



Statistics and Actuarial Science Seminar

Title: Socially Optimal Protests and Heterogeneous Preference among Citizens: A Simulation Study

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Date: Mon 4th October 2021 at 12:00PM

Location: Online

Abstract: When are citizens more likely to form socially optimal protests? The social optimality of protests means the societal cost of a protest is lower than that of a socially undesirable outcome (such as inequality, environmental hazards, or war) the protest aims to prevent. While the literature on protests has explained the causes and consequences of non-violent and violent protests, it remains unclear under what conditions citizens form socially optimal or sub-optimal protests. To examine this, I develop a simulation model varying the distributional assumptions of the societal costs and that of citizens' individual shares of these costs. Intuitively, a protest should be more likely as the societal cost of a protest lowers or the societal cost of a socially undesirable outcome a protest aims to prevent increases. However, the simulation finds this apparently intuitive theoretical conclusion does not hold if the society is as polarized a situation as where the majority of citizens estimate the societal costs far from the objective measures. This result partially explains many real-life instances where a protest is formed against a socially optimal outcome.