International Conference on Research in
HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES
27 - 29 November 2026 Vienna , Austria

Beyond Civic Passivity: Civic Participation Repertoires in Latvia

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Abstract

This study challenges the prevailing assumption that civic engagement in post-communist societies is predominantly characterized by public passivity. Using a nationally representative survey conducted in Latvia in 2024 (N = 1,005), the research examines the diversity of civic participation and the factors associated with different patterns of engagement. Drawing on the Civic Voluntarism Model and individual-level cultural value orientations, the study combines Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), K-means cluster analysis, and Multinomial Logistic Regression to investigate the structure and determinants of civic participation repertoires. Four dimensions of engagement were identified: collective activism, expressive protest, social solidarity, and institutional-local participation. Based on these dimensions, five distinct civic participation repertoires emerged: Latent Citizens (44.8%), Everyday Bystanders (30.6%), Institutional and Community-Oriented Citizens (13.4%), Expressive Activists (6.0%), and a Hyper-Active Civic Core (5.3%). The findings demonstrate that civic participation in Latvia is far from homogeneous. More than half of the population engages in public life through specialized forms of participation rather than remaining uniformly disengaged. Further analysis reveals that civic participation is primarily structured by ethnolinguistic identity, education, and gender, while income plays a more limited role. Cultural value orientations provide additional explanatory insight, with masculinity associated with expressive activism and lower long-term orientation linked to institutional and community-oriented participation. The study concludes that civic participation in Latvia is characterized not by widespread passivity but by substantial internal diversity, as distinct participation repertoires are associated with different social and ethnolinguistic groups.

Keywords: Ecological Thinking, Intertextuality, Defamiliarization, Rhizomatic Thinking