

The voter's dilemma approach to electoral participation: comparing the European elections in the Czech Republic and the Netherlands

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Abstract

In the EES 2004 questionnaire, questions pertaining to the voter's dilemma approach (VDA) to electoral participation were posed in post-election surveys of the Czech Republic and the Netherlands, two member states which are similar in their relatively low rates of turnout in 2004 and systemic characteristics. The approach measures the preferences and motives of respondents concerning the hypothetical outcomes forming a 2 by 2 matrix of voting/non-voting and high/low turnout. Our exploratory paper asks what the contribution of VDA to an individual-level explanation of participation in the European and national parliamentary elections of these two countries might be, over and above the impact of explanatory variables contained in socio-demographic, political, campaign involvement and European attitude blocks. We use a 'democratic ethos index' (DEI) as a measure of the extent to which motive and preference responses convey a disposition to vote for reasons connected to the respondent's positive valuation of a high turnout. Block-recursive OLS regressions similar to the ones of the country chapters of Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996) show that DEI substantially raises the variation explained, for the European elections of both the Netherlands and the Czech Republic, though less so in the latter than in the former. The contribution to explained variation in both national elections, where the dependent variable is the intention to vote in the next election rather than the reported vote, is even larger. These preliminary results raise some questions of interpretation concerning the explanatory status of the voter's dilemma approach.

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1. The voter's dilemma approach

Following a method outlined in Pellikaan and Van der Veen (2002) rates of turnout for the European Parliament and national legislatures are viewed as instances of a potential contributor's dilemma, in which the decision of whether or not to vote is the outcome of a process of practical reasoning.¹ The basic idea is to envisage the voting decision of a respondent - the row player of Table 1 - as a reasoned response to a *game-form* which arises on the simplifying assumption that the many others - included as the column player - will either vote in large or small numbers. The respondent is made aware that the outcome of the election (high or low turnout) is beyond his or her control, being basically determined by the actions of other individuals in the electorate (the fictitious entity in the columns of Table 1). It is also assumed that the utility of the vote for determining who get elected is vanishingly small relative to the actual 'resource cost' of voting, regardless of a high or low turnout.²

Table 1 – The Potential Contributor's Dilemma.

		The others in the electorate	
		many vote (high turnout) COOPERATE (C)	few vote (low turnout) DEFECT (D)
Row player: the respondent	vote COOPERATE (C)	Q	S
	not vote DEFECT (D)	P	R

Faced with the situation of Table 1, it may or may not be rational to vote, depending on the values that enter the individual's process of practical reasoning, and which fix the row player's ordinal payoffs. As the model outlined in Figure 1 below shows, that process runs from motives to choices, via the preference ordering of the outcomes P, Q, R and S of Table 1. In the first stage of the reasoning process, preferences are related to motives by a *test of consistent preferences*. Respondents who qualify for this test are ones who satisfy a minimal definition of rationality, which states that individuals are able to make a decision on the basis of a complete ordering of the four outcomes of Table 1, any ordering. They must then have reported one of the 24 (or 4!) possible preference orderings in response to the survey questions.³ Such respondents have translated the undetermined game-form into a game, in which either voting or not voting may be the rational course of action.

The test of consistent preferences measures an aspect of practical reasoning that lies outside the ambit of rationality, since it does not concern the choice of a strategy from given preferences over outcomes. Instead, the test seeks to check whether or not a respondent successfully uses his powers of deliberation to rank the outcomes of the voters dilemma in accordance with stated motives. As indicated in Figure 1, the motives we have included in the survey are quite general. The *Valuation* motive measures the extent to which the respondent views a high turnout as a collective good for society, while the *Willingness* motive traces gradations of willingness to contribute by casting a vote. Information about the reported stances on each of these motives (on a three-point scale) can be used to make sense of the preferences reported by the respondent.

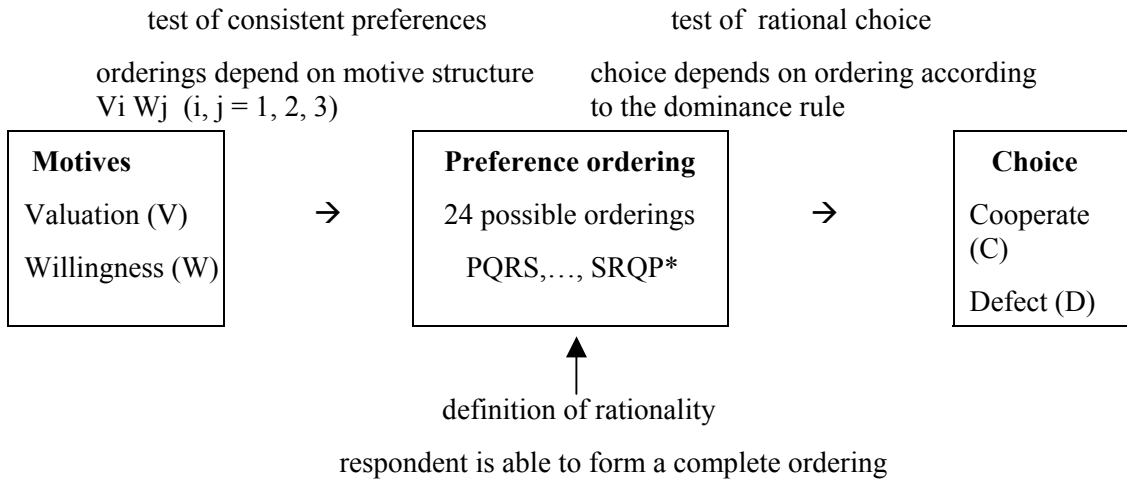
¹ H. Pellikaan and R. van der Veen, *Environmental Dilemmas and Policy Design*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2002.

² That cost may be taken narrowly as the trouble involved in showing up at the polls, or more widely as also including the time and effort spent beforehand for an informed decision on issues and candidates.

³ The questionnaire is included in Appendix 2.

In the second stage, preferences are related to choices by the *test of rational choice*. The test checks an aspect of practical reasoning which belongs to the domain of rationality: the capacity to choose according to the dominance rule. That rule, if applicable, guarantees that a choice is made which satisfies the individual's preferences better than under any alternative choice.⁴

Figure 1 – Model of practical reasoning



* read 'PQRS' as $P > Q > R > S$, where '>' denotes strict preference.

The model of Figure 1 is richer than a rational choice model which operates exclusively with preference-information. It seeks to explain the choice of whether or not to vote by inquiring into relevant motives underlying the preferences of the respondent. This additional step is suggested by the broad definition of rationality here adopted, which states that any of the 24 possible complete preference rankings of the four outcomes of a voter's dilemma might be a valid basis on which to make a rational choice. Given this diversity of admissible orderings, it becomes important to relate preference orderings to motives.⁵ As mentioned we measure responses to survey statements on the general motives of Valuation [$V1(3) = (\text{dis})\text{agree}$] and Willingness [$W1(3) = (\text{dis})\text{agree}$]

The linkage between motives and preference orderings is given by assumptions regarding reasonable constraints which a stance on motives V_i, W_j imposes upon the ranking of the outcomes P, Q, R and S in Table 1.⁶ This makes for a concordance, shown in Table 2, between the nine possible motive

⁴ The dominance rule prescribes a (non-)cooperative choice whenever in an ordering ($P > Q$ and $R > S$) $Q > P$ and $S > R$. Not all preference orderings imply a dominant strategy. For instance, orderings with $Q > P$ and $R > S$ (as e.g. in ordering QPRS) make the best strategy depend on an assessment of whether few or many others will vote. Our design is limited to the dominance rule for informational reasons. Since preferences are measured ordinally, and no information about the probabilities associated with the behaviour of the 'others' is available, it can not be determined whether the voting decision of someone without a dominant strategy maximizes expected utility.

⁵ In addition, we have included two further questions concerning respondents' beliefs. These questions aim to identify salient reasons for thinking that a high turnout is a common good, one related to input-legitimacy, and the other to output-legitimacy. The answers to these questions might shed light on the differences in motive and preference responses between the European and national cases of the voter's dilemma. In this preliminary research, however, these additional questions have not been used.

⁶ These assumptions are: V1: $Q > S$ and $P > R$; V2: either $Q > S$ and $R > P$ or $S > Q$ and $P > R$; V3: $S > Q$ and $R > P$. W1: $Q > P$ and $S > R$; W2: either $Q > P$ and $R > S$ or $P > Q$ and $S > R$; W3: $P > Q$ and $R > S$. The constraints imposed by W1-W3 respectively coincide with the conditions for a preference ordering to entail: a dominant strategy to cooperate (domC in Table 2), no dominant strategy (non-dom), a dominant strategy to defect (domD).

structures ViWj and the 24 possible preference orderings that a respondent might be able to report, either with respect to the European election or the national election in her country.

Table 2 – Concordance between motive structures ViWj and preference orderings

	domC W1	non-dom W2	domD W3
V1	QSPR QPSR	QPRS PQSR	PQRS PRQS
		QRPS PSQR	
V2	QSRP SQPR	QRPS PSRQ	PRSQ RPQS
		SPQR RQSP	
		SPRQ RQPS	
V3	SRQP SQRP	SRPQ RSQP	RPSQ RSPQ

2. The democratic ethos index

We now consider the motive structures of Table 2 from the point of view of a highly simplified *ethos of representative democracy*. This ethos, which is related to the structure of the potential contributor's dilemma, basically states that a high turnout is a collective good towards which one should be willing to contribute by casting one's vote, perhaps as a matter of democratic duty or allegiance. While we do not need to assume that respondents actually have such an ethos in front of their minds, we interpret their reported motives ViWj as reflecting the extent to which their attitudes towards the voter's dilemma conform to this ethos.⁷ This might be done in different ways. Here we rank the motive structures of Table 2 on a nine point scale starting at the top of the left column (V1W1: 'Positive Valuation and Willingness') downwards along the three V-rows, thus ending up at the bottom of the right column (V3W3: 'Negative Valuation and Willingness'). Next, considering the concordance between motives and preference orderings, each ordering is given the same position on the nine-point scale as the motive structure to which it corresponds. The motive and preference responses are then averaged to obtain a position on the seventeen-point 'democratic ethos index' (DEI), normalized from + 4 to - 4 at intervals of 0.5. Thus for example someone reporting V1W1

⁷ Respondents may of course deviate from the democratic ethos in several ways. For instance, someone might hold that high turnout is an important common good, but be inclined to take a free ride on the willingness of others to go to the polls, while being disinclined to make a democratic gesture in case many others would refuse to vote. Such a motive structure corresponds with Positive Valuation and Negative Willingness. On the test of consistent preferences, the corresponding orderings are PRQS and PQRS, both of which have a dominant strategy to defect. Hence the rational response of someone with these particular motives is not to bother about voting, despite the value judgement in favor of a high turnout. An even stronger reason for not voting, which might sometimes be relevant in the case of fundamental disaffection with European or national representative institutions, would be the mirror image of the motives characterizing the democratic ethos: negative Valuation and negative Willingness (V3W3). This stance is consistent with the dominant defect-orderings RSPQ and RPSQ. Such responses are more frequent in the European elections than in the national ones for both countries.

and the concordant preference ordering QSPR obtains a score of 4, while (V2W3, PQRS) gives a score of $0.5(-2 -3) = -2.5$.⁸

As Table 3 shows, the attitudes to voting captured by the democratic ethos index explain significant proportions of variation of the dependent variable in both countries. As might perhaps be expected, this is especially the case when the dependent variable is the intention to vote in the next national election. It seems natural to think that the model of practical reasoning underlying the VD-approach would predict intentions better than (reports of) actual behavior, since there will inevitably be some slippage between intentions and actions. To facilitate comparison, the substantially lower correlations of DEI with the previous national election are also included in Table 3. They show in all cases that attitudes towards a voting decision or voting intention (recent EP or next NP) at the time of the survey are less well aligned with reports of behaviour further in the past. This suggests that voters' democratic attitudes are not simply explained by their voting habits, though those may play some kind of formative role.

These results obviously raise the question as to what kind of substantive explanation, if any, is conveyed by relating reported or intended voting to a variable such as the democratic ethos index. To invite discussion on this question, we think it is useful to first compare the (purely statistical) explanatory power of DEI to other explanatory variables that are standardly used in the individual-level analysis of electoral participation. Our hypothesis is that DEI is bound to add considerably to R-square, especially so in the national elections.

Table 3 – Correlation Coefficients and R-squares of DEI and voter turnout in the European Parliament elections 2004, voter turnout in the last national election and vote intention in next national election in the Netherlands and Czech Republic

	Type of election	Correlation coefficient	R sq.
Netherlands	EP	0.64	0.40
	last NP	0.49	0.24
	intention NP	0.75	0.57
Czech Republic	EP	0.61	0.37
	last NP	0.47	0.22
	intention NP	0.84	0.70

Source: EES 2004 Czech and Dutch file. N=1278, 1276 and 1299 (Netherlands) and N=621, 567 and 484 (Czech Republic).

Note: EP means reported vote in EP elections as measured by q09 in the main EES questionnaire. Last NP means reported vote in last national elections as measured by q11 in the main EES questionnaire. NP means intention to vote in next national election as measured by vdv10 in the appended questions for the Netherlands and CR. Correlation coefficients are significant at $p < .01$ in a one-tailed test.

3. Block-recursive regressions

Most empirical analyses of electoral participation use socio-demographic factors, as these capture important differences between individuals in terms of the resources, motivation and mobilisation that underpin voter turnout. These factors can be seen as antecedent to all others. The explanation of voter turnout also turns importantly on general political variables which tap the motivation and

⁸ This procedure treats ordinal as interval information. Averaging makes sense only insofar preference and motive responses are sufficiently correlated, which is the case (at least .6 in the cases of national and European elections for the Netherlands and the Czech Republic). The mean scores (and standard deviations) of DEI for NL are 2.8 (2.0) for EP and 3.5 (1.3) for NP. For CR they are 1.7 (2.5) for EP and 2.2 (2.2) for NP.

mobilisation that directly refer to individuals' orientations toward national political parties and the political system under which they live. Analysis of European parliamentary elections devoted to the second-order hypothesis (Reif and Schmitt 1980) and the voluntary voter abstention model (Blondel, Sinnott, Svensson 1998) also suggest an effect of campaigning and the role of information or knowledge for mobilizing the vote.⁹ Thus, we also applied variables measuring the exposure to and interest in election campaigns, as well as media use. Then there has been considerable debate concerning the role of attitudes towards the European Union as predictors of turnout. Blondel, Sinnott, Svensson (1998) argued that those who decide not to vote in EP elections thereby tend to express negative attitudes toward different aspects of European unification. Against this, Oppenhuis (1995) and the authors collaborating in Van der Eijk and Franklin (1996) found that attitudes of potential voters, whether negative or not, hardly have had an impact on turnout in EP elections.¹⁰ The debate on this last finding is still open, as it might be that orientations to European politics become more salient when voters come to realise its growing impact on national politics.¹¹ In any case it seems important to include EU-variables in our model. Finally, the addition of the vote in the previous national election serves to tap relevant omitted variables that for whatever reason do not appear in the various blocks. This may be a way of making the test of our hypothesis concerning the explanatory power of the democratic ethos index somewhat more difficult. One could think that the attitudes towards the voting decision that we try to capture by means of this index would, as it were, be 'vacuumed up' to some extent by controlling for previous voting in the national election, despite the fact that voting in the last election is not associated with DEI very strongly.

For testing the hypothesis we used block-recursive regression models. These add groups of similar variables to the model, with each addition being assumed to be further down in the (supposed) causal chain. The object is then to calculate the addition to R-square, after having taken account of the explanatory power of (supposedly) antecedent variables of earlier blocks. As mentioned we took as dependent variable the reported vote for the European Parliament elections and 'vote intention in the next election' for the two countries' parliamentary elections. All variables, excepting DEI, were scaled on 0-1 and some of them were dichotomised (either because of nominal level of measurement or because of the large number of missing answers). In the first block, 16 socio-demographic variables were included. Subsequently a block of 5 political variables was added (one of those a scale of trust in national level institutions), and a block of 4 campaign and media variables. Two of these are scales: a scale for exposure to election campaigns and a scale measuring the extent of following media messages. Next, a block of 3 variables measuring EU orientation. Two of these are again scales: one measuring trust in EU institutions and the other the extent of positive attitude towards the EU. Finally, before including our democratic ethos index we interposed the variable that can be interpreted as a measure of habitual voting: the reported vote in the previous national parliamentary election (see Table 3). Appendix 1 lists the variables included in our regressions.

The rationale behind the sequence of blocks, then, is to re-examine the high impact of DEI on voting reported in Table 3, after ensuring that more distant causes of turnout have been assessed

⁹ See Reif, K., and H. Schmitt.: 'Nine Second-order National Elections: A Conceptual Framework for the Analysis of European Election Results'. *European Journal of Political Research*. 1980, 8: 3-4, and Blondel J., P. Svensson, and R. Sinnott.: *People and Parliament in the European Union: Democracy, Participation and Legitimacy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998.

¹⁰ Oppenhuis, E.: *Voting Behavior in Europe : a comparative analysis of electoral participation and party choice*, Amsterdam : Het Spinhuis, 1995. Eijk, Cees van der, Mark N. Franklin, et al. 1996. *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*. Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press.

¹¹ Hermann Schmitt at Nottingham EES 2004 conference?

before the more proximate causes that are encapsulated in the voter's dilemma approach are brought in.

The results reported in Tables 4–7 show a strong impact of DEI on turnout. They are presented both for the Czech Republic and the Netherlands separately and together. All blocks of variables predict turnout not only in an expected, but also in quite similar manner to that reported in the *Choosing Europe* volume.¹² The first two tables below show models of reported vote for the EP elections. Worth mentioning is a high level of explained variation in turnout in the Czech Republic at around 40 per cent before DEI enters. Adding DEI explains around 50 per cent of variation in the reported vote in European Parliament elections in both countries. Moreover, when we analyse Czech and Dutch data together and thus, when voting behaviour in both countries might (and sometimes is) influenced differently by various factors, the DEI variable is able to explain quite a lot over and above the five blocks of variables. When we focus on models explaining vote intention in the next national election we find even higher explained variation in turnout, approaching 70 per cent. The models are better in the Czech Republic with 77 per cent, while in the Netherlands it still is 67 per cent.

Table 4 – OLS regression model of voter turnout in European Parliament elections 2004 in the Czech Republic and Netherlands

	R Sq.	Adjusted R Sq.	R Sq. Change and Sig. F Change
socio-demographic variables	0.08	0.06	0.08 ***
political variables	0.19	0.17	0.11 ***
media and campaign exposure	0.27	0.25	0.08 ***
EU orientation	0.27	0.26	0.00 *
voting in last general elections	0.30	0.29	0.03 ***
democratic ethos index	0.43	0.42	0.13 ***

Source: EES 2004 Czech and Dutch file. N = 1291.

Note: Data were weighted to match electoral results and same size for each country (N=1000 for each country). Significance: *** $p \geq .001$, ** $p \geq .01$, * $p \geq .05$.

Table 5 – OLS regression models of voter turnout in European Parliament elections 2004 in the Czech Republic and Netherlands

	R Sq.	Adjusted R Sq.	R Sq. Change and Sig. F Change
Netherlands			
socio-demographic variables	0.06	0.05	0.06 ***
political variables	0.14	0.12	0.08 ***
media and campaign exposure	0.24	0.22	0.10 ***
EU orientation	0.24	0.22	0.00
voting in last general elections	0.26	0.25	0.03 ***
democratic ethos index	0.47	0.46	0.21 ***
Czech Republic			
socio-demographic variables	0.10	0.07	0.10 ***
political variables	0.25	0.22	0.15 ***
media and campaign exposure	0.30	0.27	0.06 ***
EU orientation	0.32	0.28	0.02 **

¹² Eijk, Cees van der, Mark N. Franklin, et al. 1996. *Choosing Europe? The European Electorate and National Politics in the Face of Union*. Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press.

voting in last general elections	0.40	0.37	0.08 ***
democratic ethos index	0.52	0.50	0.13 ***

Source: EES 2004 Czech and Dutch file. N=1237 (Netherlands) and N=555 (Czech Republic).

Note: Non-weighted data. Significance: *** $p \geq .001$, ** $p \geq .01$, * $p \geq .05$.

Table 6 – OLS regression model of vote intention in next national elections in the Czech Republic and Netherlands

	R Sq.	Adjusted R Sq.	R Sq. Change and Sig. F Change
socio-demographic variables	0.09	0.08	0.09 ***
political variables	0.21	0.19	0.11 ***
media and campaign exposure	0.25	0.23	0.04 ***
EU orientation	0.26	0.24	0.01 **
voting in last general elections	0.50	0.48	0.24 ***
democratic ethos index	0.78	0.78	0.29 ***

Source: EES 2004 Czech and Dutch file. N = 1186.

Note: Data were weighted to match electoral results and same size for each country (N=1000 for each country). Significance: *** $p \geq .001$, ** $p \geq .01$, * $p \geq .05$.

Table 7 – OLS regression models of vote intention in next national elections in the Czech Republic and Netherlands

	R Sq.	Adjusted R Sq.	R Sq. Change and Sig. F Change
Netherlands			
socio-demographic variables	0.04	0.03	0.04 ***
political variables	0.09	0.07	0.05 ***
media and campaign exposure	0.13	0.11	0.04 ***
EU orientation	0.13	0.11	0.00
voting in last general elections	0.40	0.39	0.27 ***
democratic ethos index	0.67	0.67	0.27 ***
Czech Republic			
socio-demographic variables	0.07	0.03	0.07 *
political variables	0.21	0.17	0.14 ***
media and campaign exposure	0.27	0.22	0.06 ***
EU orientation	0.31	0.26	0.04 ***
voting in last general elections	0.48	0.44	0.17 ***
democratic ethos index	0.77	0.75	0.29 ***

Source: EES 2004 Czech and Dutch file. N=1258 (Netherlands) and N=449 (Czech Republic).

Note: Non-weighted data. Significance: *** $p \geq .001$, ** $p \geq .01$, * $p \geq .05$.

4. Discussion

In this exploratory paper, we examined the potential of the voter's dilemma approach to account for electoral participation in two elections, in two countries which are similar in having closely related electoral systems, no compulsory voting and no Sunday voting. They also had relatively low rates of voter turnout in the 2004 European elections. As different as they may be in other respects, the Netherlands and the Czech Republic are thus candidates for individual-level explanations of why people vote or 'stay home', as the Dutch expression goes.

The results that we reported above certainly do not contradict our hypothesis, stated in section 2, ‘that DEI is bound to add considerably to R-square, especially so in the national elections’. We think that the reason cited for the strong performance of DEI in the national elections does indeed have to do with the fact that a model of practical reasoning should predict intentions better than reported behavior, because of the gap between intentions and actions. Of course we can not rule out here that the difference in performance might be related to the different social and political context of the two elections rather than to the intention-behaviour distinction. But other observations suggest that the contextual difference of national and European elections is not necessary for the result we find. In particular, in the Dutch national election data of 1998, regressions of similar variables as DEI on voting intention in the pre-election wave, and reported voting in the post-election wave, show coefficients and R-squares for voting intention that are substantively larger than they are for reported voting, just as we find in EES 2004 for the two countries examined here. This might be taken as an indication that intentions are indeed better predicted than behaviour by variables constructed from the voter’s dilemma approach.

We now want to try and interpret the results in a somewhat more searching way. The point of departure for testing our hypothesis with a block-recursive model was that more distant causes of turnout should be assessed before the more proximate causes that are encapsulated in the voter’s dilemma approach are brought in. Now from our introduction of the voter’s dilemma approach in section 1, it should be abundantly clear that using a model of practical reasoning to explain the decision to vote or not implies that the causes so advanced are *proximate* indeed. To put the point more provocatively, one might say that the causal influences on voting picked up by this approach are *so close* to the dependent variable that the substantive explanatory content of a model that achieves high proportions of explained variation by means of the approach should perhaps be called into question.

To examine this issue more closely, let us recall that our DEI variable has actually been presented under a substantive interpretation by its very name. To say that the motives and preferences of respondents can be measured according to how well they reflect an ethos of representative democracy is obviously to suggest that the deliberations and rational choices of these individuals are somehow aligned to the normative prescription: ‘high turnout is good – therefore one ought to turn out’. However, once we take a more skeptical view of what is measured by tabulating preference orderings and motive responses, given the connections between the two and their implications for behaviour, we can arrive at a far less substantive interpretation of DEI. In particular, we might hold that what the index measures is in fact the extent to which respondents are rationally disposed to either go out and vote, make that decision contingent upon their assessment of a high or low turnout, or alternatively resolve to ‘stay home’. On this quite different interpretation, DEI, or variables similar to it, actually predict voting by measuring the relative subjective utility of voting over non-voting, on the assumption that voters by and large go for the option with highest utility.¹³ When DEI is viewed in this way, it may be that, indeed, a person’s sensitivity to the dictates of the democratic ethos is what makes it more likely for her to prefer voting to staying at home. But equally, the relative utility of casting a vote might be explained by the numerous other factors that were assembled in the four first blocks of our regression model.

¹³ One way of simplifying DEI for the purpose of fashioning a measure of relative voting utility would be to simply omit the grading of motive structures and preferences according to the V-rows of Table 2. One then ends up with an ‘index of rational voting disposition’ ranging between 1 and –1, with W1 and the concordant dominant-C preferences scored 1, W2 and concordant preferences without dominant strategies scored 0, and W3 and concordant preferences with dominant D-strategies scored –1. This index produces R-squares very similar to DEI in a univariate regression.

At this moment, we are not entirely sure which of these two contrasting interpretations of DEI should be preferred. The claim that we have advanced a reasonably strong substantive explanation of turnout in the two elections for the two countries is in one way an attractive one to defend. It implies that the differences of turnout between European and national elections reflect differences in the extent to which voters feel moved by the general ethos of representative democracy to show up at the polls. But of course, as Tables 4 to 7 show, there is not much in the way of supporting evidence for this view if one looks at the impact of specifically European attitudes on voting. This suggests at least that a substantive interpretation along these lines should garner support from other kinds of evidence. We think that this would be an interesting line to pursue. The other survey questions we mentioned in footnote 4, concerning respondents' beliefs about the value of a high turnout for democracy in Europe or in the national setting have been constructed with this line of research in mind.

However, the alternative interpretation is not without its attractions. Regarding the voters' dilemma approach as a starting point for the construction of concepts of voting utility suggests an entirely different research program.¹⁴ We can not address this fully here, but we can at least suggest some obvious things that would need to be looked into. The first and rather programmatic suggestion is that voters' dilemma variables should be fashioned to take account of a more discriminating concept of rationality than the dominance rule. This suggests measuring preference orderings cardinally, so that it becomes possible to take individual expectations concerning the behavior of 'the others' into account (see Table 1), when such expectations are measured in terms of the subjective probabilities attached to a high turnout. In that way, one could construct a variable that measures relative voting utility on a ratio scale, and thus enables one to bring in the rule of expected utility maximisation. The test would then be to see how well such a variable predicts actual voting. In our questionnaire, expectation of high turnout has been measured only in a yes-no way. This is one reason why we did not make use of it in the present analysis.

Secondly, there is something closer at home which can be addressed with our models straightaway. What one would naturally want to see from a measure of relative voting utility is that in a full regression model containing relevant substantive *explananda*, it absorbs most of their impact. That is to say, a good measure of voting utility should be extremely sensitive to the motivating, mobilizing and generally reason-giving factors that are associated with socio-demographic attributes, political involvement variables, as well as with exposure to campaign stimuli and media messages. We can examine whether this holds for DEI. If it does, then the R-square of the full model should not be terribly above the R-square of the regression of voting on DEI alone. As a comparison of Tables 3 and 4 – 7 shows, DEI performs rather well on this criterion. For the EP elections in the Netherlands and the Czech Republic, R-squares of DEI are .40 and .37 respectively, whereas the R-squares of the full models are .47 and .52. In the NP elections it is even better, as may be expected. R-squares from DEI are .57 and .70 for the Netherlands and the Czech Republic respectively, and from the full model they are .67 and .77. If we are not mistaken, this shows that DEI picks up quite a lot of the causal impact of the variables of our various blocks, including the 'filtering' variable of 'voting in the last election'.

Finally, in this light the results of section 3 concerning the substantial contribution of DEI to R-square in the models of Tables 4-7 assume a different significance. Rather than suggesting an improvement of substantive explanatory power due to DEI, these results seem to reflect another

¹⁴ It may well tie in with studies of party utility, such as mentioned in the programmatic paper currently on the EES website: C. van der Eijk et al. 'Rethinking the dependent variable in voting behavior — on the measurement and analysis of electoral utilities'.

feature that one would associate with a measure of relative voting utility, on the assumption that regression models with individual-level factors have not yet been able to achieve impressive proportions of variance explained. This feature is a corollary of the one mentioned in the previous paragraph. High contributions of DEI to R-square simply tell us that the motives and preferences that go into a measure of voting utility are sensitive to other explanatory factors than the ones included in the different blocks of the model. What those other factors might be is anyone's guess, and it might of course be true that individual voting utilities are to some extent formed by random factors. At least this can be inferred from suggestions concerning random influences on voting adduced by Franklin, Van der Eijk and Oppenhuis in Chapter 19 of *Choosing Europe*.

To conclude, it is appropriate to end an avowedly exploratory paper such as the present one by saying that 'more research is called for'. We think it is exiting that the research avenues mentioned in this discussion are sufficiently disparate to point in radically different directions.

Appendix 1– Report of used variables and number of missing values

	Netherlands		Czech Republic	
	Valid N	Missing N	Valid N	Missing N
Vote in EP elections (recode Q09)	985	15	998	2
Voted in last national elections (recode Q11)	934	66	851	149
Intention to vote NP (recode vdv10)	933	67	647	353
Trade union membership (D01 - dummy)	1000	0	1000	0
Education (D02a - categories scaled 0-1)	1000	0	998	2
Gender (D03 - dummy)	1000	0	1000	0
Age in years (D04 rescaled 0-1)	1000	0	1000	0
Size of household (D05 - categories scaled 0-1)	1000	0	1000	0
Self-employed (D06 - dummy)	1000	0	1000	0
Employed (D06 - dummy)	1000	0	1000	0
Student (D06 - dummy)	1000	0	1000	0
Retired (D06 - dummy)	1000	0	1000	0
Unemployed (D06 - dummy)	1000	0	1000	0
Public sector of employment (D06b - dummy)	1000	0	1000	0
Private sector of employment (D06b - dummy)	1000	0	1000	0
Subjective social class (07 - scaled on 0-1)	1000	0	1000	0
Level of urbanization (D09 - scaled on 0-1)	1000	0	996	4
Church attendance (D10 - scaled on 0-1)	1000	0	1000	0
Monthly household income in decils (D11 - missing as mean; scaled 0-1)	1000	0	1000	0
Trust in national political institutions scale (Q13_1, Q13_3; alpha 0.77, scaled 0-1)	1000	0	1000	0
Satisfaction with the democracy in the country (Q27 - scaled 0-1)	1000	0	1000	0
Level of respondents party attachment (Q30a - categories scaled 0-1)	1000	0	1000	0
Satisfaction with the Czech governments record to date (Q29 - dummy)	1000	0	1000	0
Interest in politics (Q20 - scaled 0-1)	1000	0	1000	0
Exposure to EP campaign scale (Q07_1 - Q07_5; alpha 0.50; scaled 0-1)	1000	0	1000	0
Media scale as television & newspaper use per week (Q05, Q06; alpha 0.44, scaled 0-1)	1000	0	1000	0
Interest in the EP election campaign (Q08 - scaled 0-1)	1000	0	1000	0
Exposure to EP campaign scale by interest in the EP election campaign	1000	0	1000	0
Trust in EU political institutions (Q13_2, Q13_4, Q13_5; alpha 0.86; scaled 0-1)	1000	0	1000	0
Satisfaction with the democracy in EU (Q28 - scaled 0-1)	1000	0	1000	0
Positive attitude toward the EU scale (Q21, Q22, Q23, Q24, Q31, Q32; alpha=.78; scaled 0-1)	1000	0	1000	0
Democratic ethos index EP (explained in sec.2)	758	242	651	349
Democratic ethos index NP (explained in sec. 2)	800	200	678	322

Appendix 2. Questions about voting at the election of the European Parliament

Please answer the three questions below by circling the item of your choice. In any given question, you may choose only one single item (either A, B, C or D).

As you may know, the elections for the European Parliament have taken place in June 2004. The questions below concern various possible results of turnout in the Netherlands at these elections.

In June 2004 you may have decided whether or not to vote. And the other voters in the Netherlands also have decided whether or not they would vote. You may know what has happened in the meantime. But now we would like you to step back and consider the four possible results of people's voting described below. Each of them combines what you might have decided to do yourself with what the other voters might have decided to do.

Possibility A You decide to vote and many others decide to vote as well.
Turnout is high, and you have to take the trouble of voting.

Possibility B You decide not to vote, and many others decide to vote.
Turnout is high, and you spare yourself the trouble of voting.

Possibility C You decide not to vote, and few others decide to vote.
Turnout is low, and you spare yourself the trouble of voting.

Possibility D You decided to vote, and few others decided to vote.
Turnout is low, and you have to take the trouble of voting.

Would you please rank these four possibilities in the order of your preference?

question 1

Which of the four possibilities
do you rank as first-best?

possibility A B C D

question 2

And which of the remaining three
possibilities do you rank second-best?

possibility A B C D

question 3

And which of the remaining two
possibilities do you rank third-best?

possibility A B C D

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Questions 4 and 5: please circle the number in front of your preferred answer

question 4 (NB will be asked in the core survey)

Did you vote at the election of the European Parliament in June 2004?

- 1 yes
- 2 no

- 3 Missing category

question 5

Did you expect a high or a low turnout at the election of the European Parliament?

- 1 high turnout
- 2 low turnout

- 3 do not know/...

Here are three statements concerning the position that people in the Netherlands may or may not have taken with respect to voting at the elections of the European Parliament

We would like you to indicate your *own* position on each of these statements by circling the number in front of the response which best expresses your view

statement 1

“I consider a high turnout in the Netherlands at the elections of the European Parliament to be a good thing”

- 1 fully agree
- 2 agree
- 3 neither agree nor disagree
- 4 disagree
- 5 fully disagree

- 6 do not know / ...

statement 2

“As a Dutch citizen, I am willing to cast my vote at the elections of the European Parliament”

- 1 fully agree
- 2 agree
- 3 neither agree nor disagree
- 4 disagree
- 5 fully disagree

- 6 do not know / ...

statement 3

“In making up my mind about voting, I find it hard to follow what is going on in European politics”

- 1 fully agree
- 2 agree
- 3 neither agree nor disagree
- 4 disagree
- 5 fully disagree

- 6 do not know / ...

Here are two statements concerning how people in different countries of the European Union may or may not think about a high turnout at the elections of the European Parliament
We would like you to indicate your *own* position on each of these statements by circling the number in front of the response which best expresses your view

statement 4

“A high turnout at the elections of the European Parliament supports democracy in the European Union”

- 1 fully agree
- 2 agree
- 3 neither agree nor disagree
- 4 disagree
- 5 fully disagree

- 6 do not know / ...

statement 5

“In the long run, high turnout at the elections of the European Parliament will support the adoption of legislation and policies that are to the benefit of the population in the European Union”

- 1 fully agree
- 2 agree
- 3 neither agree nor disagree
- 4 disagree
- 5 fully disagree

- 6 do not know / ...

Questions concerning voting at the election of the Second Chamber

Please answer the questions below by circling the item of your choice. In any given question, you may choose only one single item (either A, B, C or D).

At the next election of the Second Chamber, you have to decide whether or not to vote. And the other voters in the Netherlands also have to decide whether or not they will vote. In the four possibilities described below, what you might decide to do is combined with what the other voters might decide to do.

Possibility A You decide to vote and many others decide to vote as well.
Turnout is high, and you have to take the trouble of voting.

Possibility B You decide not to vote, and many others decide to vote.
Turnout is high, and you spare yourself the trouble of voting.

Possibility C You decide not to vote, and few others decide to vote.
Turnout is low, and you spare yourself the trouble of voting.

Possibility D You decide to vote, and few others decide to vote.
Turnout is low, and you have to take the trouble of voting.

Would you please rank these four possibilities in the order of your preference?

question 6

Which of the four possibilities do you rank as first-best?

possibility A B C D

question 7

And which of the remaining three possibilities do you rank second-best?

possibility A B C D

question 8

And which of the remaining two possibilities do you rank third-best?

possibility A B C D

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Questions 9 and 10: please circle the number in front of your preferred answer

question 9

Do you intend to vote at the next election of the Second Chamber ?

- 1 yes
- 2 no

- 3 undecided / ...

question 10

Do you expect a high or a low turnout at the next election of the Second Chamber?

- 1 high turnout
- 2 low turnout

- 3 do not know / ...

Here are three statements concerning the position that people in the Netherlands may or may not take with respect to voting at the elections of the Second Chamber

We would like you to indicate your *own* position on each of these statements by circling the number in front of the response which best expresses your view

statement 6

“I consider a high turnout at the elections of the Second Chamber to be a good thing”

- 1 fully agree
- 2 agree
- 3 neither agree nor disagree
- 4 disagree
- 5 fully disagree

- 6 do not know / ...

statement 7

“As a Dutch citizen, I am willing to cast my vote at the elections of the Second Chamber”

- 1 fully agree
- 2 agree
- 3 neither agree nor disagree
- 4 disagree
- 5 fully disagree

- 6 do not know / ...

statement 8

“In making up my mind about voting, I find it hard to follow what is going on in Dutch politics”

- 1 fully agree
- 2 agree
- 3 neither agree nor disagree
- 4 disagree
- 5 fully disagree

- 6 do not know / ...

Here are two statements concerning how people in the Netherlands may or may not think about a high turnout at the elections of the Second Chamber

We would like you to indicate your *own* position on each of these statements by circling the number in front of the response which best expresses your view

statement 9

“A high turnout at the elections of the Second Chamber supports democracy in the Netherlands”

- 1 fully agree
- 2 agree
- 3 neither agree nor disagree
- 4 disagree
- 5 fully disagree

- 6 do not know / ...

statement 10

“In the long run, high turnout at the elections of the Second Chamber will support the adoption of legislation and policies that are to the benefit of the Dutch population”

- 1 fully agree
- 2 agree
- 3 neither agree nor disagree
- 4 disagree
- 5 fully disagree

- 6 do not know / ...