

# Protest Behavior in European Societies

## The Role of Individual Incentives and the Political Context

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## Abstract

Empirical research has provided different explanations for political protest. Yet, from a cost-benefit perspective the motivation for protest behavior still remains unclear. Why do people engage in protest activities, even though participation is costly and collective outcomes are available to everybody? This paper aims to provide an explanation for this paradox by analyzing which individual-level incentives foster protest participation, and by considering the specific political context in which protest activities take place. We rely mainly upon the European Social Survey (ESS) data from 2002–2003, which covers a large number of countries, and includes important items for measuring political protest. The findings suggest that both individual-level incentives and contextual features are crucial to take into account when explaining protest activity. More specifically, we find that collective and selective incentives motivate protest in most European countries, and that protest levels are higher in systems with proportional representation, in less fractionalized systems and in more polarized systems. Looking at interactions between contextual and individual-level factors, we find that people are less likely to be driven to protest by collective incentives in countries where left parties are in the cabinet.

## Introduction

Since the early 1970s there has been a substantial rise in different forms of political protest such as strikes or legal and illegal demonstrations. Empirical research has provided different explanations for these forms of action, which focus mainly on individual motivations for taking part in protest activities. Particularly inequality, relative deprivation and dissatisfaction with policy outputs have been found to be the main determinants of protest behavior in numerous studies (e.g. Barnes & Kaase et al. 1979; Gurr 1970; Muller 1979; Muller & Jukam 1983). Here, protest is aimed at achieving policy outcomes which decrease dissatisfaction and thus serve as a public good.

Looking from a cost-benefit perspective, however, we can detect at least two problems with the notion of the dissatisfied protester. First of all, for most forms of collective action an individual's likelihood of affecting the outcome is only marginal, if none at all. Second, most public goods are available to everybody, i.e. equally to those who participate and to the so-called "free-riders". Thus, a rational individual would not be expected to carry the costs of participation in the protest action (Olson 1965). How can one, then, explain the high (and even increasing) rates of participation in protest activities? In this paper, we aim to answer this question by focusing on individual incentives that drive protest participation, as well as the political-institutional arrangements which serve as the contextual background for protest activities.

One group of factors which is assumed to drive collective action in general is individual incentives, more specifically the collective and selective incentives which have been proposed in the previous literature as a solution to the so-called "paradox of participation" (see e.g. Riker and Ordeshook 1968). Though this explanation is initially developed to explain voter turnout, findings from previous research have shown that both collective and selective incentives indeed foster protest participation (see Bäck, Dayican & Smets 2007; Bäck, Teorell & Westholm 2004). However, these effects also seem to vary across countries. This suggests that the specific context in which protest activities take place might influence the incentives that drive protest behavior.

In comparative research of voter turnout, it is common practice to make use of contextual indicators to explain cross-country differences in turnout rates. The literature dealing with the influence of such contextual effects on other forms of participation, such as protest activity is, in comparison, however, rather limited. The main conclusion of the few existing cross-country studies of protest behavior is that such activity is higher in

established democracies, in affluent post-industrial societies (see Norris 2002; Teorell, Torcal & Montero 2007), and in societies with high social capital resources (Benson & Rochon 2004). This literature does not specifically focus on the characteristics of the political system which may favor political protest. For such work we suggest that we should instead look at the literature on protest movements, more specifically at the so-called “political opportunity structures” literature (e.g. Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi et al. 1992; Kriesi 1995). These studies focus on how political opportunities offered by the specific political-institutional arrangement in each country influence the emergence of new social movements and thus offer a unique set of explanatory factors for protest activity in general. However, they do not deal with political protest behavior at the individual level.

In this paper, we will thus attempt to connect the micro- and macro-level explanations for political protest. We aim at showing how differences in the political-institutional context influence, not only levels of political protest, but also individual motivations to take part in such activities. The idea is that contextual features, such as the political-institutional setting, influence the costs and benefits of taking part in protest activity, and thereby influence levels of protesting, as well as the effects of individual-level incentives on protest behavior (see e.g. Franklin 2004). Relying on the European Social Survey (ESS) data from 2002–2003, we assess cross-country variation in citizen involvement in protest activities, such as attending demonstrations. To explain protest at the individual level we focus on collective and selective incentives, i.e. on motivational explanations to participation. The ESS data cover a broad number of items that can be used to gauge individual incentives to take part in protest activity, enabling us to study such incentives.

The outline of the paper is as follows. We begin by presenting the theoretical framework, starting with the literature on the “paradox of participation” and our motivational hypotheses. Next, we move from the individual to the aggregate level and hypothesize about what contextual factors are expected to influence the differences in cross-country patterns with respect to levels of protest and the effects of incentives on protest activity. After this we present the data, our operationalizations, and discuss some methodological issues. Then follow our empirical analyses. The results show that collective and selective incentives motivate protest in most European countries, and that protest levels are higher in systems with proportional representation, a low level of fractionalization, and a high level of polarization. Looking at interactions between contextual and individual-level factors, we find that people are less likely to be driven to protest by collective incentives in countries where left parties are in cabinet.

## Theoretical framework

### *Political protest and individual motivations*

The cost-benefit analyses of political participation have mostly focused on turnout (e.g. Downs 1957; Riker and Ordeshook 1968; Aldrich 1993). Central to this body of literature is the calculus of voting which was originally formulated by Downs (1957) and modified and revised by Riker and Ordeshook (1968) in their decision-theoretic framework. The idea is that the rewards from the activity are specified as a multiplicative function of the probability that the individual will affect the electoral outcome and the benefits that are associated with the individual's favored party or candidate. The calculus can be written as

$$U = P \times B - C$$

where  $U$  refers to the utility of voting,  $B$  to the benefit derived from the success of the preferred candidate or party,  $P$  to the probability that the vote cast will decide the outcome of the election, and  $C$  to the costs of taking part in the election. A citizen is expected to participate when the costs resulting from taking part in the activity do not exceed  $P \times B$ . The calculus of voting can also be generalized to other forms of political participation, including political protest (Bäck et al. 2004).

However, for each specific mode of participation one can identify two main problems (Olson 1965). First, the likelihood that the contribution of a single individual will decide whether collective action will be successful or not, is vanishingly small, whereas participation always involves some costs. Second, most outcomes of collective action are public goods, and since no one can be excluded from accessing public goods, they apply to both participants and non-participants. Thus, a rational individual is not expected to carry the costs of participation in collective action, since he/she would anyhow enjoy the resulting public good, in other words, the individual should "free-ride" on the efforts of others. Yet still, quite a few individuals choose to participate. This is referred to as the "paradox of participation" in the literature (see Olsen 1965; Bäck et al. 2004).

To resolve this paradox one should reinterpret rational behavior as "(...) a form of aggregate rationality that is not readily amenable to Downs' (1956) individualistic rational choice calculus that underpins Riker and Ordeshook's argument" (Franklin 2004: 28, cf. Green and Shapiro 1994). Such efforts have been made in several studies, whereas the empirical literature has focused mostly upon two basic types of potential solutions.

One type of solution is based on the idea that individuals have a stake in specific public goods ( $B$ ) and do not perceive the probability that they will affect the outcome of collective action ( $P$ ), often labeled “efficacy”, as extremely small. Riker and Ordeshook (1968) argue that it “is likely that, for many people, the subjective estimate of  $P$  is higher than is reasonable, given the objective circumstances”. Thus, by increasing the probability-part of the calculus ( $P$ ), the rewards from political activity ( $P \times B$ ) may exceed the costs of participation ( $C$ ). Some people may thus participate because they want to and believe that they can affect the collective outcome, i.e. they are driven by what we call *collective incentives* (see Bäck et al. 2004).

Parallel to collective incentives, Riker and Ordeshook argue that rational voters gain other “satisfactions” from the act of voting (1968: 28), which could increase their likelihood to turn out to vote at the elections. They argue that the original calculus of voting is incomplete, since it ignores the selective rewards of voting. Therefore, they extend the calculus by adding a  $D$ -term as a new component to the model. The new calculus can be written as follows:

$$U = P \times B - C + D$$

The  $D$ -term refers to psychic gratifications that the individual achieves by participating in collective action. These types of motivations have been labeled *selective incentives*, since the benefits that motivate participation are only available to those who participate (Bäck et al. 2004). These incentives can appear in different forms. Whiteley (1995: 222), for example, argues that the satisfaction derived by expressing intense political opinions constitutes one such motivation to take part in collective action, where the “[...]reward for their involvement is to express deeply held beliefs in company with other like-minded individuals”. In other words, the more radical an individual is, the more likely he or she is to take part in political action. Another selective incentive was introduced by Tullock (1971), who argues that the voter, or the individual taking part in a protest find the act of participation entertaining in some sense. Thus, some individuals participate because they derive some entertainment value from this act. Finally, another idea that can be drawn from the work by Riker and Ordeshook (1968) is that citizens engage in political activity because they are complying with a social norm. Thus, some individuals become active because they believe that it is a citizen duty to participate (see also Westholm 1992).

Recent studies have applied these concepts, originally developed for explaining voter turnout, to political protest and have shown that they clearly can contribute to explaining participation in protest activities as well. A well-known rational choice model of protest is the *collective interest model* developed by Finkel and Muller (1998: 39), according to which “individuals will participate in protest activities to the extent that (1) they have high levels of discontent with the current provision of public goods by the government or regime, (2) they believe that collective efforts can be successful in providing desired public goods; and (3) they believe that their own participation will enhance the likelihood of the collective effort’s success.”

The model proposed by Finkel and Muller (1998) makes two important contributions to the explanation of individual protest behavior. First, they provide empirical support for the assumed relationship between collective and selective incentives on the one hand and participation in protest activities on the other. Second, by using panel data they are able to show the direction of causality between the benefits perceived by the individuals and participation in collective action. However, they do not explain which contextual features could influence the individual perceptions of costs and benefits associated with taking part in protest activities. In the following section, therefore, we will focus on the political-institutional context as a mechanism which determines the perceptions of individual costs and benefits of protest activity, and, respectively, a mechanism which affects protest behavior itself. The idea is that the institutional arrangements in a specific country may as well raise or lower the costs and benefits of participation in protest activities.

### *Contextual explanations to political protest*

Individual attitudes and incentives can explain protest behavior only to a certain extent, since political participation or its stimuli is not only internally driven, but externally determined as well. Research on political participation has repeatedly demonstrated the importance of institutional political context (see e.g. Powell 1980, 1982, 1986; Jackman 1987; Crepaz 1990; Jackman and Miller 1995; Franklin 1996, 2002; Blais 2000; Norris 2002; Rose 2002). These studies, most of which focus on voter turnout, show that citizens in certain institutional settings indeed vote to a higher extent than citizens in other settings. Franklin (1996) showed how country features influence turnout, and that such features have two obvious components: costs and benefits, which are generally established by the political situation and/or the institutional features of each country that

are largely set in the short term (see also Blais 2000; Franklin 2002). The institutional context reflects the legal and constitutional arrangements that determine the costs of voting (Blais 2000) and the likely benefits in policy consequences (or net return) of election outcomes (cf. Franklin 2004).

This perspective may well be generalized to other forms of political action. Ostrom (1998) claims that costs and benefits of different forms of action are determined by institutional rules and the choices of other actors. In short, we can draw the general conclusion that not only participation itself, but also variations in participation are likely to be based on differences in the context (institutional, political, social) in which individuals are embedded. As we have already mentioned, indicators such as the level of societal and economical modernization in a country have been referred to as the most important contextual factors explaining differences in levels of political protest. Yet these studies have failed to explain in what way this factor is linked to individual motivations that affect the decision of the individual to take part in protest activities.

An important theoretical explanation which enables us to explain the interaction between individual motivations and contextual features focuses on the so called “political opportunity structure” specific for each country. Eisinger (1973: 25) defines political opportunity structure as “the degree to which groups are likely to be able to gain access to power and to manipulate the political system”. This refers to the characteristics of the political system that favor political protest (Eisinger 1973; Kitschelt 1986). The nature of the electoral system, the number of political parties and the degree of centralization of the state apparatus are examples of such characteristics and have often been used in empirical studies on the emergence and development of new social movements (e.g. Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi et al. 1992; Della Porta & Rucht 1995; Rucht 1996; Meyer 2004).

Kitschelt (1986) defines two main dimensions of political opportunity structures: input structures and output capacity. Input structures refer to the openness or closure of the political system, which determines the opportunities for formal access to state institutions. According to this idea, the chance of formal access to institutions increases with the openness of the system. Output structures, on the other hand, is related to weak or strong capacity of the states to arrive at decisions and to impose these on society. More recent studies have attempted to modify these dimensions by adding other components. Kriesi (1995), for example, proposes to distinguish three broad sets of properties of a political system, which are believed to affect together both the emergence of collective action and the chances of success such actions may have:



1. *The formal institutional structure of the political system* is assumed to have an impact on the decision to participate in protest activities. Individuals are more likely to take part in collective action in political contexts where the formal access to the state is easier. Based on the distinction between input and output structures proposed by Kitschelt, Kriesi (1995) defines four indicators of the formal institutional structure and concludes that federal states with a fragmented concentration of state power, incoherent public administration and direct democratic institutions, which have a weak capacity to act, offer easier formal access to the state institutions. On the other hand, centralized, concentrated and coherent states with no direct democratic access tend to have a stronger output capacities and are assumed to have more restricted access to the state apparatus. Particularly for representative democracies we can additionally assume that institutional arrangements which regulate the mechanism of representation relate directly to openness of the political system. Systems with proportional representation ensure that there is a greater variety of channels which carry forward citizens' inputs into the decision-making process, whereas majoritarian systems are likely to exclude many citizens from the opportunity of getting their views represented in parliament. Accordingly we can argue that PR systems offer a higher access to the state institutions than majority systems, where the opportunities to influence the decision-making process are more restricted.

2. The general approach of the authorities with respect to protesters is determined not only by the formal institutional structure, but also by *informal procedures and strategies* employed by the authorities to deal with protesters, in other words, in the informal ways the formal institutional structure is applied. Kriesi (1995) distinguishes here between exclusive and integrative strategies that are applied with respect to protesters. Exclusive strategies are repressive, confrontative, and polarizing. Germany, France and other Southern European countries, for instance, where the strong communist left has been excluded from power for decades, form typical cases for repressive practices. These strategies raise the costs of collective action, and therefore in countries with rather exclusive strategies the opportunities for protest activities are restricted<sup>1</sup>. Integrative strategies, on the other hand, are cooperative/facilitative practices which are typical for small, consensual democracies such as Netherlands and Switzerland. States

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<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, however, one can argue that strong repression may stimulate collective action and protest might therefore be more common with countries which apply exclusive strategies (Koopmans 1990).

where integrative strategies are applied are assumed to provide greater opportunities for protest movements to emerge.

3. A third broad set of properties of the political opportunity structure is the *configuration of power in the party system*. This refers to the distribution of power among the various parties as well as to the relations that exist between them and is highly constrained by the general systemic context, particularly by the characteristics of the electoral system. As indicated above, PR electoral systems allow easier access to the state for protesters, since in these systems the protest movements are more likely to find allies within the party system. Yet not all parties can support the mobilization of protest movements equally. Individuals who are likely to join protest activities or new social movements typically belong to the electoral potential of the left (Müller-Rommel 1984, 1989; Kriesi et al. 1992; Kriesi 1995). Therefore, the configuration of power on the left is a particular determinant of protest activities, that is, whether or not left parties participate in the government and whether and to what extent the left is divided. A split left would provide little action space for protest and new social movements, since the emphasis of the parties in this case would be rather on struggle for hegemony and less on supporting the movements. Moreover, according to this approach, the existence of a left party in the government is expected to inhibit the mobilization of protest movements, whereas in opposition the left parties would tend to facilitate the mobilization of these activities, since they seek to strengthen their electoral potential in the next elections.

The above portrayed institutional arrangements in a political system constitute together its “political opportunity structure”, which is assumed to either give way to protest movements or hamper their emergence. Specific characteristics of constitutional arrangements, general strategic legacy or the party system may either facilitate the formal individual access to the state institutions and thereby foster protest activities, or reduce their likelihood by excluding the individual from the state apparatus. Of course, the central focus in these arguments is rather on whether the protest movements as a whole are likely to occur and not the individual decision to take part in them. Yet they might be indirectly related to individual protest behavior by increasing or reducing the costs of participation in protest activities. In political opportunity structures which allow easier access to the state for protesters, which within this framework is assumed to be, in federal states with a fragmented concentration of state power, incoherent public administration, direct democratic institutions, weak output capacity, integrative strategies, proportional representation and left party in opposition, individuals would be expected to perceive the

costs of participation as low and therefore would be more inclined to participate in collective protest movements. On the contrary, structures which do not allow an easy access to the political system mean higher costs for the individuals and thus they would tend to abstain from participating in these activities.

In sum, the political opportunity structure appears to flow into the calculus of participation by influencing the costs ( $C$ ) of taking part in protest activities. The more opportunities the state offers for its citizens to access the political system, the less costs emerge from participating in protest movements. Furthermore, the availability of opportunities to influence political decision-making should increase the individual's perceived probability of affecting collective outcomes ( $P$ ) – the higher the availability of political opportunities, the higher the perceived efficacy. Both a negative effect on the costs and a positive effect on the  $P$ -term, should increase the utility ( $U$ ) of protesting for the individuals and should thus increase the likelihood of such activities. In figure 1 presented below, we try to illustrate through which mechanisms the political opportunities may influence the political system, and how such mechanisms may be linked to the different terms of the calculus and thus have an impact on the decision whether or not to participate. The availability of political opportunities is likely to increase the possibility for citizens to access the political system on the one hand, and the probability that the outcomes will be in line with protesters' demands on the other.

[FIGURE 1 ABOUT HERE]

However, as seen in figure 1, it is not clear how the benefits of protesting ( $B$ ) and the policy outcomes of the government are related to each other. Following the logic of the political opportunity structures literature, policy outcomes which are in line with protesters' demands should increase the perceived benefits derived from the success of the collective action. Yet, these benefits will not necessarily be influenced negatively in case the protest action does not result in a desired policy outcome. Unlike traditional forms of participation, protest is an alternative type of activity which can be employed when the policy-making process cannot be influenced by the available channels, i.e. when the political-institutional structure does not provide the citizens with enough access points to influence the decision-making in line with their demands. Dissatisfaction with the policies that the government implements may in this case increase the need to impose pressure upon the government to produce the desired outcomes, thus increase the

perceived benefits of participating in the protest action. This would, in turn, increase the probability that the rewards from protesting ( $P \times B$ ) exceed its costs ( $C$ ) and therefore increase the chance that citizens decide for taking part in protest activities.<sup>2</sup>

We therefore argue that the opportunity structures approach is problematic in two ways: 1) its explanations to protest activity is too focused on the input dimension (access to the system), and different mechanisms focusing on the outcome dimension are not sufficiently considered, and 2) it does not discuss the nature of political protest as an alternative form of participation that people resort to when they cannot influence policy-making through other channels. Despite these weaknesses, we still assume that the political opportunity structure constitutes an important contextual component of individual protest behavior, since it offers access to the political system and thus decreases the costs of protesting. In the following section, we summarize our expectations about the effects of collective and selective incentives as well as the contextual influences on political protest. Moreover, we go on to discuss in what way features of the political-institutional context interact with collective incentives in explaining protest behavior.

### *Hypotheses*

Following the theoretical discussion presented above, we can formulate some clear expectations about why individuals participate in protest activities. First, with respect to individual motivations, we hypothesize that both collective and selective incentives correlate with protest participation. Individuals participate, on the one hand, because they want to and believe that they can influence collective outcomes. Second, people participate because they derive some satisfaction from participation *per se*, i.e. they are driven by selective incentives. More specifically, individuals are more likely to participate, the more radical they are, if he or she believes that it is a citizen duty to participate, and if they expect to derive a high entertainment value from participation.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> It is not clear from the theory how selective benefits ( $D$ ) are expected to be influenced by the availability of political opportunities to influence policy-making. We therefore do not include an arrow in the figure specifying an effect on the D-term.

<sup>3</sup> Alongside the developments of rational choice explanations to participation referred to above, the empirical research on participation has been dominated by the so-called socioeconomic status model, which in short says that participation is primarily driven by individuals' resources, such as time, money and skills (see, e.g., Leighley 1995; Brady et al. 1995; Teorell 2003). Since these resource factors may also influence the incentives and costs of political participation, they need to be controlled for in our models. Previous research has also shown that activity is influenced by a number of social background features, such as, gender, age employment, and marital status.

Regarding contextual effects on protest, we derive two kinds of hypotheses. First, we expect the political opportunity structures to influence protest behavior by reducing the costs of protest. Second, we expect that the interaction between individual incentives and political opportunity structures also contribute to the explanation of cross-country differences in political protest. Our predictions on the role of the political context when explaining protest behavior are summarized in table 1 below.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

The first set of hypotheses refer to the direct contextual effects on levels of individual protest activity<sup>4</sup>. Relying on the theoretical discussion above, we first of all aim to test the effects of the openness of the political system on protest behavior. We already mentioned in the former section that the openness of the system can be measured by using indicators such as decentralization, concentration of state power, coherence of public administration and the existence of direct democratic institutions. Yet in the case of European societies, most of these indicators tend not to vary a lot between countries. Therefore, we have chosen to focus on two indicators that vary substantially across the countries studied here: the electoral system and the level of the concentration of state power. With respect to the electoral system, we expect that individuals will be more likely to take part in protest movements in systems with proportional representation, since such systems offer opportunities for the protesters to gain access to the political system and thus increases the likelihood that the movement will be successful. The concentration of state power will be measured through the number of veto players in the decision-making process. According to this idea, high access to the political system and thus the likelihood of protest is assumed to be greater in states with a higher number of veto players.<sup>5</sup>

Second, we predict higher levels of protest in systems where integrative strategies are applied against protesters. In these states, party system polarization is be expected to be

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<sup>4</sup> Generally we assume here a positive effect of the availability of political opportunities on political protest. Yet, as discussed above, the perceived benefits (the *B*-Term in the calculus) might be affected in a two-fold way by the political opportunities. Therefore, it's not incorrect to hypothesize also a reverse effect.

<sup>5</sup> However, we should keep in mind that another likely effect of a high number of veto players is that they make a political system more conservative. In a system with many veto players, access to the state is higher, but on the other hand it's more difficult to produce policy change (see e.g.

higher, since no party is excluded from the political system. On the contrary, in countries where exclusive strategies are prevailing, certain political parties, such as parties with extreme ideological positions are excluded from the political system, and therefore the party system polarization is expected to be low. In line with the political opportunity structures approach, we hypothesize that citizens are more likely to take part in protest activities in systems with a high level of polarization. Yet at the same time we recognize that repressive strategies (indicated by a low level of polarization) could also lead to dissatisfaction, which may stimulate protest activity (see Koopmans 1990).

Furthermore, we will test the effects of certain party system features, which are assumed to generate opportunities for protest activity, such as left parties in opposition and legislative fractionalization. First, protest participation is expected to be low in states with a left party in government, since left party cabinets are less likely to foster protest activity. As argued above, left parties are more prone to support protest movements when they are in the opposition. Second, we assume that the chance for a split left will be higher in systems where overall party system fractionalization is high, and we therefore predict that the likelihood for protest will be lower in highly fractionalized systems. In addition, we also include one contextual control variable in our models, measuring the level of economic modernization, measured by means of GDP per capita, and the expectation is that protest activity is likely to be higher in more developed countries.

The second type of hypotheses relate to cross-level interaction effects, that is, the effects of contextual features on the individual incentive structures. As pointed out above, (see figure 1) the main idea of the theory of political opportunities is that they reduce the costs of participation by offering more access to the state while they increase the probability that the protesters can influence the policy outcomes on the one hand and the collective benefits of participating gained from the success of protest activities on the other. This allows us to assume that citizens would tend to be driven by the motivation to affect collective outcomes more strongly in countries where the opportunities to influence outcomes are more favorable. Therefore, we can expect political opportunity structures at the contextual level and collective incentives on the individual level to have a positive joint effect on political protest. In other words, we hypothesize that collective incentives are more likely to drive political protest in states with a higher number of veto players,

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Tsebelis 2002). Again, if we regard protest as an alternative means to regular channels to initiate policy change, then a high number of veto players should have a reverse effect on protest activity.

with a highly polarized party system, a proportional electoral system, with low legislative fractionalization and where no left party is participating in the government.

With respect to selective incentives, it is more difficult to formulate clear expectations on how these may interact with the opportunity structures. In the figure 1, we have shown how the institutional arrangements are expected to relate to the  $P$ ,  $B$  and  $C$  terms of the calculus of participation, but it is not clearly derivable from the theory how selective benefits ( $D$ ) might be affected by the availability of political opportunities to influence policy-making. However, we argue as follows. When citizens protest because they are motivated mainly by selective incentives, they are not necessarily aimed at influencing collective outcomes, but tend more to satisfy their individual needs to express or entertain themselves. Whether the institutional structure is offering greater opportunities to influence policy-making or not is not of great relevance to them, since they see their benefits not in the outcome of the protest activity but in the act of protesting itself. In other words, political opportunity structures are expected to only determine the role of collective benefits, and does not influence the selective benefits of protest activity. We therefore hypothesize that there are no significant interaction effects between contextual features and selective incentives. Nevertheless, we include several variables measuring the interactions between contextual features and selective incentives, in order to evaluate whether the expectation of a non-significant effect is empirically supported.

## Data and methods

### *The European Social Survey*

We here test our hypotheses by using the European Social Survey (ESS) data set. This data source is a biennial multi-country survey covering over 30 nations. The first round was fielded in 2002/2003, the second in 2004/2005 and the third in 2006/2007. In this paper we make use of the first round, since this data set includes two different items on protest activity as well as numerous other items on individual motivations, by the use of which we are able to measure the concept of incentives and a number of control variables. One main advantage of using the ESS data set is that it includes items on political participation, where respondents have been asked if they have done these activities in the past twelve months. This offers us the opportunity to study the actual behavior of citizens

instead of their intention to participate. Moreover, the data set covers 22 countries and therefore allows us to test our hypotheses in a broader context.<sup>6</sup>

For the operationalization of our aggregate-level variables we had to refer to other sources, since the ESS data set does not cover information on institutional characteristics. Therefore, we made use of the information in the Comparative Political Data Set (Armingeon et al. 2006), the Comparative Political Data Set for Post-Communist Countries (Armingeon & Careja 2007), the World Development Indicators of the World Bank, the Party Policy in Modern Democracies Data Set (Benoit & Laver 2006), and the Quality of Government Data Set (Teorell, Holmberg & Rothstein 2007).<sup>7</sup> The following section provides an overview of the indicators used to measure our dependent and independent variables, whereas a more detailed description of the operationalizations can be found in the appendix.

### *Measures of protest and individual incentives*

Our dependent variable, participation in protest activities, is an additive index based on two items measuring participation in lawful demonstrations and participation in illegal protest activities in the past 12 months. That these items cluster together and distinguish themselves from other forms of non-institutionalized participation like consumer activities has been repeatedly shown in previous research (see e.g. Teorell, Torcal & Montero 2007). Other widely used indicators of political protest, such as joining strikes are unfortunately not included in the ESS data set.

Collective incentives, as indicated above, are a product of two factors: the perceived probability of influencing the outcome ( $P$ ) and the perceived benefits associated with the preferred outcome ( $B$ ). As a measure of  $P$ , we use an additive index out of three items which focus on self-efficacy of the respondents. The benefits are measured by the “stake” of the respondent in collective outcomes, which is an additive index out of satisfaction items with various policy outputs such as health services, education, economy and satisfaction with the functioning of the democratic system as a whole. It may be argued

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<sup>6</sup> Out of these 22 countries, we have left out Austria, Switzerland and Czech Republic due to lack of data for some of our independent variables as well as Israel with the concern that this country is situated in a different context and that protest behaviour here might be effected by completely different reasons. Thus, we conducted our analyses with the remaining 18 countries.

<sup>7</sup> As the data on our dependent variable, i.e. political protest, has been collected during 2002 and 2003, we mainly picked figures from the year 2002 for the contextual variables where they were available.



that these items are not proper measures of collective stakes. Indeed, in former studies collective stakes have been measured using questions on respondents' perceptions on the importance of a number of social issues (see Bäck et al. 2004). However, the ESS dataset unfortunately does not provide us with this kind of indicator. The only variable which seems adequate to measure the extent to which individuals are concerned about collective political issues is the satisfaction with a number of policy outputs and the working of democracy in general. Here we expect that the less satisfied an individual is with the policies implemented in the own country, the higher his or her stake in collective outcomes will be; therefore a higher level of protest participation can be expected.

In the theoretical section, we identified three selective incentives: ideological radicalism, social norms and the entertainment value of participation. An individual's degree of *radicalism* is captured by using the question on left-right self placement. An individual is assumed to be more radical, the stronger he or she deviates from the centre of the scale. *Social norms* are measured by means of a single item on the extent to which respondents consider being active in politics as an important condition of being a good citizen. Finally, the *entertainment value* of participation is an additive index out of the items on subjective political interest and the frequency of political discussions with others. Earlier studies have used more direct questions on the excitement or fun value of following social issues and of working actively to influence them (see e.g. Bäck et al. 2004). Again, however, questions of this type are not available in the ESS dataset. Yet, we assume that a person who states to be interested in politics and who discusses politics frequently is likely to be entertained by following what is going on in the political sphere.

The dependent variable as well as all indicators and indices for measuring collective and selective incentives have been standardized to vary between 0 and 1. In order to be used in country regressions these variables are moreover summed up in two indices for collective and selective incentives, and standardized. We also measured a number of resource and social background variables which serve as control variables. The indicators of socioeconomic background used are gender, age, church attendance, employment status, marital status, and location of living (rural/urban area). Next to this, we used the total yearly household income of the respondents as an indicator of economic resources as well as social resources like the level of education and the degree to which the respondent has been involved in voluntary organizations in the past 12 months to control for the effects of incentives.

### *Methodological considerations*

One problem with the analysis performed in this paper is that we do not have access to panel data. This is a problem for most research on political participation, since many of the attitudes and perceptions that are assumed to explain political activity might just as well be the effects of participation. When we only have access to cross-sectional data, i.e. if participation and attitudes are measured at the same time, it is difficult to discern the causal relationship between variables. For example, an individual's belief in their own ability to affect collective outcomes, their perceived efficacy, may be "amplified" though participatory acts like protest behavior, where groups attempt to mobilize individuals (Finkel & Muller 1998; Finkel 1987; Snow et al 1986). As suggested by Finkel and Muller (1998: 40), these "difficulties can be overcome to a large extent through the analysis of panel data, in which attitudes, cognitions and behaviors are measured over at least two periods" (see also Bäck et al. 2004; Finkel 1995). The problem is that there is, to our knowledge, no available panel data set that covers a large number of countries. Hence, we have to rely on cross-sectional data, like the ESS data, that we use here.<sup>8</sup>

In this paper we use a data set consisting of over 25 000 individuals in 18 European countries. Our data set is thus characterized by what can be called a hierarchical structure, with individuals as level-1 units and countries as level-2 units. A straightforward approach to analyzing these data would be to pool the data into one big data set and use a linear regression (OLS) to test our hypotheses. A problem with pooling the data set, and thus ignoring the "clustered" structure of the data (individuals are "clustered" within countries), is that our coefficients will be a blend of both within-country and between-country effects. When applying an OLS regression on a pooled data set we assume that residuals are identically independently distributed, but the problem is that in a data set where the units are clustered in some way, this assumption may be violated because residuals of observations belonging to the same cluster are likely to be correlated (van Deth & Elff 2001). Thus, when dealing with clustered or hierarchical data, "it is important to allow for dependence or correlations among the responses observed for units belonging to the same cluster" (Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal 2008: 51).

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<sup>8</sup> Since we are mainly interested in the cross-country variation in incentive structures, and since we have no reason to believe that the direction of causality varies across contexts, we do not believe that the lack of panel data will seriously influence the conclusions we draw.

Many authors therefore suggest that data with this type of structure should be analyzed by using so called multilevel models (see e.g. Raudenbush & Bryk 2002; Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal 2008). A common multilevel model is a random coefficient model, which can be seen as a hierarchical system of regression equations (Hox 2002), where the level-1 coefficients are treated as random variables at the second level. This type of model will be used here. In this multilevel model we include variables that vary at the individual level (i.e. across level-1 units), most importantly selective and collective incentives, and variables that vary only across contexts (i.e. only across level-2 units), such as contextual features describing the institutional structure in a country. By including such contextual features we are able to say something about whether these features influence the levels of protest activity across countries. In the multilevel model we also include a number of cross-level interaction terms, aimed at measuring the effects of contextual features on the slopes of our collective and selective incentives indices, thereby enabling us to evaluate hypotheses that say that a specific contextual feature (e.g. PR electoral system) increases or decreases the effect of selective or collective incentives on protesting.

## An empirical analysis of protest activity

### *Political protest and incentives structures across European countries*

We begin by presenting the results of our descriptive analyses. We compare in the following the levels of protest participation as well as collective and selective incentives across 18 European countries in order to assess cross-country differences in protest and individual incentives. The results from these analyses are shown in table 2 below.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

With respect to protest activity, we find overall levels of participation to be quite low. The average mean level of participation does not exceed 0.04 on a scale varying between 0 and 1<sup>9</sup>. Yet we can still observe some cross-country variation in the levels of political protest. Luxembourg and France appear to have a relatively higher number of citizens

taking part in protest activities. These countries are followed by Spain, Italy and Germany, which also show levels of protest that go beyond the average. The lowest levels of protest can be found in Poland and Finland. Based on these results, we can define no general pattern in the distribution of protest across countries. Northern and Southern European countries do not tend to cluster with each other with respect to their protest levels, nor do the Eastern and Western European countries. The same conclusion can also be drawn for the individual incentives. A comparison of the distribution of collective incentives levels shows that there is no clear pattern recognizable. Collective incentives are relatively high among citizens of Germany, Greece and Poland, whereas Finland, Luxembourg and Belgium show lower levels of collective incentives. Turning to selective incentives, we find their levels to be generally higher than the collective incentives, yet the mixed pattern of the distribution of levels is also the case for this type of motivations. In short, we can conclude from the results of our descriptive analyses that there is no general north-south or west-east pattern with respect to the levels of protest participation.

In a next step, therefore, we seek to establish cross-country patterns in the way that individual incentives motivate protest activity. We perform regression analyses in each of the eighteen countries, where we analyze the effects of collective and selective incentives on political protest. Table 3 provides an overview of these effects.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

First, we can see that in most of the countries both collective and selective incentives tend to play a significant role on the individual considerations on whether or not to take part in protest activities. This is also the case under control of socio-economic resource variables. Yet of course, we can observe some deviating cases. In Germany, for instance, collective incentives do not have an impact on protest behavior, whereas in Finland and Poland selective incentives are found to have no significant effect on protest. Moreover, in Hungary, the effect of selective incentives vanishes after introducing the control variables. Other minor differences across countries can be found in the explanatory power of the incentives. Collective motivations appear to be the most influential determinants of political protest in most countries, yet in some countries such as Sweden the effects of

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<sup>9</sup> This may well be due to the fact that levels of illegal protest activities, which is a component of the protest index, is everywhere low. It may be possible to get a greater cross-country variation

selective incentives are markedly higher than the collective ones. In these countries it is thus not the goal of affecting collective outcomes that matters. Instead, selective benefits that come with participation are more important motivations.

Again here it becomes clear that there is no simple cross-country variation that follows a north-south or east-west pattern when we look at the incentives that drive protest participation. We find, for example, that selective incentives are such strong motivations for protest in countries like Sweden, whereas they do not matter at all for protest behavior in Finland and Poland. How can we explain this variation across countries? We may be able to answer these questions when we take a closer look at the contextual features that may explain the found patterns in incentive structures.

### *Individual-level incentives that drive political protest*

Above we have investigated the cross-country variation in the levels of protest activity and how different incentives to participation vary across the European countries. As we could see, both the protest levels and the slopes of incentives driving activity varied across countries. Before performing an analysis where we try to explain this cross-country variation by including contextual features in the analysis, we need to take a closer look at the different individual-level incentives that motivate individuals to take part in protest activity. In table 4 we present two multi-level models using a pooled data set of the individuals in 18 countries. In these models we treat the country intercepts as random, but for simplicity, we keep the slope coefficients fixed, i.e. we apply random-intercept models. In model 1 we include the different collective and selective incentives presented above as separate variables. In model 2 we include instead the indices grouping together the variables measuring collective or selective incentives. In both models we include variables measuring the individuals' demographic and socio-economic background.

[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

Looking at model 1, we can see that protest activity is clearly driven by collective incentives, since the efficacy and collective stakes variables both exert positive and significant effects on protesting. Thus, individuals who believe that they can influence political outcomes, and individuals who have high collective stakes, are taking part in

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with higher levels of participation when different protest indicators are also included in the index.

demonstrations to a higher extent than individuals who have a low level of efficacy and lower collective stakes. Continuing down the table (in model 1) we see that our selective incentives also exert positive and significant effects on protest activity. First, we find that ideological radicalism significantly influences protest activity. Thus, individuals who have more radical views are more inclined to take part in demonstrations. This suggests that individuals are driven to be active by expressive incentives, e.g. they protest because they are interested in expressing their views together with like-minded people. Second, the entertainment value of participation also seems to be important to take into account when trying to explain protest activity; the effect of this variable is also positive and significant. Thus, individuals take part in collective action because they find it entertaining. Third, our results show that social norms also seem to be an important motivation to protest activity. Individuals who believe that it is a citizen duty to be active seem to be more likely to take part in protest activity. The results that collective and selective incentives motivate protest activity are replicated when we instead use our indices (model 2), where efficacy and stakes are included in one index (collective), and where radicalism, entertainment value and norms are included in another (selective).

Even though this is not the main aim of the paper, it may be interesting to take a quick look at the effects of some of the control variables included in the models presented in table 4. As we can see, a number of demographic, socio-economic and resource variables exert significant effects in both of these models. First of all, involvement in social organizations has a significant positive influence on protest behavior. Thus, citizens with a higher level of social resources tend to participate more in protest activities. More in line with the socio-economic status model (see e.g. Brady et al. 1995), we also find that highly educated people are to a larger extent involved in these types of activities. Furthermore, the age variable exerts a negative effect, suggesting that older people are less likely to take part in protest activity, which is in line with results found in previous research (e.g. Norris 2002). Finally, we find that more religious people, employed people, and people who are married, are less inclined to take part in demonstrations.

In the bottom part of the table we present some random coefficients obtained in the multilevel analysis. First, we present a measure of how much the country intercepts vary – the standard deviation is 0.037. Second, we present a measure describing the variation within countries – the standard deviation around the country-specific regression lines is 0.151. Thus, the largest unexplained variation is found at the individual level. A useful measure that can be calculated using the random parameters is the intraclass correlation

coefficient, which measures the proportion of variance in the dependent variable that is between level-2 units (see Raudenbush & Bryk 2002: 36). After removing the effect of our individual-level variables, the intraclass correlation is 0.057, indicating that about 6% of the variation in protest activity is between countries. Thus, we should take a closer look at the cross-country variation and the contextual features that could explain it.

#### *An analysis of contextual effects on protest activity*

In table 5 we present a number of analyses aimed at gauging the effects of contextual characteristics on protest activity. All of the models are random coefficient models, where each country is assumed to have different intercepts, as well as different slopes for our main incentives variables (collective and selective incentives), i.e. we are no longer holding the slope coefficients fixed. In the first model we only include the individual-level variables in order to obtain a base model with which we can compare the other models. In model 2 we include the contextual features that we expect should influence the level of protest activity in the European countries, describing the political-institutional context of each country. In model 3 and 4 we include variables measuring the interaction between each contextual feature and the collective and selective incentives indices. The interaction terms are included in order to investigate whether some contextual features, as hypothesized above, make the effect of collective incentives indeed stronger and if the selective incentives and the context indeed affect protest independently from each other.

[TABLE 5 ABOUT HERE]

Looking at our base model (model 1) we can see that the effects of our collective and selective benefits indices are positive and significant at the 0.01 level, again giving support to the hypothesis that individuals are motivated to protest by both collective and selective incentives. More interestingly, when we look at model 2 presented in table 5, we find that several of the contextual features included in this model significantly influences protest activity. More specifically, we find that individuals are more likely to protest in countries with a PR electoral system, where the polarization of the party system is high, where fractionalization is low, and where GDP per capita is high.

The hypothesis that individuals should be more likely to protest where the opportunity structure is favorable, is thus given some support here. First of all, we find that indicators of configuration of party system are significantly related to protest behavior. The negative

effect of legislative fractionalization on protest activity indicates that in countries where fractionalization in parliament is low (with a smaller number of larger parties), individuals are more likely to take part in protest acts. Thus, the hypothesis that protest will be fostered by a low level of fractionalization, which may be an indicator of a united left in the party system of the country, has been confirmed. Moreover, the hypothesis that citizens should be more likely to protest in political contexts where the state applies integrative strategies to deal with the opposition is also supported by the findings. The effect of left-right party system polarization is weak, but positive and significant in model 2. Thus the hypothesis that repressive strategies should mobilize dissatisfied citizens to protest is not supported by the findings. We can confirm once again that citizens perceive the opportunities to gain access to the state to be greater when the party system is offering them a broad spectrum of channels through which they can express their opinions and demands. This suggests that the costs for protest participation are perceived to be low, which, in turn, is likely to foster protest behavior.

Also, looking at GDP per capita, the contextual feature which is here included as a control variable, we can see that the level of economic development has a positive impact on the level of protest activity. People in highly developed countries are more likely to take part in illegal and legal demonstrations. This result is in line with previous research which has shown that most forms of political activity is higher in affluent post-industrial societies (see Norris 2002; Teorell, Torcal & Montero 2007), and the mechanism could of course be that individuals in such societies are more likely to have higher education and to be informed about politics, which should make them more likely to participate.

With respect to the number of veto players and left party cabinet, however, the outcome is not in line with our expectations. Both variables have been found to have no significant effect on individual protest behavior. This could be explained by the fact that these variables are related to the policy outcomes of the government in a two-fold way. All contextual factors included in this analysis are thought to influence the access to the state mechanism and the producing of desirable outcomes positively. Yet, in the case of a high number of veto players and having a left party in opposition it is also likely that the government policies do not fit with protesters' demands. As mentioned above, a high number of veto players guarantees an increased access to the policy making process, but at the same time it makes it more difficult to change policy outcomes, which promotes the status quo. If we, contrary to the theory of political opportunity structures, regard protest as an alternative means citizens use when they are dissatisfied with the government



policies, then a high number of veto players should decrease protest when we look at the access mechanism (high access, less protest), but it should at the same time increase protest through the outcome mechanism (policy outcomes are not in line with protesters, more protest). Thus, the effects through these two mechanisms may be canceling each other out, which may constitute an explanation for why we do not find a significant effect here. This argument could also apply to the left party government variable. According to the theory of political opportunity structures, citizens are less likely to protest when left parties are participating in the government. Yet, when we assume that citizens protest out of dissatisfaction with government outputs, then this variable could also be expected to have a reverse effect. As discussed before, citizens would be driven to protest when the government policies are not in line with their demands. Thus, also here we can expect that the insignificant effect is due to the cancellation effect of opposing mechanisms.

Turning now to our cross-level interaction variables presented in model 3 and model 4, we can see that most of these variables do not exert any significant effects on protest activity. We hypothesized that a number of contextual features should influence the slopes of collective incentives on protest activity, for example, we expected that individuals should to a higher extent be motivated to protest by collective incentives in PR electoral systems. However, this is not the case. The only cross-level interaction term with a significant effect in model 3 and 4 is the variable measuring the interaction between the left party in cabinet and the index measuring collective incentives. The effect of this interaction term is negative and significant, which suggests that people are less likely to be motivated to protest by collective incentives in countries where the cabinet includes Socialist or Social Democrat parties. Thus, our hypothesis on the effect of left party participation in cabinet on individual incentives has been confirmed.

Finally, as expected, the selective incentives do not seem to interact with any of the contextual variables. None of the interactions between selective incentives and contextual features exert a significant effect in model 4. This confirms our assumption that the institutional arrangements which give citizens the opportunities to access and determine policy-making do not influence citizens who are driven primarily by their personal needs and satisfactions, since they are not motivated by the goal to influence collective outcomes, but rather by the private benefits they derive from protest activity.

All in all, we find support for the idea that we need to take both individual-level incentives and contextual features into account when explaining protest activity. More specifically, the results presented in our multilevel analyses show that collective and

selective incentives motivate protest in most European countries, and that protest levels are higher in less fractionalized systems and in more polarized party systems. Furthermore, individuals seem to be more less likely to be motivated to protest by collective incentives when they reside in countries where left parties are in cabinet.

## Concluding remarks

Protest activity, such as demonstrations, is a commonly used instrument for influencing policy in most democratic regimes. From a cost-benefit perspective protest behavior is difficult to explain. The question is, why do people engage in protest activities when collective outcomes are available to everybody? In this paper we have aimed to provide an explanation for this paradox by analyzing both the individual-level incentives that foster protest activity and the specific political context in which people are embedded.

Drawing on the rational choice literature on political participation we hypothesize that individuals participate, because they want to and believe that they can influence collective political outcomes – they are driven by so called collective incentives. Also, people participate because they derive some satisfaction from participation *per se*, i.e. they are motivated by so called selective incentives. Drawing mainly on the literature on protest movements, more specifically on the “political opportunity structures” literature, we specify several hypotheses about how political-institutional arrangements in each country influence political action. For example, we predict that individuals are more likely to protest in systems using PR list electoral formulas, since such political systems offer opportunities for protesters to gain access to the political system.

Using data drawn from the European Social Survey, a survey performed among over 25 000 European citizens, we are able to evaluate our hypotheses about the role of individual-level incentives and the political context in 18 European countries. The results found here give strong support to the idea that we need to take both individual-level incentives and contextual features into account when trying to explain protest behavior. In line with our hypotheses, we find that individuals in most European countries are motivated to protest by both collective and selective incentives. However, we also find that the effects of such incentives vary across countries. In some countries, such as Germany, collective incentives do not have a significant impact on protest behavior, whereas in Finland and Poland selective incentives are found to have no significant effect on protesting. The found differences between countries suggest that we should consider

context-specific factors which may account not only for varying levels of protest but also for the variation in the slopes of collective and selective incentives.

The results of the multilevel analyses provide support for the assumption that context-specific factors account for cross-country differences in levels of protest. We find that protest levels are higher in systems with proportional representation, in less fractionalized party systems and in more polarized party systems. Contrary to our expectations we find no effect of a variable measuring the number of veto players and a variable measuring if a left party is in cabinet. Furthermore, our results show that the relationship between protest behavior on the one hand and collective and selective benefits on the other, is not determined by the political opportunity structure. With respect to the collective incentives slopes, the only significant interaction effect is the negative effect of left party presence in cabinet on collective incentives, which suggests that individuals are less likely to be motivated to protest by collective incentives in countries with a left party in cabinet.

The lack of significant interactions between contextual and individual-level features may of course be due to the fact that there are no measures of the perceived costs of participation included in the survey material used here, which makes it difficult to gauge whether different features of the opportunity structure does in fact lower or increase the individual's perceived costs. With the available items in the data set we were only able to analyze one side of the relationship between political opportunities and the individual cost-benefit calculus, i.e. the benefits-part – we were not able to test if the availability of certain political opportunities indeed lower the costs of participation through offering more access to the policy-making process.

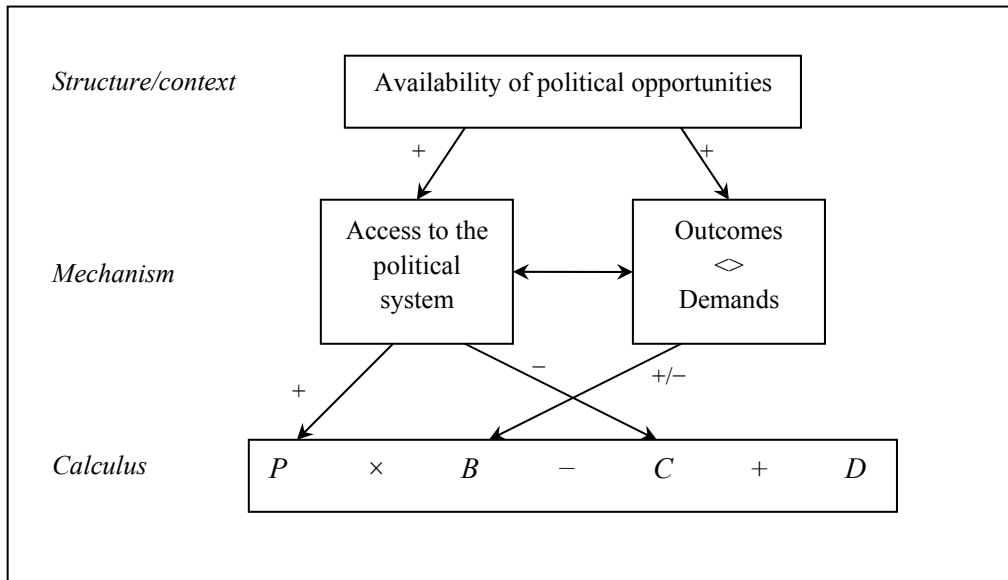
We find no significant interactions between political opportunity structures and selective incentives, indicating that the importance of selective benefits, in line with our expectations, is not determined by political opportunity structures which offer favorable conditions to implement collective demands. This suggests that we should search elsewhere for contextual features that may explain the cross-country differences in the effects of selective incentives on protest. One possible explanation is that citizens who are motivated to protest primarily by psychological satisfaction (such as expressing oneself through the act of protesting) are more likely to be mobilized by personal dissatisfaction with the government and its policies, yet they may not necessarily aim to make a contribution to collective outcomes, but just to satisfy themselves by expressing their frustration through participating in the protest activities. If we adopt this explanation, however, we need to regard protest participation from an opposite perspective than the

political opportunity structures theory does, namely, from the perspective of the theory of the dissatisfied citizen. According to this theory, citizens are more likely to participate in protest activities when they are dissatisfied with the policy outputs and the status quo. Therefore, they would be expected to be driven more to protest when opportunities to influence the government are *not* available for them, which is contradicting the assumptions of the theory on political opportunity structures.

Overall, the results indicate that the so called opportunity structures framework is to some extent useful when we try to explain protest activity in the societies studied here. For example, we find a positive effect of party system polarization on protest, and this could be explained by the fact that citizens perceive the opportunities to gain access to the state to be greater when the party system is offering them a broad spectrum of channels through which they can express their demands, which in turn lowers the perceived costs of political activity. Future research could build upon these findings by measuring the perceived costs of participating in protest activities and by testing the assumed relation between these costs and the access dimension of political opportunities. Furthermore, a broader perspective than is offered by the political opportunity structure literature is needed to shed more light on the interactions between contextual and individual-level factors when aiming to explain protest activity in the European societies.

## Tables and figures

Figure 1: Political Opportunity Structures and the Calculus of Participation



*Table 1. Hypotheses about the effect of contextual features on protest activity*

<i>Contextual feature</i>	<i>Indicators</i>	<b>Two types of hypotheses</b>	
		The effect on levels of activity (Direct contextual effects)	The effect on incentives slopes (Cross-level interaction effects)
The formal institutional structure	PR electoral system	Citizens are more likely to take part in protest activity in PR electoral systems	Citizens are more likely to be motivated to protest by collective incentives in PR electoral systems
	Veto players	Citizens are more likely to take part in protest activity in countries with a higher number of veto players	Citizens are more likely to be motivated to protest by collective incentives in systems with a high number of veto players
Exclusive vs. Integrative strategies	Polarization	Citizens are more likely to take part in protest activity in systems with a high level of polarization	Citizens are more likely to be motivated to protest by collective incentives in highly polarized systems
Configuration of power in the party system	Left party cabinet	Citizens are less likely to take part in protest activity in countries where left parties are part of the cabinet	Citizens are less likely to be motivated to protest by collective incentives in states where left parties are a part of the cabinet
	Fractionalization	Citizens are more likely to take part in protest activity in systems with a low level of fractionalization	Citizens are more likely to be motivated to protest by collective incentives in systems with a low level of fractionalization

*Table 2. Levels of political protest, collective and selective incentives across 18 countries*

<i>Country</i>	Participation level	Collective benefits	Selective benefits
Belgium	0.05	0.15	0.37
Denmark	0.05	0.17	0.46
Finland	0.01	0.13	0.43
France	0.10	0.17	0.39
Germany	0.06	0.28	0.44
Greece	0.03	0.25	0.43
Hungary	0.02	0.24	0.43
Ireland	0.04	0.21	0.39
Italy	0.07	0.19	0.42
Luxembourg	0.12	0.14	0.42
Netherlands	0.02	0.19	0.44
Norway	0.05	0.20	0.45
Poland	0.01	0.25	0.46
Portugal	0.02	0.22	0.45
Spain	0.09	0.17	0.36
Slovenia	0.02	0.22	0.41
Sweden	0.04	0.22	0.45
United Kingdom	0.03	0.21	0.36
<i>Average</i>	0.04	0.21	0.42

Note: Data from the European Social Survey. Entries are means of the respective indices.

Table 3. The effects of collective and selective incentives, country regressions

Country	Model 1			Model 2		
	Only benefits indices		Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	Control variables included		Adj. R <sup>2</sup>
	Collective	Selective		Collective	Selective	
Belgium	0.21 <sup>***</sup>	0.14 <sup>***</sup>	0.04	0.19 <sup>***</sup>	0.10 <sup>***</sup>	0.08
Denmark	0.09 <sup>**</sup>	0.11 <sup>***</sup>	0.02	0.09 <sup>**</sup>	0.11 <sup>***</sup>	0.08
Finland	0.09 <sup>***</sup>	0.01	0.01	0.08 <sup>***</sup>	0.01	0.02
France	0.32 <sup>***</sup>	0.22 <sup>***</sup>	0.10	0.19 <sup>***</sup>	0.18 <sup>***</sup>	0.19
Germany	0.01	0.23 <sup>***</sup>	0.05	0.01	0.22 <sup>***</sup>	0.09
Greece	0.08 <sup>***</sup>	0.10 <sup>***</sup>	0.03	0.05 <sup>**</sup>	0.08 <sup>***</sup>	0.07
Hungary	0.11 <sup>***</sup>	0.05 <sup>**</sup>	0.02	0.09 <sup>**</sup>	0.03	0.05
Ireland	0.21 <sup>***</sup>	0.04 <sup>*</sup>	0.04	0.18 <sup>***</sup>	0.04 <sup>*</sup>	0.07
Italy	0.31 <sup>***</sup>	0.24 <sup>***</sup>	0.11	0.25 <sup>***</sup>	0.22 <sup>***</sup>	0.15
Luxembourg	0.14 <sup>*</sup>	0.15 <sup>***</sup>	0.02	0.14 <sup>*</sup>	0.14 <sup>***</sup>	0.10
Netherlands	0.05 <sup>**</sup>	0.05 <sup>***</sup>	0.01	0.05 <sup>**</sup>	0.05 <sup>***</sup>	0.01
Norway	0.11 <sup>***</sup>	0.13 <sup>***</sup>	0.02	0.08 <sup>**</sup>	0.11 <sup>***</sup>	0.04
Poland	0.04 <sup>***</sup>	0.01	0.01	0.03 <sup>*</sup>	0.02	0.02
Portugal	0.15 <sup>***</sup>	0.07 <sup>***</sup>	0.05	0.13 <sup>***</sup>	0.06 <sup>**</sup>	0.07
Spain	0.36 <sup>***</sup>	0.24 <sup>***</sup>	0.12	0.27 <sup>***</sup>	0.18 <sup>***</sup>	0.18
Slovenia	0.08 <sup>***</sup>	0.04 <sup>*</sup>	0.01	0.07 <sup>**</sup>	0.04 <sup>*</sup>	0.05
Sweden	0.05 <sup>*</sup>	0.21 <sup>***</sup>	0.07	0.04	0.19 <sup>***</sup>	0.09
United Kingdom	0.08 <sup>***</sup>	0.07 <sup>***</sup>	0.02	0.06 <sup>***</sup>	0.05 <sup>***</sup>	0.05
<i>Average</i>	0.10 <sup>***</sup>	0.11 <sup>***</sup>	0.03	0.09 <sup>***</sup>	0.10 <sup>***</sup>	0.06

Note: Data from the European Social Survey. Significant at \* the 0.10 level, \*\* the 0.05 level, \*\*\* the 0.01 level. Entries are unstandardized regression coefficients from single-country regressions, where model 1 includes only the selective and collective benefits indices, and model 2 also includes socio-demographic control variables (coefficients not shown).



Table 4. Multilevel analysis of protest activity and individual incentives

	Model 1 Individual incentives	Model 2 Individual incentives indices
<b>Fixed coefficients</b>		
Intercept	-0.014 (0.010)	0.010 (0.009)
<i>Collective incentives</i>		
Efficacy	0.031*** (0.005)	–
Collective stakes	0.051*** (0.006)	–
Collective incentives index	–	0.095*** (0.008)
<i>Selective incentives</i>		
Ideological radicalism	0.031*** (0.003)	–
Entertainment value	0.063*** (0.005)	–
Social norms	0.029*** (0.004)	–
Selective incentives index	–	0.109*** (0.006)
<i>Control variables</i>		
Organizational Involvement	0.213*** (0.011)	0.217*** (0.011)
Gender	0.001 (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)
Age	-0.091*** (0.006)	-0.087*** (0.006)
Church attendance	-0.026*** (0.004)	-0.026*** (0.004)
Education level	0.008 (0.004)	-0.001 (0.004)
Employment status	-0.012*** (0.002)	-0.011*** (0.002)
Marital status	-0.014*** (0.002)	-0.014*** (0.002)
Residence	0.014*** (0.002)	0.014*** (0.002)
<b>Random coefficients</b>		
Std. deviation (intercept)	0.037*** (0.006)	0.036*** (0.006)
Std. deviation (residual)	0.150*** (0.001)	0.150*** (0.001)
Log likelihood	12 509.16	12 569.094
N of observations (countries)	26 075 (18)	26 208 (18)

Note: Significant at \* the 0.10 level, \*\* the 0.05 level, \*\*\* the 0.01 level. Entries are parameter estimates from random intercept models using STATA's xtmixed command, with standard errors in parentheses.

Table 5. Multilevel analysis of protest activity, incentives and contextual features

	Model 1 Individual- level features	Model 2 Contextual features	Model 3 Interactions (collective)	Model 4 Interactions (selective)
<b>Fixed coefficients</b>				
Intercept	0.008 (0.007)	-0.012 (0.028)	-0.001 (0.029)	-0.002 (0.046)
<i>Individual-level features</i>				
Collective benefits	0.109*** (0.023)	0.109*** (0.023)	0.455*** (0.133)	0.108*** (0.023)
Selective benefits	0.108*** (0.017)	0.108*** (0.017)	0.108*** (0.017)	0.062 (0.121)
<i>Contextual features</i>				
PR electoral system	–	0.018* (0.011)	0.018 (0.011)	0.031* (0.018)
Number of veto players	–	-0.004 (0.003)	-0.005 (0.003)	-0.001 (0.005)
Left party in cabinet	–	0.011 (0.008)	0.008 (0.008)	0.016 (0.013)
Polarization	–	0.004*** (0.002)	0.004** (0.002)	0.001 (0.002)
Fractionalization	–	-0.131*** (0.042)	-0.137*** (0.042)	-0.139** (0.069)
GDP per capita	–	0.204*** (0.038)	0.202*** (0.038)	0.204*** (0.038)
<i>Cross-level interactions</i>				
PR × collective/selective	–	–	-0.003 (0.053)	-0.041 (0.048)
Veto players × collective/selective	–	–	-0.009 (0.015)	-0.012 (0.005)
Left party × collective/selective	–	–	-0.133*** (0.036)	-0.016 (0.032)
Polarization × collective/selective	–	–	-0.004 (0.007)	0.008 (0.007)
Fractionalization × collective/selective	–	–	-0.249 (0.206)	0.027 (0.182)
<b>Random coefficients</b>				
Std. deviation (intercept)	0.023*** (0.005)	0.021*** (0.005)	0.021*** (0.005)	0.018*** (0.005)
Std. deviation (collective slope)	0.089*** (0.017)	0.090*** (0.017)	0.060*** (0.014)	0.089*** (0.017)
Std. deviation (selective slope)	0.069*** (0.013)	0.069*** (0.013)	0.068*** (0.013)	0.058*** (0.013)
Std. deviation (residual)	0.149*** (0.001)	0.149*** (0.001)	0.149*** (0.001)	0.149*** (0.001)
Log likelihood	12 723.025	12 732.848	12 738.052	12 735.219
N of observations (countries)	26 208 (18)	26 208 (18)	26 208 (18)	26 208 (18)

Note: Significant at \* the 0.10 level, \*\* the 0.05 level, \*\*\* the 0.01 level. Entries are parameter estimates from random coefficient models using STATA's xtmixed command (random slopes: collective & selective incentives), with standard errors in parentheses. Each model includes socio-demographic control variables.

## Appendix A

Question wordings from the European Social Survey 2002–2003.

### *Protest activity*

There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? (Response values 1=Yes 2=No)

Additive index out of the following items:

- Taken part in a lawful public demonstration
- Participated in illegal protest activities

The resulting index has been standardized to take values varying between 0 and 1.

### *Collective incentives*

#### Perceived Self-Efficacy:

Additive index out of the following questions:

- How often does politics seem so complicated that you can't really understand what is going on? (Response values: 1 for 'never' to 5 for 'frequently')
- Do you think you could take an active role in a group involved with political issues? (Response values: 1 for 'definitely not' to 5 for 'definitely')
- How difficult or easy do you find it to make your mind up about political issues? (Response values: 1 for 'very difficult' to 5 for 'very easy')

The resulting index has been standardized to take values varying between 0 and 1.

#### Collective Stakes:

Additive index out of the following items:

- On the whole how satisfied are you with the present state of the economy in [country]? (Response values: 0 for 'extremely dissatisfied' to 10 for 'extremely satisfied')
- And on the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]? (Response values: 0 for 'extremely dissatisfied' to 10 for 'extremely satisfied')
- Now, using this card, please say what you think about the state of education in [country] nowadays? (Response values: 0 for 'extremely bad' to 10 for 'extremely good')
- Still using this card, please say what you think overall about the state of health services in [country] nowadays? (Response values: 0 for 'extremely bad' to 10 for 'extremely good')

Collective stakes are assumed to be high when the satisfaction with the various system outputs is low. The resulting index has been standardized to take values varying between 0 and 1.

## *Selective incentives*

### Social Norms:

Measured by a single item:

- To be a good citizen, how important would you say it is for a person to be active in politics? (Response values: 0 for 'extremely unimportant' to 10 for 'extremely important')

The variable has been standardized to take values varying between 0 and 1.

### The entertainment value of participation:

Additive index out of the following items:

- How often would you say you discuss politics and current affairs? (Response values: 1 for 'every day' to 7 for 'never')
- How interested would you say you are in politics? (Response values: 1 for 'very interested' to 4 for 'not at all interested')

The resulting index has been standardized to take values varying between 0 and 1.

### Ideological radicalism:

Measured by a single item:

- In politics people sometimes talk of "left" and "right". Using this card, where would you place yourself on this scale, where 0 means the left and 10 means the right?

The index has been built by calculating the absolute difference between a respondent's answer and the center of the scale (5) and then standardized to take values varying between 0 and 1.

## Appendix B

### *Operationalization of contextual variables*

The *openness of the formal institutional structure* has been measured by the number of veto players. Here, we referred to cross-section data from the year 2002 from the “Quality of Government Data Set” (Teorell, Holmberg & Rothstein 2007). This variable has been constructed by combining various measures: The legislative index of political competitiveness (dpi\_lipc), the executive index of political competitiveness (dpi\_eipc), presidential systems and parliamentary systems. It is equal to one if dpi\_lipc or dpi\_eipc is less than 5 (multiple parties are legal but only one party won seats) and incremented by one if there is a chief executive, if the chief executive is competitively elected, and if the opposition controls the legislature. In presidential systems, number of veto players is incremented by one for each chamber of the legislature, for each party coded as allied with the president’s party and which has an ideological (left-right) orientation closer to that of the main opposition party than to that of the president’s party. In parliamentary systems, it is incremented by one for every party in the government coalition as long as the parties are needed to maintain a majority, and for every party in the government coalition that has a position on economic issues closer to the largest opposition party than to the party of the executive (The prime minister’s party is not counted as a check if there is a closed rule in place).

Exclusive vs. integrative strategies to deal with protest groups are operationalized by measuring the party system polarization along a left-right dimension. In order to derive figures for the levels of party system polarization, we made use of the “Party Policy in Modern Democracies Data Set” (Benoit and Laver 2006), which measures party policy positions in a large number of countries using systematic surveys of country specialists. One question in this survey was on the left-right position of each party in the country’s political system. The country specialists were asked to locate each party on a general left-right dimension, taking all aspects of party policy into account, on a scale varying from 1 (Left) to 20 (Right). Using the scale scores from this item, we measured the polarization level by the absolute difference between the position of the party on the far left side of the scale and the one on the far right side.

For the measurement of *configuration of power in the party system* we use three different measures. *Proportional representation* is a dummy variable taken from the

Quality of Government Data Set and takes the value 1 if proportional representation is used as electoral rule to select any candidate in any house. *Left party in cabinet* is measured using the variable on party of chief executive from the Quality of Government Data Set, which captures whether the party is left, right or centre oriented and was then recoded. We recoded the variable into a dummy, where 1 stands for parties defined as communist, socialist, social democratic or left-wing. For the operationalization of the *degree of fractionalization* in the country parliament we referred directly to the information from “The Comparative Political Data Set 1960–2004” (Armingeon et al. 2006) and the “Comparative Political Data Set II for 28 Post-Communist Countries” (Armingeon and Careja 2004). The fractionalization scores taken from these data sets refer to the index of legislative fractionalization of the party system according to the formula proposed by Rae (1968):

$$rae\_leg = 1 - \sum_{i=1}^m s_i^2$$

where  $s_i$  is the share of *seats* for party  $i$  and  $m$  the number of parties.

Finally, our contextual control variable, the level of *economic modernization* of a country has been measured by the level of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per capita. We took the information on the levels of GDP in 2002 out of the World Development Indicators Data of the World Bank. As the values for this variable were quite high compared to the values of the participation variables, which vary between 0 and 1, they have been divided by 10.000 to make the scale smaller.

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