

**Ever Less Engaged Citizens?
Political Participation and
Associational Membership in Spain**

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Political Participation and Civic Engagement: a Crisis of Involvement?

Arguments about the alleged crisis of political participation and civic engagement are relatively common these days. From electoral participation to associational life, involvement in the public arena is said to be declining (Putnam, 1995a and b, 2000). Citizens are becoming more critical and are also more distrustful of different social and political institutions (see the collection of articles in Norris, 1999a and Pharr and Putnam, 2000). Civic malaise discussions are, again, defining the research agenda of political science. Although several studies and publications have already established that there is no justified reason to speak about a “crisis of democracy” (most notably, Kaase and Newton, 1995; Klingemann and Fuchs, 1995; and Norris, 1999b), some authors make the case of, at least, a crisis of engagement. In this vein, Putnam has argued in several of his works (1995a and b, 2000) that the American public is ever less engaged in public affairs. Some of Putnam’s theses about engagement decline have already been counter-argued by several European researchers (Norris, 1999b and 2002; De Hart and Dekker, 1999; Hall, 1999; Selle and Strømsnes, 2001). Other pieces of evidence were already there before Putnam started to promote his own view of the situation. In this sense, Topf (1995) noted that, with the exception of Spain and Finland, the political action repertoire had been increasing since the 1980s. Similarly, Gundelach (1995) found that grass-roots activity had increased in most European countries, again but in Spain.

As we see, even if the general argument of civic engagement decline is probably not applicable to all western countries, some of the available evidence would suggest that this could be the case for Spain.

Most Spanish analysts seem to agree that, after a period of greater citizen mobilization before, during and immediately after the transition to democracy Spaniards retreated from politics and regained their traditional passivity (Linz, 1971 and 1981; Maravall, 1981: 28-31; McDonough, Barnes and López Pina, 1984; Sastre, 1995 and 1997; Torcal, 1995). Some

authors even argue that the Spanish transition to democracy was not particularly accompanied by a mobilized citizenry, since the transition was mainly elite-driven and Spanish political parties intentionally pursued a strategy of demobilization to facilitate elite agreements (Sastre, 1995 and 1997). This version has, nevertheless, been contended by other researchers that argue that conflict was much more present than it is usually admitted (Desfor Edles, 1998). In any case, the general consensus would be that political participation and civic engagement has been declining in Spain lately. Could we, then, be facing one of Hirschman's (1982) waves of retreat to the private sphere?

In addition, Spain stands out as one of the western countries with lower levels of political participation and civic involvement. Together with other southern European nations, Spain shows some of the lowest levels of interest in politics, political discussion and associational membership (see Figure 1 and Table 1). Accordingly, Spain has been described as a demobilized and apathetic society.

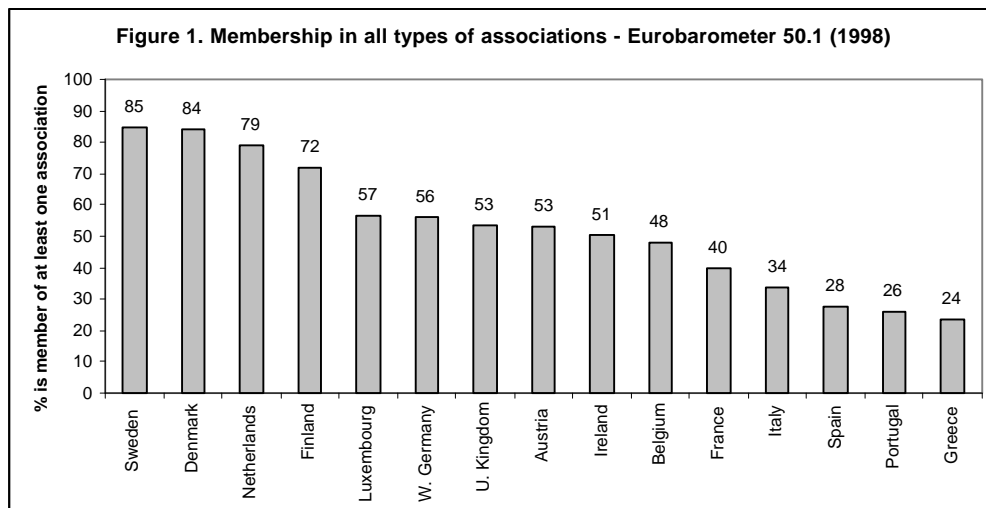


Table 1

Political involvement: Spain in the European context

	No interest in politics			Never discuss politics			Not close to any political party		
	1980 WVS	1990 EB	1998 EB	1980 WVS	1990 EB	1998 EB	1987 EB	1990 EB	1996 EB
Denmark	14	6	4	20	22	27	29	38	36
Germany	15	12	12	20	20	19	32	38	48
Netherlands	24	11	8	26	24	36	23	20	28
Luxemburg		17	15		31	42	46	47	38
U. Kingdom	28	15	22	37	31	48	48	46	53
France	26	23	24	37	36	37	45	45	39
Greece		14	27		16	55	30	24	45
Italy	47	28	24	47	32	36	33	40	39
Ireland	46	28	34	51	43	48	57	60	60
Bélgium	54	31	28	56	47	40	48	54	47
Spain	40	45	33	30	54	35	62	57	49
Portugal		41	39		56	56	33	42	25
EU average	33	23	22	36	34	40	40	43	42

Sources: WVS=World Values Survey, EB=Eurobarometer. All figures are percentages

There is no fundamental debate around this description of Spanish society. However, this paper discusses the truth in the more pessimistic visions of political participation in Spain. Are Spaniards really less engaged in politics than they were 20 years ago?

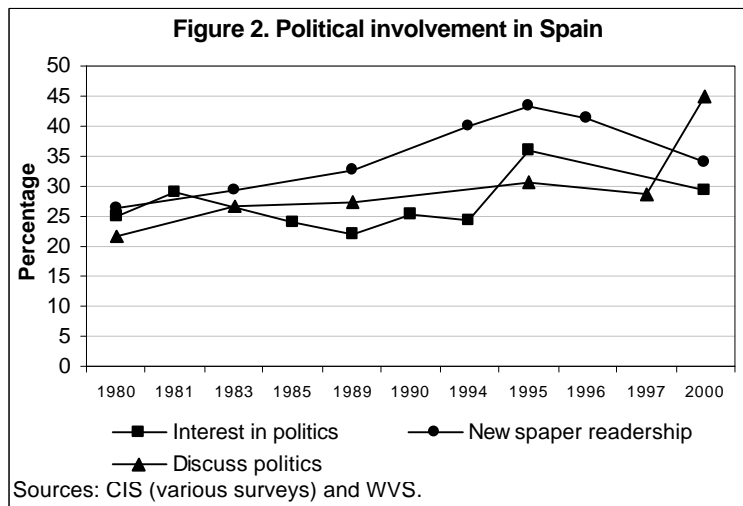
Ever Less Engaged? A Descriptive Approach to the Spanish Case

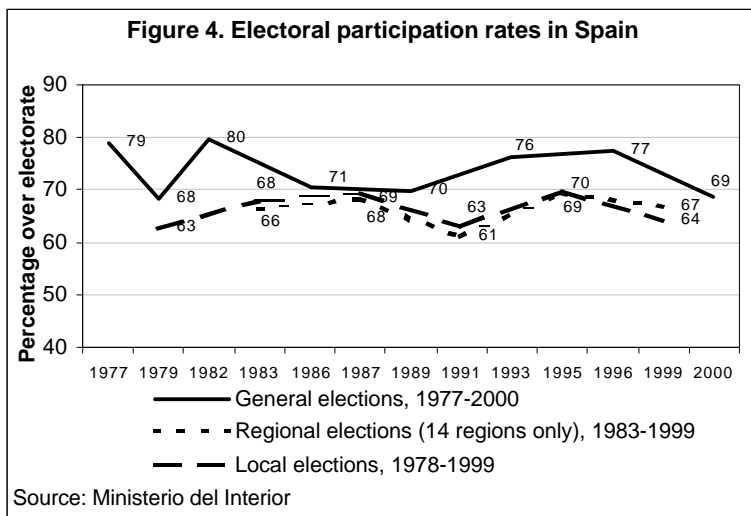
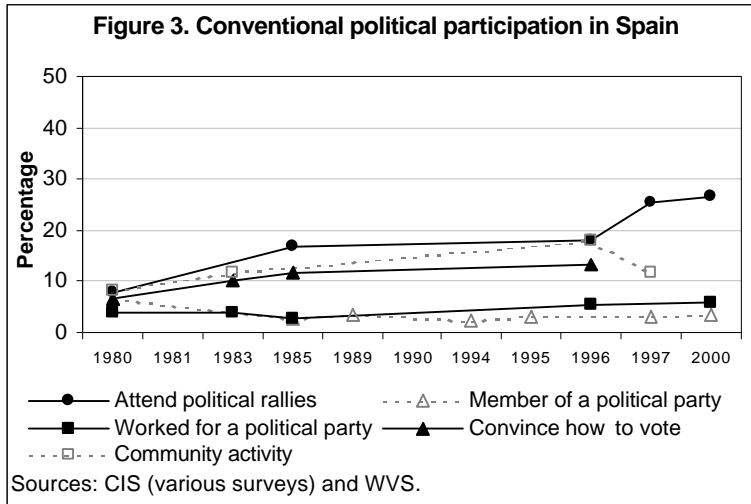
Although political participation has received a certain degree of attention from Spanish pollsters, the time series we already have are far from perfect. Interestingly enough, leaving aside voting, nonconventional forms of political participation are much more frequently among the forms of political action included in Spanish surveys. Thus, we are able to give a fuller account of the evolution of protest participation in Spain.

A first thing we note from a descriptive exploration is the absence of a general trend of decreasing citizen engagement with politics. Figures 2 to 6 show the evolution of various forms of citizen involvement and participation between 1980 and 2000¹. If anything, we can argue that there

is no single pattern of increasing or decreasing engagement for Spanish citizens. While some forms of involvement are becoming more popular, other seem to remain more or less stable.

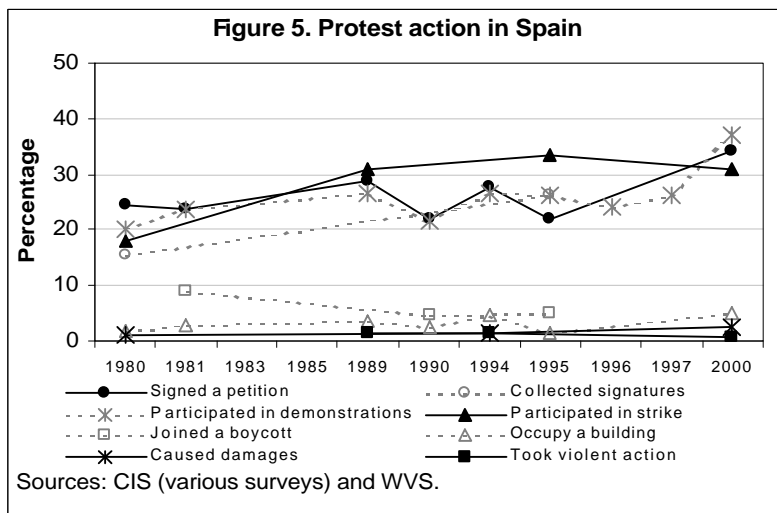
Spaniards have, although modestly, become more attentive to political affairs (see Figure 2). The available data show a certain degree of instability or measurement error, but it seems safe to say that –at least– involvement in politics has not decreased since the 1980s. Quite on the contrary, newspaper readership has been constantly increasing until the mid-1990s, political discussions are more frequent nowadays than two decades ago², and political interest has remained within levels of 20-30% with periodical ups and downs.

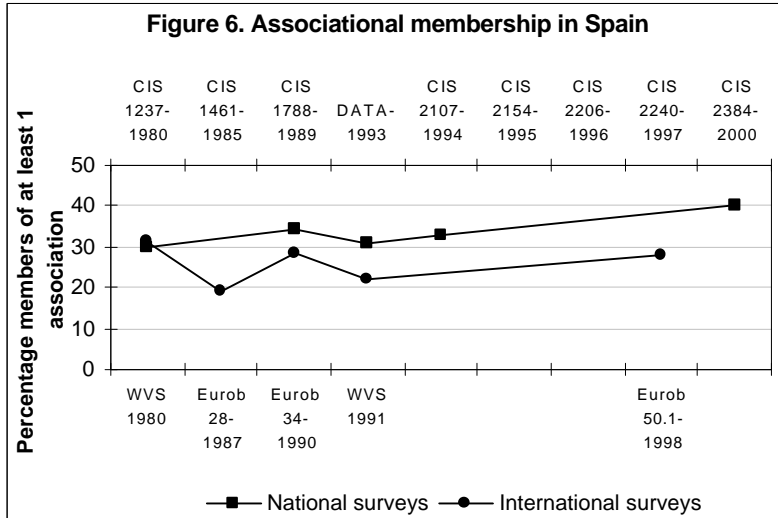




In what regards the different forms of political participation, I will use here the classical distinction between conventional and nonconventional action for illustrative purposes³. To the extent that we can find no homogeneous pattern within each type of political action, this distinction is not very useful for our longitudinal analyses. Some conventional actions (see Figure 3) are nowadays more frequent,

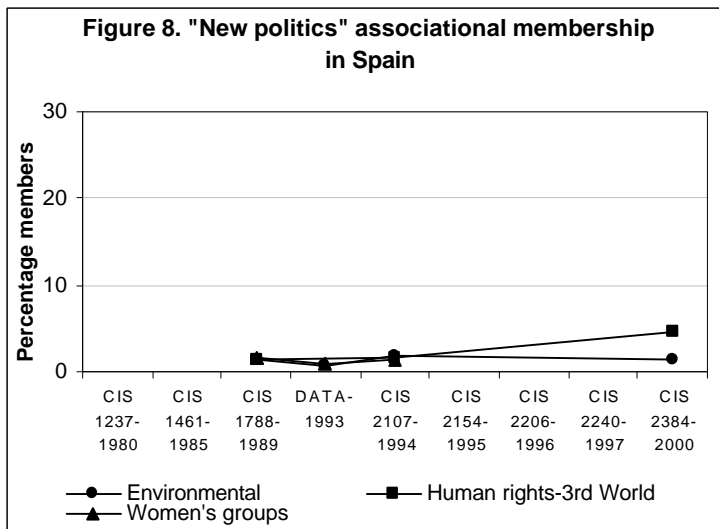
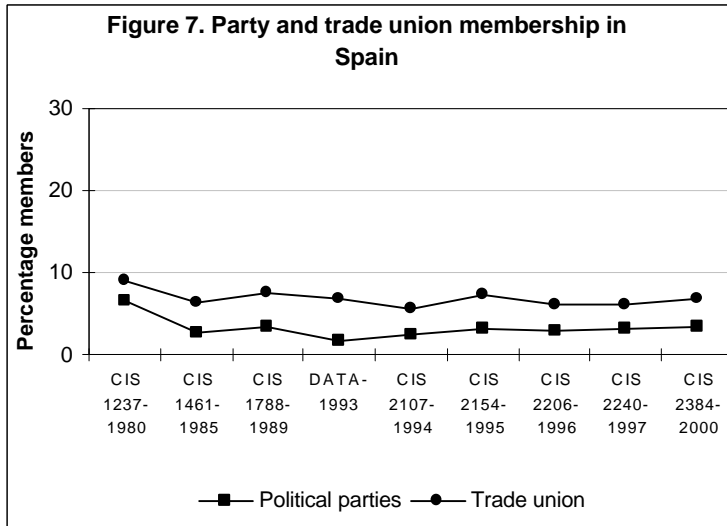
particularly attending political rallies and convincing others how to vote, than in the 1980s and the rest have remained at stable levels. In addition, electoral participation rates (Figure 4) have not systematically declined in the last two decades. Ups and downs are frequent and pronounced depending on the electoral cycle, but the high abstention level of 2000 is not very different to that we had in 1979. Therefore, with the exception of party membership, there has apparently been no retreat from the political arena for Spaniards after the so-called “honey-moon” with democracy in the late 1970s-early 1980s. And even in the case of party membership, the trend has not been of a constant decline, but rather of stability after an initial period of adjustment. If we turn to protest action (Figure 5), the pattern is clearly one of increasing citizen engagement in the political arena⁴. Participation in strikes and in demonstrations, and signing petitions is now more common than twenty years ago. Between 20 and 35 percent of the Spanish adult population have protested in any of these forms⁵. On the other hand, more aggressive forms of political participation have remained at constant and reduced levels in Spain.

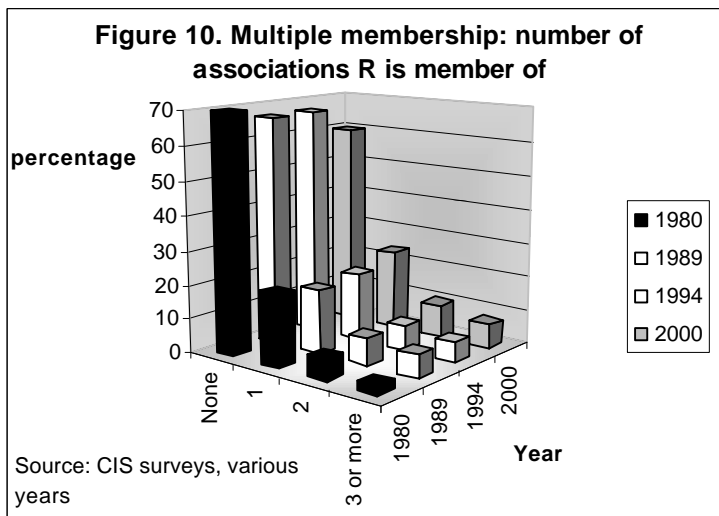
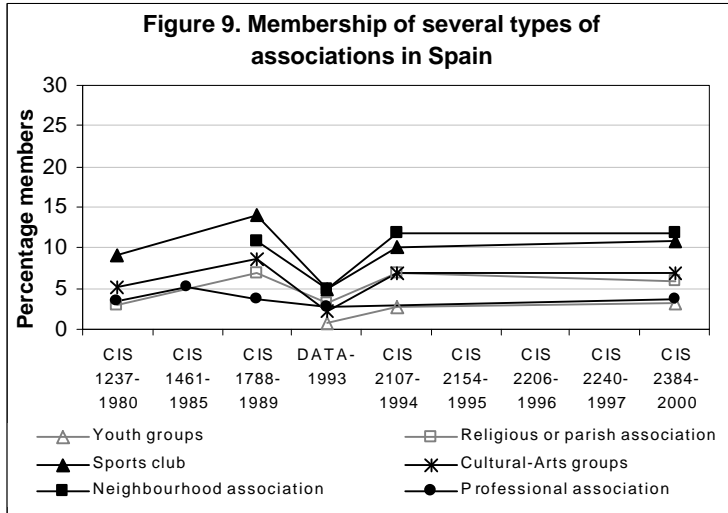




Civic engagement, as measured by associational membership, has not declined either. Quite on the contrary, Spaniards seem to be more involved in associational life than they were two decades ago (Figure 6)⁶. However, this general trend of increasing membership has not benefited the more politically oriented associations. Neither political parties nor trade unions have been able to boost their membership figures and they have to content themselves with stable trends (Figure 7). Similarly, the so-called “new politics” associational world has not been able to attract Spanish citizens to their organizations (Figure 8). Although Spaniards are now more willing to join different sorts of protest initiatives, they do not seem willing to commit themselves further. The one exception is the slight increase in membership rates of human rights and 3rd World development groups. This is mainly due to the growing popularity of all sorts of NGOs, which is a more general phenomenon in western countries, and is still reduced in magnitude in Spain as compared, for example, with the Netherlands or Belgium (see Morales, 2002). Increases are not widespread either if we consider membership of other types of associations (Figure 9)⁷. Finally, although the increasing levels of engagement in associations are mostly

reduced to single memberships, multiple memberships have also increased in the last decades (see Figure 10), thus contributing to reject the idea of a decline in civic engagement in Spain.





As we see, a purely descriptive approach to the evolution of citizen engagement in Spain since the 1980s shows no support for a hypothesis of declining involvement in politics. In the last twenty years Spaniard's psychological involvement with politics (interest, discussion and newspaper readership) seems to be increasing, conventional forms of political

participation are mostly stable or slightly decreasing, electoral turnout is not in decline, mild forms of protest action are becoming more popular, while the more aggressive forms have remained stable, and associational memberships are modestly increasing.

However, it might well be that while we find no aggregate pattern of civic disengagement, fundamental social changes are taking place that will bring in the short or medium term a decline in citizen involvement in Spain. The civic orientation and behaviour of the various generations that form our society may be very different. A generational approach is needed to properly evaluate the hypothesis of a decline in civic engagement in Spain.

A Generational Approach to the Evolution of Citizen Engagement in Spain

As a “young” democracy, Spain is still in the process of constructing a consistent political culture. Many students of Spanish politics and society (Montero and Torcal, 1990; Torcal, 1992; Torcal, 1995; Montero, Gunther and Torcal, 1998; Torcal and Montero, 1999) have stressed the importance of generational differences in attitudes and behaviour and of generational replacement for the process of attitude change in Spain. A generational approach to the evolution of citizen engagement in Spain will allow us to test two different hypotheses.

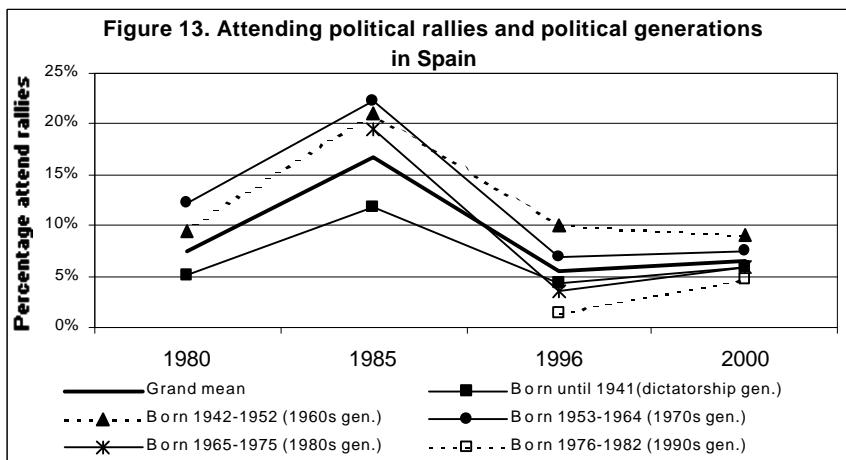
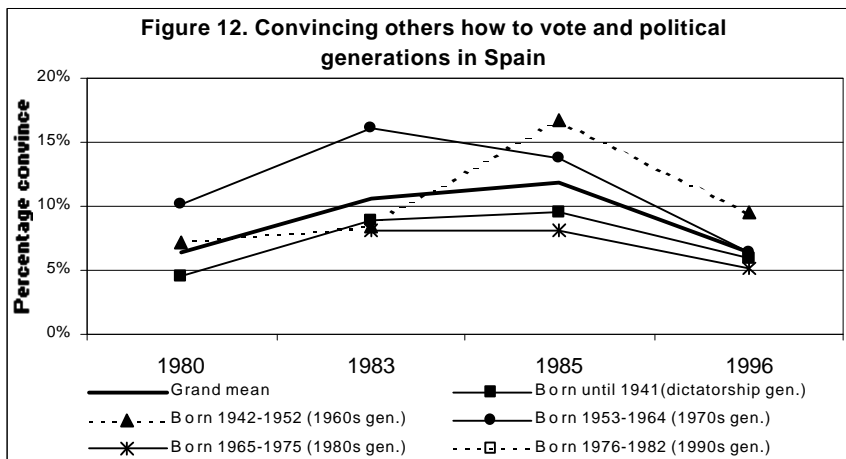
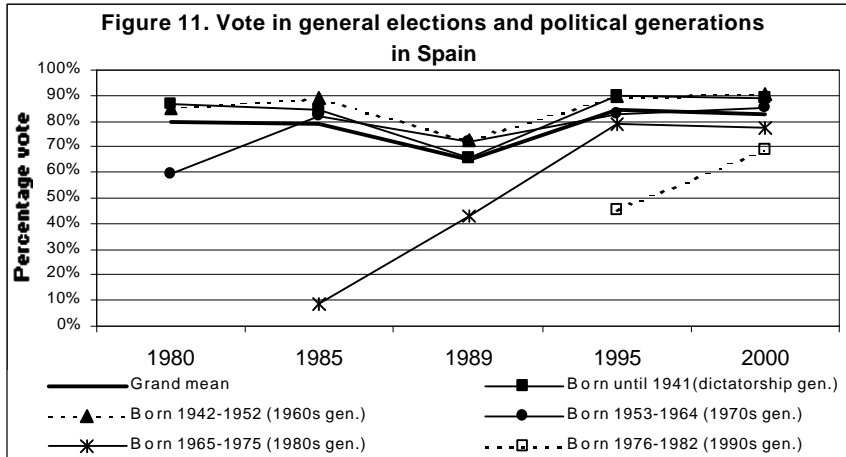
On the one hand, Putnam’s arguments about the decline of civic engagement (2000) introduce the hypothesis that it is the older generations, mainly those who were the adult population in the post-World War II, the ones to have starred the “golden age” of civic engagement (at least in the US). We have already seen that in Spain there has been no such decline during the democratic period, however we might think that generational replacement could in the medium term produce a decline in civic engagement if the younger generations are less prone to get involved in the public arena. That is, even if there has not existed a golden age of civic involvement in Spain, there might be a “civic generation”; a generation

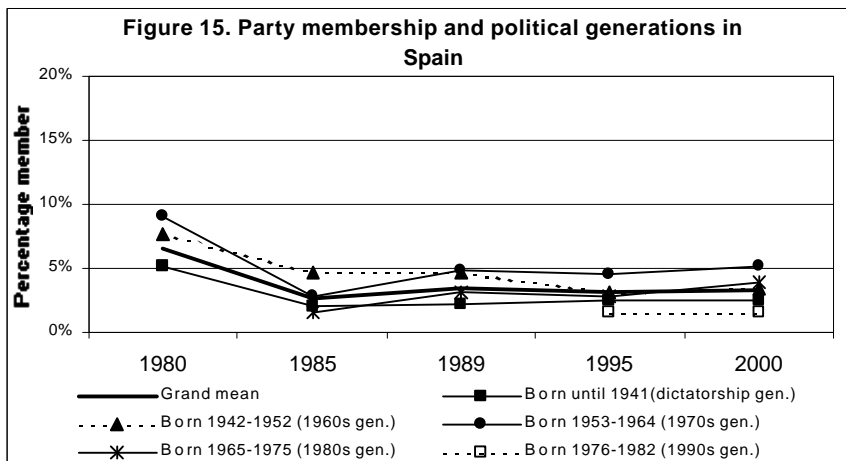
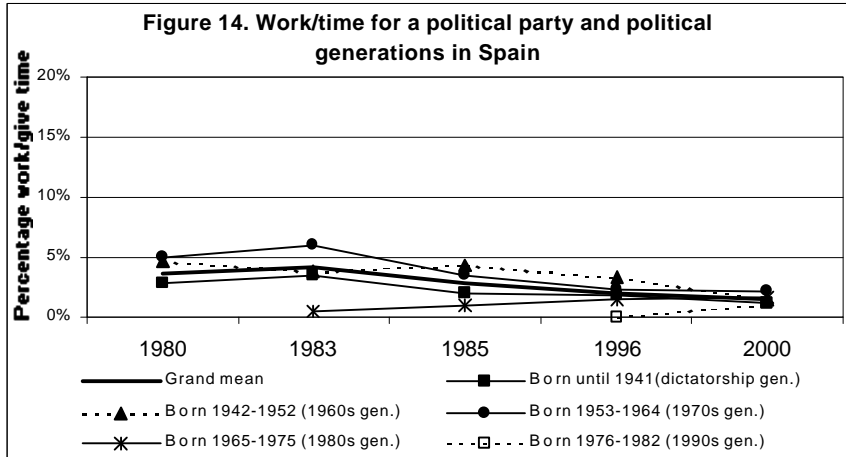
with outstanding levels of civic participation when compared to other generations.

A second hypothesis that this type of analysis will enable to test is related to an alternative view of generational replacement and political involvement, which relates to the specificities of the Spanish case. As mentioned before, Spanish students of democratic political culture have argued that democratic behaviours and attitudes will, if anything, expand in Spain with generational replacement. From this point of view, the younger generations, already educated and socialised in a democratic environment, will bring with them attitudes of greater legitimacy and support for democracy. If this is the case we would also expect generational replacement to foster citizen political involvement and democratic practices, rather than a decline in citizen engagement.

Nevertheless, both hypotheses could be confounded by a parallel process of change in participation patterns; or, as Pippa Norris (2002) has recently put it, with the *reinvention* of political activism. Longitudinal and generational trends could well vary substantially across types of political engagement. In fact, according to Putnamian-style accounts we would expect younger generations to become increasingly disengaged from the more conventional and traditional forms of participation: voting, electoral and party politics, and traditional associational memberships. While following Norris (2002) we would, in addition, expect the younger to engage more enthusiastically in new forms of participation and in protest behaviour⁸. Thus, the generational analyses that follow will distinguish between different forms of civic engagement in order to get a clearer perspective.

Figures 11 to 15 show the generational patterns of engagement of five political generations⁹ for different forms of participation in electoral and party politics. A quick analysis of these graphs uncovers mixed results and patterns.





Firstly, not in all cases are generational differences neither statistically nor substantially significant. Working for a political party and being a party member are so rare forms of political participation that generational differences are in most years negligible. Generational differences are most noticeable for voting and convincing others how to vote.

Secondly, the patterns we see are a mixture of cohort and age effects. It is true that the younger generations, the 1980s and 1990s

cohorts, are less likely to participate in any form of electoral and party politics. However, it is also true that, as the years go by, both generations gradually approach the behaviour of their elders. This is most clearly seen with regard to voting in general elections (Figure 11), but it is a general pattern for all forms of conventional participation. And a detailed observation of all figures shows that generational differences tend to decrease substantially when we reach the year 2000. A similar conclusion is to be reached with regard to the oldest generation, the dictatorship cohort. In general terms, this generation has been less involved in politics than the 1960s and 1970s generations. Nevertheless, in some instances, as they have become older, the members of the former cohort have become more engaged. In other instances the behaviour of the oldest generation is not very different to that of the 1960s or 1970s generation.

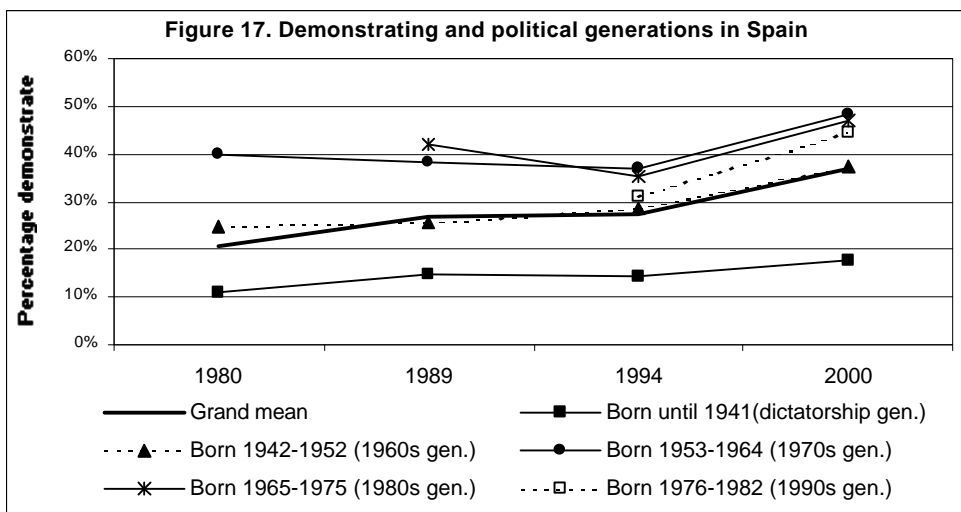
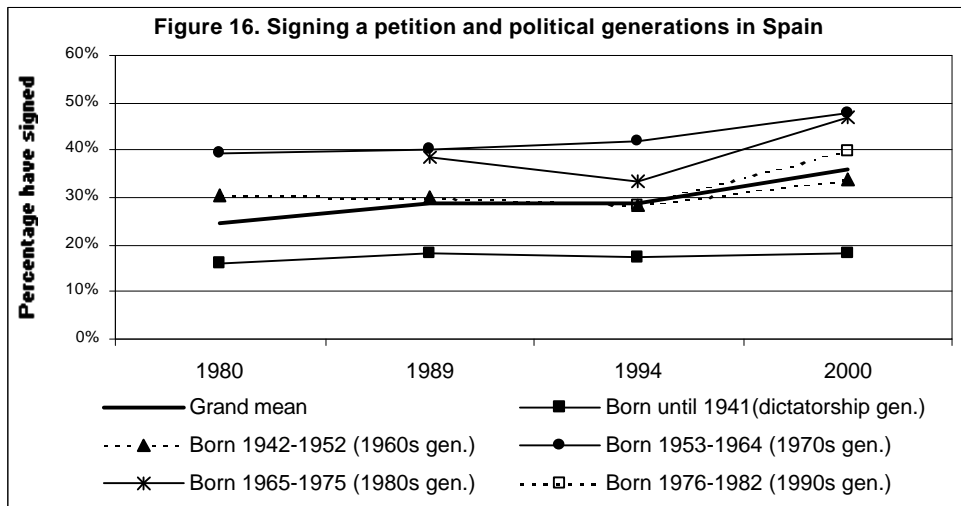
Finally, there is no clear “civic generation” in what concerns the electoral and partisan forms of engagement. While the 1960s generation is in all cases among the most participatory cohorts, it usually shares this top ranks with either the dictatorship or the 1970s generations. In addition, the fact that this is the only cohort to have been in their middle years of adulthood (between 30 and 60 years) during the whole 20-years period makes it difficult to say if it has a really distinctive behaviour as a generation or if these results reflect the common “inverted-u” age pattern.

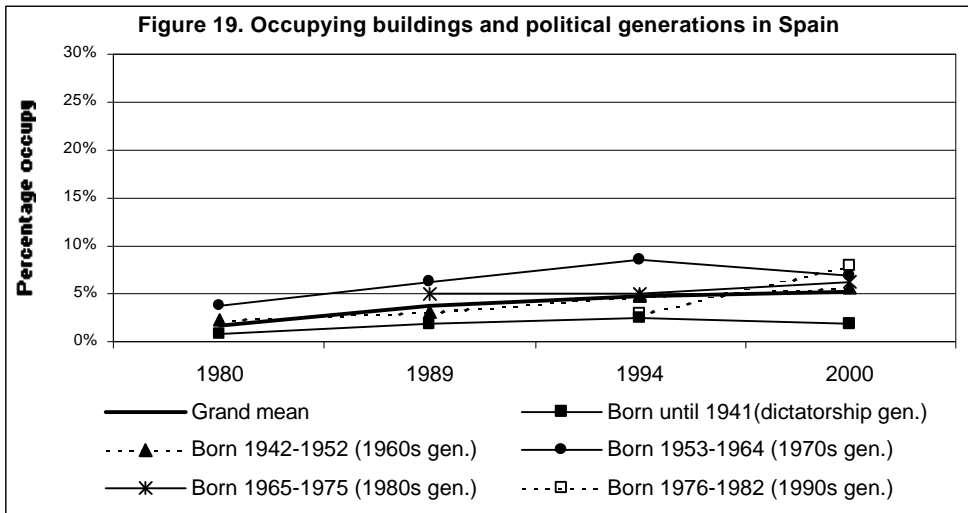
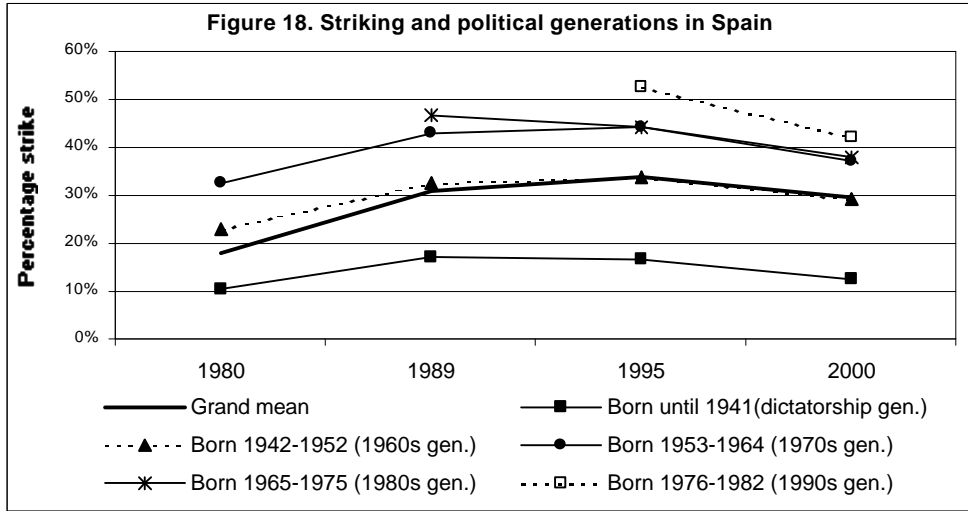
Are generational patterns the same when we consider protest action? As we said before, we could expect higher levels of engagement from the younger generation in the more unconventional forms of political involvement.

Figures 16 to 19 show protest behaviour by cohort in Spain¹⁰. A first insight we get from the comparison between these trends and those of electoral and partisan participation is that generational patterns are somewhat different. As expected, younger cohorts are more likely to protest than older ones. Another important aspect is that there are no substantial differences in the protest behaviour of the three youngest generations. Although the 1970s generation tends to be the most active in all forms of protest, the 1980s and 1990s generations display –in most

occasions— similar levels of participation and sometimes even surpass the former (as in strike activity and building occupation).

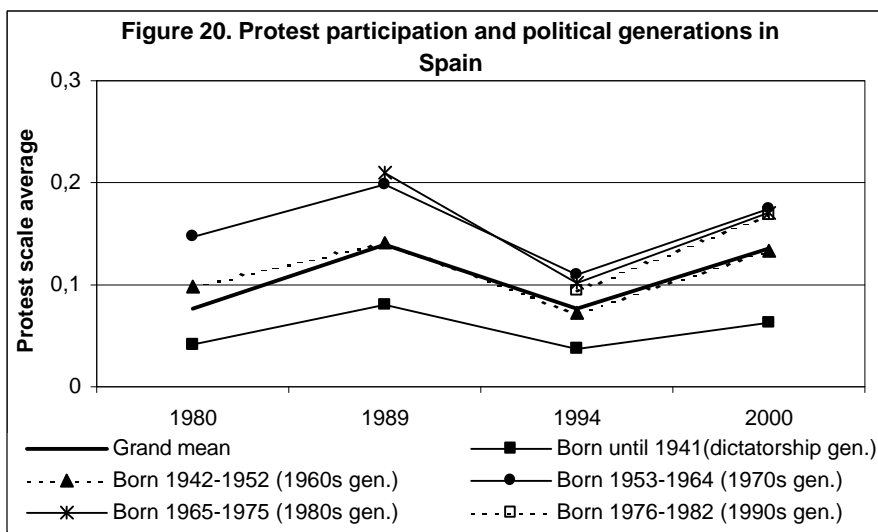
Secondly, cohort effects are much more clear for protest action than for electoral and partisan participation. Indeed, the trends for each generation are usually quite stable and age effects are not very apparent. The dictatorship generation shows the lowest levels of protest engagement and the 1960s generation is usually around the average, and these patterns do not substantially change as they grow older. Nor do the younger generations vary their behaviours as time goes by —beyond the common period effects that are visible¹¹.





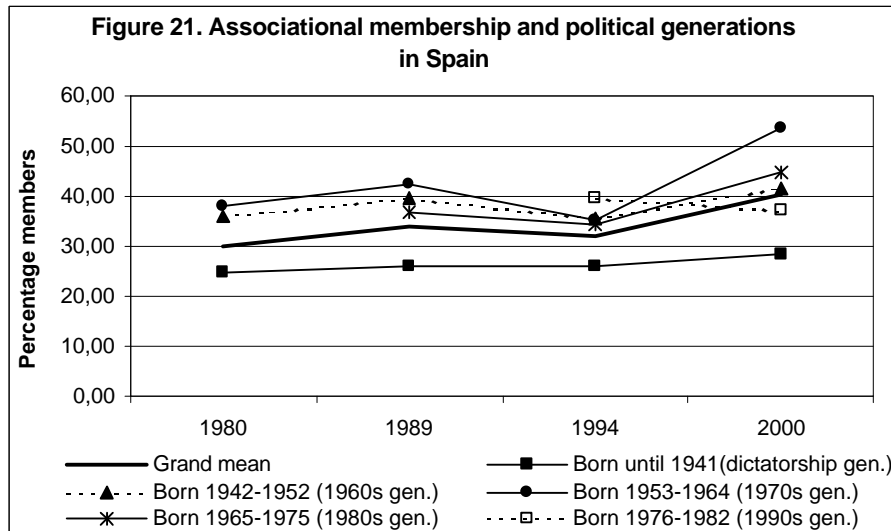
Finally, the trends for protest behaviour show that, while the younger generations might not be clearly “reinventing” political activism, they are not clearly retreating from politics either. The youngest citizens are equally likely to demonstrate and participate in strikes¹² as their predecessor generations are, and they are not very different to other generations in what regards signing a petition and occupying buildings. In

fact, when the whole protest repertoire is jointly considered –as measured by an additive scale¹³– the three youngest cohorts (1970s, 1980s and 1990s generations) appear as almost indistinguishable (Figure 20). In this sense, it does seem that protest action has already been incorporated to the citizenship “tool kit” of Spaniards and that it is here to stay, since the younger citizens are not more passive in voicing their demands than are middle age adults.



A final aspect of generational variations in civic engagement that we explore in these pages is associational membership. While generational differences are clear for protest action, they are less so for these organised forms of citizen participation (Figure 21). It certainly seems that the 1970s generation is the most engaged in organisations, but it is also the one with a more erratic associational behaviour, and it also looks like the youngest cohorts are not substantially less involved in associations than one of the generally most civic generations: the 1960s generation. In addition, the increasing trend of associational engagement is common to the three intermediate generations, while the youngest and oldest cohorts show more stable patterns. What is, nevertheless, clear is that the dictatorship

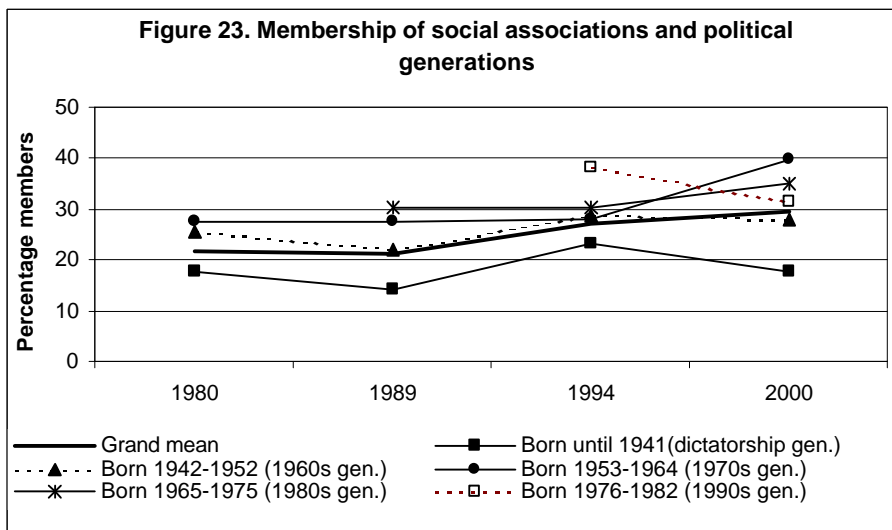
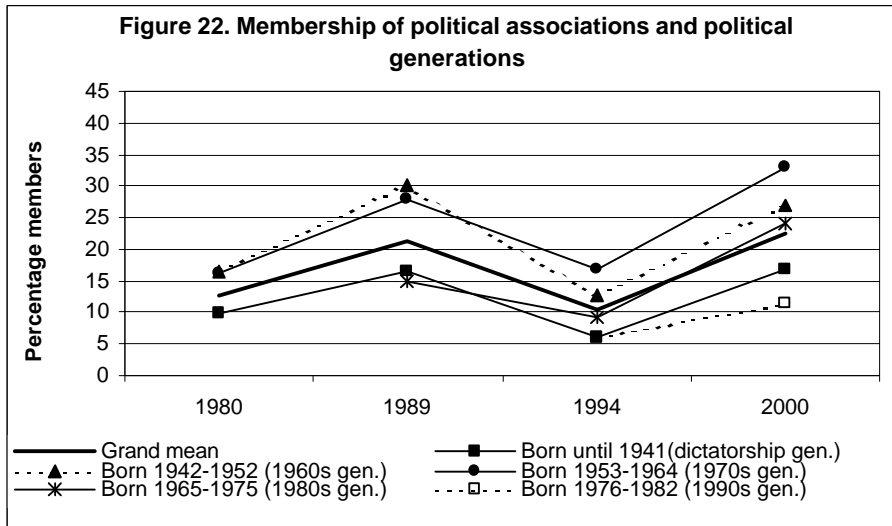
generation is, by far, the least organisationally involved –as it was already with regard to protest action.



Are these patterns the same for all types of associations? Does the behaviour of the generations vary depending on the domain of action of the organisations? In the next Figures we distinguish between politically –and socially– oriented associations (Figures 22 and 23).

It does seem that the type of organisation is relevant to understand the membership patterns of Spanish cohorts. Politically oriented associations seem to be far more attractive to the generations that were socialised around the transition to democracy: the 1960s and 1970s cohorts. Both the dictatorship and the 1990s generations are quite reluctant to join these types of groups, while the 1980s generation conforms to the average trend. In contrast, the youngest cohorts are both over the average levels of socially oriented associational membership, while the dictatorship generation remains the least involved. This fact introduces important nuances to the general picture: after all, it might well be that younger citizens are not retiring to the private sphere but that they are just in the

process of redefining the type of associational engagement they will promote.



In summary, we find limited evidence in the Spanish case that would support the argument about a decline of involvement from the

youngest generations. This hypothesis seems to be truer for engagement in political organizations and in electoral-partisan politics than for other forms of participation. Younger generations are extensively involved in protest forms of participation and are engaged in socially oriented associations at average levels. In addition, although in many instances the youngest generation (1990s) is less involved in public affairs, there seems to be a certain age effect that will push this cohort towards more average levels, in terms of their political behaviour.

On the other hand, to a certain extent, in the Spanish case it is possible to identify two “civic generations” and not only one. Spaniards politically socialised during the 1960s and 1970s are, undoubtedly, more active in politics than other older and younger generations. Nevertheless, the 1960s cohort seems to have concentrated their involvement in the more conventional electoral and partisan forms of participation, whereas the 1970s generation has a wider repertoire and participates extensively through protest actions and all sorts of associations.

However, the descriptive accounts shown so far, while useful for getting the broad picture about trends and patterns, are not very informative about the relative importance of generational membership. In fact, in many cases there is doubt that many of the patterns we see are to be attributed to cohort effects instead of being accounted for by age effects. The next section will provide a more detailed analysis of the relative importance of age and generational membership.

A Multivariate Analysis of Generational Differences in Civic Engagement

Is there really a generational divide in political participation in Spain? Or, are the differences in behaviour that we find across the various cohorts due to a certain overlap between middle-aged citizens and certain generations for the last 20 years? Although the survey data available for answering this question is limited, we can test cohort and age effects by pooling several datasets from different years together.

The multivariate analyses presented in the following pages have been estimated from a pooled dataset that combines CIS studies 1237 (1980), 1461 (1985), 1788 (1989) and 2382-2384 (2000 elections panel)¹⁴. Forms of engagement have been divided in its main five dimensions: voting, electoral-partisan participation, mild forms of protest action, aggressive forms of protest action, and associational membership¹⁵. To reduce the problems due to noncoverage of certain participation items across these four surveys, each dimension is measured with a dichotomous variable so that participation in any act will identify the respondent as a participant in that dimension, and no information on the extent of the individual's repertoire is analysed. Table 2 presents the main descriptives of the five dependent variables used in subsequent analyses and their distribution across the four surveys pooled in the dataset.

Table 2
Descriptives of the dependent variables

Year	Voting		Electoral-partisan		Mild protest		Aggressive protest		Associational membership	
	yes	Total N	yes	Total N	yes	Total N	yes	Total N	yes	Total N
1980	2089	2666	519	3647	1251	3647	222	3647	1136	3647
%	78.4	100	14.2	100	34.3	100	6,1	100	31,1	100
1985	2874	3652	797	3652	0	3652	0	3652	1048	3652
%	78.7	100	21.8	100	0	100	0	100	28,7	100
1989	2287	3638	158	3648	1622	3648	197	3648	1278	3648
%	62.9	100	4.3	100	44.5	100	5,4	100	35,0	100
2000	3034	3649	298	3649	1930	3648	204	3648	1470	3648
%	83.1	100	8.2	100	52.9	100	5,6	100	40,3	100
Total	10284	13605	1772	14596	4803	14595	623	14595	4932	14595
%	75.6	100	12.1	100	32.9	100	4,3	100	33,8	100

Table 3 presents the results of five logistic multivariate regression analyses carried out with the pooled dataset. The main goal of these analyses is not to provide good models of each form of engagement, but to be able to discern cohort from age effects on the variations in participation we have seen in the previous descriptive analyses¹⁶. If, when controlling for the effects of age, membership of a given generation has a statistically significant effect we will be able to argue more forcefully that generations behave in a different way. If the coefficients related to the cohorts are not

significant we will infer that it is not so much the generation that matters but other aspects related to the life cycle. In addition, other variables that might be related to a differential participatory behaviour of the various cohorts are included. Different levels of education, interest in politics or feelings of internal efficacy could be the reason for greater or lesser engagement in the public arena.

As we see, in all cases generational differences remain even after controlling for the effects of age and of other factors¹⁷. In the cases of aggressive protest action the coefficients of the two youngest cohorts are not statistically significant due to the more reduced number of cases for these generations. And, in general terms, we already saw that the differences between all cohorts for this more rare form of political action were quite small in any case.

Table 3
Multivariate logistic analyses of generational differences in engagement (pooled dataset: 1980-2000)

	Voting			Electoral-partisan			Mild protest			Aggressive protest			Associational membership		
	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	B	Sig.	Exp(B)	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Dictat. gen.	-0.50	0.00	0.61	0.46	0.00	1.58	-0.76	0.00	0.47	-0.33	0.06	0.72	-0.28	0.00	0.76
1970s gen.	0.28	0.00	1.32	-0.56	0.00	0.57	0.79	0.00	2.21	0.25	0.07	1.28	0.19	0.00	1.21
1980s gen.	-0.17	0.10	0.84	-1.47	0.00	0.23	1.48	0.00	4.40	-0.11	0.55	0.90	0.21	0.02	1.23
1990s gen. (1960s gen.)	0.99	0.00	2.70	-2.10	0.00	0.12	2.31	0.00	10.07	0.36	0.13	1.44	0.12	0.36	1.13
Age	0.20	0.00	1.22	-0.08	0.00	0.92	0.12	0.00	1.13	0.00	0.93	1.00	0.06	0.00	1.07
Age square	-0.0017	0.00	1.00	0.0004	0.00	1.00	-0.0011	0.00	1.00	-0.0002	0.45	1.00	-0.0007	0.00	1.00
Education	-0.02	0.84	0.98	0.15	0.20	1.16	1.06	0.00	2.87	0.56	0.00	1.74	1.24	0.00	3.46
Interest pol.	0.85	0.00	2.33	1.51	0.00	4.52	0.63	0.00	1.87	0.84	0.00	2.31	0.63	0.00	1.88
Int. efficacy	0.04	0.46	1.04	0.29	0.00	1.33	0.59	0.00	1.80	0.70	0.00	2.01	0.43	0.00	1.53
Male	0.10	0.04	1.10	0.55	0.00	1.73	0.42	0.00	1.53	0.44	0.00	1.56	0.48	0.00	1.61
Intercept	-3.73	0.00	0.02	-0.25	0.44	0.78	-4.86	0.00	0.01	-3.82	0.00	0.02	-2.95	0.00	0.05
Cox-Snell R ²	0.096			0.104			0.170			0.038			0.114		
Nagelkerke R ²	0.145			0.193			0.234			0.120			0.156		
N of cases	12,302			12,931			12,931			12,931			12,931		

Note: In black, coefficients significant at p 0.10. Within brackets the generation taken as the reference category. B coefficients are unstandardised logistic regression coefficients. All variables, except for age, are coded with a range 0-1 and, thus, these coefficients can be interpreted as the increase/decrease in the log-odds ratio of being engaged in each of these forms when the independent variable changes from its minimum to its maximum values

Interesting, and in some cases unexpected, results are obtained from these analyses in what regards the relationship between the

probability of engaging in each of these forms of participation, the age of the individual and the generation to which she belongs. The curvilinear relationship between age and engagement adopts different shapes depending on the type of participation we consider. These differences are best appreciated when we graphically represent the estimated probability of participating in each of these forms by age and generation (Figure 24)¹⁸.

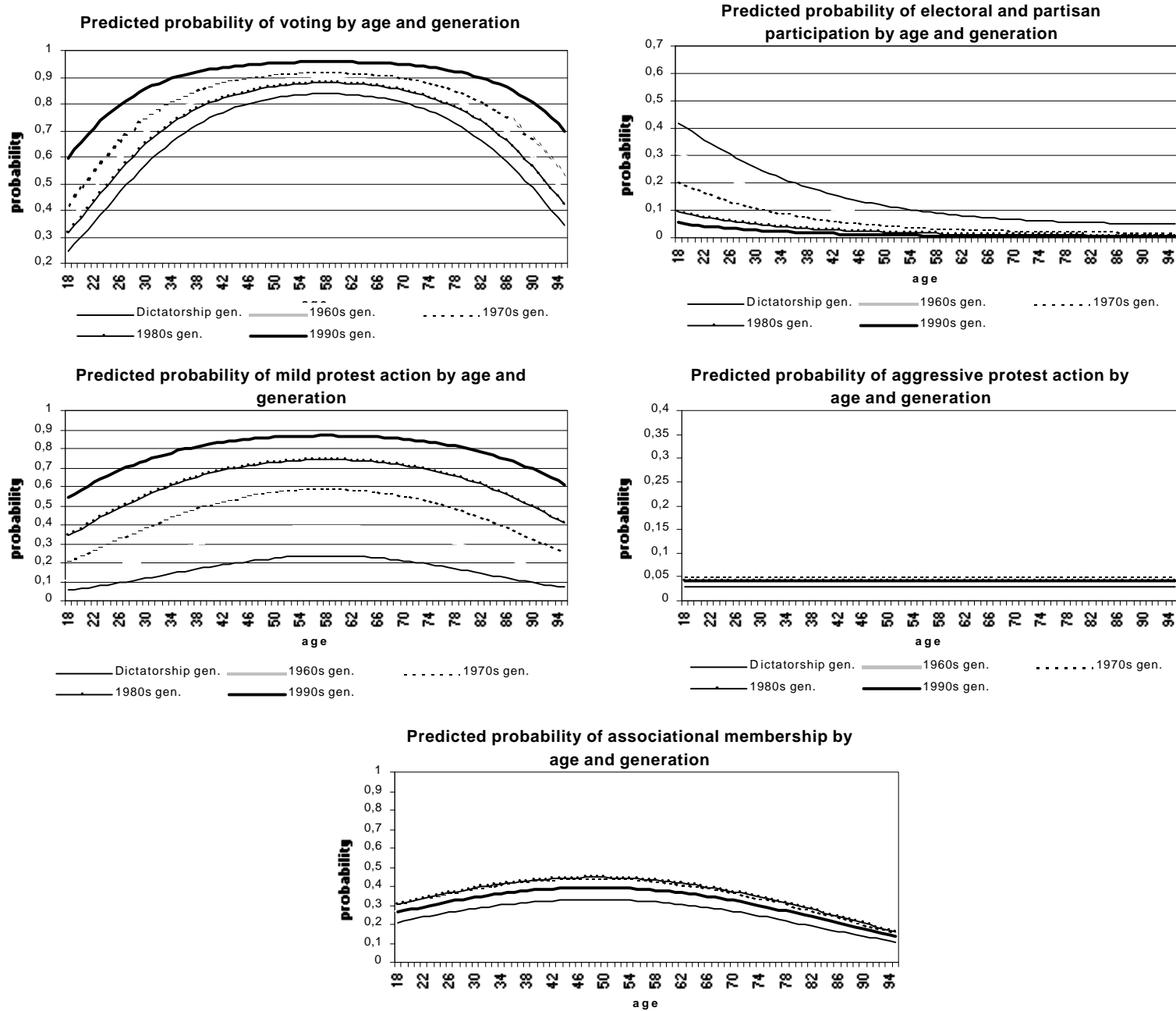
In most cases, engagement levels show the traditional “inverted-u” shape; that is, participation increases with age until the late 50s and early 60s when individuals tend to reduce their commitment, but this reduction usually does not reach the lower levels of youth. This is the pattern found for voting, mild forms of protest action, and associational membership. Different patterns are found for electoral-partisan forms of engagement and for aggressive protest action. In the former case, involvement tends to gradually decrease with age, while in the latter it remains stable along the life cycle at extremely reduced levels.

In addition, some unexpected results with regard to generational differences are worth being pointed. Contrary to what many commentators would argue, the youngest generation of Spanish citizens is not less likely to vote in general elections. Rather, given that they are very young and that younger people tend to vote less, the 1990s generation would seem to vote more than previous generations. In other words, if their behaviour remains stable –as compared to 2000– we should expect this cohort to turn out in elections much more than their siblings, parents and grandparents have done¹⁹. We should also be optimistic with regard to the tendency to join associations of the younger Spaniards. Actually, it is the 1970s and 1980s generation to lead in this form of engagement, both in absolute and relative terms. The young are not getting disengaged from associations in Spain, at least not yet. And our results would indicate that levels of associational membership should increase and not decrease in the years to come.

Finally, these results would not support either simple conclusions about “civic” or “uncivic” generations. It is true that the dictatorship generation is usually the least likely to engage in all forms of participation except in the case of electoral-partisan activities. And it is also true that the

1970s generation is frequently among the most active ones. Nevertheless, the patterns are mixed and the leading role of generations varies greatly across types of involvement. This is probably good news, since it indicates that rather than a generational pattern of gradual disengagement in Spain we have a generational diversification of repertoires. Put simply: different generations like to do different things.

Figure 24. Age and cohort effects for different forms of civic engagement (predicted probabilities: pooled dataset, 1980-2000)



In Summary

Arguments about a Hirschmanian retreat of citizens to the private sphere are not adequate for the Spanish case. Spaniards are not strictly less active in the political arena now than they were 20 years ago. True, some forms of participation have slightly declined or remained stable at low levels –especially party membership– but others have been increasing with time. On the other hand, associational engagement seems to be growing even if citizens, and especially the younger cohorts, seem to prefer the more socially oriented organizations.

There is no such thing as a “civic” generation in Spain. With the only exception of the dictatorship generation, that shows generally the lowest levels of engagement, all generations are similarly active in the public arena. Only they get involved in different ways. The younger citizens tend to prefer protest politics and certain forms of associations, while the older ones tend to prefer electoral and partisan types of participation. Still, it is not true that “conventional politics” is out fashioned: the 1990s generation is turning out to vote in levels that are extremely high given their age. And it does not seem that the young are reinventing activism either. In many ways, in Spain the generation that reinvented activism seems to be the 1970s generation, who adopted protest politics as a core part of its political repertoire.

Finally, it is not at all clear that generational replacement will necessarily produce better citizens, or at least not more involved citizens. Democratic learning does not seem to be cumulative across generations in what regards participation in public affairs. In most cases, the generations of Spaniards “born” with democracy are not very different from their elders; they are, however, less willing to become members of the more politicised groups. In other words: democracy has not produced a particularly “disengaged” generation, but it has not produced increasingly active citizens either. Simply, there is no reason why we should be overly optimistic or pessimistic.

Notes

- * A previous version of this paper was presented at the ECPR Joint Sessions in Turin, March 2002. I wish to thank all participants in workshop 22 on *Political Participation and Information* for their useful comments and suggestions. Especially useful were the observations made by Eva Anduiza, Svante Ersson, Pippa Norris, Marina Popescu and Larry Rose, which have greatly contributed to improve the current version of the paper.
1. Data were obtained from the following studies of the Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (CIS): no. 1237 (1980, 3457 cases), no. 1361 (1983, 1724 cases), no. 1461 (1985, 2505 cases), no. 1788 (1989, 3356 cases), no. 2105-2107 (1994, 5087 cases), no. 2154 (1995, 3983 cases), no. 2212 (1996, 2499 cases), no. 2240 (1997, 2490 cases), no. 2384 (2000, 5283 cases) and no. 2387 (2000, 2484 cases); and from the World Values Surveys (WVS) of 1980, 1991, and 1995.
 2. The strikingly high estimate for political discussions in 2000 should, probably, be attributed to the fact that the survey was conducted immediately after the General Elections of March 2000.
 3. The distinction between conventional and nonconventional (or protest) forms of action is now less useful than it was in 1979 (Barnes and Kaase 1979). Western citizens have incorporated to their ordinary repertoires of political participation acts that were regarded as highly conflictual in the post-2nd World War period. Thus, signing or collecting petitions, demonstrating, or participating in strikes have gained a certain “normality” status in most democracies.
 4. The reader should note that all three waves of the WVS systematically underestimate the participation of Spanish citizens when compared to the estimations obtained with the surveys done by the CIS. This is more notorious for the cases of “participated in demonstrations” and “signed a petition”, although also visible for all other forms. It is difficult to say which estimation might be more reliable, but given the availability of longer time series for the CIS and their apparent smoothness, we could be confident of the better quality of estimation of the latter. This is certainly bad news, since the WVS is frequently used to compare across countries and, thus, Spanish figures could come out as artificially lower than they already are. See Morales (2002) for an analysis of similar problems in the cross-national measurement of associational membership and for a discussion of its implications for the social capital debate.
 5. A common problem to all survey items related to political participation is the frequent lack of reference to a time frame. Unfortunately, only recently have

questions included the reference to the last 12 months. Hence, we can not be truly sure whether the increase is really reflecting a trend in participation or the accumulation of the last twenty years. Probably a certain combination of both phenomena will be true.

6. We should, however, consider this increase with care since measurement has not always been consistent across surveys, either national or international. The trends of both national and international studies, nevertheless, support the conclusion of increasing associational membership or, at least, the absence of a decline. In fact, I have chosen for the 2000 time point study no. 2384 (postelectoral survey) rather than study no. 2387 (political culture survey) because, with the same group items and half the sample size of the former, the latter gave higher membership estimates (in more than 7%). In this sense, my conclusions are, if anything, conservative.
7. The DATA 1993 estimates seem to introduce measurement error rather than a real decline in the trend, given that the 1994 point is more consistent with what is a generally stable trend.
8. Putnam's and Norris' approaches are not necessarily contradictory; it is mostly a matter of emphasis. While Putnam (2000) stresses the existence of a general trend of decline in civic engagement, Norris (2002) would acknowledge a certain degree of decline in engagement in certain forms of participation in some countries and adds that there is also a countertendency due to a generalised increase in participation in alternative forms of action.
9. Any division of the population in generations introduces a certain component of arbitrariness, to the extent that drawing lines between years is never an exact exercise. The distinction between these five generations has been motivated by the different periods in which these cohorts came of age and were politically socialized. The first generation is that of citizens who were born by 1941 and, thus, were socialized in politics during the Spanish Civil War and the Francoist regime. The cohort of people born between 1942 and 1952 is composed by the individuals who came of age during the 1960s, a period of increased mobilization against the dictatorship. The 1970s generation were born between 1953 and 1964, and lived their late adolescence in the crucial moments of transition to democracy. The fourth cohort, the 1980s generation, were politically socialized during the first decade of democracy which can still be regarded as a post-transition decade marked by the attempted coup d'état, the historical Socialist landslide victory, and the anti-NATO mobilizations. The last generation is composed by those born between 1976 and 1982, a cohort of young citizens who were, majoritarily, already born with democracy and politically socialized in democratic "normality".
10. Although sufficient time series were available for "doing graffiti", "causing damages" and "exerting violence" the number of respondents per generation that has protested in each of these ways is so limited (sometimes less than

- 15) that the results are not stable along time. Nevertheless, the patterns to which they point are very similar to those seen for the least aggressive forms of protest.
11. Period effects in all data shown in this paper are most probably a mixture of period effects, random variation in survey estimates, and variation due to subtle changes in question wordings.
 12. The high levels of strike activity among the youngest cohort is to be understood in the educational context and not in the labour context. High school and university strikes are not infrequent in Spain and youth employment levels are, on the contrary, very low.
 13. An additive scale was used to summarise all the information of the eight indicators of protest action. Constructing such a scale is no easy task, and the approach adopted here has been to use factor analyses to explore the dimensionality of the various items (see Appendix for more details), which show a reasonable degree of unidimensionality. However, factor analysis is not a useful means for producing a single coherent scale to be used at different time points, since the results are not always as consistent as they should be for such an endeavour. Therefore, I have opted to give informed weights to the different forms of action (see Appendix). A second problem with using factor scores is related to the different forms of action listed in each of the three surveys used for this task. Hence, for longitudinal analyses, the best option seemed to construct a reduced scale of political protest which would incorporate only those items present in all three studies. This protest scale has a standardised range of 0-1.
 14. The data have been weighted to give equal weight to the four year points (25% each). Unfortunately, the lack of a unified battery of participation forms in surveys across time limits the possibility of pooling surveys from the 1990s. Nevertheless, these four time points cover well our five political generations. Two close time points in the mid and late 1980s have been selected because one survey incorporates items related to conventional forms of participation and the other only includes items on protest action.
 15. Electoral-partisan participation includes convincing others how to vote, attend political rallies, party membership and give time or work to a political party. Mild forms of protest action include participation in strikes and demonstrations, and signing petitions. Aggressive forms of protest are: occupy buildings, do graffiti, damage things or property, and exert violence. Associational membership includes membership in any type of organisation.
 16. This notwithstanding, the models do not suffer from big problems of misspecification, since the main control variables are included. Objections could be made with regard to the noninclusion of variables related to mobilisation. However, those factors would be related to period effects that would, presumably, affect all cohorts more or less similarly.

17. All coefficients related to the generations are to be interpreted by comparison to the 1960s generation, which has been used as the reference category. The effects of age have been modeled with a quadratic expression, so as to properly capture the curvilinear relationship that this variable generally has with participation.
18. The reader should bear in mind that these are estimated probability and not “real” percentages. That is, these are the shapes of the relationship between age, generation and engagement according to the data we have available. The estimated probability has been calculated as $\pi = 1 / 1 + e^{-(\hat{\alpha} + \hat{\alpha}x)}$ with all variables fixed at their average or modal value for a male respondent and only allowing age and cohort to vary. Thus, the lines represent the change in the probability of participating as age varies, and each line represents a different cohort.
19. Of course, it might well be that the 2000 elections promoted an unusual participation of the youngest citizens. However, there is no reason *a priori* to believe this is the case, since the 2000 elections were not very contested and resulted in one of the lowest turnout rates of the past 20 years in Spain.

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Appendix

As a general phenomenon, political participation expressed in its different forms of action does show a reasonable degree of unidimensionality. Due to the different items included in Spanish surveys along time, separate factor analyses for three time points (1980, 1994 and 2000) were carried out. Two of them (Tables A1 and A2) included sufficiently inclusive lists of participation forms, and the other two (Tables A3 and A4) include only protest forms of action. Equivalent results are found in all of them.

A first factor seems to be related to a unidimensional latent structure of participation. In this sense, all forms of action load to a significant degree in this factor and are, thus, expressing the fact that they are all related to a great extent. A second factor –and, in the case of the complete list of 1980, the third one– expresses the distinction between more and less aggressive forms of protest. This distinction becomes even clearer when we consider the results of the factor analyses of protest action forms only.

With these results as standpoints, an additive protest scale was constructed. These were the values assigned to each form of protest that were then added into a single scale: sign petitions=1, participate in demonstrations=1, participate in strikes=1, block traffic=1.5, occupy buildings=1.5, do political graffiti=2, damage things or property=2, and exert any violence=2. The final scale was then standardized to a 0-1 range by dividing the sum of all values by the maximum possible value.

Table A1
Factor Analysis of participation forms, 1980*

	1	Factors	
		2	3
Demonstrate	0.73	-0.26	-0.20
Strike	0.69	-0.28	-0.19
Sign petition	0.66	-0.26	-0.19
Collect signatures	0.64	-0.14	-0.13

Political graffiti	0.55	0.02	0.26
Political rally	0.53	0.39	-0.08
Work for party	0.52	0.58	-0.04
Block traffic	0.51	-0.09	0.49
Community work	0.47	0.43	-0.09
Occupy buildings	0.43	-0.11	0.46
Persuade how vote	0.43	0.37	-0.06
Damages	0.34	-0.04	0.53
% variance	30.6	8.9	7.9

* Maximum likelihood extraction, 5 iterations

Table A2
Factor Analysis of participation forms, 2000*

	Factors		
	1	2	3
Graffiti-damages	0.65	-0.44	-0.24
Violent action	0.59	-0.43	-0.23
Demonstrate	0.53	0.27	0.46
Occupy buildings	0.53	-0.09	0.09
Strike	0.51	0.19	0.40
Contact politicians	0.45	0.18	0.08
Sign petition	0.43	0.19	0.36
Write to media	0.43	0.08	0.13
Time for party	0.29	0.60	-0.48
Attend electoral rally	0.24	0.37	-0.19
Donate money to party	0.22	0.35	-0.32
% variance	21.5	10.8	9.2

* Maximum likelihood extraction, 6 iterations

Table A3
Factor Analysis of protest actions, 1980*

	Factors	
	1	2
Demonstrate	0.78	-0.24
Strike	0.77	-0.25
Petition	0.67	-0.19
Block traffic	0.53	0.49
Political graffiti	0.51	0.24
Occupy buildings	0.45	0.43
Damages	0.34	0.53
% variance	35.9	13.1

* Maximum likelihood extraction, 3 iterations

Table A4
Factor Analysis of protest actions, 1994*

	Factors	
	1	2
Demonstrate	0.64	-0.44
Block traffic	0.62	0.06
Political graffiti	0.61	0.40
Occupy buildings	0.52	0.00
Sign petition	0.46	-0.42
Violent action	0.46	0.35
Damages	0.42	0.37
% variance	29	11.3

* Maximum likelihood extraction, 5 iterations