cent, the unsupportive becomes the more active group of citizens. A similar, albeit less pronounced, can be seen for GDP growth in figure 1f. This suggests that when the economy is flourishing, citizens use this activity to channel system supportive messages to decision makers, but when economic conditions worsen, it becomes a channel for voicing discontent.

For boycotting, there are also no significant estimates for the interaction terms, meaning there are no significant differences in the developments between the groups. For GDP growth (figure 1h), the groups of citizens become less likely to take part or appear relatively unaffected as the economy grows at a faster pace. The unsupportive are the most likely to be active, particularly at lower levels of economic growth. The developments are similar for unemployment in figure 1i, where all groups are more likely to become active as the level of unemployment increases, and it is again the unsupportive citizens who are most active while the disempowered are the least active group.

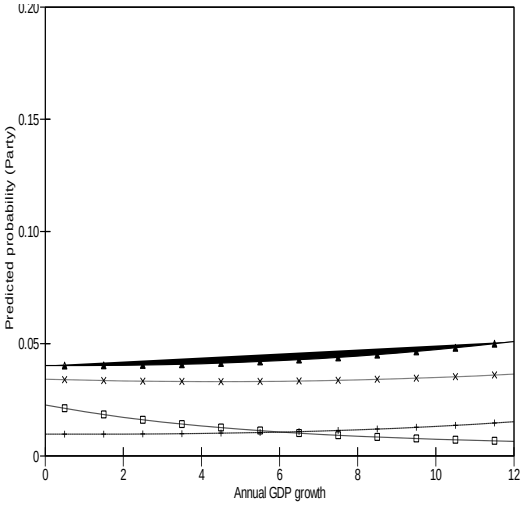
To conclude, H3 is approved with some reservations since low economic performance strengthens the effect of political dissatisfactions on political participation, although the impact is not coherent for all activities.

Figure 1 – Predicted probabilities for participation

ANNUAL GDP GROWTH | **UNEMPLOYMENT**

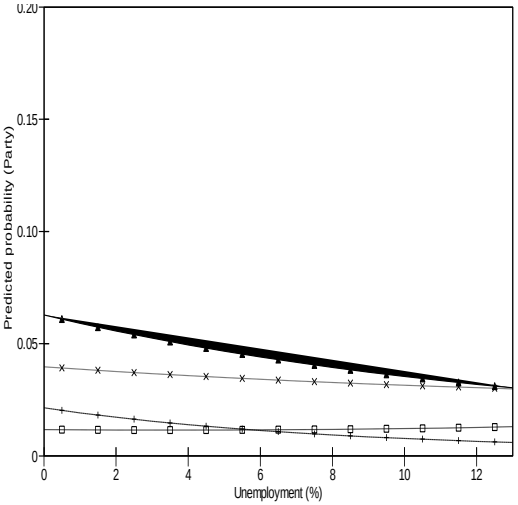
PARTY INVOLVEMENT

Figure 1a



Significant interactions (p): *Disenchanted (0.05)*

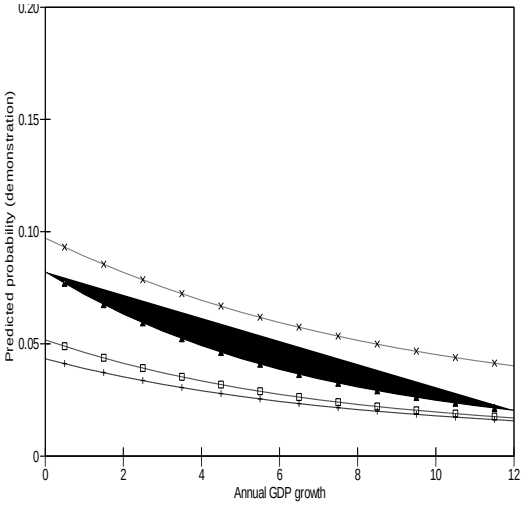
Figure 1b



Significant interactions (p): *NONE*

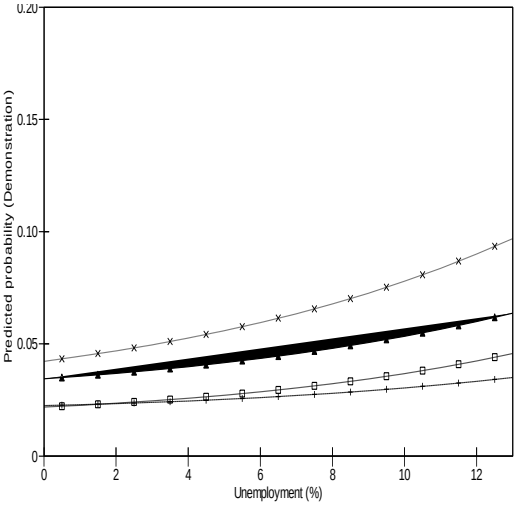
DEMONSTRATIONS

Figure 1d



Significant interactions (p): *NONE*

Figure 1e



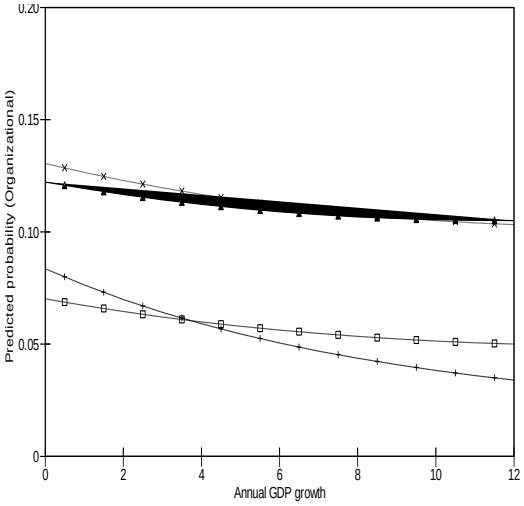
Significant interactions (p): *NONE*

Figure 1 – Predicted probabilities for participation (continued)

ANNUAL GDP GROWTH **UNEMPLOYMENT**

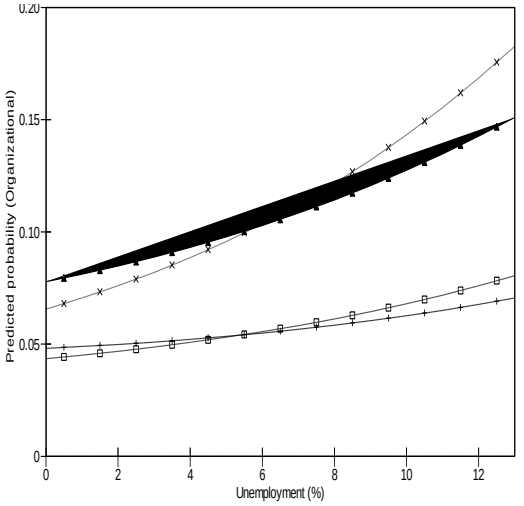
ORGANIZATIONAL INVOLVEMENT

Figure 1f



Significant interactions (p): *Disempowered (0.05)*

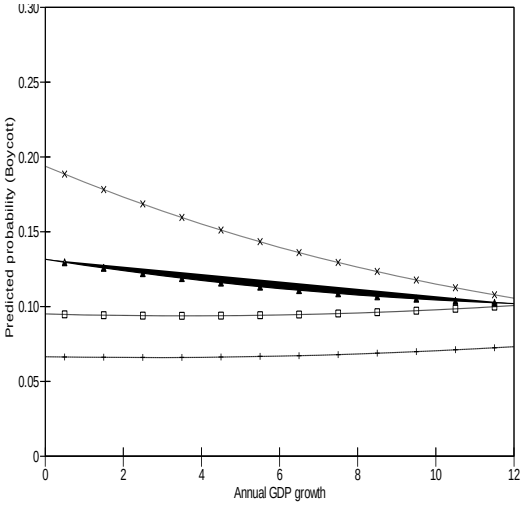
Figure 1g



Significant interactions (p): *Disempowered(0.10), Unsupportive (0.10)*

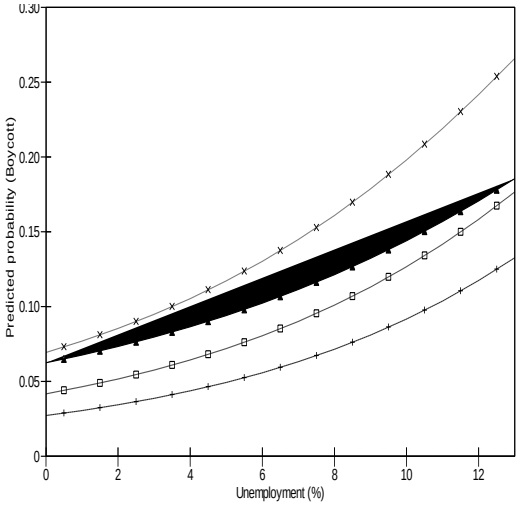
BOYCOTTING

Figure 1h



Significant interactions (p): *NONE*

Figure 1i



Significant interactions (p): *NONE*

***Note**: Figures show developments in predicted probabilities for involvement as economic conditions change.*

▲—— *Satisfied* + - - - *Disempowered* x-------- *Unsupportive* □—·—· *Disenchanted*

5. Discussion of the results

The results have important implications for how citizens conveyed different kinds of political dissatisfaction to decision makers during the on-set of the economic crisis. First of all, the results show that not all kinds of dissatisfaction were conveyed to decision makers in an equal manner. Previous studies have often, explicitly or implicitly, posited a relatively straightforward relationship whereby political dissatisfaction leads to lower involvement in institutionalized activities and higher involvement in non-institutionalized activities (Barnes, Kaase et al. 1979; Inglehart 1997; Marien and Christensen 2013). While this holds true for the unsupportive citizens, who resemble the critical or assertive citizens identified by previous research ((Inglehart 1997; Norris 1999, Rosanvallon 2008), other types of dissatisfaction were less likely to be conveyed to decision makers since both the disempowered and the disenchanted were less active than the satisfied citizens in all types of participation examined here.

Both of these forms of dissatisfaction involve low levels of subjective political empowerment, and this finding thereby supports the importance of subjective political empowerment for mobilizing dissatisfied citizens (cf. Gamson 1968). However, identifying the kinds of citizens who perform certain activities reveals that political participation is about more than conveying grievances, even during economic crisis. The satisfied citizens were generally among the most active groups of citizens in all activities, showing that even ostensibly elite-challenging activities such as demonstrations are not necessarily a challenge to the political system as such (cf. Christensen, 2014). That political activists nowadays use new types of participation is therefore less due to citizens becoming increasingly dissatisfied and more about having different preferences for when and how to convey their demands in creative new ways (cf. Micheletti and McFarland 2011). Given that these activities are less capable of sustaining representative democracy (cf. Mair. 2006; White and Ypi 2010), it is all the more important to ensure that decision makers give all forms of participation attention, even when coming through unorthodox channels. Since the traditional institutionalized activities are unable to attract citizens and thereby ensure the link between citizens and representatives, it is necessary to ensure that the representative system remains open for new ways that citizens communicate their demands.

Furthermore, the greatest challenge to representative democracy during times of crisis does not come from citizens using novel activities for expressing their demands. Disempowerment and disenchantment both lead to apathy, suggesting that these particular grievances go unheard. This gives decision makers little chance to accommodate the demands even when possible, which could in the long run undermine democratic

legitimacy. To solve this problem, it is imperative to convince citizens that they can and should affect political decisions since high levels of subjective empowerment makes it more likely that citizens will take action when they feel the need arises. Where this to be a successful endeavor, it would mean turning more harmful forms of political dissatisfaction into a benign unsupportiveness that can even benefit the functioning of democracy.

The direct impact of country level economic factors was less salient for involvement in all activities than often thought (della Porta and Mattoni 2014). There was some evidence to suggest that people who are unsatisfied with their household income become more likely to demonstrate, which shows that this is the most important channel for venting grievances caused by economic hardship. However, both organizational involvement and boycotting (albeit the estimate was insignificant) are more likely to be performed by citizens who are satisfied with their household income. Hence the changes in patterns of political participation, and in particular the popularity of new forms of non-institutionalized activities, are not primarily due to economic factors. This supports the ideas of Hutter (2014), who suggests that protest is increasingly a sign of cultural rather than economic issues. Nevertheless, the results also suggested that differences in economic performance affect the links between kinds of dissatisfaction and participation. In particular, disenchanted citizens are slightly more likely to be involved in political parties as the economic conditions deteriorate. A possible interpretation is that these citizens are the ones who turn to populist radical right parties (Mudde 2007) when they experience economic hardship. While outside of the scope of this study, this suggests that it is helpful to examine the links between different kinds of political dissatisfaction and support for such populist parties to understand how these parties channel dissatisfaction into the political system.

These findings hereby provide new insights into the links between political dissatisfaction and participation during crises, but they are not without shortcomings. The data come from a particular period during the very early stages of the economic crisis and it cannot be ascertained that similar results would be obtained when the state of the economy deteriorates even further. Furthermore, although the differences in economic performance were still rather large at the time, this also entails that it is not possible to establish whether the linkages only exist when the economy is in crisis or are valid even when the economy blossoms. Nonetheless, the results certainly indicate the importance of decision makers remaining attentive to all types of participation to ensure that citizens' grievances are channeled into political decision making, even during the very early phases of an economic crisis.

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Appendix 1: Coding of variables

Variable	Survey question and coding of variables
Political participation:	*There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following?*
Party involvement	*Worked in a political party or action group*, dichotomous variable 0/1 (1=has done)
Demonstrations	*Taken part in a lawful public demonstration*, dichotomous variable 0/1 (1=has done)
Organizational involvement	*Worked in another organisation or association*, dichotomous variable 0/1 (1=has done)
Boycotting	*Boycotted certain products*, dichotomous variable 0/1 (1=has done)
Political attitudes	
Satisfaction with democracy	*How satisfied are you with the way democracy works?* Scored 0-10, recoded 0-1 (1 highest satisfaction).
Political trust	Composite index with questions indicating level of trust in: 1) [country]'s parliament; 2) politicians; 3) political parties. Scored scale 0—10, index coded 0-1 (1 highest trust; Cronbach's alpha = 0.91)
Political interest	How interested in politics?'. Recoded to vary between 0-1 (1 = Very interested).
Internal political efficacy	2 questions: *How often politics so complicated that you can't understand what is going on*? & *How difficult to make mind up about political issues?* Index coded 0-1 (1 highest efficacy).
Economic indicators	
GDP growth	Percentage growth rate of GDP in 2007. Source World Bank
Unemployment	Rate of unemployment in 2007; Source OECD
Feelings household income	*Which of the descriptions on this card comes closest to how you feel about your household's income nowadays?*, scored 1-4, coded 0-1 (1 =most satisfied)
Control variables	
Corruption	Level of corruption in 2007; Source Transparency International.
Age	Age in years divided by 100.
Gender	Gender of respondent; Dichotomous 0/1 (1=male).
Education	'Highest level of education achieved'? Coded to vary between 0-1 (1 highest educational attainment).
Party identification	*Is there a particular political party you feel closer to than all the other parties?* Dichotomous variable 0/1 (1 = yes).
Voted	*Some people don't vote nowadays for one reason or another. Did you vote in the last [country] national election in [month/year]?* Dichotomous variable 0/1 (1 = yes).
Social trust	Composite index with 3 questions: 1)*Most people can be trusted or you can't be too careful*; 2) *Most people would try to take advantage of you if they got the chance*; 3) *People try to be helpful*. Scored scale 0-10; Index coded 0-1 (1 highest social trust; Cronbach's alpha = 0.80)
Social life	*How often socially meet with friends, relatives or colleague*? Scored 1-7, coded to vary between 0-1 (1 most social)
Life satisfaction	*How satisfied with life as a whole?* Coded to vary between 0-1 (1 most satisfied)

Appendix 2: Models for interaction effects

	Party involvement						Demonstration						Organizational involvement						Boycotting					
	#GDP			#Unemployment			#GDP			#Unemployment			#GDP			#Unemployment			#GDP			#Unemployment		
	B	SE	P	B	SE	P	B	SE	P	B	SE	P	B	SE	P	B	SE	P	B	SE	P	B	SE	P
Fixed effects																								
Constant	-4.44	(0.20)	***	0.20	(22.33)	***	-3.51	(0.16)	***	-3.49	(0.14)	***	-2.76	(0.13)	***	-2.77	(0.13)	***	-2.36	(0.14)	***	-2.37	(0.13)	***
Disempow-ered	-1.43	(0.11)	***	-1.43	(0.11)	***	-0.54	(0.10)	***	-0.55	(0.09)	***	-0.75	(0.08)	***	-0.72	(0.06)	***	-0.63	(0.07)	***	-0.62	(0.07)	***
Unsupportive	-0.23	(0.08)	**	-0.22	(0.07)	**	0.38	(0.07)	***	0.34	(0.06)	***	0.04	(0.04)	NS	0.05	(0.04)	NS	0.30	(0.06)	***	0.31	(0.06)	***
Disenchanted	-1.22	(0.11)	***	-1.27	(0.11)	***	-0.36	(0.14)	**	-0.41	(0.11)	***	-0.68	(0.06)	***	-0.66	(0.06)	***	-0.23	(0.07)	**	-0.22	(0.06)	***
GDP growth	0.02	(0.07)	NS				-0.14	(0.12)	NS				-0.02	(0.04)	NS				-0.03	(0.05)	NS			
Unemploy-ment				-0.06	(0.03)	NS				0.04	(0.07)	NS				0.05	(0.03)	NS				0.08	(0.04)	*
GDP # Disem-powered	0.02	(0.05)	NS				0.01	(0.04)	NS				-0.07	(0.03)	*				0.03	(0.03)	NS			
GDP # Unsup-portive	-0.01	(0.04)	NS				0.05	(0.04)	NS				-0.02	(0.02)	NS				-0.03	(0.03)	NS			
GDP # Disen-chanted	-0.11	(0.05)	*				0.07	(0.10)	NS				-0.03	(0.03)	NS				0.02	(0.04)	NS			
Unemploym. # Disempow-ered				-0.04	(0.03)	NS				-0.02	(0.03)	NS				-0.03	(0.02)	NS				0.03	(0.03)	NS
Unemploym. # Unsupportive				0.03	(0.02)	NS				0.03	(0.02)	NS				0.03	(0.01)	NS				0.03	(0.02)	NS
Unemploym. # Disenchanted				0.06	(0.04)	NS				0.05	(0.06)	NS				-0.01	(0.02)	NS				0.03	(0.02)	NS
Random ef-fects																								
var(cons)	0.12	(0.04)		0.11	(0.03)		0.11	(0.03)		0.41	(0.11)		0.33	(0.10)		0.33	(0.10)		0.27	(0.08)		0.27	(0.08)	
var(disempow)	0.07	(0.07)		0.04	(0.06)		0.04	(0.06)		0.07	(0.03)		0.07	(0.04)		0.07	(0.03)		0.03	(0.01)		0.03	(0.02)	
var(unsupp)	0.02	(0.02)		0.01	(0.02)		0.01	(0.02)		0.01	(0.02)		0.01	(0.01)		0.01	(0.01)		0.03	(0.01)		0.04	(0.02)	
var(disench)	0.06	(0.10)		0.07	(0.10)		0.07	(0.10)		0.18	(0.08)		0.03	(0.03)		0.03	(0.02)		0.02	(0.01)		0.02	(0.02)	
ICC	0.034			0.033			0.105			0.110			0.092			0.091			0.075			0.075		

Note: Entries are coefficients (B) from multilevel logistic regressions with standard errors (SE) in parentheses. The models also include the control variables listed in table 5. Data weighted with design weight. Significance (P): * p<0.05, '' p<0.01, '''p<0.001.