Politics of Provocation[1]: Citizen Involvement and Institutional Reforms Across the Globe

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"Protesters and the Call for Democratic Reform"

In 2010, revolts in the Middle East and Northern Africa were instigated by a Tunisian man who set himself on fire, seemingly out of frustration, protest and despair with his living conditions. What followed were mass demonstrations throughout the Arab world. Some of these protests resulted in a government turnover, whereas in some countries there is little to no change. In the same period, people in many established democracies also started protesting against their governments. The 'Occupy Movement', for instance, is calling for more democracy and social and economic equality. At the moment we have managed to count 82 demonstrations worldwide[2].

These protests bring about several questions. First of all, *why are people so angry and dissatisfied?* Which developments, policies or systemic changes have led people to protest on such a wide scale? What are the reasons for this dissatisfaction—is there, for example, less democracy in democratic countries than before? Was there, for example, an increase in oppression or a decrease in living standards in the Arab Spring-countries? Moreover, *what was the exact role of newer means and forms of political participation (such as new media) in the revolts and protests?* Were those media necessary conditions to trigger mass protests, or would they have occurred as well without them? Were there no other means to channel disaffection through established political institutions? And lastly, *does the mere existence of these demonstrations say something about a different notion of (democratic) citizenship?* The current methods of voicing preferences and attempts to change (such as occupying; organizing participatory councils; demonstrating), may signal a changed citizenry. A citizenry with different political norms and values may have implications for democracy. Indeed, such changed citizenry may actually facilitate or impede a transformation towards a more democratic political system. These questions are central to the workshop that we propose.

"Disaffected Citizens and Protest activity"

Numerous scholars describe the increasing dissatisfaction of people with their political system and the decline of traditional and institutionalized forms of political participation.[3] At the same

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[1] Inspired by : Wolfsveld,Gadi. 1988. The Politics of Provocation: Participation and Protest in Israel.SUNY Press,Albany.

[2] http://www.guardian.co.uk/news/datablog/2011/oct/17/occupy-protests-world-list-map#data

[3] See e.g. Pharr, Susan J. , and Robert D. Putnam, eds. 2000. Disaffected Democracies; What's Troubling the Trilateral Democracies. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press; Li, Yaojun, and David Marsh. 2008. "New Forms of Political Participants: Searching for Expert Citizens and Everyday Makers." British Journal of Political Science 38:247-72; and Mair, Peter. 2006. "Ruling the Void? The Hollowing of Western Democracy." New Left Review 42:25-51.

time, there have been a number of studies that have illustrated how the use of non-conventional forms of participation, such as demonstrations, protests, signing petitions, boycotts and buycotts, are rising.[4] Despite elaborate examination of the topic, protest activity has not been researched systematically.[5]

Explanations for the upsurge of demonstrations could generally be organized along three levels: *Micro-level* explanations[6] which focus on individual characteristics, predispositions –and resources (SES-model). *Meso-level* explanations[7] see organizations in civil society (as sources for social capital) and the media (both old and new) as crucial factors in motivating people to become politically active. Lastly, *macro-level*[8] scholars have also looked at the impact of the political system (electoral system; the openness of a system), political opportunities, globalization and economic development (grievance theory), on people's attitudes and political activity. Even today macro-level approaches remain understudied. The notion of modernization runs to some extent through all these three levels, and has been argued to be responsible for, for example, shifts in people's values (post-materialism); higher levels of education; technological advances, etc.

Most studies, however, have looked at specific subsets of countries or at one specific level of analysis. In recent cases, however, we see very different countries showing similar patterns of disaffection and protest while at the same time similar countries show different citizen behaviors. It remains unclear to what extent we can explain the similarities and differences in current political dissatisfaction, increased call for democracy and upsurge of protest activity using existing frameworks.

Workshop papers, fit and questions
In this joint session we want to develop explanations for the cases described at the beginning of this document. These explanations can be on both the individual, organizational and institutional levels. We are seeking comparative and empirical papers. Papers could for example deal with a general or specific explanation of the level of dissatisfaction with politics; works that link discontent to the increasing need for political expression through protest and disobedience; the impact of technological innovation on people's political behaviour and perceptions; the impact of structural changes on the citizenry; democratic citizenship and its implications for the functioning of democracy. And even papers which discuss various patterns of protests and preliminary successes of political provocation in terms of democratic change.

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[4] See e.g. Inglehart, Ronald, and Gabriela Catterberg. 2002. "Trends in Political Action: The Developmental Trend and the Post-Honeymoon Decline." International Journal of Comparative Sociology 43:300-16; and Stolle, Dietlind, Marc Hooghe, and Michele Micheletti. 2005. "Politics in the Supermarket: Political Consumerism as a form of Political Participation." International Political Science Review 26 (3):245-69.

[5] Dalton, Russell J., Alix Van Sickle, and Steven A. Weldon. 2009. "The Individual-Institutional Nexus of Protest." British Journal of Political Science 40:51-73.

[6] E.g. Burns, Nancy, Kay Lehman Schlozman, and Sidney Verba. 2001. The Private Roots of Public Action; Gender, Equality, and Political Participation. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

[7] Putnam, Robert D. 2000. Bowling Alone: the Collapse and Revival of American Community. New York: Simon & Schuster; and Norris, Pippa. 2001. Digital Divide. Civic Engagement, Information Poverty, and the Internet Worldwide. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

[8] Franklin, Mark N. 2004. Voter Turnout and the Dynamics of Electoral Competition in Established Democracies Since 1945. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; Dalton, Russell J., Alix Van Sickle, and Steven A. Weldon. 2009. "The Individual-Institutional Nexus of Protest." British Journal of Political Science 40:51-73

We would specifically welcome papers that provide **(a)** an overview of theoretical explanations for the general worldwide phenomenon (based on historical analysis, existing research and case studies as well as innovative elements), and **(b)** that empirically test some of the possible theories. Is this last group we encourage the use of new data, but would also appreciate the use of data over time to track (and explain) the occurrence of the widespread protests, call for democracy or dissatisfaction. In addition, we encourage contributions that deal with more in-depth comparisons of two or more countries. Our *explanatory emphasis is at the macro and meso levels* (institutions, living conditions, cultural aspects) but we would also be very interested in papers that combine explanatory levels in multi-level studies.

Likely participants would come from the field of comparative politics, and may have a focus on comparing democracies; democratic reforms; institutional change; social capital; democratic citizenship and political participation.