

Can Chants in the Street Change Politics' Tune? Evidence from the 15M Movement in Spain

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Abstract :

What are the long term effects of protests? This paper studies how the level of attendance at simultaneous marches organized by the 15M (the Spanish Occupy movement) impacted electoral behavior and political attitudes in the following decade. Using regional variation in weather shocks as an instrumental variable for the level of attendance at simultaneous marches, I find that cities with higher attendance are more concerned about corruption and vote more for left wing and anti-corruption parties and less for far-right parties. Using novel data from Twitter, I document a higher uptake of social media platforms after an offline protest and a persistent difference in online activity in cities with higher attendance. Using survey data, I also show a higher electoral effect for people that have a social media account. Overall, this paper shows that street protests can have long-lasting effects on political concerns and electoral choices, explained, in part, by the creation of a persistent online social network.