The Political Participation of the Poor

Local Social Context and the Impact of Social Ties on the Political Engagement of Poor Individuals

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Abstract

Research on political participation finds that poor citizens engage less in politics than wealthy citizens. Yet, recent survey evidence also suggests that there is crucial variation in the poor's level of engagement within the same country and across neighborhoods and villages. However, most of the existing literature falls short in explaining variation between poor citizens living in different communities. Therefore, we still do not fully understand why some poor citizens are more or less likely to participate than others and the extent to which this may be driven by the local social context and, more specifically, the density of social ties in the community. This dissertation aims to fill this gap in the previous literature by providing a theoretical framework to explain political participation by the poor. Acknowledging a wide range of existing research on social context and political behavior, I argue that poor individuals should be more likely to participate in activities based on social interaction between neighbors or when a social norm of compliance exists within the community. The theoretical expectations suggested are in line with previous scholarship showing that poor individuals are more oriented towards others in their local community and act more pro-socially than wealthy individuals. They are also more reliant on social norms of reciprocity and community-help than the wealthy. Empirical evidence from three individual research papers on Tunisia, Sub-Saharan Africa, and the UK highlights the importance of community norms and social ties for the poor's political participation. It also suggests that social sanctioning, bandwagoning and solidarity may explain this relationship.

Sammanfattning på Svenska

Forskning om politiskt deltagande finner att fattiga medborgare engagerar sig mindre i politik än rika medborgare. Samtidigt tyder nya fynd från surveyforskning även på att det finns avgörande variation i fattigas nivå av engagemang inom ett och samma land och mellan kvarter och byar. Emellertid brister existerande litteratur i sin förmåga att förklara variation mellan fattiga och rika i olika samhällen. Således förstår vi ännu inte fullt ut varför vissa fattiga medborgare är mer eller mindre benägna att delta än andra, samt utsträckningen till vilken denna variation beror på den lokala sociala kontexten och, mer specifikt, densiteten av sociala band i samhället. Denna avhandling ämnar fylla detta hål i litteraturen genom att framlägga ett teoretiskt ramverk över fattigas politiska deltagande. Tillerkännande ett brett spektrum av tillgänglig forskning om social kontext och politiskt beteende, är mitt argument att fattiga individer mer sannolikt deltar i aktiviteter baserade på den sociala interaktionen mellan grannar eller när en social norm av medgörlighet råder i samhället. Mina teoretiska förväntningar är i linje med tidigare forskning som visar att fattiga individer är mer orienterade gentemot andra i sitt lokalsamhälle och agerar mer pro-socialt än förmögna individer. De är också mer beroende av sociala normer av ömsesidighet och hjälp från samhället, än de förmögna. Empiriska bevis från tre individuella forskningspapper om Tunisien, Subsahariska Afrika och Storbritannien belyser vikten av samhällsnormer och sociala band för de fattigas politiska deltagande. De antyder också att social sanktionering, bandwagoneffekten och solidaritet kan förklara detta samband.

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Writing a dissertation is like riding a roller coaster. You start all excited and a bit nervous, too. You will experience many ups and downs during your way – they may have to do with your work or the social contacts you establish. At one point, you will feel like you fall, and hopefully there will be someone to hold you. Sometimes you will believe that this will never come to an end. But once you're done, you feel relief, happiness and the urge to go on the next ride. That's at least how I felt.

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1 Introduction

> "[P]eople are not just members of universally defined categories, such as social classes, but are also socialized and politically mobilized in particular geographical-spatial milieus with their own characteristics and influences on how members behave: that is, people act differently according to the type of place they live in." (Johnston and Pattie, 2005: 185)

This dissertation asks when do economically poor individuals participate in political actions and why? A puzzling experience inspired this research project. While working on Contestation in post-Ben Ali Tunisia, I found that the number of socioeconomic protests was very high in the marginalized interior and southern districts but very low along the more developed coastal line (Jöst and Vatthauer, 2020).[1] Moreover, data from a household survey, the Local Governance Performance Index (Lust et al., 2015), shows some variation in the reported civic participation of Tunisian citizens from different villages, even within the same region (for example, in neighborhood clean-ups). I was surprised by these apparent differences in the poor's political and civic engagement, which appeared dependent on the local context in which they are embedded. While doing fieldwork in the interior regions, people told me that the residents of Makthar – a remote municipality in the district of Siliana – have a strong sense of community. They are very active in organizing protests against their marginalization and clean-ups after protests and strikes. Back at the University in Gothenburg I tried to understand what was going on, and therefore I engaged with a broad range of literature from political science, social psychology and sociology.

The well-established literature on political participation explains differences in the levels and modes of engagement as an outcome of individual characteristics and available resources such as time, money and civic skills (e.g., Armingeon and Schädel, 2015; Beeghley, 1986; Brady et al., 1995; Verba et al., 1995). Yet, if individual characteristics are all that matter for political action, why do we see subnational variation in the engagement of the poor?

Another strand of the literature has focused, more particularly, on social context effects and political behavior. The Columbia School in Political Participation Research emphasizes that individuals do not act in isolation from their social environment but are affected by the social structure in which they are embedded (Berelson et al., 1954; Lazarsfeld et al., 1944). Yet, where and why poor individuals should be more likely to engage is mostly missing from this discussion.

[1] Protest numbers peaked In January 2016, when a total of 154 unemployed protests were counted. 121 protests took place in the marginalized South and Interior and only 17 protest events were organized in the coastal governorates (w/o Tunis) and 16 in the capital city, Tunis (Jöst and Vatthauer, 2020).

Similarly, the broad literature on social capital almost entirely misses a more thorough discussion of the poor (for an exception see Pichler and Wallace, 2009). While individuals from the middle- and upper-middle class are described as having more formal connections to others and are generally more trusting (Putnam, 2000; Uslander and Brown, 2005; Delhey and Newton, 2003), it is less clear whether they also possess more informal connections to neighbors and friends than the poor. Moreover, in more recent years, scholars have become increasingly interested in the effects of social networks, such as the impact of family, peer and elite ties on voting and other forms of participation (e.g., Eubank et al., 2019; McClurg, 2003; Rolfe, 2012; Siegel, 2009). Yet, how these social networks and ties differ among communities is still not well understood. In particular, the differences between poor and disadvantaged communities are understudied.

Finally, inequality in voter turnout also varies considerably across countries, with poor individuals being more likely to vote than wealthy individuals in most of the Global South (Kasara and Suryanarayan, 2015). The scholarship on clientelism and vote-buying suggests that the poor are more likely to vote in these contexts because they sell their votes to brokers and political candidates. But why then are clientelistic practices more successful in some communities than in others? Whereas most of the political participation research is conducted in Western industrialized countries, most scholars who work on vote-buying concentrate on the Global South. These two literatures have developed in mutual isolation. However, both have in common that they lack a theoretically underpinned discussion of the sub-national differences in the poor's political and civic participation. Thus, despite an extensive literature on social inequality and participation, we still do not fully understand why some poor individuals participate more than others, depending on the local context in which they live.

In the following, I draw on the previous literature to understand why poor individuals engage in some local contexts but not in others. Thereby, the project sheds light on the variation between poor communities both in Western European countries and Africa. I provide answers to the following research questions: How and why does the local social context impact poor individuals' political and civic engagement? And, more specifically: What role is played by social ties and norms in these communities?

This dissertation adds to the scholarly debate by explaining how we should expect the poor's participation to vary and why. I complement some of the earlier findings in the social capital and political participation research by theorizing the role of social norms and ties on the political behavior of the poor. Thereby, I aim to draw a more nuanced picture of the political behavior of the poor than the previous literature. Specifically, I argue that, on average, poor individuals behave differently than wealthy individuals and different mechanisms drive their engagement. Drawing on previous literature on social context and poverty, I assume that the poor should be more reliant on their neighbors for help than the wealthy. From this, I further theorize that compared to

wealthy respondents, poor respondents should be more likely to engage in political actions that are based on social interactions among community members or when a strong social norm to comply (e.g. the idea of a social norm to vote or solidarity) exists within the neighborhood or village. They should be even more likely to do so when living in communities with dense social ties. I introduce social monitoring, solidarity and bandwagoning as potential mechanisms driving compliance and political engagement among the poor.

Using examples from the UK, Tunisia and Sub-Saharan Africa, I highlight how these mechanisms apply to the poor in both Western and non-Western contexts. Though these countries are arguably very different regarding specific cultural, historical and social characteristics, I show how similar mechanisms may apply independently. However, a certain level of freedom to participate in political actions such as voting is necessary for my argument to hold. Therefore, I focus on electoral democracies in this dissertation.

Given these considerations, the contribution of this dissertation will be twofold. First, I shed some more light on contextual effects, stemming from everyday social interactions within the local environment, on the participation of the poor. Second, I contribute to the scientific literature in the field by investigating how poor individuals differ from wealthier individuals regarding their engagement in different modes of participation. In which types of participation would we expect poor citizens to be more likely to engage in than others and why? I show that social ties and norms in the community increase the engagement of the poor to a greater extent than the wealthy, and that this applies both for modes of local political participation that are in line with democratic ideals (e.g., voting in elections) and those that challenge the state and its core institutions (e.g., anti-establishment protests).

This dissertation compiles three individual papers. In paper 1, I show that feelings of relative deprivation compared to the coastal regions and perceptions about increasing levels of corruption in state institutions and organizations triggered frustration and feelings of solidarity among socially disadvantaged individuals in Tunisia's interior and southern regions. This led to their collective self-mobilization in the absence of other mobilizing forces and organizational structures during the post-Ben Ali-period. In paper 2, I study the UK, a Western European country, and find that perceptions about how others behave are more likely to influence poor individuals than wealthy individuals. I show that this is explained through norms of reciprocity among the poor. Poor individuals tend to have denser social ties with their neighbors as they rely more strongly on others living nearby to solve daily problems and, in some situations, even to secure livelihoods. Our theoretical and empirical investigations in paper 3 expand this view by showing that the density of social ties within impoverished communities in Kenya, Zambia and Malawi varies, contrary to assumptions that the poor always have denser social ties to their neighbors than the wealthy. In communities with dense neighborly social ties, we observe compliance with local leaders and neighbors who ask respondents

to vote or for participation in community actions to be increased. We find that social monitoring and bandwagoning are present as underlying mechanisms.

The Political Participation of the Poor is an important topic of study and should be of equal interest to social scientists and political practitioners. Suppose that the poor do not use the existing channels of political participation? Such a case can lead to an unequal representation of interests (Verba et al., 1995) and disparity in political officials' responsiveness to different socioeconomic groups (Peters and Ensink, 2015). When the interests of the poor are not represented, they also become invisible to the broader public. In some cases, this will lead to frustration and resignation among the poor; in other cases, this can further cause political turmoil, as we have seen, for example, in the unemployed protests in Tunisia or the yellow vests movement in France. Therefore, we need to understand the conditions under which the poor and socioeconomically disadvantaged are more likely to participate and the drivers of their participation. The research findings could then help to create more effective political measures to support equal participation of different social groups.

In the following, I first discuss the three main concepts of the dissertation: poverty, local social context and political participation. Then, I discuss the previous literature on the poor's political participation, which, I argue, has mostly focused on individual-level explanations and less so on existing local variation across more impoverished communities. I also give insights from other fields such as social psychology and sociology to add to the earlier literature on which my theoretical framework is based. I introduce my theoretical model before presenting the research design and discussing the measures used in this dissertation. Finally, I briefly present the three individual research studies.

2 Three Concepts

This dissertation's theoretical argument relies on three key concepts: poverty, local social context, and political participation. Before introducing the theoretical model in light of previous research in sociology and political science, I would like to briefly discuss and define these concepts. How each concept is measured is discussed in more detail in section 5.

2.1 Poverty

This dissertation identifies the poor as the population of interest in papers 1 and 3. It looks at poverty as the primary independent variable in paper 2. In this dissertation, I define poverty conceptually as economic well-being. The concepts of poverty, socioeconomic status and well-being are used extensively in the social science literature. They are also intensely debated among social scientists. As scholars have different conceptual understandings of these concepts, measures vary greatly. Social scientists conceptualize poverty either as economic well-being, capabilities or social exclusion.[2] In this dissertation, I define poverty as economic deprivation. In this understanding, poverty describes the lack of "basic means of survival" (absolute poverty) or a lack of means that represent the median for a given society (relative poverty) (Wagle, 2018: 185). Moreover, it is important to note that I focus on long-term poverty and the behavior that results from it. For example, I do not expect my theoretical expectations to hold for individuals who suffer from short-term income losses or college students who may have a very low income at present but expect high gains in the future.

Focusing the theoretical and practical discussion exclusively on economic well-being may miss out on essential aspects of deprivation such as the systematic or perceived social and political exclusion of the poor and, thus, the need for economic, social and political freedom (Sen, 1999). Fighting poverty should encompass more than efforts to increase income levels, as many scholars have pointed out before (cf. Wagle, 2018). However, I argue that lacking capabilities and social exclusion should still be separated from the concept of economic well-being. I see both a lack of capabilities and social exclusion as (potentially) following on from economic deprivation. Hence, we should understand both approaches as conceptually different from economic deprivation as poverty. Unlike economic deprivation, social exclusion and lack of capabilities could also result from ethnic cleavages or gender inequality.[3]

[2] For an overview of the discussion among social scientists see Wagle (2018).

[3] For example, Paper 1 looks at the social exclusion of Tunisian citizens as resulting from high levels of unemployment in the interior and south. Again, I understand the perceived social exclusion (subjective exclusion) as resulting from economic cleavages. A lack of economic well-being and economic cleavages may also result from the historical exclusion of

Sometimes these cleavages overlap, as in the case of the *banlieues* in Paris where ethnic cleavages coincide with high levels of unemployment and lower levels of education (cf. Silver, 1994). By contrast, in the case of Tunisia, economic deprivation and unemployment are faced by highly educated young people in the interior and southern regions. Therefore, I argue that it is critical to distinguish economic deprivation or poverty from other layers of deprivation. From the literature on the social psychology of the poor, we know that economic deprivation shapes individual attitudes and behaviors in ways that are different from membership of a minority group. Most importantly for this dissertation, previous work has shown that poor individuals are more socially oriented towards others and more dependent on neighbors who provide a safety net whenever needed (Dietze and Knowles, 2016; van Eijk, 2010a; Pinkster, 2007; Stephens et al., 2007).

2.2 Political Participation

The primary dependent variable is political participation. The concept of political participation is anything but clear. In general terms, it describes a situation in which "citizens' activities [are] affecting politics" (van Deth, 2014: 351). Yet, over the years, scholars of political participation have offered different meanings to the concept by limiting it to so-called conventional modes of participation or widening it to various "unconventional" forms (Fox, 2014; Kaase and Marsh, 1979; Lamprianou, 2013; for an overview see van Deth, 2001). Formally, political participation is exercised through voting in democratic elections. Democratization theorists like Robert Dahl (1971) have highlighted that political participation – understood as voting in elections – represents a central condition for a functioning democracy. This early work in political participation research limited political participation to what is sometimes referred to as "conventional" forms of participation such as voting, campaigning, contacting government officials or being a member of a political party (e.g. Campbell et al., 1960; Verba and Nie, 1972). In later studies, scholars agreed that the concept of political participation should not be limited to these forms of engagement. Some have included, for example, protests, boycotts and petitions in their definition of the term (e.g., Barnes et al., 1979; Parry et al., 1992).

As discussed in their seminal work from 1972, *Participation in America*, Verba and Nie point to the importance of the policy influence of a specific action. In their understanding of political participation, this action must be directed "upward from the masses" (Verba and Nie, 1972: 3), meaning that the intention should be to guide and change political outcomes. They restrict it to actions aimed at affecting the political decisions of state officials and governments. Accordingly, its meaning is substantially distinct from activities

these areas. Hence, social exclusion and poverty are understood as mutually defining each other but as still being conceptually different.

that do not support the government and those not intended to make a political impact.

Others, like Harriss (2005) and Kersting and Sperberg (2003: 154), also include acts of problem-solving within the community. Looking at shanty-town citizens in Latin America and Africa, Kersting and Sperberg (2003) argue that in the developing world, the social exchange between community members, which is directed towards (social) problem solving, should also be considered as a form of political engagement. In the case of autocratic regimes, in which the use of formal political channels is often restricted, scholars have even extended the concept to engagement in "non-movements"[4] (Bayat, 2010) or other forms of non-participation such as the decision not to vote. In the participation literature, these acts are described as informal or alternative forms of participation (cf. Lamprianou, 2013).

On the one hand, this might lead to what Sartori (1970: 64) refers to as "conceptual stretching." On the other hand, a broader concept of political participation takes into account the different channels through which citizens can make their voices heard – especially at the community level. This extension can also contribute to revising a Western-centered concept of political participation on which, for example, the differentiation between conventional and unconventional forms of participation is based.

I agree that narrowing the concept risks missing important actions at the community level. In this dissertation, I focus attention on acts of *active* local political and civic participation. I expect my theoretical model to hold in electoral democracies with a certain level of political freedom to participate. I rely on a broader concept of local political participation that extends to local political and civic participation, such as participating in community meetings to solve problems and contributing to community funds. Rather than differentiating between what has been labeled as conventional and unconventional forms of participation, I draw on Huckfeldt's differentiation between individually and socially based modes of action. In this categorization, actions can either be based on social interaction with others or present as an individual act that does not necessarily involve social interaction with other individuals (Huckfeldt, 1979). However, as Kenny (1992) has pointed out, it is not always easy to know in which category an activity best fits. For example, in the case of voting, events that lead to this action may be based on social interaction, even though the act of voting itself is individually based. In this dissertation, I theorize that poor respondents should be more likely to participate in activities that are organized at the local level and require social interaction between community members, as these actions are prone to social monitoring. Examples of such actions are local protests and contributing to community programs and funds. By contrast, poor citizens should be less likely to engage in other forms of participation, such as voting in national elections. Voting typically represents an individually based action that is not necessarily based on the community's social exchange.

[4] Non-movements describe acts that are not recognized as political in the first place.

However, whether an individual – independent of her socioeconomic background – turns out to vote is often assumed to depend on existing local ties and community pressure (e.g. in the literature on clientelism and vote-buying).[5] Where local ties are dense and social norms of compliance exist within the community, we may expect poor individuals to be equally more likely to turn out to vote. One way to get at this will be to see whether voting is seen as a social norm and whether social obligations to turn out to vote exist within the community. Where they do, we may expect social sanctioning mechanisms to explain individual compliance in these cases. For example, where individuals perceive voting as something to be done by all community members, they may expect non-compliance to be sanctioned by the community (e.g., others may think poorly of non-compliers or talk badly about them).

Finally, using a broad definition of political participation that incorporates modes of participation that are perceived as desirable in a democratic system, such as voting in elections, and those that are seen as more problematic, such as protests that are directed against the establishment and existing state institutions, will help us to shed light on the recent phenomenon of the rise of populist and partly anti-democratic movements. This appears increasingly important, as we observe this phenomenon in many countries of the world.

2.3 Local Social Context

Finally, I would like to introduce the concept of local social context, which acts as a moderator in the model. Huckfeldt and Sprague (1987) describe social context as the structure of a given social environment. In a spatial understanding of social context, the context is bounded by a specific geographical unit, such as a neighborhood or district. Previous research on political participation has shown that the neighborhood's socioeconomic composition can affect individual behavior (Giles and Dantico, 1982; Huckfeldt, 1979). Some studies found that high-status environments increase engagement among high-status individuals but not among low-status residents. These studies suggest that social interactions are more likely in homogeneous communities in which neighbors share a particular social background.

Similar to this earlier work, I look at contextual effects on political behavior stemming from the individuals' embeddedness within a specific local context. Hence, "how to define community?" and "what is local?" are important questions to raise early in this dissertation. Yet, the answers to both questions can differ depending on the context, as we see in the case of Tunisia (see paper 1). Typically, we understand local as meaning the smallest geographical unit extending the household. Following previous literature on neighborhood context, we can expect individual behavior to be most likely influenced by others within these boundaries. In this dissertation, I ask, more directly, how

[5] See for example, Stokes et al. (2013) on the role of brokers in mobilizing people to vote for a specific candidate.

perceptions within the neighborhood about whether others vote and the density and strength of social ties among neighbors shape willingness to vote or to contribute to community programs. Thus, in this dissertation local social context is defined as the social ties and norms in a community.

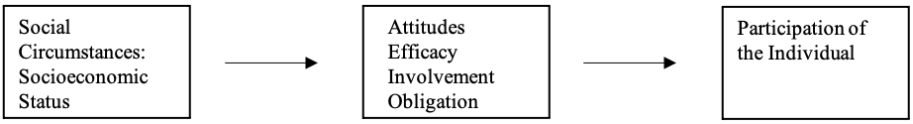
For example, in Tunisia, socioeconomic marginalization runs along regional lines. The interior and southern regions are underdeveloped compared to the districts along the coastal line. In these marginalized regions, the governorates (districts) became “the new local” as regional experiences of deprivation shape the residents' everyday lives.

However, this is not to say that specific characteristics, for example, of households or districts, would not affect individual behavior. Previous studies show that family members and peers influence the individual’s decisions to vote (e.g., Gerber et al., 2008; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1987). Yet, since this dissertation concentrates on effects on local political and civic participation, I am particularly interested in how the local environment affects compliance.

3 Political Participation and Socioeconomic Status

A broad scholarship on political participation argues that less affluent individuals are less likely to participate in political actions than their more affluent fellow citizens (Barnes et al., 1979; Verba et al., 1978, 1995; Verba and Nie, 1987). The standard socioeconomic model, sometimes called the sociological model (cf. Brooks et al., 2006), theoretically underpins the empirical findings (see Figure 1). It explains differences in the individuals' level of political participation as the result of their socioeconomic background. People from a higher social class engage more often in political actions. By contrast, lower-status individuals are reluctant to participate. Verba et al. (1995) have criticized the model for disregarding the underlying mechanisms that link socioeconomic status and the levels of political participation.

Figure 1. The Standard Socioeconomic Model[6]



Therefore, in later studies, Verba et al. (1995) and Brady et al. (1995) theoretically explain variation in the political participation of different socioeconomic groups as resulting from an unequal disposition of time, money and civic skills. This resource model of political participation is also referred to as the civic voluntarism model or behavioral model in the literature (Dalton and Klingemann, 2011; Kern et al., 2015). It is often contrasted with the classical rational-choice approach that explains participation as a result of a cost-benefit-calculation (Dalton and Klingemann, 2011; Verba et al., 1995). More recently, resource mobilization approaches have been increasingly challenged by scholars who argue for a revival of grievances theory, which says that individuals mobilize in response to resource shortages (e.g., Kern et al., 2015; Simmons, 2014).

Yet, the participation of the poor is also expected to vary by type of action. Most commonly, scholars argue that the poor are less likely to vote as it requires specific resources such as personal skills and information on the voting process, the political parties, and their candidates and agendas. As poor and low-educated individuals typically do not possess these resources, they are disadvantaged when it comes to conventional forms of political engagement (cf. Gallego, 2007; Armingeon and Schädel, 2015).[7] However, others have

[6] Verba and Nie (1972), presented as a slightly modified illustration.

[7] Scholars such as, for example, Armingeon and Schädel (2015) and Lake and Huckfeldt (1998) present level of education as a useful predictor of political participation.

claimed that differences between social groups are even more pronounced when looking at unconventional forms of participation (e.g. protesting, signing petitions) than conventional forms (e.g. voting, party membership) (Armingeon and Schädel, 2015; Harriss, 2005; Verba et al., 1995).

Independent of the type of action, we observe a preeminence of resource-centered approaches to explain individual political engagement. Yet, these approaches cannot explain the local variation in the poor's engagement: Why do poor people sometimes participate even though they do not possess the resources to do so?

One argument that we find in the literature on social integration is that people mobilize through their social group (Lipset and Rokkan, 1967). This social group can be a family that encourages its members to vote simply through discussions and exchanging information, as with any other organization or club (cf. Beeghley, 1986; Lake and Huckfeldt, 1998; Verba and Nie, 1987). As Verba and Nie (1987) claim, the organization does not have to follow a political agenda *per se,* but it merely needs to offer some space for discussion. They emphasize that certain individual attitudes that are shaped by social circumstances explain differences in engagement. Similarly, Lake and Huckfeldt (1998) show that organizational and personal networks matter for participation. The authors find that individuals' social interactions are positively associated with engagement in conventional forms of participation, even when controlling for income, gender and education.

A wide literature on social capital and participation suggests that social capital and social trust should be higher among the middle and upper-middle classes as they build connections to others; joining sports clubs and organizations (e.g., Putnam, 2000; Uslaner and Brown, 2005; Delhey and Newton, 2003). In his seminal study "Bowling alone," Putnam (2000) discusses the decreasing participation levels of all social classes due to shrinking social interaction. Yet, whether this also translates into lower levels of any type of social capital is less clear. More recently, Pichler and Wallace (2009) show that while formal social capital is higher among the wealthy than the poor, informal social capital, seen as connections to neighbors and friends, does not differ between the two social groups. The findings suggest that more nuanced research on social capital could enrich our understanding on the relationship between social connections and participation among the poor and the wealthy. This dissertation complements some of this previous work by theorizing and empirically testing more specifically how and why social ties among the poor differ from those between the wealthy.

Scholarship that focuses on the political participation of poor and socially disadvantaged citizens in developing contexts suggests a different pattern. A vast body of literature finds that citizens are more likely to support political

candidates due to clientelistic practices and, in particular, vote-buying[8] (Blaydes, 2008; Vicente and Wantchekon, 2009). Some find that political candidates and brokers are more likely to target poor citizens simply because they expect them to be more easily attracted than wealthy citizens (cf. Corstange, 2018; Jensen and Justesen, 2014; Stokes et al., 2013). In a recent study on the Philippines, Hicken and Ravanilla (2021) find that poor voters, in general, but, in particular, those who are more centrally located within their family network, have a higher likelihood to be targeted by brokers. Other studies suggest that poor individuals are also more responsive to brokers and political candidates who offer them handouts or community goods in exchange for their votes (Blaydes, 2008; Brusco et al., 2004). Stokes et al. (2013) show that brokers are often people from the community who mobilize voters on behalf of political candidates. They are also people who know the community very well and are well respected by others. Brokers are selected based on the size of the networks that they can potentially mobilize. As poor voters are expected to be easily attracted and more responsive to their offers, they tend to mobilize poor voters (Stokes et al., 2013). Some have suggested that poor voters may be perceived as being cheaper to purchase (cf. Jensen and Justesen, 2014; Stokes et al., 2013) as the utility from selling their votes is expected to be higher for the poor than the wealthy (Brusco et al., 2004; Dixit and Londregan, 1996; Jensen and Justesen, 2014). Yet, there is also more recent experimental work by Kao et al. (2017) showing that the poor are more willing to support a candidate when promised community goods than when expecting personal benefits. These earlier studies suggest that the poor do not sell their votes to increase personal benefits but rather to contribute to a common good, and they are more likely to do so when asked by brokers from their community.

These insights can help us understand under which conditions poor individuals participate in political and civic actions. The underlying mechanisms of social pressure and social monitoring by brokers as community members and the social rewards when selling one's vote in return for community benefits may also apply when clientelism and vote-buying are not what is driving compliance. For example, individuals may simply comply with norms of voting within the community because they are socially monitored or because they expect sanctions in the case of non-compliance. In recent work, Rosenzweig (2020) shows in lab-in-the-field experiments conducted in Tanzania and Uganda that citizens may vote because they follow social norms of voting and fear sanctions in the case of non-compliance. In the experiment, voting was costly for the participants as money was collected from all voters to support community goods, whereas abstainers could keep the money. Rosenzweig found that individuals who are more socially dependent are more likely to vote when their behavior is visible to others than when it is not.

[8] Vote-buying describes the "direct exchange at the individual level of rewards and material goods by political patrons in return for electoral support by voters" (Jensen and Justesen, 2014: 220).

However, most of this previous scholarship has overlooked subnational variation in the poor's political and civic participation (for exceptions see Huckfeldt, 1979; Lawless and Fox, 2001). Consequently, systematic explanations for differences between the levels and types of political participation within poor communities are lacking (cf. Lawless and Fox, 2001: 363). This, I argue, represents a critical shortcoming in the literature.

In the following, I examine the importance of local social context and subnational variation in the poor's participation. I consider previous work on social context and participation and the poor's social psychology, investigating the conditions under which we should expect poor individuals to be more strongly affected by social monitoring and why this should be so. I then present a novel theoretical model explaining why poor individuals are more likely to participate when living in certain neighborhoods than in others and how social ties and community norms affect their willingness to participate in different activities.

3.1 Social Context and Participation

Scholars of the so-called Columbia School in Political Participation Research emphasize that individuals do not act in isolation from their social environment but are affected by the social structure in which they are embedded (Berelson et al., 1954; Lazarsfeld et al., 1944). Some scholars in this tradition have investigated, more specifically, the effects of social context on different socioeconomic groups. Looking at the United States, Giles and Dantico (1982) and Huckfeldt (1979) measure social context as high-status versus low-status environments based on the inhabitants' median income, educational level, and occupation. In both studies, engagement in socially based modes of participation is increased in higher social contexts. Moreover, both Huckfeldt (1979) and Giles and Dantico (1982) show that individuals living in high-status environments positively affects engagement in socially based modes of participation among wealthy individuals. Interestingly, Huckfeldt (1979) further finds a decreasing effect on poor individuals' participation in these neighborhoods. However, this effect is non-significant in the study by Giles and Dantico (1982) using data from the 1972 American Election Study. Scholarship in the UK and Sweden has focused on working-class membership and neighborhood composition. In early work on voting and neighborhood context, Tingsten (1937) shows that the working-class members are more likely to vote when living in working-class neighborhoods in Stockholm. More recent work focusing on social class and voting decisions in the UK finds that living in working-class constituencies increases the likelihood of voting for the Labour Party (Andersen et al., 2006; Andersen and Heath, 2002).

These earlier studies looked at the United States and Western Europe, comparing individuals according to their social identities (e.g. working-class versus upper-middle and upper class). Yet findings may look different in most of

the Global South where relative deprivation or socioeconomic status may not be defined along class lines. Similarly, in some European countries, the relevance of belonging to the working class has decreased over time. Therefore, I will focus on economic deprivation or poverty instead of social class in this dissertation (see also section 5.2 on poverty measures). Moreover, this previous work mostly lacks a theoretical discussion and empirical evidence for the mechanisms explaining this relationship. Some have suggested that social pressure and community norms or the spread of information within these contexts can explain increases in the individual's political participation (Huckfeldt 1979; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1987). Yet, especially how the social interactions within these spatially defined contexts differ between the poor and the wealthy, and finally, how they shape their behavior still requires some exploration. For example, it is still unclear whether it is preliminary information diffusion or social monitoring that explains the relationship.

Other studies on social networks understand social contexts as politically engaged networks or family and peer ties within the community. Eubank et al. (2019), Siegel (2009), Rolfe (2012) and McClurg (2003) show how social network structure and the influence of peers, family and elites influence the political participation of citizens. Siegel (2009) argues that network size and the strength of these networks impact voting decisions and the impact of elites. In an empirical study on social networks in Ugandan villages, Eubank et al. (2019) similarly show that social context matters for participation. The authors find that social connections between peers are crucial for participation in less salient local elections where media reporting is relatively rare. Though we can draw meaningful conclusions on the role of community ties for participation and the underlying mechanisms, these studies do not pay specific attention to the differences between poor and wealthy citizens.

In this dissertation, I investigate the role of social norms and the importance of the density or strength of social ties on individual behavior within specific local contexts. I draw on previous research on social networks and participation, showing that pre-existing ties to movement activists are strongly correlated with participation in protests (Eubank and Kronik, 2020; McAdam and Paulsen, 1993). Yet, while previous work shows how network structures can help to overcome collective action problems, the relationship is theoretically still underdeveloped. For example, how these ties are characterized – for instance, whether the strength or the number of social ties matters most – and why they should matter is still not well understood.

3.2 Poverty and Social Behavior

Studies in social-psychology have demonstrated that poor individuals show certain behaviors that distinguish them fundamentally from more affluent citizens. For example, poor individuals focus more on the present than on the future. Economic deprivation and uncertainty in everyday life – such as the fear of not making ends meet – lead to a focus on immediate benefits and

discount favorable long-term decisions (Haushofer and Fehr, 2014; Shah et al., 2012). Low-income individuals also face higher levels of psychological distress due to negative life experiences (McLeod and Kessler, 1990).[9] Denny (2017) finds that economic uncertainty leads to a "good intention gap." Though low-income individuals have high intentions to participate, cognitive biases and a low capacity to make long-term decisions are followed by forgetfulness and political absenteeism. Poor individuals may also be perceived as less reliable cooperation partners (Schaub et al., 2020). In an experimental setting, Schaub et al. (2020) find that US participants show lower levels of cooperation with a low-income partner who they do not know personally. The negative effect is most pronounced when both cooperation partners have a low-income background. Moreover, the negative impact of poverty on willingness to cooperate is highlighted when the cooperation partner is black.

However, a series of studies on the social behavior of the poor provides evidence that, compared to wealthier citizens, the poor behave more pro-socially (cf. Piff et al., 2010; Piff and Robinson, 2017) and are generally more oriented towards others (e.g., Dietze and Knowles, 2016; Stephens et al., 2007). Moreover, in some of these studies, poor individuals showed higher levels of compassion (e.g., Oveis et al., 2010; Stellar et al., 2012) and acted more charitably than wealthier citizens (e.g., Côté et al., 2015; James and Sharpe, 2007). In particular, they were more willing to spend a higher percentage of their income on providing public goods from which the entire community would benefit (Buckley and Croson, 2006). Buckley and Croson (2006) argue that this behavior is linked to the idea of a fair share or reciprocity, which the authors find to be particularly strong among low-income citizens. Similarly, Baldassarri (2015) finds that Ugandan villagers show higher levels of cooperation in public goods provision due to reciprocity and social sanctioning.

One of the most well-established findings in sociology and social psychology is that people who share similar characteristics are more likely to interact socially (for an overview, see McPherson et al., 2001). The so-called social homophily argument has shown that people from a similar socioeconomic background are considerably more likely to befriend or get married (e.g., Block and Grund, 2014; Blossfeld and Timm, 2003; Kalmijn, 1998; Lazarsfeld and Merton, 1954; Shrum et al., 1988). This argument applies to all socioeconomic classes. However, as previously suggested, poor individuals are even more socially oriented. Hence, they should build even stronger social ties when living in a neighborhood where many others share their social status. In turn, one might expect neighbors from a lower socioeconomic background to

[9] McLeod and Kessler (1990) find in a series of surveys that individuals of a lower socioeconomic background show higher levels of distress after income-related (e.g., income loss) and non-income related life events (e.g., divorce or other love loss). The risk of facing these events is strongest for low-income individuals (compared to low education and unemployment). These findings indicate that this vulnerability is not simply the result of the financial constraints that low-income individuals face (ibid.).

be generally more likely to bond socially with each other and to build dense social ties.

3.3 Neighborhood Social Ties and Social Relations among the Poor

Some sociological literature further suggests that less affluent individuals tend to be more oriented towards their immediate local environment than their wealthier counterparts (Pinkster, 2007). As Bridge (2002: 12) puts it, "neighbourhood relations might be relatively more significant for those with limited economic resources and mobility." Thus, neighborhood social ties should affect poor individuals to a larger extent than wealthier individuals. The idea is that local networks become safety networks for the poor, while at the same time they may be lacking bonding ties to individuals outside the neighborhood or the ability to maintain these ties (van Eijk, 2010a; Pinkster, 2007). van Eijk (2010a) shows in her comparative study of three different neighborhoods in Rotterdam that individuals living in a socioeconomically disadvantaged neighborhood indicate a higher level of localness. This does not imply that poor individuals have more local ties but rather that they lack connections to others living outside their neighborhood. It further suggests that existing local ties become more central to poor individuals but not necessarily that poor individuals also build more new connections to neighbors than wealthier individuals. The salience or density of social ties is also different from their strength. Whereas the density of ties refers to the number of connections relative to the number of possible connections, the strength of ties refers to the type of relationship. We could think of, for example, friendship or family ties within the community. Henning and Lieberg (1996) argue that weak ties to acquaintances are easier to maintain in the neighborhood than strong ties to close friends. Thus, the poor's neighborly relations may be based on weak connections rather than strong ties such as family and friendship ties. Still, these connections create the basis for reciprocal relationships among neighbors in poor communities.

Qualitative evidence from studies by Singerman (1995), Scott (1977), Kersting and Sperberg (2003) and others shows that community life among poor individuals is traditionally based on norms of reciprocity and social help. As Matthews and Besemer (2014: 4) write, "it is important not to romanticize these relationships and presume they offer people in poverty sufficient resilience or help or can overcome broader socio-economic inequalities." Instead, when people are faced with the need to secure their daily livelihoods, this creates the necessity for social norms of reciprocity within a local community. These norms help to ensure social support when needed. Yet, these social norms can also create a burden for low-income families, for example when they withdraw from their social networks because they do not feel they can reciprocate due to a lack of resources (Matthews and Besemer, 2014; Offer, 2012).

Earlier work in sociology shows that, for poor individuals, neighbors also matter for navigating life, more generally. In his study of job networks among residents of poor and wealthy neighborhoods in Atlanta, Boston and Los Angeles, Elliott (1999) founds that inhabitants of poor neighborhoods are more likely to access jobs through neighbors. In another study, Bailey et al. (2013) found that poor individuals report higher levels of support from family members and neighbors. Others show that poor individuals also rely on their neighbors for childcare and material support and information on state support in times of crisis (Bradshaw and Wasoff, 2009; Dex and Joshi, 2005; McCabe et al., 2013).

In his seminal study on *The Moral Economy of the Peasants,* Scott (1977) shows that the social obligation to help each other ensured social security for each individual in peasant communities in South East Asia. In these pre-colonial contexts, social institutions within poor communities followed a specific need to create a social security system where state and private institutions were weak or lacking entirely. We find similar arguments in the literature on most developing countries today, in which social insurance programs for poor individuals are often non-existent or non-affordable (Banerjee and Duflo, 2011). Thus, resulting from the norm of reciprocity and fair share, I expect poor individuals to build denser community ties due to their distinguishing social behavior when living in homogenous contexts. Thus, connections to people living in the same village or neighborhood should play a more central role for poor individuals. By contrast, the need for reciprocity may not be equally important for the members of wealthier communities. In more affluent communities, individuals often choose alternative avenues of social security, such as bank saving accounts or private social insurance programs (Banerjee and Duflo, 2011), or have connections to more influential people.

Recently, Anoll (2018) has made a similar argument when explaining differences in how US citizens evaluate the benefits of political participation. She finds that Blacks see a greater value in voting and participation in political rallies than Whites or Latinos when living in ethnically homogeneous communities. She suggests that social cohesion should be stronger in majority Black communities. As a result of experiences with political exclusion, political engagement is more highly valued in majority Black communities. Yet, Anoll looks at perceptions about whether participation is important and not at actual or reported behavior. Moreover, her findings seem to be limited in scope to the US context where Blacks have suffered from decades of marginalization and persistent high levels of poverty in majority Black communities.

As scholars working on neighborhoods and social networks have pointed out, individuals interact with others in different social environments such as schools, workplaces, or neighborhoods (Bridge, 2002; van Eijk, 2010a). Some of these may be overlapping, meaning that local ties may not be locality-based but may still be locally maintained (van Eijk, 2010a). In their influential work on community life in 20th century East London, Young and Wilmott (2013 [1957]) found social networks to be dense and individuals mutually dependent

on where these different relationships overlapped. Yet, McPherson et al. (2001), for example, emphasize that social neighborhood context represents a unique case. Unlike other social environments, the neighborhood encourages social interaction based on given characteristics like social status, which is not necessarily the case in the workplace or a sports club, in which people of different social status groups tend to engage: "The homogeneity of neighborhoods on characteristics that are transmitted by parents […] clearly influences the homophily of ties that are formed in this arena as opposed to organizational foci like schools and workplace, which are organized along different dimensions" (McPherson et al., 2001: 430). Others have further argued that neighborhood relationships are characterized by local proximity and can have various shapes and intensities. Therefore, neighborhood relations are substantially different from other types of relationships, such as relationships with colleagues (cf. Blokland, 2003; van Eijk, 2010a).

Bringing together these shards of knowledge, I expect that social interactions with others should be relatively more important for poor rather than wealthy citizens as the poor rely on others to overcome resource scarcity and insecurity in their daily lives. Historically, the necessity for social support, especially during times of crisis, created stronger social obligations within poor communities to help each other out. Social norms change slowly and thus may persist, to a certain extent, until today. Therefore, I expect poor individuals to build denser social ties within the community when living in local proximity to other individuals who share their deprived socioeconomic status.

From these previous findings, I assume poor respondents to be more likely to interact with their neighbors socially than with people from outside the neighborhood/village *(individual-level social ties).* Moreover, social relations between poor citizens are assumed to be denser in socioeconomically deprived communities *(community-level social ties).* In this reading, poverty produces local social ties because poor individuals depend more on their neighbors than wealthier individuals, who typically rely on more powerful and more distant people for help.

3.4 Potential Mechanisms: Social Monitoring, Coordination and Information

The literature on political behavior and collective action largely suggests three potential mechanisms in explaining the link between social ties and individual participation: (1) information, (2) bandwagoning or solidarity and (3) sanctioning. Following previous research, we would expect individuals, in general, to be more likely to participate when they possess the necessary information, when actions are coordinated among individuals or when they can fear (social) sanctions in case of non-compliance.

Information is undoubtedly one of the most discussed mechanisms underlying political participation. Different scholars working on social networks and participation have argued that the costs of participation should decrease

when people receive information in discussion with others (e.g., Downs, 2015; Huckfeldt et al., 2004; Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1987). Some scholars have emphasized the positive impact of politically engaged neighbors and peers on voting (Huckfeldt and Sprague, 1987; McClurg, 2003; Verba and Nie, 1987) and the density of communities, such as ethnically homogeneous communities, for information diffusion (Larson and Lewis, 2017). Others have shown that contact with activists is essential for individual participation in social movements or neighborhood organizations (McAdam, 1986; Oliver, 1984; Schussman and Soule, 2005). For example, Oliver (1984) finds that whether close friends or relatives live in the same neighborhood increases the odds of participating in local organizations. As Masterson (2018) points out, the information provided through strong ties to family and close friends might differ in substance from the information gained through weak ties, as described by Granovetter (1973). Within networks of strong social ties, information is spread through these connections, which increases the level of information among highly connected communities. At the same time, weak ties can also provide external information that would otherwise not be available to the community. This makes this information even more valuable than the information that is spread between members of dense community networks. Out-group members often act as bridges to other communities, thus, securing access to external information (Granovetter, 1973).

Moreover, information may also verify that your situation does not reflect an "individual problem" that derives from personal failure but a problem faced by all people within your social stratum or community.[10] This might increase frustration among poor citizens, and it might also help them develop a shared identity and group solidarity when they cannot solve this issue.

Considering the differences between poor and wealthy individuals, we may expect the poor to rely much more on information that is spread within their local environment than the wealthy. Instead, the wealthy may gain information through people living outside their community with whom they are connected through bridging ties. Thus, information that is spread within the community may be relatively more important to the engagement of the poor than the wealthy.

At the same time, we might expect communities with denser social connections between the members of the village or neighborhood to be able to effectively coordinate collective action on the local level. Coordination is linked to the expected success of the action and thus may be decisive for some individuals who are uncertain about whether they should participate or not. Thus, collaboration in collective actions, for example, is contingent on the individuals' expectations of the behavior of others. The idea of doing something only because everyone else is doing it is also described as **bandwagoning** in the literature. Bandwagoning can result from an individual cost-benefit

[10] For a similar argument on the role of individual versus system blame as an important component of group consciousness that leads to mobilization, see the work by Miller et al. (1981).

calculation based on the expected success of an action or be a consequence of a feeling of solidarity with other community members. The former implies that when many people participate, the expected benefits of participation should outweigh the individual's costs and thereby explain compliance. Yet, we could also think of community bandwagoning as resulting from group solidarity among community members. Or in other words, if everyone else is doing it, I think that I should support the members of my community and comply. In this reading, the individual would think of her compliance as "the right thing to do." In a series of lab-in-the-field experiments with Ugandan villagers, Baldassarri and Grossman (2013) found that group attachment, identification with a social group, increases the prosocial behavior of the individual. The effect exists independent of the social proximity between group members. In another study, Baldassarri (2015) further shows that group solidarity underlies higher donations to public goods. Moreover, cooperation is increased through mechanisms of reciprocity and social sanctioning. Bandwagoning, as cost-benefit-calculation or solidarity, should lead to the same pattern and, thus, help overcome collective action problems; people are generally more likely to participate when expecting many others to comply (Olson, 1971; Opp, 2009).

Another potential reason could be that the individual expects social sanctions or rewards from the community (Gerber et al., 2008; Huckfeldt, 1979; Sinclair, 2012). **Social monitoring or social sanctioning effects** describe the idea that people comply because they expect others to monitor their behavior and to sanction them in the case of non-compliance. Individuals can be socially monitored by the social community or by political leaders who ask them to participate. In both cases, social monitoring creates social pressure on the individual, which can then be followed by actual sanctions in the case of non-compliance and rewards in the case of compliance. It can stem from an existing social norm to comply (e.g. a civic duty to vote) or simply be the result of spontaneous mobilization within the community (e.g., spontaneous contentious action). For example, when participation is publicly reported, people might expect sanctions or rewards from the community depending on whether they participated in an activity or not. In Get Out the Vote (GOTV) studies, scholars have repeatedly shown that individuals are more likely to turn out to vote when they are informed that their voting records will be made publicly available and when voting records are shared with neighbors and members of the own household (Gerber et al., 2008; Rogers et al., 2017; Sinclair, 2012). Recent findings further indicate that social pressure can increase turnout, especially among low-propensity voters (Rogers et al., 2017). Further research suggests that group sanctioning increases willingness to cooperate and to donate to public goods (Baldassarri, 2015), but also facilitates vote-buying through social monitoring by family and friends (Cruz, 2019).

I expect social pressure from the community and the social norms and obligations within a community to be important to individuals living in socioeconomically homogenous communities and communities with close-knit

ties. As the ability to sanction non-participation will be generally higher in communities with dense social ties, this should affect compliance among community members. In turn, this may increase participation in actions based on social exchange with members of the community who will sanction non-compliance (cf. Huckfeldt, 1979).

In the collective action literature, both the capacity to coordinate and the ability to assert social pressure on community members are presented as central mechanisms that can help overcome collective action problems such as the free-rider problem (Olson, 1971). Even where a high level of coordination exists, individuals might refrain from acting because the costs of participation are high. This should be even more so in the case of poor individuals than for wealthy individuals. By contrast, social sanctions and rewards should exert social pressure on the individual and therefore evoke compliance. For poor individuals, I theorize that living in communities in which most individuals interact increases engagement in modes of political and civic participation due to higher and more effective coordination and sanctioning within the community. By contrast, wealthy individuals are expected to be less dependent on their immediate local environment. Therefore, compared to poor individuals, social sanctions by other community members should have a smaller effect on the wealthy. This also implies that where social ties are denser, poor individuals will be mobilized through effective coordination and social sanctioning even though the costs of participation are high (i.e. in terms of time and energy spend). As Aytaç and Stokes (2019) argue in their recent book, *Why bother? Rethinking Participation in Elections and Protest*, social pressure might even induce costs of non-participation or absenteeism that might outweigh existing costs of participation.

I test two of the three mechanisms identified earlier, bandwagoning or solidarity and social monitoring, in this dissertation. I argue that all three mechanisms, including information, are theoretically linked to the density of social ties within a community. Whereas information has been discussed extensively in the collective action and social movement literature, social monitoring, especially, is arguably more challenging to investigate empirically.

4 Theoretical Framework

In this section, I present the theoretical framework for my dissertation. I develop my theoretical model to answer the questions: In which social contexts are poor individuals more likely to engage politically and why?

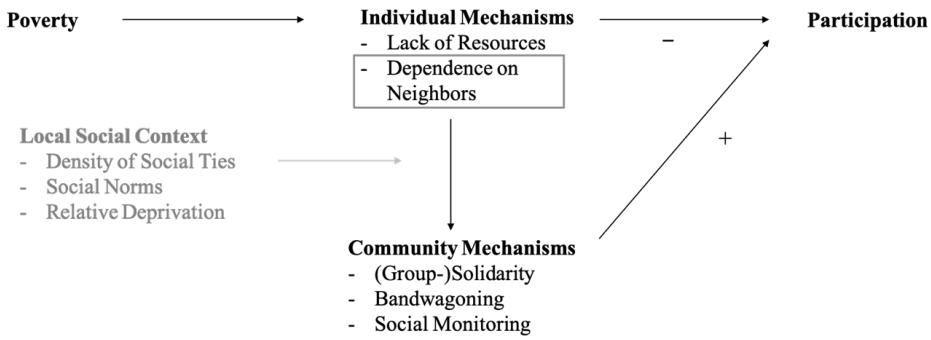
4.1 Social Context, Social Ties and the Participation of the Poor

Resource approaches to participation argue that poor individuals engage less because they lack the necessary resources (see figure 2). These approaches aim to understand why, on average, poor individuals participate less than wealthy individuals. They suggest that given a lack of the necessary means – including money and civic skills – poor individuals typically abstain from the political sphere.

Figure 2. Poverty as Resource Shortage causes Political Absenteeism

As previously discussed, these approaches fail to take local variation and the social dynamics between poor individuals and within poor communities into account. Departing from previous research on social context and participation, my theoretical model aims to fill this gap.

Figure 3. Basic Theoretical Model Explaining Participation of the Poor

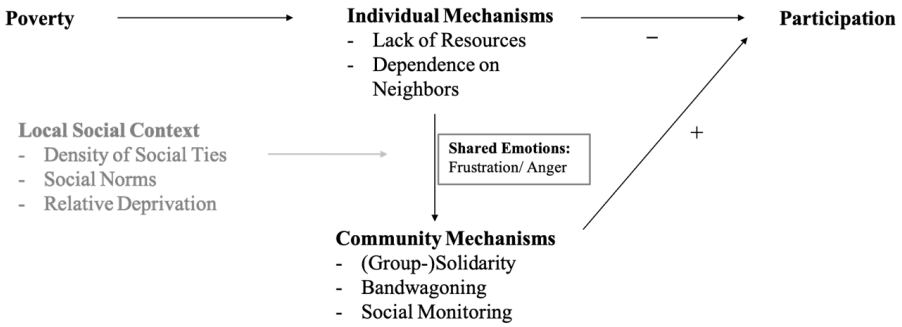


Note: Causal relationship in black, moderator relationship in grey.

Specifically, I argue that the social dependence on neighbors and community members that goes along with these resource shortages can increase participation among the poor (see figure 3). The social dependence of the

individual, caused by a lack of resources, may, in some cases, lead to community dynamics such as social monitoring, bandwagoning and group-solidarity. It may then result in higher levels of compliance and participation among the poor. My theoretical model is designed to explain under which conditions we may expect these community dynamics to positively affect the participation of the poor.

Figure 4. The Role of Shared Emotions in the Participation of the Poor



Note: Causal relationship in black, moderator relationship in grey.

Unlike previous research arguing that social context is commonly expected to affect the individual behavior of "social citizens" (Sinclair, 2012), I theorize that local context effects are relatively more important for poor rather than wealthy individuals. Moreover, these can alter the expected negative relationship between poverty and participation that stems from a lack of resources. Thus, I expand previous knowledge on social context and participation by taking the individual's socioeconomic status as my point of departure when thinking about potential contextual effects and the underlying individual and community mechanisms explaining individual behavior. Specifically, I argue that poor individuals should be more likely to engage politically in contexts where social ties are denser,[11] relative deprivation is high, or community members perceive compliance as a social norm within the community. This will then lead to higher levels of engagement through the mechanisms of social monitoring and community bandwagoning (see paper 2 and 3). Alternatively, we would expect individuals to build denser social ties with their neighbors where relative deprivation is high, resulting in a sense of we-ness or solidarity, which encourages participation (see paper 1).

I expect the proposed mechanisms of solidarity, bandwagoning and social monitoring to increase participation independent of the individual's socioeconomic status. However, compared to wealthier individuals, the effects

[11] I define the density of social ties in this context as the pre-existing social relations with many different members of your community.

should be more pronounced for engagement in socially based modes of political participation for poor individuals only. Poor individuals are more oriented towards community members and more dependent on others within their local environment than wealthier citizens. Hence, they should also be more likely to comply when many others are expected to do the same and when they are socially monitored by the community and local leaders. Another potential mechanism that will not be tested empirically in this paper but which is still deemed theoretically relevant is information. We could, as well, expect poorer individuals to rely more on their neighbors to gain information that is spread through their local community. The spread of information among neighbors should be especially facilitated in socially dense communities. By contrast, the wealthy may possess more bridging ties to others living outside their community and therefore depend less on information that is spread through dense social ties in the community.

I will look at social monitoring, bandwagoning and solidarity as potential mechanisms in more detail in the individual papers. Yet, the basic model on which this dissertation is based is presented in figure 3. A lack of resources and social dependence on others can also trigger shared emotions, such as anger and frustration, among the poor and unemployed. These emotions may then enforce solidarity among those affected and facilitate monitoring based on this sense of we-ness (see figure 4).[12]

Thus, whereas poor individuals are commonly expected to be less likely to participate in political actions, the direction of this effect should change, for example, when relative deprivation is high or a social norm of participation exists within the neighborhood or village. I expect similar effects when social ties are dense among community members. The underlying theoretical idea is that poor individuals should be more strongly affected by the other people they socially interact with than are wealthier individuals. Following previous research on the poor's social behavior, this should be true either because others living nearby provide the social security net that poor individuals rely on, or because they simply lack connections to others outside their most immediate social environment. Thus, when political actions are based on social interactions between community members or when they benefit the community, poor individuals should be more likely to comply. For example, in a sense, engagement in community programs is seen as a socially based action as the engagement not only requires the interaction of community members, but the contribution also benefits the community as a whole. Yet, poor individuals may also be more likely to participate in individually based modes of engagement when a social norm to comply exists within the community. Then, the moderating

[12] In paper 1, I look, more specifically, at how the unemployed Tunisian youth in the interior and south experienced shared emotions such as high levels of frustration and anger due to their own situation and the marginalization of their districts. I argue that in the face of high levels of relative deprivation they have created a sense of we-ness and in-group-solidarity led to their collective participation in a series of local protests in 2016.

effect of social context should be larger for poor rather than for wealthy individuals. We may expect poor individuals to be more likely to vote when a norm of voting exists within the community. Thus, even though we can understand voting as an individual-based action, it may become community-based in contexts where it is a community duty to do so (see section 5.3 on political participation measures).

Interestingly, the compliance of poor individuals with clientelist practices such as vote-buying may follow a similar logic. As previous studies have shown, poor individuals are more likely to respond to brokers from their community who ask them to sell their votes (Stokes et al., 2013). Again, social monitoring and bandwagoning may be the relevant community mechanisms explaining compliance with practices that are not just the result of a higher utility that follows from receiving individual benefits, as some scholars have argued (Brusco et al., 2004; Dixit and Londregan, 1996; Jensen and Justesen, 2014). For other types of social cleavage, such as gender or ethnic cleavages, the context in the community should not matter in the same way since – even though these cleavages may overlap – these social groups are seldom constituted from different socioeconomic groups. Therefore, I assume that the mechanisms described above only hold for socioeconomic groups.

Again, I expect these mechanisms to increase compliance independent of the individual's socioeconomic status. However, compared to wealthier individuals, the effects should be more pronounced for local actions for poor individuals only. Poor individuals are more oriented towards members of the community and more dependent on others within their local environment than wealthy citizens. Hence, they should also be more likely to comply when many others are expected to do the same and when they are socially monitored by the community and local leaders.

4.2 Alternative Explanations and Mechanisms

Other possible explanations for why we may expect social ties to be stronger in some villages and neighborhoods focus on mobility and development – including accessibility to electricity and telecommunication and social media channels. Especially in less developed rural areas, citizens often face higher practical barriers to travel and for communication through telecommunication and social media channels. The distance between different rural villages is usually greater than between urban neighborhoods. Public transportation, such as shared mini-buses, is often not, or only to a limited extent, available. In particular, rural villages in some of the world's poorest countries such as Malawi and Zambia are more likely to face electricity cuts regularly or not to be connected to an electricity supply at all. Electricity shortages may pose a greater problem to citizens living in less developed countries than individuals living in highly industrialized Western countries, who do not face them regularly.

However, in her in-depth study of neighborhood ties in the Netherlands, van Eijk (2010a, 2010b) finds that even in urban neighborhoods in Rotterdam, a major city in an industrialized Western European country, poor citizens have fewer connections to individuals living outside the neighborhood. Thus, even in places where telecommunication technologies and well-developed public transportation networks exist, such as in the Netherlands today, the poor's social ties seem to be more spatially concentrated than those of wealthy citizens. Accordingly, my theoretical arguments should hold in different country contexts. Effects should be stronger in less developed and rural areas. However, the urban poor may still be likely to vote or protest due to existing clientelistic structures and vote-buying practices or when being mobilized through third parties such as civil servants, political parties or trade unions (cf. Harriss, 2005).

Political parties and trade unions are frequently discussed as mobilizing forces for poor and unemployed protesters in Europe and elsewhere (Angrist, 2013; Baumgarten and Lahusen, 2012; Chabanet and Faniel, 2012; della Porta, 2008; Netterstrøm, 2016). However, the suggested relationship between third party support and political participation among the poor and unemployed may not be as straightforward as this implies. Some scholars have emphasized that civil society organizations and political parties often lack connections to those from the lower socioeconomic stratum and this absence thereby influences the actual behavior of such groups (Bayat, 2000; Piven and Cloward, 1979). Some of these organizations and parties may also be subject to clientelistic practices and lack of trust. In the first paper of this dissertation, I discuss the case of Tunisia and why we may still observe protests in some of the poorest communities even though third party support is widely lacking.

One may further argue that the effects of social norms on participation should be more pronounced within developing countries, where the state often does not provide critical social services to some more remote local communities, than in Western industrialized countries. Thus, in countries with lower levels of state capacity, people may be more likely to organize activities to fill this gap through acts of civic and political participation or to challenge the state via political contention. I will engage with this in the first and third papers of this dissertation, focusing on protest participation among unemployed protesters in Tunisia and compliance with local authorities and neighbors in Zambia, Kenya and Malawi.

Following the vast literature on vote-buying and clientelism, poor individuals may follow brokers and political candidates who offer individual benefits or community goods for their support (Blaydes, 2008; Brusco et al., 2004; Stokes et al., 2013). My theoretical framework draws on the previous findings that brokers are typically people from the community who are well connected and who often target the poor. This already suggests who poor individuals listen to and why – especially when promised community goods by these patrons. In paper 3, my co-author and I investigate compliance with political leaders and neighbors when poor individuals are asked to vote or to contribute

money to a school or burial fund. We can see social extraction as a form of civic engagement in the sense that it represents an individual contribution to community programs.

5 Research Design

In this section, I will present the research designs for the three individual studies included in this dissertation. This project aims to understand what drives the political and civic engagement of poor individuals. I follow a mixed-methods approach, using quantitative and qualitative methods to answer my research questions. I start by discussing the data and methods used in the individual papers. Then, I introduce the concepts and measures for the dependent and independent variables. Each paper further discusses the methodology used in more detail.

5.1 Data and Methods

This dissertation project relies on different data sources and mixed methods to investigate variation in poor individuals' political and civic participation. It combines qualitative and quantitative evidence to provide answers to my research questions. One of the advantages of using a mixed-methods design is that it allows me to rely on different data sources and methods to investigate the research problem in more depth. For example, combining quantitative and qualitative methods can help reach a deeper understanding of patterns observed in quantitative observational data.

For the first paper, I combined data on protest occurrence and protest characteristics from the Armed Conflict and Event Data Base (ACLED) with qualitative interview data. ALCED is one of the largest protest event databases, currently available for over 150 countries worldwide. The database codes protest events and cases of political violence based on media reports and articles. It provides data on protest demands and the types of actors involved, but it does not allow for more fine-grained information on individual protest events. Therefore, I conducted a qualitative media analysis using media reports and articles from some of the most prominent French language newspapers and radio channels in Tunisia. Finally, I conducted semi-structured interviews with political activists, local officials and members of trade unions and unemployed organizations in some of the interior regions during fieldwork in August and September 2018.

In the protest event data, I found correlation between high unemployment and the number of local protests. The data also shows low levels of reported civil society engagement in these protests. Yet, only after conducting in-depth fieldwork, including semi-structured interviews with local civil and political actors, did I understand the social dynamics driving participation among the unemployed. In the interior and south, high levels of local deprivation compared to the coast created a sense of we-ness and solidarity among the unemployed, which led to their collective mobilization. Thus, adding qualitative evidence provided further insights into the perceptions of deprivation of the unemployed in the interior and south compared to the inhabitants of the coastal

regions. It was particularly useful to understand the mechanisms driving political participation among the socially disadvantaged – in this case, the unemployed youth – in Tunisia.

Paper 2 relies on observational survey data. I use data from the longitudinal household survey, *Understanding Society*, conducted by Essex University. The analysis of neighborhood social context effects contains some specific requirements for the data. First, I needed the individual-level survey data to be provided at the local level – in this case, the neighborhood level. Second, ideally, the data should also be representative at this very low level of aggregation. Third, as I focus on socioeconomic status as the primary independent variable, sensitive information on household income or household assets for each respondent is needed on a very low aggregation level. Fourth, in this study I am particularly interested in neighborhood context and social ties. Therefore, a unique set of survey questions on neighborly social ties is required so as to be able to answer my research questions. Conducting surveys that allow for a multilevel investigation is very costly and would have been beyond the reach of a PhD budget. Thankfully, I received access to the special license data from the University of Essex, which included questions on political participation, neighborhood social ties and social norms on voting within each neighborhood. The data entails information at postcode level. I merged the survey data with data on neighborhood deprivation from the Index of Multiple Deprivation (Department for Work and Pensions, 2020).

To avoid the ecological fallacy that stems from using group-level data to understand individual behavior, I develop a two-level multilevel model to investigate differences in voting intentions among poor individuals in England. Multilevel modeling allows me to explore contextual effects on the individual behavior of respondents. I also run binary logistic regression to test whether social trust and neighborhood social ties can potentially explain this relationship.

Paper 3 combines observational survey data and experimental data from an original data set, the Local Governance Performance Index (LGPI), which was conducted by the research group on Governance and Local Development (GLD) at Gothenburg University (Lust et al., 2020). I was involved in the collection of the survey data and the design of the survey experiment.

Together with my co-author, Ellen Lust, I use data from the LGPI survey in Zambia, Kenya and Malawi to investigate the effects of social ties on poor individuals' compliance in Sub-Saharan Africa (N=14,117). We use multilevel modelling to investigate contextual effects, specifically the density of social ties, on individual behavior among poor individuals from 631 communities in Kenya, Malawi and Zambia. We further include ordered logistic regression models to test some of the potential mechanisms: community sanctioning, bandwagoning, and leader sanctioning. We also rely on data from focus group discussions and fieldwork conducted in the three countries.

In an ideal setting, I would want to randomize the individual's socioeconomic background and the density of social ties in the community. However,

these variables cannot be easily randomized even in an experiment. Combining observational and experimental data, in which we randomized the type of action (voting vs contributions to educational and burial funds) and the type of authority, adds to the generalizability of our findings.

In the following, I will provide an overview of the measures used to capture socioeconomic deprivation or poverty in previous studies on political participation. Then, I discuss the measures that I use in the three papers included in this dissertation.

5.2 Poverty Measures

Within the broad field of research on political participation, there is strong consent about the link between the individual's socioeconomic status[13] and the level of political participation (cf. Barnes et al., 1979; Verba et al., 1978, 1995; Verba and Nie, 1987). Socioeconomic status can be measured in many different ways. Previous studies on political participation have used employment status, objective or subjective measures of wealth, relative or absolute income, and educational attainment as proxies for socioeconomic status (for a discussion of the different measures, see Quintelier and Hooghe, 2013). Objective measures of wealth include, for example, individual and household income and questions on available household assets. Subjective measures ask for the individual's relative position (e.g. feeling better or worse off than your neighbors) or perceived social class. I will discuss some of the indicators or proxies used to measure socioeconomic status in more detail before introducing the measures used to capture economic well-being in my papers.

In some seminal studies in the field, scholars have analyzed how income affects political participation (Verba et al., 1995). Yet, in particular, when looking at rural areas, scholars have more recently tried to avoid asking about respondents' income level. Instead, household surveys include questions about available household items or the existing infrastructure or the household's primary water source. In studies on health care and educational enrollment, scholars have created indices to produce an objective indicator of the respondents' socioeconomic status (cf. Filmer and Pritchett, 2001; Vyas and Kumaranayake, 2006). Vyas and Kumaranayake (2006) argue that one reason for this is that they are generally "easier to collect" than income information and reduce the number of missing data. Also, asking about household equipment allows us to ask about less sensitive information than family income.

A robust literature on political behavior finds that education is positively correlated with voting levels (Armingeon and Schädel, 2015; Gallego, 2007). Others further find that citizens with lower and medium educational levels

[13] Just as with poverty, socioeconomic status is a social construct that is still very much debated in the social sciences (Oakes and Rossi, 2003). To date, scholars have not agreed on a common definition. However, I use this term to capture social status within society. Oakes and Rossi (2003: 775) describe it as "differential access (realized and potential) to desired resources."

participate less in "unconventional" and "conventional" types of participation (Stolle and Hooghe, 2011). Some studies include education as a standard control in their models. Yet, education is often strongly correlated with other measures of socioeconomic status, such as income or wealth. It is sometimes even seen as a proxy for pre-adult factors such as family socioeconomic status (cf. Persson, 2015). In international surveys on student performance such as PISA and TIMMS, the "number of books at home" is included to measure the family's socioeconomic status. In this reading, education is discussed as a proxy for other factors such as socialization. The so-called relative education model by Nie et al. (1996) argues that individuals with higher levels of education are members of social networks, which affects their participation. Hence, the educational attainment of others around you and your relative position towards them should matter most in determining whether you are embedded in these networks and engage in political and civic life.

A third strand in the literature that links socioeconomic status and political participation measures socioeconomic status as employment status – comparing employed and unemployed individuals (Parry et al., 1992). Even though educational background, employment status and income are strongly correlated – in particular in the Western democracies that most scholars in the field have analyzed – the indicators must be distinguished and analyzed separately in the case of non-Western countries. Tunisia, where the educational level is comparably high among unemployed youth, may show different patterns. We can find other examples in most individual-level surveys that include questions about available household items. Scholars create asset indices to obtain an objective indicator of the respondents' socioeconomic status or poverty levels.

The measures presented fall into the category of so-called objective measures of socioeconomic status. Scholars also discuss how far subjective measures, based on individuals' perceptions of their socioeconomic status relative to their surroundings, represent more adequate measures. Examples of subjective measures of socioeconomic status include survey questions about one's own belonging to a social class or one's socioeconomic status compared to the people living in the neighborhood. Krauss (2015) looks at how students' perceived belonging to lower social classes affected their level of political engagement – measured in the number of times they search for information on student governments. The author finds that individuals who perceive themselves as having a lower-class background think they cannot impact political institutions. The study finds that, for this reason, these students engage less.

I measure poverty using different so-called objective measures, including income, the ability to cover one's needs and unemployed status, depending on the country specifics. For many countries of the Global South, questions on individual income may not be a good measure of economic well-being or socioeconomic background. Many people work in the informal sector without a steady income to report. Also, in some contexts, wealth may be better defined by the goods and property owned by the family than income. Therefore, I use

different measures for socioeconomic background in this study depending on the country context (see the individual papers for details).

By contrast, subjective measures that ask about individual perceptions may be likely to capture the mechanism (e.g. emotions, group-solidarity) rather than the individual's objective socioeconomic status. For example, individuals who *feel* more deprived due to their material deprivation (or not), may be more likely to behave in a certain way due to this feeling. Yet, in this dissertation, I am interested in how the local social context influences poor and disadvantaged individuals. They may feel more deprived based on the context in which they are embedded, yet, they should not be primarily categorized by this feeling of deprivation.

In the first paper, I concentrate on the political engagement of unemployed individuals in Tunisia's interior and south. I measure socioeconomic background by looking at the employment status of the individuals. Unemployment constitutes a key driver of socioeconomic deprivation in Tunisia. Young Tunisians, especially in the interior and south, suffer from generally high levels of unemployment. Residents of these areas often do not have a steady income and often work in the informal sector. Despite what the category of "the poor" typically suggests, the unemployed young citizens that I study in the first paper are generally highly educated. Nonetheless, as a result of the lack of job opportunities, and an unstable income and life situation, unemployed graduates should still be considered as economically deprived. Consequently, this also draws into question how we should think about these social categories in the future. As Turchin (2010) argues, the future may see further political and social instability following an "overproduction of young graduates with advanced degrees." Partly, this may be caused by a mismatch between high numbers of graduates and available career options.

For the second paper, I use a measure of household income for earnings after tax to define who is poor or wealthy in my sample. I calculate the equalized household income by relying on the OECD-modified scale. It accounts for the number and age of household members to provide a better measure of wealth. I define poverty using the relative poverty measure from the Child Poverty Act (2010), which takes 60 percent of the median available household income as a threshold. The official numbers on median household income are taken from the Households Below Average Income (HBAI) dataset.

As income measures, typically, do not present good wealth indicators in most of the Global South, the Local Governance Performance Index (LGPI) asks alternative questions to determine income and individual wealth. In the paper, we use whether respondents can cover their needs or not as our primary measurement. The question gives an approximate idea of the household income of each respondent. In the sample, we define respondents who reported that they have difficulties or great difficulties making ends meet as poor. In the next step, we aggregated responses at the square-kilometer level to receive a measure of neighborhood deprivation. We take 80 percent of the respondents

in the neighborhood self-defining as explained as our threshold to define our poor neighborhoods.[14]

Using different measures of socioeconomic background allows for reliance on measures that are most relevant in different country contexts.

5.3 Measuring Participation

As introduced earlier, I aim to investigate when and why poor individuals participate in acts of local political action. Following Huckfeldt (1979), I differentiate between those activities that demand higher levels of social interaction (e.g. convincing others to vote) and those that are individual acts (e.g. contacting a politician by writing a letter). For example, Kenny (1992) points to the potential effects of the social environment on actions such as voting. He argues that even though the act might be individually based, the process may still include social interactions at various stages. To avoid this trap, Kenny looks at different actions and finds that social networks matter for both individually based and socially based types of participation. In papers 2 and 3, I look at voting, arguing that when there is a social norm of voting in the community or where the social pressure to vote is activated, voting as an individually based mode of participation should be designated as socially motivated.

In the individual research papers, I use different measures of local political and civic participation. In paper 1, I look at participation in unemployed protests in different municipalities in Tunisia's interior and southern districts. I differentiate between different types of protests in the ACLED dataset, such as strikes, demonstrations and sit-ins. As a socially based mode of participation, participation in local protests became an increasingly important mode of the political expression of the poor and unemployed in the democratizing North African country.

Paper 2 looks at the intention to vote in the upcoming 2015 national parliamentary election in the UK. Respondents were asked about their intention to vote on an 11-points Likert scale. By measuring whether people think that others in the community exercise their vote, I aim to test whether we can expect a social norm of voting to exist in that community. My findings indicate that perceptions about whether others in the community vote has a stronger impact on the poor's voting intentions than on the voting intentions of the wealthy.

Using a conjoint experiment, in the third paper we differentiate between different types of local civic and political participation. Specifically, we look at voting and the contributions made to burial and educational funds. Given the random assignment of the type of activity, we were able to test whether the type of action affects the results. In each of the three cases, we assigned, experimentally, whether our respondents were asked to participate by the local authorities and their neighbors or by more distant leaders. This allowed us to

[14] For details see paper 3 on "Neighborhood Social Ties and Compliance among the Poor".

test whether social pressure by community members versus community outsiders affects the poor's willingness to comply.

6 Three Studies on Social Context and Participation

This dissertation includes three separate studies on the effects of social context on poor individuals' civic and political participation (see Table 1 for an overview). I focus on different aspects of the theoretical model in the individual papers. In the second paper of the dissertation, I investigate the role of poor and wealthy individuals' perceptions of the voting behavior of others in the neighborhood – which points to a social norm of voting – on their voting intentions. I propose that social sanctioning could potentially explain this relationship. In the third paper of the dissertation, I focus on the role of dense community ties for the participation of the poor. Together with my co-author, I introduce community bandwagoning and social monitoring as potential mechanisms. Thus, whereas study 2 compares poor and wealthy respondents regarding their voting intentions and the underlying social dynamics, papers 1 and 3 focus exclusively on poor and unemployed individuals. Together, the three studies aim to contribute to a better understanding of how social context can enhance engagement in the different civic and political actions of the poor and socioeconomically disadvantaged.

6.1 Study 1: Group Solidarity and Unemployed Protests in Tunisia

The first article of the dissertation analyzes the protest wave that spread over Tunisia's most deprived regions in January 2016. It investigates how socially disadvantaged citizens in the marginalized regions mobilized to organize the biggest protest wave since the revolution in January 2011. Similar to the Arab uprisings that were triggered by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in the poor town of Sidi Bouzid, the 2016 protests followed the death of a young, unemployed Tunisian in the interior. Yet, while the 2011 demonstrations were heavily supported by Tunisian civil society organizations and the central trade union, these actors seemed rather absent in the 2016 protests.

Previous work on unemployed protests is rather scarce as unemployment is understood as a temporary phenomenon and social stigmatization hinders the collective engagement of those affected (cf. Chabanet and Faniel, 2012; della Porta, 2008; Lahusen, 2013). Nevertheless, the article draws on this earlier literature on unemployed mobilization in Western democracies. It contributes to the discussion by adding the first empirical evidence on unemployed protests in a non-Western country, i.e., North Africa. It further highlights the importance of group identity and solidarity for the mobilization of socially disadvantaged groups. It brings insights from the sociology of emotions literature to speak to the current scholarship on social movements. In particular, the paper argues that social grievances are emotional. For example, social

exclusion triggers shared emotions such as anger and frustration and resentment towards other social groups (Smith, 2008; Barbalet, 1998). These shared emotions can then lead to in-group solidarity and collective identity formation among fragmented social groups, thereby causing political mobilization of the marginalized (Jasper, 2014; Summers-Effler, 2002; della Porta and Diani, 1999).

The paper also discusses theoretically the importance of trade unions and unemployed organizations as mobilizing forces for unemployed protesters, more generally. It questions their relevance for the political mobilization of unemployed protesters. Previous scholarship has argued that trade unions are the most important third actor for protest mobilization of the unemployed (McAdam et al., 1996; McAdam et al., 2001; McCarthy and Zald, 1977; Zald and McCarthy, 1987). Yet, more recent scholarship has increasingly challenged the supportive role of the trade unions and other social organizations in Tunisia and elsewhere (Chabanet and Faniel, 2012; della Porta, 2008; Weipert-Fenner, 2020; Bayat, 2000).

In this paper, I ask how emotion and a shared sense of unity overcome the problems in movement formation associated with this lack of a third-party actor. To investigate this question, I rely on semi-structured interviews with citizens in the interior regions, civil society activists and members of trade unions and political parties during fieldwork in Tunisia in 2018. I also analyze data on single protest events from the ACLED data base and unemployment and population characteristics from the National Statistics Institute in Tunisia (INS). Moreover, I coded Facebook posts of the unemployed union during the protest wave of January 2016. I provide empirical evidence on the role of these organizations in the Tunisian context as well as additional media reports and articles.

I show that the central trade union (Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail, UGTT) and the union of unemployed graduates (Union des Diplômés Chômeurs, UDC) were absent from these protests. Instead, unemployed protesters organized autonomously in response to increasing marginalization and the high levels of corruption in state institutions and organizations. The UGTT especially has previously been criticized for corrupt practices among some highly influential members and, in particular, their involvement in the allocation of public service jobs. More specifically, I find that the perceived high level of corruption and increasing regional polarization has created strong sentiments of solidarity and a sense of local belonging among the unemployed citizens in the country's interior and south. They feel marginalized compared to the coastal regions, which laid the basis for the successful mobilization of unemployed protesters in these regions. The findings suggest that emotions and group-solidarity are essential drivers of mobilization when the mobilization infrastructure typically provided through unions and other organizations is lacking.

6.2 Study 2: Neighborhood Deprivation and Voting in England

The article investigates variation in the voting intentions of less affluent individuals in the UK. Based on previous literature on the poor's social behavior, I build a new theoretical framework, arguing that poor citizens are more likely to follow the example of others than wealthy citizens when they believe that most other eligible people in the neighborhood vote. To test these claims empirically, I develop a two-level- multilevel model using survey data from the Understanding Society Data set and the Index of Multiple Deprivation.

A recurrent argument in studies on social segregation and neighborhood context is that local ties matter more for the poor than the wealthy (cf. van Eijk, 2010b). Previous work on neighborhood social context shows that the poor have less diverse social ties and fewer connections to outsiders (Bridge, 2002; Pinkster, 2007; van Eijk, 2010b; Andersen et al., 2006). Poor individuals are also described as relying more frequently on their neighbors to solve daily problems than wealthier individuals.

Following this previous work, poorer individuals should be more strongly influenced by others in their local social environment than the wealthy. However, unlike this previous work, I suggest that this should also affect the political behavior of the individuals. Especially when living in more deprived neighborhoods, the impact of how others behave politically on the individual's intention to vote should be higher. Also, the anticipated effect should be higher for poorer rather than wealthier individuals. As one of the core assumptions on which the theoretical expectations are based, I further state that social ties should be stronger among poor rather than wealthy respondents.

I test my expectations empirically in this paper. I measure perceptions of neighbors' behavior, yet, I expect perceptions to be driving individual behavior. If I vote because I believe that others vote, this implies some social agreement between me and my neighbors. Or in other words, what I expect them to do does not necessarily need to be accurate as long as I believe that my neighbors vote. From this, I argue that these findings already point to a social norm of voting. We can expect it to be a more important predictor of the political behavior of poor individuals than wealthy individuals. I suggest that a social norm is being enforced through social interaction with others as opposed to an intrinsic idea of voting being a civic duty. To underpin this difference, I run similar models with civic duty to vote as a context variable. I do not find this to increase voting intentions among low-income respondents.

I find that compared to wealthy individuals, poor individuals show lower voting intention. However, I also find that perceptions of others' political behavior have a more substantial impact on poor than wealthy individuals. I show that whether the respondent thinks that most neighbors vote is associated with higher voting intentions among low-income respondents. This effect is significantly stronger for poor individuals than for wealthy individuals. Moreover, compared to wealthy individuals, I find that poor individuals are more

likely to report that they have close-knit relations with their neighbors. By contrast, wealthier individuals show higher levels of trust in their neighbors than poor individuals. This result is in line with previous findings on social capital and generalized trust among different socioeconomic groups.

6.3 Study 3: Social Ties and Compliance in Sub-Saharan Africa

A broad literature shows that the poor are more dependent on their neighbors for help as they provide a safety net when resources are limited (Singerman, 1995; van Eijk, 2010b). Other literature on clientelism and vote buying further finds that the poor are more likely to be attracted by political candidates and brokers from the community (cf. Corstange, 2018; Dixit and Londregan, 1996; Jensen and Justesen, 2014; Stokes et al., 2013). Some of this literature further suggests that the poor are also more likely to respond to these political candidates and brokers (e.g., Vicente, 2014).

In the final paper of this dissertation, my co-author and I bring these literatures together and ask more concretely when the poor participate and why. In particular, we examine the extent to which dense social networks influence compliance with political leaders and neighbors who ask them to contribute to community funds or vote in an election. We expect poor citizens to be more likely to comply when asked by community members to participate. They should be even more likely to do so when living in socially dense communities than in communities with less dense social ties. The social proximity of these leaders and neighbors should matter to poor individuals more generally as they rely on their neighbors as a safety net. Yet, this should be even more the case when community ties are dense because community density enables social monitoring and strengthens the feeling of solidarity among community members.

We use original survey data from the Local Governance Performance Index (LGPI) and a conjoint experiment to test our theoretical expectations. In Kenya, Malawi and Zambia, citizens vote to improve the service provision to their communities, but they also contribute money and labor to community initiatives that aim to provide these services. We focus on contributions to educational and burial funds and look at voting as an additional action. Compliance – our dependent variable – is measured in responses to the question about whether individuals would contribute to an educational or burial fund or vote for a candidate who does not represent their interests. Finally, we use additional survey questions to test the extent to which community sanctioning, leader sanctioning, and bandwagoning explain this relationship.

Unlike the assumptions in the literature, we find that poor citizens do not always live in communities with dense social ties. Yet, where they do, poor respondents report an increased willingness to contribute to school funds or vote when asked to by local leaders and neighbors compared to when more

distant leaders do so. Thus, the effect of the social proximity of the leader is significantly higher for poor individuals living in communities with dense social ties compared to those living in communities with less dense social ties. We further find the primary evidence for community bandwagoning and community sanctioning being important mechanisms. Our findings suggest that local ties matter for governance. More remote leaders may be unable to achieve compliance among poor citizens, and this is even more so among those living in socially dense communities, as they lack the social connections to these communities.

Table 1. Overview of Individual Papers

Paper	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Context Variable	Mechanism	Cases	Data	Method
Paper I: Mobilization of unemployed Protesters	Unemployment	Protesting	Regional Deprivation	Emotions and Group-Solidarity	Tunisia	Semi-structured interviews; Media reports; Facebook posts; Armed Conflict and Event Database (ACLED); 2014 Census (INS, 2014)	Qualitative analysis; statistical analysis
Paper II: Where do the poor vote?	Household Income	Voting	Perceived Voting Behavior of Neighbors (N=9,686)	Neighborhood Social Ties	England (N=21,955)	Understanding Society Dataset (Essex University, 2016), The Index of Multiple Deprivation (Department for Work and Pension, 2020)	Multilevel analysis using survey data; linear multilevel regression
Paper III: Compliance and Social Ties among the Poor (co-authored)	Type of Authority	Voting, Contributing Money to Burial and School Funds	The Density of Neighborhood Social Ties, N=631 (communities)	Community Sanctioning, Community Bandwagoning	Kenya, Zambia and Malawi (poor sample, N=14,117)	The Local Governance Performance Index (Lust et al., 2019), Focus groups and fieldwork notes	Multilevel analysis using experimental and observational data; linear multilevel regression

7 Conclusion

In the introduction to this dissertation, I laid out a theoretical framework that aims to increase our understanding of poor individuals' political participation. More specifically, I focused on how, exactly, the local social context in which the individual is embedded affects her behavior. Following previous findings on social behavior and social norms within less-affluent communities and among poor individuals, I argue that local social ties should be denser among the poor. As a result of higher levels of group solidarity, community sanctioning and bandwagoning, poor individuals should also be more likely to engage in those forms of participation based on social interaction between members of the local community. Among these types of local political participation are participation in protests, engagement in community programs and contribution to community funds. Similarly, we may expect poor individuals living in communities with strong social ties to participate in modes of participation that are not *per se* based on social interaction with other community members when there is a strong social norm to comply, such as a norm of voting.

The dissertation compromises three papers, which aim to test the theoretical expectations empirically. In the first paper, I examine the role of regional deprivation in the mobilization of unemployed protesters in Tunisia. I find that frustration with regional marginalization and high unemployment levels triggered group-solidarity among the disadvantaged in the interior and southern districts, which led to their collective mobilization. In the second paper, I analyze variation in the individual voting intentions of citizens living in more and less deprived neighborhoods in England. I find that when poor individuals and the citizens of the more deprived neighborhoods think that their neighbors vote, then they are more likely to follow their lead. The effect is significantly stronger for poor rather than wealthy individuals. The third paper looks at the role of social ties for poor individuals' political engagement, using original survey data from Kenya, Malawi and Zambia. It shows that the poor are more likely to listen to local leaders and neighbors than to more removed leaders such as MPs when asked to vote or donate money to a school or burial fund. Moreover, when living in socially dense neighborhoods, the effects on individual compliance with local leaders and neighbors is more pronounced. We find the primary evidence that this relationship is explained through social monitoring by the community and by the bandwagoning of the individual.

With this research, I contribute to the literature on political participation and social networks by providing a theoretical model that explains poor individuals' engagement while taking contextual differences in community norms and ties into account. In the theoretical model, I combine insights from

different literatures on clientelism, social psychology and sociology and extend these by looking more specifically at the poor. I show that some of the mechanisms explaining participation in civic and political actions such as social monitoring and community bandwagoning are relatively more important to poor individuals than to wealthier individuals, and that they are similar across countries.

Thus, contrary to assumptions from the extant literature on social capital, the poor may be more likely to have connections to their neighbors than the wealthy do to theirs. This may explain increased levels of engagement in local actions and compliance when asked by community members to participate. Thus, while the wealthy should possess more formal social capital and connections to people living outside their neighborhood, the poor may be better connected within their community. By emphasizing these nuances, the dissertation complements existing research on social networks, social capital and participation.

Moreover, this dissertation highlights a few points that could be relevant for social scientists, more generally. First, poor and wealthier individuals behave differently, yet they are also differently affected by the social environment in which they are embedded. Paper 2 shows that while wealthy individuals intend to vote to a higher extent than poor individuals, the poor are more strongly affected by social norms of voting in their community than the wealthy. For example, the poor tend to vote to a higher extent when they perceive that others will do the same whereas the wealthy do not seem to be similarly influenced by their neighbors. Second, political scientists should care about the local level as local social context matters for the poor's political behavior. Suppose we want to increase the engagement of those who typically abstain from political life. In that case, we need to understand why they most often do not engage, but, importantly also, why they sometimes do. Part of the answer lies in understanding how everyday local life is structured and shapes individual behavior. Third, analyzing very different country contexts using similar questions has advantages. For example, we learn from these different cases that even though cultural, social and historical characteristics are different, some of the mechanisms explaining individual behavior may still be similar.[15] Fourth, we can enhance our understanding of these mechanisms by bringing together different streams of the literature even though they usually do not speak to each other. For instance, in this dissertation, I draw on previous work on political participation and vote-buying. I find that participation and compliance with those who offer community goods and benefits may be driven – at least in some cases – by similar mechanisms such as community norms and ties to members of your community.

Apart from the scientific contribution, this research can also provide insights for politicians and practitioners in non-governmental organizations.

[15] I am not saying that we should and can compare countries as we please. Working on different countries always requires the researcher to reflect on the specific country context. Yet, we may still gain something from "looking outside the box".

Only by understanding why some poor individuals participate more than others and how we can develop effective countervailing measures will we increase the political and civic engagement of those who usually abstain. An essential aspect of democracy is to guarantee and strengthen the equal representation of interests. When some social groups do not feel represented then this can trigger frustration and anger, leading to protests such as the recent January 2021 unemployed protests in Tunisia. It can also cause political turmoil and even violence against state institutions and other social groups in society. In many countries of the world, populists are on the rise, using the sentiments of those who feel excluded from the political system to stir up resentment against others and even undermining democratic structures. Research on political participation will need to better understand why some social groups abstain and when it is that they participate. Only then will we be able to effectively strengthen engagement in political and civic actions within the democratic order and break the basis for populism's success.

This dissertation contributes to our understanding of this recent phenomenon by showing that similar mechanisms may cause engagement in modes of participation that are more desirable in a democratic system as well as those that are directed against the establishment. This may appear at first sight to be contradictory, as strong social ties, combined with individual frustration and the sentiment of being excluded from the political system, can result in the mobilization of those who feel excluded. Populist rhetoric, dividing societies into "them" (the elite) versus "us" (the people) may be appealing, particularly to those in need. However, this is not to say that the poor are generally more likely to support populist parties or engage in violent protests. Instead, as I show in study 3, especially when living in socially dense communities, poor people often behave in a more pro-social fashion and are also more willing to engage in community programs and to support others. This dissertation shows that social norms and ties can positively affect engagement in what we consider to be desirable modes of engagement, yet, it could also lead to disruptive behavior when people perceive that their voices are not heard through the existing channels of political participation. This again highlights the importance of the political inclusion of all social classes in established as well as young democracies. It also emphasizes the need to draw a more nuanced picture of the political behavior of the poor than previous research has done.

At the same time, this dissertation also draws into question how we should understand poverty and what may result from economic deprivation, more generally. As I show in paper 1, young and well-educated unemployed citizens in Tunisia are increasingly experiencing frustration due to the absence of job and life opportunities. Though unemployed graduates have obtained a high level of education, they must be considered as economically deprived. This contradicts our understanding of poverty and of the people we would typically consider as being poor. As Turchin suggests, high levels of education may lead to instability, for example when expectations about future achievements cannot be met due to lack of opportunities. The lack of social mobility

may increasingly lead to disruptive behavior and, in some cases, could also result in extremism, as shown by Gambetta and Hertog (2016) in the case of engineers becoming Islamist radicals.

Some of the questions raised in this dissertation require further investigation. For example, what distinguishes socially dense communities from those which do not have dense community ties? In the literature, we find that time spent by people in the community shapes the strength and density of community ties (Kasarda and Janowitz, 1974). Other studies also show that rural communities and the poor and the elderly have denser neighborly ties (e.g., Campbell and Lee, 1992; Logan and Spitze, 1994). Yet, in particular, how these connections between neighbors develop over time needs to be addressed through additional research. Another topic for future research will be to examine the role of community social networks in participation, asking more specifically about the density and the type of relationships between neighbors. For example, we still do not know which types of relationships shape the behavior of the poor. We could think of family ties within the neighborhood versus connections to people who are "just neighbors," both potentially leading to a general need to comply – either because your family would think or speak poorly of you or because other people in the neighborhood would do so. Another way to think about this would be to understand why poor individuals report stronger social ties but are less trusting than wealthier individuals (paper 2). Also, what does this tell us about the type of relationships that matter for participation? Who do poor individuals "trust"? This leads us to the next question about potential mechanisms. We find that community sanctioning drives compliance in Kenya, Malawi and Zambia. Whether it is about how people judge or sanction in materialistic terms, or even physically, is not clear. Thus, how social sanctioning is integrated into people's everyday lives needs to be further investigated, or put more simply, we need to understand better what is happening on the ground. Also, future work should focus more explicitly on the local: how should we measure local context? More work is needed to show why local context matters for political behavior, and thus, why we should care about subnational differences in the social sciences.

This dissertation already points to the importance of local context for individual behavior and political participation. It shows that poor individuals are influenced by the social environment in which they are embedded; they rely more on their local networks and therefore are more prone to social monitoring from the community. Yet they also show higher levels of solidarity with their neighbors, which can increase their willingness to engage in socially based modes of local participation and to vote when voting is perceived as a community norm. Therefore, this research provides important scholarly and programmatic insights regarding the poor's participation and, more specifically, the role of social norms and ties.

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