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How Citizens React to Economic Crises and Their Social and Political Consequences

Article on defining, identifying, and measuring crises (Deliverable: 9.1)

WP9: Scientific dissemination

Work package Leading Institution: UNIGE

Submission due date: July 2014

Actual submission date: January 2015



This project has received funding from the European Union's Seventh Framework Programme for research, technological development and demonstration under grant agreement n° 613237

Citizens' Reactions to Economic Crises in the Electoral and Non-Electoral Arenas: A Research Agenda

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Word count: 14'509

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Abstract

This paper discusses the ways in which citizens react to economic crises and their social and political consequences from a theoretical point of view. We suggest a number of hypotheses regarding citizens' reactions to economic crises which can be derived from the existing literature on this topic. Our main goal is to theorize about political reactions through a discussion of previous research on citizens' reactions to economic crises. We distinguish between works dealing with responses in the electoral arena (political parties and voting) and in the non-electoral (social movements and protest). The hypotheses are meant to stimulate empirical work on how citizens react to economic crises and their social and political consequences.

Keywords: Economic crisis, political behavior, voting, protest

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Introduction

European countries are still struggling with the negative effects of the Great Recession which started in 2008, most notably high levels of unemployment, cuts in social services, and a grim outlook for the future. As citizens try to cope with the effects of negative economic conditions, attention has also been drawn to the potential political effects of the recession. One possible negative effect of economic hardship is the decline of political participation and civic engagement. However, while the experience of economic difficulty can certainly be understood as draining resources from political participation, it may also be considered that tough economic conditions generate grievances, which people may seek to redress through political participation, and sometimes through recourse to protest. Economic crises may provide the political space and motivation for the mobilization of those seeking to criticize what are perceived to be unjust patterns of wealth distribution in advanced capitalist democracies and to draw attention to the fact that not all sections of society bear the costs of economic crisis evenly.

Political reactions to economic crises, however, are not limited to the choice between retreating from public life and various forms of participation, on the one hand, and political engagement (both electoral and non-electoral), on the other. There is a range of other possible responses. Citizens may choose different channels and strategies to make their voice heard as an active reaction to crises. Not only can they engage in political action and protest, but they may seek access to justice at various levels (from local to European and international) and take part in the associational life of their community. Economic crises may also open up new opportunities for political parties – in particular, right-wing populist parties – which voters might consider as providing attractive solutions to cope with the negative consequences of the

crisis. More generally, changing political attitudes and voting behaviors can also stem from a situation of economic hardship.

To be sure, citizens may react – and indeed they have done so – in a variety of other ways to the economic crisis, such as engaging in a wide repertoire of non-capitalist practices that involve citizens lowering their cost of living, connecting to other communities and assisting others. Studies show the existence of a wide repertoire of non-capitalist practices that involve citizens lowering their cost of living, connecting to other communities and assisting others (Conill et al. 2012). Alternative forms of resilience include strengthening social and family networks and community practices to foster solidarity in the face of crises, changing lifestyles towards more sustainable forms of consumption and production, developing new artistic expressions, and moving abroad for short or long durations (or on the contrary reducing mobility). This paper, however, focuses on the electoral and non-electoral arenas. In the conclusion, we suggest a number of research avenues based on recent works stressing the need to combine electoral studies with the analysis of social movements and protest.

The paper has a two-fold purpose. On the one hand, we wish to provide a review of recent work on citizens' reactions to economic crises and their social and political consequences. On the other hand, based on such a literature review, we suggest a number of hypotheses aimed to encourage empirical research in this field. By doing so, we aim to provide an agenda for future research on the connections between economic crisis and policy responses to them – most notably through austerity policies – on the one hand, and citizens reactions in both the electoral and non-electoral arenas, on the other. Some of these hypotheses have already been tested in previous research, while others still need to be confronted with empirical evidence. However, even in the former case, we think that further

research is needed in order to validate, strengthen, or challenge existing findings, especially in the light of more recent developments.

The remainder of the paper unfolds along four main sections. In the next section we discuss work on electoral responses and party politics. Then we address non-electoral reactions, in particular in relation to social movement theory and protest behavior. The two parts are organized somewhat differently as they draw from different bodies of literature and theoretical traditions. However, they are both geared towards reviewing previous research in order to propose a number of hypotheses to be tested in future work. The third section discusses dynamics of long- and short-term processes in relation to the crisis of representation and how it led to the rise of new political actors in both the electoral and non-electoral arenas. We conclude with some reflections and possible ways forward for a research agenda on the interplay between electoral and non-electoral mobilization, which we consider as a blind spot in the extant literature.

Reactions in the electoral arena: political parties and voting

The dominant approach to the study of the electoral consequences of the crisis relates to the economic voting literature and suggests that citizens will punish incumbents in times of economic downturn for their poor economic performances. Economic voting theory rests on the assumption that citizens assess and evaluate the state of the economy in order to decide whether to support or punish the incumbents at the poll (Duch and Stevenson 2006; Lewis-Beck and Stegmaier 2000), and recent studies show that the effect of economic voting may be stronger in times of crisis (Hernández and Kriesi Forthcoming; Singer 2011).

Research on the Great Recession has tested the economic voting hypothesis in a variety of countries (Bellucci 2012; Costa-Lobo and Lewis-Beck 2012; Fraile and Lewis-Beck 2012; Marsh and Mikhaylov 2012; Scotto 2012), finding different results. Marsh and

Mikhaylov (2012), for example, have studied the Irish case, where one party dominating the electoral scene for decades has been severely punished at the polls in 2011. They show that the magnitude of the vote loss for the incumbents cannot be attributed solely to economic voting. The economic predictors alone do not account for the loss of votes. The authors argue that the government repeatedly loss credibility due to key decisions it took: firstly, offering government guarantees for the banks, then suppressing free healthcare for elderly, and lastly withdrawing from the bond market. They show that these specific events drove the loss of votes, while among macro-economic indicators only unemployment also contributed to predicting incumbents' punishment of the party.

Nezi (2012), in contrast, shows that the intensity of changes in the economy was central in the Greek case: "in a period when the economy is at its worst the incumbent has no real chance of winning and should expect support only from its long-time loyal supporters" (Nezi 2012: 504). He argues that substantial changes in the perception of the economy are required for the government to lose votes. This may be related to the salience of the economy, as suggested by Singer (2011). In times of crisis and with dramatic changes in the economic situation of a country, the economy becomes the focus of attention of all citizens, not only of those most affected by economic changes and those who place the economy on top of their priorities at all times.

The economic voting literature leads us to hypothesize that, in times of crisis, citizens punish political parties in government due to the perception that they are incapable to handle the economic crisis. This expectation is rather straightforward. However, a number of studies discuss the contingency of the economic voting hypothesis and highlight potential moderators. Next we discuss them in order to make further and more specific hypotheses.

Economic voting

The economic voting theory is often criticized for the absence of strong empirical evidence supporting the idea that voters ground their electoral choice on how the economy is doing and punish incumbents for bad economic performances (Bartels 2014). Anderson (2007), among others, has pointed to the problematic assumptions on which the economic voting theory rests: that there is an objective economic situation and that voters have access to unbiased information to assess it. Such strong assumptions do not consider the media framing of the economic news, the political parties' ability to draw attention on other issues, and the different capabilities and motivations of citizens to inform themselves about the economy. We first discuss the salience of economic and non-economic issues. Then we examine certain individual characteristics that may moderate the effects of grievances on voting.

The economic voting theory assumes that the economy is the main predictor of the voters' choice to punish the incumbent. However, a recent study questions the assumed centrality of the economy in determining the vote choice (Singer 2011). He suggests that not all the voters cast their vote based on economic considerations and shows that the salience of the economy is not constant, but varies across individuals and contexts. He finds in particular that the most economically vulnerable citizens pay more attention to the economy and that the latter plays a greater role in the less developed countries. Moreover, other issues such as war, terrorism, corruption, and moral questions may divert attention from the economy. In addition, other types of grievances may contribute to raising support for non-governmental parties. Most notably, grievances pertaining to immigration and ethnic relations are associated with the rise of the radical right (Roushas 2014), while grievances related to the corruption of the political elites played a key role in the electoral success of outsiders and the punishment of established political parties in the shadow of the Great Recession (see for instance Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013; Nezi 2012). This suggests that citizens' reactions to economic crises in the electoral arena are issue based. Furthermore, the crisis spurs electoral participation

depending on which issues gain salience in the midst of the crisis and which social groups are most strongly hit by it.

Some have proposed to focus on citizens' personal experience of the economy in order to address the problems related to the assumption that there is an objective economic situation (see Curtis 2014 for a discussion of the rationale behind the focus on pocketbook effects). This also makes sense in the context of the Great Recession, as its impact may vary across social groups, certain groups having more crisis-related grievances than others. For example, youth and the unemployed have been among the most strongly hit by the crisis in the Southern countries. Yet, research on electoral behavior does not find strong evidence for an impact of egocentric variables on voting (Brody and Sniderman 1977; Kinder and Kiewiet 1979). This suggests that citizens do not use their personal experience of the economy, but rather the overall state of the economy, to make their vote choice. However, in his study of support for the Prime Minister in Iceland, Curtis (2014) recently found that, in times of crisis, egocentric factors do account for the vote choice, but only among the more sophisticated voters. Furthermore, Duch and Sagarzazu (2014) show that poor voters are less likely to consider their own economic situation in making their vote choice than rich ones. These two studies suggest that the less well-off and the less politically sophisticated are less likely to make their vote choice based on personal economic grievances. This leads us to hypothesize that, even in times of crisis, citizens who punish the incumbents for their bad economic performances may not be the most affected by the economic crisis.

It is important to consider how political attitudes such as partisan attachment or political ideology mediate the effects of grievances on voting. Social groups may have different grievances, but they may differ also in terms of personal characteristics affecting voting behaviors (Anderson 2007). Not all economic issues are valence issues; some are positional or partisan issues (Lewis-Beck and Nadeau 2011). As a result, not all the voters

punish incumbents in bad economic times because they disagree with the party's approach to solve economic problems. Some may support the incumbent because they share values or opinions that are reflected in proposed ways to handle economic issues such as unemployment and inequalities. For example, Wright (2012) shows that the Democrats in the U.S. own the issue of unemployment. Therefore, if they are in power and unemployment increases they are not punished since they are able to present themselves as being best able to solve this problem. Thus, voters choose them for their position on the issue of unemployment rather than punishing them for the rise of unemployment. More generally, we may expect partisanship and ideology to shape the way in which citizens perceive and evaluate the economy and economic performances (Weyland 2003).

Partisanship, however, may be threatened by widespread dissatisfaction with how democracy works and with the political elites. For example, Greece experienced a long-lasting and deep economic crisis coupled with drastic austerity measures that resulted in rising unemployment, poverty, but also pessimism about the future and reduced mental and physical health (Angouri and Wodak 2014; Roushas 2014). In this context, the gap between citizens who bear the costs of the crisis and see dim future prospects, on the one hand, and the optimism of the political class, on the other, is a source of grievances per se. Furthermore, grievances related to high unemployment and rising poverty have been shown to be related to the rise of the radical right in Greece (Roushas 2014), where those facing financial difficulties were more likely to vote for Golden Dawn (Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2013). Thus, dissatisfied citizens not only voted against the government, but they casted a protest and anti-system vote. In Spain, one of the core grievances of protesters did not concern the economy, but rather democracy, as citizens demanded "real democracy" (Browne and Susen 2014). This leads us to hypothesize that in times of crisis punishing incumbents results from the combination of both economic and political grievances.

Lastly, a number of studies consider the effects of emotions in the context of the Great Recession, in particular in countries most strongly hit by the crisis (Dinas and Rori 2013). For example, Johnston Conover and Feldman (1986) have shown that, while the cognitive dimension of one's personal economic situation does not affect policy preferences, its emotional dimension – for example, anger or indignation – does. Based on that, we may tentatively hypothesize that in times of crisis it is not only grievances that drive electoral reactions, but grievances have to be associated with strong emotional reactions such as anger or indignation in order to affect the vote choice. Yet, further research should examine the intervening role of emotions for voting behavior during economic crises.

Blame attribution

The contingency of the economic voting theory stems from certain individual characteristics which may affect the perception of the economy and related grievances, but also from the specific institutional design of a country, which may either facilitate or hinder the process of blame attribution (Anderson 2007). The latter, in turn, plays a key role in electoral behavior, for example in the re-election of incumbents. Generally speaking, blame is based on two main components: perceiving avoidable harm and perceiving responsibility (Angouri and Wodak 2014).

The more straightforward story concerning blame attribution relates to the institutional design and how easy or difficult it is to ascribe responsibility for political decisions. For example, Kriesi (2014b) found that voters tend to punish the incumbents more often in majoritarian regimes, where the attribution of responsibility is easier. In a similar vein, Wagner (2013) suggests that the impact of emotional reactions may be stronger in systems where responsibility is clearer. He shows that, in Britain, citizens experienced either fear of the potential consequences of the crisis or anger for the actions taken and which led to it,

depending on whether or not they blamed someone for the crisis. According to his analysis, anger appears in relation to blame assignment only when citizens blame institutions which they see as being accountable to them and responsible for their welfare. In turn, anger results in punishing the incumbents.

Dynamics of blame attribution, however, are more complex once we consider individual perceptions. Based on participant observation, Cramer (2014) found that, in a small rural community in Wisconsin, citizens blamed the government, the civil servants, and the trade unions for the crisis, but not the banks, the financial sectors, and the big corporations. She argues that, when making sense of the economic crisis, “causal stories are less a product of facts than of social categorizations and social identities” (2014: 92). The people she talked to about the crisis tended to blame in particular the civil servants. They perceived them as lazy and inefficient workers who were paid by their hard-earned money through taxes, and, as part of the government, they were seen as failing to respond to their demands and needs. Moreover, they were perceived as being defended by greedy trade unions. These findings suggest that, even in times of crisis, voters need to identify whom they can blame for the current economic situation in order to cast a vote against the governing political parties. In other words, the incumbents are not automatically blamed for the crisis.

Voters seek to punish national governments for failing to avoid or handle the crisis. Yet, supra-national institutions may blur responsibilities and blame attribution. Costa-Lobo and Lewis-Beck (2012), for example, show that blaming national political actors is conditional on the perceived responsibility of the European Union. The more the latter is blamed for the crisis, the lower the effect of economic voting at the national level. Similarly, Anderson and Hecht (2012) show that, when external actors or an external shock are seen as the cause of the crisis, the government will not be punished. However, when the national actors seem to have lost any room for maneuver, they are also punished for their

powerlessness (Hernández and Kriesi Forthcoming). In this vein, a study of the emergence of Golden Dawn in Greece relates its electoral success to the desire of citizens to punish the entire political system as blame was not attributed to a single actor, but rather to the system (Angouri and Wodak 2014).

In sum, research on the role of blame attribution in the process of casting an economic vote to punish the incumbents for their economic policies highlights the importance of ascribing clear responsibilities. However, since the crisis results from global trends in the economy and since economic policies are shaped at the national and supra-national levels, voters may not be able to ascribe responsibilities and punish political actors who participated in decision-making which resulted in the current crisis.

Polarization and disaffection

A further important question concerning the way in which citizens react to economic crises in the electoral arena is whether voters turn to the right or to the left. Bartels (2013; 2014) argues that there is no ideological voting in times of crisis. In his view, parties from the right and from the left were equally punished during the Great Recession. However, Lindvall (2014) maintains that there are short- and long-term effects of an economic crisis. Comparing the Great Depression and the Great Recession, he observes that voters tend to turn to the right at first, but in the medium to long run they tend to favor the left. More specifically, he suggests that, in the early stages of a crisis, the most vulnerable groups suffer from the economic downturn and the core of the electorate feels less altruistic, hence turning to the right. However, as the effects of the crisis hit different constituencies, they spread to middle class citizens who turn to the left to ensure their own social protection. In addition, the fact that parties of the left own certain issues such as unemployment also contributes to explaining why a left turn is expected (Wright 2012).

The process of Europeanization contributes to blurring the divisive left-right cleavage as mainstream parties, both from the right and from the left, tend to be pro-European, while radical parties on both sides tend to be anti-European (Halikiopoulou, Nanou and Vasilopoulou 2012). Therefore, it is difficult to conclude whether we should expect the Great Recession to result in a shift to the left stressing social rights and economic redistribution. This is all the more true as empirical evidence is poor and the shift only appears in the long-run (Lindvall 2014) or in a reduced importance of ideological preferences (Bartels 2014). The crisis could also result in a shift to the right, that is, not only short-term (Lindvall 2014), but set in long-term social transformations resulting in demands for national preference and protectionism as key measures to solve the current economic crisis as well as other social problems. We discuss the role of political parties defending these positions, such as populist parties from the right or the “left of the left,” as well as more generally the dynamics of short- and long-term effects, in more detail below. Here we would simply like to advance the hypothesis that in times of crisis voters do not consistently vote for the right or for the left, but they turn away from mainstream political parties and support new challengers instead.

Reactions in the non-electoral arena: social movements and protest

Reviewing work and advancing hypothesis about citizens’ reactions to economic crises in the non-electoral arena is at the same time easier and harder than it is for the electoral arena. It is easier insofar as, generally speaking, the whole social movement literature starts from the assumption – either implicitly or explicitly – that protest arises because people feel deprived in a way or another. It is harder precisely because this very fact makes it more difficult to advance hypotheses that apply specifically to how citizens’ reacts in times of crises. It is nevertheless worth doing so, as economic crises might alter certain dynamics of movement emergence and participation or exacerbate existing trends.

To make a much more variegated picture simple, students of social movements explain the rise and fall of protest activities by means of one or more of three main factors: grievances, resources, and opportunities. Grievances capture the level of discontent generated by social change or by certain political decisions. Breakdown and collective behavior theories obviously stress this kind of factor and disregard the other two. Resources refer to the endogenous level of organization as well as the capacity to mobilize and allocate resources for collective action. Resource mobilization theory has put this factor at center stage. Opportunities can be seen as “options for collective action, with chances and risks attached to them, which depend on factors outside the mobilizing group” (Koopmans 2004: 65). Collective action frames, as stressed by the framing approach, could be considered as a fourth main explanatory factor. However, in a way it cross-cuts the other three and can be addressed in relation to them.

Students of social movement have paid increasing attention to movements and protests which emerged or reactivated during the Great Recession, most notably the Spanish *Indignados* movement and the various Occupy movements (Ancelovici Forthcoming; Ancelovici, Dufour and Nez Forthcoming; della Porta and Mattoni 2014; Flesher Fominaya and Cox 2013; Flesher Fominaya and Hayes Forthcoming; Gamson and Sifry 2013; Giugni and Grasso Forthcoming; Pickerill and Krinsky 2012). Given the particularly deep crisis encountered by Greece, much attention has also been paid to the Greek situation (Diani and Kousis 2014; Johnston and Seferiades 2012; Kousis 2014; Rüdig and Karyotis 2013a; Rüdig and Karyotis 2013b; Sakellarpoulos 2012). All these works provide valuable analyses of the factors that may explain why and how citizens’ react collectively to economic crisis by engaging in popular contention and mobilizations. Each study stresses a specific factor or, often, a combination of factors, but we can use the three-fold distinction of grievances, resources, and opportunity as a canvas for suggesting a number of hypotheses regarding the

impact of economic crises in the non-electoral arena and on the propensity of citizens to engage in or withdraw from social movements and protest activities.

Grievances

The simplest and most straightforward hypotheses are perhaps those relating to grievance theory. Long seen as obsolete and discarded by students of social movements as misleading if not plain wrong, grievance (aka breakdown or collective behavior) theories have regained some legitimacy in recent years (Buechler 2004). Accusing rational-based approaches to collective action of throwing the baby out with the bath water, *post-litteram* collective behavior scholars have stressed the fact that grievances are at least a necessary – if not a sufficient – condition for collective action and protest activities to emerge.

Grievance theories assume that social movements form to the extent that people are discontent and are subject to social stress. Among the most well-known classical accounts – which can be seen as variants of the approach – are Gurr's (1970) relative deprivation theory stressing people's frustrations when comparing to a reference group, Kornhauser's (1959) mass society theory based on a Durkheimian view of the role of anomie and social isolation, and Smelser's (1962) added-value theory emphasizing the role of structural strain and generalized beliefs (see also Geschwender 1968 for a helpful review of frustration-based theories; Useem 1998 for a more comprehensive review of breakdown theories). In this vein, Useem (Useem 1980), while showing that social cohesion increases protest, has offered evidence supporting breakdown theorists' claim that discontented people are more likely to protest than others. More recently, Bernburg (Forthcoming) has revisited relative deprivation theory, showing how experiencing economic loss has influenced protest behavior during the Icelandic economic crisis. More specifically, perceived financial loss has led to protest

participation and support among those who believed their losses to be greater than the losses of others.

The impact of grievances and discontent is also stressed in studies on protest behavior in Latin America. For example, Sheffner and Stewart (2011) show how the size, scope and density of the hardship created by the Mexican states failure to protect people from declining wages and increasing unemployment, coupled with its cutting subsidies, united a multi-class coalition demanding political change, playing a role in the country's democratic transition. The Argentinian case has also solicited a number of analyses stressing the role of grievances and hardship brought about by economic downturn. For example, although not necessarily framed in terms of breakdown theory, Borland and Sutton (2007) show how the economic crisis of the early 2000s in Argentina has fostered activism by challenging gendered everyday practices and expectations. Scholars, however, also note that grievances may lead to protest, but not singlehandedly. Thus, Sheffner (1999) found in his study of urban poor in Mexico that political alliances and sponsorship might play an important role – positively or negatively – for urban popular movements. Similarly, comparing Mexico and Argentina, Sheffner et al. (2006) found that socioeconomic hardship induced by austerity policies led to protest when accompanied by political opportunities. More generally, studies on Latin America suggest that a combination of factors – including hardship, perceived threats, and political alliances – should be taken into account to explain collective action in response to neoliberal globalization (Almeida 2007; Johnston and Almeida 2006).

If we keep the other factors out of the picture for now, grievance theory leads to a number of hypotheses on the impact of economic crises on non-electoral behavior. Firstly, on the collective level, since economic crises are a major source of hardship and deprivation, we may in general expect protest to increase in times of crises and more general sustained economic recession. Secondly, on the individual level, grievance theory leads to the

prediction that those individuals who are most affected by the crisis are more likely to engage in protest activities. Thirdly, a related expectation, lying somewhere in between these two levels of analysis, is that those social groups that are most deeply affected by the crisis are more likely to form social movements in response to difficult economic conditions. Thus, for example, migrants and unemployed should be overrepresented in protests against the crisis, as the latter is likely to affect them to a greater extent.

Yet, as the Occupy demonstrations show, economic crisis may provide the political space and motivation for the mobilization of those seeking to criticize what are perceived to be unjust patterns of wealth distribution in advanced capitalist democracies and to draw attention to the fact that not all sections of society bear the costs of economic crisis evenly. This can be most clearly seen in the rhetoric of the Occupy movement, which set what they perceived as the greedy, corrupt financial sector of the 1%, against the 99% of hard-working, law-abiding citizens. However, the Occupy movement has also been characterized in the media as being unrepresentative of the general population, with activists described as mostly drawn from the relatively secure, educated, liberal middle classes. It has been suggested that the real losers of the current economic crisis, those most hardly hit by the economic recession – the unemployed, for example – did not form part of this movement and stayed at home during the protests. Therefore, while the economic crisis might have been the spur for political mobilization and the focus of the Occupy movement's rhetoric, it is questionable whether it is those people with the most serious grievances to redress who actually engage in protest action of this sort. This is where the other factors – in particular, resources and opportunities – come into play.

Resources

The shift from grievance-based to resource-based explanations represents a major watershed in social movement theory. Proponents of the resource mobilization approach have stressed since the late 1960s that people engage in collective action and social movements not so much – or at least not only – because they feel discontent, but because they possess the resources to do so (Gamson 1968; McCarthy and Zald 1977). In other words, discontent is a necessary but insufficient condition for collective action. In the absence of resources – as well as opportunities – protest is not likely to be forthcoming. This leads to the general expectation that more resourceful individuals and groups are more likely to engage in protests in times of crisis.

Of course, beyond this general hypothesis, the point is above all to ascertain which resources are most helpful. Certain kinds of resources might prove particularly conducive to protest participation. Previous experience with political engagement plays an important role in this regard. Rüdig and Karyotis (2013b), for example, have studied the causes of protest against austerity measures in Greece by means of survey data. They found that relative deprivation is a significant predictor of potential protest, but does not play any role in terms of who takes part in strikes or demonstrations. Previous protest participation is key to explaining actual participation. Thus, we may expect people who have previous experience with protest participation to be more likely to become involved in protest about economic crisis. More generally, their study of mass opposition to austerity in Greece suggests that “different variables matter at different stages of the process: the drivers change as our focus shifts from explaining opposition to austerity to protest potential and, ultimately, actual protest participation” (Rüdig and Karyotis 2013b: 508). This resonates with Klandermans’ (1988) distinction between consensus mobilization and action mobilization, whereby the factors explaining the former are not necessarily the same as the factors accounting for the latter.

Previous experience with protest activities can be seen as providing civic skills favoring political participation. More generally, proponents of the resource model of political participation (Brady, Verba and Schlozman 1995) paid special attention to three kinds of resources: time, money, and civic skills. The latter, in particular, is acquired in nonpolitical institutional settings such as the workplace, organizations, and churches. These resources, in turn, have a strong effect on political activity. A similar argument is put forward by proponents of the social capital approach (Putnam 2000; Putnam and Leonardi 1993) arguing that previous embeddedness in voluntary associations provide social capital which, in turn, favors political participation, in addition to better government. This has been recently applied to underprivileged groups such as migrants (Morales and Pilati 2011) and unemployed (Lorenzini and Giugni 2012) among others, for whom such resources may be particularly important as they lack other kinds of resources for political mobilization. Thus, we may expect people who are strongly embedded in various kinds of (nonpolitical) organizations and voluntary associations to be more likely to engage in protest activities in times of crisis than those who are less well connected. This may occur in particular because such an organizational embeddedness provides civic skills, social capital, or both. In a similar vein, Fuster Morell (2012) has shown the role of social networks – a factor which has long been put at center stage by scholars to explain participation in social movements (see Diani 2004 for a review) – for the mobilization of the Spanish 15M movement. The author argues that the movement has taken advantage from the networks and skills of previous movements and that, in turn, its mobilization has led to the creation of a common framework for action through social networks. Online social networks may prove to be a powerful resource in this respect today (Anduiza, Cristancho and Sabucedo 2013).

In addition to previous experience with protest activities as well as organizational embeddedness and social networks, symbolic resources may also help establishing a linkage

between economic crisis and recession, on the one hand, and the rise of protest during hard times, on the other. In terms of scholarship on social movements, this type of resource has been stressed most forcefully by framing theory. Framing is the fourth main explanatory factor which is part of the conceptual “toolkit” of social movement scholars, in addition to grievances, resources, and opportunities. Framing “focuses attention on the signifying work or meaning construction engaged in by social-movement activists and participants and other parties (e.g. antagonists, elites, media, countermovements) relevant to the interests of social movements and the challenges they mount” (Snow 2004: 384; see also Benford and Snow 2000).

According to this view, in the absence of the construction of grievances and relative deprivation as social or political problems which can be redressed through political action – but also without the organizational structures, resources, and political opportunities necessary to mobilize and effect political change – the experience of economic hardship or other forms of disadvantages are unlikely to lead to political participation. According to this line of reasoning, the experience of economic recession, and more specifically the costs and pressures experienced by individuals suffering economic hardship and austerity, are more likely to push them to exit political engagement than to mobilize them to political action. We may thus expect involvement in protest activities among those who are particularly affected by economic crises to be more likely when they are able to frame their situation as a social or political problem. This includes blame attribution, which we discussed above in the context of electoral behavior, and more generally identifying a source of injustice, which was shown in previous research to be key to an explanation of protest behavior (Gamson, Fireman and Rytina 1982). It also includes the capacity of movements to build collective identities (Flesher Fominaya 2015).

Opportunities

The general public and the media often share a grievance-based account of protest: especially when it comes to radical or violent forms of action, people are seen to protest because they are unhappy and worse-off than they used to be. In contrast to this view, political opportunity theorists maintain that grievances alone do not suffice and that social movements need an opportunity to form and mobilize (Kriesi 2004; Tarrow 2011). This leads to the general hypothesis, paralleling the ones we put forward for each of the other two main explanatory factors, that protest in times of crisis should be more likely if and when opportunities arise within the institutionalized political arenas. Such opportunities may take the form of changing political alignments, the emergence of an institutional ally, or sudden expressions of repression on the part of the state (in fact, a specific hypothesis can be advanced for each of these aspects). Some of the works mentioned earlier already point in this direction. Almeida's (2003) work on protest in authoritarian settings, adds an interesting viewpoint in this regard. Bringing back a much forgotten concept in political process theory, he argues that threats stemming from state-attributed economic problems, erosion of rights, and state repression, which usually should discourage protest, may lead to greater levels of collective action and resistance if the recipients of those threats are resourceful and have organization infrastructure. In a way, this brings together the three strands of literature we are focusing on here: grievances (in the form of threats, although the author conceptualizes them as one of two strands of political opportunity theory, along with political opportunities), resources, and precisely opportunities.

Although scholars have stressed above all its input side – the openness or closedness of the political system, the configuration of political alignments, and the state's capacity and propensity for exerting repression – public policy can also be considered as part of the political opportunity structure opening up of closing down options for collective action

(Meyer 2004). This aspect appears as crucial for understanding popular responses in times of economic crisis. Thus, recent works have argued that it is not so much the fact of experiencing the crises and the associated hard times that spurs protest, but the policies and measures enacted by the political elites in relation to the crisis (Beissinger 2014; Kriesi 2014b). In other words, “*dramatic political reactions to the Great Recession were associated less with the direct economic repercussions of the crisis than with government initiative to cope with those repercussions*” (Bermeo and Bartels 2014: 4; emphasis in original). Thus, we may expect protest in times of crisis to be related to policy measures – in particular, austerity measures – in response to the crisis rather than to its effect on individual conditions.

Kriesi (2014b) advances a further hypothesis concerning the impact of the context. He maintains that protest addressing austerity measures is more likely to emerge when no other institutional channels are available. This is perhaps the quintessential political opportunity argument. He refers in particular to the existence of direct democratic instruments, but the argument can be made more general by including other institutional and conventional channels of interest intermediation such as neo-corporatist arrangements and the possibility to act through lobbying. Accordingly, we may expect contentious reactions to hardship to be stronger in contexts where no other institutional channels for expressing discontent are available.

The crucial role of the context is also stressed by recent work on participants in mass demonstrations in various European countries based on protest survey data. For example, Ketelaars (Forthcoming) shows that the instrumental motivations of anti-austerity participants depend on the political context in which these events were staged. She found in particular that, depending on the political context, the participants’ expectation to be politically decisive increases, which in turn reinforces their instrumental motivations. This study suggests that we need to take into account possible mediating effects of perceived political efficacy on the

relationship between government stance and instrumental motivations to participate in anti-austerity demonstrations.

Just as framing can be seen as a way to put to use symbolic resource, hence bridging grievance and resource mobilization theories and explanations, students of social movements have also stressed how collective action frames and political opportunities may interact (Diani 1996; Gamson and Meyer 1996). A recent example of work in this direction is provided by Cristancho (forthcoming) in his study of contentious responses to anti-austerity policy in Spain. The author shows the importance of social movements and unions in framing the crisis and emphasizing different dimensions of the conflict. Furthermore, his findings suggest a relevant role for parties in providing ideological cues for making sense of the crisis and of the role of governments in austerity policy. He finds that partisan attachments are related to accounts of blame for the crisis and are consequently a central factor in shaping individual understandings that can lead to choose between potential solutions. This points to the hypothesis that contentious reactions to economic crises are more likely when oppositional parties succeed in framing the crisis in terms of specific responsibilities of the government. Thus, blame attribution, in particular blaming ruling parties, also fosters non-electoral behavior. More generally, as shown by Diani and Kousis (2014) in their analysis of protest campaigns against neoliberal austerity policies in Greece, protesters assign shared meanings to episode of collective action, thus establishing a connection between different claims which bring about distinctive political agendas.

Dynamics of long- and short-term processes: The crisis of representation and the rise of new political actors

Thus far we have dealt separately with citizens' reactions to economic crises in the electoral and in the non-electoral arenas. In this section we address the crisis of representation – a long-

term trend – and discuss how it may lead to the rise of new political actors in both arenas in the short run in relation to the crisis and in the longer run as ongoing processes of social and political transformation. Concerning the long run, Katz and Mair (1995; 2009), contrary to median voter theory, highlight two trends that reduce the attractiveness of established political parties: their convergence towards the center and their loss of power vis-a-vis supranational institutions. However, the long-lasting dissatisfaction with political parties due to their diminished representative function may be accelerated by the economic crisis (Hernández and Kriesi Forthcoming).

In addition, we discuss how cleavage theory contributes to untangling the short-term transformations related to the crisis and the long-term changes in citizens' support for established political parties as well as and for the populist right, left-wing mobilization, and new (a)political parties. Finally, we are also interested in how electoral and non-electoral reactions to the crisis interact, and how this relates to dynamics of short- and long-term processes.

Economic crisis, austerity, and citizens' influence over policy decisions

Katz and Mair (1995; 2009) show how the ideological convergence of political parties relates to the growing influence of supranational institutions, such as European institutions. As policy decisions are increasingly taken at the supranational level, legislative bodies lose power over the executive and the latter, in turn, shifts to a more technocratic exercise of government in order to comply with supranational regulations. This ultimately results in a convergence of political parties in the exercise of national and supranational responsibilities as well as in a diminished representation of citizens. In the context of the Great Recession, examples of this transformation can be found in relation to the public saving of banks, when governments decide to make private debts public, thus forcing their country to a long-lasting period of

austerity. In Ireland, for example, the bailout was presented as inevitable and was endorsed by all political parties (Mair 2013), thus making politics a game with no alternatives. In so doing, the governing parties limited the possibilities for any future government to take any policy decision that would not comply with the agreed rescue plan. This reinforces a longer lasting trend identified by Schäfer (2013) as “permanent austerity,” which limits government policy options and citizens’ choices at election time.

Another example of the convergence of political parties and the loss of citizens’ representation is the establishment of technocratic Prime Ministers endorsed by national parties in a number of European countries. In 2011-12, Greece and Italy were led by technocratic Prime Ministers appointed to overcome the country’s financial difficulties and to avoid a default of payment in the Eurozone (Verney and Bosco 2013). These Prime Ministers were not elected, but nonetheless they were supported by the major political parties and by national leaders of other EU countries. As a result, the adoption of drastic austerity measures resulted in high levels of citizen dissatisfaction and in protest voting (Verney and Bosco 2013). In Italy, a large share of the voters turned away from mainstream parties and supported a new contender, the *Movimento 5 Stelle* (Baldini 2013), while in Greece they either abstained from voting or supported radical parties from the left (*Syriza*) and from the right (*Golden Dawn*) of the political spectrum (Dinas and Rori 2013).

The replacement of elected bodies with technocratic governments raises important questions about the citizens’ role in the democratic process and in providing political answers to the economic crisis. Future research should analyze how citizens perceive such technocratic governments and how the latter contribute to political learning, in particular through their impact on political attitudes such as trust, satisfaction with democracy, and support for mainstream political parties and the European Union. Lastly, citizens’ perception that “governments in Europe [...] are not listening to their people” (Angouri and Wodak

2014: 553) may justify, in the eyes of some of them, the use of violence, as witnessed by the case of Golden Dawn in Greece.

The limited influence of citizens over policy choices is due, among other things, to the growing influence of supranational instances over national policy decisions. Yet, supranational institutions often lack popular support and largely fail to represent European citizens, as shown by the low levels of electoral participation in European elections. In addition, as Scharpf (2013) has noted, in the course of the Great Recession European institutions, which have been long lacking input legitimacy, have also lost part of their output legitimacy. National political parties and elected bodies represent citizens both at the national and supra-national levels. However, as they become more accountable to supranational institutions, converge to the center, and comply with austerity measures, mainstream political parties no longer address citizens' demands and grievances.

The processes described above can be seen in the light of cleavage theory. The latter argues that political parties reflect existing divisions in the population. During the 20th century, most markedly, religion and class delineated social cleavages that formed the basis of political parties (Bartolini and Mair 1990). Yet, in the last decades a process of dealignment has led to a new structuring division opposing the “winners” and the “losers” of globalization (Kriesi et al. 2012). This process may be accelerated by the crisis, especially in Southern Europe (Hernández and Kriesi Forthcoming). Indeed, in Greece (Dinas and Rori 2013; Vasilopoulou and Halikiopoulou 2013), Italy (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013), and Spain (Chari 2013; Martín and Urquizu-Sancho 2012) citizens have withdrawn their support for the main political parties in the latest elections.

These findings resonate with studies of inequalities that highlight the withdrawal of poor citizens from politics (Bartels 2009; Jacobs and Skocpol 2005; Offe 2013; Schäfer 2013). McCarty (2012), for example, shows that the financial crisis and the Great Recession

have reinforced polarization in U.S. politics and that elected bodies have become (even) more prone to defend the interests of the more well-off. The crisis may increase dissatisfaction with the political elites and produce political cynicism, in as much as it reinforces the perception that policy actors are unresponsive to the demands, needs, and grievances of a majority of citizens and defend only the interests of the most powerful lobbies (Offe 2013; Schäfer 2013).

Thus, economic crises bring to the fore the question of what are the choices offered to citizens in the electoral arena and what is their influence over policy decisions. This leads us to hypothesize that in times of crisis citizens have limited influence over policy decision that are more closely related to their worries – that is economic policies – because national political parties have a very limited leverage on economic policies. Moreover, we suggest that in times of crisis political dissatisfaction may spread from the so-called “losers” of globalization to broader sectors of the middle class and result in a major political dealignment. Earlier we suggested that, according to the economic voting theory, citizens will punish incumbents. However, cleavage theory suggests that citizens would not only turn away from incumbents, but from all established political actors and support new contenders. Thus, we expect the crisis to reinforce and to broaden dissatisfaction with governments and political parties due to the perception of their unresponsiveness. This, in turn, leads voters to support anti-establishment or new parties and, in the most extreme cases, may result in political violence.

Right-wing populism

The populist right has been gaining visibility and influence in Europe since the mid-1990s. Its emergence is part of a long-term process and is not solely due to the economic crisis (Mayer 2014). Yet, the populist right’s electoral success may be accelerated by the crisis (Kriesi

2014a). In this regard, the populist right illustrates quite well the interplay of long- and short-term dynamics.

Working-class voters have decreasingly supported the socialists as their dissatisfaction with their policies has been growing and as structural changes resulting from the post-industrial transformation of the labor market reduced the strength of class identities (Mayer 2014). Fear of downward mobility and rising intolerance towards immigrants have turned working-class voters away from the left to the benefit of the populist right. Yet, this is most visible among those who do not have a strong leftist ideology – the right-wing working class, those who are neither from the left nor from the right, and those who are strongly politically disaffected – and among young people (Mayer 2014). Berezin (2013) observes that voters are confronted with the inability of mainstream parties from the right and from the left to answer their demands for security in terms of employment, welfare protection, and cultural identities. Populist parties seize the opportunity to mobilize on such issues. During, the 2012 French presidential elections, for example, Marine Le Pen framed her discourse around economic issues and national preference, leading the way of other political parties who then admitted that the diagnosis was correct but the prognosis wrong (Berezin 2013).

Thus, unaddressed fears related to social, economic, and cultural grievances drive support for the populist right from voters who are most strongly hit by the economic crisis or who are more threatened than others to lose their socio-economic status in times of crisis. France and Greece are two cases in point, albeit with different modalities. In France, the radical right is set in a long-term trend of increasing influence, whereas in Greece the rise of Golden Dawn is more directly linked to the economic crisis and the related collapse of the two parties which have dominated the Greek political scene over the last decades. Although Golden Dawn has been active in electoral politics since the early 1990s, it obtained its major electoral breakthrough during the economic crisis (Ellinas 2013). The Great Recession has

avored its rise by showing the economic incompetency of mainstream parties and their implications in the processes that led to the bailout of Greece. Furthermore, austerity measures stopped clientelist practices of political parties which, therefore, lost electoral support. The degree of citizen dissatisfaction with the political elites and with corruption practices was extremely high, leading to massive protests in the street and to the rising support for the radical right (Ellinas 2013). In this regard, we may thus hypothesize that the effect of the economic crisis is related to the increasing grievances of specific groups of unrepresented citizens which are addressed by the populist right in the electoral arena (Kriesi 2014a; Kriesi 2014b).

“Left of the left” mobilization

Relating to the idea mentioned earlier that people feel they have little in the way of influence on policy choices through electoral channels and with regard to the rise of protest, it might be noted that protesters take to the street not so much in response to difficult economic conditions created by the crisis, but rather to oppose government policies aimed to fight the crisis itself (Bermeo and Bartels 2014a). These protests explicitly address governments’ austerity measures. Students of social movements have recently started to inquire about who takes part in these protests and to study the socio-demographic characteristics – including the class basis – and political values of participants in anti-austerity protests (Gamson and Sifry 2013; Giugni and Grasso Forthcoming; Pickerill and Krinsky 2012). To be sure, the latter display a number of differences with participants in other types of movements. For example, a higher share of citizens having working-class occupations or working class identity take part in anti-austerity demonstrations (Hylmö and Wennerhag forthcoming). Similarly, in terms of political values, anti-austerity movement participants are closer to new social movement participants concerning the economic left-right dimension, while being different from both

old and new movement participants concerning the social authoritarian-libertarian dimension (Giugni and Grasso 2013). However, these works generally tend to conclude that anti-austerity protesters are not fundamentally different from the core constituency of the new social movements. In particular, Hylmö and Wennerhag (forthcoming) maintain that the recent wave of anti-austerity protests in Europe has not only brought the lower classes to the streets, but these protests still attract mainly the well-educated middle class. We may therefore expect that economic crises do not bring into the streets fundamentally different constituencies than those mobilizing during periods of economic growth. At the same time, however, social movements may be able to address in the non-electoral arena grievances specifically relating to the economic crisis.

Trade unions are key actors in the mobilization of the left. Recent studies show that, although economic strikes are declining, general or political strikes are increasing across Europe (Gall 2013; Hamann, Johnston and Kelly 2013; Lindvall 2013). These studies show how trade unions in the last decades have opposed policy choices taken by governments through general strikes, by bringing the political conflict to the streets. The likelihood of observing general strikes in a country depends on the strength of trade unions, and this relationship is curvilinear: where unions are weak, or unions strong and established partners having access to decision-making arenas, general strikes are unlikely, but where they are neither weak nor strong they are most likely to use general strikes as a means to influence policy decisions (Lindvall 2013). Moreover, the color of the government also affects the propensity to call on general strikes: the latter are less likely when the left is in power (Hamann, Johnston and Kelly 2013). However, this may change in times of crisis. Spain and Portugal are prominent examples of increasing strike activity even under socialists' governments, but the study by Hamann et al. (2013) includes data until 2008 only, so this question remains open to future investigation. Lastly, trade unions organized protests – not

only strikes, but also mass demonstrations and other forms of protest – jointly with “new new social movement” – during the Great Recession in Portugal (Accornero and Ramos Pinto 2014). Research on the specific role of trade unions in times of crisis is still sparse, but the above mentioned studies suggest that trade unions may be able to mobilize beyond their traditional constituencies and to renew their political strength in times of crisis.

In sum, regarding the “left of the left” mobilization, we may hypothesize that, in times of economic crisis, social movements of the left reactivate their traditional constituencies, but at the same time they are able to mobilize crisis-related grievances in the streets. Moreover, we may expect trade unions to contribute to the increasing protest activities in as much as they provide organizational resources to more informal mobilization networks.

From social movements to (a)political parties

The Great Recession has not only facilitated the electoral breakthrough of the populist right, but also led to the emergence of new political parties. This offers another opportunity to reflect on how contention may move from the non-electoral to the electoral arena. In Italy, for example, the convergence of the economic crisis and widespread, deeply rooted dissatisfaction with the political elites created a fertile ground for the rise of the populist *Movimento 5 Stelle*. The latter existed previously as an online activist network centered around its charismatic leader, former comedian Beppe Grillo, who organized highly symbolic protest events in several Italian cities (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013). The *Movimento 5 Stelle* became a contender in local elections in 2009 and obtained its first electoral success in 2010 at the local level. It then became the second largest party in Italy. People adhering to the movement were, originally, highly educated youth living in cities and using Internet more than average citizens, but as the movement obtained its first electoral success it became closer to the average citizen (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013). Followers of the *Movimento 5 Stelle*

tend to be center-left, but at the same time they face difficulties in situating themselves on the traditional left-right axis. As the party grew, it attracted more voters from the center-right and protest voters outflowing from other parties, resulting in the party having two distinct constituencies: a leftist one and a rightist one (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013). Yet, the party refuses to position itself either on the right or on the left and displays an atypical mix of environmental protection, workers' protection (but against trade unions), and anti-immigration positions, which makes it difficult to classify on the left-right axis.

The Italian example reflects a broader trend consisting in blurring the left-right division and stressing the division opposing pro- and anti-European positions. In fact, it appears that the radical right and the radical left in Europe are converging on a number of issues: nationalism is shared by both camps (Halikiopoulou, Nanou and Vasilopoulou 2012) and the radical right embraces economic protectionism (Berezin 2013; Halikiopoulou, Nanou and Vasilopoulou 2012) as well as welfare chauvinism (de Koster, Achterberg and van der Waal 2013). In addition, citizens who perceive cultural ethnic threats, but also to some extent economic ethnic threats, are more likely to vote for the radical right (Lucassen and Lubbers 2012). Although existing studies do not always consider the effect of the crisis on the economic positioning of the radical right, we may expect these trends may to be reinforced by the economic crisis.

More recently, during the 2014 European elections in Spain, the two main political parties have faced an electoral setback as both the PSOE and the PP lost considerable shares of votes to the benefit of smaller and emergent political parties. In particular, the newly created party *Podemos* attracted votes and media attention. Similarly, new parties are formed in Greece, such as the *River*, led by a renowned journalist who converted to politics during the crisis. However, it is still too early to know what will happen in the long run with these political parties resulting from the crisis.

The emergence of new political parties in the shadow of the economic crisis in Southern Europe suggests that the crisis may result in a deep transformation of the political system in countries confronted at the same time with an institutional crisis. However, we do not know at this stage whether voters will continue to support these parties. In the light of existing research, we may hypothesize that they will lose support once they share government responsibilities (Corbetta and Vignati 2013) or that they will establish themselves as relevant political actors resulting from broad socio-economic transformations, just like the Green emerged from the new social movements in the 1970s and 1980s. In addition, support for new political parties is related to the fate of the main contenders. Voters may continue to support these new political parties if established political parties do not manage to bring their countries out of the recession, at least in the voters' perception.

The role of leadership

In their definition of populism as a political strategy (as opposed to its ideological dimension) Kriesi and Pappas (Forthcoming) refer to the charisma of the leader as a defining feature of populist parties. Indeed, populist parties present themselves as direct representatives of the people's will. In his study of the electoral success of Hugo Chavez in Venezuela, Weyland (2003: 825) has stressed the importance of a charismatic leader in times of crisis: "people have particularly exalted hopes in prominent political leaders when facing severe crises, whereas under more normal circumstances, expectations pinned on leaders – even those with good, promising track records – are quite moderate." We may thus expect charismatic leaders to become more influential in times of crisis and prolonged recession.

Charismatic leadership has proven to play an important role in other contexts as well. For example, the leader of the Italian *Movimento 5 Stelle*, Beppe Grillo, presents himself as an outsider, a victim of the media system, which is seen as corrupted as the political system and

politicians, as a whistleblower denouncing the misdeeds of elected politicians and political parties, and as an indignant citizen fighting to be heard and represented (Bordignon and Ceccarini 2013). Reliance on charismatic and powerful figures may be related to the crisis, since “[w]hen exogenous threats to the system occur, most people, independently of the ideological labels they espouse, are likely to retreat to ‘authority’, or, more colloquially put, pleas for law and order” (Berezin 2009 34). Thus, periods of economic crises and recession may increase the appeal of charismatic leaders who propose to solve economic and social problems related to the crisis with simple formulae and sometimes in an undemocratic way. This is especially true in the case of radical right-wing populism. Indeed, a radical right ideology can be characterized by a limited dedication to the rule of laws, the division of power, and the defense of minorities rights, in brief, by an illiberal conception of democracy (Kriesi 2014a).

To be sure, the increased personalization of politics is a long-time trend in Europe, perhaps most visible in the Italian case with the highly prominent figure of Berlusconi during two decades or in France with the “omni-president” Sarkozy. But the economic crisis has reinvigorated this trend and put charismatic leaders at center stage. Yet, a number of questions remain about how the Great Recession has contributed to this process. Future research should address how the combination of dormant political dissatisfaction and the economic downturn resulted in or accelerated trends related to the rise of both charismatic leaders and populist parties. In this context, the literature on personality and in particular on submission to authority provides important cues for advancing hypotheses that could be tested in relation to the crisis (see Jost et al. 2003 for a literature review and meta-analysis). For the time being, we may tentatively hypothesize that in times of crisis citizens are more likely to support the charismatic and authoritarian figures of populist movements because these leaders articulate

widespread dissatisfaction with political elites and because citizens seek strong leadership and trust clear-cut responses to the crisis.

Conclusion

This paper has addressed works on electoral and non-electoral political engagement with the aim of setting a research agenda for the study of citizens' political reactions to the Great Recession in particular and of economic crises more generally. We discussed how scholars have studied the relationship between economic crises and political engagement – in both the electoral and non-electoral arenas – and we advanced a number of hypotheses addressing citizens' political reactions in the shadow of the Great Recession. These works and the hypotheses derived from them usually stress mechanisms taking place either in the electoral or in the non-electoral arenas, while they rarely point to interactions between the two domains. In conclusion, we would like to briefly discuss this understudied aspect. We believe that the study of economic crises provides an opportunity to shed light on the interplay between electoral and non-electoral mobilization. By highlighting a number of potential linkages between the two arenas in the context of the study of citizen's reactions to economic crises, we hope to open up avenues for future research in on interactions between political parties and social movements (Kriesi et al. 1995; McAdam and Kloos 2014; Tilly and Tarrow 2007; Walder 2009).

Social movements and political parties may interact, first of all, at election time. Social movements may either mobilize before the election, in order to drive attention over specific issues, or after the election, so as to challenge its outcome, as pointed out by McAdam and Tarrow (2013). These are the most common hypotheses on the interactions between electoral and non-electoral mobilization, which we addressed when discussing the literature on anti-

austerity mobilization, taking the form of opposition to governments' policy choices in the streets, but also of protest asking for more democracy.

Perhaps more interestingly, social movements may contribute to polarization by reinforcing dealignment processes. As McVeigh et al. (2014) maintain, movements who have strong views over a specific issue that becomes highly salient may foster support for a specific political party sharing their diagnosis of the situation and defending their prognosis. Similarly, McAdam and Tarrow (2013) as well as McAdam and Kloos (2014) stress the role of social movements in the process of polarization. McAdam and Tarrow (2013) argue that movements are more likely to have strong views on a few issues, while political parties have more moderate views on a larger set of issues. Thus, movements that manage to gain widespread support among citizens may use this leverage to push political parties towards more radical views on specific issues. McAdam and Kloos (2014) maintain that, while the electorate and the public at large stay largely in the center of the political spectrum, social movements drive political parties away from the center and towards more extreme positions. Thus, in this approach, polarization is mostly an elite-based process which is not coupled with a polarization among citizens.

In the context of the crisis, social movements may contribute to dealignment in two ways. On the one hand, citizens may move away from established political parties and, instead, support protest parties or new parties that share their views over the crisis when they are receptive to social movements' stance on the crisis. On the other hand, citizens who seek clear answers to the long-lasting recession may support radicalized political parties or charismatic leaders in both the electoral and non-electoral arenas. In this case, citizens may not be as radical as the political parties, which would be pushed towards more radical views mostly by social movements that gain visibility and leverage, yet they would vote for them.

However, as suggested by Hutter and Kriesi (2013), different interactions between electoral and non-electoral mobilization may be at play on the right and on the left of the political spectrum. These authors maintain that the right mobilizes the losers of globalization at the local level on immigration issues, but seldom take to the streets, as this form of action does not correspond to their values in terms of security and law-and-order. Thus, street mobilization is left to the leftists. However, in recent years, the right has increasingly taken to the streets, for example in France and Germany to protest government policies over same sex marriage or against what is perceived as government inaction on threats caused by immigration. Although these issues are not directly linked to the economic crisis, we may expect these changes to contribute to transformations in the action repertoire of the populist right, implying a closer interaction between protest through voting and marching in the streets in times of crisis. Moreover, Hutter and Kriesi (2013) show that the left has shifted the attention from the national to the global level. However, in times of crisis we may observe a return of the left on the local and national scenes as attested by the increase in the number of general strikes, but also of nationwide and locally organized demonstrations. Thus, in times of crisis, leftist and rightist citizens may be opposed not only at election times, but also on the streets, through mobilization and counter-mobilization.

Finally, it is worth noting that, when studying the consequences of economic crises, we should distinguish between their short- and long-term effects (Lindvall 2014). So far, research has focused on the short-term consequences, as the crisis and its effects are still unfolding. However, future research should aim to distinguish between short- and long-term effects. This holds in particular to the emergence of new political parties and new forms of protest, as these may be immediate yet ephemeral responses to economic crises.

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