Edited by Marcos Ancelovici, Pascale Dufour and Héloïse Nez

Street Politics in the Age of Austerity

From the Indignados to Occupy

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Protest and Social Movements

Recent years have seen an explosion of protest movements around the world, and academic theories are racing to catch up with them. This series aims to further our understanding of the origins, dealings, decisions, and outcomes of social movements by fostering dialogue among many traditions of thought, across European nations and across continents. All theoretical perspectives are welcome. Books in the series typically combine theory with empirical research, dealing with various types of mobilization, from neighborhood groups to revolutions. We especially welcome work that synthesizes or compares different approaches to social movements, such as cultural and structural traditions, micro- and macro-social, economic and ideal, or qualitative and quantitative. Books in the series will be published in English. One goal is to encourage non-native speakers to introduce their work to Anglophone audiences. Another is to maximize accessibility: all books will be available in open access within a year after printed publication.

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Amsterdam University Press

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1   Introduction

From the Indignados to Occupy: Prospects for Comparison

Pascale Dufour, Héloïse Nez and Marcos Ancelovici

In the spring of 2011, public squares in Spain were taken over by thousands of residents and activists calling for social reforms and a transformation of the political system. The so-called 'Indignados' or 15 May movement (15M movement), as it is known in Spain, is still active today, but its forms of action have changed. Instead of mass demonstrations and occupations of public squares, the movement has developed at the neighborhood level, primarily around housing and social solidarity issues.

Similarly, anti-austerity protests emerged in Greece in the wake of the Spanish 15M movement, with daily gatherings of 'outraged' Greeks in Syntagma Square in Athens. These protests are considered to be a first "peak in the cycle of struggles in Greece against an unpopular government and the patronage of the country under the Troika of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the European Union (EU) and the European Central Bank (ECB)" (Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013: 1-2).

In Israel, a "sudden and unexpected movement saw 10 percent of Israel's total population go out on the streets" (Grinberg 2013: 2) to demand affordable housing and increased economic equality. From mid-July to the beginning of September 2011 (two months prior to the occupation of Wall Street), a massive occupation of public squares led mainly by young people took place throughout the country. This protest received massive support from the population and, for the majority of Israel's observers, was unexpected.

In the fall of 2011, the occupation of public squares crossed the Atlantic Ocean and took hold of New York City, followed by the rest of North America. In Montreal, campers occupied a downtown public square for several weeks until they were evicted by the police on 25 November. Following the example of Occupy Wall Street (OWS), Montreal was one of many North American cities to join the 'Occupy movement.' These mobilizations enjoyed exceptional media coverage and succeeded in pushing the issue of growing socio-economic inequality to the center of the public debate. After the evictions from public squares, the Occupy movement petered out somewhat but carried on in different forms. In Montreal, for example,

it supported the student movement and participated in the six-month student strike of 2012.

Of course, these events unfolded in specific local contexts. Nevertheless, they also emerged within a specific timeframe, following what has been dubbed the 'Arab Spring', which began in Tunisia in December 2010. For most observers, the mass protests in Tunisia, Egypt, Yemen, and Syria in 2010 and 2011 and the protests in Europe and North America in 2011 belong to the same wave of protests and can be considered together (*Interface* 2012; *Current Sociology* 2013; Flesher Fominaya and Cox 2013; Della Porta and Mattoni 2014a). But is the fact that protests emerged more or less simultaneously a sufficient reason to put them in the same category? The main objective of this introductory chapter is to discuss the following question: *Do the 2011 protests that shook Europe and North America belong to the same family of protests? And how is it possible to simultaneously study their commonalities and their unique features?* These questions lie at the heart of the collective endeavor of this volume. All the chapters are involved in a comparative dialogue which a single researcher could not have carried out alone. In the conclusion of the volume, we will propose some elements and leads for a more systematic comparison.

To facilitate the comparison, we have excluded from our discussion the Arab revolutions as well as the most recent protests in Brazil (2013), Turkey (2013), and Hong Kong (2014). The primary reason for this exclusion is the drastic difference in terms of socio-economic context. The global financial crisis did not hurt all countries equally, with some currently experiencing economic growth while others are deteriorating. Consequently, we chose to focus on a comparison of cases with the highest degree of similarity, thereby reducing the scope of the argument. If we set aside developing countries from our discussion, is it possible to consider the post-2010 protests in Europe and North America as part of the same phenomenon?

This chapter is divided into two main sections. We begin by surveying the growing body of literature on the 2011 protests in different locations, identifying both the hypotheses and the blind spots. We then propose to define this new family of protests on the basis of three dimensions, that is, a political economy, a constitutive tension with representative democracy, and specific modes of action (at least in the initial phases of the protest), suggesting that the issue of diffusion must be included in the analytical framework for the purpose of comparison.

Abundant Literature but Few Connections to Social Movement Theory

The Occupy and Indignados movements in Europe, Israel, and North America have given rise to a rich body of literature in the years following their emergence. These publications are nevertheless rather unequal in terms of status, quality, and range of cases covered. We have listed more than 150 references, over half of which cover the 15M movement in Spain. The others consider the Occupy movement in the United States, Indignados and Occupy in Europe, and the Tent movement in Israel. Some studies have also developed a European or international comparison. To elaborate upon this selection, we have considered books, articles in scientific reviews, and papers presented at the conferences and workshops in which we participated.[1] We do not, however, claim to be exhaustive.[2] Many of these publications have a militant tone, blending testimony, analysis, and pamphleteering. We have excluded books authored solely by activists or journalists, scholars' interventions in demonstrations and assemblies, newspaper articles, and blogs. Although some of these interventions are intellectually stimulating and illustrate the high level of reflexivity of the movements' participants, we chose not to engage with them for two main reasons. First, their diversity made any synthesis very hazardous; and second, they were generally framed in normative terms while we wanted this volume to be fully anchored in the sociology of social movements and contentious politics.

The academic literature is plural in and of itself. Numerous pieces have been written by researchers directly involved in the movements and often relying on participant observation and ethnography. They propose a personal interpretation, nourished by a dual belonging. In these cases, authors do not use social science tools to analyze mobilizations as much as they develop positions from their own insider knowledge of movements (in the US, for instance, see Byrne 2012; Gitlin 2012). These publications represent an important contribution to the public debate and the reflexivity of movements in relation to their own practices, but they do not participate in academic debates concerning the nature and dynamics of

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1   Most of the chapters in this book were presented at the "Street Politics in the Age of Austerity" Conference (Montreal, 21 February 2013); the 20th International Conference of Europeanists (Amsterdam, 25-27 June 2013); and the Congress of the Spanish Federation of Sociology (Madrid, 10-12 July 2013).

2   This review is limited in particular by language. Our references consist of publications in English, Spanish, French, and Catalan. Greek publications, for example, are not accessible to us.

social movements. That is the main reason why we do not include their discussion in our review. However, numerous essays written in the heat of the moment describe democratic practices and suggest interpretations of the meaning of these mobilizations (in Spain, for example, see Botella 2011; Nez 2011; Romanos 2011; Serrano 2012; Pestaña 2013). Others have explicitly employed the conceptual apparatus of political science (Welty et al. 2012). But most publications available to date do not rely on fieldwork. They either build upon research conducted on past mobilizations (e.g., the global justice movement) and extrapolate on this basis (Alberich 2012), or they make general claims, for example, concerning the transformation of democracy (Subirats 2011) or the 'principle of democracy' (Ogien and Laugier 2014).

The publications we consider here provide us with some indication of who the protestors are, how protests work, and where they originate. Nevertheless, we still possess very few tools for building a solid comparative argument.

Who Are the Protestors?

Certain studies have used a quantitative approach to describe the social composition of the mobilizations and the aims and motivations of activists and participants. For example, during the 15M camp, questionnaires were distributed in Salamanca (Calvo et al. 2011) and Bilbao (Arellano et al. 2012) as well as in the New York camp (Panagopoulos 2011). In Spain, data has also been recollected later from a sample of people who participated in the 15M in Madrid (Likki 2012) and from studies of major demonstrations between 2010 and 2011 (Anduiza et al. 2013a). Other studies in the United States have relied on an online survey (Costanza-Chock 2012b). Calvo (2013) puts in perspective three surveys conducted in Spain (demonstrating that the least politicized participants left the movement after the summer of 2011), and Castells (2012) proposed a synthesis of these data for both Spain and the US. Other North American studies have illustrated that certain categories of the population (particularly those most affected by the economic crisis) were underrepresented in the occupations. For example, Ancelovici (2012) argues that while the collective action frame "We are the 99%" is effective in mobilizing a wide variety of people, it also conflates very different categories that we need to sort out in order to obtain a solid grasp of the socio-economic inequalities and power relations. In Spain, more classic public opinion studies have also been used to assess the high degree of support for the 15M movement (CIS 2011; Metroscopia 2011). Among these

quantitative studies, some have attempted to measure the influence of mobilizations on elections (Jímenez 2011; Anduiza et al. 2013b).

In spite of the methodological problems they raise (problems the authors have acknowledged in certain cases), these studies provide us with important information on the participants' profiles. In Spain, the portrait is actually quite different from the one the media put forward during the 2011 mobilization: the Indignados are not primarily youths directly hurt by the economic crisis, nor do they consist mainly of marginal and anti-system people. In contrast, it is an intergenerational and highly educated movement, strongly supported by national public opinion. Although the students and the unemployed have been involved in the mobilizations, the majority of respondents claim to be in a rather good financial situation but are afraid for their future. Few of them are involved in social or political groups. They vote in greater numbers than the average population, and most of them identify with a left-wing ideology. They are concerned about economic and political issues, and their criticism targets political leaders as well as bankers. Some authors have proposed typologies of participants. For example, Taibo (2013) differentiates Indignados originating from alternative social movements, who make anti-capitalist claims, from those without prior experience, who are more inclined to be moderate. Some results show that the 15M movement led to an increase in the number of blank and spoiled ballots, which penalized majoritarian parties (especially the Socialist Party, PSOE) during the elections of 2011. Nevertheless, the causal link between the two phenomena (elections and protest) has not been clearly demonstrated. Similarly, although the media have recently paid a significant amount of attention to new Spanish anti-austerity political parties close to social movements – Podemos at the national level and Ganemos at the municipal level – the connection between parties and movements is still pretty much in flux and, in spite of some victories of these new parties in the May 2015 municipal election, it is impossible to determine at this stage the direction it may take.

In the US, the picture is substantially different. According to Milkman, Luce, and Lewis's study (2013), the New York Occupy Wall Street protest was composed mainly of highly educated young adults, with a low rate of ethnic/racial and class diversity. Many had experienced problems with the job market, and those under the age of 30 were burdened by substantial debt. Very few were immigrants. The majority of those actively involved in the movement had previous protest experience (in community groups, unions, anti-war organizations, immigrant rights, human rights or women's rights groups, community groups as well as more traditional political groups).

Unlike the Spanish protest, the New York protest was less intergenerational in scope. As in Spain, however, the people involved in Occupy Wall Street were not the most marginalized of American society. Though very supportive of Obama in the 2008 election, many were disappointed by his administration while others were already skeptical of representative democracy before the movement emerged.

How Do Protests Work?

Ethnographic studies primarily question the meaning that activists give to their experiences, especially in terms of organizational practices and internal democracy (Juris 2012; García 2012; Nez 2012; Razsa and Kurnik 2012; Rivero 2012; Estalella and Corsín 2013; Ezquerra and Cruells 2013; Razquin 2014; Nez and Ganuza 2015). These studies highlight the specifics of the Occupy and Indignados movements in their respective contexts (for example, the 15M in Madrid, Cáceres and an Andalusian town, or Occupy in Boston, Slovenia, and New York). We note a variety of practices and forms of direct democracy: deliberation and consensus are highly valued in general assemblies in Spain and the US; working groups appear to be more autonomous from the general assembly in Slovenia, and consequently most of the activists' time is dedicated to action and concrete activity as opposed to deliberation (Razsa and Kurnik 2012).

In particular, these studies propose a genealogy of the democratic practices of the assemblies, which allows us to understand variations from one location to another. In Spain, several sources of influence overlap: the political culture of the self-organized social centers, a generation of highly educated professionals participating in the assemblies, various forms of discussion on the Internet and social networks, as well as a civic culture open to dialogue (Nez and Ganuza 2012; Ganuza et al. 2013). In Slovenia, the democratic practices implemented originated more from the struggle for migrants' rights, which explains why a slogan such as "We are the 99%", with its potential nationalist connotation, was only cautiously received in this country (Razsa and Kurnik 2012).

Furthermore, the practice of direct democracy over time in the assemblies of various Spanish towns indicates that although participants are able to limit the emergence of hierarchies and leaders at the beginning of the process by adopting particular rules with respect to the decision-making process and voicing of opinions, in the longer run the principles of inclusion and horizontality are more difficult to apply because of the specialization of tasks and the defection of participants (García 2012; Nez 2012; Rivero

2012; Estalella and Corsín 2013; Razquin 2014). In addition, though women have gained more space and visibility compared with previous social movements and though some frames incorporate the intersectionality of inequalities and oppressions (Cruells and Ruiz 2014), interventions and political proposals continue to be spearheaded primarily by men (Ezquerra and Cruells 2013).

As Razsa and Kurnik (2012) argue, ethnography and comparison have a specific role to play in describing and discussing variation in the form and practice of the direct democracy that emerged within the Indignados and Occupy movements. Ethnography can also be used to question the interactions between online and offline mobilizations with a view to testing general assertions according to which a space of autonomous communication between a virtual and physical public space has emerged (Castells 2012). Such an approach would complement contributions that focus on the *digital* practices of the Indignados and Occupiers, stress the role of the Internet in the consolidation of social mobilization (Arellano et al. 2012; Fuster and Subirats 2012; Gerbaudo 2012; Subirats 2012; Candón and Redondo 2013; Anduiza et al. 2013a) and the emergence of informal political debates (Vicari 2013), and highlight the influence of activists in the development of online practices (Costanza-Chock 2012a). This field of research is still quite recent, and we need more data to be able to understand how virtual and physical protests are related. For example, it is generally taken for granted that the use of social media explains the forms that protests took on and the diffusion they underwent (for example, Candón and Redondo 2013; Gaby and Caren 2012). But we do not know precisely how central and important social media actually are, nor do we know the exact way in which they work.

Where Do the Protests Come From?

Some of these studies situate the recent protests in relation to previous movements; we are therefore justified in inquiring into the points of continuity and change. Juris (2012), for example, argues that the main difference between the global justice movement and Occupy is the shift from pre-existing group networks to a logic of aggregation of individuals who do not necessarily possess prior activist experience. This shift allows for an expansion of the mobilization to other social categories. These changes are connected to the use of Facebook and Twitter, virtual social networks that enable the convergence of numerous participants to a specific location. This type of activism is more difficult to sustain over time, more difficult to structure around a formal program or set of shared claims, and can be less

socially and racially inclusive. Adell (2011), who has followed demonstrations in Madrid since the democratic transition in the 1970s, shows that direct links exist between 15M demonstrations and earlier ones (such as the 2003 protests against the war in Iraq and the 2004 protests related to the Atocha train station bombings in Madrid). Through a detailed description of the 15M demonstrations, he points out two innovations: participatory democracy practices as well as the Internet and use of live streaming.

Other authors have developed a temporal comparison of movements, using mostly secondary sources to describe previous movements (Baumgarten 2013; Romanos, 2013a). When they do not rely on recent fieldwork, this type of research tends to transpose onto the Occupy and Indignados movements analytical frameworks and theories elaborated to make sense of other cases (Smith and Glidden 2012; Della Porta 2012; Fougier 2012; Flesher Fominaya 2015). The merit of these contributions lies in their search for continuity in collective action, thereby avoiding the pitfall of treating all recent events as new phenomena. They demonstrate that the post-2010 protests amplify or deepen previously existing practices, particularly in autonomous and global justice movements (Maeckelbergh 2012; Shihade, Flesher Fominaya and Cox 2012; Della Porta 2014; Flesher Fominaya 2015). Therefore, autonomous movements in Spain or the global justice movement in the US have much in common with recent protests in terms of claims, action repertoires, and social composition. Various differences have nevertheless been noted with the global justice movement, such as the superiority of the national level as the main target of protest (Della Porta and Mattoni 2014b; Flesher Fominaya 2014), the strength of the territorial anchoring in contrast with the network form (Halvorsen 2012), or the decision-making procedures with the shift from consensus among organizations to consensus among individuals (Aguiton and Haeringer 2012). Some authors also argue that activists from the global justice movements have been spectators rather than leaders in the Occupy and Indignados protests (Fougier 2012).

In Spain, comparisons have been made with the *Okupa* movement (i.e., squatters' movement), which inspired some of the democratic practices of Indignados and supported them in terms of logistical resources. The 15M, in turn, changed the public perception of the squatters (Abellán, Sequera and Janoschka 2012; Martínez and García 2012). Another comparison includes the free culture movement, which exerts an influence on the 15M at the level of actors and claims (Fuster 2012; Fuster and Subirats 2012). In the US, pre-existing informal anarchist networks (and ideas) appear to be at the heart of the core group of activists (Milkman et al. 2013; Graeber 2013).

What Comparisons Can Be Drawn?

Very few international comparisons can be found in the existing literature, with the vast majority of studies being single case studies, focusing on a city or a country. Specific contexts are identified to explain why the movement, originating in central Spain, failed to find its way into the Basque country (Arellano et al. 2012), or why it followed a specific path in Catalonia (Díaz and Ubasart 2012), or why the massive protests in Israel declined abruptly (Alimi 2012; Gordon 2012; Grinberg 2013). Other studies have attempted to explain the 'failure' of certain cases: in Italy, where political opportunities are unfavorable and where anti-austerity protests compete with the Indignados identity (Zamponi 2012); in Portugal, where the protests rely more on traditional organizations and focus on national issues (Baumgarten 2013; Accornero and Ramos 2014); in Greece, where it is difficult to identify targets and prepare victorious actions in a context of strong police repression (Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013). Some works compare two cases, such as Canada and the US (Ancelovici 2012), Occupy Amsterdam and Occupy Los Angeles (Uitermark and Nicholls 2012), or Occupy Slovenia and Occupy Wall Street (Razsa and Kurnik 2012). In these instances, the continuity of movements is related to their capacity to build strong links with the existing local activist milieu. Finally, some studies adopt an approach explicitly based on the political process model and emphasize political-institutional and organizational variations across European countries (Ancelovici 2015).

Various special issues of journals, certain conference proceedings (Tejerina and Perugorría 2012), and books (Castells 2012; Flesher Fominaya and Cox 2012; Della Porta and Mattoni 2014a) have developed an international comparative perspective with various levels of detail and analysis. *Social Movement Studies* (2012) dedicated two special issues to Occupy movements in very diverse local and national settings, but this comparison is more a juxtaposition of short texts, sometimes in the absence of a large amount of data, than a real analytical comparison (Pickerill and Krinsky 2012). The special issue of *Interface* (2012), which attempts to compare three waves of contention (the Arab revolutions, the 15M in Spain, and Occupy in the US), is similar in nature. *The American Ethnologist* (2012) published a less ambitious but much more coherent special issue at the analytical level. It consists of two very stimulating articles (Razsa and Kurnik 2012; Uitermark and Nicholls 2012) and one comment that generates dialogue on the contributions surrounding certain themes, such as time and temporality, moral imaginaries, and the conception of democracies (Nugent 2012). Nugent demonstrates

that these movements are rooted in a specific temporality of capitalism, "in which the political is no longer autonomous from the economic" (281). Given increasing levels of social and economic inequality, several articles of the *Current Sociology* issue (Benski et al. 2013; Langman 2013; Tejerina et al. 2013) also underscore the interest of bringing economic policy back into the study of social movements. This last collective production offers a more integrated comparison between the Indignados and Occupy movements in various countries (Spain, Greece, Portugal, Italy, Israel, and the US) as well as the Arab revolutions, which the issue's coordinators include under the umbrella of a 'new cycle of contention.' In the special issue of *Development and Change* (2013), the emergence of a new generation of activists and the properties common to the various post-2010 movements are questioned.

Several points of debate cut across such comparative analyses. First, how can we define these movements? Various expressions are used: 'Occupy social movements' in reference to the contentious occupation of public places (Tejerina et al. 2013), 'Activisms 2010+' to emphasize current transformations of activism (Biekart and Fowler 2013), or 'the movements of 2011' which constitute a new global social movement (Glasius and Pleyers 2013). If we look beyond the words, what is at stake is the construction of an analytical object of research and, as a result, the possibility of comparing cases. Until now, the majority of comparative studies have attempted to identify common characteristics, such as the increased role of the Internet and social networks (Castells 2012; Biekart and Fowler 2013), while recognizing that they belong to specific contexts. Some researchers discuss the emergence of a new generation of activists similar to that of 1968 (Gills and Gray 2012; Glasius and Pleyers 2013); others refer to the appearance of "diverse manifestations of a new international cycle of contention" (Tejerina et al. 2013: 1) or of "non-centralized and innovative momentum of multiple protest expressions" (Biekart and Fowler 2013: 532). Several authors propose novel frameworks for analyzing these mobilizations and stress the importance of emotions (Benski and Langman 2013) or the strategic uses of humor (Romanos 2015).

Lastly, in spite of the abundance of references, the literature does not put forward a clear sense of what the post-2010 protests mean. We have a good understanding of how the occupations and demonstrations unfolded and evolved, but we lack empirical studies that deliver a microanalysis of activists' trajectories before, during, and after the protests. This type of microsociology would allow us to address the continuity/change issue in a more focused and grounded manner. Similarly, aside from a few stimulating reflections (Gamson 2011; Romanos 2013b; Roos and Oikonomakis 2014), we

lack studies that trace the ties and networks (real or virtual) that connect or fail to connect these movements across space. Given that so many questions remain unanswered, does it make sense to group together all the post-2010 protests under a single umbrella?

The Analytical Framework: A New Family of Protests, but Not a Single Movement

It would appear quite logical at first glance to consider these post-2010 mobilizations as part of a single set of protests for at least two reasons. The first reason is the time period during which they emerged (2010-2012) in a very specific economic context in the US, Canada, and most European countries. These protests are part of a particular temporality of capitalism. Second, activists emphasize (to differing degrees) the failure of the capitalist system and of representative democracy.

However, given that we are questioning the assertion that all of these protests fall in the same category, let us take a closer look. The political process approach suggests the concept of the protest cycle (Tarrow 1994) or waves of contention (Koopmans 2004) to describe a phase of "heightened conflict and contention across the social system" (Tarrow 1994: 153). Tarrow's emphasis on the idea of a *cycle* suggests a form of iteration over time, while the *wave* metaphor simply refers to an increase and decrease in the number of protests. Nonetheless, these two expressions suggest at least three interrelated processes:

> First, protest waves are characterized by a strong expansion of contention across social groups and sectors, superseding the narrow boundaries of policy fields, and often transcending national borders. Second, protest waves are invariably characterized by a transformation of contention, i.e., changes in strategies, alliance structures, identities, and so forth, which inevitably arise in processes of dynamic interaction and make that no protest wave ends up where it began. That protest waves come to an end is the third seemingly trivial truth, but the reasons for that contraction of contention have commanded little attention in the literature so far. (Koopmans 2004: 21)

The post-2010 protests do not appear to possess the necessary characteristics to fit this definition. First, movements are still too recent to be able to speak of a significant expansion of protest, both in length and scope (except

perhaps for Greece and Spain). Some authors have even argued that Occupy Wall Street is not a social movement per se but a "moment" of protest and a "dramatic performance" (Calhoun 2013: 35). The 'social movement' category was debated in Spain, where some authors prefer to talk about a "space of mobilization" (Calle 2013), while others contend that a "social movement" is forming as the internal organization of the Indignados becomes more structured (Ibarra 2013). Second, the global diffusion of protest is mostly geographical and much less sectoral in nature, except in certain places such as Spain and Greece. In most locations, there is little or no radicalization or intensification of conflict. In other words, reasoning in terms of a cycle for the post-2010 protests implies a conceptual stretch that undermines the value of such a concept.

As Tejerina et al. (2013) argue, the concept of wave is sustained empirically by common action repertoires (such as the use of social media, see Biekart and Fowler 2013) and frames used by activists during protests (such as rights-based demands, ibid.). However, as mentioned earlier, very few studies have actually demonstrated the presence of a concrete diffusion process (for an exception, see Della Porta and Mattoni 2014a) or even a transnational coordination of movements. Moreover, we lack the necessary temporal perspective to be able to characterize ongoing mobilizations as part of a cycle of protest. In some countries, struggles are not over. The notion of a 'cycle' has been used in the past as an *a posteriori* analysis. For example, it was only at the end of the 1980s that studies showed how a cycle of protest had occurred in Italy, France, and Germany in the 1960s and 1970s (Della Porta and Tarrow 1986; Kitschelt 1986; McAdam 1988). Finally, if we want to identify a 'cycle' or a 'wave' – all the more if it is transnational – we need to specify which protests are to be included and which are not. For example, in 2011 and 2012, several contentious episodes involving the student movement took place in Chile (Peñafiel 2012) and Quebec (Ancelovici and Dupuis-Déri 2014). We believe that these protests are not part of the same wave, even if the temporality and some of the claims made are comparable. How can we go about drawing clearer analytical boundaries?

We agree with scholars who state that we must "study and comprehend the local conditions of the specific case" (Grinberg 2013: 493) as well as "the social conflicts and tools used by the dominant groups to maintain their power, and the sequence of events that provoked the political dynamics of protest, including the influence of international waves" (Kriesi et al. 1995: 4). In other words, rather than asserting that these events are akin to one another (or considering, for example, that they belong to the same global social move-ment, see Glasius and Pleyers 2013) or that they can be treated analytically as

belonging to a single global cycle of protest, we hypothesize that they share a contemporaneity and emerged in a specific global context. Their singularity (demonstrated by testimonies and published studies) should not prevent us from considering them together analytically. But we should not instill them with global meaning a priori. This should be an empirical question.

Notwithstanding their local peculiarities and the different names and labels that activists have used to describe them, three common features stand out. First, all these mobilizations denounce the concentration of wealth and the rise of income inequality at the expense of the vast majority of people, the so-called '99%'. They also all put forward a critique of mainstream institutions and representative democracy. But beyond the actors' discourses and frames, it is important to consider the particular structural context in which these movements emerged (the economic crisis) and determine the manner in which it conditioned and shaped the mobilization. Second, the criticisms directed at representative democracy have specific implications for the social practices and trajectories of these movements. Third, it is possible to trace the process of diffusion that connects them (even if it is a loose connection). These three features underlie the emergence of the post-2010 protests.

The Economic Crisis: More Than a Context for Action

From the collapse of the American financial sector and the bank bailouts to the bursting of the real estate bubble in Spain and the Euro crisis, the global financial and economic crisis that began in 2008 represents the structural context in which these mobilizations unfolded. This crisis occurred in the wake of a broad trend toward neoliberal deregulation, trade liberalization, offshore manufacturing, welfare retrenchment, and the rising indebtedness of consumers, students, and households. Although the intensity and specifics of the crisis may vary, austerity is spreading among developed countries as it had spread in many Latin American countries in the 1980s as a result of the debt crisis. The deepening of the social and economic precariousness that affects a significant part of the population constitutes fertile ground for mobilizations and the radicalization of certain ideologies. On the right, nationalist and xenophobic movements are gaining strength. On the left, the picture of a corrupted political-financial elite that underlies the crisis feeds anti-systemic sentiments and contributes to the renewal of sectors of the radical left (e.g., Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain).

However, this global context does not automatically generate protests. The latter have been massive in certain instances, as in Greece and Spain,

but relatively weak in others, even when the crisis was hitting the national economy very hard, as it did in Ireland. How can we make sense of such variations? How has the economic crisis affected mobilizations and protests? Since the 1970s, the social movement literature has focused on cultural, organizational, and political-institutional factors at the expense of socio-economic ones. Indeed, as Hetland and Goodwin (2013) have highlighted, since the 1970s, we note a "strange disappearance of capitalism from social movement studies". While the changing dynamics of capitalism have been central to the work of Fox Piven and Cloward (1979), Tilly (1978, 1981), Skocpol (1979), and McAdam (1982), more recent studies tend to ignore both the enabling and constraining effects of capitalism on collective action in the short term and long term (for exceptions, see Kousis and Tilly 2005; Della Porta 2015). Rather, the focus has shifted almost exclusively to the state structure, eliminating the explicit link to economic structures and conditions that shape the very grievances and resources at the heart of current mobilizations. "The results are clear and ironic: during an era in which global capitalism became ever more powerful – an era when capitalism triumphed over Soviet-style Communism – it also became increasingly invisible to scholars of popular movements" (Hetland and Goodwin 2013: 90-91).

Nevertheless, in recent publications on the Occupy movement and the Indignados, it would appear that 'capitalism' is back in the analysis. We have observed three possible approaches for analyzing the economic context:

1   The first consists of taking into account the specific economic moment of the emerging protests, in particular the economic crisis of 2008 and its consequences in terms of social cutbacks, increased precarization[3], unemployment, and pauperization. Here, analyses assume that a link exists between the objective economic situation of activists and protests. The assumption is that the intensity of the crisis will correlate strongly with the level of protest. However, empirical results are not always consistent with this hypothesis: those who took to the streets were not necessarily the ones most hurt by the crisis or the most vulnerable. For example, in France (see the chapter by Chabanet and Lacheret) and, above all, in Ireland (see the chapter by Royall and Desbos), severe recessions and austerity measures were not followed by strong protests. Here, counter-examples and 'negative' cases are important to allow for a better understanding of the dynamics of the protests and their precise links with the effects of the crisis.

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3   Precarization refers to the process by which people's working and living conditions become more precarious.

2   The second approach complexifies the link between capitalism and protests. From this perspective, the Occupy movement is viewed as the product of capitalist contradictions (Langman 2013: 13). Even if the wave of protest has declined, the movement itself will continue over time insofar as the crisis of legitimacy that fostered it has not disappeared. Among the contradictions that the capitalist system produces, the impossibility of economic integration is one of the most discussed. The relative deprivation argument, developed by Gurr (1970), relates a given population's level of expectation of well-being to objective material conditions. In a nutshell, a strong discrepancy between the two is expected to create the conditions for rebellion. This theory has been strongly criticized, mainly for its inability to explain why people tend not to protest even though the conditions are met. In spite of its mechanistic aspect and simplistic expression, we note a return to a variant of the relative deprivation argument. In Spain, for example, young educated students have had rising expectations in terms of employment access and general well-being. The incredibly high level of unemployment for young people (above 50 per cent for youths under 25) prevents them from fulfilling these expectations, creating a favorable context for (mass) protest (Ibarra 2013).

3   The third approach is based on the idea that an analysis in terms of the political economy of protest could produce multiple results that are not fixed or structurally determined, constituting an empirical puzzle that remains to be solved. Biekart and Fowler (2013: 530-531) advance, for example, two related questions: why did movements emerge precisely when they did, and why did a single protest appear to have spread around the globe? This perspective, which we share, has analytical implications. It requires detailed empirical research to identify: (a) the socio-economic location of activists (and their objective relation with the changing socio-economic structure), AND (b) differences among varieties of capitalism. Put differently, the particular impact of the capitalist structure is circumscribed and left open rather than presumed.

How does the economic crisis affect mobilizations? Hetland and Goodwin (2009: 12) describe four ways in which movements can be affected by the dynamics of capitalism: (1) the impact on identity and solidarity-building; (2) the impact on the evolution of movements and the kind of victories they can expect; (3) the impact on the class balance within movements; and (4) the impact on strategies and goals mediated by the capitalist ideology.

These points are certainly valid for the post-2010 protests and should be explored further.

A political economy of protest must consider the social composition of the mobilization. Is it a movement of the middle class? In Canada and Israel, there is no serious economic crisis, but there is a middle-class crisis, one that is related to indebtedness and access to education and housing (Rosenhek and Shalev 2013). Given the absence of a financial crisis in these two countries, we have to understand who are the people involved in the protests. One can put forward the hypothesis that the threat of downward mobility or '*déclassement*' – where you cannot afford middle class status even if you have the required education and family background – shapes mobilizations in terms of claims, frames, and strategies. Here, there is a clear connection to a kind of 'relative deprivation' argument: those who expected to maintain or improve their living conditions are suddenly faced with the strong probability that they will have less than their parents did. Furthermore, we should not rely on a narrow view of the crisis. In addition to considering the cutbacks in social spending, we must also take into account broader structural transformations of the economy and society in the long term (Joshua 2013). Thus, according to Della Porta:

> The evolution of the last 30 years or so has (…) deeply transformed the social structures. Fordism was said to have created a two-thirds society, with new social movements emerging from the pacification of class conflict, and even the *embourgeoisement* of the working class, with the crisis of the 1970s producing a short but radical wave of protest by the excluded one-third. Today's mobilizations seem instead to reflect the pauperization of the lower classes as well as the proletarianization of the middle classes, with the growth of the excluded in some countries to about two-thirds of the population. (2015: 13)

We can push the analysis a little further and ask how varieties of capitalism and welfare regimes are related to protest in the age of austerity. The literature on varieties of capitalism and welfare regimes illustrates how the type of welfare state and historical social institutions have played a role in terms of access to resources, levels of equality (social and political), and the way in which economic crises impact citizens, workers, and families (Palier et al. 2012). For example, the US is very different from southern European countries in terms of who is responsible for the well-being of citizens. In the US, citizens are expected to take care of themselves by working in the labor market; the state is not a major provider of protection.

In southern European countries, the family and the state are pillars of well-being (Dufour, Boismenu and Noël 2003). Does this difference in terms of welfare mix have an impact on grievances and claims in situations of economic crisis? Could it explain certain types of alliances? Does it affect the intensity of mobilizations or the likelihood of success or failure? Can we relate 'varieties of capitalism' to 'varieties of protest'? And if so, how exactly should we go about doing this? What are the causal mechanisms at play? While several scholars of the welfare state have explored these questions in the past (O'Connor 1993; Pierson 1996; Anderson 2001; Graefe 2004), we believe that social movement scholars have neglected them for too long.

The Political Crisis Dimension at the Heart of Activist Practices

According to Biekart and Fowler (2013: 532), a clear link exists between current global economic transformations – in particular the disproportionate role of transnational corporations in state affairs – and the reactions of citizens across the globe (i.e., a loss of trust in political parties). In this respect, Activisms 2010+, as Biekart and Fowler call it, can be interpreted as the emerging counterpart of political disaffection and disillusionment. Nevertheless, the connection between the diagnosis of the 'crisis' of representative democracy and mobilizations/protests is not self-evident. This connection is made by protesters (Graeber 2013), but where does it come from?

Commentators often claim that the practice of horizontalism is the lowest common denominator of the recent wave of protest. Such practice is based on direct democracy and non-hierarchical, prefigurative alternatives that allegedly embody the desired ideal society. Another defining feature is the call for autonomy vis-à-vis political parties and other institutional actors such as trade unions. There is a clear rejection of the principles and logic of representative democracy. The 'political crisis' diagnosis appears to express, among other things, a civic desire to be empowered by taking ownership of the polity as opposed to delegating one's power to elected officials. However, as in the case of the economic crisis, the political crisis does not generate discontent automatically. Moreover, the boundary between institutional and extra-institutional actors is not always clear. For example, certain trade unions and political parties support and sometimes actively participate in protests (Calle and Candón 2013; Béroud 2014). We should refrain from taking the current anti-institutional discourse at face value and assuming that it is equally common to all instances of protest. It is an empirical question that needs to be addressed. Furthermore, some activists

that were criticizing elections and representative democracy in 2011 have, since then, joined existing or new political parties, such as Syriza in Greece or Podemos and Ganemos in Spain.

The literature has approached the democratic preferences and practices of activists from various perspectives:

1   First, some studies consider the political practices employed during the protests. What modes of organization and action (assemblies, open space, occupation) have been developed and are being used? How is consensus rule implemented, and what debates does it generate among participants (see the chapters by Nez and Ancelovici)? What are the possibilities and constraints that this specific mode of organization creates (Kauffman 2011; Nez 2012; Schein 2012; Smith, Castañeda and Heyman 2012)? In particular, the question of continuity/discontinuity of movement and action is central and echoes some of the questions raised during the 1960s and 1970s in certain self-managed networks (Kitschelt 1993). How do individuals use horizontalism not only in movement assemblies but also in their neighborhoods and everyday lives during and after occupations (Maeckelbergh 2012)? How is it related (or unrelated) to past practices in other activist milieus?

2   Another focus, related to the first, consists of studies that attempt to situate the frames, discourses, emotions, and practices of activists with respect to other movements and organizations in order to explain the particularities of the post-2010 protests (Liboiron 2012; Maeckelbergh 2012; Della Porta and Rucht 2013; Perrugoria and Tejerina 2013). Maeckelbergh (2012) shows, for example, how the practice of occupying public squares during the 15 May movement in Spain built upon and expanded some of the methods developed by the global justice movement (see also Flesher Fominaya 2015). For Juris et al. (2012), the capacity of inclusion of the Occupy movement stems from its use of networking logics to address power differentials within the 99%, even if it created a tension with the basic principles of general assembly and direct participation.

3   Lastly, other types of research focus more on the links (or lack thereof) between protests and other arenas, such as the electoral arena. Generally more quantitative in nature (with some exceptions, such as Fishman 2012), these studies ask whether or not participation in protests affects voting behavior (Jímenez 2011; Anduiza, Mateos and Martin 2013). Unfortunately, we clearly lack studies that systematically explore the actual articulation of different arenas of political participation in order to better understand what the post-2010 protests mean for representative democracies and their transformation.

Overall, it is not clear whether post-2010 activist practices, ideas, interests, and emotions are really redefining the relationships to institutional politics in Western representative systems. As Agrikoliansky suggests, "recourse to consensus, the importance granted to deliberation, or the absence of a spokesperson, are old practices that have characterized protest movements, from European anarchist groups at the end of the nineteenth century, to the American civil rights movement of the 1950s, and the groups that proliferated in France at the end of the 1980s" (2007: 34). Tracing the history of American social movements in the 20th century, Polletta (2002) demonstrates that activists have found a strategic value in participatory practices. The 'new social movements' in the 1960s and 1970s represent an important sequence in this history, and one of their peculiar features was the rejection of the centralized and hierarchical organization of the workers' movement and the promotion of autonomous and decentralized operational structures (Touraine 1985; Berger 1979; Offe 1985; Melucci 1989). These social movements in educational, environmental, and women's struggles defined themselves against institutional politics and thus challenged the boundaries of politics. General assemblies and a strong commitment to internal democracy were preferred, while electing representatives was a suspicious practice. The same concern cuts across the global justice movement, which emerged at the end of the 1990s. The participatory principles put forward by the global justice movement not only expressed adhesion to a value system (Della Porta 2009; Pleyers 2010) but were also a way to address practical problems, such as reconciling diversity and cooperation in a myriad of organizations that included the world social forums (Sommier 2003; Della Porta 2004; Aguiton and Cardon 2005; Agrikoliansky 2007). In this regard, the central characteristic of social movements is to redefine the possibilities of collective action, whatever the period or place considered, and thus to actively participate in the transformation of politics. What is really new in post-2010 protests has yet to be demonstrated.

Post-2010 Protests in a Comparative Perspective: The Issue of Diffusion

The third feature of the post-2010 protests is directly related to our capacity to compare movements. Beyond structural economic conditions (with all their varieties, as illustrated in the chapter by Ross) and beyond the democratic practices of activists, which vary from place to place, what do we know about the links between protests and their processes of transnationalisation? From a comparative perspective and putting aside the question of similarities or differences between movements, the issue

of actual connections among them is very interesting and probably the strongest argument in favor of grouping them in a single 'family'.

In the literature on the Occupy and Indignados movements, the question of diffusion is raised by several authors (Castañeda 2012; Kerton 2012; Shihade et al. 2012; Della Porta and Mattoni 2014a). However, only a handful of scholars have conducted empirical studies on the issue, which may be addressed in four ways:

1   *From the perspective of contagion or mimetism.* The main idea is that movements will find some inspiration abroad and will attempt to establish certain links between their own local protests and other mobilizations abroad. It can be difficult to show precisely how the spirit of the time has a direct or indirect effect on place-based protests, but certain studies have suggested indicators: a comparison of collective action frames, activist discourses, imaginaries, and tools. In a short text that unfortunately contains few empirical elements, Gamson (2011) suggested an understanding of the connections between the Arab Spring and the Israeli Summer on the basis of collective action frames. He shows that 'agency' ("the consciousness that it is possible to alter conditions or policies through collective action", 464) plays a critical role in diffusion from one movement to another (see also Tarrow 2005). As a result, the speed of the dictators' departure in Tunisia and Egypt strengthened the belief in other countries – such as Israel (Gamson 2011) or Spain (Romanos 2013b) – that people can make things happen. In the 1980s, McAdam (1982) used the concept of 'collective self-efficacy' to describe the same kind of phenomenon.

2   *Using the genealogy of diffusion processes through an analysis of activists' mobility across national and/or sectoral boundaries* (*physical or virtual*). How do ideas, people, tools, strategies, and tactical and cultural repertoires travel? How are they adapted to local circumstances in other places? Romanos (2013b) is one of the few scholars who has studied the transnationalization of the post-2010 protest on the basis of empirical and multi-sites research. Applying the now-classic framework developed by Tarrow (2005) and relying on interviews with Indignados in Madrid and Occupiers in New York, he demonstrates that the influence of the Arab revolutions on the 15M in Spain is connected to indirect and impersonal channels, while Spanish immigrants and Spanish activists who travelled to New York played an important role in the emergence of Occupy Wall Street and the transmission of knowledge from one camp to another. In this volume, Oikonomakis and Roos propose another original answer to the above questions by developing the concept of

'resonance' to explain the diffusion of tactics and claims in Spain, Greece, and the US.

3   *Examining the issue of continuity/rupture between generations of activists and movements.* Diffusion is not only a matter of travelling abroad but also across different periods in the same place. In the case under scrutiny here, what ties have been built (or not been built) with previous movements? What type of learning has taken (or not taken) place? Smith's chapter deals with these issues for Occupy Pittsburgh, which she compares with the US Social Forum. This diachronic comparison across time should be developed to identify the ruptures and the continuities of the Indignados and Occupy movements with previous mobilizations beyond the global justice movement (Flesher Fominaya 2015; Romanos 2013).

4   *Comparing simultaneous mobilizations within the same country to trace and assess diffusion processes across movements.* This is the case of the mobilization 'waves' in Spain, which emerged in various public service sectors (in Madrid, for instance, the 'green wave' in education, the 'white wave' in health, and so on) to oppose budget cuts and were to some extent inspired by the practices of the Indignados (Adell 2013; Calle and Candón 2013).

All four strategies require very detailed empirical analyses to follow the trajectories of activists and their circulation among activist milieus in their respective country and abroad and through different types of organizations. For example, contending that Occupy was influenced by anarchism is not the same as showing that specific activists who were at the heart of the mobilization process come from anarchist networks and affinity groups. Thus, a combination of micro, meso, and macro-level analysis is needed to address the similarities and differences of post-2010 movements across space and time.

Outline of the Volume

The great variety of cases discussed in this introduction raises the question of the unit of analysis and the 'comparability' of protests. The media have indeed presented them as different expressions of a *single* phenomenon. But are we really looking at just one phenomenon? Are 'Occupy' and the 'Indig-nados' the same? Is relying on similar modes of action and organizational forms (occupations, assemblies, etc.) and denouncing the consequences of the economic crisis or the democratic deficit enough to justify talking

about a single phenomenon? As discussed above, we argue that, in spite of local peculiarities, all of these mobilizations are part of a broader family of anti-austerity protests. The latter are defined as contentious collective actions targeting austerity policies (cuts in education, housing, health care, pensions, government jobs and services, etc.) implemented by governments under pressure from financial markets and/or supranational institutions in connection with deficit and debt problems (Walton and Ragin 1990: 882).

In order to make sense of, and account for, this family of anti-austerity protests, the contributors to this volume propose two kinds of comparison. The first one is straightforward and implies that some of the chapters (2, 3, 4, and 9) compare several cases. The second one builds on the complementary aspects of a series of single case studies (chapters 5, 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11) that are engaged in an empirical and analytical dialogue. Although taken separately, these chapters are not comparative as such, for taken together they put forward a broad and contrasting analysis of the post-2010 protests that a single researcher, or even a small team of researchers, could not have achieved. We believe that this diffused comparative perspective is one of the core assets of this volume.

We have organized this volume into four sections with a view to exploring, analyzing, and comparing this new family of protests:

1   The first section examines the manner in which structural factors shape the current mobilizations. It offers a broader view of the 'crisis' context – both economic (chapter by Ross) and political (chapter by Kriesi) – and the possibility of combining these two contextual dimensions to understand mass protest in a comparative perspective (chapter by Perugorría, Shalev and Tejerina). This last chapter analyzes in particular the role of political cleavages in protests that have attracted mass support, that is, in Spain and Israel.

2   The second section looks closely at the practical and spatial dimensions of activism in three national contexts: in Spain, with Nez's chapter on the localization of the Indignados and their forms of organization and actions; in Greece, with Kousis's chapter on the spatial dimension of the Greek anti-austerity campaign from 2010 to 2013; and in Montreal, with Ancelovici's chapter on the organizational forms of public square occupations and the choice of horizontalism to solve practical problems in the camp.

3   The third section deals with the complex issue of diffusion within a country and among countries. Smith's chapter discusses cross-fertilization and tensions between the global justice movement and Occupy Pittsburgh. Oikonomakis and Roos propose the concept of 'resonance'

to examine the complex diffusion of collective actions during post-2010 struggles on the basis of participant observation in Spain, Greece, and the US.

4   The last section of this volume explores two 'negative' cases (Desbos and Royall's chapter on Ireland and Chabanet and Lacheret's chapter on France) where a strong movement should have developed given the external opportunities but where internal dynamics among collective actors prevented important protests from emerging. This section aims at avoiding the common problem of selecting on the dependent variable and looking only at 'positive' cases. It thus extends the reach of the comparative perspective of the volume.

Finally, the concluding chapter proposes to answer the main question posed in our introduction: Can we compare? If so, why and how, and what results can we expect to obtain?

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