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Do Broken Windows Pay Off? Riots and Political Participation in Times of Postdemocracy

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the role of riots as a participatory form in (western-type) democracies. The increasing number of riots over the last decades can be interpreted as a symptom of postdemocratic tendencies. It is argued that in a democracy - as long as it aims at representing as many people as possible - riots play a significant role as they are a way to express the agenda of the 'unheard'. Riots are a reformist type of political participation which create a dissent by their illegitimacy that cannot be ignored by the government. Riots have significant implications for governments as (even the possibility of) riots influences decisions about public policies and spending.

Diese Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit der Rolle von Riots als partizipative Möglichkeit in (westlichen) Demokratien. Die zunehmende Anzahl an Riots über die letzten Jahrzehnte kann als ein Symptom postdemokratischer Tendenzen gesehen werden. Es wird argumentiert das in Demokratien - solange sie beabsichtigen möglichst viele Menschen zu repräsentieren - Riots eine bedeutsame Rolle haben da sie die Agenda der sonst nicht gehörten ausdrücken. Riots sind eine reformistische Form der politischen Partizipation welche durch ihre Illegitimität Dissenz generieren der von Regierungen nicht ignoriert werden kann. Riots haben bedeutsame Implikationen für Regierungen da (sogar nur die Möglichkeit eines) Riots Entscheidungen über politische Maßnahmen und Staatsausgaben beeinflusst.

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1 Introduction

On a chill fall day in October 1766 merchants from Lincolnshire arrived at the Goose Fair in Nottingham and purchased cheese. The people of Nottingham - enraged by the authorities decision to sell the cheese to alien merchants despite a local food shortage - erected barricades throughout the city to prevent the evacuation of the cheese while looting warehouses, shops, and a Lincolnshire cargo ship. Nottinghams mayor was knocked over by a rolling cheesewheel while attempting to restore order. He called for the 15th Dragoons-Cavalry who citizens greeted by throwing stones and cheese-withdrew. Only after over a week with the support of a militia infantry and after several prisoners had been freed by angry mobs the military could restore order (Turton 2009).

Almost 250 years later 64 people in Nottingham where trialed for looting, arson, and rioting after the killing of Mark Duggan in Tottenham which resulted in six days of rioting across England with over 3.000 arrested and five people dying (BBC 2011).

Riots have been a part of human history since the existence of authorities and hierarchies in society (Clover 2019, p.129ff). This thesis investigates the role riots play in (post-)democratic political systems as a form of political participation. The main question is how riots affect public policies and therefore the decision-making process in western-type democracies and whether they can be interpreted as a way of non-institutional political participation in a democracy or not. This question will be examined by an analytical discussion of economic theories concerned with riots and public policies and theories as well as qualitative research from social studies concerned with social movements.

In order to do so chapter 2 provides a framework of what can be considered a democracy based on an institutional approach taking into account not only the necessary legal conditions but emphasizing the role of interaction between the political authorities and the people within a democracy. Postdemocratic tendencies and social movements are discussed to better understand participatory forms in such political systems.

Chapter 3 discusses what can be considered a riot based on theories from economics, social sciences (especially focusing on theories of social movements), and accounts of participants. Furthermore, it provides an economic model of riots which allows for understanding the implications they have for policy-makers and governments when it comes to social planning. It is argued that riots are a rational response to certain socio-economic conditions and postdemocratic tendencies which make other participatory forms subjectively pointless.

Chapter 4 discusses the question of violence in riots. Apart from that it will be shown that riots do not qualify as political participation within an ideological left-right framework but are rather context-specific.

As riots (and even the anticipation of riots) influence governmental decisions fundamentally different from institutional forms of participation (like voting or lobbying) while still being a valid expression of dissatisfaction with constituted political forces they should be considered and approached as a form of non-institutional participation.

2 Political Participation and (Post-)Democracy

“Yes - this I hold to with devout insistence,
Wisdom’s last verdict goes to say:
He only earns both freedom and existence
Who must reconquer them each day.”

Faust
(Goethe)

This chapter proposes a framework of what can be considered a (western-type¹) democracy. It focusses on democracy interpreted as a process that aims at aligning the institutional power of the state with the participation of the people that live within the legislature of the state. Of specific interest are situations in which the institutional power does not coincide with the will of participation or interest of the people. This situation can be described as dissent.

Dissent can manifest itself via political participation which itself is separated in institutional participation (e.g. voting, lobbying, NGOs) and non-institutional participation (e.g. social movements).

¹Most of the scientific work presented focusses on democracies in Europe and Northern America. Hence, this thesis is also interested in the implications of riots in these democracies. This does not necessarily imply that the results are not applicable to other democracies (or other political systems in general) but such results are not within the scope of this thesis.

Colin Crouch's analysis of democracy and his idea of 'postdemocracy' emphasizes the importance of an analysis of non-institutional participatory forms. The implications of institutional changes that lead to a decrease of institutional participation make non-institutional participation more attractive and allow for a more concise picture of the problems of institutional democratic systems.

Conclusively, Social movements are characterized by the aim to signal the will of an unsatisfied part of the people. Section 2.3.1 and 2.3.2 elaborate on how social movements affect politics. One form of a social movement are riots which will be examined more thoroughly in chapter 3 and 4.

2.1 Democracy

A democracy is characterized as a political system that constitutionally guarantees popular sovereignty and separation of executive, legislative, and judicial power under the rule of law (Oppelt 2012, p.29). However, this definition does not prolong as it might become an "empty significant" (Brown 2012, p.70f.) - a popular phrase that can be used by different actors as they wish to legitimate themselves as democratic.

Different philosophers tried to characterize democracies more concisely by also attributing a certain discursive situation that should be strived after. This offers different types of minimal criteria a political system has to fulfill to be characterized as a democracy. Bobbio, philosopher of law, characterized the aims of a democracy as follows: guaranteeing fundamental civil liberties, competition between different political parties in periodical elections with a commonly agreed upon universal suffrage, and the permanent process of collective decision making by a majority system (Bobbio 1988). Jürgen Habermas added that modern democracies need to guarantee private autonomy and the right to an independent live which allows all citizens to participate in a public sphere that creates independent formations of political opinions and intentions (Habermas 1996). Both aim at a political system that allows for active participation.

These accounts describe a field of oscillation between two different forces. Firstly, the state which guarantees rights to the individual and, secondly, the individual which participates in different participatory forms. The former can be described as constituted and the later as constituting force (Celikates 2010, p.298f.).

Given the definitions above the constituted forces are characterized by the legal guarantee of popular sovereignty and separation of executive, legislative, and judicial power under the rule of law, whereas the discursive situation a democracy achieves to be characterizes the constituting forces. The political system of a democracy can then be differentiated from other political systems as it is the only one that constitutes the possibility of constituting forces by guaranteeing citizens their individual as well as their popular sovereignty and allows them to form individual, independent political opinions and intentions. Celikates argues that those oscillating forces of constituting and constituted are never perfectly aligned therefore need a constant exchange with one another.

Democracies (at least within national states) are only possible by constituting an "other" which is an excluded group of people (Butler 2005). Although democracies hence have to be interpreted as an excluding political form of organisation they still are able to *promise* overcoming inequalities by the possibility of equality and freedom (Oppelt 2012, p.30). Nevertheless, such contrary forces create a field of possible dissent which is characteristic for a democracy.

Democratic participation springs from this field of dissent and can manifest itself through different forms which are further called participatory forms. These can be divided in institutional and non-institutional participatory forms. Institutional participation happens within a constituted framework whereas non-institutional participation relates to and challenges constituted forces².

²A third possible type of participation would be a revolutionary movement. However, it is excluded in this analysis as it does not relate to but rather aims to replace the constituted forces.

2.1.1 Dissent in a Democracy

Constituted and constituting forces are characterized by an inherent dissent. The constituting forces aim at challenging the state of the democracy as they are fundamentally asking the question of legitimacy of the existing system in power whereas constituted forces aim at integrating and organizing the constituting forces in order to guarantee their own existence. If the constituted forces fail at incorporating the constituting forces the constituting forces will overthrow the existing system in power and replace it with a different one. This tension can be described as "démocratic insurgeante", as a permanent resistance against the constituted apparatus of the state (Abensour 2004, p.161ff.).

This resistance springs from the idea of inherent dissent. Dissent plays the important role of re-constituting the subjectivated individual within the state. However, it also challenges not only the constituted forces themselves but also the way they affect people's lives. They are questioning the political system fundamentally on every level (Daase 2014, p.12). *Allowing* for this dissent is what differentiates a democratic political system from any other political system. However, this does not imply that the dissent is necessarily something the constituted forces endorse.

2.1.2 Role of Participation in Democracies

Participation is defined as a fundamental democratic principle which allows people to influence political decisions. It is minted by the ever-changing interests, opinions, and necessities of the individuals and the structural lethargy of institutions which aim to bring the participation into effect. Participation stands in contrast to representation³ which is characterized by the act of standing or acting *for* people who are represented. (Oppelt 2012, p.185ff.)

Participation which aims at representation is then referred to as institutional participation. It is the constituting force which has been organized and incorporated by the constituted forces

³Participation can be interpreted as a *constituting* force whereas representation can be interpreted as a *constituted* force

in order to satisfy the needs and interests of the people and to maximize the efficiency of decision making.

Participation which does not aim at representation but rather to change the state of the political system is then referred to as non-institutional participation⁴.

In order to incorporate and organize the dissent democracies allow for active political participation. How successful certain forms of participation are depends on the degree to which the constituting powers are satisfied with the outcome of this process of participation.

Institutional Participation

Examples of institutional participation are voting, lobbying (including petition-type manifestations), and engagement in NGOs. They all aim to change and influence political decisions. Although this is no characterizing criteria they are all forms of legal⁵ participation.

One type of manifestation that can be institutional as well as non-institutional are protests. For example: a protest can be officially legitimated by the authorities and just as well be legal without being legitimated by the authorities. At the same time a protest can be peaceful and legal but then turn violent and illegal.

Non-Institutional Participation

Non-institutional participation - as directed towards the constituted forces - creates a field of participation which might be accepted by the constituted forces but (at least in the long run) only if the participatory form is organizable and institutionalizable. For example, general suffrage was no institutional participation for all states that called themselves democratic, however, through non-institutional participation⁶ and institutional participation⁷ likewise it

⁴Compare for example the idea of direct action which aims at immediate changes for the individual brought by the individual themselves (Graeber 2013, p.17f.)

⁵"Legal" in this terminology can also be interpreted as commonly accepted by the constituted forces.

⁶For the example of the Suffragette movement: riots, illegal demonstrations, strikes, assassinations

⁷For the example of the Suffragette movement: petitions, legal demonstrations, lobbying

became a general form of institutional participation by creating an indisputable dissent for the constituted forces which could not be ignored.

Hence, it is often not possible to draw a clear distinction between non-institutional and institutional participation. However, some forms of non-institutional participation (for example riots) are by definition not organizable. Nevertheless, they can be participative. Examples are the Civil Rights Movement or the Suffragette Movement which all included riots (besides different forms of participation) but where the non-institutional participatory form (e.g. a riot) was not directly aimed at the representation but can be interpreted as an expression of general dissatisfaction (Dorlin 2020, p.105ff.)⁸.

The question of participation in non-institutional forms also depends on the individual. Institutional participatory forms often have some type of barrier associated with them (citizenship, financial capabilities, spare time, access to networks, etc.) and therefore are not inclusive of all people. Additionally, people also can lose the hope of having an effect when participating in institutional forms. Hence, those people will be more likely to participate in non-institutional forms as it subjectively is a more promising way for them to make their voices heard.

Non-institutional participation can be characterized as participatory forms which aim to change at least some aspects of the constituted political system but do not rely on provided participatory forms. Section 2.3 will discuss how those non-institutional types of participation influence politics in general and policies specifically by analyzing non-institutional participation for the case of social movements.

2.2 Postdemocracy

In the prior section we characterized a democracy as the relation between constituted forces and constituting forces. There exists an inherent dissent by which development and progress

⁸Similar attitudes are also present in more recent social struggles as for example during the Baltimore-Riots in 2015 (Al-Ghrabi 2015) or the Riot in South Africa in July of 2021 (Crimethinc. 2021).

of democratic ideals are driven. 'Postdemocracy' describes different analysis of political affairs which argue that such democratic progress either came to a halt or diminished over the last few years. This thesis is concerned with Colin Crouch's analysis of postdemocracy. He argues that in western-type democracies political institutions are increasingly becoming an insufficient dummy for political participation as they themselves exist but there is no adequate participation within them (Crouch 2008). This section is concerned with presenting Crouch's ideas with a focus on institutional changes and closes with an analysis of non-institutional participatory forms in such postdemocratic structures.

2.2.1 Characterization of a Postdemocracy

Colin Crouch argues that numerically there are more democracies than ever before but at the same time these democracies are lacking active participation of citizens (e.g. through discussions in organisations independent from the state). A postdemocracy still holds elections but the debates around these elections are mostly led by public relation-teams of political parties and (media) corporations. This prevents open and democratic dispute. For Crouch 'dispute' describes the process of aligning the needs of the people with the political system - or as outlined above in section 2.1.1 the alignment of constituted and constituting forces. Hence, the idea of 'dispute' in Crouch's framework has the same function as 'dissent' in the approach discussed above.

Citizens in a postdemocracy are bored, frustrated, and disillusioned about politics while powerful stakeholders and PR-teams are setting the realm of political discussions and politics become increasingly more like a show. This leads to a state of political affairs minted by a deep mistrust towards politicians but at the same time the call for strong leaders.

Colin Crouch does not state that (western-type) democracies are necessarily postdemocratic but that they increasingly show symptoms of postdemocratic processes which can be observed by opinions and attitudes of citizens and also by increasing economic inequality which results in less and less people participating due to the missing economic capabilities. Thomas Piketty

comes to similar conclusions after investigating the role of inequality in social systems (Piketty 2014).

These developments have several causes: Firstly, globalization and the pressure for companies to be flexible and act as a social institution. Secondly, commercialization of the public sector, and thirdly, decreasing influence of leftist political parties.

Regarding the role of companies in times of globalization Crouch argues that over the last few decades, companies had to become more flexible as they have to act globally to be able to compete with other bigger companies. However, companies cannot switch from country to country looking for the lowest taxes and most profitable working conditions as they are, on the one hand, bound by sunk costs of moving for example their production line and, on the other hand, companies also play a fundamental role as a social institution which bounds them to a certain location due to existing networks of people and information which they rely on. Only few truly global companies can afford to be flexible and undercut the prices of other companies. This effect is driven by the abolition of many finance- and market-regulating policies. As companies toil for survival it becomes more attractive for them to influence politics via lobbying and pressure groups. Their success depends mostly on their respective economic influence. Hence, the few big and global companies are more successful in influencing politics which - in the long run - leads to a concentration of economic (and due to postdemocratic developments also political) influence or put differently: a monopolization of production and power in the hands of few big companies.

Crouch emphasizes that it is not globalization per se that drives these effects but rather a general neoliberal agenda that could not properly adapt to problems of the free market such as a supply-driven economy due to monopolization of economic power and an unequal income distribution which limits consumers capabilities to act on behalf of their own interests (Crouch 2011). Crouch shows that a market-driven economy relies on a high number of participants at the supply and the demand side to function. Due to the way the neoliberal agenda was

implemented the high concentration of power at the supply-side leads to a situation where the economic elite controls knowledge and the individuals access to information⁹ (Crouch 2015).

This observation becomes increasingly important for companies which take the role of providing goods that priorly were provided by a (social) state as it is not profitable for companies to provide every necessary good (especially public goods) at the free market.

Due to commercialization of the public sector - especially following the politics of Ronald Reagan (for the USA) and Margaret Thatcher (for the UK) which were also adopted in many other countries - government offices are forced to act like companies. The government wants to shift responsibilities of the public sector to private companies which creates a decreasing self esteem of the government. By shifting responsibilities of the public sector away from itself the state cannot fulfill its necessary functions. These either become adapted to the free market (which is not necessarily democratic) or monotonous and incriminating to fulfill for the public sector¹⁰.

Finally, Crouch argues that leftist political parties¹¹ often played the important role of intermediating interests of people which otherwise could not participate in political institutions due to a lack of financial capabilities. He argues that class structures have significantly changed in the second half of the 20th century and that the traditional working class declined in numbers and also in influence (as for example more and more jobs are endangered by outsourcing¹²). The traditional working class has been replaced by many smaller classes without a consistent

⁹For example, once a company has a (quasi-) monopoly on a certain good it is not incentivised to provide an adequate quality of this product - at the same time the company (if it has an informational advantage) can influence information about the quality and hence distort the consumers perspective (Crouch 2015, p.198)

¹⁰Crouch describes this process as a self-fulfilling prophecy: The state shifts the responsibilities of the public sector to private companies and for example de-invests the public sector. Hence, once the state does need to fulfill certain responsibilities that companies under the pressure of flexibility in a globalized economy cannot fulfill the state lacks the bureaucratic and infrastructural capabilities to do so.

¹¹He specifically emphasizes the Labour-Party in England

¹²At least rhetorically following the public discourse as influenced by big media corporations

class-interest. Additionally, changes in the workforce lead to more woman participating in new forms of employment but leftist parties could not adapt to and represent the interests of the now working women. At the same time leftist parties became increasingly reformist which is not necessarily aligned with the interests of the class they aim to represent. Hence, the priorly given identity by leftist parties deceased and often was replaced with a narrative of racism and nationalism. Combined, these three factors change the way institutions function in a (post-)democracy.

According to Crouch the neoliberal agenda which was implemented in most parts of the western world (and due to globalization also forced upon other countries) in the 1970s and 1980s which included a commercialization of the public sector, an ideological attack on unionism, and an increasing pressure on companies to act flexible led to few bigger companies having to concentrate power in the form of knowledge and political influence (which they apply by controlling media corporations which form the public opinion and hence set the realm of political discourse). Globalization multiplied this effect as competition was expanded to different countries and even fewer companies could adapt to these changes. People feeling as 'losers' of globalization often adhered to a right-wing narrative of the importance of the national state in times of globalization (Crouch 2018). Crouch concludes that the neoliberal agenda could not find proper solutions for global competition as it cannot allow to incorporate democratic politics, globalization, and an increasing focus on the ideology of the national state.

Dani Rodrik describes this situation as "The Political Trilemma of the World Economy" where

We have three options. We can restrict democracy in the interest of minimizing international transaction costs [...]. We can limit globalization, in the hope of building democratic legitimacy at home. Or we can globalize democracy, at the cost of national sovereignty. [...] We can have at most two out of three." (Rodrik 2011, p.200)

He argues that if we want to truly eliminate transaction costs between national borders a national state can only exist if it exclusively focusses on economic globalization disregarding domestic regulation which would imply that the state could not at all participate in any social endeavor in politics hence creating immens inequality which does not allow for democratic participation. Alternatively, we can disregard the idea of the national state and replace it with a "global governance" where global institutions would be responsible for legal and political jurisdiction. The third option would be to allow for national restrictions on trade and capital flow which would mean to give up (hyper-)globalization. (ibid., p.200-205)

Different institutional changes like the increasing monopolization of economic power and knowledge combined with the resurging focus on the national state question democratic politics which is amplified by the social and economic effects of globalization. Resulting institutional changes are discussed in the subsequent section.

2.2.2 Institutional Changes

An institution for Crouch is everything that tries to bring together the will of the people (constituting force) and the political structures which can be found (constituted force) which need a permanent dispute (dissent).

Companies - a social institution - are forced to be increasingly flexible and in order to reduce the (mostly) negative effects of this flexibility they aim at influencing the political institutions. They try to manipulate the public opinion in their interest and hereby forcing political parties which want to be elected to adhere to these manipulated public opinions. Companies are aiming at manipulating the public opinion by advertisement but especially by influencing the media which in this process becomes more and more concentrated into big media-empires often lead (or co-lead) by company officials.

This effect is reinforced by increasing wealth of the economic elite who due have the capability to influence the public opinion via media in their own interest. Additionally, media-companies are increasingly becoming commercialized and centralized. Commercialization leads

to the simplification of the presentation of political content as media-companies have to reach as many people as possible and centralization of the media also leads to a centralization of power. Hence, political dispute becomes devoid of content and does not represent the will of the people accurately.

Additionally, unions have been less and less important in the political dispute. Crouch describes this as an effect similar to the one which has cost leftist parties their influence (reformism, lacking adaption to the interests of women in the workforce). Unions like the IWW (Industrial Workers of the World) often played a crucial role in representing interests of people who - due to citizenship or financial capabilities - are left out of the political process (for example in the first half of the 20th century, especially in the United States).

The IWW sees itself as a revolutionary union which wants to bring about social change by the means of general strike¹³. In order to do so they want to unify workers from all industries in a self-organized, federalised manor that allows for direct action (IWW 1905). It was founded in 1905 and has seen a continuous increase in participating members until the repression wave during the first world war and the red scare following.

The IWW always focused on industrial disputes. However, such industrial disputes - which were practicioned by different means (from peaceful resistance via strikes to armed conflict with state und company representatives) - were always connected to different social issues. The IWW was one of the few unions that actively organized migrant and stateless workers (Chester 2014), was involved in the emancipation of women and provided a plattform for one of the first working class feminist newspaper ("The Woman Rebel") (Newsinger 2017, p.20), actively organised anti-fascist action (ibid.), and organised an anti-war movement during the first world war which ultimately led to the de-facto dispersal of the IWW as members were prosecuted and executed at large due to their anti-war stance (ibid., p.53ff.). The way the industrial disputes of the IWW influenced different social issues can be seen by examining their involvement in the free-speech movement of 1909:

¹³A coordinated strike by workers from different industries to achieve certain political or economic goals.

IWW-organizers often agitated by singing songs, acting, and holding speeches on soapboxes in front of factories and on markets (Kuhn 2019, p.18f.). The organizers were regularly arrested and often heavily abused by state officials. When James Thompson was arrested on the 2nd of November 1909 in Spokane while mounting his soapbox other organizers tried to hold speeches after one another until all of them were arrested (in the end about 150 IWW-Organizers were arrested). The police - enraged by this public misdemeanour - raided the local IWW bureau which led to a call to "fill the prisons of Spokane" by getting arrested for holding speeches in public. During the following five months thousands of IWW organizers and sympathizers travelled to and were arrested in Spokane and subjected to systemic police brutality which resulted in hundreds being hospitalized and three IWW members being killed. These events triggered many different protests in Fresno, Aberdeen, Oakland, San Francisco, Denver, Detroit, Philadelphia, Alaska, Hawaii, and most notably 1912 in San Diego where dozens of IWW-members were murdered by the police and hundreds were beaten so brutally that many police officers resigned in protest. From 1909 to 1912 many regional regulations regarding corner speeches in the United States were lifted due to the ever ongoing protests¹⁴(Newsinger 2017, p.24ff.). Although the free speech movement started with the aim to fight and organize for industrial disputes it has been influential for the general sphere of politics.

For Crouch it is especially important to stress that these fights were often fought by people which otherwise had no way of representation in the political system due to their gender, race, or class. He speculates that the introduction of universal suffrage (or at least more people having the right to vote) suppressed such working class organizations but could not replace the participatory effect adequately. Additionally, the declining influence of unions is attributed to the consistent attempts to undermine the relevance of unions and unionizing by the constituted forces (especially the neoliberal ideology) but also to unions not properly adapting to

¹⁴However, most restrictions were re-constituted and even expanded during the first world war. Similar attempts of the IWW to organize protest resulted in them being blacklisted and many IWW-members being killed without trial for their anti-war resistance (Newsinger 2017, p.53ff.)

changes in the workforce and new structures of social and economic classes (Crouch 2008, p.71f.). Overcoming these struggles might restore unions as a democratic way of mediating and transmitting dissent between the constituted and the constituting forces, however, at the moment there is no unionist movement in western type democracies that is influential enough to fulfill this role. (Briskin and McDermott 1993; Noble 2010).

2.2.3 Non-Institutional Participatory Forms in Postdemocratic Structures

Citizens become increasingly repellent of the idea of classical political representation. Crouch describes that there have been attempts of influencing politics outside of institutions namely NGOs/ NPOs¹⁵ and social movements.

Firstly, NGOs and NPOs are often trying to fill the absence of the political system but themselves cannot be seen as an indicator of political participation as they are always at least partly concerned with being an institutional participatory form or wanting to become one. Secondly, different types of social movements can be an indicator of political participation (although not necessarily¹⁶). However, both of these possible participatory forms depend on financial support and the financial capabilities of the people participating in them. Hence, they always have to deal with the question of how open their type of participation is to whom.

One type of social movement Crouch does not discuss is a riot. The question of a riot as (at least) an expression of political participation is especially interesting as it is a type of action that needs few (or no) financial capabilities and is often motivated by similar desires of participation as other social movements or NGOs/ NPOs.

¹⁵Non-Governmental Organisations and Non-Profit-Organisations

¹⁶Crouch argues that many racist and nationalist social movements are aiming at exclusion instead of inclusion when it comes to political participation and hence should not necessarily be considered as a participatory form.

The following section discusses the role of social movements in more detail and especially how they can effect and create dissent in order to then properly examine riots as one type or (depending on the type of movement) one tactic of social movements.

2.3 Social Movements

Social movements can provide a way of mediating dissent of people who are part of the movement and the interests of the constituted forces. Social movements do not necessarily depend on citizenship or socio-economic factors. Social movements can affect the political system by creating indisputable dissent which has to be addressed by the constituted forces. We have to differentiate between reformist and revolutionary social movements. Reformist social movements aim to change a process within the political system (Bosi, Giugni, and Uba 2016, p.16ff.). Revolutionary movements aim to overthrow and replace the existing political system with a different one (Goodwin 2001, p.6f.).

This thesis is only concerned with reformist social movements. Revolutionary social movements are excluded from this analysis as they are fundamentally different in their goals, needs, ideology, and structure. Replacing a constituted force with another constituted force does not create a field of dissent but rather a fight between two political ideas of which only one can prevail¹⁷.

Thereby, a reformist social movement will be defined as a (non-)institutional way of creating dissent between the constituted and the constituting forces by which the constituting forces are the ones actively creating the dissent which is directed at the constituted forces. Notably, a social movement is not defined by its (non-)violent tactics or the scale of the movement itself.

¹⁷Although the then proposed change of a system might also influence the democratic process of the succeeding constituted system (Bosi and Giugni 2012). The revolutionary movement itself cannot function within the democratic system of the constituted forces (Goodwin 2001, p.286ff.). However, this does not imply that it cannot replace the old political system with a democratic one.

2.3.1 How Social Movements Create Dissent

Social movements can target different parts of the constituted force. They either can aim to replace a policy, to converse a policy, implement a new policy, or to reconfigure the conditions of the democratic political system, e.g. they aim to inherently change the constituted force (Meyer 2003).

Social movements can transfer their dissent by different means like for example public opinion campaigns, demonstrations, manifestations (Chenoweth and Stephan 2012), boycotts, sabotage, strikes (Porta 2016), or by opinion creation via digital means (Earl 2016). One way of creating dissent is a riot (Passarelli and G. Tabellini 2017)¹⁸.

Social movements can affect the constituted system via these means by either a "cognitive shift" (a shift in the way people think about certain actions and a certain framing of consilidation), an "emotional shift" (the way people's emotions adapt to certain expressions of the constituted force and how the people are prefigured to receive such expressions), or a "relational shift" (changing the way different occurences are perceived as combined and connected to each other or not). They then can achieve the outcome of either a legislative legitimation of the interests of the social movement or they can change specific civil, political, and social qualities of how the constituted force presents itself (Porta 2016, p.22f.).

2.3.2 Democratization of Social Movements

Democratization describes the process of the constituted force implementing the dissent created by the constituting forces and thereby changing the civil, political, and/ or social qualities of the democratic political system in such that it now incorporates the interests of people who priorly have felt unrepresented (Doowon 2006).

Daniela Piccio showed that social movements barely impact political parties directly but rather that they change the general discourse and the behaviour of individuals. If social

¹⁸for an indepth discussion of how riots create dissent see chapter 3

movements affect political parties it is generally an unintended by-product by changing the general public opinion and forcing political parties to adhere to these opinions to get elected. (Piccio 2016, p.279).

As outlined in section 2.2 Crouch describes a postdemocratic system as one in which political parties themselves are not necessarily the most relevant part of the democratic process but PR-teams and companies. It has been shown that social movements can effect these companies and market structures by an interplay of different actors with different tactics (Balsiger 2016, p.247ff.). These findings are consistent with the theory of postdemocracy. Hence, we can conclude that social movements can affect a democratic political system by focusing on the market structure within said system.

The following chapter will discuss the idea of a riot as well as presenting an economic model of riots. Henceforth, chapter 4 will discuss whether or not riots can be interpreted as a form of political participation within a democratic political system.

3 Riots

"The Question is then, when you smash a window, are you doing so because you are looking to grab some food, or some diapers, or a TV to sell so that you can make next month's rent? Or are you smashing a window to express anger and frustration, and so that maybe the elites or general public pay attention to your political views?"

Poor Person's Defense of Riots

(Vasquez 2014)

This chapter is concerned with the idea of a riot. After giving a definition of a riot two competing theories of explaining how riots come about will be discussed. These theories are concerned with whether a riot is nothing but an emotional response of a group of people (as it is common within economic theory) or is a rational response to a certain economic, political or social situation. It will be argued that riots have to be interpreted as a rational response.

3.1 Theory of a Riot

In section 2.2.3 it was constituted that a riot is a form of a reformist social movement that expresses a dissent with the constituted forces within a political system. Furthermore, riots are a form of non-institutional participation.

Media often present riots as having no content or goal whatsoever and try to frame riots as unorderly demeanor of a group of people (often then described as criminals, looters, or 'thugs') acting completely outside of the democratic political system. However, these descriptions

ignore the political aspect of a riot. Although riots might not be explicitly directed towards a certain policy they are an expression of dissatisfaction with a general economic, political, and/ or social climate (P. Weiler 2018). Such sentiments are also repeatedly expressed by rioters themselves. Although there are barely any attempts to describe a riot as a constructive political action - in such that it offers an alternative - accounts of riots generally have in common that they ascribe a certain feeling of power and representation for the ones involved with the riot (see for example crimethinc. 2018; crimethinc. 2021; A. K. Thompson 2010, p.65-79; Kauffman 2017, p.135-188; Bortlik 2010).

This feeling of representation, for british historian and activist E.P. Thompson, springs from the possibility of a riot to create social disturbance. A riot allows for a type of spontaneous, collective organization of people which is simpler and easier than for example organizing within a political party and offers the perspective of immediate change of a certain situation (E. Thompson 1971).

In order to create the social disturbance a riot always and everywhere is illegitimate (Clover 2019, p.37). This illegitimate manifestation consists of a group of people which acts as a collective aiming at "illegally assaulting at least one other group or illegally attacking or invading property [...] in ways that suggest that authorities have lost control" (Halle and Rafter 2003, p.347). This moment of illegitimacy comes through the active and wilfull disruption of authority and is crucial for understanding a riot. Although riots often start as a response to a certain policy they are concerned with a broader understanding of questioning the political stage.

To understand this feeling of empowerment from questioning the authorities we can rely on Judith Butler's account of subjectivation. They define subjectivation as a process of an individual ("subject") impersonating structures of a society in a process of the definition of the self within a society. According to Butler this explains why people in general might adhere to a system that is not actually beneficiary to them, e.g. a system which relies on their exploitation but which cannot let them participate in a fair share of representation given their

respective input (Butler 1997). One way of overcoming and individuals dissatisfaction with the exploitative system is to define a feeling of ones "self" which might consist in disagreeing (and expressing this disagreement) with (in this case) a political system. One way of doing so is to actively not adhere to the rules which the constituted forces assert¹.

Conclusively, a riot can be defined as a a reformist collective action that illegitimately and by illegal means creates a situation that suggests that the constituted forces have lost control over a short period of time at a specific place. It is an approachable way of non-institutional participation for people who feel otherwise unrepresented or unheard.

One crucial question is whether rioting is motivated by an emotional reaction to a given policy or by rational, obeitively comprehensible, reasoning as a response towards a certain social situation. The former is a common assumption within economic theory as will be shown in section 3.2. Section 3.3 argues that riots should rather be interpreted as a rational response to certain socio-economic situations than an emotional response to specific policies.

3.2 Riot as an Emotional Response

Economic theory often refers to riots as being an emotional reaction to a certain public policy or political decision. Most prominently Passarelli and Tabellini assume that protest in general relies on two major assumptions: (i) Individuals who are unhappy with a certain political measurement decide whether they want to participate in a collective action. This depends

¹Butler gives the example of a member of the police force telling one to "Stop!". The individual - through subjectivation - is conditioned to adhere to this call of the member of the police force as they represent the authority to which one is subjectivated (Butler 2005, p.17-33). What constitutes the self is to actively ignore the call of the authority similarly to a riot being necessarily illegitimate as it actively repels the idea of adhering to the priorly agreed upon societal rules. One example would be to repel the idea of property rights by attempting a collective action that aims at invading or destroying property of others. However, Butler is no proponent of violent participation but of nonviolent protest (Butler 2020). The implications will be discussed in section 4

on a psychological reward they expect from participation. (ii) Individuals form assumptions about their subjective entitlement in such that they expect a certain result based on what they consider fair. This feeling of fairness always includes a self-serving bias such that one's own entitlement is respectively higher weighted than other people's entitlement (Passarelli and G. Tabellini 2017).

A riot (or unrest) happens if assumption (ii) becomes more important for the individual than assumption (i) (otherwise they would participate in other forms of social movements, petitions, lobbying, etc.). As the second assumption relies on a self-serving bias Passarelli and Tabellini argue that the ultimate decision of whether to participate in a riot or not is an emotional one due to impossibility to assert an objective value to the self-serving bias. Hence, what sparks a riot is not the aim of changing something about the current state of affairs but rather a general feeling of being treated unfairly. A riot then happens if this feeling accumulates above a certain threshold for a group of individuals.

Similar sentiments are formulated by different economic theorists when it comes to discussing the role that social unrest plays in austerity decisions, namely that riots happen when individuals have an unbearing feeling of not being accounted for by the political authorities - regardless of whether they are objectively or not (Ponticelli and Voth 2020) or when differentiating between a riot and other forms of participation when it comes to welfare cuts (Taylor-Gooby 2013).

One of the few economic accounts that tries to explain riots without the sentiment of an emotional response was formulated by DiPasquale and Glaeser who try to explain riots by strategic behavior of the individuals participating. However, they admit that they cannot provide a sufficient framework of rioting within a neoclassic model (Denise and Glaeser 1999, p.2f). They conclude that without incorporating an emotional argument they cannot provide a sufficient answer to why riots happen but only can speculate about rioting behavior (*ibid.*, p.21f.). Therefore, economic theory often relies on the assumption that riots start purely as an emotional response to public policies. The following subsection gives a deeper analysis of such an emotional model of rioting.

3.2.1 Economic Model of Riots

This section presents an economic model of riots as formulated by Passarelli and Tabellini (2017). Note that this formalisation depends on the assumption that riots are an emotional response. In section 3.3.1 we will adapt the model to interpret riots as a rational response. For simplicity this thesis discusses only the static model in a formalised way. As will be shown in section 3.3.2 this already allows for significant adaptations if accounting for the fact that we have to interpret riots as a rational instead of an emotional reaction.

Passarelli and Tabellini² assume for the static model an economy that consists of N groups for which individuals $i \in N$ have the same policy preferences. Each individual's utility function³ is given by $V^i(q)$ with $q \in R$ which describes the policy in question the government wants to implement (or already has implemented). Each individual decides whether to participate given a function $p^i = P^i(q)$ relating to a certain policy. They assume that the government trades social welfare effects of a policy with the potential social harm of riots given by $\zeta \geq 0$. Given a Benthamite social welfare function $W(q)$ the government's optimal policy maximizes

$$W(q) - \sum_{i=1}^N \lambda^i \zeta^i P^i(q) = 0 \quad (3.1)$$

The next question they are concerned with is whether an individual j participates in a riot of group i which depends on whether the expected payoff of participation is higher than the cost

$$p^i = Pr(\epsilon^{ij} \leq p^i \lambda^i a^i - \mu) = \frac{1}{2} + \frac{p^i \lambda^i a^i - \mu}{2a^i} \Rightarrow p^{*i} = \frac{\sigma^i - \mu}{2a^i - \lambda^i a^i} \quad (3.2)$$

where λ^i expresses the size of the group, a^i is the aggrievement caused by the policy, μ expresses the risk of repression which is common knowledge, R_i is a threshold of a reference utility for when the individual is aggrieved, and ϵ^{ij} captures idiosyncratic components of cost and benefit which are uniformly distributed with mean zero and density $1/2\sigma^i$. μ and ϵ^{ij} describe the costs of participation of the individual i in the protest of a group j whereas a^i a

²For an extensive derivation and explanation see Passarelli and G. Tabellini 2017.

³We assume $V^i(\cdot)$ is continuously differentiable, concave, and cannot be nonnegative given any q

and R^i describe the individuals motivation to participate given the subjective entitlement that is projected onto a certain policy and its implications.

They continue to express the effect of a policy on participation with

$$P_q^i(q) = -\frac{\lambda^i}{\sigma^i - \mu} [P^i(q)]^2 \omega^i [R^i - V^i(q)] V_q^i \quad (3.3)$$

where ω^i is the subjective entitlement of the individual (or what Passarelli and Tabellini consider the emotional aspect of riots). Assuming that a fair policy aims at maximizing all group's welfare functions each individual i chooses whether to participate as given in (3.2.) and the government taking into account the considerations of (3.3) by maximizing (3.1) we get

$$W_q(q^*) = \sum_i \lambda^i \zeta^i P_q^i(q^*) \quad (3.4)$$

with which we can reformulate the optimality condition to yield

$$\sum_i \lambda^i [1 + \zeta^i \Phi^i(q^*)] V_q^i(q^*) = 0 \quad (3.5)$$

with

$$\Phi^i(q) = \frac{\lambda^i [P^i(q)]^2 \omega^i [R^i - V^i(q)]}{\sigma^i - \mu} > 0 \quad (3.6)$$

Aggrievement is caused by a subjective feeling of unfair treatment following a consistent and logical view of subjective entitlement. Subjective entitlement describes a certain expected outcome for each individual based on the individuals worldview. Hence, it is implied that there always exists a political conflict due to different worldviews of individuals. Aggrievement affects the participation $p^i = P^i(q)$ as it also implies that an individual takes costly actions to express aggrievement (e.g. the individual chooses a form of political participation to express dissatisfaction with policy outcomes). Subsequently, participation has a threshold of triggering a political crisis which makes policy changes by the government more likely. A riot specifically creates social harm (e.g. in the form of property damage) which the government can trade off with the social welfare effects of a policy or try to encounter with repression. It is assumed that the governments response is commonly known among the individuals and implied in their aggrievement as are government constraints.

3.2.2 Results of the Model Based on Emotional Response

They conclude that homogenous (low σ^i), large (δ^i) groups are more efficient in mobilizing and hence are more influential. Furthermore, the higher the emotional response (high ω^i and higher self-serving bias) the easier a group of people is aggrieved and hence it is more responsive to changes in policies and the higher is the potential threat of this group that the government has to consider. Additionally, groups that create high social costs⁴ with their protest receive more favorable treatment (ζ^i).

Resignation Effect

In a dynamic model Passarelli and Tabellini show that equilibrium policies will be distorted by riots even if the government is benevolent and accounts for all possible implications of riots. This effect appears via the resignation effect which describes that the government prefers issuing debt over financing a policy with a higher tax. Otherwise, to finance a policy (e.g. higher subventions for the poor) in period 1 it would be necessary to increase the taxes on the rich. This can be avoided by issuing debt as then neither of the two groups become more aggrieved by the policy decision. This resignation effect increases tax distortion independently from the respective representation of the groups. This is the optimal strategy for the government as long as tax distortion does not increase over periods (Passarelli and G. Tabellini 2017, p. 931f).

This finding should be emphasized because it shows that riots cannot be investigated with the same instruments and models which are used for voting and lobbying. For such models it is typical that with equal representation of different groups equilibriums are not distorted (Persson and G. E. Tabellini 2000).

⁴Social costs are on the one hand the material costs a riot creates like property damage or the cost of police operations. On the other hand, they are also the implicit costs of a riot. For example a riot of public transportation workers also influences public transportation and therefore the whole economy as people cannot participate in the workforce if they are not able to get to their office.

Anticipation

The second crucial conclusion of their dynamic model is that riots are not necessary to increase the cost of a policy. They show that even the anticipation of riots by the policy makers (and similarly the threat of riots by the people) suffices for issuing government debt and therefore triggers the resignation effect.

These findings are consistent with empirical data (Woo 2003). However, it is mostly assumed that the empirical findings are the result of instability of the government (Alesina and G. Tabellini 1990). Given the model provided by Passarelli and Tabellini we can conclude that this might not be the (only) influential factor as they come to similar conclusions with assuming a stable government. The empirical evidence rather can be contributed to the propensity of rioting in the population and the anticipation of riots by the respective government.

Uniqueness of Riots

Conclusively, the model shows that riots are a fundamentally different phenomenon from institutional forms of political participation such as voting or lobbying. Firstly, riots (or their anticipation) can distort public policies although overall social welfare is maximized and the government is assumed to be benevolent. Secondly, (anticipated) riots are a reason for the government to deviate from tax smoothing.

Hence, assuming that riots are a non-institutional participatory form they have to be treated separately from already existing economic models of institutional participation like voting or lobbying. However, one of the crucial assumptions of the model of Passarelli and Tabellini is that they have to assume that riots are an emotional response to a policy. The following section discusses if riots rather should be analysed as a rational response.

3.3 Riot as a Rational Response

Contrary to most of economic theory social studies often argue that riots are no emotional decision but rather are a combination of objectively comprehensible decisions of individuals and socio-economic structures. Joshua Clover argues that riots happen because they are a low entry-cost, immediate solution for people to overcome an increasing separation from economic conditions and modes of production. With the accumulation of capital due to capitalist economic principles which intensified over the last few decades individuals do not see themselves as part of the process of production and hence are less likely to feel connected to its outcome. He especially highlights how social reproduction creates a dilemma in intensified capitalist modes of production as the individual sphere of reproductive work, which is a necessity, cannot be evaluated properly at the market and hence is replaced by the production of labor-power which can be evaluated in wages at a market (Clover 2019, p.40ff).

Clover argues that individuals can participate in the political system either by addressing the political sphere or affecting the economic sphere. The economic sphere is for example addressed by strikes which aim at disrupting the mode of production. The political sphere can be addressed by decisions concerning institutional participation (voting, lobbying). However, directly addressing the political sphere becomes increasingly difficult as more and more aspects of the political sphere are moved to the economic sphere for example by privatization of the public sector (similar to the processes described in section 2.2). Hence, institutional participation becomes less attractive to individuals and their participation evolves to other forms.

As riots are necessarily illegitimate and therefore suggest that authorities do not have control the constituted forces are directly addressed and cannot ignore the participation of the people. For other forms of participation (like for example a strike) the political authorities can shift

their responsibility to the economic sector and hence argue that they cannot act on behalf of the people as the economic sector is responsible⁵.

Similar arguments for this direct effect of riots (and people actively choosing to riot based on this effect) can be found throughout social sciences (see for example Porta 2016, p.231ff.; Bosi, Giugni, and Uba 2016; Chenoweth and Stephan 2012). That participants actively think about such decisions and are aware of these implications of riots has been shown for the anti-globalization movement (A. K. Thompson 2010, p.59ff, p. 72-79), the anti-war movement after 9/11 in the USA (McAdam and Tarrow 2010), the G20-Protests in Hamburg 2017 (Crimethinc. 2018), and the Arab Spring (Meirowitz and Tucker 2013). Clover does not conclude that riots are purely rational as they can spring from emotions of being unheard. However, these emotions relate to a general socio-economic situation that generates a climate from which riots can occur hence what can be observed as 'emotion' is conclusively still a rational response.

Proponents of the emotional reasoning for riots accept that the response is in some way conflicted with rational considerations and given the analysis of postdemocratic developments in chapter 2.2 and the considerations of rioters themselves we have to account for the fact that (by their inherent idea) riots are a rational response given that other modes of political participation are not considered sufficient for making oneself heard.

Therefore, we adapt the definition from section 3.1: A riot can be defined as a reformist collective action that illegitimately and by illegal means creates a situation that suggests the constituted forces have lost control over a short period of time at a specific place and expresses

⁵For example: People are demanding higher pensions. As the political sphere shifted financing of those pensions towards the economic sector via ancillary wage costs the political authorities can argue that providing higher pensions is the responsibility of the companies. The companies will argue that they cannot provide higher pensions without increasing the ancillary wage costs and at the same time decreasing the net wages. As the people do not want lower net wages they will accept the argument of the companies. However, providing pensions in a social welfare state should depend on the political authorities not on individual companies.

a rational reaction to general dissatisfaction about a certain political, social, and/ or economic situation. Additionally, it is an approachable way of non-institutional participation for people who feel otherwise unrepresented or unheard.

3.3.1 Revisiting the Economic Model of Riots

In order to adapt the economic model presented above in section 3.2 to one that is based on the assumption that riots are a rational response we have to reestablish the coefficients that imply an emotional component. In the model of Passarelli and Tabellini emotions are expressed by the subjective entitlement of the individual (ω^i). We can replace this with the rational assumption of only weighing the expected benefits of the riot with the expected amount of repression.

One proposed approach would be to take a standardized version of the Gastil-Index which describes the amount of democratic freedom in a specific state via the dummy of the inverse amount of repression expected for a specific action assuming that the more democratic a state is, the less severe punishments will be⁶ (Denise and Glaeser 1999). As has been shown by Passarelli and Tabellini, the social costs a riot generates directly influences the success of the riot.

Social costs of a riot depend on different variables. DiPasquale and Glaeser have shown by statistically examining the Los Angeles Riots of 1992 that the social cost - when it comes to the consideration of participating in a riot - depends mainly on the social status (by the dummy of unemployment) and on the amount of property owned by residents in a certain region. As

⁶It is necessary to note that this cannot be a perfect dummy as even in states with a high Gastil-Index, like Germany, the judicial and public punishments for protests in Hamburg 2017 were immense. The Ministry of the Interior actively ignored principles founded on the rule of law (like the presumption of innocence) and decisions of courts have been ignored by police forces in order to punish peaceful and violent protestors alike while actively excluding, attacking, and imprisoning independent media journalists (Dellwo, Szepanski, and J. P. Weiler 2018). Nevertheless, we have to assume that it is a sufficient dummy to express a tendency in how a state will react to riots.

riots often aim at the destruction of property they are less likely to happen in regions where people own property (e.g. cars, houses).

Furthermore, they especially emphasize the role of race when it comes to riots. Participation in riots is disproportionately high among racial minorities. Philosopher Elsa Dorlin identifies the possibility of questioning the authority of the state as crucial for minorities as they are usually the first ones to be expropriated by the constituted forces and at the same time are disproportionately less presented in other forms of (institutional) participation. Hence, riots - due to their low entry costs of participation and their low level of organisation - are the obvious solution for expressing the voice of the otherwise unheard (Dorlin 2020). Similar notions can be found through most descriptions of the idea of riots by the ones participating in riots (see for example A. K. Thompson 2010; Kauffman 2017; Gelderloos 2021, p.32ff.). This suggests, that the decision of participation does not depend on an emotional reaction based on subjective entitlement but rather on socio-economic circumstances.

3.3.2 Results of the Model Based on Rational Response

The motivation of riots as a rational response (seeing no other way to express anger about the socio-economic circumstances) does not contradict the model formulated by Passarelli and Tabellini. However, it adds to the understanding of the uniqueness of a riot. Riots can distort public policies that maximize overall social welfare with equal representation because the people in question do not feel themselves represented by the outcome of a certain policy as they interpret it in the sphere of their own socio-economic capabilities.

Put differently: People riot because the policy (although the government is benevolent and the policy maximizes overall social welfare) should be interpreted within all policies that already have been implemented and are expected to be implemented. It suggests that belonging to a lower socio-economic class and therefore receiving a lower share of social welfare is not satisfactory. This is consistent with the arguments presented in section 2.3 about the unique characteristics of riots as a non-institutional participatory form.

Riots influence the constituted system by creating a situation that cannot be ignored by the ones in power as this would lead to generally decreasing trust in the political system. This notion of directly addressing the political system becomes even more important when considering the economization of the public sector and hence less points of participative interaction with the institutional system which are accessible for non-privileged people...if you have no other way of making yourself heard you break a window.

4 Riots as Participatory Form

"We often suffer from a collective amnesia about the crucial role of law-breaking in the history of social change."

Poor Person's Defense of Riots

(Vasquez 2014)

Heretofore, it has been shown *why* people break windows. Chapter 2 discussed that democracies consist of a legal framework and the will of the people which is legitimized by the legal framework. These constituted and constituting forces are in a permanent dissent - a *démocratic insurgeante* - which creates the sphere of democracy. Dissent is expressed by political participation which can either be conveyed by institutional (e.g. democratized) or non-institutional participation. Due to postdemocratic tendencies institutional participation becomes increasingly less important and non-institutional participation can (sometimes) fill this lack of participation. Chapter 3 showed that riots are a reformist non-institutional participatory form that aim to suggest a loss of control by the constituted forces by illegal means and express a rational reaction to general dissatisfaction about a political, social, and/ or economic situation. Riots are significantly different from other forms of institutional participation and (even their anticipation) influences governmental decisions and incentivizes deviation from optimal policies.

The remaining question is whether these qualities suffice to characterize a riot as a valid participatory form in a democracy or put differently: Whether broken windows - beyond economic considerations - do pay off?

The chapter closes with a short discussion about the political orientation of riots, showing that riots are generally non-attributable to an ideological left-right framework as they are context-specific.

4.1 The Logic and Force of Non-Violence

Judith Butler argued that in a democracy non-violence is a crucial principle of protest as a collective issue of the expression of rage. Non-violence emerges from rage and aggression but paired with the principle of having the moral highground over a system that enacts violence on one or a group of people. Additionally, violence does not suffice to offer a better alternative than the already existing one against which people want to protest (Butler 2020).

Nevertheless, this does not apply to a riot as the riot does not aim at providing a succeeding alternative to the constituted forces. The riot is an expression of dissatisfaction that creates an indisputable dissent. This indisputability springs from the direct tactics of a riot that imply illegal means to make voices heard. It is important to recognize that such moral arguments of non-violence ignore the material conditions which form aggrievances that create riots (Dorlin 2020). Providing a better alternative to such a broad understanding of material (e.g. socio-economic) conditions is not the claim of a riot but rather of a revolutionary social movement. We have to emphasize that a riot is not a revolutionary but a reformist social movement¹.

Chenoweth and Stephan 2012 make a similar mistake in their analysis of nonviolent conflict in "Why Civil Resistance Works". By examining different cases around the world they show that what they consider civil resistance (as defined by its non-violence) is more successful than violent attempts which they consider revolutions.

However, the separation between violent forms of protest as revolutionary attempts and non-violent forms of protest as civil resistance does not comprehend the underlying idea of a riot. A riot does not aim at providing a better alternative (as a revolutionary movement does)

¹As has been shown in section 2.3.

but is a call for attention and a call for change within the constituted forces. Riots themselves are no revolutionary protest but a reformist type of protest. Furthermore, section 3.2.2 and 3.3.2 show that riots *do* have a significant influence on the government.

Although it cannot generally be argued that a riot is violent (as it depends on the definition of violence) it is conspicuous that riots are not aiming to be peaceful due to the importance of their aspect of illegitimability and illegality. Hence, we assume that they are not non-violent.

4.2 Question of Violence

As discussed in chapter 3 riots qualify as mediating the interest of the people to the constituted forces and the economic analysis has shown that they have a significant effect. Furthermore, riots are a way of directly approaching the political system instead of economic aspects of the constituted forces which makes them attractive especially assuming postdemocratic tendencies.

However, it might be argued that riots cannot be referred to as participatory forms as they are violent and democratic political systems are by construction as non-violent as possible. That this assumption about democracies does not hold has been argued by different philosophers. Democracies, as every other political system that is based on hierarchies, are founded via the social contract by the control of violence but do not expel violence (Arendt 1972; Popper 1945). It only illegitimizes violence for the people but not for state authorities for which it is considered to be necessary (Donhauser 2019, p.22ff., p.68ff.).

Participants of riots often emphasize that riots are not violent as they are mostly concerned with property damage and violence against people is generally excluded², the question is rather whether property damage can be considered violence (A. K. Thompson 2010). For example Clover 2019 argues that property damage during a riot cannot be considered (illegitimate)

²Except violence against state officials who actively interrupt the riot. However, for this case they often argue that these people are by definition an expression of state violence and also actively enacting violence against the people protesting hence the so-called violence becomes the only legitimate violence, namely self-defense (Dorlin 2020, p.185-199; crimethinc. 2018).

violence as it is only a response to certain violent conditions people are subjectivated to (see also Gelderloos 2021, p.108-116).

Either way, as has been shown in chapter 3, riots aim at disrupting the state authority by illegal means. This is the crucial quality of a riot. Without for example property damage a riot would be no different from a demonstration which does not fulfill the criteria for representing the people who riot (otherwise they would not riot in the first place). We conclude that riots are not necessarily violent but illegitimate and at the same time they are not non-violent.

Important for whether these (potentially violent) tactics of a riot are still sufficient for legitimating riots as a form of protest in a democratic system is the motivation of the rioters. Chenoweth and Stephan, as well as Butler, implicitly assume that riots are an emotional response as what they consider violence in the framework of unrest springs from the emotional reaction to a certain situation or in other words: riots occur because people are emotionally so overwhelmed that they do not *want* to choose a different form of participation. However, as shown in section 3.3 people respond to certain conditions under which they are forced to live and in which they *cannot* articulate their interests in a different way. This observation implies that rioting is objectively comprehensible (a rational response) to certain socio-economic conditions within a western-type democratic framework.

As democratic political systems aim at representing as many people as possible³ we have to accept that - if there are no other possible ways of presenting the interest of those people - the riot is legitimate for the ones participating. Or as Martin Luther King emphasized:

"Certain conditions continue to exist in our society, which must be condemned as vigorously as we condemn riots. And in the final analysis, a riot is the language of the unheard. [...] Social justice and progress are the absolute guarantors of riot prevention." (King 1967).

³Although they always are founded on the idea of separating people in the ones belonging to a democracy and the ones that do not (Donhauser 2019, p.51-62).

Therefore, if we interpret a riot as a rational response to socio-economic conditions, we have to conclude that the riot itself is not un-democratic but the conditions that incentivise people to riot are and that within this framework (given such socio-economic conditions) rioting should be considered a valid form of political participation.

4.3 Remarks on the Politics of Riots

In January 2021 hundreds took to the streets in the dutch cities of Amsterdam and Rotterdam rioting for several consecutive days in response to a prolongation of covid curfew measurements. The media concluded that the unrest has to be connected to a demonstration of right-wing extremist group "Pegida" which was planned in Amsterdam (Cunningham 2021).

At the first day a Covid-19 testing facility was set on fire which was attributed to right wing hooligan groups. However, soon the fascist hooligans started complaining about being physically attacked by migrant youth (Henley 2021). Over the next few days it was mostly the migrant youth that accelerated the conflict on the streets while the fascist hooligans started working in coordination with local police forces to contain the unrest. Leftists soon tried to explain that those migrant youth where part of a leftist antifascist movement (although they themselves might not know that). However, there is no indication of the rioters having any motivation which can be attributed to the political spectrum in such a simple manor.

In an interview with "Één Vandaag" one participant of the riots hints at a possible reason, namely that in January 2021 the dutch government resigned after it became public that 20.000 parents - mostly migrant and working class - where wrongfully prosecuted for fraud which led to their financial ruin which coincided with the extension of measurements to prevent the spread of Covid-19:

"Then they say: We are the scum of the earth. But the government has stolen millions from families, has destroyed families. If they do it, it's legal because they are the government. If we do it, we are criminals [...] You can't do anything,

just sit at home. First they said until such and such date, but then at the press conference they extended it again for 2 weeks. Later we're inside for 25 years, just like a TBS clinic." (Schouten and Messelink 2021)

Nowhere in the interview (or any other account of the unrest by the participants themselves) a clear political stance that can be attributed to either a left or right-wing ideology can be found. Rather the main motivators are the feeling of being left-out, a general dissatisfaction with the government's policies, and anger regarding government officials⁴. It seems insufficient to analyse such unrest within the political spectrum of "left - right".

This observation is crucial for the understanding of riots through most of history. Riots are generally more context specific than ideology specific and they only can be attributed to a certain political ideology when the context is specific to that ideology. For example riots attributed to labor disputes were generally influenced by anarchist or leftist organisations (like for example during the Great Railroad Strikes of 1877, the Steel Industry-Union riots in 1919 in Indiana, Ohio, and Pennsylvania, or the cotton-textile industry dispute in Georgia, South Carolina, Alabama and Rhode Island in 1934). On the contrary riots and unrest associated to segregation were often organized by right-wing extremists (like for example the Chicago Riot in 1919) (Hunsicker 2011, p.49ff.).

One of the main reasons of why riots are mostly context specific is that ideology-specific unrest often does not suffice for the categorization of a riot as provided in chapter 3. For example, right wing driven unrest often takes the form of lynching as a distinct tactic of accelerating a race conflict (Upchurch 2021). Hence, such unrest has to be interpreted as a tactic of a larger revolutionary movement and does not suffice the definition of a riot. Furthermore, Colin Crouch argues that many right-wing and nationalist manifestations should not necessarily be considered as participatory forms as they often aim at excluding a certain group of people and hence, if successful, might decrease overall political participation.

⁴This does not prevent parties from every political spectrum to either claim or condemn the riots just as it pleases their ideology (e.g. RiotTurtle 2021)

In most examples of riots and unrests in western-type democracies over the last decades there either is no common ground in terms of "left-right" among the protestors or proponents of each ideological orientation where working - if not together at least - next to one another. For example during the *Gillet Jaunes* protest movement proponents of right wing parties participated just as traditionally leftist unions did⁵. Alternatively, riots were not carried by proponents of either the left or the right but rather by anarchists or general antiauthoritarian ideas in such that the protest often is leaderless, decentralized, and often excluded from being attributed to either side of the political spectrum (like for example the G20-protests in Hamburg 2017).

The context-specificity of riots also has become increasingly important due to changes in protest over the last 20 years: Clive Bloom argues that such observations about the political orientation of riots and unrest are not surprising as by construction (and also the definition of riots provided in chapter 3) such unrest is often leaderless and embedded in the ideas of grassroots movements which themselves developed from anarchist and antiauthoritarian ideas in the 1990s. Although such protest is not (always) anarchist or antiauthoritarian, fundamental ideas of such political theories concerning the role of participation and the way of intervention in daily politics have become increasingly influential in protest. He specifically argues that there was a shift in political protest that started in 1999 in Seattle during the WTO-protests⁶ (Bloom 2012, p.11-16).

Bloom argues that riots are affecting politics by methods which were derived from anarchist ideas including the main goal of the protest not having a political stance included in a "left-right-framework" but rather aiming at representation of the interests of the individual within

⁵Similar for the Maidan-Movement in Ukraine from 2013-2015 although the nationalist/ neo-fascist part of the movement became increasingly stronger over the course of the protests.

⁶The WTO protests in Seattle in 1999 are generally considered a turning point in how protests work. After Seattle, protest increasingly became decentralized. There are no longer 'leaders' or main figures of a protest but rather a seemingly anonymous group of people (see for example Hunsicker 2011, Graeber 2013, Kauffman 2017)

society. Hence, we conclude that riots (especially after 1999) are not necessarily divisionable in right/left but are rather a social struggle between the ones that have other ways of participation and the ones that do not. Due to the materialist conditions of political participation we can conclude that riots are rather distinguishable by analyzing them through the framework of "winners/ losers", "oppressor/ oppressed", or "heard/ unheard".

5 Conclusion

Do broken windows pay off? Yes.

A democratic political systems consists of constituted forces which guarantee the citizen a certain set of rights which allow the citizen to formulate free and independent political opinions (2.1). This possibility - which is unique to a democratic political system - creates a constituting force which always challenges the constituted forces by a *démocratic insurgente* creating dissent (2.1.1). Sometimes this dissent can be incorporated and hence represent the will of the people by democratization of participatory forms (2.1.2; 2.3.1; 2.3.2)

Given the economic analysis of riots (3.2.1; 3.3.1) they influence public policies by creating a resignation effect for governmental spending (3.2.2) and are a way of creating dissent with the constituted forces of a democratic political systems which said system cannot evade (3.3). Especially the later quality of a riot makes them axiomatic for people who otherwise do not feel attracted by the presented options of political participation. Such people are people who have a lower socio-economic status (3.3.2) and hence do not have the capability to take part in or are actively excluded from other participatory forms as those are often restricted in their accessibility (2.3; 2.2.3). Inclusive participatory forms are especially important assuming that there are postdemocratic tendencies as described by Colin Crouch which further restrict the (at least subjective) influence of institutional forms of participation like voting, lobbying, or legal protest (2.2.2).

Two different accounts arguing why riots - as they are not non-violent (4.2) - should not be considered participatory forms in a democracy where presented in section 4.1. Both arguments

- the supposed moral superiority of non-violent protest and the idea that violent tactics do not succeed in a democracy - have been dismissed as they misinterpret riots as a revolutionary participatory form. A riot, however, does not aim to provide a better alternative to constituted forces but only expresses dissatisfaction with the existing forces. Combined with the analysis of the economic implications of riots it has to be argued that a riot is a reformist non-institutional participatory form. Section 4.3 briefly discusses the question of whether riots can be seen as left or right and concluded that both categories only apply in exceptional cases as riots are generally rather context-specific than ideology-specific.

Questions remaining open are who actually participates in riots and, hence, whether they are inherently more inclusive than other participatory forms¹. Additionally, an interesting question is how different reactions by the constituted forces influence future riot behavior². As Passarelli and G. Tabellini 2017 show, economic theories of protest cannot sufficiently account for differences between institutional and non-institutional participation. Hence, further research is needed to provide a consistent and enriched understanding of how social movements affect government decisions and public policies³.

¹A. K. Thompson 2010 suggests that due to the provided anonymity riots are more inclusive for people discriminated against for gender and race. However, this result is only based on individual accounts and not on empirical data.

²Individual accounts of protesters as presented by Dellwo, Szepanski, and J. P. Weiler 2018 suggest that increased repression by the government does create a feeling of unity among the protesters and simultaneously increases grievance and dissatisfaction of the protesters. Contrarily, Passarelli and G. Tabellini 2017 suggest that increased repression reduces the motivation of protesters and makes other types of participation more attractive.

³Although there is extensive literature on social movements from social studies economics generally seems to wrongfully ignore the differences between institutional and non-institutional participation.

Given postdemocratic tendencies we are likely to observe an increase in riots over the next few years. This does not mean that there are no alternatives which can provide a more constructive solution to the postdemocratic dilemma of missing representation along the lines of class, race, and gender. However, fulfilling the demands of such alternatives will most likely be a long and strenuous task that redefines the way we see and interpret the idea of democracy and fill it with live.

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