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ANALYTICAL IMAGES OF POLITICAL TRUST IN TIMES OF GLOBAL CHALLENGES. THE CASE OF SLOVENIA, SPAIN AND SWITZERLAND

Lluís COROMINA and Simona KUSTEC¹

The main aim of this paper is to disentangle the understanding of political trust by analysing its determinants and trends in specific global crisis circumstances. Two fundamental perspectives of understandings of political trust as institutional and evaluation category in the period during the 2002 to 2012 are taken into focus, applying Switzerland, Spain and Slovenia as case study countries with different experiences of democratic development. The aim of the study is to see whether, and how, attitudes towards political trust in the three countries potentially changed during the set period and according to the set institutional and evaluation perspectives of political trust. A multiple group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFA) and posterior structural equation model (SEM) are specified, applied on the European Social Survey (ESS) dataset. The study confirms that the perception of political trust is significantly divided within various types of political institutions. Attitudes to political trust in various democracies differ within political institutions depending on whether they exist at a national or international level, or whether they appear as individual political subject. Attitudes to political trust are also affected by time periods and global economic challenges. The findings point to the need for political institutions to perform in accordance with stable democratic patterns. Findings also point to the need for further research in order to track various prevailing characteristics of political trust in variously developed democracies.

Key words: political trust; political institutions; democracy; multiple group confirmatory factor analysis; posterior structural equation model.

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1 INTRODUCTION

Trust is one of the most fundamental research areas in the social sciences. Ever popular, but at the same time, increasingly complex, ambiguous, multi-layered, and elusive, and therefore, a highly challenging topic of research, whether taken from a conceptual or an operational-measurement perspective. It is therefore unsurprising that the substantial body of 'trust literature' has a considerable number of studies from various perspectives, with findings that are frequently contradictory and mutually exclusive.

This paper focuses on the perceptions of political trust, and analyses two fundamental perspectives of its understandings - the institutional and evaluation one. The focus of the paper is set in the period during the 2002 to 2012, considering economic crisis in that time in three European countries with different rates of democratic development. The aim of the study was to see whether, and how, attitudes towards political trust in the three countries potentially changed during the set period and according to the set two political trust perspectives.

Various typologies of political trust can be identified in referred literature, addressing various perspectives. For the purposes of the paper political trust is set into its institutional and evaluative context. The institutional perspective of political trust places political entities at the heart of interest. Here, the issue of political trust refers to trust in political institutions, which are either understood as one large complex entity, or as a set of individual, political institutional constructs with their own peculiarities and '*modus of operandi*' (Zmerli et al. 2007; Hooghe 2011). The individual political entities, or the 'zipped' political institution approach to measuring political trust is taken at the core of this perspective of political trust.

The second perspective of political trust addresses its evaluative perspective. It focus either into the processes and structures of the work and performance of political institutions (political trust as a so-called specific phenomenon), or into general democratic processes and structures of a political regime and its correspondence with political trust (political trust as a so-called diffuse phenomenon) (Easton 1975; Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki 1975; Kumlin 2002; Newton 2006). In this sense, political trust can be understood as a purely political, or as a wider socio-cultural phenomenon (van Deth, Montero and Westholm 2007). It can 'serve' to be either a dependent or independent evaluation research variable. Among the so-called political factors, such characteristics as satisfaction with democracy, patterns of political culture, attitudes towards political participation, and political performance have most frequently corresponded to political trust as dependent variable, and it can be also *vice versa* (Almond and Verba 1963; Easton 1975; March and Olsen 1984; Mishler and Rose 2001; Grönlund and Ferrera 2007; Zmerli, Newton and Montero 2007; Marien and Hooghe 2011). So-called 'non-political factors' primarily focus on demographic, economic, educational and other socio-cultural attitudes towards political trust. For instance, it is predicted that the level of education or gender corresponds to the level of political trust detected by the respondents (Kaase 1999; Letki 2004; Mishler and Rose 2001; Almond and Verba 1963; Schiffman, Thelen and Sherman 2010; Zmerli et al. 2007).

In this paper, both of the exposed approaches to political trust are being tested in three European democracies with different experiences of democratic

development,² all of them having very specific political and economic circumstances before and after the 2009 global economic crisis. When considering the stated political trust perspectives, the study is expected to provide new insights into the following:

- a) the complexity of general understanding of political trust as a unique or construct-divided institutional phenomena, with a special focus given before and after critical crisis circumstances (*'institutional'* perspective).
- b) the role of political and non-political factors in relation to the institutional related perception of political trust before and after critical system-wide circumstances (*'evaluation'* perspective).

For analytical purposes, the dataset of the European Social Survey (ESS) is obtained. A multiple group confirmatory factor analysis (MGCFAs) and posterior structural equation model (SEM) are specified and applied to three European countries in 2004, before the 2008 global economic and financial crisis, immediately after the crisis, in 2010 and later in 2012.

2 POLITICAL TRUST AND THE INSTITUTIONAL STRUCTURE OF POLITICAL ENTITIES

Political trust is understood first and foremost as an institutional phenomenon. It is most often approached as being either interpersonal (Almond and Verba 1963; Putnam 1993; Inglehart 1990) or system (Easton 1975; Mishler and Rose 2001; Dalton 2000; Levi and Stoker 2000); and either individual or collective (Zmerli et al. 2007).

In this sense, political trust is most often considered a dependent variable with special relevance in the relationships between citizens and political authorities or entities. These relationships can be understood on a single political institutional basis or on an individual basis, and based on either firmly, formally regulated constitutional and legislative norms or on their own 'rules of the game' (Searing 1982).³

Many authors suggest it is inappropriate to categorise political entities as single political institutions. (Rohrshneider and Whitefield 2009; Zmerli et al. 2007; Marien and Hooghe 2011), instead, various political subjects need to be treated as a set of individual entities or constructs (Levi and Stoker 2000; Pharr et al. 2000; Searing 1982; Torney-Purta, Barber and Richardson 2004). Results confirm the argument above and identified differences in the levels of political trust among the following individual groups of political subjects (Denters et al. 2007; Hooghe 2011): a) *individual actors* (e.g., political parties and politicians); b) *regulating institutions* (e.g., parliament, government, courts, police, army); c) *policy performance bodies* (e.g., economic, healthcare, education, and cultural institutions; civil service, and so on); and d) *international organisations* (the United Nations).⁴

² See Table 5 in Annex for the key descriptive characteristics of the democracies of the countries analysed: Switzerland, Spain and Slovenia.

³ In real life, the 'truth' frequently fell somewhere 'in-between'. Politicians do not implement the rules of the game as reliably as is implied by traditional constitutional rulings and modern democratic theory. In practice, therefore, politicians' responses differ substantially from the normative expectations of the political institutions (ibid).

⁴ Hooghe (2011, 271) fundamentally defends the single-definition of political institutions' trust, but adds "if there is any two-dimensionality in a political trust scale, it would be between, on the one

On the basis of the institutional-related understanding of political trust outlined above, the first leading hypothesis tests the potential division of political entities and perception of political trust, as follows:

H₁: The structure of political trust is more than a one-dimensional phenomena.

3 EVALUATION PERSPECTIVES OF POLITICAL TRUST AND POLITICAL ENTITIES

Political trust can be conceptually and analytically treated as a two-fold phenomenon. It can be used as one (among many others) of the determinants for the assessment of the success of one political system or its democracy, or it can directly reflect the cognitive assessment of what political entities do with regard to regime performance (Easton 1975; Kumlin 2002, 109–111). In the former case we speak about a diffuse political trust phenomenon, while in the latter about a specific phenomenon (Easton 1975). In the diffuse phenomenon cases, it is assumed that political trust is so closely related to democracy that it either represents its constitutive minimal criteria, which is a trademark of success or failure (Zmerli et al. 2007; Kumlin 2002; Denters et al. 2007). Political institutions undertake a central role when political trust is regarded as a specific phenomenon. Political trust is being defined through the evaluation data of how they perform, how they are perceived by the people, and what results they are achieving (ibid).

By the mid 1970s, Crozier, Huntington and Watanuki (1975) had already closely connected lower levels of political trust in established Western democracies to the prevailing modes of state governability. According to the authors, lower levels of political trust are related to a broader range of economic, social and political interventions on a macro-level, showing that in the longer term, various general dysfunctions of democracy are the only evident explanation for decreasing trust in political institutions (ibid). Inglehart (1990), also on a longer-term basis, correlated decreasing levels of trust with the rise of modernisation and identity changes. Within a similar framework, a causality between general satisfaction with democracy and the performance of specific policies has also been confirmed on various case studies, stating that where there is higher welfare and economic policy performance, people have higher expectations (Putnam 1993; Vatter and Bernauer 2009). This is particularly true for economic policy performance and trust in how governments work. It is believed that national economic performance and citizens' evaluations of the economy are correlated in such a way that negative perceptions of the economy promote higher political distrust (Citrin 1974; Hetherington 1998).⁵

hand, trust in representative institutions [...] and on the other hand trust in the order institutions of a society" and "if the purpose was to show political trust is not one-dimensional, it would have made more sense to focus on items that are less central to the scale, like [...] trust in United Nations".

⁵ Although in a very recent case Klingeman (2018) stated that the 2008 financial crisis in Germany had no direct impact on the strong and stable support for democracy within the country, a number of studies focusing on political parties' stability in times of economic crisis show that people in Western democracies (especially post-socialist) are significantly more likely to shift to another party in response to an economic downturn. This leads towards the destabilization of the party systems, which is one of the building blocks of today's democratic systems, and also political trust discourse (Hernández and Kriesi 2016; Dassonneville and Hooghe 2017).

Similar general trends described above have also been detected in the cases of younger democracies. Although countries in the so called younger democracies have higher levels of mistrust in political institutions than those of older democracies (Bernhard, Reenock and Nordstrom 2003; Letki 2004; Catterberg 2006; Dalton and Welzel 2014), the patterns of relationships between democracies, politicians' responsiveness and political trust show similarities with democracies with older tradition (Zmerli et al. 2007; Denters et al. 2007).

In other words, scholars who have analysed the shorter-term impacts of contemporary political and economic experiences and the changing levels of political trust recognise mostly conclude that short-term negative experiences have a greater effect on the decreasing levels of political trust, regardless of the level of their democratic traditions (Mishler and Rose 2001; Klingemann 2014).

Hence, according to the results from literature review, it would be expected that the economic and financial crisis and the related processes shaped attitudes towards political trust during the periods under study (2004, 2010 and 2012). Based on the exposed general evaluative perspective of political trust in times of crisis, the following hypothesis is established:

H₂: The level of political trust constructs is negatively affected over time (e.g. in times of financial crisis).

Further on, a set of the so-called diffuse political and non-political determinants of political trust in various political entities should be considered. The leading questions in these cases would be if individual satisfaction with government or with democracy (political determinants), or level of education, gender, satisfaction with life (non-political determinants) are relevant as evaluation categories of defining political trust (Almond and Verba 1963; Catterberg 2006; Crozier et al. 1975; van Deth et al. 2007; Mishler and Rose 2001; Pharr et al. 2000).

The literature that relate to the political determinants of the concept of political trust reveals that levels of political trust correspond to the performance of political institutions in relations to democracy, political system and also in a specific policy field as reflected through individuals' evaluation of their satisfaction, responsiveness, participation, and choice of the stated political factors (Zmerli et al. 2007; Denters et al. 2007). Besides the already stated influence of economic circumstances, many studies have shown that political trust in political institutions is likely to decline when material wellbeing increases. In this case, greater wealth leads to a decline in satisfaction with the performance of welfare policies, as the public begins to evaluate its leaders and institutions, demanding higher standards and with higher expectations. (Inglehart 1990; Catterberg 2006).

Further on, non-political determinants such as age, gender, education and individuals' satisfaction with life are evidenced to have an impact on the assessment of political trust, too (ibid). People's individual cultural and normative traits and beliefs, or their social backgrounds are assumed to correlate with non-political determinants for political trust (Schoon and Cheng 2011). Some studies have found that ability, education and occupational status have a positive association with political trust (Hibbing and Theiss-Morse 1995), while others have found negative or non-significant associations (Döring 1992; Hooghe 2011). Research on the potential impacts of non-political determinants (e.g.,

long-life learning) on political trust in younger, post-communist democracies have not revealed any significant differences to more established democracies (Mishler and Rose 2001; Catterberg and Moreno 2006).

Although the stated approaches and especially their findings have quite frequently been marked as inconsistent (Schoon and Cheng 2011), or even conceptually overstretched (Fisher, Van Heerde and Tucker 2010; Hooghe 2011), the third and fourth hypothesis considering political and non-political determinants of political trust are (in accordance with previous studies) as follows:

H₃: Political determinants have a higher influence on political trust than non-political determinants.

H₄: Causal effects of non-political determinants on political trust constructs are significant and lower than causal effects on political determinants.

Table 1 shows the stated hypotheses.

TABLE 1: OUTLINE OF THE HYPOTHESES

Structure		
H ₁ Political trust constructs	H ₂	Trend of political trust (2004, 2010, 2012)
	H ₃	Causal effects of political variables
	H ₄	Causal effects of non-political variables

4 DATA, METHOD AND OPERATIONALIZATION

4.1 Data

Data collected on a random sample of Swiss, Spanish and Slovenian citizens were provided by the European Social Survey (ESS) for the years 2004, 2010 and 2012.⁶ The sample size for Spanish citizens was 4772 respondents (1338 in 2004, 1683 in 2010, and 1751 in 2012); 4459 were Swiss respondents (1819 in 2004, 1295 in 2010, and 1345 in 2012); and 3335 were Slovenian respondents (1091 in 2004, 1159 in 2010, and 1085 in 2012). Each country chosen has a different level of democratic maturity, and all three offer full ESS data support for testing the leading hypotheses. Switzerland was chosen for being one of the first European democracies, Spain is representative of the early third wave of European democracies in the late 1970s, and Slovenia is an example of the late third wave of post-communist democracies, from the early 1990s. Data for all three countries were analysed in 2004 (before the global financial crisis), in 2010 and 2012 (two and four years after the 2008 financial crisis).

4.2 Operationalization

Political trust is described as a complex concept that cannot be properly measured by answering one single question. Therefore, a combination of political trust indicators were used in order to obtain a more reliable result, as this is more appropriate for measuring complex concepts than a single indicator (Allum, Read and Sturgis 2011; Torney-Purta et al. 2004).

⁶ The reason for using this particular sample of three countries is purely practical as all data required for the periods analysed were fully available in the ESS dataset for the three countries.

In this study, political trust was measured using seven items from the following ESS question: "... on a score of 0-10 how much do you personally trust each of the institutions? 0 means you do not trust an institution at all, and 10 means you have complete trust". The items are: '[country's] parliament', 'the legal system', 'the police', 'politicians', 'political parties', the 'European Parliament' and the 'United Nations'.⁷ These seven institutions were analysed for Switzerland, Spain and Slovenia in the years 2004, 2010 and 2012.

First, latent constructs on trust in political institutions was analysed, then political and non-political causal relationships between the constructs. Political factors include satisfaction with the economic situation, government, democracy, health and education. The measurement for these variables is the same for all time periods, and is obtained from ESS on a scale of 0 (completely dissatisfied) to 10 (completely satisfied). Satisfaction with the economic situation is measured as follows: "On the whole, how satisfied are you with the present state of the economy in [country]?". Satisfaction with government is measured by the question "Now thinking about the government in [country], how satisfied are you with the way it is doing its job?". Satisfaction with democracy is evaluated with the question "On the whole, how satisfied are you with the way democracy works in [country]?". Satisfaction with education is evaluated with the question "Please say what you think overall about the state of education in [country] nowadays?", and satisfaction with health is evaluated with the question: "Please say what you think overall about the state of health services in [country] nowadays?"

Non-political factors used are gender, age, life satisfaction (measured by "On the whole, how satisfied are you with life in general?", measured on a scale of 0, completely dissatisfied, to 10, completely satisfied), and level of education (using four categories: "below lower secondary education; lower secondary education completed; upper- and post-secondary education completed; and tertiary education completed").

4.3 Method

Firstly, Confirmatory Factor Analysis -CFA- (Brown 2006) was used to evaluate political trust as a latent construct. As three countries and three time points are involved, multiple group CFA -MG-CFA- is used to study Hypotheses 1 and 2. This enables us to evaluate the institutional structure and trends of political trust over different years for the three countries. Secondly, the effects of political and non-political indicators on political trust constructs are analysed using Structural Equation Modelling- SEM (Byrne 2012). This permits not only accuracy of the results, but also flexibility in estimating models, giving more accurate estimates of the relationships between the theoretically related variables (political and non-political indicators) and the latent construct of interest (political trust), while measurement error is taken into account. Hypotheses 3 and 4 were evaluated using SEM.

4.4 Results

The first part of this section shows the resulting institutional perspective of political trust. The focus is on measuring whether political trust is a single latent

⁷ The following set of institutions was selected on the basis of the classifications available and the labelling of institutions. The European Parliament was added as another potential, very specific supra-national representative political institution (see Denters et. al, 2007; Hooghe 2011, and the section *Political trust and the institutional structure of political entities* in this article).

construct formed by seven indicators, or if it is represented by several latent variables. The institutional perspective of political trust was also interpreted for each country and time period. Table 2 shows the fit indices for the political trust model structures analysed. MGCFA with Maximum Likelihood Robust (MLR) estimator was used for each country. The following goodness-of-fit measures were used for the model fit: standardised root mean square residual (SRMR), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) measures. SRMR values of 0.09 or lower and RMSEA values of 0.06 or lower indicate acceptable fit (Hu and Bentler 1999). The comparative fit index (CFI) and Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) incremental fit indices were used to calculate improvements over competing models. Values higher than 0.90 for these two indices are an indicator of acceptable model fit (Hu and Bentler 1999).

TABLE 2: FIT MEASURES FOR MEASUREMENT OF POLITICAL TRUST

	χ^2	df	P	CFI	TLI	RMSEA	SRMR
(M1) 1 construct							
Switzerland	2045.130	54	.000	.816	.785	.147 (CI 90%: .141, .152)	.076
Spain	3149.407	54	.000	.748	.706	.178 (CI 90%: .173, .184)	.102
Slovenia	1996.224	54	.000	.813	.781	.163 (CI 90%: .1567, .169)	.067
	7453.488	174	.000	.783	.764	.161 (CI 90%: .157, .164)	.085
(M2) 2 constructs*							
Switzerland	1220.131	49	.000	.892	.861	.118 (CI 90%: .112, .124)	.057
Spain	1873.897	49	.000	.852	.809	.144 (CI 90%: .138, .149)	.094
Slovenia	970.712	49	.000	.911	.886	.118 (CI 90%: .111, .124)	.052
	4383.633	157	.000	.874	.848	.129 (CI 90%: .126, .132)	.079
(M3) 3 constructs**							
Switzerland	137.564	38	.000	.991	.995	.039 (CI 90%: .032, .046)	.018
Spain	143.120	38	.000	.991	.986	.039 (CI 90%: .032, .046)	.024
Slovenia	128.197	38	.000	.991	.986	.042 (CI 90%: .034, .050)	.021
	468.688	122	.000	.990	.984	.042 (CI 90%: .038, .046)	.028

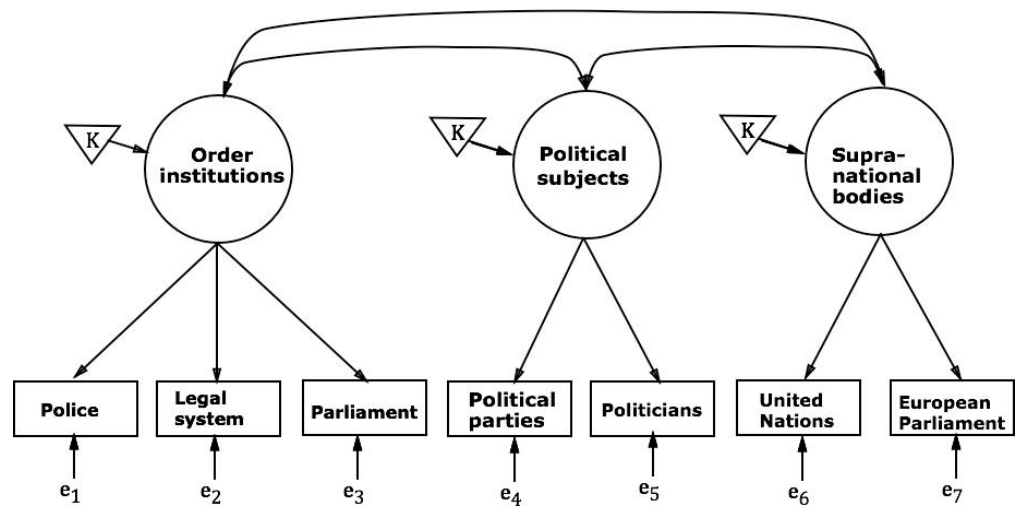
* National institutions and political subjects (parliament, legal system, police, politicians, political parties); Political bodies at the supranational level (European Parliament, United Nations).

** Order institutions at the national level (parliament, legal system, police); Political subjects (politicians, political parties); Political bodies at the supranational level (European Parliament, United Nations).

Table 2 shows the model fit for different institutional perspectives of political trust using MGCFA in the three time periods. Firstly, a single latent construct with the seven reflective indicators was evaluated. The fit for model (M1) is not acceptable, which means these seven items are not correctly specified as unique latent variables. The second model (M2) considers one latent construct represented by trust in ‘parliament’, ‘legal system’, ‘police’, ‘politicians’, ‘political parties’, namely “National institutions and political subjects”, and a construct representing ‘trust in the European Parliament’ and ‘trust in the United Nations’, namely “Political bodies at an international level”. This model fit is better than model 1, but it is still not acceptable. The third model (M3) sees political trust as three different latent constructs: 1) “Order institutions at a national level”⁸ made up of ‘trust in parliament’, ‘legal system’ and ‘police’; 2) “Political subjects” comprising ‘trust in politicians’ and ‘political parties’; and 3) “Political bodies at an international level”, a latent construct representing trust in ‘European Parliament’ and ‘United Nations’. The fit for M3 is acceptable. The latent component structure found for M3 is invariant (Milfont and Fischer 2010) across time (2004, 2010 and 2012) and countries (Switzerland, Spain and Slovenia), thus allowing comparisons across time and countries to be interpreted correctly. The representation of model 3 (M3) can be seen in Figure 1.

⁸ Labelled 'order institutions' on the basis of established typology used to measure political trust (Denters et al. 2007).

FIGURE 1: CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS WITH 3 LATENT FACTORS



In Figure 1, squares represent indicators and circles represent constructs (latent variables), e_i is a random measurement error for the responses and κ is the factor mean for the latent variables.

Results from Table 2 support H_1 in that the institutional structure with three latent variables “Order institutions at a national level”, “Political subjects” and “Political bodies at the international level” is the same for all three countries. This structure also holds for the three time periods: 2004, 2010 and 2012. Parliament and national governmental institutions are regarded as public order institutions. This finding is important in itself, as parliament is regardless of the fact that it should represent the central arena of democracy through its regulatory powers (functions, jurisdictions).

Table 3 shows the levels of these three latent constructs, where each construct is measured with latent means (κ).

TABLE 3: LATENT FACTOR MEANS FOR POLITICAL TRUST

	Order institutions at the national level			Political subjects			Political bodies at the supranational level		
	2004	2010	2012	2004	2010	2012	2004	2010	2012
Switzerland	5.481	5.793**	6.115**	4.749	5.014**	5.207**	4.573	4.572	4.638
Spain	5.048	4.293**	3.446**	3.664	2.726**	1.919**	4.966	4.487**	3.945**
Slovenia	4.131	2.991**	2.977**	3.111	2.256**	2.331**	4.525	3.763**	3.823**

**p-value<0.01

Table 3 indicates that levels of trust are different for each of the three countries. Switzerland has the highest level of trust for all constructs in 2004 (except “Political bodies at the international level” in Spain in 2004). Thus, according to data from 2010 and 2012, Spain follows Switzerland. The country with the lowest level of trust for all constructs is Slovenia. This means that the maturity of democracy in these three countries (established in Switzerland in 1848, Spain in 1977, and Slovenia in 1991) is relevant to the citizens’ level of trust; Switzerland thus has the highest levels of trust for the various dimensions (order institutions at a national level, political subjects and political bodies at an international level).

Table 3 also shows the trend from 2004 to 2012 for the three latent constructs. Switzerland has a positive trend, which means that for “Order institutions at a national level” and “Political subjects”, the level was higher in 2010 and 2012 than in 2004, while for “Political bodies at an international level” there is no

difference between time periods. Spain and Slovenia were severely affected by the economic and financial crisis, and have a lower level of political trust for all the constructs after the financial crisis. Slovenia had a dramatic decrease for “Order institutions at the national level” while “Political subjects” also decreased significantly after the crisis.

Results partially support Hypothesis 2. The trend for the level of political trust over time also holds as the trend in the “Order institutions at a national level”, “Political subjects” and “Political bodies at an international level” was negative over time for Spain and Slovenia. However, the constructs “Order institutions at a national level” and “Political subjects” increased in Switzerland, which had the same level of trust for “Political bodies at the international level”.

5 CAUSAL RELATIONSHIPS FOR POLITICAL TRUST

The next step is to relate the three latent constructs found in the analysis (M3 in Table 2) with their political and non-political predictors. A SEM model, with Maximum Likelihood Robust (MLR) estimator, was used to identify the significant causal factors for political trust over time. The political factors used are the level of satisfaction with the following situations: country’s economy, government, democracy, education and health system. The non-political factors used are the level of satisfaction with life, gender, age and education. Tables 4a, 4b and 4c show the political and non-political effects on the latent constructs “Order institutions at a national level”, “Political subjects” and “Political bodies at an international level” in Switzerland, Spain and Slovenia, respectively. Unstandardized estimates are used (Byrne 2012) to compare the results in Tables 4a, 4b and 4c.

TABLE 4A: ESTIMATES FOR POLITICAL TRUST IN SWITZERLAND

	Switzerland								
	2004			2010			2012		
	OiN	Ps	PbS	OiN	Ps	PbS	OiN	Ps	PbS
Sat. Eco.	.005	.011	-.014	.014	-.039	-.046	-.050*	-.035	-.096**
Sat Govern	.360**	.364**	.355**	.387**	.414**	.369**	.386**	.454**	.390**
Sat Demo.	.197**	.136**	.078**	.191**	.109**	.023	.300**	.163**	.073*
Sat Edu.	.030*	.049*	.087**	.030*	.046	.086**	.067**	.052*	.103**
Sat. Health	.057**	.029	.012	.125**	.105**	.135**	.046**	.001	.087**
Sat. Life	.058**	.035	.002	.059**	.009	.040	.053**	.043	.071*
Gender	.112*	-.044	-.079	-.104	-.284**	-.881**	-.079	-.310**	-.511**
Age	-.006**	-.001	-.011**	-.003	.001	-.017**	-.006**	-.001	-.017**
Education	.040**	.006	.076**	.052**	-.030**	.039**	.050**	.009	.038**
R ²	.546	.367	.329	.588	.351	.345	.589	.386	.305

*p-value <.05; ** p-value <.01

OiN (Order institutions at the national level); Ps (Political subjects); PbS (Political bodies at the supranational level)

TABLE 4B: ESTIMATES FOR POLITICAL TRUST IN SPAIN

	Spain								
	2004			2010			2012		
	OiN	Ps	PbS	OiN	Ps	PbS	OiN	Ps	PbS
Sat. Eco.	.109**	.174**	.154**	.159**	.225**	.160**	.185**	.239**	.119**
Sat Govern	.174**	.200**	.149**	.183**	.269**	.154**	.132**	.177**	.096**
Sat Demo.	.267**	.167**	.237**	.287**	.178**	.251**	.318**	.158**	.334**
Sat Edu.	.085**	.111**	.107**	.120**	.096**	.116**	.093**	.065**	.095**
Sat. Health	.132**	.086**	.089**	.118**	.029	.083**	.040**	.025	.043*
Sat. Life	.047*	-.008	.040	.043*	.037	-.026	.031*	-.033*	.001
Gender	-.011	-.063	-.174*	-.112*	-.080	-.434**	-.140*	-.189*	-.079
Age	.013**	.012**	.003	.001	.009**	-.006*	.001	.006*	-.007*
Education	.043**	.037**	.029**	.041**	.030**	.015	.019**	.026**	.012
R ²	.482	.252	.328	.614	.380	.368	.574	.371	.372

*p-value <.05; ** p-value <.01
 OiN (Order institutions at the national level); Ps (Political subjects); PbS (Political bodies at the supranational level)

TABLE 4C: ESTIMATES FOR POLITICAL TRUST IN SLOVENIA

	Slovenia								
	2004			2010			2012		
	OiN	Ps	PbS	OiN	Ps	PbS	OiN	Ps	PbS
Sat. Eco.	.047*	-.016	.003	.028	.030	.026	.072*	.071*	.043
Sat Govern	.274**	.223**	.211**	.366**	.365**	.160**	.217**	.309**	.173**
Sat Demo.	.321**	.282**	.272**	.288**	.214**	.357**	.343**	.286**	.321**
Sat Edu.	.038	-.005	.073*	.074**	.071**	.128**	.072**	.015	.067*
Sat. Health	.060**	.127**	.053	.034	.070**	-.016	.061**	.076**	.111**
Sat. Life	.033	.036	.087**	.008	-.006	.013	.003	-.011	.048
Gender	.078	-.124	.243*	.128	-.074	-.068	-.297**	-.305**	-.243*
Age	.001	.010**	.009**	.002	.004	.001	.002	.003	.005
Education	.071**	.033*	.116**	.078**	.009	.053**	.108**	.013	.062**
R ²	.610	.384	.331	.612	.492	.331	.553	.519	.404

*p-value <.05; ** p-value <.01

The results for Switzerland in Table 4a show that political variables are predictors of political trust. These variables are satisfaction with government, democracy, health, and education. “Order institutions at a national level” was particularly affected by both political and non-political variables in 2004, except for the variable 'satisfaction with the economy'. The “Political subjects construct” is affected by political variables only, while “Political bodies at an international level” is affected by satisfaction with government, democracy, education; and the non-political variables, age and education.

In 2010, the “Order institutions at a national level” construct is affected by the same variables, except gender and age, which are not statistically significant. “Political subjects” and “Political bodies at an international level” have more differences between time periods; this means that order institutions in Switzerland are more stable over time. In 2012, satisfaction with the economy was a predictive variable for “Order institutions at a national level” and “Political bodies at an international level”, the remaining political variables and most non-political variables are significant.

Table 4b shows that for Spain in 2004, all political and non-political variables are relevant for “Order institutions at the national level” except gender. For “Political subjects”, all variables are relevant, except satisfaction with life and education. The “Political bodies at an international level” is affected by all political variables, gender and education. Concerning 2010 and 2012, political variables affected the three latent constructs, except satisfaction with health on “Political subjects”, showing clear confirmation of stability in those variables. Education is the most relevant non-political variable, however it is non-significant for “Political bodies at the international level” after the economic and financial crisis.

Results for Slovenia (Table 4c) in 2004 reveal a pattern of effects of determinants on constructs that is less clear. Education and political variables affect “Order institutions at a national level”, and “Political subjects” is affected by satisfaction with democracy, government, health; and the non-political variables, age and education. “Political bodies at an international level” in Slovenia differ in structure from Spain or Switzerland, as non-political variables (except satisfaction with health) are significant. The trend in Slovenia from 2004 to 2010, and in 2012, suggests that non-political variables become non-significant. Education and gender (except in 2010) are significant for all constructs. Political variables are stable over time, and satisfaction with the economy is significant in 2012 for “Order institutions at the national level” and “Political subjects”.

Generally, political variables highly influence “Order institutions at a national level”, “Political subjects”, and “Political bodies at an international level” in all countries and all time periods. In 2004, non-political variables in Switzerland and Spain affect “Order institutions at the national level”, while for Slovenia they are more closely related to “Political bodies at an international level”. However, from 2004 to 2010 and in 2012, the trend for these variables differs in countries with different levels of democratic maturity. Results show that in the case of Switzerland, non-political variables are less important for predicting order institutions at a national level, but more important for “Political subjects” and “Political bodies at an international level”. In the case of Spain, the effect of non-political variables has not changed significantly. For Slovenia, satisfaction with government and democracy remain stable, and satisfaction with economy gains importance in the short-term (2012) after the 2008 financial crisis.

These results confirm the proposed hypotheses. In relation to political factors and the constructs “Order institutions at the national level”, “Political subjects”, and “Political bodies at the international level”, hypothesis 3 is partly supported. Political variables are significant predictors of the various constructs. For instance, satisfaction with the government is generally higher, but not satisfaction with economy or democracy.

Additionally, political determinants on political trust over time show that the effects of political determinants on “Order institutions at a national level” after

the financial crisis (2010 and 2012) are greater than, or equal to those in 2004. Satisfaction with the economy is increasingly important in 2012, at mid-term after the financial crisis, and even more relevant in Spain and Slovenia, which were most affected by the crisis. Regarding the effects of non-political determinants on the latent constructs, hypothesis 4 is also partly supported. Non-political variables influence different years for the different countries, particularly education.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The debate surrounding political trust has a long history, and still remains popular today, particularly when new political and socio-economic challenges appear in a system, such as the 2008 global economic crisis. Previous studies, using a range of applying various normative and analytical approaches, have revealed many interesting findings, but also contradictions. The results pose a challenge for both further academic research, and also for the contemporary '*state of affairs*' in the specific countries analysed, be it from institutional or wider democratic system perspective.

The main aim of this paper was to disentangle the structure and map the trends of political trust before, during and after particular global crisis periods. This was carried out by analysing political trust as a bundle of constructs of various types of political institutions over time and according to political and non-political determinants.

Testing the proposed model revealed a convincing interrelation between the countries and a higher general level of political trust (see Table 5 in the Annex). It seems that citizens' understanding of political trust has a more complex structure than appears at first glance.

Hypotheses 1 and 2 confirm connections between an institutionally-divided understanding of political trust according to: a) order institutions at a national level (with parliaments in all countries being perceived as an order institution similar to national governmental institutions); b) individual political subjects; and c) political bodies at an international level.

The results confirm that these constructs are stable over time, and that the periods before (2004) and after (2010 and 2012) the global financial crisis play an important role. If we compare the levels of political trust before (2004) and after the financial crisis (2010 and 2012), it decreases in Spain and Slovenia, but not in Switzerland, partially confirming hypothesis 2.

Regarding hypotheses 3 and 4, which relate to the casual relationships of political and non-political determinants on political trust constructs, findings reveal that political determinants have predictive effects on the components of political trust in the different countries. For non-political determinants, education is the most important variable that influences political trust. These findings point to the need for political institutions to perform in accordance with stable democratic patterns. This is especially important for the set of representatives of the so-called individual political subject group of political entities that face the lowest levels of trust among the whole "family" of political institutions. Results show that highest political trust is placed in the regulatory (i.e. order) political institutions, followed by trust in political bodies at an international level.

All in all, the results of the analysis reflect the need to conceptually understand political trust as an important systemic (i.e. diffuse) democratic characteristic, as well as a specific construct of evaluation performance of different groups of political entities. In the latter case, a convincing difference is found between political institutions at both national and international levels, and the phenomena of political entities as individual actors' is firmly evidenced. Politically relevant determinants play an especially important role, and should therefore assist in the attempt to understand and explain the patterns of political trust in individual groups of political entities, and their further potential impact on the wider, so-called diffuse perception of variously developed democracies. Special attention should be given to issues regarding various types of satisfaction, which vary from each other surprisingly, despite their similarities 'on paper' (e.g. government, democracy, economy).

Finally, it is also important to add that the results of the study point to new insights into trends in political trust in three countries with different levels of democratic development. A limitation of the study is the size of the sample of countries selected, which restricts generalization of the findings. However, the methodology and results can contribute to further research in that other countries and/or other time periods could be chosen in relation to the political system selected.

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APPENDIX

TABLE 5: KEY CHARACTERISTICS BY COUNTRIES

Country / characteristics	Switzerland	Spain	Slovenia
GNI per capita (in \$), Atlas method, 2012**	82,730	30,110	22,810
Annual GDP growth, average (2004-2012) / in 2009 (%)**	2.11 / -2	1.78 / -4	1.55 / -8
Inflation, 2012 (%)**	-0,6	2,4	2,6
Life expectancy at birth / in 2011**	83	82	80
Beginning of current democracy*	1848	1977	1991
Form of government*	Federal republic	Monarchy	Republic
Power of the head of the state*	President of the cabinet simultaneously serves as the president of the republic	Weak	Weak
Elections of the head of the state*	Indirectly elected / nominated (see above)	Not elected (monarchy)	Directly elected (absolute majority)
Number of parliamentary chambers*	2	2	2
Current no. of parties in parliament / no. of parties that gained at least 5 % of the seats at the last national parliamentary elections (year)***	11/7 (2011)	6/3 (2011)	7/6 (2011-early)
Electoral system, as relevant for the analysed period of this paper (2012)*	Party list	Party list	Party list
Turnout at the last national parliamentary elections (last EP elections) in %***	48.5	68.9 (44.9)	65.6 (28.4)
Membership in EU, as relevant for the analysed period of this paper (2012)*	/	1986	2004
Membership in NATO*	/	1982	2004
Membership in the United Nations (year of admission)****	2002	1955	1992
Membership in the World Trade Organisation*****	1995	1995	1995
Political trust, mean (standard deviation) 1999-2002*	0.55 (0.18)	0.47 (0.18)	0.49 (0.21)
Satisfaction with democracy, mean (standard deviation) 1999-2002*	0.57 (0.22)	0.55 (0.22)	0.42 (0.22)
Correlation among constructs (author's analysis).	2004 2010 2012	2004 2010 2012	2004 2010 2012
OiN with Ps	0.82 0.83 0.80	0.75 0.75 0.76	0.87 0.84 0.86
OiN with Pbs	0.67 0.66 0.65	0.81 0.80 0.81	0.79 0.76 0.78
Ps with Pbs	0.65 0.66 0.64	0.69 0.65 0.61	0.65 0.67 0.69
Political trust and political determinants (authors' analysis)	See Table 4a	See Table 4b	See Table 4c
Political trust and non-political determinants (authors' analysis)	See Table 4a	See Table 4b	See Table 4c

Sources:

* van Deth et al. (2007, 20–22, 43–44);

** World bank dataset (The World DataBank) (<http://databank.worldbank.org/>);

*** ECPR Political Data Yearbook (<http://www.politicaldatayearbook.com/>);

**** United Nations (<http://www.un.org/depts/dhl/unms/>);

***** World Trade Organisation

(http://www.wto.org/english/thewto_e/whatis_e/tif_e/org6_e.htm);

Results without stars are from authors' analyses.

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