

Vote and Protest in Argentina and Brazil: contemporary research based reflections on political participation ¹

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Abstract

The article presents a comparative analysis of recent citizen's reflections on political participation in Argentina and Brazil. Throughout the recollection of data from focus groups carried out in 2015 and 2016, we aim to discuss the ways the participants conceived and related the compulsory act of voting with the participation in the recent wave of demonstration in both countries. In the cases presented, there was a prevalent understanding of voting and protesting as complementary forms of political engagement and the participation in protests was conceived as a form to compensate the limitations of formal electoral politics.

Keywords: Political participation, Protest, Vote, Argentina, Brazil

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Introduction

Since the end, three decades ago, of the military dictatorships marked by intense political repression and restricted national elections, collective protests and voting have become significant parts of political life in Argentina and Brazil. The political and economic crisis in Argentina at the beginning of the 2000 and the Brazilian political crisis after 2013 have changed local protests. Participating in demonstrations became an increasingly feasible way for different social groups to collectively participate in political life. In this context, it is interesting to assess how some individuals in both countries relate their mandatory political participation (voting) with voluntary engagement in mass demonstrations.

As part of an international collective research team (Project PolPart) assembled to investigate the currently inconclusive relationship between participation and engagements in party and protest politics, we conducted focus groups in Argentina and Brazil to gather qualitative data. The objective was trying to trace general trends in these two democracies with recent authoritarian backgrounds.

As the first joint outcome of the Argentine and Brazilian teams, this paper seeks to analyse the discussions on political participation that took place in fourteen focus groups carried out in Buenos Aires and Brasilia during 2015 and 2016². The aim was to recreate the settings where people discuss politics (Gamson, 1992) allowing the researchers to assess how people construct meanings for political participation and its different formats. Therefore, based on focus groups data we seek to help answering

² We conducted seven focus groups in Brazil and eight in Argentina, forming cohorts from different age groups and with different educational levels. The missing case in the Brazilian sample is the cohort age sixty and older with a university education.

the question of how people make sense of political engagement in situations where voting is mandatory and demonstrating is increasingly becoming routine.

We were particularly interested in how people publicly justify the relationship between party politics and protest politics as forms of political participation. In other words, we hope to understand what connections people perceive between two forms of influencing politics: formal participation (voting) and informal participation (protesting). This paper also contributes to understanding how people make sense of different modalities of political participation in countries where voting is mandatory.

In order to describe particular features of each country before the comparison, the paper first provides an overview of political systems and protest politics in Argentina and Brazil, followed by analysis of each country's focus groups data. In the conclusion, we single out that: a) there was a prevalent understanding in discussions of voting and protesting as complementary forms of political engagement; and b) under certain conditions, participation in protests was justified as a form to compensate the limitation of formal electoral politics.

Recent political context in Argentina

Analysis of the Buenos Aires focus groups requires the input of context information. Participant's debates about voting and protest activity were tainted, as they should, by Argentina's political reality.

The 2015 Presidential elections are definitely playing in Argentina's political reality today. 'Cambiamos' coalition's defeat of the former ruling party marked an end of a political cycle. After twelve years of Kirchnerist administrations, the rise of a new political force to the presidency signed a change of era. The polarization between partisans and detractors of the

Kirchnerist coalition stands as an indisputable fact of Argentine politics for some years now.

Adding to the above, the final years of Cristina Fernandez's administration were marked by economic hardships tied to a lack of economic growth and foreign investment amid high inflation rates.

President Macri rises to the Casa Rosada instigated by the toughest opposition and criticism to the Kirchnerist government. This favoured to position the new administration as pledge for change from the outset. In so doing, it capitalized the demands of a cycle of massive protests (2012-2015) critical of the preceding administration. Those protests condemned the excessive intromission of the executive power over public affairs, its strong controls over free market exchanges and the economy as a whole, and the excessive politicization of social life (Falleti, 2012).

Thus, Macrism modification of the economic policy had the intention of both dealing with the existing difficulties, while simultaneously changing the terms of operation of the economy itself. Pro-market reforms impinged directly on salaries and household incomes that, in a matter of months, experienced a strong drop in terms of purchasing power. Furthermore, the uncertainty has prompted a feeling of unrest in the population giving way to a series of protests of diverse intensity in 2016.

Mass media and public opinion in general were only partially drawn to the economic debate. Since the day of the elections, the public scene has been dominated by an ever-growing number of corruption scandals. Having had all spotlights turned to these corruption scandals has given the new administration a leeway while heightening — in the long run — constituency's distance and criticism towards all sorts of political activities.

Such post electoral context marked by strong polarization was likely to impinge on the debates about voting and protesting. Argentina's compul-

sory voting system makes hard to identify the extent to which electoral processes draw people's interest.³

In terms of protest participation indicators, Argentina has very significant figures that have grown in recent years. According to Latinobarometro, between 1998 and 2008, the percentage of people who took part in or would take part in public demonstrations rose from 25% to 51%, whereas the numbers of those who said that they would never take part in a public demonstration dropped from 74% to 46%. According to the Argentina UDP-IRCD 2013 survey, 14.1% of the respondents had taken part in some sort of protest action in the last year. These numbers coincide with 2010 LAPOP data that point to the fact that Argentina doubles the regional average (Lodola; Seligson, 2013, p. 178).

The following section presents data from focus groups discussions held in this political context. The analysis focuses first on the assessment of each mode of participation to then delve into the distinctions and relations rising from the debates about institutional and protest politics.

Voting in Argentina

Every focus group showed mixed feelings when it came to assess voting. A first element to ponder is that Argentina's compulsory voting system seems to turn this into a sort of routine mechanism of participation. Unlike what happens with protesting, the decision to vote or not does not appear as a key question. In the following pages we will address participants view on voting and their analysis of the usefulness — or not — of voting as a mechanism of participation, as well as their appraisal of the political offer available in Argentina.

³ By law those who don't go voting should pay a fine. However, the amount to pay is not high and, also, this penalty is not so rigorously applied, what means that abstention is relatively tolerated in the present electoral system. Abstention numbers have yet remained close to 20% of the electors eligible to vote.

One of the first issues discussed vis-à-vis voting was the importance of voting to the enforcement of democratic regime. Young participants tied this liaison in a generic fashion. Concurrent with the abovementioned context of political polarization, the references to the importance of voting as a mechanism to democratically settle disputes has a special meaning.

Jordán: Yes, all of it, I keep on thinking about what he said and democracy is really important. To me, that's my point. I think this is the only moment in which everyone chooses what they have to, what they want to choose and I think we should respect others.

Clara: Yes. But the thing is ignorance. I mean, 'No, if you voted for him, you're an ignorant'. Do you get it? Ignorance is yours when you say that.

Jordán: There's a reason for voting, right? There's a reason why each of us is able to cast his vote and choose who he wants. I mean, if either, if he won with an outright majority, say 10.000 votes, one thousand or one single vote, that's something. Everyone chooses, and it is part of democracy for all of us to accept the way things turn out. Now (the thing is that) we have a divided country, let's be real, so I believe that.

Before concluding this first topic, we should draw attention to a noteworthy generational difference. Amongst the youth segments the importance of voting is generically tied to the virtues of the democratic regime. Whereas amongst older participants the importance of voting is systematically tied to the memory of the dictatorship and the achievement of a democratic recovery during the 80s.

At the same time, the assessment of voting is crossed by an appraisal of the political offer. In this sense, there were numerous considerations about the **fragmentation of the political offer** and the multiplication of candidacies.

Especially amongst the eldest participants, political offer fragmentation is formulated in a key of nostalgic recollection of partisan proposals that have traditionally organized the political spectrum. These participants saw in Radicalism and Peronism — the two biggest national parties — the key to a clear solution to the issue about political preferences.

Younger participants' diagnosis also points to fragmentation but not coupled to a nostalgic recollection of the traditional bipartisanship offer. The reaction of this group to one of the voting images was different.

Thus, this evaluation of the offer brings us to a consideration over the role of voting as a selection of political leaders mechanism. Stripped from its programmatic component, political offers seem to be more tied to the candidates' personal figure itself. That trait might, in this case, be influenced by the proximity to presidential elections, even if the images selected for the focus groups did not establish direct liaisons with any kind of election in particular.

Discussions about voting as a mechanism of participation had yet another interesting feature: every group debated about **voting's inadequacy as mechanism of participation**. Contrary to their first definitions, the issue here is that politics are deemed a professional activity detached from citizen's everyday life. Thus, voting cannot, in any sense, bridge the gap between (professional) politics and everyday life.

Protest in Argentina

After these preliminary considerations about voting, this section delves into how protest activity was assessed in terms of mechanism of political participation in Argentina. Protest was addressed both in general terms — debating about how to influence politics or how to solve social issues through protest activities — as well as through images or questions

targeting specific types of protest — petitioning, demonstrations, occupations, etc. In what follows, we explore discussions about protest in a broader sense.

A first characteristic to underline about protest activity is linked to an **ability to draw attention to grievances**. That is, as a form of demand building on institutional channels and eventually going beyond them, when confronted to a lack of response:

Mónica: I believe everyone has the right to protest, to make their voice heard. I would first go through the system — locally or at the city level. But if I can't get through, then I would try to find a way of making my voice heard. Someone has to hear it, don't you think? But I would first go through...

César: Making your protest visible.

Mónica: Sure. But that would be the last option to me not the first one. Because the reasonable thing to do is to first go through the system. I would go to the city council or to whom it may concern, and if they cannot provide a satisfactory answer or help me in anyway, well, then I would carry on...

At the same time, discussions about protest activities (demonstrations, rallies, occupations, etc.) were marked by talk about **route blockage strategies**, which have been a staple vernacular sort of protest of the last two decades. Most images stirred the debate about the legitimacy of impeding circulation as a means of protest.

Considerations of route blockages as a form of protest led the debate on political participation and modes of influencing politics to a discussion about overlapping rights. Protests are mainly viewed as a form of alteration of everyday life, thus the recurrence in assessing the terms of their disrupted features.

In addition, it should be noted that various modes of protest are coupled with pre-established repertoires. Therefore, the weighting of a given format is inextricably linked to an assessment of actors typically associated with this format. This is definitely the case of the roadblocks and the unemployed organizations.⁴

Even when a broad range of social actors perform route blockages, these are often linked to the mobilization of popular sectors and therefore bestowed with a highly disruptive component plus an undertone of suspicion of manipulation. Similarly, demonstrations — particularly the massive ones — are evoked as peaceful expressions of citizens' grievances. This appeared as a clear distinction that set them apart. Public demonstrations were clearly divided into political and non-political actions. The first ones were defined by the use of flags and banners while the others were seen as spontaneous and unorganized.

Evaluations on the relation between voting and protesting in Argentina

Discussions about protesting and voting in the Argentina case pointed to some elements of rupture and continuity that allow us to draw some preliminary conclusions about the relationship between institutional politics and protest politics.

The first thing that stands out is that both voting and protest dynamics make up an integral whole with more general discussions about the definitions of political activity. The most common definitions about politics were related to politicians' doings (as a professional activity – “it is what politicians do”). In that sense, politicians' activities were described through

⁴ Very important unemployed organizations sprung during mid 1990s in Argentina nationwide. In terms of modes of protest, they chiefly resorted to route blockages. See Svampa and Pereyra (2003) among others.

two major topics: on the one hand, corrupt activities (something opposite to ethics). On the other hand, good politicians are those who can help people out (politics as charity).

The intensity of pro-government and anti-government cleavage in Argentina ("K" and "anti-K") was the key reference for that negative way of pondering the link between conflict and politics. It was also possible to recognize a common meaning of the expression "engage in politics". To take part in the field of politics (*participar en política*) is something that people often consider as picking a profession (a career choice). Finally, it was clear that the link to politics calls for the mediation of a key figure. It could be a relative who is already engaged in politics or a political leader or militant. In any case, it is less of a decision than a situation what yields engagement (i.e. to solve a specific problem).

Recent political context in Brazil

In 2013, Brazil undergone a new protest cycle that has considerably changed the country's political scene. It had a profound impact on institutional politics, affecting political parties alliances and eventually hindering the support for the PT (Workers' Party), the ruling party. Different from previous protest cycles in Brazil (1984 and 1992), the 2013 demonstrations had an anti-partisan and autonomist character, similar to global protest waves since the Arab Spring and the Occupy movement (Alonso; Mische, 2015; Tatagiba, 2014; Tugal, 2013). The 2013 demonstrations were organized mainly through social media, such as Twitter, Facebook and WhatsApp, and within two months they reached national scale, mobilizing millions of people in different cities (Conde; Jazeel, 2015; Tatagiba, 2014; Tugal, 2013). In the following days the number of people on the streets increased and demonstrations went on to encompass different social groups and claims (i.e. against corruption, for better public services, against FIFA's World Cup, for political reform).

By 2014 the amorphous public with a heterogeneous multiplicity of claims had progressively turned into anti-government demonstrators. This was partly due to the role of the mainstream media, which after an initial negative coverage eventually changed sides and started to support the demonstrations, framing protesters as anti-partisan, anti-government and autonomous. According to Saad-Filho (2013) and Tatagiba, Trindade and Teixeira (2015), this was seen as an opportunity for the right-wing media to try to influence the popular mobilization, setting the tone for an anti-government agenda. In effect, left-wing oriented groups started to leave the streets as claims shifted to a more right-wing liberal agenda (i.e., against redistributive policies, for tax reduction, against state intervention in the economy). A few self-proclaimed “new social movements” were formed during this protest cycle. They gained visibility through social media and even though they claimed anti-partisanship as principle, they conveyed an anti-government and anti-PT agenda⁵ and were some of the main organizers of pro-impeachment demonstrations in 2015.

The 2013 demonstrations had a significant effect on the following Presidential election, held in October 2014. In a disputed second round⁶, President Dilma was re-elected with 51,64% of the votes, against 48,36% to the defeated candidate (the difference was around 5 million votes).

However, as of the moment the result was released it started being questioned. These demonstrations reached its peak in March 2015 and had as participants voters of the defeated opposition party (Telles, 2015; Paiva et al., 2016). Protests assumed an anti-government and anti-PT character and were framed as “popular spontaneous mobilization” by the hegemonic

⁵ Winters and Weitz-Shapiro (2014) sustain that one of the results of the 2013 protest cycle was the overall reduction in people’s identification with political parties. The anti-partisan feeling strengthened after the demonstrations and specially the anti-Worker Party feeling.

⁶ Brazil’s electoral rule grants that the president has to be elected by an absolute majority and this usually takes the two most voted candidates to a second round.

media and press. The most important claims were the end of corruption and President Dilma's impeachment.

In 2016 the Congress initiated the impeachment process that was voted and approved between April and August. The voting process was followed by intense demonstrations, pro and against impeachment, which divided the country. Legislators that casted their votes in favour of the impeachment, including those that were previously part of the government coalition, justified their decision by stating that they were being accountable to popular mobilization and were answering to the "call from the streets".

In what follows, we will discuss some findings from the seven focus groups conducted in Brazil between August 2015 and July 2016 concerning the evaluations of voting and protesting as possible strategies to influence politics. We will also look at how these two strategies relate to each other in participant's view, in order to assess how people make sense of political participation in the current unstable Brazilian political context.

Protest in Brazil

The 2013 political cycle had lasting impact on people's perception of demonstration as a form of political participation. The image of a demonstration shown during the focus groups discussions automatically led participants to talk about 2013 and about the most recent pro-impeachment protests. They described their personal experience of having participated in one of these protests and evaluated their effectiveness and legitimacy. The

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groups composed of younger participants debated about the efficacy of the 2013 protests, arguing that there were many different claims, making it impossible for the demonstration to have a clear objective. They disagreed on whether or not those demonstrations were successful. While one group identified the 2013 protests as having been unsuccessful, because they did not change anything and left people disappointed, the other group had a less pessimistic view. Participants agreed that even though claims were ambiguous and diverse, the 2013 demonstrations still had an important impact, since the President made an official declaration only days after the protest peak and announced actions to address some of the claims coming from the streets – such as a number of concrete measures to tackle corruption. The pro-impeachment demonstrations were also mentioned in two groups and people talked about their personal experience of participating in these demonstrations and evaluated it as an important action to influence politics.

There was a prevailing idea that demonstration is a valid and legitimate strategy as long as it does not turn into a violent protest. Participants largely rejected violence as a legitimate form of trying to influence politics and made negative references to demonstrators who resorted to violence (*baderneiros*).

Voting in Brazil

Voting is compulsory in Brazil for people aged from 18 to 70. For people between 16 and 18 and over 70 years old, voting is optional, as well as for the illiterate population – around 8,5% of Brazilians⁷. The sanction for not turning up in election day is having one's voting situation considered irregular, though regularization is possible through payment of a small fee. Voting turnout has ranged from 83,25 percent to 78,90 percent in the last

⁷ IBGE, 2015 (corresponds to around 14 million people).

five Presidential elections.⁸ Presidential and state elections occur every four years and are alternated with municipal elections. As a result, Brazilians have to vote every two years.

Voting was considered the most important form of political participation in all eight focus groups. Some participants justified this position by arguing that voting is the only time they really have the power to influence politics and to make a change. This, however, was a controversial topic of discussion and participants presented a number of reservations to voting as a viable strategy.

Another doubt casted on voting as a viable strategy to influence politics came from criticism towards politicians. While all groups made general criticisms regarding the poor quality of Brazilian politicians, some specifically mentioned that voting, as the only strategy, is problematic because representatives seldom do what they promise and are engulfed by a corrupt system. Other reservations participants had on voting as a strategy was the fact that there are no good options during elections and they are obliged to vote for bad candidates.

As with demonstration, electors' degree of political awareness (*consciência política*) was an important criterion to evaluate the legitimacy of voting as a strategy. Arguments that questioned the legitimacy of social benefit recipients as aware voters were common during the 2014 Presidential election.

This simultaneous affirmation of voting as the most important strategy to influence politics and the recognition of its many problems resulted in interesting evaluations by participants regarding the relation between voting and protesting.

⁸ <http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=30>

Evaluations on the relation between voting and demonstrating in Brazil

Since 2013, protesting as a form of trying to influence politics acquired a new status in Brazil. The magnitude of protests that took place on that year was unprecedented since the early 1990's and this had a profound impact on the range of possibilities considered to influence politics.

Focus groups discussions took place amidst this changing political context that influenced participants' opinions concerning protest. When shown images of demonstrations people would often refer to recent concrete cases of protest in which many of them took part. This is an important consideration when analysing how people perceived the relation between protesting and voting as two viable political participation strategies.

Evaluations on the relation between voting and demonstrating differed among groups and among participants within the same group. Arguments that considered voting and demonstrating as two complementary strategies were built on considerations about the deficiency of the vote. The scepticism of participants, due to many problems related with the vote, led them to conclude that only voting is not enough to influence politics. Demonstrations should also be used as strategies to control the elected representatives and to hold them accountable until the next elections. Some of the fragments below illustrate this line of reasoning:

Sandra [for Palmira]: But what is the alternative to voting? To choosing?

Palmira [for Sandra]: I don't know, because you go there, you vote, and then what? I think we need to empower ourselves as pressure groups, make noise, make changes (...).

⁸ <http://www.idea.int/vt/countryview.cfm?id=30>

Moderator: But to you the pressure is where? In the vote?

Palmira: In the vote, but not entirely there. I feel that the representation is flawed because people [representatives] are engulfed by the system.

Moderator: The pressure would be on the communities, then?

Palmira: Yes, in the aggregation of actions, demonstrations, in taking a stance. (...) These people [politicians] don't have any moral, so they must be watched; people need to be watching.

Ednaldo: And need to exercise their right to protest.

When talking about what they consider to be the most important form of participation, people in this younger focus group talked about the connection between voting and demonstrating.

Raul: For me, the first one would be this [pointing to the ballot box]. But it's a two-way street, as we were just talking. You usually have to choose between two candidates that don't represent you, so I don't know if I would put this one first...

Igor: You can place the vote in first and the demonstration in second, to get rid of the guy you elected [laughing].

After the moderator placed pictures of different forms of participations on the table the following group of older people were trying to organize them from the most to the least important according to them:

Aline: I believe these here are in the right sequence [referring to the images disposition on the table]: here we vote and then here we are protesting, to show our candidates that someone is watching them.

Sérgio: I agree.

Answering to the question of whether they agreed with the statement that "people in our society are not politically active", the following participant talked about voting as an insufficient form of participation and of the need for more proactivity.

When participants argued that to demonstrate is more important than to vote they also referred to problems inherent to the voting system. However, differently than the evaluations above, voting and demonstrating are conceived here not as complementary strategies, but as two alternative possibilities.

Another form of conceiving the relation between voting and demonstrating saw them as contradictory when aimed at the same person. In other words, participants referred to the inherent contradiction in electing a representative and then protesting against her or him a while latter. No particular case was mentioned as an example, but this criticism was probably influenced by pro-impeachment demonstrations held only a few months after President Dilma took office.

In some groups, participants understood the relation between voting and demonstrating as a hierarchical one, with voting regarded as more important than demonstrating. These evaluations also considered demonstration as a result of bad electoral choices, or as caused by the decisions of elected representatives. Either way, these arguments reaffirm the predominance of vote over protest as a strategy to influence politics.

These different forms of conceiving the relation between voting and demonstrating point to the fact that people have different ways of making sense of protesting and voting as possible strategies to influence politics. As they ponder the deficiencies and advantages inherent to each strategy, they make careful analysis of the relation between the two. It's important to notice that with a few exceptions, voting continues to be regarded as the most important and efficient strategy to influence politics, despite all its problems. Demonstrations are also conceived as valid strategies, as long as they are not violent. We argue that the complementarity, or even the contradictory relation participants see between demonstrating and voting is

influenced by the recent protest cycle, which placed demonstration as a possible concrete course of action to influence politics.

Conclusion

Several interesting aspects emerged from the focus groups outcomes in both Argentina and Brazil. If analysed independently, each national context could be attributed to its unique historical background, though both can be considered relatively recent stabilized democracies compared to other countries in the same research. The development of electoral politics in the two countries over the past thirty years is highly dependent on governments' ability to deal with changing economical environments at the local, regional and global level. According to participants in both Argentina and Brazil, the State must also be able to come up with feasible policies for key social issues in addition to manoeuvring such environments.

Here is where voting and protest came together in most of the focus groups analysed. Protest became a way to denounce the elected governments' incapacity to deal with situations of social crisis in Argentina at the beginning of the twenty-first century. In Brazil, massive protesting uprisings happened later, in 2013. More recently, protest has also served as a way to reinforce mass media accusations of corruption among the elected heads of state.

In Argentina and Brazil, older participants regarded voting as a positive achievement after local struggles to put an end to authoritarian military dictatorships, when there were few if any opportunities to vote. For this generation, voting is a continued living experience of what they achieved three decades ago. For the younger participants, voting is understood as a formal and important feature of democratic regimes in their countries, something they cannot ignore. However, all focus groups brought up the deficiencies in local voting systems today — and in party politics as well.

One perspective common to almost all focus groups was to think about protest as a nuanced way to remedy much of the problems related to the political system and to electoral participation. Aside from few criticisms to the untrustworthiness of the electronic ballot box in Brazil, voting as a legitimate and important form of citizen participation was praised in both countries, notwithstanding the bad quality of the offer in terms of politicians and parties. However, voting is not understood as the sole valid form of participation. Political participation has a broader meaning to participants in focus groups, and protesting is seen as an essential form of influencing politics.

When analysing the collective discussions regarding different strategies to influence politics it is important to understand the conditions and circumstances under which protest was understood as a form of political action as important as voting or as a form of correcting some of the problems with party politics. Our preliminary analysis pointed out the following reasons underlying participants analysis of the relation between voting and protesting: a) bad quality of electoral offer; b) changes in the expected courses of action of elected politicians; and c) corruption.

Joining a protest is also considered different than taking part in politics. Among most of the cohorts, politics is regarded as a realm for professional (elected) politicians, who are seen as the ones responsible for policy and decision making. Voting and protesting (non-violently) are conceived of as legitimate ways to change both the politicians and policies or for society to exert pressure for changes in professional politics. Politics in this view is more than a specific realm or career; it is synonymous with public interest and open to everyone. In these cases, voting does not necessarily mean involvement in traditional party politics; just as protesting is not the same as being part of the movement's politics.

Focus group data in Brazil and in Argentina are revealing of how people make sense of political engagement in these two new democracies. There is a widespread convergence around the fact that voting is a legitimate and important form of participation. However, because of its mandatory character, participants also see it as an obligation and take it as granted when assessing political participation. This means that a citizen that just votes is not necessarily considered engaged in politics in these democracies, but is considered only as someone who fulfils his or hers basic political obligation. Protesting, on the other hand, is also understood as a legitimate form of participating, as long as not violent or not clearly associated with party politics (in the case of Argentine focus groups discussions). Assessments of deficiencies in the political system and the quality of its representatives, as well as concerns about the legitimacy of more or less politicized protest politics, indicate that people in these new democracies are extremely critical of voting and protesting as strategies to influence politics. However, the legitimacy of these two forms of political participation is not put into question in focus groups, where people argue for the necessity of a better offer from the political system so that citizens can engage more.

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