

Citizens' Responses to the European Economic Crisis in the Public Domain

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Citizens may respond to economic crises and to policy responses to such crises in a variety of ways. This special issue focuses on collective responses as they express themselves in the public domain, in the form of social movements or other types of interventions. The special issue originates in a large-scale comparative research project funded by the European Commission and titles "Living with Hard Times: How Citizens React to Economic Crises and Their Social and Political Consequences" (LIVEWHAT). The eight articles all use a common dataset and adopt a common method, known as political claims analysis, which has proven fruitful in previous work on social movements and contentious politics, consisting in retrieving interventions in the public domain on a given issue, or range of issues, drawing from media sources, most often newspapers. The data stem from a systematic content analysis of newspapers in each of the countries under study.

Keywords: Economic Crisis, Great Recession, Citizens' Responses, Public Domain, Social Movements, Contentious Politics, Protest Behavior, Political Claims Analysis, LIVEWHAT, Living with Hard Times, P&P Special Issue, Newspaper Content Analysis, Media, Political Communications, Citizenship, Participation, and Democracy.

Los ciudadanos responden a las crisis económicas y a las respuestas políticas a tales crisis en una variedad de formas. Este número especial se enfoca en las respuestas colectivas tal como son expresadas en el dominio público en la forma de movimientos sociales u otros tipos de intervención. El número especial tiene su origen en un proyecto de investigación comparativo de gran escala financiado por la Comisión Europea y tiene por título "Viviendo en tiempos duros: Cómo reaccionan los ciudadanos a las crisis económicas y a sus consecuencias políticas y sociales" (LIVEWHAT por sus siglas en inglés). Los ocho artículos usan el mismo conjunto de datos y adoptan un método común conocido como análisis de reclamos políticos que ha probado ser muy fructífero en trabajos previos sobre movimientos sociales y política contenciosa, consistiendo en búsqueda de intervenciones en el dominio

We would like to thank Eva Anduiza and Luke Temple for their detailed and thoughtful comments on a previous version of this article. All remaining errors are, of course, our own and we take full responsibility. Please send all correspondence to Marco Giugni, Département de science politique, Université de Genève, Uni-Mail, 1211 Genève 4, Switzerland marco.giugni@unige.ch. Results presented in this article have been obtained within the project "Living with Hard Times: How Citizens React to Economic Crises and Their Social and Political Consequences" (LIVEWHAT). This project was funded by the European Commission under the 7th Framework Programme (grant agreement no. 613237).

público por asunto, o rango de asuntos, dependiendo de fuentes mediáticas, mas usualmente prensa. Los datos parten de un análisis de contenido sistematico de los periódicos en cada una de las naciones bajo estudio.

The articles in this special issue of *Politics & Policy* originate in a large-scale comparative research project funded by the European commission under the 7th Framework Programme (grant agreement no. 613237), titled “Living with Hard Times: How Citizens React to Economic Crises and Their Social and Political Consequences” (LIVEWHAT), coordinated by one the guest editors of this special issue. This project aims to provide evidence-based knowledge about citizens’ resilience in times of economic crises to inform more effective policy responses to the negative consequences of such crises. It examines in particular the ways in which European citizens have reacted to the crisis that, at different degrees of intensity in different countries, has afflicted Europe since 2008, but also how citizens have dealt with economic crises and their consequences more generally. More specifically, the project has three main objectives: 1) to provide systematic evidence of the ways in which European citizens respond to economic crises and to policy responses to such crises, both individually and collectively; 2) to advance knowledge on the connections between individual factors, contextual factors, and the ways in which European citizens respond to economic crises and to policy responses to such crises; and 3) to suggest a number of good practices as to how to deal with economic crises, both at the social and political level, through which their negative consequences on European citizens can be avoided or limited. A more detailed description as well as various related documents and outputs are available on the project’s website at <http://www.livewhat.unige.ch>.

Citizens may respond to economic crises and to policy responses to such crises in a variety of ways. Firstly, citizens may respond individually (e.g., changing attitudes and behaviors) or collectively (e.g., engaging in collective action). Secondly, they may respond privately (e.g., changing lifestyle) or publicly (expressing discontent in the media). Thirdly,

they may respond politically (e.g., voting for a populist party) or non-politically (by broadening their social ties). This special issue focuses on collective responses as they express themselves in the public domain, in the form of social movements or other types of interventions. In addition, it focuses on a specific economic crisis, the one that started in 2008 and which has come to be known as the “Great Recession.”

In addition to—at least potentially—changing individual attitudes and behaviors, discontent arising from economic hardship may also lead to collective forms of reactions, including protest behavior. More generally, the analysis of collective responses to economic crises intersects with the study of political interventions by organized actors in the public domain. The public domain contains a large plurality of actors—including powerful policy makers and political elites as well as corporate actors, pressure groups civil society organizations and movements—who thus have at disposal a common arena for making public their positions, mutual conflicts, shared agreements, and so forth. While the policy domain only includes institutions and main political elites that lead processes of decision making, the public domain is opened up to different types of “publics” that are the object of policy making (Bassoli and Cinalli forthcoming; Cinalli 2010). But obviously these two domains are strongly interlinked and twined together. In particular, institutional variations are expected to affect the relationship between economic crisis, policy responses, and citizens’ resilience. On the one hand, neoinstitutionalist theories have clearly shown the institutional influence on movement forms as well the historical and institutional dependence of collective forms of political engagement (Lowndes 2010). In particular, the concept of political opportunity structures has been used to explain the levels, forms, and outcomes of collective action (Kriesi 2004; Meyer 2004). On the other hand, attention can also be focused on legal systems and rules through which collective engagement become possible. One may refer to the fact that the wide-spreading of the meaning of “rights” in the daily life of citizens has only occurred

where the same meaning was reflected in legal and institutional practices (Tarrow 1996). The legal framework has also been crucial for shaping people's conceptions of basic principles, for example, "equality" and "personhood" (Merry 1990).

In any large polity—such as the city, a larger region, and more so the national state—it is impossible for all these actors to interact publicly and directly, together, as in a face-to-face model. Consequently, they must rely to a considerable extent on the media to access and shape the public space, so as to express their position, debate the pros and cons of different policy choices, or call upon the support of general public. As a consequence, there are growing bodies of research that focus on the crucial relationship between different types of actors, their interventions, and the common public domain that is available through the media. Drawing upon protest event analysis in studies of contentious politics (Hutter 2014), some scholars have engaged with claims making (Giugni and Passy 2004; Koopmans and Statham 1999) in a way to systematically analyze roles and positions of all actors that enter national public spheres. Other scholars have dealt with the analysis of the media so as to go deeper in the assessment of cross-actor interactions and public deliberation in the whole polity as well as in specific policy fields (Cinalli and Giugni 2015; Cinalli and O'Flynn 2014; Dolezal *et al.* 2010). By acknowledging the plurality of modes of political intervention that different types of actors may use (Sanders 1997; Young 2000), a systematic analysis of the public domain has to refer to all potential forms of reactions and interventions in the public space, such as purely discursive forms (e.g., public statements, press releases, publications, and interviews), conventional forms of political action (e.g., litigation or petitioning), as well as protest forms such as demonstrations and political violence.

By tackling the distinction between institutions and public discourse, this special issue deals with the different articulations at the intersection of the policy and the public domain so as to broaden the explanatory scope of our analysis. We can thus engage with the dynamics

readjustments between the decisions that policy makers take on the one hand, and the shape of the public domain on the other, focusing on processes of (mis)matching between the public and the policy domain. In so doing, we can also evaluate whether policy actors (in their quest for political advantages) have a discourse in the public domain that is consistent with their interventions in the policy domain. Additionally, we can evaluate which readjustments do take place across institutions and discourse (Cinalli and Giugni 2016; Geddes 2008).

The articles in this special issue are all based on the same dataset, generated in the LIVEWHAT project and following the method of political claims analysis (Hutter 2014; Koopmans and Statham 1999). This method, which has proven fruitful in previous work on social movements and contentious politics (Cinalli and Giugni 2013; Giugni 2010; Koopmans *et al.* 2005), consists in retrieving interventions in the public domain on a given issue or range of issues drawing from media sources, most often—as here—newspapers. The interventions are defined as “political claims,” which are instances of strategic action in the public sphere that are political in nature. They thus consist of the expression of a political position by some form of physical or verbal action that relate to collective social problems and solutions, regardless of the form this expression takes (verbal statement, violence, repression, decision, demonstration, court ruling, etc.) and regardless of the nature of the actor (governments, social movements, NGOs, individuals, anonymous actors, etc.). Each intervention of any actor is characterized by a typical structure, which can be broken down into six main elements inquiring into the main attributes of a claim. We have thus identified the claimant (Who makes the claim?), the form (By which action is the claim inserted in the public sphere), the addressee (At whom is the claim directed?), the content (What is to be undertaken?), the object (To whom is the claim directed?), and the frame (Why should this action be undertaken?).

The data stem from a systematic content analysis of newspapers in each of the countries under study. A two-step procedure has been followed to gather the relevant content-analytic data, combining the advantages of automated search and selection of online media sources with the qualitative detail allowed by human coding. In the first step, several national newspapers have been selected (available online through sources such as Lexis-nexis). From these newspapers a representative sample of articles has been drawn through relevant keyword searches, which was then coded in the second step. We have created a comparative dataset by random sampling about 1,000 claims per country (for a total sample of 9,033 claims) selected from five newspapers in each country and covering the period from 2005 to 2014 (in Greece and Poland the number of newspapers have been reduced owing to lower online availability). The choice of newspapers has followed from the need to insure as much as possible a representative and unbiased sample. Therefore, we have included both quality newspapers and more tabloid-oriented newspapers. Furthermore, we have considered newspapers from different political orientations as well as more “neutral” newspapers. All articles containing any of the three words “crisis,” “recession, or “austerity” have been selected and coded, to the extent that they referred to the current economic crisis. The articles have been sampled from all newspaper sections, excluding editorials, through key words search. Table 1 lists the newspapers used as a source for the coding.

Table 1 about here

The data generated allow for both nationally based and cross-national comparative analyses. More specifically, they provide evidence to study collective responses to the crisis and the position of policy makers in the public domain, to examine the positions of collective actors with regard to the crisis, how they frame the crisis, its origins (diagnostic), and potential solutions (prognostic). Which collective actors more often address issues relating to the economic crisis? What do policy responses to such crisis “look like” in the public domain?

What issues are most often addressed? What causes are attributed to the crisis and by whom? What solutions are proposed and by whom? How do organized citizens react publicly to periods of crisis? Are protest activities related in some way to such periods?

The articles in this special issue address these, as well as related, questions. More generally, they all engage with the debates and dynamics mentioned earlier. Some of them address more general questions and adopt a broader comparative framework, while others have a more specific focus, in terms of the issues addressed, the countries covered, or both. The first two articles, in a way, both question the relevance and impact of the economic crisis on political claims making and point to the relevance of national features in this process.

Lorenzo Zamponi and Lorenzo Bosi (*Which Crisis? European Crisis and National Contexts in Public Discourse*) ask whether there is such a thing as “the crisis” in the European public discourse and whether this emerges as a recognizable factor. Their analysis points to a number of differences between countries that were most severely hit by the crisis on the one hand and countries that were less so on the other, but also to differences within the same group of most severely hit by the crisis. Based on that, they argue in favor of a more nuanced view of the crisis in order to account for its political consequences. The economic crisis has an impact on public discourse, but not a homogenous one. One needs to take into account national specific features in order to understand the relationship between economic crisis and political change. In this perspective, they identify four different “crises” in public discourse—the global financial crisis, the public debt and austerity crisis, the industrial productive crisis, and the political legitimacy crisis—and examine the relationship between their relative visibility and the evolution of structural factors and political change in different national contexts.

The article by Manlio Cinalli and Marco Giugni (*Collective Responses to the Economic Crisis in the Public Domain: Myth or Reality?*) questions the impact of the

economic crisis in a clear-cut and provocative fashion. They challenge the common wisdom that the Great Recession has produced radical changes in terms of political behavior and more specifically in terms of a rise in protest actions. To do so, they assess the extent to which the crisis has spurred protest activities and given socioeconomic issues a higher saliency in public debates, but also the extent to which the crisis has provided a more prominent place for economic and labor actors as subject actors, as object-actors, and as addressees in claims making about the economic crisis. Their analysis shows that the crisis has not produced such radical changes in all these aspects, although it has had some impact. More broadly, the analysis unveils the normative underpinnings of the commonly held view that the economic crisis has fed a grievance-based conflict between capital and labor, which allegedly goes beyond the specific patterns and configurations of each country.

The remaining six articles all address more specific issues. The study by Marco Giugni and Maria Grasso (*How Civil Society Actors Responded to the Economic Crisis: The Interaction of Material Deprivation and Perceptions of Political Opportunity Structures*) focuses on the role of the civil society. They examine the relationship between material deprivation—an aspect most often stressed in works on the impact of the economic crisis—and different types of responses by civil society actors. Specifically, they look at the interaction of material deprivation and perceptions of the political environment or political opportunity structures. Their findings suggest that the effect of material deprivation on various aspects of responses to the crisis by civil society actors varies depending on the perceptions of political stability and of the effectiveness of government. This suggests that such perceptions feed into the interpretation of present conditions and act as signals leading material deprivation to become politicized as a grievance.

Maria Theiss, Anna Kurowska, and Janina Petelczyc (*Whose Rights, Which Duties? Political Claims in the Sphere of Labour Policy in the Times of Crisis: The Social Citizenship*

Perspective) follow a “social citizenship perspective” and examine the discursive construction of social citizenship of labor market actors (employees, employers, and outsiders) during the crisis. Their study shows that the attribution of rights (or freedoms) to these three groups prevails and that claims supporting employees’ social rights are most often made. However, the framing of the claims varies according to the actor at hand. In this regard, they outline three kinds of discourse about the rights and duties that actors should have with respect to the labor market: in contexts of severe crisis labor organizations and groups claim the rights of employees; in contexts of moderate crisis the state (re)calls the rights of the outsiders; and in contexts in which the crisis was present in the discourse rather than in real terms, a window of opportunity has emerged for markets and employers to claim their freedoms and rights.

The article by Sabina Monza and Eva Anduiza (The Visibility of the EU in the National Public Spheres in Times of Crisis and Austerity) looks at the articulation between the national and the European level in claims making during the economic crisis. To do so, they examine the visibility of the EU in the debates that took place in the national public spheres of the nine countries included in the study. More specifically, they inquire whether the impact of the recent economic crisis and the implementation of austerity policies have advanced the presence of the EU, its member states, and European concerns in the national public spheres. Their analysis confirms previous work that has pointed to a limited presence of EU-level issues in political claims making in different fields. However, despite the very limited overall presence of the European Union and European subjects in the national debates, they find meaningful cross-national differences. In particular, Germany stands out as having a leading position conveying visibility to European claims, followed by France, Greece, and Italy, whereas Poland, Spain, and Sweden display a lower visibility of the EU, and even more so Switzerland and the UK.

While the articles described so far all analyze the entire spectrum of countries included in the LIVEWHAT project—either generally or focusing on a more specific issue—the last three contributions look at specific countries. Christian Lahusen, Maria Kousis, Johannes Kiess, and Maria Paschou (Political Claims and Discourse Formations: A Comparative Account on Germany and Greece in the Eurozone Crisis) compare public debates on the economic crisis in two countries belonging to the Eurozone: a country that has been most severely affected by the crisis (Greece) and one that has largely been spared from it (Germany). They look at the patterns governing the discursive construction of the European financial and economic crisis in these two countries. In this regard, they suggest a number of possible scenarios: a widening of country-specific cleavages between competing discourse and policy communities; a realignment of these cleavage structures in the sense of a disruption and reorganization of existing discourse communities; and a mainstreaming or dealignment of discourse communities and a convergence of debates into a hegemonic discourse. Their analysis does not validate or refute either of such scenarios, but provides important insights about the patterns and implications of “crisis discourses.” First, the crisis did not erode the political cleavages and actor constellations within the domestic policy domains. Second, the crisis did not reinforce or enlarge the antagonism between contending policy communities when speaking about policy issues and ideas. More generally, while their findings point to a number of differences between the Greek and German public debates, they also show that the dealignment of political cleavages in both countries stresses a seemingly underlying mainstreaming process that limits the diversity of crisis-related claims.

The last two articles focuses on the British case. Luke Temple, Maria Grasso, Barbara Buraczynska, Sotirios Karampampas, and Patrick English (Neoliberal Narrative in Times of Economic Crisis: A Political Claims Analysis of the UK Press, 2007-2014) engage with the debate of the place of neoliberal thinking and policies in times of economic crisis. They show

that press coverage of the financial crisis, recession, and austerity in the UK drew heavily on a neoliberal discourse. Political, market, and civil society actors discussed the impact of hard times on people using a reductionist neoliberal narrative, framing people as economic actors and consistently underplaying any social or political traits. Thus they find a strong overlap in language utilized by market actors and political actors, and by actors from the opposing two main parties, particularly from 2010 onwards. While civil society actors were more likely to break away from this neoliberal mold, the stories which they told were from many reference points, with no evidence of a coherent counter-narrative. More generally, by examining communicative rather than coordinative discourse, the authors expand the focus of previous studies that have examined the embeddedness of ideology in society, and highlight potential links to studies of citizen participation and mobilization.

Finally, the article by Patrick English, Maria Grasso, Barbara Buraczynska, Sotirios Karampampas, and Luke Temple (*Convergence on Crisis? Comparing Labour and Conservative Party Framing of the Economic Crisis, 2008-2014*) looks in further detail at the ways in which the two main British political parties framed the economic crisis. More specifically, they examine the impact of the financial crisis—seen as a “critical juncture” for British politics—on the consensus that has been forming in the UK since the 1980s regarding the ideological primacy of the market and Thatcherite politics. The authors examine whether this Downsian model of political convergence showed any change in direction between 2008 and 2014. This is of particular interest in the UK context since the Labour Party left office in 2010 after being in power for 13 years. Findings show that, despite the critical juncture offered by crisis, the consensus was maintained and the Labour and the Conservatives adopted very similar framings and narratives of the economic crisis in their public discourses. The authors conclude that such narratives and frames are very much part of a continued Thatcherite, neoliberal understanding and practices in British politics. Taken together, these

two articles show how the neoliberal discourse is deeply embedded in British politics and society and that, even important external “shocks” such as the financial crisis, have not overturned this state of affairs.

In conclusion, this special issue offers an articulated argument about the political relevance of the Great Recession, well beyond a mere economic reading of the crisis. While the economic aspects and indicators have largely been discussed by academics and public pundits, more work remains for the social sciences to digging into the varied meanings, effects, and implications of the Great Recession for European politics. This special issue sheds light on just a few, yet crucial trends for the politics of crisis. Among the main results, we find that the crisis opens up opportunities for different discourses in different countries, even when these latter are similar in the economics of crisis. Contrary to common opinion, we argue that the crisis does not translate necessarily into political action, even when focusing specifically on the reaction of civil society. We also stress the possibility to distinguish between an objective crisis on the one hand and a subjective crisis on the other, both of which imply different roles for main political actors as well as variable dealignments in terms of traditional cleavages. In addition, the Great Recession can be appreciated in its quality of strong test to evaluate the articulation between Europe and the national state, as well as the resilience of the neo-liberal *entente* between left-wing and right-wing politics across the public and the policy domain.

Ultimately, in our quality of members of the scholarly community, in this special issue we continue to analyze what is politically at stake with the crisis. The limits of a purely economic approach may well hide different attempts to elaborate and disseminate different discourses following the different normative stand of different actors. So this is special issue comes to complement a broader effort of the scholarly community that must consist in dedicating publications, conferences, and working group discussions to knowledge that gives

as a better view of the multiple political crises that comes together with the Great Recession. Confused by fear-mongering and economic technicalities, it is time for the Europeans to appreciate the multiple facets, in their structure and in their construction, of the Great Recession. This latter is, in our argument, a powerful enterprise of politics that lies entirely within the political realm.

About the Authors

Manlio Cinalli is Research Professor at CEVIPOF (CNRS - UMR 7048), Sciences Po Paris. He has delivered teaching and research in various leading universities and institutes across Europe and the US, including Columbia University, the University of Oxford, the University of Geneva, and the *École Française de Rome*. Drawing upon a comparative relational approach and multi-methods research, he has published widely on citizenship, exclusion, ethnic relations, and migration. He has many large grant awards in related research fields that have contributed more than £2.5M of research funding to host institutions.

Marco Giugni is a professor at the Department of Political Science and International Relations and Director of the Institute of Citizenship Studies (InCite) at the University of Geneva, Switzerland. His research interests include social movements, and collective action, immigration and ethnic relations, unemployment and social exclusion.

Table 1: Newspapers Used as Source for the Coding of Claims Making

France	Germany	Greece	Italy	Poland	Spain	Sweden	Switzerland	UK
Libération	Bild	Kathimerini	La Repubblica	Dziennik Gazeta Prawna	El País	Dagens Nyheter	Neue Zürcher Zeitung	Daily Mail
Le Figaro	Süddeutsche Zeitung	Rizospastis	La Stampa	Gazeta Wyborcza	La Vanguardia	Svenska Dagbladet	Blick	Daily Mirror
Le Monde	Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung	Ta Nea	Corriere della Sera	Rzecznik Pospolitej	El Periodico de Catalunya	Aftonbladet	Tagesanzeiger	The Guardian
Le Parisien	Welt	To Vima	Il Giornale		ABC	Göteborgs Posten	Le Matin	The Sun
La Tribune	Frankfurter Rundschau		Il Sole 24		El Mundo	Norrbottens-Kuriren	Le Temps	The Times

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