

## **How does “communist legacy” matter and why?**

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### **Introduction**

In contrast to almost all expectations, 25 years of democratic regime has not still healed forty years of non-democratic communist regime. Observers point out that the East European (EE) democracies that have experienced a communist rule display significantly lower civic and political participation than the West European (WE) democracies. Moreover, the gap between the two groups of countries does not decline over time as suggested after the 1989 revolutions. Although the difference between EE and WE democracies has received a lot of attention, the examination of sources standing behind the negative “communist legacy” has not been more developed. This paper aims to explain the post-communist gap in civic and political participation and show what factors stand behind.

In contrast to available studies that examine the role of generations and individual level characteristics of post-communist citizens, this study focuses on the effect of contextual factors that might stand behind the difference between East- and West-European democracies. Specifically, it expects that the post-communist participatory gap is not a result of individual characteristics of the citizens living in these countries, rather it is because of macro-contextual factors at the systemic level. The article examines three dimensions of country context that have been defined by studies of contextual determinants of political participation: socio-economic development, institutional opportunities and political culture.

To examine the contextual factors standing behind the participatory post-communist gap, the study estimates multilevel models using the European Value Study data from 2008-2010 in 27 European democracies. The individual level data are supplemented with appropriate country level indicators. The results show that the effect of the post-communism is mediated by individual level predictors of political participation, socio-economic development and political culture.

## **The Post-communist gap in civic and political participation**

On one hand the breakdown of the communist regimes in 1989 signified the victory of democracy. On the other hand it has also triggered a new discussion about the quality of democratic regimes. Although most of the post-communist countries adopted democratic political institutions and market economies right after the demise of the communist governments and some of them entered the European Union later on the region still displays significant democratic deficits compared to the WE democracies.

A large gap in civic and political participation is next to corruption among the most often mentioned drawbacks. Post-communist countries still do not have developed civil society as it exists in Western democracies (Howard 2003). The problem does not lie in the number or robustness or the organizational structure of civil society. In this regard the EE countries perform quite well. However, the post-communist civic groups and social movements have mostly a form of small NGOs that lack larger membership (Howard 2003). Hence the weakness lies in the low mobilization capacity of ordinary citizens that the post-communist civil societies display (Petrova and Tarrow 2007; Císař 2013). Similarly, political participation, particularly non-electoral participation, remains dramatically lower than in WE democracies (Hooghe and Quintelier 2014; Bernhagen and Marsh 2007; Inglehart and Catterberg 2002). Citizens in EE countries sign petitions, donate money or boycott products by tens of percent less than people in the West.

A striking observation for many students of the region is that the post-communist gap does not get smaller over time (Hooghe and Quintelier 2014; Barnes 2006; Bernhagen and Marsh 2007). Paradoxically, the EE democracies seem to be after 25 years of democratic regime even further from their Western counterparts in this regard. The revolution days were in most of the post-communist countries accompanied by increased political mobilization of their citizens. However, after a few years the civic and political activism dropped and display stable trend (Vráblíková and Císař 2013). Also the difference between WE and post-communist democracies is not a result of a few outliers. The two groups of countries form two distinct more or less homogenous blocks.

Although the low civic and political participation in the post-communist countries has received a large attention, the empirical research of its sources is rather underdeveloped. Probably the most popular hypothesis of how communist legacy dampens democratic political and civic activism relies on the socialization argument (Barnes 2006; Inglehart and Catterberg 2002; Bernhagen and Marsh 2007; Howard 2003). According to this perspective, the communist regime that enforced non-voluntary participation created aversion to politics and

destroyed social capital. Together with the absence of democratic socialization it should have pre-programmed generations that experienced it to be inactive in politics and civic life (Barnes 2006; Letki and Evans 2005, xxx)

Despite the wide acceptance of this theory, empirical evidence does not support it. In contrast to what this theory implies, the gap between post-communist countries and Western democracies has not decreased (Bernhagen and Marsh 2007; Hooghe and Quintelier 2014). Extensive comparative study of generational effects in political participation across post-communist and West-European democracies by Hooghe and Quintelier (2014) does not find any results supporting this theory. Similarly, Letki (2004) shows that thanks to participation even within non-democratic communist party people learned civic skills that have positive effect on their democratic political participation. Also a qualitative study examining pre- and post-89 civic participation in Czechoslovakia (Pospíšilová 2014) casts serious doubts on this theory. Volunteers and activist do not interpret civic activism during communist times as endorsed and non-democratic. Rather, they used the opportunities and resources that the communist regime offered for activism as a disguise for their own voluntary activities (Pospíšilová 2014).

Next to studies that examine explicitly the role of “communist” generations, similarly other literature sees the explanation of the difference between WE and EE democracies in the characteristics of the post-communist citizens. Either because of more complex socialization process of the communist heritage or because of the problems during democratic transformation, the suggested source of the post-communist gap is that citizens in these countries lack predispositions necessary for civic and political engagement. According to this perspective, the EE countries display lower participation because post-communist citizens do not have social trust, democratic values or civic skills that in contrast induce people in the West to civic and political participation.

Technically, these studies examine how the individual level explanatory models developed for Western democracies explain participation in post-communist countries (Tworzecki 2008; Barnes 2006). Other authors study both EE and WE democracies and try to explain the effect of post-communism with inclusion of individual level predictors. For instance, Bernhagen and Marsh (2007) use this strategy to analyze the gap in non-electoral participation between Western and Eastern democracies. These studies have shown that individual-level explanatory factors do not account for the existing gap in civic and political participation between WE and CEE democracies (also Hooghe and Quintelier 2014). Hence, the question of what stands behind the post-communist participatory gap remains open.

### **Contextual explanation of the post-communist gap**

The above presented explanations are not the only possible. The problem might not be in the post-communist citizens, rather the participatory deficit that the post-communist countries display in comparison to the WE democracies might originate from the systemic characteristics of the EE democracies. The comparative literature has long time ago argued that the macro-context of national states is characterized by attributes that systematically influence individual traits and the processes that affect it within these contexts (Przeworski and Teune 1970). Also the literature on CEE countries has recognized and theoretically discussed the macro-level factors that can stand behind the post-communist gap as well. As Crawford and Lijphart (1995: 176) put it, not the socializing legacy approach, but “the immediate context comprised of norms, institutions, and international pressures matters most to the future of liberal capitalist democracy”. Specifically, the studies usually mention the low economic development, weak state structure and inappropriate political institutions, the lack of democratic or civic culture and bad political performance of these regimes that display high corruption, political instability etc. as reason why post-communist countries score lower on civic and political activism also culture (Fortin 2012; Evans and Whitefield 1995; Barnes and Simon 1998; Klingemann 2006; Tworzecki 2008; Pollack 2003, xxx).

The empirical analyses of how contextual factors explains the participatory gap between East and West remain rather untouched. Authors have so far examined the contextual explanation only to account for variation across post-communist countries. For instance, Bernhagen and Marsh (2007) study the effect of historical legacies, such as different type of communist rule and different type of transition, on individual participation. Similarly, Letki (2004) tests contextual effects of socio-economic development, polity score and parliamentary elections on individual participation in Post-communist countries. Other studies including also WE democracies, despite formulation of contextual level theories, study individual level indicators parallel to the contextual ones and examine only the individual-level relationships (e.g. Evans and Whitefield 1995, Klingemann et al. 2006, Kirbiš 2013; Barnes and Simon 1998). However individual level traits and there effects are different than contextual factors and might display different effects as the discussion on individual or ecological fallacy shows.

Only Hooghe and Quintelier (2014) have examined the effect of corruption. They show that the effect of post-communism on institutional and non-institutional political participation

disappears when corruption is included into the multi-level mode.<sup>1</sup> This article takes a similar direction and examines further the contextual sources of the participatory difference between WE and EE democracies. While Hooghe and Quintelier (2014) focus primarily on the analysis of generational effects, this study develops more the contextual explanation of the post-communist participatory gap. Generally, the available studies on the macro-contextual determinants of individual political participation have focused on three main types of contextual determinants that are more stable characteristics of political systems and hence can be considered as causes of individual political participation: economic development, political institutions, and political culture. Next paragraphs will specify in more details why each of these dimensions is suggested to be responsible for the difference in civic and political participation between WE and EE democracies.

### *Socio-economic development*

One reason why post-communist countries can display lower civic and political participation can be a lower socio-economic development existing in these countries. Studies have shown that individual civic and political participation is dependent on the country's level of socio-economic development (Norris 2002; Dalton, Van Sickle, and Weldon 2010). To explain this effect the authors refer to modernization (Norris 2002) or to the resource mobilization theory developed in social movement literature (Dalton et al. 2010, McCarthy and Zald 1977). Modernization theory emphasizes the long term social, economic, demographic, and technological developments in societies going from rural over industrial to post-industrial societies (Inglehart 1997; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). Higher socio-economic development increases the level of literacy, education, leisure, and affluence, the expansion of middle class, growing levels of human capital. The socio-economic macro conditions develop the societal resources for participation. They shape the immediate but external surroundings of individuals, such as the development of civil society, and communication technologies, quality of education (Norris 2002; Inglehart 1997; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). The resource mobilization theory emphasizes the mobilizing organizations, such as social movements, voluntary groups and NGOs, which recruit individuals into protest (Dalton, Van Sickle, and Weldon 2010). Socio-economic development should lead to a higher number of these actors; that is, to a more

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<sup>1</sup> However, Hooghe and Quintelier (2013) do not specify the mechanism of how exactly the level of corruption should be responsible for lower participation. Corruption might not be a cause of lower individual participation, rather it can be a result of the same more deep systemic structures that make post-communist countries perform worse on the number of democratic quality indicators, such as participation and corruption. Corruption can also be even a result of little developed civil society and people's involvement in politics.

developed civil society sector, and should increase the resources available to them for mobilizing individuals into participation, such as a skilled public interested in politics, communication technologies, and independent media.

Analyses have shown that socio-economic development explains voter turnout across developing and developed countries. Within post-industrial countries the socio-economic development does not play a role (Norris 2002). From this reason, socioeconomic development should be particularly relevant for explanation of the post-communist gap because most of these countries do not have post-industrial economies based mainly on service sector and not that much on industrial sector (Evans and Whitefield 1995). Despite some expectations that appeared during the revolutionary days, countries in the EE region still did not catch up their Western neighbors in the level of socio-economic development. For instance, that time first deputy prime minister of the Czechoslovakia Valtr Komared expected that “if reasonable economic policies will be followed, the Czechoslovak Federative Republic will in two years reach the same living standards as it is in Austria” (Melničuk 2009). These promises did not materialize. The Czech Republic falls behind Austria in the quality of life by 14 places in the Quality-of-life index from 2005. Similarly all other post-communist countries with the exception of Slovenia are placed below the WE democracies in this ranking. Already lower economic development of countries in this region compared to WE democracies in 1989 got only deepened by economic problems that the post-communist countries experienced during transition. Hence even rich people in these countries did not experience material security and faced uncertainty and personal suffering (Evans and Whitefield 1995).

### ***State institutions***

The other reason why EE democracies have a lower civic and political participation than the WE countries might lie in their political institutions. Studies of political participation have shown that institutional design of the state is crucial determinant of cross-country difference in participation (Dalton, Van Sickle, and Weldon 2010; Meer, Deth, and Scheepers 2009; Vráblíková 2014). Drawing on political opportunity structure theory from social movements or literature on comparative institutions they show that people need institutional opportunities that assure access to the decision making and chances to be successful for their participation. Particularly decentralization of institutions that implies a high number of veto points in the political system that check and balance each other is crucial (Vráblíková 2014).

In contrast to transformations of economy, party politics, civil society and people’s attitudes, the rebuilding of the core state institutions in the post-communist countries has not

received that much research attention (Grzymala-Busse and Luong 2002; Crawford and Lijphart 1995). Many authors seem to take for granted that the new democracies in the Eastern Europe just adopted the same institutional framework as countries in the West and that the institutional state structure is more or less the same here. If it gets attention it is related to the assumption that post-89 institutional designing is led by the reduction of the over-sized communist state (Grzymala-Busse and Luong 2002).

However, the institutional design and its practical functioning in the EE democracies are different from the WE countries. Their character is a result of the legacy of communist institutions that were highly centralized and non-competitive and the decisions on the new post 89 institutions (Crawford and Lijphart 1995) that were adopted very quickly and often by elites that directly profited from how they were designed (Grzymala-Busse and Luong 2002).

Most of the post-communist countries have multiple centers of authority-building (Grzymala-Busse and Luong 2002) and are classified as “weak states” (Fortin 2012). Although power-separation in the political system is the crucial moment how national political institutions facilitate political participation (Vráblíková 2014), power dispersion in post-communist countries have a different character than in old democracies. Grzymala-Busse and Luong (2002) argue that the specificity of state institutional structure in most of the post-communist countries lies in the low formalization and representation of elite competition. The “who” and “how” competes is different in these regimes. As Grzymala-Busse and Luong (2002) identify, in most of the post-communist countries the elite competition takes place through informal networks and/or is only self-contained, which means among recognized elites that are not a really good representation. Such dispersion of power results in fractious, personalistic and autocratic tendencies. The power-dispersion or weakness of the post-communist states does not provide citizens with transparent and accountable politics that would facilitate their individual participation.

### ***Political Culture***

A number of authors have long argued that democratic and civic culture of the nation is necessary for well-functioning democracy (Almond and Verba 1963, Eckstein et al. 1996, Inglehart 1997, Inglehart 1988, Putnam 1993). Given that both Eastern and Western democracies have democratic institutions and have market economies, often scrutinized reason that should make a difference between the two blocks of countries is the political culture. Students of post-communist political culture argue that the post-communist democracies lack

a suitable cultural congruent with the democratic institutions (Howard 2003; Inglehart and Catterberg 2002; Tworzecki 2008; Kirbiš 2013).

Political culture is a contextual characteristic different from individual attitudes. Almond and Verba (1989: 14-15) define political culture as a “particular distribution of patterns of orientation toward political objects among the members of the nation”. Political culture is a “macropolitical” concept that can affect the realm of micropolitics, consisting of individual attitudes within the political structure (Almond and Verba 1989). Taken from the perspective of the individual, political culture is the normative environment in which he lives and possibly influences his attitudes and behavior.

The effect of systemic cultural characteristics on individual participation has started be examined more systematically only recently (Welzel and Deutsch 2012; Vráblíková 2012). Although there is a lot of literature on democratic and civic attitudes in the post-communist countries that explicitly posits itself into the political culture paradigm and understands the culture as a system-level phenomenon, it has not so far empirically studied the effect of contextual culture on individual participation (Pollack 2003; Klingemann 2006; Barnes and Simon 1998; Kirbiš 2013).

Three types of political culture that can explain the participatory post-communist gap can be distinguished: democratic culture, social capital and self-expressive culture (Inglehart and Welzel 2005: chap. 11). The text will deal with each of these three theories of how cultural context explains the post-communist gap.

### *Democratic culture*

A number of researchers have argued that democratic civic culture is necessary for well-functioning democracy. According to this perspective, democracy cannot prosper without a high share of democrats. The lack of democratic culture including mass support for the democratic system and trust in political institutions are often seen as the biggest deficit of post-authoritarian societies (Mishler and Rose 2001; Klingemann 2006; Barnes and Simon 1998). Drawing on Easton, studies have distinguished between two types of the democratic political culture. On one hand it is the principal support for democratic political system, on the other it is an evaluation of everyday performance of democratic regimes. As it is the case in other countries, also in the post-communist democracies the two types of democratic mass orientations are not related neither at the individual nor at the country level (Linek 2010).

How should the political culture of democratic principles affect individual participation? The communist political culture has been described as a culture of high socio-



political activism, which reflected the mobilization aspect of the communist ideology (Almond 1983; Linz and Stepan 1996). The worries after the 1989 were that although there might be a lot of participation in the region this participation will be non-democratic (Barnes and Simon 1998). As far as empirical evidence shows, the vast majority of political participation is democratic (non-violent, legal and not supporting non-democratic goals, Vráblíková and Císař 2013). Still, the level of democratic culture can affect even individual democratic participation. Generally shared support for democratic principles make democratic institutions work better which provides environment supporting people's activism.

However, it should be particularly the democratic satisfaction aspect of the political culture that is expected to be responsible for the gap between EE and WE democracies. A number of studies has shown that political trust and satisfaction with politics is specifically low in post-communist countries (Mishler and Rose 2001; Mishler and Rose 1997). They attribute the dissatisfaction to the "post-honeymoon" effect, which means disillusion of post-communist publics with how badly democracy really works in contrast to what they expected at the eve of the democratic transitions (Catterberg and Moreno 2006; Inglehart and Catterberg 2002). Post-communist literature argues that because of this low political satisfaction post-communist citizens are alienated from politics. The general apathy in the society should deactivate also people who otherwise would get involved in civic and political activism.

### *Social capital*

Other group of political culture literature draws on de Tocqueville's ideas about democracy and his emphasis on civic life. This approach argues that for the well-functioning democracy and participatory public, the culture of social trust, voluntary associations and resulting social capital are needed (Putnam 1996, 2000). The low level of social capital is another candidate for explaining the post-communist gap because post-communist countries are quite poor on social capital. A number of authors have pointed at the fact that communist culture destroyed social trust and voluntary civil society, which have not been yet recovered, and that post-communist countries lack social capital (Howard 2003, Inglehart and Catterberg 2002). Social capital is seen as a source of most of the deficit the EE region displays in comparison to WE democracies.

As a number of authors have argued, social capital is primarily collective good operating on the level of societies. Thanks to the culture of consensus, cooperation and inclusiveness it should decrease the costs for contributing to the collective good for all members of the society, not only for those who individually possess personal social capital

(van Deth and Vrablikova 2013). Available studies have shown mixed results for the effect of contextual social capital on political activism. An analysis of aggregated protest by Benson and Rochon (2004) shows a positive effect of social trust. The multilevel analysis of Whiteley and his colleagues (2009) finds a positive effect of both aggregated social trust and group membership on individual non-electoral participation. However, Vrablikova (2012) shows that contextual social capital does not facilitate non-electoral participation because it strengthens non-competitive aspect of the country culture that is, however, necessary for people to have a chance to be successful with their participation (Vráblíková 2012).

### *Self-expressive culture*

The final explanation of the gap between EE and WE democracies sees the explanation in the lower level of self-expressive culture. Self-expressive culture should be result of post/modernization processes. The experience of existential security, autonomy in decision making, development of cognitive skills and creativity, and diversification of interpersonal interactions in postindustrial societies should lead to a cultural value change by which more people have postmaterialist/self-expressive values, which correspond to more new forms of participation such as protesting.

In contrast to previous contextual explanations, the origin of the difference is not that much in the communist legacy. As Inglehart and Welzel (2005) show, prior democratic or non-democratic institutions do not affect self-expressive culture that much. Inglehart argues (Inglehart 2006: 76, also Inglehart 1997: 96), that "communism left a clear imprint on the value systems of those who lived under it but a given cultural heritage can partially offset or reinforce its impact." With the exception of Poland, post-communist countries score high on secular-rational dimension of mass values and probably due to communist past even more than Western democracies. The real difference between the two regions the level of self-expressive values (Inglehart 2006: 72). These values express emancipative essence of democracy (Inglehart and Welzel 2005), which is however lacking in post-communist countries.

As already mentioned, one version of the modernization theory stresses the role of post-materialist/self-expressive culture, especially for "elite-challenging" types of political participation. This expectation has been supported by several studies. Both fully aggregate-level analyses, and multilevel studies analysing individual non-electoral participation, found a positive effect for self-expressive/postmaterialist/emancipative culture on protesting or other non-electoral activities (Benson and Rochon 2004; Inglehart and Welzel 2005; Welzel and Deutsch 2012; Vráblíková 2012). Multilevel analyses have also shown that self-expressive

culture as a macro-contextual phenomenon has its effect beyond individual level attitudes; i.e. it is the prevalence of these values in a given society that matters. Welzel and Deutsch (2012) explain that political culture works as a “mental climate” because people are more exposed to these types of political participation, and the process of social contagion spreads it across all groups so that not only people individually possessing self-expressive values perform these activities.

## **Data and Methods**

The individual level data come from the European Value Study done between 2008 and 2010. The study includes all European countries that were in this time defined as democracies by the Freedom House and for which the contextual indicators were available. Since the theory suggests that the reason for lower civic and political participation of post-communist citizens are contextual determinants, multi-level modelling is used.

### **Non-electoral participation**

Non-electoral political participation is defined as voluntary action by ordinary citizens directed toward influencing political outcomes (distribution of social goods and norms), which are activities either used exclusively for political participation, or general activities with an expressed intention to influence politics not including voting and party membership (Teorel et al. 2007: 336, Rosenstone and Hansen 2003: 4, van Deth 2011). As a measure of non-electoral participation additive index of three participatory items that people ever did covered by the EVS/WVS is used: signing a petition, joining in boycotts, attending lawful demonstration. The Principal Component Analysis has shown that the three activities form one dimension. The intra-class-correlation coefficient, which shows how much of the variation in non-electoral participation belongs to the cross-country differences is 16 percent.

### **Individual level predictors**

At the individual level, this study includes a standard set of variables usually used to explain political participation: age, communist generation, education, income, sex, political interest, political dissatisfaction, supporter of democracy, social trust, and group membership.

### **Socio-economic development**

In the first two models the socio-economic development is indicated by the country’s GPD per capita (PPP US\$) in the year before the survey. Models including indicators of political culture

include the country's GDP per capita (PPP US\$) in year before the measure of political culture because the socio-economic development is suggested to have effect on political culture. The data were obtained from the International Monetary Fund. The reason is that the GINI index is not available for this time.

#### Institutional opportunities

Institutional opportunities tap the institutional separation of power within the political system that expresses a number of institutional veto points. The Political Constraint Index V developed by Henisz (2000) is used. This measure is constructed from a) the number of independent veto points in the political system including decentralization of executive and legislature and territorial decentralization, b) the political affiliation of actors holding positions in these institutions and c) the degree of institutional fragmentation within these institutions (see Henisz 2000)

#### Political culture

The measurement of political culture draws on measures developed by (Inglehart and Welzel 2005: chap. 11, internet appendix). Since the political culture is a societal-level phenomenon, it needs to be measured at the level of national country. The measures used to indicate political culture are constructed as the aggregation of individual level attitudes representing the countries' populations. All of these data come from the previous wave of the EVS/WVS done in 1999 and 2000.

Democratic political culture includes two indicators. Political satisfaction is composed of trust in basic political institutions (parliament, police, army, justice system) and satisfaction with democracy. The two indicators are strongly correlated on the country level and form one composite measure ( $r = .7$ ). The culture of principal democrats is measured as a percentage of democrats in the country based on the Klingeman index (Klingemann 1999). Social capital is measure as a composite indicator of percentage of people who trust others and percentage of people displaying civic obedience. Inglehart and Welzel (2005) include under social capital culture culturist next to usually used social trust also norms of "civic honesty", such as conformity with laws and honest behavior. These norms express the norm of obedience. Civic obedience is index based on three items (avoiding fare on public transport, cheating on taxes, claiming government benefits when not entitled). Measurement of self-expressive culture follows the measurement of (Inglehart and Welzel 2005). It includes liberal aspirations, life

satisfaction, tolerance to homosexuality and interpersonal trust. The difference compared to their measure is that measure used in this paper does not include petition signing potential.

### **Explaining the post-communist participatory gap**

Figure 1 shows the results for the analysis of the sources of the post-communist gap in political participation. The basic model estimated is the multilevel model explaining individual non-electoral participation just with the post-communist dummy. Model 1 shows the contextual effect of post-communism on individual participation. The coefficient is significant and shows that the change between EE and WE context dramatically decreases individual participation by .4 points on the index ranging from 0 to 1. The goal of the analysis is to explain the effect of the post-communism indicator.

The second model includes the individual level predictors of political participation as usually examined in most of the available studies. According to this perspective, post-communist countries display lower activism because they have a higher concentration of citizens that are badly shaped for participation. As the difference in the post-communist coefficient by .09 shows the effect of communist legacy is partially mediated by the individual level predictors.

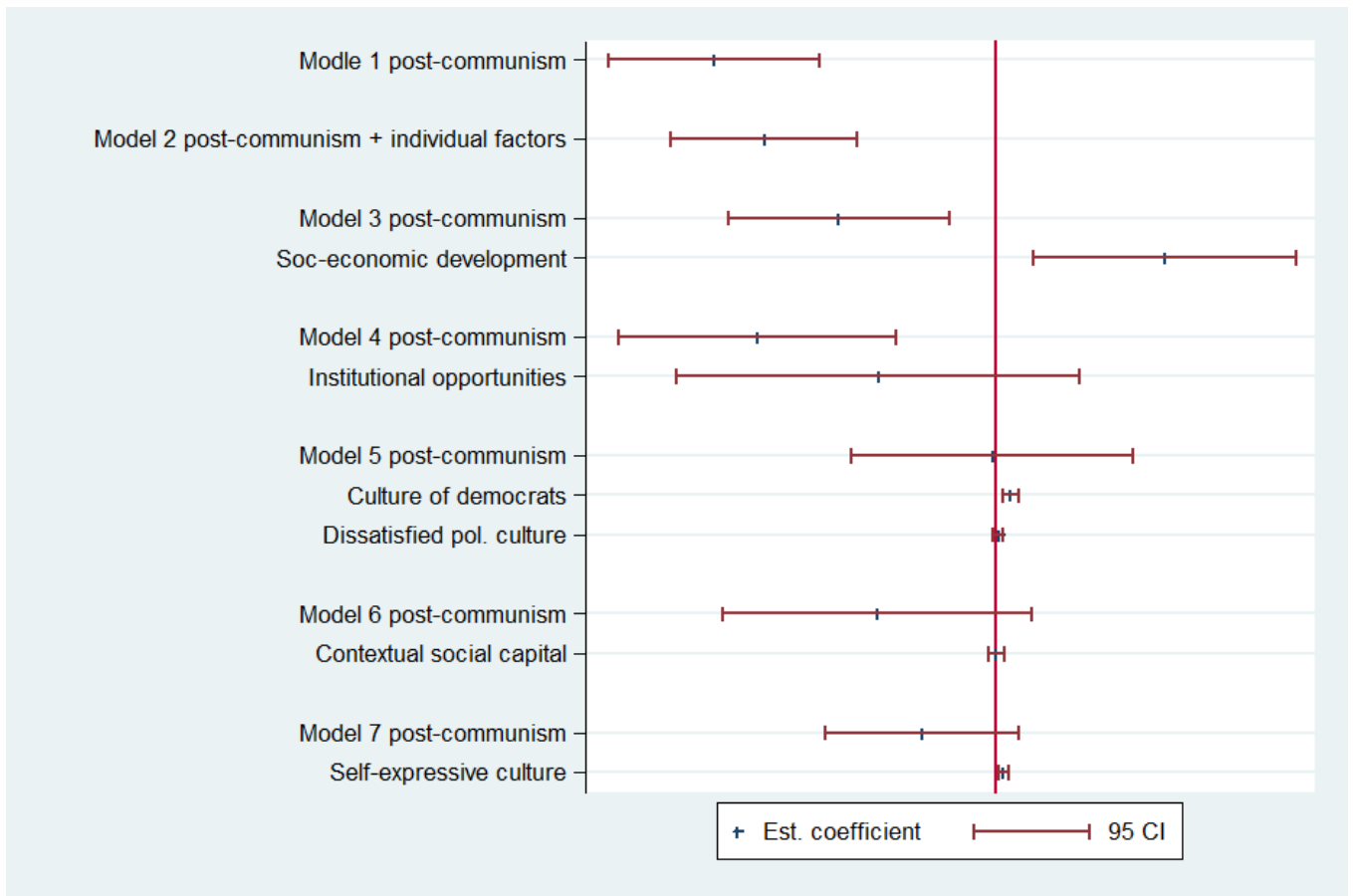
From Model 3 on the contextual level explanations of the post-communist gap that are crucial for this study are tested. Model 3 tests the socio-economic explanation. The results show that socio-economic context partially explains the gap as well. The coefficient of the post-communist dummy decreases by another .14 when the GDP is added to the Model 2 including the individual level explanatory factors. However, the post-communist dummy remains significant, which means that there are also other reasons why citizens of the post-communist region participate less in politics.

Model 4 tests the second contextual explanation suggested in the theory section: political institutions. We expect that participation in the EE countries is lower because they do not have institutional opportunities providing them with access to decision making and chances to be successful. As the results show, the inclusion of the indicator measuring the veto points in the political system does not help explain the post-communist participatory gap. The coefficient of post-communist indicator increases and the institutional opportunities do not have a significant effect on individual participation. This result goes against findings from other studies that have shown the positive effect of this measure. The problem might be that the POLCON V measure used here does not display much variation in the sample of countries and might not capture the difference theorized in the section above.

The following Models 5, 6 and 7 test the political culture hypotheses. First democratic culture is tested. We expect that it is due to the lack of democratic culture that citizens in the EE region participate less than in the WE democracies. Specifically, a number of authors suggest that post-communist countries display a culture of apathy or political disappointment that generally decreases the participation in this region. Other authors point at the role of the share of democrats. In contrast to the expectations, the dissatisfied culture is not responsible for the difference between EE and WE democracies. Nevertheless the second indicator of the democratic context shows the effect. Citizens living in countries with less developed democratic culture participate less than people from countries that have a higher share of principle democrats. Importantly for the purposes of our analysis, the significant effect of the post-communist indicator disappears.

Model 4 shows the results when social capital is added into the model. The coefficient for the post-communist indicator remains insignificant, however increases compared to previous model. Moreover, the contextual social capital does not have a significant effect on individual participation and hence does not help explain the post-communist gap. Model 5 shows the final analysis that includes self-expressive culture in addition to factors that were significant in previous models: individual level predictors, socio-economic development, and democratic culture. Also in this model the coefficient for post-communism is not significant, which means that the variation between WE and EE democracies has been explained. Also self-expressive culture significantly increases individual participation as suggested by the theory. Other contextual predictors in the model do not show significant results. However, if the self-expressive culture is the only contextual factor included in the model it explains the post-communist effect only partially.

**Figure 1: Explaining the post-communist gap in individual non-electoral participation**



Note: The figure shows estimated coefficients of the effect of post-communism and added contextual factors with their confidence intervals. The results come from the multi-level models using 27 countries that control for influential country cases. The individual level data come from the EVS 1999-2000.

**Conclusion**

The article suggested that the reason why citizens of post-communist countries are less active in politics does not result only from the fact that they lack pro-participatory individual factors, but also because of system level characteristics these countries display. We examined three types of contextual determinants: socio-economic development, institutional opportunities, and political culture. The results showed that there is not a single factor, neither individual nor contextual, responsible for the difference between EE and WE democracies in political participation. The factors that partially mediate the effect of the post-communism are individual level predictors of participation and self-expressive culture.

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