

NEWSLETTER

LIVEWHAT—Living with Hard Times: How Citizens React to Economic Crises and Their Social and Political Consequences

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<http://www.livewhat.unige.ch/>



LIVEWHAT is a research project that studies policy responses and citizens' resilience in times of crisis. The project brings together universities and an international advisory board of leading scientists from nine European countries – France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom.

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LIVEWHAT updates

NEW FINDINGS

Public Responses to the Economic Crisis in European Countries

Over the past six months, the eight national teams of LIVEWHAT have been working extensively to gather and analyze information related to how European citizens have reacted to the economic crisis by intervening as organized collective actors through claims making in the public domain. They examined national public debates about the economic crisis in the nine countries of the project namely, France, Germany, Greece, Italy, Poland, Spain,

Sweden, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom. Methodologically, the teams relied on political claims analysis as this approach has enabled them to cover a broader set of actors, forms of action and issues than that are usually covered within studies of social movements and protest. In particular, claims were coded by random sampling of about 1,000 claims per country (for a total sample of 9,033 claims) selected from five newspapers in each country and covering the period from 2005 to 2014. All articles containing any of the three words “*crisis*”, “*recession*”, or “*austerity*” were selected and coded, to the extent that they referred to the

current economic crisis. The articles were sampled from all newspaper sections, excluding editorials, through key words search.

Below we present some of the main findings of the political claims analysis by looking at: the actor-subject who makes the claim, the form of the claim, the issue addressed, the actor-object, and the construction of blame and frames that provides a full cognitive understanding of the claim. The findings are presented on the basis of a continuum of countries and the degree at which they have been affected by the economic crisis.

That is, the countries of the sample used in the analysis were classified into three groups: those severely hit by the economic crisis i.e. Greece, Italy, and Spain (strong impact); those moderately hit i.e. France and the United Kingdom (moderate impact); and those countries which have been less or not affected by the

crisis i.e. Germany, Poland, Sweden, and Switzerland. This is admittedly a rough classification, but was effected to see more clearly whether the severity of the crisis has had an impact on the structuring of the discursive field around the issue of the economic crisis.

Main Findings: Issues and objects

Table 1 below reports the issues of claims - or content – to answer the question “what is to be undertaken?”

Table 1: Issues of claims about the economic crisis by strength of crisis (percentages)

	Strong	Intermediate	Weak
Socioeconomic issues	54.72	71.17	59.05
Macroeconomics	42.41	56.45	51.99
Labor and unemployment	10.28	8.28	7.02
Social policy	1.86	3.88	1.50
Economic activities and domestic commerce	0.18	5.82	0.13
Other issues	45.28	28.83	40.95
Rights, civil liberties, and discrimination	1.09	1.60	0.52
Health	1.37	0.80	0.73
Agriculture	1.02	1.03	0.34
Education, culture, and sports	5.02	1.03	2.23
Environment	0.88	0.74	0.65
Energy	0.88	0.34	0.60
Immigration and integration	0.42	0.57	0.57
Transportation	1.37	1.37	0.70
Law and order	3.89	0.51	2.69
Urban and regional policies	15.57	11.02	22.97
Defense	0.28	0.11	0.28
Science	0.98	0.40	1.73
Foreign trade	1.79	0.68	2.62
International affairs	9.75	2.74	2.05
Government and public administration	0.07	1.14	0.05
Public lands and water management	0.91	0.97	0.65
Other fields	0.00	0.51	0.00
Total N	100%	100%	100%
	2851	1752	3862

(Pearson chi2 (40) = 1.1e+03, Pr = 0.000, Cramer's V = 0.2533; Pearson chi2 (2) = 170.5644, Pr = 0.000, Cramer's V = 0.1419)

The analysis shows that claim-making over macroeconomics, labor and unemployment, social policy, as well as economic activities and domestic commerce, take the lion's share across all variations of intensity of the crisis. The fact that in all countries claim-making focuses on just a limited number of issues accounts for the minor variations

along the weak to strong crisis *continuum*. Yet, the figures also show an interesting *crescendo* over labor and unemployment between countries of weak and strong crisis respectively. It is also noticeable that a comparable pattern can be detected for other less debated issues, and in particular international affairs. It is

possible to single out some national specificities that do not show up in the figures of Table 1. Spain and the United Kingdom stand out as the two opposite poles with highest and lowest claim-making over macroeconomic issues.

Italy is the country where discussion over labor and unemployment is the most intense, while France stands out for its unparalleled claim-making over economic activities and domestic commerce.

Lastly, German actors pay no attention whatsoever vis-à-vis issues of social policy. Moreover, Table 2 below shows the distribution of claims when looking at their main objects. In this case the analysis has

identified answers to the question “who is the main actor whose interests are at stake?”

Table 2: Objects of claims about the economic crisis by strength of crisis (percentages)

	Strong	Intermediate	Weak
State and party actors	11.70	24.13	12.33
State actors	10.59	21.59	11.64
Political parties and politicians	1.11	2.54	0.69
Economic actors	25.94	35.12	37.34
Civil society actors	25.67	13.80	17.61
Other professional organizations	3.84	2.16	2.71
Labor organizations	16.05	8.71	11.94
Group-specific organizations	5.06	2.00	2.35
Solidarity, human rights, and welfare organizations	0.17	0.76	0.13
Other civil society organizations	0.54	0.16	0.48
Unknown/unspecified actors	36.69	26.95	32.72
Total N	100% 2965	100% 1848	100% 3918

(Pearson chi2 (16) = 394.7893, Pr = 0.000, Cramer's V = 0.1504; Pearson chi2 (6) = 344.0756, Pr = 0.000, Cramer's V = 0.140)

Examining national specificities outside Table 2, one also finds some crucial cross-national variations that fit established knowledge of comparative politics, sociology, and economics. In particular, the pattern of claims focused on policy-makers and the state as the main actor-objects shows that the two countries characterized by a Continental welfare state – France and Germany – stand together on a same pole that is made of extensive claim-making over institutional actors. Poland confirms its strong liberal-residual developments by standing, side by side with Switzerland, on the opposite pole of scarce claim-making.

The countries following the Southern model – Greece, Italy, and Spain – are also similar. The United

Kingdom is the only country left out from conventional knowledge, since it shows more similarities with the Southern countries than with the liberal-residual pole (as one may expect). Yet, national specific figures referring to economic actors and civil society do not fit the same comparative pattern.

Thus, economic actors are extensively taken as the object of claims in Germany, Italy, Sweden, and the United Kingdom while civil society actors bring Poland together with Greece and Italy. Another underlying finding is that in some countries, claim-making is still focused on the old cleavage between work and capital (Greece and Italy), while in others it is rooted in a post-capitalist context (United Kingdom, and Spain to a minor extent).

Frames

The variable visibility of economic actors within the public domain, both as actor-subjects, and actor-objects, calls for a more detailed analysis of economic frames vis-à-vis other main types of legal and political frames. Table 3 refers to the analysis of main diagnostic frames, that is, which causes are seen as having led to a particular aspect of the crisis.



Table 3: Diagnostic frames of claims about the economic crisis by strength of crisis (percentages)

	Strong	Intermediate	Weak
Economic causes	38.66	57.87	61.12
Legal, administrative, and regulatory causes	34.32	23.78	13.74
Political causes	18.34	7.48	11.63
Other diagnostic frames	8.68	10.87	13.52
Total N	100% 1014	100% 1270	100% 1376

(Pearson $\chi^2(6) = 237.3373$, Pr = 0.000, Cramer's V = 0.1801)

Once again, the analysis confirms the idea that the intensity of economic crisis waters down the economic substance of claim-making. Thus, economic frames prevail especially in contexts of weak crisis, with political causes standing out in contexts of strong crisis. Regarding national specificities, the analysis suggests that in this case economic causes are singled out across the entire set of countries. The major exception to this trend is Italy, where legal, administrative, and regulatory causes take the lion's share. Greece also provides some discordant voices within the group owing to the important presence of political

causes among the diagnostic frames. Table 4 shows the distribution of claims when looking at the blamed actor, that is, the actor who may explicitly identified as bearing the main responsibility of crisis.

The comparison according to the weak-to-strong *continuum* strengthens findings referring to the actor-subject and the actor-object variables. Thus, stronger intensity goes together with decreasing blaming of economic actors and increasing blame against civil society and institutional actors.

When looking at national specificities that may lie behind the weak-to-strong *continuum*, one finds

only few cross-national variations that fit the established knowledge of comparative politics, sociology, and economics. France and Germany show some similarities owing to the important percentage of blame against economic actors. Yet, the same cannot be said about other expected combinations.

So Greece, Italy, and Spain are quite dissimilar from each other (with the economic actors taking a crucial share of blaming only in Italy), while the situation of the United Kingdom is now closer to that of France and Germany.

Table 4: Blamed actors in claims about the economic crisis by strength of crisis (percentages)

	Strong	Intermediate	Weak
State and party actors	71.74	58.12	46.26
Economic actors	14.49	31.60	34.92
Civil society actors	7.03	5.52	2.27
Unknown/unspecified actors	6.73	4.76	16.55
Total N	100% 683	100% 924	100% 441

(Pearson $\chi^2(6) = 153.4421$, Pr = 0.000, Cramer's V = 0.1935)

Most crucially, Switzerland stands out for the highest percentage of blaming against economic actors: for every 2 claims reaching the public domain there is an economic actor being blamed.

Conclusions

The analysis of collective responses in the public domain suggests that the public debate has largely been dominated by a discourse focused on macro-economic issues. Particularly

in countries less affected by the economic crisis, the political contention over the crisis is generally pacified.

This leaves a crucial space of political intervention for economic actors and groups (despite their low grievance). In this case, it is noticeable that policy-makers and the state have dominated debates about the economic crisis. Sometimes this has happened in addition to specific professional organizations and experts who, most likely, have supplied policy-makers and the state with expertise on the crisis.

Hence, a first form of consensual politics around the economic crisis can be detected in Europe, which may have worked as a form of client politics, dominated by state actors, economic groups, and state-sponsored interests, mainly acting via verbal speech. In this context, even the labor organizations have had little to say over major policy 'reforms' that have been pushed forward in the labor market as a way of reacting to the (low intensity of)

crisis. So, economic actors did not generally gain their best visibility when their interests were under threat, but they took the lion's share of claims in context of lowest grievance. Overall, the process of pacification in the public domain has been politically driven, embedded in the weakness of labor movements and other civil society organizations vis-à-vis stronger political entrepreneurs such as the economic organizations.

Furthermore, far from being a simple economic type of crisis to be seized through usual economic measures, the economic crisis has stood out for its eminently political character. It has emerged as a political resource for some entrepreneurs (mostly, economic groups and interests) who have made use of the idea of the economic crisis, even when basic economic indicators do not show a context of economic crisis.

Most crucially, the economic crisis has provided a political arena where the classic performance of contentious politics can continue to be delivered between powerful political insiders on the one hand, and different types of outsider 'publics' on the other. The lack of a straightforward vector linking the grievance to the grievant is far from being a bizarre result of the analysis. The existence of any grievance, even when consisting of the economic crisis, has been grounded in the contentious dynamics that link political insiders and outsiders within a same field of intervention. Thus, the politics of the economic crisis has been most salient when it was brought at the core of neoliberal readjustments of the labor market dividing workers on the one hand and capital on the other.

Visit our website to learn more about our research:
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Announcements and upcoming events



WORKSHOP

Scuola Normale Superiore

March 10th 2016

Our Consortium researchers, Dr Lorenzo Bosi (Principal investigator of the Italian team in LIVEWHAT) and Dr Lorenzo Zamponi, are

organizing a workshop entitled "*Forme d'azione sociali dirette in tempi di crisi economica in Italia*" at Scuola Normale Superiore in Florence. The workshop investigates the presence and development of direct social actions in Italy since the 1970s. It brings together historians and social scientists to meet and discuss their research. The

conference will be held in Italian and is open to the public.

Workshop participants

Lorenzo Bosi
(Scuola Normale Superiore)

Carlotta Caciagli
(Scuola Normale Superiore)

Silvia Casilio
(Universita' di Teramo)

Pietro Castelli Gattinara
(Scuola Normale Superiore)

Donatella Della Porta
(Scuola Normale Superiore)

Francesca Forno
(CORES - Universita' di Bergamo)

Caterina Froio
(Sciences-Po Paris)

Loredana Guerrieri
(Fondazione Ugo Spirito e Renzo De Felice)

Maria Cristina Marchetti
(Universita' di Roma La Sapienza)

Herbert Reiter
(Scuola Normale Superiore)

Luciano Villani
(Universita' di Roma La Sapienza)

Lorenzo Zamponi
(Scuola Normale Superiore)

Andrea Zini
(Centro Studi Movimenti Parma)

Venue

Palazzo Strozzi
Florence, Italy

To learn more about the upcoming workshop, visit:

www.sns.it/eventi/formazione-sociali-dirette-tempi-di-crisi-economica-italia

LIVEWHAT events



LIVEWHAT CONFERENCE

OCTOBER 2015

The LIVEWHAT International Scientific Conference took place in Geneva from Wednesday 14th to Friday 16th October 2015. It was organized by the project coordinator, the Institute of Citizenship Studies (InCite) of the University of Geneva. The aim was two-fold: to disseminate the project's findings and to foster exchanges between the LIVEWHAT Consortium and prominent scholars working in the field. The conference was structured around five main themes, reflecting key research dimensions of the LIVEWHAT project.

Theme 1: The interplay of different forms of participation in times of crisis

Research on party politics and protest politics seldom speak to one another. Theme 1 brought together scholars discussing the interaction between political parties, civil society organizations, and social movements. The papers presented dealt with the mechanisms connecting different forms of political participation at the micro-, meso-, and macro-levels. The panels of Theme 1 addressed: at the macro level, the broader question of the interaction between contentious and party politics and how they influence each other; at the meso-level, the mobilizing capacity of civil society

organizations on different policy issues; at the micro-level, whether and how citizens engage in and combine multiple forms of participation.

Theme 2: Austerity policies and the governance structure of the economic crisis

The economic crisis has shaped a field of intense grievance and high political salience, which in itself questions the role of political institutions, policy-making, and broader processes of governance. The two panels of Theme 2 offered a comprehensive framework for the study of these processes. The underlying idea was that the political inclusion of different kinds of stakeholders and civil society actors in the public domain can hardly be disconnected from the decisions of elites and institutions in the policy domain. Hybrid processes at the intersection of the public and the policy domain are also evident when political elites become main actors within the 'national publics'.



Panel 1 focused on the complex mixture of laws, policies and different types of arrangements that shape the political context. Attention was also focused on more fluid decisions in the hands of policy-makers, who can intervene to widen, or otherwise restrict, scope for bottom-up political access.

Panel 2 took into account a more dynamic model where roles of public challengers and policy insiders are detected in the concrete development of interventions of actors themselves. Governance processes are thus evaluated in the open-ending interplay across politics and society.

Theme 3: Social welfare, family, and non-political resistance to the economic crisis

As a reaction to the current economic crisis, European countries have been implementing significant social policy reforms including the fields of labor market policy, family policy, and social protection

systems. However, the directions of these reforms have often been contradictory. On the one hand, significant cuts in social spending as part of the austerity measures have been made; on the other, increased financial support was introduced for families to ease their difficult situation in the crisis. The panels of Theme 5 discussed the directions of

welfare regimes' transformations, particularly the consequences of social policy reforms on social citizenship in Europe.

Theme 4: Economic crisis and the rise of populisms

Populist discourse has become increasingly widespread in Europe over the last decades. While in some countries populist parties, particularly on the radical right, have a relatively long history, in others populist parties seem to have flourished in the context of the economic crisis. Despite the widely held impression that economic recession is a 'breeding ground' for populism, the effect of the economy

on the prevalence and character of populist discourse remains an open question.

The panels of Theme 4 discussed how and under what circumstances the economic crisis affects the rise of populism and the specific forms it might take. The first panel focused on the success of the populist radical right and the appeal of its policy stances, such as opposition to immigration and Euroscepticism. The second panel examined the spread of populist rhetoric in public debate and the rise of populist attitudes among the public.

Theme 5: Social welfare, family, and non-political resistance to the economic crisis

Since the economic crisis of 2008, citizens have responded to economic threats by engaging in a wide repertoire of alternative economic and non-economic practices aligned with solidarity and social economy aims, so as to meet basic needs linked to food, shelter, health, childcare and education that are no longer covered by the respective social policies. At the same time, these alternative practices foster and facilitate new forms of political participation aimed to strengthen open, democratic forms of governance and sustain social economy objectives. They may stem from social movements, labor unions, or other associative structures. The aim of the two panels of Theme 5 was to highlight the interactions between these alternative initiatives, the policies affecting them, the policies influenced by them, as well as the social movement milieu which fosters them.

The LIVEWHAT scientific conference was concluded with a keynote speech given by Jonas Pontusson on the topic: *"The Impact of the Economic Crisis on Support for Redistribution in Europe."*

Jonas Pontusson is Professor of Comparative Politics at the University of Geneva in Switzerland. A leading scholar of comparative political economy and the welfare state, he previously taught at Cornell and Princeton. He

has been a visiting scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation, the Swedish Collegium for Advanced Study in Social Sciences, and Nuffield College, Oxford.

LIVEWHAT in Greece

October 2015

On 2nd October 2015, our Consortium researchers, Dr Stefania Kalogeraki and Ms Marina Papadaki (members of the Greek team in LIVEWHAT), and Dr Maria Mexi (member of the Swiss team) participated in the 5th Panhellenic Conference on Social Welfare Services, which was organized by the Prefecture of Crete in the town of Aghios Nikolaos. During the conference proceedings, Dr Kalogeraki from the University of Crete presented the LIVEWHAT project (objectives and workpackages), while focusing particularly on Workpackage 6 which involves an analysis of current alternative forms of resilience (barter networks, food banks, free medical services, soup kitchens etc.) across Europe and the impact of the economic crisis (Workpackage 6).

Over the conference, the LIVEWHAT researchers had a fruitful exchange with the invited scientific community, policy makers and other stakeholders. The conference offered a unique opportunity for network building and the planning of future cooperation between the project researchers and different stakeholders in Greece.



LIVEWHAT in Switzerland

September 2015



On 2nd September 2015, LIVEWHAT Coordinator, Professor Marco Giugni and Dr Maria Mexi (member of the Swiss team) followed the invitation of Ashoka Switzerland to a joint conference on Swiss Changemakers. The conference's aim was to disseminate

ideas about how to bring out and support the most innovative entrepreneurial solutions to social and environmental challenges, which has the effect of inspiring all actors of society to become in turn changemakers. During the conference, Professor Marco Giugni and Dr Maria Mexi presented the LIVEWHAT project, its conceptual and methodological approaches and its first findings on the impact of the economic crisis and related policy responses across the nine countries studied by LIVEWHAT. The meeting was attended by young social entrepreneurs, civil society stakeholders, practitioners, and activists. The exchanges focused on the necessary tools and mindsets that are necessary to help the social ventures take on ambitious visions, rethink their social impact, and build development strategies to mitigate the adverse effects of the crisis.

Feedback from latest Consortium meetings



On 2nd-3rd December, 2015, our Italian partner – Scuola Normale Superiore – hosted the fifth LIVEWHAT Consortium meeting at Palazzo Strozzi in Florence.



At the meeting, the teams discussed papers which are built on findings about individual responses to crises under Workpackage 4.

The aim of Workpackage 4 was to study individual responses to crises by private citizens through a survey on national representative samples of the general population in each of the nine countries studied by the project.

The papers tackled challenging themes pertaining to individual perceptions, assessments and responses to crises by private citizens allowing us to better grasp the cross-national variations in the extent and form of resilience at the micro-level of individual citizens.

Workpackage 4 data was collected through a survey on national representative samples of the general population in each of the nine countries studied by the project. In addition, the teams discussed and planned the research steps of the next work packages. First, particular attention was dedicated to the sixth work package on alternative forms of resilience in times of crisis.

Here, the teams will map, analyze and assess existing practices of resilience in response to crisis, such as citizens' initiatives and networks of cooperation amongst civil society actors.



Moreover, the teams will engage with the individual and collective actors involved in these initiative in order to promote knowledge exchange and deliberation about the crisis's implications for the well-being of families, women, children, minorities, the elderly, and other vulnerable groups and communities on the one hand, and innovative responses, best practice models and policy implications on the other hand.



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- University of Crete (Greece)
- Autonomous University of Barcelona (Spain)
- University of Sheffield (United Kingdom)
- University of Siegen (Germany)
- University of Warsaw (Poland)
- Uppsala University (Sweden).

For questions about the project, you may contact the Project Coordinator:

Professor Marco Giugni

Director of the **Institute of Citizenship Studies (InCite)**

University of Geneva.

Email: Marco.Giugni@unige.ch



LIVEWHAT Consortium includes nine European Universities across Europe. Project Coordinator is the University of Geneva (Switzerland). The Consortium Partners are:

- European University Institute (Italy)
- Fondation Nationale des Sciences Politiques (France)

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