



Mateus Meeting, 15th - 16th October

**Social Capital & Trust
mobilization and demobilization in modern democracies**

Carreira da Silva, Filipe

Institute of Social Sciences, University of Lisbon, Portugal

**As razões de um divórcio
O exercício da cidadania em Lisboa: voto, mobilização e associativismo**

This paper discusses the results of a study funded by the Lisbon city hall in 2009-2010 and developed by two research teams from the ICS-UL and ISEG on the exercise of citizenship rights in the city of Lisbon. Two basic forms of political participation are discussed: on the one hand, one finds a formal-institutional modality of participation (associated with electoral participation in local and general elections); on the other hand, there is what we designate as “urban activism”, which includes two distinct and specific modalities – mobilization (which refers to the participation in public demonstrations, for example) and belonging to voluntary associations, such as unions, political parties and other civic organizations. Our study concludes that these two forms of exercising one’s rights of citizenship work according different logics and are predicted by different factors. Electoral participation is not correlated with any informal modes of civic participation whereas mobilization and belonging to voluntary organizations are so closely related to each other that one can even identify an urban activism index. This divorce, so to speak, between the formal and informal dimensions of political participation raises two sorts of questions. First, there is the question of the causes of such a divorce; second, there is the question of its consequences. Socio-economic attributes (education, age, primary socialization) and political and cultural indicators (media exposure, ideological self-positioning) help us understand the reasons behind such a divorce. As to the consequences, there is one question in particular that merits discussion in a seminar on trust and social capital, two topics developed by neo-Tocquevillians whose main concern is the health of democratic regimes: for how long can the divorce between the silent majority (older, with a stable occupational position), responsible for the electoral legitimation of political democratic authorities and the vocal minority (younger, better educated) that makes itself heard through a host of protest activities endure, before democratic disengagement and urban governance problems assume an even higher proportion than today?