Contention in times of crisis

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This publication URL: https://archive-ouverte.unige.ch/unige:145547
Publication DOI: 10.1017/9781108891660

Chapter 1: Introduction

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In September 2008, Lehman Brothers fell and the global money markets seized up. This was the beginning of the financial crisis that began in the United States but soon spilled over to Europe as well. In Europe, the shock period of the financial crisis was to be followed up by the Eurozone crisis, which derived directly from the shock of 2008 and was initiated in early 2010 with the sovereign debt crisis in Greece. While the worst of the crisis seemed to be over by fall 2012 after the Head of the European Central Bank had declared that he would do 'whatever it takes' to save the euro, the fall out of the crisis continued to haunt Europe at least until the conclusion of the third Greek bailout in summer 2015. It is hard to overstate the sheer magnitude of the impact the economic crisis has had on the lives of people in Europe. Between 2007 and 2013, the number of unemployed people in the EU rose from 17 to 26 million (European Commission, 2014). Dramatic losses of income for large social groups combined with a severely tightened and restricted labor market, especially for the younger generation in the countries hardest hit by intensified structural decline. The combination of these crises and the economic, political and geopolitical responses to them are, as Adam Tooze (2018: 5) has observed in the introduction to his account of 'the first crisis of a global age', essential to understanding the changing face of the world today. As Tooze has also noted, politics loomed large during this crisis. We saw not limited but big government, massive executive action and economic and political interventionism of an unprecedented kind. In Europe, these interventions led to 'one of the worst self-inflicted economic disasters on record' (Tooze 2018: 15).

The key questions guiding our study

In this book we ask how Europeans reacted to this economic disaster in the protest arena. The attentive observer would expect such a disaster to have led to an enormous wave of mobilization of protest across the European continent. There are some observers who have suggested as much. The protest wave they have identified is of an even larger scale and Southern Europe in particular has been said to have been part of it: this wave of protest rolling across the globe initiated at the beginning of 2011 in the Arab Spring, spread to the South of Europe – Portugal first, followed by Spain and Greece, then moved on to New York, where the first Occupy Wall Street camp was established, before spreading all over the U.S. and beyond (della Porta and Mattoni 2014: 3). Later on, starting in spring 2013, these movements against austerity were said to have been followed by another cycle of protest and covering a diversity of countries such as Turkey, Brazil, Venezuela, South Africa, Bosnia, Bulgaria and Ukraine (della Porta 2017).

However, we can speak of global waves only in a very loose sense. As a matter of fact, a closer look at the different elements of these alleged waves has revealed important differences. As Navrátil and Cisar (2014: 227) point out, the Occupy Wall Street movement in the U.S. or the Indignados in Spain had a strong national or even local dimension and their claims-making has focused on national and local rather than transnational and global publics and authorities. Focusing on Europe we shall amply demonstrate that Europe did not experience one big wave of political mobilization and protest after 2008 and that diffusion processes remained very limited, indeed. Despite intense protest mobilization in some countries and periods, protest remained confined geographically and temporally. Heterogeneity prevailed over general trends and our study tries to document this systematically for the first time.

Second, attentive observers would also expect the economic disaster to have concentrated protest on economic targets. Given the massive economic decline that large social groups of lower- and middle-class citizens experienced in the wake of the Great Recession, we would expect 'a return of the economy' in mobilizing for protest as compared to pre-crisis periods, i.e. a return of economic grievance-driven mobilization of socio-economic claims. While the traditional conflicts – class conflicts and regional conflicts – had been the most mobilizing conflicts in a country like Spain in the not too recent past (Koopmans 1996), it is well known that since the rise of the new social movements in the 1970s protest in the Northwest of Europe has predominantly been driven new cultural conflicts (Kriesi et al. 1995, Hutter 2014: 82f.). The middle-class 'movements of affluence,' which mobilized political demands on behalf of others, neglected economic issues and have primarily mobilized on such issues as women's rights, human rights, ecology, peace, and global social justice. In times of economic crisis, we expect the proactive 'movements of affluence' to be replaced by 'movements of crisis,' i.e. by social movements that emerge as direct reactions to the life-disrupting situations of sudden deteriorations in economic conditions. We shall show that there is a 'return of the economy', but that it is regionally specific and partial in the sense that it is targeting the economic crisis management of the government, but not private corporations.

Kerbo (1982) who introduced the distinction between 'movements of crisis' and 'movements of affluence,' suggested that 'movements of crisis' are relatively unorganized and develop more spontaneously, and that they are more likely to be characterized by hostile outbursts and collective violence. If this were to hold, we would expect a change in the action repertoire of protestors in the course of the crisis, away from 'business as usual,' i.e. an action repertoire of protest dominated by demonstrations and strikes, towards a more confrontational and more violent action repertoire. Previous protest waves were characterized as resulting in either the institutionalization or the radicalization of protest (Tarrow, 1989). Also, it has been observed

that in periods of crisis new modes of action are tested (Fillieule 2010) and that during protest waves the repertoire of contention is often transformed, with an emergence of new forms of action that end up characterizing a specific protest wave (Taylor and van Dyke, 2004). Therefore, we ask whether, during the Great Recession, ordinary forms of protest, such as demonstrations, were supplemented by innovative protest actions such as occupations or protest camps. The Indignados and Occupy movements and their practices to occupy squares and to organize deliberative assemblies in public squares have attracted a lot of media attention and they have been considered to have introduced a true innovation (Maeckelbergh 2012). Our third major research question concerns the extent to which protest mobilization during the great economic crises led to the spread of such innovations. We shall show that in spite of some innovations and in spite of the predominance of 'movements of crisis' in some parts of Europe, 'business as usual' predominates. Protestors have mostly enacted the established patterns of action, although there have been creative moments that have assumed great importance. Most importantly, we shall show that protest remained largely non-violent, even in the most contested countries.

Given the importance of politics during these economic crises, the attentive observer would finally expect that the economic grievances have spilled over into the realm of politics. In the course of our study we shall distinguish between economic and political crises as two potentially interrelated sets of grievances that help us explain the emergence of protest. Indeed, political crises intensified across Europe during the Great Recession (Armingeon and Guthmann, 2014; Cordero and Simón, 2016; Magalhães, 2014) and they represent a key challenge for democracies in the 21st century (Dahlberg et al. 2015). Our fourth question asks how the management of the crisis by the government and international actors contributed to the mobilization of protest and, inversely, how the mobilization of protest contributed to the demise of incumbents and to the transformation of party systems. Irrespective of whether we

find a direct effect of economic grievances on protest or not, one of the key arguments of this book is that economic and political factors interact in driving protest. Most generally, we shall show that sustained and intense protest follows when and where economic grievances raise expectations among citizens of their national governments and these expectations are not met. In addition, we shall also show that protests amplify the electoral punishment of governments for their lackluster performance.

Our approach in this study

In this study, we adopt a macro-approach that attempts to cover all of Europe. We shall study the development of protest across no less than 30 European countries – the 27 EU member states at the time when we started this study in 2014 plus three additional West European countries (Iceland, Norway and Switzerland). More specifically, we study *protest events*, which we broadly define as all politically motivated unconventional actions performed by one or more individuals (Kriesi et al. 1995: 263). Protest events cover multiple forms of contentious political action such as demonstrations, strikes and riots and we rely on an extensive list of protest actions that allows us to identify protest in its various forms. Protest events can be distinct or they can be part of a protest wave, an instance when multiple events are tied together by the issues they address, their organizers, or the time and place in which they happen (Tarrow 1989).

In our attempt to cover protest systematically across such a large number of countries, we rely on a well-known methodological approach – protest event analysis (Hutter 2014). This approach is based on media data – we shall use English-speaking news wires as our source. As has been amply discussed in the literature (e.g. reviews by Earl et al. 2004 and Ortiz et al. 2005), this kind of data is subject to biases. However, these biases are quite well known and can be taken into account in the analysis. The great advantage of this method is that, in spite

of its drawbacks, it allows us to systematically trace the development of protest across time. We are not aware of any other approach that would allow us to do this on the scale we are aiming at. Our study covers the development of protest from 2000 to 2015, i.e. we cover the pre-crisis period up to the crash of Lehman Brothers in fall 2008, the shock period of the financial crisis that goes up to the first Greek bailout in spring 2010, the period of the Eurozone crisis that, in our interpretation, lasts until the summer 2015, as well as the last five months of 2015 that stood in the sign of the rising refugee crisis. Even if this methodology is well-known and widely used, the application of protest event analysis at the scale we are undertaking in this study is unprecedented, and we had to develop new, original semi-automated procedures for data collection in order to be able to implement this approach for our purposes. Since our answers to the questions guiding our research depend a lot on these procedures, we shall present and evaluate them in the next two chapters.

It is important to keep in mind that we are above all interested in the development over time of protest at the macro-level. Our first three questions refer to the changes we expect to take place in the course of the great economic crisis. In Part II, the answers we shall provide to these questions will be above all descriptive. We believe that it is important to get the facts right in the first place. Even if our data are not perfect, we believe that we will be able to present the general trends which will allow us to provide answers to the basic factual questions about changes with respect to protest mobilization in the course of the financial and Eurozone crises across Europe.

In order to go beyond mere descriptive accounts, we shall rely on three key concepts of social movement studies – grievances, resources and political opportunity structures (see McAdam 1982). *Grievances* constitute our starting point. The social movement literature has for a long time sidelined the study of economic grievances, arguing that resources and mobilization drive protest, not grievances. For a long time, grievances have had a bad name in this

literature as a result of the legacy of collective behaviour models, also known as strain or breakdown theories (see McAdam 1982: 5-19; Buechler 2004). These theories conceived of collective behaviour as a largely spontaneous, unregulated and unstructured group activity, and even went as far as considering it as irrational, disruptive, dangerous or excessive. As a result of the discredited legacy of collective behaviour theories, economic deprivation has largely been neglected as a driving force in the study of protest mobilization. However, there is ample reason to re-examine the role of economic grievances in explaining protest, as the Great Recession led to much more massive economic deprivation than we saw in the preceding decades. And, indeed, the Great Recession has brought the concept back to the center in the study of protest, both at the macro level (Beissinger and Sasse, 2014; Brancati, 2014; Quaranta, 2016) and at the micro level (Grasso and Giugni, 2016; Rüdig and Karyotis, 2014; Häusermann et al. 2017, Portos-Garcia 2016).

While exogenous shocks like the financial and Eurozone crises create a tremendous amount of popular discontent, it is unlikely that they create mobilization potentials from scratch. They rather contribute to pre-existing latent mobilization potentials that are linked to the structural conflicts, which predate the crisis and which pre-structure the way the crisis mobilization will play out. The mobilization potentials newly created by the crisis add to this already existing stock of grievances. In addition, a crisis is likely to serve as a catalyst for the mobilization of these latent potential. It may reshape, redirect or reinvigorate an already on-going mobilization process, or it may trigger the articulation of the latent potentials that have already been accumulating before the occurrence of the crisis and which have been reinforced by the crisis.

People with grievances seek to express them, and they do so by raising their voice or by exiting (Hirschman 1970). Exit has been an important reaction to the great economic crisis in many countries. Thus, in the case of Latvia, discontent overwhelmingly took the form of exit, i.e. of leaving the country on a massive scale – protestors effectively ‘voting with their feet’

(Eihmanis 2013: 15). We do not deal with this type of reaction to the crisis here, but only with those who raised their voice collectively. In democratic societies, citizens have the right to vote and they have the opportunity to express their grievances as voters. As Piven and Cloward (1977: 15) have already noted a long time ago, 'ordinarily, defiance is first expressed in the voting booth simply because, whether defiant or not, people have been socialized within a political culture that defines voting as the mechanism through which political change can and should properly occur'. Accordingly, one of the first signs of popular discontent is sharp shifts in voting patterns. More generally, in democratic societies, the action repertoire of protests is likely to make use of the available institutionalized channels of access, which means that the privileged institutional space, i.e. the privileged arena to voice grievances are the electoral, and, where available, the direct-democratic arena. But the next elections might still be far away and the grievances suddenly imposed by the economic crisis may call for immediate reaction. The protest arena provides an alternative channel for the expression of grievances that is available to the extent that there are organizations that are ready and have the resources to mobilize them.

Except for the general organization of civil society, we shall pay rather scant attention to the *organizational* aspect of the mobilization process which is dear to the resource mobilization approach. Contrary to this approach which presumes that grievances tend to be 'relatively constant and pervasive' (Jenkins and Perrow 1977: 265) and that there are always enough grievances to get a protest going if it is effectively organized (McCarthy and Zald 1977: 1215), we are inclined to assume that in democratic societies with developed civil societies there are always enough organizational resources around to pick up on grievances, if these grievances are only pressing enough. More recently, the social media have lowered the organization costs to a great extent, such that large-scale protest events can be organized in a rather spontaneous fashion without established organizational resources. Thus, the largest

demonstration in Portugal during the peak years of the crisis, 2010-2013, was organized by a facebook group and a blog (Accornero and Ramos-Pinto 2014: 3). In line with the general notion of 'business as usual', we expect, however, traditional political organizations like parties and, above all, unions to have played a key role in the mobilization of protest across Europe during the entire period covered. Parties are expected to have been important especially in countries with an otherwise weak civil society.

We shall focus, however, on *the political context and its interaction with grievances* in the creation of the dynamics in the protest arena. Let us first clarify our understanding of *'political crisis'*. A political crisis may be expressed in attitudinal and behavioural terms (see Mainwaring et al. 2006). The political grievances correspond to the attitudinal indicators of a political crisis among which we can count lack of trust in political institutions and lack of satisfaction with the way democracy works. Among the behavioural indicators we can include lower turnout, electoral volatility, the rise of new challengers in the electoral channel or even the collapse of party systems, but also the rise of protest events in the protest arena. The attitudinal component refers to the latent mobilization potentials, which constitute the more or less fertile ground for the political crisis. The political crisis, however, only breaks out in the open once these latent potentials are mobilized and manifest themselves in behavioural terms. This is to say that the political crisis does not develop as a matter of course, but is the result of political mobilization – either in electoral terms or in terms of protest or in terms of both (Kriesi 2015: 21).

Earlier version of the political process approach that have referred to theories of the state have been criticized for 'surveying the terrain of collective action from so high an altitude that crucial processes and internal variations cannot be seen' (Tarrow 1988: 436). We shall pay attention to specific processes, in particular to the political management of the economic crisis. Political dissatisfaction may be the direct consequence of the government's poor

management of the economic crisis, and political dissatisfaction may be expressed in public protest. After the initial 'shock period', when governments countered the economic impact of the crisis by relying on some version of 'liberal' (Pontusson and Raess 2012) or 'emergency Keynesianism' (Hall 2013), they turned to austerity policies with the beginning of the Eurozone crisis, which were the key sources of economic hardship in the most hard-hit countries. While the welfare states buffered the negative consequences of the crisis initially (Bermeo and Bartels, 2014), especially in the countries of northwestern Europe, which had strong automatic stabilizers, the turn to austerity impeded the redistributive functions of the state and crucially contributed to the hardship of the populations. This is likely to have focused the minds of the protestors on government policy.

The political crisis may be the direct result of the reaction to the government's management of the economy, but it may also have other origins. It may not only result from poor economic performance for which the government is held responsible, it may also result from poor governance in general. In other words, a political crisis may also result from corruption and partiality, disregard for the rule of law, large-scale scandals and general ineffectiveness of government. Importantly, a political crisis may also take the form of a representation crisis that is not directly linked to an economic crisis nor to poor governance. In the case of a representation crisis, political discontent arises from the tension between new societal demands and their inadequate representation in the political system in general, and in the party system in particular. Specifically, this tension between the political representatives ('the elites') and the voters ('the people') results from the inability/ unwillingness of the established parties to represent the new demands. For some time party scholars in Europe have been pointing out the weakening of the representative function of established parties – their increasing remoteness from their constituencies, their programmatic convergence and the decline of their mobilizing capacity (e.g. Mair 2013). Arguably, this kind of crisis has set in

long before the Great Recession hit Europe and has become important in northwestern European countries as we shall argue in the next section. More generally, we shall argue that the type of political crisis varied significantly from one European region to the other with important implications for the mobilization of protest.

Finally, let us clarify our approach to the relationship between the electoral and the protest arenas. This relationship has multiple dimensions as has been pointed out by McAdam and Tarrow (2010, 2013). On the one hand, parties – the key players in the electoral arena – are important sponsors of protest in the streets. In Western Europe, protest was mainly sponsored by parties on the left (e.g., della Porta and Rucht 1995; Kriesi et al. 1995; Maguire 1995). Moreover, government participation of these parties was identified as a crucial condition for the facilitation of movement activities. In opposition, the left-wing parties were more likely to act as allies of ideologically close movements, such as the new social movements in the 1970s and early 1980s. By contrast, in Central and Eastern Europe, parties with little influence in the electoral arena from different ideological camps were more likely to sponsor protest (Cisar and Navratil 2015; Cisar and Vrablíkova 2016). We shall show that the influence of party sponsoring of protest still varies from one European region to the other. On the other hand, the mobilization of protest in the streets may contribute to the agenda-setting in the electoral channel (e.g. Vliegenthart et al. 2016), and it may influence the electoral outcomes in different ways (McAdam and Tarrow 2013). Movements may also exert a direct influence over established parties, like Tea Party did on the Republican Party (McAdam and Kloos 2014), or they might even mobilize in the form of parties in the first place, like the radical populist right or the Italian 'Movimento 5 Stelle'. We shall argue that the impact of protest on electoral outcomes and on the shape of the party systems is probably the most important political consequence of the mobilization of protest during the Great Recession.

The three regions of Europe

For the presentation of our results, we shall distinguish between three regions of Europe – north-western Europe, southern Europe and central-eastern Europe. We introduce these macro-regions because this allows us to point to the large differences that exist between them with respect to the development of protest during the Great Recession. As we shall show, it is above all southern Europe that experienced the emergence of a tremendous amount of protest during the Great Recession, while the development of protest in the other two regions was much more subdued. We think that it is important to get a clear idea of these differences on a grand scale, even if we shall show that there is also considerable country-specific variation within each region. Since the distinction between the macro-regions is important for our way to present the results, we shall provide three sets of arguments why this distinction makes sense as a first step in the analysis of the data. These three sets of arguments are linked to our three sets of explanatory factors which we take from social movement theory – grievances, resources, and political opportunity structures.

Economic and political grievances

The first set of arguments concerns the crisis experience which has varied a lot from one region to the other. *Figure 1.1* provides a schematic overview over the development of *economic and political grievances* in the three regions during the period covered by our study. We use unemployment rates as a rough indicator for economic grievances and satisfaction with democracy as an equally rough indicator for political grievances. The left-hand subgraph for economic grievances shows that unemployment rates increased sharply in the immediate aftermath of the onset of the financial crisis in both southern and eastern Europe, while they remained comparatively weakly affected in the export-led and tertiarized economies of continental and northern Europe (Baccaro and Pontusson, 2016). The unequal development of

the regional unemployment rates demonstrates that the Eurozone crisis accelerated and exacerbated structural economic imbalances that had accumulated for decades (Boix, 2015). The countries of southern and eastern Europe had experienced severely lagging job growth in productive service employment for a long time, and these structural weaknesses acted as a catalyst when the financial crisis hit their economies, leading to rampant decline in economic demand and occupational performance. But while both eastern and southern countries were on average strongly hit by the crisis, we nevertheless observe two important differences. First, the eastern European pattern blends into a more long-term picture of volatile employment performance, even before the crisis (Bohle, 2016), whereas in southern Europe the crisis represented a sudden discontinuity after an extended period of macroeconomic stability, expansionary fiscal policies, and easy access to financing for deficits and debt (Hassel, 2014). Hence the actual *decline* in economic performance was much more strongly and sharply felt in the south than in the east. Second, the countries of eastern Europe show a relatively quick recovery onwards with declining unemployment rates from 2011, as a reaction to painful measures of external (Poland and Czech Republic) and internal devaluation (Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia and Romania) implemented by national governments (Walter, 2016). The same does not hold for the countries of the European south, where unemployment not only rose to much higher levels but these levels were also more sustained. Here, external adjustment was ruled out because of Eurozone membership, and internal adjustment policies were either impeded or – via conditional bailout packages – externally forced upon these countries. We expect that it is the strong and lasting increase in economic grievances that accounts for the emergence of widespread protest in southern Europe.

<Figure 1.1>

The second part of *Figure 1.1* shows that satisfaction with democracy experienced a tremendous decline in southern Europe in the aftermath of the initial shock in fall 2008,

falling from close to 60 percent to below 30 percent of respondents satisfied with democracy, which contrasts with steady high level of democratic satisfaction in northwestern Europe and the continuously low level of democratic satisfaction in central-eastern Europe. The massive collapse of satisfaction with democracy in the South represents an actual watershed in political legitimacy that may not be explained by the absolute levels of economic grievances alone. The economic difficulties may have reduced the citizens' tolerance of poor governance in general. As Royo (2014) argues with regard to Spain, we cannot understand the Spanish real estate bubble, the country's loss of competitiveness or its financial crisis without taking into account what he calls the 'extractive behaviour' of the Spanish political elite and the general 'institutional degeneration' in Spanish politics. However, as he also argues, the problem in Spain has been both the extractive behaviour of the elite and the fact that civil society tolerated this behaviour. It was only when the economic crisis exposed the economic model as unsustainable that the public became outraged with the actions of its political elite. Southern European countries suffered from a *double crisis* during the Great Recession – an economic and a political crisis (Hutter et al. 2018) – with important consequences for the mobilization of protest, as we shall show in our study. As with the economic grievances, we expect that the strong *increase* in political grievances accounts for the emergence of protest in southern Europe. Where citizens had been dissatisfied for a long time, as in central-eastern Europe, dissatisfaction is expected to have triggered less protest, even when combined with economic grievances.

The individual countries vary of course with respect to the extent that they follow the overall regional pattern. Thus, in northwestern Europe, Ireland has clearly been more heavily hit by the economic crises than the rest of the countries, while Germany's unemployment rate continued its decline that had started in 2005 throughout the economic crises. This is illustrated by the first two subgraphs in *Figure 1.2*. On the whole, however, the experience of

the countries in this part of Europe was rather similar. The third sub-graph shows that Greece and Spain are the two southern European countries that have been hit most heavily. By contrast, the unemployment rate in Italy did not increase by much in the course of the crises. In Portugal the rise in unemployment accelerated as a result of the crises, but it had already started before the shock period and it never reached the extreme levels of Greece and Spain. In eastern Europe, the Baltic republics were most heavily hit, with unemployment at least tripling between 2007 and 2009 (Kattel and Raudla, 2013). This is illustrated by the case of Latvia in the fourth subgraph of *Figure 1.2*. Compared to the Baltic states, however, unemployment increased much less in the other countries in this region. The case of Poland is most interesting in this respect, because in Poland unemployment had reached very high levels in the early 2000s, from which it declined until the beginning of the crises, and hardly increased at all during the crisis. It is also notable that in a country like Romania unemployment did not increase at all during the whole period covered by our study, although Romania was severely hit by the economic crisis, too.

<Figure 1.2>

There is also within region variation with regard to the political grievances. In northwestern Europe, the case of Ireland is again set apart: in line with the increasing economic grievances political grievances increase as well, i.e. satisfaction with democracy declined, although from a very high level and not as much as to reach southern or eastern European levels. This is shown in the first subgraph of *Figure 1.3*. In some northwestern European countries, like Germany or Sweden, political satisfaction even increased at least up to 2015, when the Great Recession ended and was followed up by the refugee crisis. By contrast, all southern European countries experienced a strong decline in political satisfaction during the economic crises. This decline was particularly pronounced in Greece and Spain, the two countries most heavily hit by the economic crises. In Portugal, by contrast, just as with the state of the

economy, the decline has been more continuous as it already set in before the fall of Lehman Brothers. In central-eastern Europe, Poland again constitutes a case apart, since satisfaction with democracy follows an increasing trend throughout the crises. In the other countries, political satisfaction declines somewhat, but nowhere as much as in southern Europe, and it recovers rather rapidly to pre-crisis levels. Against the background of these rough crisis indicators, we would expect the greatest amount of protest in countries like Greece and Spain, while we would expect a limited amount of protest in countries like Germany, Sweden or Poland.

<Figure 1.3>

Political legacies

In addition to these short-term factors linked to the crisis, the *political legacies* vary systematically between the three regions. For the study of protest, it is very important that the countries of southern Europe – with the exception of Italy – were governed by *authoritarian regimes* until the mid-seventies of the 20th century, while the countries of central-eastern Europe were governed by *communist regimes* until 1990. As a result of their belated democratization, these countries missed the wave of mobilization of the new social movements and were hardly affected by the wave of the radical populist right, which had strongly influenced protest mobilization in northwestern Europe. The first wave (the wave of the new social movements or the New Left) is an expression of the 'silent revolution' and was driven by the socio-cultural segment of the new middle class. This wave gave rise to the 'new politics': the new social movements stood at the origin of the rise of the Green parties and of the transformation of the northwest European social-democratic parties which, in the process, have become middle-class parties (e.g., Gingrich and Häusermann 2015, Häusermann 2015). The second wave (the wave of the radical populist right or the New Right) is an expression of the social conflicts arising from 'globalization' and was driven by a heterogeneous set of 'losers

of globalization' (Kriesi et al. 2008). In this process, the parties of the populist radical right have become the parties of the working class in northwestern European countries (Oesch 2008, 2013; Afonso and Rennwald 2015). These two waves of mobilization have in common that they concerned above all *cultural issues*. The rise of the parties of the New Left and the New Right is an expression of a crisis of representation that reflects the increasing distance of mainstream parties from their constituencies and their increasing convergence on the economic dimension. In the process, the two waves increased the importance of the cultural dimension of the partisan space and transformed its meaning, which, in the European context, had traditionally been dominated by issues related to religion. We expect the legacy of these two waves of mobilization to have left its imprint on the pattern of protest mobilization in northwestern Europe during the Great Recession. Against the background of this legacy and given the limited impact of the Great Recession in northwestern Europe, we expect the 'return of the economy' to have been particularly weak in this part of Europe.

In the authoritarian countries of southern Europe, the new social movements hardly got a foot on the ground until recently. Even in Italy they did not develop as much as in northwestern Europe because of the strong presence of the communist left, which explains the continued salience of the class cleavage, the mobilization on economic issues and the corresponding weakness of the new social movements. In our earlier comparative study of new social movements in western Europe we have argued this point for the case of France (Kriesi et al. 1995: 14-19), but the same applies to an even greater extent to Italy and, by extension, to the other countries of the European south: a strong communist party restricted the independent development of new social movements in these countries (della Porta and Rucht 1991: 38). Moreover, the authoritarian legacy largely discredited the radical right and has limited the rise of these parties until the unfolding of the refugee crisis after 2015. Only in Italy did the fascist right survive the fall of the regime and was able to organise itself openly. But, paradoxically,

the Italian neo-fascists started to decline at the very moment when the radical right began its rise in northwestern Europe, precisely because of their solid neo-fascist lineage (Ignazi 2003: 52). Only by distancing themselves from this legacy could they make a fresh start. Against this background, we would expect cultural issues to have been much less influential in the protest arena in southern Europe already before the crisis. Moreover, given this legacy and the strong impact of the economic crisis we expect a particularly strong 'return of the economy' in this part of Europe.

In the formerly communist countries of central-eastern Europe, by contrast, it is the communist legacy that left its imprint on the protest arena. Neither new social movements nor the radical right had been a significant presence in these countries prior to the Great Recession. Civil society has traditionally been weak (Bernhard 1996, Howard 2003, Bernhard and Karakoc 2007, Pop-Eleches and Tucker 2013), and party systems in particular have remained weakly institutionalized (Casal Bértoa 2015, Casal Bértoa and Enyedi 2014). The very high level of volatility in these systems since the democratic transition is the most important empirical evidence for their lack of institutionalization (Powell and Tucker 2014). But in the absence of other strong intermediary organizations, parties are likely to play a comparatively important role in the mobilization of protest in this region. To distance itself from the communist legacy, the post-communist left has pursued rightist policies of fiscal responsibility and economic reform (Tavits and Letki 2009). This led to the convergence of the major parties on economic issues, which means that cultural issues have become more prominent in structuring the central-eastern European party systems. But these cultural issues are of a different kind than the ones mobilizing in northwestern Europe (Kriesi 2016: 38): their common denominator seems to be a 'defensive nationalism' asserting itself against internal enemies (such as ethnic minorities: Russians, Roma, and Jews) and external ones (such as foreign corporations

colonizing the national economy). Accordingly, we would also expect cultural issues to be rather prominent in central-eastern Europe, even in the course of the crisis.

The relative weakness of the civil society in central-eastern Europe is visible in *Figure 1.4*. The left-hand panel in this figure presents the development of civil society from the time of the transition to democracy in 1990 up to 2017. As this figure shows, central-eastern Europe has hardly caught up with northwestern Europe during this period. In terms of social movement theory, this suggests that the *resources* for mobilization in the protest arena are generally rather limited in this region, which, in turn, means that, ceteris paribus, we would expect a comparatively low level of mobilization in the corresponding countries. *Figure 1.5* documents the variation of the strength of civil society within each region in 1990 and in 2015. Countries above the diagonal experienced a strengthening of their civil society during the 25 years that separate these two snap shots, while countries below the diagonal experience a weakening of their civil society. The figure shows that, with the exception of Slovenia, civil society seems to be generally weak in central-eastern Europe when compared to northwestern Europe. On average, southern Europe lies between the other two regions in this respect (see *Figure 1.4*), but the average hides large differences between, on the one hand, Greece and Italy with rather strong civil societies and, on the other hand, Spain and Portugal with rather weak civil societies. The two southern European countries with the largest grievances – Greece and Spain – turn out to be distinguished in this respect. In other words, the combination of severe grievances with a rather strong civil society sets Greece apart from the other southern European countries, and leads us to expect a particularly strong mobilization of protest in Greece during the crises.

<Figures 1.4-5>

Institutional structures for managing the economy and international interventions

Finally, the distinction between the three regions is also related to two additional aspects of the *political opportunity structure* that play an important role for the quality of the management of the economy and governance more generally: the institutional structures and international interventions. Both may seriously constrain a government's capacity to respond to citizens' grievances. Institutional structures refer to the regime of social and economic policies in place in a given country. These institutional structures are most effectively characterized in terms of varieties of capitalism and different stages of structural development (Beramendi et al., 2015; Bohle, 2016; Hassel, 2014). Thus, the post-industrial export-led economies of continental and northern Europe proved to be very resilient in the crisis, not least because of their effective macro-economic stabilizers. On the other hand, the (neo-)liberal economies of central and eastern Europe felt the impact of the crisis directly and very strongly, because of their weak stabilizers and high international interdependence, but – precisely because of their liberal economic regimes – their governments had preserved leeway for adjustment decisions. It was in the southern political economies that the economic policies were generally hostile to structural adjustment, and the governing capacity of the political elites was constrained by power asymmetries and rigidities (Beramendi et al. 2015). Moreover, the central and eastern European democracies were plagued with corruption, defined as 'the misuse of public office for private gain' (Klašnja et al. 2014: 69).

The right-hand graph in *Figure 1.4* presents the development of an index for state capacity (composed of indicators for clientelism, corruption and rule of law) in the three regions from 1990 to 2015. As the graph suggests, with respect to state capacity on average both southern and central-eastern Europe fall short of northwestern Europe throughout the period covered. While the northwestern European countries are quite homogenous in this respect, the countries of the other two regions vary considerably. This variation is documented in *Figure*

1.6, which follows the format of *Figure 1.5*. In central- and eastern Europe, Poland, the Baltic states and Slovenia with rather strong state capacities appear to be clearly distinct from the Czech Republic, Hungary and especially Bulgaria and Romania with much weaker state capacities. In southern Europe, state capacity is considerably higher in Portugal and Spain than in Greece. This confirms Afonso et al. (2015), who showed that parties in Greece relied much more on clientelistic linkages than their Portuguese counterparts in particular. Assuming that a lack of state capacity to deal with the economic crises contributes to the political grievances and enhances the effect of economic grievances on the mobilization of protest, Greece meets yet another condition for the strong mobilization of protest in the economic crises.

<Figure 1.6>

In addition to domestic institutional constraints, governments are also constrained by the interventions of inter- and supra-national actors. Two institutions were particularly central to the understanding of supranational constraints on economic policy-making: the Eurozone (Sanchez-Cuenca, 2017) and international bailouts supervised by the IMF, the ECB and the European Commission (Armingeon and Guthmann, 2014; Mair, 2013a). Governments belonging to the European Union – and even more so to the Eurozone – have faced a tension between responding to their national constituencies (responsiveness) and respecting Europe-level agreements (responsibility). In the light of these double constraints, some observers speak of 'democracy without choices,' arguing that the Eurozone agreements resulted in both a lack of alternatives regarding the socioeconomic policies available to deal with the crisis (Alonso, 2014; Mair, 2013a) and a growing power of technocrats (Sanchez-Cuenca, 2017). These constraints weakened domestic responsiveness and blurred the chain of responsibility. Previous studies came to contrasting conclusion with regard to the impact of these constraints on protest. While Beissinger and Sasse (2014) found that IMF interventions increased protest

in eastern Europe, other studies find that the imposition of supranational constraints on choices reinforced support for national democracy (Cordero and Simón, 2016) and a study of six western and southern European countries shows that ECB decision-making reduced protest (Genovese et al. 2016). The paradigmatic case of foreign interventions is, of course, Greece, which has been the object of no less than three bail-outs, with very severe conditionality attached. In other words, Greece really ticks all the boxes that enhance the structural potential for protest mobilization. In Greece, the preconditions for a 'perfect storm' were reunited (Altiparmakis 2019). It is, therefore, not surprising that Greece did experience an exceptional wave of protest during the Great Recession as we shall document throughout this study.

Outline of the book

The book starts with a data section presenting and assessing our strategy for the semi-automated coding of protest events. In Chapter 2, we introduce the tools used, explain the rationale behind the choice of tools and the data collection procedure, and we evaluate their performance. Chapter 3 assesses the quality of our data by comparing them with a variety of other existing datasets.

Part II focuses on the dependent variable: three chapters discuss the trends and characteristics of protest, notably general trends in frequency and intensity (Chapter 4), action repertoires (Chapter 5) and protest issues (Chapter 6). These chapters show the development of and variation in protest over time across Europe. Chapter 4 maps the intensity of protest and protest waves over time in different regions and countries. It investigates whether we observe sweeping cross-national protest waves or instead more contained national waves of protest. Chapter 5 studies the forms protest took in this period. It addresses the question to what extent we see novel innovative forms of protest spread across Europe or just 'business as usual'.

Chapter 6 investigates the issues of protest and responds to the question about the 'return of the economy'.

Part II moves our analysis to the explanatory side. Chapter 7 conceptualizes economic and political grievances and analyzes the direct and conditional impact of economic deprivation and political dissatisfaction on protest. In studying the extent to which economic and political grievances trigger protest, Chapter 7 studies not only the direct link between economic deprivation and protest mobilization but also how this direct link is conditioned by by the government's capacity to respond to these grievances. In addition, it investigates whether these political grievances act as a mediating mechanism linking economic grievances and protest. Chapter 8 complements this focus on the relationship between economic hardship and protest with an analysis of the austerity policies which had to be implemented either as a consequence of supranational bailout agreements or for domestic reasons. Again, we are mainly interested in the interaction between economic grievances (austerity measures) and political grievances (the international constraints on government capacity imposed by bailout agreements), and investigate whether the latter reinforce the effect of the former on protest. Chapter 9 looks into the linkages between different national dynamics of protest mobilization by investigating the diffusion of protest across national arenas. It assesses the idea of a Europeanization of protest by testing for diffusion effects of sharing common borders or belonging to the same European region.

In Part IV of this study, we add a focus on the interaction of protest with wider national and international political dynamics. Chapters 10 and 11 study the relationship between protest and electoral politics. Chapter 10 compares the dynamics of opposition in the two arenas by asking if the punishment of elites in the electoral arena is reinforced by economic protest, or if the two dynamics are distinct. Chapter 11 then focuses on political parties as actors and initiators of protest. Chapter 12 summarizes the main results and concludes.

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Figure 1.1 Economic and political grievances: average unemployment rates (quarterly) and average satisfaction with democracy (half-yearly), per region 2000-2015

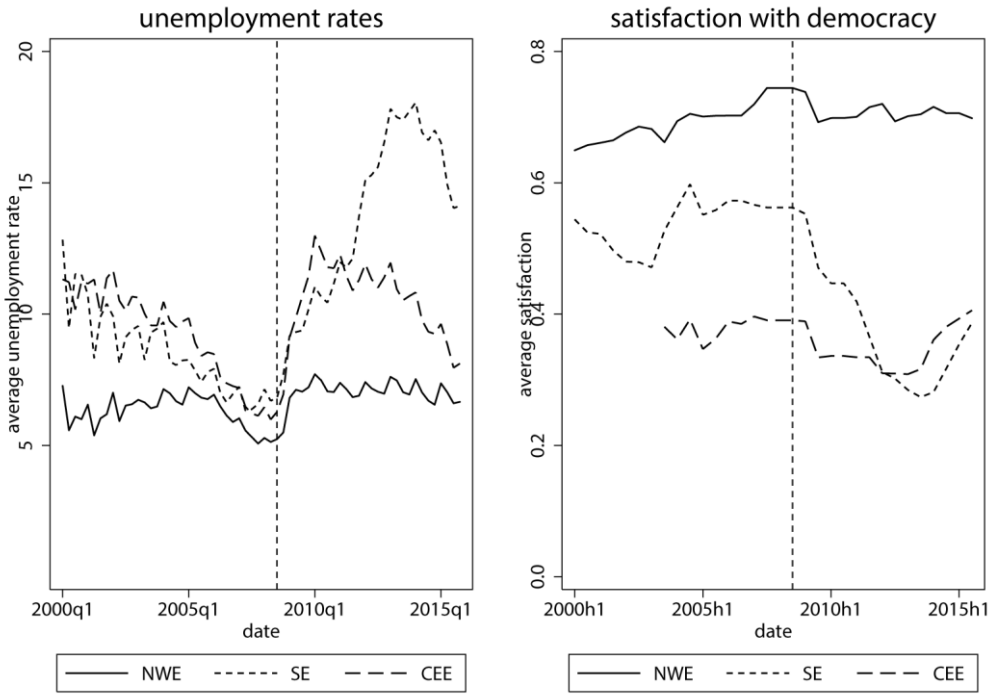


Figure 1.2 Economic grievances: average unemployment rates (quarterly), per country 2000-2015

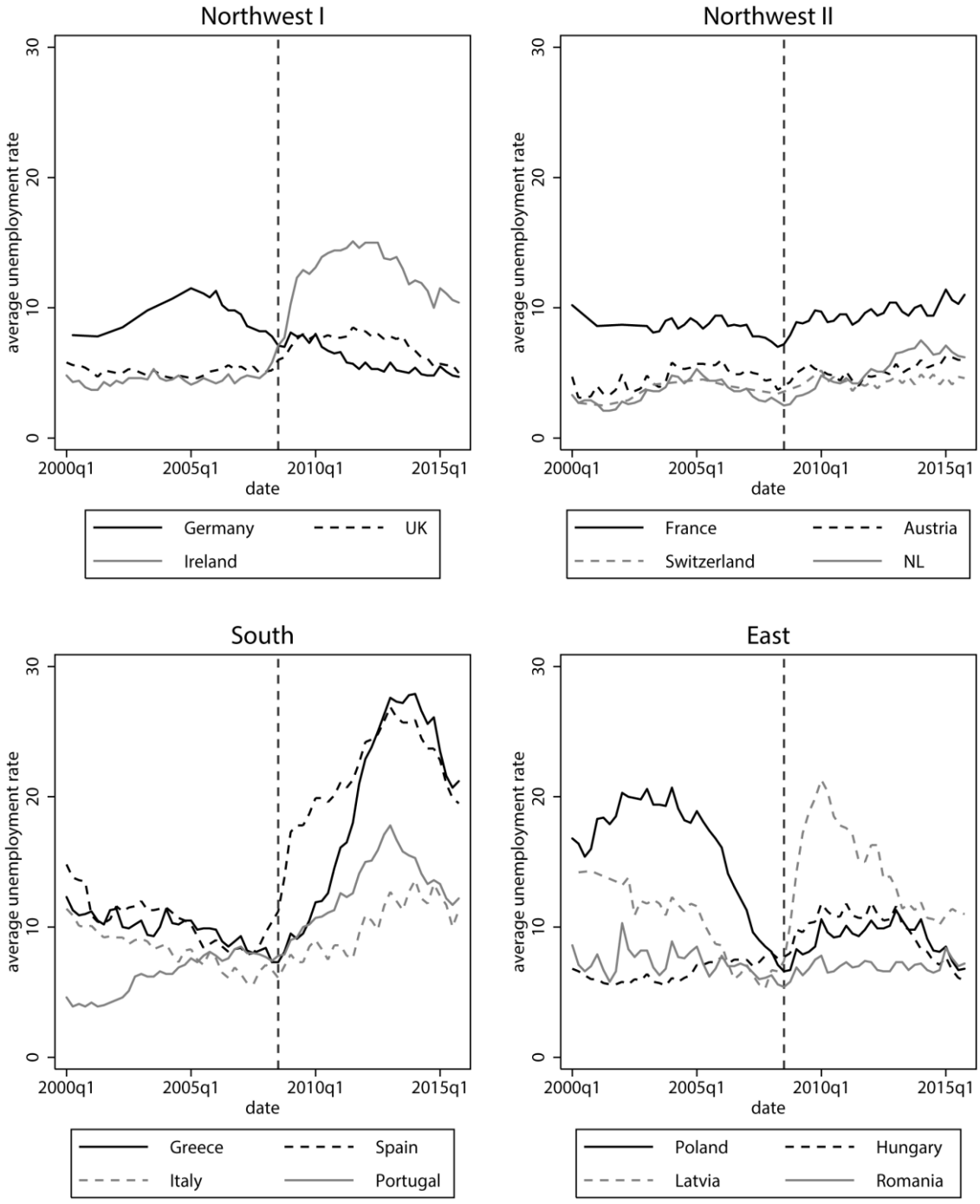


Figure 1.3 Political grievances: average satisfaction with democracy (half-yearly), per country 2000-2015

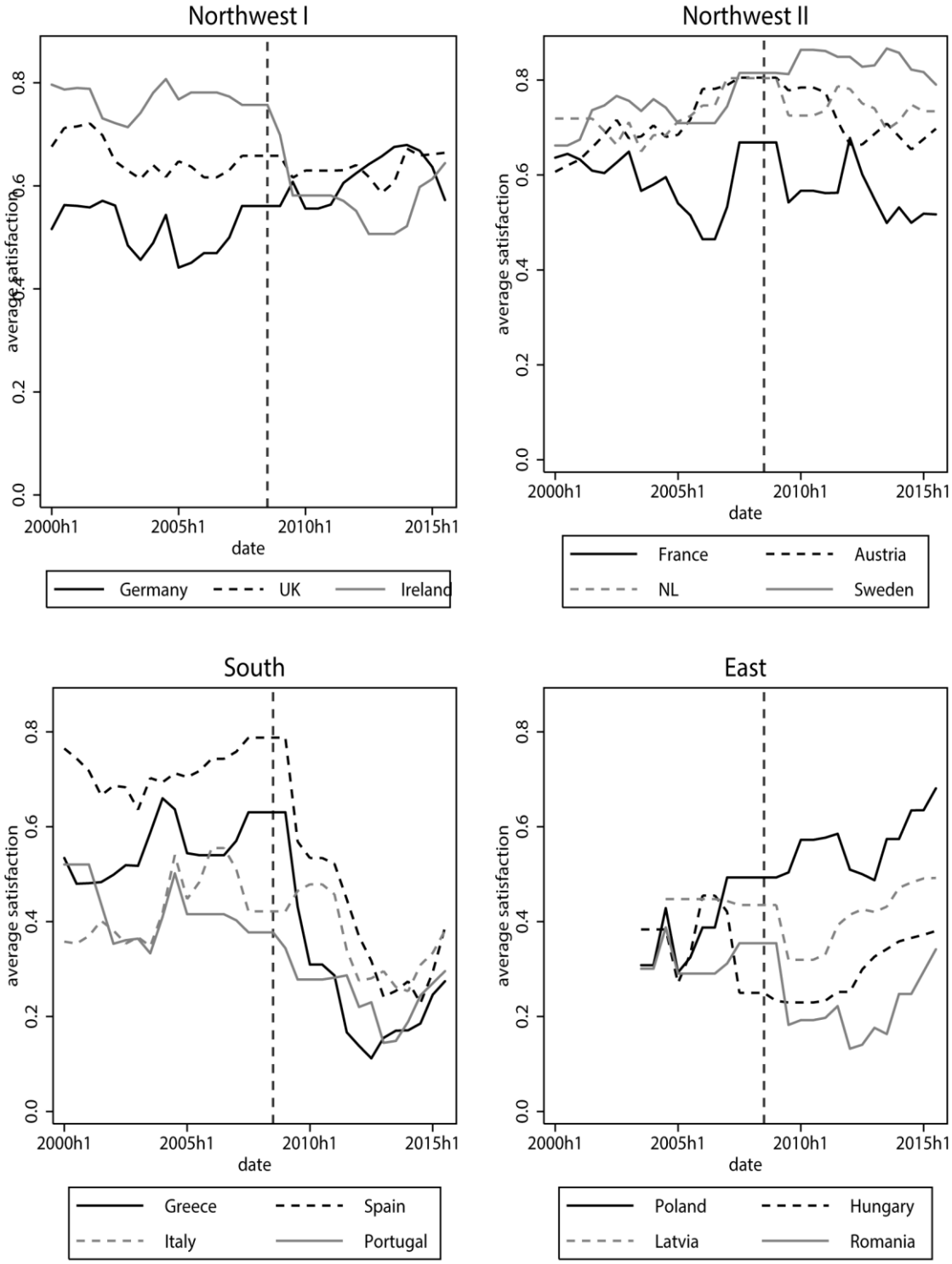
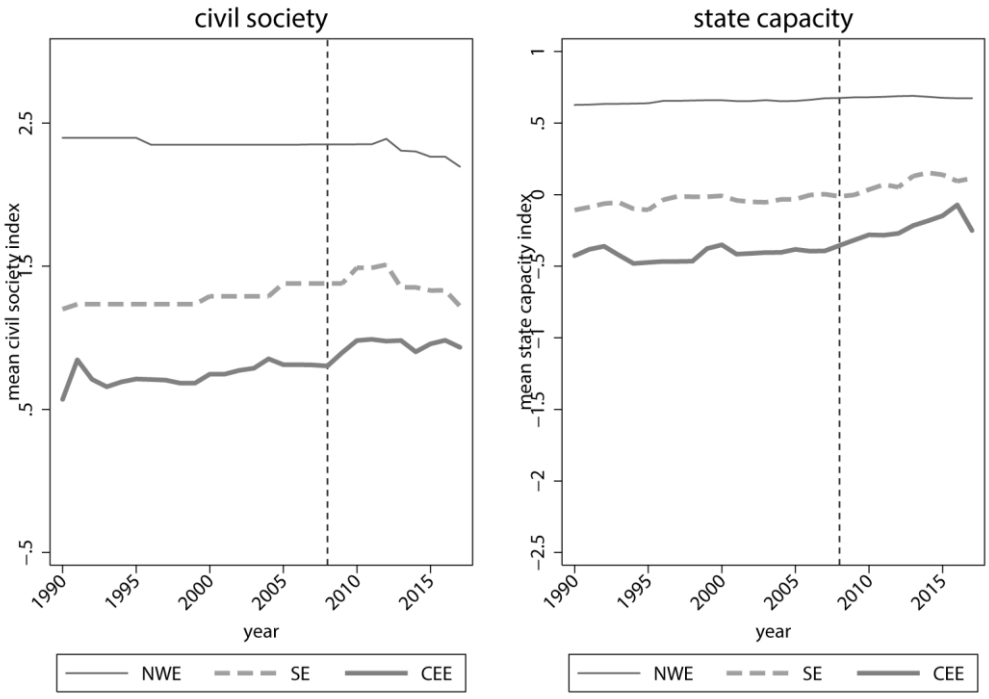
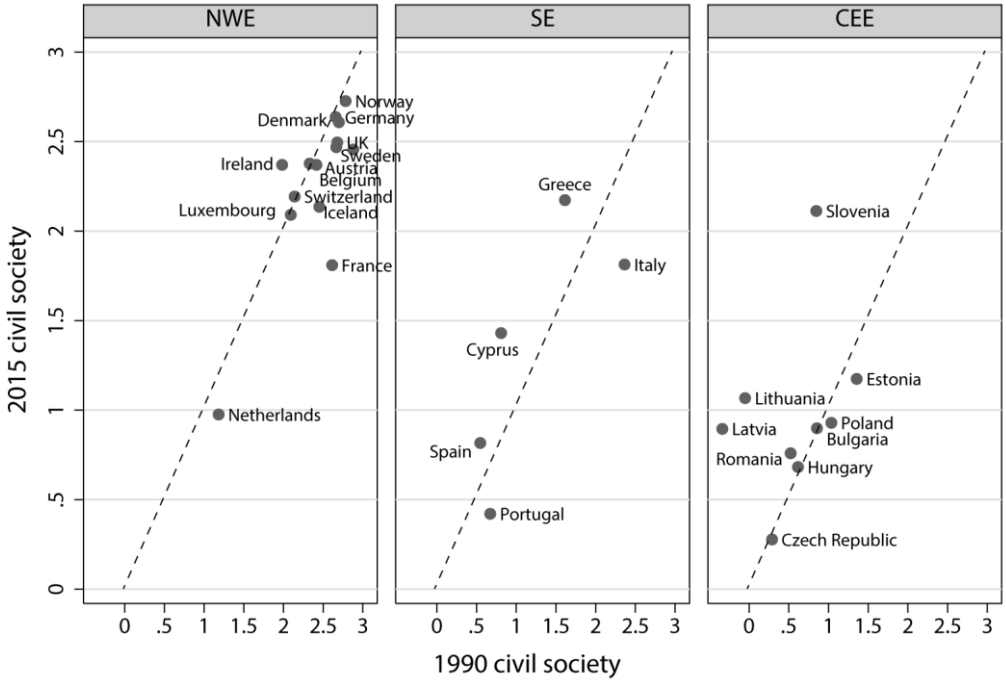


Figure 1.4: State capacity and strength of civil society by region, 1990 vs 2015



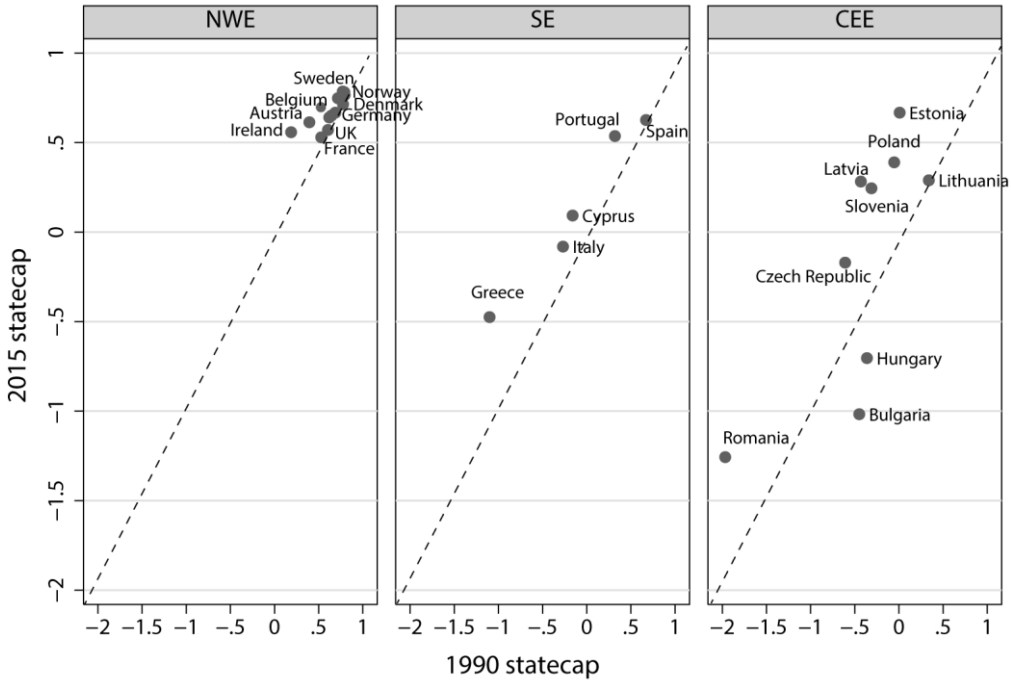
Source: state capacity: factor based on V-Dem clientelism index, regime corruption index (Sigman and Lindberg (2017), *V-Dem Working Paper Series* 2017:56) and rule of law index; Civil society: V-Dem indicator for CSO participatory environment (Bernhard *et al.* (2015), *V-Dem Working Paper Series* 2015:13).

Figure 1.5: Strength of civil society by region and country, 1990 vs 2015



source: see Figure 1.2

Figure 1.6: State capacity by region and country, 1990 vs 2015



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