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## Patterns of participation: Political and social participation in 22 nations

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Kenneth Newton and Heiko Giebler

**Patterns of Participation:  
Political and Social Participation  
in 22 Nations**

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## **Abstract**

Many studies show that political participation at the individual level is fragmented, multidimensional and non-cumulative, but comparison of 22 nations in Europe shows that different kinds of social and political participation at the country level are cumulative, unidimensional. The result is a set of country families of participation. Since these generally correspond with the country families found in studies of public policy, it raises the possibility of still higher-level generalizations covering an even broader range of social, economic, and political country characteristics. Finally, this study explores various theories explaining country patterns and families of participation and concludes that this is best done by a reference to a single syndrome of country characteristics covering democratic and economic development, government effectiveness, low corruption, high public expenditure on public personal services, and the rule of law. These factors seem to act as a mutually reinforcing system of cause and effects that are closely associated with country levels of participation of many different kinds.

## **Kurzzusammenfassung**

Während viele Studien auf der Individualebene eine fragmentierte, mehrdimensionale und nicht-kumulative Struktur politischer Partizipation aufzeigen, kommt dieser Vergleich von 22 Nationen Europas auf der Makroebene zum Ergebnis, dass verschiedene Formen politischer und sozialer Beteiligung sowohl kumulativ als auch eindimensional sind. So können im Hinblick auf die Partizipation Länderfamilien definiert werden. Da diese weitgehend mit jenen Länderfamilien übereinstimmen, die sich aus anderen Studien ergeben haben, eröffnet sich die Möglichkeit einer weiter reichenden Generalisierung, die vielfältige soziale, ökonomische und politische Ländercharakteristika umfasst. Darüber hinaus werden verschiedene theoretische Ansätze zur Erklärung von Ländergruppen und Partizipationsmustern überprüft mit dem Ergebnis, dass dies am besten mit einem Netz eng verwandter Indikatoren gelingt, namentlich der demokratischen und ökonomischen Entwicklung, der Regierungseffizienz, niedriger Korruption, hohen öffentlichen Ausgaben in den Bereichen Bildung und Gesundheit sowie Rechtstaatlichkeit. Diese Faktoren bilden ein sich gegenseitig verstärkendes System von Ursache und Wirkung, das in einer engen Verknüpfung mit dem Ausmaß an Beteiligung in verschiedenen Bereichen steht.



*Kenneth Newton and Heiko Giebler<sup>1</sup>*

## **Patterns of Participation: Political and Social Participation in 22 Nations**

‘... nothing is great or little otherwise than by comparison ...’  
(Jonathan Swift, *Gulliver’s Travels*)

### **Introduction**

This study explores cross-national patterns of participation in 22 nations in Western and Central Europe and tries to explain them. It differs from most previous work on participation in two main respects. First, much of the existing literature deals with either social participation or political participation, and often concentrates on particular sub-types such as conventional political participation, protest activity, political violence, membership of voluntary associations, or engagement in community affairs. This study examines levels of participation across a wide variety of different types – political and social, conventional and unconventional, formal and informal, individual and collective. Second, most research examines individual-level participation, comparing the activity of different groups according to variables such as age, sex, occupation, education, ethnicity, and family background. In contrast, this study is a cross-national comparative analysis of aggregate rates of participation. Countries, not individuals, are the units of analysis. There is no necessary reason why patterns of participation at the individual level should be repeated at the country level, although this may be the case, and certainly no reason why the same sorts of variables used to explain participation at the individual should be used at the country level of analysis (Roller and Weßels 1996; Rosenstone and Hansen 1993; Weßels 1997). For this reason the main focus of explanation here is on the systemic and institutional characteristics of countries, such as democratic and economic development, public policies and services, and the rules and procedures of the social and political order.

The study is divided into two main parts. The first shows that patterns of individual-level participation revealed by earlier research are, indeed, repeated in this study, but it then explores country levels of participation in greater detail and shows them to be very different. The second part of the paper explores theories that might account for these

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<sup>1</sup> The authors would like to thank Frank Castles, Jan van Deth, and Bernhard Weßels for their very helpful comments on an earlier version of the paper.

patterns of participation, and, since the concern is with country comparisons, the explanatory theories and variables are necessarily systemic and institutional ones that characterize whole nations, not individuals.

### **Political Participation: Specialized or Generalized?**

Verba and Nie's (1972) classic work on political participation in the United States found, contrary to the conventional wisdom of the time, that political participation is not one-dimensional and cumulative, but fragmented and specialized. Most citizens tend to specialize in a particular form of political engagement and stick to it: they are either party campaigners, or involved in community affairs, or they contact public officials, or they are protest activists. Comparatively few engage in a wide range of political activities and most do not accumulate different activities in the political repertoire as they become more and more politically involved. If they do combine two or more kinds of political activity, it is not possible to predict on the basis of knowledge of any one kind of activity what the others are likely to be. In this sense, different kinds of political participation are multidimensional and non-cumulative. The Verba and Nie finding has been amply confirmed in later studies of political participation in Costa Rica, Canada, Norway, Tokyo, Britain, and the United States (Parry, Moyser, and Day 1992; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978: 331–339).

This article takes the fragmented and specialized nature of political participation as its starting point, but extends the analysis to cover a wide range of both political and social participation. In addition to conventional and protest political activity it covers social involvement, helping behavior, and participation of various kinds in a broad array of voluntary associations. The present work also takes countries as its unit of analysis, not individuals. That is, it uses country averages of different kinds of social and political participation in order to see how they compare and contrast. Verba, Nie, and Kim (1978: 61–62) found that each of the seven countries covered in their comparative study had its own particular profile of political participation that differed from the rest. As a result, each country had a unique pattern of participation, and they explain this by suggesting that different types of political systems will encourage various types and combinations of political engagement according to the needs and problems of their citizens and according to their perceptions of the most effective forms of action for solving these problems.

Other research also suggests diverse patterns of participation among countries. Lipset (1963), for example, argues that each country's political history is associated with a culture that is more or less individualist or collectivist, while other writers emphasize the

importance of religion (Scott 1957), urban-rural differences (Smith 1975), government structures (Rose 1954), contextual factors of opportunity structures and modernization (Roller and Weßels 1996), and of age, education, and wealth (Curtis, Grabb, and Baer 1992; Inglehart 1997; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Knoke 1986; Morales 2008). For example, it may be that federal systems favor more decentralized and local forms of participation, that strong and unified parties encourage party activity, that proportional electoral systems encourage high levels of voting turnout, that competitive market societies have more occupational pressure group activity, and so on. In this case, each country with its own particular historical, institutional, and cultural mix will have its own particular, and perhaps unique, pattern of social and political participation.

It is also possible that rates of participation are determined primarily by one or a few driving factors with a powerful influence. Van Deth and Elff's (2004) multi-national analysis of changes in political involvement and apathy in Europe in the last three decades shows that political interest depends primarily on economic changes. Is it possible that economic development—or some other variable such as religion, democratic development, or education—has a powerful and general influence on many forms of participation? This would have two implications for cross-national comparative studies. First, countries with similar levels of economic development would have similar levels of participation of different kinds, rather than unique country profiles. Second, if, as is often the case, economic development has a powerful and general effect on a wide variety of social and political phenomena, including different forms of social and political participation, in a wide variety of countries, one would expect to find not a fragmented and multidimensional pattern of participation at the national level but a unidimensional and cumulative pattern determined by one or a few country characteristics.

## **Data and Methods**

Data on social and political participation are drawn from the first wave of the European Social Survey (ESS) of 2002/2003. The ESS survey has a methodological rigor that is unusually strict for comparative surveys. Each participating nation has to adhere to common standards of sampling, questionnaire design, event and context measurements, translation, fieldwork, response rates, and archiving. Any deviations from these specifications are documented and transparent. Face-to-face interviews were conducted with a sample of people aged 15 and over resident in private households, regardless of nationality, citizenship, or legal status. Sampling was by strict probability methods at every stage. Quota sampling was not permitted at any level, nor was the substitution of non-



responding households or individuals.<sup>2</sup> Response rates of 65% or higher were attained in 11 of the 22 countries and in many cases were hence in excess of the usual response rates for cross-national surveys and even national ones. Sample numbers were between 2,995 (Germany) and 1,207 (Italy).<sup>3</sup>

Great care was taken with drafting (see Saris, Satorra, and Coenders 2004), pilot testing, and translation of the questionnaire into all languages spoken as a first language by 5% or more of the resident population of all countries. Most national surveys were conducted between September 2002 and April 2003.<sup>4</sup> The ESS asks 24 questions about different aspects of social and political participation. These group into five different types, as follows:

1. *Conventional political participation*

The measures of conventional political participation are the percentages of respondents in each country saying that they had engaged in the following seven activities during the last twelve months: *voting; involvement in political campaigns; contacting political and government officials; joining, working for, and giving money to political organizations; being interested in politics; and discussing politics.*

2. *Unconventional (protest) political behavior*

Unconventional political behavior in this study means taking part in the previous twelve months in any one of four forms of protest activity; *lawful demonstrations, signing a petition, boycotting products, and deliberately buying certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons.* Legal protest behavior of this kind has become part of the normal repertoire of western politics in recent decades, though only a minority engage in it in most Western states (Barnes and Kaase 1979; Jennings and van Deth 1990; Meyer 2004). Illegal protest behavior is less common but by no means negligible (Roller and Weßels 1996: 98).

3. *Participation in voluntary associations*

The ESS asks about four kinds of activity in voluntary associations in the previous twelve months; membership of, participation in, giving money to, and voluntary work for associations. It also asks about 11 kinds of voluntary associations (*business, consumer, cultural, environmental, humanitarian, political, religious, science, social,*

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2 Over-sampling (by using different selection probabilities for certain subgroups or strata) was acceptable provided that the total sample still complied with the effective sample size criterion and that the data could be re-weighted to achieve a correct distribution.

3 Design weights and population weights are applied as appropriate in all the statistics reported in this paper.

4 Full details of the first wave survey are available in the ESS Technical Annex ([www.europeansocialsurvey.org](http://www.europeansocialsurvey.org)). Data can be downloaded by accessing the ESS Data homepage (<http://ess.nsd.uib.no>).

*sport*, and *trade union*).<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, questions about voluntary activity were not asked in Switzerland and the Czech Republic reducing the number of countries to 20 so far as voluntary associations are concerned. These two countries are included in percentage tables dealing with other forms of participation but not in the voluntary organization tables or (for reasons of comparability) in the tables presenting or using standardized participation scores for countries.

#### 4. *Informal social participation*

The measure of *social engagement* is the percentage of respondents saying that they meet socially and the frequency with which they say they do so. It differs from involvement in voluntary associations in that it concerns individual and group participation, not that of organizations and associations.

#### 5. *Informal helping behavior*

The measure of helping behavior is the percentage declaring that they have actively provided *help for others* and the frequency with which they say they do so. It differs from the activity of welfare associations in being individual and personal, rather than organized and institutionalized by a charitable association.

The number of countries included in the ESS is too small to use multiple correlations, multiple regression, or principal component analysis. Using the latter would make this study directly comparable with individual level research, but, unfortunately, the sample size fails to meet widely recognized standards, for example, the rule of thumb requiring five times as many observations as variables in principle component analysis (Bryant and Yarnold 1995: 100). Therefore, a combination of percentages, simple correlations, and hierarchical cluster analysis is used instead. None of these three methods is likely to produce entirely convincing results on its own but using all three together is more convincing if they triangulate on the same general conclusions.

Cluster analysis is commonly used in attempts to discover similarities between countries where the number of observations is substantially lower than in individual level research (Castles 1993; Obinger and Wagschal 2001; Castles and Obinger 2008). In this study, cluster analysis is used to uncover similarities and dissimilarities between different measures of participation as well as to uncover similarities and differences between measures of participation in different countries or, in other words, to identify country families. This makes it possible to analyze the way in which different measures of participation cluster and the ways in which different countries cluster with respect to participation. The cluster analysis technique applied here is hierarchical cluster analysis

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5 There is also an 'Other' category which is not analysed here because it is a mixed residual category with an unclear content.

with the complete linkage method using Euclidian distances. The complete linkage method is a rigorous and exacting procedure in the formation of clusters, sometimes described as the ‘furthest-neighbor’ approach. It is a less biased method than some other forms of cluster analysis (Hair and Black 2000: 178). The inclusion of a new object or cluster into an existing cluster is based on the maximum distance between objects in each cluster and represents the smallest space that can enclose all objects in the newly formed cluster. Because cluster analysis maximizes the distance between clusters and minimizes the distance within them, the complete linkage method tends to form especially tight clusters.<sup>6</sup>

Euclidean distance is based on the calculation of distance between two variables in n-dimensional space, where n equals the number of variables. Euclidean distance is the most commonly used measure applied in cluster analysis and is particularly appropriate for the purposes of this article (Cormack 1971).<sup>7</sup> The sensitivity of the measures to absolute scale differences (voting turnout average 79%, working for a political party or group averages 4%), is solved by using standardized data (Hair and Black 2000: 171).

### **Individual-Level Political Participation**

Although the concern is with cross-national comparison in this article, individual level analysis was carried out as an essential but preliminary step in order to confirm that the ESS produces the same or similar results as previous individual-level studies cited above. Table 1, presenting the results for the United Kingdom, shows that it does. Using the same statistical method of principal component analysis to analyze very similar measures of conventional participation as the Verba and Nie studies, the table shows that political participation in the United Kingdom divides into four distinct components, each of which is small and independent of the others. The first explains only 17% of the variance and loads heavily on working for a political organization, displaying campaign material, taking part in demonstrations, and donating money to political organizations or groups. The second, explaining less than 16%, covers the unconventional or protest behavior of signing petitions, boycotting products, and buying ethical products. The third, explaining less than

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6 Since the results of different kinds of cluster analysis can vary, iterative partitioning methods using K-means cluster analysis were also calculated. The results, not produced here for reasons of space, are virtually identical to those of the hierarchical cluster analysis.

7 It is vital to give a wide variety of participation measures equal importance in the calculations, and Euclidian distances gives outliers neither too much (Squared Euclidean distances) nor little weight (City-block distances). It is also vital to give every feature of an object equal importance for the calculations, excluding, for example, Chebychev or Power distances, and Euclidian distance is the most satisfactory way of doing this.

15%, covers interest in and discussion of politics, and the smallest of all is associated only with voting. All four components together explain little more than half of the total variance. These results repeat previous research showing that individual political participation is typically fragmented and multidimensional.<sup>8</sup>

*Table 1: Principal component analysis (varimax rotation) of individual political participation in the United Kingdom (N = 2,052)*

Indicator	Component			
	1	2	3	4
Interested in politics	0.130	0.131	0.812	-0.203
Discuss politics	0.081	0.211	0.814	-0.031
Voted in last election	-0.012	-0.080	-0.172	0.939
Contacted politician	0.374	0.160	0.332	0.023
Worked for political organization	0.691	-0.021	0.166	0.127
Displayed campaign material	0.670	0.154	-0.036	-0.181
Lawful demonstration	0.631	0.108	-0.016	-0.056
Donated money to political organization	0.499	0.096	0.234	0.040
Signed petition	0.293	0.606	0.008	-0.191
Boycotted products	0.055	0.793	0.173	-0.019
Bought ethical products	0.070	0.764	0.254	0.039
Variance explained (%)	16.65	15.62	14.92	9.24

The same principle component analysis of individual political participation in France, Germany, Italy, Portugal, and Denmark shows the same degree of fragmentation and specialization.<sup>9</sup> Having established this consistency with previous individual-level results, the rest of the analysis will be devoted to aggregate, cross-national levels of participation. Is it also fragmented and multidimensional, and does each country have its own unique profile of participation?

<sup>8</sup> The rarest form of political activity is illegal protest. Although the ESS asks about it, it was decided not to include it as a form of participation in this study. While it is clearly a form of political participation, it was excluded from this study on theoretical and empirical grounds. Theoretically, its illegal nature sets it apart from the other 24 measures of legal participation, and, empirically, it is the rarest form of participation with no more than 2% in any country saying they had been involved in this kind of activity, and usually less than 1%. In individual-level principal component analysis it emerges as a variable on its own that fails to explain a significant proportion of the variance. Illegal protest activity is, therefore, an exception to the general rule of participation but a rare one.

<sup>9</sup> Figures are not reproduced here for reasons of space.

## Cross-National Participation

### *Conventional Political Participation*

Table 2 presents the measures of conventional political participation by country. Because the table contains an overwhelming mass of figures, it is organized in a way that helps to make comparative sense of them. First, types of participation are arranged in columns on the y-axis from the most widespread forms of activity on the left (voting and discussing politics) to the least widespread on the right (working for a political party and donating money to a political organization). Second, countries are ranked in rows on the x-axis from top to bottom according to their overall standardized rates of participation.<sup>10</sup> The basis for this ranking is explained later in this article, and is not important at this stage of the analysis; it is the simple rank ordering of countries that matters at this stage (see Table 7).

Table 2 shows substantial variations in different kinds of conventional political participation. The over-all averages of voting in elections and discussing politics are, not surprisingly, the most widespread forms of political activity, with 79% and 66% respectively, and donating money and working for a party or political group the least with 6% and 4%. In this respect, most countries repeat a common pattern. There are some substantial variations between countries within the columns. In Switzerland 85% of the population claims to discuss politics often, compared with 50% in Greece. In the Netherlands 66% claim an interest in politics, but in Spain it is 21%. In Finland 24% say they have contacted a political official in the past twelve months compared with 10% in Poland.

In spite of this, countries tend to vary in the same way both across the columns and down them. That is to say, the percentage figures most generally decline as one moves across the columns from high participation elections to comparatively low participation party work, and the figures most generally decline as one moves down each column. This means that if a country is relatively high on one measure it is generally high on the others as well. For example, the top seven countries (Norway, Austria, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Finland, and the Netherlands) most generally have scores that are greater than the average of all 22 countries, shown in the last row. In fact, 39 out of 49 scores for the top seven are greater than the average. Conversely, the bottom seven countries (Greece, Hungary, Poland, Italy, Portugal, Spain, and Slovenia) are often below average.

The exception to this general pattern is voting turnout. Voting is by far the most common form of participation, social or political perhaps because the state, political

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<sup>10</sup> Except Switzerland and the Czech Republic which are presented at the bottom of the table due to missing data on participation in voluntary associations.

parties, the media, and some voluntary organizations give elections a lot of attention and try to make it as easy as possible to vote. The state makes it simple or automatic to register. It subsidizes political parties and their newspapers in some countries, and in five of the twenty two countries (the Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Italy, and Greece) voting is or has recently been compulsory. The strenuous efforts of parties to mobilize their voters are reinforced by some voluntary associations, and elections get a huge amount of media coverage. In short, voting is different because electoral systems and political institutions help to make it a low cost, low effort form of participation.<sup>11</sup>

*Table 2: Participation in seven kinds of conventional political activities by country (percentages)<sup>a</sup>*

Country	Type of political activity							N
	Voted in last election	Discussed politics	Interested in politics	Contacted politician	Displayed campaign material	Donated money	Worked for political party or group	
Norway	84	78	49	23	22	12	9	2,036
Austria	88	77	58	18	8	11	10	2,257
Sweden	87	70	57	16	11	6	5	1,999
Denmark	94	77	63	18	5	9	4	1,506
Germany	85	82	63	13	6	9	4	2,919
Finland	82	77	46	24	16	7	3	2,000
Netherlands	86	71	66	14	4	8	3	2,364
Belgium	85	60	45	18	7	9	5	1,899
United Kingdom	72	62	52	18	20	8	3	2,052
Israel	79	75	63	13	12	12	6	2,499
Luxembourg	65	69	43	18	5	15	4	1,552
Ireland	76	60	47	22	9	10	5	2,046
France	75	74	40	18	11	3	5	1,503
Slovenia	80	60	42	12	2	6	4	1,519
Spain	78	53	21	12	10	5	6	1,729
Portugal	73	65	36	12	7	4	4	1,511
Italy	89	52	33	12	7	3	3	1,207
Poland	66	68	40	10	3	9	3	2,110
Hungary	81	69	46	15	3	2	3	1,685
Greece	91	50	32	15	3	2	5	2,566
Switzerland	69	85	61	17	9	18	8	2,040
Czech Republic	66	66	32	23	5	12	5	1,360
Average	79	66	45	14	7	6	4	42,359

a In this table (and in Tables 3, 4, and 5) the base numbers include 'Don't know', 'Not answered' and 'Refusal.' Country statistics are weighted by country specific design weights, which correct for differential selection probabilities and the effects of clustering in the different national sample designs. In the last row of this table, and in all following tables where appropriate, the data are weighted by country specific design weights, and also by population weights that correct for the different population sizes of countries.

<sup>11</sup> On the exceptional nature of voting see Schlozman (2002: 436).

*Unconventional Politics*

Table 3 presents figures for rates of unconventional political participation in the 22 ESS countries. It is organized in the same way as Table 2, that is, from the most frequent form of protest activity in the first column to the least frequent in the last, and from the country with the highest overall rate of social and political participation in the first row to the country with the lowest in the last. By and large, Table 3 demonstrates the same general pattern as Table 2: the top seven countries generally (in 20 cases out of 28 or 71%) have higher than average rates of petition signing, buying ethical products, demonstrating, and boycotting products. Conversely, the bottom seven countries most usually (26 cases out of 28 or 93%) have lower than average rates of participation.

*Table 3: Participation in four kinds of political protest activities by country (percentages)*

Country	Type of political participation				N
	Signed petition	Bought ethical products	Boycotted products	Lawful demonstration	
Norway	36	35	19	8	2,036
Austria	27	30	22	10	2,257
Sweden	41	55	32	6	1,999
Denmark	28	44	23	8	1,506
Germany	30	39	26	11	2,919
Finland	24	42	27	2	2,000
Netherlands	22	26	10	3	2,364
Belgium	34	27	13	8	1,899
United Kingdom	40	32	26	4	2,052
Israel	18	18	15	10	2,499
Luxembourg	29	30	16	21	1,552
Ireland	28	25	14	7	2,046
France	35	28	27	18	1,503
Slovenia	12	10	5	3	1,519
Spain	24	12	8	17	1,729
Portugal	7	7	3	4	1,511
Italy	17	7	8	11	1,207
Poland	7	10	4	1	2,110
Hungary	4	10	5	4	1,685
Greece	5	7	9	5	2,566
Switzerland	39	45	31	8	2,040
Czech Republic	16	23	11	5	1,360
Average	26	24	17	9	42,359

Taking part in lawful demonstrations, however, is clearly an exception to the general rule. This is probably because demonstrating is a comparatively high cost/low participation

activity that involves small proportions of the population (less than 9% compared with 26% who sign petitions and even 79% who vote). In other words, the extreme cases of low cost/high participation voting and high cost/low participation demonstrations are both poor predictors of other forms of political activity.

It might be hypothesized that the newer democracies with less effective and well established channels for conventional political participation will engage in more unconventional politics, but the figures in Table 3 suggest otherwise. It is the older and better established democracies of northern Europe that generally have the highest rates of protest activity. These figures are consistent with post-materialist theory arguing that unconventional and lawful forms of protest activity are usually higher in the older and wealthier democracies (Inglehart 1997: 312–325; Inglehart and Welzel 2005).

### *Participation in Voluntary Associations*

Although most research treats political participation in isolation from social participation, it may be that politics do not stand alone. If social and political patterns are closely associated, as van Deth (1997) argues, then there will be a single socio-political pattern of participation. Indeed, social capital and civic society theories argue that the higher the rates of civic and social engagement, the higher political participation is likely to be. If this is the case, then voluntary association activity should follow the pattern already seen in the case of political participation. At the same time, there are reasons for thinking that countries might combine their levels of voluntary activity in their own unique ways: some countries are religious with a high church membership; some are more sporty than others; the egalitarian ones will encourage minority group activity and show fewer class differences; socialist countries are likely to have strong trade union and worker organizations; the environmentally conscious ones will have larger green and ecology groups; those with more individualist and materialistic cultures will have stronger consumer and occupational groups. If each country combines such characteristics in different proportions then their relative rates of participation in different kinds of voluntary associations will vary and each country will have its own unique pattern.

Table 4, organized in the same way as the previous percentage tables, shows the percentage of the population in each country involved in any of the four ways in each of the 11 kinds of voluntary associations. It shows that a country's relative level of participation in any one kind of voluntary activity is generally repeated in the others. For example, Norway, Austria, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, Finland, and the Netherlands at the top have rates of participation that are uniformly higher than or at least equal to the



Table 4: Participation in twelve kinds of voluntary associations, by country (percentages)

Country	Type of association											N
	Sport	Cultural	Religious	Consumer	Trade union	Humanitarian	Social club	Environmental	Business	Science	Political	
Norway	44	30	21	33	49	37	27	9	16	11	10	2,036
Austria	36	29	41	34	24	24	25	30	12	16	16	2,257
Sweden	50	30	19	38	56	33	22	14	10	14	10	1,999
Denmark	41	31	29	18	66	25	20	16	16	9	7	1,506
Germany	38	24	25	29	15	21	18	15	9	9	6	2,919
Finland	38	26	35	5	49	21	14	8	15	11	8	2,000
Netherlands	56	25	32	32	23	25	12	34	15	14	6	2,364
Belgium	42	33	13	11	30	21	28	19	13	16	9	1,899
UK	36	25	21	33	17	14	21	17	15	13	4	2,052
Israel	28	25	11	27	18	11	19	9	10	15	12	2,499
Luxemburg	34	30	9	50	27	17	23	21	16	9	10	1,552
Ireland	46	28	37	12	24	16	24	14	20	13	11	2,046
France	32	28	11	6	11	15	14	10	4	11	3	1,503
Slovenia	24	14	13	10	22	15	18	3	10	7	5	1,519
Spain	19	17	11	5	8	11	11	6	6	11	5	1,729
Portugal	13	6	12	2	7	7	7	3	4	4	5	1,511
Italy	19	15	11	8	14	15	8	9	13	5	6	1,207
Poland	6	5	7	1	7	4	3	3	2	4	3	2,110
Hungary	10	9	9	3	7	3	8	2	5	5	2	1,685
Greece	5	6	2	1	6	2	4	2	5	4	4	2,566
Average	29	21	17	16	16	15	14	12	9	9	5	42,359

average in 8 of the 11 kinds of voluntary associations. In most cases their participation rates are even appreciably higher than the average. At the other extreme, the bottom seven countries have rates of participation that are lower than average in 73 out of 84 cases (political association are an exception). Contrary to the idea that each country has its own profile of voluntary association activity, Table 4 shows that each has relatively similar rates of participation across all 11 types of voluntary activity. Once again, there are few exceptions to the rule, but a general pattern becomes clear.

### *Social and Helping Behavior*

The extent to which populations socialize with one another and help each other in an informal and personal manner might be expected to vary, for example, with different social and economic conditions. For example, informal socializing is often said to suffer as a result of the social and economic pressures of modern, urban life: big cities are said to be societies of strangers compared with the more intense and vibrant community life of small towns and rural areas. Helping others in a private and personal way may be more common in the close-knit communities of friends, relatives, and neighbors in small towns and villages, compared with more anomic, mobile, and heterogeneous cities that may rely more on the public welfare agencies of the state and on private or semi-private welfare associations. Similarly, as Habermas (1989) has argued, it may be that private helping behavior is crowded out by the welfare state which has, he claims, colonized civil society and undermined natural forms of solidarity. Wolfe (1989) also claims that the welfare state undermines the moral strength of both intimate and distant social ties. In other words, large-scale societies and advanced welfare states may have comparatively little informal socializing and helping behavior, compared with small-scale societies and less advanced welfare states, which can rely less on state welfare and private welfare organizations and more on informal, personal contacts.

The first two columns of Table 5 compare participation in formally organized social clubs with the frequency of meeting socially with friends, relatives, and work colleagues. The figures show, as one might expect, that informal social meeting is much more frequent than formal associational membership, and they also show that formal and informal socializing are not alternative modes of social participation, but mutually complementary ones.

The last two columns of Table 5 compare activity in formally organized welfare, aid, and humanitarian associations with informal helping behavior. The latter is far more common than the former, as one might expect, but the two sets of figures tend to decline

together within the columns, suggesting that organized welfare and aid does not drive out personal helping behavior. On the contrary, formal and informal help are positively associated. Nor does the welfare state drive out either informal social ties or informal helping activity, for it is evident that the advanced welfare states of northern Europe have the highest rates of informal helping and socializing activity as well as the highest rates of voluntary association activity (Table 4). Once again, participation levels in countries are generally cumulative and unidimensional so far as social participation and helping behavior are concerned. However, because there is only one measure of social participation and one for helping behavior in the survey and they share an informal and personal nature, the two measures are combined to form a single indicator of social and helping behavior for the following detailed empirical analysis.

*Table 5: Formal and informal types of social and helping behavior by country (percentages)*

Country	Social		Helping		N
	Formal social club	Informal social contacts	Formal humanitarian association	Informal helping	
Norway	27	98	37	66	2,036
Austria	25	92	24	81	2,257
Sweden	22	97	33	67	1,999
Denmark	20	98	25	72	1,506
Germany	18	94	21	78	2,919
Finland	14	95	21	54	2,000
Netherlands	12	96	25	76	2,364
Belgium	29	93	21	71	1,899
United Kingdom	21	92	14	61	2,052
Israel	19	94	11	68	2,499
Luxembourg	23	91	17	58	1,552
Ireland	24	92	16	58	2,046
France	14	95	15	55	1,503
Slovenia	18	87	15	74	1,519
Spain	11	92	11	44	1,729
Portugal	7	90	7	67	1,511
Italy	8	87	15	44	1,207
Poland	3	84	3	52	2,110
Hungary	8	69	3	61	1,685
Greece	4	77	2	55	2,566
Switzerland	–	97	–	85	2,040
Czech Republic	–	86	–	40	1,360
Average	14	91	15	59	42,359

### *Overall Participation*

Does each of the countries display a tendency towards relatively consistent levels of participation across each of the measures compared to other countries? This is to expect a great deal, because the study covers 24 kinds of participation in 22 (20, in the case of voluntary association activity) countries with different histories, institutions, and cultures. Nevertheless, the simple correlations in Table 6 show that 22 of the 24 measures of participation vary together – i.e. they are positively correlated. This means, of course, that if participation is comparatively high on one measure of participation it is most generally high on the others as well. And if the score on any one measure is low it is, *pari passu*, generally low on the others. Moreover, in spite of the small number of observations, the great majority are statistically significant at the 5% level of probability, and of those that are not statistically significant, a large majority are .30 or greater. Once again, the two exceptions are voting and lawful demonstration, where none of the correlations are statistically significant, and where, almost uniquely in the table, some of them are negative, especially for lawful demonstration.

To reinforce the point, Figure 1 presents a hierarchical cluster analysis of the 24 participation measures. The higher the number on the x-axis, the more dissimilar are the objects or, in this case, variables within formed clusters. The figure shows, first, that widely different forms of participation cluster together. For example, membership of consumer associations pairs most closely with political donations, helping others pairs most closely with interest in politics, social meeting with signing petitions. A bigger cluster groups membership of different kinds of association with donating money to political organizations, another groups religious and environmental associations, helping others and discussion of and interest in politics, and a third groups informal social contacts with signing petitions, boycotting products and membership of humanitarian organizations. In other words the clusters do not follow the *a priori* categories of participation used in Tables 2–5, but jumble them up in a more or less random fashion, showing how closely associated are different kinds of social and political participation. Once again, Figure 1 shows that voting and lawful demonstrations are outliers that join the other measures at a low level of similarity. As already shown in the correlation matrix, lawful demonstration stands the furthest apart from other forms of participation.

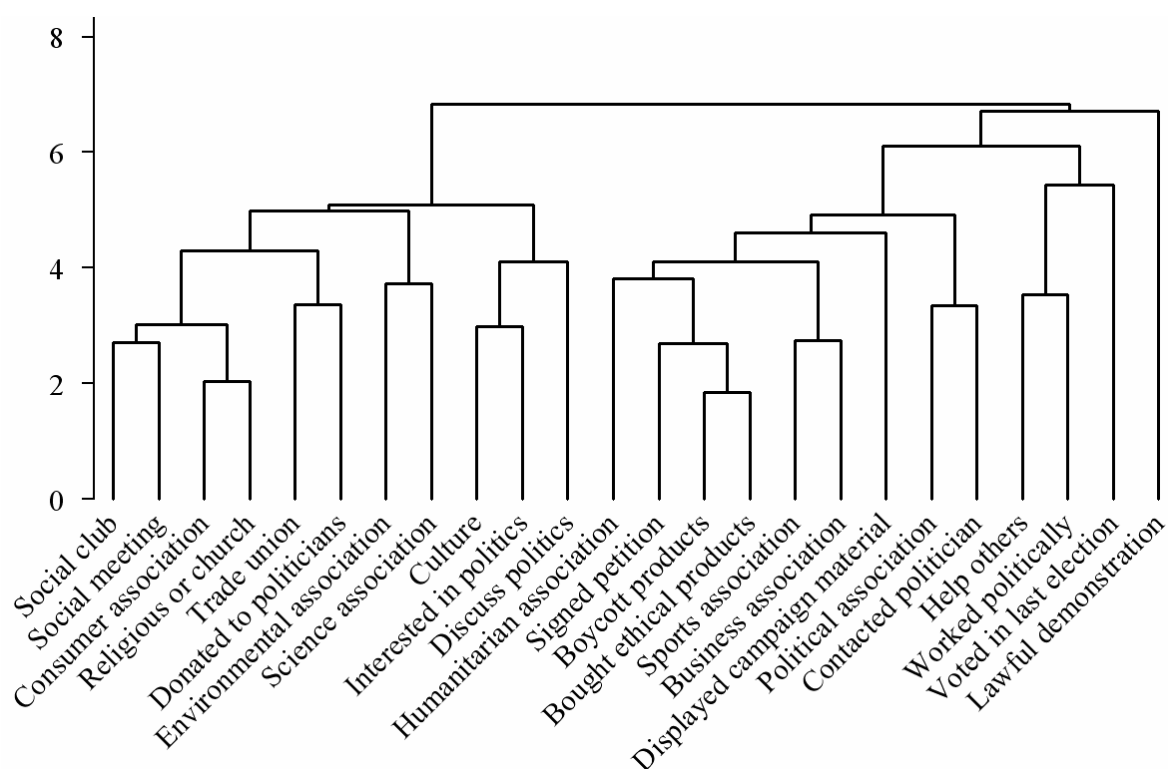
The evidence presented so far uses different statistical techniques (percentages, correlations, and cluster analysis) but all of it points to the same conclusion. Rather than being fragmented, multidimensional, and noncumulative, as it is at the individual level, social and political participation at the national level are systematically patterned, cumulative, and unidimensional. Tables 2–5 show that countries repeat their levels of

Table 6: Correlation Matrix of 24 Participation Indicators

	Social club	Humanitarian association	Sports association	Culture	Consumer association	Religious or church	Trade union	Environmental association	Business association	Science association	Political association	Social meeting	Help others	Displayed campaign material	Contacted politician	Interested in politics	Voted in last election	Donated to politicians	worked politically	Discuss politics	Signed petition	Boycott products	Lawful demonstration	Bought ethical products
Social club	1.0																							
Humanitarian association	.72**	1.0																						
Sports association	.76**	.86**	1.0																					
Culture	.88**	.80**	.89**	1.0																				
Consumer association	.66**	.65**	.66**	.66**	1.0																			
Religious or church	.47*	.58**	.70**	.57**	.34	1.0																		
Trade union	.58**	.80**	.67**	.67**	.42	.50*	1.0																	
Environmental association	.54*	.56**	.75**	.68**	.70**	.64**	.30	1.0																
Business association	.70**	.62**	.75**	.72**	.54*	.64**	.62**	.56**	1.0															
Science association	.81**	.60**	.77**	.87**	.70**	.46*	.41	.72**	.61**	1.0														
Political association	.72**	.56*	.53*	.65**	.57**	.53*	.48*	.53*	.59**	.72**	1.0													
Social meeting	.60**	.76**	.78**	.75**	.51*	.53*	.59**	.52*	.51*	.63**	.48*	1.0												
Help others	.50*	.44*	.38	.38	.47*	.47*	.30	.54*	.21	.34	.41	.31	1.0											
Displayed campaign material	.44	.56*	.50*	.50*	.23	.28	.44	-.01	.36	.40	.38	.56*	-.13	1.0										
Contacted politician	.61**	.41	.68**	.68**	.30	.58**	.62**	.30	.70**	.50*	.48*	.39	.07	.64**	1.0									
Interested in politics	.48*	.53*	.66**	.56**	.63**	.59**	.48*	.63**	.42	.48*	.42	.43	.77**	.07	.22	1.0								
Voted in last election	.12	.40	.26	.20	-.00	.32	.44	.21	.21	.01	.22	.08	.35	.20	.10	.30	1.0							
Donated to politicians	.69**	.47*	.51*	.61**	.70**	.37	.39	.52*	.58**	.66**	.70**	.52*	.39	.27	.35	.50*	-.22	1.0						
Worked politically	.52*	.45*	.24	.40	.31	.30	.21	.27	.15	.44	.67**	.34	.31	.53*	.35	.11	.27	.38	1.0					
Discuss politics	.35	.51*	.46*	.49*	.46*	.49*	.46*	.34	.16	.32	.32	.44	.56*	.35	.33	.74**	.05	.46*	.26	1.0				
Signed petition	.78**	.77**	.81**	.88**	.63**	.43	.55*	.54*	.54*	.75**	.41	.76**	.20	.57**	.57**	.38	.08	.44	.34	.35	1.0			
Boycott products	.55*	.64**	.65**	.74**	.53*	.49*	.60**	.39	.38	.55*	.35	.62**	.25	.51*	.58**	.53*	.21	.26	.23	.58**	.82**	1.0		
Lawful demonstration	.28	.12	.10	.38	.30	-.18	-.07	.18	.06	.37	.22	.28	-.23	.18	.05	-.20	-.19	.23	.27	.01	.41	.21	1.0	
Bought ethical products	.64**	.80**	.80**	.81**	.62**	.58**	.80**	.49*	.52*	.60**	.42	.67**	.38	.44*	.62**	.64**	.24	.42	.20	.65**	.81**	.91**	.10	1.0

Note: N = 20; Pearson (product moment) correlations (two-tailed); \* = p < .05 and \*\* = p < .01.

Figure 1: Hierarchical Cluster Analysis of 24 Participation Indicators in 20 Countries



participation, relative to each other, across a wide variety of measures. Table 6 shows that most of these measures are positively correlated, and are either substantively strong or statistically significant in spite of the small number of observations. And Figure 1 shows that (with the exception of voting and lawful demonstration) widely different kinds of participation cluster together. There is, in other words, an underlying and consistent structure to social and political participation, suggesting that participation is participation, whether it is social or political, conventional or unconventional, individual or organized, private or public, self-regarding or other-regarding, humanitarian or materialistic, cultural or sporting, religious or scientific. This is true for 22 of the 24 measures, but voting and lawful demonstrating are exceptional. Therefore, in the next set of tables those two variables are excluded, while noting carefully that they are different from the general pattern of participation.

Given the unidimensional and cumulative nature of 22 measures, it is reasonable to create a single indicator of participation in order to compare countries. This is done in Table 7. In order not to give undue weight to widespread forms of participation (voting, for example, averages 79% across all countries) and too little to minority activities (working for a party or political organization averages 4%), the scores are standardized by subtracting each country score from the mean of all countries and then dividing by the

standard deviation of the measure (z-transformation). The sum of the resulting figures for all participation measures provides a single, overall score for each country. It is this score that has been used to give shape and understanding to the percentage tables reported so far in the paper—so the country ranking of Table 7 is the same (minus Switzerland and the Czech Republic) as that of all the previous percentage tables. Norway, Austria, Sweden, Denmark, Germany, and Finland are at the top, Slovenia, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Poland, Hungary, and Greece are at the bottom, and the Netherlands, Belgium, UK, Israel, Luxemburg, Ireland, and France are in the middle. To underscore the point that participation at the country level is unidimensional and cumulative, Table 7 also produces standardized scores for each of the four theoretical sub-types of participation, showing that they follow the country rankings for general participation fairly closely. In short, there is a great deal of cross-national consistency in participation levels in general and in respect of particular sub-types.

*Table 7: Average Standardized Participation Scores for 20 Countries*

Rank	Country	Participation (total)	Voluntary associations	Social and helping behavior	Conventional political activity	Protest activity
1	Norway	0.95	0.88	0.63	1.56	0.72
2	Austria	0.90	1.09	0.98	1.07	0.45
	Sweden	0.90	0.86	0.62	0.27	1.83
4	Denmark	0.70	0.67	0.94	0.38	0.86
5	Germany	0.56	0.14	0.92	0.27	0.93
6	Finland	0.42	0.38	-0.15	0.61	0.83
7	The Netherlands	0.39	0.75	0.98	0.01	-0.19
8	Belgium	0.35	0.60	0.53	0.02	0.26
9	United Kingdom	0.33	0.25	-0.00	0.02	1.04
10	Israel	0.23	0.14	0.48	0.64	-0.32
	Luxemburg	0.23	0.67	-0.25	0.21	0.29
	Ireland	0.23	0.67	-0.10	0.28	0.05
13	France	0.08	-0.42	-0.08	-0.00	0.81
14	Slovenia	-0.50	-0.44	0.23	-0.72	-1.06
15	Spain	-0.66	-0.62	-0.75	-0.70	-0.56
16	Portugal	-0.73	-1.14	0.18	-0.62	-1.32
17	Italy	-0.91	-0.57	-1.15	-1.02	-0.89
18	Poland	-1.06	-1.39	-1.00	-0.61	-1.26
19	Hungary	-1.18	-1.18	-1.61	-0.64	-1.27
20	Greece	-1.23	-1.33	-1.36	-1.00	-1.21

*Note:* Figures are the averages of standardized indicators and a higher value indicates more participation. The countries are sorted by the overall participation scores. The two deviant types of participation (voting and lawful demonstrating) are not included in the calculations.

Perhaps the most obvious point to emerge from Table 7 is that country families with common borders or strong historical and cultural connections often have similar levels of participation.

1. Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland fill four of the top six places, ranking 1<sup>st</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup>, and 6<sup>th</sup> respectively.
2. Austria and Germany<sup>12</sup> rank 2<sup>nd</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup>.
3. The Benelux countries of the Netherlands, Belgium, and Luxemburg rank 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup>, and 10<sup>th</sup>.
4. The UK and Ireland are 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> in the table.
5. The Mediterranean nations of Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy, and France are grouped in the bottom eight of the Table.
6. The remaining countries at the bottom eight are ex-communist countries, namely Poland, Hungary, and Slovenia.<sup>13</sup>
7. Israel is part of the northern European group, but at the bottom end closest to other Mediterranean countries.

France falls between the northern European and the Mediterranean/Central European countries. Though France and Slovenia rank next to each other, their scores are widely different suggesting that there is a big gap between the northern countries and those in the south and centre, with France closer to the northern than to the southern group.

### **Explaining National Patterns**

The second part of this article seeks to explain the levels of national participation shown in Table 7. The task is made easier by the clear and stable pattern of cumulative and unidimensional social and political participation and by the existence of country families of participation. However, since this is a core empirical claim of the present research it was tested again using, this time, a cluster analysis of countries (Figure 2).<sup>14</sup> This shows a division between two main families of nations – those of the north and those of south and central Europe. The first includes Austria, Norway, Denmark, Germany, Sweden, Belgium, the Netherlands, Israel, Ireland, Luxemburg, Finland, the UK, and France. Greece, Hungary, Poland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, and Slovenia form a second group of countries. The northern group is, in turn, sub-divided into two branches of the main family: Austria, Norway, Denmark, Germany and Sweden in the first, and Belgium, the

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12 The German figures are pulled down somewhat by the inclusion of East Germany. West Germany has a figure much closer to Austria's. It is also clear from Tables 2, 4, and 5 that Austria and Switzerland are closely alike.

13 It is clear from Tables 2, 4, and 5 that the Czech Republic also falls in the bottom third on most of the measures available.

14 The cluster analysis is based on the four sub-types "Conventional Political Participation", "Unconventional Politics", "Participation in Voluntary Associations", and "Social and Helping Behavior."

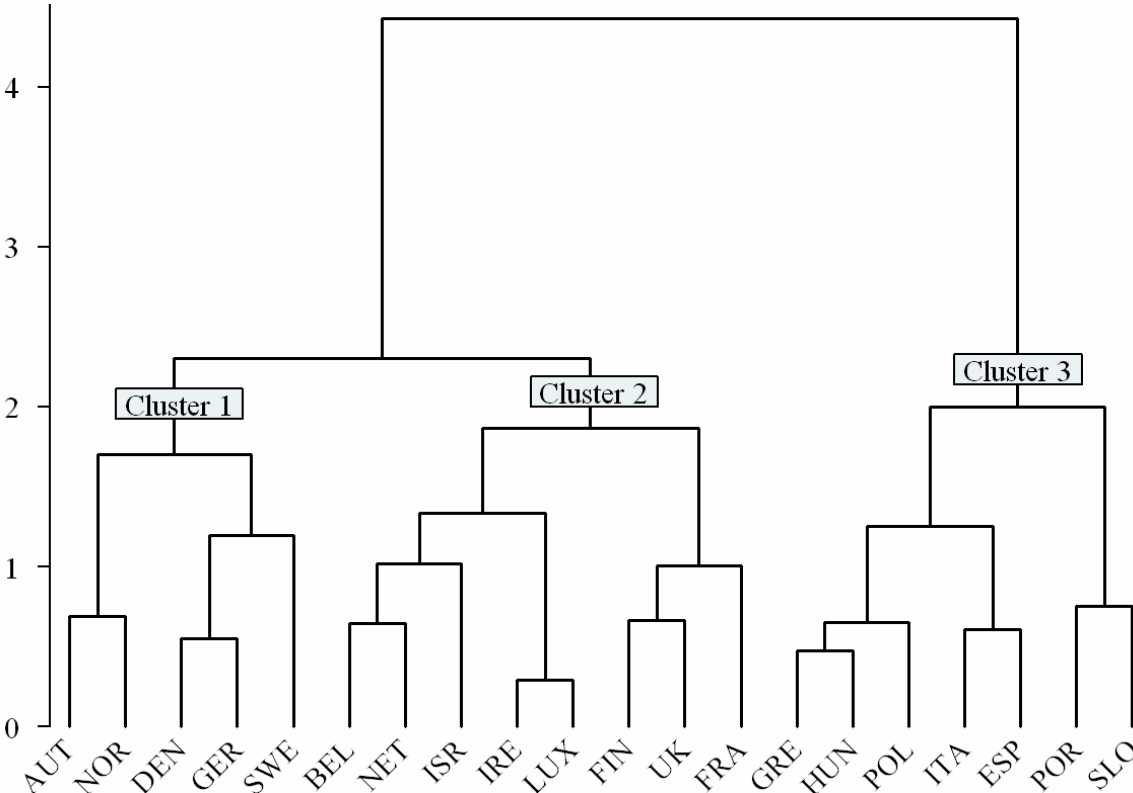


Netherlands, Ireland, Israel, Luxemburg, Finland, the UK, and France in the second. As in Table 7, the cluster analysis shows that countries with contiguous borders and a common historical and cultural background are closely similar in their participation levels—the Scandinavian nations, Benelux countries, Germany and Austria, the UK and Ireland, and so on.

These families of nations are similar to those of research on public policy (Castles 1993; Castles and Obinger 2008; Obinger and Wagschal 2001) showing a set of five country families that are persistent over time.

The fact that participation country families largely coincide with those for public policy suggests not just families of nations on single characteristics, but family resemblances over a variety of characteristics. And if the same country families appear on public policy and participation, then it is possible that they will appear on other dimensions as well—party systems, formal institutions of government, political culture, religion, national values, and so on.<sup>15</sup>

Figure 2: Patterns of Participation



Note: Dendrogram using Complete Linkage Method and Euclidean Distances.

15 Existing deviations can, for example, depend on the countries included into the analysis. Cluster analysis, especially in the context of small- or medium-N studies, is highly sensitive to inclusion or exclusion of cases.

Rather little country-level research on social and political participation has been completed, but it is possible to identify some general theoretical approaches towards an explanation of the cross-national patterns that have emerged. They revolve around political, economic, legal, and social development determinants, and, although they mix and overlap in real life, it is possible to distinguish between them for theoretical purposes.

## **Political Theories**

### *1. Democratic Development and Stability*

Democracy is designed to integrate citizens into the political system and to encourage at least some forms of mass participation in politics (Lipset and Rokkan 1967: 17–23). It is also associated with participation in social life, for the benefits of personal development and the free expression of individual interests. Based on the principles of freedom of thought, speech, and association, democracy creates an institutional framework and a culture of trust (Delhey and Newton 2005) that promotes individual participation of many kinds, not least in the voluntary associations that are an integral part of civil society. Democracy also limits the capacity for arbitrary and discriminatory action by private and public actors, so making participation more attractive and less risky. It helps to create a structure of opportunities for participation of diverse kinds, not just conventional political participation (Kitschelt 1986), and a culture that favors free and equal participation in society and its politics. Conversely, risk and unpredictability in social and political life were barrier major problems for participation in the communist states of Central and Eastern Europe (Mishler and Rose 1997; Stzompka 1996). Democratic stability encourages participation by making the social and political world more predictable and less threatening and by making it easier to plan and organize for the future.

The measures of democracy and stability used in this study are:<sup>16</sup>

- *The Economist Intelligence Unit, Democracy Index*: the higher the score, the more democratic the country;
- *Political stability* which is a composite measure provided by the World Bank covering ethnic tension, internal conflict, constitutional changes, military coups, political fragmentation of parties and groups, social unrest, terrorist threats, and armed conflict. The scale is fixed with a maximum of +2.5 for the greatest government stability, and a minimum of -2.5.

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<sup>16</sup> For more detailed information on the measures see Delhey and Newton (2004: 30–34).

## 2. *Good Government*

By good government is meant a set of institutional mechanisms, procedures, and outcomes that maintain equality of the rights and duties of citizens, impartial and effective public bureaucracies, political and social stability, and an absence of violence and corruption. It is closely associated with democracy but not identical with it. Good government also seems to be closely associated with social trust and reciprocity, which, in turn, are the basis of close and constant interaction between citizens (Delhey and Newton 2005). Good government may also help to set a social and political framework that encourages citizen competence, a community of citizens with common interests, and a collective sense that participation in public and private affairs is worthwhile and effective and will not result in violence or be undermined by corruption.

Measures of good government are:

- *Government effectiveness* which is a World Bank measure covering bureaucratic quality, transaction costs, quality of public health care, and government stability. The scale is from +2.5 (greatest effectiveness) to -2.5 (least effective);
- *Corruption* is provided by Transparency International; the higher the score, the less the corruption.

## 3. *Personal Public Services*

It might be argued that high levels of personal public services will have a direct and indirect impact on social and political involvement. The more governments tax their populations in order to provide services, the more citizens will be inclined to become politically involved in order to influence public policies. And the more governments provide public services, especially health and education, and the better educated and healthier their populations are, the more resources citizens will have that enable them to participate effectively. A high level of personal public services might also help to create a sense of shared identity, common purpose, and social equality that express themselves in closer and more co-operation social involvement. Alternatively, it might be argued as Habermas and Wolfe have (see above) that the welfare state is a destroyer of close social ties and personal help and support for others.

The measures of personal public services used here are:

- *Public expenditures on health and education* as a percentage of GDP (provided by the UNDP's Human Development Report).

## Legal Theory

The rule of law, essential for democracy and equality of citizenship, makes participation and collective action more risk free by minimizing the arbitrary action of the state and private individuals. It also helps to produce a stable social order that makes the processes and consequences of participation more predictable and less threatening. It guarantees freedoms and allows individuals to follow their interests and act as they wish within the broad limits of the law. Absence of the rule of law in totalitarian and less-developed countries is associated with suspicion, alienation, low trust, and corruption, all of which make it difficult or dangerous to co-operate and become involved with others. The two legal measures employed here are:

- *Law and order*. Produced by the Political Risk Services, the *International Country Risk Guide* (ICRG) covers legal impartiality and popular observe of the law as judged by country expert opinion; the higher the score, the better the law and order of the country;
- *Rule of law* which is a composite measure provided by the World Bank covering the extent of black markets, enforceability of private and government contracts, corruption in banking, crime, and theft as obstacles to business, losses from and costs of crime, and the unpredictability of the judiciary. The scale has a maximum of +2.5 (greatest rule of law) and a minimum of -2.5 (least rule of law).

## Economic Theory

Economic resources, in one form or another, are crucial determinants of levels and types of participation from voting turnout and party choice to involvement in voluntary associations and involvement in social and cultural affairs (Schlozman 2002; van Deth and Elff 2004; Verba and Nie 1972; Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978; Weßels 1997). The wealthier the society the higher its levels of participation in particular kinds of activities, especially those concerned with the production of collective goods (Olson 1982) and those of a non-materialist, self-development, and self-expressive kind that revolve around local communities and new social movements (Inglehart 1997). Income inequality, on the other hand, may have the effect of depressing levels of participation to the extent that it is associated with marginalized and excluded minorities (Verba, Nie, and Kim 1978) and with low levels of social trust that inhibit free participation (Delhey and Newton 2005). The measures of wealth and inequality used here are:

- *GDP per capita* (Human Development report);

- *Gini Index* on income inequality (Human Development Report);
- *Life expectancy* (Human Development Report).

### **Modernization Theories**

Conflicting opinions about the impact of modernization on participation correspond roughly with the different views of Simmel (1950) and Tönnies (1963). One theory argues modern societies will have higher rates of participation across a wide spectrum of activities because of their greater resources, higher levels of education, larger populations, greater social differentiation, better communications, and a more complex social structure of overlapping and interlocking social groups and organizations (Bell 1973; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Roller and Weßels 1996; Weßels 1997). Others equate modernization with bureaucracy, centralization, alienation, privatization, atomization, anomie, materialism, individualism, and increasing social isolation, which result in lower levels of social involvement and civic engagement. Similarly, modernization in the form of large-scale post-industrial and urban society is claimed to have contradictory effects, one theory arguing that the increasingly anonymous, individualistic, materialistic, TV dominated, and impersonal life in the city undermines the sense of community and common purpose, the other claiming that the sheer scale and the increasingly heterogeneous, multi-cultural, and vibrant nature of the modern city encourage social interaction and new forms of urban involvement. Our measures of modernization are:

- *Population size and density, degree of urbanization, size of agricultural sector* (United Nations Demographic Yearbook; Human Development Report; OECD Labour Force Statistics).

### **Fragmented and Divided Societies**

The effects of population size on participation will be strongest where there are no divisions separating people into sharply different groups. Participation rates may be lower where the population is fragmented and deeply divided, even if it is a large one. According to Rokeach (1960: 161) “there is a natural tendency for people to associate with, socialize with and be more comfortable with others having similar belief systems” and this is more likely to occur in ethnically, religiously, nationally linguistically, and culturally similar populations. Some studies have found that socially mixed and heterogeneous societies have

lower rates of volunteering and voluntary association activity and values and attitudes that do not support co-operation and trust (Alesina and La Ferrara 1999; Costa and Kahn 2003; Knack and Keefer 1997). The measures of fragmentation and division in this study are:

- *Religious, linguistic, and ethnic fractionalization* (Alesina et al. 2003; World Culture Report).

## **Education**

Education has often been picked out for its close and special association with many forms of social life, not least participation (see, for example, Weßels 1997: 207). It is one of the most important individual resources and contributes to the human capital of nations as a whole. In this study education is measured by:

- Secondary *education* net enrollment ratios (Human Development Report of the UNDP).

It is, of course, the case that although these theories may be distinguished for theoretical reasons, they are closely entangled in real life: democratic societies are most generally economically developed, marked by stability and low conflict, good government, law and order, low corruption, and so on. In real life it may be difficult to separate out the theories and their measures and to estimate their independent effects on participation.

The associations between this set of independent variables and the standardized participation scores were estimated by means of simple correlations. The correlations (Table 8) show that rates of participation are most closely associated with three groups of country characteristics.

First and foremost is the nature of the social and political order, as measured by the indicators of law and order, (the absence of) corruption, and, above all, by the World Bank measure of rule of law. The latter shows an extremely close association with the overall participation score ( $r = .90^{**}$ ). The second group of characteristics covers democratic effectiveness and stability, particularly the World Bank's composite measure of government effectiveness (.77\*\*) and the EIU's democracy score (.71\*\*). The third group of variables covers national wealth and its consequences, especially GDP per capita (.60\*\*), government expenditures on health and education (.56\*\*), as well as life expectancy (.55\*), which is usually closely associated with health and government spending on health and education. The signs for economic equality are negative, as hypothesized, but the correlations are well below even the weakest level of significance.

There is weak evidence that some aspects of modernization are associated with higher levels of participation, most notably the size of the agricultural sector which is strongly and negatively related ( $-.69^*$ ). However, the three other measures of modernization (population size and density, and urbanization) do not seem to be of much importance. There is little convincing evidence that population fragmentation or division (including economic inequality) matters much and, perhaps more surprisingly, that aggregate educational levels have any impact.

*Table 8: Simple Correlations between Participation Scores and Country Characteristics*

Variable	Participation (Total)	Voluntary associations	Social and helping behavior	Conventional political participation	Unconventional politics
<b>Social and political order</b>					
Rule of law	.90**	.90**	.70**	.77**	.84**
Law and order	.75**	.81**	.61**	.62**	.64**
<b>Politics</b>					
Government effectiveness	.77**	.79**	.61**	.57**	.76**
EUI democracy index	.71**	.73**	.58**	.56**	.67**
Absence of political corruption	.87**	.80**	.75**	.80**	.78**
Political stability	.35	.37	.26	.20	.41
<b>Government expenditure</b>					
– on health and education	.56**	.39	.65**	.50*	.48*
– on health	.46*	.31	.59**	.36	.40
– on education	.51*	.37	.55*	.50*	.43
<b>Economy</b>					
GDP per capita	.60**	.71**	.40	.49*	.54*
Life expectancy	.55*	.54*	.45*	.37	.57**
Economic equality	-.28	-.32	-.11	-.31	-.28
<b>Divided society, education, and modernization</b>					
Linguistic fractionalization	.24	.37	.29	.13	.09
Religious fractionalization	.13	.09	.19	.01	.17
Ethnic fractionalization	-.05	.09	-.07	-.09	-.09
Education	.34	.24	.35	.18	.39
Population density	.08	.14	.28	-.07	-.07
Population size	-.13	-.27	-.13	-.26	-.12
Urbanization	.32	.33	.13	.19	.47*
Size of agricultural sector	-.69**	-.73**	-.52*	-.50*	-.67**

*Note:* N = 20; Pearson (product moment) correlations (two-tailed); \* =  $p < .05$  and \*\* =  $p < .01$ .

To check the reliability and robustness of these results, and to ensure that we have not over-interpreted the single measure of participation in general, additionally, separate sets of correlations were run between the country descriptors and the four sub-types of participation. The results shown in Table 8 are much the same for each sub-type as they are for overall participation. In short, participation of different kinds and the overall participation scores are closely associated with the same set of independent variables,

showing once again that each country has a similar level of participation of different types and that these are correlated with the same explanatory variables.

This claim might be tested more thoroughly with regression analysis, but this is not possible for two reasons. First, with only 20 countries it is not possible to test a large number of independent variables simultaneously. Second, many of the independent variables most closely correlated with participation are themselves closely inter-correlated and cannot be entered into the same regression. For example, rule of law is, as expected, an integral component of a tight-knit wider syndrome of powerful variables. Instead of regression analysis, another approach which triangulates on participation and its correlates is used, taking the three main clusters of countries shown in Figure 2 and testing whether these vary systematically according to the independent variables most closely associated with participation. In other words, do countries that cluster on measures of participation differ systematically in respect of the independent variables that seem best to explain the level of participation?

The figures in Table 9 show that they do differ significantly in this respect so far as rule of law, absence of corruption, law and order, government effectiveness, democracy, and GDP per capita are concerned. The analysis of variance (ANOVA) F-tests show whether a country group is significantly different from another with respect to the country descriptors. The country clusters are significantly different with respect to the precise variables most closely associated with the level of participation. Therefore, the table supports the overall validity of the cluster solution because it shows significant and systematic differences between the country clusters and the exogenous variables most closely associated with them (Aldenderfer and Blashfield 1985: 66). At the same time, those results emphasize the importance of those variables in the general context of political and social participation.

## Conclusions

The results presented in this paper suggest three main conclusions about patterns of social and political participation at the country level. First, *participation is participation is participation*: what ever may happen at the individual level in terms of its non-cumulative, fragmented, and specialized nature in political life, social and political participation at the country level are cumulative and not specialized or fragmented. Country profiles of participation are all of a piece insofar as each nation maintains a consistent level of involvement over a wide range of measures compared with the other countries. Second, *the more the more*: countries with a greater depth of involvement on any one kind most usually



have a greater depth of involvement on the other measures as well. Country profiles of participation show a strongly consistent pattern in this respect, with the same countries consistently appearing at the top of the European league tables, and conversely the same countries appearing at the bottom. This is true of 22 of our 24 measures, but voting turnout, and legal and illegal demonstrations are equally clearly deviant cases that do not conform to the general pattern.

*Table 9: F-Test Statistics and Cluster Centers*

Variable	Cluster 1	Cluster 2	Cluster 3
Social and political order			
Rule of law**	1.71	1.50	0.80
Law and order**	5.80	5.63	4.43
Politics			
Government effectiveness**	1.53	1.50	0.77
EUI democracy index**	9.29	8.58	7.88
Absence of political corruption**	8.64	8.10	5.10
Political stability	1.30	1.04	0.91
Government expenditure			
– on health and education*	13.3	11.4	10.3
– on health	6.70	6.06	5.41
– on education*	6.64	5.31	4.90
Economy			
GDP per capita (in 1000)*	26.7	27.7	16.9
Life expectancy	78.3	78.1	76.1
Economic equality	28.8	31.8	32.4
Divided society, education, and modernization			
Linguistic fractionalization	0.14	0.32	0.12
Religious fractionalization	0.35	0.36	0.29
Ethnic fractionalization	0.10	0.25	0.18
Education	91.4	89.8	87.9
Population Density	253	535	294
Population Size	22.0	20.3	24.4
Urbanization	74.0	77.8	62.6
Size of agricultural sector**	3.42	3.26	9.86

*Note:* N = 20; values are cluster centers by variable; \* =  $p < .05$  and \*\*  $p < .01$  using ANOVA F-test .

Third, *there are country families of participation*, with a clear divide between the countries of the Nordic and northern regions of Europe, and those of south and central Europe. Within the northern group there are two family branches consisting of the Scandinavian and northern countries, and those located in the middle of west Europe that are located between the northern and Mediterranean regions. Countries with common borders, cultures, and historical ties are often grouped closely together: Norway, Denmark, and

Sweden; Austria and Germany (and probably Switzerland); the Benelux countries; the UK and Ireland; the Mediterranean nations; and central-European countries. Moreover, these country families coincide to a substantial degree with those revealed by studies in other areas, suggesting that country families may be similar in other respects yet to be explored.

The strength and consistency of the participation patterns makes the job of explaining them easier. Country levels of participation are best explained by three sorts of factors. The first and strongest is the social and political framework set by the rule of law, law and order, and low levels of corruption. The second consists of the political configuration of government effectiveness, democracy, spending on public personal services, and (to a lesser extent) political stability. The third involves the economic variables of wealth and their correlate, life expectation. The theory that focuses on modernization fares less well, although there is a strong and significant tendency for agricultural societies to have low levels of participation, and similarly education and population fragmentation have little impact.

Two important points qualify this simplified summary of the results. Many of the explanatory variables are closely interrelated and form a single, indivisible syndrome of country characteristics. The rule of law is an integral part of democracy, which is closely associated with wealth, political stability, law and order, government effectiveness, modernization, and often with high expenditures on personal public services. It is possible, if not probable, that each element in this syndrome serves to promote participation both directly and indirectly by virtue of their mutually reinforcing effects. In this case, it may be very difficult, if not impossible, to untangle the syndrome and isolate the independent effects of each component – at least without a much larger number of observations and a long-time series. And in this case, it may be that participation's strongest correlation with rule of law may be attributed not to its own direct effects or intrinsic importance in the overall combination of factors, but to the fact that it happens to be the best single indicator in this work of a large and complex array of interrelated and interdependent variables that encourage participation.

This also means that it is extremely difficult to sort out cause and effect relations when it is possible, or likely, that many of the variables included in this study operate as both cause and effect. People learn to participate by participating, claims Pateman (1988). In the same way, the structures and institutions that permit and encourage participation may form a mutually reinforcing system that encourages more participation. In the terms used by Inglehart and Welzel (2005), rule of law could be a key component of the human development sequence that is intimately bound up with human happiness, democracy, economic well-being, and participation. To try to unravel such complex cause-and-effect relations of this kind is another and exceedingly difficult matter to be researched on another occasion.

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