

Civic participation in Europe

Pawel Starosta¹

¹ Institute of Sociology, University of Lodz, Poland

Abstract: *The process of global transformation is accompanied by various consequences. One of globalists' fundamental theses assumes that, possibilities of citizens to participate in shaping political and social structures increase as well. In other words, a greater range of freedom and smaller pressure from state structures put the individual potential to the increase of common good and democracy in contemporary world (S. Huntington 2004). Opponents of globalisation underline that the processes of globalisation, mainly the declining role of the national state and the growing role of freedom of individuals leads to quite opposite results. Normative system undergoes differentiation and relativisation, social life becomes increasingly privatised and, consequently, public sphere falls down. Many researchers provide empirical examples confirming decrease in the interest public sphere and engagement of the representatives of democratic authorities in supporting same authoritarian regimes (Tam 2008).*

The objective of article (presentation) is to make an attempt at answering three main problem questions:

What is the general level of civic participation of Europe's population in the end of the first decade of the 21st century and what is the scale of differentiation of the participation between different European countries?

What patterns of civic participation dominate in Europe's population? and

Which of the below listed models explaining the differentiation of civic participation (Socio Economic Status Model; Social Capital Model or Attachment Model) is best fitted to explain the changeability of European rural population's participation?

Dependent variable is civic participation. It is a well-known term in social and political Sciences.

In the tradition of political and social sciences the varied understanding of civic participation is connected with varied perception of the issue of social development (Hickey & Mohan; 2004) and citizenship (Delanty 2000). Nevertheless, it always refers to the actors' participation in spheres of social life that constitute civic space, i.e. to political, associative and public one (Edwards, 2009). In our presentation, civic participation is understood similarly to behavioural approach as activity that is executed by the actions of citizens in public, political and associative sphere (Pattie, Seid, Whiteley, 2003). The independent variables are; the socio-economic status model the social capital model and the attachment model.

Three hypotheses have been formulated respectively to the problem questions.

H1. *In the first hypothesis it has been assumed that the level of civic participation in Europe will be close to the median position on the designed scale. It is expected that the highest levels of participation will be noted in the countries of the longest democratic traditions such as Great Britain, Switzerland or France, while the lowest levels will be noted in the countries of the shortest democratic tradition.*

H2. *In accordance with the results from previous studies (Verba, Scholzman, Brady 1995; Pattie, Sayed, Whiteley 2003), we think that the dominating patterns of participation will be voting and campaign participation.*

H3. *We think that from among the three models taken under consideration (the SES, SC and AT Models), the Socio-Economic Status model is best fitted to explain the changeability of civic participation of the Europe's inhabitants under survey from the statistical point of view.*

Verification of hypotheses was based on a database containing information from four rounds of the European Social Survey conducted in 21 European countries in 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008,2010, 2012,2014,2016 .

The analysis covered respondents from such countries as Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Holland, Spain, Germany, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Russia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Sweden, Hungary, Italy, Great Britain.

On the base of empirical analysis I can conclude that; General level of political participation in Europe is not so high. The predominant type of civic participation is voting participation. The highest level of political participation have been identified in Scandinavian and the lowest in former post-communist countries. Socio Economic Status Model and Social Capital Model to the same extent are fitted to explain changeability of political participation.

Keywords: globalisation, democracy, civic participation

1. Introduction

The process of global transformation is accompanied by various consequences. One of globalists' fundamental theses assumes that, possibilities of citizens to participate in shaping political and social structures increase as well. In other words, a greater range of freedom and smaller pressure from state structures put the individual potential to the increase of common good and democracy in contemporary world (S. Huntington 2004). Opponents of globalisation underline that the processes of globalisation, mainly the declining role of the national state and the growing role of freedom of individuals leads to quite opposite results. Normative system undergoes differentiation and relativisation, social life becomes increasingly privatised and, consequently, public sphere falls down. Many researchers provide empirical examples confirming decrease in the interest public sphere and engagement of the representatives of democratic authorities in supporting same authoritarian regimes (Tam 1998).

2. Theoretical Background. Civic Participation And Its Changeability

Civic participation, otherwise referred to as civic engagement (Pattie, Seyd, Whiteley, 2003) is a subcategory of a wider term of social participation (Misztal 1977) and is a fundamental concept used in social sciences with reference to civil society. It is usually defined as any individual or group/communal activity, carried out through political or non-political processes, which is aimed at solving or addressing issues of public concern. It encompasses national service, volunteering, political activism etc. In the tradition of social and political sciences a varied understanding of civic participation is conditioned by varied perception of the processes of social development (Hickey, Mohan 2004) and citizenship (Delanty 2000).

In this article the term civic participation, rather than civic engagement, shall be used due to the fact that it is characterized by the prominence of a behavioral component (Scholzman Verba, Brady 1999; Putnam 2008, Starosta 2010). As participation always refers to subjects in the domains of social life, citizenship can be seen as representing an expression of human agency in the political arena. For the purpose of the article, civic participation will be understood as encompassing all forms of citizens' activity in the civic sphere. In other words, it is not reduced to engagement exclusively within political institutions but includes activity which is directly or indirectly allied thereto, be it through collective mobilization or individual effort (see: Scholzman, Verba, Brady 1999; Putnam 2008). Civic participation is conceptualized in this paper in a broad sense as the boundary between political and nonpolitical activity is by no means clear-cut (Verba, Scholzman, Brady 1999: 400). This is because social action, both on the part of individuals and collectivities, may cater to political objectives at the local and national level. Herein, civic sphere will be understood herein as a wider term than public sphere, i.e. as encompassing what belongs to political, associative and public spheres (Edwards 2009) – with a restriction that in practice these three terms may partly overlap. In our presentation, civic participation is understood similarly to behavioural approach as activity that is executed by the actions of citizens in public, political and associative sphere (Pattie, Seid, Whiteley, 2003)

Scholars have devoted a great deal of attention to the study of civic participation (Pattie, Seyd, Whiteley, 2003; Skocpol, Fiorina, 1999, Verba, Scholzman, Brady 1995, Hickey, Mohan 2004). There are four theoretical perspectives that may be distinguished when it comes to research projects on this subject: locus and level of engagement, ideological/political project conception of citizenship and development theory (Hickey and Mohan 2004: 9).

As indicated by a number of authors (Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Nie and Kim 1978; Verba et al. 1995), activities which fall into the category of civic participation vary along a number of dimensions. In particular, the forms of participation are related to the resources and skills possessed by individuals who engage in them. Five modes of civic participation are used to be analysed in the literature:

The first one is voting in general elections. This form of electoral behaviour is the simplest form of civic participation that does not require an individual to have any special resources or skills.

The second mode is campaigning which is categorized in the existing literature as one of the two major types of electoral behaviour, along with voting (Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Nie and Kim 1978). It requires an individual to make use of significantly more extended resources and skills, but has no direct influence on legitimisation of authority, neither at the local nor national level.

The third mode is networking. It encompasses individual's activities which lead to forming connections in the public sphere, thus augments social capital and foments community life.

The fourth one is associative. An expression of civic participation is membership in voluntary associations, working to their benefit or performing socially useful unpaid work (compare Grabb, Curtis 1992).

The fifth mode is party involvement. It includes party membership and active engagement in activities within the party beyond the periods of electoral mobilisation. This is an example of political involvement which is connected with the classical conception of a democratic state.

Several theories attempt to explain changeability of civic participation in a national, regional or local context, in a form of simplified models. When it comes to explanatory patterns, the following are most often applied: rational choice, socio-economic status, civic voluntarism, social capital, attachment and socialization. Within each of the above, the focus is on a combination of factors which may provide a sound explanation of civic activism.

The concept of socio-economic status derives directly from structural functionalism. The framework of this concept is that every structure consists of diverse social statuses indicated by such resources-values as education, power, wealth, age and gender. The core assumption is that a social system rewards those individuals who possess the rare skills which meet its functional requirements and undertake action which contributes to its subsistence and development (Davies, Moore 1975). In the rational choice theory, it is assumed that economically rational actors maximize their benefits from any activity and simultaneously minimizing their costs. An important assumption in this case is that "action is undertaken to achieve objectives that are consistent with an actor's preference hierarchy of goods (Ritzer, Stepnisky 2018: 396). Civic activism appears on the one hand as an activity through which one desires to alter one's position in the social structure, and on the other, as a kind of the return payment that one makes for the social system in exchange for a high position occupied within it and related privileges (Verba, Nie 1972). The concept of social capital is currently one of the theoretical approaches which are very often brought into service by sociologists. Popularized by Bourdieu (1986), Coleman (1994), Lin (2001), Putnam (2001), and Halpern (2005), it is used to explain numerous social phenomena, particularly economic development, development of democracy in various countries and local communities, public security and quality of life. Since the most common components of social capital are trust, network of social contacts that the individual has and, less frequently, shared norms of cooperation, thus civic activism is treated here as resulting from existence of a certain level of trust that individuals have in others and institutional structures, stemming from their embeddedness in a network of social contacts.

The concept of attachment was developed by psychologists (Bowlby 1997) and sociologists (Kasarda, Janowitz 1974;) as a theory of individual's dependence on another individual(s) or a social group. In other words, individual's activity, including civic one is interpreted as a result of his or her emotional ties with a given social group and functional bonds that exist between him or her and the group within which civic activity takes place.

3. Problem Questions And Data Base

In this article only the models of socio-economic status, social capital, and attachment will be employed for further analyses. This restriction is due to the unavailability of the indicators which are necessary for the purpose of rational choice, citizen voluntarism and socialization theory modeling.

The objective of article (presentation) is to make an attempt at answering three main problem questions:

What is the general level of civic participation of Europe's population in the end of the second decade of the 21st century and what is the scale of differentiation of the participation between different European countries?

What patterns of civic participation dominate in Europe's population? and

Which of the below listed models explaining the differentiation of civic participation (Socio Economic Status Model; Social Capital Model or Attachment Model) is best fitted to explain the changeability of European population's participation?

Dependent variable is civic participation. It will be described by such items as; Work for political party or social action group last 12 months; Interest in Politics ; Taken part in public demonstration last 12 months; Displayed campaign badge; Posted or shared anything about politics last 12 months ; Contacted politician last 12 months; Work in association last 12 months; Boycotted certain products last 12 months; Membership of trade union; Signed petition last 12 months; A sense of identification with a political party or action group Participation in last parliamentary election

The independent variables are; the socio-economic status model the social capital model and the attachment model. The socio-economic status (SES) model is based on the following variables: gender, age, and education – measured by the number of completed years of education, feeling about household income and by borrowing money . Variables in our model are therefore typical SES variables frequently used in other studies. The social capital model includes such variables as: generalized trust, trust in institutions, frequency of using the Internet, frequency of meeting friends or colleagues and discuss intimate and personal matters with others and the attachment model is built upon such variables as: a sense of security in the place of living as well as the feeling of belonging to the religion, feeling of discrimination in country , etc. feeling of belonging to minority group in country, feeling of belonging to the country.

Three hypotheses have been formulated respectively to the problem questions.

H1. In the first hypothesis it has been assumed that the level of civic participation in Europe will be close to the median position on the designed scale. It is expected that the highest levels of participation will be noted in the countries of the longest democratic traditions such as United Kingdom, Switzerland or France, while the lowest levels will be noted in the countries of the shortest democratic tradition.

H2. In accordance with the results from previous studies (Verba, Scholzman, Brady 1995; Pattie, Sayed, Whiteley 2003), we think that the dominating patterns of participation will be voting and campaign participation.

H3. We think that from among the three models taken under consideration (the SES, SC and AT Models), the Socio-Economic Status model is best fitted to explain the changeability of civic participation of the Europe's inhabitants under survey from the statistical point of view.

Verification of hypotheses was based on a database containing information from nine rounds of the European Social Survey conducted in 29 European countries in 2018, including 49519 respondents.

The analysis covered respondents from such countries as Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Netherlands, Spain, Germany, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Slovakia, Slovenia, Switzerland, Sweden, Serbia, United Kingdom, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Iceland, Latvia, Montenegro.

4. Empirical Analysis

Table I Items of civic participation in Europe

Items	F	%
Work for political party or social action group last 12 month	2092	4,2
Interested in politics	21439	43,3
Participation in last parliamentary election	35505	71,7
Contacted politician last 12 month	7565	15,3
Displayed campaign badge	4184	8,4
Work in association last 12 month	7768	15,7
Signed petition last 12 months	12274	24,8
Membership of trade union	7863	15,9
Taken part in public demonstration last 12 months	3708	7,5
Boycotted certain products last 12 months	9025	18,2
A sense of identification with a political party or action group	23042	46,5
Posted or shared anything about politics last 12 months	7606	15,4

Cronbach's Alpha ,714

The answers to the 12 selected indicatory questions (items) were coded in a 0,1 system, where zero denoted lack of participation and 1 denoted participation in a given act.

In order to construct one synthetic scale describing the level of civic participation within the whole of the European population and in particular countries, it has been decided to sum up the positive responses to the 12 previously selected questions. In this way was a 13-degree summary initial scale constructed with the minimum of 0 points in case of the lack of participation in any act and the maximum of 12 points in case of participation in all distinguished acts.

Table II Scale of Civic Participation in Europe

Number acts of participation	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
F	6451	9079	9759	8171	5567	3940	2711	1736	1051	598	277	133	46
%	13,0	18,3	19,7	16,5	11,2	8,0	5,5	3,5	2,1	1,2	,6	,3	,1

N=49519

Table III Means of participation scale for the European countries

Country	Mean	N	Standard Deviation
Austria	3,211	2499	2,221
Belgium	3,242	1767	2,140
Bulgaria	1,662	2198	1,413
Switzerland	2,941	1542	2,290
Cyprus	2,160	781	2,062
Czechia	2,167	2398	2,050
Germany	3,792	2358	2,182
Denmark	4,464	1572	2,129
Estonia	2,124	1904	1,808
Spain	2,998	1668	2,356
Finland	4,273	1755	2,289
France	2,944	2010	2,247
United Kingdom	3,320	2204	2,225
Croatia	2,464	1810	1,963
Hungary	1,644	1661	1,485
Ireland	2,985	2216	2,193
Iceland	5,102	861	2,443
Italy	2,193	2745	1,933
Lithuania	1,761	1835	1,635
Latvia	1,976	918	1,661
Montenegro	2,227	1200	1,970
Netherlands	3,330	1673	2,004
Norway	4,696	1406	2,348
Poland	1,983	1500	1,937
Portugal	3,041	1055	2,110
Serbia	2,133	2043	1,885
Sweden	4,931	1539	2,159
Slovenia	2,222	1318	1,971
Slovakia	2,156	1083	1,857
Total	2,869	49519	2,249

Table IV. Types of civic participation in Europe – Factor analysis.

Items of civic participation	Social movement participation	Political party participation	Voting participation	Trade union activities
Signed petition	,692			
Boycott certain products	,650			
Displayed campaign badge	,640			
Taken part in public demonstration	,603			
Work for political party		,774		
Contact with politician		,660		
Work in association		,556		
A sense of identification with a political party		,471		
Interested in politics			,745	
Voting in last parliamentary election			,720	
Posted about politics			,641	
Member of trade union				921
% of variance	16,504	14,033	13,375	8,935
Extraction Method; Principal Component Analysis				
Rotation Method: Varimax				

Table V Table 11. OLS Regression – Socio Economic Status Model

Predictors	Beta	p.
Gender	-,031	,000
Age	-,120	,000
Level of Education	,261	,000
Felling about household's income	-,099	,000
Borrow money	,124	,000
R² 0,136		
Anova: F 5398,018 ; p.,000		
Dependent variable; Civic Participation		

Table VI OLS Regression – Social Capital Model

Predictors	Beta	p.
Generalized trust	,076	,000
Institutional trust	,123	,000
Personal use of internet	,177	,000
Contact with friends	,145	,000
Anyone to discuss intimate and personal matters with	-,016	,000
R² 0,119		
Anova: F 1372,501 ; p.,000		
Dependent variable; Civic Participation		

Table VII. OLS Regression – Attachment Model

Predictors	Beta	p.
Feeling of safety	-,146	,000
Belonging to particular religion	,028	,000
Feeling of discrimination in country	-,079	,000
Citizen of country	-,116	,000
Feeling of belonging to minority group in country	,049	,000
Number of people living regularly as member of household	-,030	,000
R² 0,044		
Anova: F 1474,130 ; p.,000		
Dependent variable; Civic Participation		

5. Conclusion

On the base of empirical analysis I can conclude that; General level of political participation in Europe is not so high. The predominant type of civic participation is social movement participation. The highest level of political participation have been identified in Scandinavian and the lowest in former post-communist countries. Socio Economic Status Model and Social Capital Model to the same extent are best fitted to explain changeability of civic participation in Europe.

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