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Which party members participate in direct political action? A cross-national analysis

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Abstract
As a reaction to the erosion of political parties, citizens increasingly engage in participation independently from parties (such as boycotts, petitions and street demonstrations). Looking beyond the often-stated contradiction between party membership and these forms of non-institutionalized participation, we tried to determine whether party members participate in non-institutionalized participation as a complement or an alternative to their party membership activities. Based on the relative deprivation and civic voluntarism model, three party variables were selected: activity rate in the party, government status and ideological orientation of the party. The results of our analysis conducted on party members in 22 European countries show that the government status and the ideological position of a party have the largest effects on the propensity to participate in direct action. Activity rate does not have a significant effect, except a positive one for street demonstrations. In sum, direct action is not an alternative for dissatisfied party members, but rather a complement.

Keywords
Party members, direct action, participation, petition, boycott, street demonstration

Introduction

Political parties in Western democracies are often considered to have been in a state of crisis for several decades. Although there is no clear consensus on this overall trend (e.g. Dalton et al., 2011), parties' ties to the broader society appear to have weakened seriously. Aspects of this crisis include increased electoral volatility (e.g. Drummond, 2006), as well as a decline in the number of party members (e.g. Van Biezen et al., 2012). These tendencies put pressure on the traditional linking function of parties. Citizens no longer recognize parties as trustworthy intermediaries for channelling their demands to the government. As a reaction, citizens have increasingly resorted to other

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forms of participation to influence public policy, such as boycotting products, signing petitions and participating in street demonstrations. These forms have been labelled as, for example, non-institutionalized participation, unconventional participation, direct action or cause-oriented participation (Barnes and Kaase, 1979; Hooghe and Mariën, 2013; Hustinx et al., 2012; Norris, 2007). In the last few decades, the number of participants in these kinds of direct actions has risen enormously (Dalton, 2009).

In general, these non-institutionalized forms of political participation can be contrasted with traditional, institutionalized forms of participation such as party membership. Many researchers distinguish between these two (or more) types of participation activities, with the most notable difference lying in the type of participants (e.g. Hooghe and Mariën, 2013; Li and Marsh, 2008; van Deth, 2014; Webb, 2013). Participants in demonstrations, petitions and boycotts (i.e. non-institutionalized participation) undertake this kind of action as an alternative to joining a political party (i.e. institutionalized participation).

However, other studies (Parry et al., 1992) have found that party membership increases the chance that people undertake this kind of direct action, as the same skills and resources needed for participation apply to both institutionalized and non-institutionalized forms of participation. In other words, the two kinds of participation are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Whiteley (2011), for instance, found no negative effect of consumer participation (boycotting products) on party membership and intra-party activity, and Galais (2014) even found a positive effect of protest behaviour on voter turnout (which is another form of institutionalized participation). Norris et al. (2005) indicate that party members are more likely to take part in street demonstrations, but that this also depends on what they are demonstrating against. Finally, in their study of university students, Hustinx et al. (2012) detected a specific category of participants, called 'civic omnivores', who combine traditional forms of participation with more unconventional ones.

The present paper aims to go beyond the alleged mutual exclusiveness between party membership and direct action by investigating what kind of party members engage in these forms of participation.

First of all, we will examine whether direct political action could be considered as an alternative or as a complement to party membership activity. To this end, a comparison is made between party members and non-members, but also between active and passive members. Active members are supposed to consider non-institutionalized participation as a complement to their party membership, while passive members regard it as an alternative to party membership activity.

Next, we will study the effect of a party's government status. Party members of opposition parties are expected to engage more often in direct action, since they tend to be more dissatisfied with (government) policies and they lack more direct channels (such as personal contacts) to influence government policy.

In addition, we will investigate whether the ideological orientation of a party plays a role. It is not entirely clear what to expect in this respect. While people from the right in general possess more resources to participate (Jennings and van Deth, 1990), the post-materialist topics that are often promoted by non-institutionalized participation (e.g. pacifism) are more in line with leftist concerns (Teorell et al., 2007).

Rather than conducting an analysis on the whole population – which is the most common approach – we have restricted our research population to party members. We use a subset of the 2004 International Social Survey Programme on citizenship (ISSP Research Group, 2012).

This paper is structured as follows. First, we will discuss the current crisis of political parties and initiatives that have been taken to overcome problems associated with it. Next, we will consider theoretical explanations for participation in non-institutionalized forms of participation and

we will indicate how these can be applied to our research population (i.e. party members). Before discussing the results of our empirical analysis, we will describe our methodology.

Party membership under pressure and alternatives

In many Western democracies, political parties are generally perceived as being in decline. This is illustrated by low levels of trust in parties, reduced party identification and decreasing party membership figures (e.g. Drummond, 2006; Van Biezen et al., 2012). As parties are performing crucial functions in a political system (e.g. they articulate interests, and recruit and select political elites), their decline potentially has far-reaching consequences for the functioning of democratic systems. In order to solve problems associated with this negative trend, three kinds of actors have undertaken action: parties, governments and citizens themselves.

Political parties have made an effort to rejuvenate, for example, by introducing participatory instruments in order to give party members (and even non-members) a greater say in the internal workings of the party (e.g. LeDuc, 2001; Pilet and Cross, 2014; Wauters, 2014).

Governments have also taken action to provide citizens with alternative mechanisms for participation. These mechanisms (such as referenda and deliberative experiments) bypass the formal representative role of political parties and put citizens in direct contact with the government (e.g. Caluwaerts, 2012; Fatke, 2014; Rahat and Sheafer, 2007). What these participatory instruments all have in common is that the initiative is taken by the (local) government, who always maintains control of the process.

However, citizens themselves have also sought alternative outlets to further their interests. These alternatives are not related to parties nor are they initiated by governments. Groups of citizens have autonomously taken the initiative to influence public policy, without at the same time becoming part of the political system. Boycotts, demonstrations and petitions are examples of such initiatives (Dalton, 2009; Mariën et al., 2010). We will now discuss each of them in more detail. Boycotting products is an individualistic form of participation, related to the concept of ‘consumer citizenship’ (Pattie et al., 2004). Based on the target and the kind of action, a distinction can be made between three types of political consumerism (Stolle et al., 2005). First of all, people can boycott products from businesses located in particular countries because they disagree with the government policies of that country. For instance, many people refused to buy oranges from South African companies during the Apartheid regime. A second type of boycott targets the practices of the corporations themselves. Shell, for instance, has been boycotted because of their activities in Nigeria. Finally, instead of boycotting products, people can also do the exact opposite and buy specific products from corporations that make a special effort to realize particular societal or ethical goals. This kind of action is called ‘buycotting’ (Neilson, 2010).

For our analysis, we have looked at boycotting in a more general sense. An implication of this broad interpretation is that boycotts are neither necessarily targeted at a foreign government nor at one’s own national government.

Another form of non-institutionalized participation is petitions, which are essentially requests to a third actor (often a public authority such as a government) to change their policies. This form of action has existed for ages (Norris, 2007), but has recently received new impetus by the emergence of online petitions. This new form of petitioning is much easier to arrange, distribute and sign. Consequently, large numbers of citizens participate in this kind of political action (Pattie et al., 2004). We focus on petitions initiated by individual people or by private (voluntary) organizations.

A third form of non-institutionalized action is street demonstrations. Again, these have existed for decades, but their purposes and participants have changed. Traditionally, street demonstrations

were mainly organized in terms of socio-economic issues, but the rise of post-materialist issues has added to the causes for street demonstrations – issues related to racism, the environment, etc. (Van Aelst and Walgrave, 2001). As a consequence, the number of street demonstrators has increased and their profile has broadened, which has been labelled the 'normalization of protest' (Norris, 2007; Van Aelst and Walgrave, 2001).

An important feature that boycotts, petitions and street demonstrations have in common is that they constitute an individualized and easy form of participation (Whiteley, 2011). All these forms correspond with a general trend in society according to which collective forms of participation decline to the benefit of political action that involves little or no contact with other people (Pattie et al., 2004). This makes this kind of participation very attractive, especially to young people (e.g. Dalton, 2009; Norris, 2007; Stolle et al., 2005). As a result, political participation as a whole is not in decline, as the rise in this non-institutionalized participation compensates for the decline in more traditional forms such as party membership (Dalton, 2009; Pattie et al., 2004).

Non-institutionalized participation: theoretical explanations

In this section, we will describe theories that explain why people participate in non-institutionalized activities. Afterwards, we will demonstrate how these theories can be applied or adapted to our specific research population of party members. It should be emphasized that our focus is on actual behaviour, not on attitudes towards direct action nor on the willingness to participate in it (see e.g. Donovan and Karp, 2006; Webb, 2013).

A first theoretical insight that could be relevant is *relative deprivation* theory (Dalton et al., 2001; Donovan and Karp, 2006; Gurr, 1970), which elaborates the concept of participation in reaction to discontent. Discontent arises when reality does not match with expectations and when people perceive a gap between what they think they deserve and what they actually obtain (Gurr, 1970). This could be applied to a person's socio-economic position, but also to government policy.

Two kinds of political discontent can be discerned: specific discontent (about particular actors, such as the current government) and diffuse discontent (about democracy in general) (Muller and Jukam, 1983). There is no consensus in the literature about whether satisfaction differs with respect to a system or individual people, but it is clear that the two are not necessarily related (Newton, 2006). Similarly, political process theory states that direct action is undertaken by those suffering from political and economic control by the government and the state (Armstrong and Bernstein, 2008; McAdam et al., 2001).

The empirical evidence on whether discontented people become active in non-institutionalized participation is ambiguous, however. Dalton et al. (2001) found in their analysis at the aggregate level a clear relationship between the levels of democratic dissatisfaction in a country and the support for alternative forms of participation. At the individual level, Kaase (1990) as well as Hooghe and Mariën (2013) have found a significant relationship between political trust (a concept related to political satisfaction) and non-institutionalized participation: the lower their political trust, the more likely people are to engage in direct action.

However, other studies conducted at the individual level have not found a correlation (Donovan and Karp, 2005; Muller and Jukam, 1983; Norris et al., 2005), while yet others have suggested that the kind of participation and the kind of dissatisfaction play an important role in this (Webb, 2013).

People who are critical about the functioning of classic democratic tools have two options: either to become apathetic or to engage in alternative methods, including direct democratic instruments, non-institutionalized direct action and in some cases even aggressive political behaviour (Gurr, 1970; Hooghe and Mariën, 2013; Muller and Jukam, 1983). A crucial influential variable in

this respect appears to be political efficacy, which is defined by Campbell et al. (1954: 187) as 'the feeling that individual political action has or can have an impact upon the political process'. A distinction can be made between internal and external political efficacy (Niemi et al., 1991). The former refers to beliefs of citizens about their competence to understand politics and participate in it, while the latter measures the extent to which political institutions are perceived as being responsive to citizen demands. It was found that high levels of political distrust lead to high levels of participation in non-institutionalized activities, but only among people with high levels of political efficacy (Hooghe and Mariën, 2013). In contrast, people with lower levels of political efficacy are more likely to become apathetic (Citrin, 1974).

Secondly, a number of explanatory variables can be found in the '*civic voluntarism model*' (Verba et al., 1995), which states that political participation is determined by two factors: motivation and capacity. People undertaking participatory activities need motivation and resources to participate. The first element, motivation, refers to the fact that people who are interested in politics and who see it as their duty to take part in the political system are more likely to participate. The second element, 'resources', includes knowledge, social networks, experience, money and equipment (Edwards and McCarthy, 2004). Some people have more resources than others, and are therefore also better equipped to participate. Scholars disagree on whether non-institutionalized participation is more demanding than institutionalized participation. If this is indeed the case, as is assumed by the cognitive mobilization theory (Donovan and Karp, 2006), then groups that are traditionally under-represented will participate even less in these kinds of activities. In addition, adherents of post-materialist values, who are supposed to participate more often in elite-challenging activities, are often found among higher-educated people (Donovan and Karp, 2006).

Research results provide an ambiguous answer to this question. Li and Marsh (2008) found that women and young people were indeed under-represented among people that effectively participated in direct action. Dalton (2009) found that lower educated people were less likely to participate in boycotts and demonstrations, while younger people were more likely to do so. Mariën et al. (2010) and Sloam (2013) have found a similar bias, with lower educated people participating less often and women and young people participating more often. In sum, almost all studies have found that education and age play a role, but the results paint a mixed picture for gender.

We will investigate the effect of these variables (i.e. education, age, gender and political interest) on the likelihood of party members participating in direct political action. Party members are already a select elite with high levels of political interest and 'resources' (e.g. Scarrow and Gezgor, 2010). It remains to be seen whether these socio-demographic factors still have a stimulating effect.

Party members as a specific case

In this section, we will focus on how these theories can be applied to our research population, that is, party members. The above-mentioned general theories will be further elaborated, modified and linked to hypotheses about party members' participation in direct action. While the general theories outlined above focus on variables at the individual level, we will now also take two other levels into account: the party and the country.

First, we need to formulate a hypothesis about the influence of individual-level variables. In the previous section, we indicated that relative deprivation could lead to either high levels of non-institutionalized participation or high levels of apathy (depending on levels of individual political efficacy). As party members in general exhibit higher levels of political efficacy than other citizens (Cross and Young, 2008; Whiteley, 2011), we expect discontent to fuel direct action rather than political apathy. Discontent about the party is translated into passivity within the party, as has been

demonstrated in previous research (Van Haute, 2010), and this will lead to more activity outside the party, as will be hypothesized below.

Based on the 'civic voluntarism model', however, it could be assumed that skills and resources are needed for both intra-party and non-institutionalized participation. If we assume that the same skills and resources are needed for both forms of participation, we can also expect active party members to be active in direct action, with non-institutionalized participation complementing their party membership. We formulate the following hypothesis:

H1: Passive party members participate more often in direct action techniques.

If this hypothesis is confirmed, this implies that the relative deprivation theory applies, while the reverse would confirm the civic voluntarism model.

In addition to these individual variables, we should also consider variables related to the party level. Several potential party classifications are possible: parties can be categorized on the basis of their origin (e.g. cadre parties), their organizational features (e.g. mass parties, cartel parties) and their ideological characteristics (e.g. catch-all parties) (Krouwel, 2006).

Two particular features will be discussed here, as they are particularly relevant from a theoretical perspective, that is, government status and ideological orientation. We will first consider the impact of the *government status of the party*. The political process model makes a clear distinction between insiders and challengers of the policy pursued by the state (McAdam et al., 2001). Insiders, on the one hand, have access to decision-makers and because they profit from this interplay with political and economic elites, they generally refrain from protesting. Challengers, on the other hand, are economically and politically disadvantaged, and have only a limited policy impact (McAdam et al., 2001). The combination of political discontent about their current situation and the lack of access to policymakers makes them more likely to undertake non-institutionalized participation activities. Party members dissatisfied with the government can be found primarily in opposition parties, which mostly have only limited access to policymakers. Therefore, we expect that party members from opposition parties are more likely to take part in direct action methods (which are often supported and even organized by opposition parties).

As boycotts, petitions and street demonstrations are often (but not exclusively) targeted towards the government (van Deth, 2014), it is assumed that members of government parties participate less often in these activities. After all, they can use other channels (such as direct contacts with ministers and their staff) to influence policy or they can rely on the initiatives undertaken by the government to put pressure on foreign governments or companies. However, several authors have criticized this narrow focus on the state as the only power centre, as well as the strict dichotomy between insiders and challengers (e.g. Armstrong and Bernstein, 2008). It is indeed true that power is shared between several actors, including the state (but also large corporations, for instance), and insiders could also adopt a critical stance towards these institutions. Nevertheless, it should be pointed out that the arguments to consider opposition parties as (in)direct stimulators of non-institutionalized participation are still valid. We should simply be aware that they are not the only channels or organizations to do this.

H2: Members of opposition parties participate more often in direct action techniques.

Another party variable that is relevant from a theoretical perspective is *party ideology*. Expectations about its impact go in opposite directions. On the one hand, it could be argued that people with right-wing preferences are more likely to participate, which is in line with the civic voluntarism model since they tend to possess more resources (Jennings and van Deth, 1990; Teorell et al.,

2007). This effect is confirmed by empirical results, but only for conventional participation, such as voting.

On the other hand, it has also been shown that people from the left are more likely to participate in direct action (consumer participation and protesting), but this effect is rather modest (Teorell et al., 2007). Two explanations can be given for this effect. First of all, it can be attributed to the rise of post-materialist values in society, which stress quality of life and self-expression (Inglehart 1990). Since topics put forward by post-materialists (e.g. pacifism or feminism) are highly valued on the left side of the political spectrum, we expect people from the left to be more likely to participate in direct action (Teorell et al., 2007). Yet another explanation for a higher prevalence among left-wing supporters is given by Kaase (1990). In his view, left-wing parties are more prone to the 'iron law of oligarchy' than other parties (Michels, 1911), which suggests that bottom-up participation and influence is impossible in organizations beyond a certain level. Therefore, traditional left parties are, in Kaase's view, less flexible to integrate new forms of activism into their party. As an alternative, he argues, frustrated leftist party members will turn to direct action techniques outside parties.

To sum up, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

H3: Members of left parties participate more often in direct action techniques.

If this hypothesis is confirmed, this can be interpreted as support for the relative deprivation theory. However, if it is rejected, the civic voluntarism model appears to offer the strongest explanation.

A third level that is relevant for explaining non-institutionalized participation by party members is the country level. As some political systems grant their citizens more political and civil rights than others, opportunity structures may differ. It goes without saying that for people to be able to sign petitions, boycott products or demonstrate, they need to have at least some degree of freedom. Therefore, non-institutionalized participation can be expected to be higher in countries with a high level of civil liberties. This is reflected in our fourth hypothesis:

H4: Party members in countries with a high level of civil liberties participate more often in direct action techniques

Methodology

In order to take stock of party members' participation in direct action techniques, we relied on a subset of respondents from the 2004 International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) on citizenship. This broad-scale survey was conducted between 2003 and 2006 in a large number of countries and focused on topics about citizenship and participation (including party membership and direct action). In total, 52,550 people participated in this survey, which was executed by several national agencies (ISSP Research Group, 2012). To allow us to compare party labels and party categorization, we limited the dataset for our analysis to European countries only, because these countries encounter similar problems of party decline and because they interpret party membership in the same way.[1] We included these countries: Germany, Great Britain, Austria, Hungary, Ireland, the Netherlands, Norway, Sweden, Czech Republic, Slovenia, Poland, Bulgaria, Russia, Spain, Latvia, Slovakia, France, Cyprus, Portugal, Denmark, Switzerland and Finland. We included only respondents that were a member of a political party at the moment of the survey. As such, we ended up with 2,162 respondents, which is sufficient to conduct reliable statistical analyses.

We have three *dependent variables*: whether or not a party member has participated at least once in either boycotts, petitions or street demonstrations. We did not impose any time restriction for participation in these kinds of direct action.

Table 1. Percentages whether one has ever participated in non-institutionalized forms of action, by party membership (N = 28,568).

	Petition	Boycotting products	Street demonstration
Party members	64.4%***	40.6%***	43.8%***
Non-members	44.2%	27.5%	26.4%
Total population	45.7%	28.5%	27.7%

All differences between party members and non-members are significantly different (chi² ***p < 0.001).

As for the *independent variables*, we made a distinction between variables related to an individual person, to parties and to the country one lives in. The variables mentioned in the hypotheses were included, as well as a number of control variables related to the relative deprivation or the civic voluntarism theory. A description of these variables can be found in Appendix 1.

Empirical analysis

First, we will perform a descriptive analysis on the dataset with all respondents (both party members and non-members). Table 1 shows whether or not a respondent has ever participated in one of the pertinent activities here (i.e. boycotting products, signing petitions or taking part in street demonstrations).

Table 1 clearly demonstrates that party members do not engage less often in non-institutionalized participation than the population at large. On the contrary, higher overall percentages are recorded for party members than for the average citizen. This may indicate that the skills and resources needed to become a party member are also useful for undertaking non-conventional participation, and that the distinction between party membership and non-institutionalized participation is less clear-cut than is often assumed. These figures seem to suggest that direct action is complementary to party membership rather than an alternative to it.

A marked difference lies in the rank order of the kind of direct action techniques. Signing petitions is more often carried out than boycotting a product, which in turn is performed slightly more often than taking part in a street demonstration. This corresponds with findings on the British population by Pattie et al. (2004). Party members, however, appear to participate more in street demonstrations (43.8%) than in boycotting products (40.6%).

As indicated above, the difference between members and non-members was not our main focus. We wanted to determine what kind of party members are more likely to perform non-institutionalized participation. Therefore, we reduced the ISSP dataset to those respondents that are a member of a political party (N = 2162). We ran a multilevel binominal logistic regression with the chance of ever having participated in petitions, boycotts or street demonstrations, respectively, as a dependent variable (see Table 2).

The results for the party variables differ clearly between petitions and boycotts on the one hand and street demonstrations on the other.

As for petitions and boycotts, a party's government status plays a greater role than its ideological orientation. Members of parties that are regularly part of the government are less likely to participate in these forms of action. The odds of members of government parties signing petitions or boycotting products are only half those of members of opposition parties.

For street demonstrations, our observations show a completely different picture. Here, the ideological orientation is a more decisive factor. A clear left–right divide could be noted, according to

Table 2. Multilevel logistic regression (random intercept model) explaining whether or not a party member has signed petitions, boycotted products and taken part in street demonstrations (second order Predictive Quasi Likelihood).[2]

	Signing petitions		Boycotting products		Street demonstrations	
	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)	B	Exp(B)
Individual variables						
Age (in years)	–0.023***	0.977	–0.015***	0.985	–0.009	0.991
Sex (1 = man, 2 = woman)	0.204	1.226	0.279**	1.322	–0.229	0.795
Years of education	0.052**	1.053	0.080***	1.083	0.098***	1.103
Self-placement social hierarchy	0.006	1.006	0.083*	1.087	0.019	1.019
Trust in politicians (ref.: strongly agree)						
Agree	0.823**	2.277	0.713**	2.040	0.469	1.598
Neither agree, nor disagree	0.943***	2.568	0.750**	2.117	0.801**	2.228
Disagree	1.047***	2.849	0.747**	2.111	0.453	1.573
Strongly disagree	1.280***	3.597	0.880**	2.411	1.470***	4.349
Activity rate in party (1= active, 2= passive)	–0.191	0.826	0.120	1.127	–0.624***	0.536
Political interest (ref.: very interested)						
Fairly interested	0.273	1.314	–0.025	0.975	–0.228	0.796
Not very interested	0.137	1.147	–0.088	0.916	–0.354	0.702
Not at all interested	–0.624	0.536	0.402	1.495	–0.835	0.434
Political discussion (ref.: often)						
Sometimes	–0.331*	0.718	–0.390**	0.677	–0.130	0.878
Rarely	–0.917***	0.400	–0.797***	0.451	–0.960***	0.383
Never	–0.926**	0.396	–1.019**	0.361	–1.038**	0.354
Internal political efficacy	0.404***	1.498	0.149	1.161	0.076	1.079
External political efficacy	0.019	1.019	0.117*	1.124	0.157**	1.170
Good citizen	0.075	1.078	–0.033	0.968	–0.031	0.969
Party variables						
Party several times in government	–0.469**	0.626	–0.416*	0.660	–0.058	0.944
Party ideology (ref.: centre-left)						
Far left	–0.258	0.773	–0.357	0.700	–0.348	0.706
Centre liberal	0.018	1.018	–0.310	0.733	–1.070***	0.343
Right conservative	–0.207	0.813	–0.794***	0.452	–1.127***	0.324
Far right	–1.050***	0.350	–0.548	0.578	–1.235***	0.291
Country variable						
Civic liberties	–1.311***	0.270	–1.700***	0.183	–0.580	0.560
Constant	0.641		–0.390		0.793	
Standard deviation (party)	0.158		0.161		0.294	
Standard deviation (country)	0.439		0.088		0.419	

The number of observations equals 2108 at the individual level, 203 at the party level and 22 at the country level.
See Figures 1, 2 and 3 in Appendix for predicted log odds for participation by government participation.
*$p < 0.1$.
**$p < 0.05$.
***$p < 0.01$.

which, party members from the centre-left and far-left parties are much more likely to take part in these demonstrations. The odds for a member of a right-wing conservative party, for instance, are

only 0.324 times the odds for a centre-left party member. For petitions and boycotts, there is a kind of left–right divide too, but this is less sharp and not all party differences are significant.

In sum, a party's government status (whether it is regularly part of the government or not) proves to be more important than its ideological orientation. An important exception to this rule is street demonstrations, where a strong left–right divide continues to have a large impact. This could be the result of the different topics promoted by different instruments: traditional leftist socio-economic topics are still assumed to dominate most street demonstrations. To conclude, for petitions and boycotts H2 is confirmed (members of opposition parties do participate more often), while H3 is rejected (members of left parties are not more active). For street demonstrations, the opposite applies: H3 is confirmed and H2 rejected.

At the individual level, differences were noted in terms of party activity. For petitions and boycotts, activity inside the party has no significant effect. For street demonstrations, on the contrary, active party members are more likely to take part. Passive party members are only half as likely to participate, which allows us to conclude that party activity acts as a complement to street demonstrations. This means that H1 about passive members is rejected. For street demonstrations quite the opposite applies: active members participate more, thus confirming the civic voluntarism model.

We have taken into account other elements of relative deprivation, both about respondents' own socio-economic position, that is, their self-placement in the social hierarchy, and about government performance, that is, their trust in politicians. The signs of the coefficients for this latter variable are as expected and are highly significant, meaning that party members who distrust politicians are more likely to participate in alternative action (Hooghe and Mariën, 2013). As for self-placement, there is only a small significant effect for boycotting, which is the opposite of what was expected: party members with a high social position are slightly more likely to participate.

Next, there are the variables of the civic voluntarism model. Taking part in political discussions has a large significant effect on the likelihood of undertaking non-institutionalized participation. Party members who often engage in political discussions are more likely to participate. This effect exceeds the effect of political interest, which is no longer significant when political discussion is inserted in the model.

As for the other variables, the picture is more blurred. Age significantly influences the likelihood of signing petitions and boycotting products (but not demonstrating). Similarly to the findings for the population as a whole (Mariën et al., 2010), younger members participate more often. Female party members are slightly more likely to boycott products, but for the other two kinds of action no significant differences could be noted. Years of education have a significant effect in all the models, which is in line with findings for the whole population (e.g. Mariën et al., 2010; Sloam, 2013). Citizenship norms do not have any significant effects.

Finally, as set out in the theoretical section, the sense of political efficacy plays an important role. It has a significant positive effect for both internal (signing petitions) and external (boycotting and street demonstrations) forms. This means that party members who estimate that they are capable of influencing the government, or think that the government takes their actions into account, tend to participate more often.

As for the country-level variable, our expectations are confirmed. In countries with a high degree of freedom (and hence low scores on the civil liberties index), participation is more likely to occur. This effect is significant for signing petitions and boycotting products, but loses its significance for street demonstrations.

Conclusions

The linking function of political parties has been put under pressure in the last few decades. As a reaction, parties, governments and citizens alike have introduced new mechanisms to communicate

citizens' concerns. In the present study, we have focused on three activities developed by citizens that are initiated independently of parties and governments, that is, boycotting products, signing petitions and taking part in street demonstrations. It is often stated that these forms of participation differ from traditional forms of participation (such as joining a political party), for example, in the kind of people that participate in it.

In the present article, we have challenged this apparent contradiction between non-institutionalized participation and party membership. We set out to map to what extent party members engage in these kinds of activities and explain what kind of party members do so. We have taken into consideration three specific variables to analyse party members' profiles: their activity rate in the party, their party's government status and its ideological orientation. We formulated expectations about these variables based on the relative deprivation model and the civic voluntarism model.

The results of our analysis conducted on a population of party members selected from the 2004 ISSP dataset show that a party's government status generally has a large effect on the propensity to take part in direct action. Members of opposition parties are more likely to boycott products and to sign petitions. For them, direct action is complementary to party membership in order to protest against government policy. The ideological position of parties has a smaller impact, but nevertheless a left–right divide could be discerned, which becomes very apparent when street demonstrations are concerned. The activity rate within the party does not have a significant effect, except for street demonstrations, in which active members are more likely to take part. In sum, we can conclude that direct action is not an alternative for party members, but, rather, a complement.

These findings have four important implications.

First of all, the distinction that is often made between participants in institutionalized forms of participation (including party membership) and non-institutionalized forms (boycotts, petitions, demonstrations) is less clear-cut than often assumed. Our analysis reveals that it is perfectly possible to combine active party membership and direct action. Perhaps, not only individual members, but also parties as a whole could be engaged in boycotts, petitions and street demonstrations: either by mobilizing their members, supporting the organizers or even organizing these direct actions themselves.

Second, the kind of party one belongs to appears to be crucial in this respect: members of elite-challenging parties are much more active in direct action techniques than members of government parties, and members of leftist parties are more likely to participate (especially in street demonstrations) than members of rightist parties. This points to the importance of making a distinction between the kind of party membership when forms of participation are assessed. Only membership of a specific kind of party (established or government parties) can be contrasted with alternative participation instruments. Conversely, people aiming to challenge the establishment use all kinds of techniques to do so (boycott, petition, street demonstration, but also party membership). In sum, it is not the kind of participation that matters, but what it is targeting (the establishment, the current government, etc.).

Third, it makes also sense to distinguish between different kinds of direct action. We clearly found a distinctive pattern for petitions and boycotts on the one hand, and street demonstrations on the other hand. Apparently, there are other dimensions (target, type of behaviour, etc.) that play a role in determining the kind of party members that participate in direct action (see e.g. van Deth, 2014).

Finally, from a theoretical perspective, we found evidence for both the civic voluntarism model and the relative deprivation model. As for the former, more or less the same pattern as among the population at large could be found: youngsters, higher educated people and people who often engage in political discussions tend to be more active. Despite being a select elite, party members do not differ much from the population in this regard.

Concerning the relative deprivation model, we found that party members who distrust politicians are more likely to participate, which is in line with findings for the population as a whole. Our finding that there is a higher prevalence of direct action among opposition party members also supports this model. We should note, however, that only discontent about politicians in general and about the government fuel non-institutionalized participation, not dissatisfaction with the party (operationalized here as passivity regarding party activities) nor dissatisfaction with one's position in the social hierarchy. For parties, this might be reassuring: despite their apparent widespread decline, they nevertheless seem to be in tune with increasingly popular initiatives to undertake direct political action. The sense of political efficacy is also relevant here: dissatisfied party members participate in direct action if they perceive that their action could bear some fruit.

In sum, party members possessing resources such as political interest and education who are dissatisfied with politicians and the government, but not necessarily with their own party, are more likely to participate in direct political action, on condition that the political regime in the country grants sufficient civil and political liberties.

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Notes

1. For the US, for instance, party identification instead of formal party membership was asked.
2. We checked the three models for multicollinearity. Variance Inflations Factors are never higher than 1.600.
3. In fact, the question in the ISSP survey about party membership contained four answer categories: belong and participate; belong, not participate; used to belong; never belonged to. As our analysis is conducted on party members only, our respondents all fall into the first two categories. These two answer categories were also used as a demarcation between active and passive members.
4. For former communist countries, such as Bulgaria and Hungary, we assumed that parties that have been in government once since the early 1990s are regular government parties

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Appendix 1. Independent variables

Individual level

- Party activity: dichotomous variable: either active or passive (ISSP categorization).[3]

- Relative deprivation variables:

Dissatisfaction with the current government (captured by government status of the party, see below)

Dissatisfaction with individual politicians: agreement with 'we can mostly trust people in government' (strongly agree; agree; neither agree nor disagree; disagree; strongly disagree)

Self-placement social hierarchy: self-positioning on a scale from 1 to 10 according to social position in society.

- Civic voluntarism variables:

Sex

Age: in years

Level of education: years of education

Interest in politics (very interested; fairly interested; not very interested; not at all interested)

Political discussion: frequency of discussing politics with friends, relatives or fellow workers (often; sometimes; rarely; never)

Norms of citizenship: combining scores on four items measuring the importance (1–7) of what it takes to be a good citizen: voting in elections, never trying to evade taxes, always obeying laws and keeping track of government actions

- Political efficacy variables:

Internal political efficacy: combining scores on two statements: 'People like me don't have any say in what the government does' and 'I don't think the government cares much what people like me think' (strongly agree; agree; neither agree nor disagree; disagree; strongly disagree)

External political efficacy: combining scores on two statements: 'I feel I have a pretty good understanding of the important political issues that my country faces' and 'I think most people in my country are better informed about politics and government than I am'.

Party level

- Government status: own coding based on Woldendorp et al. (2000), Political Data Yearbook Interactive (www.politicaldatayearbook.com) and Parliament and government composition database (www.ParlGov.org): 'several governments': whether a respondent's party is a regular government party, that is, a party that has been in government several times in the last 20 years.[4]

- Ideological orientation: far left, centre left, centre liberal, right conservative and far right (ISSP categorization).

Country level

- Degree of civil liberties in a country: we rely upon the yearly Freedom in the World report published by Freedom House (2015), an independent watchdog organization dedicated to the expansion of freedom around the world. Each country is assigned a numerical rating on a scale of 1 (highest degree of freedom) to 7 (least free). The scores are reached through a multi-layered analysis by a team of regional experts and scholars. The item we use here refers to civil liberties in 2004, and includes topics such as freedom of expression and belief.

Empirical analysis

Figure 1. Plot predicted log-odds (Pred log-odds) for participating in petitions by whether a party has been several times in government, split up by country.

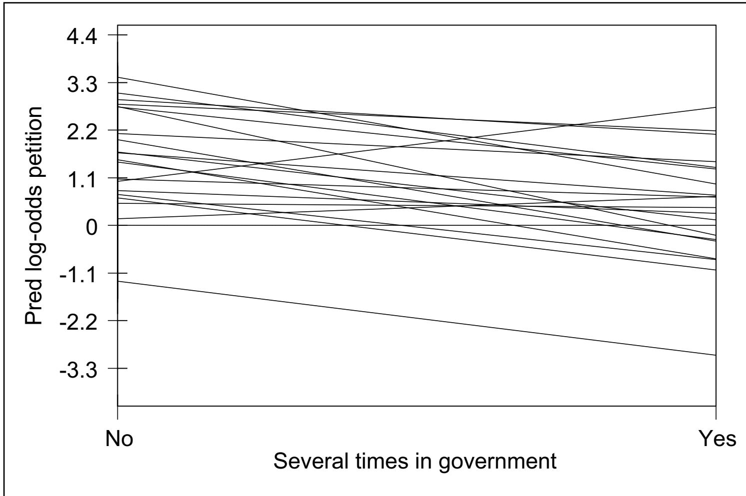

Figure 2. Plot predicted log-odds (Pred log-odds) for participating in boycotts by whether a party has been several times in government, split up by country.

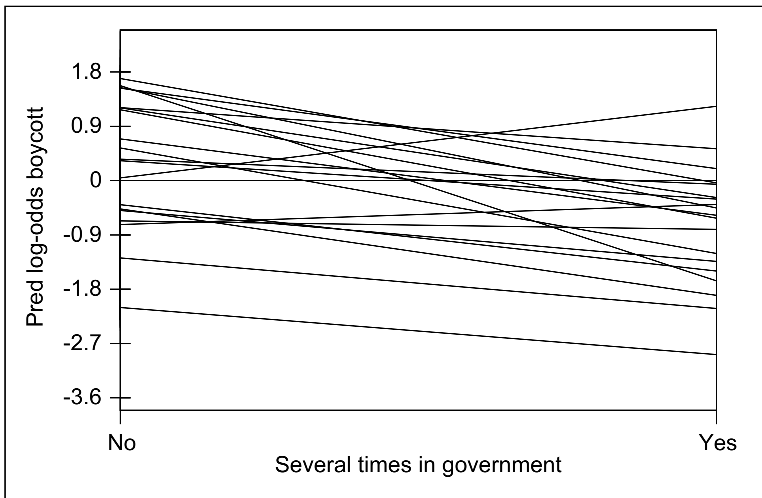

Figure 3. Plot predicted log-odds (Pred log-odds) for participating in demonstrations by whether a party has been several times in government, split up by country.