

NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, PARTICIPATION AND THE DEFICIT OF POLITICAL REPRESENTATION: PHENOMENON, CAUSES AND PERSPECTIVES

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“The axial principle of the modern polity is participation” (Daniel Bell, 1973)

Political participation: any action (or non-action) addressed to directly or indirectly influence in the political decision making process or in those taking part on it (within a wide conception of “political”).

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Structure of the presentation

Cultural change and new political paradigm.

Consequences of these changes in political participation.

Characterization of the new social movements and the new political participation.

Concluding remarks regarding political participation in the early 21st Century.

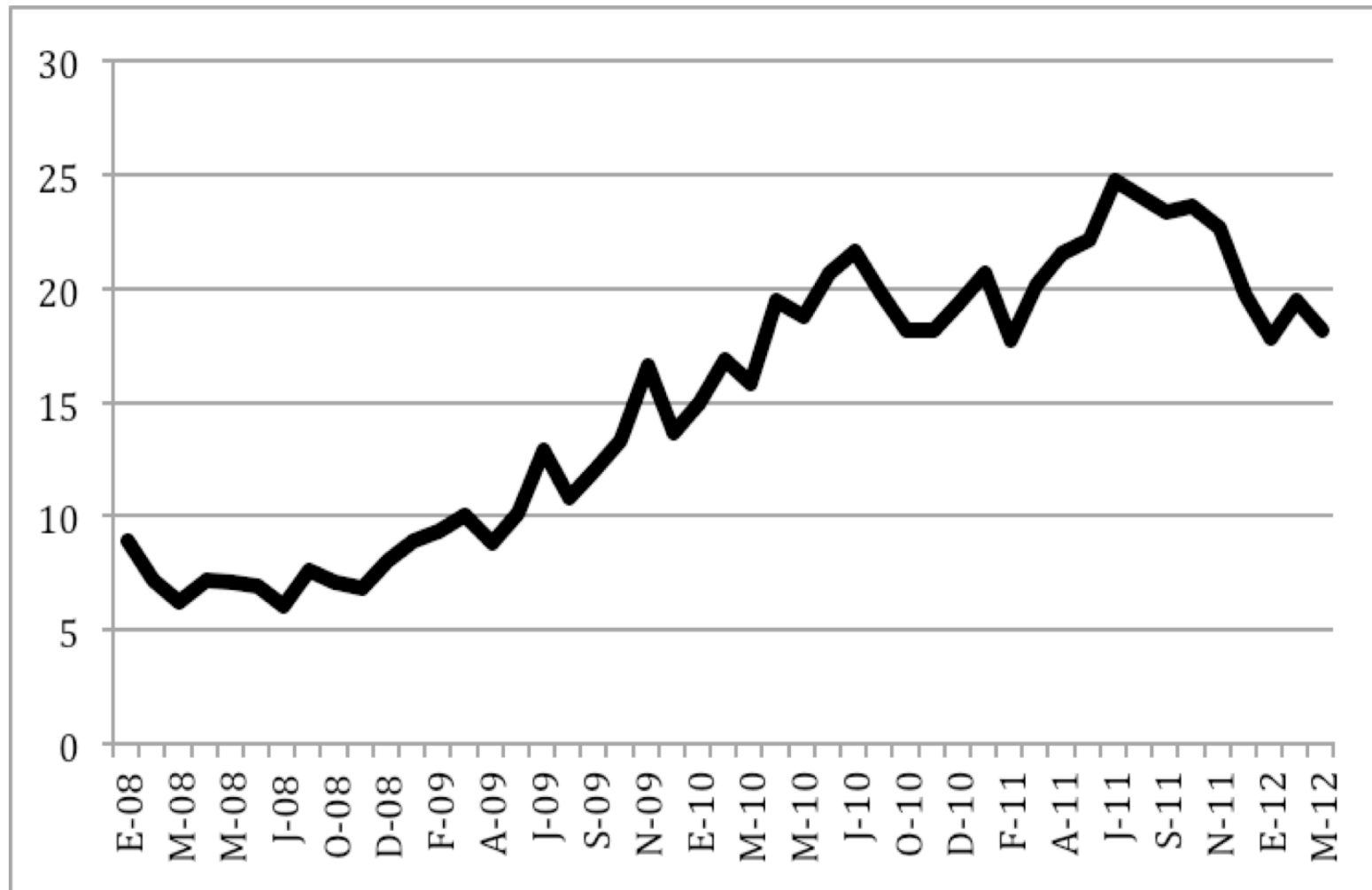
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Anger citizens all arround the globe:
“They (politicians) don´t represent us”

Generalized support for their protest in all social
groups:

Democratic fatigue, democratic malaise, citizens
apathy, political disaffection, political privatism...

Percentage of citizens who think the political class and the political parties are the third problem Spain faces



Source: Centro de Investigaciones Sociológicas (www.cis.es).

NUESTROS VOTANTES NO NOS REPRESENTAN.





Cultural Change Theory: Changes in societies from the 60s (20th Century) at the systemic level

- Huge economic growth (basic needs covered for most of the population).
- Increase of education (both qualitative and quantitative wise).
- Haga clic para modificar el estilo de subtítulo del patrón Intense development of Mass Media, TV and Internet (consequences on communication).
- Lack of war experience for most of the population.

Cultural Change Theory: Changes in the individual level

- New values linked with self-realization, quality of life, communication, solidarity and expressive initiatives: transition from traditional to rational-secular values and from survival to expressive values.
- Progressive increase of the political skills, sophistication and autonomy of citizens.
- Increasing demands for participation, election, choice and self-determination by citizens.

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Cultural Change Theory:

Changes in the political system level (I)

- a) Changes in the political topics, now more related to specific issues than to the traditional political cleavages.
- b) Changes in the support for the institutions, arising new loyalties towards the local or supranational ones, and erosion of those preexisting ones towards the Nation-State.
- c) Changes in the base of the social conflict: the conflict based in economic or wealth distribution has diminished its salience, whereas the conflicts based on identity and personal or self-autonomy have gained relevance.

The political alignments that had structured politics since the early 20th Century unfroze, and a lot of non-aligned and monothematic new issues arouse.

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Cultural Change Theory: Changes in the political system level (2)

d) Changes in the forms of political participation, with an increase of the amount and kinds of political protest (conducted now in non-conventional ways, in an enlargement of the menu of political participation forms).

Political participation develops with more autonomy from traditional collective actors (parties and unions) and through new social movements and social networks which Internet has widened in expansion and influence.

The participation finds new non-conventional and non-institutional ways, as protest demands which were not well satisfied by traditional political actors in a non anti-system action.

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Cultural Change Theory:

Changes in the political system level (3)

- Social conflicts do not only deal anymore with economic redistribution, gaining salience the expressive-cultural ones.
- A new political domain has arisen: the semi-public sphere, between the political-public and the private ones.
- New political monothematic actors flourish, complementing and competing with the traditional ones, trying to improve the rusty democratic institutions and to add fluidity to the democratic life.

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Elements of the *new political paradigm*

- Topics: monothematic and expressive related.
- Kind of conflict: not linked to social class or economy.
- Style of political action: non-bargaining or negotiating one.
- Objectives of the initiative: collective or potentially universal.
- Political discourse: fragmented, monothematic, plural, negative.
- Area of influence: semi-public sphere and despacialized.
- Social basis of support: diffuse, feeble, wide, abstract.
- Identity base: “loose of meaning” metaphors and flexible: “nomads of the present”, looking for identity anchors.
- Political organizations: not bureaucratic, flexible, horizontal, assembly-based, decentralized...
- Forms of political participation: non-conventional ones, complemented with conventional ones when needed.

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Analysis of the new political participation

Necessarily two-dimensional or two-fold (Kitschelt):

Economic (re-)distribution axes (State Vs. Market)

Social and cultural life governance axes
(Traditional Vs. Libertarian)

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Consequences for political representation

- Diversification of political domains, not restricted to those included in the Nation-State: despatialization of politics with new players (new social movements, complementing the “old” ones -which try to adapt to the new trends-).
- More difficult aggregation and representation of political identities, diversified and monothematic.
- Channalized through a wide range of complementary or competing organizations (big and small ships/botes).
- “Unsatisfied democrats” willing to improve the democratic system, improving its rusty institutions and actors.

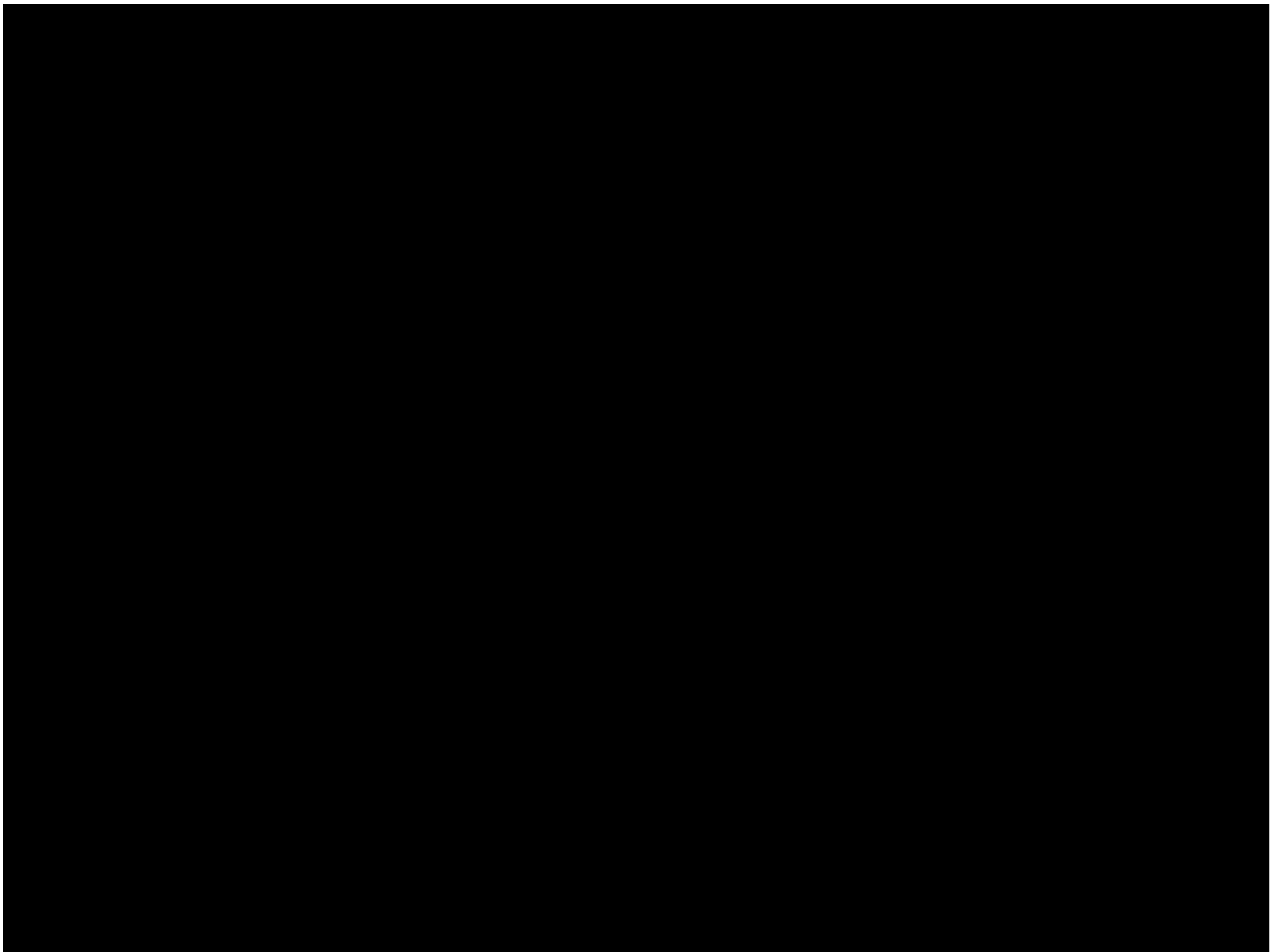
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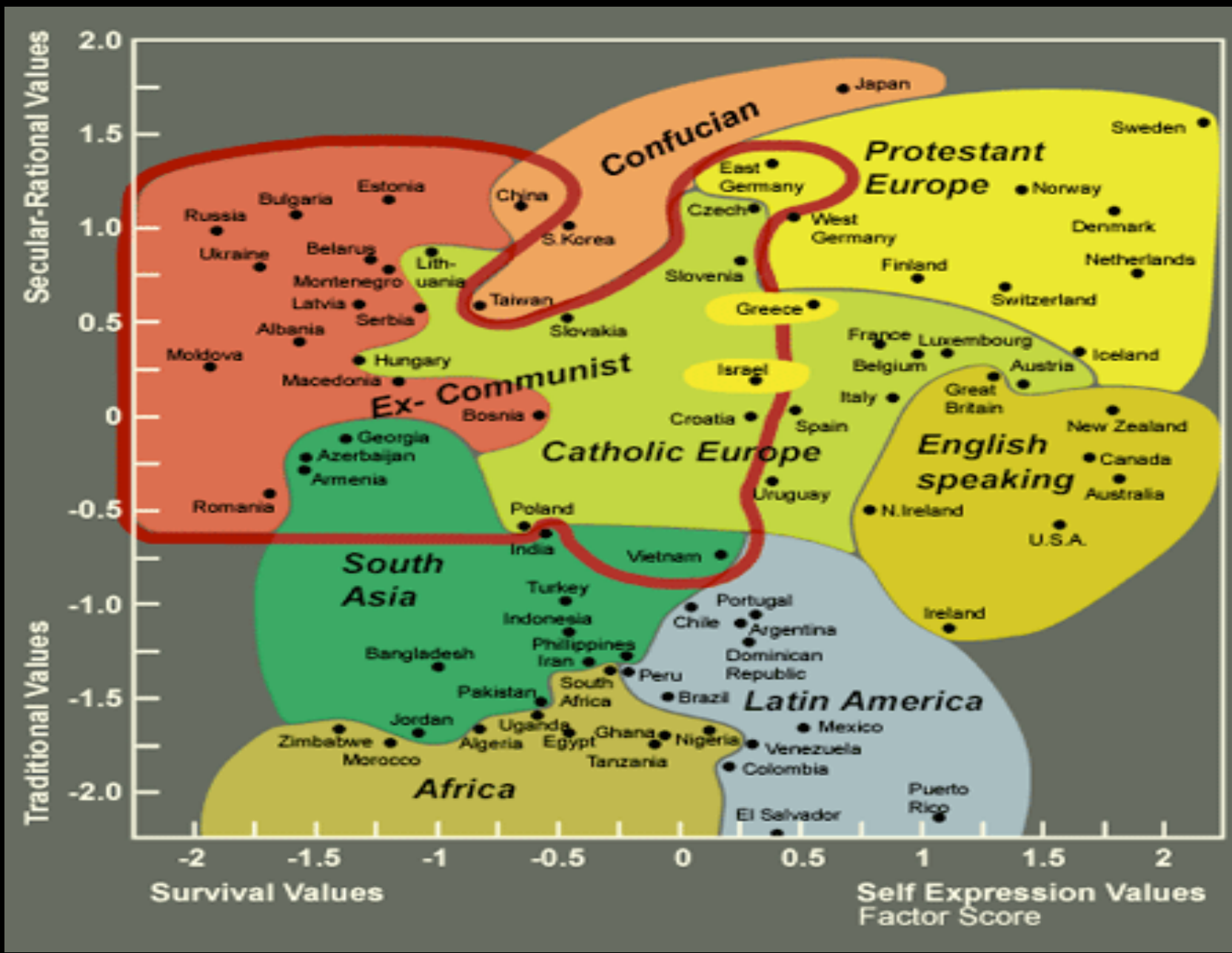
Risks or challenges of the new political participation

“Fake participation”: “pseudo-activities” or “pseudo-participation” (Adorno/Habermas).

Participation through new social networks and Internet channels...:“Público experience”.

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Thanks very much