

Edalina Rodrigues Sanches, José Santana Pereira, Isabella Razzuoli (ICS-ULisboa) | *Critical Trends of Citizen Participation in Policymaking: Insights from Portugal*

In representative democracies political trust is often featured as a key requirement of regime stability and legitimacy, as well as quality of democracy. The extant research shows that the sources of political trust are various and linked both to individual- and macro-level factors, long- and short-term (macro-level factors such as historical legacies, welfare state policies or economic development, prior levels of interpersonal and social trust, and performance-based accounts/citizens appraisals of how political institutions actually work). The context of the financial and economic crisis in Europe in 2008 is an interesting context to test the nature of this political attitude, since the turmoil was of greater volume than any other pattern of negative economic performance experienced by most European democracies in the last 30 years. We know that, in many countries, the citizens' expressed levels of trust in political institutions, namely political parties, the government and the parliaments, dropped dramatically, but the extant research has done little more than account for this longitudinal variation instead of analyzing its causes. Was this decrease caused by national political institutions being blamed by the economic crisis, or merely by being deemed incompetent to deal with it? Are levels of trust in non-political institutions no longer good predictors of trust in political institutions? If so, to what extent are the current measures of political trust distinct of measures of government performance? In order to provide answers to these questions, this chapter analyses citizens' trust in political institutions in a selection of European democracies in the last two decades, drawing on European Social Survey data. Such an analysis is relevant as it allows to investigate a key dimension of citizenship in democratic societies and their ability to face critical junctures.