

Online Appendix ‘Political Distrust and its Discontents’

Case selection, language and national contexts

Social science research often rests on a restricted number or areas of observations. The objective of this study was to gather qualitative accounts of citizens’ political distrust. Earlier research in political culture has identified distrusting citizen attitudes towards the political class as a salient topic in Britain despite its long-standing democratic institutions and the older observations of cultural deference towards politicians has been replaced by hostility (Hart, 1978; Almond and Verba, 1980; Hay, 2007; Stoker, 2011). In Greece, distrust of politicians and political institutions is fast increasing since the great recession spilled over and exposed the country’s poor public financial situation in 2010. Democratic institutions have often struggled to establish efficient and transparent processes to serve citizens, yet in the democratic era following 1974 political parties managed to provide a link between citizens and politics and enjoyed an unprecedented surge of citizen confidence in their governance role, which has now been reversed (Vasilopoulou et al., 2014; Armingeon and Guthmann, 2014; Featherstone, 2005). Similarly, Italian citizens have often grappled with an oversized political system, in which it is extremely difficult to enact change. People around the country and especially in the south tend to report very negative evaluations of their political institutions and politicians, and often resort to interpersonal or other cooperative networks to make up for the lack of security and efficiency in getting things done (Almond and Verba, 1963; Gambetta, 1988; Putnam, 1993; Schyns and Koop, 2010). The two graphs below trace Eurobarometer trends for ‘trust in national parliament’ and ‘trust in national government’ in the three countries relative to the EU average, showing lack of trust is consistently high.¹

The US and a number of other countries in Europe could have provided fertile ground for the study of political distrust, such as the post-communist countries of Central and Eastern Europe. Nevertheless, existing research of political attitudes in these national contexts has shown that

¹ Although the three national political contexts have been studied separately and comparatively through historical case studies, representative survey data on citizens’ political trust became available through Eurobarometer surveys only in 1997.

the communist experience and subsequent transition has shaped the way citizens relate and evaluate the state as well as their community in a fundamental way (Mishler and Rose, 1997, 2001). Britain, Italy and Greece represent nations from a relatively homogenous group of Western European established democracies, which present variation in their historic trajectories, political culture and institutional culture characteristics.² Furthermore, relying on three different national contexts for the qualitative phase of this research project, instead of a single case, provides extensive information on the meaning and operation of political distrust to support the conceptual model and operationalisation of distrusting judgments.

Political context, language and culture

The next paragraphs offer a brief observational account of the contextual, linguistic and cultural differences encountered in the study of political distrust. In Italy, the early 1990s saw the overturning of the party system and the entire political status quo since the end of the Second World War through the ‘clean hands’ scandal, which exposed widespread and deep-seated corruption among the political class, close ties with the Mafia and abuse of power.³ This gave rise to a two bloc party system, where a centre-left bloc led by the ‘Partito Democratico’ (PD) competed and exchanged power with a centre-right bloc led by ‘Forza Italia’ (followed by ‘Popolo della Libertà’, PdL). The centre-right and much of Italian politics of the past two decades has been dominated by the figure of Silvio Berlusconi, a media owner and businessman who established a firm grip on the country’s political scene despite recurrent scandals and allegations of political corruption. Following the wave of financial turmoil that shook peripheral European countries, a technocratic government led by Mario Monti was put in place in late 2011 to implement reforms and austerity measures that would rehabilitate public finances. At the time of fieldwork, the majority of Italians had turned their back on the technocratic experience, resentful of increased taxation and austerity measures. The inconclusive elections of February 2013 saw an entirely new anti-systemic political party ‘M5S’, led by a television comedian Beppe Grillo, capture the frustration of millions of Italians across the country with the state of the political system and receive 25.5% of the vote. The on-

² See Appendix B for more information on the three countries.

³ For more information on the ‘clean hands’ scandal see Gundle and Parker (1995) and Della Porta and Vannucci (1999).

going coalition talks in the summer of 2013, between the centre-left (PD) and centre-right blocks (PdL), which became the only possibility for government formation, and the political bargaining over the nomination of a prime minister further frustrate those citizens who had been hit hard by the economic crisis and were looking for an end to uncertainty and for quick reforms. In addition, in the summer of 2013, Silvio Berlusconi was on trial pending economic charges for tax-fraud (not personal scandal). The trial's development and verdict was at the forefront of every public discussion across the country, adding to citizens' exposure to political corruption.

Greece has followed a different political trajectory in its modern history. Following a seven year military junta from 1967-1974, in the democratic *metapoliteusi* era both main political parties, the socialist 'Pasok' and the conservative 'New Democracy', attempted to put Greece on the road to modernisation and integration with Europe. Although early EU and Eurozone memberships were achieved, the political class failed to create independent services and it institutionalised clientelistic practices in every aspect of the public domain. The relatively young democratic institutions have proven to be impervious to systemic reform, even in the period of economic growth and prosperity following the introduction of the common currency. In the 2000s Greek citizens seemed to be catching up with the rest of Western Europe in levels of satisfaction with their democracy and indeed trust in their political institutions and government.⁴ However, the recent financial crisis exposed Greece as the weakest economic link in the European chain and from 2010 the country has entered into multiple programmes of financial assistance from the European Commission, ECB and IMF, which included the imposition of harsh austerity measures and conditions of structural reform. These political developments, along with plummeting socio-economic indicators, caused extensive changes to the political party system. Following a provisional coalition government with a technocrat prime minister between 2011-2012, the former centre-left socialist party Pasok, which had governed for more than 20 years since 1974, almost disappeared from the electoral map. A formerly marginal small radical left-wing party 'SYRIZA', pursuing a populist anti-austerity agenda, found support and emerged as the main opposition party to a coalition government following elections in 2012 (heading a governing coalition since January 2015). On the far-right side of the political party spectrum, the fringe extreme-right party 'Golden Dawn', with

⁴ For a longer discussion on the institutional successes and failures of the *metapoliteusi* era see Featherstone (1990, 2005) and Pappas (2013).

neo-Nazi and nationalistic rhetoric, increased its popular appeal and consolidated itself in Parliament with 7%-8% of the national vote. At the time of fieldwork in the summer-autumn of 2013, Greek citizens had already been exposed to three years of plummeting socio-economic indicators and harsh austerity measures imposed by their national government and the Troika of international institutions (European Commission, ECB, IMF). The economy was a central preoccupation for citizens across the country, but equally central was the political upheaval that broke ties between citizens and the political parties they had supported and relied on for four decades. In this respect, considerations of blame and responsibility for the state of the country were popular in public discourse. The extreme-right 'Golden Dawn' party also featured in media and public discussions, although fieldwork took place prior to the legal detainment and prosecution of Golden Dawn MPs.⁵

At first glance, the political experiences of citizens in England have been markedly different than the two Southern European countries. Britain has been considered a case where the long history of democratic institutions and citizen deference form a solid basis for a thriving civic culture. Yet, scholars have highlighted the existence of critical citizenship and political distrust in parts of Britain as far back as the 1880s (Hart, 1978). Despite stable politics, citizens in England have been widely critical of their political elites and institutions, and increasingly disaffected and disengaged from political processes, leading many scholars to sound the alarm over the state of democratic politics in the country.⁶ The perceived detachment of political elites from the rest of the population and the revelations of political abuse of power, from the parliamentary expenses scandal in 2010 to the inquiry into the Iraq war, have contributed to a public discourse of mistrust, although this had not led to rapid change in the political or party systems in the way seen in Italy and Greece. Some scholars argue that the last two general elections in the UK showed signs of change. Despite the first-past-the-post majoritarian electoral system, following the 2010 elections the Conservative Party had to form a coalition government with the Liberal Democrats, who won 23% of the vote (57 out of 650 seats) and challenged the definition of the UK as a two-party system. At the time of fieldwork in late 2013, the performance of the coalition government was a salient political subject, but mainly because of the disappointment in the Liberal Democratic Party not to fulfill their electoral

⁵ For more information on Golden Dawn and the rise of extremist and populist rhetoric in Greece following the financial crisis see Vasilopoulou, Halikiopoulou and Exadaktylos (2014).

⁶ For a longer discussion on the current state of citizen attitudes towards the political system see Stoker (2011) and Hay (2009).

promises. Challenges to the party system also came from strong nationalist sentiments in Scotland, where despite the rejection of independence in the 2015 independence referendum, the Scottish National Party swept Scotland's constituencies at the general election later that year and came out with 56 seats in Westminster. Pressure was also mounted by rising anti-European and anti-immigration sentiments, articulated by the right-wing UK Independence Party (UKIP). At the time of fieldwork the EU and potential exit from the Union did not feature in public discussions and most participants showed very little interest and regarded the EU as something external to their political system. Most discussions were centered expectedly on economic issues, such as taxation and benefits and the salient topic of immigration from within and outside the European Union. The ongoing political turmoil in Syria and potential military involvement discussed in parliament and in the media throughout 2013 also resurfaced sentiments and reactions from the last UK military involvement in Iraq and Afghanistan.

The historical and current political context certainly influences public discourse on political matters, but so does language. In a subtler, yet impactful way, language shapes discussions and expressions of political attitudes, as well as the way in which people formulate thoughts and create meaning. The following paragraph offers only a brief account of the linguistic heritage the notions under investigation carry in the three national contexts studied. This is part of a larger and much richer discussion in semantics, yet for the purposes of this study exploring citizens' aptitudes of political distrust, such information may help the reader better appreciate the expressions of distrust presented and analysed in the following chapters.

In the English language the words *mistrust* and *distrust* provide an etymological equivalent for the concept we wish to capture; that is, the negative spectrum of political attitudes of trust, and not simply the lack thereof. The two words may not be used as readily as the affirmative of trust in everyday language, yet context often helps determine whether the emphasis is placed on the negative expectations of the speaker, or on a lack of conviction in determining trustworthiness. On the other hand, the Greek and Italian languages present a different story for the use of 'trust' and 'distrust'. Firstly, the two terms are etymologically connected to and derived from the words 'belief' or 'faith'. *Δυσπιστία*, the Greek noun for distrust, is formed from the combination of the negating prefix 'δυσ-' and 'πίστη', meaning 'faith' or 'belief'. Trust is formed by the pronoun "εν-" and 'πίστη' (faith) to make "εμπιστοσύνη", meaning to place your faith in something or someone. Yet this translation of trust and distrust only works for nouns. When using a verb to denote the act of trusting, 'εμπιστεύομαι' (I trust), there is no

counterpart verb that denotes distrust, only its negation, ‘δεν εμπιστεύομαι’ (I do not trust). Similarly, distrust in the Italian language is derived from the negating prefix ‘s-’ and ‘*fiducia*’, meaning ‘faith’. *La sfiducia* is a commonly used noun for distrust, yet it does not transform to a verb. People will use the term ‘*avere fiducia*’ (to have trust) or its negation “*non avere fiducia*” (to not have trust) to express their decision to approach political agents with trust or distrust.

Two important points follow from these linguistic particularities. Firstly, political distrust is linked to the concept of faith, at least in terms of its etymological roots. Although there are no remnant traces of religious connotations, faith and belief are by definition powerful concepts that are not only dependent on rational calculation. They are called upon to bridge uncertainty and mitigate risk about the future in the same way that modern scholarship conceptualises trust and distrust. Losing one’s faith and establishing a predisposition of disbelief in politics represent a serious rupture in citizen-state relations that is difficult to mend. Regaining faith entails the same challenges as regaining trust. Therefore, despite the inevitable national linguistic characteristics among the three contexts, it is reasonable to expect there will not be an unbridgeable chasm in the use and meaning of the terms trust and distrust. Secondly, although in both non-English languages the term distrust can translate as a noun, there is no equivalent translation for the verb that denotes the act of distrusting. However, we believe that this does not pose a challenge to the study of distrusting attitudes, since the focus of this investigation is the study of latent psychological attitudes and not linguistic expressions of distrust.

Participant recruitment and interviewing

Appendix I and II below present background information about the selected countries and study participants.

APPENDIX I Information on study participants

Key demographic characteristics of interview participants

Socio-economic Status of Participants

SES Categories	Total Sample	UK	GREECE	ITALY
(1) Higher salariat	8.3%	12.5%	6.25%	6.25%
(2) Lower salariat	18.8%	25.0%	18.75%	12.5%
(3) Intermediate occupations	18.8%	12.5%	12.5%	31.25%
(4) Petit bourgeoisie or independents	16.6%	6.25%	31.25%	12.5%
(5) Self employed occupations (eg. agriculture)	12.5%	18.75%	6.25%	12.5%
(6) Higher grade blue collar workers	2.1%	0%	0%	6.25%
(7) Lower grade white collar workers	0%	0%	0%	0%
(8) Lower technical occupations	2.1%	0%	6.25%	0%
(9) Routine occupations	6.25%	6.25%	6.25%	6.25%
(10) Never worked and long-term unemployed	6.25%	12.5%	6.25%	0%
(11) Student	8.3%	6.25%	6.25%	12.5%

Note: SES follows the European Socio-economic Classification

Guide available at <https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/files/esec/guide/docs/UserGuide.pdf>

Comparison from Survey data from June 2012

OCCUPATION SCALE	UK	GREECE	ITALY
Self-employed	5.8%	18.5%	12.3%
Managers	12.1%	5%	4.5%
Other white collars	7.3%	12.5%	2.3%
Manual workers	18.1%	11.2%	17.8%

House persons	4.5%	9%	14.2%
Unemployed	9%	11.2%	5.8%
Retired	27.7%	22.1%	18.3%
Students	5.6%	1.5%	6.7%

Note: Source of data Eurobarometer 77.4 (June 2012)

Age of Participants

Sample	Average age in years
Total Sample	41.8
UK	44.7
Greece	44.8
Italy	35.8
Total Sample Age Groups	
18-20 years	4.1%
21-29 years	22.9%
30-39 years	22.9%
40-49 years	16.6%
50-59 years	16.6%
60-69 years	1.4%
70 years onwards	2%

Comparison from Survey data from June 2012

Sample	Average age in years
UK	51.9
Greece	45.4
Italy	48.6

Note: Source of data Eurobarometer 77.4 (June 2012)

Gender of Participants

Sample	Male	Female
Total Sample	50%	50%
UK	50%	50%
Greece	50%	50%
Italy	50%	50%

Comparison from Survey data from June 2012

Sample	Male	Female
UK	45.90%	54.10%
Greece	49.90%	5.10%
Italy	43.10%	56.90%

Note: Source of data Eurobarometer 77.4 (June 2012)

Participant and Interview Information

Participant ID	Geographical Location	Gender	Age Group	SES*	Interview Length
I-3201	Periphery	F	18-30	6	48'16"
I-3202	Periphery	F	18-30	11	58'01"
I-3103	Periphery	M	18-30	3	46'20"
I-1104	Periphery	M	60-70	1	55'36"
I-3105	Periphery	M	40-50	4	60'03"
I-1206	Big City	F	50-60	4	61'39"
I-1207	Big City	F	18-30	3	52'57"
I-1108	Big City	M	30-40	2	57'40"
I-1109	Big City	M	18-30	2	68'43"
I-2110	Smaller City	M	18-30	3	45'00"
I-1111	Big City	M	40-50	9	46'53"
I-2112	Smaller City	M	18-30	5	63'15"
I-2213	Smaller City	F	18-30	3	60'23"
I-2214	Smaller City	F	30-40	3	47'50"
I-2115	Smaller City	M	30-40	11	71'30"
I-2216	Smaller City	F	30-40	5	40'48"
G-1201	Big City	F	50-60	1	50'00"
G-1102	Big City	M	30-40	4	64'10"
G-1203	Big City	F	20-30	11	58'44"
G-1204	Big City	F	20-30	3	72'16"
G-3105	Smaller City	M	30-40	2	61'00"
G-3206	Smaller City	F	50-60	10	46'34"
G-1107	Big City	M	40-50	4	62'05"
G-2108	Periphery	M	40-50	4	60'23"
G-2209	Periphery	F	60-70	2	55'21"
G-2110	Periphery	M	40-50	4	48'49"
G-2111	Periphery	M	50-60	5	40'56"
G-1212	Big City	F	60-70	2	61'00"
G-3213	Smaller City	F	50-60	4	71'00"
G-3114	Smaller City	M	20-30	9	74'23"
G-3115	Smaller City	M	20-30	8	50'05"

G-3216	Smaller City	F	50-60	3	57'21"
UK-2101	Smaller City	M	20-30	11	65'23"
UK-3102	Periphery	M	30-40	2	64'00"
UK-2103	Smaller City	M	40-50	2	57'02"
UK-1204	Big City	F	20-30	3	61'56"
UK-1105	Big City	M	30-40	1	55'54"
UK-2106	Smaller City	M	20-30	3	78'55"
UK-1207	Big City	F	20-30	2	52'00"
UK-2108	Smaller City	M	60-70	4	61'21"
UK-1209	Big City	F	40-50	1	50'03"
UK-1210	Big City	F	30-40	2	64'51"
UK-1211	Big City	F	40-50	5	56'42"
UK-3212	Periphery	F	60-70	10	59'05"
UK-3213	Periphery	F	50-60	5	57'40"
UK-3214	Periphery	F	50-60	10	51'09"
UK-3115	Periphery	M	70-80	5	54'34"
UK-3116	Periphery	M	50-60	9	58'45"

Note: Socio-Economic Status number corresponds to the European Socio-economic Classification, for further information, see <https://www.iser.essex.ac.uk/files/esec/guide/docs/UserGuide.pdf>

APPENDIX II Thematic Headings for Narrative Interviewing

Initial stage: Formulating initial topic for narration: ‘What are your thoughts about politics in [country] today?’

No interruptions

Main Narration: Only non-verbal encouragement to continue story-telling

Verbal encouragements: ‘What happened then?’, ‘What do you mean by [...]’, ‘Can you tell me a bit more about this?’

No opinion and attitude questions

No arguing on contradictions

Questioning phase: ‘Why’ questions allowed, ‘Why did you say [...]’,

Concluding phase: ‘How did you find this exercise?’