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Shifting Inequalities? Patterns of Exclusion and Inclusion in Emerging Forms of Political Participation

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Abstract

Previous research has found a steady increase in the number of people involved in emerging forms of civic engagements such as Internet campaigns, protests, political consumerism, and alternative lifestyle communities. Verba et al. (1995) have established that various forms of political participation in the United States follow a pattern of structural inequality, based on income, education, gender and civic skills. The growing popularity of emerging action repertoires forces us to re-evaluate the claims of this literature. Do these patterns of inequality persist for the emerging action repertoires across advanced industrialized democracies, or are they becoming even stronger, as Theda Skocpol (2003, 2004) argues? The results of this cross-national analysis with longitudinal comparisons suggest that gender inequalities in emerging political action repertoires have substantially declined since the 1970s, whereas other forms of inequality have persisted. However, contrary to the more pessimistic claims about a 'participation paradox', there is no evidence that inequality based on socio-economic status has substantially increased since the 1970s.

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Introduction

Although various authors have put forward the claim that participation and engagement levels in liberal democracies are declining (Dalton & Wattenberg 2002; Dalton 2004; Macedo et al. 2005; Pharr & Putnam 2000; Lane 2000; Putnam 2000, 2002a), recent studies suggest that the downward spiral in figures for traditional, institutionalized organization and participation is "offset at least in part by increases in the relative importance of informal, fluid, personal forms of social connection" and civic engagement (Putnam 2002b, 411; Cain, Dalton & Scarrow 2004; Zukin et al. 2006). This conclusion is based on research which found a steady increase in the number of people involved in emerging forms of civic engagement that take place outside of the institutionalized sphere of politics, such as Internet campaigns, ad-hoc protests, political consumerism, and life style politics (Bennett 1998; Dalton 2004; 2008; Inglehart & Catterberg 2003; Norris 2002; Cain, Dalton & Scarrow 2004; Stolle & Hooghe 2005; Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti 2005). The argument is that citizens today, especially younger generations, seem to prefer participating in the extra-parliamentary realm, in non-hierarchical and informal networks, and a variety of sporadic campaigns.

Yet criticism has emerged about these emerging non-institutionalized forms of participation. First of all, various debates have arisen about the actual name of these forms of participation—should they be called emerging, unconventional, extra-parliamentary, individual, creative, innovative or simply new forms of political participation? A more careful analysis of the common characteristics of these forms of these action repertoires might be an important step towards their better understanding. Despite anecdotal evidence about their rise, some authors claim that there is no systematic proof to indicate that these participation acts are important forms of political expression for large groups of the population (Putnam 2000, 148-181; Skocpol 2003). It has been argued that the widening of the concept of political participation might render it less useful for analytical purposes (van Deth 2001, 2009; for counter-arguments see Micheletti & McFarland 2009). Furthermore, different interpretations of the nature of participation have sparked a conceptual debate about whether these acts are truly political and whether they can be successful as political tools. For example, can they be just as effective in establishing and achieving political goals as traditional and institutionalized forms of participation like voting and political party membership? Most importantly for the purpose of this article, their growing popularity forces scholars to re-evaluate the existing inequalities of political action repertoires. Critics claim that newly emerging action repertoires generate even stronger patterns of persistent inequalities than conventional forms of participation (Verba, Schlozman & Brady. 1995; Skocpol 2003, 223ff.), excluding a large group of the population from broad-based participation. Alluding to the decline in conventional political action repertoires, Macedo and his colleagues proclaim that "Americans…leave our civic life impoverished. Citizens participate in public affairs less frequently, with less

knowledge and enthusiasm, in fewer venues, and less equally than is healthy for a vibrant democratic polity," (Macedo et al. 2005, 1).

This criticism about inequality builds upon the well-known phenomenon of the 'participation paradox': the more intensive a form of political participation is, in terms of the skills, time, energy and resources involved, the more skewed its distribution across the population becomes (Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995). Since most of these expansions of the participation repertoires require a substantive amount of cognitive skills and material resources, it is more than plausible that the participation paradox might lead to more unequal outcomes for these emerging action repertoires than would be the case for conventional or institutionalized participation acts. Theda Skocpol (2004) acknowledges that different forms of participation have become more prevalent in recent decades, thus challenging the pessimistic conclusions of authors like Robert Putnam (2000). Her main concern, however, is that as they are accessible only to an elite part of the population they actually strengthen existing inequalities: "Variety and voice have surely been enhanced in the new American civic universe forged by the organizing upsurge of the 1960s to the 1990s. But the gains in voice and public leverage have mainly accrued to the top tiers of U.S. society – while Americans who are not wealthy or higher-educated now have fewer associations representing their values and interests, and enjoy dwindling opportunities for active participation" (Skocpol 2004, 14).

However, before any conclusions can be drawn about the potential of these extra-parliamentary action repertoires and the inequalities they might engender, their character, style and consequences must be analyzed more systematically than has yet been done. This task is challenging: Because of their sporadic and non-institutionalized character, these forms of engagement are much harder to measure and gauge than institutionalized or conventional forms of participation.

This article attempts to fill this gap. Two main research questions guide this article. First, how we can best conceptualize and distinguish emerging action repertoires from other conventional forms of political participation? Second, does the presumed rise in emerging forms of participation lead to more political inequality than for the conventional forms of participation? Consequently, we offer a systematic analysis on how these rising action repertoires differ from conventional participation. We then discuss the inherent inequality problem and apply it to these forms of participation. The following section is empirical in nature. The patterns of exclusion and inclusion of emerging action repertoires across countries as well as over time are examined in juxtaposition to conventional forms of participation. We close with some speculation about the democratic potential of these emerging forms of participation.

Theorizing Emerging Political Action Repertoires

Since the 1990s, political scientists have increasingly called attention to an alleged decline in political participation and citizen involvement. They have expressed concern over diminishing voter turnout in advanced industrialized democracies (Putnam 2000; Rubenson et al. 2004), decreases in party and union membership, and lower citizen involvement in political campaigns. With rising alarm they have noted that citizens show declining levels of party identification, political trust, and political interest (Blais, Gidengil and Nevitte 2004; Dalton 2004; Dalton & Wattenberg 2000; Macedo et al. 2005; Offe & Fuchs 2002; Stolle & Hooghe 2005; Karp & Banducci 2007). While other scholars have acknowledged this trend they have added the important insight that citizens have begun to develop a multitude of innovative ways to engage in politics which they find more meaningful, more efficient and more direct (Dalton 2008; Norris 2002; Pattie, Seyd and Whiteley 2003). For these scholars, the decline in conventional political action is not worrisome. In fact, we should expect citizens to turn away from mass political organizations, because they prefer more self-expressive acts of participation (Inglehart 1997, 1999; Inglehart & Catterberg 2003; Welzel & Inglehart 2005).

Several theoretical perspectives underline this trend. For example, postmodernization processes and the related shift from materialist values of economic safety to more post-materialist values encourage citizens to find new venues to express their private and public concerns and identities. The reason is that post-materialist values are increasingly linked to demands for more individual autonomy, self-expression, and choice, so that citizens seek more individualized ways to express their political beliefs, away from organized and hierarchically structured mass politics (Bennett 1998; Dalton 2004; Inglehart 1997).

Theories of risk society, including sub-politics, also help to explain the emergence of more recent forms of political involvement (Beck 1992; Beck & Beck-Gernsheim 2002; Giddens 1996). Sub-politics is related to processes of globalization and to citizens' perceptions about government's inability to control and take responsibility for the new uncertainties created by public and corporate policy. According to these authors, the responsibility vacuum created by government's incapacity in selected globalized policy areas is being filled by the fact that *active sub-politicians* take responsibility on their own (Holzer & Sørensen 2003). Concerns about governability therefore can motivate citizens to venture into new, different or innovative forms of political participation that are not connected to the traditional functioning of political institutions.

While various theoretical explanations of why and how these forms of participation emerged have been put forth, the lack of solid empirical research regarding their characteristics and inherent inequalities still presents a significant problem. To solve the inequality question, an empirical study of these emerging action repertoires needs to be systematized. Despite the diversity of these emerging forms of involvement, some first

reflections about their commonalities and defining characteristics vis-à-vis conventional political acts are in order. In the remainder of this section we will examine their characteristics with regard to: 1) their structure and mobilizational methods; 2) spheres in which participation takes place; 3) the specific style of individualized and individualistic involvement; 4) targets of political action; while paying particular attention to how these characteristics might actually shape inequality patterns.

First, these emerging forms of participation abandon traditional organizational structures that involve high levels of formality and bureaucratic order in favour of horizontal and more flexible ones. Loose connections, in other words, are rapidly replacing static bureaucracies (Wuthnow 1998). Instead of collaborating under formal umbrella structures, these grassroots associations opt for co-operation in flexible and horizontal networks that are better adapted to the needs of information-driven societies (Castells 1996). The lack of an organizational and hierarchical structure means that political actions are less planned, less scheduled and less organized long in advance by established membership organizations with regular meeting practices and routines. Instead, citizens become activated through sudden Internet alerts, news, or other spontaneous mobilization efforts so that these emerging forms allow for a citizen's easy entrance and exit from civic engagement. This is certainly the case with new, more emotion-driven forms of protest and mobilization. In October 1996 some 300,000 people (three per cent of Belgium's total population) participated in a protest rally against the inertia of their nation's police force in the face of abductions and killings of young children; two years later, though, the organizing committee was out of business as its membership had all but evaporated (Hooghe & Deneckere 2003, van Aelst & Walgrave 2003).

Second, these new initiatives are also less concerned with institutional affairs, like party and parliamentary politics, which brings them into sharp contrast with more traditional political organizations. Lifestyle elements are politicized although the actors no longer label their action as explicitly 'political.' Spheres traditionally perceived as private, such as the wearing of certain clothes or consumer choice, now represent political involvement because they reflect value, resource, and power allocations in our societies (Easton 1965). Eliasoph (1998) documents how housewives, rather than entangling themselves in routine politics, prefer political actions related to every-day life, whether concerning shopping decisions or choices for household waste disposal. In doing so, these participation repertoires blur the traditional boundaries between the public and the private sphere.

Third, and as a consequence of the above points, there are two characteristics that stand out about emerging forms: they are more individualized and individualistic in character compared to the typically more collective-oriented conventional actions. The "individualized" aspects are that participation in them may take several forms and versions that are unique across individuals. Although conventional engagement differs in terms of intensity, time, skills and money invested (Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995), conventional political institutions such as parties and unions clearly shape a more uni-

form model of support and engagement among their members. Newly emerging forms of participation, on the other hand, allow for more flexibility, choices and fashions of involvement. For instance, they might involve a citizen's spontaneous decision to take a day off of work for a demonstration, donate money to a cause while walking to lunch, formulate and then forward a politicized e-mail or postings on a political website, the regular or temporary purchase of certain products for political, ethical or environmental reasons or they might go further to include a host of complex and consistent lifestyle choices (Micheletti & Stolle forthcoming). The point is that participants choose very much their own fashion of participating in politics without following an organizational model or script. Thus emerging forms of participation seem to end the "one size fits all" style engagement in conventional politics.

Emerging action repertoires are also more individualistic. They do not necessarily lead to group interaction or face-to-face meetings of the kind we typically encounter in unions, voluntary groups, regular council meetings, and so forth. Often such acts are simply performed alone, however we should note that voting or contacting a public official are also rather individualistic acts. Passive memberships in check-book organisations are relatively individualistic well and the model of these organizations no longer stresses voluntary participation in local chapters. Check-book membership organizations operate mostly on a national scale, with a professional staff relying on print and electronic media to stay in touch with their members (Wollebæk & Selle 2003). On the other hand, emerging forms may be triggered by larger societal concerns (human rights, global social injustice, climate change, wars), used by established social movements and followed by aggregate or public consequences (corporate social responsibility, better environment, peace). Even the logic of action is collective, as seen through the reliance on numbers for successful protests or boycotts to have their effects. This leads to a certain paradox: while these forms of protest and participation can often be seen as examples of co-ordinated collective action, most participants simply perform such acts alone, whether at home before a computer screen or in a supermarket. In order to address some of these insights, Micheletti described these acts as examples of individualized collective action (Micheletti, 2003, 24-34).

A fourth common characteristic is the multiple target orientation of innovative political involvement outside of conventional political institutions. In contrast to conventional participative forms which are often conceptualized such that targeting the government or government-related bodies is an integral part of the definition, emerging forms aim at targets regardless of whether they represent public or private institutions; the importance is that they have de facto political power (Vogel 1975). This is particularly true for political consumerism, which uses the market as a political arena. Political consumers use political values and goals to target selected companies, international organizations, or simply public attention (Micheletti, Follesdal & Stolle 2003). The goal is not always national legislative change, as national governments are not trusted to regulate international labor or corporate practices successfully.

These characteristics suggest that the emerging forms of political participation can be successfully distinguished from conventional and institutionalized forms of participation. Several empirical analyses have supported this claim (e.g. Sabucedo & Arce 1991; Marien, Quintelier & Hooghe 2009). Previous studies have also pointed out that political participation is expanded or transforming and have thus created various labels for these new participatory acts. Originally authors like Barnes & Kaase (1979) emphasized the distinction between conventional and non-conventional forms of participation. However, currently 'unconventional' forms have become so popular and mainstream that the label has been rendered nearly meaningless (Inglehart & Catterberg 2003). Others have added new distinctions about parliamentary and extra-parliamentary as well as institutionalized and non-institutionalized acts (Marien, Quintelier & Hooghe et al. 2009). Although the type of arenas where participation takes place and their level of institutionalization are an important distinction, we add here that additional characteristics help us further differentiate the types of political acts, which is why we opt for the more inclusive and neutral term of emerging political participation. This choice though assumes that these forms are indeed increasing over time and are establishing themselves in democratic societies. There is plenty of evidence to support this assumption (Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti. 2005; Inglehart 1997).

The important question of the second part of this investigation is about the patterns of inequality and inclusion in these political acts. Given the commonly known biases in various forms of political participation, we ask whether these patterns of inequality persist, or even become stronger in these emerging engagement repertoires.

Inequality in Emerging Action Repertoires

The study of equality in political participation is not new at all. Verba et al. (1995) have extensively studied both the substantive and demographic inequality in various forms of political participation. In a nutshell, there is a wide-spread demographic though not much of a substantive inequality in participation. Richer, more educated people, males and older generations are more active in conventional forms of political participation in the US. Rarely has research studied political inequality beyond the US and in the context of emerging forms. Some new research efforts suggest that the original assumptions about political participation being more equally spread outside of the US cannot be confirmed anymore. The idea was that some European democracies achieve a more egalitarian pattern of involvement because political institutions such as unions and parties offer the desired resources necessary for high levels of participation (Verba, Nie & Kim 1979). Yet recent analyses revealed that European democracies as well deal with a ris-

ing inequality gap particularly for voting (Caul 2005; Gallego 2007), which is attributed to the diminishing importance of equalizing institutions such as unions and churches (Kittilson 2005). However, rarely have studies directly compared the inequality of various types of action repertoires including the emerging forms (see exception in Gallego 2007, Marien at al 2009); and there is no study that looks at how inequality in types of participation changes over time.

Interestingly, two divergent expectations shape up when thinking about how unequally spread emerging forms of participation are. On the one hand, most traditional forms of participation are linked to organizations and institutions, which bring with them resources, networks and opportunities for political action and influence (Verba, Nie & Kim 1979). Although these institutions are apparently in decline, we still expect them to matter, although less so over time. Most of the emerging forms, on the other hand, are by definition disconnected from well-established institutions and thus without the helping organizational umbrella (Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995). This might imply that they require more resources and skills from the participants to compensate for the missing institutional framework. For instance, education, political knowledge and cognitive skills are required for the assessment of the various product labels in stores or for current political events that trigger petition drives. As a consequence, education levels might still influence those who participate in emerging forms of political action.

Some empirical proof for this expectation has been offered in previous research. Verba, Schlozman & Brady (1995) have shown, for example, that check-book activism is heavily dominated by the richest segment of the population, and that this inequality is stronger than for traditional forms of participation. Skocpol (2003) too has expressed concern about the fact that the professionalization of political activism could lead to more privileged political access and influence for the wealthiest groups of the population. Of course, emerging forms of participation go way beyond pure check-book memberships, but the question arises as to how inclusive these democratic practices actually are (Young 2002).

Other authors, however, have questioned whether emerging political action repertoires actually strengthen patterns of inequality. The importance of socio-economic resources such as education might diminish for forms of participation that are more sporadic: for example, the entry costs for signing a petition are lower than for becoming an active member of a political party. Similarly, it certainly costs fewer resources to forward a political email than to attend meetings of a political organization. In order to be engaged politically, people do not need to have the time to regularly go to meetings, and they do not need selective group or leadership skills. Overall, one can assume that these emerging action repertoires are practiced more sporadically than conventional forms. This new and less taxing approach to exhibiting political views and stances might thus facilitate a broader recruitment of citizens from diverse and non-traditional backgrounds. Mobilization into emerging action repertoires seems more widely accessible, as displayed through the Internet and other informal mobilization mechanisms (Jennings &

Andersen 2003). In sum, with regard to the inequality of the practice of these action repertoires based on socio-economic resources, particularly education, our hypothesis remains open, as two opposing assumptions seem to exist in the social science literature, suggesting that emerging forms might exhibit more or fewer levels of inequality compared to conventional forms. Looking at the spread of inequality over time, we would assume that particularly conventional forms of participation exhibit higher levels of educational inequality because they are most affected by the increasing disappearance of mobilizing institutions of the church, unions, and political parties.

Another form of inequality is expressed in the gender gap in political participation. Whereas gender gaps for voting have closed in several countries (Conway 2001), they remain for several other conventional activities even for working informally to deal with a community problem, making campaign contributions, contacting public officials, and affiliation with political organizations (Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995). For emerging forms of participation, we expect less of a gender gap, since these activities allow for the merging of public and private spheres and they relate closely to every-day life activities. Whether it is about the choice of products in the super-market, life-style decisions such as vegetarianism or the fight for animal rights more generally, or signing petitions, many of these activities are closely related to the areas of life in which women are at least equally or more active than men. The exception might be in political internet activities, which are often less frequented by women (ref). It seems thus plausible for our second hypothesis that women are at least equally if not disproportionately drawn towards these emerging participation types compared to men.

Considering over time changes in gender inequality, we expect both conventional and emerging forms to exhibit more gender equality over time. Again, as resources play an important role for political participation, it is quite clear that women have gained such resources over the last decades through their increased entry into the labor force. Moreover, higher professional positions allow for the practice and learning of skills through activities undertaken on the job, such as organizing meetings, giving presentations, and the like that can be transported to the political realm (Schlozman, Burns & Verba et al. 1999). Since women have gained increasingly higher level positions at work, we expect in our second part of the gender hypothesis that the gender gap diminishes for both forms of participation, but eventually is smaller for emerging forms because of their every-day character.

The final dimension of participatory bias to be examined in this article is age. Scholars who write about the decline in political participation suspect that the young generation has tuned out of conventional forms of political participation, ranging from voting, to party membership, joining other groups, to contacting politicians and attending group meetings (Putnam 2000; Macedo et al. 2005). Similarly, older people are seen as the model-engagement generation, who is frequently and eagerly involved in political acts. On the other hand, critics of this perspective put forth that particularly the young generation is engaged disproportionately in various emerging forms that have been over-

looked, and which the elderly have not taken up (O'Toole et al. 2003). The characteristics of emerging forms, and particularly their low entry costs, the sporadic nature of these forms, young people's familiarity with the Internet, and their openness to lifestyle politics, such as the wearing of specific clothes, stickers or buttons allow for easier recruitment of younger age groups into these action repertoires. However, also older generations should adopt emerging repertoires over time as they become more mainstream, and are easily available political tools for everyone. So, while generally emerging action repertoires are likely dominated by the younger generations, in a time period comparison we would thus expect younger people to disproportionately drop out of conventional forms; and we would expect increasing age equality in emerging forms over time. The overall task of this article then is to assess these expectations, and thus the validity of the criticisms charged against emerging action repertoires to ask whether participation in them is indeed more heavily skewed than in traditional participation repertoires and how this equality has changed over time.

Empirical Analysis

Data

The question about the evolution of the equality of emerging participation patterns vis-à-vis conventional forms can only be solved using longitudinal data sets that reach back at least a couple of decades. In addition, the inequality in action repertoires has to be tested in several countries at the same time to ensure that the relationships are not an artefact of a specific cultural or institutional context. Therefore, two general conditions guide our choice in data sets: a) longitudinal availability of items that measure innovative action repertoires in comparison to conventional forms; and b) the cross-national availability of these items. The very nature of these innovative action repertoires, defined by irregularity and spontaneity, has made it difficult for researchers to capture the phenomenon beyond case studies. We too have encountered this problem. The compromise then is to rely on the select few items that have been included in cross-national surveys, such as boycotting and the signing of petitions. These acts used to be labelled as unconventional, since they are not related to formal political organizations or institutions.

The surveys should also contain many of the socio-demographic variables which allow us to understand the inequalities inherent in these participation forms. Since no one data set can answer all of these questions, we will have to rely on the data sources that are currently available. The comparison between the countries included in the Political

Action data set from the early 1970s (Barnes & Kaase 1979) and the European Social Survey (2002), with its large political action battery, are the most useful. This selection allows for an analysis of the posed questions for a number of Western European countries (and the US), over several decades, and for a number of participation acts. Extreme care should be taken, however, since sampling procedures and the wording of various items have changed slightly since the early 1970s.[1] If anything though, the surveys for the later time point of the ESS estimate a more conservative account of participation in these action repertoires, as they attach a time frame to their survey questions (e.g. actions performed in the last 12 months). For some of these acts, we will further substantiate our findings by relying on the results of the Dutch Elections Studies, conducted in the Netherlands from 1971 onwards.

In sum, our data sources include:

1. The Political Action dataset that was collected in eight nations in the early 1970s.[2]
2. The results from the first and second wave of the European Social Survey (ESS), conducted in 2002 and 2004-5[3], combined with the CID survey for the United States.[4] For the analysis we utilize the original eight countries that participated in the Political Action Survey.
3. Dutch Elections Studies, 1971-1998[5] is one of the few longitudinal data sources which include broad batteries of political action.

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1 Question wording: In the Political Action survey, no time-frame was included, whereas in the ESS the question was asked regarding activities in the previous 12 months. In the 1974 Political Action Survey, the exact question was: "Are you willing to join boycotts?" with a first answer category: "I have done this." All the other answering possibilities ventured into the possibility that the respondent might consider taking part in this kind of action. In the ESS/CID survey, the question was asked in the following way: There are different ways of trying to improve things in [country] or help prevent things from going wrong. During the last 12 months, have you done any of the following? The answer options were just 'Yes' or 'No;' whereas a 'Yes' answer counted as having done the activity.

2 For a full description of the Political Action data, see Barnes & Kaase (1979), pp. 537-591. Fieldwork for this survey was done in 1973-1975, with most interviews being conducted in 1974.

3 For a full description of the ESS data, see www.europeansocialsurvey.org.

4 Parts of the CID data has been designed for a merger with the 2002 ESS data; for a full description of the CID data and its design see http://www.uscidsurvey.org.

5 For a description of the Dutch Elections Studies (1971, 1972, 1977, 1981, 1982, 1986, 1989, 1994 and 1998), see http://www.bsk.utwente.nl/skon.

Shifting Inequalities

In this section we examine the extent to which the rise of emerging types of engagement is linked to a changing distribution of participation within the population (Verba 2003). We particularly examine biases for gender, education, and age as these are strong and persistent sources of inequality with regard to political participation (Verba, Schlozman & Brady 1995).[6] The analysis proceeds in several steps. First, we present a bivariate comparison of various forms of inequalities in emerging and conventional action repertoires in two points in time, namely in 1974 and 2002 for a number of countries for which we have comparative data. These include the participant countries in the *Political Action Survey* such as Austria, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland, and the United States. In a second step, a multiple regression test of inequality in the two time periods is performed across participation types. Finally, the Dutch data set is used to conduct a longitudinal test of changing inequalities within one data set.

Gender Bias

One obvious group that is mobilized through emerging forms of participation comprises women. Figure 1 shows shifting gender inequalities measured in relative gender gaps (in relation to men) in boycotts and for signing petitions using data from the 1974 Political Action Survey and the 2002 ESS combined with the US CID survey. Three emerging activities, such as boycotting, signing petitions and protesting, as well as three conventional political action repertoires, such as voting, contacting a politician, and party membership, were chosen here for the graph which shows relative gender gaps and indicates the extent to which women are more or less engaged than men in a selected activity. So, for example, whereas in 1974 women were about 23% less engaged in boycotting than men, by 2002 this has completely shifted around, and now women are 14% more engaged than men in this activity.

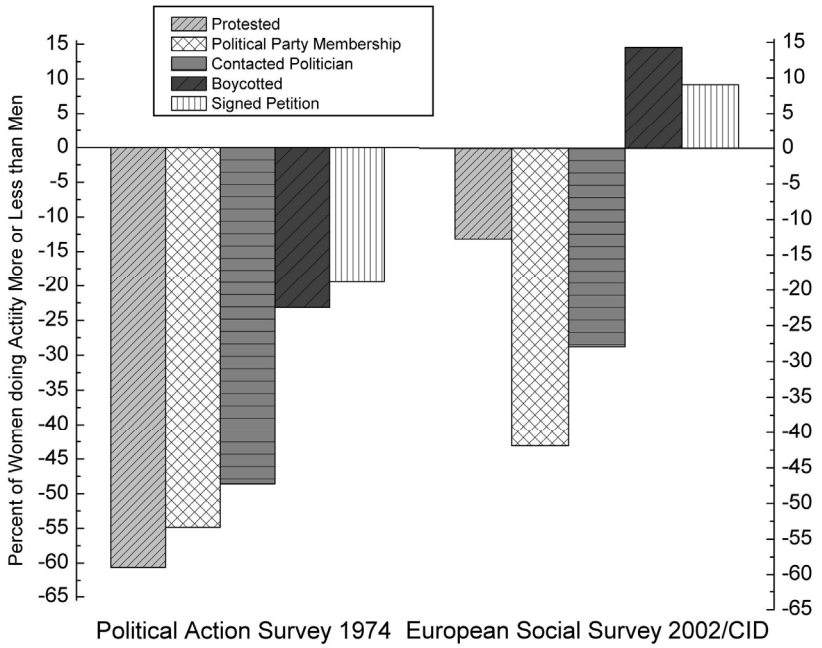
It is quite striking to observe that the emerging actions (as compared to the conventional ones) in the second time point seem to be gender-neutral, and, at least with regard to political consumerism and the signing of petitions, are actually being practiced more by women now. As Figure 1 demonstrates, the acts of signing petitions, boycotting and demonstrations all started out with the typical 1970's gender gap, with women up to 60% less involved in protesting compared to men. Yet by now the gender gap has been

[6] Family income, too, could be considered as an important source of inequality. Income, however, is always somewhat difficult to measure reliably in survey research, and this proved to be especially the case when pooling various countries across time. Since almost every survey used its own classification system for income, we did not succeed in assembling a reliable and comparable measurement of income across time. Therefore, in the subsequent analysis, we will stress the importance of education level, since this is the closest measurement to socio-economic status measured reliably.

either reversed (as in the case of boycotting and petitions) or has declined drastically (as in the case of protests). For acts that clearly show a downward trend according to the literature (party membership, contacting a politician etc.), on the other hand, the traditional gender gap diminished only to a degree. In fact, party membership and contacting politicians have not only declined in the general population, but they have also remained predominantly male activities with relative gender gaps of 42 and 28% respectively in 2002.

Figure 1

Gender Inequalities in 1974 and 2002



Source: 1974 Political Action Survey; 2002/2005 ESS and CID surveys. Countries include Austria, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland and the United States.

Note: Bars represent relative aggregate gender gaps on various political acts, indicating the percentage that women are more or less engaged than men.

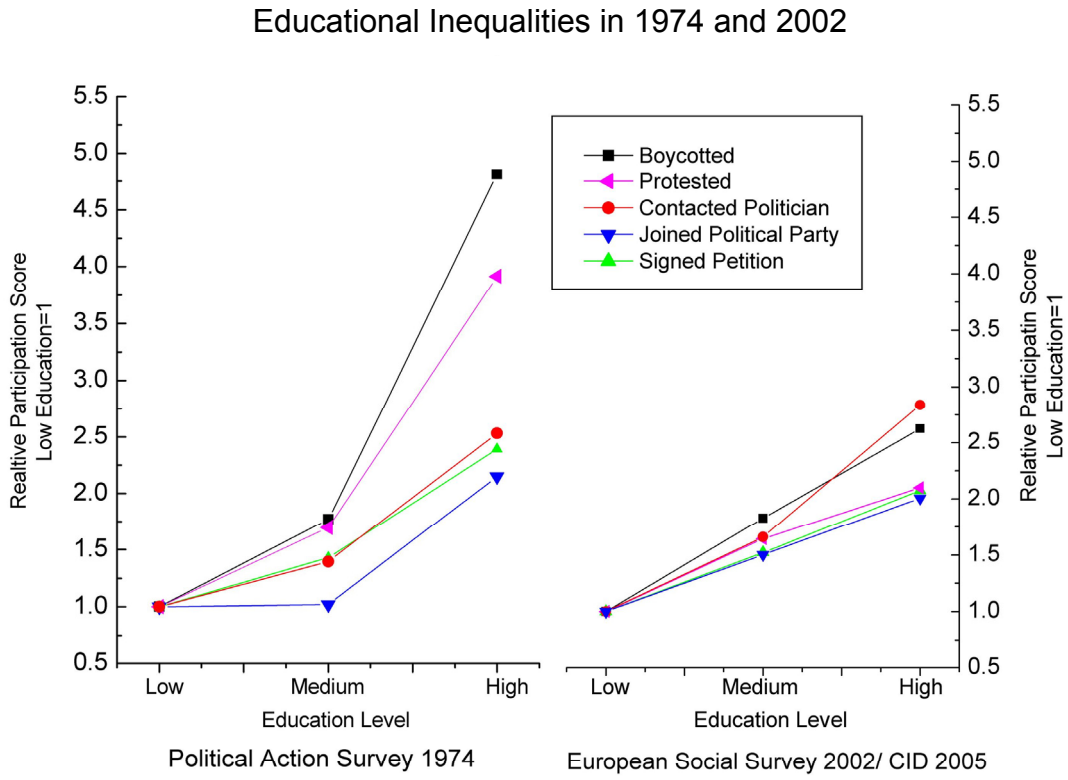
Other data analyses confirm this finding. In 10 out of 16 Western European countries included in the World Value survey, the gender gap for boycotting decreased steadily and was reversed in some Scandinavian countries. For the usually unmeasured activity of "buycotting" (i.e., deliberately *buying* products for ethical or political reasons), women's engagement vis-à-vis men's is even stronger, which is indicated by an analysis of the 2002 ESS: in all countries but Spain more women are involved in buycotting than

men (results not shown). In sum, some emerging forms of participation mobilize and include groups of the population (in this case women) that have been previously excluded altogether, or at least included disproportionately.

Educational Bias

Education has emerged as a basic and ubiquitous form of inequality. Verba, Schlozman & Brady (1995: 334 ff.) found that education is one of the strongest predictors of all forms of political participation. How do emerging political action repertoires change the education bias for political participation?

Figure 2



Source: 1974 Political Action Survey; 2002/2005 ESS and CID surveys. Countries include Austria, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland and the United States.

Notes: Participation ratios in five forms of political engagement, for three education categories. The ratios are standardized to the lowest educational group. Countries include Austria, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland and the United States.

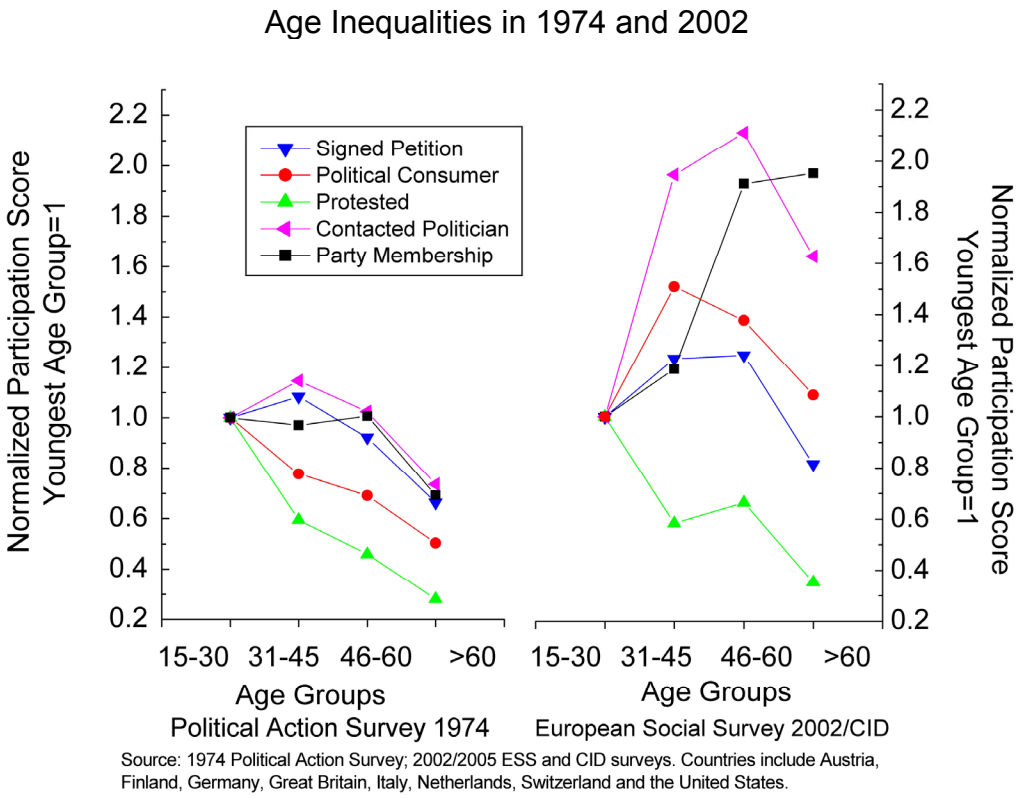
In Figure 2 relative participation scores which were normalized to the participation level of the lowest education group are presented, meaning that the activity level of the lowest educational groups is set to one or 100%, and the higher educational groups are compared to this level. So, for example, for the most unequal form of participation of boycotting in the 1970s the Figure shows that the highest educational group is nearly five times as engaged in boycotting than the lowest educational group. The results in Figure 3 demonstrate that education is an influential factor for almost every form of political action in the 1970's. This is particularly true for boycotts and protest politics, which back then were some of the newest forms of participation. 1970's protesting also showed significant signs of inequality as it was practiced nearly four times as frequently by the group with the highest education level, in comparison to groups with the lowest. In 2002, education still drives participation in the emerging action repertoires, but as we can see to a lesser extent. With regard to taking part in demonstrations and boycotts we observe a somewhat mainstreaming effect: while in the early 1970s these were typical activities for the highly educated, in 2002 inequality with regard to demonstrating is basically the same as with regard to other forms of participation. This indicates that demonstrations and rallies today include a more wide-spread segment of the population (Norris, Walgrave & van Aelst 2005). In addition, boycotts show a more reduced educational curve, while highly educated people are still 2.6, times more likely to practice this form of political consumerism than are the less educated. This result confirms other research showing how political consumerism preserves an educational bias (Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti 2005).

In sum, emerging forms of participation do not significantly diminish the inequalities between participants regarding educational resources. On the other hand, and contrary to some of the more pessimistic assumptions, they do not strengthen inequalities either. Instead the educational inequalities are there, but in a slightly more dampened form than in the 1970's. The pessimism in the work of Skocpol, Verba et al. and other authors, therefore, does not seem to be completely warranted by the evidence presented here.

Age Bias

Age is another factor that biases forms of political participation. It is particularly important to understand which forms are more inclusive for younger people, as scholarly views clash here as to how engaged young people have become over time. Older generations have been praised for their generous level of engagement. Given our previous discussions we would expect that young citizens are more drawn toward emerging forms of participation, more than even three decades ago, and in contrast to older citizens who we expect to engage disproportionately in traditional forms.

Figure 3



Our expectations have been confirmed in most regards. Back in the early 1970s the youngest age groups of 15-30 years were often the ones experimenting with then new forms of political participation. For example, the youngest were 3.5 times more likely to protest than the oldest age group (over sixty) and more than two times as likely to boycott. For voting and membership in political parties, older age groups were more engaged: a pattern that also holds for the year 2002. In fact, all conventional and institutionalized political acts in 2002 show a very large age bias; for party membership or for contacting a politician, older age groups are involved almost twice as often as the youngest people. But at the same time the youngest citizens clearly take the lead again in protesting in the later survey. Contrary to our expectations, the middle age group is now the most active with regard to boycotts and the signing of petitions, showing the typical curvilinear patterns of the influence of age on participation. One interpretation of these findings is that we are perhaps witnessing the ageing of the 'protest generation' (Jennings 1987). Those who initialized demonstrations, petitions, and boycotts back in the early 1970s are also those who continue to use this form of participation in the contemporary period, while the present youth cohort seems less eager to engage in these action repertoires (see Figure 3).

In sum, emerging action repertoires have the tendency to engage young people disproportionately as long as they remain new and innovative. Over time, these repertoires are taken over by middle age groups, and the same curvilinear effect of age on participation dominates the analysis as has been the case before with conventional participation.

A Regression Test

Thus far, various biases have been examined one by one: gender, age and education. These bivariate explorations are useful for detecting trends of inequality. Moreover, the relative scores indicate trends independent of the rise or decline in selected participatory repertoires. Yet these relationships need to be tested in a multiple regression model for a better understanding of inequalities in a cross-national context. Since the focus in this article is on determining the significant changes between 1974 and 2002, we had to limit the analysis to political acts that were measured in an equivalent manner in the two surveys. Two models are presented, with the following as dependent variables:

I) emerging participation acts (signing petitions, participating in boycotts and in demonstrations)

II) conventional participation acts (contacting politicians and party membership)

In both cases, the dependent variable is dichotomous: having participated in one or all of these acts, or not, which implies the use of binary logistic regression as the method of analysis. As independent variables, we include the most important forms of inequality, i.e., gender, age and education levels as well as all country dummies. All cases are weighted equally per country in order to ensure that large sample countries do not dominate the analyses.

The results from this multiple regression analysis largely confirm our bivariate exploration of the data. For education we do not observe meaningful differences between the 1974 and the 2002 results, indicating that the lower and medium education groups are consistently less engaged in both forms of participation than are the high education groups. Also, younger age groups are more engaged in emerging forms of participation in both points in time, just as they are clearly less engaged in conventional acts. This was most significant in 2002. There is an interesting reversal for the 31-45 age group. Whereas they had practiced more conventional politics in 1974 than the oldest age group, in 2002 this difference has been reversed, suggesting that there are clear generational effects. The 46-60 age group appears to be the most engaged in conventional acts throughout the two time periods.

The strongest difference between the analyses of the two surveys though emerges for gender. For institutionalized forms of participation, the gender gap remains significant

in the two points in time. For the emerging participation acts, the gender gap in 2002 is reversed, with women now significantly more active than men in these acts such as signing petitions, and joining boycotts and protests. More specifically, women now have 13% higher odds of being engaged in the emerging action repertoires when compared to men. From earlier analyses we know that this relationship is mostly driven by boycotts and signing petitions.

Table 1: Comparison of the Equality of Various Forms of Political Participation

	Political Action Survey		**ESS 2002**	
	Conventional	Emerging	Conventional	Emerging
Gender	-1.000**** (.368)	-.678**** (.507)	-.435**** (.647)	.122*** (1.130)
Education low	-1.342**** (.261)	-1.056**** (.348)	-1.292**** (.275)	-1.220**** (2.95)
Education medium	-.916**** (.400)	-.801**** (.449)	-.597**** (.550)	-.652**** (.521)
Age 15-30	-.174*** (.841)	.925**** (2.521)	-.781**** (.458)	.327**** (1.387)
Age 31-45	.312**** (1.366)	.632**** (1.882)	-.144** (.866)	.231**** (1.260)
Age 46-60	.313**** (1.368)	.449**** (1.567)	.167** (1.182)	.355**** (1.426)
Constant	1.069**** (2.913)	-1.304**** (.271)	.005 (1.005)	-1.456**** (.233)
Nagelkerke R^2	.176	.125	.101	.100

Source: 1974 Political Action Survey; 2002/2005 ESS and CID surveys. Country dummies include Austria, Finland, Germany, Great Britain, Italy, Netherlands, Switzerland and the United States as reference case. Emerging political repertoires: signing petitions, participating in a march or protest, and boycotting. Conventional political repertoires: party membership and contacting politicians. Reference categories: male, high education, age 60 and over. Entries are results from a binary logistic regression, with B coefficients and (Exp(B)) in parentheses ****:<.001, ***:<.01; **:<.05; *<.1. Note, dependent on the dependent variable and survey, the sample size varies between 10,231 and 14,688.

Although comparing the biases in two data sets, which are about 30 years apart and contain similar but not identical measurements, constitutes an important test, the ultimate analysis should utilize a longitudinal data set. The problem is that such data sets are not readily available. It appears that only the Dutch elections studies included the emerging forms of participation found already in the 1970's, right until the currently available data of 1998. The availability of a reliable time series for the Netherlands allows for an

analysis that includes interaction effects of the socio-economic variables that measure potential biases and the year of the survey, such that inequalities over time can be revealed.

The Dutch data set has a few limitations: it only contains two emerging forms of political participation, specifically, the signing of petitions and protest participation. In addition, of the two conventional political acts only data regarding party membership were available. The other disadvantage is that it can only help to test the propositions in a one-country setting. Nevertheless, a separate analysis of the Dutch Political Action and ESS data reveals that the Netherlands do not diverge from the patterns found in other Western democracies (this analysis is available from the authors).

In a first set of regression models, we include the year of the survey, as well as gender, education and age as categorical variables, whereas the second set of models include interaction terms between the year of the survey, and gender, education and age. The interaction terms were included separately for better interpretation; they indicate whether any of the biases in gender, education and age have strengthened or weakened over time.[7] This analysis was conducted for the two available emerging forms (see first four columns) and repeated for party membership (see last four columns). The results from the Dutch longitudinal analysis largely confirm our earlier findings. Both Models 1 in Table 2 indicate that the year of the survey is positively related to the emerging forms of participation and negatively related to party membership, and in both cases significantly. This confirms the trends that were established using real-life data on the frequency of demonstrations and party membership in the Netherlands (SCP 2004) as well as previous findings about the rise of emerging forms and the decline of conventional political acts (Stolle, Hooghe & Micheletti 2005; Norris 2000). For the other independent variables as well our initial findings are confirmed; and the results hold with various formulations of the models (e.g. also when including variables such as political interest, etc.). Younger people are overrepresented in petition signing and demonstrating: the age group of 31-45 year olds has 2.1 times the odds of being engaged in emerging actions in comparison to the oldest age group. As expected, for party membership the relation is strongly reversed; the youngest here are far less engaged in political parties than are the older generations. Education remains a strong source of inequality for all forms of participation. Models 1 also show that there is an overall gender gap for both types of political participation in the Netherlands when examining the pooled surveys, though the coefficient for emerging forms is admittedly smaller. The stage is set for interaction effects to uncover the various inequality gaps over time.

[7] The results are the same when all interaction terms are included in one model.

Table 2: Socio-demographic Biases in the Pooled Dutch Election Study

	Emerging Forms				Conventional Forms			
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Year of survey	0.040***	0.035***	0.039***	0.031***	-0.038***	-0.042***	-0.047***	-0.037***
	(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.004)	(0.005)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.008)	(0.006)
Gender	-0.094***	-0.219***	-0.093***	-0.094***	-0.283***	-0.368***	-0.281***	-0.283***
	(0.033)	(0.058)	(0.033)	(0.033)	(0.061)	(0.094)	(0.061)	(0.061)
Low education	-0.655***	-0.655***	-0.615***	-0.655***	-0.681***	-0.682***	-0.775***	-0.682***
	(0.047)	(0.047)	(0.084)	(0.047)	(0.086)	(0.086)	(0.135)	(0.086)
Medium education	-0.173***	-0.172***	-0.218***	-0.173***	-0.257***	-0.257***	-0.402***	-0.258***
	(0.043)	(0.043)	(0.081)	(0.043)	(0.079)	(0.079)	(0.130)	(0.079)
Age 15-30	0.508***	0.511***	0.509***	0.523***	-2.188***	-2.187***	-2.184***	-2.187***
	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.060)	(0.102)	(0.157)	(0.157)	(0.157)	(0.239)
Age 31-45	0.747***	0.748***	0.745***	0.533***	-1.013***	-1.013***	-1.011***	-0.993***
	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.090)	(0.083)	(0.083)	(0.083)	(0.125)
Age 46-60	0.519***	0.520***	0.516***	0.382***	-0.397***	-0.396***	-0.394***	-0.373***
	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.050)	(0.091)	(0.074)	(0.074)	(0.074)	(0.113)
Gender* year		0.010***				0.008		
		(0.004)				(0.007)		
Low education* year			-0.004				0.008	
			(0.005)				(0.010)	
Medium education* year			0.002				0.006	
			(0.002)				(0.005)	
Age 15-30*year				-0.003				0.000
				(0.007)				(0.020)
Age 31-46*year				0.016***				-0.002
				(0.006)				(0.009)
Age 46-60*year				0.010*				-0.002
				(0.006)				(0.008)
_cons	-0.953***	-0.897***	-0.946***	-0.838***	-0.912***	-0.879***	-0.815***	-0.926***
	(0.063)	(0.066)	(0.080)	(0.084)	(0.097)	(0.102)	(0.125)	(0.111)
N	16214	16214	16214	16214	16179	16179	16179	16179
Nagelkerke	.098	.098	.098	.099	.071	.071	.071	.071
Cox and Snell	.073	.073	.073	.073	.030	.030	.030	.030

Source: Dutch Election Studies, pooled data for 1971, 1972, 1977, 1981, 1982, 1986, 1989, 1994 and 1998. Figures on signing petitions and participation in protest events. Entries are results from a binary logistic regression, B and (Exp(B)) ****:<.001, ***:<.01; **:<.05; *<.1. Reference categories are high education and the age-group 61 and up. Dependent variables are emerging action repertoires (signing petitions and protest) and conventional action repertoires (party membership).

Both models 2 in Table 2 include the interaction term between gender and survey year (coded with 0 for 1971; 1 for 1972 and so on). As expected, the interaction term is positive and significant for the emerging forms of participation, offering a confirmation of our initial finding that gender inequalities have been diminishing in this area of participation. In fact, the gender gaps have reversed over time, whereas no such reversal is observed for the conventional activity of party membership. This result is in line with the results of the cross-national analysis presented earlier. The political parties in the Netherlands, apparently, were not able to attract more female members than they did three decades ago. However, protesting and signing of petitions is drawing more females into political action over time.

In both Models 3, the interaction effect between the two lowest educational groups and survey year is not significant, confirming the bivariate analyses presented earlier, and indicating that the inequality of education does not increase (or decrease) over time. Finally, for Models 4 the interaction terms with the two medium age variables show a positive sign and are statistically significant for emerging forms, which means that over the years these forms have been increasingly taken up by these middle age groups, not necessarily increasingly by the youngest. This again could be an indication of the ageing of the protest generation and is certainly a mainstreaming of the emerging acts. There is no such interaction with the oldest generation, however, which was tested in a separate model with the youngest generation as a reference category. There is also no change in the importance of age over time for party membership.

Discussion

Emerging action repertoires are currently practiced more broadly and widely than many of the conventional acts ever were, with the notable exception of voting. Our main question was how this transition affects the inequality that is so prevalent in citizen political action? Conventional action repertoires reflect the common biases which remain fairly consistent over time—they involve more men than women, they require more education, and recently they have been practiced more by older age groups compared to younger ones. Meanwhile, the rise in emerging action repertoires also demonstrates a shift in the composition of those engaged in their practice. Most strikingly, they have partially integrated formerly excluded groups, like women, and remain open to young age groups although older middle age groups have now taken the lead. Indeed a large chunk of this rise can be explained by the increasing involvement of women in the emerging action repertoires. In fact, for emerging forms of political participation the gender gap has even been reversed, with women being more active in boycotts and peti-

tions than men. For conventional and institutionalized acts, on the other hand, the traditional gender gap is still present and has not substantially changed over time. The conclusion here is then that the inequalities with regard to gender have been reduced substantially through the emerging forms of political action but not through conventional political acts.

However, emerging action repertoires remain exclusive for the lowly educated. Education is highly significant both for conventional and emerging acts; this is true for both 1974 and 2002. The Dutch data though show that educational equalities have not substantially increased nor decreased for both types of political action. Finally, age inequalities are most predominant for conventional political acts. Indeed it is striking to observe how the younger age groups withdraw from party and institutionalized politics more readily than was the case in 1974, and even more so in comparison to the older age groups. Older groups are excluded from the emerging repertoires, while the groups aged between 31 and 60 have gained ground. The youngest group, aged 15-30, have become to be extremely disengaged from conventional politics; but their engagement in emerging repertoires has not increased over time. Overall, emerging action repertoires have opened more ways of engagement for the younger cohorts, and can be seen therefore as more inclusive with regard to age as well.

Overall, the emerging political action repertoires are certainly not more exclusive than the conventional political action repertoires have been, and in fact their potential for less bias has already been proven with regard to gender and, to a degree, with regard to age. While we do not want to downplay the importance of other forms of political inequality, it is striking that the erosion of gender inequality, which is one of the most persistent forms of inequality, has not received due attention within the political science literature. Nevertheless, it seems clear that the entry of a new cohort of female political participants is relevant, not just from an equality perspective, but also because it has redefined the way politics is being practiced in contemporary democracy. However, we should also add that there might be another dimension of equality that needs further attention. Those who practice emerging forms might be also more engaged in conventional political acts further compounding the strong inequality already inherent in any form of political action. In fact, in 2002 those who have engaged in emerging repertoires are nearly four times as likely to be a party member and over two times as likely to have contacted a politician. These double inequalities are certainly posing a limit to the egalitarian potential of emerging repertoires.

Our theoretical analysis of these emerging action repertoires has shown that these political acts challenge current definitions of political participation as they stretch the boundaries of the public and private spheres because they are practiced in a non-institutionalized and sporadic manner, and consequently target many different power-holders beyond national governments. The question arises as to the democratic consequences of this transformation. Will citizens' voices be heard as much as with the use of conventional political tools? Or will their non-institutionalized, sporadic and individual-

ized character prevent the transmission of political goals? Can ad-hoc and short-lived mobilization campaigns sustain important issues that citizens want to push? How effective are these emerging tools with regard to the way citizens can influence the policy-making process? Many such questions remain open in the study of emerging action repertoires. What we do know, however, is that contrary to some pessimistic assumptions, this shift has not led to an increase in political inequality on major socio-demographic dimensions.

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