

Organized Labor, Organized Citizens? A Systematic Review of Trade Unions' Democratic Spillover Effects

Noah Vangeel – TURI Conference 20/10/2026

Together with prof. Dr. Karolien Lenaerts

Strike against the *Eenheidswet*, Antwerp, 1961

Photo from Amsab-ISG



Trade unions and politics

Two pathways



Direct effect



Indirect effect

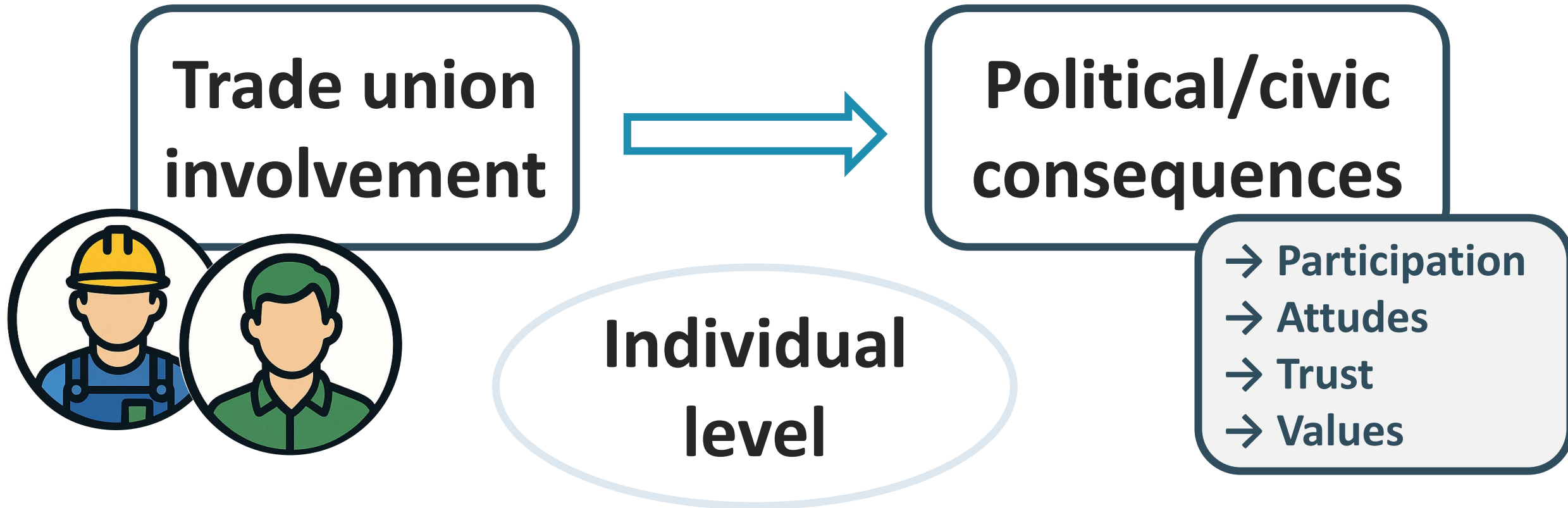


Trade unions and politics

Is there an indirect/individual level effect?

- Cross sectional research
- Many possible pathways, but which one is dominant?
- What is political participation?

Systematic Literature Review



Result: 3,5 remarks



Result: 3,5 remarks

Theory

- Six theoretical frameworks



- Four (4!) out of 37 reviewed papers explicitly test **the black box**

Result: 3,5 remarks

Cross-sectional data

- How to measure causality?
- How to correct for cross-sectionality?
 - Robustness
 - Statistical methods (SEM, mediation analysis?)

Result: 3,5 remarks

Variables used

- Independent: member or non-member
 - Active/passive involvement?
 - Member/representative?
- Dependent variable: political participation à la ESS/EVS
 - Low-risk involvement?
 - Individualised (“modern”) involvement
 - Past participation ... but supply of action

Next steps

- Finish reviewing all papers
- Offer solutions
- Incorporate your feedback

Thank you
very much