



Edited by Donatella della Porta

Global Diffusion of Protest

Riding the Protest Wave
in the Neoliberal Crisis

Amsterdam
University
Press

Global Diffusion of Protest

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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Riding the Protest Wave in the Neoliberal Crisis

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Donatella della Porta*

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Cover illustration: Anonymous mask. Taken during the evening protest against the government austerity policies on November 12th 2014 in Montreal.

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Cover design: Coördesign, Leiden

Typesetting: Crius Group, Hulshout

Amsterdam University Press English-language titles are distributed in the US and Canada by the University of Chicago Press.

ISBN 978 94 6298 169 0

e-ISBN 978 90 4853 135 6 (pdf)

DOI 10.5117/9789462981690

NUR 686 / 696 / 697



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Acknowledgments

The idea for this book came from the observation of the unexpected extension of the protest cycle that had developed around 2011 in the Middle East and North African region as well as in Southern Europe – a cycle that spilled over into other world regions in 2013. Two favorable opportunities allowed us to pursue this research. The first was an Advanced Scholars' grant from the European Research Council on Mobilizing for Democracy, which gave me not only the funds for the empirical work, but also the flexibility to invest those funds into the analysis of events that happened after the grant was awarded. The second favorable circumstance was the richness of competences present at the Center on Social Movement Studies (Cosmos), which I direct (first at the European University Institute and now at the Scuola Normale Superiore in Florence), which allows for the efficient and effective implementation of the research plan, as well as for plenty of suggestions about theoretical and empirical matters.

As always, I am most grateful to Sarah Tarrow, for her skills, care and patience in making this volume – written by scholars from many non-English speaking countries – readable.

1 Riding the wave

Protest cascades, and what we can learn from them

Donatella della Porta

1.1 Social movements in late neoliberalism: an introduction

In 2013, as the cycle of protest that became most visible in 2011 seemed to subside, contentious politics began to re-emerge worldwide. By looking at protests in the most disparate parts of the globe (including Turkey, Brazil, Venezuela, South Africa, Bosnia, Bulgaria, and Ukraine), this volume will address three main debates spurred by those protests: the effects of the late neoliberal global economy on social movements; the development of contentious politics under authoritarian democracies; and the emergence of new collective identities.

In addressing these questions, we shall also discuss a more encompassing one: What happens when a wave of protest which starts in a homogeneous area affects other countries in its long ebb? Or, at least, when it is seen as a sort of continuation of that initial spark? In 2013, protests spread, inspired at least in part by the anti-austerity protest wave of 2011 but also presenting some peculiarity. Participants in the new movement often acknowledge the learning process from movements in other countries. Thus, a Turkish activist stated,

I believe they would never have taken off had it not been for the various global precedents, such as the Occupy movement. Our local park forums adopt the methods of global justice movements such as Occupy. The hand gestures to enable communication among crowds without creating noise have been emulated at some of the forums with larger participation. The open stage where individuals queue for and take turns to express their thoughts, ideas and vision freely, is another element of this movement's repertoire that is becoming more and more common (Inceoglu, 2013).

The linkages between the protests in 2011 and those in 2013 have in fact been explicitly addressed by scholars as well. As Göran Therborn (2014: 6) noted, "Paradoxically, it is not so much in the recession-struck Northern heartlands but in the neo-capitalist Second World, and in the – supposedly booming – BRICS and emerging economies, that popular anger has made itself felt."

The 2011 protests had started in the so-called PIIGS countries – Portugal, Italy, Ireland, Greece, and Spain – which were suffering the most from the financial crisis and in very contentious environments. In contrast, some of the 2013 protests developed in countries that were considered as “winners” in economic terms (such as Brazil, Venezuela, Turkey, South Africa) or as very tame in terms of contentious politics (such as Bosnia, Bulgaria, or Ukraine). Nevertheless, despite differences, “an emphasis on urban space through the occupation of public squares has been a common characteristic of all of these protests. Real estate bubbles, soaring housing prices, and the overall privatization-alienation of common urban goods constitute the common ground of protests in as diverse places as the United States, Egypt, Spain, Turkey, Brazil, Israel, and Greece” (Tuğal, 2013: 158).

In analyzing these protests, this volume has two aims: one theoretical, and one empirical. At the theoretical level, the volume’s introduction as well as the individual chapters will address the three mentioned debates: the effect of the late neoliberal global economy on social movements; the development of contentious politics under “authoritarian democracies”; and the emergence of new collective identities.

The first debate is about the social bases of the protest. While the movements of 2011, from the Arab Spring to the Indignados and Occupy, had been defined as movements against austerity by victims of the financial crisis, the 2013 movements have often been called movements of the middle class. Departing from the observation of the participation of a large mass of well-educated youth as well as members of free professions and white collar workers, however, the debate saw a cleavage between those who talked about a positive expansion of the (tendentially democratic) middle classes in the global South, and those who pointed instead at the frustration of a middle class in status and economic decline. In addressing the social composition of the protests, the volume discusses the issue of the effect of the neoliberal economy beyond the core democratic countries – as well as the various class configurations of the protest as the protest waves broadened beyond the first-comer countries.

A second debate addresses the political conditions for the development of the protests. Defying the expectation that movements will develop when democratic opportunities open up, the volume analyzes contentious politics in what have been defined as authoritarian, or at least non-liberal, democracies. At both the theoretical and the empirical levels, the various chapters will analyze the intertwining of neoliberal economic global policies with reduced institutional channels for participation, growing repression as well as a perceived decline of civic and political rights. As rulers learn from previous

failures, protesters target exclusive and corrupt conceptions and practices of politics, proposing alternative democratic conceptions and practices.

A third debate, which will be covered both theoretically and empirically, refers to the emergence of new collective identities. In various ways, the protesters in 2013 needed to reconstitute a political subjectivity. While a traditional class discourse and an ideological vision of the Left were problematic given domestic but also transnational trends, the movements contributed to the spreading of an alternative language, bridging social and cultural concerns. In action, during the protest campaigns, a new “spirit” emerged, giving rise to a sense of empowerment that often lasted beyond the campaigns. Contentious politics contributed, in this way, to the reshuffling of political cleavages and the emergence of new norms – although with different degrees of success as latecomers rode the protest wave.

From the empirical point of view, the volume analyzes protests in areas of the world that have rarely been addressed by “mainstream” social movement studies. By looking at the protest forms, framing, and organization, the research points at the ways in which ideas spread from the areas in which a protest wave first emerged, and how they were adopted but also adapted to new contexts.

Social movement studies have developed a useful toolkit of concepts to deal with collective action in normal times – meaning structured times in which expectations can reliably be built upon previous experiences, cognition, relations. Additionally, the type of context they have mainly addressed are so-called advanced democracies, with developed welfare states, consolidated party systems, and (more or less) respected rule of law. Theorization has often been oriented towards explanation of the impact of structures on collective action. The main expectation is that protests require opportunities and resources to develop – and a democratic political system has long been considered as almost a precondition. Further, movements have been seen mainly as national actors; only more recently have they been located within transnational arenas.

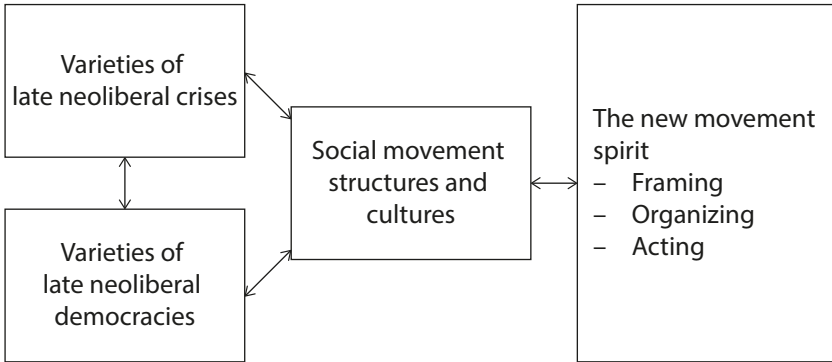
We know much less about some issues that are of fundamental importance for looking at late neoliberalism and its discontent (della Porta, 2015). First, although Goldstone and Tilly (2001) authoritatively noted that not only opportunities but also *threats* can encourage mobilization, and although there is growing attention to the threats that trigger protest, we still know little about movements that develop in times of crisis – i.e., when protest is fueled more by threats than by opportunities. Movements that develop in times of crisis have been little studied in mainstream social movement studies. We can assume that social movements that form in response to threats

have different characteristics from those emerging in times of abundance. In Kerbo's analysis (1982), *movements of crisis* are sparked by unemployment, food shortages, and dislocations, when everyday life is challenged during threatening political and social crises. Their participants are, at least in the early stages, mainly the beneficiaries of the requested changes, and protests tend to be more spontaneous, more often involving violent outbursts. *Movements of affluence*, in contrast, are found in relatively good times; they are often formed mainly by conscience members, and they are better organized and less likely to use violence (Kerbo, 1982: 654). In general, while movements of abundance (and opportunities) are expected to be stronger, larger, longer-lasting, pragmatic, optimistic, and more often successful, movements of crisis (and threats) are expected to be weaker, smaller, shorter, radical, pessimistic, and more often unsuccessful (della Porta, 2013b). As we will see, however, these assumptions seem too simplistic for the recent movements, which certainly react to crisis, but go well beyond reactive trends.

We also know little about movements in exceptional times, i.e., eventful times, when action changes relations. Social movement studies, as other areas of studies in comparative politics or sociology, have focused on stable times. Indeed, a main expectation has been that social movements belong to normal politics and society, adapting to contextual conditions that tend to be predictable. Conjunctural shifts of course happen in the political opportunities for protest, but they rarely change structures. In fact, actors' strategies are expected to be path dependent, only marginally evolving within known structures.

If path dependency is indeed a widespread assumption in several areas, however, recent societal development has shifted attention towards turning points. In fact, neoliberalism has been considered as a critical juncture that has drastically transformed modes of political integration (e.g. Roberts, 2015). At times, the crisis of late neoliberalism has also been presented as a critical juncture, bringing about dramatic changes, although constrained by previously existing structures. As typical agents of change, social movements themselves have been seen as producing critical junctures through sustained waves of protest. This has been noted in particular about anti-austerity protests in those countries in which the economic crisis has more quickly and deeply transformed previously established norms and relations (della Porta, 2015; Roberts, 2015). Protests moved, however, from the countries that had apparently suffered more from neoliberal globalization (the so-called PIIGS) to those that had apparently gained from it (the BRICS-type countries). More knowledge and theorization is certainly needed about the working of the same critical junctures in different (neoliberal) contexts.

Figure 1.1 Explaining the movement’s spirit



In order to understand movements in times of crisis, one must indeed move decisively from causal to processual approaches. As movements, as producers of their own (domestic and transnational) resources and sources of empowerment, enter into complex interactions within multiple arenas, the relations among players evolve in response to their strategic choices. In game theoretical perspective, then, not only can games be changed, but also the very identity of the players. While the socio-economic and political contexts continue to enhance and constrain actors and action, feedback loops are continuously produced and reproduced (della Porta, 2016).

As illustrated in Figure 1.1, then, we can expect a variety of neoliberal crises to affect the characteristics of the different players – not only their interests or strategies but also their very identities. Socio-economic characteristics interact with political features, as neoliberalism and its crises bring about the demise of previous forms of societal incorporation, often without a successful substitution. Social de-incorporation thus generates more or less acute crises of legitimacy (della Porta, 2015). While social movement structures and cultures, often rooted in previous social and political regimes, are directly and indirectly attacked, a new movement spirit can emerge from the mobilization, transforming structure and relations at the economic, political, and societal levels.

Looking at these processes, an additional consideration is in order. While social movement studies have tended to focus on the national level, with some attention to the local level, it is only more recently that an interesting transnational dynamic has developed, together with the increasing importance of international political opportunities and transnational activism (della Porta and Tarrow, 2005; 2012). Research has looked at the

development of new actors, but also at the cross-national diffusion of frames and repertoires of action. Indeed, 2011 has been considered as a year of global contention, comparable to, for example, 1848 or 1968. In looking at the rolling wave of the protest in 2013 and beyond, we can address a specific form of cross-national diffusion. Research on the spread of social movements has often stressed proximity and similarity as facilitating factors (della Porta and Mattoni, 2014). Nevertheless, as we will see in this volume, frames and repertoires often spread in distant and diverse places and are adapted to different situations with varying degrees of mobilizing capacity.

The differential success of ideas spreading through emulation is indeed addressed in research on regime transitions that looks at regime cascades. At the micro level, the assumption is that there are “behavioral cascades,” determined as the net benefits of each individual choice are influenced by the number of people who make that choice (Granovetter, 1978), and mobilization is fueled by the action of a “critical mass” (Marwell and Oliver, 1993). The assumption is that each individual is imperfectly informed and that no one person can individually decide to overturn the status quo (Lohmann, 1994). Each individual can then undertake action in order to give a signal to large numbers, and the public is especially sensitive to the size of aggregated turnout when deciding whether to make public a private experience with the regime. In short, as “people are limited in their abilities to articulate their personal experiences and opinions on complex policy issues or to understand other people’s communications”, they “take an informational cue from this simple signal: aggregate turnout” (Lohmann, 1994: 50). In this sense, political action is a way to express dissatisfaction with the regime; the public looks for information about the size of protest; and the regime risks losing power if communication cascades are successful (Lohmann, 1993; 1994). At the macro level, the assumption is that in these moments protest for democratization also spreads cross-nationally as information is transmitted and received (all the more quickly in times of social media) at the transnational level. This does not imply, however, that the outcomes are convergent as, first of all, structural similarities might be overestimated by the activists, while regimes learn from each other to absorb and/or repress protests.

In parallel, we can assume that, even if the wave of contention in Turkey, Brazil, Venezuela, Ukraine, Bosnia, and Bulgaria originated in the 2011 events, different contexts can bring about different outcomes. In what follows, I will address three different theoretical debates that have been stimulated by this wave of protests.

1.2 Bringing capitalism and class back into the analysis

Social movement studies have been criticized for having paid too little attention to long-term structural transformations. Strangely, some valuable exceptions notwithstanding, concern for the social basis of protest has even declined, as socio-economic claims raised through protest remained stable or even increased (della Porta, 2016). While Gabriel Hetland and Jeff Goodwin (2013) have called attention to the strange disappearance of capitalism from social movement studies (especially in the United States), a review of political sociology studies on social movements stressed how the narrowing of the focus on the process of mobilization has, since the 1980s, diverted attention from the relations between social structures and political participation, as well as collective identities (Walder, 2009). In addressing this claim, I have elsewhere suggested that we need to take into account three temporalities of capitalism: its long-term changes, the mid-term alternance of growth and crisis, and the short-term dynamics of specific critical junctures (della Porta, 2015). One should, however, handle the challenge of bringing structures into focus, without losing the attention to agency and political mediation that have been an important contribution of social movement studies.

Neoliberalism and its crisis

This volume focuses on late neoliberalism and its crises, with particular attention to the ways in which different varieties of neoliberalism are reflected in protest movements around the world that were seen as latecomers in the contentious wave which culminated in 2011. Exacerbated by austerity policies – imposed on countries forced to access (or just threatened with) international lending institutions – policies of privatization, deregulation, and liberalization were also widespread in expanding economies. Research in political economy has pointed at some general characteristics of neoliberalism, which can be seen within two quite different approaches: a) in a trend vision, as a form of capitalist evolution (such as a developed version of post-Fordism); b) in a Polanyi-like cyclical vision, as part of the pendulum between free market and social protection. In both perspectives, free market has emerged as an ideology that drives policies oriented not towards a retreat of the state from the market, but rather towards the reduction of investments designed to reduce market inequalities. Interventions include protection of financial capitalism, privatization of public goods, bailing out of banks, and flexibilization of labor markets, but also high regulatory activities intended to increase the opportunity for speculative advantages. As we will see, this was true not only in the countries that were hardest hit

by the economic crisis – triggering deep and strong waves of contention – but also in the so-called successful cases and in those countries in which citizens had long been “patient” (Greskovits, 1998). These developments have clear consequences for the social bases of contemporary contentious politics, although these vary in different countries.

By looking at the protests that developed later along the wave that became most visible in 2011, we extend in fact the focus on contention from the countries that were hardest hit by the crisis to a broader range of neoliberal economies, including those considered as the winners in global capitalism. Beginning in the 1980s, the core capitalist states experienced a turn towards the free market. First, the United States and Great Britain, led respectively by Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher, moved toward cuts in the welfare state as justified by an ideology of the free market. As increasing inequalities and reduction of public intervention risked depressing the demand for goods, low interest rates were used, in a sort of private Keynesianism, to support demand – ultimately fueling the 2008 financial crisis. In fact, in that year, the failure of Lehman Brothers produced such a shock that governments decided to come to the rescue, with increasing government debt.

Given economic decline in the United States and United Kingdom, coordinated market economies like the EU and Japan – where firms rely more on non-market relations to manage their activities – seemed to demonstrate equal or even superior competitiveness as compared to the liberal market economy, which relies for coordination on competitive market arrangements (Hall and Soskice, 2001; Streeck, 2010). However, that form of capitalism also moved towards the free market and was hit by the recent financial crisis, showing, indeed, some inherent contradictions of democratic capitalism. This could be seen especially in the EU, where the trend towards welfare retrenchment was aggravated, especially in the weaker economies, by the monetary union that (together with the fiscal crisis) increased inequalities both among and within member states. With the abandonment of Keynesian types of intervention, which assigned leading functions to fiscal policies, the monetarist orientation of the EU policies – with the abandonment of full employment as a goal and the dominance of price stability – was responsible for the type of crisis that developed in the union (Scharpf, 2011; Stiglitz, 2012: 237). The European Monetary Union (EMU) produced particular problems for countries with below-average growth, as interest rates proved too high for their economies.

In 2008, the evidence of the crisis at the core of capitalism became dramatic. As what political economists defined as “private Keynesianism” – oriented to develop public demands through low interest rates – showed

the full extent of its fragility, some countries (with traditionally weak economies) were indeed much harder hit than others. In rich states as well, however, neoliberalism had the effect of exponentially increasing social inequalities, with a very small percentage of winners and a pauperization of the working class, together with a proletarianization of the middle class.

While the welfare state under Fordism had represented a decommodification of some goods, defined as public services, neoliberalism brought about the privatization and (re)commodification of once-public goods together with a flexibilization of the labor market that weakened workers' power. The evolution of the last 30 years or so has deeply transformed the social structures. Fordism is 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. The mobilizations of 2011 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 (della Porta, 2015). As protest spread worldwide, what became especially evident was the degree of social inequality that neoliberalism produced where there was economic growth as well as decline.

Spacing, displacing, misplacing, and replacing

Common to the wave of protest is a call to reappropriate a public space that is seen as expropriated by neoliberal development. A common element in the 2011-2013 waves of protest has been a concern with public space. It has been observed that:

Protests in Greece, the USA, Egypt, Brazil, or Spain were partially directed against policies of privatization, corruption and real-estate development, which are intensified during financial crises and lead to a massive verbalization of discontent over globally raised concerns with just how democratically the public is being ruled. It is the context of globalized capitalism that conditions the protests against the commercialization of public space, and the subjugation of the corrupt and inefficient national states to obey the rule of international financial capital (Örs, 2014: 4).

Protest waves started in global cities, even if they were not confined to them. For Tilly, "the changing locations, activities, and spatial configurations of people themselves constitute a significant part of contention" (2000: 146). He underlines that "everyday spatial distributions, proximities, and routines

of potential participants in contention significantly affect their patterns of mobilization" (2000: 138). The neoliberal development changed the material spatial dimensions of social life (including the spatial practices), but also the symbolic meanings of space as well as the imposition of and resistance to dominant socio-spatial orders (Brenner and Theodore, 2002: 374). For Lefebvre, the right to the city signifies in "the most positive of terms the right of citizens and city dwellers, and of groups they (on the basis of social relations) constitute" (1996: 194-5). In the protest claims,

The right to the city thereby expands into a broader right to space in and beyond the urban scale. The right to the city privileges therefore the *perceived space* of inhabitants over the *conceived space* of developers and planners. In terms of neoliberal understanding, urban space is imagined as owned property, its role being to generate economic productivity. The right to the city destabilizes this viewpoint and offers a distinctly new vision of what the city is for. [...] In contrast to conceived space, which routinely ignores the complexities of daily inhabitancy, the right to the city underlines the needs of citizens as urban dwellers and is reflected by these particular forms of resistance (Lelandais, 2014: 1796).

The struggle over space is a struggle for democracy through the reappropriation of public spheres. In fact,

[T]oday the crisis of democracy springs up from the very public space it neglected: the people gather in the *agora*, the streets and the squares making demands, exercising their right to have a direct say, requesting a redefinition of their democracy in terms of claiming the power to determine how the public is to be ruled. In insisting on a return to the original meaning of democracy, they underline the very crisis of its current, dominating, traditional version. The contact with the physical is called back through the establishment of the virtual, enabling both direct and representative democratic demands to come to the surface: the public reclaims its space, the people redefine their democracies of the new age (Örs, 2014: 2).

As for perceived spaces, planning and urban restructuring decisions are increasingly based on maximization of private gain; surveillance is increased in public spaces to maintain law and order, punitive institution building, and social surveillance; and authoritarian governance is seen as a means of silencing dissent arising from economic contradictions. Lived

spaces thus become more polarized, with the destruction of working-class neighborhoods for speculative land development and gentrification as well as the creation of “purified” spaces, as gated communities, enclaves, and places of consumption reserved for the elite. As Harvey suggested, “this nearly always has a class dimension, since it is usually the poor, underprivileged, and those marginalized from political power that suffer first and foremost from this progress” (2012: 16). In fact, “such an urban order is what is experienced, imagined, and struggled against in terms of lived space. This struggle against the current socio-spatial order can be thought of as a multifaceted and multilayered anti-capitalist struggle” (Karasulu, 2014: 171).

The commodification of urban space tended towards authoritarian forms, as increasing authoritarianism is linked to neoliberal policies: “The Gezi resistance can be considered as part of the global wave of uprisings that started in 2009, centred in countries around the Mediterranean, as reactions against various facets of the deepening of capitalist social relations” (Erkan and Oguz, 2014: 114). In this sense, neoliberalism is seen not as a dismantling of the state, but rather as “the enhancement of authoritarian governance” through various forms of intervention in urban areas, with “increasing social control, restrictions, penalisation, and exclusion of certain social groups” (Eraydin and Taşan-Kok, 2014: 111).

Resistance to this process of expropriation, in various forms, individual and collective, takes place on the territory. In fact,

In an urban space conceived in a neoliberal logic based on market value of place and without a participative process taking into account the needs and desires of inhabitants, neighbourhood becomes the place where many social groups (minorities, political and/or religious groups, and so on) create enclaves within which their identity is recognized without repression, and these environments enhance the development of a relatively shared identity, connected to the neighbourhood, within the community. Many inhabitants, especially in informal neighbourhoods threatened by several planning projects, try to organize resistance even though such resistance is sometimes weak and not a general reaction. These communities have in some instances organized themselves into independent structures and have developed their own local protest that is not specifically expressed through street demonstrations (Lelandais, 2014: 1787).

Challenges in the new wave were in fact singled out in the differing capacities of protest actors to connect various contentious spaces.

The social bases of the protests

The wave of protests in its ascending phase in 2011, but also in the rolling phase around 2013, brought about a concern with the class dimension of contentious politics that mainstream social movement studies had long forgotten. In 2011, protesters were considered mostly as members of a new precarious class that had been dramatically hit by the austerity policies. Differently from those in 2011, the protests in 2013 have been interpreted as “middle class” phenomena. In fact, mobilizations have been presented by some observers as a manifestation of “a new middle-class politics – democratic, environmentalist – whose global import is predicted to grow” (Yörük and Yüksel, 2014: 103). In the words of the ideologist of the end of history, Francis Fukuyama (2013),

The theme that connects recent events in Turkey and Brazil to each other, as well as to the 2011 Arab Spring and continuing protests in China, is the rise of a new global middle class. In Turkey and Brazil, as in Tunisia and Egypt before them, political protest has been led not by the poor but by young people with higher-than-average levels of education and income. They are technology-savvy and use social media like Facebook and Twitter to broadcast information and organize demonstrations. Even when they live in countries that hold regular democratic elections, they feel alienated from the ruling political elite.

In a different vision, Therborn (2014: 16) noted that, in different combinations, the critique to neoliberalism came from pre-capitalist populations (as indigenous people), extra-capitalist “wretched of the earth” (as casual laborers, landless peasants and street vendors), but also workers and emerging middle-class layers. In sum:

pre-capitalist populations, fighting to retain their territory and means of subsistence; “surplus” masses, excluded from formal employment in the circuits of capitalist production; exploited manufacturing workers across rustbelt and sunbelt zones; new and old middle classes, increasingly encumbered with debt payments to the financial corporations – these constitute the potential social bases for contemporary critiques of the ruling capitalist order. Advance will almost certainly require alliances between them, and therefore the inter-articulation of their concerns. Which way – or ways – the new middle classes in Africa, Asia and Latin America swing will be a vital determinant. [...] The middle classes – in particular their salaried and professional components – are also potentially open to

cultural critiques of capitalism, especially to environmental and quality-of-life concerns. However, given the fickleness of middle-class politics, any progressive turn will require the mobilization of a major popular force among the first two social currents mentioned above: invaded or outcast pre-capitalist populations, and workers defending themselves in the sphere of production.

With the support of statistical definitions of middle classes as encompassing those above the poverty line – in part manipulated to push forward an image of globalization as successful in modernizing backward countries – the 2013 protests in countries such as Turkey or Brazil have been described as an emerging middle class, impatient with neoliberal forms of authoritarianism and manifesting this dissatisfaction in the streets (Yörük and Yüksel, 2014). However, the description of the 2013 movements as “middle-class” has been challenged from various perspectives: first of all, the idea that other classes did not participate in the protests is challenged empirically; second, a proletarianization of former middle classes is identified; third, urban conflicts have been defined as going well beyond the post-materialist issues that were seen as characterizing the overcoming of poverty.

1.3 Illiberal (post-)democracies in late neoliberalism

Socio-economic dynamics are strictly interwoven with political ones as neoliberalism, while changing them dramatically, displaced but by no means weakened the relations between the market and the state. Neoliberalism has introduced deep changes in the working of “real democracies” – i.e., in Robert Dahl’s (2000) definition, democracies in the way they really work. However, this does not mean a reduction of state intervention in the market and civil society, as neoliberalism needs the state in order to set up conditions for success, but also for bailing out banks in times of crisis. In general, neoliberalism, with minimalist visions of democracy as only electorally accountable and unconcerned with citizens’ rights, is characterized by a drop in the capacity of representing as well as in its responsibility towards citizens. I have elsewhere addressed these issues (della Porta, 2015) by moving from the concept of a legitimacy crisis, singling out the main elements of what I define as a *crisis of responsibility* – by which I mean a drastic drop in the capacity of the government to respond to citizens’ requests (what Mair [2009] called responsiveness).

Described by Colin Crouch (2004) as post-democracies, really existing democracies in rampant times of neoliberalism are in particular characterized

by the implementation of various mixes of the following mechanisms of building support:

- *Coordinated collusion*. A small oligopolistic class of politicians-businessmen is formed through the political protection of small circles of individuals who, thanks to political protection, are able to exploit the enrichment potential of financial capitalism.
- *Organized clientelism*. Having lost the capacity to create collective identities, parties build their electoral support through individual/corporate integration in patronage networks.
- *Participatory cooptation*. Some selective form of participation of citizens as individuals is used in the attempt to counteract the decrease in political trust.

However, these mechanisms for building support require resources that are diminished in the crisis of neoliberalism. New mechanisms of incorporation in illiberal democracies then include:

- *Centrifugal corruption*. As crises create divisions in the oligarchy, centrifugal tendencies develop in the organization of corrupt exchanges (della Porta and Vannucci, 2014).
- *Exclusive ideological appeal*. As crises reduce the spoils to be distributed through patronage to individuals and corporate groups, attempts at integration of the electorate go through the development of an exclusive definition of the people, throughout, for example, nationalist and religious fundamentalisms, spreading homophobic and xenophobic tendencies.
- *Repression of dissent*. Minimalistic to the extreme in the definition of democracy, the authoritarian democracies impose a drastic restriction of the space for dissent, through laws and practices.

Movements react, indeed, with very high levels of mistrust to a perceived legitimacy crisis, which has very different characteristics from the one hypothesized by Habermas (1976) for advanced capitalism. Today's legitimacy crisis is, in fact, driven not by excessive state intervention in the market in order to support the socially weak, but rather by state intervention in support of capital and the related stripping off of civic, political, and social rights (Sassen, 2006). Deregulation, privatization, and liberalization have been the main policy directions justified with the need to re-establish the efficiency of the market. De facto, these interventions did not help competition, but rather supported the concentration of power in the hands of a few huge corporations. Since 2008, public debt has increased, not because of

investments in social services and support for the weaker groups, but rather due to huge expenditures of public money to bail out banks and financial institutions from their financially-driven crisis, as well as by drastic cuts in the taxation of capital. This takes, first of all, the form of a corruption of representative democracy through the overlapping of economic and political power. On the output side of the political system, this means an abdication of responsibility by representative institutions in the face of citizens' demands.

Against the neoliberal promises of defending the market from the state, scholars of various disciplines point at the growing intermingling of the two. Segregation of economy and polity is rarely present, as governments still have to remedy market failure, and the market needs laws (for example on protection of copyrights, patents, contracts). In fact, as Crouch wrote about neoliberalism, "in its attempt to reduce certain kinds of government interventions in the economy, it encourages or provides space for a number of mutual interferences between government and private firms, many of which raise serious problems for both the free market and the probity of public institutions" (2012: 93). Rather than competition, in neoliberalism there is a concentration of capital with the development of "giant firms" that distort the market: "a 'giant' firm is one that is sufficiently dominant within its markets to be able to influence the terms of those markets by its own action, using its organizational capacity to develop market-dominating strategies" (2012: 49). Privatization, liberalization, and deregulation, allowing for the concentration of capital, derive from governments' commitment in terms of favorable legislation.

The space for political decisions has been denied, by politicians of different colors, based on the assumed absolute dominance of the so-called "logic of the market," especially of international markets. As Streeck (2011: 20) observed, having been saved by the states,

As we now read in the papers almost every day, "the markets" have begun in unprecedented ways to dictate what presumably sovereign and democratic states may still do for their citizens and what they must refuse them. Moreover, the very same ratings agencies that were instrumental in bringing about the disaster of the global money industry are now threatening to downgrade the bonds of the very same states that had to accept a previously unimaginable level of new debt to rescue that industry and the capitalist economy as a whole.

In fact, the democratic aim of obtaining citizens' trust has now been rhetorically substituted by a focus on market confidence, which is to be

obtained even at the expense of irresponsiveness to citizens' demands. The responsibility of democratic states vis-à-vis their citizens is then all the more removed, as external conditionalities impose cuts in public spending, with often dramatic consequences in terms of violations of human rights to food, health, and housing.

Neoliberalism has been described as a critical juncture that has dramatically transformed the regime of political incorporation of the masses, with dramatic effects on party systems and state institutions (Roberts, 2015). The type 3 of elite support (and at times, consensus) strategies change vis-à-vis previous (in particular, Fordist) models of political consensus building, based on party representation of the interests of labor in the representative system as well as functional integration of class interests through collective representation. That model, with the related development of welfare states as ways of decommodification and rights entitlement, had indeed sustained the vision of a democratic capitalism. Attacking (explicitly and implicitly) those forms of representation and incorporation, neoliberal states become in general less capable of integration and more oriented to the atomized individuals. Political support is achieved (or at least searched for) through various mechanisms oriented to different potential constituencies: the business-political oligarchy; the party bases of reference; the population at large. Old modes are not totally displaced, though, and new modes are implemented with different balances. We can therefore find in different countries – as well as in different neoliberal times – different constellations of strategies for obtaining political support.

Challenging the idea that economic neoliberalism brings about political liberalism, the 2011 movements were perceived as promoting either democracy or the deepening of democracy in countries in which there had been a democratic weakening. The 2013 movements focused even more on the struggle against what they perceived at the same time as corrupt and illiberal democracy. In general, “crucial to these revolts (with the exception of the Arab cases) was the shattering of a key myth of the last 35 years: the necessary link between liberalism and democracy. The development and deployment of new police state techniques intensified throughout the revolt, underlining the authoritarian tendencies of the world’s liberal leaders and their followers” (Tuğal, 2013: 158). As O’Donnell (1973) had already noted in his work on Latin America, capitalism can survive very well in non-democratic environments. What is more, the more exploitative its form, the more it needs to control potential dissent, through a mix of cooptation and repression. In fact, with differences in degree and kind, democracy does not thrive in late neoliberalism; to the contrary, even in established

democracies, global neoliberalism brought back forms of tough policing of protest (della Porta, Petersen, and Reiter, 2006; della Porta and Tarrow, 2012). In the contentious politics of 2013, we might discern some specific versions of this authoritarian neoliberal democracy in the personalistic forms of power, but also in the spirals of repression and mobilization that played an important role in the spreading of the protest.

1.4 The new spirit of social movements

Social movements in times of crisis see specific challenges, neither considered nor theorized by social movement studies. At the neoliberal critical juncture, with the related weakening of traditional forms of social incorporation and political legitimacy, social movements face the symbolic challenge of constructing a new subject; the material challenge of mobilizing limited resources; the strategic challenge of influencing a very closed political system. While not totally restricted by them, movement responses to the crises are in fact structured by the existing material resources, as present in movement networks, as well as symbolic resources, as expressed in movement culture. This implies a restriction of the options that are available – as Tilly’s concept of repertoires stressed – but also triggers learning processes, in terms of the lessons coming from the past as well as from abroad. Although certainly constrained by existing structures, a characteristic of the movements in times of crisis is their capacity to create resources through the invention of new frames, organizational devices, forms of action. In this sense, attention must shift to what has been termed a “politics of becoming”: identities do not yet exist, rather they are formed; networks are reconstituted through the overcoming of old cleavages, as participatory public spaces are created. In extraordinary times, as old identifications and expectations are broken, a new spirit emerges in action.

Neoliberalism grew within a specific type of cultural environment. With some pessimism about the capacity of a new collective subject to emerge, Zygmunt Bauman has located in *liquid modernity* the cultural dimension of the emerging conflicts. This implies insecurity and flexibility, which make collective identities difficult to develop. While heavy/solid/condensed/systemic modernity was composed of compulsory homogeneity, liquid modernity emphasizes momentary impulses. With the end of the illusion of a *telos* (as a state of perfection to be reached), there is a deregulation and privatization of tasks and duties from collective endowments to individual management. In this view, individualism prevails over the collectivity. As community and

corporations no longer offer protection through dense nets of social bonds, the search for substitute targets (such as criminality and terrorism) is a reaction to fear. In the past, the modern state had managed fears through protection of social state institutions that construct new webs of social bonds (Bauman, 2000: 59) or long-term involvement in the Fordist factory; nowadays, a deregulation-cum-individualization develops fears (2000: 67).

In the new context, some scholars consider collective identities to be difficult to develop. Individuals are seen as lukewarm towards the common good, common cause, good society: the other side of individualization is the end of citizenship (2000: 36). However, this is not linked to the colonization of the lifeworld by the state, but rather by its decline, as “it is no more true that the ‘public’ is set on colonizing the ‘private.’ The opposite is the case: it is the private that colonizes the public spaces” (2000: 39). The collapse of confidence is said to bring about a fading will to political commitment with endemic instability. A state induced insecurity develops, indeed, with individualization through market flexibility and a broadening sense of relative deprivation, as flexibility precludes the possibility of existential security (2007: 14). The moral appeal in movements’ discourse is seen, somehow critically, as avoiding central political issues (e.g. Žižek, 2012: 79).

A diagnosis of fragmented identities is shared by other scholars as well, although they are sometimes more optimistic about the potential for collective actors to form in liquid times. According to Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, the resistance of subjective forces develops through “activities and desires which refuse the dominant order by proposing ‘lines of flight’” (Hardt and Negri, 2000: 48). Disciplinary regimes thus no longer succeed in controlling the values and desires of young people, who no longer dream of getting a job that “guarantees regular and stable work” (2000: 273). Unitarian, centralized, and hierarchical organizational forms are neither possible nor positive, as society is composed of a “multiplicity of irreducible singularities” (2000: 166). Therefore, the multitude is considered as permanently in the making, assuming rhizomatic forms and leaving no place for a political vanguard. Even identity should not aim at consolidation, while there is an emphasis on singularity as always involved in a project of becoming different (2000: 339). During action, singularities are bridged together, establishing what is common and forming a new power oriented to managing the commons.

Indeed, anti-austerity movements seem to develop what Ernesto Laclau (2005) has defined as a populist reason. According to him, populism is a political logic: not a type of movement, but the naming, the construction of the people as a way of breaking order and reconstructing it. In fact,

he stated, “democracy is grounded only on the existence of a democratic subject, whose emergence depends on the horizontal articulation between equivalential demands. An ensemble of equivalential demands articulated by an empty signifier is what constitutes a ‘people’: so the very possibility of democracy depends on the constitution of a democratic people” (Laclau, 2005: 171). Recognizing the difficulties in the construction of the people, he points at historical conditions for the emergence of popular identities in “the multiplication of social demands, the heterogeneity of which can be brought to some form of unity only through equivalential political articulations” (2005: 229). Challenging somehow both Baumann’s pessimistic view of liquid society and Hardt and Negri’s optimism about a move towards the self-extension of identities, Laclau points instead at the need for political forms of social reaggregation through a populist reason.

Nowadays, neoliberalism brings about a deepening of the logic of identity formation, but the discursive construction of the people requires frontiers. The search for a populist reason, as the need for naming the self and for recognition of the self, is driven by a crisis that challenges a process of habituation, fueling processes of (new) identification. In times of crisis, a dissonance arises between expectation and reality, as a crisis suspends the *doxa*, made up of undiscussed ideas, and stimulates opinions: a universe of discussion or arguments (Bourdieu, 1977: 168). Actual protests can then be interpreted as non-conformative action using discourse and opinions to challenge habitus and *doxa*. According to empirical analyses, in fact, in today’s protests the search for a naming of the self that could bring together different groups has indeed produced the spread of definitions of the self as the people, or even more, the persons or the citizens. These ideas have reflected and challenged the cultural effects of neoliberalism (della Porta, 2015).

The protest in and around 2013 can indeed be seen as expressing a specific search for new subjectivities. In fact, it has been noted that protests themselves represented

[A] procedure of emergence, in the sense that the emerging entity cannot be reduced to its constitutive elements. With regard to the composition of the multitude performing the resistance, this means that the protesting subject (“the protesters”) is not simply a mixture of the people and the sociological categories they represent. Rather, [...] there are specific mechanisms within the uprising that lead to a recomposition of the multitude, a “becoming” of the people. The term “becoming” expresses a modal change, a transformation in the composition of that collective subject (Karakayalı and Yaka, 2014: 123-124).

As we will see in the volume, the search for new subjectivity moved from the early phase of the protest wave in 2011 to the rolling phase in 2013. Supported in 2011 by a search for cooperation among a broad part of the population powerfully hit by the crisis, the populist reasoning took different courses in the late riding wave. In fact, the process of emerging subjectivities seems to have been more successful where protesters were able to construct liberated spaces, as in Gezi. In contrast, the process was more difficult when protest was confronted with legacies of loyalty to former movement-near parties (as in Venezuela or South Africa, and partly in Brazil), or where the very definition of the Left had been delegitimized by the long experiences of “real socialism” and the promises of a neoliberalism progress that was still attractive (as in Bosnia, Bulgaria, or Ukraine).

1.5 The research and this volume

In what follows, the volume will address the mentioned protests in more detail. It will indeed report results from a large cross-national and cross-time project on social movements and democracy, sponsored by an ERC grant. The broad question of the effects of social movements on processes of democratic transitions, but also on the deepening of democracy, has been addressed in various other parts of the research (della Porta, 2014; 2016). This part of the research builds on a previous project that had analyzed the anti-austerity protests at their apex in 2011 (della Porta, 2013a; 2015) by looking instead at the ways in which protest spread after its peak in different contexts and with different effects.

In order to do this we have selected those cases that acquired global notoriety around 2013, being indeed considered as some sort of continuation of the protests of 2011. The research design therefore follows a most-different-cases strategy, covering contentious events in Eastern Europe, in Latin America, and on the African continent. Although aware of differences, we aim to single out, within a logic of discovery, some common global trends (della Porta, 2008). The various case studies developed on a common theoretical framework supported by empirical analysis. The research was carried out in 2014 and 2015. From the point of view of research methods, we triangulated as much as possible documentary sources (including various databases) with interviews of a theoretically sampled group of activists of recent protests in each country. In addition, within a logic of historical comparative analysis, we used secondary sources that mainly comprised research in political economy, political participation, and social movements.

The results of this research are first presented, case by case, in the following chapters, and then compared in the concluding one.

In Chapter 2, Kivanc Atak and Donatella della Porta look at “The spirit of Gezi: A relational approach to eventful protest and its challenges.” Often discussed as a case of “middle-class” politics, the protests that started in Gezi Park in 2013 converged in bringing together on the streets multi-class coalitions of collective actors and individuals. The protesters were often described as plural and heterogeneous in terms of gender, age, religion, ethnic background, and even traditional ideological background. Starting from the concern for reconquering an expropriated public space, those protests contributed indeed to the emergence of new discourses as well as claims for another (non-corrupt) relationship between civil society and state institutions.

Chapter 3, by Mariana Mendes, addresses “Brazil’s popular awakening – June 2013: Accounting for the onset of a new cycle of contention.” There as well, protest developed on issues of space and the use of the city. Often compared with the Turkish Gezi protests, the mobilization before and around the soccer World Cup are to be seen as complex claims around issues of social justice and economic development.

In Chapter 4, Juan Masullo looks at “Making sense of ‘La Salida’: Challenging left-wing control in Venezuela.” In fact, to a certain extent similar to the ones in Brazil, protests in Venezuela pointed at dissatisfaction with a populist conception of democracy – even if in a left-wing version – expressing claims for more participation.

In Chapter 5, “The Marikana massacre and labor protest in South Africa,” Francis O’Connor also looks at protest, in this case addressing a government that had emerged from past social movements: the 2013 wave of protest in South Africa that targeted continuous inequality as well as an exclusive conception of democracy.

In Chapter 6, “Left in translation: The curious absence of an austerity narrative in the 2013 Bulgarian protests,” Julia Rone looks at how, moving east, the 2013 protests in Bulgaria also mobilized dissatisfaction with both the social and the political qualities of democracy. Even if with different trends and outcomes, these campaigns articulated claims for social justice with concerns for the political role of citizens.

In Chapter 7, Chiara Milan studies “‘Sow hunger, reap anger’: From neo-liberal privatization to new collective identities in Bosnia-Herzegovina.” Unexpected as they could be in countries recovering from hard experiences of civil wars, the 2013 protests in Bosnia emerged from social suffering. In the course of the mobilization, however, the broader and deeper issue of the construction of new identities became central.

Chapter 8, by Daniel Ritter, looks at “A spirit of Maidan? Contentious escalation in Ukraine.” Considered as yet another example of the “movement of the squares” that had become visible with the 2011 occupation of Tahrir in Egypt, the 2013 occupation of Maidan in Ukraine escalated into a civil war. The attempts at building an inclusive identity failed as a result of internal divisions and external interventions.

In Chapter 9, “Riding the wave: Some conclusions,” by Donatella della Porta, the main research findings are analyzed comparatively. A main theoretical issue is addressed here: What happens when a wave of protest, which starts in a homogeneous area, affects in its long ebb other countries? Or, at least, when it is seen as a sort of continuation of that initial spark? The idea of a cascade is that contentious events in one country function as inspiration for latecomers – i.e., early risers produce spinoff. Those movements that arrive later on ride on the wave of the protest, but at the same time they often lack the structural characteristics that had facilitated protest in the first place. They therefore need to adapt – domesticate, to a certain extent – ideas coming from outside.

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