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Social Capital & Trust,  
mobilization and demobilization in modern democracies

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**Civic and political participation: a new culture shift?**  
– evidence from 12 countries

This presentation uses data from the ISSP 2004 module on «Citizenship» in order to show that there is, in most contemporary societies<sup>1</sup>, a gradual but generalized shift from conventional forms of civic and political participation, such as **associations' membership** (of political parties; trade unions or any other professional association; church groupings or any other religious associations; sports, cultural or recreational associations; any other voluntary associations<sup>2</sup>), towards more autonomous and unsystematic forms of participation, such as those described here as «**self-mobilization**»: signing a petition; buying or refraining from buying products for political, ethical or environmental motives; participating in a demonstration, in a meeting and in an internet forum; contacting a politician or a top civil servant; giving money or raising funds for public causes; and contacting or appearing in the media<sup>3</sup>.

«Self-mobilization» is thus comparable to «elite-challenging collective action» in Weltzel's and Inglehart's approach (Weltzel, Inglehart & Deutsch (2005), which I will discuss. Moreover, in terms of social capital production, this shift tends to confirm the relative decline of bonding and bridging social capital (Putnam, 2000) to the benefit of linking social capital, ie, “open-ended networks with different participants, shared norms and common objectives”, whose levels of trust and reciprocity may, however, “be circumscribed by competitive demands” (Baron, Field e Schuller, 2000; Woolcock, 2001; Field, 2003). The question to be discussed is whether this change corresponds to a new

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<sup>1</sup> The countries in the sample are: Brazil, Canada, Chile, France, Hungary, Mexico, Portugal, Spain, Sweden, Venezuela, Uruguay and the USA.

<sup>2</sup> The scale used was: 1- Never belonged; 2 – Belonged in the past; 3 – Belongs but is not active in the association; 4 – Belongs and participates actively in the association's life.

<sup>3</sup> The scale was: 1 – I would never do it; 2- I never did it but I could do it; 3- I did it in the past; 4- I did it last year.

culture shift – dealing now with forms of participation rather than with issues, such as those associated with post-materialism and the new political culture – equivalent to the generational shift conceptualized in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century by Ronald Inglehart (1990) and Terry N. Clark (1998).

This shift in the forms of civic and political involvement allows also for the identification of alternative elites to the established ones associated with conventional social capital, namely to the membership of political parties as well as trade unions and other professional associations. Conversely, the emergence of this new type of alternative elites associated with linking social capital seems to correspond to the collective and individual withdrawal from conventional party and electoral politics. One or two examples of these simultaneous trends can be given for Portugal, e.g., the «teachers movement» and the «Bloco de Esquerda».