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***'Back to the roots!'***

***The effects of personality traits and personal values on civic and political group membership***

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A growing literature examines the relationship between personality traits and personal values, on the one hand, and political behavior or attitudes on the other hand. Yet, most studies focused on electoral behavior, ideology, or attitudes towards specific issues (e.g. immigration). Conversely, much research still has to be done to find out if and how these core inter-individual differences can influence not only the content of political acts or thoughts, but also the form of engagement. This thesis attempts to fill this gap by uncovering the direct and indirect effects of the “Big Five” traits (John et al. 1991) and the four higher-order basic values (Schwartz 1992) on various forms of civic and political group memberships (e.g. social clubs, federations or associations; humanitarian or charitable organizations; political parties; social movement organizations). I argue that traits can be seen as a specific kind of individual resources for membership (because they refer to what people are and as such they influence what they *can* do), while basic personal values may provide the reasons to be involved in such civic and political groups (because they refer to what people value and then influence what they *want* to do). Using quantitative data from the GESIS Panel Longitudinal Core Study (Germany), I demonstrate that traits and values indeed matter, even when other important individual characteristics are taken into account. More precisely, and consistent with my theoretical expectations, the former are primarily related to the very act of participating in citizen groups, whatever the organization under scrutiny, whereas the latter are better predictors of some specific forms of engagement (e.g. party membership).