

## Democratic Activism - October 2022

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This summary is prepared for the 2022 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](mailto:w.louis@psy.uq.edu.au) .

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

In total, there were 120 documents covering the topic of democratic activism published in October 2022. The majority of the documents were book chapters and journal articles. A large proportion of the documents covered issues such as politics and democracy (Natalina, 2022), student and young-person activism (Heggart & Flowers, 2022; Paschou, 2022), feminist activism (Clover, 2022; Lemons & Rodriguez, 2022; Wolfink, 2022), and environmental activism (Asara, 2022; Lamm et al., 2022). These issues will be discussed in further detail below.

### Issues within democratic activism

A reoccurring theme for the issue of politics was how the public digital sphere is influencing social and democratic activism (e.g., Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2022; Peña & Gold, 2022). Many new queries are raised by the use of technology to discuss political matters, such as: 1) how online political discussion influences offline protesting (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2022; Ryan & Tran, 2022); 2) how society uses technological tools to organise and mobilise political actions (Tiessen, 2022); and 3) how political satire and humour are changing with the introduction of new technologies (Koivukoski, 2022).

Analyses of social media report that social media plays a great part in exposure to misinformation and conspiracy beliefs, which can fuel protesting (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2022;

Zhai et al., 2022). On the other hand, social media replete with 'fake news' can lead to incorrect opinions (Peña & Gold, 2022). Therefore, media can be of use for both political advocacy and propaganda (Arif & Wardhani, 2022; Ho et al., 2022). Additionally, scholars wrote about social media 'hashtag wars' that are prevalent, making activist groups easy to establish, but also naturally unstable and prone to polarisation and clustering (Gil de Zúñiga et al., 2022; Tiessen, 2022).

Another major theme of the papers was youth activism. As political and democratic activism have become popularised on social media, more young people have become involved in the conversation (Paschou, 2022; Walsh, 2022). Some findings in our record highlighted that young people are exercising their right to vote *less* as time continues (Heggart & Flowers, 2022), but others conclude that young people are being drawn to involvement more strongly via issues such as housing issues, repression, gender inequality and discrimination, local government (Perasović et al., 2022). Some young activist groups are reported to mistrust political parties and institutions, and to have formed grassroots groups due to finding solidarity and similarity with one another (Heggart & Flowers, 2022); other papers also showed that the highest demand for democracy comes from urban centres, among educated and elite young people (Brenner, 2022). Some scholars emphasized that student political movements are instrumental in driving changes in national policies or toppling governments and have been the centre piece in the establishment of democracy in countries such as Nepal (Rai, 2022). Pedagogy on democratic activism has also been found to be important and influential, especially in Black feminist and womanist social movements (Lemons & Rodriguez, 2022).

The role of democracy in environmental politics also received significant attention, with the most concentrated focus being placed on multinational corporations and governments who are responsible for causing climate crisis (Das, 2022). The way schools are teaching students about the environment has been found to encourage dismissive thinking around non-living environments, and it is suggested that teaching should change to encourage a meaning-making outlook as opposed to a colonial or developmentalist outlook (Ress, 2022). While democratic systems promise to enable well-informed and responsible decisions while considering citizens' deliberations, it is questioned whether democracy has the ability to deal with serious environmental problems (Cologna et al., 2022; Das, 2022). Halting climate change may require more extreme government policies, challenging liberal democracy as an effective system. On the other hand, scholars argue that activists are pushing for a more environmentally oriented government and that climate movements should push for

a functioning democracy, where citizens have real agency in political decision-making (Das, 2022; Loy et al., 2022).

### **Participants and generalisability**

Of the journal articles published, most were empirical and quantitative. Important findings showed that activism is unlikely to decrease in the coming years, despite the negative consequences of institutional distrust. This is likely due to activism having a relationship with deliberative processes, as well as communication power and communication of stories being a strong tool to influence formal, stable government practices.

The studies published come from North and South America, East and Western Europe, Western and Southern Africa, and South and East Asia, and case studies and literature reviews are reported from different time points.

Examining the details of the methodology was difficult, both in terms of the time frame for coding and in that some articles and book chapters could not be found through the University of Queensland online library.

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