

Democratic Activism – November 2022

Prepared by Montana Allen

This summary is prepared for the three-month trial of the Forward Project of the Social Change Lab - Susilo Wibisono & Winnifred R. Louis – details of the methodology and all summaries available here: <http://www.socialchangelab.net/forward.html> and via subscription/email at <https://socialchangelab.substack.com/>. Feedback welcome, to w.louis@psy.uq.edu.au.

Please cite as: Allen, M., Wibisono, S., & Louis, W.R. (2023). Democratic Activism – November 2022. *A publication of the Social Change Lab FORWARD project*. Published online 26 January 2023. Available at <http://www.socialchangelab.net/forward.html>.

Month/Year	November 2022
Key term	“Democratic activism” and democratic activism
Database	Google Scholar
Link to database	https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/17p2fFHcyHQ0-hhlzNb2ZV-nzAUPxBPYs1fXsVC1_IRY/edit?usp=sharing

Overview

Overall, there were 120 articles kept in the database that fell into the categories; journal articles, proceedings, book chapters, research reports, archived research reports, and books. Out of these, only 16% of the result were relevant with democratic activism, 29% were partially relevant, and 33% were not relevant. There were 29% of the result deleted from the database due to falling either being a planned publication (i.e., not published in November 2022), a master’s or PhD thesis, or a book review. Out of the relevant and partially relevant categories, there were 4 books, 13 journal articles, 23 book chapters, and 5 research reports. In this summary, only relevant publications will be reviewed.

Participants and data

Of the relevant journal articles, three articles were empirical, and one was a theoretical paper. The empirical papers consisted of two qualitative studies (one using interviews, and one using discourse analysis), one quantitative study using surveys, and one systematic review article. It seems that overall, participants were relatively young, with one study using participants aged between 18 and 35 years old (Larrinaga et al., 2022) and another, despite using a wider range of participants’ age, with an average of 35 years old (Truong, 2022). The discourse analysis covered data from two magazines: Times and Wired

(Balan & Dumitrica, 2022). In terms of locations of data sources, publications could be classed as 'global' if they covered multiple countries across different continents or 'unspecified' if there was no mention of location. If the publication sourced data from one country, that specific country would be named. Considering all types of publications, two publications were unspecified, three publications were global, three publications were from the USA, and the remainders were from Basque Country, Vietnam, Istanbul, New Zealand, Germany, El Salvador, China, Turkey, Iran, Macedonia, and the UK.

Themes and findings

There are several distinct reoccurring themes that arose within November's 'democratic activism' publications. These include young peoples' role in activism and politics, feminism, and democracy.

The findings of some papers suggested that young people's increasing awareness of inequalities also increase their solidarity with one another within social and political movements (Batsleer et al., 2022). On the other hand, it was also noted that their political participation has become more fragmented and sporadic, with only 29% of young people interested in politics (Larrinaga et al., 2022). However, while interest in politics is low, the authors suggest that this does not mean that young people are not committed to activism, but instead that they have a harder time attributing political meaning to their activity (Larrinaga et al., 2022). In fact, youth are certainly involved in activism, marked with the addition of the word '*youthquake*' to the *Oxford English Dictionary* in 2017 to represent a significant cultural, political, or social change arising from the actions or influence of young people (Stitzlein, 2022). Young people are of a special interest in the context of democratic activism, as well as other forms of activism, as they favour less traditional "dutiful" citizen acts, but instead seek more personalised engagement in movements via social media, self-expression, protests, and volunteering (Stitzlein, 2022). Additionally, it is suggested that fewer young people saw democracy positively, or as a government system that is "*of, by, and for the people*", due to them recognising the injustices that happen (Stitzlein, 2022). This ability to recognise the downfalls and injustices of a political system is highlighted as an important skill for students to learn in school (Stitzlein, 2022; Nielsen, 2022). Due to the skill not being taught in school, there seems to be a lack of sensitivity towards the importance of diversity in activism as well as a lack of knowledge about rallying, talking to the media, or even making posters (Nielsen, 2022). Whilst over time this knowledge is learned by newcomers to any social movement, it is argued that developing a collective identity would be simpler with the addition of education about activism (Nielsen, 2022; Amidon, 2022). In addition to young

people's involvement in activism, young women's involvement is a large and integral part to many movements where it is felt that gender equality cannot be reached in the current political climate (McMahon, 2022).

It is stated that the aim of women social movements is to dismantle the patriarchal social order, and address changes required in policies that affect their needs, differences, and specificities (McMahon, 2022). Feminist groups in Iran have a long history of challenging female oppression by making their presence felt in public spaces, such as parks, by doing everyday activities, such as singing, cycling, playing sports, and more (Pourmokhtari, 2022). Public spaces that allow these types of protests to happen are vital to social justice and democratic practices, as they allow for inclusion, representation, and recognition of differences (Low, 2022). "Presence-as-resistance" is a less risky form of protest, where women can create a sense of solidarity, awareness of common interests, and perform quiet defiance in order to gain more control over their bodies and lives (Pourmokhtari, 2022). Cycling in large groups was in particular a great form of resistance for Iranian women before it was outlawed in 2016, as the activity was traditionally reserved for men alone (Pourmokhtari, 2022). While women seem to be the main contributors to feminist movements, it is argued that feminist activism should be the concern of all people, not just women (Bell, 2022). Participation in feminist movements encourages empowerment and renewal of principals, as well as moving on from the response stage of the social movement to a more constructive stage (Larrinaga et al., 2022).

Today's democratic activism seems to be built on an important backdrop of democratic movements from the 70's and 80's, where activists began transcending the binary of 'rupture or continuity', instead embracing more contemporary, diverse activism (Milder, 2022). This meant that the divide between conventional political parties and grassroots movements could lessen, and collective community action could unfold (Milder, 2022). Cooperating to reach a common goal is important in pro-democracy protests, and leads different activist groups, such as environmentalist groups and urban youth movements to come together and cooperate to achieve their goals (Truong, 2022). Governments also play an important role in whether democratic activism can actually take place, with some governments, for example the Brant Government in West Germany, encouraging it (Milder, 2022) and other governments, such as in Iran, prohibiting it (Pourmokhtari, 2022). Whilst governments, such as the Vietnamese government, may be tolerant of pro-democracy protests, they often go to great lengths to prevent them as they pose a threat to the current regime (Truong, 2022). However, it seems that while public spaces exist, opportunities for

pro-democracy activism, as well as other activism, will continue to manifest, as they are identifiers of social solidarity and support (Low, 2022).

Selected References – Democratic Activism – November 2022

- Amidon, T. R. (2022). From postcards to PSAs: Activist soundwriting. In M. J. Faris, *Amplifying Soundwriting Pedagogies Integrating Sound into Rhetoric and Writing* (pp. 209-222). Colorado: University Press of Colorado.
- Balan, V. D. (2022). Technologies of last resort: The discursive construction of digital activism in *Wired* and *Time* magazine, 2010–2021. *New Media & Society*. Published online, <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/14614448221135886> .
- Batsleer, J. R. (2022). *Young People, Radical Democracy and Community Development*. Policy Press.
- Bell, A. (2022). Be Otherwise, Thirteen Acts of Resistance. In L. M. Shipley, *The Routledge Companion to Art and Activism in the Twenty-First Century*. New York: Routledge.
- Larrinaga, A. O. (2022). Exploring new citizenship practices: The meaning of young activists' political engagement in the Basque country. *Made-to-Measure Future (s) for Democracy?*, 217-239.
- Low, S. (2022). *Why Public Space Matters*. Oxford University Press.
- McMahon, G. (2022). Be(com)ing Feminist and Creating a 'Politics of a Difference' (A Manchester Case). In *Reshaping Youth Participation: Manchester in a European Gaze* (pp. 67-81). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Milder, S. (2022). Democracy in the Streets, Social Change in the Countryside. In *Rethinking Social Movements after '68*. University of Groningen.
- Nielsen, G. B. (2022). The Ethics of radical student activism: social justice, democracy and engagement across difference: civic engagement in climate justice, human rights, and democracy. In A. T. Sevelsted, *The Power of Morality in Movements* (pp. 193-210). Springer.
- Pourmokhtari, N. (2022). Presence-as-Resistance: Feminist activism and the politics of Social Contestation in Iran. *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 7, 1-14.
- Stitzlein, S. M. (2022). Political dissent and citizenship education during times of populism and youth activism. *Theory and Research in Education*, 20(3), 217–236. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14778785221134235>
- Truong, M. (2022). Declining opportunities for speaking out: The impact of Vietnam's new leadership on grassroots collective action. *Asian Journal of Comparative Politics*. Published online. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20578911221139764>