



THE LONDON SCHOOL
OF ECONOMICS AND
POLITICAL SCIENCE ■

Call for Papers

Workshop: The Art of Political Contention

29 May 2018

Despite the growing interest in the micro-level dynamics of contentious politics, much scholarship remains focused on revolutionary elites and their rational decisions. The everyday lifeworld of rank-and-file rebels, grassroots activists and local support networks as well as the ways in which these actors drive wider trajectories of contention has attracted comparatively little attention. This is despite the fact that the social foundations of resistance and revolutionary movements shape the course of collective action in important ways, impacting dynamics of mobilisation, cohesion and legitimacy. Against this background, this workshop proposes to look at the arts as a window into the social underpinnings of armed and unarmed contentious politics.

Revolutions, rebellions and resistance movements around the world have utilised the arts for political communication and mobilisation. Anti-colonial revolutionaries in Sub-Saharan Africa used poetry and songs to communicate a unified idea of the postcolonial statehood and citizenship. Rural insurgencies in Asia have used songs, dances and drama to mobilise the peasantry around ideas of social justice. Similarly, unarmed resistance relies on the arts to mobilise and as a form of resistance in and of itself. These artistic performances can be read as top-down propaganda of revolutionary elites and their ideologies. Importantly however, they also allow a glimpse into the popular aspirations that made these movements possible in the first place. Despite this pervasiveness of the arts in revolutions, rebellions and resistance movements, they remain an underexplored resource for understanding contentious politics.

We invite submissions from different disciplinary and inter-disciplinary outlooks that offer empirical, theoretical and methodological contributions to the study of contentious art forms (including for instance music, poetry, literature, drama or street arts). While we are open to submissions on the topic more generally, we currently seek to organise the workshop in three streams and particularly invite submissions addressing one or more of the following themes:

Stream 1 analyses how art can help understanding revolutions, rebellions and resistance movements in their wider social and political orders. It focusses on the role of the arts for mobilisation and communication of resistance and revolutionary causes. What is the relationship between arts and contentious politics? How can the arts help to uncover ideas, ideologies and collective identities of revolutions, rebellions and resistance movements?

Stream 2 explores how art can shed lights on the internal social and political orders of revolutions, rebellions and resistance movements. How can contentious art forms be used as a window into the every-day lifeworld, aspirations and social practices among the grassroots of resistance, rebellion and revolution? In which ways can the arts work as sites of contestation and emancipation within such movements?

Stream 3 focuses on the methodological analysis of contentious art forms. What insights can we gain from analysing contentious arts instead of more traditional sources? What are the differences between written, audial or visual forms of arts? Which methods can be used for analysing these different forms of arts and what are their challenges?

The full-day workshop will take place at LSE on 29 May 2018. Please submit the following to Dr Benjamin Chemouni (b.h.chemouni@lse.ac.uk) and Dr David Brenner (d.brenner@surrey.ac.uk) by the end of Friday 16 March:

- Paper abstract (up to 300 words)
- Paper outline (bullet point overview of proposed paper and its connection to one of the four streams).
- Brief bio

The workshop aims to promote face-to-face interaction and intensive discussion through a small group format. The participants will be invited for an end-of-workshop dinner.

Kind support from a LSE Department of International Development RIF-funded Small Research Grant means we can offer limited funding for participants within the UK travelling from outside of London.