Notwithstanding the practical and theoretical relevance of the topic, the interactions between civil society and democratization have rarely been addressed in a systematic way. Additionally, even though social movements and civil society organizations are increasingly recognized, in political as well as scientific debates, as important actors in democracies, interactions between research and thinking in the two fields has been rare. The seminar addresses the role of social movements in democratization processes, bridging social sciences approaches to social movements and democracy. With a theoretical interest in the interactions between structure and agency, we shall discuss contributions from the “transitology” approach to democratization and the political process approach to social movements, as well as more innovative approaches in both areas, addressing both structural preconditions as well as the actors’ strategies, and therefore looking at the intersection of structure and agency. We shall address different sub-questions linked to the broad question of social movements’ participation in democratization processes: a) under which (external and internal conditions) do social movements support democratization processes? b) Under which conditions do they mobilize for democracy? c) Under which conditions are they successful in triggering democratization processes? d) And, finally, which are the legacy of the participation of the civil society during transition to democracy on the quality of democracy during consolidation? Various waves and cases of democratization processes will be discussed.

Participants are expected to give short presentations, when possible linking the general discussion with their own research projects.

Session 1. – 03 October – Social Movement and democratization: An Introduction


Session 2. – 10 October – Forms of resistance in Authoritarian Regimes

Boudreau, V. 2004, Resisting Dictatorship, Cambridge University Press, chapters 1, 2, 9

Johnston, Hank, 2011, States and Social Movements, London, Polity, chap. 4

Bayat, Asef, 1997, Street Politics. Poor People’s Movements in Iran, New York, Columbia University Press, chap. 1, 8

Session 3. – 17 October – Networks in movements for democracy

Osa, M. 2003, Networks in Opposition, in M. Diani and D. McAdam, eds. Social Movements and Networks, Oxford University Press, 77-104.


Session 4. – 24 October – Democratization and class politics


Session 5. – 07 November – Eventful protests for democracy


Session 6. – 14 November – Transforming identities in mobilization


Session 7. – 21 November – International norms and Diffusion processes


Session 8. – 28 November – Civil society organizations after transition


Session 9. – 05 December – Authoritarianism as Reactions to Movement


Session 10. – 12 December – Deepening Democracy
