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Protests as a Building Block to Deliberative Democracy?

A Quantitative Study on the Relationship Between
Protests and Deliberative Democracy in 30 European Countries

Amanda Louise Bolann Håland

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Department of Government

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Supervisor: PerOla Öberg

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Abstract:

In a time of decreasing participation in party politics across Europe, both protests and deliberation can be studied as means of expressing political opinion that have not seen the same decline. Traditionally, protests and deliberation have been considered mutually exclusive. This notion has later been challenged, indicating that these factors coexist in democratic societies. The aim of this thesis is to get a better understanding of the complex causal relationship between protests and deliberative democracy in 30 European countries. This is investigated through the following research question: Do countries with high levels of protest activity also have high levels of deliberative democracy? Two contradicting hypotheses are established, where one considers protests and deliberation to be mutually exclusive while the second hypothesis considers them to be coexisting factors in democratic countries. To test the hypotheses, correlation matrices and regression analysis are used, adding relevant control variables (GDP per capita, population and income distribution) to the model. The results imply that protests and deliberation are *not* mutually exclusive, instead countries with higher levels of protest activity also have higher deliberation. However, this does not appear to be because protests itself drive deliberation, but rather that a *confounding variable*, measuring the percentage of national income that the bottom 40% holds, drives both protests and deliberation positively. The implications underline the importance of a more even income distribution to foster both more protests and higher deliberation. Further research to continue investigating these findings is encouraged.

Key words: deliberative democracy, protests, deliberation, political participation, income distribution, European countries

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1. Introduction:

In an increasingly globalised world, greater divides across social class, geographical location, and education level have emerged across Europe. This has shown that there are both winners and losers of the globalisation process, leading to a rising discontent and criticism towards elites and experts among some groups of people across the continent. This has created societies where people mainly encounter others that are in a similar situation as themselves, and it is put less focus on meeting people that does not necessarily share your own perception of the world.¹ When seeing these alarming trends, certain scholars underline that we need to look for other possible solutions. Advocates of deliberative democracy would argue that many of these problems have arisen because we do not deliberate enough as people are not put in situations where they have to discuss complex political issue with people that are different from themselves. To move towards a more deliberative form of democracy would therefore increase legitimacy and prevent many of the problems we see in today's democratic societies.²

While some consider moving towards a deliberative system a long-term solution, others see social movements and protests as essential tools to get your voice heard. The usage of protest as a way of achieving political goals is a more traditional way of participation which has not seen the same decline as other activities, such as voting.³ Using protests as a tool to affect decision-making has therefore gotten increased legitimacy over recent years, making it essential to understand how such activities are affecting democratic societies.

While protests are often seen as a more contentious form of politics, deliberation theories are largely focused on peaceful encounters through public conversation among citizens. This has led both traditional researchers on deliberation and protests to consider them mutually exclusive, where a country would either have widespread protests *or* deliberation.⁴ However, this assumption has been challenged by other researchers, arguing that protests and deliberation can coexist as social movements themselves often have deliberative components. Furthermore, activism can also function as *deliberative triggers*, laying the foundation for starting a public conversation.⁵

A theoretical disunity between scholars can therefore be observed, dividing them on how they view the relationship between protests and deliberation. Despite a clear theoretical

¹ OECD, *Understanding the socio-economic divide in Europe*, p. 5.

² della Porta, *Can democracy be saved?*, p. 63.

³ Mendonça & Ercan, "Deliberation and Protest", p. 268.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Jennstål & Öberg, "The ethics of deliberative activism", p. 652.

disagreement, few empirical studies have been conducted to test these theoretical assumptions in practice, especially on a macro-level. Assuming that deliberative democracy is the goal of a country, a study on how protests affect this form of democracy is of interest both from an academic and policy perspective. Looking at how a certain factor affects deliberation can be considered of significant relevance for determining how this democratic system can be achieved in practice and what policy implementations that should be considered to achieve this.

The study will first present relevant theoretical framework and previous research, followed by a presentation of the design, method, and material as well as reflections on the limitations of the thesis. Finally, the results of the regression analyses will be presented together with a discussion about the interpretation of the results and their limitations alongside some final conclusive remarks.

1.1 Purpose and Research Question:

The purpose of this thesis is to analyse whether or not an empirical relationship between protest events and the prevalence of deliberative democracy exists. This will be done by looking at the relationship between the number of protests each year in 30 different European countries and the deliberative democracy index for the respective countries during 2000 to 2015. Protest events are generally considered difficult to measure and therefore only a few studies on the relationship between protests and other macro-level variables have been conducted. However, with the new techniques used by The Observatory for Political Conflict and Democracy (PolDem), their newly published dataset on protest events in Europe makes conducting such a quantitative comparative study possible. By using this data, this thesis aims to contribute with new perspectives on the empirical nature of the relation between deliberation and protests, which have previously not been possible partly due to the lack of extensive protest data.

Furthermore, several researchers have highly encouraged more comparative studies on deliberative democracy.⁶ Hence, my study might not only be of relevance to further academic research on the topic as this type of research could have important policy implications by studying the factors that can affect the success of deliberation in a country. Non-conventional forms of participation such as both protests and deliberation have gained increased legitimacy, strengthening their relevance in democratic societies.⁷ This raises questions about whether a

⁶ Curato & Steiner, “Deliberative Democracy and Comparative Democratization Studies”, p. 494.

⁷ della Porta & Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, p. 166.

society can have both active protests and high deliberation, or if they work against the purpose of one another? This thesis will explore this topic through the following research question:

Do countries with high levels of protest activity also have high levels of deliberative democracy?

This will be tested using regression analysis, with the aim of establishing whether a higher level of protest events has a statistically significant effect on the level of deliberation for each country in the dataset. As this thesis will be conducted using macro-level data, conclusions from this paper can only be drawn on this level as well. Hence, the conclusions made in this thesis will only cover whether protest activity affects the level of deliberation or not on a country-level, investigating whether a country that has more registered protest events also has a higher or lower deliberation index. It will therefore not be possible to say anything about the individuals that take part in these activities or if it is the same people that protest and deliberate within a society – just whether a general trend among countries can be found. In other words, this is only one step in further exploring how the causal relationship between protests and deliberation looks like.

2. Previous Research and Theoretical Framework:

This section will examine protest and deliberation as two separate areas within political science research to gain a better understanding of what these concepts mean and how they have been understood in previous research. Subsequently, a presentation of how these concepts are understood in relation to each other both theoretically and empirically will follow. This section will end with establishing the theoretical framework and hypotheses that will be used for conducting the statistical analyses in later parts of this study.

2.1 Protest Theory

Protest and social movement theories and research often go hand in hand, and it can therefore be difficult to find theories that only look at protests alone as these topics to a relatively high degree are interconnected.⁸ This study will mainly focus on protest events and not social movements as protest are considered both easier to operationalise and find available data on. Furthermore, to fulfil the aim of the study, it is also more relevant look at how one specific factor affects deliberation, as social movement is a broad term that includes both protests and other activities in one. However, due to the nature of the pre-existing work in this field, this

⁸ della Porta & Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, p. 167.

thesis will also use relevant parts of social movement research to develop the theoretical framework.

Since the 1950's there has been an increase in the use of protests activities as a mean to express opinions and demands in established democratic countries.⁹ The World Value Survey shows that the largest increase has been observed in wealthier, post-materialistic states. This has led to an increased legitimacy for this type of participation in these states, expanding the interest and need for more research on this topic.¹⁰ It is therefore considered even more important to get a better understanding of what effects political activism and protest have in modern democratic states today.

One aspect of protest and social movement theory looks at why protests take place and who participates in them. Norris presents a model showing how political activism, including protesting, is affected by a combination of five main factors: societal modernisation, the structure of the state, mobilising agencies, individual resources, and individual motivation.¹¹ These factors are therefore essential in determining how and why people get engaged in political activism.

Other research has shown that when people take part in protests, it is mainly to express their personal opinions and demands on an issue, and not necessarily to come to a consensus with other participants.¹² This is well in line with how della Porta views protesting, a way of affecting public opinion. Thus, the aim is to persuade other individuals and groups about the stance held by the protesters themselves, as the persuasion and influencing often happens indirectly through the media and via other powerful actors. When arranging protest events, this can lead to different reactions from outsiders, where positive reactions often lead to increased sympathy for the protesters and the issue they present while negative reactions cause people to be more sceptical and critical towards them.¹³

An aspect of social movement theory which was often overlooked in traditional social movement research was the impact and consequences of social movements on individuals, culture, and politics.¹⁴ Understanding how protests can potentially be affecting certain forms of democracy has in recent decades been put more emphasis on but is yet to be more extensively

⁹ Norris, *Democratic Phoenix*, p. 191.

¹⁰ Ibid, pp. 188-93.

¹¹ Ibid, p. 20.

¹² Mendonça & Ercan, "Deliberation and Protest", p. 273.

¹³ della Porta & Diani, *Social Movements: An Introduction*, pp. 168-9.

¹⁴ Bosi, Giugni & Uba, *The Consequences of Social Movements*, p. 1.

explored.¹⁵ Practical limitations often make it difficult to measure these effects as there is an extensive number of factors that can contribute to their impact on society. This is one gap in previous research that this thesis wishes to contribute to, exploring how protests might affect deliberative democracy.

Regarding how protests should be defined, it is well-recognised within social movement research how difficult it can be to find a precise definition of the term. Because of this difficulty, different solutions are offered on how to deal with it.¹⁶ The research platform, PolDem, where the protest data for this thesis is taken from, conduct protest data without establishing an exact theoretical definition of protests in their work.¹⁷ Other scholars argue that while a theoretical definition is necessary, it should be broadly defined.¹⁸

To avoid unnecessary validity issues, a theoretical definition will be used to establish what this investigation considers by the term protest or protest event before conducting the statistical analysis. This definition has been constructed specifically for this study as some of the definitions used by scholars are considered too broad for what a protest event entails in this thesis. The definition is constructed by taking both the theoretical aspects of protests as well as the coding schemes used by PolDem into consideration. The theoretical aspects capture how protests are considered an unconventional form of participation, combined with examples of what a protest event often is in practice, for example a demonstration. A protest is therefore defined as “an unconventional or non-institutionalized political action form such as a demonstration, strike, blockade, or petition”.¹⁹

2.2 Deliberation Theory:

Jürgen Habermas’ work has laid the foundation of deliberative democratic theory. He presented an alternative to the accepted notion of the popular will as the aggregated interest of the people. Instead, he considered the importance of mutual understanding which, according to him, will only be achieved through a communicative process fostering public conversations.²⁰ In other words, supporters of deliberative democracy consider that the legitimacy of political decisions lies in the power of the conversation. People are open to and know that they are not necessarily sitting with the right solutions and that they might change their minds when all arguments are

¹⁵ Bosi, Giugni & Uba, *The Consequences of Social Movements*, p. 21.

¹⁶ Hutter, “Protest Event Analysis and Its Offspring”, p. 12.

¹⁷ Kriesi et al., “PolDem-Protest Dataset 30 European Countries”, pp. 27-8.

¹⁸ Hutter, “Protest Event Analysis and Its Offspring”, p. 12.

¹⁹ Kriesi et al., “PolDem-Protest Dataset 30 European Countries”, p. 28.

²⁰ Khoban, *Deliberation, against all odds?*, p. 1.

heard.²¹ Therefore, supporters of deliberation view deliberative democracy as a more justifiable and more legitimate system. In this type of democratic system people are forced to give reasons for their opinions and defend them, something that a pure electoral system does not offer as people do not have to justify their choices in the same way.²²

della Porta goes as far as arguing that for liberal democracies to be saved, we need new alternatives, for example deliberation.²³ More deliberative practices have already become more common within social movements and it is therefore reason to believe that this could be efficiently expanded to larger parts of society as well.²⁴ Delegation of power and majority voting no longer offer sustainable solutions to democracy seeing the complex, often cross-border issues that states have to deal with today.²⁵

The main criticism of deliberation concerns how decisions will be made in such a system. While the preferred answer to this may vary, most deliberation scholars agree that in practice the system must be complemented by other decision-making procedures, for example voting.²⁶ As this thesis tries to capture the empirical prevalence of deliberation in the world today, it will therefore take into consideration that no pure deliberative systems exist, and countries can have both electoral and deliberative features concurrently. This will be further discussed in section 3.2.2.

While some deliberation researchers have had a stronger focus on arranged mini publics where a small group of citizens come together to discuss political issues, this thesis will rather have a broader take on deliberation.²⁷ A broader view entails that deliberation is not only something that happens through arranged events, but rather as a form of democratic system where deliberation is present in all parts of society. Deliberation will take place among neighbours, friends, and colleagues in their everyday lives, as well as on a national scale between elites and the public.²⁸

²¹ Dryzek, *Deliberative Democracy and Beyond*, p. 1, della Porta, *Can democracy be saved?*, p. 61.

²² Gutmann & Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?*, pp. 14-5.

²³ della Porta, *Can democracy be saved?*, p. 186.

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Ibid, p. 189.

²⁶ Gutmann & Thompson, *Why Deliberative Democracy?*, p. 18.

²⁷ Khoban, *Deliberation, against all odds?*, p. 1.

²⁸ della Porta, *Can democracy be saved?*, p. 63.

A theoretical definition that goes well in line with the above described take on deliberation is taken from Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), which will also be used as the theoretical definition in this thesis, and defines an ideal deliberative democracy as:

The deliberative principle of democracy focuses on the process by which decisions are reached in a polity. A deliberative process is one in which public reasoning focused on the common good motivates political decisions — as contrasted with emotional appeals, solidary attachments, parochial interests, or coercion.²⁹

2.3 Protests and Deliberation as Mutually Exclusive:

Some of the most well-known theorists opposing Habermas' idea of deliberative democracy are Chantal Mouffe and Iris Young. They are known as agonists who consider conflicts to be an essential part of any democracy. They consider deliberation an ineffective practice which forces away contentions in a society.³⁰ This view is often considered in line with protests and considers protests an action of people that “feel constrained by democratic procedures”³¹ and who are not able to get their voice heard through more traditional means of participation.³² Deliberation is therefore a practice which is reserved for the people of a certain class and status, biased towards more powerful people or groups in a society. With such a perspective on protests, they consider this ideal to be incompatible with deliberative democracy as this form of democracy discourages any forms of coercion. Another aspect of the negative relationship between deliberation and protest activities is presented by Fishkin. He argues that protest activities and activism can contribute to undermine the purpose of deliberation as activists can use deliberative situations to push their opinions onto others while not being as open to change their own perspectives as the deliberative ideal requires.³³

More empirical research on deliberation also suggests that what might affect the extent of a deliberative ideal in a country being achieved, is the type of deliberative culture the country has. The cultures are divided into deliberative and non-deliberative cultures. This means that countries either have a deliberative culture fostering deliberative practices or have a non-deliberative culture using more contentious forms of participation, such as protests.³⁴ A case study on Sweden was conducted by Jennstål, Uba & Öberg to test this theory. They conducted

²⁹ Coppedge et. al, "V-Dem Codebook v11.1", p. 44.

³⁰ Mendonça & Ercan, “Deliberation and Protest”, p. 268.

³¹ Jennstål & Öberg, “The ethics of deliberative activism”, p. 652.

³² Ibid.

³³ Mendonça & Ercan, “Deliberation and Protest”, p. 269.

³⁴ Jennstål, Uba & Öberg, “Deliberative Civic Culture”, pp. 2-4.

a survey collecting information about Swedes' adherence to deliberative values, where the results indicated that deliberative values are more prevalent in the country. If the theory holds, then Sweden and other countries with deliberative cultures should have less protest activity compared to countries with a non-deliberative culture.

These negative aspects of the relationship between protests and deliberation goes well in line with how V-Dem define deliberation, as shown in section 2.2. They underline the importance of a "respectful and reasonable dialogue"³⁵ instead of "emotional appeals, solidary attachments, parochial interests, or coercion"³⁶, characteristics that often are associated with protests.

2.4 Protests and Deliberation as Coexisting Factors:

Mendonça and Ercan presents a theoretical argument for why they consider a relationship between conflicts and consensus to be important in politics and that the two of them do not necessarily need to be mutually exclusive. Politics requires a combination of conflicts and consensus as conflicts contributes to destabilization. At the same time, they argue that at some point stabilization is also needed which can be achieved through different forms of mutual understanding or consensus. This combination will therefore lead to *synagonism*, or co-struggle, where a constitutive relationship of conflict through protests and mutual understanding through deliberation go hand in hand.³⁷

Their theoretical framework was tested by looking at protests held in Turkey and Brazil in 2013. They concluded that the deliberative potential would differ among protests based on what issue they protest about. For example, in the two countries studied, the issue that united different protest groups was how they all wanted to get their voice heard against how the government had violated their fundamental rights. Furthermore, they emphasise how the protests had deliberative outcomes as they contributed to make the political sphere more aware of their claims, which the political elites also responded to. In other words, the protests led to a public conversation among groups that would normally not deliberate with each other. All in all, this article therefore showed how deliberation and protests can be compatible, not only in theory, but also in practice.³⁸

Another way to look at the interconnectedness of protests and deliberation can be through deliberative activism where activism rather functions as deliberative triggers instead of seeing

³⁵ Coppedge et. al, "V-Dem Codebook v11.1", pp. 44-45.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Mendonça & Ercan, "Deliberation and Protest", pp. 269-70.

³⁸ Ibid, pp. 276-9.

it as a co-struggle as Mendonça and Ercan do.³⁹ Jennstål and Öberg are critical of Mendonça and Ercan's study. They accuse Mendonça and Ercan of claiming to look at deliberative parts of protests, while they are in fact looking at more "participatory, emancipatory and empowering" forms of participation, according to Jennstål and Öberg.⁴⁰ The deliberative aspects are not included in the participatory parts but rather occur when an actor initiates a conversation with people that have other opinions than themselves. This is shown in Jennstål and Öberg's definition of a deliberative activist as someone who "does not only offer justifications for one's views and action and bring attention to an issue"⁴¹ but also "engage in dialogue with those with whom they disagree"⁴².

When conducting their empirical study, Jennstål and Öberg look at four cases of provocative art and how and if this art, considered a difficult issue of deliberation as it is usually not expressed verbally, could be deliberated on.⁴³ The results show that the artists or exhibitors cannot themselves make a deliberative system, but they can contribute to the conversation by initiating or responding to deliberation on the artwork they have created, which is an important component in creating deliberative norms.⁴⁴ Based on these results, it can be reasonable to assume that with an "easier" issue of deliberation, protestors can also be considered to contribute to a public conversation the same way as activists producing provocative art can.

Furthermore, della Porta has developed an alternative theory about how deliberative and participatory democracy can work together. This is a democracy where deliberative practices are present, but also one that makes sure that everyone is included, which requires that society embraces equality in practice. This type of democratic model has been endorsed within larger social movements, such as the global justice movement and could therefore be interesting to explore within a larger comparative perspective that is not only focusing on a specific movement.⁴⁵

Overall, but with slightly different approaches, these researchers argue for how high levels of both protests and deliberation can be present in a democratic state. Protests can not only coexist

³⁹ Jennstål & Öberg, "The ethics of deliberative activism", p. 648.

⁴⁰ Jennstål & Öberg, "The ethics of deliberative activism", p. 653.

⁴¹ Ibid, p. 648.

⁴² Ibid.

⁴³ Ibid, p. 654.

⁴⁴ Ibid, pp. 658-9.

⁴⁵ della Porta, *Can democracy be saved?*, pp. 67-8.

with deliberation but can also have a positive impact on it according to these theories and previous research, as protests affect both the cultural and political aspects of a society.

2.5 Hypotheses:

Whether protests and deliberation can coexist in democratic states has been shown to create a divide between scholars. As Mouffe and Young argue, the contentious elements of protests cannot coexist with deliberation as it aims to foster the very opposite of protesting. When a country has many protests, this will weaken the prerequisites of deliberation, making it more difficult for deliberative norms to take root in society. When people want to voice their opinion on an issue, they are more likely to express them through protest activities than through different forms of public conversations. This lays the foundation of the first hypothesis:

H1: A country with higher levels of protests will have lower levels of deliberative democracy

On the other hand, other scholars argue that protests can foster deliberation and therefore that they can coexist. Mendonça and Ercan argue that this happens through the process of co-struggle where conflict and contention eventually drive people or groups to use less contentious means and start a conversation with other parties. Jennstål and Öberg agree with the premise that protests and deliberation potentially can coexist, but instead consider that activism functions as deliberative triggers where the activists themselves choose to take part in a public conversation about the issues they promote without any initial contentious elements. While the different authors present two different mechanisms as potential driving forces for deliberation, the scope of this thesis will however not be able to test any mechanisms and instead focuses on their main argument linking protests and deliberation together in a positive way. This lays the foundation for the second hypothesis:

H2: A country with higher levels of protests will have higher levels of deliberative democracy

At first glance it might seem counterintuitive to use two contradicting hypotheses in the same thesis. However, considering that this is an explorative study of a topic that has two very divided theoretical conceptions, I do not consider one of these conceptions to be particularly stronger than the other as they are both recognised within their field of research. This thesis will therefore equally consider both possibilities, however contradicting, as likely empirical scenarios for the statistical results. While it cannot be completely excluded that deliberation instead could affect protests, based on the theoretical framework presented above, this causality will be assumed through this thesis.

3. Research Design and Method:

This part of the thesis introduces the research design. It will present the material that will be used and the characteristics of the different datasets and variables, followed by explaining the methodology used. Furthermore, the limitations of the design, material, and method as well as how this can affect the results will be discussed at the end of this part.

3.1 Statistical Design:

This thesis will use a statistical design. The benefit of using this design when conducting research is that a large amount of data can be gathered to make comparisons between the data in the sample. Furthermore, it is possible to test whether the hypotheses presented should be confirmed or rejected.⁴⁶ Due to the aforementioned advantages of using this type of design in combination with the chosen method (discussed in section 3.4), this design was considered the most suitable for fulfilling the aim of this study.

3.2 Data Selection:

It turned out to be difficult to find a single dataset that jointly contained all the variables I wanted to study in one. Therefore, a new dataset has been constructed by taking relevant data from different sources and merging them together to one dataset. The material used is data taken from recognised research institutes as well as international organisations that work with data collection – Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem), The Observatory for Political Conflict and Democracy (PolDem), the United Nations Population Division, the World Bank Data, and the World Inequality Database. The sample will consist of data from 30 countries covered in the dataset from PolDem during the period 2000-2015.⁴⁷ These countries are the 27 member states of the European Union (EU) as of 2007, meaning that the UK is included in the sample, but not Croatia. Furthermore, Iceland, Norway and Switzerland are also included.⁴⁸ The countries included in this study have a similar history, culture, and many common features such as being an EU member state or having close relations to the EU. This is beneficial as the countries' similar backgrounds decrease the chance that there are other variations between them that could affect the results. Other common features for the countries are that they all have a certain level of democratic and economic development. This is important to keep in mind as it affects to what extent the results can be generalised. It will not be possible to generalise the results to countries that differentiate in terms of these factors. These limitations, as well as the limitation of choosing the given period will be further discussed in section 3.5.

⁴⁶ Esaiasson et al., *Metodpraktikan*, p. 98.

⁴⁷ Kriesi et al., "PolDem-Protest Dataset 30 European Countries", p. 13.

⁴⁸ A full list of countries in the sample can be found in Appendix A.

When the sample of the 30 given countries was established, data taken from V-Dem for each respective country and year was found to add the deliberative democracy index to the dataset. The same was done for the control variables GDP per capita, population size and income distribution.

While many quantitative studies use randomised samples, this thesis will instead be working with panel data, which is a dataset where variables are measured over time. The perks of working with this type of data is that the dataset represents *all* registered protest events in the 30 countries during the given time period which gets us closer to the ideal situation of a typical natural experiment.⁴⁹ In practice, this means that we do not have to rely on the randomness of a sample to approximate estimates for a population, instead inference based on this dataset accurately reflects the population itself – the 30 countries included in this dataset during this specific time period (given that the data is accurately collected and free of errors).

The main reason why panel data is not as common in research, especially on macro level, is due to the extensive amount of time and resources it takes to collect it.⁵⁰ This thesis benefits from being able to use data that had already been collected by PolDem and will be able to conduct analysis on data that would not otherwise be possible within the scope of this thesis.

3.2.1 Protest Events:

Protest events is the independent variable of interest in this analysis. The most common ways of measuring protest events are by either using documentation via newspapers or police records, where PolDem has used the newspaper method to register and code more than 31 000 events for the aforementioned countries during the time period 2000-2015. What makes this protest data unique is how they have used a combination of “automated and manual coding” to be able to capture a larger number of events that would not be possible using only manual coding. Each event is coded as a separate unit of observation based on when and where it took place as well as what form of protest it was. Having such an extensive dataset makes it possible to make comparisons both over time and between the different countries that has not been possible to the same extent previously.⁵¹

Since the dataset registers every single event as one entity, for the purpose of this study these events have been recoded. Each unit of observation represents the number of protest events per country per year, measured on a ratio scale. PolDem has originally separated Northern Ireland

⁴⁹ Teorell & Svensson, *Att fråga och att svara*, pp. 81-2.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Kriesi et al., “PolDem-Protest Dataset 30 European Countries”, p. 13.

and the rest of the United Kingdom (UK) as two separate countries. This is however not the case for the other data sources and not relevant for the scope of my thesis. Therefore, all protest events per year in Northern Ireland and the rest of the UK have been merged into one country entity named the UK.

3.2.2 Deliberation Index:

The deliberative democracy index by V-Dem will be the dependent variable in this analysis. V-Dem is an independent research institute specialising in democratic research and exploring new ways to conduct this type of research.⁵² One of the five types of democracy indexes they produce is the deliberative democracy index. This is one of the few existing measures of deliberation on country-level over time for most countries in the world. Several scholars have underlined the invaluable contribution this index has on the possibility of conducting comparative studies on deliberation.⁵³

The index is constructed of five indicators aimed at capturing different parts of deliberation: *1. reasoned justification, 2. common good, 3. respect counterarguments, 4. range of consultation 5. engaged society.*⁵⁴ When all the components are put together, the index is constructed and scaled from 0-1 going from a low to a high score of deliberative democracy.⁵⁵ This is called the deliberative component index. However, this thesis will, as stated previously, use the deliberative democracy index instead which also takes into consideration the electoral democracy in the country. As discussed in section 2.2, no country in the world today is considered to have a pure deliberative democratic system and using this variable is therefore considered to be closer to the empirical situation of deliberative democracy. V-Dem also argues that although it is possible to look at deliberative democracy as a separate measure without electoral democracy, in practice “the highest level of deliberative democracy can be attained only when there is a high-level of both electoral democracy *and* deliberation”.⁵⁶ For this reason, this thesis will also be working with the deliberative democracy index instead of the deliberative component index as the aim is to look at deliberation and protest empirically, where electoral democracy also will be present.⁵⁷

⁵² Kriesi et al., “PolDem-Protest Dataset 30 European Countries”, p. 2.

⁵³ Curato & Steiner, “Deliberative Democracy and Comparative Democratization Studies”, p. 494.

⁵⁴ What each of the components of the deliberative component index are measuring can be found in Appendix B.

⁵⁵ Coppedge et. al, “V-Dem Codebook v11.1”, p. 54.

⁵⁶ Coppedge et al., “V-Dem Methodology v11.1”, p. 13.

⁵⁷ It should be noted that all regression analyses have been testing both deliberation indexes and it does not appear to have any significant effect on the results.

3.2.3 Control Variables:

Control variables are often added to a regression model to control for other factors that might affect the correlation between the independent variable of interest and the dependent variable. If a significant correlation between the two main variables persists after adding the control variables, we can say that the correlation between the original variables have been *isolated*, indicating that there are no confounders present. A confounder is a variable that affects both variables of interest.⁵⁸

The purpose of adding control variables is to minimise potential bias in the model and increase the precision of the estimate of interest, protest events. If the control variables had not been added, one could risk that that the model would be unspecified and affected by omitted variable bias. The intention is therefore not to interpret the control variables themselves when conducting the regression analysis, rather to ensure that incorrect or inaccurate conclusions regarding the relationship between the independent variable of interest and the dependent variable are not drawn based on a biased model.

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) Per Capita:

Based on previous research, it is not unlikely to think that GDP per capita is a factor that affects both a country's degree of deliberation and protest level. Norris considers social modernisation an essential factor affecting protest activity. This is also shown through Inglehart's post-materialistic value research, stating that when people's prosperity is increasing, they participate more actively in activities such as protests.⁵⁹ Furthermore, while there appears to be limited research specifically looking at economic prosperity and deliberative democracy, a large field of research is dedicated to the positive relationship between economic prosperity and the level of electoral democracy.⁶⁰ This indicates that GDP per capita has an effect on the system of governance.

This thesis will measure societal modernisation and economic development through the level of GDP per capita, a well-established way of measuring these factors in social science research.⁶¹ The data is taken from the World Bank Data and is calculated by taking the total GDP of a country and dividing it by the population size, given in US dollars. While some might argue that GDP adjusted for purchasing power parity (PPP) should be used, this thesis will not use this measure as PPP is considered a controversial measure by some scholars within

⁵⁸ Nyman, *More about regression*, p. 25.

⁵⁹ Norris, *Democratic Phoenix*, p. 19.

⁶⁰ Oskarsson & Widmalm, *Myt eller Verklighet?*, p. 29.

⁶¹ *Ibid*, pp. 31-2.

economics research due to possible measurement errors that could weaken the credibility of the results in this study.⁶² Furthermore, PPP is more important to consider when studying countries that have a larger difference in the relative size of their economies (for example comparing an industrialised country to a less developed country). As the majority of the countries in this sample are either members of the OECD or the EU, or both, this is therefore not considered necessary.

In the analysis, the logarithmic GDP per capita will be used. This is further explained in Appendix B, but using the logarithmic GDP per capita in research is a common practice as this variable often has a non-linear slope due to the often tie diminishing effect or return of the variable. Therefore, a linear model specification is not considered a good fit for this variable.⁶³

Population Size:

Population size can have important implications for the correlation between protests and deliberation as the 30 countries in the sample have varying population sizes which can affect the number of events held in each respective country. The population is also likely to change over time which is why the population size will be controlled for, not only for each country but also for the different years that are studied. The data is taken from the United Nations Population Division through their dataset from United Nations World Population Prospect from 2019.

Income Distribution:

While GDP per capita measures the average assets a citizen in a country theoretically could have access to, making it possible to compare different countries, it does not say anything about how wealth is distributed within the country. According to scholars such as Verba, social inequalities can have a large impact on who participates in activities such as protests.⁶⁴ At the same time, Beauvais argues that structural equality is an essential condition for deliberation to function. By structural equality, equality between different social groups based on factors such as gender, class and ethnicity are considered. When such inequalities exist in a society, this has historically led to less privileged groups being left out of deliberative processes.⁶⁵

There are different ways of measuring inequality, but the most prevalent measures are related to wealth or income distribution. The control variable will therefore be income distribution measured as the % of national income held by the bottom 40% of the population scaled from

⁶² Taylor & Taylor, "The Purchasing Power Parity Debate", pp. 135-6.

⁶³ Oskarsson & Widmalm, *Myt eller Verklighet?*, p. 32.

⁶⁴ Norris, *Democratic Phoenix*, p. 19.

⁶⁵ Beauvais, "Deliberation and Equality", p. 146.

0-1 where 0 means that the bottom 40% holds 0% of the national income and 1 means that this group holds 100% of the national income. While this measure only covers one aspect of structural inequality and does not capture all relevant aspects, this study will still use income distribution as a control variable to be able to at least control for some parts of structural inequality in the different countries.

3.4 Method:

Regression analysis will be used to investigate the relationship between the independent variable (protest events) and the dependent variable (deliberative democracy index) where countries in Europe are the unit of analysis in this thesis. This will first be done through a simple regression analysis looking only at these two variables to get a preliminary impression of how the relationship between them looks like. Afterwards, multivariate regression analysis will be used to control for relevant variables that are considered to potentially influence the relationship between protest events and the deliberative democracy index.⁶⁶

Furthermore, as this thesis works with panel data, it is assumed that there will be both variations between the different countries as well as within the respective countries. To make sure that these natural variations are not affecting the correlation between the two main variables of interest, fixed effects (FE) are added to the regression models.⁶⁷

This thesis will use both country fixed effects and time fixed effects. Country fixed effects control for any potential variation between countries that will be constant over the given period (due to for example cultural, historical, or institutional differences). Time fixed effects control for natural changes in the variables over time in terms of constant variation between countries and thereby remove any time-based effects.⁶⁸ When fixed effects are added it is not as necessary to try to control for every single variable that only differs between countries (e.g. whether the country has a majoritarian or proportional election system) as this variation should be captured by the country fixed effects. Therefore, only control variables that are likely to differ both over time *and* between countries are added to the regression analysis.

For a fixed effects model to function under ideal conditions, it is important that all countries have data for all years studied to ensure that the dataset is balanced as it can otherwise lead to misleading results.⁶⁹ This has therefore been strongly considered when choosing what data to

⁶⁶ Österman & Folke, *Getting started with quantitative analysis*, p. 72.

⁶⁷ Nyman, *More about regression*, p. 18.

⁶⁸ Ibid, pp. 18-9.

⁶⁹ Ibid, p. 27.

include in the analysis to avoid any errors in the statistical model. This is also one of the reasons why several different data sources have been used for data collection, to ensure complete data for all variables.

3.4.1 Model:

Based on the method that will be used in this study, a regression model can be derived. For this thesis, the model can be written as:

$$Y_{it} = \alpha X_{it} + \beta_1 Z_{1it} + \beta_2 Z_{2it} + \beta_3 Z_{3it} + \gamma_i + \delta_t + \epsilon_{it}$$

Where Y_{it} is the dependent variable, the deliberative democracy index, and X_{it} is the independent variable of interest, number of protest events. i refers to each country within the dataset and t indicates what time period, measured in years, that the observation is from. Z represents each control variable, GDP per capita (log), income distribution and population. It is important to note that the control variables are not meant to be interpreted and are allowed to correlate with the error term, ϵ_{it} . The control variables are included to increase precision and decrease possible bias for the independent variable of interest, protest events. Unlike a traditional linear regression model, this fixed effect model does not have a joint intercept. This is because the fixed effects model allows for individual specific intercepts, which in this case is country specific. γ_i represents country fixed effects and δ_t time fixed effects.

The model is relatively simple, including only three control variables. This is based on how the theoretical framework presents how a potential model would look like.⁷⁰ Furthermore, when fixed effects are added, as mentioned in section 3.4, adding certain control variables will not have a significant effect on the results.

3.4.2 Assumptions in the Model:

One of the major assumptions when conducting a study that is not an experiment is called the “zero conditional mean assumption” or exogeneity assumption. This assumes that no reverse causality is present where the dependent variable affects the independent variable. This assumption is based on the theoretical arguments of this thesis as there is no simple measure to test if this is the case in practice. Furthermore, it is assumed that no other variables that could affect the causal relationship have been excluded from the model.⁷¹ While this is a reasonable assumption for this type of study, in practice, it is difficult to ensure that all relevant variables have been controlled for. This assumes there does not exist any omitted country-specific time-

⁷⁰ Nyman, *More about regression*, p. 9.

⁷¹ Ibid, p. 2.

varying factor which is correlated to protest events and deliberation. This means that there does not exist any variables within a country over time that have not been controlled for. In other words, it is assumed that the control variables in this thesis cover this form of bias. This is clearly illustrated in section 4 as the results change both in terms of the coefficients and from a high level of significance to not being statistically significant at all when these assumptions have been added to the model.

Secondly, it is assumed through this model that a high deliberation is the goal in the countries studied. This is related to the purpose of the thesis, exploring how protest events can be a potential factor affecting deliberation in a country and hence why protest is set as the independent variable and deliberation is set as the dependent variable. While it might be possible to use deliberation as an independent variable, this is considered less relevant from both a research and policy implication perspective.

Thirdly, since this model assumes that the relationship between the two variables of interest is linear, this thesis is not able to say anything about if a non-linear correlation could potentially be found. This assumption is made as linear models are usually assumed in simpler statistical analyses as they are easier to interpret.

3.5 Limitations:

There are some limitations to this study, apart from the assumptions presented in the previous section, which needs to be taken into consideration. The greatest limitation of this study is connected to the independent variable, protests events, and how it is measured. To be able to semi-automate the coding of the events, the sources are only taken from 10 English-speaking news outlets that are covering the 30 countries in the sample.⁷² This can lead to validity issues as the model might fail to report certain events as it only registers the events picked up by these 10 news outlets. One failure of reporting can be connected to the size or prevalence of protests, as it can be assumed that the protest needs to be of a certain size to be registered in the news. However, the theoretical definition of protests does not set up a minimum requirement for any given number of participations or prevalence of the protest for it to be theoretically considered a protest event. Another issue is related to the use of only English-speaking news outlets, as there is a risk that English-speaking news outlets located in the UK are likely to give an overrepresentation of protest events in the UK compared to other countries or regions. Furthermore, it is known that violent protest events as well as events organised by established

⁷² Kriesi et al., “PolDem-Protest Dataset 30 European Countries”, p. 14.

political groups often gain more media attention than other types of events. As a result, this can also affect which events that have been registered.⁷³

Another limitation is the period of time which has been chosen for this study, 2000 to 2015. The perk of choosing this period is that it is a 16-year period where the last measurements were conducted 6 years ago. While the data is not entirely up to date, is it neither too old to be considered outdated. This period of time was chosen as extensive data was available covering all years and countries of interest. The major consideration for this period is that the Euro crisis took place during it and has shown to drive many people to the streets to protest, especially in for example Greece which was hit particularly hard by the crisis.⁷⁴ This can influence the number of events held in this period compared to other periods. However, these potential outliers will be dealt with in section 4.3 as part of the conducted robustness tests.

Regarding the data on deliberative democracy, V-Dem use expert panels to create their indexes. The benefit of using expert panels over for example surveys, is that to a larger extent the objective observation of how prevalent deliberative practices are is captured, rather than how the people living in that country perceives it to be.⁷⁵ Using expert data can also decrease the risk of unsystematic error, which leads to a stronger reliability. Furthermore, by using V-Dem's own definition of deliberative democracy, this variable has a decreased risk of encountering validity issues.

While the main purpose of this study is to establish whether a correlation exists between protest and deliberation, a regression analysis cannot state in which causal direction the correlation is. Based on the theoretical framework presented, the hypotheses state that it is protests that cause more or less deliberation and not the other way around. To get closer to establishing a causal relationship, causal inference will be used by adding control variables. However, there is still a chance that relevant variables have not been controlled for which can affect the results. This is important to be aware of as it can affect how isolated the relationship will be in practice. Since it can be difficult to establish the time order of protest events and deliberation, this is heavily based on the theoretical arguments as a basis for this thesis.

⁷³ Lorenzini et al., *Contention in Times of Crisis*, p. 49.

⁷⁴ Kriesi et al., "PolDem-Protest Dataset 30 European Countries", p. 8.

⁷⁵ Coppedge et al., "V-Dem Methodology v11.1", p. 11.

4. Results and Analysis:

This section presents the results and the analysis of the results in this thesis. It first explains the descriptive statistics, followed by testing the two established hypotheses using correlation matrices and regression analysis. Lastly, improvements of the model and its effects on the results is presented by conducting a range of robustness tests.

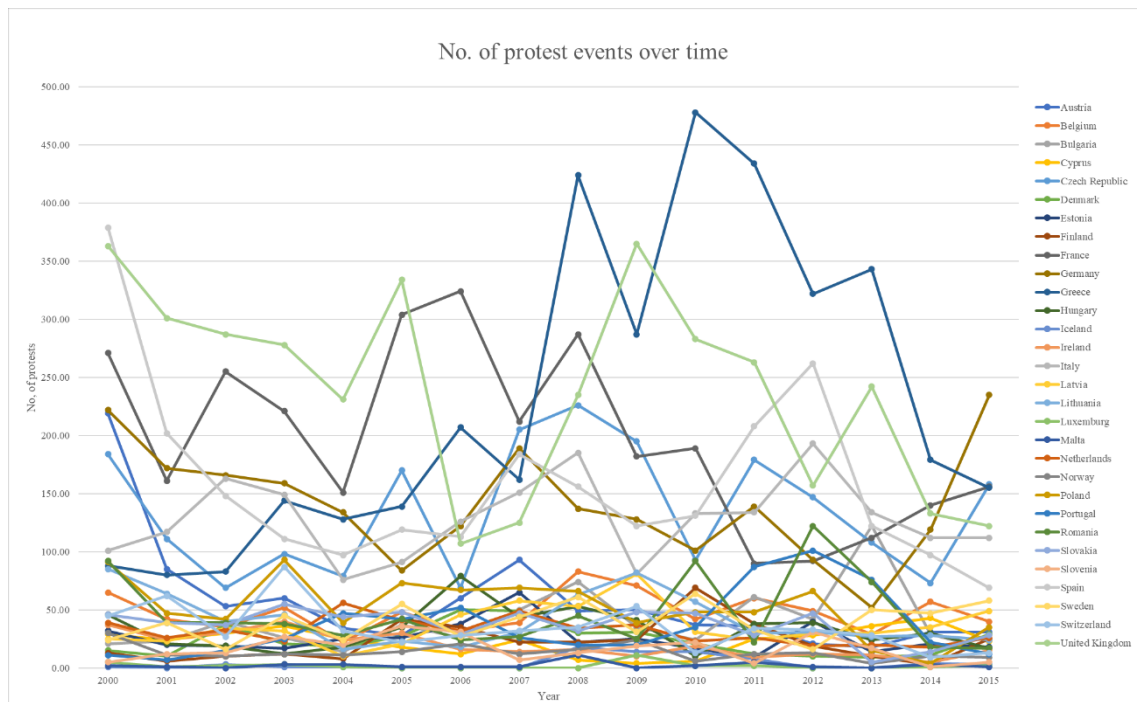
4.1 Descriptive Statistics:

To get an overview of the data used in this analysis, descriptive statistics of all the variables are presented in *Table 1*. The number of observations for the compiled dataset made for this study is 480 for all variables. This is based on the number of observations found in the PolDem dataset, where the other data sources have been added with observations for the same years and same countries. Protest events is a frequency count for per country times per year, leading to $30 \times 16 = 480$ observations.

	No. of observations	Mean	Standard deviation (sd.)	Min.	Max.
Protest events	480	63.773	77.589	0	478
Deliberative democracy	480	0.758	0.0987	0.373	0.881
GDP per capita	480	35570.622	23190.441	3985	111968
Income distribution	480	0.133	0.0183	0.083	0.178
Population	480	16 927 528.202	22 065 227.174	281 205	82 534 176

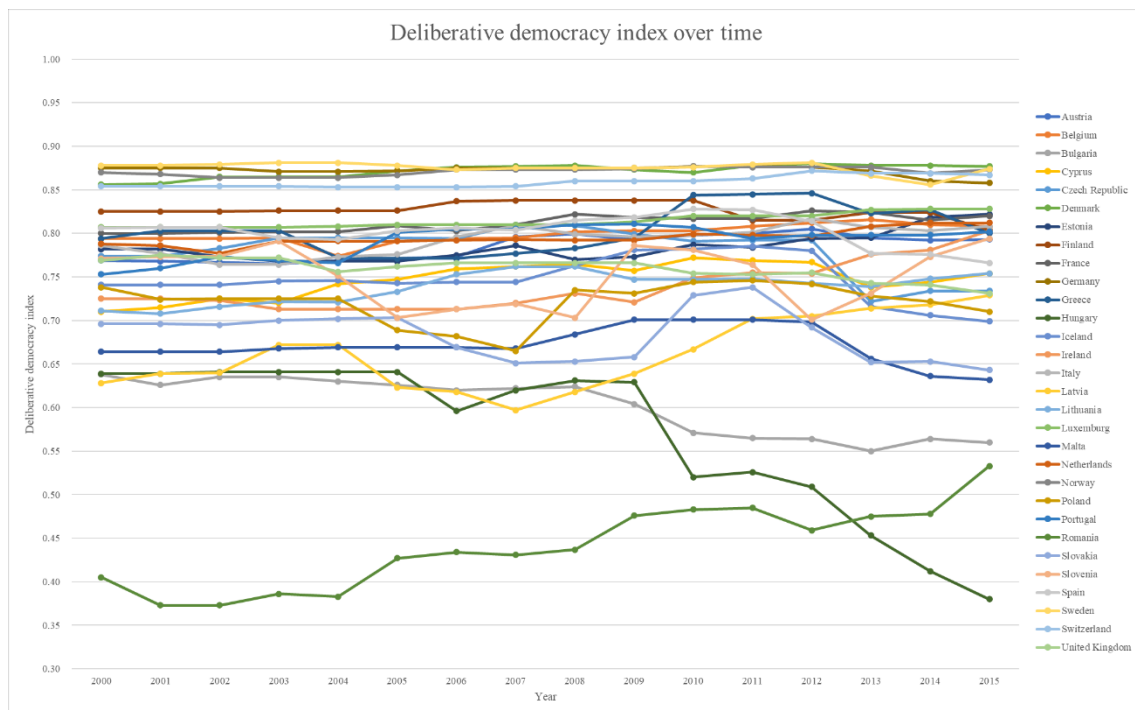
Table 1. Descriptive statistics of the variables

The deliberative democracy index has a scale of 0-1 while the GDP per capita is measured in US dollars. We can observe that there is some variation in the deliberative democracy index, ranging from minimum 0.373 to maximum 0.881. It is worth noting that none of the countries reach a deliberative index of more than 0.881.



Graph 1. Number of protest events over time.

Graph 1 gives a visual overview of the number of events registered for each of the 30 countries during 2000-2015. Greece appears to have held a lot more protests than all the other counties during several years in this period.



Graph 2. Deliberative democracy index over time.

Graph 2 gives a visual display of the deliberative democracy index over time in the 30 countries. One can clearly see that there are some countries that do not follow the same stable trend that most of the other countries do. These countries are Romania, Hungary, and Italy.

A correlation matrix, presented in *Table 2*, shows the correlation coefficient between the relevant variables used to test hypothesis 1 and 2. This is used to indicate what variables that have stronger correlations to each other and whether the correlation is positive or negative. Looking at the two main variables, protest events and deliberation, the correlation efficient is positive with a coefficient of 0.157. Furthermore, there seems to be a particularly strong correlation between deliberation and logarithmic GDP per capita with a coefficient of 0.743.

	Deliberation	Protest events	GDP per capita (log)	Population	Income distribution
Deliberation	1.000	0.157	0.743	0.158	0.275
Protest events	0.157	1.000	0.011	0.620	-0.138
GDP per capita (log)	0.743	0.011	1.000	0.078	0.337
Population	0.158	0.620	0.078	1.000	-0.151
Income distribution	0.275	-0.138	0.337	-0.151	1.000

Table 2. Correlation matrix of the relevant variables.

4.2 Testing the Hypotheses:

In the bivariate regression analysis (*Table 2, Model 1.1*) looking at the relationship between protest events and deliberation, the result shows a statistically significant positive relationship at 0.1 % significance level. According to the model, when the number of protest events increases by 1, the deliberative democracy index will on average increase by 1.990E-04 in the same country. When protest events increase by 100 events a year, the deliberation index will increase by 0.0199. This corresponds to an approximately 2% increase in deliberation. This simple preliminary regression indicates that there is initial evidence supporting hypothesis 2 and not hypothesis 1. While the increase in deliberation might appear to be small, it could still have a considerable effect on policy implications related to regulation of protest events.

Furthermore *Model 1.2* shows the results from a multivariate regression analysis where the control variables logarithmic GDP per capita, population size and income distribution are added. Protest events is still statistically significant at a 0.1 % significance level, but the coefficient has decreased from 1.990E-04 to 1.819E-04. It therefore still seems to be support for hypothesis 2. At the same time, GDP per capita is also statistically significant with a coefficient of 0.098. The reason why the coefficient is decreasing is likely to be because *Model 1.1* is incorrectly specified and therefore biased. When GDP per capita is included, the bias will

diminish, and the estimation will be more consistent. In other words, this is a case of omitted variable bias where the correlation in *Model 1.1* was overestimated because GDP per capita had not been controlled for. This indicates that GDP per capita is a factor affecting both protests and the deliberation index.

Model 1.3 takes into consideration the fixed effects for year and country when looking at the correlation between the two main variables of interest. What is interesting in this case is that the coefficient of protest events is decreasing but still has a significance level of 10 %. This could be used as an indication that when controlling for the variation over time and between countries, the correlation between protest events and deliberation is not as strong as previously shown in *Model 1.1* and *1.2*.

Model 1.4 shows the results when controlling for country and time fixed effects while also looking at all the control variables (GDP per capita, population and income distribution). When this is done there are no statistically significant estimates apart from the income distribution variable. This could potentially serve as an initial indication that income distribution is a *confounding variable* which can explain both variations in protest events and deliberation. This will be further discussed later in this section.

Something that should also be brought attention to is the large change in the value of the R^2 and adjusted R^2 when adding the control variables and fixed effects, going from an adjusted R^2 of 0.0225 in *Model 1.1* to 0.9988 in *Model 1.3* and *1.4*. An exceptionally high value of adjusted R^2 could be due to the limited variation in countries over time in terms of the deliberative democracy index. As a result of this, controlling for country and time fixed effects captures a lot of the variation in deliberation and there is only limited variation left in the dataset. This makes the variation in the independent variable's ability to explain the variation in the dependent variable considerably stronger. While this is concerning as lack of variation makes it harder to distinguish an effect, I would argue that this highlights the importance of including country and time fixed effects to avoid drawing any inaccurate or false conclusions. This is also shown in the change of significance level in *Table 3* when fixed effects are added. Despite the limited variation of deliberation across countries and over time, this is the most extensive data available on deliberation both in terms of countries and period of time that I am aware of, and this was therefore still considered the best method and data to use for the purpose of this study.

	Model 1.1	Model 1.2	Model 1.3	Model 1.4
Protest events	1.990E-04*** (5.740E-05)	1.819E-04*** (0.043)	5.420E-05 . (3.070E-05)	3.909E-05 (3.170E-05)
GDP per capita (log)		0.098*** (4.36E-03)		-2.877E-03 (0.015)
Population		9.411E-11 (1.710E-10)		-1.888E-09 (2.050E-09)
Income distribution		0.297 (0.174)		0.502* (0.210)
Constant	0.746*** (5.770E-03)	-0.288*** (0.043)		
Country fixed effects	NO	NO	YES	YES
Time fixed effects	NO	NO	YES	YES
No. of observations	480	480	480	480
R^2	0.0246	0.5774	0.9988	0.9988
Adjusted R^2	0.0225	0.5739	0.9988	0.9988
Standard error	0.0975	0.0644	0.0271	0.0270

The standard error is given in parentheses, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, . $p < 0.1$

Table 3. Results from testing hypothesis 1 and 2 using regression analysis.

Based on the results given in *Table 3*, we can rule out a direct relationship between protest events and deliberation when controlling for relevant variables and fixed effects. This does not mean that it can be established that a correlation does not exist overall, but rather that it has not been identified in this specific setting. However, there are still certain aspects of the results that can be further explored. Looking at how the control variables affect the independent and dependent variable can help interpret if there exist one or more potential confounding variables. If this is the case, then it turns out that even if a direct correlation cannot be observed between protest events and deliberation, there might be one or more underlying variables that are affecting both variables of interest.

From *Table 3, Model 1.4*, it can be established that the control variable income distribution is positively correlated to deliberation and statistically significant on 5% significance level. To test if income distribution also has a positive effect on protest events, a regression analysis will be conducted using protest events as the dependent variable and the control variables as independent variables to see if the control variables are statistically significant and correlated to protest events. These results are shown in *Table 4*.

Table 4, Model 2.1 shows that there is a statistically significant relationship between population size, income distribution and protest events. Since the correlation coefficient is positive and

statistically significant both for protest events (as shown in *Model 2.1*) and for deliberation (as shown in *Model 1.4*), income distribution appears to affect both variables positively and it is therefore plausible to consider it a confounding variable. It should be noted that the size of the correlation coefficient is very large and misleading. This is probably because the control variables were chosen to reduce the bias and increase the precision of protest events as the independent variable of interest when deliberation is the dependent variable (seeing that this was the main objective of the paper and its hypotheses). The estimate of the correlation coefficient is therefore likely to be biased as no control variables are added to reduce bias for the income distribution variable (i.e. possible omitted variables for this specific relationship). This is a natural next step in exploring this issue but is however far outside the scope of this thesis. This could be an interesting phenomenon to look at for future research, developing hypotheses that are specifically covering the relation between income distribution and protests and/or deliberation. Regardless of the misleading size of the correlation coefficient of income distribution, its statistical significance level still supports the idea of this variable being a confounder.

Regression analysis cannot determine the causal direction of the correlation and it must instead be argued theoretically. Regarding income distribution, it is easier to see a logical line of argumentation for income distribution affecting protests and not the other way around. A more uneven distribution of income is likely to affect people's opportunity to take part in protest activity. Since the aim of the study is to investigate the relationship between protests and deliberation, it makes intuitive sense to use protest events as the dependent variable in *Model 2.1*.

	Model 2.1
GDP per capita (log)	-23.847 (22.547)
Population	-1.540E-05*** -2.98E-06
Income distribution	1058.971*** (310.050)
Fixed effects (FE)	YES
No. of observations	480
R^2	0.8500
Adjusted R^2	0.8390
Standard error	40.290
The standard error is given in parentheses, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, . $p < 0.1$	

Table 4. Results from testing the relationship between protest events and the control variables.

While protests might affect a country's income distribution, this is a more long-sought way of reasoning as important mediating variables such as elections, policy implementations etc. are likely to be factors in-between protests and deliberation.

While it initially (in *Model 1.1* and *1.2*) looked like there might be a small but statistically significant correlation effect of protest events on deliberation, this did not turn out to be the case when fixed effects were added, probably due to model misspecification. The result turned out to be more complicated than initially thought as income distribution turned out to be an essential variable that has a positive effect on both protest events and deliberation. Hypothesis 1 is rejected while it is found some support for hypothesis 2. However, the result is not as simple as that. While it to some extent appears that countries with higher level of protests have higher levels of deliberation, this is *not* due to protests directly affecting deliberation. Instead, the results indicate that having a more even distribution of income, where the bottom 40% of the population holds a larger % of the national income, can lead to both more protests and better deliberation within the country. Income distribution is therefore considered to be a *confounding variable*.

Another aspect that needs to be addressed is the population variable. Somewhat surprising the correlation coefficient is negative, indicating that an increase in population size leads to a decrease in the number of protests. As this might seem illogical, there can be multiple ways to explain this. When looking at the correlation between population and protest events, there is reason to believe that a negative bias is causing the negative coefficient. In other words, one or more factors that could affect the population have not been controlled for and are likely to affect the correlation, functioning as a negative bias in the model. This is okay considering that population was used as a control variable to increase precision and decrease bias of the variable of interest. Therefore, it is important to note that the negative relationship between protest events and population is probably due to inaccurate representation of the actual relationship and *not* to be analysed further or considered a finding in this paper.

4.3 Robustness Tests:

When a regression model is constructed, it will never be 100% accurate as the model is a theoretical simplification to help us better understand a complex reality. Robustness tests can therefore be performed to evaluate the model and check if this has any effects on the results. The first robustness test that will be conducted is to remove all the outliers that might affect the correlation coefficient. This is done by using a box-plot diagram for protest events categorised by country. An outlier is marked as an observation that does not go within the interquartile

range shown as the plotted lines above and below the boxes. These outliers are marked in the model as circles where the number connected to them is the row number of that observation in the dataset.

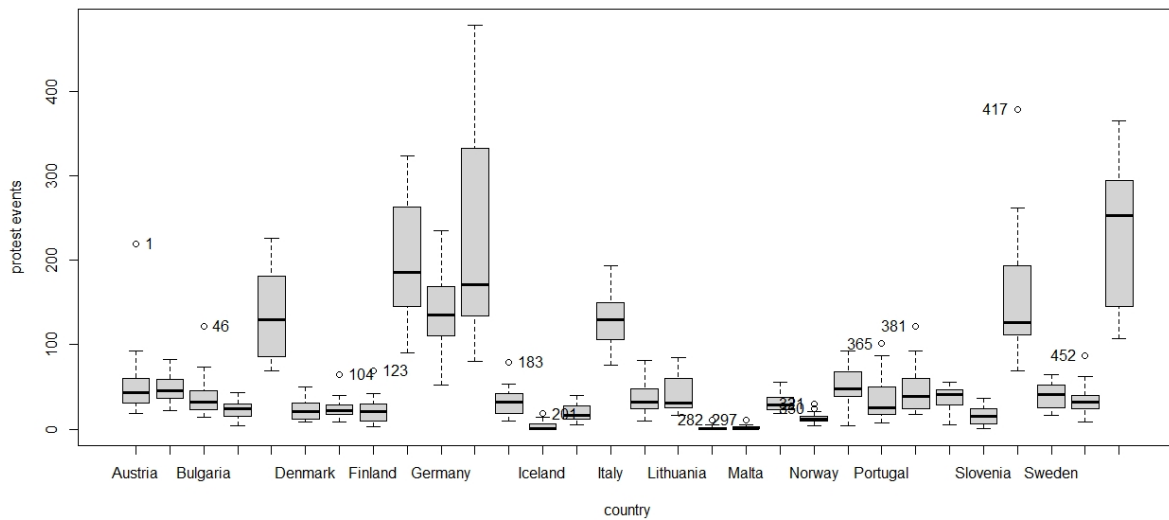


Figure 1. Box-plot for number of protest events per year categorised by country

The same type of diagram is constructed for the deliberation index by year, categorised by country, to get an overview of these outliers also.

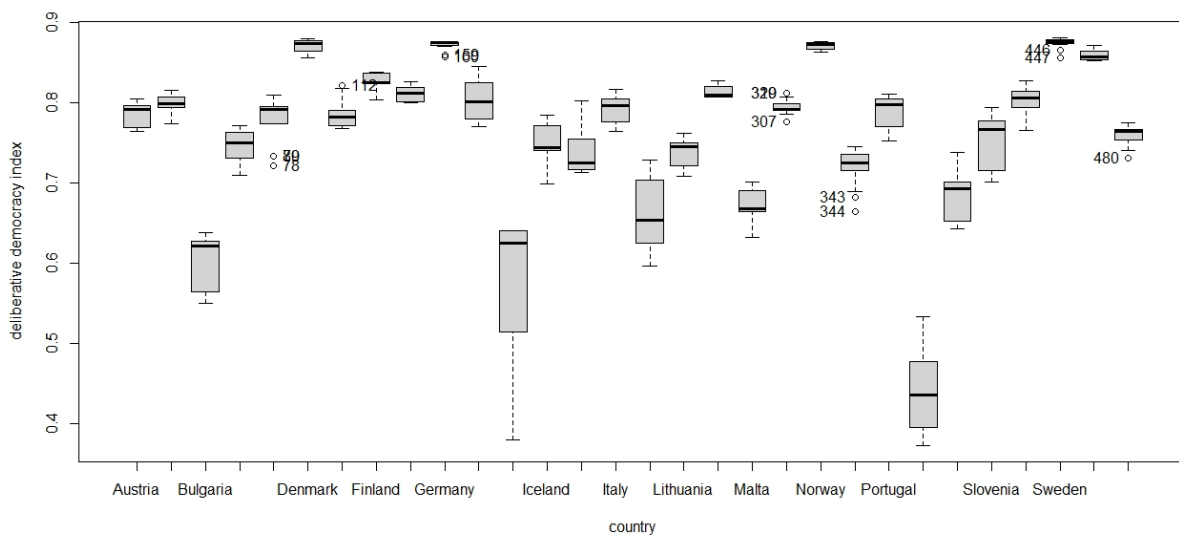


Figure 2. Box-plot for deliberation index per year categorised by country

When both box-plots with outliers are presented, the registered outliers are removed to create a new dataset with 452 observations. A new correlation matrix is created to see if this affects the correlation between any of the variables. What can be observed is that the correlation between protests and deliberation has increased from 0.157 to 0.172. As the correlation coefficient

increases, there might be reason to believe that when conducting regression analysis in the new test, this might improve the results. Important to be aware of in this case is that since this thesis works with panel data, which is non-random in its nature, a systematic removal of the observations could potentially affect the results. Therefore, this analysis is to be interpreted as a robustness test and not as the main result.

	Deliberation	Protest events	GDP per capita (log)	Population	Income distribution
Deliberation	1.000	0.172	0.739	0.164	0.277
Protest events	0.172	1.000	0.021	0.629	-0.135
GDP per capita (log)	0.739	0.021	1.000	0.083	0.331
Population	0.164	0.629	0.083	1.000	-0.133
Income distribution	0.277	-0.135	0.331	-0.133	1.000

Table 5. Correlation matrix of the relevant variables when outliers are removed.

To test if the results have changed, a new regression analysis was conducted giving the results shown in *Model 3.1*. Comparing the results to the results from *Model 1.4*, there are only minor changes in the correlation coefficients but no changes in the significance level. In other words, it does not seem to be any considerable differences in the results when including the outliers. The results therefore still indicates that income distribution has a positive effect on deliberation.

	Model 3.1
Protest events	4.468E-05 (3.420E-05)
GDP per capita (log)	-3.634E-03 (0.015)
Population	-1.861E-09 (2.140E-09)
Income distribution	0.499* (0.214)
Fixed effects (FE)	YES
No. of observations	452
R^2	0.9989
Adjusted R^2	0.9988
Standard error	0.0267

The standard error is given in parentheses, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, . $p < 0.1$

Table 6. Results from testing the relationship between protest events and deliberation when control variables and fixed effects are added, and outliers are removed.

To see if removing the outliers has any effect on the relationship between protests and income distribution, another regression is conducted for robustness purposes. As done in *Model 2.1*,

protest events is the dependent variable while the three control variables function as the independent variables. The results are shown in *Table 7*. Comparing these results to the results in *Table 4*, there are arguably only minor differences in the correlation coefficients. The significance level of the population variable has decreased from 0.1% to 1%. One could argue that this could plausibly serve as an indication that the results for the population variable are not as robust as the one for the income distribution variable. Again, that being said, it is only a control variable, so we are not interested in the details surrounding that variable. Seeing that the significance level of income distribution remains the same and that the correlation coefficient has slightly increased, it gives support for the previous argument in section 4.2 that it is a confounding variable.

	Model 4.1
GDP per capita (log)	-18.141 (21.906)
Population	-9.984E-06** (3.030E-06)
Income distribution	1152.058*** (300.740)
Fixed effects (FE)	YES
No. of observations	452
R^2	0.8624
Adjusted R^2	0.8513
Standard error	38.210
The standard error is given in parentheses, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, . $p < 0.1$	

Table 7. Results from testing the relationship between protest events and the control variables when the outliers are removed.

Furthermore, another aspect to study is whether the results might differ when taking into consideration what type of protest it is. So far, the focus has mainly been on a relationship between protests and deliberation where all types of protests have been equally considered. This is however not necessarily the case in practice as deliberation theory is largely based on peaceful encounters among citizens, coercion would therefore not go well in line with deliberation.⁷⁶ In that case there can be reason to believe that whether the protest is considered violent or not can influence the correlation to deliberation. Previous research has also shown examples of this, as violent protests lead to other people viewing the protesters as “less reasonable” which therefore

⁷⁶ Coppedge et al., “Measuring High Level Democratic Principles using the V-Dem Data”, p. 5.

also decreases the public support for them.⁷⁷ To test whether this affects the results in practice, another correlation matrix and regression analysis is conducted.

	Deliberation	Violent protest events	GDP per capita (log)	Population	Income distribution
Deliberation	1.000	0.171	0.743	0.158	0.275
Violent protest events	0.171	1.000	0.099	0.525	-0.153
GDP per capita (log)	0.743	0.099	1.000	0.078	0.337
Population	0.158	0.525	0.078	1.000	-0.151
Income distribution	0.275	-0.153	0.337	-0.151	1.000

Table 8. Correlation matrix of the relevant variables when looking at violent protest events.

The result is presented in *Table 8* and *9*. Somewhat surprising, there still appears to be a positive correlation between violent protests and deliberation at approximately the same level as when counting all protest events. When conducting the regression model, there are also no changes in the variables' statistical significance levels. Overall, there does not appear to be any statistically significant differences between the results given in section 4.2.1 and when conducting the given robustness tests.

	Model 5.1
Violent protest events	4.765E-05 (9.130E-05)
GDP per capita (log)	-3.859E-03 (0.015)
Population	-2.142E-09 (2.10E-09)
Income distribution	0.530* (0.210)
Fixed effects (FE)	YES
No. of observations	480
R^2	0.9988
Adjusted R^2	0.9988
Standard error	0.0270
The standard error is given in parentheses, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, . $p < 0.1$	

Table 9. Results from testing the relationship between violent protest events and deliberation index.

Another robustness test worth conducting was testing whether it could be a time-lagged effect of protest events on deliberation. In other words, could the number of protests have an effect

⁷⁷ Simpson, Willer & Feinberg, "Does Violent Protest Backfire?", p. 1.

on the deliberation index in another period of time? To test this, a time-lagged variable of one year for protest events was added to the dataset. When looking at deliberation for year x, the no. of protests will be taken from year x-1. For example, when looking at deliberation for 2001, the protest event data was taken from the year before, 2000. The problem of using a lagged variable is that for each year that is lagged, there will be 30 less observations in the dataset. Losing observations can have an effect on the regression results as the sample becomes smaller. For this reason, I have chosen to test the lagged variable for one year only, to avoid losing too many observations and not risking getting misleading results. When conducting the regressions, the results are shown in *Table 10*.

	Model 6.1	Model 6.2	Model 6.3	Model 6.4
Protest events (lagged)	1.860E-04** (5.880E-05)	1.759E-04*** (4.935E-05)	4.690E-05 (3.200E-05)	3.219E-05 (3.350E-05)
GDP per capita (log)		0.100*** (4.620E-03)		-1.426E-03 (0.017)
Population		1.034E-10 (1.776E-10)		-1.741E-09 (2.290E-09)
Income distribution		0.282 (0.184)		0.471* (0.228)
Constant	0.747*** (5.980E-03)	-0.319*** (0.045)		
Country fixed effects	NO	NO	YES	YES
Time fixed effects	NO	NO	YES	YES
No. of observations	450	450	450	450
R^2	0.0219	0.5781	0.9988	0.9988
Adjusted R^2	0.0197	0.5743	0.9987	0.9987
Standard error	0.0980	0.0646	0.0274	0.0274

The standard error is given in parentheses, *** $p < 0.001$, ** $p < 0.01$, * $p < 0.05$, . $p < 0.1$

Table 10. Results from testing the relationship between time-lagged protest events and deliberation when control variables and fixed effects are added.

Based on the results in *Table 10*, it appears that when comparing these results to the initial results in *Table 3*, no significantly different results are found. This indicates that protest events do not have an affect on deliberation in a country the year after the protests were held.

5. Discussion:

While previous research on the relationship between protests and deliberation has been conducted, most research has been case studies of one or a few countries or specific social movements. This thesis therefore aimed to analyse these variables from a broader perspective,

to see if any general trends could be observed on a country-level by using newly available protest data in combination with a standardised deliberation index. A study that would not have been possible to conduct without the new method of data collection developed by PolDem.

When testing the two contradicting hypotheses, it turned out that hypothesis 1, indicating that countries with high protest activity has lower levels of deliberation, did not find any support through the statistical analyses. This is an interesting result as one part of the literature on this topic indicates that a negative correlation should be found when conducting this study as protests are essentially working against the purpose of deliberation. Instead, the initial results indicated that the correlation was positive. This can have large implications for the agonists, seeing that their theoretical arguments do not appear to be present in practice.

Some support for hypothesis 2 could be found when analysing the results. Looking at the correlation matrices, it is clearly shown that protest events and deliberation are positively correlated on country-level, and therefore that countries with higher levels of protests also appear to have higher levels of deliberative democracy. However, when conducting the regression analysis and adding the relevant control variables and fixed effects, the result was not statistically significant. Protests do not appear to directly affect deliberation as the regression analysis instead indicates that both protests and deliberation are positively affected by a confounding variable, income distribution. The results therefore imply that the theorist arguing for a positive relationship between protests and deliberation appear to have a way of thinking that matches how the situation in fact look like in the 30 European countries investigated. However, from this study it cannot be identified that this relationship is driven by protest directly leading to more deliberation.

Instead, a more even distribution of income leads to both more protest and more deliberation in the same country at the same time. A more even distribution of income in a country can be used as an indicator of how large differences there are between rich and poor citizens within a country. From the results, it therefore appears that countries that are more economically equal also has a higher level of protests *and* deliberation. This goes well in line with the theorists such as della Porta and Beauvais, focusing on how deliberation cannot be achieved without equal opportunities for citizens in a country. Societies with smaller differences between individuals might feel that the gap between citizens and elites is smaller and therefore be more prone to participate in politics through protests and/or deliberative means.⁷⁸ This is only one potential

⁷⁸ Beauvais, "Deliberation and Equality", p. 146, della Porta, *Can democracy be saved?*, p. 67.

explanation for how the relationship between income distribution, protests and deliberation looks like.

Therefore, a major implication of the results is underlining how important a more even income distribution is for fostering more political participation among citizens in a country. This should be put more emphasis on regarding how to make successful policies that increases both political participation and expression through protests but also to increase the components contributing to a more deliberative democratic system.

As this thesis cannot determine exactly *how important* income distribution is for protests and deliberation, this is one aspect that could be further researched. Furthermore, through more qualitative studies, what mechanisms that affects income distribution's effect on either protests or deliberation or both, could be studied more in detail in the future. Through this thesis it is also impossible to say anything about if the people that take part in protests also are the ones that deliberate. A study using individuals as the unit of analysis instead of countries would be needed to draw any conclusions on that level. This thesis's results are therefore looking more at general trends among countries.

Since this study is conducted on macro level using only European countries with a certain level of economic development and democracy, the generalisation level of this result is limited to countries within Europe. Having close ties to the EU can mean that these countries share many of the similar economic, cultural, and democratic values and practices. It can also be argued that the situation in other countries with similar levels of both economic and democratic development will be the same, however this is more uncertain as the chance is higher that these countries have different cultural factors that could affect both protests and deliberation compared to the European countries.

6. Conclusion:

Do countries with high levels of protest activity also have high levels of deliberative democracy? This is the question that this thesis has investigated, leading to some unexpected results. The study is based on two split theoretical notions, where one considers protests and deliberation to be mutually exclusive while the other one sees them as able to coexist. Through the statistical tests, it was established that a negative correlation does not exist, thereby rejecting the theoretical notion claiming that protests and deliberation are mutually exclusive. Instead, the initial results showed that countries having higher protest activities also have a higher deliberation index. However, when controlling for different types of biases, it appeared that

these results were misleading. Through the final results it was therefore established that no *direct* correlation between protest events and deliberation could be found. Instead, one variable appeared to affect both protests and deliberation positively, functioning as a *confounding variable* that drives the positive relationship. This variable is the income distribution variable, indicating that protests as well as deliberative democracy are driven by a more even distribution of income.

The purpose of this thesis has been fulfilled as the thesis has discovered new aspects of the relation between protests and deliberation in European countries. While it turned out that the relationship is more complicated than expected from the theoretical framework, this can offer an interesting starting point for further research on this topic. Since the researchers seeing protests and deliberation as mutually exclusive have been disproved through this thesis, this instead implies that further research in this field should be more concentrated on these two factors coexisting in democratic societies. A natural step forward is therefore furthering the research on *how* a more even income distribution contributes to both a higher level of protests and a higher level of deliberation.

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Appendixes:

Appendix A: List of Countries in Alphabetical Order

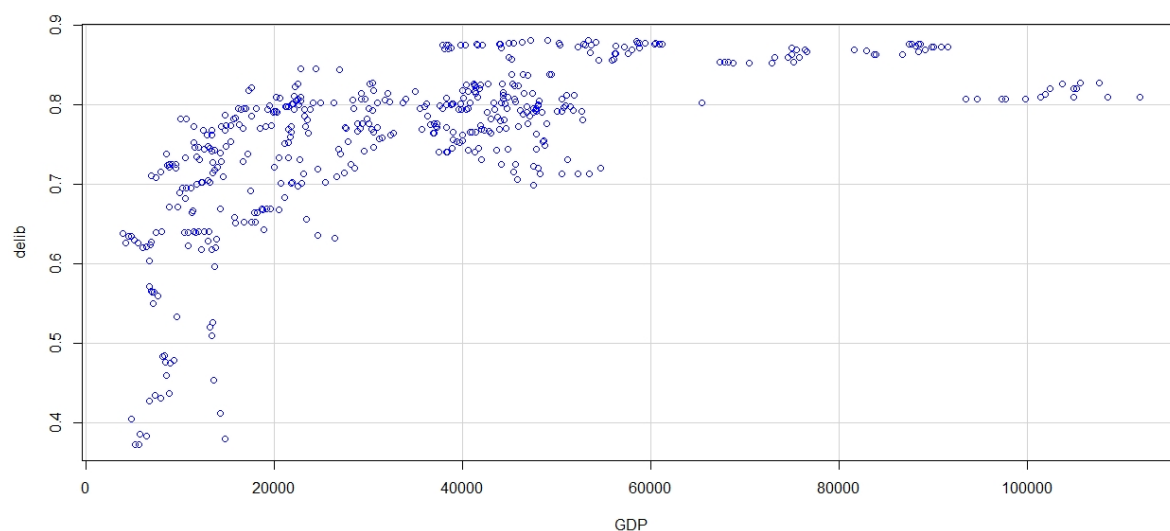
Austria	Latvia
Belgium	Lithuania
Bulgaria	Luxemburg
Cyprus	Malta
Czech Republic	Netherlands
Denmark	Norway
Estonia	Poland
Finland	Portugal
France	Romania
Germany	Slovakia
Greece	Slovenia
Hungary	Spain
Iceland	Sweden
Ireland	Switzerland
Italy	United Kingdom

Appendix B: The Components in the Deliberative Component Index

1. Reasoned justification
When important policy changes are being considered, i.e. before a decision has been made, to what extent do political elites give public and reasoned justifications for their positions?
2. Common good
When important policy changes are being considered, to what extent do political elites justify their positions in terms of the common good?
3. Respect counterarguments
When important policy changes are being considered, to what extent do political elites acknowledge and respect counterarguments?
4. Range of consultation
When important policy changes are being considered, how wide is the range of consultation at elite levels?
5. Engaged society
When important policy changes are being considered, how wide and how independent are public deliberations?⁷⁹

⁷⁹ Coppedge et. al, "V-Dem Codebook v11.1", p. 159-61.

Appendix C: Logarithmic GDP Per Capita



There appears to be a positive relationship between GDP per capita and deliberation, but with a diminishing effect instead of a linear one. It is therefore considered more suitable to use a logarithmic variable for GDP per capita in the regression analysis to obtain a more linear relationship between the logarithmic GDP per capita and deliberation.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Nyman, *More about regression*, p. 8.