# The Two-Dimensional Structure of Political Opportunities

## A Quantitative and Mixed-Methods Analysis of the Effect of Political Opportunity Structures on Nonelectoral Participation

Proefschrift voorgelegd tot het behalen van de graad van doctor in de sociale wetenschappen aan de Universiteit Antwerpen te verdedigen door

**Joost de Moor**


Promotor
Prof. dr. Stefaan Walgrave

Faculteit Sociale Wetenschappen
Departement Politieke Wetenschappen
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**PhD Dissertation:**

**Joost de Moor**
University of Antwerp
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*The cover pictures illustrate how citizens today use very diverse modes of action to address similar political and societal challenges – in this case, climate change and environmental degradation. I have no information on the exact motivation underlying the activities in the pictures, but they represent two essentially distinct approaches to tackle such problems. The image on the left shows a sign held in a climate change protest in Toronto. Clearly, the person holding the sign demands others – most likely governments – to 'save our planet'. The image on the right shows a participant in a 'community supported agriculture' in New York. He holds a crop that was locally and organically grown. Typically, participation in community supported agriculture advances environmental considerations regarding food consumption. Rather than asking others to save the planet, participants 'do it themselves'. This distinction is characteristic of political participation today.*

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Faculteit sociale wetenschappen
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# PREFACE/VOORWOORD

When I began my PhD, I thought it would be somewhat challenging, but not much more than that. After all, what came before hadn't been that tough either. I underestimated it, I realize now. Still, I also greatly enjoyed it, and getting it finished would hardly be as enjoyable if there hadn't been some suffering first. In that sense, I guess my PhD can best be described as a winding and bumpy road, with some highs and lows, with a degree of uncertainty, and an occasional uphill struggle. The fact that I apparently managed to make it to this final stage taught me something about the perseverance I previously did not know I had in me. Rather than to congratulate myself too much here, however, I especially want to express my gratefulness to the indispensable support of several people.

Allereerst wil ik **Stefaan** bedanken. Je hebt me aangenomen toen ik al een tijdje onderweg was, en uitgedrukt in een absolute hoeveelheid tijd is je begeleiding dus enigszins beperkt geweest. Gelukkig is echter niet alles kwantificeerbaar. Je scherpe en constructieve adviezen, en zeker ook je aanmoediging, zijn van onschatbare waarde geweest. De brandstof voor mijn eindspurt zogezegd, en hopelijk ook voor de marathon daarna. Ik ben je zeer dankbaar voor de kans en begeleiding die je me gegeven hebt.

Ook **Jan** heeft een bijzondere bijdrage geleverd aan het ondersteunen van mijn doctoraat, alsmede het onderzoek waar ik mij hierna op wil focussen. Mijn bezoek in Mannheim en de besprekingen die we daar hebben gehad hebben mijn academische ambities nieuw leven ingeblazen. Later als commissielid heb je ook een onmisbare bijdrage geleverd aan het afronden van mijn doctoraat. **Peter** wil ik hier ook in het bijzonder voor bedanken. Tijdens het afgelopen jaar heb je mij steeds van bijzonder nuttige en constructieve adviezen voorzien die mij zeker geholpen hebben mijn doctoraat kritisch te evalueren en naar het volgende niveau te tillen.

I would of course also like to give special thanks to the members of my doctoral jury, **Bert**, **Petra** and **Swen**, who have been kind enough to take it upon them to use their valuable expertise to evaluate my dissertation. I would like to thank Swen for one more thing in particular. During my Erasmus stay in Munich, your great seminar on political participation got me first interested in the subjects that I would later address in my PhD. The inspriation has been key.

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een berg onderlinge steun. In het bijzonder wil ik **Anna**, **Cecil**, **Joris**, **Meta** en **Ruth** bedanken voor de nodige kneepjes van het vak die jullie mij hebben bijgebracht op methodologisch, retorisch, en praktisch vlak. Ik heb bij elk van jullie de deur plat gelopen met meer of minder onnozele vragen en jullie hebben mij altijd geduldig van goede raad voorzien. Ook **Yves** wil ik hier bedanken, want je was niet alleen een gezellig lid van de bende van Leuven, je was ook zo aardig om het nodige verkennende werk voor mij te verrichten in het verre Antwerpen.

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I have also been fortunate enough to meet several great colleagues abroad, indeed perhaps one of the biggest advantages of this line of work. My time in Mannheim stands out in this regard where some temporary colleagues immediately became great friends. I would like to thank **Katka** in particular: for your hospitality, and your extensive methodological and theoretical support.

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# INTRODUCTION

Political participation 'beyond the vote' (in short 'nonelectoral participation' or 'NEP') is often considered to be essential for the health of any democracy as it contributes to a good rule *of*, *by*, and *for* the people (della Porta, 2013; Norris, 2002). According to Verba, Schlozman and Brady, "democracy is unthinkable without the possibility of citizens to participate freely in governing processes. (…) Political participation provides the mechanism by which citizens can communicate information about their interests, preferences and needs, and generate pressure to respond." (1995, p. 1). And even beyond the official policy making process, the political involvement of citizens is gaining importance as more and more political decisions are taken outside the realm of state politics (Norris, 2002, p. 193; Smith, 2008). However, despite its universal importance for democracies, large differences exist across political contexts with regard to the prevalence of NEP (Vráblíková, 2016). If we agree that high levels of NEP are important for democracy, then, it is key to understand the origins of such differences. Many social scientists concur that these differences are structural rather than contingent, and must be the product of specific characteristics of political systems (e.g. Dahl, 1971; Kriesi, Koopmans, Duyvendak, & Giugni, 1995; Norris, 2002). Analyzing these contextual characteristics is therefore essential for our understanding of variations in NEP.

This idea has mainly been developed within the literature on political opportunity structures (POSs) (e.g. Eisinger, 1973; Kitschelt, 1986; McAdam, 1982; Tilly, 1978). According to Sydney Tarrow's classical definition, POSs are "consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success and failure" (1996, p. 85). In this view, the POS is understood as a pull factor that can explain why certain forms of

political action are more common in some contexts than in others (Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi et al., 1995, p. 141). After all, citizens often consider engaging in political action to achieve political goals, and it is believed that opportunities that increase the odds of achieving the action's goal will incentivize action (Opp, 2009, p. 180). Certain characteristics of political contexts provide such opportunities, and variations between them can therefore explain the prevalence certain political action forms. Following this approach, researchers have indeed been able to explain variations in social movements' tactical repertoires and levels of mobilization between countries (Hutter, 2014, Chapter 5; Kriesi et al., 1995, Chapter 2; Tilly, 2006, p. 186). More recently, scholars have increasingly been using this approach to explain varying levels of NEP (Christensen, 2011; Quaranta, 2013; Vráblíková, 2014).

Yet despite the strength of this long-standing research tradition, two major gaps persist within it. Firstly, since long, the POS literature has made an important distinction between input structures and output structures (Kitschelt, 1986; van der Heijden, 2006): the former indicates a political system's openness to challengers, the latter its ability to formulate and implement policies, and thus to turn citizens' demands into substantive change. Although many authors have acknowledged that input structures as well as output structures can perform as important pull factors for NEP (Micheletti, 2003, p. xii; Overby, 1990), empirical research has focused almost exclusively on the former. This bias is becoming increasingly problematic, however. As the main locus of power, the nation state may have attracted the larger part of political participation in the past, yet during the last decades, political globalization has shifted power away from the nation-state and divided it over many stakeholders (Tilly, 2004, p. 14). Consequently, citizens and movements now have to consider who actually has the ability to act on the issue of their concern, and hence, whether they have to target the state or some other actor to achieve substantial change (Fox, 2014; Sloam, 2007). It is thus very likely that output structures have become increasingly important determinants of NEP – especially for choosing the target of action. The first goal of this study will therefore be to analyze the role of the state's input structure *and* output structure in explaining NEP.

A second gap that persists within this literature concerns the causal mechanisms that link macro-level political opportunities and micro-level political behavior (Opp, 2009, pp. 179–80). How do contextual characteristics come to affect political behavior? Empirical evidence does not support the idea that POSs could 'automatically' guide NEP like an invisible

hand (Koopmans, 2005). As NEP is certainly not always 'in line' with the opportunities of its context, there must be certain mechanisms at work that condition the macro-micro link (Meyer, 2004). Yet, although far from obvious, this link has received very little attention in the literature (Christensen, 2011; Walgrave & Verhulst, 2009). Many authors assume that POSs are perceived, that perceived opportunities inform which actions are most effective, and that activists will adjust their actions accordingly (e.g. Kriesi et al., 1995, pp. 244–45; Tarrow, 2011, p. 12), yet even this assumption has hardly been tested empirically (Opp, 2009). Building on these suggestions, the second goal of this study will be to explore the macro-micro link between POSs and NEP by testing whether POSs affect NEP because they are perceived.

Wrapped up, my aim it to address the abovementioned gaps in the literature by answering the following research question: *Through what causal mechanisms do political opportunity structures, including input structures and output structures, affect nonelectoral participation?* In what follows I will first discuss the literature on NEP and POS in more depth and outline how this study will contribute to those literatures. I will then give an overview of the chapters in this dissertation.

## HOW OPPORTUNITIES MATTER FOR NONELECTORAL PARTICIPATION

This study builds on, and contributes to, two strands of literature. On the one hand, this study is driven by the abovementioned gaps in the literature on POSs. On the other hand, this research aims to increase our understanding of differences in NEP between individuals and between countries. Why do some individuals perceive NEP as more effective, does this explain why they are more inclined to participate, and what explains variations between countries in this regard? By relating POSs and NEP to each other as independent and dependent variables, these goals present two sides of the same coin. In this theoretical overview, I will first discuss the meaning and relevance of NEP. I will then outline the POS literature as it currently stands, and touch upon some debates within it. I will finally elaborate on some of the socio-psychological and cognitive assumptions that underpin this study.

**State and non-state oriented nonelectoral participation**

Defining nonelectoral political participation is not an easy task. In fact, the concept of political participation has long been debated in political science (for overviews see Brady, 1998; Fox, 2014; van Deth, 2001). In this study, I build on the operational definition recently provided by Jan van Deth (2014). Acknowledging that the way in which citizens participate in politics has diversified so dramatically over time (Norris, 2002), van Deth proposes that political participation should not be conceptualized using a single, one-lined definition, but rather, through the application of a set of criteria. The first four criteria are generally agreed upon and go back to conceptualizations such as those proposed by Verba and Nie (1972, p. 2). Political participation is 1) an activity, 2) performed by people in their role as citizen 3) on a voluntary basis 4) that deals with government, the state, or politics. Classic definitions, such as that by Verba and colleagues (Verba & Nie, 1972, p. 2; Verba et al., 1995, pp. 37–40) stop here and have restricted the definition to behavior that seeks to influence the politics of government and the state. However, it is the ongoing expansion of citizens' modes of dealing with the political which has urged a widening of the concept of political participation. According to van Deth, we should include behavior that advances social change or targets social problems beyond state-politics, as well as types of behavior that aim to express political views otherwise. Doing so ensures that our definition of political participation covers the whole spectrum of citizens' participation throughout various relevant political or politicized arena's, including the institutional political arena, the market, and the arena of everyday life (Micheletti, 2003, pp. 23–26; Norris, 2002).

The focus of this project has been on *nonelectoral* political participation (NEP) (Dalton, 2008; Vráblíková, 2014). NEP has received increasing attention in the political science literature during the last two decades. While empirical research has shown that citizens' engagement within the electoral system (either through voting, or though party membership or identification) is declining (Inglehart, 2008; Putnam, 2000, p. 35; Wattenberg, 2000, pp. 71–76), participation beyond the vote is on the rise (Christensen, 2011; Dalton, 2008; Inglehart & Catterberg, 2002; Kriesi, 2008; Norris, 2002, 2011). In this sense, NEP is seen as an increasingly important mechanism to link citizens to political decision making processes. Moreover, the expansion of NEP is often pushed forward (e.g. by Bennett, 1998; Dalton & Welzel, 2013; van Deth, 2014) to defy skeptics who perceive waning electoral participation as a sign of an overall decline of civic engagement (Putnam, 1995, 2000). While

voting of course remains an important mechanism for linking citizens to the state (Dalton, 2008; Stolle & Hooghe, 2011), it is difficult to include voting in this study. Though still important, voting relates very differently to political contexts, because in contrast to other forms of participation, it follows strict institutional rules. For instance, in the case of Belgium, which has been central in several chapters of this thesis, voting is mandatory, which sets it apart from any other form of participation. It is because of these formal rules that the way voting is affected by the political context cannot be compared directly to NEP (Vráblíková, 2014). Hence, NEP is analyzed because of its relevance, while voting is excluded because of its incompatibility.[1]

A further distinction that is central to my analyses of NEP, is that between state- and non-state oriented forms of NEP. According to Norris, state-oriented NEP is 'designed to influence the institutions of representative government and the policy process, to communicate public concerns to government officials, and to pressure them to respond', whereas non-state oriented NEP is 'directed toward diverse actors in the public, nonprofit, and private sectors' (2002, p. 193).[2] There are several other distinctions to be made within NEP that are perhaps more common, such as the one between conventional and unconventional participation (Barnes & Kaase, 1979), institutional and non-institutional participation (Klingemann & Fuchs, 1995), or elite-directed and elite-challenging participation (Inglehart & Catterberg, 2002). These distinctions generally set apart NEP that follows the state's official channels to influence politicians (like voting or referenda), and NEP that opposes government through more contentious or disruptive actions (like protesting). As such, these distinctions generally continue to follow the tradition of Verba and colleagues who see political participation as 'activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action' (Verba et al., 1995, p. 38).

However, I already discussed that, from a conceptual point of view, there are good reasons to include non-state oriented forms of NEP as well (Norris, 2002; van Deth, 2014). Furthermore, from an *empirical* point of view, it needs to be recognized that often when

[1] That is not to say of course that electoral studies and studies on NEP should not speak to each other. For instance, McAdam and Tarrow (2010) and Hutter (2014) show convincingly that a combination between the two is very valuable.

[2] To be precise, Norris (2002) speaks of state- and non-state oriented activities. For the most concise presentation of concepts, I slightly adjusted the concept to state- and non-state oriented NEP.

citizens want to express their views, or want to change the social, cultural or economic status quo, they use tactics that target non-state actors, like corporations or international organizations (Bennett, 2012; Taylor, Kimport, Van Dyke, & Andersen, 2009; Walker, Martin, & McCarthy, 2008). Finally, and most importantly for this project, from an *analytical* point of view, a focus on POSs requires us to take into account the targets of NEP – be they the state or other actors. Only citizens' perceived effectiveness of, and propensity for, state-oriented NEP should be directly affected by the state's POS.[3]

This does not mean, however, that the state's POS does not predict non-state oriented NEP, but it does so in an indirect way. For one, they could become more attractive when opportunities for state-oriented NEP close, urging citizens to address social problems beyond the policy making process (Micheletti, 2003, p. xii; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013, p. 47). I will therefore analyze how the state's POS affects state-oriented NEP (directly) as well as non-state-oriented NEP (indirectly), which I will explain in more detail below.

For the study state-oriented forms of NEP, this study looks at several forms of NEP that are commonly included in survey research, and that target the state by definition (e.g., contacting politicians) or do so simply very often (e.g. joining a demonstration or signing a petition). For the study of non-state-oriented NEP, this study will focus in particular on lifestyle politics. Lifestyle politics refers to the politicization of everyday life choices, including ethically, morally or politically inspired decisions about, for example, consumption, transportation, or modes of living (Bennett, 1998; Giddens, 1991, pp. 214–23; Micheletti & Stolle, 2010). Lifestyle politics is often referred to as one of the most important growing forms of political participation in recent decades (Bennett, 2012; Micheletti & Stolle, 2010). For one, many studies describe that lifestyle politics are rising in most western democracies. Survey research shows for instance that more and more people are participating in boycotts, buycotts or other forms of political consumerism (Stolle, Hooghe, & Micheletti, 2005; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013, pp. 48–57), and a range of case studies show that lifestyle politics play an increasingly important role in many social movements, and that organizations focusing on

[3] There is one exception here. Several authors include the state's propensity to repress or facilitate social movements and political activism as a dimension of the POS (Kriesi et al., 1995; McAdam, 1996). Whether a state is likely to respond with strong repression to e.g., a demonstration is relevant regardless of whether that demonstration is targeted at the state or not.

lifestyle politics are growing in various contexts (Forno & Graziano, 2014; van Gameren, Ruwet, & Bauler, 2014; Wahlen & Laamanen, 2015).

Moreover, because the growth of lifestyle politics is often ascribed precisely to its non-state oriented nature, it is deemed to be exemplary and particularly fitting in the context of globalization (Beck, 1997; Giddens, 1991, p. 221). That is, important political challenges today, like climate change, appear to be outside the direct control of national governments, and against such a backdrop, focusing on advancing social change in new political arenas becomes increasingly appealing (Fox, 2014; Sloam, 2007; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013, p. 47). At the same time, citizens have come to realize increasingly that their everyday and consumer choices can have global implications (Giddens, 1991, p. 220), and 'the everyday arena' (Micheletti, 2003, p. 23) therefore becomes an appealing alternative site for political participation. Through lifestyle politics allows, citizens can address complex global problems in their direct, everyday environment. Because of its very timely nature, and its non-state oriented inclination, lifestyle politics a highly relevant and suited type of NEP to assess the effect of the state's POS on state- as well as non-state oriented NEP.

As the targets of NEP increasingly exceed the state, the opportunities of non-state targets of course become relevant as well. Activists who target companies may consider 'economic opportunity structures' (Wahlström & Peterson, 2006) and at the transnational level 'international political opportunity structures' (van der Heijden, 2006) may matter. Moreover, within states, different levels of government can have their own characteristics. Some authors have therefore articulated the importance of 'local political opportunity structures' (Rothman & Oliver, 1999; Schneider, 1997). However, as including all these types and levels of opportunity structures would increase the number of variables to take into account to the an unmanageable extent, I will in this study focus only on how the state's POS incites state- and non-state oriented NEP, and I will not discriminate between different domestic levels of government within them. I do so, because the state is a logical starting point to begin addressing the research puzzles outlined above. After all, the POS approach was mainly developed to describe how the context created by the state affects political behavior, and despite trends described above, it is still the most targeted political actor (Hutter, 2012, 2014, Chapter 5; Rootes, 2005; Van Dyke, Soule, & Taylor, 2004). Future research should explore whether the mechanisms that will be analyzed in this study can be extrapolated to the context of other types of POS as well.

**The political opportunity structure approach to social movements and NEP**

Several authors have identified POS as the most important approach in the study of social movements of the past decades (Giugni, 2009; Goodwin & Jasper, 1999). It is used to explain social movements' tactical repertoires, their ability to mobilize the masses, and their outcomes by proposing that variations in political opportunities condition movements' ability to act (Kriesi, 2004; McAdam, 1982; Meyer, 2004; Opp, 2009). Following a similar logic, the theory is recently being applied more and more within the study of NEP as well, as authors use it to explain why certain national populations are more politically active than others (Braun & Hutter, 2016; Christensen, 2011; Corcoran, Pettinicchio, & Young, 2011; Dalton, Van Sickle, & Weldon, 2010; Quaranta, 2013, 2015; van der Meer, van Deth, & Scheepers, 2009; Vráblíková, 2014).

There are several reasons why POSs are considered to be so important for explaining the prevalence of certain forms of NEP, but in essence, it is assumed that each political context provides specific opportunities or threats that function as incentives or disincentives for certain forms of NEP (Tarrow, 1996). According to Opp (2009, p. 180), 'actors choose the strategies and tactics that are instrumental – from the perspective of the actors – to best realize their goals, given the opportunities the actors are faced with.' This approach implicitly equates opportunities for mobilization with opportunities for being successful. It assumes that based on the political context, people can make somewhat accurate estimation of their chances of success, which will in turn incite them to become active (or not).

This assumption is supported by the fact that many studies have found that perceived chances of success are indeed important motivations for NEP (Opp, 2013; van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013). However, it is important to note as well that those contextual elements that increase levels of mobilization are not always the same as those determining success (Amenta, Caren, Chiarello, & Su, 2010). For instance, it has been noted that the peace movement is most capable of mobilizing massively if its chances of success are lowest (Marullo & Meyer, 2004). Moreover, the instrumental logic underlying this argument has its limits as well, which I will discuss in more detail below. For instance, irresponsive or repressive contexts can trigger outrage or grievances, which are strong mobilizing agents as well (Farah, Barnes, & Heunis, 1979; Kern, Marien, & Hooghe, 2015).

Nevertheless, it is under the assumption that POSs function as incentives for participation that most of the literature has linked POSs to mobilization and NEP (Opp, 2009, pp. 179–80).

While the origins of the POS approach can be traced back even further (e.g. Lineberry & Fowler, 1967; Lipsky, 1970), Peter Eisinger was the first to speak of the 'structure of political opportunities' (1973). While Eisinger's work was already largely comparative in nature, most of the early work on POSs used a longitudinal approach, explaining how contextual changes over time create or diminish opportunities for social movements. Classic examples of this tradition are Charles Tilly's (1978) historical overview of collective action in Europe, Doug McAdam's (1982) analysis of the emergence of black insurgency in the USA, and Sydney Tarrow's (1989) analysis of the Italian student movement. Somewhat later, and mainly in Europe, scholars started exploring the comparative merits of the POS approach. Rather than focusing on changes over time, as the Americans had done, European scholars highlighted that by comparing countries' POSs, one could explain the prevalence of tactical repertoires between those countries (della Porta & Rucht, 1995; Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi et al., 1995). Ever since, both approaches have become important tools for the analysis of social movements (for an overview see Kriesi, 2004; Meyer, 2004).

When the political participation literature started to pick up on the POS approach, it did so mainly based on the latter, comparative approach (Braun & Hutter, 2016; Christensen, 2011; Corcoran et al., 2011; Dalton et al., 2010; Quaranta, 2013, 2015; Vráblíková, 2014). That is, NEP scholars have increasingly used POSs to explain why citizens in some countries are more inclined to use certain forms of political participation than their counterparts in other countries. Many of these studies find proof for the idea that the POS is indeed a useful approach at the micro-level of citizens (and not only at the meso-level of social movements). While building on the broader social movement literature, my focus will be mainly in line with these recent trends.

Although the POS approach is thus a useful tool to explain strategies, levels of mobilization and NEP, it is of course not an all-explaining model. For instance, when responding to opportunities, citizens or movements do not do so in a vacuum. Rather, they draw on the activist tradition or the available action repertoire provided in their context (Doherty & Hayes, 2012; Tilly, 1995, pp. 41–8, 2006, pp. 34–411). Moreover, in order to respond to opportunities (or to become politically active in general), people need resources, like time, money or expertise (McCarthy & Zald, 2002; Verba et al., 1995, pp. 334–68).

Nevertheless, empirical evidence has established by now *that* POSs matter for political behavior. Which elements matter, and exactly how so, has remained less clear.

*Which elements matter?*

As Hutter (2014, Chapter 3) recently concluded, there is no exhaustive or consensual list of elements that constitute the POS. Authors have often referred to the list McAdam once proposed, including '1) the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system, 2) the stability or instability of that broad set of political alignments that typically undergird a polity, 3) the presence or absence of elite allies, 4) [and] the state's capacity and propensity for repression' (1996, p. 27). However, these definitions still provide room for many contextual elements, and over time, authors have denoted many distinct contextual characteristics as POSs. Some scholars have even argued that the concept of the POS is operated so broadly that it is 'in danger of becoming a sponge that soaks up virtually every aspect of the social movement environment' (Gamson & Meyer, 1996, p. 275; see also Goodwin & Jasper, 2003; Koopmans, 1999; Rootes, 1999). It is not my aim to settle this longstanding conceptual debate in the POS literature. Nevertheless, it is important to warrant against conceptual stretching, and to do so, I rely on a number of basic dimensions that have been proposed to distinguish different types of opportunities.

Firstly, authors have distinguished between stable and dynamic opportunities (Hutter, 2014, Chapter 3; Kriesi, 2004). Stable opportunities refer to 'the general structural setting', which includes such things as the degree of horizontal and territorial decentralization, and electoral rules that facilitate or complicate access of political minorities to the parliamentary arena (Vráblíková, 2014), but also include cleavage structures in a country (i.e. which issues dominate the political agenda and shape the parliamentary landscape) (Kriesi et al., 1995, p. XV). Dynamic opportunities include composition of government, and the presence or absence of elite allies. Combined, these elements determine how easy it is for challengers to find access to the political decision making process. In this study I will focus on both stable and dynamic elements. The stable elements are more suited for comparative analyses of general populations, because dynamic elements generally refer to more specific characteristics of the POS that are not very suited for explaining NEP of the whole population. For instance, a country's degree of federalism can

increase the access point for political challengers of any political color, while the composition of government is more likely to affect the opportunities of specific political camps.

This brings me, secondly, to the distinction between general and issue-specific POSs (e.g. Meyer & Minkoff, 2004; Verhulst & Walgrave, 2010). The idea of specific POSs is that a government can be responsive to one issue (say, security), but irresponsive to another one (say, privacy). While general opportunities are again most suited for (comparative) analyses of general populations, specific opportunities are often more accurate predictors of (the perceived effectiveness of) specific episodes of NEP. One could even argue that general opportunities mainly become relevant when they produce specific opportunities. For instance, a high degree of electoral proportionality can make it easier for small, e.g. Green parties to enter parliament. In turn, the presence of a Green party in parliament creates opportunities (e.g. in the form of elite allies) for citizens who are engaged in environmental action. In this case, it is not the more 'general' degree of proportionality itself which is an opportunity, but the space it creates for a Green party.

Finally, the distinction between input structures and output structures (Kitschelt, 1986) is the one that is central to my dissertation. Input structures refer to a system's openness to challengers' demands. Thus, a typical example of this is that Switzerland, a decentralized state with a proportional electoral system and a facilitative tradition towards social movements, is considered to be more open to challengers than the highly centralized, majoritarian and more repressive French state (Kriesi et al., 1995, pp. 41–51). Countries with such a more open input structure generate higher levels of participation and more moderate forms of action that make use of these structural openings. In contrast, countries with a closed input structure foster more radical action, or may even discourage citizens from becoming politically active altogether.

Output structures,[4] on the other hand, determine a system's ability to develop and implement policies effectively, and so to its capacity to translate challengers' claims into

[4] It is important to distinguish what is meant by output structures (Kitschelt, 1986) and the 'quality of government' (QOG), which is a concept that is often used by development scholars (Holmberg, Rothstein, & Nasiritousi, 2009; Holmberg & Rothstein, 2012). QOG, on the one hand, is a more general concept including the quality of democracy, levels of corruption, the rule of law, and the effectiveness with which government can formulate and implement policies, which combined is used to set apart successful from failed states. The output structure, on the other hand, refers only to the latter: the effectiveness of policy development and implementation (Kitschelt, 1986).

substantive political output (Kitschelt, 1986; Overby, 1990).[5] There are a number of elements distinguishing 'weak' from 'strong' states. Firstly, strong states have (relatively speaking) more spending power, which makes that they can afford to intervene in many domains of society to a larger extent (Kitschelt, 1986; Marshall & Fisher, 2015). Secondly, they have a highly centralized decision making process characterized by an absence of domestic veto players (Hutter, 2014; Vráblíková, 2014). Thirdly, strong states generally have to reckon with fewer external veto-players. Typically, political globalization – i.e. the degree to which a country is subjected to international treaties and organizations – is also considered to determine a state's ability to autonomously formulate and implement policies, as political globalization introduces many foreign veto players in the domestic political arena (Dreher, 2006). By looking at these broad indicators, output strength measures states' general ability to act. As we will see, looking at more specific measures of output strength can be beneficial as well (Giugni, 2004).

Whether greater output strength is an incentive or a disincentive for state-oriented NEP is debated. Following Kriesi et al. (1995, p. 27), Hutter (2014, Chapter 4) argues that strong states discourage NEP, because strong states are associated with a closed input structure, which limits challengers' access to the political decision making process (see also Vráblíková, 2014). At the same time, a strong output structure also limits challengers' input in the execution phase of policies. Here again, strong states need to take fewer actors into account, increasing their capacity to get things done, but reducing the influence of challengers. Such limited access should discourage goal-seeking activists from targeting the state.

To arrive at this conclusion, however, states' openness and strength must be inversely linked to each other, to form a single dimension distinguishing open/weak states from closed/strong states. While this is accurate for some measures of output strength, such as the degree of horizontal or territorial centralization (Hutter, 2014; Vráblíková, 2014), it

[5] Some scholars outside the social movement literature (e.g. Scharpf, 1970) have proposed that we should even add a third category to distinguish between the development and implementation of policies. Namely, while 'output' refers to the latter, 'throughput' should be used to cover the former. Even though this could be an interesting topic to explore, this distinction has not been adopted in the literature on social movements and NEP. Concurrently, I operate the distinction between input structures and output structures, where output refers to the state's capacity to get things done, and so to its ability to develop *and* implement policies.

does not hold for others. Looking at the criteria for output strength proposed by Kitschelt (1986) and others (e.g., Marshall & Fisher, 2015; Overby, 1990; Tilly, 2006, pp. 23–9), there are several elements that do not relate negatively to the openness of a political system. For instance, the control of the state over the market makes sure that citizens' claims can be turned into effective economic regulation, while the control of the state over the national budget makes sure that the state can afford to intervene in many domains of society to a larger extent. Neither of these elements restrict the openness of the system to citizens or movements. Moreover, there are input structures, like the facilitative or repressive tradition of the state towards social movements (McAdam, 1996), which do not necessarily decrease output strength. Thus, a strong output structure is not negatively related to a closed input structure *per se*.

**Table 0.1**: The two-dimensional structure of political opportunities

| | | **Input structures** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Open | Closed |
| **Output structures** | Strong | Strong/open<br>- High chances of procedural access<br>- High chances of substantive gains | Strong/closed<br>- Low chances of procedural access<br>- High chances of substantive gains |
| | Weak | Weak/open<br>- High chances of procedural access<br>- Low chances of substantive gains | Weak/closed<br>- Low chances of procedural access<br>- Low chances of substantive gains |

By recognizing that input structures and output structures are separate dimensions we can form four, instead of two, types of POS (as seen in Table 0.1), showing that strong systems do not necessarily have to be closed. Consequently, we arrive at different predictions, seeing output strength as an incentive rather than as a disincentive for state-oriented NEP. That is, some scholars have argued that because strong states can formulate and implement policies more efficiently, targeting them is more likely to result in substantive change, thereby rendering this type of state a more attractive target for those common types of activism that advance substantive change (Kitschelt, 1986; Klandermans, 1997, p. 169; Overby, 1990; Tarrow, 2011, pp. 176–7). Of course, this works only under the premise that government is

indeed willing to respond, but by recognizing the two-dimensional structure of POSs, this is certainly a possibility.

Whatever the case, empirical research has largely overlooked output strength, rendering this debate rather speculative for now. By doing so, the POS literature has paid surprisingly little attention to the fact that the locus of power is shifting away from the state and towards non-state actors, like international political organizations and multinational corporations (Bartolini, 2011; Held & McGrew, 2007; Kriesi et al., 2012). Because such developments towards global governance often result in weakening national output structures,[6] an important question that arises is whether people still believe the state is able to act upon their most pressing concerns (even if they believe it would be willing to do so) (Beck, 1997; Fox, 2014). I will address this gap in the literature by analyzing whether (perceived) output structures indeed condition citizens' perceived effectiveness of, and propensity for, forms of NEP that target the state.

*How do these elements matter?*

So how may such macro-level opportunities affect micro-level political behavior? Already in 1973 did Eisinger observe that 'the linkages between these diverse [macro-level] characteristics and patterns of political behavior (…) have seldom been made explicit theoretically.' (p. 11). Ever since, many authors have rightly raised similar concerns about the fact that this question has largely remained overlooked in the literature (Christensen, 2011; Koopmans, 2005; Meyer, 2004; Opp, 2009). In fact, most studies simply correlate POSs to political behavior or political outcomes without specifying any causality. According to Walgrave and Verhulst (2009, p. 1356), 'the micro-macro bridge is one of the least developed strands in the literature on protest and social movements, and the same applies to the whole of the social sciences (…).' With such a limited understanding of these mechanisms, our knowledge of the conditions under which POSs matter (or not) is also necessarily limited (Hedström & Ylikoski, 2010). This is problematic because empirical studies have overall yielded mixed results about the link between POSs and political behavior (Meyer, 2004),

[6] Of course, not all determinants of output strength are related to globalization to the same extent. For instance, like the presence of domestic veto players can result from electoral rules.

which begs the question: when do opportunities matter, and when do they not? Exploring causal mechanisms is a first key step in uncovering such conditions.

Even though empirical evidence remains scarce, the POS literature has proposed a number of theories about the question why it may be that people respond to POSs. These proposals can serve as the basis of further empirical explorations. Essentially, we can distinguish between models that assume people's awareness of, and conscious response to, POSs, and models that assume alternative, less reflexive mechanisms (Hutter, 2014; Meyer, 2004). To start with the latter, Meyer (2004) speaks of 'consistent champions', who continue their struggle, no matter the context, and who sometimes happen to strike a tone that resonates with the POS, 'like the broken clock that correctly tells time twice daily' (Meyer, 2004, p. 140). Similarly, Koopmans (2005) suggests that POSs shape tactical repertoires like the natural environment shapes species: through natural selection. Like within species, there is always diversity in the political strategies practiced within societies. The POS determines which of these forms are more 'fitting', and therefore more successful. Those forms of action that happen to be more successful are more likely to 'survive' the selection procedure that is dictated by the scarcity of resources. While this evolutionary theory offers a plausible explanation for how opportunities could shape tactical repertoires in a given context, it has largely remained overlooked.

A much more frequently proposed causal mechanism assumes that citizens are capable of perceiving POSs, and adjust their political behavior accordingly. Such a notion, Meyer (2004) captures in his idea of 'strategic respondents', who are somehow aware of the availability of opportunities or threats and respond accordingly. I call his model the 'perception hypothesis'. This model is by far the most often proposed explanation for the link between POSs and social movements and NEP (e.g. Kriesi et al., 1995, p. 245; McAdam, 1982, p. 48; Tarrow, 2011, p. 12). According to Klandermans (1997, p. 173), 'Opportunities would not have had any impact had they not been seized', while Gamson and Meyer (1996, p. 283) have suggested that 'an opportunity not recognized is no opportunity at all'. This model is in fact even embedded in Tarrow's (1996) very definition of POSs, as he speaks of dimensions that are 'incentives' for political action. What the perception hypothesis thus boils down to is the assumption that variations in government's willingness and ability to respond should be reflected in citizens' perceptions of government responsiveness, and that these perceptions affect their (perceived effectiveness of) NEP (Opp, 2009, p. 180).

Perceptions of government responsiveness have typically been operationalized as 'external efficacy' (Balch, 1974; Niemi, Craig, & Mattei, 1991), and so, external efficacy plays an important role in testing the perception hypothesis: The more open and strong government is, the more responsive it is, and the higher levels of external efficacy should be. However, in line with the more general lack of attention for government's ability act, external efficacy has traditionally been operationalized in a way that measures only whether citizens believe government is *willing* to respond to their demands. In contrast, government's perceived *ability* to respond has remained largely overlooked. Throughout this dissertation, I will argue that if external efficacy is to really capture citizens' perceptions of government responsiveness, it should reflect the distinction between input structures and output structures (Kitschelt, 1986). I operationalize this duality as 'external input efficacy', that is, perceptions of government's willingness to respond, and 'external output efficacy', that is, perceptions of government's ability to get things done.[7]

Importantly though, even with broad theoretical support for the perception hypothesis, some authors have also raised critical questions about it. In particular, it has been questioned whether it is at all likely that people can perceive political opportunities *correctly*, which is to be assumed if perceived opportunities must link real POSs to political behavior

[7] The downside of expanding the concept of external efficacy in this way, however, is that it further shifts attention from the individual's perceptions of his or her capacities to the qualities of the political system. The origin of the concept of political efficacy is in the socio-psychological concept of self-efficacy (i.e., "judgments of how well one can execute courses of action" (Bandura, 1982, p. 122)), and was first introduced into political science to measure "the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, (…) the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change" (Campbell et al., 1954, p. 187). Recognizing that political influence is affected by the political context as well, Balch (1974) later introduced the distinction between internal efficacy (perceptions of one's capacities to understand and participate in politics), and external efficacy (perceptions of government responsiveness), thereby shifting attention to perceptions of the political system. I am aware that by introducing the distinction between external input efficacy and external output efficacy, I further shift attention from the individual to the political context, and thus away from the original concept of self-efficacy. While I recognize that this does not do justice to conceptual genealogy of efficacy, I argue that the concept of external efficacy is one-sided as long as it focuses only on the openness of the system. Responsiveness is as much a matter of the state's ability to get things done, and so, if we want to incorporate a contextual dimension into how we measure citizens' perceived capacity for advancing political and social change, it is equally important to include a measure of perceived output structures, i.e. of external output efficacy.

(Koopmans, 2005, p. 27). For instance, according to Gamson and Meyer (1996), activists have an 'optimistic bias', meaning that they will always be inclined to perceive the POS as more favorable than it really is. While some authors have rightly argued that POSs do not have to be perceived 'correctly' to motivate NEP (Kurzman, 1996; Suh, 2001), only correctly perceived opportunities can constitute a link between 'real' POSs and NEP.

Notwithstanding these critiques, the perception hypothesis is by far the most often proposed causal model in the literature, yet it has hardly been tested empirically, and consequently, the question of causal mechanisms has remained unanswered. The perception hypothesis also appears to be the most straightforward explanation, and so, following the principle of Occam's razor, it is imperative to address the question of the macro-micro link between POSs and state-oriented NEP by testing the perception hypothesis.

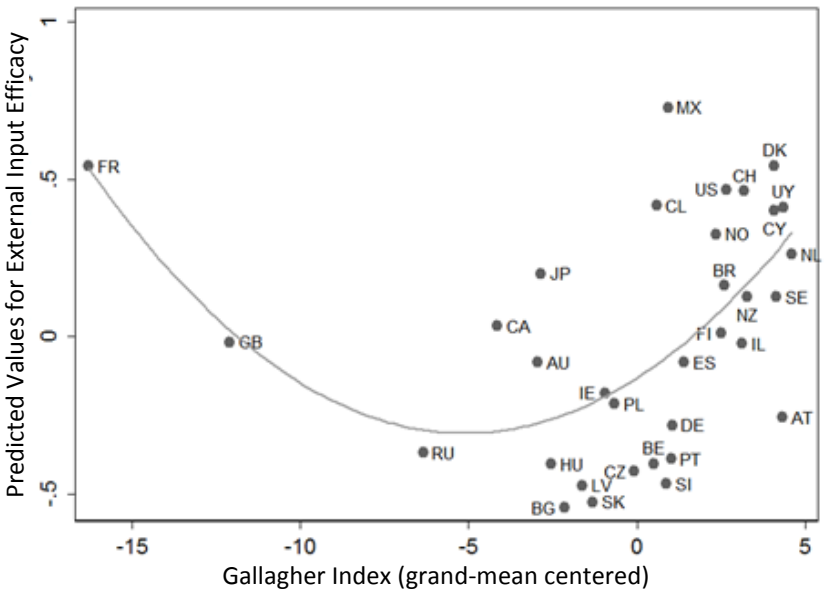
Moreover, in an earlier study that I conducted together with Anna Kern, Sofie Marien and Marc Hooghe (de Moor, Kern, Marien, & Hooghe, 2013), we already provided evidence which suggests that the perception hypothesis could well go a far way in explaining the link between POSs and NEP. In this study we tested whether in countries with a more open input structure, citizens perceived government as more willing to respond to their demands – i.e. whether they had higher external input efficacy. To measure openness, we looked at countries' electoral proportionality, as measured by the Gallagher-index (Gallagher & Mitchell, 2005; Gallagher, 1991, 1992). This index is widely recognized as a main indicator of the openness of political systems (e.g. Lijphart, 1999) as it directly measures how accurately the distribution of votes is translated into the distribution of seats in parliament, and thus how many people's votes are discarded by the electoral system. The less votes there are discarded, the less people there should be who feel their voice has no access to the political system, and the higher levels of external input efficacy should be.

The results in Figure 0.1 show that external input efficacy is both high in very proportional and in very disproportional countries.[8] It is clear as well, however, that the effect is carried by the extreme cases of Britain and France. While we argued that both countries are exemplary cases of disproportionate systems that cannot be discarded from our analyses

[8] Values are predicted based on a multilevel linear regression model of 33,622 respondents nested in 33 countries, using data from the 2004 International Social Survey Programme. The Gallagher Index is inverted so that higher values indicate more proportionality and grand mean centered.

as 'outliers', we did test what the effect would look like without including these disproportionate cases in our analyses. Without them, we find indeed that the more proportionate a country's electoral system is, the more citizens feel that politicians are willing to respond to their demands. As such the results provide important provisional support for the perception hypothesis.

**Figure 0.1**: The relation between the Gallagher Index and external input efficacy




Nevertheless, much remains to be analyzed, and so, building on these results, and on the broad theoretical support for the perception hypothesis, I will further explore in this dissertation whether (correctly) perceived opportunities can indeed explain why POSs affect individuals' state-oriented NEP. In doing this for both input structures and output structures, I address both the first and the second goal of this project.

**Socio-psychological and cognitive assumptions**

So far, I have made a number of predominantly implicit assumptions about the social psychology of political participation that need to be explicated in order to critically examine the proposed study. By using the POS approach to explain state- and non-state oriented NEP, I will mainly be approaching NEP from an individualistic and an instrumental point of view.

Moreover, I will be assuming that somehow it is cognitively possible for average citizens to perceive the POS. Each of these approaches have their benefits and limitations, and choosing them thus requires some reflection.

Firstly, in the social psychological tradition of analyzing NEP (e.g. Klandermans, 1997; van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013; van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009; van Zomeren, Leach, & Spears, 2012; van Zomeren, Postmes, & Spears, 2008), I will be approaching NEP in a rather individualistic way. That is, I presume that citizens consider individually whether they will become politically active, and that they do so on the basis of individual assessments of the political context. I thereby pay less attention to the roles collective actors like social movement organizations (SMOs) play in the mobilization of individuals (Clemens & Minkoff, 2004; McCarthy & Zald, 1977, 2002; Verba et al., 1995, Chapter 5), and in the framing of POSs (Gamson & Meyer, 1996). However, while SMOs certainly play an important role in developing campaigns, citizens still need to decide on an individual basis whether they will join any of them. After all, NEP is by definition a voluntary activity. Moreover, Bennett and Segerberg (2013; Bennett, 1998, 2012) have even argued that in the context of digital media and the individualization of society, the role of SMOs is becoming less important. Instead, citizens are becoming increasingly self-organized, which increases the weight of individual motivations for NEP.

Secondly, I have so far mainly given an instrumental interpretation of NEP (e.g. Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Walgrave, Van Laer, Verhulst, & Wouters, 2010). This approach assumes that people engage in political participation to pursue goals that are external to the action, like social or political change, and that NEP is mainly a means to this end (Klandermans, 2004). POSs are important in this regard, because people looking to advance certain goals will respond to opportunities that increase their (perceived) chances of success. These assumptions are supported by empirical evidence. Studies confirm that the majority of participants hold instrumental motivations (e.g. Klandermans, 1984; Walgrave et al., 2010),[9]

[9] The high number of people who indicate instrumental motivations may to some extent be a product of social desirability. Respondents may feel more inclined to report rational motivations for their behavior. Nevertheless, the numbers are quite overwhelming. Walgrave et al. (2010) found for instance that of the protesters they surveyed, 82.5 percent indicated instrumental motivations. Even though this might overestimate instrumental motivation somewhat, the evidence strongly suggests that many participants are goal-seeking to at least some extent.

and there is mainly evidence to suggest that POSs affect instrumentally motivated individuals (Ketelaars, 2015; Suh, 2001).

Nevertheless, this view is still somewhat one-sided as it overlooks the expressive motivation people can have for NEP. That is, people may also participate in politics because they want to express their views, their solidarity, or emotions like anger (Klandermans, 2004). Importantly, there is no inherent juxtaposition between instrumental and expressive motivations (van Zomeren et al., 2012). People often have multiple reasons to become politically active. People may for instance express their solidarity or identity while pursuing social change. People may also have exclusively expressive motivations (Walgrave et al., 2010), but even then, there are ways imaginable by which they would be affected by POSs as well. Of course, because activists with a strictly expressive motivation do not pursue social or political change, political opportunities that determine how likely they are to generate substantive change are irrelevant to them. Nonetheless, there are reasons to assume that certain elements of the POS matter for them as well. For one, whether there is a repressive tradition of government vis-à-vis civil engagement in a country (e.g., strict policing of protest) affects all activists equally, regardless of their motivation. Moreover, while expressively motivated participants do not pursue substantive changes, being heard and being taken seriously by politicians can still matter to them. Finally, following an expressive logic we can even arrive at opposite predictions from the ones derived form an instrumental logic. While a favorable POS may incite goal-seeking NEP, an unfavorable POS can trigger activism that is based on anger about e.g. government's irresponsiveness (Farah et al., 1979; Norris, Walgrave, & Van Aelst, 2005; Norris, 2011, Chapter 11). Hence, while this study follows the instrumental logic underlying much of the POS literature, expressive motivation may proof valuable when the empirical findings contradict the instrumental logic.

On a more basic level, the instrumental approach can moreover be questioned as it assumes that (political) motivations, attitudes and perceptions lead to (political) behavior. For one, we know from social psychology that human behavior is not always planned, as it is sometimes the result of automatized habits instead (Aarts, Verplanken, & Knippenberg, 1998). Moreover, even if we do accept that attitudes and behavior are related, the effect can go in both directions – not only from attitudes to behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000). This clearly applies to political behavior as well. Firstly, the experience of political participation may affect activists' attitudes and perceptions. For instance, as a result of a demonstration

that failed to have any impact, participants may come to believe that protesting is an ineffective form of action, or they may come to conclude the POS is very unfavorable. They may in fact even adapt their motivation for participating in hindsight. If the demonstration did not achieve any external goals, participants may be more inclined to indicate that they were not pursuing any goals in the first place, and that they did not overestimate chances of success. Secondly, there may be a degree of post hoc rationalization as a result of social desirability when people are asked about past political participation and political attitudes. For instance, people who indicate they have participated may feel a need to express that they find participation very effective, because they do not want to appear so irrational as to have engaged in ineffective activities. For similar reasons, they may also feel more inclined to indicate that opportunities were plenty. Hence, there are some good reasons to assume that motivations, attitudes, and perceptions are formed or adapted after the act of participating, and there is also empirical support for this idea (Finkel, 1985). Based on a panel study of Belgian adolescents, Quintelier and van Deth (2014) concluded that the effect is even stronger from political participation in the direction of various political attitudes (including political efficacy) than the other way around.

Nonetheless, there are some good reasons to assume that motivations, attitudes, and perceptions *do* affect political behavior. Most importantly, empirical studies that do have longitudinal data at their disposal support the idea that attitudes lead to behavior. This has been established in more general terms within social psychology, as well as in literature on political participation. From social psychology we know for instance that perceptions of self-efficacy (Bandura, 1982), and closely related to that, perceived behavioral control (i.e. 'people's perception of the ease or difficulty of performing (…) behavior of interest' (Ajzen, 1991, p. 183)), can both predict behavior. According to the 'theory of planned behavior' (Ajzen, 1991), the more people believe that they can perform a task well, and the more they believe that doing so will lead to a desired outcome, the more likely they are to engage in that behavior (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000; Bandura, 1997, 2000). Applied to the more specific task of political participation, several studies with longitudinal data at their disposal confirm the direction of this effect (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; Passy & Giugni, 2001; Van Laer, 2011; van Stekelenburg, Anikina, Pouw, Petrovic, & Nederlof, 2013).

Hence, it can be concluded that the relation between attitudes and behavior is an interactive one, where 'social attitudes are assumed to be residues of past experience that

guide future behavior' (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000, p. 2). While recognizing that both directions of this effect have thus been found to be significant in previous research, I will in this study test a number of common hypothesis about how motivations, attitudes, and perceptions affect behavior. As I will rely on cross-sectional data to do this (see below), I cannot test the assumed causal direction empirically, which will thus remain based on theoretical argumentation. Nevertheless, cross-sectional analyses are of course particularly useful for exploring relations between perceptions, attitudes and behavior, albeit that future research should provide more robust tests of causality. In the methods section of this introduction, and in the conclusion of my dissertation, I will come back to this issue in more detail.

Finally, by testing the 'perception hypothesis' I have made the cognitive assumption that it is possible that citizens generally have an at least somewhat correct perception of the POS. Formulated as such, this assumption certainly raises some doubts. After all, it is not very likely that 'average' citizens would be experts on e.g. the proportionality of the electoral system, let alone about whether their country is *relatively* proportional in comparison to neighboring countries. Stable elements of the POS will be particularly hard to perceive, as changes in POSs are more likely to stand out. Indeed, we know from cognitive science that stable objects are harder to notice than changing ones (e.g. Stokes, Matthen, & Biggs, 2014). Nevertheless, stable elements of the political context *are* found to predict NEP, which still begs the question: how so?

The answer may lie in the experience, rather than perception, of POSs. That is, citizens do not have to make accurate observations about their political context in order to hold perceptions of the POS that are in line with their political context. Rather, it is more likely that POSs create conditions that determine the likelihood that citizens will live through experiences that affect how open or strong they perceive the political system to be. Let me clarify this a bit on the basis of some examples. Firstly, imagine a disproportional electoral system i.e. where, as mentioned above, there is a relatively big gap between the distribution of votes and the distribution of seats in parliament. In such a disproportionate system there will be more people whose vote is discarded, and so, there will be more people who feel that their voice is not taken into account by the political system. Because such experiences of exclusion are more frequent, citizens on average perceive the input structure as more closed. In contrast, in a very proportional system, fewer people will have such a negative experience, thus increasing the average perceived openness of the political system to citizens' demands.

Another example is that of government spending and external output efficacy. It is unlikely that many citizens are aware of the comparative spending power of their government. However, in a country with a strong welfare state, citizens are more likely to have experienced that government has the capacity to get things done than in a minimal state (e.g., they experience that the state takes care of good education and health care).

My point is that POSs determine the likelihood that citizens will have experiences that condition their sense that the state is open or strong. In no way does this interpretation require that average citizens have correct knowledge of specific contextual characteristics. To be precise, then, the perception hypothesis does not exactly suggest that citizens 'perceive' POSs, but rather, that citizens' perceptions of the state's openness or strength will vary according to the 'real' POS. While it is beyond the scope of this study to interrogate the exact cognitive processes underlying the perception of POSs, this explanation provides an inherently plausible foundation for the idea that the macro-micro link between POSs and NEP is perception-based.

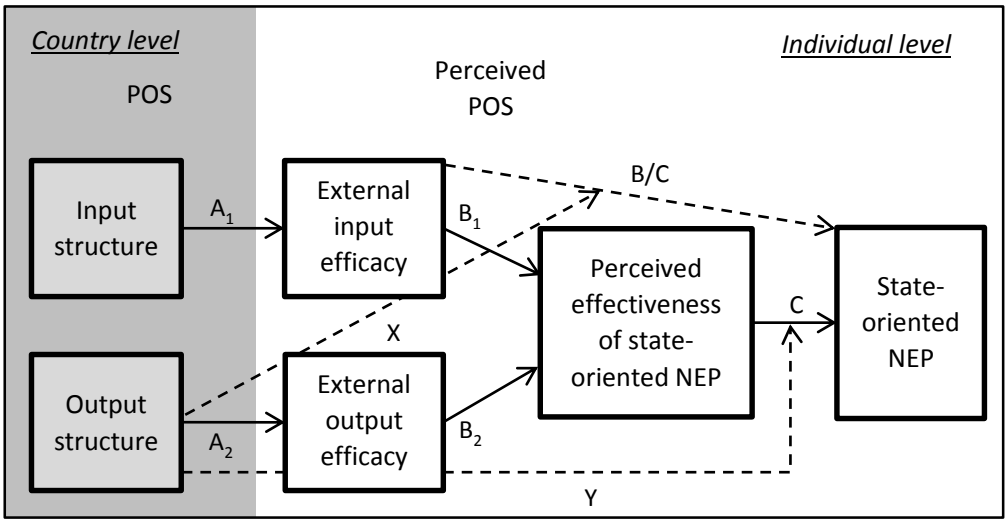
While I have demonstrated important merits of each of these approaches, they also have their limitations. Hence, throughout this dissertation I will revisit the tradeoffs that exist concerning each of them. Where necessary I will explore alternatives in more detail. In the conclusion of this dissertation, I will draw overarching conclusions about the usefulness of the chosen approach on the basis of my main findings.

## RESEARCH PLAN

Figure 0.2 summarizes the argument made so far (the dashed B/C, - X- and Y-arrows are explained below): both input structures and output structures are expected to provide relevant dimensions of the POS for NEP. They do so, arguably, because citizens have a correct perception of input structures ($A_1$) and of output structure ($A_2$). These perceptions in turn affect their expectations of the effectiveness of certain forms of state-oriented NEP ($B_1$ and $B_2$), and when citizens consider certain forms of NEP to be effective, they become more likely to engage in them (C). Thus, on the one hand this study concerns the macro-micro link between real and perceived POSs. On the other hand, it concerns individual-level relationship

between perceptions of the political context and (the perceived effectiveness of) NEP. In exploring both 'phases', distinction between input structures and output structures is central.

**Figure 0.2**: Hypothesized causal mechanism POS




*Note*: Arrows represent hypothesized effects. Dashed arrows represent indirect approaches.

Although there is thus wide support for this argument from a theoretical point of view, not all links in the figure have been empirically tested yet. Existing studies have so far mainly analyzed the direct effect of countries' input structure on NEP, but have disregarded the intermediate steps (Christensen, 2011; Quaranta, 2013; Vráblíková, 2014). Some authors have looked at the effect of external input efficacy on NEP (B/C). Moreover, some authors have already shown that the perceived effectiveness of political participation affects actual political participation (C) (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013; Verba et al., 1995). However, in doing so they generally do not distinguish between different forms of NEP, even though we know from previous research that citizens' perceptions of the effectiveness of different forms of NEP vary (Hooghe & Marien, 2014). Whether and how *real* input structures relate to external input efficacy ($A_1$), and how external input efficacy affects perceptions of the effectiveness of political participation ($B_1$) remains largely understudied.

The effect of output structures has so far been overlooked almost altogether. The direct effect of output structures on political participation has been analyzed in the case of voting (Marshall & Fisher, 2015; Steiner & Martin, 2012), but not for NEP. Moreover, whether output structures affect external output efficacy ($A_2$), and how external output efficacy affects the perceived effectiveness of political participation ($B_2$) remains unknown.

Table 0.2 summarizes which of the hypothesized causal links in Figure 0.2 have, and have not, been analyzed in the existing literature, and which of these links will be addressed in the current project. In this section I will discuss the methods I will use to do this, and I will give an overview of how the different chapters in this study relate to this model.

**Table 0.2**: Operationalization of hypothesized causal links

| Causal link (Figure 0.2) | Hypothesis | Existing studies | Chapter |
|---|---|---|---|
| **$A_1$** | The openness of input structures is perceived 'correctly' by citizens and activists | No | Intro, 3, 5 |
| **$A_2$** | The strength of output structures is perceived 'correctly' by citizens and activists | No | - |
| **$B_1$** | External input efficacy affects the perceived effectiveness of state-oriented NEP | Yes, but only anecdotal | 1, 3, 5 |
| **$B_2$** | External output efficacy affect the perceived effectiveness of state-oriented NEP | No | 1, 5 |
| **C** | The perceived effectiveness of certain forms of NEP predicts engagement in them | Yes, but not for specific forms of NEP | 1, 3, 5 |
| **B/C** | External input efficacy affects NEP | Yes | 2 |
| **X** | The strength of output structures affects the link between external input efficacy and the perceived effectiveness of NEP | No | 3 |
| **Y** | The strength of output structures affects the link between external input efficacy and NEP | No | 2 |
| **-** | Classification of different types of lifestyle politics and discussion of lifestyle politics as a form of NEP | | 4 |

**Methods and data**

The research project is divided into two parts: a set of quantitative studies, and a mixed-methods case-study. In the first part I will address specific links from Figure 0.2 using large-N survey data and regression analyses. In the second part I will present a mixed-methods case-study that integrates the various links in the figure into a single study. In this section I will explain in general terms what role each of these methods have played for the study of political participation, what their benefits and pitfalls are, and how they will be applied in this study. In each of the chapters, I will provide more detail on the exact measures and analyses that were used.

*Survey research and the study of political participation*

Large-N surveys have long been an indispensable tool for students of political participation. Almond and Verba (1963) were one of the first to survey the general population about their engagement in several 'conventional' forms of participation, while Barnes and Kaase's (1979) *Political Action Study* was the first to look into a broader set of conventional and 'unconventional' forms of participation,. Inglehart's *World Values Study* later established the worldwide expansion of these forms of NEP (Inglehart, 1997). Under the influence of these and other studies, survey research has become the main tool for studying political participation.

This is not surprising. Survey research is relatively cost-effective, it easily generates a high number of responses that can be analyzed using statistical methods, and it provides a highly standardized measurement that allows to compare political participation over time and across contexts, which is essential for the generalization of findings. Generalizability over time has been important for debates about the changing relation between citizens and the democratic process. Generalizability across contexts is particularly important for studies like this one that want to assess the influence of contexts on political attitudes and behavior.

It is to make use of such important advantages for comparative research that we need to accept that there are also certain pitfalls to this type of survey research. For one, most surveys containing good data about political participation, and in particular the comparative ones (e.g., the International Social Survey Programme or the European Social Survey), are cross-sectional in nature and do not allow for rigorous tests of causality. In fact, comparative panel-data are so costly to produce, that I know of no such survey on political

participation. Given the discussion of the interactive link between political attitudes and behavior outlined above, this is certainly an important issue to keep in mind when interpreting results. Nevertheless, comparative survey data are still very useful for exploring political attitudes, participation, and the effect of political contexts, and they provide the most efficient way to explore the links between POSs and NEP that are central to this study. Wherever correlations are found in this study by using cross-sectional data, panel studies or experiments could be used in future research to establish more precisely in what direction the found effects really go. I will return to this issue in the conclusion of this dissertation.

*General population surveys and protest surveys*

Beyond surveys in general, there are two specific types of surveys that have been important in political participation studies, each with their own additional benefits, but also with their own pitfalls.

Firstly, most political participation literature has relied on general population surveys, because political participation can be hard to pin-point other than by asking a random sample of the population about their past behavior. Some forms of political participation, such as voting or joining in a demonstration, do take place in known locations and at known times where participants can be surveyed, but other forms, like signing a petition or boycotting a product, can be much harder to locate (petitions are for instance often signed online) or to identify (how to spot somebody boycotting, i.e. *not* buying a product?). Therefore, to assess how many people engage in these types of participation, and to understand what characterizes participants, general population surveys have proven indispensable. Moreover, the general population survey is vital because most students of political participation are interested in what makes people participate, and to answer this question, participants as well as non-participants must be included.

To reap these benefits, this study uses two general population surveys. I will use the 2004 *Citizenship* module of the International Social Survey Programme, which contains uniquely detailed comparative data on political participation and external input efficacy (see also the analyses in Figure 0.2), and the PARTIREP 2014 Belgian election survey, which was the first general population survey to include a measure of external output efficacy. Both surveys are cross-sectional general population surveys that allow to analyze the distinction between participants and non-participants.

However, the information provided through general population surveys is often very thin and not contextualized. That is, we generally only know whether or not people have engaged in a certain form of participation, but we know very little about the characteristics of the exact activity people participated in (i.e. a specific demonstration or boycott campaign). However, we do know that the specific context matters a lot for participation. In fact, the more specific efficacy believes, the better they predict behavior (Morrell, 2005; Wollman & Strouder, 1991). Moreover, as argued above, POSs often have an important issue- or situation-specific dimension, and so here the argument holds as well: The more specific our information, the more likely we are to detect the predicted relationships.

Therefore, secondly, protest surveys have been used to analyze participants in a much more detailed and situation-specific way. In protest surveys, questionnaires are handed out to a random sample of participants in a demonstration, thereby allowing to researchers probe about the exact demonstration in which people are found to participate (Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2001). However, there is one major tradeoff: protest surveys do not include non-participants, and so, they do not provide any variation on the basis of which to explain why some people participate while others do not (van Stekelenburg, Walgrave, Klandermans, & Verhulst, 2012). Nonetheless, they do allow to compare participants across different contexts, and thus how they are affected by very specific contexts. In particular, in this study, I will be using data from the International Peace Protest Survey (2003), in which protesters were surveyed in anti-Iraq War demonstrations in eight countries on the same day. Keeping all other things constant, this setting provided an excellent natural experiment to test precisely what the effects of these varying contexts were (Walgrave & Rucht, 2010a, p. 262).

*Statistical analyses*

Notwithstanding some important shortcomings, I will in this study thus rely strongly on survey research. These surveys will be analyzed using a variety of regression analyses. Most importantly I will be using (ordered) logistic regressions to predict categorical variables (Mortelmans, 2010), such as whether or not respondents participated in (a certain form of) NEP, and I will use mediation analyses (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes, 2009; MacKinnon, Fairchild, & Fritz, 2007) to disentangle direct and indirect effects (e.g. to analyze the how the effect of external efficacy on NEP is mediated by the perceived effectiveness of NEP).

Moreover, to test the link between real (country-level) POSs and perceived (individual-level) opportunities using comparative surveys, I use two methods of analyses. For studies with a sufficiently large N at the country-level (> 30) (Steenbergen & Jones, 2002), I rely on multilevel regression analyses with random intercepts and random effects (Hox, 2010; Rabe-Hesketh & Skrondal, 2012a, 2012b). The analyses allow to compute coefficient for the relation between individual-level variables, but also of country-level variables. Moreover, the cross-level interactions allow to assess whether country-level characteristics condition relations at the individual-level (Kam & Franzese, 2007). When the country-level N is not sufficiently large (< 30) (Steenbergen & Jones, 2002), though, I will rely on the analysis of interaction effects with dummy-variables indicating countries in fixed effects models (Möhring, 2012). This approach is a useful solution to the common problem that in comparative research, the cases at the second level are often too small. While it is limited to the extent that it does not provide coefficients that indicate how strong the effects of specific country-level characteristics are, it still allows to assess whether certain individual-level effects vary significantly between countries, and how much so.

Below, I will discuss in more detail which data and analyses are used in each of the chapters in this dissertation.

*Case study research*

Although large-N studies have a number of strong advantages for testing specific hypotheses, the information provided by survey research is often fragmented and thin. To address the main research question in a thicker, more integrated fashion, the second part of this project will offer an in-depth, mixed-method case-study that provides a closer look at how activists engaged in social movements perceive POSs, and how this affects their strategic preferences and actions. This case study delves deeper into an increasingly important form of non-state oriented NEP and highlights an empirical setting in which contextual opportunities are likely to play an important role, but where the POS approach with its current focus on input structures falls short of providing satisfactory explanations.

Specifically, the case-study looks at motivations for people's engagement in of lifestyle politics and analyzes its relation to more 'traditional' state-oriented NEP. By focusing on lifestyle politics, this study contributes to our understanding of one of the most emblematic participation repertoires of our time (Forno & Graziano, 2014; Haenfler, Johnson,

& Jones, 2012; Micheletti & Stolle, 2010; Wahlen & Laamanen, 2015), but it also provides an excellent opportunity to explore the ideas proposed in the first part of this study in more depth. In this study I will mainly focus on the individual-level. As this chapter analyzes a single case, it lacks the comparative angle that would allow to thoroughly test the link between real and perceived opportunities. Nevertheless, I will be able to corroborate activists' perceived opportunities with their real political context.

The focus in this chapter, however, will be on the link between perceived opportunities and (the perceived effectiveness of) NEP. In particular, the proposed shift of attention from input structures to output structures may proof essential in explaining some key aspects of lifestyle politics that have remained based on speculation until now. That is, much of the literature has suggested that perceived opportunities may be essential in explaining why people engage in lifestyle politics, and in particular in explaining why some activists combine lifestyle politics with the state-oriented politics, while others focus on lifestyle politics more exclusively (Haydu & Kadanoff, 2010). Specifically, in line with arguments made above, it is often assumed that the globalization of political power and the weakening of the state motivates citizens to become more (exclusively) invested in non-state oriented NEP (e.g. Beck, 1997; Fox, 2014; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013, p. 34). However, this idea has remained largely untested until now.

I address this gap in the literature in two stages. First, the interrelatedness between lifestyle politics and state-oriented politics is analyzed from a conceptual point of view on the basis of an extensive literature review on lifestyle politics. A classification of lifestyle politics is proposed along with a discussion of its relation to the concept of political participation. This part does not speak directly to the causal pathways in Figure 0.2, but it lays out the conceptual basis for the empirical case-study on lifestyle politics and its link to state-oriented NEP that follows.

Here, this study's focal concerns will be addressed in a mixed-methods fashion by utilizing participant observation, qualitative interviewing, and surveys. Participant observation and qualitative interviewing are used to offer a deep understanding of activists' actions and motivations, thus contributing to a thicker and more integrated approach of the research questions. A survey will be used to provide a more general picture of activists' attitudes and behavior, and it allows to evaluate hypotheses on criteria of statistical

significance. Combined, these methods ensure both an in-depth and robust analysis (Tarrow, 2004).

The generalizability of this study is based upon a typical case design (Gerring, 2007, pp. 91–7). By definition, findings in one typical case are likely to hold in others as well. As such, it lays the foundation upon which research into e.g. deviant cases can begin to explore the limits of generalizability. As will be explained in more detail in the study, we therefore selected a typical lifestyle movement organization (Velt) in a typical European context (Belgium).

## OVERVIEW OF THE CHAPTERS

In the first chapter I will focus on the individual level only, and test whether the perceived effectiveness of state-oriented forms of NEP is indeed affected by external input efficacy ($B_1$) and external output efficacy ($B_2$), and whether higher perceptions of effectiveness indeed increase the probability of participation in a specific form of state-oriented NEP (*C*). Chapter 1 is also where I first introduce the new conceptual distinction between external input efficacy and external output efficacy. While I hypothesize that external efficacy should only affect state-oriented NEP, I look also at non-state oriented NEP to provide counterfactual evidence for my hypotheses. Namely, I suggest that non-state oriented NEP should not be affected by either form of external efficacy. Data is used from the 2014 PARTIREP survey, which is the first large-N survey including a measure of external output efficacy. The data are analyzed using mediation analyses to assess the indirect effect of external input/output efficacy on NEP, as mediated by perceptions of effectiveness.

The second chapter aims to find the first comparative evidence for the idea that 'real' output structures are picked up by citizens and matter for their NEP. In the absence of international survey data on external output efficacy, it is unfortunately not (yet) possible to analyze directly whether country-level indicators of output strength affect levels of external output efficacy and NEP ($A_2$ in Figure 0.2). An alternative approach is therefore proposed that can establish indirect proof for the importance of output structures in the link between the political context and NEP. More precisely, using multilevel analyses with cross-level interactions I look at how 'real' output structures affect the link between external input efficacy and NEP. The hypothesis that will be tested is that whether people believe

government is willing to take their demands into account (i.e. whether someone has high external input efficacy) matters more for their NEP (*B/C*) in countries with a strong output structure (*Y*). This is assumed because in countries with a strong output structure, politicians who are willing to take challengers' demands into account are also more likely to actually be able to 'get things done', and thus to turn those demands into substantive political change. If evidence for this effect is found, it would suggest that citizens indeed perceive output structures. After all, it would show that output structures condition how much people think government's willingness to respond affects the effectiveness of NEP, and thus that the strength of output structures is taken into consideration when citizens consider the link between government responsiveness and NEP. Like in the analyses presented in above (de Moor et al., 2013), individual-level data are used from the International Social Survey Program (2004).

The third chapter largely uses the logic of the first two chapters and the study presented in Figure 0.1, and applies it to the specific case of the anti-Iraq War demonstrations. Using a comparative data set of participants in these demonstrations in eight countries (IPPS, Walgrave et al., 2003; N = 5,772), it tests whether protesters' external input efficacy[10] reflects the 'real' openness of countries' input structures – measured in both a general and a situation-specific way ($A_1$). Moreover, it will be tested whether external input efficacy predicts perceived chances of success ($B_1$), and whether it does so more in countries where governments had a more direct influence on the occurrence of the invasion of Iraq (*X*). The latter is expected, because in these countries, politicians' willingness to take protesters' messages into account would have been more likely to result in substantive political change. Because the anti-Iraq War demonstrations took place in many countries on the same day, it provides a unique opportunity to test the comparative assumptions of the POS in a situation-specific context. However, because this chapter relies on protest survey data, it analyzes

[10] To be precise, I do not use the concept of external input efficacy in Chapter 3, but instead speak of 'expected procedural gains'. Expected procedural gains refers to protesters' perceptions of the impact of their demonstration on politicians, and as such, it relates closely to the notion of external input efficacy. However, there is an important nuance. External input efficacy refers to beliefs about the willingness of government to respond, whereas expected procedural gains (cf. Kitschelt, 1986) measures whether protesters believe they can influence politicians, which is attributable either to the responsiveness of politicians or to activists' or the movement's capacities. The measurements in the IPPS unfortunately has not discriminated between these two potential causes, and so it remains unspecified to what extent these beliefs should be attributed to perceived opportunities.

differences among activists, rather than between participants and non-participants. This is the typical trade-off when using protest surveys: it gives detailed and contextualized information about protesters, but excludes non-participants (van Stekelenburg et al., 2012). Nevertheless, in doing so, this chapter still addresses several of the central premises of the model being tested in this study.

In the last two chapters, I zoom in on lifestyle politics, doing so first from a conceptual point of view, and then empirically.

As citizens are becoming politically active in increasingly diverse ways, many scholars have recently begun to rethink what we mean by political participation. One of the main fields of action where political participation is expanding is that of lifestyle politics, which is reflected in a rapidly growing number of studies analyzing this type of NEP (for overviews see: Forno & Graziano, 2014; Haenfler et al., 2012; Wahlen & Laamanen, 2015). In chapter 4 I analyze whether one of the most recent and most exhaustive attempts to conceptualize political participation (van Deth, 2014) is capable of grasping the complexity represented in lifestyle politics. To do so, I provide a literature review and propose a classification of lifestyle politics. I distinguish between 'lifestyle change', which is focused on one's own or a collective's lifestyle, and 'lifestyle mobilization', which rather aims to foster social change by mobilizing lifestyle change in the general public. Finally, I introduce the concept of 'indirect lifestyle politics', which uses lifestyle politics to also create political momentum for change at a larger scale by affecting political or economic decision makers. Here I thus highlight the interrelatedness of lifestyle politics and indirect political strategies like state-oriented NEP, which in turn I use to qualify can Deth's conceptualization. This classification provides the theoretical foundation for analyzing how this interrelatedness (or the lack thereof) can be explained by looking at POSs, which is the subject of the fifth chapter.

Lifestyle politics have a special relation to the institutional structures of the state. Often, they are considered to be a means for fostering social change that allows activists to avoid the institutional political arena (Eliasoph, 1998; Micheletti, 2003; van Deth & Maloney, 2012). However, other studies indicate also that lifestyle movements and lifestyle activists often engage in both state-oriented (e.g., contacting politicians) and non-state oriented forms of NEP (e.g., political consumerism) (Dubuisson-Quellier, Lamine, & Le Velly, 2011;

Graziano & Forno, 2012; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013). In the fifth and final chapter[11] I zoom in on the complex relation between lifestyle politics and the state. Firstly, it is inquired in further detail how different types of lifestyle politics and state-oriented NEP relate to each other in a movement context. Next, it is investigated whether external input efficacy and external output efficacy can help explain why some lifestyle activists combine lifestyle politics with state-oriented politics, while other do not. To do so, an in-depth case study is made of a typical lifestyle movement organization (Velt) using a triangulation of three methods: participant observation, interviews, and surveys.

In sum, these five chapters will make several necessary contributions to the literature on POSs and NEP. They will increase our understanding of the macro-micro link between POSs and NEP, and expand the literature's traditional focus on input structures to include output structures as well. They will do so by looking at general POSs as well as situation-specific POSs, and they integrate various methods to diversify insights and generate robust findings. Moreover, these studies will increase our understanding of NEP, and in particular, of the link between state- and non-state oriented NEP like lifestyle politics. The chapters are stand-alone papers that can be read individually, yet they are presented in a specific order following the introduction of new concepts and ideas, which are then further explored in subsequent chapters. The findings of these chapters will be summarized in the concluding chapter, where I will draw overarching conclusions about the link between POSs and NEP.

[11] This chapter was written together with Sofie Marien and Marc Hooghe, yet I have been the principle investigator in this study. I have executed, analyzed and reported all analyses. Sofie Marien and Marc Hooghe have supported this study with insightful recommendations, which have helped the development and formulation of some of the study's main arguments.

# 1

# EXTERNAL EFFICACY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION REVISITED:

# The role of perceived output structures for state- and non-state oriented action forms

**Abstract**

*Numerous studies have stressed the role of citizens' perceptions of the state's responsiveness to explain political participation. However, in doing so, they have mainly focused on citizens' perceptions of the state's* willingness *respond. In contrast, how political participation is affected by citizens' perceptions of the state's* ability *to respond remains empirically overlooked – despite wide theoretical support. This chapter aims to address this gap in the literature using data from the 2014 PARTIREP Belgian election survey (N=2019). In line with the hypotheses, mediation analyses confirm that the state's perceived ability to respond indirectly increases state-oriented political participation, while non-state oriented political participation is unaffected.*

*This chapter is based on the following article:*

de Moor, J. (Forthcoming – online 2015). External Efficacy and Political Participation Revisited: The role of perceived output structures for state- and non-state oriented action forms. *Parliamentary Affairs.*

# EXTERNAL EFFICACY AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION REVISITED:

## The role of perceived output structures for state- and non-state oriented action forms

Citizens' political participation 'beyond the vote' is often considered to be an essential condition for ensuring a strong involvement of citizens in the democratic system (Christensen, 2011; della Porta, 2013). Many studies have therefore sought to explain why citizens do or do not become politically active, often understanding political participation as a means for citizens to change political outcomes and to foster social change (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013; van Zomeren et al., 2008; Verba et al., 1995). From this instrumental point of view, citizens can be assumed to be most likely to engage in political participation if they consider doing so to be effective in achieving such goals. Of course, political participation can also have expressive motivations, like venting a particular grievance, or sense of solidarity (Klandermans, 2004) and in such cases, the goal of participation is in the act itself, rendering perceptions of effectiveness irrelevant. Nevertheless, in general, a sense of political efficacy is found to be a strong predictor of participation (Bandura, 1982; van Zomeren et al., 2008; Verba et al., 1995, pp. 343–64). Hence, understanding exactly why people perceive political participation as effective is crucial for our comprehension of why some become politically active, while others do not. Therefore, this study analyzes what determines citizens' efficacy beliefs regarding specific forms of participation, and it tests whether actual political participation is consequently affected as well. It is often argued that efficacy beliefs strongly depend upon perceptions of the political context (Bandura, 1982; Lee, 2010). In particular, numerous authors have

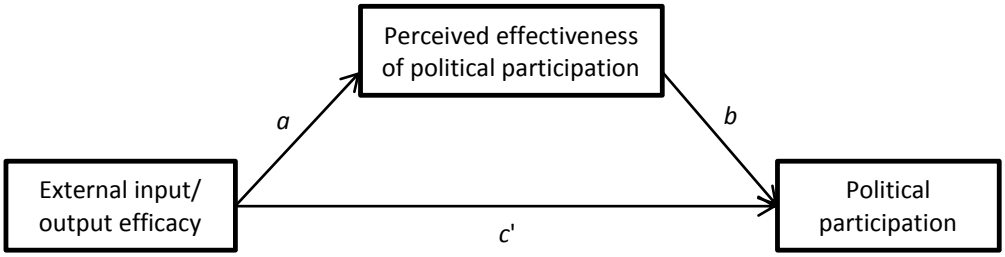
emphasized that citizens' perceptions of the responsiveness of the state play a major role in determining their (perceived effectiveness of) political participation (e.g., McAdam, 1982, p. 48; Tarrow, 2011, p. 12). Citizens who consider government to be responsive will consider participation to be more effective because in their view it is likely that authorities will change political outcomes according to their demands, and consequently, they will become more likely to participate (Karp & Banducci, 2008). If they consider government to be irresponsive instead, participation will appear ineffective, and hence, unappealing. To explain citizens' expectations of effectiveness, therefore, it is important to look at their perceptions of state responsiveness – i.e., at their external efficacy (Niemi et al., 1991).

Although external efficacy is a well-established predictor of political participation, it is often overlooked that state responsiveness has at least two dimensions: 1) whether authorities are *willing* to take citizens' demands into account, and 2) whether they are *able* to get things done (Hutter, 2014; Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi et al., 1995). To express this more technically, states have an 'input structure' that can be more closed or open to citizens' demands, and they have an 'output structure' that determines their ability to effectively produce political outcomes (Kitschelt, 1986). This study explores the idea that citizens' external efficacy should reflect this duality, thereby affecting their political participation. Perceptions of the state's willingness to take citizens into account will be defined as *external input efficacy*, while perceptions of the state's ability to act will be defined as *external output efficacy*. Until now, studies analyzing external efficacy have only measured external input efficacy, which they indeed find to relate positively to political participation (Karp & Banducci, 2008; Niemi et al., 1991). In contrast, external output efficacy has rarely been studied, and as a result, it remains largely unknown whether and how it affects (the perceived effectiveness of) political participation. This study aims to address this gap in the literature. As Figure 1.1 illustrates, it analyzes the effect of both external input efficacy and external output efficacy on various forms of political participation, and it tests whether indeed, this effect is mediated by perceptions of effectiveness. Expected variations between the effects on different forms of participation will be discussed in the next section.

Data is used from the 2014 PARTIREP election survey. This survey is the first large-N survey to include measures of external output efficacy and these data are therefore uniquely appropriate to address the research question. To analyze direct and indirect effects, mediation analysis will be used. In what follows, I will further outline the theoretical

framework, the data, measurements, and methods, after which I will present the results of the analyses. I conclude with a discussion of the theoretical implications of the findings.

**Figure 1.1**: Hypothesized direct and indirect effects




## PARTICIPATION, EFFICACY, AND THE STATE'S ABILITY TO ACT

Perceptions of *state responsiveness* play a central role in this study's attempt to explain citizens' (perceived effectiveness of) political participation. This presupposes that political participation links citizens and the state. After all, assuming that citizens' perceptions of the state will affect their participation only makes sense if the state can be considered a relevant party in a particular negotiation. This state-centered view clearly reflects Verba, Schlozman and Brady's classic definition of political participation as 'activity that has the intent or effect of influencing government action' (1995, p. 38). Of course, not all forms of political participation target the state, and below, the implications of perceptions of responsiveness for emerging, non-state oriented forms of participation will be discussed in detail (Fox, 2014; Norris, 2002; van Deth, 2014). For now, however, this state-centered view provides a useful starting point as many prevalent forms of political participation do remain targeted at the state. That is, institutional forms of political participation, such as contacting politicians, are targeted at the state by definition, and in many instances, so are extrainstitutional forms of political participation like petitioning (Bochel, 2013). Hence, notwithstanding the growing importance of non-state oriented action forms (e.g., political consumerism), in many cases the state remains an important contextual determinant that should be taken into account when explaining political participation (Vráblíková, 2014).

More specifically, this view suggests that the state's *political opportunity structure* (POS) provides an essential determinant of political participation, as it is assumed to

determine the effectiveness, and consequently, the prevalence, of political participation (Christensen, 2011; Kriesi et al., 1995; Vráblíková, 2014). That is, for state-oriented political participation to be effective, the state needs to be responsive to its claimants. After all, unresponsiveness can be considered to preclude effectiveness when it comes to action that demands policy-enforced change. This underscores the two core dimensions of the state's POS: its input structure and its output structure (Kitschelt, 1986). On the one hand, responsiveness refers to the state's willingness to take citizens' demands into account, or in other words, to the openness of its input structure. For instance, a state may have many institutional structures that enable civic involvement, like civic initiatives or referenda, or it may have a strong facilitative tradition towards civil society groups (Tarrow, 2011). On the other hand, responsiveness refers to the state's ability to produce political output, or put differently, to the strength of its output structure. A state is considered to be strong when its internal organization allows it to effectively develop and implement public policy, when there are few external forces that inhibit this ability, and thus, when its decisions and actions have a strong impact on society (Goodin, 1996; Kriesi et al., 1995, pp. 27–33). It is assumed that state-oriented political participation is most effective in the context of a state with an open input structure and a strong output structure, because here, the state is both willing and able to respond to citizens' demands (Kitschelt, 1986; Overby, 1990).[12]

Concurrently, citizens' *perceptions of* the POS can be expected to determine their beliefs in the effectiveness of state-oriented political participation, and in turn, their preparedness to engage in such activities (Gamson & Meyer, 1996; Klandermans, 1997, pp. 173–4; 48 McAdam, 1982). Perceptions of effectiveness motivate people to engage in political participation by giving them the confidence that doing so will have the desired outcome (Bandura, 1982; van Zomeren et al., 2008). Following the POS approach, these perceptions of effectiveness could thus be explained by beliefs about the responsiveness of government to its claimants (Lee, 2010; McAdam, 1982), or in other words, by *external efficacy* (as opposed to *internal efficacy* which refers the feeling that one can understand and

[12] Some authors describe a trade-off between a state's openness and its strength. That is, a state that has a very open input structure might have to reckon with more interference from external actors such as citizens and social movements, which limits its ability to act (Kriesi et al., 1995, p. 27). Still, this trade-off is not definite. For instance, there are countries that have a facilitative tradition towards social movements but that are still fairly autonomous in the development and execution of particular policies.

participate in politics) (Niemi et al., 1991, pp. 1407–8). In short, as people with higher external efficacy are inclined to believe that state authorities will respond to their demands, they will consider political participation to be more effective, becoming more likely to participate (Bandura, 1982; Karp & Banducci, 2008; Niemi et al., 1991).

As argued above, though, the state's responsiveness depends on both its willingness and its ability to translate citizens' demands into effective political output. Arguably, then, perceptions of both these elements make out someone's external efficacy. For instance, someone may be confident that politicians are willing to take his/her demands into account, but at the same time be sceptic about politicians' ability to translate those demands into some form of political output, like policy change. As a result, this person will believe that it is rather unlikely that government will be responsive in terms of providing the demanded change. Nevertheless, existing studies have generally only measured external efficacy as individuals' perception of the state's *willingness* to take citizens' demands into account (Karp & Banducci, 2008; e.g., Niemi et al., 1991). Individuals' perceptions of the state's *ability* to produce political output are rarely measured. Put differently, while external *input* efficacy is often included in analyses, external *output* efficacy is generally overlooked. Consequently, the literature on external efficacy and political participation has painted a one-sided picture that leaves unanswered the question how external output efficacy affects (the perceived effectiveness of) political participation. It is the main goal of this study to address this gap in the literature.

**State and non-state oriented action forms**

The argument made so far only makes sense for forms of political participation that are in some way targeted at the state. However, as mentioned already, political participation is increasingly found to be expanding, coming to include non-state oriented action forms as well (Norris, 2002; van Deth, 2014). As political power is shifting towards international organizations and corporate actors, the nation state is becoming a less obvious target for people who want to bring about certain social changes (Fox, 2014; Sloam, 2007). Instead, citizens become increasingly engaged in action forms that could target new power holders. For instance, petitions are today used to target state- as well as non-state actors, and boycotts pose an increasingly popular activity to directly target economic actors (Christensen, 2011; Copeland, 2014; Hooghe & Marien, 2014).

In these cases, the hypothesized (indirect) effect of external input/output efficacy is likely to be different. That is, depending on the degree to which a form of participation is state-oriented, the hypothesized effect of both forms of external efficacy will vary, resulting in three different effects. Firstly, it is expected that the effect will be strongest in the case of types of political participation that mainly target state actors (*e.g.*, contacting politicians through mail or email). Secondly, it is expected that the effect will be present but weaker for types of participation that can be targeted at both state- and non-state actors (*e.g.*, signing a petition). Finally, it is expected that the effect will be absent in the case of non-state oriented types of participation (*e.g.*, boycotting a product). Including this counterfactual hypothesis will provide further evidence for the specificity of the assumed link between external efficacy and state-oriented action forms.

H1: *There is a positive effect of external input/output efficacy on state-oriented forms of political participation that is mediated by the perceived effectiveness of those forms of participation*.

H2: *The more state-oriented the form of participation, the stronger the effects.*

H3: *There are no effects on non-state-oriented forms of political participation.*

## DATA, MEASUREMENTS AND METHODS

### Data

In order to test the hypotheses proposed above, data is used from the 2014 PARTIREP pre-election survey. This CAPI survey contains data from a representative sample of 2019 Belgian adults, including both citizens from the Flemish and the Walloon part of the country (response-rate = 45%). To correct for over- and under- representation of certain age, sex, and education categories, weighting coefficients have been computed using the ranking ratio method. The survey was conducted prior to the three-level (regional, national, and European) elections of May 25, 2014. Of course, the fact that the PARTIREP survey contains data from only the Belgian population has important implications for the generalizability of the findings. Still, as Hooghe and Marien (2014) have observed, 'analyses of the European Social Survey

have shown repeatedly that it [Belgium] is not exceptional with regard to participation patterns or political attitudes in the European context' (p. 7). Hence, although further comparative analyses would merit the generalizability of this study, the Belgian case has theoretical implications beyond its own borders as well.

**Measurements**

*Dependent variables: state and non-state oriented political participation*

As an example of state-oriented participation, contacting politicians through mail or email is used.[13] As an example of non-state oriented participation, boycotting products is used. Signing a petition represents a 'mixed' form, that can be used either to target state- or non-state actors. These forms of participation have in common that they are among the most prevalent forms of participation, which is generally ascribed to the low participation-threshold related to their non-structural nature (Sloam, 2007; Stolle & Hooghe, 2011). For each of these types of participation, respondents were asked whether they had made use of it during the last 12 months (1 = yes, 0 = no).[14] Moderate tetrachoric correlations indicate that there is an important connection between these forms of participation, but that there is still sufficient unique variation between them (see Appendix 1.1). This supports this chapter's emphasis on treating these forms of participation as related but distinct types of behavior.

*Independent variables*

Building on numerous studies that have already included external input efficacy in their analyses (but of course referred to it as external efficacy - e.g., Hooghe & Marien, 2014; Niemi et al., 1991; Vráblíková, 2014), external input efficacy is here measured by tapping into respondents' perceptions of government's general openness towards citizens' demands.

[13] Voting is perhaps the prototypical form of state-oriented political participation, however, since we surveyed voters only, there is no variation to be explained using this indicator. Moreover, voting is mandatory in Belgium, which overall reduces explainable variation.

[14] The original questionnaire contained 4 possible answers as to whether someone had engaged in a form of political participation: 1) often, 2) sometimes, 3) rarely, 4) never. For reasons of distribution (all items are heavily skewed towards the 'never' category, with only few respondents indicating the 'often' and 'sometimes' categories), the items were recoded into two categories. The first three categories were recoded into 'participated', while the fourth category became 'did not participate'.

Respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed (1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree) with the statement that 'The average citizen does affect political decisions and the actions government takes'.

In contrast, the PARTIREP survey is the first large-N survey to include a measure of external output efficacy. To measure respondents' perception of government's ability to act, they were asked to what extent they agree or disagree (ranging 1 to 5) with the statement that: 'Politicians in my country are capable of acting upon problems'. It is important to note that the item measures *whether* respondents believed politicians are able to act, not *why*. The literature has given various explanations in this regard. As mentioned already, recent studies have mainly emphasized that states are becoming increasingly powerless with the expansion of global governance, arguing that this evolution renders citizens skeptic about politicians' ability to act (Fox, 2014), yet others have emphasized the role of personal traits of politicians, like their professional competence (Gamson, 1968). Though different processes may thus underlie citizens' beliefs in politicians' ability to act, citizens who score low on this item can be said to have limited external output efficacy. The survey question was used and tested previously in a mixed-methods case-study on Belgian environmental activists (reference blinded for review). This study confirmed that this question performed well in terms of understandability, and triggered sufficient variation.

Thus, whereas external input efficacy measures whether respondents believe government is open to their demands, external output efficacy measures whether they believe government can actually get something done. The bivariate correlation between these two variables is moderate (.19***), which suggests that, although they are related, they measure clearly distinct evaluations of government responsiveness. This indicates the usefulness of disentangling this attitude.

*Mediating variables: the perceived effectiveness of political participation*

The PARTIREP survey contains detailed information on how effective respondents consider several particular forms of political participation, including contacting politicians, signing a petition, and boycotting. Concerning each of these forms of participation, respondents were asked the following question: 'Citizens can do different things in order to try to have an impact on political decisions. Could you rate the following acts on how effective they are in order to influence political decisions?' Answers were given on a Likert-scale, ranging from 1

('very ineffective') to 7 ('very effective'). This question clearly measures the perceived instrumental impact of these action forms (Hooghe & Marien, 2014).

*Control variables*

Several personal characteristics and political attitudes have been linked to (the perceived effectiveness of) political participation in previous studies and therefore need to be controlled for in the analyses as well. Men and older people generally feel more efficacious about politics, and they are more inclined to engage in institutional forms of participation (Marien, Hooghe, & Quintelier, 2010; Stolle & Hooghe, 2011). Women and young people have a stronger tendency to engage in non-institutional forms of participation (Stolle & Hooghe, 2011), although some studies suggest that even here older people are overrepresented (Wattenberg, 2012). People with higher education generally feel more efficacious, and overall they participate in politics more often (Niemi et al., 1991; Stolle & Hooghe, 2011). As for political attitudes, we know from a large body of voting literature that party identification affects the way in which citizens engage with the political system. While some argue that party identification imbues citizens with a loyalty-based tendency for political participation (Green, Palmquist, & Schickler, 2002), others suggest that it reflects citizens' judgments about the performance of parties and leaders, in turn affecting what they expect to gain from any instrumental interactions with the system (Clarke, Sanders, Stewart, & Whiteley, 2004). Furthermore, in general, people with higher political interest and internal efficacy are more inclined to participate in politics (van Zomeren et al., 2008; Verba et al., 1995). Political trust is found to have a positive relation with institutional participation, whereas it relates negatively to non-institutional participation (Hooghe & Marien, 2013). Finally, satisfaction with democracy is found to affect political participation in various ways as well (Ezrow & Xezonakis, 2016). Thus, age, sex (0 = men, 1 = women), and a categorical variable for level of education (recoded to 1 = low, 2 = middle, 3 = high)[15] are included as background variables in all analyses. Party identification is measured by asking respondents whether (1 = yes, 0 = no) there is a party they identify with more strongly than all others. Political interest is measured using a single item where 0 means very low political interest and 10 very high

[15] Low = none, primary, or lower secondary; Middle = higher secondary; High = non-university higher, and university.

political interest. Internal efficacy is measured using a sum-scale of four items with a Cronbach's α of .67. Political trust is also measured using a sum-scale of eleven items with a Cronbach's α of .91. See Appendix 1.2 for details on the items of these scales. Satisfaction with democracy is measured by asking people how satisfied they were with the way democracy functions in their country, with answers ranging from 1 = very unsatisfied, to 4 = very satisfied.

**Methods**

The hypotheses formulated above presume that external (input/output) efficacy (X) affects different forms of political participation (Y) as mediated by the perceived effectiveness of those forms of participation (Z). Baron and Kenny (1986) prescribe that in order to test such mediation, we need to calculate the 'reduced model', where the effect of external efficacy on political participation is estimated without controlling for perceptions of effectiveness (this effect is called *c*, or the total effect), and we need to calculate the 'full model', where the effect is estimated with the control for this mediator (this effect is called *c'*, or the direct effect). The difference between *c* and *c'* represents the degree to which the effects of X on Y are confounded by Z – *i.e.*, the mediated effect (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Karlson, Holm, & Breen, 2010). Furthermore, to know exactly how Z mediates the effects of X on Y, we also want to know what the effect is of X on Z (we call these effects *a*) and of Z on Y (we call this effect *b*). Hence, for each form of participation, three separate regressions need to be calculated: X needs to be regressed on Z to obtain *a*; X needs to be regressed on Y to obtain *c*, and Z and X need to be regressed on Y to obtain *b* and *c'*, respectively. Both *a* and *b* need to be significant for an indirect effect of external efficacy on political participation (*ab*) to occur (Baron & Kenny, 1986; MacKinnon et al., 2007). Finally, the size of the indirect effect is obtained by subtracting *c'* from *c*.

Although this decomposition strategy is a useful starting point, it is developed to test mediations that are built up of linear regressions (Baron & Kenny, 1986). In this study, however, the dependent variables and the mediators are categorical and they are predicted using logistic regression analysis, which complicates matters somewhat. The problem is that the inclusion of an additional (mediating) variable in a logistic regression not only affects the effect sizes, but also the scaling of the parameters (for more information see: Kohler, Karlson, & Holm, 2011). In effect, comparing *c* and *c'* using logistic regressions might conflate

mediation and rescaling and we therefore could not assess whether or not a mediating effect occurs, nor how large it is.

To address this problem, Karlson, Holm and Breen (2010) propose the KHB-method that corrects this limitation of the decomposition method for nonlinear probability models. It includes the standardized residuals of the regression of X on Z in the reduced model, thereby ensuring that the coefficients in the different models are measured on the same scale. Consequently, the KHB-method warrants against the conflation of mediation and rescaling, and coefficients can be compared across different nonlinear models, thereby providing a robustness test for decomposition based on separate regressions. This method will be applied as a robustness check using the 'khb' program in Stata 12.

Throughout all regression analyses, robust standard errors will be used. To compare effect sizes across regressions, the N needs to be kept stable. Therefore, respondents with missing observations on one of the outcome variables are deleted from the analyses (N = 57).

## RESULTS

### Descriptive statistics

Before turning to the explanatory analyses, it is useful to look at some descriptive statistics that give us a general idea of the external input/output efficacy and (the perceived effectiveness of) political participation within our sample (see Appendix 1.1 for further descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations).

On average, respondents scored 2.51 on a scale of 1 to 5 for external input efficacy, with a standard deviation of 1.13. For external output efficacy, they scored 3.12 on a scale of 1 to 5, with a standard deviation of .97. The latter suggests that in general people are more positive in their evaluation of politicians' ability to respond than about their willingness to do so, but also that these variables varied strongly among the respondents. As external output efficacy is a new indicator, it is interesting to analyze how it relates to other, more conventional indicators of perceived political system performance, and to establish whether this variable really measures something new. Apart from external input efficacy, typical measures are people's satisfaction with democracy and political trust (Norris et al., 2005). The respective bivariate correlation of these variables with external output efficacy are .36*** and .41***. Although these figures indicate that there is a significant positive

correlation between these system evaluations, they are moderate, leading to the conclusion that this variable gauges a thus far unmeasured dimension of perceived system performance.

As for political participation, people averagely feel more efficacious about signing a petition (M = 3.84, SD = 1.59) than about boycotting products (M = 3.53, SD = 1.87) or contacting politicians (M = 3.12, SD = 1.57). Paired t-tests indicate that the differences between these means are statistically significant. Signing petitions was the most prevalent form of participation (53% of the respondents indicated to have done so), followed by boycotting products (36%), and contacting a politician (18%). These averages are in line with previous studies indicating that petitions and boycotts currently rank among the most prevalent forms of political participation (Sloam, 2007; Stolle & Hooghe, 2011).

**Analyses**

In this section I present three separate figures with the standardized direct (*c'*) and indirect (*ab*) effects (odds ratios) of external input efficacy and external output efficacy on contacting politicians, signing petitions, and boycotting products. The full regression models (including control variables and R-squares) are presented in Appendix 1.3. In Table 1.1 (p. 50), the total, direct and indirect effects on all three forms of participation as provided by the KHB analyses are presented together.

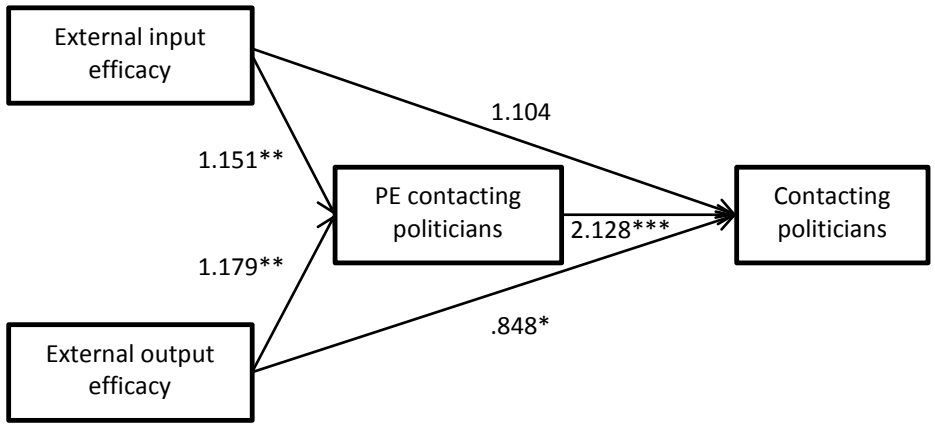
*Contacting politicians*

The logistic regressions suggest that people with high education, who identify with a party, who score higher on political interest, political trust, and satisfaction with democracy perceive contacting politicians to be more effective. Similarly, and in line with previous studies, people who score higher on education, political interest, and internal efficacy, and who identify with a political party, are more likely to have contacted politicians. Political trust and satisfaction with democracy constitute a negative effect here, which seems to contradict previous finings (Hooghe & Marien, 2013).

As for our variables of interest, Figure 1.2 suggests that there is indeed a positive indirect effect of both forms of external efficacy on contacting politicians: If citizens perceive politicians as willing or able to take their demands into account, they will perceive contacting politicians to be more effective, which in turn renders them more likely to actually engage in this form of action. Looking at these relations separately, though, does not guarantee that

the indirect effect is significant. Table 1.1 presents the results of the KHB mediation analysis and, in further support of H1, confirms the significance of the indirect effects. It is interesting to note that the effect of external output efficacy is stronger than that of external input efficacy. A one unit increase of external input efficacy indirectly increases someone's odds of having contacted a politician by 5.7 percent, while a one unit increase of external output efficacy increases it by 6.6 percent. This supports the argument made earlier that while the literature has mainly focused on the latter, the former is at least as important in understanding why people feel more or less efficacious about state-oriented political participation.

**Figure 1.2**: Direct and indirect effects of external input/output efficacy on contacting politicians.




*Note*: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. Coefficients are standardized odds ratios derived from two separate regressions. N = 1869

What do these indirect effects mean for the overall relation between external input/output efficacy and contacting politicians? We see in Table 1.1 that the total effect of external input efficacy on contacting politicians is positive significant as well, and that perceptions of effectiveness mediate roughly one-third of this relation. The remaining direct effect is also positive, but not significant. In contrast, the total effect of external output efficacy is insignificant, which is somewhat surprising. The argument predicting a positive indirect effect should also lead to the assumption that the total effect is positive, and that the mediator simply reveals its causal pathway. However, the results indicate that there is more going on

**Table 1.1**: Total, direct and indirect effects of external input/output efficacy on political participation

| | B | S.E. | *β* | *p* |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Contacting politicians* | | | | |
| ← External input efficacy (total) | 1.145 | .073 | 1.167 | * |
| ← External input efficacy (direct) | 1.091 | .070 | 1.105 | .170 |
| ← External input efficacy (indirect) | 1.049 | .018 | 1.057 | ** |
| ← External output efficacy (total) | .907 | .057 | .908 | .209 |
| ← External output efficacy (direct) | .849 | .067 | .852 | * |
| ← External output efficacy (indirect) | 1.067 | .024 | 1.066 | ** |
| *Signing petitions* | | | | |
| ← External input efficacy (total) | 1.079 | .055 | 1.091 | .131 |
| ← External input efficacy (direct) | 1.055 | .053 | 1.063 | .292 |
| ← External input efficacy (indirect) | 1.023 | .015 | 1.027 | .124 |
| ← External output efficacy (total) | .831 | .054 | .833 | ** |
| ← External output efficacy (direct) | .788 | .051 | .790 | *** |
| ← External output efficacy (indirect) | 1.055 | .021 | 1.053 | ** |
| *Boycotting products* | | | | |
| ← External input efficacy (total) | 1.051 | .056 | 1.059 | .343 |
| ← External input efficacy (direct) | 1.016 | .059 | 1.019 | .759 |
| ← External input efficacy (indirect) | 1.034 | .017 | 1.039 | * |
| ← External output efficacy (total) | .927 | .059 | .928 | .235 |
| ← External output efficacy (direct) | .922 | .059 | .923 | .200 |
| ← External output efficacy (indirect) | 1.006 | .021 | 1.006 | .774 |

*Notes*: Reported are unstandardized odds ratios (B), standard errors (S.E.), standardized odds ratios (*β*), and *p*-values. *p<.05, **p<.01, *** p<.001. N = 1869.

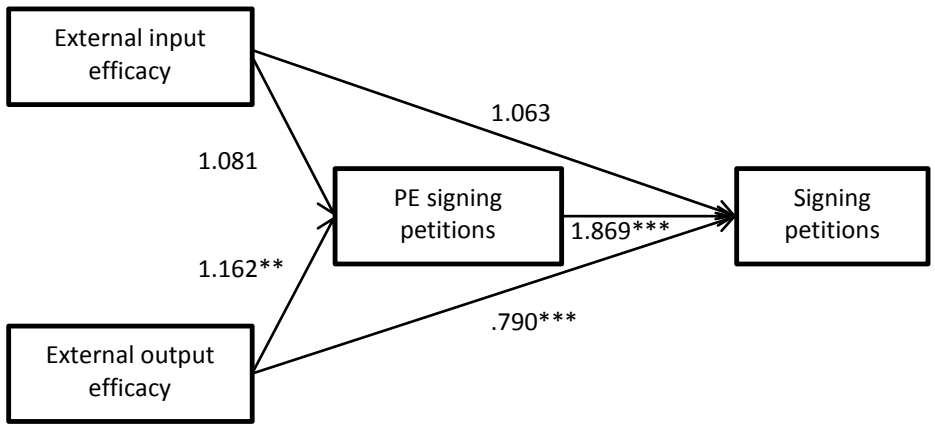
than was anticipated: there also appears to be a direct negative effect. The direct and indirect effects balance each other out, and as a result, the total effect becomes insignificant. In statistical terms, the mediator thus performs the role of suppressor: it distinguishes the positive indirect effect that runs through perceptions of effectiveness, and thereby isolates the remaining direct effect which as a consequence becomes significant (Baron & Kenny, 1986; MacKinnon et al., 2007). Hence, the absence of a significant total effect does not

contradict the existence of the indirect effect (Hayes, 2009), but the results do indicate that there are multiple ways in which external output efficacy and contacting politicians are related. How we can explain this finding in more substantive terms I will return to in the discussion.

*Signing petitions*

The analyses suggest that women find signing petitions more effective than men do. Contrary to what Wattenberg (2012) argues, but in support of e.g., Hooghe and Stolle (2011), younger people are more likely to engage in this activity, and in line with most literature, so are people with higher education, party identification, higher political interest, and higher internal efficacy.

**Figure 1.3**: Direct and indirect effects of external input/output efficacy on signing petitions.




*Note*: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. Coefficients are standardized odds ratios derived from two separate regressions. N = 1869

Because petitions can be targeted at both state and non-state actors, it was hypothesized (H2) that external input efficacy and external output efficacy would have an indirect effect on signing petitions, but that these effects would be weaker than in the case of contacting politicians. We see in Figure 1.3 that, contrary to this hypothesis, there is no effect of external input efficacy. The indirect effect of external output efficacy, however, is positive and significant. This is confirmed by the KHB analyses presented in Table 1.1: A one unit increase

on external output efficacy indirectly increases one's chances of having signed a petition with 5.5 percent. In line with H2, we see that this effect is smaller than that on contacting politicians. Figures 1.2 and 1.3 show that while perceptions of effectiveness strongly predict both forms of participation, the perceived effectiveness of contacting politicians is more dependent on perceptions of government's ability to act.

Like with contacting politicians, the indirect effect of external output efficacy is contrasted by its direct effect. That is, external output efficacy constitutes a negative direct effect that is stronger than the positive indirect effect, resulting in a negative total effect. Again, these direct and total effects do not contradict the hypothesized indirect effect per se (Hayes, 2009), yet it is clear that there is more going on than was hypothesized. The results suggest that, although people who perceive the state's output structure as strong are generally less inclined to sign petitions, they are more likely to perceive signing petitions as effective. If they do so, this increases the likelihood that they will sign petitions, thereby reducing the negative direct effect. In the discussion a more substantive interpretation of these findings is provided.

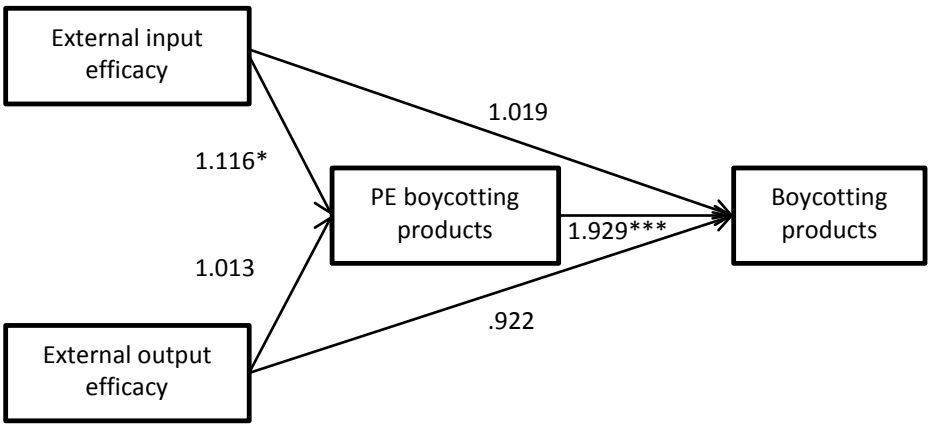
*Boycotting products*

Finally, like with signing petitions and in line with previous studies (e.g., Stolle & Hooghe, 2011), young people, people with higher education, people with higher political interest, and people with higher internal efficacy are more likely to boycott products.

Whereas a positive (indirect) effect was hypothesized of external input/output efficacy on contacting politicians, and to a lesser extent, on signing a petition, it was hypothesized (H3) that no such effect should exist for non-state oriented forms of participation like boycotting products. That is, although it is expected that people who consider boycotts to be effective will be more likely to engage in them, their perceptions of effectiveness are most likely not to be affected by their perceptions of the state. The analyses (Figure 1.4) confirm that people who believe boycotting products is effective are also more likely to actually engage in this activity. In line with H3, however, we see that these perceptions of effectiveness are not affected by external output efficacy. This is logical, because boycotts do not rely on politicians' ability to act. As a counterfactual then, these results provide evidence for the specificity of the link between external output efficacy and state-oriented political participation. In contrast, however, external input efficacy does relate

positively to these perceptions of effectiveness, which seems to contradict this chapter's theoretical assumptions. Although this relation is weaker than that on the perceived effectiveness of contacting politicians, the question remains why perceptions of effectiveness of a non-state-oriented form of participation would be affected by perceptions of the state's willingness to respond.

**Figure 1.4**: Direct and indirect effects of external input/output efficacy on boycotting products.




*Note*: *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. Coefficients are standardized odds ratios derived from two separate regressions. N = 1869

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In line with most political participation literature, this study indicates that citizens are more likely to engage in political participation if they consider a specific form of action to be more effective (Bandura, 1982; van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013; van Zomeren et al., 2008).[16] In fact, this relation is similar for all three forms of participation analyzed in this study – contacting politicians, signing petitions, and boycotting products. Moreover, it suggests

[16] Analyses not presented in this chapter indicate that engagement in specific forms of participation is generally not affected by the perceived effectiveness of the other forms of participation. Only signing a petition is affected weakly by the perceived effectiveness of boycotting a product. However, as the perceived effectiveness of boycotting products is not affected by external output efficacy, this has no implications for the overall hypothesized mediation effects.

that perceptions of the political context are significant predictors of the perceived effectiveness of political participation, as well as the act of political participation. In particular, it proposes that if citizens consider the state to have an open input structure and a strong output structure, they are more likely to perceive state-oriented political participation as an effective means to social change. Consequently, there is a positive indirect effect of external input efficacy and external output efficacy on state-oriented political participation (i.e., contacting politicians). There is a weaker but still significant effect of external output efficacy on signing petitions. Assumably, this effect is weaker because signing petitions is sometimes, but not always, targeted at the state. On the non-state oriented action form of boycotting products, external output efficacy has no effect, which, as a counterfactual, further supports the theoretical argument of this chapter. In contrast, the theory proposed in this study cannot account for the found effect of external input efficacy on boycotting products and the nature of this relation should therefore be investigated further in future research.

Overall, these findings provide preliminary evidence for a commonly made, but understudied assumption about the link between citizens and the state in the context of globalization. For instance, according to Peter Mair (2014), the globalization (and especially Europeanization) of politics forces governments away from their representative task of translating citizens' demands into political output by increasingly requiring them to act 'responsibly' in respect of the principals constituted by external veto players like the EU or the WTO (see also: Laffan, 2014). This creates a situation where 'even though governments might be willing to heed their voters' demands (…) they may well be limited in doing so by having 'other constitutionally prescribed roles to play'.' (2014, p. 590). Political globalization, in other words, detaches governments' willingness to respond to citizens demands from their ability to do so by the introduction of external constraints. Several authors have suggested that as a result of these processes, the state is becoming a less attractive target for citizens who want to advance social change (e.g., Fox, 2014; Norris, 2002, p. 193). They assume that citizens who are sceptic about the state's ability to translate citizens' demands into political output will perceive state-oriented political action as ineffective, and will therefore be more likely to abstain from it. This study's findings provide the first empirical evidence for the existence of such an effect: to perceive state-oriented participation as effective, and to consequently engage in it, citizens perceptions' of politicians' willingness *and* ability to

respond are important. Hence, although the findings do not tell us whether citizens' perceptions of government responsiveness reflect the institutional changes described by Mair, they do confirm that such perceptions are important for citizens' continued involvement in politics beyond the vote.

Whereas this study finds that external output efficacy has a positive indirect effect on contacting politicians and signing petitions, its direct effect is negative. If citizens perceive the state as having a strong output structure, they become less likely to act, and vice versa. These surprising findings do not contradict the indirect effects per se, but they still beg further reflection regarding their potential meaning and regarding their implications for the total effect of external output efficacy on political participation.

In the case of signing petitions, a potential explanation for the direct negative effect could be that citizens who lose faith in politicians' ability to act embrace alternative forms of participation to address non-state power holders about their concerns. Of course, the data do not inform us about the targets of the petitions signed by the respondents, but it might be that they are drawn to petitioning campaigns to remain politically involved while avoiding state-oriented politics. Following the same logic, however, we would also expect a negative effect on boycotting products and it remains unclear why no such effect is found. Perhaps, part of the explanation lies in the fact that on average, citizens consider petitioning to be more effective than boycotting.

The negative direct effect on the state-oriented act of contacting politicians, however, clearly requires a different explanation. It might be that citizens who feel that the state is capable of addressing problems in society consider contacting politicians as less urgent or less necessary. In their eyes, the state is effectively dealing with society's challenges, and therefore, there is less need for citizens to interfere. This interpretation resonates an argument that William Gamson made in 1968: 'high trust in authorities implies some lack of necessity for influencing them' (p. 7). In a similar vein, Christensen (2015) has described the *satisfied citizen*, who may well feel efficacious, but who considers corrective political participation to be unnecessary. The problem with this interpretation, however, is that it also implies that citizens who feel the state is not capable of solving society's main problems contact politicians to demand appropriate change. This interpretation contradicts the instrumental logic underlying the hypothesized and confirmed indirect effect: if politicians cannot act, contacting them is unlikely to result in any substantive change.

Perhaps, therefore, this direct negative effect points in the direction of expressive motivations for political participation, suggesting that someone could also contact politicians to *express* discontent with their inability to act. These are all speculations, however, and what is particularly clear is that more research is needed to investigate this relation further and to identify other mediating processes that could help explain the seemingly complex relationship between external output efficacy and political participation.

External output efficacy thus performs an important double role in linking citizens and the state. On the one hand, when citizens perceive the output structure as strong, they are overall less likely to participate in politics. On the other hand, a strong output structure presents an important perquisite for citizens to believe that political participation can be effective, inciting them indirectly to participate. Hence, disentangling this effect indicates that external output efficacy affects political participation in various positive as well as negative ways. It becomes clear, therefore, that the exclusive attention for external input efficacy in the literature is unjustified. While this chapter does support the common understanding that an open input structure facilitates state-oriented political participation, it stresses that perceptions of the output structure affect political participation even more. Future research would therefore benefit from taking into account both dimensions of responsiveness when analyzing the link between the perceived political context and political participation.

To conclude, it is important to note certain limitations of this study and possible venues for future research as well. Firstly, it needs to be recognized that the structure of the used data is cross-sectional, and that this limits our ability to make strong causal claims regarding the link between political attitudes (like efficacy) and political behavior. In fact, some studies argue that political attitudes are shaped by the experience of participation, rather than the other way around (Quintelier & van Deth, 2014). Notwithstanding the importance of this argument, however, longitudinal studies support the assumption that attitudes do predict behavior in at least some way (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; van Stekelenburg et al., 2013). Moreover, people who have never engaged in political activities have political attitudes nevertheless and in a way, political attitudes must thus precede political participation. Moreover, as Inglehart (2008) has suggested, political attitudes remain relatively stable throughout people's lives, rather than being changed after each individual experience of political participation. Experimental psychology supports this argument with

regard to efficacy beliefs (Bandura, 1982). Still, the findings in this study would merit from a longitudinal or experimental study that could more strongly assess questions of causality.

Secondly, the findings in this study are limited to one case. Although the Belgian case is often considered to be representative of other developed European democracies (Hooghe & Marien, 2014), assessing whether this study's findings will hold in different national contexts would advance the generalizability of the findings. Moreover, a comparative approach would allow to assess whether country-level variations of output strength are reflected in citizens' political attitudes and behavior. Combined with a longitudinal approach, it could even be assessed whether changes in output structures, such as those described by Mair, can explain political participation across time and space. As for now, this study strongly suggests that the effect of external output efficacy on political participation will be supported by such a comparative study.

# 2

# WHETHER THEY WANT TO RESPOND MATTERS MAINLY IF THEY CAN:

# The effects of external input efficacy on non-electoral political participation in strong and weak states

**Abstract**

*External (input) efficacy is often presented as a predictor of non-electoral political participation (NEP), because perceiving government as willing to respond is an important determinant of the effectiveness of NEP. However, the idea is contested, and empirical evidence to support it remains inconclusive. This chapter argues that this is the case because the effect of external efficacy on NEP is subject to particular contextual conditions. That is, whether government is willing to respond is most likely to bring about substantive change in countries where the government is most capable of getting things done, and the effect of external efficacy on NEP should therefore exist mainly in countries with a strong output structure. While the chapter analyzes a number of indicators for output strength, only government spending (as a percentage of GDP) is found to significantly moderate the effect: the greater government spending, the stronger the effect. These results contribute to our understanding of the specific conditions under which external efficacy determines NEP, but they also support a wider theoretical argument for an increased focus on state's output structures in the literature on political attitudes, behavior, and their contextual determinants.*

*This chapter is based on a single-authored paper.*

# WHETHER THEY WANT TO RESPOND MATTERS MAINLY IF THEY CAN:

# The effects of external efficacy on non-electoral political participation in strong and weak states

Although non-electoral political participation (NEP) is generally on the rise, important variations persist between countries and among groups of people (Dalton, 2008; Vráblíková, 2014). Several studies suggest that what is crucial in explaining such differences is external input efficacy,[17] or in other words, whether citizens believe that their country's government is *willing* to respond to their demands (de Moor, 2015; Niemi et al., 1991; Vráblíková, 2016, Chapter 3). How external input efficacy should be linked to NEP, is contested however, as theories contradict and as evidence remains inconclusive (Norris et al., 2005; Norris, 2011, Chapter 11). This chapter aims to further clarify the link between external input efficacy and NEP by analyzing how political contexts may condition the nature of this effect. Two theories exist about the nature of this link. On the one hand, external input efficacy is perceived as an empowering attitude that will increase one's propensity to become politically active (de Moor, 2015; Vráblíková, 2016, Chapter 3). That is, if someone perceives government as willing to respond to one's demands, this will increase the person's belief that participation can be effective, and in turn improves the attractiveness of NEP, as shown in Chapter 1. In contrast, the 'disaffection hypothesis', proposes that the effect of external input efficacy should be negative (Farah et al., 1979; Norris et al., 2005). Perceiving government as irresponsive will render citizens dissatisfied, and will consequently lead them to express their grievance through the various types of political behavior that make out NEP. Empirical

[17] Most of the studies I refer to in this study speak of external efficacy, rather than of external input efficacy. However, the way these studies operationalize external efficacy measures citizens' perceptions of government's willingness to respond. For clarity's sake, and in line with Chapter 1, I will therefore continue to refer to these perceptions as external input efficacy.

evidence appears to be predominantly in favor of the 'empowerment hypothesis' (Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003, p. 15; Verba, Burns, & Schlozman, 1997; Vráblíková, 2014), yet in the field of political protest there are plenty of studies that challenge whether there is an effect of external input efficacy at all (Farah et al., 1979; Norris et al., 2005; Thomassen, 1990). Hence, as the literature lacks conclusive evidence for now, it is high time to investigate under what conditions such a presumably positive effect may exactly emerge.

To do so, this chapter builds on a recently growing number of studies that aim to explain the volatile effects of political attitudes (e.g., political trust) on political participation by taking into account the contextual embeddedness of individual effects (Braun & Hutter, 2016; Dalton et al., 2010; Quaranta, 2013; van der Meer et al., 2009; Vráblíková, 2014). What the majority of these studies have in common is that they draw on the political opportunity structure (POS) theory (Kriesi, 2004; Meyer, 2004) to show that individual characteristics are mainly translated into political participation in contexts that provide sufficient opportunities to do so. Braun and Hutter (2016) show for instance that how political distrust leads to participation depends on the institutional openness of political systems.

So too it is likely that the effect of external input efficacy on political participation varies across political contexts. In particular, I hypothesize that this effect should be greater in 'strong' than in 'weak' states (Hutter, 2014; Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi et al., 1995, pp. 27–33). This is expected because whether government is *willing* to take one's demands into account is most likely to have substantive consequences when that government is also *capable* of getting things done (Overby, 1990). After all, politicians who are willing to take citizens' demands into account are more likely to translate those demands into substantive change if they are also capable to do so. As such the study speaks to a second recent development in the political science literature as well. POSs have long been divided into *input structures* (government's openness to challengers) and *output structures* (government's ability to get things done) (Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi et al., 1995; Overby, 1990), and while both have been emphasized from a theoretical point of view, empirical research has focused almost entirely on input structures. More recent studies, however, have begun to stress the importance of output structures as well, because it is believed that the state's ability to act can no longer be taken for granted in a context of political and economic globalization (Castells, 2010; Fox, 2014; Marshall & Fisher, 2015). Globalization is in other words considered to weaken states' output structures, and because this reduces the chance that states will provide substantive

change in response to citizens' demands, NEP becomes less attractive, and thus less prevalent (Fox, 2014; Sloam, 2007). Quite surprisingly, however, research that looks at output structures and NEP remains very limited, and this study therefore addresses this theoretical development empirically by analyzing the effect of output structures on NEP for the first time from a comparative point of view.

Based on existing literature (e.g. Hutter, 2014; Kitschelt, 1986; Marshall & Fisher, 2015; Vráblíková, 2014), a state's output structure can be operationalized in a number of ways: 1) a government's spending power; 2) its internal division of power as a result of horizontal decentralization; and 3) its degree of political globalization. Combined these dimensions determine how many domains of society the state can afford to intervene in, and how well it is able to choose how it will do so without the intervention of domestic or foreign veto-players. Though each of them may be important, government's spending power is arguably most likely to have an effect because, as I will discuss in more detail below, it is most likely to be noted by the average citizen. At the individual level, data is used from the 2004 International Social Survey Program (ISSP, 2004, N = 35,958) on citizenship, which contains unique comparative data from 36 countries on both external input efficacy and political participation. The data will be analyzed using multilevel analyses with cross-level interactions to test whether country-level indicators of output strength indeed determine the effect of external input efficacy on NEP.

## EXTERNAL INPUT EFFICACY AND NEP: DISSATISFACTION OR POLITICAL OPPORTUNITY?

Political efficacy is among the main predictors of political participation (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013; van Zomeren et al., 2008; Verba et al., 1995). It refers to 'the feeling that individual political action does have, or can have, an impact upon the political process, (…) the feeling that political and social change is possible, and that the individual citizen can play a part in bringing about this change' (Campbell, Gurin, & Miller, 1954, p. 187). As such, it boosts confidence, and can motivate goal-oriented political participation (Bandura, 1982, 1997). Such a sense of efficacy, however can be attributed to one's own capacities, on the on hand, or to that of the political system one engages with on the other (Coleman & Davis, 1976). This distinction is referred to as internal and external efficacy, respectively (Balch, 1974). In the words of Niemi and colleagues, 'internal efficacy, [refers] to beliefs about one's

own competence to understand, and to participate effectively in, politics, and external efficacy, [refers] to beliefs about the responsiveness of governmental authorities and institutions to citizen demands' (1991, pp. 1407–8). In Chapter 1, I proposed the additional distinction between external input efficacy (beliefs about the *willingness* of the government to respond) and external output efficacy (beliefs about the *ability* of the government to respond), the former of which I focus on in this study.

While the importance of internal efficacy has been fairly well established in the literature on political participation (e.g., van Zomeren et al., 2008; Verba et al., 1995, pp. 343–64), external input efficacy has been studied to a much lesser extent. Moreover, results remain inconclusive, and some of the core theories on political activism even predict opposite relations between the two (Norris, 2011, Chapter 10). On the one hand, grievance theories interpret political action mainly as the result of dissatisfaction (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013; van Zomeren & Iyer, 2009). In contrast to the instrumental interpretation of political participation that underlies much of the research into political efficacy, NEP is here interpreted as a means to *express* one's discontent. From this point of view, perceiving government as unwilling to respond is interpreted as a source of dissatisfaction that can fuel NEP. Several studies have tested this assumption in the field of political protest, yet none of them find the negative effect they anticipate (Norris et al., 2005; Norris, 2011; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2001). Although perceiving government as irresponsive may thus cause a sense of political dissatisfaction, it does not seem to fuel NEP.

On the other hand, there is a literature that describes a sense of external input efficacy as a resource that can empower individuals and that can thereby increase their propensity for political participation (de Moor, 2015; Finkel, 1985; Verba et al., 1997; Vráblíková, 2016, Chapter 3). Building on the POS theory, it is here assumed that perceiving government as willing to respond incites citizens to become active, because responsiveness represents an important opportunity for exerting influence (Klandermans, 1997; Meyer & Minkoff, 2004, pp. 173–4; Tarrow, 2011, pp. 12, 33). In Chapter 1 I found indeed that perceptions of politicians' willingness to respond increase citizens' perceptions of the effectiveness of certain forms of NEP, thereby increasing their odds of participating.

In sum, a strong sense of external input efficacy may thus be empowering, while perceiving government as irresponsive might cause dissatisfaction. However, empirical research has suggested so far that only when external input efficacy causes empowerment

does it lead to NEP. Looking at previous findings, I thus expect the empowerment hypothesis to provide the most probable link between external input efficacy and NEP.

> H1: *There is a positive effect of external input efficacy on non-electoral political participation*

## CONTEXTUAL CONDITIONS FOR INDIVIDUAL LEVEL EFFECTS

Even though the overall effect of external input efficacy on NEP might be positive, building on recent developments in the literature, it is to be expected that this effect is moderated by the political context. That is, while valuable insights have come from the longstanding research tradition of analyzing political attitudes like efficacy as predictors of political participation (Almond & Verba, 1963; Gamson, 1968; Verba et al., 1995), scholars have recently started to advocate a more context-focused approach (Christensen, 2011; Vráblíková, 2014). Specifically, several authors have called upon scholars of political participation to take into account the interaction between individual and contextual explanations, as social or political contexts may provide the conditions for the strength or occurrence of certain individual level effects (Kriesi, 2008; van Zomeren et al., 2008, for a more general discussion see Hedström and Ylikoski 2010).

This call has been answered by a growing number of scholars who have begun to analyze the conditions under which certain individual level characteristics may, or may not, determine political participation. For instance, Karp and Banducci (2008) show that people with a preference for small parties are more likely to vote in proportional electoral systems. Vrablikova (2014) and Quaranta (2013) both find that the way individuals' organizational embeddedness leads to NEP depends on the availability of contextual political opportunities. Likewise, Braun and Hutter (2016) find that political distrust leads to political participation, but mainly so if the input structure is sufficiently open, and Corcoran, Pettinicchio and Young (2011) find the same for levels of self-efficacy. Combined, these studies share the idea that individual traits may determine political participation, but mainly so if the political context provides sufficient opportunities to do so (Dalton et al., 2010).

Building on this growing research tradition, I expect that the effect of external input efficacy on NEP will also vary across political contexts. Just like political trust, external input

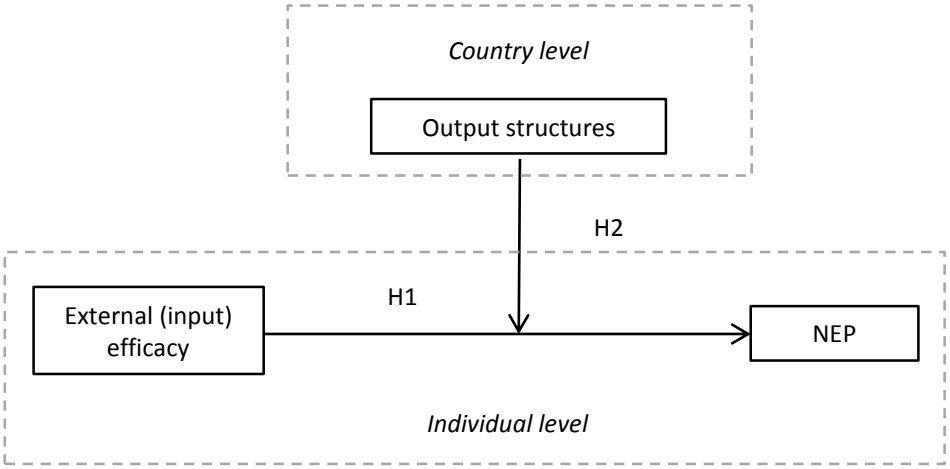
efficacy can be grouped among the political attitudes that evaluate the performance of the political context (Norris et al., 2005). If we assume that such evaluations relate to the 'real' political context in at least some way (Coleman & Davis, 1976), it is very likely that its effect on NEP relates to variations in that political context as well. A degree of contextual dependency would moreover help explain why some studies find effects of external input efficacy on NEP while others do not (Norris, 2011, Chapter 11).

Specifically, I expect output structures to determine the strength of this effect. The output structure refers to a state's capacity to develop and implement policies effectively, and as such, it conditions how likely government's willingness to respond is to lead to substantive change (Kitschelt, 1986; Overby, 1990). According to Overby, substantive change 'is to be anticipated […] where aggregative institutions exist to translate demands into policies' (1990, p. 4). Concurrently, external input efficacy can be expected to matter mainly in the context of states with a strong output structure. If government is very capable of getting things done, then a sense that it is willing to take someone's demands into account is very likely to boost his/her believes in the possibility that actions will lead to substantive change, hence increasing his/her propensity to participate. If government has a weak output structure instead, its willingness to respond is relatively unlikely to lead to substantive change, and a strong sense of external input efficacy therefore becomes less likely to incite NEP.

> *H2: The effect of external input efficacy on NEP is greater in countries with a strong output structure than in countries with a weak output structure.*

The argument made so far is summarized in Figure 2.1. Implicitly it builds on the assumption that output structures are perceived by citizens, as reflected in their external output efficacy. Yet while I have shown in Chapter 1 that external output efficacy relates positively to NEP, no comparative data on external output efficacy exists to my knowledge. Therefore I am not able to assess whether perceptions of output structures are indeed what link output structures to the link between external input efficacy and NEP.

**Figure 2.1**: Hypothesized effects of external efficacy and output structures on NEP




Nevertheless, in testing this hypothesis, this chapter is still capable of addressing an additional gap in the literature, specifically in that on POSs and political participation. That is, not only will it improve our understanding of the conditions under which external input efficacy matters for NEP, it will also address the POS literature's longstanding neglect of output structures. While the distinction between input structures and output structures has been made from the emergence of the theory (Kitschelt, 1986), and although its theoretical relevance has continued to be underlined ever since (Kriesi et al., 1995; Micheletti, 2003, p. xii; van der Heijden, 2006), few researchers have accounted for output structures from an empirical point of view. Whereas the amount of studies analysing the role of contextual elements that determine the openness of input structures – e.g., decentralization, electoral proportionality – has been steadily growing within the field of political participation and social movement studies (for overviews see Meyer, 2004; and more recently Quaranta, 2015), the amount of studies looking at output structure has remained very small. Within the field of electoral studies, a number of studies have analysed how political globalization diminishes states' ability to act, leading to drops in electoral turnout because people care less who is in government if government has limited capacities (Marshall & Fisher, 2015; Steiner & Martin, 2012). And beyond electoral participation, I have shown in Chapter 1 that perceptions of output strength determine peoples' propensity for political participation.

However, comparative research into the link between output structures and NEP have, to my knowledge, remained absent from the literature. This is really surprizing, one could argue, because many scholars have begun to question whether the state is still a viable target for political participation in a context of political globalization, as the shift of power away from the state associated with this process is arguably causing citizens to expect less from the national political system (Fox, 2014; Kriesi et al., 2012; Sloam, 2007). These concerns about the diminishing power of the state should put questions of output structures at the forefront of research into the contextual determinants of political participation, yet so far, this has hardly happened. This study will therefore respond to this gap in the literature as well.

## THE OPERATIONALIZATION OF OUTPUT STRUCTURES

A state's ability to act is determined by wide and complex range of attributes (Hutter, 2014; Kitschelt, 1986). In order to address the second hypothesis more specifically, it is thus necessary to further elaborate on how we may measure countries' output strength more concretely. A large number of variables could be taken into account to measure output structures, yet the existing literature emphasizes a number of dimension in particular that I will discuss in more detail below:[18] 1) a government's spending power, 2) the degree to which a government needs to take into account internal (or national) veto players in its decision making, and 3) the degree to which a government needs to take into account external (or international) veto players. In sum, a strong state has the budgetary power to implement policies, and has the ability to develop and implement policies relatively autonomously from other domestic or foreign veto players. If these conditions are met, the willingness of government to respond has a high probability to result in substantive change. As I will discuss in more detail in the in the conclusion, these elements are not detached from each other.

[18] A large number of variables could in theory be taken into account to measure output strength. For instance, Vrablikova (2014) measures territorial decentralization as well, because this also increases the number of veto players. If the results in this study show that the increased number of veto-players as a result of horizontal decentralization boosts the effect of external efficacy, it is worth to explore the increase in veto players resulting from territorial decentralization as well.

**Spending power**

In order to get things done, a state first of all needs money. According to a recent publication by Marshall and Fisher (2015), the degree to which a government has control over a country's GDP therefore determines how much influence it can have on society, or in other words, how strong its output structure is. This, they argue, in turn affects turnout: 'When the government spends more, elections may become more salient as voters and group leaders with different preferences over compensation compete over a larger pie and demand different mixes of taxes and spending.' (2015, p. 360). Indeed, while there are policy areas that may be less costly than others (in some cases, mainly the procedural costs of drafting a new law may have to be taken into account) most government actions are costly, and the government's control over a country's GDP will thus determine its ability to act in absolute terms. Of course, this is not to say that a government with a larger budget performs 'better'. According to libertarian political views, for instance, the state should interfere in society as little as possible, and should keep its budget to a minimum. Nevertheless, it is a fact that while the former is able to interfere in many domains of society extensively, the latter is far more limited in this regard due to its budgetary constraints, and making demands from the latter is thus less likely to result in substantive change.

Moreover, in relative terms the degree to which a government controls a country's GDP also determines its strength relative to other actors in society, therefore making this measure an indicator of government strength that is comparable between countries with different GDPs. In countries where the state has a limited spending power, other actors control the allocation of resources in society. For instance, under pressure of economic globalization, and the resulting 'race to the bottom', many states have limited the taxes they raise over companies (Busemeyer, 2009). As a result, control over GDP is shifting from the state to economic actors, and in this sense, many states' ability to implement policies is becoming more limited (Marshall & Fisher, 2015; Steiner & Martin, 2012). If spending power indeed determines the degree to which states can implement policies, then in line with the second hypothesis, it should be expected that:

> *Hypothesis 2a: The positive effect of external input efficacy on political participation is greater in countries where governments control a larger share of the country's GDP.*

**Domestic veto players**

Regardless of how much spending power a government has, its capacity to get things done still depends on the amount of relevant veto players government might have to face, either in the development of new policies, or in their actual implementation, because veto players can constrain or even block governments' decisions. These veto players might either be domestic or, as is increasingly the case in a context of political globalization, foreign in nature. I will here first of all focus on domestic veto players.

The number of domestic veto players correlates with the openness of input structures in a country. That is, the more open the input structures, the higher the number of relevant veto players that will find access to the political process. Indeed, according to Hutter (2014, Chapter 3) and Kriesi et al. (1995, Chapter 2), the openness of states is directly related to their strength. Open states provide many opportunities for a range of societal actors, including citizens and social movements, to interfere with the policy process. Consequently, government's ability to draft and implement policies becomes more limited as compared to governments that do not need to take these veto players into account. Vrablikova contends that in such weak states 'decision making is less decisive and slower, and participants can hope to be successful with their demands.' (2014, p. 6). However, I argue that this logic holds only if we consider political participation as *reactive*, i.e., when their goal is to defend the status quo, or when participants wish to make only minor adjustments to policies. Yet when their participation is *proactive* instead, i.e., when they want to get something done from the state, the state's limited ability to act plays to their disadvantage, and should reduce their hopes for substantive change (Kriesi, 1991).

Though our interpretation varies in this regard, Vrablikova's operationalization of weak and strong states still provides a useful starting point for the current study. In line with other operationalizations of weak and strong states (Hutter, 2014; Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi et al., 1995), Vrablikova argues that the number of relevant veto points in a polity is determined by to the degree to which political power is shared between political institutions like the executive, the legislature and judiciary. This degree of 'horizontal decentralization' determines the number of veto players in a polity, because the more competences are dispersed, the more access points there are for participants. This indicator should therefore be taken into account when measuring output strength. Following this operationalization, I hypothesize that:

*Hypothesis 2b: The positive effect of external input efficacy on political participation is greater in countries that are horizontally more centralized.*

**Political globalization**

In addition to domestic veto players, there is an increasing amount of foreign veto players that determine the state's ability to act. With the continuing globalization of political power, and the expansion of global governance networks, national governments are becoming increasingly subjected to the trans- and international organizations they are members of, and to the treaties they have signed (Bartolini, 2011; Kriesi et al., 2012). Even though national governments co-determine the rules these bodies dictate, they have to do so in coordination with other governments, and once the rules are in place, they limit national governments' options, and thus their ability to freely draft and implement policies, either in response to participants' demands, or otherwise. As Peter Mair has noticed, governments may be willing to listen to their voters, they are often externally constrained in doing so (2014, p. 590). As political globalization thus imposes external constraints on governments' ability to act, I expect that:

*Hypothesis 2c: The positive effect of external input efficacy on political participation is greater in countries that are less politically globalized.*

While the state's ability to act can thus be operationalized in a variety of ways that can be expected to condition the effect of external input efficacy on political participation, it is to be expected that the strength of this effect varies. That is, this chapter builds on the assumption that in some way, citizens are aware of their state's ability to act, and that therefore output structures have these hypothesized effects. As outlined in the introduction to this dissertation, I expect that POSs are most likely to be 'perceived' when they have a strong impact on average citizens' everyday lives. Of the three indicators included in this study, government spending is therefore the most likely to have an effect. After all, whether governments can afford to interfere in many domains of society is very likely to affect average citizens. The difference between a full-fledged welfare state and a minimal state can for instance make the difference between the presence or absence of government funded

education or healthcare. In countries where government spending is high, there are in effect simply more people who experience that the state can get things done, and it is thus a contextual element that is very likely to create differences between populations. Though horizontal decentralization and political globalization have significant impacts on states' capacity to act as well, their impact is likely to be more limited with regard to the everyday experience of average citizens and may therefore be less likely to get picked up on. Surely, a state that has e.g. a slow policy process as a result of horizontal decentralization may create more situations in which citizens experience that governments are not able to respond efficiently, but such effects are likely to be more incidental than the ones resulting from budgetary power. Because of a lack of comparative data on external output efficacy there is unfortunately no evidence to back this assumption up: we cannot assess whether external output efficacy is indeed affected more by either of these elements. Nevertheless, there is sufficient theoretical ground to hypothesize that:

> *Hypothesis 3: The effect of government spending is stronger than that of horizontal decentralization and political globalization.*

## DATA, MEASUREMENTS, AND ANALYSES

### Data

To address these hypotheses, data is used from the International Social Survey Programme (ISSP) on Citizenship (2004), which allows to include 35,958 individuals from 36 countries in the analyses. A limitation of the data is that they were gathered using face-to-face-interviews, postal surveys and self-completion questionnaires, yet despite these methodological limitations, the ISSP data are uniquely appropriate for testing the current hypotheses, because it is the largest international survey with detailed information about people's external input efficacy and political participation.

A variety of data sources is used to provide the country-level variables. Firstly, to measure government spending as a percentage of the national GDP, data from the World Bank is used. Secondly, following Vrablikova (2014), horizontal decentralization is measured using Henisz's (2002) political constraint (POLCON) index, which measures how constrained governments are in drafting new policies because of the number of relevant veto players in

a polity. The horizontal decentralization variable is inverted so that higher values indicate a stronger output structure. Finally, political globalization is measured using the KOF-index of globalization, which measures the number of international treaties and international organizations the country is subject to (Dreher, 2006).

Descriptives on all variables can be found in Appendix 2.1.

**Measurements**

*NEP*

Following Vrablikova (2014), non-electoral political participation is measured by asking people whether they participated in the following activities during the past 12 months: signing a petition, taking part in a demonstration, attending a political meeting or rally, contacting a political or a civil servant to express one's views, donating money or raising funds for a social or political activity, or contacting or appearing in the media to express one's views.[19] A principal components analysis based on tetrachoric correlations confirms that together these specific types of action respond to a single underlying factor depicting propensity to participate in politics. This supports the construction of a sum-scale that combines each of these elements. However, because of a strong skewedness towards non-participation, the variable is recoded to indicate whether respondents participated in one of these forms of participation or not (1/0).[20]

[19] Like Vrablikova, I do not look at electoral participation "because it is qualitatively different from all other forms of political participation due to such things as the unique context effects associated with voting" (2014, p. 10). Also following Vrablikova, I omit two other activities from the measurement: 1) boycotting or deliberately buying certain products for political, ethical, or environmental reasons and 2) joining an online political forum or discussion group. The former does fit in the concept of political participation (van Deth, 2014), yet because it is a behavior that is generally not targeted at the state, it cannot be expected to depend on the national political context in the same way. As for the latter, this resembles a type of membership, rather than a clear activity, and as such it is arguably outside the concept of political participation (van Deth, 2014).

[20] This is recommendable from both a theoretical and a methodological point of view. Theoretically, a distribution that is so heavily skewed towards zero suggests that the main differences is between people who do, and people who do not become politically active. Methodologically, it is problematic to estimate coefficients for values that are very unlikely (Field, 2010).

*External political efficacy*

Following de Moor, Kern, Marien, and Hooghe (2013), a scale of three items tapping into respondents' beliefs about government's willingness to respond are used to construct the measure of external input efficacy. The ISSP includes the most conventional measure of external (input) efficacy, as proposed by Niemi et al. (1991), asking people how much they agreed with the following statements (on a scale ranging from 1: strongly agree to 5: strongly disagree): '*People like me don't have any say about what the government does*' and '*I don't think government cares much what people like me think*' (see also Blais & Rubenson, 2013). By speaking of 'people like me', rather than of 'I', these questions measure respondents' perceptions of how the political system responds to average citizens, rather than to the capacities of the respondent (which would measure internal efficacy). To get an even more robust measure, however, one more item was added, asking people how likely they thought it would be that government would pay serious attention in case the respondent would raise a concern. Though it is somewhat less clear whether the respondent is here asked about his or her own capacities or that of the political system, a principle component analysis (see Table 2.1) with a moderate but acceptable Cronbach's alpha of .61 confirms that these three items respond to a single underlying construct. The factor score of the PCA is used as the dependent variable in the analyses.

**Table 2.1**: Principal component analysis external input efficacy

| *Variable* | *External input efficacy* |
|---|---|
| People like me don't have any say about what the government does (reversed) | **0.78** |
| I don't think government cares much what people like me think (reversed) | **0.83** |
| In case of political action, serious attention government is likely | **0.61** |
| **Overall proportion explained variance** | **0.56** |
| **Eigenvalue** | **1.68** |

*Note:* Entries are the result of a principal component analysis on these three items. Cronbach's Alpha = 0.60. Source: ISSP 2004 Citizenship. N = 35,958

*Control Variables*

In addition to a these two variables of interest, a number of common control variables are included in the analyses as well, both at the individual level and at the country level. Sex is coded binary (women = 0, men =1), age is a continuous variable, and education is entered as an ordered categorical variable ranging from 0 (no formal education) to 5 (higher than university degree). Income is measured as family income. Political interest ranges from 1 (not interested at all) to 4 (very interested). Satisfaction with democracy is measured by asking respondents how well they think democracy functions in their country (0 = very poorly, 10 = very well). Internal efficacy is an index of two items measuring agreement with the statements 'I have a pretty good understanding of the issues facing my country' and 'Most people are better informed about politics and government than I am.' Following Vrablikova (2014), GDP is added at the country level, as well as a dummy variable indicating ex-communist countries.

**Analyses**

The data will be analyzed using multilevel logistic regressions in STATA 13. Logistic regression is used because of the binary coding of the NEP variable, and a multilevel structure is used because respondents are nested within countries and because the hypotheses concern both the country level and the individual level. Cross-level interaction are estimated to analyze how certain country level characteristics moderate the individual level effects. Building on the work by Kam and Franzese (2007), the results will be visualized in order to aid the interpretation of these sometimes complex models.

## RESULTS

Following the order of the hypotheses presented above, I will here first look at the individual level predictors of NEP. I will then move attention to the country level, first to test whether the effect of external input efficacy varies between countries, and second, to analyze which indicators of output strength determine the strength of this effect.

**Individual-level effects**

In Model I (Table 2.2) a multilevel logistic regression is estimated with random intercepts to analyze the fixed effect of the individual level predictors in all 36 countries. Looking at the control variables first, it is clear that in line with previous research, there are significant effects of sex, age, education, political interest, satisfaction with democracy, and internal efficacy. Women and young people are more likely to engage in NEP, which might be somewhat surprising, given that men and older people have traditionally been overrepresented in political participation. However, this has mainly been the case in electoral politics, and women and younger people have become better represented in NEP over time (Stolle & Hooghe, 2011). A number of personal characteristics that can be interpreted as 'resources for participation', like education, political interest and internal efficacy are also found to have positive effects, which is in line with previous research as well (Verba et al., 1995, pp. 334–68). Satisfaction with democracy has a negative effect, suggesting that dissatisfaction with the system, rather than trust in its workings, leads people to participate (Norris, 2011, Chapter 11).

Most importantly, we see that external input efficacy has a positive effect on NEP. In other words, people who believe that government or politicians are willing to respond to their demands are more likely to engage in NEP. This is in line with the 'empowerment hypothesis', which understands external input efficacy as a resource that can boost peoples' confidence in the potential effectiveness of NEP, thereby increasing their propensity to become active (de Moor, 2015; Rosenstone & Hansen, 2003; Vráblíková, 2016). The results thus confirm the first hypothesis, even though is must me noted that the effect of external input efficacy is relatively small compared to other predictors like internal efficacy and political interest.

In a second step, the random intercepts model is re-estimated, but this time with random slopes.[21] In this model, the effect of external input efficacy is thus allowed to vary between countries. A likelihood-ratio test is performed to analyze whether allowing slopes to vary between countries significantly improves the fit of the model. The results indicate

[21] This model is not reported because the results do not differ substantially from Model I. Only the variance of this model is reported under Model I as a point of reference to calculate explained variance for the other models.

**Table 2.2**: The moderated effect of external input efficacy on NEP

| | Non-Electoral Political Participation | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | I | | II | | III | | IV | |
| Intercept | .276*** | .040 | .861 | .087 | .872 | .088 | .869 | .088 |
| *Individual-Level Variables* | | | | | | | | |
| Sex (Male = 1) | .829*** | .020 | .827*** | .020 | .827*** | .020 | .827*** | .020 |
| Age | .992*** | .001 | .992*** | .001 | .992*** | .001 | .992*** | .001 |
| Level of Education | 1.183*** | .011 | 1.183*** | .011 | 1.184*** | .011 | 1.184*** | .011 |
| Political Interest | 1.445*** | .023 | 1.439*** | .023 | 1.440*** | .023 | 1.440*** | .023 |
| Satisfaction with dem. | .985** | .006 | .985** | .006 | .985** | .006 | .985** | .006 |
| Internal efficacy | 1.513*** | .046 | 1.506*** | .045 | 1.505*** | .045 | 1.504*** | .045 |
| External input efficacy | 1.131*** | .015 | 1.137*** | .025 | 1.133*** | .027 | 1.135*** | .027 |
| *Country-Level Variables* | | | | | | | | |
| GDP | | | 1.000** | .000 | 1.000** | .000 | 1.000** | .000 |
| Ex-communist | | | .458** | .111 | .432** | .107 | .440** | .105 |
| Gov. spending | | | .993 | .008 | | | | |
| Horizontal decent. (-) | | | | | .880 | .614 | | |
| Political globalization | | | | | | | .997 | .009 |
| *Cross-Level Interactions* | | | | | | | | |
| Gov. spend. * ext. eff. | | | 1.007** | .002 | | | | |
| Gov. spend. binary * ext. eff. | | | | | | | | |
| Hor. dec. * ext. eff. | | | | | .783 | .135 | | |
| Pol. glob. * ext. eff. | | | | | | | .998 | .002 |
| $\sigma^2_{External\ efficacy}$ | .118[a] | | .097 | | .113 | | .114 | |
| N (countries/individuals) | 36/35,958 | | 36/35,958 | | 36/35,958 | | 36/35,958 | |

*Note:* Entries are odds ratios and standard errors (in parentheses) of multilevel logistic regressions. (-) Horizontal decentralization are inverted so that higher values indicate stronger output structures. Sign.: * < 0.05, ** < 0.01, *** < 0.001. *a*: Variance in random effect of external input efficacy comes from another model with random slopes (Model I has fixed effects).

that this is indeed the case. It is therefore advisable to continue our analyses to investigate what country-level characteristics may determine the strength of this effect.

**Country-level effects**

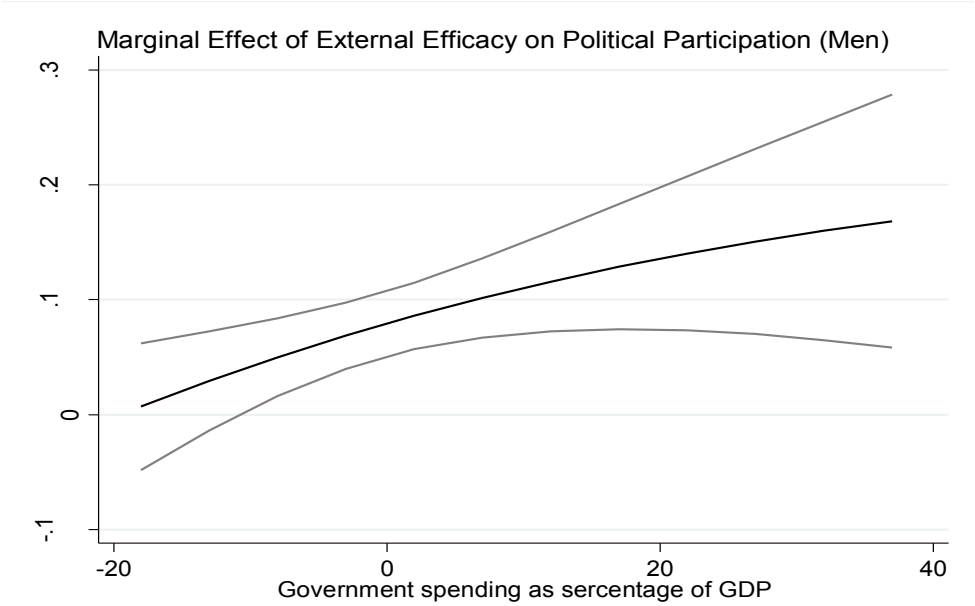
It was hypothesized that the effect of external input efficacy should be greater in countries with a stronger output structure. In models II to IV, this is tested for each of the three operationalizations that were proposed above, respectively: government spending, horizontal decentralization, and political globalization. For each of these country-level indicators, a cross-level interaction with external input efficacy is entered into the model separately, alongside the country-level variable itself and two control variables for GDP and ex-communist countries. All variables (except for the binary ones) have been grand-mean centered, because the coefficient for the interaction term is estimated when all other variables are held at zero. Grand-mean centering helps with the interpretation of the results as it renders zero to be a more meaningful value (i.e., the mean), but it does not change the effect that will be found (Kam & Franzese, 2007).

Looking at the results in Table 2.2, we see that only one of the interaction effects is statistically significant. As hypothesized (H2a), in countries where government spending takes a larger share of the GDP, the effect of external input efficacy is greater, albeit that the effect appears to be quite limited.[22] One percent higher government spending increases the odds of having participated with .7 percent in addition to 13.7 percent of a one unit increase of external input efficacy. If we consider, however, that government spending in our sample ranges from 13 percent (Mexico) to 70 percent (Cyprus), this effect can become quite substantial. Looking at the standard deviation of the random effects of external input efficacy between the model without interactions, and Model II, it becomes clear that government spending explains about 18 percent of this variation. Hence, the results suggest indeed that whether people believe politicians are willing to take their demands into account matters for NEP mainly in countries where national governments have the resources to interfere in many

[22] Following van der Meer et al. (2010), I control for influential cases. Cyprus has a particularly high value on government spending, and is consequently identified as an influential case. When Cyprus is left out of the regression, however, the effect remains positive significant. Moreover, as a robustness check, the government spending is recoded into a binary variable, indicating low and high government spending (cut of at the mean). This interaction is still significant at the 10 per cent level.

social domains, and where they have a relatively big influence on the allocation of resources in society. It was hypothesized (H3) that the effect of government spending would be the greatest, because of all the indicators, it is arguably the most likely to be picked up on by average citizens. This idea is supported by the finding that only the effect of government spending is significant.[23]

***Figure 2.2**: Marginal effect plot of effect of external (input) efficacy on NEP*




These conclusions are further illustrated by the marginal effects of external input efficacy on NEP plotted against government spending in Figure 2.2. It shows that the 90 percent confidence intervals overlap zero in the countries with the most limited government spending, indicating that in minimal states, there is no significant positive effect of external input efficacy on NEP. In other words, in these countries it does not matter whether you believe politicians are willing to respond. In most countries, however, the effect is positive significant, and it appear to become stronger towards countries with higher government spending, although the wideness of the confidence intervals indicate a limited certainty to these results.

[23] In response to comments on a previous version of this chapter, it was tested whether the combined effect (sum-scale) of the indicators of output structures could explain the effect of external efficacy on NEP. Analyses that are not reported here do not provide support for this idea.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

External input efficacy is often linked to NEP, yet theories contradict each other and results have remained inconclusive (Norris, 2011, Chapter 11). This raises the question whether there are specific conditions under which these effects may or may not hold. Building on theoretical arguments for a more contextual approach to political attitudes and behavior (Hedström & Ylikoski, 2010; Kriesi, 2008; van Zomeren et al., 2008), and a growing body of empirical research analyzing the macro-level determinants of individual-level effects (e.g., Braun & Hutter, 2016; Karp & Banducci, 2008; Vráblíková, 2014), this study has analyzed whether there are contextual variations that condition the effect of external input efficacy on NEP. Specifically, it was tested whether this effect depends on the strength of countries' output structures, i.e., on the ability of governments to develop and implement policies. Three characteristics that are in the literature linked to output strength are analyzed: 1) government spending, 2) horizontal decentralization, and 3) political globalization (Hutter, 2014; Kitschelt, 1986; Marshall & Fisher, 2015; Vráblíková, 2014). Combined, these elements represent government's financial ability to interfere in social spheres, as well as its ability to determine how it will do so without the interference of large numbers of domestic or foreign veto players. Only government spending is found to have a positive effect on the link between external input efficacy and NEP. A visual representation of the marginal effects suggest that there is no effect in countries with the most limited government spending, and that the effect gets stronger as the government's spending power does. The fact that only an effect for government spending is found is not very surprising, though, if we consider that there are big differences between welfare states and minimal states in our sample, and because these differences are arguably more likely to affect average citizens than horizontal decentralization or political globalization are.

These findings contribute not only to our understanding of the link between external input efficacy and NEP, but also to the literature on political opportunity structures (Kriesi, 2004; Meyer, 2004). More specifically, it qualifies the POS approach's predominant focus on input structures and near total neglect of output structures. It shows that one of the POS approach's key explanations for political activism, i.e., the perception of openings in the political context (McAdam, 1982, p. 48; Tarrow, 2011, p. 12), is conditional upon the ability

of a polity to get things done. It is understandable that when the POS theory was developed, there was mainly attention for input structures. During that period, the state was still a more obvious political power holder, and the strength of its output structures may therefore have not been questioned as much. Yet recent literature has pointed towards processes of political globalization and global governance (Beck, 1997; Fox, 2014), which directly challenge the power of the state and that therefore render it questionable if the state is still the obvious target for political activism it might have once been (Tilly, 2004, p. 14). From a theoretical point of view, taking into account output structures has therefore become a more obvious thing to do, and the results in this study indicate the empirical relevance of doing so as well. Of course, not all elements used to operationalize output strength in this study are equally recent or related to globalization, and political globalization itself is not found to have the effect it was hypothesized to have. Yet the element that is found to significantly interact with external input efficacy and NEP, government spending, is in fact related closely to globalization, both in a political and in an economic sense. Political globalization, like in the form of Europeanization, sometime imposes austerity measures and limits government spending. Hence, 'the reduction of a state's autonomy may imply a reduction of the size of the public sector.' (Kriesi et al., 2008, p. 8). Economic globalization drives the race to the bottom that forces governments to limit corporate taxation to create attractive investment climates, thereby limiting its control over the national GDP as well (Busemeyer, 2009). Limited government spending might thus be the most salient or tangible exponent of political and economic globalization (Marshall & Fisher, 2015).

Clearly, there are a number of issues that limit this study's ability to draw strong conclusions, and that suggest a number of particular venues for future research into the link between output structures and NEP. First of all, it is assumed that output structures condition the effect of external input efficacy because citizens can perceive countries' output strength. It assumes for instance that in countries with high government spending, citizens consider government as more capable of acting than in countries with a more limited government budget. In the absence of comparative data on perceived output structures (i.e., external output efficacy), however, this remains a speculation.

Secondly, this study takes a strictly comparative approach to the question of contextual effects, assuming that cross-sectional differences between countries will result in differences in the attitudes and behavior of people in those countries. As agued above,

however, there is also an important temporal dimension to the question of output structures. That is, important variations exist not only between countries, but also within countries over time. Marshall and Fisher (Marshall & Fisher, 2015) show for instance that there are important temporal shifts in levels of globalization that affect government spending, and these difference explain shifts in electoral participation over time. The measures of output strength used in this study could have a similar effect. In fact, it could even be argued that in some regards it should be easier for citizens to pick up on shifts within their country, than on differences between countries. An increased level of political globalization, like in the form of growing regional integration might be relatively noticeable, perhaps more than a difference between countries. However, there is a significant lack of longitudinal data on political participation that would allow for an analysis similar to that of Marshall and Fischer, who had a large quantity of longitudinal data on electoral turnout at their disposal.

In sum, much research is still required to increase our understanding of the way in which output structures interact with external input efficacy and political participation. In particular, comparative data on perceived output structures, and longitudinal data on political participation are needed. The current study provides some relevant insights into these dynamics, yet ongoing processes of globalization challenge us to look much further.

# 3

# WHY DO PEACE PROTESTERS BELIEVE THEY CAN STOP THE WAR?

## Explaining Perceived Chances of Success Among Participants in the Anti-Iraq War Demonstrations of 2003

**Abstract**

*In this study it is analyzed why peace protesters believe they can stop wars. While it is widely agreed upon that the perceived chance of success is a valuable asset for activists' sustained participation, it has rarely been analyzed why activists would, or would not, perceive their actions as potentially effective. To address this gap in the literature, this chapter explores the theoretically widely supported, but empirically understudied assumption that activists perceive opportunities in their socio-political context, and that these perceptions determine how effective they think their protest is in preventing war. To do so, it analyzes a comparative data set of participants in the anti-Iraq War demonstrations (2003) in eight countries (N = 5,772). It is found that perceptions of the likelihood that politicians will take the protesters in to account (i.e., expected procedural gains) do not reflect 'objective' contextual opportunities that are generally presumed to determine this likelihood. However, the study does find evidence to support the hypothesis that expected procedural gains matters more for perceived chances of success in countries where governments had a stronger influence on the occurrence of the invasion of Iraq. There, politicians' openness to the protesters' message would have been more likely to result in substantive political change.*

*This chapter is based on a single-authored paper.*

# WHY DO PEACE PROTESTERS BELIEVE THEY CAN STOP THE WAR?

## Explaining Perceived Chances of Success Among Participants in the Anti-Iraq War Demonstrations of 2003

In times of international crises, peace can be among citizens' main political concerns (Verhulst & Walgrave, 2010), and to advocate it, they have joined waves of protest in massive numbers (Tarrow, 2010) and frequently so (Van Dyke et al., 2004). Yet peace protesters face a significant problem. While their main goal for taking the streets is to prevent planned wars or to end ongoing ones, evidence shows that of all types of protesters, they are least likely to reach their goal (Giugni, 2004; Marullo & Meyer, 2004). In particular large demonstrations are unlikely to be influential (McAdam & Su, 2002). The case of the global anti-Iraq War demonstrations was no exception. On February 15, 2003, approximately ten million individuals, in over 600 cities worldwide, participated in demonstrations against the war in Iraq, staging the largest peace demonstration in human history (Walgrave and Verhulst 2009: 1358–9; Walgrave and Rucht 2010). Yet despite these numbers, the odds seemed to have been (and turned out to be) against the movement. Both organizers and participants saw the demonstrations as an attempt to prevent the invasion of Iraq, yet the Bush and Blair administrations were determined to wage a war, and although the UN and several of its members were still trying to stop it, things looked grim for the advocates of peace (Berenger, 2004; Rucht & Verhulst, 2010; Verhulst & Walgrave, 2010).

This complex situation raises the question how activists participating in such peace demonstrations actually perceive their chances of success. Are they all pessimistic given the movement's difficult situation and historical record, or are they rather optimistic, and if so, what renders them to feel this way? It is important to answer these questions, because feelings of effectiveness are among the main drivers behind activist' sustained participation

(van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013). The fact that states who want to go to war are often hard to stop can of course disprove initial hopes for success, yet the feeling that the movement had a strong *chance* of achieving its goal can still provide peace activists with a personal reward, it can help them to build positive associations with the movement, and it can keep their hopes up for meaningful future actions (Downton & Wehr, 1997, 1998). 'Perceived chances of success' (Lee, 2010; Opp, 2013), in other words, are not only important for activists to join the movement in the first place, but also for their continued support of the peace movement's struggles. This study therefore investigates what *explains* perceived chances of success with a comparative analyses of participants in the anti-Iraq War demonstrations of 2003. Images from the demonstrations made it readily observable that perceived chances of success varied greatly among the participants. While some carried signs stating they wanted to 'STOP THE WAR', others seemed to have had accepted that a war was inevitable, anticipating but denouncing its imminent occurrence with signs saying 'NOT IN MY NAME'. This chapter analyses what sets apart those peace protesters who did, and those who did not, believe in the demonstrations' ability to prevent the war.

To do so, it focuses on the political context in which protesters were acting, and the perceptions they had of that context. Existing research has mainly focused on socio-psychological explanations that highlight the role of the individuals' attitudes in the development of perceived chances of success (Bandura, 2000; Fernández-Ballesteros, Díez-Nicolás, Caprara, Barbaranelli, & Bandura, 2002). However, peace protesters generally do not stop wars with their own hands. Instead, they need to convince governments to do so. Therefore it can be assumed that contextual variations that determine the responsiveness of governments are essential for peace protesters' perceived chances of success. In their insightful work on peace protesters' sustained participation, Downton and Wehr (1997, 1998) stress that the political context, and perceptions thereof, could indeed play an important role in determining protesters' perceived chances of success. Yet like other studies that have made this point (e.g., Lee, 2010), Downton and Wehr lacked the comparative evidence necessary to truly assess whether the socio-political context in which protesters act are perceived, thereby affecting their perceived chances of success. With comparative data from eight countries, this study is capable of filling this gap in the literature.

To support this contextual focus, this chapter builds on the political opportunity structure (POS) approach (Kriesi et al., 1995; Meyer, 2004; Tarrow, 2011). This approach

provides the theoretical basis to develop hypotheses, and in turn the current study contributes to this theory by testing some of its core assumptions. The POS approach suggests that political contexts provide opportunities that increase or decrease the likelihood of a movement's success. Most importantly, POSs determine how responsive a system is to its challengers, a quality that can be ascribed to two elements: input structures and output structures (Kitschelt, 1986). The former refers to the openness of the system to challengers' messages, while the latter indicates its ability to affect political outcomes, and thus to turn protesters' demands into substantive change. Activists are assumed to perceive such opportunities (Gamson & Meyer, 1996; Klandermans, 1997, pp. 173–4; Meyer & Minkoff, 2004), which I will refer to as the 'perception hypothesis'. As a result of data constraints, I will focus on the perception of input structures. Specifically, the openness of input structures should be reflected in activists' expectations of being able to influence politicians. Drawing on Kitschelt's (1986) concept of 'procedural gains' (i.e. getting access to the political decision making process), I refer to these expectations as 'expected procedural gains'.[24] It is in turn expected that expected procedural gains affect activists' perceived chances of success.

Though I will not be able to measure perceptions of output structures, I will assess how 'real' output structures condition the effect of expected procedural gains. The link between expected procedural gains and perceived chances of success may seem quite obvious, but it is to be expected that there is significant variation between countries in how strong the link is. Particularly, I expect that the strength of the output structure one acts in determines how great the effect is, because in strong output structures, government's willingness to respond is more likely to result in substantive change (Kitschelt, 1986; Overby, 1990). In the current case, the effect can thus be expected to be greater in those countries with a more direct influence on whether the planned war against Iraq would take place (e.g., the USA as opposed to Switzerland).

This chapter uses a unique data set to test these assumptions. The International Peace Protest Survey (IPPS, Walgrave et al., 2003) was simultaneously conducted in eight countries, and contains information about 5,772 participants in the anti-Iraq War

[24] This concept relates closely to that of external (input) efficacy, which measures the perceived willingness of government to respond (see Chapter 1). However, external (input) efficacy measures strictly the perception of the government. Expected procedural gains measures the effect *on* government, which can be a product of government responsiveness as well as of one's own or one's group's competences.

demonstrations. As such, it provides the opportunity to analyse in a comparative fashion how peace protesters' perceived chances of success depended on their political context, and the perceptions and expectations they had thereof. The data were gathered in the US, the UK, Spain, Italy, the Netherlands, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland. These countries' differed strongly with regard to their official government position on the war and their influence on the war's occurrence. This variation allows to test whether political contexts indeed matter in the way various scholars have predicted them to, but could not test.

## THE VALUE OF PERCEIVED CHANCES OF SUCCESS

Perceived chances of success 'refers to an individual's perception of whether a collective actor to which the individual belongs is capable of achieving desired outcomes.' (Lee, 2010, p. 392). As such, it is crucial for protesters, not only as a motivation to join action in the first place, but also to stay involved (van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013). There are of course protesters who only join for expressive reasons, like to vent a particular grievance or to show solidarity (Klandermans, 2004), and for them a sense of efficacy is not as likely to be a strong condition for staying active in the movement. For the majority of protesters, however, instrumental motivations are important (Rucht & Verhulst, 2010; Walgrave et al., 2010). Specifically, Walgrave et al. (2010) found that no less than 82.5 percent of the participants in the anti-Iraq War demonstrations reported instrumental motivations for taking the streets on February 15, 2003. For such instrumentally motivated participants, protest without a chance of success will seem futile and unattractive or unrewarding (van Stekelenburg et al., 2013). According to Albert Bandura, the likelihood that people believe their movement is to be successful influences 'how much effort they put into their group endeavour, their staying power when collective efforts fail to produce quick results or meet forcible opposition, and their vulnerability to the discouragement that can beset people taking on tough social problems.' (2000, p. 76). Indeed, qualitative research by Downton and Wehr (1997, 1998) shows that a sense of success creates sustained peace activism in a number of ways. Goal-oriented peace activists need to feel that their actions make a difference, and furthermore, a feeling of efficacy can fuel a sense of pride that strengthens one's identification with, and therefore commitment to, the movement. Tausch and Becker (2013) provide quantitative evidence for the idea that activists who can retain a sense of efficacy and pride over time are

more determined to stay in the movement. Finally, high perceived chances of success can actually improve a group's performance, which, over time, could feed back into its members' expectation of success (Fernández-Ballesteros et al., 2002).

What seems critical, however, is that peace protesters are not often in a situation where their chances of success are very high (Giugni, 2004, p. 221, 2006). McAdam and Su (2002) have concluded that large demonstrations are relatively ineffective means to advancing peace as compared to other strategies, while Marullo and Meyer have even argued that 'peace movements are most likely to mobilize extensively when they are least likely to get what they want' (2004, p. 642). That is, those moments when the peace movement brings large numbers to the street, are those moments when governments prepare for war, and there is often little chance that protesters can stop them from taking arms. In the case of the Iraq war this seemed to have been no different. The American and British war-plans certainly experienced important resistance from within the UN Security Council and beyond, yet the USA and the UK seemed so determined to go to war that they even forged evidence that would justify an invasion. Even if reality ultimately disproves perceived chances of success, however, the feeling of being part of a movement strong enough to build a large *chance* to stop war can still be an empowering experience that can galvanize movement participation. Nevertheless, there is clear tension around the role of perceived chances of success in the peace movement. On the one hand, it is a crucial resource to fuel sustained participation, while on the other hand, it might be a rare commodity to come by considering the peace movement's objective chances of success.

This raises the question how peace protesters actually assess their movement's chances of success, and more importantly, what it is that fuels these perceptions. While some studies have measured peace activists' perceptions of chances of success as an independent variable (Davenport & Trivedi, 2013; Swank & Fahs, 2011), it has hardly been analysed as a dependent variable. Until now, there is some socio-psychological literature that has tried to explain perceived chances of success in more general terms by highlighting several individual-level explanations. For instance, it is found that one's personal sense of being able to understand and participate in politics (i.e., internal political efficacy) is an important condition for one's believes in the collective's ability to act (Bandura, 2000; Fernández-Ballesteros et al., 2002). Such individual-level explanations may of course be important for peace protesters as well. Still, the peace movement's success does not only depend on its

members' own abilities and efforts, but also in strong measures on the reaction of governments. To prevent the Iraq war, protesters ultimately needed governments to act. Recognizing this contextual dependency of the peace movement, then, this study focuses on the degree to which politicians were likely to take the protesters demands into account, and on protesters' perceptions of this probability.

This study thus defines the peace movement's success as its ability to prevent the war, whereas an effect on politicians is considered to be an intermediary step for reaching that goal. Concurrently, it treats expected procedural gains as a potential explanation for perceived chances of success. An influence on the political process does not mean that the desired substantive output will be gained. One could argue, however, that being taken into account by politicians is a movement success in its own respect. Nevertheless, I contend that the ultimate goal of the peace movement, and of the anti-Iraq War demonstrations in particular, is to prevent wars, and that other effects it may have should be considered as a means to this end. Expected procedural gains will therefore be analysed as a predictor of perceived chances of success, as I hypothesize that:

H1: *Higher expected procedural gains lead to higher perceived chances of success*

The idea that protesters' perceived chances of success depend on opportunities in the political context is certainly not new. In fact, the idea epitomizes one of the core ideas of the large political opportunity structure (POS) literature on protest and social movements (Gamson & Meyer, 1996; McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 2011). Yet while some scholars have tried to explain perceived chances of success on the basis of (peace) protesters' perceptions of the political context (Downton & Wehr, 1997, 1998; Lee, 2010), there is a strong lack of comparative research that can actually analyse the link between 'real' opportunities, 'perceived' opportunities, and perceived chances of success. With data about peace protesters in eight countries, this study is able to develop and test hypotheses that can address this gap in the literature.

**CONTEXTUAL EXPLANATIONS: INPUT STRUCTURES**

The openness of governments to protesters' messages is a key determinant of a movement's success. In particular in the case of the peace movement, government responsiveness is an almost essential condition for success (Marullo & Meyer, 2004). Concurrently, we may expect that government responsiveness will also affect activists' expectations of success and failure. That is, following the 'perception hypothesis' it is first of all expected that variations in the openness of countries' input structure are recognized by the protesters, rendering them more optimistic about whether they will be able to make politicians take their demands into account. In other words, it should increase their expected procedural gains. In turn, an increase in activists' expected procedural gains is likely to affect their perceived chances of success (Lee, 2010).

So what did the input structures faced by the participants look like? There are generally two approaches to operationalizing POSs, and input structures more specifically. Whereas some look at stable institutional structures, others have emphasized the importance of POSs in their issue- or situation-specific form (Meyer & Minkoff, 2004; Meyer, 2004). In the case of the Iraq war, the general and specific openness of input structures differed strongly from each other, and so it is important to take into account both to analyse how expected procedural gains and input structures related.

Firstly, Beyeler and Rucht (2010) have looked at the stable structural features of the eight countries where the current study was conducted. They integrate a number of commonly accepted indicators of into a single index of the input structures' openness. Based on the work of Lijphart (1999) and Huber, Ragin, and Stephens (1997) they looked at the degree of federalism, the effective number of parties, the index of judicial review, and the frequency of national referenda, each of which is understood as structural openings in the political system. The resulting index thus represents the general tendency of government to take citizens' and movements' demands into account, with higher values indicating greater openness (see Table 3.1). Following the 'perception hypothesis', people in open systems should believe that it is more likely that politicians will take them into account than people in closed systems.

Secondly, Walgrave and Verhulst (2009) complement Beyeler and Rucht's index with a detailed categorization of the issue-specific input structure. They look at the positions of

government and opposition parties in the eight countries in this case and show that there were important differences to be noted between the countries (see again Table 3.1). Following the 'perception hypothesis', these differences are again expected to have translated into protesters' expected procedural gains. It seems to be clear that protesters in the USA faced the least favourable issue-specific input structure, with a government that was in favour of the war, and a divided opposition. The UK presented a similar situation, but with a divided government party. Protesters in Spain, Italy and the Netherlands were confronted with a war-supporting government, but there, the opposition was against the war as well. In Germany, Belgium and Switzerland both government and opposition opposed the war, presenting the most favourable input structures to the protesters. In these countries, politicians were arguably most likely to take the protesters into account, because e.g. publically responding and endorsing the protesters or making promises about trying to stop the war, was in line with their party's position. If protesters indeed built their expected procedural gains on issue-specific signals from their context, it should reflect these differences. With the above in mind, I hypothesize that:

> H2: *Protesters in countries with a more open stable or situation-specific input structure score higher on expected procedural gains*

**CONTEXTUAL EXPLANATIONS: OUTPUT STRUCTURES**

Although it may seem quite obvious that protesters who perceive government as responsive to their demands will also believe more strongly that the demonstration could prevent the war, it is in fact likely that the strength of this relation varies across countries. A responsive government may increase the odds of protesters affecting political decisions, but government responsiveness does not guarantee success (Walgrave & Vliegenthart, 2012). Even when governments try to take protesters demands into account, their ability to alter political outcomes is sometimes limited (Kitschelt, 1986; Overby, 1990). In line with this idea, it was shown in Chapter 2 that the extent to which perceptions of government's willingness to respond predict political participation depends on governments ability to act. In the case of international political processes, we can certainly expect this to be the case as well, as the

**Table 3.1**: Political contexts around the Iraq war, 2003

| | | US | UK | SP | GE | IT | NL | BE | CH |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Input structure** | Stable structures[1] | 13.4 | 5.2 | 9.8 | 12.8 | 11.7 | 9.7 | 11.7 | 16.6 |
| | Government[2] | PRO | PRO | PRO | CONTRA | PRO | PRO | CONTRA | CONTRA |
| | Government party[2] | Right/ Conservative PRO | Center Left MIXED | Right/ conservative PRO | Center left CONTRA | Right/ conservative PRO | Right/ conservative PRO | Center left + Liberal CONTRA | Center left CONTRA |
| | Opposition party[2] | Center left PRO/ CON | Cons. Pro Liberals Con PRO/CON | Center + Far Left CONTRA | Right/ conservative CONTRA | Center + Far Left CONTRA | Center + Far Left CONTRA | Right/ conservative CONTRA | Left (Greens) Contra |
| **Output structure** | | 1: Main initiator STRONGEST | 2: Main participant STRONG | 3: Members UN Security Council MODERATE | | 4: Normal member UN WEAK | | | |

*Notes*: 1: source = Beyeler and Rucht (2010); 2: source = Walgrave and Verhulst (2009)

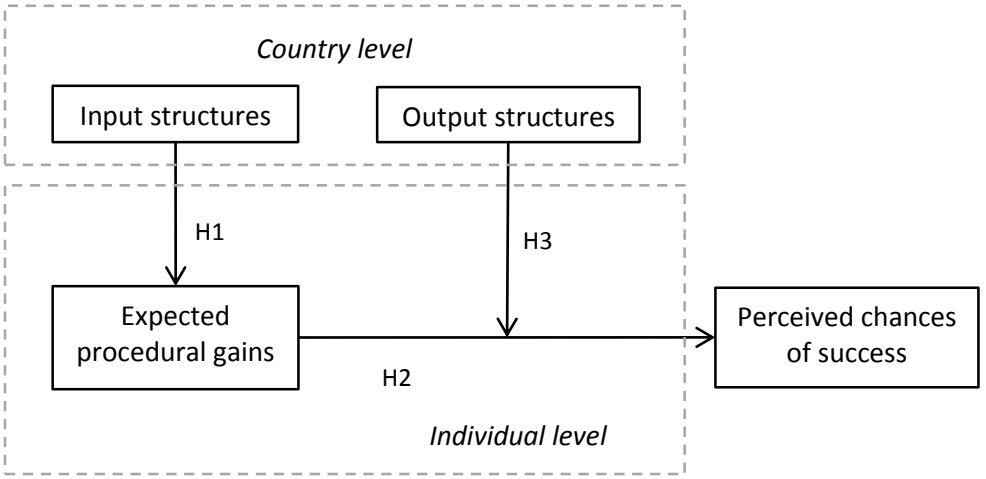
power of some counties may be very limited in comparison to that of others, which determines how likely it is that protesters' demands will become substantive political output.

In the case of the Iraq war, output strength varied significantly, according to countries' influence on the plans for war (see Table 3.1). The USA was clearly the main initiator of the war, and its foreign policy position had the most direct influence on the occurrence of the war (Fisher, 2003). The UK was the US' most important ally, being the only other country to deliver battle troops, and it resides as a permanent member in the UN security council as well. Spain and Germany were temporal members of the Security Council at the time, and in that capacity they can be said to have been more directly involved than the remaining four countries, who were members of the UN, but who had no seat at the most important table. Activists may have been aware of such power differences, and the hypothesized effect of expected procedural gains on perceived chances of success may have varied accordingly. Protesters in the US, for instance, are likely to have realized that if their government was willing to take their demands into account, this would have had a rather direct impact on whether the war would take place. In contrast, Belgian or Swiss protesters may have been aware of the fact that their governments were only involved in the international negotiations to a limited extent, and that the willingness of their governments to take them into account was not very likely to result in the prevention of the war. In short, I expect that:

> H3: *The relation between expected procedural gains and perceived chances of success is greater among protesters in countries with a stronger output structure*

In sum, on the one hand I anticipate levels of expected political input to be higher in countries with a more open input structure, leading in turn to higher perceived chances of success. On the other hand, I expect that the effect of expected political input will be higher in the context of a strong output structure, leading to higher perceived chances of success there. These hypotheses are summarized in Figure 3.1.

**Figure 3.1**: Hypothesized direct and indirect effects




**DATA, MEASUREMENTS AND ANALYSES**

This study uses data from the International Peace Protest Survey (IPPS) (Walgrave et al., 2003), which was conducted on 15 February 2003 in eight countries. The protesters were interviewed on a unique scale. A postal survey was handed out to, and completed and sent back by, 5,772 protesters. The sample's randomization was guaranteed using a fieldwork method developed by Van Aelst and Walgrave, which prescribes that questionnaires are systematically handed over to every Nth person in every Nth row of the crowd (Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2001). A relatively high response rate of 53 per cent was achieved. Moreover, the postal survey demonstrates similar marginal distributions as 991 shorter face-to-face interviews of which the random sample could be guaranteed by a near total response rate, thereby further supporting the representativeness of the sample (Walgrave & Verhulst, 2009).

The data thus provide comparative data from a single international peace protest campaign that allows to inquire how the contextual variations between those countries were perceived by the protesters, and how this may have affected their perceived chances of success. Upon reflecting on the IPPS project, Walgrave and Rucht concluded that they 'had an ideal research setting—a kind of 'natural experiment' that allows to study the impact of contextual factors.' (2010b, p. 262) Yet while an impressive body of comparative research

has already been published on the basis of the 'natural experiment' (Walgrave & Rucht, 2010b), it has not yet been analysed whether contextual variations are actually picked up by protesters, and whether this affects their expectations of success. This chapter takes up this challenge.[25]

*Variable of interest*

So how were perceived chances of success measured then? Although previous studies indicate that in the case of the anti-Iraq War demonstrations, some protesters had multiple goals, including the expression of anti neo-liberal sentiments (Klandermans, 2010), opposition to the war in Iraq clearly was their main instrumental goal (Rucht & Verhulst, 2010; Verhulst, 2010). Therefore, perceived chances of success should in this case be operationalized as protesters' perceived likelihood of preventing that war. It was measured by asking respondents to indicate to what extent they agreed (1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree) with the following statement: 'The demonstration raises the chance a war can be prevented'. The benefit of this question wording is that it measures the demonstration's *potential* influence by stressing its effect on the *chances* of preventing the war. As such it deemphasizes the absolute result of the demonstration, instead emphasizing perceptions of the movement's strength, which provides a more realistic image of how protesters perceive chances of success and thus of the believed that could fuel their sustained participation.

To measure expected procedural gains, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed (1 = completely disagree, 5 = completely agree) with the following statement: 'politicians will take into account our demands'. Protesters who answered more positive to this question clearly felt that their demands had access to the institutional political process.

[25] One complication with the data is that the completed surveys were sent back on different dates, most before the war broke out, but some after (N = 51). It is to be expected that this had significant consequences for the perceived chances of success that the protesters reported. After all, it seems that after the war broke out, the perceived chance that the demonstrations could prevent it must have gone down. Surprisingly, though, a t-test shows that there is no significant difference between the levels of perceived chances of success before and after the beginning of the war. This provides tentative evidence for the idea that perceived chances of success are not just objective readings of the movement's influence that can be shattered when the political reality indicates failure, but that there is a more lasting evaluation of movement strength related to it as well.

*Control Variables*

Other personal characteristics that have previously been found to relate to one's perceived chances of success are age, sex, education, and internal efficacy, the latter being measured as a rescaled (1-5) sum-scale of two items measuring how well respondents' believed they could understand politics (Burns, Schlozman, & Verba, 2001; Fernández-Ballesteros et al., 2002; Lee, 2010). These variables will therefore be included as controls in all analyses (see Appendix 3.1 for details).

**Analyses**

While this study relies on descriptive statistics to some extent, ordered logistic regressions are used to formally test the hypotheses. Ordered logistic regressions are used, because the variables of interest are measured using an ordinal variable, and because test statistics reveal a violation of assumptions regarding the normality of residuals. To correct for heteroscedasticity, robust standard errors are used. To account for the fact that protesters were nested in different national contexts, robust standard errors were clustered per country.[26]

Though a comparative survey of one global wave of protest provide unique comparative data, there are too few cases at the second (country) level to test the country-level hypotheses using multilevel modelling (Steenbergen & Jones, 2002). The study therefore relies on descriptive statistics to show the variation of means or coefficients between countries, the inclusion of dummy-variables in regressions to formally test whether means vary between countries according to the hypotheses, and interactions with dummies or ordinal variables representing countries to test whether effects between individual level characteristics (e.g., expected procedural gains and perceived chances of success) vary between countries or groups of countries. The need to use these methods of course means

[26] Clustered robust standard errors per country are used because respondents are nested within different countries which may have affected their answers. Potential problems with the normal distribution of residuals are therefore to be expected. More problematically even, ignoring the nested nature of the data may lead to an underestimation of standard errors, which may cause effects to appear to be significant, whereas in fact they are not (Steenbergen & Jones, 2002, p. 220). Clustering robust standard errors per country prevents these problems.

that claims about country level effects are necessarily tentative, as they can only demonstrate general trends.

## RESULTS

I begin with a number of descriptive analyses. The average scores in Table 3.2 reveal that overall the protesters felt relatively efficacious regarding their impact on governments, and ultimately, regarding their chances of preventing the war. The protesters believed quite strongly that politicians would take them into account regarding the claims they were making (M *expected procedural gains* = 3.29). On average, protesters believed also that their actions were quite likely to improve the chance that a war could be prevented (M *perceived chances of success* = 3.56). A moderate bivariate correlation of .53*** provides a first indication that these attitudes are empirically related to each other, but that they are still clearly distinct. Overall then, these averages suggest that, in line with the organizers, the protesters against the invasion of Iraq generally felt that their actions were not at all futile, despite the war-bound course of the USA and the UK (Fisher, 2003; Verhulst, 2010).

Shifting our attention to differences between countries, the averages in Table 3.2 show little to no support for the idea that variations in national contexts were reflected in protesters' believes of being able to influence politicians. It was hypothesized that expected procedural gains should be highest in countries with the most open input structures, yet neither stable nor situation-specific input structures seem to explain variations in average levels of expected procedural gains. Switzerland knows the lowest average level of expected procedural gains while both its stable and its situation-specific input structure are the most open. The UK, in contrast, ranks among the most closed systems according to both operationalizations, yet average levels of externa efficacy are the second highest here. The countries in between do not show clear patterns either, with the USA and Belgium both scoring high, yet being on opposite sides when it comes to situation-specific input structures, and with the Netherlands scoring higher than Italy, despite a more closed stable input structure. Thus, these descriptive statistics suggest that the 'perception hypothesis' does not hold in this case.

**Table 3.2**: Expected procedural gains, and perceived chances of success

| | | US | UK | SP | GE | IT | NL | BE | SW | Total |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Expected procedural gains** | Mean | 3.65 | 3.58 | 3.12 | 3.34 | 2.98 | 3.14 | 3.50 | 2.88 | 3.29 |
| | SD | .94 | .97 | 1.09 | .90 | .91 | .92 | .89 | .96 | 1.02 |
| **Perceived chances of success** | Mean | 3.76 | 3.63 | 3.57 | 3.68 | 3.36 | 3.45 | 3.68 | 3.38 | 3.56 |
| | SD | .96 | .95 | 1.21 | 1.00 | 1.14 | .97 | .98 | 1.17 | 1.05 |

*Source: IPPS, 2003*

**Table 3.3**: Ordered logistic regression of expected procedural gains

| | **Expected procedural gains** | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Model I** | **Model II** |
| *Control variables* | | |
| Sex (1 = female) | .970 (.065) | .971 (.066) |
| Age | 1.023*** (.004) | 1.022*** (.003) |
| Level of education | 1.156* (.076) | 1.154* (.066) |
| Internal efficacy | 1.039 (.077) | 1.026 (.116) |
| *Country level* | | |
| Stable input structures | 1.078 (.277) | |
| Issue-specific input structures | | 1.021 (.303) |
| N | 4718 | 4718 |
| McKelvey & Zavoina's pseudo $R^2$ | .04 | .04 |
| Log pseudo likelihood | -6541.62 | -6542.26 |

*Note*: *p < 0.05, ***p < 0.001. Coefficients are odds ratios. Clustered robust standard errors for countries between brackets. Source: IPPS 2003.

**Individual-level effects, across contexts**

However, even if expected procedural gains is not the effect of country level differences, it is important to analyse whether it could explain the large variance in perceived chances of success (SD = 1.05). Table 3.4 shows the ordered logistic regressions on perceived chances of success. In line with H1, we see in Model III that protesters' expected procedural gains has

a strong significant positive effect on perceived chances of success. A one unit increase renders a respondent more than three times more likely to be in a higher category of perceived chances of success. Moreover, this model explains a large share of the variance of perceived chances of success (McKelvey & Zavoina's pseudo $R^2$ = .32).[27]

**Table 3.4**: Ordered logistic regression of perceived chances of success

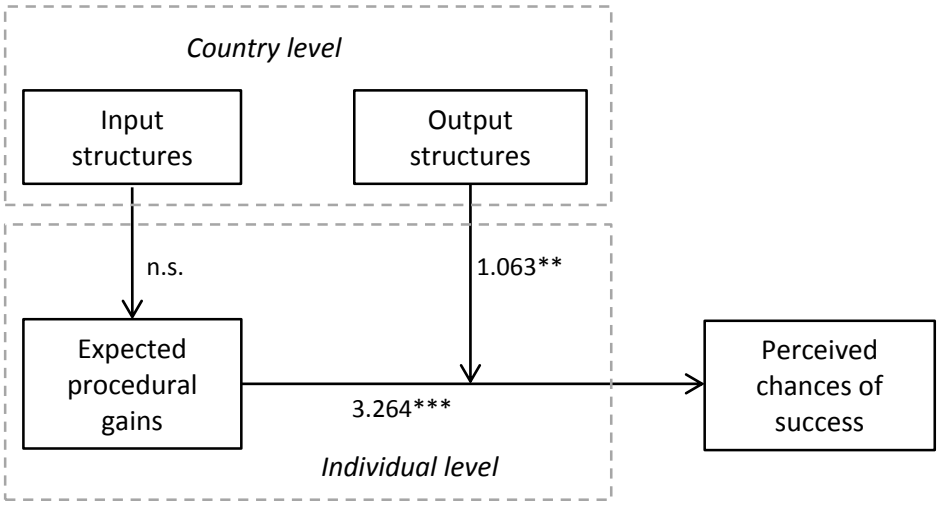
| | **Perceived chances of success** | |
|---|---|---|
| | **Model III** | **Model IV** |
| *Control variables* | | |
| Sex (1 = female) | .961 (.033) | .959 (.034) |
| Age | 1.013** (.004) | 1.013** (.004) |
| Level of education | .903*** (.020) | .906*** (.019) |
| Internal efficacy | .951 (.050) | .955 (.049) |
| *Variables of interest* | | |
| Expected procedural gains | 3.264*** (.287) | 2.930*** (.183) |
| *Country level interaction terms* | | |
| Output structure | | .808*** (.039) |
| Expected procedural gains *output structure | | 1.063** (.021) |
| N | 4674 | 4674 |
| McKelvey & Zavoina's pseudo $R^2$ | .32 | .32 |
| Log pseudo likelihood | -6458.84 | -5697.52 |

*Note*: **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001. Coefficients are odds ratios. Clustered robust standard errors for countries between brackets. Source: IPPS 2003.

Yet while the existence of this effect may not be very surprising, the third hypothesis states that this effect should still vary between countries as the willingness of politicians to respond

[27] Although interpreting pseudo $R^2$s as the explained variance of a model is always problematic, simulations have indicated that McKelvey & Zavoina's pseudo $R^2$ most closely resembles the $R^2$ in OLS regressions, which can be interpreted as the percentage of the variance explained by the model (UCLA: Statistical Consulting Group, 2011).

**Figure 3.2**: Results from ordered logistic regressions




*Note*: n.s. = not significant; ** p<.01; *** p<.001.

should matter more in contexts where politicians are also capable of acting. In Model IV an interaction is introduced between expected procedural gains and the output structure. Output structure is treated as an ordinal variable with four categories (see Table 3.1), ranging from very strong (US) to weak (Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland and Italy).[28] The results show that the effect is indeed positive significant, thus indicating that the effect of expected procedural gains is indeed greater in strong output structures. With every one unit increase in output structure, a one unit increase in expected procedural gains increases the odds of

[28] This variable is treated as ordinal, rather than as nominal, because it allows the most concise and clear presentation of results, with a single coefficient indicating the strength and significance of the interaction effect. Methodologically, however, it is not entirely correct to do this. For one, there is no direct relation between the numeric value given to the categories, and their real life differences. As a robustness check, I therefore also analyze how output structure affects the effect of expected procedural gains when treated as a nominal variable. First, when the effect is calculated for each category of output structure separately, the pattern suggested by the ordinal interaction emerges as well, with the largest effect in the strongest output structure, and the smallest effect in the weakest output structure. The only exception is that the effect is greater in the moderate than in the strong category. Yet while the differences between all other effects are statistically different, the difference between the effects in the two middle categories is not. This is tested by including an interaction term between expected procedural gains and the different categories of output strength in a regression. By using each category as reference category in different models, it can be observed whether effects are statistically different between each of them. These models are included in Appendix 3.2.

being in a higher category of perceived chances of success with an additional six percent (OR = 1.063**). These findings thus provide evidence to confirm H3: expected procedural gains matters for perceived chances of success, but more so in countries where government has a strong impact on the output at stake. Still, it is clear that the individual level effect is much stronger than the difference between countries. The findings are summarized in Figure 3.2.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Previous studies show that perceived chances of success are a valuable asset for peace protesters' sustained participation, yet what peace protesters build these perceptions on has remained understudied. In particular, while some authors stress that the social and political context should play a major role in determining peace protesters' expectations of success (Downton & Wehr, 1997, 1998), the literature has so far lacked comparative analyses that can actually test these assumptions. In fact, the wider POS literature that underlies this assumption has so far lacked empirical testing of the assumption that contextual opportunities are perceived by activists, and that this affects their perceived chances of success (Opp, 2009). This chapter has tried to address these caveats by analysing a unique data set that covers protesters' attitudes in the 2003 anti-Iraq War demonstrations in eight countries. As millions of people took the streets with a similar goal in mind in different countries on the same day, this study allows to assess how variations between the contexts in which people acted affected their expectations of success.

The results show that believing that politicians will take protesters into account has a positive effect on perceived chances of success. The comparative nature of this study allows to test also whether this believe about politicians reflects variations between actual contexts. Contrary to what was hypothesized, however, this seems not to be the case. Politicians are not perceived as more likely to take the protesters into account in countries where an open input structure would arguably have made this more plausible. This is quite surprizing considering how dependent peace movements are of government responsiveness when they try to prevent wars. However, one reason why this effect is not being found might be that protesters were acting in an international context where they had not just their own country's politicians in mind, but rather a shared international policy making process. However, we do find clear differences between contexts with regard to levels of expected

procedural gains, and previous research on the IPPS project did show that national contexts mattered in other regards, despite the international context (e.g. Walgrave & Verhulst, 2009). Why national contexts do not explain expected procedural gains remains a puzzle for now, but it seems that the perception hypothesis cannot account for it. Perhaps then, it is rather an internally oriented reflection that provides protesters' with the sense that they can influence politicians, and ultimately, prevent wars. This would explain why, despite conditions that are often unfavourable, peace demonstrations still bring together large numbers of protesters who, on average, turn out to feel quite confident about their ability to increase the chance that a war will be prevented. As this study does not find a positive effect of internal efficacy on expected procedural gains, however, this reflection seems to go beyond an assessment of one's personal competences, perhaps focusing rather on group competences.

There is one important way in which the 'real' political context does seem to interact with perceptions of effectiveness, however. In countries with a stronger output structure, expected procedural gains have a greater effect on perceived chances of success than in countries with a weak output structure, which was in line with the findings in Chapter 2. This suggests that feelings of efficacy may be truly affected by the 'real' political context in which they come about, as expected by scholars of peace activism (e.g. Downton & Wehr, 1998), and by students of social movements more generally (e.g. Gamson & Meyer, 1996; Klandermans, 1997, pp. 173–4). Rather than assessing the 'openness' of the political context, however, protesters seam to recognize that the likelihood that government will take their demands into account becomes a stronger predictor of the effectiveness of protest if that government is also able to have a strong impact on the political outcome at hand. Previous studies have already indicated that a country's output strength affects the likelihood that social movements will have a substantive impact (Kitschelt, 1986; Overby, 1990), and this study provides evidence to suggest that the embedded interrelatedness of protesters' feelings of efficacy reflects a country's output strength in a similar way. As such it qualifies the POS approach's focus on input structures and its neglect of output structures by showing that it is countries' ability to act, not their willingness to do so, that ultimately affect protesters' efficacy beliefs.

Throughout this chapter I already hinted upon a logical explanation for why output structures have an effect, while input structures do not. Getting access to the political

decision making process is something that not only depends on the openness of input structures, but also on movement strength. For instance, while an open input structure facilitates a movement's influence, a closed input structure could in theory be compensated for by building up a very strong movement. Indeed, various scholars agree that social movements create their own opportunities, rather than using only existing ones (Edwards, 2014, p. 90; Jasper, 1997, pp. 40–1; Tarrow, 2011, p. 12). Arguably, the openness of input structures and the need for movement strength thus relate to each other as communicating vessels, and it might be that in considering whether politicians will take their demands into account, protesters mainly focus on the vessel that contains their own strength. In contrast, whether politicians are capable of delivering the desired substantive change is generally not something movements can negotiate or compensate for. Especially in the case of the Iraq-war, the fact that e.g. the USA and the UK had a more direct influence on the war than the Netherlands did, was not something that Dutch protesters could sensibly oppose or wish to change. Output strength, in other words, was an objective given that they had to reckon with, and could not compensate for. Therefore output strength may have entered protesters' equations more clearly than input structures.

These findings are important for students and organizers of political protest, and of peace activism in particular. Peace activists often face steep uphill battles, but if they wish to remain engaged in struggles for peace, they will need a certain sense of efficacy nonetheless. How efficacious peace protesters feel, and what they build their sense of efficacy upon has been the object of this study. The data first of all show quite clearly that peace protesters generally do feel quite efficacious, despite the challenges they face. In fact, even in the face of a state as determined to go to war as the USA right before the invasion of Iraq, there is still hope among activists about their chances to stop the war. Still, despite the very high levels of mobilization, initial hopes for peace were of course disproved by reality, yet having felt that the movement had the intrinsic capacity to stop the war may have been a powerful experience that could have galvanized activists' engagement. The fact that open input structures do not seem to be a condition for peace activists to feel they can pressure politicians to prevent wars may be surprizing, but provides more good news for peace activism. That is, peace activists generally do not find themselves in such favourable conditions where politicians are very responsive to their demands. To depend on such (often unfavourable) conditions could thus be detrimental for their sense of efficacy, and in turn,

for their sustained participation. Still, there is one contextual element that does seem to affect protesters sense of efficacy: the output strength of the national context in which they act. Protesters seem to feel they need to be close to the action to have the biggest chance at achieving a substantive impact – i.e. to prevent war. In the context of international conflict, this is of course an important conclusion. International conflict is of concern to advocates of peace worldwide, also beyond the borders of countries directly involved, and clearly, the anti-Iraq War demonstrations showed that a certain distance does not inhibit large mobilizations for peace. Still, my findings indicate that being removed further from where the main decisions are taken may render peace protesters to feel more powerless, thereby potentially discouraging sustained international campaigns for peace.

To conclude, some limitations in this study need to be stressed, alongside some corresponding recommendations for future research. Firstly, even though the findings in this study indicate that output structures matter for the link between expected procedural gains and perceived chances of success, we lack comparative data on how activists perceive output structures that could confirm the assumed perceptual link. Chapter 1 does however show that perceptions of output structures matter for the perceived effectiveness of several forms of political participation, yet we can unfortunately only assume that the found effect of output structures in the current study is based on activists' perceptions of the political context. Future research should therefore include questions about perceptions of output structure. Secondly, while this chapter builds on studies emphasizing the importance of perceived chances of success for sustained participation, the chapter lacks data on whether activists who perceived the demonstrations as more effective also stayed in the movement longer. For that I thus have to rely on the insights generated in previous studies. Thirdly, this study looks at only one type of peace activism, yet peace activism entails many other important action forms than participating in demonstrations, including direct action and civil disobedience (Marullo & Meyer, 2004; Wehr, 1986). As these other forms of action follow different strategic logics, the political context, and perceptions thereof, are likely to play a very different role in the assessment of their effectiveness, and future research will still need to analyse the antecedents of perceived chances of success in these other fields of action. Despite these limitations, however, the findings in this study still provide important new insights about the way political contexts affect how peace protesters perceive a certain

degree of efficacy, thereby indirectly expanding our knowledge of sustained peace activism.

# 4

# LIFESTYLE POLITICS AND THE CONCEPT OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

**Abstract**

*Van Deth's (2014) comprehensive 'conceptual map of political participation' has reinstated a lively debate about the concept of political participation, and provides some compelling solutions to it. However, an important question that has been raised is whether van Deth's map actually achieves its main goal of unambiguously identifying and classifying emerging, complex types of participation, like online political activism* (Hosch-Dayican, 2014) – *or* lifestyle politics*. To contribute to this debate, this chapter aims to evaluate the usefulness of van Deth's approach for the analysis of lifestyle politics. Such an evaluation requires a clear classification of lifestyle politics. This, however, is still missing from the literature. The second aim of this chapter, therefore, is to identify and classify different types of lifestyle politics. Based on a literature review, this chapter argues that lifestyle politics are often enacted throughout different private, public and institutional arenas, and that they are often targeted at various social, economic and political actors at once. Applying Van Deth's conceptual map to these empirical realities, then, suggests that it cannot always account for their complexity sufficiently. Therefore, this chapter proposes a modification of Van Deth's framework that increases its usefulness for analyzing emerging, complex political participation repertoires.*

*This chapter is based on the following article:*

de Moor, J. (Forthcoming – online 2016). Lifestyle Politics and the Concept of Political Participation. *Acta Politica.*

# LIFESTYLE POLITICS AND THE CONCEPT OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

On April 20, 2008, about 80,000 cyclists occupied the streets of Budapest to demand a more bicycle-friendly infrastructure, staging the largest action ever conducted under the banner of the *Critical Mass Movement* (CMM) (Furness, 2010). The CMM is a worldwide grassroots movement committed to demanding a better bicycling infrastructure by gathering in large groups of cyclists who occupy a city's streets, thereby blocking car traffic and claiming attention for their demands. The CMM's activists are driven by a clear environmental motivation: they want to promote green modes of transportation like cycling to advance a more environmentally friendly lifestyle (Furness, 2010). However, because they believe that the urban infrastructure presents an important obstruction to such modes of transportation, CMM participants demand that governments act to alter cities' infrastructure in order to support those environmentally conscious lifestyle choices. In this fashion, the CMM presents an interesting case of emerging political repertoires that typically interact throughout various private and public arenas, integrating multiple political action forms and drawing on more traditional, state-oriented political participation, as well as recently emerging 'lifestyle politics'.

The complexity that characterizes emerging political participation repertoires such as that of the CMM has inspired recent debates about the concept of political participation (e.g., Brady, 1998; van Deth, 2010). Traditional conceptualizations have often covered only political activities aimed at selecting and affecting government personnel (e.g., Verba & Nie, 1972, p. 2; Verba et al., 1995, pp. 37–40). However, more recent studies have observed that with the diffusion of political power, the targets and tactics of political participation have diversified as well (Fox, 2014; Norris, 2002; Van Dyke et al., 2004). Political activities, like those of the CMM, are increasingly used across different private and public arenas, often

targeting various social, economic and political actors at the same time (Forno & Graziano, 2014; Micheletti, 2003). In line with these observations, various authors have argued that our concept of political participation should be redefined so as to incorporate this growing complexity (Fox, 2014; Norris, 2002).

One of the most recent and most comprehensive attempts to provide such a reconceptualization is Van Deth's *conceptual map of political participation* (2014). Looking at the different loci and targets of action, Van Deth identifies four categories of political participation. These include institutional forms of participation, extra-institutional state-oriented forms of participation, extra-institutional non-state oriented forms of participation, and non-political activities that are used to express political views. While Van Deth's conceptualization certainly helps to broaden traditional concepts of political participation, it remains to be evaluated how useful it is for systematically identifying and classifying the complex subject it sets out to grasp. For instance, Hosch-Dayican's (2014) application of Van Deth's framework to the field of online activism has already indicated that complex political repertoires often do not fit the strict categories proposed in his model. Expanding on Hosch-Dayican's review, then, the first goal of this chapter is to further evaluate the usefulness of Van Deth's framework for the analysis of another field of action that is typically associated with the ongoing expansion of complex political repertoires: *lifestyle politics* (Bennett, 1998, 2012; Giddens, 1991; Micheletti & Stolle, 2010).

Such an evaluation requires a clear notion and a systematic classification of the forms of action lifestyle politics refers to. As will be discussed below, lifestyle politics are used to describe a large variety of activities. Lifestyle politics are activities that advance social change by fostering politically inspired lifestyle choices (like in the case of the CMM's advancement of ecological modes of transportation), and as such, they may include various actions carried out within (and beyond) the numerous dimension of everyday life, with different levels of organization, and following very distinct strategic logics (Bennett, 1998; Giddens, 1991; Wahlen & Laamanen, 2015). Considering this diversity, a systematic classification of those action forms is necessary to clarify what types of action lifestyle politics may exactly refer to, and to assess to what extent van Deth's conceptual map can determine whether these types of action can be considered political participation, and if so, what kind of it. However, while some overviews of the literature on lifestyle politics have recently been published (Forno & Graziano, 2014; Haenfler et al., 2012; Wahlen & Laamanen, 2015), a

systematic classification of different types of lifestyle politics has not yet been provided in the literature. The second goal of this chapter, therefore, is to provide this classification. Doing so will allow to assess the usefulness of van Deth's framework in the field of lifestyle politics, and will moreover provide the growing literature on lifestyle politics with sharper definitions of the related but distinct types of action it describes.

In what follows, I will subsequently address the two main goals of this chapter. First, I will provide an overview and classification of different types of lifestyle politics. Building on the latter, I will then evaluate the usefulness of Van Deth's reconceptualization of political participation in the field of lifestyle politics. I will then propose possible adjustments to his framework, which have benefits beyond the field of lifestyle politics as well. I will conclude by engaging with previous reviews of Van Deth's conceptual map provided by Hosch-Dayican (2014), Hooghe (2014) and Theocharis (2015).

## CLASSIFYING LIFESTYLE POLITICS

Lifestyle politics refers to the politicization of everyday life choices, including ethically, morally or politically inspired decisions about, for example, consumption, transportation, or modes of living (Bennett, 1998; Giddens, 1991; Micheletti, 2003).[29] Lifestyle politics derives from a realization that one's everyday decisions have global implications, and that global considerations should therefore affect lifestyle choices (Giddens, 1991, p. 220). This idea is often covered in popular proverbs like 'think global, act local', and Gandhi's 'be the change you want to see in the world'. For instance, environmental lifestyle politics build on the premise that 'reversing the degradation of the environment depends upon adopting new lifestyle patters (…) [as b]y far the greatest amount of ecological damage derives from the modes of life followed in the modernized sectors of world society.' (Giddens, 1991, p. 221). Other moral or political considerations, such as animal welfare or ethical modes of production, are linked to lifestyle choices in a similar way (Balsiger, 2014; Micheletti & Stolle, 2010): They all use private life decisions for the allocation of values and resources for public matters and common causes, which, according to Micheletti and Stolle (2010), is what makes

[29] As Micheletti and Stolle (2010) observe, a variety of terms has been used to describe this phenomenon, including "life politics" (Giddens, 1991), "subpolitics" (Beck, 1997), and "personalized politics" (Lichterman, 1996).

them political. What sets apart lifestyle politics from other types of lifestyle choices, then, is that the latter are motivated by 'self-regarding' motives, like one's personal health, whereas the former is 'other-regarding' by considering the organization of society at large (Haenfler et al., 2012; Micheletti & Stolle, 2010).

Various studies indicate that this type of action is on the rise, and as the politicization of lifestyle decisions may occur in any aspect of everyday life, a large number and a wide variety of actions have been labeled as lifestyle politics (Bennett, 1998; Forno & Graziano, 2014; Micheletti & Stolle, 2010; Wahlen & Laamanen, 2015). The politicization of citizens' role as consumers has clearly received most scholarly attention, as witness the large literature on political consumerism (e.g., Brunori, Rossi, & Guidi, 2012; Copeland, 2014; Micheletti, 2003; Parigi & Gong, 2014; Stolle et al., 2005; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013), yet lifestyle politics have also been described referring to other aspects of daily life, including transportation, household waste disposal, the use of energy sources, fashion, and housing (Bennett, 1998; Lichterman, 1995; Wahlen & Laamanen, 2015). To bring more clarity to what types of action lifestyle politics may exactly refer to, then, I propose an inductive classification on the basis of two key dimensions of differentiation that stand out throughout the recently growing literature that is devoted to the subject: 1) the level of organization (individual or collective) and 2) the strategic logic (direct or indirect).

Firstly, although lifestyle politics transpose political considerations to the private sphere, a growing body of literature emphasizes the link between lifestyle politics and social movements, showing that lifestyle politics has both an individual and a collective dimension (Forno & Graziano, 2014; Wahlen & Laamanen, 2015). Thus, on the one hand, lifestyle politics may refer to 'an individual's choice to use his or her private life sphere to take responsibility for the allocation of common values and resources, in other words, for politics.' (Micheletti & Stolle, 2010, p. 126), while on the other, it refers to collectives who 'consciously and actively promote a lifestyle (…) as their primary means to foster social change.' (Haenfler et al., 2012, p. 2).

Secondly, empirical studies increasingly show that lifestyle politics often follow various strategic logics at the same time (Forno, 2015; Haydu & Kadanoff, 2010), which suggests that a distinction can be made between lifestyle politics that are intended exclusively as a direct means to social change, and strategies that additionally aim to use lifestyle politics to advance change indirectly. In the case of direct strategies, lifestyle change

itself is believed to lead to social change. Here a further distinction can be made between lifestyle politics that are oriented inward, focusing on one's own lifestyle or that of a collective's adherents, or oriented outward, focusing at mobilizing lifestyle change in the general public. In the case of indirect strategies, efforts to change one's own or others' lifestyles are additionally intended to create leverage for making demands for change at a larger scale from companies or governments. A distinction is therefore made between lifestyle politics that *exclusively* follow a direct strategic logic, and lifestyle politics that pursue indirect strategies *in addition* to direct strategies.

**Table 4.1**: Proposed classification of lifestyle politics

| **Strategic logic** | | **Level of organization** | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Individual | Collective |
| Direct strategies (exclusively) | Inward orientation | **Type 1:** *Individual lifestyle change*<br><br>Example:<br>- Individual political consumerism | **Type 2:** *Collective lifestyle change*<br><br>Example:<br>- Alternative food networks |
| | Outward orientation | **Type 3:** *Individual lifestyle mobilization*<br><br>Example:<br>- Discussing political lifestyle choices to persuade peers | **Type 4:** *Collective lifestyle mobilization*<br><br>Example:<br>- Promotion campaign of alternative food solutions |
| Indirect strategies (additionally) | | **Type 5:** *Individual indirect lifestyle politics*<br><br>Example:<br>- Boycott product to pressure company | **Type 6:** *Collective indirect lifestyle politics*<br><br>Example:<br>- Politicization of consumers to pressure governments or companies |

Table 4.1 summarizes the resulting classification. Its goal is not to present a definitive taxonomy of lifestyle politics and to reduce all of its complexities into just a few 'species'.

Rather, it tries to outline a number of key characteristics that distinguish the many related action forms found in case-studies into a more comprehensible set of ideal-types. The two basic dimensions of the classification (individual/collective and direct/indirect) create categories that are in principle exclusive, yet as is commonly the case with ideal types, we will see that there are some empirical complexities that do not fit in perfectly. For instance, while indirect strategies generally function as an addition to direct strategies, it is of course possible that someone is only motivated by the indirect effects of his/her lifestyle change, even though in most cases the idea of 'additionality' seems to hold. Furthermore, the subdivision into direct inward and direct outward strategies is not exclusive as in some cases, actions have an inward and an outward focus at the same time. The latter could have been resolved by adding a mixed type, yet doing so would not benefit the conciseness of the typology. Finally, even if some of these categories are in principle exclusive, we will see that all types of lifestyle politics in reality relate closely to each other, as for instance, different types of lifestyle politics are often operated in a single campaign. To appreciate these complexities, I will conclude this section with a discussion of the interrelatedness of the different types of lifestyle politics. First, however, I will discuss each of them separately on the basis of the case-studies from which they were induced (following their numerical order in the table).

**Lifestyle politics as a direct strategy**

Lifestyle politics are essentially defined by their direct approach to social change. It assumes that if people change their lifestyles according to certain political considerations, broad social change can be achieved. Within this direct strategic logic, a further distinction can be made between those individuals or groups who only focus inwardly, on their own lifestyles, and those who also turn their gaze outward to use lifestyle politics as a tool for the horizontal diffusion of change throughout the wider population. This dimension sets apart the first two types of lifestyle politics: *lifestyle change* and *lifestyle mobilization*, both of which have an individual as well as a collective dimension.

Lifestyle change refers to the most basic strategic logic of lifestyle politics. It advances societal change either by changing one's own individual lifestyle, or as a collective that supports the conscious lifestyle choices of its adherents. Individual lifestyle change (Type 1) is mainly

discussed in the growing literature on political consumerism, which shows that citizens are increasingly using their role as consumers to directly address their political concerns (Copeland, 2014; Shah et al., 2007; Stolle et al., 2005). For instance, consumers may wish to limit their carbon footprint by buying local or seasonal produce. (Below it is discussed how political consumerism can also follow a more indirect logic). Another closely related example of this type of activism is vegetarianism. Although Micheletti and Stolle (2010) find that vegetarianism is often motivated by (non-political) health considerations, political or ethical concerns for animal welfare or the environment also motivate many people to adopt a vegetarian lifestyle, in which case it is a clear example of lifestyle politics.

Collective lifestyle change (Type 2), on the other hand, can be illustrated well by the case of alternative food networks. These collectives provide members with the possibility to buy food directly from local and organic food producers, reducing transportation and intermediate trade costs, thereby advancing environmental or fair-trade considerations. Among of the most famous examples of this type of collective are community supported agriculture (CSA) and farmers markets (Brown & Miller, 2008). CSAs are farms that are jointly operated by an owner and a group of members who help the owner throughout the production process, and who share the risks and harvest of the farm in exchange for a fixed contribution. At farmers markets, farmers sell their products directly to customers to bypass transporters, auction-houses, and retailers. In both cases, producers and consumers engage in a cooperation that aims to reduce the ecological impact of consumption, and that seeks to support a fair economy. Other examples of such initiatives that have been described in the literature include *Voedselteams* in the Flemish part of Belgium (van Gameren et al., 2014), and the Italian *Gruppi di Acquisto Solidale* (Brunori et al., 2012; Graziano & Forno, 2012), which both aim to provide more direct links between producers and consumers. Such organizations all follow the logic of collective lifestyle change: they foster social change by catering the morally or politically inspired lifestyle choices of its adherents.

Lifestyle mobilization resembles lifestyle change to the extent that it also concerns people who individually or collectively advance morally or politically inspired lifestyle choices. However, in contrast to the internal focus of lifestyle change, lifestyle mobilization targets a more general public. Often, lifestyle activists add this externally focused type of action to their internally focused work, because they believe that in order to achieve the greatest

societal impact, a maximal number of people needs to be involved in lifestyle change (Bossy, 2014).

In its individual form, lifestyle mobilization (Type 3) can be thought of as individuals who communicate their political lifestyle choices to their peers (e.g., family, colleagues, friends) in order to convince them to adopt similar lifestyles (Portwood-Stacer, 2013). However, while the literature on this form of action is rather scarce, lifestyle mobilization is much more frequently referred to in the literature on collective lifestyle politics. Collective lifestyle mobilization (Type 4) is for instance described by Dubuisson-Quellier et al. (2011) in their analysis of the French alternative food movement, which advances its goals of changing consumption patterns by informing the general public about certain problems of the conventional market, and by providing consumers with (information about) alternative trade solutions. Furthermore, studying Italian grassroots anti-Mafia politics, Forno and Gunnarson (2011; Forno, 2015) describe the case of the *Adiopizzo* initiative, which uses public campaigns to urge consumers to take ethical considerations into account in their daily shopping routines, while at the same time providing opportunities to buy 'Mafia-free' products. Finally, Balsiger (2014) illustrates how activists from a Swiss Third World advocacy organization aimed to advance ethical fashion by providing consumers with a map of shops that meet specific ethical guidelines. In all these examples activists aim to provide the general public with information or tools to mobilize them into making politically informed lifestyle choices.

**Lifestyle politics and indirect strategies**

Finally, there are lifestyle politics that *also* follow an indirect strategic logic. Special emphasis is here on the additionality of this strategy: if indirect strategies do not *build on* the promotion of lifestyle change we must conclude that we are outside the realm of lifestyle politics. For instance, a petitioning campaign targeted at a company may be within the realm of consumer politics, but it is not lifestyle politics because it does not foster social change through the advancement of an alternative lifestyle in the first place. Moreover, indirect strategies also need to be distinguished from cases where a collective engages in both lifestyle politics and actions that are targeted at political or economic decision makers: only when the very same activities aimed at promoting lifestyle change *also* aim to target companies or government do we talk about indirect lifestyle politics.

Individual indirect strategies (Type 5) are mainly discussed in association with political consumerism. In addition to its direct impact, like reducing one's 'carbon footprint', political consumption can namely follow an additional indirect logic, where, through the refusal to buy certain products, a consumer intends to pressure companies to change their modes of production (Zhang, 2015). Klein et al. (2004) indeed find that many individuals who participate in boycotts do so because they believe it is an effective means to changing a company's behavior. To reflect this indirect logic, then, political consumerism has sometimes been defined as 'actions by people who make choices among producers and products with the goal of changing objectionable institutional or market practices.' (Micheletti, 2003, p. 2).[30]

This description of political consumerism highlights the indirect strategy that sometimes underlies individual lifestyle politics, yet more often, indirect strategies are discussed in studies on collective lifestyle politics (Type 6) (Wahlen & Laamanen, 2015). Here, two main approaches can be distinguished. Firstly, lifestyle politics are sometimes used to lead by example, and to convince governments or companies about the desirability of following suit through the implementation of the movement's examples at a larger scale. As such, small scale lifestyle politics, including communal living, the establishment of alternative economic systems, or alternative modes of production, have been used by movements to provide a basis to target governments or companies (Haenfler et al., 2012). For example, Bossy (2014) describes a number of French and British lifestyle collectives who use their lifestyle politics as an example to enthuse political elites to provide the change they promote at the local level at a larger scale. Similar strategies have been described in the context of farmers markets in the United States, where grassroots organizations gather data about the successfulness of the farmers market initiative, which they then use to persuade policy makers to support the development of the initiative (Brown & Miller, 2008; Lev, Stephenson, & Brewer, 2007). In short, groups focused on lifestyle politics often use their alternative practices as examples to engage with decision-makers 'in ways that may build to broader social and economical changes' (Schlosberg & Coles, 2016, p. 16).

[30] Little information exists about whether the indirect logic behind political consumerism is generally additional to the direct one, or whether some political consumers are only motivated by indirect strategies. It is likely that the latter is sometimes the case though, which would of course form an exception to the additionality of indirect strategies.

The second indirect strategy that can be distinguished relies not so much on persuasion, but instead uses lifestyle mobilization to build pressure on governments or companies. On the one hand, this is done when social movement use their ability to influence its constituents' lifestyle choices to make demands on political, and in particular, economical actors (Wahlen & Laamanen, 2015). According to Holzer, 'Under certain circumstances, social movement organizations can claim to be able to influence the decisions of consumers and thus 'borrow' their purchasing power. They can then use this as a threat, i.e. as a potential negative sanction, against business.' (2005, p. 187). This strategic logic is of course known as the boycott.

On the other hand, pressure on governments or corporations can be generated when the promotion of certain lifestyle choices is not only used to change the everyday behavior of the general public, but also its political views and engagement. Lifestyle politics is thereby used to build momentum that can be used as pressure for targeting governments and companies. In particular the work of Dubuisson-Quellier emphasizes that lifestyle mobilization can be used to politicize audiences concerning certain issues, which creates a reservoir of political engagement that movements may use to commit their constituents to join collective actions targeted at governments or companies. She notes for instance that within the French alternative food movement this indirect strategy forms an important addition to the direct strategy of promoting lifestyle change (Dubuisson-Quellier et al., 2011). By advancing political ideas through lifestyle politics, some organizations also aim to mobilize consumers into joining state-oriented action to demand policy change: 'The idea is to re-engage citizens in collective life by asking them to put new issues about food, market regulation, environmental and ethical issues on the public agenda. Consumption appears to be the pivotal area where citizens can develop their capacity to address these issues and demand improvements in public regulations.' (Dubuisson-Quellier et al., 2011, p. 315). In a more recent publication, she stresses that a similar strategy is used to build pressure on companies when lifestyle politics are used to engage politicized consumers into campaigns to name and shame companies (Dubuisson-Quellier, 2015). In such cases, promoting an alternative lifestyle targets not only the everyday decisions of citizens, but also builds pressure on other, political or economic targets. Other case-studies that describe similar indirect strategies can be found in Graziano and Forno (2012), Lichterman (1995), and Haydu and Kadanoff (2010).

**The interrelatedness between direct and indirect strategies**

The overview provided above indicates that many activities can, and have been, labeled as lifestyle politics, and that different action forms can be distinguished by taking into account the actions' level of organization and strategic logic. While these forms of action all start from the premise that lifestyle change is the key method to achieve social change, they each connect these means and ends following different strategic logics. Lifestyle politics can either be oriented inward at changing one's own or a collective's lifestyle, or individuals or collectives can orient their actions outward to mobilize the general public into making politicized lifestyle decisions as well. Moreover, in addition to the advancement of direct social change, lifestyle politics are sometimes also used as the basis for indirect action that is targeted at governments or companies. These distinctions form the basis of a classification of lifestyle politics into six ideal types. However, such a classification naturally overemphasizes the distinctiveness of the proposed categories and it is therefore important to highlight some of the ways in which they are in fact interrelated.

Firstly, some of the case-studies discussed above describe campaigns or movements that bring together multiple types of lifestyle politics. For instance, the *Adiopizzo* movement described by Forno and Gunnarson (2011; Forno, 2015) involves both individual consumers who, through shopping under the *Adiopizzo* label, aim to contribute to a Mafia-free economy, as well as organizers who do not only shop, but also mobilize other consumers and entrepreneurs to participate in the campaign. Other examples are found in American farmers markets or the French alternative food movement that both involve individual shoppers as well as organizers who actively promote certain lifestyle choices (Brown & Miller, 2008; Dubuisson-Quellier, 2015). Secondly, sometimes a single action can integrate different strategic logics, like when someone uses his/her own lifestyle change as an example to mobilize others' into making similar decisions, thus bringing together lifestyle change and lifestyle mobilization into one action. This is particularly salient in the case of indirect strategies where activists use lifestyle politics not only as a direct means to social change, but also to build momentum for creating a larger scale impact on society by persuading or pressuring governments or companies into making changes.

This discussion shows not only that different types of lifestyle politics are closely related, but also that single actions can (subsequently or simultaneously) be used to target

different actors, ranging from the self or a collective, to the general public, companies, and governments. Moreover, the discussion shows that although lifestyle politics generally originate in the arena of private life, they can be transposed into public, institutional or economic arenas as well.

## VAN DETH'S CONCEPTUAL MAP OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION AND THE FIELD OF LIFESTYLE POLITICS

The conclusions drawn from this classification offer important insights for current discussions about the expansion and conceptualization of political participation. In particular the discussion of indirect lifestyle politics underlines the complexity that characterizes this expansion by stressing the interaction between different strategic logics, the multiplicity of the targets of certain modes of participation, and their mobility across different private, public, political and economic arenas. Van Deth's (2014) conceptualization of political participation is an explicit answer to recent calls to rethink the meaning of political participation against this backdrop (e.g., Dalton, 2008; Fox, 2014). Such conceptual debates have been ascribed great importance, because what type of activities we include in our concept of political participation has serious consequences for our diagnosis of the health of democracy in an era of declining electoral participation. That is, while a narrow definition focused on electoral politics alone will lead to the conclusion that political participation is declining and that our democracy is in a state of crisis (e.g., Putnam, 2000), a broader definition will suggest that citizens have not become politically inactive, but have turned to activities outside the realm of electoral politics (Dalton, 2008). Van Deth's goal, therefore, has been to come up with a clear conceptualization that provides room for the growing complexity of political participation. However, whether it accomplishes doing so sufficiently has been questioned (Hosch-Dayican, 2014). In particular, while it has been noted that one of the main fields where political activity is expanding is the area of lifestyle choices (Bennett, 1998, 2012), it remains to be evaluated to what degree van Deth's framework can identify and classify lifestyle politics as some form of political participation, or as outside that realm. To evaluate this is the goal of the remainder of this chapter.

In order to 'cover the whole range of political participation systematically without excluding any mode of political participation unknown yet' (2014, p. 349), van Deth proposes

four criteria on the basis of which any voluntary, amateurish activity should be classifiable as a certain type of political participation (or not) (see Figure 4.1): 1) the activity is located within the institutional arena of state or government politics (minimal definition); 2) it is targeted at government or the state or 3) it is targeted at solving a community problem otherwise (targeted definition); or 4) the activity itself is not political but expresses a political motivation (motivational definition). This operational conceptualization has the strong advantage of taking into account a reality in which political power has become diffuse and in which the loci, targets and strategies of political participants have diversified accordingly (Fox, 2014; Norris, 2002, p. 193; Sloam, 2007). The conceptual map acknowledges sufficiently that political participation is no longer exclusively targeted at the state, but may as well be oriented at non-state actors like companies or fellow citizens. Van Deth argues that in this sense, his conceptual map is exhaustive, and more importantly, allows to unambiguously place any form of political participation in one of the four fields on his conceptual map (2014, p. 362).

However, I argue that it is exactly here that Van Deth's model falls short of capturing complex types of participation like many instances of lifestyle politics. Contrary to claims of unambiguous classification, it is difficult to pin-point where lifestyle politics could fit into van Deth's conceptual map. Van Deth does not discuss lifestyle politics explicitly, but he does place 'political consumerism' on his map as being 'voluntary, non-political activities by citizens used to express their political aims and intentions' (2014, p. 360). He thereby contrasts them to those political activities that are targeted at the political decision making process, or that address community problems otherwise. However, the literature review provided above clearly indicates that actions labeled as lifestyle politics, including political consumerism, do not strictly belong to this category, as they are not strictly expressive, nor untargeted. Namely, we have seen that instrumental motivations like the advancement of a more sustainable society underlie many of these actions, and often they are targeted – at the general public, at companies or at political actors. Hence, the place van Deth reserves on his map for actions related to lifestyle politics does not seem to be satisfactory.

When redoing the exercise on the basis of the proposed classification of lifestyle politics, however, we run into a problem. As the review offered in this chapter demonstrates

**Figure 4.1**: Van Deth's conceptual map including proposed modifications.
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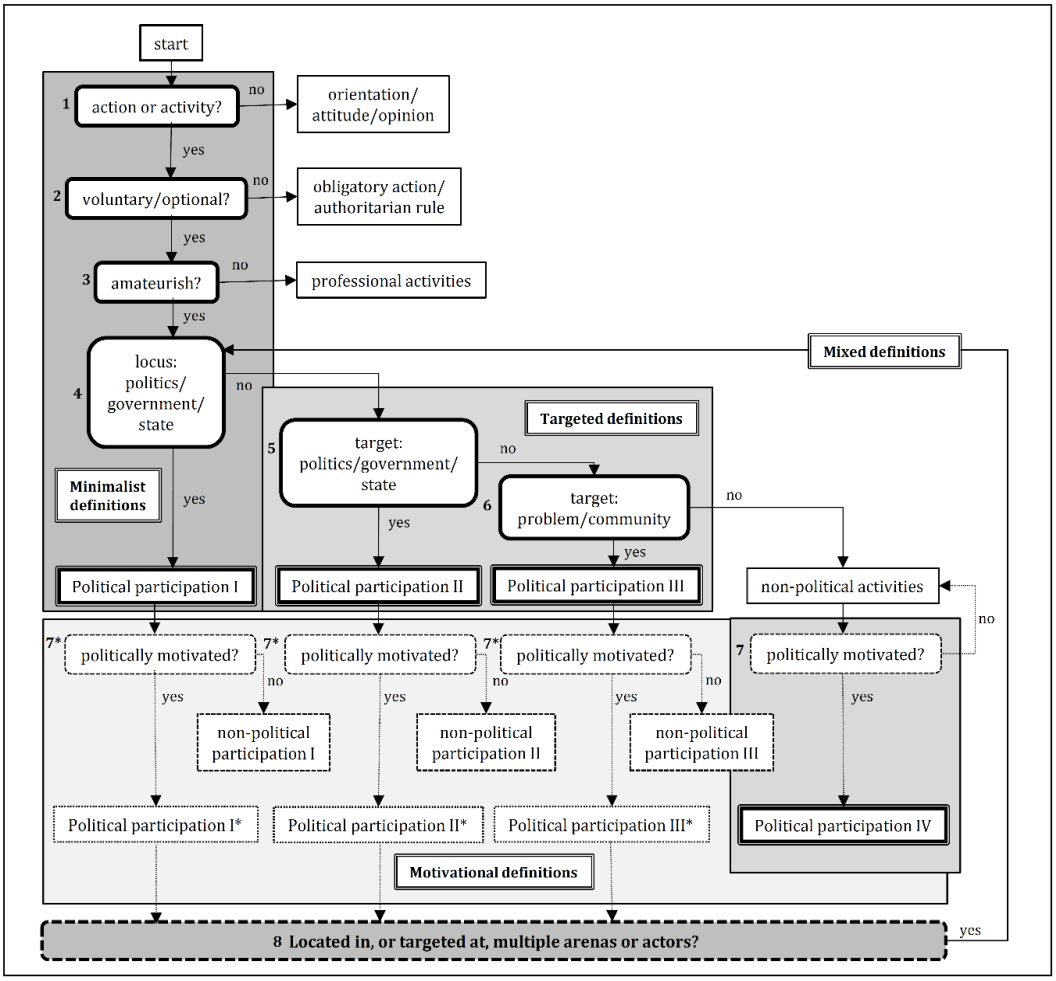



clearly, lifestyle politics – and indirect strategies in particular – are often simultaneously acted out across different private, public and institutional arenas and they can be targeted at oneself, fellow citizens as well as political and economic actors. Hence, although van Deth's conceptual map may identify some cases of lifestyle politics as political participation, it fails to unambiguously fit many of the empirical cases into one of his categories because each of his categories specifies only a single locus or target of action. A modification of van Deth's

conceptual map that appreciates such complexity is therefore required. In fact, such a modification is not only needed to unambiguously incorporate various types of lifestyle politics, but many other types of action as well. An action form like political protest is becoming increasingly characterized by the multiplicity of its targets (Van Dyke et al., 2004). For instance, the globally spreading 'Marches Against Monsanto' are often simultaneously aimed at informing the general public about genetically modified organisms (GMOs), at naming and shaming companies, and at demanding legislation against GMOs from national and supra-national authorities (Davis, 2015). It is clear that this type of protest cannot be fitted into one of van Deth's four categories unambiguously. Similar conclusions were drawn by Hosch-Dayican (2014) in her application of Van Deth's conceptual map to the field of online political activism, where it appears to be difficult to distinguish state-oriented political participation from expressive modes of action.

**Possible modifications of van Deth's conceptual map**

Despite these limitations, van Deth's operational conceptualization could still offer a useful tool for mapping the expanding field of political participation, and for identifying ambivalent types of action, such as lifestyle politics. To that end, however, the conceptual map should be adapted in order to account for cases in which the locus and/or target of a specific type or form of action is not 'unambiguous', but rather, mixed. A relatively simple adjustment in the current framework allows for this. Van Deth proposes four decision rules that lead to as many final, unambiguous categories of political participation. In order to account for ambiguous forms or types of political participation, a final classification question should be added at the bottom of the conceptual map (see Figure 4.1). This question should probe whether the case at hand is located in, or targeted at, multiple arenas or actors. If the answer is negative, the identification process ends and the activity can be classified as one of van Deth's four singular definitions. If the answer is positive, however, the identification process should be repeated, thereby identifying additional categories that apply to the case at hand. As a result, mixed definitions of political participation can be identified.

An empirical example further clarifies the proposed method. As discussed above, the French alternative food movement supports and promotes alternative modes of consumption for a dual reason (Dubuisson-Quellier et al., 2011; Dubuisson-Quellier, 2015). On the one hand, it aims to achieve direct social change by affecting people's consumption

patterns. On the other hand, by spreading the movement's views about a fair and just economy, they also aim to mobilize consumers to pressure politicians or companies to take action. When following the identification questions in van Deth's framework, this form of action would in first instance be identified as *Political Participation II*, since the movement's advancement of an alternative lifestyle appears to be indirectly targeted at the state and the political decision making process. When going further down the conceptual map in a second instance, however, this form of action would also be identified as *Political Participation III*, as it aims to solve a social problem by directly targeting the involved community or companies. As a result, this case would be classified as *Political Participation II + III*, thereby appreciating the complexity characterizing this mode of action. Hence, the small modification I propose to van Deth's framework would not affect the comprehensive and practical strength of his model significantly, yet it would increase its internal validity by making the model a better fit of the complex reality it aims to grasp.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The overview of different modes of lifestyle politics provided in this chapter leads to the conclusion that six ideal-types of lifestyle politics can be distinguished on the basis of their level of organization and their strategic logic: individual and collective lifestyle change, individual and collective lifestyle mobilization, and individual and collective indirect lifestyle politics. This classification of lifestyle politics emphasizes that the politics of everyday life, and politics acted out in the public or institutional political arena, are closely intertwined. The case-studies reviewed in this chapter show that campaigns are often simultaneously targeted at the private sphere, at companies, and at governments. Moreover, campaigns may originate in the arena of private life, but taken to the public or institutional arena once enough political momentum is reached.

This observation emphasizes the significance of recent endeavors to account for such complexities in our concepts of political participation. In this sense, van Deth's (2014) conceptual map is a valuable addition to the literature, as it presents the most comprehensive attempt to account for such complexity currently available. However, the case of lifestyle politics presented in this chapter also shows that Van Deth's framework does not always account for this complexity sufficiently. It demonstrates that many forms and

types of political participation do not fit in one of the four categories proposed in this framework unambiguously. Therefore, I have proposed a modification to the framework that allows for the identification of 'mixed' forms of political participation, thereby further realizing the map's goal of establishing for any voluntary and amateurish activity whether it can be classified as some specific type of political participation.

Two core elements of the current chapter's argumentation have raised concerns in earlier reviews of van Deth's map as well. Hosch-Dayican (2014), Hooghe (2014) and Theocharis (2015) have all questioned whether the map is sufficiently precise, or rather, too complex. Moreover, they have debated what the role is of activists' motivations in identifying political participation. To contribute to this debate, in the remainder of this chapter I wish to speak to these issues.

Firstly, the current chapter finds that van Deth's map provides a useful starting point for identifying different forms of lifestyle politics in relation to the concept of political participation, but concludes that it is not sufficiently precise when defining the type of participation the actions belong to. A similar conclusion was reached by Hosch-Dayican, who argues that 'more fine-grained classifications are (…) necessary for sound measurements of online political participation' (2014, p. 345). Similarly, Theocharis finds van Deth's map useful, but concludes that an additional category might be needed that takes contextual signifiers of political actions into account identify some forms of online political participation. In contrast, Hooghe has raised some concerns about the multiple definitions included in Van Deth's conceptualization. Using multiple definitions to fit in 'grey zone' cases of political participation is dangerous because it might result in a conceptualization that is no less complex than the empirical reality it aims to grasp. Hooghe therefore prefers the more concise, traditional conceptualization of Verba and colleagues (1995, pp. 37–40), as he concludes that 'it is not a good strategy to make a definition in itself for these 'grey zone' cases.' (2014, p. 340). The problem, however, is that although it is not entirely clear what types of action Hooghe considers as 'grey zone' cases, they seem to include exactly those modes of action that are at the heart of currently expanding political participation repertoires. That is, several examples provided in this chapter, such as alternative food movements, the Critical Mass Movement and Marches Against Monsanto seem to qualify as 'grey zone' cases because they illustrate how the locus and targets of emerging action forms are often multiple or shifting. According to a growing body of literature, however, this

ambiguity has essentially come to define political participation in the late modern era, in which the locus of power is constantly shifting in a similar way (Bennett, 2012; Fox, 2014; Norris, 2002). If we want to have a fruitful debate about the emergence and expansion of political participation repertoires, it is important to use concepts that can account for such complexities. Until now, it seems that van Deth's conceptual map is the only approach that, provided some modifications are made, succeeds in doing just that.

Secondly, in line with van Deth's conceptualization, most of the empirical studies discussed in this chapter accept activities as political participation if participants articulate that their motivation is to achieve certain forms of social or political change. Similarly, Theocharis concluded in assessing van Deth's conceptual map, that a motivational category is useful and in fact indispensable for identifying many emerging forms of (online) political participation. However, Hooghe has questioned whether this motivational approach is desirable. He argues that activists' intentions should not be part of a definition of political participation because it is difficult to determine activists' intentions, and because 'intentions are simply not relevant'. As Theocharis emphasizes as well, measuring intentions can indeed be difficult, in particular, when using survey questions. Answers might not be unequivocal, and as Hosch-Dayican points out, distortion might derive from forces like social desirability and overrationalization. But this does not mean we should exclude intentions from our definitions or analyses altogether. Although these problems are relevant and have inspired countless methodological debates, they apply to many aspects of political behavior. In fact, they have not complicated research into political participation in particular, even though aims and intentions have already been a part of conceptualizations and operationalizations within this research field since its emergence (e.g., Barnes & Kaase, 1979; Verba & Nie, 1972). Furthermore, despite these difficulties, motivations can in fact be measured. Studies discussed in this chapter show that survey questions can be successfully used to distinguish political and non-political motivations (Micheletti & Stolle, 2010), and qualitative methods can portray even more detailed accounts of activists' intentions (e.g., Bossy, 2014; Zamwel, Sasson-Levy, & Ben-Porat, 2014). Still, motivations may not matter for the identification of *all* forms of participation and can be excluded from some definitions (van Deth, 2014). Whether or not voting is a form of political participation is independent of someone's intention for casting a ballot. However, this chapter has shown numerous examples of activities that, without taking into account motivations, could not be identified as forms of

political participation. Participants in the Critical Mass Movement would simply be cycling, members of a Community Supported Agriculture project would simply be farming, and boycotters would simply be shopping. To conclude with the words of Van Deth himself: 'growing numbers of citizens reject a definite boundary between 'politics' and other aspects of their lives. These activities can only be fruitfully studied when intentions and aims of the people involved are taken into account as distinctive features.' (2014, p. 362).

# 5

# WHY ARE SOME LIFESTYLE ACTIVISTS AVOIDING STATE-ORIENTED NEP WHILE OTHERS ARE NOT?

## A case study of lifestyle politics in the Belgian environmental movement.

**Abstract**

*Lifestyle politics is often defined as a political strategy used to avoid state-oriented politics. However, recent studies indicate that in some cases, lifestyle activists engage in actions that target the state as well. The current study investigates why some lifestyle activists combine these forms of engagement, while others do not. It is questioned whether such differences can be explained by variations in activists' perceptions of the political opportunity structure. More precisely, it will be examined whether perceptions of input structures or output structures offer relevant predictors in this regard. This chapter presents an in-depth case study of a Belgian environmental lifestyle movement organization, using a mixed methods approach including participant observations, qualitative interviewing, and surveys. Contrary to the literature's overall focus on input structures, findings suggest that lifestyle activists' propensity for state-oriented action can mainly be explained by their beliefs in the state's ability to act.*

*This chapter was written in collaboration with Sofie Marien and Marc Hooghe, and is currently being revised and resubmitted for publication in a peer-reviewed journal*

# WHY ARE SOME LIFESTYLE ACTIVISTS AVOIDING STATE-ORIENTED NEP WHILE OTHERS ARE NOT?

## A case study of lifestyle politics in the Belgian environmental movement.

With the rise of lifestyle politics, citizens are increasingly fostering social change by altering their lifestyles, and by persuading their fellow citizens to do so as well (Micheletti & Stolle, 2010; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013). For instance, they address issues like social justice and climate change by promoting sustainable consumption patterns that take into account ethical or environmental considerations (Bossy, 2014; Carfagna et al., 2014). Because of this direct approach to social change, lifestyle politics has often been contrasted to 'state-oriented action forms', which, in order to achieve social change, target the state (e.g. to demand policy change) (Norris, 2002). In fact, some even argue that lifestyle politics represent a mechanism to remain politically active while *avoiding* state-oriented politics altogether (Eliasoph, 1998; Parigi & Gong, 2014; van Deth & Maloney, 2012). In particular, it has been suggested that lifestyle politics have become an increasingly attractive way to generate social change in a context of political globalization in which the state's ability to address major political challenges has arguably diminished (Beck, 1997; Bennett, 1998, 2012; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013). Action forms that allow to address these issues *beyond* state politics are therefore seen as increasingly attractive (Fox, 2014).

While these accounts give a plausible explanation for the surge in lifestyle politics we have witnessed in recent years, they overlook the fact that lifestyle politics are often acted out in the context of social movements with diverse repertoires, and that within them, state-oriented action is often practiced just as well (Andrews & Edwards, 2005; Graziano & Forno, 2012; Haydu & Kadanoff, 2010). Even within collectives that focus strongly on lifestyle politics (i.e. lifestyle movement organizations, or LMOs (Haenfler et al., 2012)), there is variation between activists who have a clear preference for expressing their opinions outside the realm of state politics, and those who still target political decision makers (Dubuisson-Quellier et al., 2011). These studies thus contradict any strict juxtaposition between lifestyle politics and state-oriented action forms.

Hence, while some studies stress that lifestyle politics signify a move away from state-oriented action forms, other accounts underscore that these action forms often coexist with each other despite their differences. These two opposing views have so far not been reconciled in the literature, and consequently, a lot remains unclear about the exact relation between different types of lifestyle politics and state-oriented action forms. Specifically, in the absence of such knowledge we lack a thorough understanding of what lifestyle politics implies as a strategy for social change, but also of what it means for democratic societies today. After all, how lifestyle politics relate to state politics is essential for the link between lifestyle activists and the democratic process. If they remain engaged in state-oriented forms of participation, we could argue that lifestyle politics *add* a channel for participation, thus creating a positive-sum outcome that 'improves democracy' (Peters, 2016). If it does not, lifestyle politics rather becomes an 'exit' strategy (Hirschman, 1970) from the political system that could compromise representative democracy.

What is urgently needed in the literature, therefore, is a thorough understanding of *how* different types of lifestyle politics can be linked to each other and to state-oriented action forms, as well as an understanding of *why* certain lifestyle activists engage in state-oriented action forms, while others do not. It is my goal in this chapter to address both issues. I start by asking: *How do different forms of lifestyle politics interact with each other, and how do they interact with types of action that are oriented at the state?* I then move from the descriptive to the explanatory and ask: *Why do some activists combine lifestyle politics with state-oriented action forms, while others do not?*

As for the latter, I build on insightful speculations of others before me (Haydu & Kadanoff, 2010; Micheletti, 2003) and expect that this distinction can be explained by looking at the political opportunity structure (POS). According to Tarrow, POSs refer to 'consistent – but not necessarily formal or permanent – dimensions of the political environment that provide incentives for people to undertake collective action by affecting their expectations for success and failure' (1996, p. 85). In this sense, I can assume that lifestyle activists will only engage with the state if they *perceive* sufficient political opportunities to do so. In particular, I will argue that the distinction between input structures (the system's openness to challengers' demands) and output structures (the system's ability to formulate and implement policies) is crucial (Kitschelt, 1986). While most literature has focused on the former, I expect the latter to be most decisive. Several of the abovementioned studies have argued that the globalization of politics, and the associated weakening of the state's output structure, have created the conditions for lifestyle politics to flourish. If the state cannot address citizens' main concerns, citizens will look for alternative arenas for change. Implicit in this account is the assumption that perceptions of the strength of output structures encourage or discourage lifestyle activists to target the state. I will test this assumption empirically.

I present an in-depth case study of a Belgian environmental LMO called Velt (Vereniging voor Ecologisch Leven en Tuinieren, or *Organization for Ecological Living and Gardening*). Velt presents a typical case (Gerring, 2007) that allows to explore the differences between activists who do, and who do not, combine lifestyle politics and state-oriented action forms. That is, like many other LMOs, it includes both forms of action in its repertoire while still providing its members the individual liberty to engage in either form of action according to their own preferences. Data was gathered using an innovative mixed-methods approach. To build a deep understanding of how Velt's members attribute meaning to their actions, qualitative interviews and participant observation are conducted. A member-survey is used to offer a more general image of Velt's members, and to test the main hypothesis. I will return to these analyses after reviewing the relevant literature on lifestyle politics and its relation to the political context. In the conclusion, I summarize my findings and reflect upon their significance for current debates on political action and citizens' involvement in, or withdrawal from, the globalized political decision making process.

## LIFESTYLE POLITICS AND STATE-ORIENTED NEP

Lifestyle politics refers to the politicization of citizens' everyday life choices (Giddens, 1991; Micheletti, 2003). It builds on the idea that private decisions with regard to food, mobility, clothing and so on, can have great social and political consequences. This line of thinking, which is often popularized in proverbs like 'think global, act local' and Gandhi's 'be the change you want to see in the world', holds particular significance for the environmental movement, where it has been repeatedly stated that individual lifestyle choices have a strong ecological impact (Stolle & Micheletti, 2013). According to Giddens, lifestyle politics[31] are key to the environmental movement because 'reversing the degradation of the environment depends upon adopting new lifestyle patterns (…) [as b]y far the greatest amount of ecological damage derives from the modes of life followed in the modernized sectors of world society.' (1991, p. 221).

This focus on private decisions, however, does not mean that lifestyle politics should be considered as a purely individual act (Bossy, 2014; Carfagna et al., 2014; Haenfler et al., 2012). Firstly, although lifestyle politics is defined by a focus on the everyday behavior of individuals, it has frequently been described as part of the collective action repertoires of social movement organizations (Forno & Graziano, 2014; Haenfler et al., 2012; Wahlen & Laamanen, 2015). Secondly, lifestyle politics may either be individual or collective in the sense that, while some activists will indeed restructure mainly their own private life, others mobilize fellow citizens into adopting more sustainable consumption patterns as well (e.g. Balsiger, 2014; Dubuisson-Quellier et al., 2011; Forno, 2015). Throughout the rest of this chapter, I will refer to the latter distinction, as 'lifestyle change' (changing one's own or the collective's adherents' lifestyle) and 'lifestyle mobilization' (encouraging other people or groups in society to change their lifestyle as well) (see Chapter 4).

In neither of these forms of lifestyle politics do the politics of government and the state play a central role. The goal is first of all to convince oneself and others about the need to change habits, and not to establish legal rules to enforce social change in a top-down fashion. In some literature on the subject, therefore, it is sometimes assumed that lifestyle activism precludes 'state-oriented action' (Norris, 2002), because everyday life decisions are

[31] To be precise, Giddens (1991) uses the term 'life politics'.

now imbued with a political meaning *instead* (Eliasoph, 1998; Parigi & Gong, 2014; van Deth & Maloney, 2012).

However, this view has been nuanced by studies showing that citizens who engage in political consumerism are on average also more likely to participate in state-oriented action forms (Stolle & Micheletti, 2013; van Deth, 2010). Moreover, various case studies show that state-oriented action forms are often practiced *alongside* lifestyle politics within LMOs (e.g. Dubuisson-Quellier et al., 2011; Haluza-DeLay, 2008; Haydu & Kadanoff, 2010). Graziano and Forno (2012) have found that activists in the Italian alternative food movement do not exclusively focus on promoting ethical consumerism. In contacting politicians and becoming active in election campaigns they sometimes address similar concerns in state-oriented action as well. Comparable results were found among activists in France (Dubuisson-Quellier et al., 2011) and the USA (Haydu & Kadanoff, 2010). In particular, lifestyle activists often aim to establish a symbiosis between both forms of action when they use lifestyle politics as an indirect means to more large scale social change (i.e., 'indirect lifestyle politics', see Chapter 4). For instance, they use lifestyle change to enthuse political leaders to implement similar changes on a larger scale (Bossy, 2014), or they use lifestyle mobilization to increase the political awareness and engagement of a collective in order to build pressure on politicians (Dubuisson-Quellier, 2015). The case of indirect lifestyle politics thus shows even more that not all lifestyle activists avoid state politics.

While these different strategies have all been described frequently in case studies of lifestyle politics, how they relate to each other has received much less attention. Are they alternatives to each other, substitutes, or do they relate in a more interdependent way? The case of indirect lifestyle politics indeed suggest that the latter is sometimes the case, but evidence is restricted to just a few case studies. As this symbiosis is likely to be a complex one that can take many forms, it is necessary to explore it in various contexts. Moreover, we know relatively little about the exact role lifestyle change and lifestyle mobilization play in these indirect, state-oriented strategies, and neither do we know much about how they relate to each other. For instance, does lifestyle change enforce lifestyle mobilization, and if so, how? We can certainly expect this to be the case, but empirical evidence has remained scarce. For a full understanding of this emerging action repertoire it is important to explore the presumable interrelatedness of its constitutive elements and state-oriented action forms in far more detail. The first goal of this chapter is to do just that.

**Why lifestyle activists engage in state-oriented action forms**

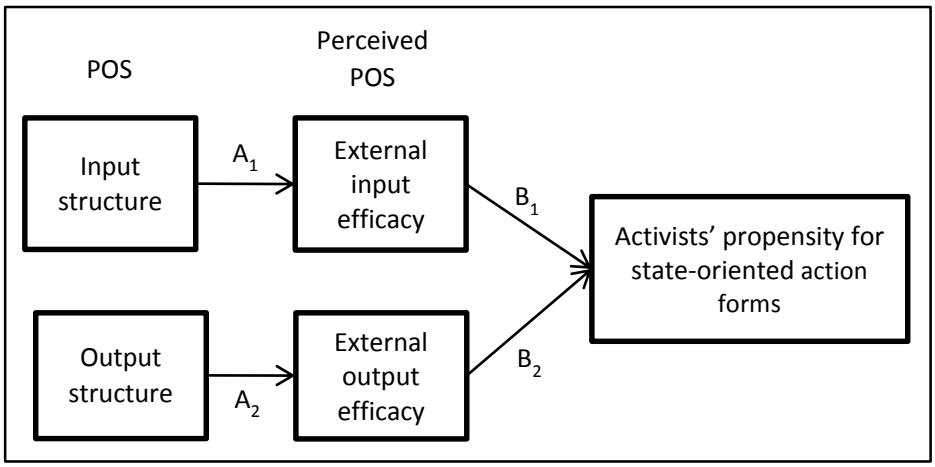
There is thus sufficient empirical evidence to suggest that lifestyle activists sometimes avoid state-oriented politics, but this is certainly not always the case. What remains unstudied, then, is *why* some lifestyle activists prefer to supplement lifestyle politics with state-oriented action while others would rather avoid state-oriented action. As for the latter, it is generally assumed that lifestyle politics replace state-oriented politics as a reaction to a sense of disillusionment regarding political institutions (e.g. Beck, 1997). Following the same logic, we may expect that lifestyle activists who also engage in state-oriented action have retained a more positive reading of the political system.

It is because of this focus on the political context that Haydu and Kadanoff (2010) have concluded that the perceptions of the political opportunity structure (POSs) might be what sets apart lifestyle activists who avoid state-oriented politics from those who do not. However, this link has never been tested empirically. To do so, it is essential to further specify POSs in two ways. Firstly, POSs have an important issue-specific dimension (Hutter, 2014; Kriesi et al., 1995). That is, a political system may be more responsive to some issues than to others. In this study I therefore focus on the specific POS for environmental issues. Secondly, there is a fundamental distinction between input structures and output structures (Kitschelt, 1986). That is, POSs determine the responsiveness of the political system to challengers' demands, and this responsiveness is the result of a two-dimensional opportunity structure. On the one hand, input structures determine the openness of the political system, and thus the relative ease with which challengers should find access to the political system. On the other hand, output structures determine the strength of the system, and thus its ability to get things done, and to turn challengers' demands into political output. Clearly then, states that are open and strong are most likely to provide challengers with the changes they demand, and both input structure and output structures pose important incentives for state-oriented action (Kitschelt, 1986).

It is often assumed that POSs affect activists because they are perceived (e.g. Gamson & Meyer, 1996; Klandermans, 1997, pp. 173–4; Tarrow, 2011, p. 12). After all, they are 'incentives' that pull activists towards some forms of action, while pushing them away from others (Tarrow, 1996). In line with the distinction between input structures and output structures, we can expect that activists make a similar distinction when assessing the responsiveness of the state. Thus, while perceptions of government responsiveness have

traditionally been conceptualized as external efficacy (Niemi et al., 1991), I have proposed in Chapter 1 that we should distinguish between external input efficacy and external output efficacy, which refer to the perceived *openness* and *strength* of government. Such perceived opportunities are thus expected to determine perceptions of effectiveness (Tarrow, 1996), which in turn will determine how likely someone is to participate in a certain form of action (Klandermans, 1997; van Stekelenburg & Klandermans, 2013).

**Figure 5.1**: Lifestyle activists' propensity for engaging in state-oriented action forms




The argument made so far is summarized in Figure 5.1. The POS, including input structures and output structures, are expected to determine lifestyle activists' external input efficacy and external output efficacy (arrows $A_1$ and $A_2$, respectively). In turn both forms of external efficacy are expected to determine lifestyle activists' propensity to engage in state-oriented forms of action (arrows $B_1$ and $B_2$), because it will affect how effective they consider state-oriented action forms to be.[32]

Though I expect both external input efficacy and external output efficacy to be important motivations for lifestyle activists to engage in state-oriented action forms, I expect the latter to be more decisive in setting lifestyle activists who engage in state-oriented action forms apart from those who do not. In many western democracies, environmental issues

[32] Lifestyle politics are not represented in the figure because lifestyle activists by definition engage in lifestyle politics, which is thus not what I try to explain here.

have become acknowledged as important by most mainstream parties (Spoon, Hobolt, & de Vries, 2014), and so we could expect environmental activists to generally perceive the political system as relatively open to their demands. In contrast, states have collectively proven to be largely incapable of effectively dealing with main environmental issues like climate change (Hale, Held, & Young, 2013; Held, 2014; Young, 2011). Consequently, it is likely that countries' output strength is more debatable among environmental activists. It is therefore more likely that environmental lifestyle activists perceive state-oriented action forms as futile because they see the political system as weak than because they see it as closed. Hence, even though I do not contest that open input structures can be an important incentive for state-oriented forms of action, I hypothesize that *external output efficacy is more decisive than external input efficacy in setting apart lifestyle activists who are more inclined to engage in state-oriented politics from those who are not*.

## VELT: A BELGIAN LIFESTYLE MOVEMENT ORGANIZATION

As the issues I am addressing are relatively unchartered, I aim to make use of the explorative benefits of a typical case selection (Gerring, 2007). That is, I look at a typical LMO in a political context that, from a European perspective, is quite typical on a number of relevant dimensions. The benefit of a typical case in this regard is that it speaks to the wider population of typical cases, and that it therefore allows to explore generalizable processes (Gerring, 2007).

Velt is a typical LMO in a number of ways (cf. e.g. Forno & Graziano, 2014; Giugni & Grasso, 2015; Haenfler et al., 2012; Wahlen & Laamanen, 2015).[33] While its roots are in the environmental movements of the 1970s (it was founded in 1973), it has recently been growing steadily. From 11.795 members in 2006 it grew to 13.200 members in 92 groups in 2010 (Velt, 2010). During the period of my research in 2013, there were 14.000 members in 100 local groups in Brussels and the Flemish part of Belgium.[34] With its strong focus on

[33] It is important to note here that while Giugni and Grasso (2015) link the emergence of lifestyle politics to the expansion of 'new social movements' in the 1970s, Forno and Graziano (2014) see a clear link with the relocalization of the global justice movement. Velt's history puts it more in line with the assessment of Giugni and Grasso.

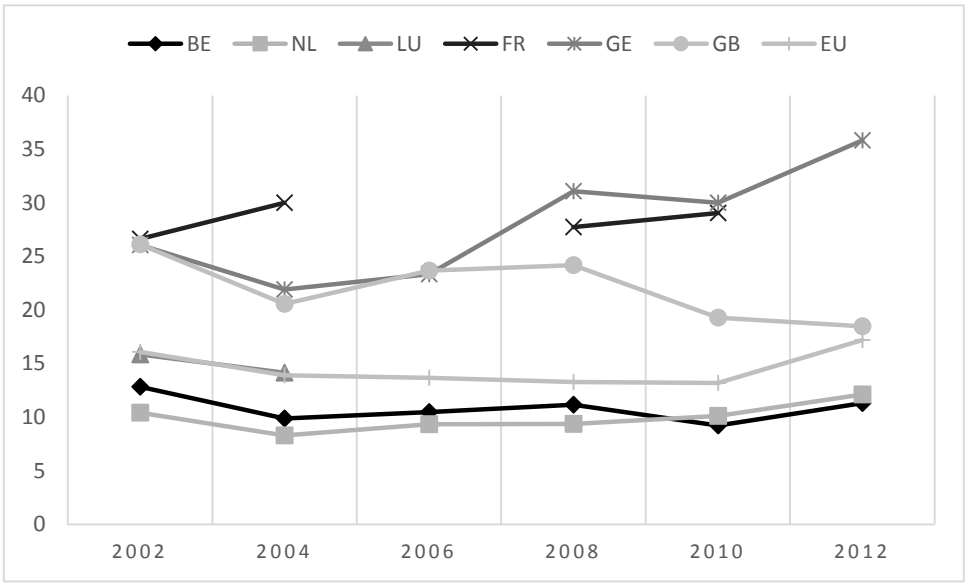
[34] Velt originated in Belgium, but currently has a division in the Netherlands as well.

ecological gardening its origins are mainly rural, yet it currently witnesses growing urban divisions. Velt's primary goal is to promote environmental causes, and in doing so it focuses strongly on lifestyle politics. Firstly, in promoting lifestyle change it offers a platform for its members to change their lifestyles according to ecological principles. Secondly, through lifestyle mobilization it encourages the general public to do so as well. In practice it does so by providing information through printed and online media, and by organizing activities that aim at educating people on topics related to ecological living, consuming, and gardening. Finally, previous campaigns, such as their struggle for a legal ban on certain uses of pesticides, show that state-oriented action is also a part of Velt's tactical repertoire. At the same time, it became clear from the explorative contacts with the organization that Velt aims at leaving a certain degree of liberty for its members to individually draw upon this tactical repertoire. Thus, its members have the opportunity to engage in lifestyle politics and state-oriented action, and they have the liberty to do so following their personal preferences. In this sense, it is a typical LMO that supports this study's goal of exploring why activists do (or do not) combine lifestyle politics and state-oriented action.

As for the political context, Belgium is relatively typical from a European perspective, at least when we look at the place of lifestyle politics in its national repertoire of action, and the openness and strength of its POS.

Firstly, the European Social Survey (ESS) can give us some idea of the comparative involvement of the Belgian population in lifestyle politics. That is, in the ESS, people are asked whether they have boycotted a product during the last 12 months. While boycotting products is only one of many activities that fall under lifestyle politics, these are the best comparative data to see where Belgium fits. Figure 5.2 shows that, compared to its neighboring countries, Belgium scores relatively low on boycotting products. Together with the Netherlands, it is the only country that scores below the European average, but it does follow Europe's relatively stable trend. Even though these general population data may not show high levels of, or a clear growth in, lifestyle politics in Belgium, there are several LMOs in Belgium that, like Velt, have recently been growing steadily in membership, including various 'local food systems' that are focused on creating a fair and sustainable food economy (van Gameren et al., 2014). These trends suggest that lifestyle politics has become increasingly established into the repertoire of the Belgian environmental movement, like it has in many other European countries.

**Figure 5.2**: Percentages boycotted product in last 12 months




*Note:* Data from ESS waves 1-6. Averages for Europe are weighted by country and number of countries varies between waves.

Secondly, the Belgian issue-specific POS for environmental issues is also quite typical from a European perspective. In terms of input structures, we see that like in most other European countries (Spoon et al., 2014), the Belgian political system has increasingly opened up to environmental issues. Its proportional electoral system creates plenty of opportunities for (small) Green parties (Lijphart, 2012). Moreover, although the weight of traditional cleavages such as class, religion, and language are still considerable in Belgian politics, these cleavages are declining, leaving space for 'new' political issues, such as environmental concerns, to arise (Deschouwer, 2009; Kitschelt & Hellemans, 1990). In contrast, Belgian output structures are denoted as weak. From its pioneer position in the 1970s and 1980s, Belgium's environmental policy performance has increasingly started to lag behind most other European countries towards the 2000s (Liefferink, Arts, Kamstra, & Ooijevaar, 2009). According to Happaerts, Schunz and Bruyninckx (2012), this weakness can to an important extent be attributed to Belgium's federalism, in which responsibility for environmental issues is spread out across poorly coordinating, relatively autonomous levels of government. Even though Belgium is thus a weak performer on environmental policy, it certainly does not stand out in terms of its failure to address major environmental issues. In fact, according to many authors, states

have collectively failed to address major environmental issues like climate change (Hale et al., 2013; Held, 2014).

In sum, Belgium represents a typical POS for environmental issues: parties of most political colors have increasingly acknowledged the importance of environmental issues such as climate change, but government's ability to effectively address such issues is limited. It is against this backdrop that I expect that weak output structures, rather than closed input structures, are what is most likely to discourage some lifestyle activists to withdraw from interacting with the state.[35] Given the rather typical LMO that Velt is, its members appear to have plenty of opportunity and freedom of choice to do just that.

## METHODS

This study builds on an integration of three methods: participant observation, qualitative interviewing, and surveys.[36] While participant observation and qualitative interviewing can offer a deep understanding of activists' actions and motivations, the interpretative nature of qualitative data analyses limits the possibility of assessing the robustness of conclusions. For one, it is difficult to generalize how perceived opportunities motivate certain action forms solely from the responses of a necessarily limited number of interviewees. Operationalizing the same research questions through a survey will therefore allow me to perform quantitative analyses and tests for statistical significance of such relations. Conversely, we will see that qualitative findings will strongly benefit the interpretation of statistical results (cf. Passy & Giugni, 2001). In effect, combining these methods will help to increase the robustness and validity of the study's findings, as well as the degree to which it generates a fuller understanding of activists' motivations (Reitan, 2007; Tarrow, 2004).

Firstly, participant observation was conducted in order to study everyday interactions through which activists' views and actions become observable. From December 2012 till June 2013, fourteen gatherings of the organization were observed and documented

[35] Note that voting is mandatory in Belgium, and that when talking about engaging with, or avoiding, state-oriented action forms, I am thus talking about nonelectoral forms of participation.

[36] During all events, participants were informed about the fact that they were being observed and that notes were being taken of what they did and said. No objections were made. Participants were offered full details about the research if they were interested in this. All participants, interviewees and survey respondents were guaranteed full anonymity.

in field notes (see Appendix 5.1 for exact descriptions, dates, durations and locations). These gatherings included courses on ecological gardening and ecological consumption; events aimed at informing the general public, such as participation in a large eco-fair; meetings of the national and local boards; and the organization's annual general assembly. As this part of the data gathering primarily served the goal of recording actions and statements of activists in group settings, the fieldworker mainly retained an observing role.

During roughly the same period, secondly, semi-structured interviews were conducted to capture activists' records of the organization's activities, their discursive understanding of their membership and participation, and their perception of the POS. Thus, the advantage of the interviews is that they allowed to tease out what remained implicit during observations. At the same time, the observations informed the interviews' topic lists, and ensured that the interviews spoke to issues that were both relevant from a theoretical point of view as well as from the point of view of the activists. Hence, a symbiosis was created between these two methods. The semi-structured approach allowed respondents a large degree of liberty to talk broadly about their actions, motivations and experiences. If required, the interviewer used funneling techniques to narrow down the topic. Between January and June 2013 eleven in-depth interviews of about one to one-and-a-halve hour were conducted with members of the organization (see Appendix 5.2 for dates and locations of the interviews). In the absence of a readily available pool of potential interviewees,[37] respondents were recruited first by contacting members present during participant observations, and second, through a method of snowball sampling.[38] Interviews were held to the point of saturation, which in this study was defined as the inclusion of activists with different levels of involvement in state-oriented action and lifestyle politics. Moreover, with the aim of getting a diverse image of different types of members from different levels of the

[37] Velt was unable to offer a database of its members from which to select respondents. Consequently, respondents needed to be contacted directly and through snowball sampling.

[38] Of the interviewees, eight out of 11 were women, and most were older middle aged. While gender and age were no selection criterion in selecting interviewees, these data show that the interviewees do match the general pattern emerging from the surveys, which, as a result of the selected events to survey, and the high response rate, do offer a fairly reliable picture of the distribution of these variable among Velt's active members. This pattern is moreover in line with previous studies that show that women and older middle aged people are over represented in lifestyle politics and political consumerism.

organization, interviewees were selected from national, provincial and local boards, as well as 'ordinary' members with no organizational functions.

Finally, a survey was conducted among Velt's members. The survey was conducted in June 2013 when much qualitative data had already been gathered. This allowed for the questionnaire to not only be informed by deductive, theoretical insights, but also by insights from the inductive, qualitative part of the research, increasing the internal validity of the survey. To get a representative sample of Velt's members, a different sampling technique was used here than with the semi-structured interviews. Questionnaires were handed out to all (85) members present at five different meetings of the organization where observation notes were taken as well (see Appendix 5.1 for dates and locations).[39] Surveys were handed out to members during events that were more focused on the members' lifestyle change (courses on gardening, ecological food, and food waste reduction) and on the general public through lifestyle mobilization (the 'open garden days'). This ensured that members focused on both types of lifestyle politics were included. The state-oriented actions of Velt were harder to survey, because they are rarer, and they are harder to pinpoint, because they are often less direct and public in nature. This focus on activities also implies that 'passive' members (who only donate money to the organization and receive Velt's magazine) are outside the scope of this study. Most questionnaires were completed on location (N = 66), while some respondents completed the survey at home (N = 8). Of the 74 respondents, four had missing values, and were excluded from the analyses. To minimize instrument bias, both groups received self-completion questionnaires. The response rate of the survey was 87 percent.

**Operationalization**

These qualitative and quantitative data sources enrich each other as they integrate different perspectives of similar phenomena in a complementary way. It is important, however, to explain how the main issues of interest were operationalized and how this integration was achieved.

To organize the qualitative data I relied mainly on closed coding (Lichterman, 2002). Whenever field notes or interview transcripts mentioned lifestyle change, lifestyle

[39] Before inviting people to fill in the survey, they were asked whether they were members of Velt. Only members were asked to fill in the survey.

mobilization, indirect lifestyle politics, state-oriented action forms, external input efficacy or external output efficacy, they were coded as such using NVivo software. For instance, if people explained during an observed meeting or in an interview that they changed e.g. their eating habit to reduce their carbon footprint, this would be coded as lifestyle change, and if they indicated that they aimed to encourage others to this as well, this would be coded as lifestyle mobilization. If they indicated that changing lifestyles was in some way aimed to influence politicians, this would be coded as indirect lifestyle politics and as a state-oriented action form. If someone would mention politicians' willingness to take environmental concerns into account, this would be coded as external input efficacy, whereas mentioning of politicians' ability to solve environmental problems would be coded as external output efficacy. In this fashion I was able to organize large amounts of data around the study's main interest.

In the survey, I focused on similar set of issues but used closed questions. Moreover, the study's focus was narrowed somewhat to the role people ascribed to lifestyle politics more generally and to state-oriented politics in their membership of Velt, as well as on their external input efficacy and external output efficacy. Doing so allowed for concise statistical analyses to test the main hypothesis.

Lifestyle politics was measured by asking respondents to what extent they agreed (1 = totally disagree, 5 = totally agree) with the statement 'I am a member of Velt to promote an alternative lifestyle'. On the same scale, state-oriented action was measured with the statement 'I am a member of Velt to pressure politicians to make changes'.

**Table 5.1**: Exploratory Factor Analysis of External Input Efficacy

| *Item* | External input efficacy |
|---|---|
| 1) Politicians take into account citizens' environmental concerns | .76 |
| 2) Environmental problems get a lot of attention in politics | .80 |
| 3) Environmental problems are disregarded in politics (reversed) | .71 |
| 4) The political party that represents my concerns about the environment has a strong impact on public policy | .68 |
| 5) Politics support environmental organizations in our country | .57 |
| Eigenvalue | 2.51 |
| Explained Variance | .50 |

*Notes:* Cronbach's Alpha = 0.74. N = 70

In order to measure external input efficacy, respondents were asked to what extent they agreed (1 = totally disagree, 5 = totally agree) with five statements. The items asked respondents how they perceived a number of traditional operationalizations of input structures (Kriesi et al., 1995; McAdam, 1996), but were formulated to highlight environmental issues, such as the responsiveness of politicians to environmental concerns (item 1); the position of environmental issues on the political agenda (item 2 and 3); the impact of elite allies on the development of policies (item 4); and the state's tradition of support or repression of environmental movements (item 5). Table 5.1 presents the exact working of the statements and the results of the exploratory factor analysis on which this scale is based. All five items have a factor loading above .50 and are included in the scale measuring external input efficacy (Cronbach's Alpha = .74). The scores of the items were summed and then rescaled.

External output efficacy was measured with a single item asking respondents to what extent they agreed with the statement 'Politicians in my country are able to solve environmental problems'. This new measure (cf. Chapter 1) clearly gauges how respondents perceived politicians' ability to act on environmental issues. It does not measure, however, why respondents would believe this to be the case. While there are several reasons for citizens to perceive their leaders as (in)capable of getting things done (e.g., institutional structures or personal (in)competence), this is beyond the scope of this study. What matters is that this item measures whether politicians have the ability to act. With a moderate correlation of .30, external input efficacy and external output efficacy are positively related, yet in line with the theory, they measure clearly distinct attitudes.

In sum, while the qualitative and quantitative operationalizations of concepts of interest are similar to ensure that they can be compared, their distinctiveness incorporates several advantages into this study. The qualitative operationalizations give a more in-depth understanding of the different types of strategies lifestyle activists engage in, and of the way in which activists perceive opportunities in their political context. The quantitative data give a more systematic account that allows to test the statistical significance of the findings.

## FINDINGS: LIFESTYLE POLITICS AND STATE-ORIENTED NEP

In this section I will start by inquiring to what extent lifestyle change, lifestyle mobilization, indirect lifestyle politics, and state-oriented action forms are established forms of action among members of Velt. I will do so, first, on the basis of qualitative data derived from interviews and observations, and second, on the basis of survey data. Subsequently, I will investigate to what extent activists' perceptions of the POS affect their propensity for state-oriented action.

Before moving to what the activists in this study do, and why so, let us take a brief look at who these activists actually are, and in particular, at whether they match existing accounts of 'typical' lifestyle activists. The survey data give the clearest account: 57 percent of the respondents were women, 70 percent of them was highly educated (meaning that they held a university degree or completed a non-university tertiary education),[40] and their average age was 50 years. The high response rate, a fairly equal distribution between men and women who refused the survey,[41] and the diversity of activities we surveyed supports the generalizability of these findings. This image is much in line with earlier accounts of lifestyle politics, and political consumerism more specifically (cf. Marien et al., 2010; Stolle & Hooghe, 2011; Stolle & Micheletti, 2013). We can thus be sure that we are looking at a typical composition of lifestyle activists (see Appendix 5.3 for details).

### The link between different types of action

I will here address the first research question: How do different forms of lifestyle politics interact with each other, and how do they interact with types of action that target the state?

The qualitative data indicate that all forms of action outlined above – lifestyle change, lifestyle mobilization, indirect lifestyle politics and state-oriented action forms – are relevant within Velt. First, lifestyle change is commonly operated by Velt's members. Most interviewees indicated that they initially joined the organization because they sought

[40] As education was highly skewed towards higher education, it was coded as follows: 1 = higher education (university and non-university), 0 = no higher education (others).

[41] In total, seven men and four women refused to fill in the survey. Taking this into account, women were overall overrepresented, as 50 of them filled in the survey versus 37 men, making a total of 54 female and 44 male members present at the surveyed events.

information and skills needed to shape their lifestyle according to ecological principles. This is reflected in the majority of the activities organized by the organization, as they focus predominantly on offering practical tools for developing an ecological lifestyle. This was observed in courses on ecological gardening, information sessions on how to recognize organic products, and workshops on how to reduce food waste. Moreover, within these activities, it was observed that interactions between members focus strongly on the exchange of practical knowledge about ecological lifestyles. Even at formal meetings, I witnessed chairs desperately requesting participants not to wander of in discussions on ecological gardening, and to stick more closely to the agenda.

Second, in addition to changing their own lifestyles, all interviewees made clear that their main envisioned strategy for fostering ecological change more broadly, was lifestyle mobilization. Through the organization of large public events they tried to inform and inspire the general public about the possibilities of an ecological lifestyle. This is the case, for instance, at the annual national 'open garden day', where members exhibit their ecological garden. The importance of lifestyle mobilization became observable in ongoing discussions about the difficulties of approaching parts of the population that had until then remained unreached. Both in interviews and during observations, members expressed their concern with the effectiveness of the organization in creating a more environmental friendly society since they observed that they were too often 'preaching to the choir'. When I asked other respondents about the same issue, several of them confirmed that reaching a broader audience was indeed an important challenge. Though some of them saw that Velt was already able to reach an increasingly widened audience, others saw this as something the organization indeed needed to improve upon.

The interviews provided some examples of how this challenge was being addressed within Velt. Sometimes cooperation was sought with other organizations in order to reach a 'different type of adherents' (e.g., with de Gezinsbond, or the *Association for Families*). In other cases, political institutions were approached to help Velt communicate its message to a wider audience. As one local leader stated:

> That is the big question of how to reach the general public. But that is very difficult. How to convince, or rather, how to excite someone for that way of thinking? I think that there you

> have to work together with politics more; with local governments to better be able to spread that message. [Interview 4]

This brings us, finally, to state-oriented action – in particular in the form of indirect lifestyle politics. While activism within Velt is mainly about lifestyle politics, several of the respondents also mentioned that in specific instances, they chose strategies that targeted government.

Some interviewees perceived a clear mutual relationship between lifestyle politics and state-oriented action. As mentioned above, political institutions are sometimes seen as a suited vehicle for reaching new adherents. Some members persuaded local authorities to broadcast the movement's messages through official communication channels. Others indicated that in organizing small scale projects, like communal gardens, they aimed to convince local governments to follow their example and to initiate similar projects at a larger scale, thereby reaching a broader audience.

Other interviewees indicated that through lifestyle mobilization they could change public opinion, thereby putting more pressure on politicians to make changes. They believed that by raising environmental awareness in society through lifestyle mobilization, they could change public opinion and the public's political preferences regarding the environment. In turn, these members believed that by changing the political preferences of the electorate, politicians could be pressured to respond to environmental concerns as well. A member of Velt's professional core stated:

> I don't think politicians care much about this problem, but they are interested in it as soon as part of the electorate stirs and tells them that they need to deal with this problem. Then, sooner or later, politicians will have to consider these problems. And that's my point, with our positive message of communal gardening and using less pesticides, we can make this happen. [Interview 10]

Thus, some of Velt's members actively combine lifestyle mobilization with state-oriented action by using indirect lifestyle politics. They do so mainly by enthusing politicians to implement their examples at a larger scale, or they aim to build pressure on politicians by changing public opinion through lifestyle mobilization. Apart from indirect lifestyle politics, they also engage in a range of other state-oriented actions that do not follow directly from

their lifestyle politics. They sometimes lobby, take part in environmental advisory boards, encourage political parties to include environmental issues in their electoral programs, and write letters to MPs to urge them to advocate environmental causes. In short, the qualitative data suggest that while most members of Velt focus on lifestyle change and lifestyle mobilization, a subsection of them also combines lifestyle politics and state-oriented action.

A similar picture arises from the survey data. Table 5.2 gives the percentages of the variables measuring to what extent respondents' membership of Velt is oriented towards lifestyle politics and state-oriented action (for further descriptives see Appendix 5.3). The scores on these items indicate that the survey data are in line with the qualitative data. More than 80 percent of the respondents reported that they are a member of Velt to promote an alternative lifestyle. In contrast, about a third of the respondents indicated that they are a member of Velt to pressure politicians to make things change. Moreover, in line with the qualitative findings, we see that promoting lifestyle change and pressuring politicians is rather cumulative: of the respondents who indicated that they were motivated by pressuring politicians, nearly everyone reported to be motivated by lifestyle politics as well (89 percent, see the shaded area in Table 5.2). As such, the quantitative and qualitative data are in line with previous studies showing that within LMOs, activists are mainly occupied with lifestyle change and lifestyle mobilization, but that part of the activists engage in state-oriented action as well (Dubuisson-Quellier et al., 2011; Graziano & Forno, 2012).

**Table 5.2**: Crosstab of Focus of Membership

| | **I am a member of Velt to pressure politicians to make changes** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **I am a member of Velt to promote an alternative lifestyle** | (1) Totally dis-agree | (2) Dis-agree | (3) Agree nor dis-agree | (4) Agree | (5) Totally agree | Total (percent) |
| (1) Totally disagree | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 2 (2.8) |
| (2) Disagree | 0 | 1 | 1 | 0 | 0 | 2 (2.8) |
| (3) Agree nor disagree | 1 | 0 | 3 | 2 | 1 | 7 (9.7) |
| (4) Agree | 7 | 2 | 16 | 4 | 3 | 32 (43.1) |
| (5) Totally agree | 4 | 4 | 5 | 10 | 7 | 30 (41.7) |
| Total (percent) | 13 (16.7) | 8 (11.1) | 25 (34.7) | 16 (22.2) | 11 (15.3) | 73 (100) |

*Note:* Fisher's exact p-value = .065

**Explaining state-oriented action among lifestyle activists**

So the next question then is: Why do some activists combine lifestyle politics with state-oriented action forms, while others do not?

As argued above, I expect that lifestyle activists' external input efficacy and, in particular, external output efficacy will affect their propensity for engaging in state-oriented action forms. To test this hypothesis, I will start by performing a statistical analysis on the survey item measuring respondents' orientation towards pressuring politicians to make changes. In a second step, I will return to the qualitative data to offer a deeper understanding of the presumed link between activists' perceptions of the POS and their propensity for state-oriented action.

Controlling for age, sex, education,[42] and membership in other organizations[43] a multivariate ordered logistic regression was conducted to analyze the effect of the external input efficacy and external output efficacy on respondents' propensity for pressuring politicians.[44] Table 5.3 presents the outcomes of this regression. Contrary to what the POS theory predicts, no evidence was found to suggest that members' external input efficacy is significantly related to their orientation towards pressuring politicians (arrow $B_1$ in Figure 5.1). In contrast, members who scored higher on external output efficacy *are* more likely to be to be oriented towards pressuring politicians to make changes (arrow $B_2$). In fact, this effect is rather strong. If a respondent increases one unit on the external output efficacy variable, his or her odds of being in a higher category of the dependent variable almost double (OR = 1.979**). A considerable share of the variance of the depended variable is moreover explained in this model (McKelvey & Zavoina's $R^2$ = .174).[45]

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[42] These variables are in the literature often put forward as important predictors for political participation and therefore need to be controlled for (Burns et al., 2001).

[43] We control for membership in other environmental organizations as it might be expected that those activists who do not use their membership in Velt to target politicians might in fact simply do so in other organizations. To control for this effect we include a dummy variable measuring this distinction (1 = member other organization, 0 = not member other organization) in the analysis.

[44] We use an ordered logistic regression because the dependent variable is categorical.

[45] Although interpreting pseudo $R^2$s as the explained variance of a model is always problematic, simulations have indicated that McKelvey & Zavoina's pseudo $R^2$ most closely resembles the $R^2$ in OLS regressions, which can be interpreted as the percentage of the variance explained by the model (UCLA: Statistical Consulting Group, 2011). Indeed, when the model is estimated using OLS, the obtained $R^2$s most closely resemble McKelvey & Zavoina's pseudo $R^2$. Therefore, with the necessary cautiousness, McKelvey & Zavoina's pseudo $R^2$ can be interpreted as the explained variance by the model.

**Table 5.3**: Ordered Logistic Regression of Propensity to Pressure Politicians

| | *I am a member of Velt to pressure politicians to make changes* | |
|---|---|---|
| Predictors | *β* | *Odds ratio* |
| *Control variables* | | |
| Age | -.034* (.020) | .967* (.019) |
| Sex (1 = female) | -.412 (.526) | .662 (.348) |
| Education (1 = higher education) | -.065 (.667) | .937 (.625) |
| Member other organization (1 = yes) | -.121 (.497) | .886 (.441) |
| *Variables of interest* | | |
| External input efficacy | -.489 (.322) | .613 (.198) |
| External output efficacy | .683*** (.249) | 1.979*** (.492) |
| N | | 70 |
| McKelvey & Zavoina's Pseudo $R^2$ | | .174 |
| Log pseudolikelyhood | | -100.109 |

*Notes:* *p < .10, **p < .05, ***p < .01. Standard errors between brackets. A Brant test shows no significant results, indicating that a one-equation model is valid.

The qualitative data allow to gain more insight into how the institutional structure is driving activists' choices and can help interpret the quantitative findings. It is important to note, though, that the image from the qualitative data can differ from the quantitative picture as a result of the aforementioned differences in sampling criteria for the survey and semi-structured interviews. Whereas the former provided a representative sample of Velt's active members, the latter was intended to cover the different types of members within Velt. Keeping this in mind, the qualitative data provide some important clues as to why I may have found that external output efficacy, and not external input efficacy, predicts state-oriented action.

The qualitative data first of all offer an important nuance regarding the non-significant effect of external input efficacy. Contrary to what the quantitative data may suggest, the interviews indicate that perceiving input structures as open does motivate state-

oriented action. Most interviewees indicated that they perceived the input structure as relatively open towards environmental claims, and for some of them this was a clear incentive to engage in state-oriented action. Respondents indicated that environmental issues are gaining political weight, and that this makes politicians increasingly responsive to their concerns (which is in line with the scholarly description of the Belgian issue-specific input structure outlined above). This perception of the political context makes some interviewees feel more efficacious about, and prepared to engage in, state-oriented action. One member claims:

> [Political parties these days] have to be green, they don't have a choice. In the past, they played different cards, like the wellbeing of children and elderly people, but it was remarkable that this time [the Belgian local elections of 2012] they all 'acted green'. So maybe we did accomplish something there. They have now written down that they will address these problems, and it is up to us to monitor that they indeed do so. [Interview 9]

Feeling confident about government's willingness to address environmental issues also incited some members to actively lobby for specific policy changes. Referring to their advocacy of a legal ban on the use of pesticides in the maintenance of public spaces, a member of the national board argued:

> You cannot just set good examples. On a larger scale you need to change some things as well, like what happened with the pesticides. (…) The pesticide decree was a result of our lobbying. We showed that pesticides were not necessary. (…) We started a movement by setting a positive example and creating public support, and after that we addressed public policy. [Interview 11]

By using lifestyle activism to mobilize public opinion, some activists thus believed that openings in the input structure could be instrumentalized. This insight provides an important qualification to the non-finding in the statistical model. According to the qualitative data, activists do seem to consider open input structures as an important condition for effective

state-oriented action. So why does the statistical analysis yield this non-significant result then? The qualitative interviews suggest that respondents generally agreed that input structures were at least somewhat open to their demands. Consequently, there appears to have been too little skepticism about the input structure among the activists to cause any of them to refrain from state-oriented action.

Regarding external output efficacy there appeared to have been more skepticism (which was also in line with the aforementioned scholarly description of the Belgian issue-specific output structure). Some respondents stated that even if politicians wanted to do something about environmental problems, they most likely would not be able to do so because of a limited ability to draft or implement policies. One member stated: 'Yes, I think they [local, federal, and national politicians] all have good intentions, but the power to really do something, I do not believe they have that.' [Interview 7]. The negative effect of such low levels of external output efficacy on state-oriented action did not emerge as clearly from the qualitative data as from the quantitative data, though. Some of the respondents who expressed low levels of external output efficacy did still underline the importance of engaging in state-oriented participation, often to push for incremental changes. Nevertheless, other respondents confirmed the pattern emerging from the quantitative data, indeed showing that low levels of external output efficacy sometimes motivates activists to focus more exclusively on lifestyle politics – even if they perceive input structures as open. One respondent said:

> I wouldn't go as far as to say that it [engaging in state-oriented politics] is useless (…). Political parties are open to our concerns, but I have little faith in the workings of compromise politics. (…) I don't believe in the system's ability to act. (…) Instead I think we can better do it ourselves. [Interview 1]

Wrapped up, it appears that although a belief in an open input structure might incite some activists to engage in state-oriented action, it is less powerful in explaining why others tempt to avoid it. For those respondents, it is rather a low level of external output efficacy which functions as a disincentive to engage in state-oriented action. External output efficacy did not always have this effect though, and none of the respondents rejected state-oriented politics

in absolute terms, but perceiving the state as weak can sometimes clearly encourage activists to focus more exclusively on lifestyle politics.

To fully bring these quantitative and qualitative images together, a final discrepancy between the two needs to be pointed out. The quantitative data show that respondents were more skeptic about the openness of the political system to environmental concerns (M = 2.63) than about its ability to address them (M = 3.26). This contradicts the qualitative data somewhat, as they showed that most respondents felt that politicians were fairly willing to take environmental issues into account. Nevertheless, it is difficult to translate qualitative insights into quantitative values. What is most important is that like in the qualitative data, the statistics in Appendix 5.3 show that there is less variation in external input efficacy (SD = .60) than in external output efficacy (SD = .97). This supports the idea that, as a more differentiating issue, it is external output efficacy that sets apart lifestyle activists who are oriented towards targeting the state from those who are not.

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

Like others before me, I have shown that different forms of lifestyle politics and state-oriented action forms coexist within LMOs (cf. Dubuisson-Quellier et al., 2011; Dubuisson-Quellier, 2015; Graziano & Forno, 2012). Moreover, I have described in detail how there can be important symbioses between these action forms. Lifestyle change can lay the foundation to begin mobilizing others to change their lifestyles as well, and mobilizing others to change their lifestyles is sometimes seen as a way to engage them into more indirect, state-oriented forms of political action. While this confirms once more that lifestyle politics and state-oriented politics cannot simply be juxtaposed, it became clear as well that only part of Velt's members combined their lifestyle politics with state-oriented politics. I therefore continued to explore what sets apart lifestyle activists who engage in state-oriented action forms, and those who do not. Based on insightful speculations of others before me, I began exploring the role of POSs and perceived opportunities (Haydu & Kadanoff, 2010; Micheletti, 2003). As hypothesized, the quantitative analyses indicated that activists' external output efficacy was a key predictor of their engagement with the state. In contrast, external input efficacy, which have received the lion's share of attention in the literature, do not predict state-oriented action, even though the qualitative findings nuanced this image somewhat. These findings

are thus not only important for those who want to understand the distinct repertoires of lifestyle activists, but for students of POSs as well: the negligence of output structures appears to be empirically unjustified, and future research should focus more on the state's (perceived) ability to act.

An important question is of course to what degree the findings of this single case study are generalizable. Since my strategy has been to select a typical case in a typical context, it can be expected that – given the necessary caution – findings can speak to the wider population of typical cases (Gerring, 2007). The Belgian context, with its rather open input structure and its weak output structure is exemplary for an era in which environmental issues have entered most western political party programs and political agendas (Spoon et al., 2014), but where governments often proof to be limited in effectively addressing major environmental concerns like climate change (Hale et al., 2013; Held, 2014). It is therefore likely that in many political contexts, the perceived strength of output structures will be a more divisive issue than the perceived openness of input structures. Previous case studies show that in many of these contexts there are LMOs that (like Velt) offer their members the choice between focusing exclusively on lifestyle politics and focusing at the state as well. Based on this study's findings, we can expect that external output efficacy is key in setting apart state- and non-state oriented lifestyle activists in such cases as well.

Nevertheless, while these findings can be generalized to the extent that they provide useful working hypotheses for those studying lifestyle politics in other contexts, there are several reasons why more research is still necessary to qualify and substantiate such expectations. Firstly, I have argued that many governments have proven to be incapable of effectively addressing major environmental issues, but it is still important to recognize that Belgium ranks among the 'laggards' in Europe when it comes to environmental policy (Happaerts et al., 2012; Liefferink et al., 2009). In countries that perform better, like Germany, the general population may still be more inclined to believe that the state can effectively address environmental issues. In such contexts, external output efficacy could be a weaker predictor of lifestyle activists' propensity to avoid state politics. Secondly, it needs to be assessed to what degree the findings can be applied beyond the environmental movement, as the openness and strength of the POS to non-environmental issues may look very different. While the weakening of states' output structures has been described as a rather general pattern in the age of political globalization, it still needs to be assessed how

(perceived) input and output structures affect lifestyle activists concerned with other issues, like e.g. trade justice. Finally, lifestyle politics have become prevalent within different types of collectives. While the current study looked at a typical LMO (Haenfler et al., 2012) with roots in the new social movements of the 1970s (cf. Giugni & Grasso, 2015), Forno and Graziano (2014) have described how lifestyle politics has much more recently become an important part of the relocalization strategy of the global justice movement (GJM). Having been disillusioned with its initial focus on international counter summits, many actors from within the GJM have come to adopt a 'think global, act local' attitude that incites them to invest in concrete, lifestyle oriented action forms. It remains to be seen whether political groups with such a completely different, often transnational, background have similar motivations for targeting or avoiding the state.

This study does not only provide direction for future research in terms of important working hypotheses. The innovative mixed-methods approach I used is likely to yield insightful and robust conclusions in future research as well. By investing in participant observations, researchers can make sure that they develop a good understanding of the types of action that are practiced within an organization. Semi-structured interviews should be considered as they provide key additional insights about what motivates activists, which is something that often does not become sufficiently explicit within the context of observed movement activities. Finally, surveys allow to test more rigorously whether the qualitative insights hold throughout the wider population of LMOs' members, and to test specific hypotheses using statistical tests.

Though more research is thus needed, the current study suggests strongly that activists' concerns about the state's ability to act can lead them to withdraw from state-oriented politics. This underscores that forces weakening the state, like political globalization, pose important challenges to democracy (Held & McGrew, 2007; Smith, 2008). I argued in the beginning of this chapter that whether or not lifestyle activists continue to target the state can be seen as defining whether lifestyle politics is an additional channel for participation that can 'improve democracy', or whether lifestyle politics forms an 'exit strategy' (Hirschman, 1970) that results in a zero-sum, or potentially negative outcome, for the democratic involvement of citizens (Peters, 2016). If the state's output structure is indeed becoming weaker, thereby depressing external output efficacy, we can expect more and more activists to become more exclusively focused on non-state oriented actions forms like

lifestyle politics. Some have heralded this process as good news for democracy, because it suggests that citizens remain politically active despite unfavorable conditions (e.g. Beck, 1997; Bennett, 1998, 2012). However, lifestyle politics cannot really substitute the more encompassing, broader societal focus of state-oriented or representative participation, and so, if the former replaces the latter, there are still good reasons for concern, to which I will return in more detail in the conclusion to this dissertation. While this is an important qualification of the celebration of the rise of lifestyle politics, this and other studies show nonetheless that there is no strict juxtaposition between lifestyle politics and state-oriented politics. Instead, lifestyle politics has the capacity to keep people politically involved despite unfavorable conditions, creating a reservoir of political engagement that can be tapped into once more favorable conditions arise.

# CONCLUSION AND DISCUSSION

It is hard to imagine that citizens and their political behavior would *not* be affected by the political context. It is much less obvious, however, which particular elements of the political context may have such an effect, and exactly how so. It has been the aim of my dissertation to delve deeper into precisely these two issues. Specifically, the first goal of this study has been to analyze the role of the state's input structure *and* output structure in explaining nonelectoral participation (NEP). The second goal of this study has been to explore the macro-micro link between POSs and NEP by testing the common assumption that political opportunity structures (POSs) affect NEP because they are perceived. In this conclusion I will summarize my main findings and reflect upon the extent to which the findings address these goals, as well as highlight shortcomings, enduring puzzles, and venues for future research. I will first briefly revisit the theoretical framework which this study seeks to improve.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In essence, the political opportunity structure (POS) approach suggests that political contexts affect the political behavior of the people within them (Giugni, 2009; Kriesi, 2004; Meyer, 2004). Political contexts provide opportunities and threats that can render certain forms of political action more or less favorable. As (dis-)incentives, these threats and opportunities guide the political behavior of the citizens and movements within a given context (Opp, 2009, p. 180; Tarrow, 1996). Hence, if we want to understand variations in political behavior between contexts we need to analyze the availability of threats and opportunities in those contexts.

While the POS approach was initially developed to analyze social movements, authors have more recently begun to use the POS approach to explain variations in the

prevalence of NEP between countries, showing that a range of elements of the POS can indeed explain levels of participation (Braun & Hutter, 2016; Christensen, 2011; Quaranta, 2013, 2015; Vráblíková, 2014). The argument they make for political participation follows a similar logic as the one used to explain social movements' tactical repertoires and levels of mobilization: the availability of opportunities or threats poses (dis-)incentives that result in varying levels and types of NEP.

However, the POS literature has long endured several key limitations that I have tried to address in this dissertation. Firstly, even though the POS literature has long made a theoretical distinction between input structures and output structures (Kitschelt, 1986; Kriesi et al., 1995; Overby, 1990; Tilly, 2006; van der Heijden, 2006), empirical research has almost exclusively focused on the former. Input structures refer to those elements of the POS that determine the 'openness' of the system. For instance, according to Kriesi et al., 'proportional representation allows for easier access than plurality or majority methods. (…) Where there are more political parties, social movements will be more likely to find allies within the party system' (1995, p. 29). In contrast, output structures refer to the elements of the POS that determine the 'strength' of the system. For instance, highly centralized states can more easily develop and implement policies, and states who control a large share of a countries GDP have a greater financial capacity to do so. Combined, these two dimensions of the POS determine a systems 'willingness' and 'ability' to respond to citizens' claims, and both elements are thus essential determinants of the effectiveness of any form of NEP that is aimed at generating substantive changes through the political system (Kitschelt, 1986; Overby, 1990).

It is remarkable that the POS literature has given such exclusive attention to input structures. In a context of increased political globalization the state's ability to act is often seen as decreasing (Bartolini, 2011; Beck, 1992, 1997; Held & McGrew, 2007). As it is therefore less clear now who has the power over certain issues, output structures have become a much more important variable to take into account in the pursuit of substantive change. Is the state still the most obvious target, or have other actors emerged that have more power over a certain issue? In the context of political globalization, the answer to this question has become much less obvious (della Porta, Kriesi, & Rucht, 1999; Fox, 2014). These changes should strongly encourage us to begin taking into account output structures when trying to explain social movements and NEP. The first goal of my dissertation has been to respond to this challenge.

Secondly, the lack of knowledge about the mechanisms through which such macro-level POSs may affect micro-level political behavior has frequently been identified as one of the most important weaknesses in the literature on social movements and NEP (Christensen, 2011; Koopmans, 2005; Opp, 2009, pp. 179–80; Walgrave & Verhulst, 2009). There are a number of theories about this link, but most often it has been assumed that POSs are in some way perceived 'correctly' by citizens and movements, and that it is these perceived POSs that affect their decisions about becoming politically active (e.g. Gamson & Meyer, 1996; Klandermans, 1997, p. 173; Kriesi et al., 1995, p. 245; McAdam, 1982, p. 48; Meyer & Minkoff, 2004). Throughout my dissertation I have referred to this assumption as the 'perception hypothesis'. Even though the perception hypothesis is by far the most proposed explanation for the macro-micro link, it has hardly been tested empirically. We do not know whether 'real' opportunities are perceived 'correctly', and our knowledge of the effect of perceived opportunities on NEP is limited as well. The second goal of my dissertation has been to test the perception hypothesis empirically by analyzing *whether or not* perceptions of government responsiveness vary between countries according to their POSs, and whether these perceptions affect citizens' (perceived effectiveness of) NEP.

Perceptions of government responsiveness have traditionally been conceptualized as 'external efficacy' (Balch, 1974; Coleman & Davis, 1976; Niemi et al., 1991). However, this has typically been done in a one-dimensional fashion, measuring only whether government is perceived as *willing* to respond to citizens' demands. Perceptions of government's ability to respond have thus remained overlooked. To address this caveat, I have proposed a distinction between 'external input efficacy' (perceive willingness to respond) and 'external output efficacy' (perceived ability to respond). Based on this distinction I have tested the perception hypothesis while recognizing the two-dimensional structure of POSs.

**Socio-psychological assumptions**

In doing so, I have also made a number of socio-psychological and cognitive assumptions that cannot be taken for granted and that I will be revisiting throughout this conclusion. Firstly, I have assumed that citizens operate as individuals when they engage in NEP, and that the contextually embedded decision about whether and how to participate in politics is an individual one. As such this study has paid only limited attention to the role of collective

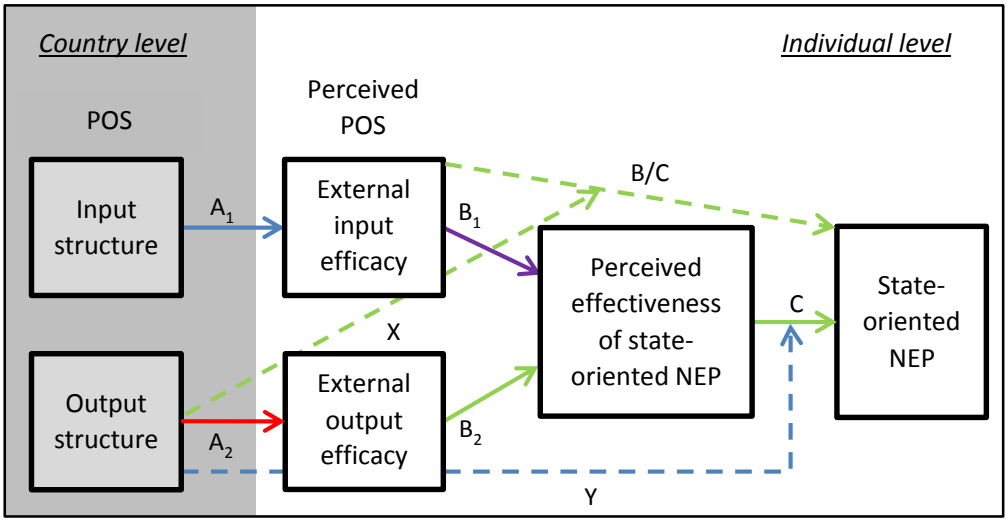
actors, such as social movement organizations (SMOs), who play important roles in the development of political campaigns.

Secondly, I have assumed that citizens participate in politics out of instrumental motivations, that is, that they want to achieve a goal that is external to the action and that they are rational actors who weigh costs and benefits of participating (Opp, 2013). As such, this study has paid less attention to the fact that citizens sometimes have non-instrumental motivations for NEP as well, such as a sense of identification, solidarity, or a desire to express their views without pursuing any influence on the social or political environment (Klandermans, 2004). Even though this has received little attention in the literature, people with expressive motivations can actually be affected by POSs as well. Moreover, on a more basic level, I have also assumed that (political) motivations, attitudes and perceptions lead to (political) behavior. While this assumption is supported by earlier longitudinal studies (e.g. van Stekelenburg et al., 2013), the effect can go in the other direction as well (Ajzen & Fishbein, 2000; Quintelier & van Deth, 2014).

Finally, I have made an important cognitive assumption. This study has not analyzed the exact cognitive processes through which citizens could come to perceive POSs correctly, and like any aspect of the perception hypothesis, these processes have neither been studied in the existing POS literature. I have therefore proposed a theoretical assumption about these perceptions. I have begun by stating that to assume that citizens make correct observations of abstract political context factors probably overestimates the political interest and expertise of the average citizen. I have proposed instead that there might be a more subtle, and more convincing model to link POSs to external efficacy. Namely, I have argued that POSs can become tangible as they create conditions that increase the average likelihood that citizens undergo specific experiences that affect their perception of government's willingness or ability to respond to citizens' demands. So, in no way do citizens need to have factual knowledge of their political context. Instead, the context creates the conditions that affect their attitudes, like a high degree of disproportionality will make more citizens experience that their views are discarded by the political system, and like high government spending makes it more likely that citizens experience that the state can intervene in society.

Clearly, each of these assumptions is debatable, lacks empirical testing, or knows valid alternatives. Based on my findings, I will therefore revisit these assumptions throughout this conclusion.

**Figure 6.1**: Hypothesized causal mechanism POS




*Note*: Arrows represent hypothesized effects. Dashed arrows represent indirect approaches. The color of the arrows represent how much support my dissertation provides for the existence of the link:

A: Supported effects
B: Partly supported effects
C: Contradictory results
D: Not tested

**MAIN FINDINGS OF THE DISSERTATION**

The main argument of this dissertation is summarized in Figure 6.1: POSs – including input structures and output structures – were expected to be perceived correctly (arrows $A_1$, $A_2$), determining the perceived effectiveness of (specific forms of) NEP (arrows $B_1$, $B_2$), and in turn, affecting individuals' propensity to engage in certain forms of NEP (arrow *C*). In one study, I looked at the direct effect of external input efficacy on NEP (arrow *B/C*). In the absence of comparative data on perceived output structures, however, arrow $A_2$ could not be tested directly. I have therefore proposed two indirect ways of measuring the effect of 'real' output structures on the links between perceived POSs and NEP (arrows *X* and *Y*). The colors of the arrows in the figure indicate to what degree my research has addressed the different segments of my main argument, showing that I have found at least partial evidence for most links, but limited or contradictory evidence in some other cases.

**Table 6.1**: Overview of findings regarding hypothesized causal links

| Causal link (Figure 6.1) | Hypothesis | Chapter | Empirical support based on findings |
|---|---|---|---|
| **$A_1$** | The openness of input structures is perceived 'correctly' by citizens and activists | Intro., 3, 5 | Only anecdotal or partial support and non-findings |
| **$A_2$** | The strength of output structures is perceived 'correctly' by citizens and activists | - | - |
| **$B_1$** | Perceived input structures affect the perceived effectiveness of state-oriented NEP | 1, 3, 5 | Largely supported, but no effect on signing petitions, and not decisive in case of lifestyle politics |
| **$B_2$** | Perceived output structures affect the perceived effectiveness of NEP | 1, 5 | Supported by findings |
| **C** | The perceived effectiveness of certain forms of NEP predicts engagement in them | 1, 5 | Supported by findings |
| **B/C** | Perceived input structures affect NEP | 2 | Supported by findings |
| **X** | The strength of output structures affects the link between external input efficacy and the perceived effectiveness of NEP | 3 | Supported by findings |
| **Y** | The strength of output structures affects the link between external input efficacy and NEP | 2 | Partial support: only gov. spending has effect |

In Table 6.1, I outline more specifically how each chapter addressed these arrows, and to what effect it did so. In the remainder of this section, I will discuss how the main findings of the individual chapters answer the main research question. Whilst focusing on both input structures and output structures, I will first discuss my findings with regard to the 'perceptions' of 'real' opportunities (arrows $A_1$, and $A_2$ as replaced by X and Y), and I will then review my findings about the effect of perceived POSs on the perceived effectiveness of NEP (arrows $B_1$ and $B_2$) and on NEP (arrows B/C and C).

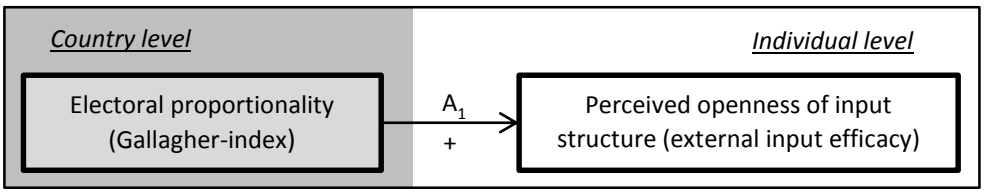
**The macro-micro link between 'real' and perceived opportunities (arrows $A_1$, X and Y)**

The first assumption of the perception hypothesis is that citizens perceive POSs correctly. Do the findings in this study confirm this?

The mixed-methods case-study of Belgian environmental organization Velt in Chapter 5 provides some tentative support for the idea of 'correctly' perceived POSs. The qualitative data indicate that Belgian environmental activists often perceive that the issues of their concern will find easy access to the political system, which is in line with scholarly accounts of the Belgian POS. In general terms, Belgium is characterized by proportionality and decentralization (Lijphart, 2012, pp. 33–41), which has been linked to an open input structure (Kriesi et al., 1995, Chapter 2). Moreover, the Belgian cleavage structure has opened up sufficiently to accommodate environmental issues (Deschouwer, 2009; Kitschelt & Hellemans, 1990). The Belgian output structure has been defined as relatively weak, however – in particular regarding environmental issues (Happaerts et al., 2012; Liefferink et al., 2009). Accordingly, there seems to be more pessimism among the activists regarding government's ability to act on environmental issues.

While these findings are in line with the perception hypothesis, comparative evidence is still needed to prove that variations in 'real' POSs are reflected in variations of 'perceived' POSs. However, the evidence that was found for the existence of this effect was somewhat limited. In the introduction, I presented findings from an earlier study in which we tested whether Gallagher's index of electoral proportionality on external input efficacy in 33 countries (de Moor et al., 2013). It was shown that there was a significant positive relation between proportionality and external output efficacy (as illustrated in Figure 6.2). However, in that same paper we tested another important indicator of the system's openness, federalism, which had no such effects, and so, it must be concluded that the results were limited.

**Figure 6.2**: Findings regarding the macro-micro link of input structures



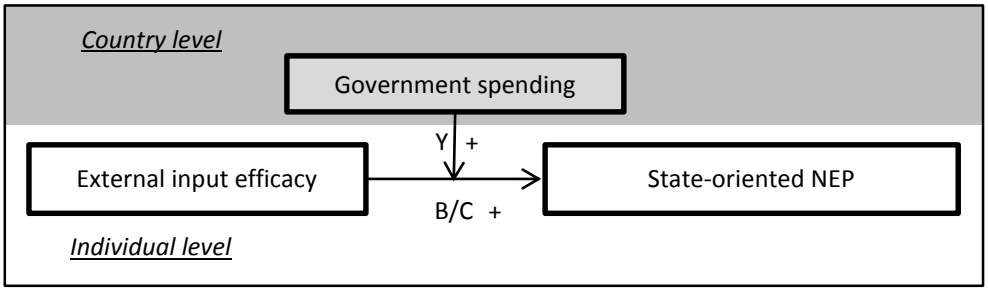
In Chapter 3, a similar test was performed, this time looking at the issue-specific context of the anti-Iraq War demonstrations in 2003. Looking at the same demonstrations in eight countries, it was expected that the openness of input structures would affect respondents' beliefs about the odds that their message would be taken into account by politicians. However, the analyses revealed that neither the openness of general or of specific input structures affected the peace protesters' perceived effect on politicians. This is quite remarkable, because in order to be effective, peace protesters depend heavily on governments' responsiveness, they cannot stop wars with their own hands. Consequently, peace protesters were expected to be particularly aware of the openness of the POS.

So why do we only find proof for the link between real and perceived input structures (arrow $A_1$ in figure 6.1) in the study of the general population, and not in the situation specific case? I have speculated that it might be that the collective dynamics at work around demonstrations block out feelings of efficacy based on the political context. Rather, protesters can be overwhelmed by the experience of massive collective action, which can come to inform their efficacy beliefs instead (Klandermans, 1997). Whatever the case, the evidence for the 'perception hypothesis' regarding input structures seems to be limited.

With regard to output structures the evidence is limited as well, but this is mainly a consequence of the availability of data: international surveys do not measure citizens' perceptions of government's ability to act. Thus, there is no way in which I have been able to directly measure whether the comparative strength of countries' output structures is reflected in citizens' external output efficacy (arrow $A_2$). However, as illustrated in Figure 6.3, I have been able to show in Chapter 2 that output structures (as measured as government spending) strengthen the effect of external input efficacy on NEP (arrow Y). Using multilevel regressions with cross-level interactions, I tested whether external input efficacy had a stronger effect on NEP in countries with a stronger output structure. While I tested the effect for a number of elements, only government spending was found to have a positive effect: the larger the share of the national GDP the state controls, the higher the effect of external input efficacy on NEP. This suggests that people in countries where government has a lot to spend care more about whether politicians are willing to respond to their demands when considering to become politically active, and thus that they are somehow aware of government's ability to get things done. The other elements that were included in the analyses (political globalization and horizontal centralization) may not have had such an

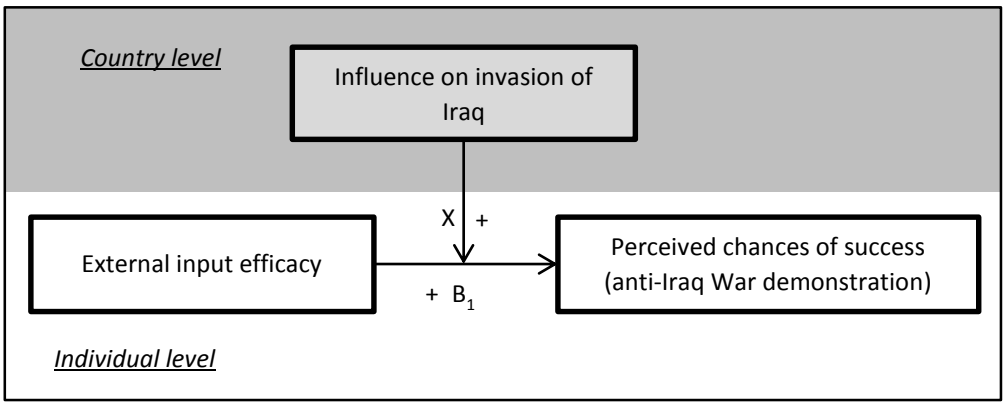
effect because they were less likely to generate experiences that determine citizens' perceptions of government's ability to act, to which I will return in more detail below.

**Figure 6.3**: Findings regarding output structures and NEP




Similarly, in Chapter 3, I showed that politicians' perceived willingness to take protesters into account related more strongly to protesters' perceived chances of success if those politicians were objectively more capable of addressing the issues of their concern (arrow X in Figure 6.1, and specifically in Figure 6.4 below). In the absence of comparable data on external output efficacy it remains to be tested whether this effect indeed occurs because citizens 'perceive' variations in output strength, yet the assumption is that this is indeed the case: in strong states, citizens perceive the state as more capable of getting things done, and thus to respond to their demands in case they are willing to do so. Here, government's willingness to respond is more likely to result in substantive change, leading to stronger effects of external input efficacy on NEP.

**Figure 6.4**: Findings regarding issue-specific output structures

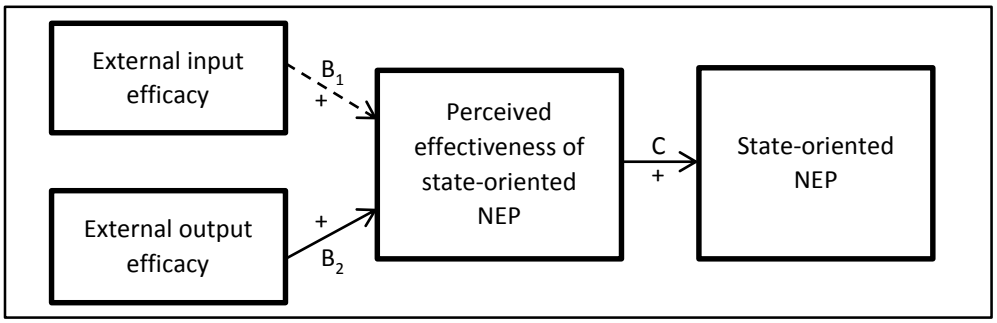


**Perceived opportunities and political participation (arrows $B_1$, $B_2$, C, and B/C)**

The fact that citizens' perceived opportunities do not always reflect 'real' POSs does not mean that perceived opportunities do not matter for citizens' NEP. Although the theoretical model to link POSs and NEP assumes 'correct' perceptions, 'incorrect' perceptions of POSs could inspire NEP just as well (Kurzman, 1996; Suh, 2001). In this section I therefore focus on the micro-level findings alone, as I link perceptions of input structures and output structures to citizens' propensity to engage in certain forms of NEP (see figure 6.5 for the found effects).

Let us start with the more conventional focus on citizens' perceptions of input structures, i.e. external input efficacy. Building on an instrumental interpretation of NEP, it was assumed that external input efficacy should motivate any form of state-oriented NEP (arrow B/C), as the willingness of government to respond renders the chances of success higher in the case of policy oriented NEP. Indeed, using large comparative survey data in Chapter 2, it was shown that external input efficacy has a direct positive effect on NEP, which is in line with previous research.

**Figure 6.5**: Individual-level findings




However, when we look somewhat closer at the exact link between external input efficacy and NEP, as I did in Chapters 1 and 5, we see that the explanatory power of external input efficacy is somewhat limited (hence the *dashed* arrow $B_1$ in Figure 6.5). In Chapter 1, I analyzed data from the 2014 PARTIREP Belgian election survey, which contains data on external input efficacy, external output efficacy, various forms of NEP and information on how effective respondents thought each of these forms of participation were. Using mediation analyses it was confirmed that external input efficacy explains whether citizens perceive contacting politicians through mail or email as effective, and that as such it boosts

their propensity to engage in this form of participation (arrow C). No such effect was found for signing petitions, however, which was unexpected given that petitions are often – though certainly not always – targeted at the state (Bochel, 2013).

The study of environmental activists in Chapter 5 also showed mixed results. No statistically significant link could be found between lifestyle activists' external input efficacy and their propensity for state-oriented forms of NEP. However, the qualitative data nuanced this image. External input efficacy certainly is important for lifestyle activists' perception of the effectiveness of state-oriented NEP, and for their propensity to engage in such activities. However, as explained above there is simply quite strong consensus among them about the fact that Belgian politicians are receptive to environmental concerns. Hence, because there is little variation here, it simply cannot explain their propensity for state-oriented NEP.

In contrast, regarding the state's ability to address environmental issues effectively, the qualitative data show there is less consensus, and it appears that these differences are important to explaining lifestyle activists' propensity for state-oriented NEP. Some Belgian lifestyle activists appear to be more in doubt about their politicians' ability to respond to their claims than about politicians' willingness to do so. The data suggest that those who consider politicians as incapable of acting are the ones who perceive state-oriented NEP as less effective (arrow $B_2$) and would focus more exclusively on lifestyle politics (arrow C). External output efficacy, rather than external input efficacy, appears to be decisive here.

This view is backed up by the analyses of general population data in Chapter 1. Here it is shown that people who score higher on external output efficacy perceive state-oriented NEP as more effective and are in effect more inclined to engage in those forms of NEP. In contrast to external input efficacy, this is the case for contacting politicians as well as for signing petitions. Hence, while overlooked in the political participation literature until now, external output efficacy appears to be at least as important as external input efficacy.

However, Chapter 1 also showed a clearly surprising finding. Namely, external output efficacy has a direct negative effect on contacting politicians. In trying to explain this finding, the instrumental logic underlying the indirect effects breaks down. We could assume that citizens who perceive politicians as capable of acting are less inclined to contact politicians, because they feel that this is not necessary when politicians are effectively dealing with society's problems. They could be what Christensen (2015) has called 'satisfied citizens'. Be that as it may, the instrumental logic does not explain why people who perceive politicians

as incapable *would* address them. If they are incapable of getting things done, then contacting them is not likely to result in any of the substantive gains that most instrumentally motivated citizens are after. This finding therefore points in the direction of important expressive motivations. People who perceive politicians as incapable of acting may feel the need to express their discontent over such inability. This finding suggests that more research is needed into the links between expressive motivations and POSs (see below).

**Answer to the research question: Causal mechanisms, conditions, and unanswered questions**

Bringing all focal concerns of this study together in a single sentence, this study has tried to answer the following research question: *Through what causal mechanisms do political opportunity structures, including input structures and output structures, affect nonelectoral participation?* The findings in this study provide some important answers to this research question.

When looking at how my findings speak to the causal pathways laid out in Figure 6.1, we see that there is at least partial evidence for both the upper (input structures) and the lower (output structures) hypothesized tracks. That is, some elements of the political context do seem to interact with perceived opportunities, either directly (in the case of input structures – arrow $A_1$) or indirectly (in the case of output structures – arrows X and Y), and both external input efficacy and external output efficacy seem to affect how effective citizens believe specific forms of NEP are (arrow $B_1$ and $B_2$) and how likely they are to engage in them (arrows B/C and C). For instance, we know now that in very proportional systems, external input efficacy is higher, and that this will render citizens more likely to perceive contacting politicians as effective, in turn making them more likely to engage in this type of NEP – in particular if those politicians represent a state with great spending power. As I will discuss in more detail below, evidence seems to be stronger with regard to output structures, yet overall, there is thus sufficient evidence for conditional support of the perception hypothesis; with regard to input structures as well as output structures.

At the same time, however, the findings show also that the link is not always very clear. Not all POSs seem to be perceived (e.g. federalism or political globalization), and perceived opportunities do not always predict NEP (e.g. there is no effect of external input efficacy on signing petitions). Given that the perception-based causal mechanism does not

always work, the findings should also be seen as an imperative for future research. According to Hedström and Ylikoski:

> *The account of a causal mechanism integrates an isolated piece of causal knowledge with a much larger body of knowledge and helps us to answer many natural follow-up questions about the conditions under which the causal dependency holds: For example, what are the necessary background conditions and what are the possible intervening factors that have to be absent for the effect to be present? In this way the mechanism expands our ability to answer what-if questions, i.e., it deepens our understanding.* (2010, p. 53).

The findings in this study indeed help us to ask the next important questions. We know that the perception hypothesis works sometimes, but not always. So what are the conditions for this mechanism to occur? When are opportunities perceived and when not? When do perceived opportunities matter for NEP and when don't they? And are there alternative mechanisms that can explain the macro-micro link in other circumstances?

In the remainder of this conclusion I will seek to provide provisional answers to these questions on the basis of the clues we have based on my findings, but also based on existing literature. I will first address two more immediate issues that, based on my findings, beg clarification: 1) Why does the evidence for the role of output structures appear to be stronger than that for the role of input structures? And 2) do this study's underlying socio-psychological assumptions hold? Addressing these issues already highlights a number of conditions and intervening factors that further specify the causal mechanism assumed under the perception hypothesis. Building on this discussion I will in the next section outline in more detail what questions future research should focus on in order to further improve our understanding of the link between POSs and nonelectoral political behavior.

1) *Why is there stronger evidence for the role of output structures than for the role of input structures?*

Let us assume for a moment that the found effects regarding output structures are there indeed because citizens indeed take 'real' output structures into account in some way. The

question that remains then is: why do (perceived) output structures appear to affect (the perceived effectiveness of) NEP more consistently than (perceived) input structures do?

A potential answer to this question may lie in the degree to which citizens or movements can 'correct' or 'compensate for' an unfavorable condition imposed by the POS. If it can be compensated for quite immediately, it should have a less definitive effect than when it cannot. In theory, citizens and movements should be able to compensate for closed input structures, but not for weak output structures. Output structures could therefore pose a more definitive condition, which could explain why citizens appear to be more affected by, and more aware of, output structures than input structures.

Let me clarify this a bit. Whether politicians are willing to take citizens' demands into account can be attributed either to the openness of the political system, or it can be attributed to citizens' ability to put pressure on the system. In fact, several authors have emphasized that activists make their own openings in the political system (Hudalah, Winarso, & Woltjer, 2010; Jasper, 1997, pp. 40–1; Tarrow, 2011, p. 12). According to Edwards (2014, p. 90) 'activists do not take chances gifted by political elites, but make their own chances by using their imaginations, passion, and creativity'. In contrast, citizens cannot compensate for government's ability to turn demands into effective political outcomes. It is hard to imagine that activists would be able to force government to become capable of getting something done. Of course, in a sense, governments' competences are negotiable political outcomes as well (e.g., their spending power, and thus taxation, is of course a major political issue), but changes in output structures can generally only be made in the very long run. In contrast, governments can at quite readily decide to listen to certain challengers' demands. Hence, as output structures cannot be compensated for like input structures can, they can be seen as a more definitive condition on the effectiveness of NEP. I theorize therefore that this is why output structures appear to be taken more seriously by citizens and activists.

In this sense, I have not only found at least equally strong empirical support for the role of output structures as for the role of input structures; there are also theoretical reasons to ascribe even more weight to output structures than to input structures. Upon reflection it appears that a strong output structure presents a necessary condition for any case of state-oriented NEP that has the goal of advancing substantive change. While an open input structure can facilitate the goals of such participation, but this is not a necessary condition. This conclusion has major implications for NEP in a context where, as a result of political

globalization, political power has been increasingly moving away from the nation state. I will discuss these implications, as well as potential solutions, towards the end of this conclusion.

*2) Do this study's underlying socio-psychological assumptions hold?*

In the theoretical outline of this conclusion I mentioned some of the assumptions that I have made in terms of the socio-psychological and cognitive underpinnings of this research. Specifically, I have chosen to look at the link between POSs and NEP from the perspective of individuals, and I have assumed that these individuals generally have some instrumental motivations and a rational approach. From a cognitive point of view, I have assumed that it is possible that citizens perceive POSs correctly, but that they most likely do so through experiences rather than observations, and that elements that are more likely to affect the average citizen are therefore also more likely to be 'perceived'. Given some of the limited findings in this dissertation, can we maintain these assumptions?

As for the individualistic approach, firstly, I found that individuals' perceptions of government's willingness to respond only reflect 'real' input structures in some cases. Though there might sometimes be plausible explanations for this, these limited findings still raise the question how those input structures that appear not to affect external input efficacy can still affect their NEP (e.g. federalism). Perhaps, this is because other actors who *are* aware of these input structures push them to engage in certain forms of NEP. For example, social movement organizations (SMOs) typically play central roles in mobilizing citizens in many forms of NEP, such as protesting, signing petitions, and boycotting products (Verba et al., 1995, Chapter 5). Specialized organizers in SMOs are more likely to have the resources (e.g. time, expertise) to be aware of certain contextual elements. They are the ones who develop strategic plans in response to those opportunities, and who mobilize rank and file participants to engage in their actions. Citizens of course still need to make voluntary decisions about whether or not join these actions, and their personal motivations remain essential in that regard (Klandermans, 2004), but if there are more opportunities to join campaigns in someone's environment, then participation becomes more likely as well (Verba et al., 1995). Given certain POSs, SMOs should be more or less inclined to mobilize citizens to join certain types of NEP. Hence, SMOs could be what constitutes the sometimes missing link between POSs and citizens' NEP. Exploring the mediating role of SMOs is therefore an important venue for future research.

Secondly, the limited findings regarding the perception of input structures and the effect of external input efficacy on NEP also challenge me to rethink some of the instrumental assumptions that underlie this project's focus on political opportunities. The notion that opportunities should affect citizens because they make considerations about effectiveness before they decide to commit to a certain form of NEP might overestimate the instrumentality of participation. If we assume that participation is rather about identity, solidarity or expression (Klandermans, 2004; van Zomeren et al., 2012) than about achieving a certain goal, then perhaps opportunities that determine effectiveness are not as important. Could this explain some of the non-findings, and could a more expressive interpretation make better sense of the patterns we find?

Perhaps. However, overall, my findings suggest more strongly that output structures are perceived than that citizens have a correct notion of input structures, and that external output efficacy is a more essential predictor of state-oriented NEP. If anything, output structures are more closely related to an instrumental logic than input structures are. A government that is willing to listen might be important to expressively motivated citizens as well. After all, even though their 'expression' has no goal that is external to the action, it might still be important for them to be heard and recognized by politicians. In contrast, a strong output structure is only important for instrumentally motivated participants, because whether government can actually get something done is irrelevant for citizens who are not interested in substantive outcomes. The effects of output structures that are found in Chapters 2 and 3 therefore seem to suggest that instrumental considerations matter for a sufficiently large share of the population for output structures to produce statistically significant effects of external input efficacy on NEP between countries. Hence, without discarding the potential importance of expressive motivations, the non-findings do not point in the direction of an excessive focus on instrumental motivations. As for the more basic assumption that motivations, attitudes and perceptions lead to behavior; this assumption was not necessarily contradicted by the findings, but has remained theory-based in the absence of longitudinal data, to which I will return in more detail below.

Finally, several non-findings also challenge us to revisit the cognitive assumptions underlying the perception hypothesis. Even if we assume that many citizens are instrumentally motivated in a way that interests them in political opportunities, is it likely that the average citizen could have a somewhat accurate understanding of the macro-level

elements that make out POSs? From the outset of this dissertation I have argued that it is in fact quite unlikely that average citizens (could) build their perceptions of the openness or strength of the political system by simply observing their political context. The explanation that I have offered instead is that POSs can determine experiences which inform perceptions of the openness or strength of the political context. But is this theory in line with the findings? That is, are those structures that appear to be 'perceived' indeed the ones that are more likely to be experienced by the average citizen?

In general this does indeed seem to be the case. Using the general population data from the ISSP (in the paper referred to in the introduction (de Moor et al., 2013) and in Chapter 2), there were two elements with significant effects: Gallagher's index of proportionality and government spending. As argued, these two elements are indeed quite likely to have affected how open or strong the average citizen will experience the political system to be. In contrast, more indirect measures of proportionality, federalism, or less everyday indicators of output strength like political globalization, may not be as likely to have had such an effect. So far this explanation seems to hold. The findings in Chapter 3, however, require a different explanation. Here it appears rather that the specific protest context of the anti-Iraq War demonstrations created dynamics in which protesters seemed to have based their efficacy beliefs rather on their own capacities than on the political context, which could explain why no effect was found of any relevant input structures. As for the output structures (or how direct a country was involved in the invasion of Iraq), these probably had a significant effect because they created a quite definitive condition which was simply quite readily observable (rather than 'experienced over time', as I suggest is the case with some other POSs). These all remain speculations, however, and it is clear that future research will have to look deeper into the cognitive processes through which citizens construct an understanding of their political context.

In sum, the main answer to the research question is thus that both input structures and output structures appear to affect NEP, because arguably, citizens perceive them 'correctly'. However, the evidence is not conclusive, and there appear to be certain conditions for this mechanism to occur. Specifically, input structures appear to be less likely to be taken into account when citizens consider NEP, because input structures can be compensated for. In particular in the context of collective action it appears that people refer mainly to their own

or their group's capacities to determine how likely it is that they can affect politicians, rather than on politicians' willingness to take their demands into account. In contrast, since output structures cannot really be compensated for, they appear to pose a more definitive condition upon activists' ability to generate substantive change through the political system. Nevertheless, not all output structures appear to have this effect. It appears that they have an effect mainly if they are likely to have been experienced (like government's spending power) or if they are quite readily observable (like government's involvement in the invasion of Iraq).

Based on this discussion we can add two conditions to refine the perception hypothesis: firstly, POSs matter mainly if they cannot be compensated for, and secondly, the more likely average citizens are to be affected by the conditions set by the POS, or the more readily observable POSs are, the more likely it is that their external efficacy reflects it. Thus, the perception hypothesis seems to work, but there are at least two conditions that increase the likelihood that the proposed mechanism occurs. Because of these conditions, output structures appear to matter more for NEP than input structures do, which is an important qualification of the focus on input structures in the existing literature.

## LIMITATIONS, UNSOLVED PUZZLES, AND OPPORTUNTIES FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

I have so far discussed to what extent my findings have addressed the research question of this project, and what puzzles have remained unsolved. Based on that discussion I will in this section formulate four key limitations in this study that indicate possible venues for future research that can further improve our understanding of the link between POSs and political behavior.

### External output efficacy across countries

The first limitation of this dissertation is clearly that it lacks comparative data on external output efficacy. In this project I have shown in various ways that output structures are important for citizens' political participation, and that the focus on input structures that has dominated the literature on POSs is thus one-sided. I have shown that 'real' output structures moderate the link between perceived input structure and (the perceived effectiveness) of NEP, and I have shown that external output efficacy is often a better predictor of state-

oriented NEP than external input efficacy is. However, in the absence of comparative data on external output efficacy I have not been able to test whether this link exists because citizens' perceptions of output structures reflect 'real' output structures. Moreover, while Chapters 1 and 5 show that external output efficacy affects citizens' and lifestyle activists' propensity for state-oriented NEP in the Belgian context, it remains to be seen whether these findings can be replicated in other contexts. Hence, although my dissertation shows rather clearly that output structures matter for NEP, in the absence of comparative data on external output efficacy, a number of important questions remain unanswered.

Future research would benefit strongly from the availability of such data. Comparative survey programs, like the European Social Survey, or the International Social Survey Programme would benefit from taking this call into account, yet as space in these surveys is very scarce, it is more realistic to set up a smaller survey program with a smart case selection to analyze the level of external output efficacy in typically weaker (e.g. Belgium and Switzerland) and stronger states (e.g. France of the UK). Doing so would allow for a first exploration of this study's comparative assumptions.

**Longitudinal data**

The second limitation of this study is that it has been largely cross-sectional, which is a consequence of the study's theoretical focus. Most of the literature applying the POS approach to NEP has been comparative, analyzing how country level characteristics can explain NEP within those countries (e.g. Quaranta, 2013; Vráblíková, 2014). This study has built on the latter approach, expanding its focus, and testing some of its underlying assumption. The research question has therefore largely been addressed from a comparative point of view. While comparative and longitudinal studies can in principle be integrated, there are to my knowledge no international, comparative, longitudinal surveys that include measures of NEP and external efficacy that could have been used to address this issue. Hence, because the focus of this research has been comparative, my ability to test causal directions using longitudinal approaches was inevitably limited. As for the Belgian studies, while it was already a major step forward to be able to measure external output efficacy among a large and representative sample of the Belgian population, there was unfortunately no way to have fitted the question in a panel study. The Velt study addressed forms of NEP that people had

often been involved in for already much longer, which precluded assessing any attitudes existing before respondents' NEP.

This lack of longitudinal data is problematic for both theoretical and methodological reasons. Theoretically, it is problematic because as mentioned above, POSs often affect NEP as they change over time (McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001; McAdam, 1982; Tarrow, 2011). A question that remains unanswered, therefore, is whether such temporal shifts (rather than differences between countries) are perceived by citizens, and will also affect NEP. For instance, in Chapter 2 I tested whether differences in levels of political globalization between countries affect the strength of the effect of external input efficacy on NEP. However, rather than analyzing differences between countries, we should perhaps analyze this link over time. That is, perhaps this link is not affected by absolute levels of political globalization, but rather by its increase over time. If countries become more politically globalized, we could thus expect the link between external input efficacy and NEP to diminish. Given the plausibility of such hypotheses, future research would benefit from examining more closely how changing contexts determine NEP.

Methodologically, a lack of longitudinal data makes it of course difficult to proof causality. Do attitudes and perceptions influence behavior, as has been the premise of this study, or does the effect go in the other direction? My findings show for instance that there is a significant relationship between external output efficacy and state-oriented NEP, but they cannot determine whether high levels of external output efficacy incite NEP, or whether experiences of NEP inform perceptions of government's ability to act. There are studies that do have longitudinal data at their disposal which confirm that attitudes can predict behavior (Klandermans & Oegema, 1987; Passy & Giugni, 2001; Quintelier & van Deth, 2014; Van Laer, 2011; van Stekelenburg et al., 2013), but there is also evidence pointing in the other direction (Finkel, 1985; Quintelier & van Deth, 2014). Hence, the causal direction assumed in this study is plausible but speculative, and future research should subject the findings in this study to tests for causal directions.

Within the currently running MECPRO project led by Stefaan Walgrave, we are trying to do just that. Applying the method of Klandermans and Oegema (1987), the goal of the project is to find stronger evidence for the causal link between motivations and attitudes on the one hand, and participation in political protest on the other. We survey potential participants in a demonstration a number of weeks before the demonstration, asking them

about their motivations to participate, and then again afterwards, to ask whether they did or did not participate in the end. In effect, we can safely link motivations in Time 1 to participation in Time 2. Though focused only on protesting, and not on NEP more broadly, this project will thus allow us to address this gap in my dissertation. Specifically, we will measure potential participants' external input efficacy and external output efficacy, and we will be able assess whether they effectively predict participation.

**Alternative hypotheses**

The third limitation of this dissertation is that while there are multiple scenarios for linking macro-level POSs to micro-level political behavior, I have only tested the most common one. While doing so proved to be sufficiently demanding, my findings showed that some elements of the political context are not perceived as we would expect them to be. This leaves unanswered how it is possible that other studies do find that these elements affect levels of NEP between countries (Braun & Hutter, 2016; Christensen, 2011; Quaranta, 2013, 2015; Vráblíková, 2014). For instance, how is it possible that federalism affects NEP, but is not reflected in citizens' external input efficacy? These findings challenge us to consider whether other explanations could provide probable, alternative explanations. If certain input structures are not perceived 'correctly' by citizens, then how is it possible that they affect their political behavior anyway? One option is to explore the role of other, intermediate actors, who may be more likely to perceive certain opportunities. The other option is to go beyond the perception based explanation altogether.

*Social movement organizations*

First, as touched upon briefly in the above, it might be that it is not the citizens themselves who perceive POSs, but rather, that specialized individuals in social movement organizations (SMOs) do. SMOs are important mobilizing agents. They organize many of the actions citizens can participate in, like demonstrations or petitioning campaigns (McCarthy & Zald, 1977; Verba et al., 1995), and so, we could assume that much of the strategic considerations, including assessments of the POS, happen at this meso-level. It might be that strategic specialists within SMOs adjust actions to specific POSs, after which citizens join these actions. This does not have to mean that citizens never consider POSs. For some citizens, their own perceptions of POSs might still lead them to decide not to join certain actions. Nevertheless,

placing strategic considerations at the level of organizations could explain why citizens' propensity for NEP can be explained by POSs, without 'average' citizens perceiving them.

To test this theory would require analytical approaches that focus more on the processes through which SMOs choose their strategies. In itself, such an approach has been identified as something that is desperately needed in the literature on social movements. According to key social movement scholars, too little research analyzes 'the ongoing accomplishment of collective action' (McAdam, McCarthy, & Zald, 1988, pp. 728–9, quoted in Reitan, 2007) and 'the actual choice of actions' (Goodwin & Jasper, 2003, p. 16). As a result, we also know very little about the role POSs play in the making of such strategic decisions, let alone about *how* POSs could affect this.

The aim of my post-doctoral research is to address precisely this issue. I have been, and will be, following the international climate movement over a long period of time, closely observing its strategic meetings and talking to protagonists in those meeting. In doing so, I am able to trace the decision making processes that lead this movement to adopt specific strategies. As a result, I am able to analyze what the role of (perceived) opportunities is in those processes and whether those opportunities are communicated to mobilize constituencies. At the same time, this approach allows to assess what other relevant processes may be at work that could interact with opportunities, or that in some cases may render contextual opportunities irrelevant. In turn, this research will allow me to assess how SMOs respond to opportunities, and how they involve rank and file activists in this.

In this study, the perception hypothesis will again be used as an analytical starting point to begin understanding the link between POSs and political behavior. However, there is another, often overlooked theory in the literature on social movements which provides a promising additional explanation for this macro-micro link.

*An evolutionary approach to political opportunities*

According to Koopmans' (2005) evolutionary theory, citizens and movements do not 'perceive' POSs, but rather, over time 'learn' which types of action are effective given a certain POS. This learning process can be rather mechanical, quite reflective, or something in between. In the most mechanical reading, movements that happen to have the type of action that fits a given context best will be most successful and therefore most likely to survive (and its strategy along with it). This reading follows a strictly Darwinian logic, where the 'species'

does not actively adapt to its environment (as Lamarck would have it), but rather 'happens' to fit best, which increases its chances of survival. Ineffective actions die out like unfitting creatures in an ecosystem. Thus, there is always *variation* in social movements' repertoires, and contextual conditions *select* the successful ones, and the successful ones are *reproduced*.

This approach of course gives no agency to the citizens and movements involved, and is therefore problematic, as we know from a large body of literature that pure structuralism does not explain social movements very well (Goodwin, Jasper, & Polletta, 2000; Goodwin & Jasper, 1999; Opp, 2013). However, there are versions of this theory that ascribe more agency to citizens and movements. We could argue that through trial and error, activists experience over time which actions work best, and that they will adapt their strategies accordingly. Still, this reading ascribes very limited intentionality to activists, as it suggests that activists simply realize which actions are successful (or not), and not *why* certain actions work (i.e. because of their fit in the context). To pay even more respect to an interpretation of activists as (bounded) rational beings, therefore, we can assume that activists experience over time which actions are most successful *given* a certain context. Through trial and error, they discover which actions work best, and they are aware that this is the case *because* of the presence of certain opportunities in the context. Based on this information, they will be able to adapt their future strategies to those opportunities (assuming that they remain relatively stable).

In principle, this theory can be applied at the micro-level of activists, or at the meso-level of SMOs. The experience of success and the accompanying strategic adaptations can arguably happen at both levels. However, because the theory builds on an idea of trial and error, it is limited in explaining NEP throughout general populations. After all, many citizens are never politically active, which precludes them from being affected by a mechanism that is based on previous experiences. For this theory to explain NEP throughout the general population, then, requires the mediating role of an actor who does have the experience, which he can transfer to the unexperienced. For this, we need to look at the meso-level of mobilizing agents like SMOs, and to investigate how they adapt their strategies over time, and mobilize citizens to join those strategies.

To test such a theory of cultural evolution would again require us to use very different empirical approaches than the ones used in this study. Luckily, Koopmans believes that compared to evolutionary biologists, scholars of political behavior have a relatively easy

job. Whereas the former need to wait for evolutionary changes to consolidate over generations, the cultural evolutions social movements go through can be observed much more directly. He argues:

> *Cultural innovations (…) can immediately diffuse via media and social networks and can be adopted by everyone within their reach. Cultural evolution, therefore, is happening right before our eyes and at a speed that brings the analysis of the evolutionary mechanisms behind significant sociocultural changes within the reach of any social researcher. Since the empirical study of cultural evolution is so evidently possible, it is an intriguing question why almost nobody has done it.* (2005, p. 32).

Echoing the call of others mentioned above (e.g. McAdam et al., 2001, pp. 24–34; Reitan, 2007, pp. 40–1), Koopmans claims we need a more dynamic approach of studying political action to understand such processes. We need to focus not only on the 'large or otherwise remarkable' movements and strategies once they have been established as the 'winners of the evolutionary process' (Koopmans, 2005, p. 32). Rather, we need to focus more broadly and include the movements and strategies that were unsuccessful, and analyze the processes by which some movements and strategies make it, while other do not.

Besides further exploring the perception hypothesis, I focus on the evolutionary mechanisms proposed by Koopmans in the abovementioned research of the climate movement. I have been analyzing how cooperating actors within that movement come to select strategies from a wide variety of options, and I pay particular attention to how these strategies are adapted to their political context over time – either in a reflexive or in a more mechanical way. Specifically, for more than two decades, the climate movement has mobilized around the annual UN climate summits. In this research, I analyze how previous summit mobilizations affect future mobilizations.

**Expressive motivations**

In addressing the POS literature, I have mainly used an instrumental interpretation of NEP, and I have thereby largely ignored expressive motivations. As a result, I cannot compare the relative strength of instrumental and expressive motivations in predicting NEP. Moreover, although the instrumental focus of this study is in line with earlier studies arguing that mainly

instrumentally motivated individuals are affected by POSs (Ketelaars, 2015; Suh, 2001), there are still a number of ways in which expressively motivated individuals *could* be affect by POSs. Future research should therefore focus more on the contextual dependency of expressively motivated NEP.

For instance, even for expressively motivated activists, it might be important that politicians take their grievances into account – not to achieve something specific, but simply to be acknowledged. For them, an open input structure with responsive politicians can thus be important as well. Moreover, various authors have denoted the facilitative or repressive tradition of governments towards challengers as an important element of the POS (Kriesi et al., 1995, p. 34; McAdam, 1996). To what extent governments repress citizens engaged in politics of course affects activists regardless of their instrumental or expressive motivations. In both instances, the expected effects of POSs go in the same direction as in the instrumental interpretations: more open POSs stimulate expression.

However, following an expressive interpretation of NEP can also predict opposite effects. Discontent about e.g. the irresponsiveness of government can motivate NEP as well, thus predicting that a closed POS can boost NEP (Farah et al., 1979; Norris et al., 2005; Norris, 2011, Chapter 11; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2001). Moreover, expressive motivations could replace instrumental motivations in unfavorable conditions. Like most POS literature, I have so far assumed that unfavorable POSs render instrumentally motivated citizens less likely to participate. After all, their aim is to affect the social or political environment, and conditions that render such achievements unlikely should therefore discourage such behavior. While this assumption is largely supported by the findings in this dissertation, there is an alternative scenario to explain lower levels of instrumental participation in unfavorable conditions that is worth exploring. Namely, unfavorable POSs could change the motivations of instrumental activists. Rather than to render them inactive, an unfavorable POS could make activists abandon their instrumental motivations, yet instead remain active on the basis of expressive motivations. Expressive motivations, like a sense of moral obligation or solidarity, could thus function as a baseline motivation to which activists can fall back when contexts render instrumental ambitions unlikely to be achieved.

Such interactions between POSs and instrumental and expressive motivations remain understudied however, and future research should therefore explore how not only

instrumentally motivated NEP, but also expressively motivated NEP, and the interaction between the two, are affected by POSs.

Wrapped up, my recommendations for future research are to collect more comparative and longitudinal data on external output efficacy, to shift attention to SMOs, to explore alternatives to the perception hypothesis like the evolutionary approach of Koopmans, and to explore in more depth how non-instrumental motivations for NEP interact with the political context.

## NORMATIVE IMPLICATIONS: OUTPUT STRUCTURES AND STATE-ORIENTED NEP

Citizens' involvement in the political process has long been understood as an essential condition for any political system to be called a democracy. While the Schumpeterian tradition proposes that such involvement should be confined to voting in periodic elections, many others see participation beyond the vote as an essential addition as it contributes to ensuring that the rule *of* the people is also the rule *for* and *by* the people (e.g. Dahl, 1971, pp. 1–16; Verba et al., 1995, pp. 1–2; Vráblíková, 2016). At the same time, we know that levels of participation vary greatly between countries and between people. Understanding such differences is crucial, because *high* levels of participation ensure that politicians pay serious attention to citizens' demands, and because *equal* levels of participation contribute to the equal consideration of the interests of all citizens (Verba et al., 1995, p. 1). What has long been considered crucial to incite political participation, and thus to explain such differences, is the (perceived) responsiveness of the political system to citizens' demands. After all, responsiveness increases chances of success, which in turn incites goal-oriented political participation. Consequently, more responsive political systems advance higher levels of participation, and people who perceive the system as more responsive are more likely to participate. This study has expanded and specified our knowledge of this link between responsiveness and NEP, showing that responsiveness is both a matter of the openness and of the strength of the political system. In this section I will use these insights in the light of the debate on how the involvement of citizens in the political decision making process can be improved. While both the level and the equality of participation are essential, in line with the rest of this dissertation, I will focus on former.

**Improving responsiveness?**

Most scholars and policy makers who have inquired how political participation can be improved follow the traditional focus on input structures, assuming that the more open the system is, the more people will be inclined to participate (e.g. Dahl, 1971, pp. 1–2; Norris, 2002, p. 82). For instance, a wide array of participatory institutions has been proposed to provide additional channels to involve citizens, including deliberative bodies or consultative spaces (e.g. Ganuza & Francés, 2012). While such participatory institutions may indeed provide important tools to increase citizens' participation in the policy making process, simply offering institutional access points is not enough. As Vráblíková (2016; Conclusion) recently argued convincingly, the mere presence of channels for participation does not suffice to engage people in the political process. What matters mostly is whether citizens feel that if they would use such channels, their views would be given serious consideration by policy makers. Thus, beyond formal access, citizens also need to perceive a fair chance at real influence on the actual policy making process.

While I concur with Vráblíková (2016) in that we should look further down the policy making process than its access points, I believe that the findings in my dissertation provide material to suggest that we should take this argument one step further. We should not only look at whether political systems offer participatory institutions *and* whether participants' claims receive serious attention; we should look at the abilities of the political system to get things done as well. Put differently, if we want to increase levels of state-oriented NEP, we should take into account input structures *as well as* output structures.

However, just like output structures have often been overlooked as incentives and explanations for NEP, they have also remained relatively unexplored in discussions about how political institutions could be addressed to facilitate NEP. While I argued above that addressing the strength of the political system is a complicated endeavor, it is not impossible: weaknesses can be remediated, and strengths can be unveiled.

**Remediating weaknesses**

Strengthening political systems is probably more difficult that opening them up. Surely, the latter is not entirely easy either, but in principle, government can quite readily decide to pay serious attention to claim makers, and it could choose to implement more channels for participation *and* establish that the outcomes of these channels are to be treated in specific

ways further down policy making process. Moreover, as argued above, organized citizens can force access to the political system, if they are for instance sufficiently numerous or persistent (Edwards, 2014, p. 90; Tarrow, 2011, p. 12). According to Welzel (2013), if the democratic aspirations of citizens are persistent enough, then media, opinion polls, and elections will make the political elite adapt the system to demands for access. He argues that:

> *Ignoring the voices of people who have the means and will to coordinate themselves is a costly and eventually unsustainable option for those in power. For this reason, we find that governments are more responsive, accountable, and democratic where emancipative values are widely shared* (…) (2013, p. 313).

The strength of the state's output structure would appear to be much harder to change. Governments cannot assume power over certain issues 'instantaneously' in the way they can decide to listen to challengers. Furthermore, in many cases, the state generally cannot decide upon its own competences autonomously, because the state's ability to act has increasingly become a matter of externally implemented constraints. As it has frequently been noted, international treaties and membership in international organizations often limit governments' choices (Bartolini, 2011; Held & McGrew, 2007). For instance, specific trade agreements can inhibit authorities from implementing market regulations. Moreover, the government's spending power is often also externally constrained. On the one hand, political globalization entangles governments in international agreements that require them to stay within certain budgetary confines (Kriesi et al., 2008, p. 8). On the other hand, economic globalization, and the associated 'race to the bottom' restricts governments from collecting revenue through corporate taxation (Busemeyer, 2009). Because their output strength is thus not something governments can easily change, it often also makes less sense for citizens to demand the political system to become capable of acting. Compared to input structures, output structures thus present a more definitive external constraint to the chances of substantive success for goal-oriented participants.

Though they might be harder to change, even output structures ultimately boil down to negotiable political decisions. In particular, the shift of political power to often unaccountable, transnational political bodies is a political choice that has great implications for participatory democracy, because in short, it creates a democratic deficit (e.g. della Porta,

2013; Steffek, Kissling, & Nanz, 2008). However, this deficit can – and has been – negotiated by citizens and politicians alike, either by demanding that political competences remain at the national level, or by struggles for the democratic accountability of such emerging political actors. Kriesi and colleagues (2012) have described extensively that the degree to which political competences should be given to transnational bodies like the EU or should remain national has become one of the major political cleavages in European politics. At the level of political parties, the distinction between a 'cosmopolitan (pro-European) and a nationalist (anti-immigration) position' (Kriesi, 2012, p. 123) has become a major new cleavage along which political parties in Western Europe distinguish themselves. Concurrently, Dolezal and Hutter (2012) find that west European electorates can also be distinguished along this 'integration-demarcation cleavage'.

While Hutter (2012, 2014, Chapter 5) finds no quantitative evidence to suggest that this cleavage has also come to dominate the arena of protest politics, under the banner of the Global Justice Movement there have of course been major historical protests against neo-liberal globalization. The shift of power to democratically unaccountable bodies like the WTO, the G8, or the World Economic Forum has been an essential element in those protests (della Porta, 2007; Reitan, 2007, pp. 1–4; Tarrow, 2005, p. 73), and these struggles continue until today. While the GJM may have known its peak around the turn of the millennium (Flesher Fominaya, 2014, Chapter 5; Hadden & Tarrow, 2007), the recent movement against TTIP and CETA[46] shows that the loss of power of democratic governments is still heavily contested. For instance, according to the Institut für Protest- und Bewegungsforschung, between 150.000 and 250.000 people took the streets in October 2015 in Berlin because 'the protesters saw TTIP and CETA as an expression of the power of corporations and as a threat to democracy' (2015; translation by the author), staging the largest demonstration in Germany since the monumental anti-Iraq War demonstrations.

In short, though complicated, the link between political power and democratic input is thus negotiable, and citizens united in social movements for democracy have played an essential role in strengthening this link (Smith, 2008, pp. 227–31).

[46] The Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement.

**Unveiling strengths**

Even if the link between political power and democratic accountability can be strengthened, it will certainly be a long-term process. However, in the meantime, much could be gained from distinguishing where the state can choose quite autonomously to turn citizens' demands into substantive political change, from where it cannot. That is, while more research should tease this out in detail, external output efficacy is likely to be a quite general feeling people have, rather than a very precise assessment of government's capacities in specific issue domains. In reality, however, these capacities can vary greatly, and citizens' perceptions of government's (in)ability to act are therefore likely to be correct in some domains, but unjustified in others. Low external output efficacy may thus be based on experiences in one issue domain, and incorrectly extrapolated to another, thereby potentially discouraging participation for the wrong reasons.

Increasing citizens' knowledge of such diversity could therefore be an important task for governments and civil society actors alike. Governments that care about the participation of citizens may want to inform citizens about the domains where government can still act relatively autonomously on its citizens' behalf. However, to expect governments to voluntarily invite additional stake holders to come and complicate their work may be a bit naïve. Therefore, the dissemination of such information may rather be a task for civil society organizations who are concerned with citizen participation. Moreover, there may be much to gain from unveiling potential false excuses of powerlessness. That is, governments may not always want to act on certain issues, yet to cover up their unwillingness, they could argue that they are simply unable to respond. Civil society actors concerned with citizens' participation in politics could thus advance political participation by striving for good knowledge of the precise domains where citizens' views *can* be turned into substantive political outcomes, if only government can be pressured to do so. They can thereby counter potentially overgeneralized feelings of low external output efficacy, thereby keeping citizens engaged in areas where substantive gains could potentially be won.

An example clarifies what this could look like, and shows that this type of mobilization is already being used. During my fieldwork on the climate movement's mobilization around the 2015 UN climate conference in Paris, I often witnessed debates about whether or not to target government leaders in the negotiations. While some argued that doing so would be futile because governments did not have the power to decide over

climate change anyway (e.g. because they thought companies did), others opposed this view by saying that governments only used that argument ('our hands are tied') as an excuse not to act. In reality, they argued, governments had the power to act, but were more persuaded by forces other than citizens' demands (e.g. corporate interests). Pressuring these government to make them act on citizens' behalf was therefore precisely what was needed. Who was right in this debate is not really an answerable question. Governments' ability to act on climate change is after all a hugely complicated matter, and this will be the case in many issue domains. However, this example does show that some movement organizers indeed engage in 'unveiling governments' hidden competences' to counter unnecessarily low feelings external output efficacy, and to enthuse potential participants to target those governments.

**The enduring importance of state-oriented NEP**

While I have argued that output structures pose a more definitive condition upon citizens' and movements' chances of success, output strength can vary across issues, and they are certainly not unchangeable. Citizens and movements therefore play an essential role in uncovering and creating political opportunities. While this has long been noted with regard to the openness of the political system (Edwards, 2014, p. 90; Jasper, 1997, pp. 40–1; Tarrow, 2011, p. 12), favorable output structures can be created in certain ways as well.

These insights stress the sustained importance of state-oriented NEP. A weak output structure may render substantive gains unlikely at first, but by advancing structural change, activists can create the opportunities (i.e., a sufficiently strong output structure) that are necessary for future substantive gains. When we think of successful political participation, we often consider substantive gains, and upon first consideration, advancing structural change may not sound as appealing. Nevertheless, in the light of the challenge of weakening output structures associated with political globalization, and this study's findings about the disempowering nature of perceiving output structures as weak, activism that is oriented at remediating weak output structures and unveiling output strength could proof essential for keeping citizens involved in state-oriented politics.

This also signifies an important qualification of the celebration of non-state oriented NEP that we have witnessed in much of the literature on the expansion of political participation repertoires. Some scholars see citizens' move towards lifestyle politics and

other non-state oriented forms of NEP as good news for democracy (Bennett, 1998, 2012; Lichterman, 1995; Stolle & Hooghe, 2011). They stress that even if people are disillusioned by the political system, the evolution of non-state oriented NEP shows that citizens remain politically engaged despite weakening output structures, but simply do so in other arenas, like that of everyday life (Micheletti, 2003, pp. 23–26). Compared to citizens who become politically inactive altogether, responding to weakening output structures by engaging in non-state oriented NEP would indeed seem to be the better scenario for democracy. However, before concluding that such emerging forms of non-state oriented NEP are good for democracy, Jackie Smith suggests we should ask:

> *Do these new forms help to reduce inequalities of access and influence, or do they signal a growing marginalization of citizens from national political processes that are increasingly enmeshed within a fundamentally undemocratic international democratic system?* (2008, p. 228).

The answer to this question depends on whether the non-state oriented forms of NEP complement or replace state-oriented NEP. If they complement it, they present additional channels for participation that can improve democracy (Peters, 2016), which, as this and other studies show, is quite often the case: people involved in e.g. political consumerism are for instance more likely to participate in state-oriented NEP than those who are not (Stolle & Micheletti, 2013, pp. 84–6), and within many organizations that practice lifestyle politics, members target the state just as well (Dubuisson-Quellier, 2015). If they replace it, however, the expansion of non-state oriented NEP rather signifies the type of 'marginalization' of citizens from the political decision making process that Smith speaks of, which certainly does not benefit representative democracy. Specifically, there are two particular problems.

Firstly, non-state oriented forms of NEP like lifestyle politics are not suited to replace state-oriented participation. While these forms certainly allow citizens to address important societal issues, they are generally quite narrow in topical focus, and the benefits of the action are generally more focused on the participants than on the general public. Moreover, participation in these types of NEP is often more skewed towards the more affluent parts of the population than for instance voting is (Stolle & Micheletti, 2013). Hence, its growth may thus signify a fractionalization of the political community, with selected parts of the

population advancing only a selected set of issues to the benefit of a selected part of society. A local food project may for instance address environmental issues, but ultimately, participation is likely to be unequal and rather limited in numbers, addressing only one or few of society's many challenges, while its most immediate outcomes cater only the participants. In other words, it lacks the more encompassing qualities of state-oriented NEP and representative participation. In this regard, Peters (2016) has rightfully noted that if new, more narrow forms of participation replace the more encompassing ones, democracy can be undermined.

Secondly, if citizens come to focus more exclusively on non-state oriented NEP, we can interpret this as an 'exit' strategy (Hirschman, 1970) that leaves unexploited the aforementioned potential of creating opportunities by advancing structural change. It leaves the system as it is, and thereby dismisses any possibilities for future substantive gains. Since non-state oriented NEP does not provide a complete alternative for state-oriented NEP, such an evolution would present a significant problem for the democratic governance of society.

Again, we should not be overly alarmist as state- and non-state oriented NEP are often practiced in tandem. However, the fact that low external output efficacy provides an incentive to focus more exclusively on non-state oriented forms of NEP should be considered an important warning regarding representative democracy in a context of weakening output structures.

Wrapped up, my dissertation confirms that (perceived) responsiveness is an important quality of the political system to keep citizens engaged in state-oriented political participation. I have also shown, however, that responsiveness is both a matter of openness and of strength. Citizens do not only need to know that their views are given serious consideration within the policy making process; they need to know that the system they are targeting also has the capacity to get things done. For a variety of reasons, however, citizens may doubt that this is the case, and therefore refrain from state-oriented NEP. In particular, the diminishing power of the state that has been associated with the globalization of politics is often held to have such a discouraging effect. However, difficult as it probably is, the strength of the state, and the link between political power and democratic input more broadly, *is* negotiable. Actors who are concerned with the involvement of citizens in the political system should realize that such structural gains are worth pursuing, as doing so lays

out the opportunities for future substantive gains. In the meantime, these actors could benefit from specifying in which domains citizens' demands can or cannot be effectively turned into political output given the current status quo, thereby countering any unnecessary generalization of low external output efficacy. The importance of creating or unveiling such opportunities highlights the enduring necessity of state-oriented NEP and qualifies the celebration of the expansion of non-state oriented NEP: while the latter can keep citizens involved in politics, it cannot fully replace the more encompassing functions of the former, and it fails to exploit the potential embedded in advancing structural change.

## CONCLUDING REMARKS

I began this conclusion by stating that it might be obvious that political contexts affect the political behavior of the people in those contexts in some way, but that it is less obvious which parts of the context would have a significant impact, and how so. These are issues that have been highlighted as important gaps in the social movement literature for quite some time now, and it is remarkable that they had not yet been systematically dealt with. Though several challenges remain, this study has made a number of important steps in addressing there gaps in the literature. Still, I wish to conclude by emphasizing that this 'old' gap in the literature, is in fact of enduring relevance, and requires to be revisited regularly. Political contexts are constantly changing, and these changes have only become faster and more intense with the globalization of politics. Power is increasingly shifting from the state to transnational organizations and governance networks, thereby shifting and multiplying the relevant loci of power citizens and movements could potentially target to advance social or political change (della Porta & Tarrow, 2005; Smith, 2008).

Such changes do not simply alter the input values to our equations. They can essentially change the dynamics at work. I began this dissertation by arguing that changes relating to political globalization urge us to pay more attention to output structures. Yet the scale shift of political power challenges us to continue interrogating the mechanisms that link political contexts to political behavior. As power has moved increasingly from the national to the global, political opportunities have shifted as well (della Porta et al., 1999; Tarrow, 2005). However, in order to grasp opportunities, citizens and movements need resources, and the resources required to act at the global level are generally different, if not much greater, than

at the national level (Bandy & Smith, 2005; Rootes, 2005). How can resource-poor actors deal with this? Can they still afford to grasp such opportunities?

Furthermore, political power has not only shifted to a higher scale, it has also become far more dispersed (Hale et al., 2013). Global governance networks for instance bring together a large range of different political and economic actors, each with their own input and output structures (Bartolini, 2011; van der Heijden, 2006). We cannot simply assume that the POSs presented by such 'new' political actors affect citizens and movements the same way the POS of the state does. I have already touched upon the potential cognitive difficulties of 'perceiving' POSs, and these only become multiplied with the fragmentation of political power. Can we expect citizens and movements to be equally aware of such a multiplicity of POSs, or is it more likely that POSs become less relevant in strategic considerations, because the cost of taking all of them into account becomes too high?

Finally, while it is unlikely that POSs become irrelevant altogether at once, we might expect them to start affecting NEP in different ways. For one, as the loci of power multiply, citizens and movements increasingly have to invest in choosing the right targets. When the state was still a more obvious target for NEP (Tilly, 2004), POSs were especially important in determining the tactics through which citizens and movements could influence national governments. Now, activists have to choose their target first. This might also shift more weight from input structures to output structures, because the first question becomes, *who actually has the power?*, thus assessing actors' output structures. Only then can actors ask, *how can we influence that target?*, given its input structure.

These are all important reasons to continue investigating not only *whether* political participation and social movements are affected by POSs, but also *how* they are affected. After all, the causal mechanisms at work might change as the nature of POSs does. Even though this study has improved our understanding of how political contexts affect citizens' political behavior, then, we should continue to inquire how citizens and movements are affected by POSs. It is my goal to continue addressing these issues in the future.

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# APPENDIXES

**Appendix 1.1** Descriptives of survey items

| Item | N | Min. max. | Mean | Std. dev. | Pearson's correlations with variables of interest 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. | 5. | 6. | 7. | 8. |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. PE contacting politicians[a] | 1996 | 1-7 | 3.06 | 1.57 | - | | | | | | | |
| 2. PE signing petitions[a] | 2010 | 1-7 | 3.80 | 1.59 | .479*** | - | | | | | | |
| 3. PE boycotting products[a] | 1977 | 1-7 | 3.48 | 1.87 | .201*** | .323*** | - | | | | | |
| 4. Contacting politicians | 2016 | 0-1 | .16 | .37 | .384***[c] | .170***[c] | .146**[c] | - | | | | |
| 5. Signing petitions | 2017 | 0-1 | .49 | .50 | .186***[c] | .337***[c] | .193***[c] | .552***[b] | - | | | |
| 6. Boycotting products | 2011 | 0-1 | .33 | .47 | .067[c] | .121***[c] | .401***[c] | .428***[b] | .482***[b] | - | | |
| 7. External input efficacy | 2010 | 1-5 | 2.49 | 1.15 | .140*** | .082*** | .059** | .100*[c] | .110**[c] | .047[c] | - | |
| 8. External output efficacy | 2002 | 1-5 | 3.11 | 1.00 | .175*** | .115*** | .023 | -.046*[c] | -.105***[c] | -.065*[c] | .187*** | - |
| *Control variabl* | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 8. Age | 2019 | 18-84 | 48.56 | 17.62 | -.035 | -.040 | .041 | -.049***[c] | -.271***[c] | -.095[c] | -.057* | .070** |
| 9. Sex (1 = female) | 2019 | 0-1 | .51 | .50 | .007***[c] | .057[c] | -.028*[c] | -.079[b] | -.053[b] | -.073[b] | -.064***[c] | -.051***[c] |
| 10. Education | 2019 | 1-3 | 1.93 | .79 | .127*** | .056* | .113*** | .304***[c] | .404***[c] | .273***[c] | .076*** | -.028 |
| 11. Party identification | 2014 | 0-1 | .59 | .49 | .132[c] | .096*[c] | .113[c] | .230***[b] | .132***[b] | .096*[b] | .083*[c] | .113[c] |
| 11. Political interest | 2017 | 0-10 | 4.79 | 2.77 | .188*** | .111*** | .156*** | .307***[c] | .277***[c] | .227***[c] | .162*** | .146*** |
| 12. Political trust (sumscale/11) | 1949 | 0-9.7 | 4.97 | 1.45 | .231*** | .146*** | .021 | -.022[c] | .040[c] | -.037[c] | .279*** | .405*** |
| 13. Satisfaction with democracy | 2008 | 1-4 | 2.71 | .66 | .190*** | .123*** | .032 | -.097*[c] | -.088**[c] | -.055[c] | .177*** | .357*** |
| 14. Internal efficacy (sumscale/4) | 1993 | 1-5 | 2.68 | .81 | .091*** | .056* | .086*** | .283***[c] | .231***[c] | .205***[c] | .119*** | -.001 |

*Notes*: Reported results are obtained using analytic weights in Stata 12. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. a: PE refers to 'perceived effectiveness'.
b: Tetrachoric correlations; p-values from $\chi^2$ tests. c: Polychoric correlations; p-values from $\chi^2$ tests.

**Appendix 1.2** Items measuring internal efficacy and political trust

| *Variable* | *Items* |
|---|---|
| Internal efficacy | On a scale from 1 to 5, can you indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements? 1 means you totally disagree and 5 means you totally agree: 1) I consider myself capable of participating in politics; 2) I believe I would do an equally good job as most of the politicians we elect; 3) I think that I am better informed than other people on matters of politics and the government; 4) I think I have a good understanding of the important problems our society faces. |
| Political trust | On a scale from 0 to 10, can you indicate how much trust you have in the following institutions? 0 means that you do not have any trust in this institution and 10 means that you have full trust in this organization: 1) court; 2) police; 3) media; 4) political parties; 5) the regional government; 6) the regional parliament; 7) the federal government; 8) the federal parliament; 9) social movements; 10) politicians; 11) the European Union. |

**Appendix 1.3**: Full regression models

**Table 1** Logistic regression of contacting politicians

| | *Reduced model* | | | *Full model* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | S.E. | *β* | B | S.E | *β* |
| *Control Variables* | | | | | | |
| Age | 1.000 | .004 | .993 | 1.000 | .004 | .995 |
| Sex (1 = female) | 1.115 | .151 | 1.056 | 1.059 | .151 | 1.029 |
| Education (ref. = *low*) | | | | | | |
| *Middle* | 1.970*** | .380 | 1.388 | 2.043*** | .399 | 1.413 |
| *Higher* | 2.532*** | .484 | 1.528 | 2.413*** | .459 | 1.495 |
| Party identification | 1.668** | .246 | 1.286 | 1.494** | .226 | 1.218 |
| Political interest | 1.150*** | .036 | 1.475 | 1.140*** | .039 | 1.442 |
| Political trust | .919 | .054 | .885 | .862* | .054 | .807 |
| Satisfaction with democracy | .794* | .093 | .859 | .719** | .089 | .719 |
| Internal efficacy | 1.355** | .133 | 1.274 | 1.326** | .134 | 1.326 |
| *Variables of Interest* | | | | | | |
| External input efficacy | 1.139* | .069 | 1.161 | 1.091 | .070 | 1.104 |
| External output efficacy | .897 | .069 | .899 | .845* | .067 | .848 |
| PE contacting politician | | | | 1.628*** | .079 | 2.128 |
| Intercept | .046*** | .023 | | .026 | .013 | |
| McKelvey & Zavoina's pseudo | | | .18 | | | .29 |
| $R^2$ | | | 1869 | | | 1869 |
| N | | | | | | |

*Note:* *p <-05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. Coefficients are unstandardized odds ratios (B) and robust standard errors (S.E.) and standardized odds ratios (*β*). a: PE = Perceived effectiveness.

**Table 2** Logistic regression of signing petitions

| | *Reduced model* | | | *Full model* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | S.E. | *β* | B | S.E. | *β* |
| *Control Variables* | | | | | | |
| Age | .979*** | .003 | .690 | .978*** | .003 | .681 |
| Sex (1 = female) | 1.133 | .125 | 1.065 | 1.055 | .121 | 1.027 |
| Education (ref. = *low*) | | | | | | |
| *Middle* | 1.781*** | .241 | 1.322 | 1.868*** | .266 | 1.353 |
| *Higher* | 2.864*** | .408 | 1.617 | 3.074*** | .457 | 1.670 |
| Party identification | 1.304* | .147 | 1.139 | 1.284* | .151 | 1.130 |
| Political interest | 1.123*** | .026 | 1.383 | 1.122*** | .027 | 1.377 |
| Political trust | 1.009 | .046 | 1.013 | .978 | .048 | .969 |
| Satisfaction with democracy | .843 | .081 | .894 | .802* | .083 | .865 |
| Internal efficacy | 1.222* | .095 | 1.174 | 1.199* | .097 | 1.152 |
| *Variables of Interest* | | | | | | |
| External input efficacy | 1.076 | .053 | 1.087 | 1.055 | .053 | 1.063 |
| External output efficacy | .837** | .053 | .839 | .787*** | .051 | .790 |
| PE signing petition [a] | | | | 1.482*** | .056 | 1.869 |
| Intercept | .993 | .382 | | .419* | .171 | |
| McKelvey & Zavoina's pseudo $R^2$ | | | .19 | | | .28 |
| N | | | 1869 | | | 1869 |

*Note:* *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. Coefficients are unstandardized odds ratios (B) and robust standard errors (S.E.) and standardized odds ratios (*β*). a: PE = Perceived effectiveness.

**Table 3** Logistic regression of boycotting products

| | *Reduced model* | | | *Full model* | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | S.E. | *β* | B | S.E. | *β* |
| *Control Variables* | | | | | | |
| Age | .996 | .003 | .938 | .993* | .003 | .891 |
| Sex (1 = female) | 1.042 | .114 | 1.021 | 1.029 | .118 | 1.014 |
| Education (ref. = *low*) | | | | | | |
| *Middle* | 1.470** | .215 | 1.205 | 1.441* | .218 | 1.193 |
| *Higher* | 2.143*** | .315 | 1.416 | 1.943*** | .292 | 1.354 |
| Party identification | 1.086 | .125 | 1.041 | 1.053 | .127 | 1.026 |
| Political interest | 1.094*** | .026 | 1.286 | 1.071** | .027 | 1.210 |
| Political trust | .918 | .042 | .885 | .938 | .046 | .912 |
| Satisfaction with democracy | .923 | .089 | .949 | .892 | .089 | .928 |
| Internal efficacy | 1.188* | .091 | 1.148 | 1.207* | .097 | 1.162 |
| *Variables of Interest* | | | | | | |
| External input efficacy | 1.049 | .052 | 1.056 | 1.016 | .054 | 1.019 |
| External output efficacy | .935 | .057 | .936 | .921 | .059 | .922 |
| PE boycotting product [a] | | | | 1.422*** | .045 | 1.929 |
| Intercept | .332** | .125 | | .133*** | .053 | |
| McKelvey & Zavoina's pseudo $R^2$ | | | .08 | | | .19 |
| N | | | 1869 | | | 1869 |

*Note:* *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. Coefficients are unstandardized odds ratios (B) and robust standard errors (S.E.) and standardized odds ratios (*β*). a: PE = Perceived effectiveness.

**Table 4** Ordered logistic regression of the perceived effectiveness (PE) of individual forms of political participation

| | PE contacting politicians | | | PE signing petitions | | | PE boycotting products | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | B | S.E. | *β* | B | S.E. | *β* | B | S.E. | *β* |
| *Control Variables* | | | | | | | | | |
| Age | .997 | .003 | .947 | .997 | .003 | .944 | 1.006* | .003 | 1.101 |
| Sex (1 = female) | 1.139 | .103 | 1.067 | 1.283** | .117 | 1.133 | 1.028 | .092 | 1.014 |
| Education (ref. = *low*) | | | | | | | | | |
| *Middle* | 1.147 | .132 | 1.069 | .985 | .115 | .993 | 1.174 | .136 | 1.081 |
| *Higher* | 1.464** | .173 | 1.190 | 1.001 | .119 | 1.000 | 1.593*** | .187 | 1.237 |
| Party identification | 1.279* | .124 | 1.128 | 1.082 | .106 | 1.040 | 1.112 | .110 | 1.053 |
| Political interest | 1.062** | .023 | 1.182 | 1.042 | .023 | 1.121 | 1.094*** | .025 | 1.285 |
| Political trust | 1.156** | .052 | 1.233 | 1.095 | .054 | 1.141 | .937 | .043 | .911 |
| Satisfaction with democracy | 1.265** | .104 | 1.67 | 1.127 | .098 | 1.082 | 1.089 | .098 | 1.057 |
| Internal efficacy | 1.078 | .072 | 1.062 | 1.073 | .072 | 1.058 | .984 | .071 | .987 |
| *Variables of Interest* | | | | | | | | | |
| External input efficacy | 1.132** | .048 | 1.152 | 1.071 | .047 | 1.081 | 1.101* | .049 | 1.116 |
| External output efficacy | 1.182** | .064 | 1.179 | 1.164** | .065 | 1.162 | 1.013 | .059 | 1.013 |
| McKelvey & Zavoina's pseudo $R^2$ | | | .11 | | | .04 | | | .04 |
| N | | | 1869 | | | 1869 | | | 1869 |

*Note:* *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001. Coefficients are unstandardized odds ratios (B) and robust standard errors (S.E.) and standardized odds ratios (*β*). a: PE = Perceived effectiveness.

## CHAPTER 2

**Appendix 2.1**: Descriptive statistics

| Item | N | Min. max. | Mean | Std. dev. |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| *Individual-level variables of interest* | | | | |
| 1. NEP | 44,072 | 0 - 1 | .40 | .49 |
| 2. External efficacy (factor scores) | 42,078 | -1.64 - 2.80 | | 1 |
| *Individual-level control variables* | | | | |
| 5. Sex (1 = female) | 47,952 | 0 - 1 | .47 | .50 |
| 6. Age | 47,642 | 15 - 98 | 46.39 | 17.28 |
| 7. Education | 47,613 | 0 - 5 | 2.69 | 1.47 |
| 8. Political interest | 47,208 | 1 - 4 | 2.42 | .89 |
| 9. Satisfaction with democracy | 45,236 | 0 - 10 | 5.82 | 2.38 |
| 10. Internal efficacy | 44,295 | -1.27 - 1.01 | | .49 |
| *Country-level variables of interest* | | | | |
| Gov. spending | 47,985 | 13.1 - 70 | | |
| Horizontal decent. (-) | 47,985 | .11 - .69 | | |
| Political globalization | 47,985 | 49.48 - 96.66 | | |
| *Country-level control variables* | | | | |
| GDP | 47,985 | 1084.8 - 56627.7 | | |
| Ex-communist | 47,985 | 0 - 1 | | |

Source: ISSP 2004

## CHAPTER 3

**Appendix 3.1**: Descriptives of survey items

| Item | N | Min. max. | Mean | Std. dev. | Pearson's correlations with variables of interest | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 1. | 2. |
| 1. Perceived chances of success | 5575 | 1-5 | 3.56 | 1.05 | - | |
| 2. Expected process input | 5485 | 1-5 | 3.29 | 1.02 | .528*** | - |
| *Control variables* | | | | | | |
| 3. Sex (1 = female) | 5710 | 0-1 | .54 | .50 | -.021 | .015 |
| 4. Age | 5732 | 12-85 | 39.87 | 15.19 | .197*** | .115*** |
| 5. Education | 5100 | 1-5 | 4.05 | 1.14 | .006 | .087*** |
| 6. Internal efficacy | 5025 | 1-5 | 2.59 | .95 | -.016 | .008 |

*Note*: ***p < .001. Source: IPPS 2003

## Appendix 3.2

**Table 1**: Ordered logistic regression of perceived chances of success with interactions

| | Perceived chances of success | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Reference category:** | **USA** | **UK** | **Ger/Sp** | **Others** |
| *Control variables* | | | | |
| Sex (1 = female) | .946 (.042) | .946 (.042) | .946 (.042) | .946 (.042) |
| Age | 1.013** (.004) | 1.013** (.004) | 1.013** (.004) | 1.013** (.004) |
| Level of education | .916** (.024) | .916** (.024) | .916** (.024) | .916** (.024) |
| Internal efficacy | 1.209*** (.050) | 1.209*** (.050) | 1.209*** (.050) | 1.209*** (.050) |
| *Variables of interest* | | | | |
| Expected process input | 3.839*** (.301) | 3.122*** (.301) | 3.447*** (.410) | 3.265*** (.285) |
| *Country level interaction terms* | | | | |
| Output structure | | | | |
| USA | | .768*** (.031) | .589* (.152) | .460*** (.017) |
| UK | 1.302*** (.053) | | .766 (.201) | .595*** (.022) |
| Germany/Spain | 1.699* (438) | 1.305 (.343) | | .781 (.209) |
| Others | 2.176*** (.079) | 1.671*** (.061) | 1.281 (.343) | |
| Expected process input*output structure | | | | |
| USA | | 1.230*** (.023) | 1.114# (.066) | 1.277*** (.028) |
| UK | .813*** (.015) | | .906 (.059) | 1.038* (.019) |
| Germany/Spain | .898# (.053) | 1.104 (.071) | | 1.146* (.078) |
| Others | .783*** (.017) | .963* (.017) | .872* (.059) | |
| N | 4615 | 4615 | 4615 | 4615 |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | .12 | .12 | .12 | .12 |
| Log pseudo likelihood | -5717.22 | -5717.22 | -5717.22 | -5717.22 |

*Note*: #p < 0.1, *p< 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001. Coefficients are odds ratios. Clustered robust standard errors for countries between brackets. Source: IPPS 2003.

**Table 2**: Ordered logistic regression of perceived chances of success per country

| | Perceived chances of success | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | **USA** | **UK** | **Ger/Sp** | **Others** |
| *Control variables* | | | | |
| Sex (1 = female) | .753# (.128) | .865 (.156) | .989 (.191) | .993 (.014) |
| Age | .997 (.006) | .997 (.006) | 1.023*** (.004) | 1.016** (.005) |
| Level of education | 1.123 (.149) | .902 (.079) | .816*** (.042) | .950*** (.009) |
| Internal efficacy | 1.259 (.207) | 1.380* (.222) | 1.319*** (.060) | 1.168# (.103) |
| *Variables of interest* | | | | |
| Expected process input | 4.691*** (.522) | 3.909*** (.437) | 3.183*** (.941) | 2.861*** (.190) |
| N | 579 | 506 | 1068 | 2462 |
| Pseudo $R^2$ | .17 | .16 | .13 | .11 |
| Log pseudo likelihood | -624.94 | -552.10 | -1323.19 | -3175.84 |

*Note*: #p < 0.1, *p< 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001. Coefficients are odds ratios.
Clustered robust standard errors for countries between brackets (except for USA and UK).
Source: IPPS 2003.

## CHAPTER 5

**Appendix 5.1:** Dates and locations of participant observations and survey interviews

| Date and duration | Location | Nature of activity | Survey conducted |
|---|---|---|---|
| 06-12-12: 2:30h | Antwerp | Meeting about the introduction of 'Velt-ambassadors', who promote Velt to public | No |
| 06-12-12: 2:30h | Antwerp | Meeting of the national board of Velt. Main subject is the promotion of Velt's public image | No |
| 25-02-13: 2:30h | Wemmel | Meeting of members to discuss their participation in the 'open-garden-days', where they present their ecological gardens to the general public | No |
| 18-03-13: 2:00h | Heist-op-den-Berg | Meeting of local board and general meeting with members, discussing the groups course of action | No |
| 24-03-13: 3:00h | Antwerp | Annual general meeting of Velt. Every local chapter is represented by limited number of delegates. | No |
| 26-03-13: 2:00h | Genk | Meeting of local board. Various points, like the appointment of new board members, budgets, and activities to be organized in the next year | No |
| 18-04-13: 2:00h | Halle | A course on ecological gardening | No |
| 19-04-13: 1:30h | Brussels | Velt has a promotion stand at an annual eco-fair called *Valeriaan*. Several members are present to promote Velt to the general public | No |
| 29-04-13: 2:30h | Leuven | A course organized by Velt on the possibilities of small ecological gardens in urban settings | No |
| 01-06-13: 8:00h | Puurs | 'Open-garden-days': members present their ecological gardens to the general public | Yes |
| 02-06-13: 8:00h | Landskouter | 'Open-garden-days': members present their ecological gardens to the general public | Yes |
| 04-06-13: 2:30h | Antwerp | A course organized by Velt on the possibilities of small ecological gardens in urban contexts | Yes |
| 06-06-13: 2:00h | Harelbeke | A course by Velt on strategies for consuming ecological food | Yes |
| 11-06-13: 2:00h | Wespelaar | A course organized by Velt on techniques to reduce food waste | Yes |

**Appendix 5.2:** Dates and locations of semi-structured interviews

| # | Date | Location | Function interviewee in Velt | Sex | Age category | Duration of interview |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **1** | 03-01-13 | Bierbeek | Member local board Velt Leuven | Female | 50-60 | 1:20h |
| **2** | 07-01-13 | Diest | Normal member | Female | 40-50 | 1:37h |
| **3** | 14-01-13 | Diest | Member local board Velt Hageland | Female | 40-50 | 1:25h |
| **4** | 14-01-13 | Leuven | Member local board Velt Hageland | Female | 50-60 | 1:12h |
| **5** | 28-01-13 | Leuven | Member local board Velt Leuven | Female | 50-60 | 0:58h |
| **6** | 27-03-13 | Brussels | Member local board Velt Brussel | Male | 40-50 | 1:20h |
| **7** | 09-04-13 | Werchter | Normal member | Male | 60-70 | 1:09h |
| **8** | 19-04-13 | Brussels | Member of local board Velt Neerbrabant and provincial board Velt Vlaams Brabant and Brussels | Male | 60-70 | 1:00h |
| **9** | 06-05-13 | Londerzeel | Member of local board Velt Neerbrabant and provincial board Velt Vlaams Brabant and Brussels | Female | 50-60 | 1:04h |
| **10** | 13-05-13 | Antwerp | Member of Velt's professional core | Male | 40-50 | 1:03h |
| **11** | 04-06-13 | Antwerp | Member of Velt's professional core | Female | 30-40 | 1:01h |

**Appendix 5.3:** Descriptives of survey items

| Item | N | Min. max. | Mean | Std. dev. | Pearson's correlations with variables of interest | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | | 1. | 2. | 3. | 4. |
| *Variables of interest* | | | | | | | | |
| 1. I am a member of Velt to promote an alternative lifestyle | 73 | 1-5 | 4.18 | .92 | - | | | |
| 2. I am a member of Velt to pressure politicians to make changes | 73 | 1-5 | 3.05 | 1.29 | .238* | - | | |
| 3. External input efficacy (sum-scale/5) | 70 | 1-4.4 | 2.63 | .60 | -.212 | -.091 | - | |
| 4. External output efficacy structure | 73 | 1-5 | 3.62 | .97 | .082 | .310** | -.301* | - |
| *Control variables* | | | | | | | | |
| 7. Age | 74 | 29-80 | 49.59 | 11.86 | -.009 | -.228 | .287* | -.016 |
| 8. Sex (1 = female) | 74 | 0-1 | .57 | .50 | .049 | .081 | -.109 | .311** |
| 9. Education (1 = higher education) | 74 | 0-1 | .70 | .46 | -.173 | .051 | -.081 | -.018 |
| 10. Member other organization (1 = yes) | 72 | 0-1 | .71 | .46 | 0.060 | -.020 | .108 | .035 |

*Note:* *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001