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Selective or Generic Activism? Types of Participants, Political Action Repertoires and Mobilization Capacity in a Post-Communist Society

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Selective versus Generic Activism: Types of Participants, Political Action Repertoires and Mobilization Capacity in a Post-Communist Society

Marius Ioan Tătar

Abstract

This study develops and tests two arguments for how repertoires of political action are reconfigured in post-communist Romania. Using multivariate statistical analysis, it examines whether citizens' engagement in post-communist politics is linked with generic socio-economic and attitudinal traits or alternatively, it is connected with selective mobilization opportunities provided by social networks and organizations. The findings reveal that while most Romanians are politically inactive two decades after the fall of communism, those who engage in politics do it selectively and their political action repertoires are largely influenced by four mobilizing agents: trade unions, political parties, social networks and civil society organizations.

The literature on post-communist politics generally points out a stark contrast between the effervescence of social movements that led to the collapse of the communist regimes and the relative apathy after the establishment of democracy (Letki 2003). While democratic theory posits that political engagement plays an important role in the equal representation of citizens' needs and preferences in the democratic political processes, post-communist citizens seem to be increasingly estranged from politics. Thus, the identification of factors shaping how and how much citizens participate in the political sphere is important (Johann 2012) as it points to the underlying sources of political apathy in the region. However, research on post-communist 'repertoires' of political participation in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) is insufficient and this hampers our understanding of the functioning and persistence of democracy in this region. A frequent finding in the political behaviour literature is that citizens of eastern European countries participate less in politics than their western neighbours (Bernhagen & Marsh 2007). But is this difference simply a matter of degree of citizen participation? Or do post-communist citizens and their western counterparts also differ in their understanding of what political participation means and how they combine various structural

dimensions of conventional and nonconventional political actions? In other words, are citizens of new European democracies more likely to be generalists, specialists or simply apathetic in terms of political behaviour?

While the specialist-generalist controversy has spanned in various fields of behavioural sciences, its potential to generate insightful academic debates remains largely unexplored in studies of political behaviour. This article develops two explanations inspired and adapted from the specialist-generalist debates and applies them to an empirical analysis of the patterns through which post-communist citizens reconfigure their political action repertoires after decades of authoritarian rule in Romania.

Following the logic of generic activism, citizens who participate in various political activities have a common set of socio-economic and attitudinal traits that differentiate them from non-participants. These common characteristics act as strategic resources for a plethora on political actions and are commonly associated both with traditional forms of political participation such as campaigning, community activism and party membership (Verba & Nie 1972; Verba, Nie, & Kim 1978; Verba, Schlozman, & Brady 1995) and also with elite-challenging actions such as demonstrations and strikes (Norris, Walgrave, & Aelst 2006). Within the logic of generic activism one would expect protesters to be also active in traditional forms of political participation since different forms of political action have essentially akin sources. Moreover, the motivational attitudes and social characteristics of protesters, party members and civic joiners should be rather similar than different (Norris, et al. 2006).

On the contrary, the selective activism logic's central claim is that different forms of political actions have different sources that will generate more divisive citizen participation. Moreover, within this logic the type of voluntary organizations and social networks to which a person belongs are of utmost importance, as they can act as mobilizing agents and influence the range of political action opportunities of an individual. From this perspective, one would expect a growing specialization of citizens' political involvement into either conventional or unconventional forms of participation, due to different contextual opportunities for engaging within specific political activities preferred by mobilizing agents such as trade unions, political parties, civil society organizations, and social networks. Moreover, since various types of participants have distinct characteristics and belong to different kinds of organisations, it is expected that those taking part in some sort of political action, usually do not take part in other forms of political participation.

In order to examine these two logics of political activism the article focuses on Romania, chosen as a typical post-communist society illustrating the overall decline of citizen participation in the region. Rates of political

participation in Romania steadily declined during the transition period typifying thus regional patterns of relative political apathy of post-communist citizens from Central and Eastern Europe. Moreover, since in Romania political engagement has reached its lowest levels around the mid of the second post-communist decade, it is expected to find in this period any potential socio-structural biases associated with unequal citizen involvement in politics which might undermine the quality of democracy by subverting the ideal of equal representation of citizens' interests regardless of their socioeconomic status.

This article is structured into six parts. The first section summarizes three alternative theoretical models and their related hypotheses commonly used in the literature to explain political participation, contrasting resource-based, attitudinal-motivations, and recruitment-based or mobilization accounts. What are the main explanatory factors of political activism in post-communist Romania? How do theories developed in the western democratic context manage to explain political activism in the post-communist context? In the second section I conceptualise and explore the structural dimensions of a set of 11 political actions, based on a multivariate analysis of Public Opinion Barometer¹ (BOP 2005) which provides a nationally representative cross-section sample of the Romanian adult population. How are various forms of political participation empirically linked? The exploratory factor analysis of survey data reveals three components of citizen participation in post-communist Romania: conventional participation, legal protest participation and illegal protest participation. Based on these structural dimensions, a complex typology of political participants is built in order to substantiate the way post-communist citizens reconfigure their political action repertoire, namely how they combine various forms of political participation. The fourth section explores whether political activists are a homogeneous or a heterogeneous group of citizens and finds that recruitment-based factors best explain the differences between various types of participants and non-participants. The fifth section discusses the nexus between citizens' political repertoires and the mobilization potential of trade unions, political parties, civil society and social networks. How does involvement in various political and non-political organizations and social networks influence an individual's propensity to participate in legal or illegal protest actions, or in more conventional and elite-supporting activities? The conclusion highlights the main findings and their implications for our understanding on how political action repertoires are reconfigured in post-communist societies and their consequences for democratic stability and legitimacy in the region.

¹ The Public Opinion Barometer (hereafter BOP) was conducted in May 2005 by Gallup Organisation Romania and commissioned by *Open Society Foundation Romania*, see Appendix for more details.

Explaining political participation: theoretical arguments

The existing literature on comparative politics gives different interpretations to the dynamics of political participation in various societies. Empirical analyses usually reveal two apparently divergent trends of the evolution of citizens' activism: the thesis of *political involvement decline* and the thesis of *shifting styles of political participation*. Regarding the first trend, some authors found a systematic decrease of interest in politics and conventional forms of political participation in Western democracies (Dalton & Wattenberg, 2000; Wattenberg, 2002). Other research relying on modernization theories (Inglehart 1977, 1990, 1997; Norris 2002), supports the hypothesis of changing styles of political involvement by replacing and/or supplementing declining forms of traditional political participation (mainly voting, political party membership, campaigning, etc.) with non-conventional means of participation (protest politics, the new social movements, etc.).

Although political theory broadly views citizens' political engagement as playing a vital role in democratic governance (Norris 2002), the consolidation of democracy process in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) was accompanied by an overall decline in both electoral (Kostadinova 2003; Kostadinova & Power 2007, p. 47; Rose & Munro 2003) and non-electoral forms of political participation (Barnes & Simon 1998, apud. Dalton & Klingemann 2007). While democratic institutions gradually consolidated in the region, civic and political activism of citizens of former communist countries knows an obvious setback (Inglehart & Catterberg 2002). This finding is all the more paradoxical as political participation is generally regarded as a benchmark for the quality of democracy in a country. From this perspective, once democracy takes root in a society, one would expect citizens to participate more and not less in the political process. Data on political participation from CEE countries seem to contradict these expectations. Moreover, the decline of political participation in the region seems to be part of a wider process of withdrawal of citizens from the public sphere in post-communist states, manifested through their non-involvement in most forms of civic, associational and community participation (Howard 2003; Letki 2003).

Low and declining rates of political participation have raised concerns about the quality of democracy in Central and Eastern Europe. As Merkel (2011) has emphasized, in a high-quality democracy citizens should not only have equal rights to participate, but these rights should also be used in an equal manner. Low and unequal participation rates might undermine democracy particularly if citizen engagement is obstructed by structural constraints which can widen and reinforce gaps in terms of unequal political influence between those who participate and those who do not. Participants can

make their voice heard in the political arena and their interests have better chances of being represented in the political process, compared to those that do not/cannot participate. If the factors that hinder the political engagement of different segments of citizenry are based on unequal access to participatory resources, then the terms in which political participation processes take place in a democracy might not be fair (Teorell, 2006) inducing a 'participatory bias' based on structural constraints. And this compromises the principle of political equality that underlies democracy (Dahl, 1989; Verba, et al., 1995). Thus the smaller are the socio-structural gaps (i.e. based on gender, age, education and income) between participants and non-participants, the more democratic participation is (Merkel, 2011).

On the other hand, sustained political participation might have beneficial consequences for the quality of democracy since all persons who are subject to political decisions can shape those decisions. Moreover, if participation is as widespread and equal as possible it can contribute to a more equal consideration of citizens' interests (Merkel, 2011) by political representatives as well as to a more equal protection of citizens' rights from governmental abuses. In the unsettled political environment of post-communist societies, citizens' engagement in both conventional and protest forms of political influence is all the more important for the quality of democracy as sustained participation may stimulate more effective popular control over the government, while rendering democratic processes more responsive, accountable and legitimate (Tatar, 2006).

Direct forms of political actions that challenge decisions of political elites have played an important role in the collapse of communist regimes in the region (Inglehart & Catterberg 2002). However, after transitions to democracy formally ended, many new democracies have gone through a time of disappointment with the new political regime. Thus direct political action (such as demonstrations, signing petitions, etc.) decreased as citizens lost their confidence in their capacity to influence the political process (Inglehart & Catterberg 2002). Decline in elite-challenging actions is part of what Inglehart and Catterberg (2002, p. 300) have called the 'post-honeymoon phase of disillusionment with democracy'. However, these authors have anticipated that in the long run, direct forms of political actions contesting public authorities will follow an upward trend in 'new' democracies as happened a few decades back in 'old' democracies too.

Scholars often explain political participation decline in the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe by disappointments with post-communist politics felt by many citizens of these states. While politically disaffected citizens normally do not call into question the legitimacy of the democratic system of governance, they do manifest a sense of political ineffectiveness, powerlessness, cynicism and do not trust political institutions, politicians and the fairness of the political process more generally (di Palma 1970; Torcal & Montero 2006). They might also perceive a widening gap

between politicians and ordinary people backed by their belief that political elites are not concerned with citizens' welfare. Two different conclusions can be drawn from the literature concerning the behavioural consequences of political disaffection. On the one hand, studies on Western democracies highlight some positive consequences of critical assessments that citizens have towards the institutions and political elites, manifested by a transformation of the relations between governments and citizens and an increasing use of new forms of political participation (Dalton 1999; Norris 1999). On the other hand, some authors consider that disappointments with politics are responsible, especially in new democracies, for citizens withdrawal from the democratic process and the emergence of uninformed and apathetic individuals (Torcal & Montero 2006). Using this second model of interpretation, it is expected that political disappointments during the post-communist transition period constitute one of the sources of political disengagement after 1989 in Romania too.

Beyond explaining the main trends in political participation it remains to assess the factors that lead individuals to participate or not into politics. Academic literature devoted to political participation reveals a number of perspectives from which the involvement of citizens in politics is analyzed. The *institutionalist* approach focuses on the structure of opportunities for participation offered by institutional channels and procedures. At the macro level, comparative studies reveal significant differences between countries on opening up to citizen participation in public affairs. This institutional openness can inhibit or stimulate political engagement (Jackman 1987; Powell 1986). But even within the same political and institutional system differences often exist between the degree of participation of the poor and the rich, between young and old, between those with higher education and those with primary school (Norris 2002). In this direction fall *structural* approaches underlining social cleavages based on age, gender, social status, which are closely related to resources such as time, money, knowledge and skills necessary to participate (Verba, et al. 1995). On the other hand, the *cultural-motivational* perspective emphasizes attitudes and values that people have in the processes of political participation, including norms of political engagement as a civic duty, political interest, democratic values and attitudes, ideological and partisan identification, etc. Unlike the above mentioned perspectives, *mobilization theories* stress the role of agents, either taken individually (such as political leaders), or collectively as organizations and the social networks generated by political parties, trade unions, voluntary organizations and community associations that act as catalysts of participation (Rosenstone & Hansen 1993). To summarize, the literature review on the explanatory models of political engagement sketched above suggests that individuals don not participate because they cannot, they do not know how, they don't want or because no one asked (Norris 2002; Verba et al. 1995). What kind of socioeconomic, attitudinal and mobilization-related differences

can one expect to find among various types of participants based on these theories? In the next paragraphs I will summarize the main theoretical arguments offered by three explanatory models of political participation as well as the testable propositions derived from them according to the *logic of generic activism* and the *logic of selective activism* presented in the introduction of this study.

Models of strategic resources

Explanations of political participation at the individual level often focus on resources that facilitate political action and lay the groundwork for what is called the ‘civic voluntarism model’ (Verba et al. 1995). This model includes status variables such as: age, socioeconomic status, education, class, residence, region, etc. (Pattie & Johnston 1998, apud. Comşa 2006). Education is one of the strongest predictors of participation because it provides cognitive and civic awareness which helps citizens better understand politics (Norris 2002). The main thesis of the socio-economic model is that people with higher economic status - higher education, higher incomes, and better occupational positions - are more active in politics. Resources such as time, money and civic skills offer more opportunities to participate and so those who have such resources are more likely to be involved in politics. Many forms of political participation take time for information, involvement in a campaign or solving community problems and therefore time is increasingly becoming an essential resource for participation. Also, political activism more often requires money, usually in the form of support or financial contributions for certain candidates or political causes. Not least, citizens that have organizational and communication skills are more likely to take part in any form of political activity (Verba et al. 1995). Moreover, since these resources are unevenly distributed in society, they can be useful to explain differences in political participation related to gender, race/ethnicity, age and social class inequalities (Norris 2002).

If the resource theories are correct then according to the logic of generic activism we should expect that *a common set of resources enable citizens to participate in various forms of political actions*. Moreover, *different types of political participants should share common socio-economic traits that differentiate them from non-participants*. On the other hand, within the logic of selective activism we should expect that *different sets of resources enable citizens to participate in various forms of political actions* and also *different types of political participants have different socio-economic characteristics that distinguish them from non-participants*.

Cultural and motivational models

In addition to skills and other resources that can facilitate civic involvement, motivation is also necessary for individuals to become active in politics. Literature on what motivates participation usually starts from Olson's (1965) provocative argument according to which rational actors should not engage in collective action aimed at achieving a common good, unless they receive certain selective incentives. Since each individual can take advantage of the results of a collective action whose cost is paid by others, each individual has a rational reason to abstain and not pay the cost of participation. For instance, literature on voting behaviour points out this 'paradox of participation' since according to rational choice models, citizens should refrain from voting because the benefits of voting (understood here as a chance to give a decisive vote) are usually lower than the costs of voting (Downs 1957). Therefore, rational choice models explain rather why people do not participate and cannot yet explain why much of the electorate still votes (Blais 2007). According to Olson (1965) individuals' involvement in politics should be explained by reference to the notion of selective incentives - namely benefits which are obtained only through the personal contribution to the result of collective action. Thus, motivational attitudes can be affective, meaning an emotional attachment to the norms of civic involvement based on the internalization of the social norms of participation, for instance in the case of individuals who are conceiving participation as a civic duty or those who vote out of civic patriotism. Motivations can also be expressive for people aiming to participate in order to express their support or to reassert their identity (ethnic, religious, ideological, etc.) and membership to a group or community. Also, incentives can be instrumental, generated rather by the anticipated benefits of participation (Norris 2002). Among the most prominent attitudes and values mentioned in the literature as influencing activism are: the feeling of civic duty, a sense that citizens can influence the political process (internal or self-perceived political efficacy), the belief that elected authorities are responsive to people's problems (external political efficacy), political interest and support of the political system, including the belief that democracy is a good system of government, confidence in the main political institutions of representative democracy (parliament, government, political parties, courts, etc.), satisfaction with government performance and trust in political leaders.

If cultural-attitudinal theories are correct then according to the logic of generic activism we should expect that *a common set of attitudes enable citizens to participate in various forms of political actions*. Moreover, *different types of political participants should share common attitudinal motivations that differentiate them from non-participants*. On the other hand, following the logic of selective activism we should expect that *different sets of*

attitudes enable citizens to participate in various forms of political actions while different types of political participants should have different attitudinal motivations that distinguish them from non-participants.

Models of political mobilization

Organizational approaches emphasize the mobilising role of agents and social networks, including political parties, unions, religious organizations (churches), voluntary associations, etc. in activating political engagement. Even among individuals with similar socioeconomic and attitudinal characteristics, different degrees of political participation may exist because of the influence exerted by civic or political organizations (Norris 2002). These differences are explained by mobilization theory through the fact that in order to participate people need a catalyst that may be a candidate, a political activist, a party, an association, an institution or interest group. These actors are informed, know what are the ways and means of action which can bring benefits and therefore have every incentive to mobilize citizens for certain purposes (Comşa 2006). Regarding the mobilization of citizens, many studies of electoral participation reached the same conclusion: people who have been contacted by parties/candidates and asked to vote are more likely to go to the polls, even after controlling the effect of other explanatory variables (Comşa, Gheorghiuță, & Tufiş 2010). According to Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) there are strong links between the patterns of political participation and the choices of politicians, political parties, interest groups and political activists. Based on longitudinal data, Rosenstone and Hansen (1993) argue that U.S. citizens participate not because of personal characteristics, but mainly due to political choices and rewards offered to them in a process of mobilization around political controversies and opportunities.

Besides political leaders and organizations, other important agents which may encourage political involvement include community groups, voluntary associations and social networks that can contribute to the mobilisation of colleagues, neighbours, friends or relatives in the political process. Following Robert Putnam (2000; 1993) a plethora of studies emphasize the role of voluntary associations in fostering social and political participation (Alexander, Barraket, Lewis, & Considine 2012; Deth 2006; Kriesi 2008; Levi 1996; Newton 2001). According to Putnam's social capital theory, a wide range of heterogeneous organizations ranging from voluntary associations, community groups and private organizations enable face to face meetings of members and contribute to the production of dense civic networks that strengthen community bonds and social trust. The denser the links promoted

by these heterogeneous organizations and networks of relationships the more social trust will be generated. This 'links' individuals, groups and communities and facilitates cooperation on matters of common interest.

Existing literature on social capital and civil society highlights that proximity to an organization (political or not) has the effect of channelling individuals more or less directly into politics (Boulding & Gibson 2009; Diani 2009; Lambright, Mischen, & Laramée 2009; Maloney, Van Deth, & Roßteutscher 2008; Miller 2009; Uhlin 2009; Verba, et al. 1995; Wallace, Pichler, & Haerpfer 2012; Zakaria 2013). In most direct ways, a person who belongs to more groups has higher odds to be politically involved as s/he has higher chances to be recruited and invited to participate politically. Moreover, socially involved people are more likely to recognize the relevance of politics to their lives, to be more interested in politics, more informed about politics, to talk more about politics and eventually get involved in politics, simply because they contact, meet and converse with more people than socially isolated persons who are most often marginalized and politically alienated. In less direct ways, organizations are, as Tocqueville called them ([1835-1840]/2005), 'schools of democracy' not necessarily because they themselves are models of democratic organization and functioning (actually they might not be in many cases), but because they help their members better understand politics, providing them with realistic experiences about how social groups work. Unlike socially isolated people who do not have daily experiences of negotiations, debates and argumentation, conflict and compromise (Woshinsky 2008), members of such organizations acquire social, cognitive and leadership skills that may prove extremely useful in subsequent political interactions.

Nevertheless, different types of associations are not only likely to produce very different levels of social capital (Maloney, et al. 2008) but also to promote different types of political action repertoires. While I do not reject the argument that all voluntary forms of associations promote participation, trust and thus empowerment and this is the basis on which democracy can be built (see especially Putnam 1993, 2000), following van der Meer et al. (2009) I depart from a homogeneous understanding of social participation and find it more analytically useful to distinguish among different types of organizations (i.e. trade unions, civil society organizations and political parties) and social networks in order to examine their influence on post-communist citizens' political action repertoire.

If mobilization approaches are correct then according to the logic of generic activism we should expect that *active membership in various organizations is linked to citizen participation in similar forms of political actions.* Moreover, *different types of political participants should have common organizational affiliations that differentiate them from non-participants.* On the other hand, following the logic of selective activism we should expect that

active membership in various organizations is linked to citizen participation in different forms of political actions while different types of political participants should have different organizational affiliations that distinguish them from non-participants.

Non-electoral political participation in Romania: conceptualization and structural dimensions

The notion of political participation usually designates those actions by which individuals or groups are trying to defend and promote their interests in the political sphere. This is basically the conceptualization of participation as ‘influencing attempts’ (Teorell 2006). The classic definition is provided by Verba and Nie (1972, p. 2, apud. Teorell 2006): ‘Political participation refers to those activities by private citizens that . . . aim at *influencing* the government, either by affecting the *choice* of government personnel or by affecting the *choices made* by government personnel.’ This definition is still predominant in studies of political participation and has provided the reference for international research since the 1970s (Barnes & Kaase 1979; Verba, et al. 1978) until the 1990s (Parry & Moyser 1994; Verba, et al. 1995). Its presence in most handbooks and encyclopaedias in the social sciences, confirms the popularity of this conception of political participation in the current academic literature (Teorell 2006).

Participation as a way to influence policymaking significantly expands the scope of citizens’ political action repertoire in a democracy beyond electoral participation (Deth 2001). Thus, compared to the ‘elitist model of democracy’ (which resumes political participation to voting), the ‘responsive model of democracy’, to which the definition given above belongs, allows individuals to express preferences not only on the selection of governing elites (through elections) but also on policies developed by the political personnel (through non-electoral forms of participation and influence). Therefore, political participation is viewed as an instrumental act used by citizens who try to make the political system more responsive to their will (Teorell 2006). According to Verba (1996, apud Teorell, 2006, p. 789) ‘Participation is a mechanism for representation, a means by which governing officials are informed of the preferences and the needs of the public and are induced to respond to those preferences and needs.’ In other words, political participation is expected to ensure more responsiveness to citizens' preferences (Teorell, 2006).

There are various ways through which citizens can influence democratic policymaking and thus scholars usually examine multiple indicators to measure political participation as ‘influencing attempts’ (Bernhagen & Marsh 2007; Harris, Wyn, & Younes 2010; Johann 2012; Kluegel & Mason 1999; Portes, Escobar, & Arana 2009; Shah,

Friedland, Wells, Kim, & Rojas 2012). This paper is based on a dichotomous classification of non-electoral political actions into *conventional* or *traditional* participation, on the one hand and *unconventional* or *protest* participation, on the other hand. Albeit often criticized, this division of political participation into conventional and more confrontational political activities is widely used in political participation studies concerning both Western democracies and the new democracies of Central and Eastern Europe (Catterberg 2003; Comşa 2006; Diani 2009; Inglehart & Catterberg 2002; Kriesi 2008; Lamprianou 2013; Letki 2003; Opp & Kittel 2010; Uslaner 2004). In this paper, I further differentiate between two forms protest behaviour, namely legal and illegal protest, which might require different participation costs and resources and therefore might have divergent roots and patterns (Uslaner 2004).

I investigate conventional and protest participation (with its legal and illegal dimensions) through a nationally representative survey conducted in May 2005 in Romania as part of the Public Opinion Barometer (BOP 2005) program supported by Open Society Foundation (1994-2007). This survey asks about a range of social and political acts of public involvement being thus well suited for a comparative investigation of conventional and unconventional participation. The survey asked respondents two sets of questions on political activities (conventional and unconventional) instrumented in the questionnaire in the form of the following yes/no items: *'After 1989, have you ever... contacted politicians, attended a political meeting, attended an electoral rally, signed civic/political initiatives?'* and *'So far, you have participated in any of the following forms of protest?... legal strike, legal protest /demonstration, signing a political petition/complaint letter, occupying buildings, blocking roads, joining illegal strikes, being on hunger strike'*, having four response options: *'1. Yes, 2. No, 3. Don't Know, 4. No Response'*. These questions were re-coded as '0' if the respondents answered *'No'*, *'Don't Know/No response'* and '1' if the respondents have participated in that particular political activity (See Appendix for a more detailed operationalisation of variables).

In Table 2 (last column), I present the figures for these forms of conventional and unconventional participation measures in Romania. Around three quarters of Romanians do not get involved in any of the political activities analysed in Table 2 (i.e. *'the Inactives'* type), and only 14.4% of the adult population of Romania attended a political meeting after 1990, less than 10% participated in an electoral rally, contacted politicians and public servants, participated in legal strikes and demonstrations or signed a petition/complaint letter. More extreme forms of political participation have been practiced by less than 1% of the adult population. These figures are in line with

other research emphasizing low and decreasing levels of both electoral and non-electoral forms of political participation in Romania, after 1989 (Bădescu & Radu 2010; Bădescu, Sum, & Uslaner 2004; Comșa 2006; Sum 2005; Tătar 2011, 2013; Uslaner 2004). For instance, the World Values Survey (WVS) and European Values Survey (EVS) 1995-2008 datasets reveal that the share of demonstrators in the Romanian adult population declined from 18% in 1995 to 6.8% in 2008, while the share of those who signed a petition decreased from 14.3% in 1995 to 10% in 2008. Less than 2% of the Romanian population has participated in contentious forms of protest such as illegal strikes and occupation of buildings or factories since the middle of the 1990s.

Since few people take part in each form of political activity in Romania it makes sense to group variables into scales (Uslaner 2004). I performed an exploratory factor analysis for these 11 measures of political activity using SPSS Statistics 19. The exploratory factor analysis (Principal Components method, Oblique rotation, KMO = 0,778, total variance explained = 56.33%) structured the political participation acts into three structural dimensions (see Table 1): *legal protest* (sum of squared loadings after rotation = 2.61) *illegal protest* (sum of squared loadings after rotation = 2.15) and *conventional participation* (sum of squared loadings factor after rotation = 2.26).²

Table 1 around here

² To test the robustness of the construct validity and reliability of the political participation measures and their dimensional structures, Principal Components Analysis (PCA) was carried out on similar indicators of political participation gathered in Romania in 1990 and 1998 within the *Consolidation of Democracy in Central and Eastern Europe in 1990-2001. Cumulated Survey Data* (Rotman et al. 2004). While on data collected immediately after the collapse of communist regime in Romania (1990), PCA grouped all protest actions into a single dimension, by the end of the first post-communist decade (1998), analyses revealed a clear split of protest action into 2 different dimensions: legal and illegal protest. This bi-dimensionality of protest actions was confirmed by the PCA carried out on data collected in 2005. The empirical differentiation of legal and illegal protests could be the result of a process of specialization of participants and adoption of a particular repertoire of protest actions, a process that took place in the early years of democratic experience. Thus, some participants in protest activities have gradually moved to and prefer legal political actions, while others are more in favor of illegal ones.

The factor analysis grouped the 11 variables concerning political activities into three main components of political participation. Thus *contacting a politician, attending a political meeting, and participating in election rallies* have higher factor loadings into the *conventional participation* dimension; *participating in a lawful strike, attending a protest/march/legal demonstration, signing a complaint, signing civic/political initiatives*³ have higher loadings in the *legal protests* dimension; *occupation of buildings, blocking roads, hunger strike*⁴, *illegal strikes* have higher loadings in to the *illegal protests* dimension of political participation. The factor scores obtained by Principal Component Analysis for *conventional participation, legal protest* and *illegal protest* dimensions have been saved as three new variables and added to the original dataset. These ‘factor scores variables’ have been then grouped by a two-step Cluster Analysis (log likelihood distance measure, BIC clustering criterion) into five groups. The five clusters of respondents have been saved as a categorical variable containing the five types of participants (i.e. five values ranging from 1 to 5) presented below in Table 2, and serves as the dependent variable of this study.

Types of participants and political action repertoires in post-communist Romania

As mentioned above, the notion of ‘political participation’ encompasses multiple ways in which citizens can make their voice heard in the political process. In examining political engagement scholars focus on one or several participatory acts separately, or on cumulative indices and dimensions that underlie ‘various modes of political activities’ (Johann, 2012, p. 47). While such research strategies are useful for analysing the factors associated with participation in a specific political activity or mode of participation (i.e. conventional vs. protest), they are unsuitable for examining citizens’ repertoires of political action that might comprise various forms of activities. The purpose of this section is to build a complex typology of participants which can reveal, as Johan (2012, p. 47) has suggested, ‘whether and how people combine different modes of participation’. The repertoires of actions analysed here are thus based on the potential involvement of citizens in both conventional and protest (legal and illegal) forms

³ Signing civic initiatives is not necessarily a form of protest but since in Romania such political activities were mainly promoted by civil society organizations as a means to control/reform an unresponsive political system, signing civic initiatives is more strongly associated with other forms of elite challenging actions.

⁴ Hunger strike is not illegal in itself (in the sense that it is not prohibited by law) but in the empirical analyses is strongly associated with more extreme and illegal forms of protest, than with other ‘milder’ forms of political participation.

of political action (see Table 2). Despite obvious cultural and temporal differences, the types of participants resulting from the cluster analysis on Romania 2005 BOP data converge to those proposed by Kaase and Marsh (1979, pp. 154-155) in a comparative study across five nations (Austria, Britain, the Netherlands, Federal Germany and the USA).

Table 2 around here

In post-communist Romania the classification of individuals according to their participation in different political activities reveals the following types, listed here in order of their proportion in the population:

The Inactives, representing 74% of the total population, are persons who are neither involved in conventional or in unconventional (protest) forms of political participation. Their political involvement resumes at most at voting in elections or following political news on television.

The Conformists (about 10% of the population) are those that get involved only in conventional forms of political participation (48% said they had contacted a politician, 80% have attended a political meeting, 23% attended an election rally). Conformists are generally people who feel closer to a political party and therefore, not particularly surprising, they participate in forms of political action usually mediated and promoted by political parties.

The Contesters (about 9% of the population) are those whose repertoire of political actions is limited to legal forms of protest (64% have participated in a legal strike, 27% in a protest march or demonstration, 42% have signed a petition or complaint letter). If they decide to go to polls, the contesters are usually more pragmatic and individualist voters compared to the conformists (in the sense they do not feel particularly strong partisan identification so that they vote usually depending on circumstances) and do not contact at all politicians.

The Reformists (5% of the population) engage in conventional forms of participation (56% have contacted a politician, 87% have attended a political meeting, 70% have participated to an electoral rally, 46% have signed a political initiative) but their repertoire also includes legal forms of protest (52% have participated in a legal strike, 71% to a lawful demonstration, 54% have signed a petition/complaint). Reformers are a combination of conformity (i.e. conventional participation specific to *the conformists*) and contestation (i.e. legal protest participation specific to *the contesters*).

The Complete Activists (2%) are an extremely small minority of the adult population that is characterized by intense and comprehensive political involvement that goes even to non-legal or illegal forms of political action. However the preferred forms of political participation in this group remain acts of protest, be it legal or illegal (legal strike 76%, illegal strike 68%, legal demonstration 54%).

The profile of participants: who they are and how different they are?

What factors best predict individuals' belonging to a certain category of participants? To answer this question I nuanced the profile of the types of participants by multivariate analysis. Multinomial logistic regression is a statistical technique suitable for this purpose as it helps determine the characteristics that best distinguish the five types of participants/non-participants: *the inactives, the conformists, the protesters, the reformists and the complete activists*. I have started the analysis with a complex statistical model with 38 predictors that can be broadly divided into three main categories derived from the explanatory models presented in the literature review section: strategic resources, attitudinal motivations and mobilization-related factors. Many of these predictors (most of them belonging to the 'strategic resources' and 'attitudinal motivations' models) had no statistically significant influence, unduly hindering further interpretation of data. To facilitate a comparison in terms of the predictors that best distinguish between these types of participants, I have built a simpler model which still succeeds to explain a significant proportion of the variance of the dependent variable (i.e. types of participants). Thus, I excluded all variables that had no statistically significant influence, and after I went through a series of intermediate models, I have reached a reduced model including only statistically significant predictors.

The reduced model evaluates the predictions of belonging to one of the five types of participants (dependent variable) based on 12 predictors (independent variables): age coded in four categories 18-29, 30-49, 50-65, over 65; an index of *personal modernity* composed of the number of known foreign languages and computer literacy skills; an index of *social connectedness* summing the number of 'relations' available to individuals to solve various issues in different situations (it is used as a proxy to a person's *social network*); an index of *trust* in national political leaders; an index of *political discussion* frequency; an index of *political knowledge*; an index of *satisfaction with the country's political and economic system* (degree of satisfaction with democracy and market economy in Romania); an index of *political interest; subjective political*

competence (agreement with the statement ‘I am better informed about politics than most people’), *participation in trade union* activities after 1990; *participation in the actions of other civil society* organizations since 1990; *participation in the activities of political parties* after 1990. A more detailed description of these predictors/indexes is presented in the Appendix.

The model produced a significant differentiation between the five groups of participants based on the 12 predictors [χ^2 (7084, N=1800) = 2442.10, $p = 1$, deviance criterion], the variance explained by the model being R^2 (Nagelkerke) = 0.433. The model correctly classified 78.2% of all cases. *The inactives* were correctly identified in 97.7% of cases; *the conformists* were identified correctly in 26.9% of cases, *the protesters* in 18.2% of cases, *the reformists* in 32% of cases, and *the complete activists* in only 2.7% of cases. There was a tendency to incorrectly classify cases of the least numerous categories, to the largest category (i.e. *the inactives*).

Table 3 around here

Table 3 shows that the 12 predictors have unequal individual effects on explaining the variance of the dependent variable. Depending on the impact on improving the prediction of belonging to one of the five types of participants we can distinguish between three classes of predictors: with *large impact* (participation in trade union activities after 1990, participation in party activities since 1990 and individuals’ social connectedness), *medium impact* (participation in activities of other civil society organizations since 1990, political knowledge, satisfaction with the functioning of democracy and market economy in Romania, the frequency of discussions on political topics, personal level of modernity measured here as foreign languages skills and computer literacy), *low impact* (subjective political competence, political interest, trust in national political leaders and age).

Therefore, membership in one of the five types of participants is best predicted by previous participation in the activities organized by trade unions and other civil society associations, involvement in the activities of political parties, and social connectedness (measured here as the number of relationships individuals can rely on in different situations). These predictors suggest that ‘political mobilization’ is the model that best explains belonging to different types of participants. According to this model, individuals engage in a form or another of political participation mainly because they are mobilized in this process by

different agents: collective ones (i.e. trade unions, political parties and civil society organizations) or individual ones (politicians, friends, neighbours, family members, etc.).

Table 4 presents the multinomial logistic regression coefficients, Wald χ^2 test, statistical significance, odds ratio Exp (B) and the limits of the 95% confidence interval of for Exp (B). The reference category of the dependent variable is *the inactives*. Data presented in Table 4 allow comparisons between different types of political activists, according to various characteristics. We note that some predictors have a stronger effect on some types of participants than others. These differences will be discussed below, first as comparisons between each type of participants and the inactives and then by pointing out differences between types of participants themselves, according to the 12 predictor-variables (7 numeric and 5 categorical) presented above in this section.

Table 4 around here

The Conformists vs. The Inactives

Conformists (about 10% of total population) are those who have a higher propensity to participate in activities organized by political parties, than the general population. For instance, compared to *the inactives* (representing almost two thirds of the total population), *conformists* are almost 17 times more likely (1/0.059) to have participated in activities organized by the political parties, after 1990. They also have significantly higher numbers of relationships in different spheres of social life, connections that can be used to solve issues related to different fields: health care, legal, administrative and financial issues, business, getting a job, etc.

In addition, *conformists* are a relatively attentive public to political phenomena that discuss about politics more frequently and have more objective knowledge about politics than *the inactives*. Moreover, *conformists* are almost 2 times (1/0.507) more likely to consider themselves better informed about politics (subjective political competence) compared to *the inactives*. Generally, they are persons with a higher degree of personal modernity (in terms of knowledge of foreign languages and computer literacy) and are more involved in the activities of civil society organizations. No significant differences in terms of age and participation in trade unions' activities can be noted between *the conformists* and *the inactives*.

On the other hand, *conformists* are people somewhat more dissatisfied on how democracy and the market economy work in Romania, compared to *the inactives*. However, they tend to have more confidence in national political leaders than *the inactives*. In other words, conformists are relatively unhappy with the workings of the political and economical systems, but at the same time, have more confidence in political leaders than those who do not engage at all politically. Their relative dissatisfaction with how things work in the country, combined with trust in political leaders and the potential solutions proposed by these leaders, could provide an incentive for conformists to engage in political participation acts, particularly conventional ones (i.e. contacting politicians or officials, participation in a political meeting or an electoral rally), precisely because these behaviours can be conceived both as ways to protect and promote their own interests (through requirements addressed to political representatives), and also as a form of support for public authorities. Thus, conformists are somewhat dissatisfied persons who believe that their problems can be solved using the conventional channels of participation (particularly those resulting from partisan affiliation or proximity to a political party) offered by the existing institutional setup.

The Contesters vs. the Inactives

Unlike the conformists (who are close to political parties), contesters (about 9% of the population) are mobilized to legal forms of protests by trade unions and other civil society organizations. Therefore, their political action repertory includes especially strikes, participation in marches or demonstrations of protest, signing petitions and complaint letters. Compared to *the inactives*, *contesters* are over 11 times more likely to have participated in trade unions' actions and over 2.5 times more likely to have participated in the actions of other civil society associations, after 1990. They are not significantly different from *the inactives* in terms of participation in the activities organized by political parties: about 99% of *the inactives* and about 98% of *the contesters* saying they have not participated in the activities of political parties, after 1989. Moreover, *contesters* and *inactives* are not significantly different in terms of interest about political affairs and frequency of discussions about politics.

Although, there are no significant differences between *contesters* and *inactives* in terms of self-perceived political competence, contesters generally have higher levels of political knowledge (measured by an index of objective knowledge). Moreover, they have a higher degree of personal modernity. Also, age is one of the predictors that significantly differentiate contesters from the inactives. Thus, contesters are more likely than inactives to be part of rather younger or adult generations (18-29, 30-49, 50-65) and not the older category (over 65 years). The biggest

differences are in the age category of 30-49 years, the contesters are four times more likely than the inactives to be from this age category, *all other things being equal*.

In terms of the overall assessment of the political-economic system, contesters are like conformists: they have a relatively higher degree of dissatisfaction with how democracy and market economy work in Romania, than the inactives. In addition, like the conformists, the contesters tend to be more confident in national political leaders than the inactives. Beyond these similarities, contesters differ fundamentally from conformists by the types of agents which mobilize them to participate politically and by means of political action. The conformists' proximity to political parties is crucial for their mobilization in conventional forms of elite-supporting political participation, while trade union and other civil society organizations' membership are key factors to mobilize the contesters in legal protest political actions. Thus, conformists and contesters do not primarily differ in terms of strategic resources needed for participation (i.e. political knowledge, political trust and interest, or degree of personal modernity), but in terms of the organizations in which they activate and which mobilize them politically.

The Reformists vs. the inactives

The reformists are a relatively small public (about 5% of adults) made up of people interested in politics, discussing more frequently on political issues and also having more political knowledge than the vast majority of population made up of *inactives*. To the latter, reformists have a higher degree of personal modernity and benefit of more personal relationship they can rely on in different situations. However, there are no statistically significant differences between the reformists and the inactives concerning their confidence in the national political leaders, nor in terms of dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy and market economy in Romania, controlling the effect of other variables in the model. Unlike the conformists, reformists seek to influence public authorities not only by conventional means of participation (specific to conformists) but also through legal protests (specific to the contesters) thus putting additional pressure on political leaders in order to obtain the outcomes that would have not been achieved solely by conventional methods. Hence, in terms of forms of political action, reformists are a mixture of conformity and contestation.

The hybrid political action repertoire of reformists is emphasized by their involvement both in the actions that benefited political parties after 1990 (e.g. political meetings, election rallies, signing political initiatives) and in those organized by trade unions or other civil society associations (legal strikes and demonstrations, signing

petitions/complaints of protest). Compared to absolute activists which are politically mobilized rather by unions or civil society organizations, reformers frequently participate in actions organized by political parties and also vote more frequently in elections.

Complete activists vs. the inactives

Complete activists represent that very small minority (about 2% of adult population) whose repertoire includes all three forms of political participation: conventional, legal and illegal protest. *Complete activists* do not differ significantly from the *inactives* neither by level of personal modernity, trust in political leaders, political knowledge or subjective political competence, nor by frequency of political discussions or age, controlling the effect of other variables in the model. What differentiates them fundamentally from politically inactives is the fact they are connected to those social networks and are part of those organizations that can crystallize their interests and can channel their action for attaining certain purposes. In other words, compared to the inactives, complete activists have an organizational vehicle that can help them recognise and pursue group interests⁵ in the political sphere. Thus, activists have participated in much higher proportions in the actions of trade union and also of other civil society organizations, after 1989 than the inactives. At the same time, they have more personal relationships to rely on in different situations, but are generally more dissatisfied with how democracy and market economy works in Romania. Moreover, complete activists are relatively more pessimistic than the rest of the population regarding the improvement of their personal welfare in the near future (next 12 months). Political dissatisfaction combined with the lack of hope that, in the short term, their problems will be solved might increase *the complete activists'* availability to engage in all forms of political participation, but especially in the protests, including illegal ones.

Political Action Repertoires and Mobilizing Agents

In post-communist Romania, we can notice certain degrees of specialization of political activism depending on the organizations and social networks individuals belong to. The most important factors that differentiate the types of participants analysed above are related to the mobilising agents who direct individuals to specific forms of political action. Thus, individuals' odds to engage in protest actions (legal or illegal) significantly increase if, in the past, they have participated in trade unions. Compared with unions' impact, other civil society organizations (ranging from

⁵ Adapting the Marxist terminology, they have the organizational vehicles to acquire group/class 'consciousness'.

environmental to human rights ones) have a much lower potential for mobilizing citizens to protest. In contrast, those who have participated in political parties after 1990 have much higher chances to currently engage in conventional forms of participation (contacting politicians, election rallies, supporting party initiatives).

However, some organisations are more clearly oriented towards political issues than others and, as noted above, these organizations promote different political actions repertoires. Overall, civil society associations in Romania have a relatively low capacity to mobilize citizens in actions of any kind and especially in acts that fall within the sphere of politics (Badescu, et al. 2004). In addition, not only their mobilizing potential is different but also their political actions repertoire varies. Unions are perhaps the best example of not explicitly political organizations, which have a relatively strong capacity to mobilize their members in politically-relevant actions, compared with other civil society organizations. Even if trade unions do not necessarily have direct political aims, they are powerful mobilizing agents in protest actions, especially when their members are recruited from employees working in the public sector. This is so because unions have the ability to activate what we might call the political ‘consciousness’ of public sector unionists by showing them both that their interests are directly affected by governmental decisions and also how those decisions can be influenced by collective action. Consequently, where unions are strong, union members are more involved in politics, their voice is better heard in the political sphere, their interests are better represented in politics and implicitly, the decisions affecting them will be more favourable (i.e. better working conditions, higher wages, longer leaves, etc.) than in places where unions are weak and lack organizational capacities and political mobilizing force (Woshinsky 2008, p. 94).

Political parties are classical examples of organizations that have direct impacts on citizen involvement in politics. In this study, party activism ranked second, after trade unions, in terms of the importance of the predictors that differentiate the five types of participants presented in Table 2. This may seem surprising at first sight, especially considering the fact that political parties assume immediate political purposes, including policy making functions. However, political participation defined as ‘influencing attempts’ is not confined to conventional political actions (i.e. contacting politicians, attending an electoral rally or a political meeting, signing a political initiative, etc.) which can be interpreted as forms of support for parties and politicians in particular, and for the democratic system in general. In the conceptualization used in this article, political participation also includes elite-challenging actions, namely legal or illegal protests, which people use to contest decisions made by public authorities or to claim and protect certain rights. Taking into consideration this complexity of political action repertoires it becomes more

straightforward to understand that unions may have greater overall influence than parties as agents of political mobilization mainly because Romanian political parties focus particularly on voter mobilization strategies during election campaigns and generally promote conventional forms of political participation.

Yet, unions might have an overall advantage over political parties as agents of political mobilization not only because their political action repertoires are more diverse but also for reasons that relate to the post-communist context. In the new European democracies, partisanship (meaning here attachment to political parties) has weak social roots and seems to be a variable endogenous to the political process which highly correlates with other political factors such as interest in politics and trust in political institutions due to several reasons (Tătar, 2013). First, as Tufiş (2010) has emphasized, the almost instantaneous emergence of political parties in post-communist societies excludes the formation of strong attachments to them through political socialization, leaving only direct experience as a possible source of identification with a particular political party. Thus, attitudes towards parties in new democracies are more volatile and vulnerable to critical evaluations of their current (mainly economical) performance as parties in government. Second, the initial post-communist transition period was characterized by an increased instability of the party systems and this did nothing but to delay the formation of strong attachments to political parties. Moreover, political parties along with the new institutions of representative democracy have been blamed for the economic hardships and deterioration of living standards affecting significant parts of the population as a result of structural changes and economic reforms during the post-communist transition. These developments along with pervasive perceptions of political corruption have contributed to relatively low and decreasing levels of party identification in this region. Not surprisingly, 'partisan' has become a pejorative term for citizens and politicians alike not only in Western societies as Katz and Mair (2009) have noted, but also in post-communist democracies. Distrust of party politics and the perception of a growing gap between parties and the wider society might have left more room for alternative social actors acting as agents of political mobilisation. While trade unions in Romania are nevertheless entangled to a certain degree with political parties and union leaders were protagonists of notorious corruption scandals, union membership and levels of popular trust in unions have remained higher than in the case of political parties during the last two decades.

However, the mobilization capacity of these organizations should not be exaggerated. In Romania only a relatively small proportion of the adult population belongs to or expresses closeness to these organizations (i.e. trade unions, NGOs and parties) and their ability to mobilize citizens outside the relatively small circle of members and

supporters is extremely low. For instance in 2005, about 16% of Romanian adults have been members of a civil society organization, about 12% were members of a union and only around 5.5% of a political party,⁶ since 1990. Moreover, in Romania organizations of all kinds usually only manage to mobilize their own members, having thus an extremely small impact outside their contributors. For example, of those who participated in trade union organized actions after 1990, over 95% were union members. This is not surprising given the fact that unions are organizations that aim to protect and promote the rights of employees they represent, and therefore have no interest or incentives to bring to their actions masses of un-unionized persons. On the other hand, unions' ability to mobilise even their own members is quite low. Of those who were union members since 1990, only about 60% had participated in collective actions organized by unions in the post-communist period.

In terms of mobilisation strategies, unions and political parties seem to be somewhat similar, although one would expect their target audiences to differ both in size and features. Professionally-based unions tend to involve in their collective actions only union members and this seems reasonable since, in general, only union members will benefit from the results of union actions. Surprisingly, a similar pattern occurs also in the case of political parties, which are organisations that usually seek and need broad popular support to win the elections, gain governmental positions and then stay in government. Thus, among those who participated in the actions of parties after 1990, almost 91% were party members. On the other hand, among those who were party members after 1990, about 70% have participated in party-organised actions. A lower mobilisation potential of their members is registered for civil society associations: only 60% of their members took part in actions of the organizations they were part of. As in the case of unions and political parties, civil society organizations are unable to expand their mobilization capacity beyond their own members. Among those who participated in actions of civil society associations since 1990, over 95% were members of those organizations.

Beyond formal membership in organizations, informal social networks play an important role in promoting political participation. People better connected socially, with many relationships in various fields, are more politically involved than those with fewer connections. Involvement in several informal groups can produce supportive relationships or even friendships. The higher the number of these positive relationships, the stronger the sense of self-esteem a person will have. Involvement in many social relationships is also associated with a more pronounced sense of social competence and also subjective political competence (i.e. those who consider themselves

⁶ Data based on BOP, May 2005.

better informed about politics than the general public). In turn, subjective political competence is one of the predictors discussed above for significantly differentiating the types of participants, but is also relatively strongly associated with an increased interest in politics, a higher frequency of political discussions and more objective knowledge about politics.

Conclusions

Although political theory broadly views citizens' political engagement as playing a vital role in democratic governance, in Central and Eastern Europe the consolidation of democracy process was accompanied by an overall decline in both electoral and non-electoral forms of political participation. Establishing the roots and patterns of political disengagement is important due to the valuable insights it can provide for understanding democratic persistence and the avoidance of authoritarian regressions in this region. This paper has found that citizen participation in the post-communist context is not as much influenced by individuals' socio-economic and attitudinal characteristics. Instead, it is highly contingent on recruitment or mobilization related factors. This means that the nature and degree of political participation is strongly influenced by political and non-political organizations and social networks to which citizens belong or are close to. These organisations or networks largely act as politically mobilizing agents and frame citizen participation into more elite supporting or more elite-challenging ways of action. In the absence of strong participatory political cultures it seems that the quality of post-communist democracies largely depends on the democratic goals and methods pursued by these mobilising agents. Moreover if, depending on contextual and organisational opportunities for political mobilisation, 'participants can be both radical and mainstream, anti-state and pro-state' regardless of their socio-economic status and motivational profile, as Norris *et al.* have suggested (2006, p. 302), then the study of such mobilizing agents and their political action repertoires can provide important insights into their potential for both challenging and strengthening democracy.

This paper explored the political action repertoires of post-communist citizens in Romania and found three structural dimensions of non-electoral political engagement, namely conventional participation, legal protest participation and illegal protest participation. Based on participation along these three structural dimensions, I have distinguished between five types of citizens: *the inactives* (74% of the Romanian adult population), *the conformists* (10%), *the contesters* (9%), *the reformists* (5%) and the *complete activists* (2%). These findings suggest that, in terms of structural dimensions, the types of participants and the way they combine various conventional and

unconventional political actions seem to converge in old and new European democracies. This further implies that post-communist citizens and their western neighbours have similar understandings on what political participation means and what are the major channels of public voice in a democracy. Yet there seems to be a difference in terms of degree of participation. Namely the actual share of citizens participating in each mode of political action might considerably vary across countries, citizens of eastern countries being in general less engaged than their western counterparts (Bernhagen & Marsh, 2007). Post-communist Romania illustrates these patterns of low and declining political involvement in new European democracies, since almost three quarters of its citizenry are not engaging in any form of political actions besides voting in elections.

The paper has also examined the importance of different explanatory models of political activism derived from theories mainly developed in the context of western democracies. In the changing circumstances of Romanian democratic consolidation, the factors associated with political participation are not mainly based on socioeconomic resources or motivational attitudes (i.e. socioeconomic status, political attitudes and skills) but on ‘recruitment-based’ factors, namely political mobilization exerted by various organisations (see also Sum, 2005). Therefore it seems that socioeconomic inequalities do not substantially bias political engagement in Romania. This finding appears to be in line with regional patterns of low levels of political participation which do not necessarily undermine the democratic quality of political processes in post-communist Europe (Kostelka, 2014). On the other hand, political mobilization theories posit that individuals engage in politics not primarily due to their socioeconomic traits but because they are mobilized in this process by various agents. Using Romania as a typical post-communist case, I have compared the mobilizing potential of four such collective actors: trade unions, political parties, civil society organizations, and social networks.

The increasing importance of politically mobilizing agents has its own implications for the political action repertoires in post-communist Romania. I find a growing specialization of citizens’ political involvement into either conventional or unconventional participation forms, and this is linked to different contextual opportunities for engaging within specific political activities preferred by the mobilizing agents. Thus, the chances of individuals to engage in protest actions (legal or illegal strikes, demonstrations, marches, etc.) greatly increase if they are active members of trade unions. Compared with trade unions, other civil society organizations (ranging from environmental organizations to human rights protection NGOs) have a much lower potential to mobilize citizens in protests. Usually, active membership in such civil society organizations is associated with more civic and legalistic

ways of participation and issuing policy recommendations to public authorities. In contrast, those who were active members of the Romanian political parties after 1990, have a much better chance to currently engage in conventional forms of participation (contacting politicians, election rallies, supporting legislative initiatives of political parties). However, it should be noted that in Romania only a relatively small proportion of the population belongs to or is close to these organizations (i.e. trade unions, NGOs and parties) and their capacity to mobilize citizens outside the relatively small circle of members and supporters is extremely low.

In addition, our data show that there is a very weak association between citizens' participation in more forms of political action and this is linked to a weakened civil society peculiar to post-communist contexts (Howard, 2003) and to low degrees of cross-cutting membership in different organisations which could stimulate engagement in various public arenas. Usually, those taking part in some sort of political action, do not take part in other forms of participation. Thus, our data do not support the logic of a 'generic activism', according to which people who have the resources and inclination to participate tend to be involved in all forms political activities, radical or mainstream, whether organized by civil society, trade unions and political parties.

Although we have identified in our data sets individuals who engage in more forms of political action, their share is extremely low among the Romanian population. On the contrary, 20 years after the fall of communism, most Romanians are no longer involved at all in politics, not even in the act of voting, as shown by data from the 2008 and 2012 parliamentary elections when turnout was around 40%. However, those who engage in politics do it selectively. As seen above, our data support the logic of 'selective activism' which implies some degree of specialization in different types of political actions based on the social groups and organizations individuals belong to and also according to the participatory repertoire these organizations promote.

In other words, it seems that in post-communist Romania political engagement is not primarily based on the self-selection of individuals in participatory processes, but rather on their recruitment and mobilization by various organizations and networks. This questions the ability and willingness of post-communist citizens to act autonomously in the new democratic processes. Further comparative studies might elucidate if this is part of a persistent communist legacy of the 'obedient-citizen' designed by the authoritarian regimes of Central and Eastern Europe, or it belongs to a broader syndrome of political disaffection based on a widening confidence gap between citizens and political elites, equally affecting both 'old' and 'new' democracies.

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Appendix

The measures

The statistical analyses presented in this article are based on a dataset of a nationally representative survey conducted in May 2005 in Romania as part of the *Public Opinion Barometer* (BOP, 2005) program supported by Open Society Foundation (1994-2007). Fieldwork consisted of face-to-face interviews which have been carried out at respondents' domiciles during 6-19 May 2005. The survey has the following methodological features: a. *Sample size*: 1800 persons aged 18 and over; b. *Type of sample*: stratified, probabilistic, three-stage stratification criteria: 18 cultural areas according to historical provinces, residence (urban - rural), urban size (4 types), the development of the rural areas (3 categories); c. *Representativeness*: the sample is representative of for the adult population of

Romania, with an error margin of $\pm 2.3\%$ at a confidence level of 95%. Data has been collected by the Gallup Organization Romania.

Variable/Index	Measures and methods of recoding/building variables/indices, BOP, Romania, May 2005
Subjective political competence	Dichotomous variable obtained by recoding the variable Q140 concerning subjects' agreement with the following statement: 'I am better informed about politics than most people,' having the following answer options: 1. True; 2. Rather true; 3. Rather False; 4. False; 8. DK; 9. NA. The new variable was recoded with 1 (the responses with 'true' and 'rather true') and 0 (the rest of responses).
Index of political knowledge	Index summing up the number of correct answers to ten questions (Q74-83) ranging from knowledge of political leaders holding certain positions in the state, various features of the electoral system, to NATO and EU membership
Index of political discussion	Summative index of variables Q102-103 on the frequency of political discussions with people who have the same political orientations and with people having different political orientations, respectively.
Index of political interest	Summative index consisting of 7 items (Q67-73): 'How interested are you in the ...?: Political life in your city; Romania's political life; Parliamentary elections; Electoral campaigns; Political information; Personal discussions on political issues; Reading about political issues.' Responses: '4. Very much; 3. Much; 2. Little; 1. Very little; 0. At all.' Responses with '8. DK/9.NA' were coded as missing values and replaced with the average of the index. Thus, the additive index has a values ranging from 0 to 28. We tested the dimensionality of the 7 items composing the index by exploratory factor analysis (Principal Axis Factoring method, KMO = 0.898, a single factor was extracted explaining 73% of variance). The resulting index of political interest has high consistency/reliability (Cronbach's Alpha = 0.949).
Index of trust in national political leaders	Summative index of variables Q92-101 on the level of trust in the main national political leaders measured on an ordinal scale with 5 values ranging from 0 (none) to 4 (very much). Responses with '7.Do not know her/him; 8. DK 9. NA' were recoded with the value 2 (the median value of the trust scale). Cronbach's Alpha Reliability index = 0.817 political leaders. The index has values ranging from 0 to 40.
Index of personal modernity	Summative index of variables Q312-314, Q316 on knowledge of foreign languages and variable Q320 on the ability to use the computer. Variables were recoded to 1 for foreign language skills / ability to work with the PC, or 0 for the other choice. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of personal modernity index = 0.645. The index takes a value from 0 to 5.
Structural dimensions of political participation: conventional participation; legal protest participation; illegal protest participation	The following variables Q145 (attending a political meeting), Q146 (contacting a politician), Q147 (participating in a protest, march, demonstration), Q148 (signing a petition / policy initiatives), Q149 (attending an election rally), Q158 (signing a complaint) Q159 (participation in strikes/ legal demonstrations), Q160 (participation in strikes / demonstrations illegal), Q161 (occupying buildings/factories), Q162 (blocking streets), Q163 (hunger strike) were recoded into new variables with value '1' if the subject reported that s/he realized that action and '0' for the rest the answer variants. Following factor analysis of the 11 new variables (Principal Components method, oblique rotation, KMO = 0.778, total variance explained 56.53%) three factors/dimensions have resulted: <i>legal protest</i> (sum of squared loadings after rotation = 2.61) <i>illegal protest</i> (sum of squared loadings after rotation = 2.15) and <i>conventional participation</i> (sum of squared loadings factor after rotation = 2.26). Contacting politicians, attending a political meeting and participating in election rallies have the highest factor loadings in the <i>conventional participation</i> dimension. Participating in a legal strike, legal demonstrations and marches, Signing a political petition/complaint letter, and signing civic/political initiatives have the highest factor loadings in the <i>legal protest</i> dimension. Occupying buildings, blocking streets, hunger strike and Illegal riots have the highest

Variable/Index	Measures and methods of recoding/building variables/indices, BOP, Romania, May 2005
	factor loadings in the <i>illegal protest</i> dimension.
Index of social connectedness (relations)	Summative index of Q220-228 variables which were recoded into new variables with value '1' if the subject said s/he has a 'relation' to solve various issues in different situations and 0 for the other possible answers. Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for index of social connectedness = 0.797. The index takes a value from 0 to 9.
Index of satisfaction with democracy and market economy in Romania	Summative index of Q24-25 variables measuring satisfaction with democracy and market economy in Romania. Responses were recoded (subtracting 1 from the original values) so that the new variables had values on a five-level ordinal scale from 0 (very dissatisfied) to 4 (very satisfied). The responses with '8.DK/9.NA' were recoded to 2 ('neither satisfied, nor dissatisfied'). Cronbach's Alpha coefficient for the <i>Index of satisfaction with democracy and market economy in Romania</i> = 0.785. The index values range from 0 to 8.
Types of participants (Dependent variable)	Factor scores obtained for <i>conventional participation</i> , <i>legal protest</i> and <i>illegal protest</i> dimensions of political participation (see above construction of these variables through exploratory factor analysis) were grouped by a two-step Cluster Analysis (log-likelihood distance measure, BIC grouping criterion, number groups: 5). The respondents have been grouped into five types of participants: <i>the inactives</i> , <i>the conformists</i> , <i>the contesters</i> , <i>the reformists</i> , and <i>the complete activists</i> . The reference category in multinomial logistic regression analysis is <i>the inactives</i> .
Age	Age recoded in four categories: 18-29, 30-49, 50-65, over 65
Participation in trade union activities after 1990	Dummy variable (recoded from Q156-157): '1'=Yes and '0'=No
Participation in the actions of civil society organizations since 1990	Dummy variable (recoded from Q156-157): '1'=Yes and '0'=No. Civil society associations include: civic and human rights organizations; environmental groups; associations of owners/tenants; religious associations; church choirs; sports groups; other association/NGO.
Participation in activities of political parties after 1990	Dummy variable (recoded from Q156-157): '1'=Yes and '0'=No

TABLE 1
STRUCTURAL DIMENSIONS OF POLITICAL PARTICIPATION IN POST-COMMUNIST ROMANIA

Variables: Modes of political participation	Components of participation			Communalities
	1. Legal Protest	2. Illegal Protest	3. Conventional participation	
Legal strike	.797			.635
Legal demonstrations, marches	.709			.623
Signing a political petition/complaint letter	.645			.434
Signing civic/political initiatives	.482			.428
Occupy buildings		.786		.626
Block streets		.718		.555
Hunger strike		.675		.453
Illegal riots		.607		.493
Contacting politicians			.863	.733
Political meeting			.795	.705
Election rallies			.497	.512
Sum of squared loadings after rotation	2.61	2.15	2.26	
Total variance explained = 56.33%				

Note: Data in columns 2, 3 and 4 represent factor loadings. Loadings <0.40 were not presented in order to make the interpretation of the results more straightforward.

Source: Author's elaboration based on BOP 2005 data.

TABLE 2
TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS AND POLITICAL ACTION REPERTOIRES IN POST-COMMUNIST ROMANIA

Modes of Political Participation		Inactives (74%)	Conformists (10%)	Contesters (9%)	Reformists (5%)	Complete Activists (2%)	Total RO (100%)
Conventional	Contacting politicians	0	48	0	56	32	8.6
	Political meeting	0	80	8	87	43	14.4
	Election rallies	0	23	8	70	38	7.6
Legal protest	Signing civic/political initiatives	0	3	7	46	35	4.1
	Legal strike	0	2	64	52	76	9.9
	Legal demonstrations, marches	0	3	27	71	54	7.6
	Signing a political petition/complaint letter	0	7	42	54	49	8.1
Illegal protest	Occupy buildings	0	0	0	0	30	0.6
	Block streets	0	0	0	0	38	0.8
	Hunger strike	0	0	0	0	8	0.2
	Illegal riots	0	0	0	1	68	1.4

Note: Data represent % of those who said that, after 1990, they had participated in that specific political action form, within each type. The first line includes the percentage (%) of each type of participants within the adult population in Romania, 2005.

Source: own elaboration based on BOP, OSF (May, 2005).

TABLE 3
MULTINOMIAL LOGISTIC REGRESSION ANALYSIS OF THE TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS - THE IMPORTANCE OF THE PREDICTORS

Predictors	Model Fitting Criteria	Likelihood Ratio Tests			χ^2 /df
	-2 Log Likelihood of the reduced model	χ^2	df	Sig.	
Constant	2442.103	.000	0	.	.
Participation in trade unions' activities after 1990	2561.492	119.389	4	.000	29.847
Participation in political parties' activities after 1990	2518.837	76.733	4	.000	19.183
Index of social connectedness (relations)	2486.926	44.823	4	.000	11.206
Participation in the actions of other civil society organizations after 1990	2468.889	26.786	4	.000	6.696
Index of political knowledge	2462.666	20.563	4	.000	5.141
Index of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy and market economy in Romania	2460.882	18.778	4	.001	4.695
Index of political discussions	2460.249	18.146	4	.001	4.536
Index of personal modernity	2460.169	18.066	4	.001	4.516
Subjective political competence	2454.821	12.718	4	.013	3.179
Index of political interest	2454.269	12.166	4	.016	3.041
Index of trust in national political leaders	2452.924	10.820	4	.029	2.705
Age (18-29, 30-49, 50-65, 65+)	2465.164	23.060	12	.027	1.922

Note: χ^2 is the difference in -2 log likelihood of the final model and the reduced model. The reduced model is formed by omitting an effect (of the variable in question) from the final model, the null hypothesis being that all parameters of that effect are equal to 0. The statistical significance threshold used is of 0.05.

Source: own elaboration based on BOP data, in May 2005.

TABLE 4
MULTINOMIAL LOGISTIC ANALYSIS OF THE TYPES OF PARTICIPANTS/NON-PARTICIPANTS –
PARAMETERS' ESTIMATES

Dependent Variable – typology of participants with 5 categories: <i>inactives, conformists,</i> <i>contesters, reformists, activists</i>		B	Wald χ^2	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% confidence interval for Exp (B)		
						Lower limit	Upper limit	
Conformists vs. Inactives	Constant	-.124	.025	.873				
	Index of personal modernity	.263	7.427	.006	1.300	1.077	1.571	
	Index of trust in national political leaders	.035	5.448	.020	1.035	1.006	1.066	
	Index of social connectedness (relations)	.287	39.988	.000	1.332	1.219	1.456	
	Index of political knowledge	.174	11.572	.001	1.190	1.076	1.315	
	Index of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy and market economy in Romania	-.145	5.946	.015	.865	.770	.972	
	Index of political interest	.015	.772	.380	1.016	.981	1.051	
	Index of political discussions	.087	14.464	.000	1.091	1.043	1.142	
	Subjective political competence	No	-.680	10.635	.001	.507	.337	.762
		Yes	0
	Participation in trade union activities after 1990	No	-.627	2.903	.088	.534	.260	1.099
		Yes	0
	Participation in political parties' activities after 1990	No	-	48.214	.000	.059	.027	.132
		Yes	2.822	0
	Participation in the actions of other civil society organizations after 1990	No	-.754	8.125	.004	.470	.280	.790
		Yes	0
	Age	18-29	-.497	2.017	.155	.608	.306	1.208
		30-49	-.060	.048	.827	.942	.550	1.613
50-65		.005	.000	.984	1.005	.585	1.729	
65+		0	.	.	.	.	.
Contesters vs. Inactives	Constant	-.658	.470	.493				
	Index of personal modernity	.241	5.834	.016	1.273	1.047	1.548	
	Index of trust in national political leaders	.035	5.479	.019	1.036	1.006	1.067	
	Index of social connectedness (relations)	.085	2.464	.116	1.089	.979	1.211	
	Index of political knowledge	.116	5.335	.021	1.123	1.018	1.240	
	Index of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy and market economy in Romania	-.208	11.790	.001	.812	.721	.914	
	Index of political interest	.010	.335	.563	1.010	.975	1.047	
	Index of political discussions	.028	1.422	.233	1.028	.982	1.077	
	Subjective political competence	No	-.219	.900	.343	.803	.511	1.263
		Yes	0
	Participation in trade union activities after 1990	No	-	80.940	.000	.090	.053	.152
		Yes	2.411	0
	Participation in political parties' activities after 1990	No	-.644	.901	.343	.525	.139	1.985
		Yes	0
	Participation in the actions of other civil society organizations after 1990	No	-.944	12.568	.000	.389	.231	.656
		Yes	0
	Age	18-29	1.139	6.546	.011	3.124	1.305	7.475
		30-49	1.446	13.433	.000	4.244	1.959	9.193
50-65		1.164	8.148	.004	3.202	1.440	7.120	
65+		0	.	.	.	.	.

Dependent Variable – typology of participants with 5 categories: <i>inactives, conformists, contesters, reformists, activists</i>		B	Wald χ^2	Sig.	Exp(B)	95% confidence interval for Exp (B)		
						Lower limit	Upper limit	
Reformists vs. Inactives	Constant	-.865	.714	.398				
	Index of personal modernity	.456	14.349	.000	1.578	1.246	1.998	
	Index of trust in national political leaders	.034	2.410	.121	1.034	.991	1.079	
	Index of social connectedness (relations)	.240	15.561	.000	1.271	1.128	1.432	
	Index of political knowledge	.247	10.180	.001	1.280	1.100	1.490	
	Index of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy and market economy in Romania	-.119	2.081	.149	.888	.755	1.044	
	Index of political interest	.081	9.673	.002	1.085	1.031	1.142	
	Index of political discussions	.086	6.648	.010	1.090	1.021	1.163	
	Subjective political competence	No	-.541	3.418	.064	.582	.328	1.033
		Yes	0
	Participation in trade union activities after 1990	No	2.387	48.861	.000	.092	.047	.180
		Yes	0
	Participation in political parties' activities after 1990	No	3.142	46.169	.000	.043	.017	.107
		Yes	0
	Participation in the actions of other civil society organizations after 1990	No	1.437	22.209	.000	.238	.131	.432
		Yes	0
Age	18-29	.108	.040	.842	1.114	.385	3.225	
	30-49	.440	.944	.331	1.552	.639	3.767	
	50-65	.573	1.606	.205	1.774	.731	4.302	
	65+	0	.	.	.	.	.
Complete activists vs. Inactives	Constant	.102	.005	.942				
	Index of personal modernity	.227	1.671	.196	1.255	.889	1.773	
	Index of trust in national political leaders	-.006	.051	.821	.994	.941	1.050	
	Index of social connectedness (relations)	.247	9.041	.003	1.281	1.090	1.505	
	Index of political knowledge	.065	.432	.511	1.067	.879	1.295	
	Index of satisfaction with the functioning of democracy and market economy in Romania	-.284	6.440	.011	.753	.604	.937	
	Index of political interest	.064	3.491	.062	1.066	.997	1.140	
	Index of political discussions	.052	1.420	.233	1.053	.967	1.147	
	Subjective political competence	No	-.646	2.563	.109	.524	.238	1.156
		Yes	0
	Participation in trade union activities after 1990	No	2.678	42.052	.000	.069	.031	.154
		Yes	0
	Participation in political parties' activities after 1990	No	1.539	3.478	.062	.215	.043	1.082
		Yes	0
	Participation in the actions of other civil society organizations after 1990	No	-.989	4.625	.032	.372	.151	.916
		Yes	0
Age	18-29	.210	.080	.778	1.233	.288	5.285	
	30-49	.578	.933	.334	1.783	.552	5.762	
	50-65	.361	.335	.562	1.434	.423	4.864	
	65+	0	.	.	.	.	.

Note: Data represent the results of a multinomial logistic regression model with the dependent variable *types of participants*, with five categories: apathetic, conformists, contesters, reformists, absolute activists. *Inactives* is the

reference category. Exp (B) coefficients are odds ratios: values higher than 1 represent a positive effect, values below 1 represent a negative effect. The statistical significance of coefficients is presented in column Sig. For nominal or ordinal predictors, the reference category's parameter (the last category of each nominal variable) is set to 0, because it is redundant. Example of reading data: *conformists*, compared to the *inactives*, are 0.507 times less likely to not consider themselves more competent on political matters than most people; or vice versa, *conformists*, compared to *the inactives*, are almost two times ($1/0.507 = 1.97$) more likely to claim they are more competent on political matters than most people.

Source: own elaboration based on BOP May 2005 data.