



Tiago Carvalho

# Contesting Austerity

Social Movements and the Left  
in Portugal and Spain (2008-2015)

Amsterdam  
University  
Press

## Contesting Austerity

# Protest and Social Movements

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# Contesting Austerity

*Social Movements and the Left in  
Portugal and Spain (2008-2015)*

*Tiago Carvalho*

*CIES-IUL – Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology  
ISCTE – University Institute of Lisbon*

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*For Lara and Kyara*

*Electioneering*

I will stop  
I will stop at nothing  
Say the right things  
When electioneering  
I trust I can rely on your vote

When I go forwards you go backwards and somewhere we will meet

Riot shields  
Voodoo economics  
It's just business  
Cattle prods and the IMF  
I trust I can rely on your vote

– Radiohead, *Ok Computer*, 1997

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# Acronyms

ECB	European Central Bank
EU	European Union
GJM	Global Justice Movement
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
PASOK	Panhellenic Socialist Movement

## Portugal

15O	Plataforma 15 de Outubro
BE	Bloco de Esquerda
CDA	Congresso Democrático das Alternativas
CDS-PP	Centro Democrático Social – Partido Popular
CGTP	Confederação Geral de Trabalhadores Portugueses
FP25	Forças Populares 25 de Abril
FSP	Fórum Social Português
GàR	Geração à Rasca
JSD	Juventude Social Democrata
M12M	Movimento 12 de Março
MAS	Movimento Alternativa Socialista
PCP	Partido Comunista Português
PEV	Partido Ecologista os Verdes
PI	Precários Inflexíveis
PREC	Período Revolucionário em Curso
PS	Partido Socialista
PSD	Partido Social Democrata
PSR	Partido Socialista Revolucionário
QSLT	Que se Lixe a Troika
RDA69	Regueirão dos Anjos 69
Ruptura-FER	Ruptura – Frente Revolucionária de Esquerda
UDP	União Democrática Popular
UGT	União Geral de Trabalhadores

## Spain

CCOO	Comisiones Obreras
CGT	Confederación General del Trabajo
ETA	Euskadi Ta Askatasuna
IA	Izquierda Anticapitalista

IU	Izquierda Unida
LOMCE	Ley Orgánica para la Mejora de la Calidad Educativa
PAH	Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca
PCE	Partido Comunista Español
PP	Partido Popular
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español
UGT	Unión General de Trabajadores
UPyD	Unión Progreso y Democracia

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I dedicate this book) kept and held me safe throughout this (not always easy) journey that is now coming to an end. I could not be more thankful for all the love they have for me.

Time now to move on to new (research) destinations. This is the culmination of a path: it is not the end, just a new beginning.



# Introduction

## Abstract

This introductory chapter presents the dynamics of the contestation of austerity at the heart of this book, together with their historical context. Firstly, I introduce key elements of the political-economic context – such as the shift from embedded liberalism to neoliberalism – in which the Great Recession and Eurocrisis unfolded. Secondly, I describe how the crisis developed in Europe and how and why it affected the peripheral Southern European countries. I evaluate the anti-austerity contentious responses in Southern European countries, especially Portugal and Spain. Lastly, I present the structure of the following chapters and the book as a whole.

**Keywords:** austerity, protest, neoliberalism, Great Recession, Eurocrisis, Southern Europe

## Starting point

In 2008, the collapse of the bank Lehman Brothers prompted the greatest world economic crisis since the Great Depression in 1929. The Great Recession, as it came to be known, spurred a transnational wave of protests and the emergence of new political actors across the world. Despite the differences in the political and economic regimes under which they emerged, protest movements across the world – from the Arab Spring and Occupy to new populist political parties – sparked and signalled new political dynamics. Even if in many ways similar to the political transformation of the “long 1960s” in Western Europe, these new movements led to the resurgence of economic grievances, long forgotten in social movement studies.

Upon the emergence of the transnational wave of protests, initial assessments advanced a culturalist, idealist and technophilic point of view that emphasised the break with past mobilisations such as the Global Justice Movement. In line with the new social movements theory, these assessments suggested that any movement emerging from the networked society in which

we were living would be a networked movement in which information and communication technologies shaped the “bubbling up” of subterranean politics (Castells, 2012; Kaldor & Selchow, 2013). Ignoring the historical, cultural and political contexts, the stress was placed on the relative homogeneity of the movements across countries, as a new generation of precarious youth activists seemed to have spontaneously emerged with demands for democratic renewal and the recovery of the political sphere by citizens. From this perspective, social media allows autonomous communication and connects groups around the world (Castells, 2012). Still, even if formed on the Internet, it was by occupying public space that these movements manifested and became levers of social and political change. Although the role of the Internet cannot be denied, these movements’ spontaneity was only a matter of appearance. However, many of these assessments focused on only one event or case-study, the movements’ rejection of the existing party system, and their symbolic and cultural discourses and innovations in repertoire.

Contrasting with this perspective, and enlarging the scope of the analysis, in this book I analyse the contentious responses to austerity in Portugal and Spain in the context of the Great Recession between 2008 and 2015. Throughout this period, I will focus on the relations between different sets of players, their evolution over time, and the resulting outcomes. Contestation went beyond street politics: as a result of austerity policies there emerged an anti-austerity arena, which included both institutional and non-institutional players. Rather than being similar across countries, past mobilisations and interactions between players within specific countries are constantly making and re-making the patterns of protests found. Consequently, the anti-austerity cycle of contention results not only from the policies enacted and the opportunity structures and threats, but also from players’ own strategies and interactions.

Rather than being spontaneous, in many ways the contentious responses to the Great Recession reflected previously existing structures of mobilisation and frames (Flesher Fominaya, 2014). Contestation of austerity during this period was a complex phenomenon in which movements were only one part of the story. The overall argument of the book is that the impact of structural adjustment programmes and austerity are not fixed. Rather, the formation of an anti-austerity arena is dependent on the history of past mobilisations and the interactions between institutional and non-institutional players throughout the cycle of protest. As such, we require a dynamic and relational analysis that considers not only austerity and the political opportunity structures, but also players themselves.

By analysing Portugal and Spain, and adopting a cycle-based approach, I show that anti-austerity contestation went beyond social movements: these players need to be situated within a broader landscape. As such, I make a series of interrelated arguments about how the cycle of protest develops in the two countries, showing that it can follow distinct paths depending on the configuration of anti-austerity arenas – i.e. the relationship between institutional and non-institutional players. In addition to considering the players contesting austerity, I analyse how frames and claims develop: as will be seen, anti-austerity discourses moved from a rhetoric of representation to demands on redistribution (which tends to be overlooked), as trade unions became increasingly visible.

### **The contentious politics of neoliberalism**

Despite the apparent novelty of the wave of contention resulting from the Great Recession, there have been similar processes in other parts of the world over the last 40 years. The lyrics in the epigraph of this book remark on the interrelation between institutional politics and protests against internationally led austerity measures (*Riot shields/ Voodoo economics/ It's just business/ Cattle prods and the IMF*). Released in 1997, "Electioneering" addresses – among other topics – the divide between electoral politics and citizens, suggesting that low trust in institutions, protest and police violence are intimately connected to economic policies that widen inequality. Even if protest movements have been at the centre of the political landscape since the eruption of the financial and economic crisis, it is important to note that the structural adjustment programmes implemented by the International Monetary Fund (IMF) since the 1980s produced a similar crisis of legitimacy, intense protest mobilisations, political backlashes and the emergence of populist parties (Roberts, 2012).

Since the 1970s the turn from embedded liberalism to neoliberalism – which is understood here simply as policies that diminish the role of the state and boost the role of markets – led to the retrenchment of the welfare state and marketisation of public goods, accompanied by the rise of unregulated financial markets (Anderson, 2000; Harvey, 2007; Mann, 2013; Streeck, 2012, 2013; Tooze, 2018). This paradigm shift in political-economic policy has taken place not only because of the growing importance of International Financial Institutions, but also due to the influence of ideas closely related to those of the Washington consensus, where debt crises played an important role in transforming policy architectures (Babb & Kentikelenis, 2016; Hall, 2012; Kentikelenis, Stubbs, & King, 2016; Roos, 2019; Tooze, 2018).

As a manifestation of the economic transformation of the last 40 years, the Great Recession (understood here as a “triple crisis” of banks, public finance and the “real” economy) was the result of the financial expansion of unregulated shadow banks, global imbalances, and the private debt produced by “privatised Keynesianism,” in which stagnant real wages led to dependence on credit for consumption in order to maintain living standards amid welfare retrenchment (Mann, 2013). As a result, frictions between capitalism and democracy increased (Barber, 2000; Fitoussi & Saraceno, 2013; Mann, 2013; Offe, 2013a; Streeck, 2012). Post-war democratic capitalism involves a tension between the interests of markets and those of voters: market requirements make democratic institutions less responsive to citizens’ needs as states have primarily to fulfil the desires of markets. Citizenship is thus reduced to its electoral dimensions, ignoring, for the most part, social rights (della Porta et al., 2016; Roberts, 2008; Schäfer & Streeck, 2013).

As a solution to the Great Recession, governments implemented austerity, claiming that “there is no alternative” to market liberalisation, retrenchment and privatisation policies, which were viewed as a unique and mandatory solution in order to regain market trust (Blyth, 2015; Reis, 2013; Tooze, 2018). More than a precise concept, austerity is a buzzword used to disguise market liberalisation and class politics under the veil of morality, simplicity and virtue (e.g. live within our means, compensate hard-working people, etc.) (Blyth, 2015). As a policy regime, austerity involves the reduction of the state’s budget through a combination of welfare retrenchment, privatisation, a roll-back of universal social policies and labour market protection. Thus, it incorporates the idea of extending market competition while limiting state activity, leading to outcomes such as diminishing labour costs and increasing capital accumulation. Austerity is not a new phenomenon, however, and it has been designated throughout history using terms such as “structural reform” or “liquidation” (Blyth, 2015).

The consequences of austerity and market liberalisation go beyond rising unemployment, low growth, and economic stagnation. The resulting crisis of redistribution, through cuts in social services and social rights, leads to an increasing distrust in institutions which brings back the “social question” and class politics (della Porta et al., 2016; Judt, 1997). These policies, which are detrimental to most of the population, also result in growing inequality and tensions between the national and global arena, diminishing the capacity of those with fewer economic resources to make use of state power to implement change (Mann, 2013). Since 2008, these conditions have led to rising political discontent among citizens and

protests against mainstream political parties and technocratic governments. Responses outside the institutional sphere emerged in the form of alternative political movements and counter-movements, with subsequent effects on the institutional sphere as populist parties emerged (della Porta et al., 2016; Flesher Fominaya, 2017; Crouch, 2004; Mair, 2006; Schafer & Streeck, 2013).

Consequently, the Great Recession provoked a resurgence of debates about capitalism in mainstream social movement studies, with scholars of the latter attempting to build bridges with political economy (Bailey, Clua-Losada, Huke, Ribera-Almadoz, & Rogers, 2018; Císarř & Navrátil, 2017; della Porta, 2015, 2017; della Porta et al., 2016; Hetland & Goodwin, 2013). To do this, we need to account for how the interaction between crisis, market liberalisation and national contexts produced different types of counter movements around the world. A broad perspective combining the features of the socioeconomic crisis and austerity, the political cultures of these countries, and the reactions to political opportunity structures and threats is thus required.

Taking all of these elements into account, Polanyi provides a framework for understanding both the dynamics and counter-dynamics of market liberalisation at different levels. In *The Great Transformation*, he (1944) shows that in response to a movement of planned market liberalisation and domination over other societal spheres, a spontaneous and plural countermovement of protection emerges. As Burawoy remarks, in Polanyi's approach, society is in "contradictory tension with the market" (Burawoy, 2005, p. 199), and this generates multiple opposition actors. As such, in Polanyi's view "the market tends to destroy society, but on the other hand, society (re)acts to defend itself and to subordinate the market" (Burawoy, 2005, p. 198).

A Polanyian framework can thus be used to better understand the dynamics of the contentious politics of neoliberalism, allowing us to situate the anti-austerity cycle in context and understand the plurality of counter-movements for protection against further economic liberalisation that has emerged with it (Roberts, 2008). As with austerity, the so-called structural adjustment programmes led by the IMF in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s led to protest mobilisations and political transformations (Ortiz & Béjar, 2013; Roberts, 2008, 2012). Thus, there is a need to consider the relationship between neoliberal globalisation and its counter-currents in a different way. Rather than focusing on the (dis)continuities between different waves, we should focus on the different levels at which market liberalisation happens and to what kind of resistance is it conducive.

If global justice movements were the core actors contesting neoliberal dynamics at a transnational level until the outbreak of the Great Recession, with the anti-austerity movements the academic literature shifted to consider national manifestations of the same phenomena (which could have been seen already in Latin America). Though we should not deny the difference between the global justice movements and anti-austerity cycles (della Porta, 2012), they are both reactions to processes of market liberalisation, albeit reactions that operate at different scales of governance. Anti-austerity and global justice movements can thus be seen as reactions at different levels to similar issues. Repertoires, strategies and discourses appear to be continuous over time, transferable and adaptable depending on the locus and phase of the conflict.

### European crisis

The Eurozone crisis is, to a certain extent, part of the broader historical dynamics described in the previous section. The European financial and debt crisis was the most severe political and economic crisis since the creation of the European Union (EU), questioning both the nature and future of European integration, with repercussions that extended far beyond the crisis. It was not a simple extension of the global financial crisis, even if it followed on from it, but rather an unusual financial crisis that developed within a supranational monetary union among developed countries (Tooze, 2018).

The way the national crises evolved was deeply embedded in European dynamics. Three major phases can be identified, involving the interplay between markets, the EU institutions, and the responses of different member states – particularly those most affected by the crisis.<sup>1</sup> In the aftermath of the 2008 crash, the main measures of a first phase concerned the bailout of banks to protect the financial system. These expansionary policies were soon followed by a brief neo-Keynesian second phase that lasted until the beginning of 2010, with the EU institutions encouraging countries to use public investment to prevent recession (Copelovitch, Frieden, & Walter, 2016; Hall, 2012, 2014).

Nevertheless, the Greek debt crisis erupted after the country's 2009 general elections. The new Greek government revealed that their budget deficit was higher than previously predicted. This third phase triggered

1 See Appendix I for a full chronology of the events considered key in the literature for the development of the European Crisis.

a reorientation of policy at both European and national levels as market pressures started to rise. As the risk of contagion to other countries increased, the weakest links of the Eurozone – Portugal, Spain, Italy and Ireland – shadowed by the EU, followed a “budget consolidation” strategy to reduce their debts and deficits to “gain market trust.” As the austerity phase began (Ramalho, 2020; Reis, 2013), these countries adopted programmes, either imposed or self-implemented, to pursue these objectives.

In 2010, two countries were bailed out (i.e., were given an official credit line) under the auspices of the so-called Troika.<sup>2</sup> The first bailout was granted to Greece in mid-2010; after this came Ireland, at the end of the year. In 2011, Portugal would join the club. Finally, in 2012, Cyprus and Spain requested assistance for their banking systems. Although Italy was never officially under assistance, since it was deemed “too big to bail” (Perez & Matsaganis, 2018), a technocratic government took emergency measures supported by a broad coalition of political parties.<sup>3</sup> By 2013-2014 a post-austerity phase had begun, with all the countries’ assistance programs coming to an end, even if the restrictions associated with the Eurozone have been maintained to this day. Within this story, Greece continued to be the outlier; in 2012 it would receive a second bailout and haircut, and in 2015, after tense negotiations with the European institutions and a referendum led by SYRIZA, the country received its third bailout.

Even if almost all the costs of this crisis were imposed on individual countries, there were also measures taken at European level to facilitate the conditions under which the bailouts could operate at national level. Most notably, these measures included the creation of the European Financial Stability Facility (May 2010), the European Central Bank’s (ECB) decision to buy sovereign debt on secondary markets, the establishment of a permanent crisis resolution mechanism (December 2010) by the European Council, and the beginning of quantitative easing (January 2015). Most importantly,

2 “The Troika” refers to the joint action decision group comprising the IMF, the European Commission and the European Central Bank (ECB), which imposed conditionality programmes on the countries under its auspices in order to lend money to them.

3 It should be noted that a variety of bailouts and technocratic governments existed in each country. For instance, even though Portugal never had a technocratic government, the finance minister Vítor Gaspar (2011-2013) had no party affiliation and held credentials with several of the international institutions (today he holds a post in the IMF). In Spain, the PP government elected in 2011 had Luis de Guindos, an independent close to the PP, overseeing the treasury and economy (today he is a vice president of the European Central Bank). For about six months Greece had Lukas Papademos as prime minister leading an independent government with the parliamentary support of the major political parties in the country (November 2011 to May 2012); previously he had been vice president of the ECB.

there was the declaration of the then president of the ECB, Mario Draghi, in July 2012, that the ECB would do “whatever it takes to preserve the Euro.”

Overall, the Eurocrisis was a result of a combination of imbalances within the currency area, allied to deficiencies in the design of the European Monetary Union that had been known about since its inception, such as: (1) a macroeconomic divergence, resulting from imbalances between zones with different economic structures that provided incentives for the cash-strapped half of the union to borrow from the other half, reinforcing differences; (2) a lack of fiscal policy coordination; and (3) fragmented financial regulation (Copelovitch, Frieden, & Walter, 2016; Hall, 2012, 2014; della Porta et al., 2016).

The already existing differences in economic organisation within the Eurozone were reinforced by the creation of the common currency. While the northern countries have export-led economies, the southern ones have domestic demand-driven economies (Hall, 2014). Nevertheless, most of the southern countries, with the possible exception of Greece, had good economic performance indicators and reasonable budget deficits in the years preceding the crisis. Still, the consequent liberalisation measures taken under austerity came to reinforce a pre-existing liberalisation trend (e.g. levels of employment protection dropped more in these countries than in others). This crisis exposed the frailties and asymmetries within the Eurozone, especially trade deficits in the periphery and surpluses in the core. The asymmetric integration at the European level led to continuous trade deficits in the south and after that to debt. What Portugal, Spain, Italy, Greece and Ireland had in common before the crisis was not public sector debts but rather their growing trade deficits (Blankenburg, King, Konzelmann, & Wilkinson, 2013; Hall, 2014; Reis & Rodrigues, 2012; Tooze, 2018). The fiscal imbalance was thus a symptom, not a cause, of the crisis.

In sum, an economic and financial crisis with weak and uncoordinated responses led to a *political* crisis. In della Porta’s (della Porta et al., 2016) view, rather than a typical crisis of scarcity or inflation, the Eurozone crisis can be understood as a crisis of redistribution, featuring state retreat from social service provision and the erosion of social rights, leading to an undermining of consent, with concomitant declines in the levels of trust in institutions. Sánchez-Cuenca (2014b) called this a top-down approach, whereby non-elected institutions imposed economic policies on national governments – in his terms, an expression of “democratic powerlessness.”<sup>4</sup> Rather than an institutional crisis at the national level, *per se*, we are looking at the incapacity of the political system to respond to the international

4 Translation of *Impotencia Democrática*.

pressures and constraints imposed by non-elected technocratic institutions. This implicated different but interconnected analytical levels, such as the national context and broader European dynamics.

As a consequence, Offe (2013b) identified a spectrum of reactions to this crisis, involving both protests and transformation of the party systems across Europe. On the one hand, there was a collapse of the party system and a reinforcement of both the far right and far left. On the other hand, there was an emergence of protest movements alongside “ephemeral eruptions of mass violence” among the most excluded populations. Nonetheless, rather than viewing these reactions in isolation, I will later suggest that they should be interpreted as part of a longer contentious process involving the interaction between institutional and non-institutional players.

### **The politics of austerity in the Southern European countries**

As seen in the previous section, the Eurozone crisis affected mostly the Southern European countries and Ireland due to imbalances within the Eurozone. Despite the economic resemblances between these countries and their similar positions within the Eurozone, the political impact of the crisis diverged due to their different political institutions, civil societies, and histories.

As Malefakis (1992; 1995) observes, scholars first grouped together the Southern European countries because of their common path towards modernisation and democratic politics since the 1970s. These countries can be conceived predominantly as a single socio-political and historical entity due to the remarkable historical parallels between them. A specific field of study was therefore established from the late 1970s onwards, and especially in 1980s. Constituting a semiperiphery (Arrighi, 1985), the Southern European countries are distinguishable from other European peripheries – like that of the Eastern European countries – due to their internal social and economic heterogeneity, rather than ethnic and linguistic conflicts (with only Spain displaying such conflicts (Miley, 2013, 2014)). These countries had a mix of rural, urban and industrial classes until the 1970s. After this point, following the emergence of democratic regimes and the welfare state, education levels rose and class structures changed: while the rural classes declined, the number of professionals and employees grew with the increasing importance of the service and public sectors. Even so, previous social dualities did not vanish; instead, they were transformed: though a change can be perceived, these continue to be the most unequal countries in Europe (Carmo, 2010).

The transition to democracy in the mid-1970s is considered to have been a turning point for Portugal, Spain and Greece (Fishman, 1990a; Gunther, Diamandouros, & Sotiropoulos, 2006). Gunther, Diamandouros and Sotiropoulos (2006) argue that democratisation, socioeconomic modernisation, and Europeanisation led these countries to approximate Western politics and social patterns – thus a certain leapfrogging occurred, both in economics and politics. Despite some convergence, European integration nevertheless led to asymmetric modernisation, due to the specificity of these countries' integration and position in the EU, which resulted in a debt crisis and austerity (López & Rodríguez, 2011; Reis & Rodrigues, 2012).

Regarding the Euro crisis, Hall (2012, 2014) contends that if there was a concerted response by the EU, it was still slow and insufficient, with the majority of the costs being imposed on Southern European countries in order to reduce their budget deficits. Furthermore, the EU demanded an acceleration of previous structural reforms to the Southern European countries: the focus was mainly on internal devaluation by reducing labour costs to restore international competitiveness (Perez & Matsaganis, 2018). With that said, even if these countries are demand-driven, this does not explain the differences between their austerity policies. Greece and Portugal were tied to programs dictated by the Troika, while Italy and Spain, due to the relative size of their economies in the EU context, had more leverage to implement their own responses (della Porta et al., 2016; Perez & Matsaganis, 2018). Yet the government in Spain implemented a harsher program than in Portugal.

In both Portugal and Spain, budget cuts were announced in the public sector throughout 2009 and 2010 (later extending to the private sector through taxation and labour reforms) (Reis & Rodrigues, 2012; Salmon, 2017), particularly after the Greek debacle at the end of 2009. These measures were undertaken by centre-left parties (the PS – *Partido Socialista* and the PSOE – *Partido Socialista Obrero Español*) who happened to be in government until the election in 2011 of right-wing governments in both countries. The new conservative governments delivered similar plans to those formulated by the previous governments and influenced by the markets and the European institutions (Moury & Standring, 2017; Salmon, 2017). These measures included labour reforms in both countries at the beginning of 2012, the privatisation of strategic sectors and bailouts of banks.

At the same time, there were also important differences. Apart from the external intervention, Spain – unlike Portugal – had a housing bubble that burst in this period. In addition, in Spain many policies were aimed

at privatising parts of the health and education sectors. Despite the labour cuts in these sectors in Portugal, such measures were never seriously attempted. Also, the Portuguese Constitutional Court blocked some of the measures undertaken by the government. By 2014, in contrast to Greece, as external constraints began to ease the economic situation improved in both countries.

A crisis that was initially economic and political became social due to welfare retrenchment. The impact on the labour market entailed declining income, rising unemployment and underemployment, and a general erosion of social rights. Labour devaluation measures led to a sustained wave of emigration from these countries to those of Europe's core. Perez and Matsaganis (2018) show that the policies of internal devaluation had distributive consequences, in that inequalities did not rise in Portugal, despite the consolidation measures. In this sense, in comparative terms, the crisis and austerity had a stronger impact in Spain.

As such, although imbalances contributed to the crisis within the Eurozone, the responses to it were aimed at national political institutions and hence varied across national contexts. The result was not only a decline in satisfaction with democracy, the economy, national governments and the EU, but also an increase in levels of discontent, disaffection and delegitimation among citizens (Morlino & Quaranta, 2016; Portos, 2021). These reactions were directed particularly towards national institutions, such as political parties and governments, in countries that were already marked by political disaffection (Magalhães, 2005; Montero, Gunther, & Torcal, 1997).

Given these findings, a comparison between Portugal and Spain becomes especially fruitful due to the similar political scenarios in a time of crisis, with no electoral instability until the 2015 elections, and with socialist governments being followed by right-wing majorities. At the same time, when it came to protest, in Spain new players emerged, creating disruptive dynamics, while in Portugal traditional actors were dominant. In fact, these countries displayed differences in both the frequency and nature of their protests (Accornero & Ramos Pinto, 2015; della Porta et al., 2016; Portos, 2019; Portos & Carvalho, 2022). As for the transition to democracy in Portugal and Spain (Fishman, 1990a), during the most recent crisis, though the semi-peripheral context of these countries (i.e. their positioning vis-à-vis Europe) certainly contributed to the paths followed, their political trajectories did not follow a "unified logic." Attention thus needs to be paid not only to features related to the socio-economic crisis, but also to the political reactions to it, understood with reference to the opportunities, threats, and political cultures in each country (della Porta et al., 2016).

## Contesting austerity in Southern Europe

A sustained wave of protest emerged in all of the Southern European countries (Accornero & Ramos Pinto, 2015; della Porta et al., 2016; Portos, 2019; Portos & Carvalho, 2022; Quaranta, 2015). As with other processes of market liberalisation, the contentious responses to austerity involved multiple players (Roberts, 2008) such as precarious youth, and public and blue-collar workers (della Porta et al., 2016). In contrast to the anti-globalisation movement, protests were nationally grounded. Protestors made wide use of internet technologies as a means of mobilisation, maintained a horizontal character, and proved capable of expanding their bases beyond activists, incorporating new people into broad protests (Castells, 2012; della Porta et al., 2016; Flesher Fominaya, 2017; Gerbaudo, 2017). In the course of this wave of contention, a transnational, shared frame emerged and thereafter diffused – one based on the idea of “citizenship,” and which developed not against democracy, but instead demanded its renewal.

Depending on the national context, contentious responses to austerity had different configurations. In Spain, in mid-2011, the 15M movement emerged, occupying squares in cities all over the country, which led to the creation of local grassroots assemblies and movements in defence of public healthcare and education, among other things (Castells, 2012; della Porta et al., 2016; Hughes, 2011; Portos, 2016). Forging links between parties and social movements was difficult, both because of the mistrust of the parties, particularly *Izquierda Unida* (IU), towards the movements, and also because of anti-party and anti-union sentiment within the movement (Castells, 2012; Flesher Fominaya, 2007, 2014; Ramiro & Verge, 2013). The links between these players developed only at a later stage of the cycle, with trade unions joining movements' mobilisations such as the *Mareas* (Romanos, 2016; Portos, 2019; Portos & Carvalho, 2022).

By contrast, in Portugal, even though different social movements also arose between 2011 and 2013, no new political party was electorally successful. Instead, “old” actors dominated the landscape. Baumgarten (2013) divides the 2011 protests in Portugal into union-led demonstrations and general strikes; independent protest events; and social movement platforms or occupations of public spaces. Throughout the cycle of protest, various links developed between institutional and non-institutional players. The *Confederação Geral de Trabalhadores Portugueses* (CGTP), the dominant trade union in the protests, is directly linked to the *Partido Comunista Português* (PCP). During the first phase of protest, these two players avoided giving organisational support to much of the movements' protests, but

later on, as their messages evolved, collaborations emerged, though more disruptive players remained sidelined (Carvalho & Ramos Pinto, 2019). The *Bloco de Esquerda* (BE) was a major player from the beginning, developing close connections with activists (Lisi, 2013). As Soeiro (2014) observes, poly-membership, or belonging to various groups, prevailed throughout the cycle. Players remained very close to each other, as the networks were small and groups such as *Que se Lixe a Troika* were very close to the political parties. In fact, the occupation of public spaces and the creation of public assemblies around Lisbon were merely momentary episodes (Baumgarten, 2017a; Carvalho, 2014). Autonomist and libertarian groups formed the basis of these assemblies, and even though they participated in protests, they never led any campaign successfully and were not able to reach the same level of success as comparable groups in Spain or Greece (Kentikelenis, 2018; Kotronaki & Christou, 2019; Portos, 2019).

In addition, stemming from this wave of protests, between 2009 and 2015 a range of transformation took place in the party system, with the emergence of new political parties and alliances, especially in the form of movement-parties (della Porta, Fernández, et al., 2017). Most notably, a wave of populism emerged with parties such as SYRIZA, *Podemos* and the Five Star Movement replicating, at least discursively, the idea of direct democracy that was advocated by the movements. As a consequence, by 2015 in all of these countries the parties that held majorities for several decades had lost their hegemony (Martín & Urquizu-Sancho, 2012; Rodríguez-Teruel et al., 2016; Rodríguez Teruel & Barrio, 2016; Vidal, 2018).

We can also distinguish among more and less stable countries vis-à-vis their institutional and electoral processes. On the one hand we have Portugal and Spain which, from the electoral cycle of 2010-2011 (Bosco & Verney, 2012; Verney & Bosco, 2013) up until the 2015 elections, did not change government; on the other hand, Italy and Greece had different governments during this period, some of them of a technocratic bent.

However, these countries diverged after 2015. In Spain, *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos* (Miley, 2017; Orriols & Cordero, 2016; Rodríguez-Teruel et al., 2016; Vidal, 2018) emerged, deepening the ongoing constitutional crisis in a parliament with no clear majority, with the PP remaining in power after a second general election in June 2016 (Miley, 2017). From 2014 onwards, *Podemos*, a new political party, took advantage of the political opportunity structure created by the movements, particularly after electing five MEPs in May 2014 (Miley, 2017; Orriols & Cordero, 2016; Ramiro & Gomez, 2016; Rodríguez-Teruel, Barrio, & Barberà, 2016; Sola & Rendueles, 2018). At the local and regional levels, new political forces such as *Ahora Madrid* and

*Barcelona en Comú*, closer to the activists, also emerged. In Portugal, by contrast, an unprecedented shift in terms of party alliances led to a parliamentary pact between the PCP, BE, Greens (PEV), and *Partido Socialista* (PS). For the first time in history, a minority PS government was supported by an alliance of left-wing parties (Accornero & Ramos Pinto, 2020; Lisi, 2016). Finally, in Greece, SYRIZA formed a government, replacing PASOK, the Greek Socialist Party, as the main force on the left of the political spectrum (Tsakatika, 2016).

As can be seen, contestation of austerity in the Southern European countries involved a plurality of players. It ranged from contestation in the streets – both by traditional actors such as trade unions and by newly formed social movements – to new political parties. In her cross-country processual comparison, della Porta (della Porta et al., 2016) points to a combination of institutional and non-institutional factors driving the contentious cycle, such as the political conditions amidst the crisis, the way left-wing parties absorbed and managed its fallout, and the declining trust in institutions (both national and European), the opportunities and threats resulting from the crisis, and the different types of protest that emerged. In line with this perspective, Roberts argues in a similar vein that it is “essential to think beyond the short-term political dynamics of crisis management to consider the longer-term institutional legacies and fragilities of the different political alignments forged around crisis-induced policy reforms” (Roberts, 2017, abstract).

When considering these cases and scenarios, two sets of competing hypotheses are plausible. On the one hand, a more classical, grievance-based model would view these divergent reactions and outcomes as the consequence of the different austerity measures implemented, specifically the unique set of grievances they generated. On the other hand, a second set of hypotheses focuses directly upon national-level political institutions and political processes to propose that, even if the crisis and its impact can explain at least some aspects of contention, the way that institutions and actors manage the crisis nevertheless remains key. Within this second type of hypothesis, a first step highlights the way austerity and the crisis are managed by institutional actors and representative institutions (political parties, parliaments, etc.), and a second step examines their responsiveness and openness to protest grievances: because institutions and actors are responsive to protest grievances and demands, they end up channeling discontent that leads to demobilisation. Therefore, in this perspective, to give an example, the lower number of protests by social movements in Portugal when compared to its Southern European counterparts, rather

than reflecting a less severe crisis impact, reveals not only the capacity of institutions to absorb and manage austerity to mitigate its harm, but also the capacity of existing left-wing parties in parliament to channel discontent.

Robert Fishman proposes that the divergence between Portugal and Spain is linked to the nature of democratic practice resulting from the divergent paths taken in the transition to democracy (Fishman, 2010, 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2013, 2017, 2019; Fishman & Cabral, 2016; Fishman & Everson, 2016; Fishman & Lizardo, 2013). In the case of Spain, though protest was essential in shifting the public agenda and influencing institutional actors, Fishman points out that the potency of the protests was the result of institutional players' exclusion and delegitimation of protesters. As a consequence of the lack of institutional openness to citizens' demands and grievances, protest was the only remaining channel. Portugal, in his view, presents a contrasting scenario where the openness and inclusiveness of the institutions resulted in deeper collaboration and engagement among actors. As such, in Spain, movements must resort more frequently to disruption to attain their objectives, whereas in Portugal, institutional and non-institutional actors engage in a conversation,<sup>5</sup> as institutions are more open due to the institutional and cultural legacy of the revolution (Fishman & Everson, 2016).

Adding to this perspective, and building on Fishman's work, Tiago Fernandes (2016) highlights the importance of the specific political context – one that provided allies, voice, and resources for social movements – for explaining the singularity of Portuguese protest dynamics in times of recession. Another critical factor is the institutional settings that moderated the impact of the crisis. In particular, Fernandes points to the existence of a strong network of state-civil society partnerships for policy delivery to the poor, as well as the Constitutional Court action that overturned many of the harshest austerity measures. In other words, the Portuguese institutions were more inclusive, since the institutional left – comprising political parties and trade unions – was more receptive to hearing and articulating the demands of those protesting in the streets. A variety of other factors are important, too, such as the country's size (both in terms of population and area), the intensity of the austerity programs implemented and how they were managed, and especially the nature and quality of the political institutions that emerged with democracy. In Portugal, although there was a specific program of austerity under the auspices of the Troika, this program

5 Building on his transitional and culturalist argument, Fishman points out that in a typical conversation the demonstrations end up at the doorsteps of Parliament, and protesters are invited to the Parliament.

was not only less austere than in Spain, but the measures also attenuated its negative impact on those in the lower strata of the population (Perez & Matsaganis, 2018). The distributional impact was therefore comparatively less harsh, resulting in lower growth in inequality and unemployment, and thus fewer protests (T. Fernandes, 2016).

However, as the authors of the contentious politics approach propose, democratic regimes do not diminish the role of protest and social movements but rather have a crucial role in its expansion, because they are paramount in shaping and redefining the political sphere. Even if both the economic crisis and institutions can explain the different forms of contention, they do not fully explain variations in the cycle of protest. As such, it remains necessary to consider the inner workings of the political process and the power relations between players. Rather than assuming that protest is simply channelled, it is important to analyse the relationship between institutional and non-institutional players and understand how it shapes the cycle of protest and its outcomes. Even if the previous perspectives look at the way that different national political settings mediate the effects of the Eurozone crisis on contentious responses, they take a comparatively static approach. Ours, by contrast, will consider the internal power dynamics of the contention cycle, where agency plays a crucial role.

### **Contesting austerity: social movements and the left**

This study of the dynamics of resistance to neoliberalism, crisis and austerity in Portugal and Spain will provide evidence of how political players reacted to, adapted to and managed the crisis, leading to the rise of an anti-austerity arena of contention. Moreover, this book will contribute to essential debates not only in the field of social movements in contexts of market liberalisation and crisis, but also on the nature of Iberian and Southern European democracies. The intersection of these topics will be crucial to understanding how social movements and contentious politics play a role in processes of political change.

*Contesting Austerity* is the first book to take a comparative approach to the Portuguese and Spanish anti-austerity mobilisations. While most studies focus on single case studies, this work benefits from a paired comparison that provides a broader understanding of the political processes and mobilisation in the two countries. In contrast to Fishman's work (2019) about Portugal and Spain, even if partially following and in debt to it, this comparison focuses solely on the period of the Great Recession. Moreover, Fishman interprets

the events of the protest cycle through institutions' degree of openness to civil society actors and political culture: political discontent is channelled through institutions in Portugal, while in Spain institutional closedness invigorates street politics. *Contesting Austerity*, meanwhile, proposes that the differences result from social movements' degree of autonomy from institutional players: if in Portugal institutional players curtailed movement actions by interfering in the development of the cycle of protest, in Spain movement autonomy vis-à-vis trade unions and political parties allowed for a reconfiguration of the anti-austerity protest arena.

The book combines the notion of "contentious politics" with recent concepts in social movement theory, namely those of "players" and "arenas" (which are defined in the next chapter). This articulation allows us to move away from the more structural aspects of the "contentious politics" perspective, while retaining a cycle-based approach, and introduces the idea that the interactions between players shape both the protest cycle and the formation of the anti-austerity arena. Most work on the anti-austerity contentious wave tends to focus on specific events, cases or groups without looking at the full range of forms of contestation. By taking a cycle-based approach, rather than focusing solely on social movements, this book looks to the interactions between institutional and non-institutional players. Its most original contribution is to show that a variety of players contested austerity and their interactions came to shape the contentious responses to it. Each country has a distinct configuration of relations between institutional and non-institutional players that explains the different outcomes.

Building upon the considerations outlined in this introduction, chapter one ("Cycles, Arenas and Claims") presents the analytical framework deployed throughout the empirical chapters. I explore conceptually how to analyse the plurality of claims and players that developed throughout a cycle of protest and how these are essential for our understanding of how broader political arenas are re-shaped. I also explore how concepts such as cycles of protest, players and arenas, repertoires and claim-making developed in social movements studies. *Contesting Austerity* differs from more conventional approaches to social movements by analysing contentious reactions to austerity as part of an arena characterised by the dynamic interaction of a plurality of players – including parties, unions, and the state. At the end of the chapter, I present this investigation's research design and methodology. Based on a paired comparison and process tracing, the extensive data collection allows for thick description (i.e. grasping various dimensions of social reality in detail), and involved a detailed reconstruction of the case countries' respective contentious dynamics, based on an

unprecedented protest event analysis database (over 4,500 events coded for the two countries) and on 44 interviews conducted by the author. The detailed description in terms of players, claims and repertoires allows for a full picture of mobilisation in the period under analysis.

In the subsequent chapters, this book follows the different phases of the cycle of protest in the two countries between 2008 to 2015. As we will see, at each phase of the cycle new claims, discourses, players and alliances emerged. As the cycle unfolded, the protest arena was reconfigured not only by the specificity of opportunity structures, but also by interactions between players.

Chapter two (“Preludes to the Anti-austerity Mobilisations”) reconstructs the dynamics of mobilisation in Portugal and Spain from the transition to democracy to the austerity years. It is argued that rather than being spontaneous reactions to political and economic crises, many of the features identified throughout the following chapters were already present and were important in shaping the configuration of discourses and players during the austerity years. In Portugal, the principal conflict was centred around labour issues with protest dynamics dominated by trade unions. Movement players remained small, closed and conflictual, with a strong presence of political parties among them, and with small, reactive and more disruptive local movements emerging in response to changes in the welfare state. In Spain, the autonomy of social movements in relation to political parties and trade unions led to more open and horizontal repertoires, in which movements, in addition to focusing on labour precarity, also developed a critique of democratic institutions, later transferred to the 15M.

The next two chapters deal with different aspects of what I call mobilisations under and against austerity. These comprise two moments, involving different players and discourses, between 2010 and 2014. In the first phase, centred on 2011, which I have called “Turning Points” (the title of chapter three), we see a redefinition of the contentious arena, with the emergence of social movements directly contesting austerity. These brought new dynamics and claims into the political sphere of both countries. Nevertheless, after this turning point, the two countries follow different paths: in Spain there was a crescendo of mobilisations, with social movements becoming dominant, while in Portugal social movements never became leading players and emerged only within particular political opportunity structures. This reflected the capacity of social movements in Spain to go beyond their core of activists, while in Portugal the movements proved much less capable of doing so. Apart from the past trajectory of protests, this divergence relates not only to different conjunctural and contextual opportunities, but also

to the different capacities of emergent movements to establish an open and broad discursive repertoire and effective structures of mobilisation, penetrated to varying degrees by established institutional players.

However, this divergence does not paint a complete picture of the anti-austerity dynamics in the two countries. To account for the full cycle, other mobilisations must be taken into consideration. Thus, in chapter four (“Enduring Austerity”) I deal with protest dynamics between 2012 and the end of 2013, during which new players and claims materialised. In Spain, multiple and overlapping dynamics developed, whereby the demand for social rights to education and health triggered an alliance between social movements and trade unions. In Portugal, by contrast, trade unions and political parties dominated street mobilisations. If trade unions were the main player, the re-emergence of social movements gave rise to a strategic alliance and the co-optation of these movements by political parties. Rather than developing a discourse critical of the regime, as occurred in Spain, mobilisations in Portugal were characterised by demands to protect the legacy of the 1974 revolution. Together, these two chapters advance a critique of the sole focus on social movement dynamics.

Lastly, chapter five (“From the Streets to Institutions”) focuses on the dynamics within party systems – specifically in relation to the left-wing parties – as an outcome of the contentious cycle during the electoral period (2014-2015). While existing research has focused on the influence of the 15M mobilisations on the constitution of *Podemos* in Spain and the lack of a new party in Portugal, I show that these transformations do not result solely from the challenges introduced by the movements, but also from the internal dynamics of the institutional left. In this way, *Podemos* is the result of both social-movement dynamics and internal struggles within the pre-existing party *Izquierda Unida*. In Portugal, with the social movements domesticated and at the back of the stage, the debate on the left revolved around the unity of the left against austerity.

Portugal and Spain diverged in both the nature and intensity of the protests they experienced and the reconfiguration of the party system, a focus on which should help us to understand that the so-called anti-austerity protests cannot be treated as a single phenomenon despite their commonalities and linkages. When observing the political consequences of the Great Recession and austerity, we find different protest responses and outcomes in Portugal and Spain. We could expect the similar historical backgrounds of these semi-peripheral European countries – both of which underwent a rapid socio-economic transformation in the second half of the 20th century, and a transition to democracy followed by integration into European institutions

from the 1970s – to produce similar outcomes. Arguably, even if in a broader macro-historical perspective a certain parallel can still be observed – since both have gone through a crisis embedded in European dynamics – an in-depth analysis of the anti-austerity cycle reveals different trajectories. As I will show in the empirical chapters of this book, the shape of the cycle of protest was different in each case, and the lack of successful new political parties in Portugal contrasts with the plurality of electoral players that emerged in Spain.

Many seem to analyse the current epoch from an “end of history” perspective, whereby contention is disruptive of liberal democracies. But contention is no abnormality. Rather, it is at the very heart of processes of political change. Contention involves a range of actors that struggle to define meaning in the political sphere. The “turbulence” of the current period provides us with a valuable opportunity to examine these dynamics. By using a longitudinal cycle-based approach to analyse the dynamic configurations and reconfigurations of the political arena, I hope to contribute to our understanding of the intricate process of political change in the Iberian Peninsula – but also elsewhere – during the peak of austerity.

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# 1 Cycles, arenas and claims

## A players-based approach

### Abstract

This chapter presents the analytical framework deployed in the empirical chapters. It combines the structural focus of McAdam, Tilly and Tarrow's "contentious politics" approach (2001, 2015) with Jasper and Duyvendak's (2015a, b) interactionist perspective on "players" and "arenas," allowing us to explore the plurality of claims and players that developed throughout the cycle of protest and re-shaped the political landscape in the two countries. As such, it proposes a cycle-based approach that engages with the strategic interactions between institutional and non-institutional players. The final section of the chapter discusses the research design and methodology employed in this book.

**Keywords:** cycles of protest, players, arenas, claims, repertoires

As the authors of the so-called "contentious politics" approach remind us, grievances stemming from increasing deprivation and inequalities account only partially for protest as they alone cannot explain the different nature and trajectory of protest seen across countries. Instead, to understand these, it is necessary to focus on "variations in political structure and in the workings of the political process" (Tarrow, 2011, p. 26), and "the relational dynamics of complex episodes of contention" (Tarrow, 2015, p. 99).

If in the introduction of this book I followed a Polanyian approach (Burawoy, 2003; Polanyi, 1944) by considering the political and economic dynamics that lead to the eruption of counter-movements under market liberalisation, in this chapter I will construct an analytical framework to analyse the internal dynamics of the cycle of protest in Portugal and Spain between 2009 and 2015. I will combine tools from the Contentious Politics and Political Process approaches with recently developed interactionist perspectives (Duyvendak & Jasper, 2015a, 2015b; Jasper, 2021; McGarry, Davidson,

Accornero, Jasper, & Duyvendak, 2016) to investigate the internal dynamics of a protest cycle in a fine-grained way using a players-based approach.

In this chapter, I will discuss three main analytical dimensions. First, I will consider how the concepts of political opportunity structure and eventful protest contribute to a better understanding of how protest cycles evolve. Second, taking into account some of the most recent debates in social movement studies, I will untangle the relation between institutional and non-institutional players through an arena- and players-based approach. Lastly, I will explore how to analyse repertoires and claims. This framework allows us to examine the internal dynamics of the contentious cycle by looking at the dynamic relations between “social movements, political contention and regimes, and at the embedding of national patterns of contention in world politics” (Tarrow, 2011, p. 179).

### **Cycles of protest, political opportunity structures and eventful protests**

Protest, even if not the only activity performed by contentious players, is at the core of social movements’ action. A protest is a non-routine, non-institutionalised and unconventional form of action used by collective players to “pursue or prevent changes in institutionalized power relations” (Taylor and van Dyke 2004: 268 – in della Porta & Diani, 2006). Usually such events vary from demonstrations, marches, or strikes to more disruptive performances such as boycotts, sit-ins, occupations or blockades. By using indirect channels to influence decision-makers, it “sets in motion a process of indirect persuasion mediated by mass media and powerful actors” (della Porta & Diani, 2006, p. 167). Tarrow defines a protest event “as a disruptive direct action on behalf of collective interests, in which claims [are] made against some other group, elites, or authorities” (Tarrow 1989: 359). In the same vein, Opp (2009) defines protest as a “joint (i.e. collective) action of individuals aimed at achieving their goal or goals by influencing decisions of a target” (p. 38). Following the project Dynamics of Collective Action,<sup>6</sup> a protest event can be understood operationally as a collective and public act that involves claim-making and the desire to change society, with varying degrees of disruption depending on the repertoire.

However, rather than protests being isolated, “[a] widespread observation in social movement studies is that protest events tend to cluster in time and

6 See the website: <https://web.stanford.edu/group/collectiveaction/cgi-bin/drupal/>

space” (della Porta, 2013b) becoming “a protest cycle when it is diffused to several sectors of the population, is highly organized, and is widely used as the instrument to put forward demands” (Tarrow, 1989: 14-15). Tarrow classically defines a cycle of protest as a:

phase of heightened conflict across the social system, with rapid diffusion of collective action from more mobilized to less mobilized sectors, a rapid pace of innovation in the forms of contention employed, the creation of new or transformed collective action frames, a combination of organized and unorganized participation, and sequences of intensified information flow and interaction between challengers and authorities. Such widespread contention produces externalities, which give challengers at least a temporary advantage and allow them to overcome the weaknesses in their resource base. It demands that states devise broad strategies of response that are repressive or facilitative, or a combination of the two. And it produces general outcomes that are more than the sum of the results of an aggregate of unconnected events. (Tarrow, 2011, p. 199)

Several authors agree that a cycle of protest (or protest cycle) occurs when protests from a plurality of political and social sectors cluster rapidly in a sustained way within a specific territory, using a diversity of repertoires and introducing novel frames and claims (Koopmans, 2004; Tarrow, 1989, 1993). As such, the notion of a cycle of protest (and other similar concepts such as waves, campaigns and tides) delineates the sequence and links between events over time, i.e. it helps in “locating single protest events as well as social movements within the broader historical context to which they belong” (della Porta, 2013b). Hence, by dealing with the internal dynamics of each phase of conflict, this concept helps us map the plurality of players, discourses and repertoires that co-exist and interact in a given protest cycle, from the dawn of its first mobilisations to its intensification over time and space, and finally, to its normalisation and eventual decline. Even if a protest cycle mirrors and reproduces some of the previously existing protest dynamics, it also amplifies trends that had been slowly germinating. The clustering of protest events condenses emergent tensions and disputes that had been developing previously, while reshaping the political and protest sphere.

As such, street politics is not randomly distributed but rather tends to follow a specific sequence. Despite their terminological differences and theoretical divergences, both Koopmans (2004) and Tarrow (2011) agree that there is an unequal distribution of protest throughout time, with each phase unfolding with different intensity. If Koopmans points to

expansion, transformation and contraction, Tarrow indicates that cycles develop through processes of diffusion, exhaustion and the tandem between radicalisation and institutionalisation. Nonetheless, it should be clear that no unilinear model exists and that analysis of the cycles' internal processes should instead recognise the more or less recurring patterns found in different cases.

Protest cycles do not erupt spontaneously but slowly expand until a political opportunity structure eventually opens. Following Tarrow (1993, 2011), the intensification of conflict, its geographical diffusion, and the emergence of new players, symbols, frames and repertoires of action leads to new phases of the cycle of protest. This ascending phase leads to a turning point when protest increases: new players emerge and engage in tactical innovation. Claims and frames at this stage are essential in opening up the scope of mobilisation by not only formulating diagnoses of injustice that resonate with broad constituencies (Benford & Snow, 2000), but also fulfilling a strategic role (Tarrow, 1989, 2013; Zamponi, 2012) by amassing more participants in order to gain greater legitimacy (della Porta & Diani, 2006). Moreover, as Flesher Fominaya (2014, 2020) argues, spontaneity and novelty – as a frame and discourse – are usually used to broaden the range of participants and present the mobilisations as distinct from previous ones.

After this expansion, protests tend to decline. State authorities either repress protest or control it by division, co-optation or exclusion. In addition, emerging protest groups lose their newness and eventually split, following co-occurrent processes such as institutionalisation and radicalisation (Tarrow, 2011). As protest declines and politics enters a new institutional routine, movement groups might follow distinct strategies: on the one hand, moderate movement leaders institutionalise by creating political parties; on the other hand, more radical sectors use violence to keep confronting state authorities.

Understanding how the chain of mobilisation events unfolds is a central aspect of this analytical framework: being highly contingent, these events should be understood as open-ended and relational processes (Portos & Carvalho, 2022). For instance, Portos (2019) shows that in the Spanish anti-austerity cycle of protest no radicalisation happened. Rather than the “radicalisation-institutionalisation tandem” proposed by Tarrow, the collaborative strategies between emerging players and institutionalised ones, together with a shift downward in scale (a so-called “scale-shift”), led to a long cycle of mobilisation instead of quick radicalisation.

The analyses of protest cycles mentioned above swing between structure and agency. If on the one hand there is a tendency to point to very rigid

patterns in the way collective action unfolds, on the other hand contingency and agency also need to be considered. That is why the two most important concepts associated with contentious cycles are those of the political opportunity structure and eventful protest.

The political opportunity structure (POS) is one of the main explanatory concepts in social movement studies, and has both structure- and agency-led versions and uses. In more static versions, it is a “stable institutional structure” composed of state capacity and apparatus, political regime and institutions, and cleavage structure; in more dynamic versions, it refers to the configuration of players and their interaction (Goodwin & Jasper, 1999; Kriesi, 2007). This distinction could also be thought of in terms of the long-term versus short-term contexts in which contentions players act.

Changes in the political environment seem to explain the opportunities and threats that lead to contentious actions. It is the way these different opportunities change over time that provides the context that affects and triggers mobilisation. In Tilly and Tarrow’s (2015) conceptualisation, the POS is defined by: 1) the opening up of, and increase in access to, institutions to new actors; 2) the evidence of political realignment in shifting alignments or electoral instability; 3) the availability of influential allies; 4) emerging splits within the elite (Tarrow, 2011).

Nevertheless, protests are not determined solely by pre-existing and contextual opportunities, and we also need to understand how players make use of and create their own opportunities. In fact, movements and other players can also help determine and change how cycles unfold (della Porta, 2008, 2020; Portos & Carvalho, 2022). Cycles of protest should be taken as open-ended and highly contingent phenomena whose course is affected by transformative events. Protest can have a transformative effect and introduce innovations during the cycle, putting forward new repertoires, players, frames or claims, or even building alliances (Portos & Carvalho, 2022). As such, protest events (which are normally understood as a consequence of a POS) can also be considered an independent “variable” that shapes how the cycle of protest unfolds (depending on their degree of eventfulness). As Portos and Carvalho (2022, p. 47) propose:

Protest events are not merely an explanandum, as they are also ‘social mechanisms of their own with the capacity to initiate change across multiple registers and levels of explanation’ (Meyer & Kimeldorf, 2015, p. 429). In other words, events can become the explanans. The eventful character of specific protest events resonates with the concept of ‘thickened history’, a time when events rapidly multiply and take on a

significant causal role of their own (Beissinger, 2002, p. 42). Moreover, some eventful protests can trigger ‘critical junctures’, thereby ‘producing abrupt changes which develop contingently and become path dependent. While routinized protests proliferate in normal times, some protests – or moments of protest – act as exogenous shocks, catalyzing intense and massive waves of protest’ (della Porta, 2018, p. 4).

A cycle-based approach enhances a detailed understanding of political processes. Its temporal element contributes to a dynamic and dense reading of episodes of contention, as it allows the identification of different phases and factors behind it. But, as argued here, the interaction between the POS and eventful protests also shapes the dynamics of protest cycles in turn. Nonetheless, there is no cycle of protest without players, and their agency is crucial to understanding the strategic choices made, as well as how these come to affect the paths that cycles can take.

### **Blurring the lines: a multi-player perspective**

Typically, the contentious politics approach is presented as a multi-actor perspective, with social movements being the typical form of contention under democratic regimes. Social movements are “sustained campaigns of claim making, using repeated performances that advertise that claim, based on organizations, networks, traditions, and solidarities that sustain these activities” (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, p. 237). Movements can be divided into campaigns and bases. Campaigns involve public challenges and claim-making directed towards power holders, and bases are the “social background, organisational resources, and cultural framework of contention and collective action” (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, p. 237). Therefore, actors are not simply constituted through the mobilisation of resources or as a response to political opportunities; they are also products of their context, their repertoires and their interaction with other actors. In this perspective, actors are “recognisable sets of people who carry on collective action in which governments are directly or indirectly involved, making and/or receiving contentious claims” (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, p. 236). Advocating a multi-actor perspective, Koopmans suggests that:

... what we need is an approach that transcends the isolated view of single movements and inserts them in time and space, but treats the latter not as dimensions on which to sample ‘cases,’ but as variables that

are an intrinsic and central part of the analysis of contention. ... Against the focus on single movements, this approach argues that contention is always a multi-actor process that cannot be adequately understood by focusing attention on one actor and reducing the others to the role of context variables. Instead, inter-actions between actors become the fundamental units of analysis (Koopmans, 2004, p. 40).

However, the study of how contentious mechanisms, dynamics and interactions between institutional and non-institutional actors come to shape cycles of protest remains, in many ways, a black box. As Piccio (2016a) remarks, even if there have been calls to thoroughly explore this relationship between actors, many gaps in our knowledge persist. I propose that we focus on the assemblages of contention and how the national context, institutions and players mediate the formation of these assemblages. Cycles of protest and contentious events are part of a longer contentious process and interaction between institutional and non-institutional actors or players (Duyvendak & Jasper, 2015a, 2015b; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012; Goldstone, 2003, 2004; Jasper, 2021; Kriesi, 2015; McAdam, Tarrow, & Tilly, 2001; Tilly & Tarrow, 2015). Within a cycle-based approach, the question is not only how these actors or players transform over the course of the cycle, but also how they interact.

The distinction between institutional actors (or insiders) and non-institutional actors (or outsiders) originates from the power theories of – and debates between – elitists and pluralists in the 1960s and 1970s. As Scott suggests, protest – or non-institutionalised collective action – constitutes an alternative perspective in these discussions: “While ‘parties’ are groups that follow conventional, institutionalized patterns of political participation, protest groups are organized around collective resistance to the very structures that underpin party politics” (Scott, 2001, p. 111). Even though this is still a rigid way of looking at actors, protest is then understood as a form of collective action directed towards political parties and state institutions. Considering both these types of actor throughout a cycle of contention, in which they are both active players, allows us to both close the gap and establish a dialogue between social movement studies and the literature on political parties. If the contentious politics approach investigates institutional actors and institutions, it rarely presents them as being active players throughout cycles of protest, but rather merely as outcomes.

It should be added that this scientific division of labour also results from assumptions within particular strands of democratic theory. For instance, Kitschelt (1993) observes that implicit to the conceptualisation of protest cycles is the idea of institutional (un)responsiveness. As institutions fail to

meet the demands and grievances of various social groups, protest becomes an alternative channel through which to express their discontent. As the cycle unfolds and institutions become responsive, either the criticisms and demands are incorporated through the creation of new political actors or institutional changes, or repression leads protests to fade out. Goldstone (2004) points out that in most research on social movements there is a distinction between social movements and political parties, whereby the former are taken to be extra-institutional actors and outsiders to the political sphere that, if successful, transition to inside the institutional sphere.

Nonetheless, engrained in this view is a normative stance according to which protest actors are perceived as an anomaly and disruption, and outsiders are not a legitimate part of the democratic process. This gives rise to a unidirectional perspective in which extra-institutional actors target institutions and if successful are incorporated into the institutional sphere. Yet the relations between institutional and non-institutional actors are more complex than this: non-institutional actors do not simply exert pressure on politicians and governments (Kriesi, 2015). Social movements are one of the cornerstones of modern political participation and they shape the nature of democracy and citizenship. In fact, democracy not only contributes to the diffusion and development of social movements; these players are fundamental in the continuous struggle to redefine the political sphere (Eisenstadt, 1998; Goldstone, 2004). As Goldstone remarks: "social movement activity is not so much an alternative to institutionalized politics, diminishing as the latter increases; rather it is a complementary mode of political action, which increases even as democratic politics spread" (Goldstone, 2004, p. 336).

Goldstone therefore suggests that the relationship between actors is blurred and less clear-cut than might be expected. Institutional and non-institutional actors are mutually dependent and deeply intertwined (Goldstone, 2003, 2004; Kriesi, 2015). Nevertheless, it could be argued that more complex and intricate mechanisms are at play. There is a need to consider both the transformative capacity of protest, as well as the interaction between movements and parties throughout the process, instead of understanding protest only as the channelling mechanism referred to above. We thus need an approach in which there "are no clear lines separating the roles of challenger (protestors or social movement activists), incumbents (those engaged in routine acceptance and membership in the polity defined by a policy field), and governance units (agents or institutions of the state)" (Goldstone, 2015, p. 227).

To this end, it could be pointed out that the political arena is replete with a variety of players that do not fit traditional models, entailing a more complex

chain of interactions between them (Piccio, 2016a, 2016b). Institutional and non-institutional players' interactions can take different modalities; they are intricate and involve a diversity of forms and entry points. For example "hybrid" actors such as movement-parties mix features traditionally associated with both parties and social movements (della Porta, Fernández, et al., 2017), and social movement unionism brings aspects of social movements into the field of labour (Köhler & Calleja Jiménez, 2015). Reinforcing this idea, Goldstone points out that Tilly's work in fact reflects the symbiosis between social movements and democracy:

Social protest repertoires emerged in England at roughly the same time as repertoires for influencing elections to Parliament, and with the same purpose – to influence the outcomes of Parliament's deliberations. This was not a coincidence but represented a fundamental evolution in the nature of politics: both democratisation and social movements built on the same basic principle, that ordinary people are politically worthy of consultation. (Goldstone, 2004, p. 342)

Building on many of these considerations, over the last decade social movement studies have evolved to include analysis of the interactions between players, or actors, through different concepts such as arenas and fields (or spaces). These new emergent syntheses aim – more or less successfully – to integrate and advance previous conceptualisations of collective action, while incorporating agency and moving away from more structural approaches. As will be seen in the following chapters, by considering multiple players within a protest cycle in their various forms, I will provide an analytical grid that helps disentangle the interactions that shape the protest cycles under analysis. Jasper's approach to arenas, players and strategic action is particularly fruitful.

According to the players and arenas approach, there is a need to consider three main conceptual components: players, arenas, and strategic action. For Jasper, players "are those who engage in strategic action with some goal in mind" (Jasper, 2015, p. 10). This is a loose concept that can stretch from simple to compound groups, or from individuals to groups of individuals. An arena is a "bundle of rules and resources that allow or encourage certain kinds of interactions to proceed, with something at stake" (Jasper, 2015, p. 15). Within an arena, players not only interact with each other, but also "monitor each others' actions, although that capacity is not always equally distributed" (Jasper, 2015, p. 15), due to different roles played. More importantly, this conceptualisation goes beyond a static approach by analysing the dynamic

interaction between a wide range of players intervening in an arena such as the state (Duyvendak & Jasper, 2015a). This type of analysis helps to blur the borders between players, allowing for a much more flexible and situated analysis that does not take players for granted, but rather contextualises their action within a given arena (Duyvendak & Fillieule, 2015).

We should note that there is an important metaphorical difference between the notions of “actors” and “players.” If “actors” refers to groups or individuals that play a certain role following norms within a system, “players” implies agency and strategic decisions within a game. While the former follows norms, the latter makes choices. As such, in a given cycle of protest, players’ agency is of core importance to understanding how they come to shape this cycle. By adding an interactionist flavour to an until now mostly structural and macro analysis, and by blurring the boundaries between players and not taking them for granted, we can expand our vocabulary when examining how and why the sequence of events within a cycle of protest unfolds. Therefore, processes like alliance building, institutionalisation, co-option, movement-parties and political articulation are specific forms of interaction that can occur along a cycle of contention – forms that should be included in our analyses.

## **Repertoires, discourses and claim-making**

The argument presented in the previous section on the plurality of players present in contentious arenas can and should be extended to the domain of repertoires and claim-making. While initial studies on the anti-austerity protests in Europe focused mostly on claims for democratic renewal made by social movements, we need to consider that the contestation of austerity involved a plurality of subjectivities (Roberts, 2008). Moreover, the nature of the discursive repertoires in a given country is also associated with the nature of that country’s political regime and its institutions (Fishman, 2019). In a context where austerity entails a limited conception of citizenship whereby the markets and commodification take over labour and social rights, these rights play a very important role in contesting austerity. By creating a typology of citizenship claims, we can interpret claim-making beyond the frame of (mis)representation. This makes it possible in the following chapters to analyse the full diversity of discourses at play.

A repertoire constitutes a historical script that is embedded in the political culture and followed in protest actions and performances. Repertoires can be defined as “claim-making routines that apply to the same claimant-object

pairs: bosses and workers, peasants and landlords, rival nationalist factions, and many more” (Tilly & Tarrow, 2015, p. 16). Contentious politics authors distinguish between two types of repertoire that result from historical shifts brought about by the emergence of modern capitalism and state building. Repertoires evolved from local, non-standardised and parochial ones to modular and cosmopolitan ones that targeted central authorities. Tarrow (2011) points out that the distinction between parochial and modular repertoires involves three dimensions: 1) parochial vs cosmopolitan: from local interests and interactions in a single community to interests that span across many communities; 2) segmented vs modular: from addressing local issues and nearby objects to easy transferability between settings; 3) particular vs autonomous: from significant variability between groups, issues and localities to being “autonomous in beginning on claimants’ own initiative and establishing direct contact between claimants and nationally significant centers of power” (Tarrow, 2011, p. 41). The former type (parochial, segmented, and particular) were violent, direct, and brief. They were not apolitical or pre-political but railed against the fact that “authorities were ignoring their inherited rights” (Tarrow, 2011, p. 46) (e.g. food riots, religious conflicts, or peasant revolts). Modern repertoires (cosmopolitan, modular and autonomous) changed and have taken the form of boycotts, mass petitioning, public meetings, strikes, marches, demonstrations, and occupations. As the term repertoire indicate, they should be understood as conventions or standardised actions that are used repeatedly by players.

Moreover, when analysing claim-making – understood as the directing of demands towards particular targets – we should consider the way players and arenas develop. This is closely linked to the idea of the “language of contention,” which Tarrow (2013) developed in an attempt to explain how and why particular frames and discourses of contention have become more prominent than others. Tarrow uses a term coined by Steinberg (1999): “discursive repertoires.” These “are reciprocally linked to the repertoires of collective actions that groups develop to realize their goals” (Steinberg, 1999, p. xxi). They are historically constructed and politically tied not only to how regimes are built, but also to the relation of forces between institutions, institutional and non-institutional players. Even if it builds on social movement framing literature, Tarrow’s perspective goes beyond it by proposing two sets of variables to analyse the problem at hand: symbolic resonance and strategic modularity. The former builds on the conceptualisation proposed by Benford and Snow (2000) which emphasises the “core meaning of a specific term.” It shows how a term resonates within processes of mobilisation that will ensure its diffusion beyond the core members. However, though resonance

is important, Tarrow remarks that it is not sufficient for understanding the success and persistence of discourse over time, which requires adaptability alongside resonance. As such, strategic modularity refers to “the degree to which terms that emerge in one strategic context can be repeated without losing the strategic advantages they originally possessed” (Tarrow, 2013, p. 17). These discursive repertoires tend to be persistent due to their adaptability to different contexts and political opportunity structures. Discursive repertoires therefore need to be malleable and open to interpretation to ensure persistence over time. Tarrow argues that “the deployment and diffusion of contentious language respond to both cultural and strategic incentives through the constitution of actors who draw upon a battery of language to describe their identities, their claims, their opponents, and their forms of action” (Tarrow, 2013, p. 20).

However, Tarrow’s approach to discursive repertoires lacks an understanding of how these evolved historically, in the same way as non-discursive repertoires, like protest actions, developed in parallel to – and in interaction with – the state and capitalism. Tarrow only proposes a way of analysing why and what discursive repertoires tend to persist. As such, to evaluate processes of claim-making throughout a cycle of contention we need an approach that includes a historical analysis not only of how movements and contentious politics evolve, but also of the development of capitalism, state structures, citizenship and the language of rights. Thinking about discursive repertoires alongside the development of citizenship opposes the more recent and seemingly ahistorical perspectives that focus solely on the development of a broad and open discourse for democratic regeneration. This *myopia of the present* within the movements of the crisis tends to forget the importance of historical struggles that developed throughout the last centuries and that continue to shape current contestation cycles.

Furthermore, as noted in the introduction of this book, austerity corrodes democratic legitimacy as it diminishes social rights. Therefore, it can be argued that not only are political claims to democracy in play, but also claims for social rights. Claim-making is multidimensional and can address several demands simultaneously. As Roberts establishes, the processes of economic liberalisation in Latin America represent “responses to a set of common problems that are rooted in the contradictions between democratic citizenship and socioeconomic exclusion – the central fault line of democracy in the aftermath of market liberalization in the world’s most inequitable region” (Roberts, 2008, p. 319). As I will show throughout the empirical chapters of this book, the anti-austerity cycle of contention not only comprised multiple players, but also brought forward different

conceptions of citizenship and democratic rights. This resulted in different types of claim-making at different stages of the process.

Historically, citizenship rights have been at the centre of the modern state's development and centralisation. The creation of social citizenship, which resulted from movements' struggles to expand democracy and citizenship rights, also led to state centralisation (Eisenstadt, 1998; Mann, 2012; Mouzelis, 2008). Following this argument throughout the book, I will use the various dimensions of citizenship rights, even if loosely and broadly defined, to better understand how claim-making develops throughout the cycle of protest. Contentious players make claims that can be broken down into three main dimensions (defined below) that tend to be present in both social movement studies and citizenship theories. These dimensions are constitutive of democratic dynamics and will be used to interpret the evolution of claims and demands through time.

The classical conceptualisation formulated by Marshall defines citizenship as "status bestowed on those who are fully members of a community. All who possess the status are equal with respect to the rights and duties with which the status is endowed. There is no universal principle that determines what those rights and duties shall be, but societies in which citizenship is a developing institution create an image of an ideal citizenship against which achievement can be measured and towards which aspiration can be directed" (Marshall & Bottomore, 1992).

Based on the English case, Marshall situates the expansion of rights along a continuum over three centuries. Civic rights come about in the 18th century, ensuring individual liberties like freedom of expression and thought, and property rights. In the 19th century, political rights matured as the right to participate in the exercise of political power as a member of the political body. Finally, in the 20th century, social rights guaranteed an economic and social safety net that ensured a decent living for all. Marshall demonstrates that until the concession of social rights, there was no principle that either safeguarded citizens against class inequalities or guaranteed the social and political inclusion of the working class. This view is in line with conceptions of democracy that go beyond civil liberties. For instance, Tilly defines democracy by stating that "a regime is democratic to the degree that political relations between the state and its citizens feature broad, equal, protected and mutually binding consultation" (Tilly, 2007, pp. 13-14). This could be translated into equality, voice, and inclusion ensured by more specific types of rights.

However, other perspectives can be adapted to fit with the contentious politics approach's understanding of claim-making and its diversity. Fraser (2008) proposes an approach to social justice based on three major families

of justice claims: redistribution, recognition and representation. Even if connected by participatory parity, these cannot be reduced to each other. For each of these families of claims, justice means the dismantling of the associated institutionalised obstacles; in this sense, Fraser's approach is similar to Marshall's. These families of claims constitute basic categories that allow us to interpret claim-making.

Claims for redistribution target distributive injustice or misdistribution and deal closely with the dynamics of capitalism and class structure. Claims for recognition mobilise discourses against status inequality or misrepresentation, and are related to the impediments to participation constituted by "institutionalized hierarchies of values." Lastly, claims for representation constitute a political dimension of this grammar of claim-making – one that it is directly connected to the "scope of the state's jurisdiction and the decision rules by which it structures contestation" (Fraser, 2008, p. 17). They relate to who is included in, and excluded from, the political community.

**Table 2.1 Grammars of claim-making and citizenship**

<b>Marshall</b>	<b>Tilly</b>	<b>Fraser</b>
Social	Equality	Redistribution
Civil	Inclusion/integration	Recognition
Political	Voice	Representation

There is a correspondence between the three perspectives described here. Combining them allows for a multi-faceted reading of the multiple claims and interests that can be identified – in the form of discursive repertoires – throughout the protest cycle in the political arena.

## **Research design, methods and data collection**

There is a quantitative difference between research published about the anti-austerity cycles of protest focusing on Portugal and researched published on the same topic focusing on Spain (Carvalho & Accornero, 2023). While a vast array of publications discusses the protest mobilisation during the period under study in Spain and Greece, Portugal has not been studied nearly as much. The less intriguing and disruptive protests in Portugal received less attention in publications and international research projects. Nonetheless, this makes it a more compelling case as it was the site of divergent responses to austerity, despite similar conditions for contestation to arise.

Moreover, in terms of the contestation of austerity policies, Portugal and Spain are contrasting cases that have been feeding ongoing discussions about democratic practice (Fishman, 2011, 2012b; Fishman & Lizardo, 2013). It is important to note that the trajectory of political and historical events in Portugal and Spain was similar throughout the 20th century: a long authoritarian regime, followed by a transition to democracy in the 1970s; simultaneous access to the European Economic Community (1986); and, lastly, the Eurozone crisis of the 2010s. With the Great Recession, both countries were hit hard on all fronts: by the international crisis, by the European responses, and by domestic politics. Socialist parties were in power until right-wing parties won elections in 2011, and continued austerity reforms initiated by the previous office holders. Trade unions spearheaded initial reactions with calls for general strikes at the end of 2010, and in 2011 new actors emerged. After this point, as will be seen, both cases followed distinct paths when it came to contentious responses to austerity. Portugal and Spain may therefore seem to be historically bound together due to their “periphery of the centre,” or semi-peripheral status (Santos, 1990), which results in them being exposed to similar global dynamics. Nevertheless, despite these resemblances, their political trajectories under austerity did not follow the same path. Even if it is possible to detect a political change in most European countries – particularly those most affected by the crisis and austerity – the processes through which this change occurred seem to have been inflected by their political structures, as well as both their institutional and their non-institutional players.

To fully understand the configurations that the contentious paths in each country took, this period needs to be considered as a moment of “thick history” in which history compresses and accelerates due to the high levels of contention (Tilly, 1978). In this book I follow a process- rather than a variable-oriented approach, relying on multiple sources of empirical data in a fine-grained and detailed reconstruction. As is often argued by authors from interactionist perspectives, an alternative to examining long trends and chains of causality in social structures is to focus on deconstructing chains of interactions and their effects on political outcomes. As the crisis became a moving target during my research, the challenge became one of analysing the shifting sands through an open-ended, relational and processual approach that considered a multiplicity of players and their interactions. As such, the research strategy followed in this study was to use a paired comparison, following a “process tracing” logic (Tarrow, 2010) to analyse how the contentious process developed in Portugal and Spain between 2009 and 2015. Paired comparison is a “method of political analysis distinct from both single-case studies and multicase analysis” (Tarrow, 2010,

p. 231) that allows for both deep background knowledge of the cases and causal process analysis that a large-N strategy would not provide. Rather than focusing on the different factors behind processes of change, this form of processual comparative analysis – grounded in the work of Tilly and Tarrow (2015) – explores the processual black boxes behind these causes.

To address social movement theory's methodological problems such as its *myopia of the visible* (Flesher Fominaya, 2014) – in which collective action is equated with visible protest and mobilisations, and non-observable elements hardly considered – I distinguish between two complementary levels of data collection. Inspired by Goffman's (1990) distinction between *front* and *backstage*, I suggest that research should combine (1) a seen dimension of mobilisation present in public protest with (2) an unseen dimension comprised of movement culture, discourses and most of all interactions between players that are not visible in the public sphere.

The data collection procedure combined a protest event analysis (Hutter, 2014) and interviews with key players involved in the process of mobilisation. In the first step, using protest event analysis (PEA) I mapped protest trends during the cycle of contention for players, repertoires and claims. In the second step, the interviews with members of political parties, trade unions and social movements helped me to define and understand the unseen dynamics of mobilisation by providing information about these players' interactions and strategies. When triangulated, these two forms of data collection were complementary, as interviews were particularly valuable to my understanding of the quantitative data.

The PEA resulted in a database of 4,566 events that took place between January 2009 and December 2015 (Portugal = 1,345; Spain = 3,221). To compile the database, I used the online edition of one newspaper with large-scale circulation in each country – the *Diário de Notícias* in Portugal and *El País* in Spain. Instead of using keywords, I conducted a daily search in order to enable more detailed analysis and the collection of more events. The dataset spans four different dimensions: besides time and space, I coded data on organisers, claim-making and modes of protest. The codebook allows for a detailed depiction of the protest cycle's evolution. Not wishing to merely study the process through event counts, I collected and systematised data on eventful protests (della Porta, 2008) or large protest events (Diani & Kousis, 2014) – i.e. massive events of protest that have symbolic impact and that change the trajectory of the political process – which gave me several points of observation that allowed for more systematic and in-depth storytelling.<sup>7</sup> I also constructed

7 I have included this data in Appendix I.

a chronology of the main political and economic events between 2007 and 2015, through a variety of sources in Portugal, Spain and Europe. In chapter two – “Preludes to the Anti-austerity Mobilisations” – I have used secondary data from the *European Protest and Coercion Data* collected from international news agencies by Ronald Francisco between 1980 and 1995 (Francisco, 2000).

In the second stage of data collection, I interviewed members of political parties, trade unions and social movements. While a PEA allows one to build up a catalogue of protests in the public sphere, it provides little reliable data about the unseen aspects of these mobilisations. As Flesher Fominaya (2014) points out, the political process approach, and by extension its methodological tools, tends to focus merely on the active phases of contention without considering their continuity over time through the “survival of activist networks, a repertoire of goals and tactics and a continued sense of collective identity” (Fominaya, 2014a, p. 147). This is reflected in two aspects of this research, as on the one hand a PEA provides insufficient evidence on the relations between players, and on the other hand it does not reveal the emergence of non-protest players, despite their connections, and how particular groups develop (e.g. *Podemos*). As such, the interviews provide backstage information for reconstructing the broader historical processes behind mobilisation. They illuminated aspects of the mobilisation process, such as sequences of events, framing and claims, and relations between players. Furthermore, interviews with well-positioned individuals allowed me to access information that would not have been accessible otherwise and alerted me to questions that I was not aware of before.

Semi-structured elite interviews gave me an overview of the events and organisations in the arena, from trade unions and political parties to social movement groups. Here I did not attempt to be as systematic as with the PEA, but rather to collect multiple perspectives within and across groups to allow for the triangulation of different and conflicting discourses. During the interviews, I focused on four aspects: (1) past political trajectories, in order to reconstruct previous episodes and campaigns; (2) constellations of players, their alliances and conflicts; (3) the nature of the claim-making, frames, narratives and how they evolved throughout the cycle of protest; (4) repertoires of action and different forms of movement culture and organisation. As part of my fieldwork in Lisbon and Madrid, I also attended political events and rallies when possible.<sup>8</sup>

8 I attended the BE convention and the first Constituent Assembly of *Podemos* – both at the end of 2014. During the period I spent in Spain (October 2015 to May 2016) and Portugal (December 2015 to January 2016), I followed the electoral process closely and attended various rallies and demonstrations.

As remarked previously, some perspectives on – and analysis of – the movements of the crisis fall into overgeneralisation and romanticisation that overstates their transformative potential (Roberts, 2008). One of the reasons behind this is the overly biased samples that studies tend to rely on. Focusing solely on “new” social movements without paying attention to the diversity of responses to market liberalisation is a limitation that affects our understanding of anti-austerity mobilisations. Hence, a full and detailed account of the events and groups that mobilised against austerity can only be achieved through a systematic data collection process that looks into the full range of contentious responses. The mixed methods approach whereby I triangulate information allows for a detailed analysis of the contentious process in two countries in terms of both public protest and backstage interactions.

The puzzle this book tries to solve is less one of the impact of the economic crisis and how it led to protest, and more about the political dynamics in which protests were embedded. The Great Recession and the implementation of austerity measures in these two countries constituted a critical juncture that redefined the political arena in the times to come. In the following chapters I will examine the internal dynamics of the contentious cycle by assessing the dynamic relations between “social movements, political contention and regimes, and at the embedding of national patterns of contention in world politics” (Tarrow, 2011, p. 179).

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## 2 Preludes to the anti-austerity mobilisations

From Democratisation to the Great Recession

### Abstract

This chapter lays out the background to the austerity cycle of contention by reconstructing the dynamics of mobilisation in Portugal and Spain from the transition to democracy in the 1970s to the austerity years. It identifies continuities and ruptures from the pre-crisis to the austerity period. It shows that the political dynamics that came to define the anti-austerity cycle of protest were established in the early 2000s. Rather than spontaneous reactions to political and economic crises, many of the features identified were previously present and shaped the configuration of discourses and players throughout the austerity years.

**Keywords:** social movements, political parties, trade unions, legacies, protest continuity

### Contentious transitions

In a way, all cycles of protest start before they have even begun. It is not possible to understand – at least not fully – the path and configuration of the Portuguese and Spanish anti-austerity cycles of protest without considering past mobilisations that came to shape them. Without dismissing the innovations at the peak of the anti-austerity cycle, many of the features to be found in protest movements during the austerity years can be identified in previous waves of protest.

The transition to democracy in the mid-1970s in these two countries not only inaugurated contentious politics under democracy; it also shaped following mobilisations decisively. Despite the historical parallels between Portugal and Spain identified in the introduction, however, the role of collective action throughout the democratisation period varied significantly. Overall, in

both countries, contention and popular mobilisation played a crucial role in democratisation. Nonetheless, it involved different degrees of interaction between street politics and institutions. As Fishman (2019) remarks “the long-lived Portuguese dictatorship was overthrown in late April 1974, whereas the Spanish regime reformed itself (under pressure from the opposition) after the death of longtime dictator Francisco Franco in November 1975” (p. 29). While Portugal is a case of democratisation through social revolution, Spain is a case of regime-guided reform. This divergence leads to two quite different forms of engaging and incorporating bottom-up mobilisations. If the state in Portugal, in the midst of a long colonial war and international economic crisis, crashed into a void that purged the old elites, in Spain the Francoist elites controlled the opening of the regime to the opposition (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2014a).

In Portugal, the *coup d'état* initiated by middle-ranking officers in April 1974 became a revolution that played out in parallel to a colonial war in Africa – a revolution that lasted for nineteen contentious months and transformed the political regime (Fishman, 1990a). The collapse of state authority created the opportunity structures that unleashed a wave of popular mobilisation (Palacios Cerezales, 2003) that was central to shaping the future democratic regime (Fishman, 2019). Akin to a cycle of protest, the revolutionary situation (Tilly, 1993) was characterised by opposing political forces that disputed democratic legitimacy through street politics (Accornero, 2012, 2016a; Accornero, Carvalho, & Ramos Pinto, 2022; Palacios Cerezales, 2003; Ramos Pinto, 2013). As Accornero (2016b) summarises, this period involved:

attempted coups and counter-coups; massive social mobilisation; the occupation of houses, lands and factories; and, at the institutional level, the adoption of radical measures such as the nationalisation of key private enterprises (banks, insurance companies, public transport and iron works, among others), the introduction of a minimum wage for civil servants and the institution of unemployment benefits. (Accornero, 2016b, p. 357)

In Spain, the process of democratisation started later, and it was initiated from within the regime after Franco's death. Unlike in Portugal, the military opposed the opening-up of the regime, with the opposition having to counter their pressure. Collective action was of importance in the Spanish transition to democracy, but it differed from that in Portugal as it was far less disruptive and transgressive (Durán Muñoz, 2000). Elitist approaches claim that as the main left-wing parties in Spain, the *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) and the *Partido Comunista de España* (PCE) – until then clandestine – slowly joined the negotiating table during this period, they did so in exchange

for demobilising their rank and file (Romanos & Aguilar, 2016). However, Fishman (1990b) shows that there was an internalisation of the legitimacy of democracy by workplace leaders rather than just top-down demobilisation.

In both countries, the transition to democracy constituted a critical juncture that has shaped almost all aspects of political life. It moulded civil society and social movements' understandings of democracy, their claim-making and frames, and shaped collective action over the anti-austerity cycle of protest. Nonetheless, even if this period is of importance, in the following decades other forms of collective action emerged.

### Contention under consolidating democracies

The first two decades of the democratic regimes in these countries were marked by the consolidation of democracy and admission to the European Economic Community (later the European Union – EU), and finished with the end of the governments of Felipe González in Spain (1996) and Cavaco Silva in Portugal (1995). During this period, contentious processes in both countries shared similar features.

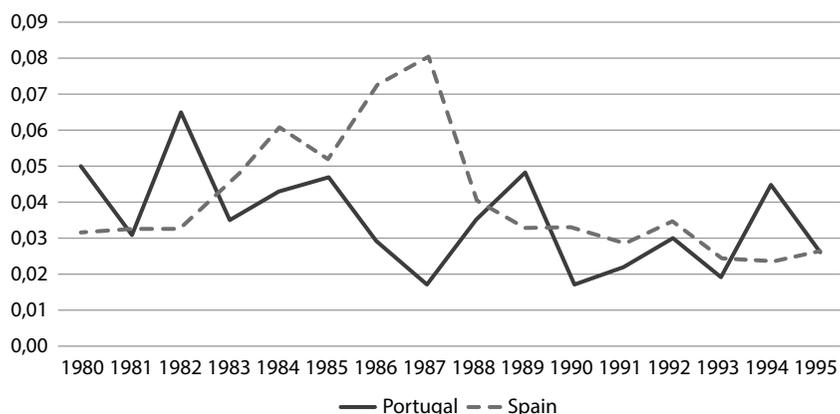
In both countries there was an absence or weakness of the so-called new social movements throughout this period. During the 1980s, contrary to other Western European countries where feminism, environmentalism and pacifism became part of the social movement landscape, labour and political issues were still at the fore in the recently formed Iberian democracies. For instance, despite the multiple protests against nuclear energy, especially in Spain<sup>9</sup> (Cruz, 2015) but also in Portugal (Barca & Delicado, 2016), these outbursts were essentially local, never coalescing into a larger movement or political party, like Green parties elsewhere. Instead, leftist political parties either adopted this issue or integrated fringe political forces into their lists.

Nevertheless, these two countries had different protest dynamics that developed throughout the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>10</sup> As Figure 3.1 shows, the number

9 Rafael Cruz (2015) compiles a useful chronology of contentious events in his book *Protestar en España, 1900-2013* that allows for in-depth analysis of the main protest trends in Spain.

10 The data comes from the “European Protest and Coercion Data” collected and systematised by Ronald Francisco. It is available at <http://web.ku.edu/~ronfrand/data/>. I use this data to investigate some of the main contentious trends in Spain and Portugal. Some caution is necessary as the data comes from international news agencies and not from national sources. Therefore, it might be less diverse and biased towards protests with international visibility. I have cleaned and changed the database to exclude coercion events (i.e. repressive actions by the authorities) and keep solely protest events. I have reduced all multi-day events (repeated in the database) to single events.

**Figure 3.1 Protest actions (per 1000 people) in Portugal and Spain per year (1980-1995)**



Source: Francisco (2000)

**Figure 3.2 Contentious players (%) in Portugal (1980-1995)**



Source: Francisco (2000)

of contentious actions per year differed between the two countries. In Portugal, 1982 was the year with the most protest, followed by 1994 and 1989. In Spain, the 1980s were quite conflictual due to the violence perpetrated by *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (ETA), but the number of protest actions per 1,000 people dropped to about half after 1987.

In Portugal, as shown in Figure 3.2, labour and trade union actors were dominant until 1990, except from 1984 to 1986. Furthermore, the strike was the primary type of contentious action as intense labour mobilisations marked the first two decades of democracy in Portugal (Accornero & Ramos Pinto, 2015). The highest number of protests occurred in 1982 in the context

of a deteriorating economic situation that preceded the second IMF intervention in 1983. It was also the year of the first two general strikes in Portugal (February and May) organised by the *Confederação Geral de Trabalhadores Portugueses* (CGTP) union federation (the third happened in 1988, with the collaboration of both the CGTP and *União Geral de Trabalhadores* – UGT).

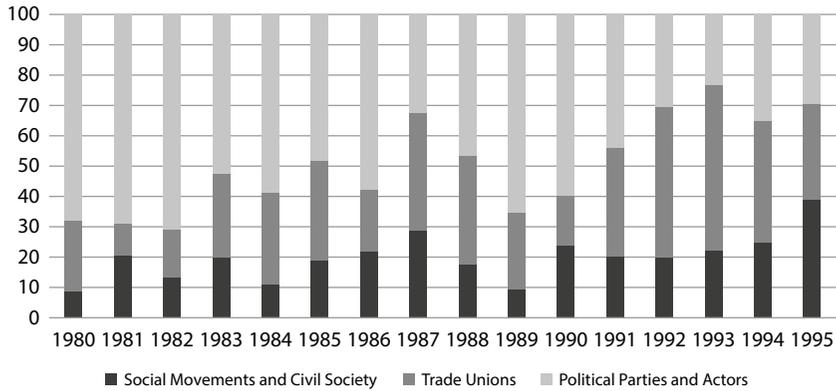
These trade union federations had close ties with different political parties, in ways that have not changed to this day. If the CGTP, founded in 1971, was heavily influenced by the Communist Party; the Socialists, and to some extent the centre-right (PSD), were involved in the creation of the UGT in 1978 with the objective of disputing the communist hegemony in the labour world. Stoleroff (1988) observed that the CGTP, the main trade union in Portugal, advocates a class unionism that is anti-capitalist, while the UGT, the minority trade union, pursues a reformist and neocorporativist strategy. As such, “Portuguese syndicalism is a politicised syndicalism, oriented towards state intervention, and even dependent on it”<sup>11</sup> (Stoleroff, 1988, p. 148).

In Spain, with the exception of the period between 1984 and 1986, due to the activities of political actors such as ETA, trade unions dominated the protest landscape throughout the 1980s. Social movements and civil society actors slowly became relevant in the 1990s.

The trade union *Comisiones Obreras* (CCOO) was created and boosted in the 1960s by the then illegal Spanish Communist Party, while still under Franco’s authoritarian regime. The *Unión General de Trabajadores* (UGT) dates to 1888, even if it remained in clandestinity during the dictatorship. The trade unions led strong labour mobilisations that shaped the period of the transition to democracy and continued to be important afterwards (Cruz, 2015; Jiménez Sánchez, 2011; Romanos & Aguilar, 2016; Sánchez-Cuenca, 2014a). Trade unions’ membership progressively declined a few years after the transition and, as politics became increasingly institutionalised, mobilisation in the street became less important. Nevertheless, the trade union retained some of its trademarks: horizontal practices (expressed in open assemblies) and direct actions (such as occupations). Notably, even if initially built as a political and social movement, the CCOO abandoned that project as it institutionalised further in the late 1980s (Cruz, 2015).

Unlike in Portugal, in Spain the link between political parties and trade unions was progressively disrupted in the 1980s. The liberalising policies of Felipe Gonzalez’s PSOE government after the 1982 general election led to the party’s estrangement from the Spanish UGT, with the trade union mobilising against the government’s labour law of 1984. At the same time, the

11 Translated from Portuguese.

**Figure 3.3 Contentious players (%) in Spain (1980-1995)**

Source: Francisco (2000)

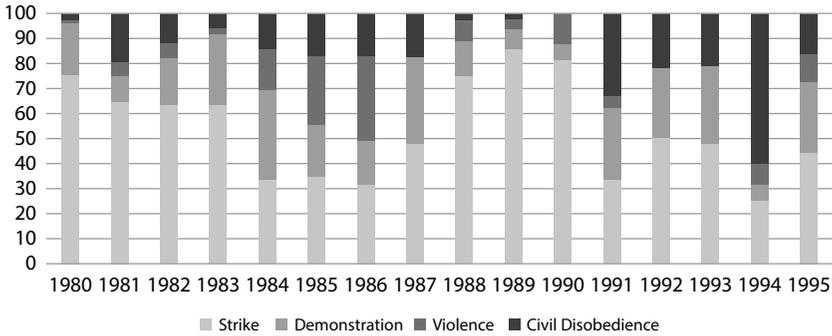
Communist Party and the CCOO ended up acting more independently from each other as a result of the formation of the new left-wing party *Izquierda Unida* (IU) in 1986. Nevertheless, a third element to be considered is the close collaboration – upon becoming institutionalised and embedded in the state – of the so-called majoritarian trade unions (CCOO and UGT) (Gunther & Montero, 2009): rather than being in conflict, these unions had very close ties. Despite their institutionalisation in the 1980s, trade unions remained conflictive organising national general strikes in 1981, 1985, 1988, 1992, and 1994 (before the year 2000). Labour unions were not the sole contentious issue or player throughout the 1980s: in both countries, political organisations pursued violent and disruptive actions, despite their different objectives. In Spain political violence was associated with nationalist projects, while in Portugal it served revolutionary and radical purposes.<sup>12</sup>

Players associated with the nationalist question were predominant in Spain throughout the 1980s. It was only towards the end of this decade that *Terra Llibre* (Catalonia), *Ejército Guerrillero de Pueblo Gallego Libre* (Galicia) and, the principal group, *Euskadi Ta Askatasuna* (Basque Country) decreased their action or were contained. This is noticeable in the large proportion of political players (Figure 3.3) and violent repertoires (Figure 3.5) in Spain throughout the 1980s.<sup>13</sup>

12 Furthermore, there were instances of far-right and anti-communist violence in both countries; see Palacios (2003) for Portugal. In Spain, Cruz (2015) shows how the far right remained active and demonstrated until 1981 (23F), after which its activity decreased.

13 It is interesting to note that these actions generated counter-mobilisations against terrorist violence that would become closely associated with the right-wing party *Partido Popular* (Díez & Laraña, 2017, p. 170).

**Figure 3.4 Repertoires (%) in Portugal (1980-1995)<sup>14</sup>**

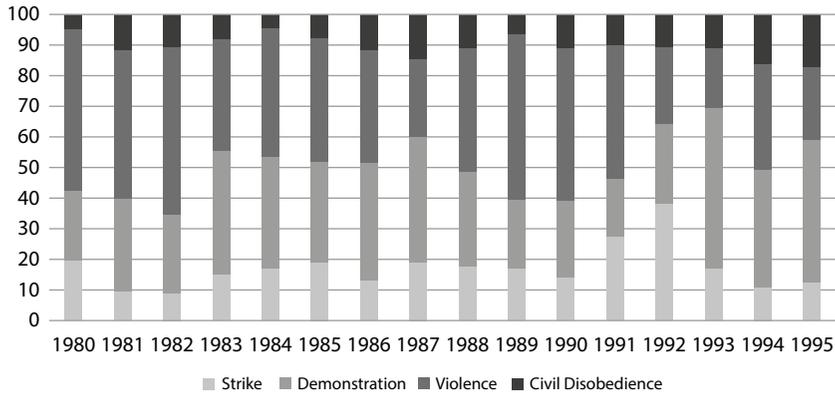


Source: Francisco (2000)

In Portugal, post-revolutionary radicalisation led to the creation of groupuscules throughout the 1970s and 1980s that opposed the path of parliamentary democracy and capitalism taken after 1975. In particular the FP25 (Popular Forces 25th April), a revolutionary armed group that operated between 1980 and 1987, emerged as the expression of the radicalisation of those whose post-dictatorship vision for society was rejected. This group’s actions were particularly visible between 1984 and 1986 (Figure 3.4) when political players resorting to violent repertoires increased. Due to the imprisonment and repression of its members by state action, the group was progressively dismantled, with little or no action after 1987. The group officially ceased its activity in 1991.

The late 1980s brought new protagonists, issues and repertoires. In Spain, while trade unions institutionalised further, demobilising their respective bases, urban neighbourhood associations, which were important during the transition, also lost relevance (Cruz 2015; Romanos & Aguilar 2016). After the 1982 victory in the general elections, the PSOE contributed to the demobilisation of the neighbourhood movement. Nonetheless, the cultural elements and movement practices that pervaded these groups in previous decades – such as horizontal, decentralised and local actions – persisted in alternative autonomous groups that would later become the basis for the Spanish Global Justice Movement (GJM). The most important mobilisations of the 1980s were those of the pacifists and the movement against North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) (with significant mobilisations

14 Besides strikes, these repertoires include the following: 1) demonstrations – demonstrations, marches, rallies; 2) violence – forms of political violence such as bombs, taking hostages or assassinations; 3) civil disobedience – hunger strike, boycott, vandalism, occupation and riots.

**Figure 3.5 Repertoires (%) in Spain (1980-1995)**

Source: Francisco (2000)

against the referendum to decide on the organisation's permanence in 1986) (Díez & Laraña, 2017). These events went hand in hand with the movement against conscription that spread to the whole country (Sampedro, 1997). This period also saw the development of housing squats (Martínez López, 2018) influenced by similar practices developed in Germany and the Netherlands, which slowly installed themselves in major urban centres in the country. Another important campaign of the 1980s consisted of the student mobilisations against the national university admissions exam, giving voice to a more autonomist student movement in the country. Finally, after a year of campaigning in 1994, a demonstration promoted by more than 200 organisations followed by a weeks-long encampment in Madrid pressured the PSOE government to allocate 0.7% of GDP to foreign aid (Cruz, 2015; Díez & Laraña, 2017).

In Portugal, the mid-1980s marked the rise of Cavaco Silva's centre-right PSD government. In 1989, with the support of the Socialist Party (PS), his government changed the Constitution to allow the privatisation of strategic sectors nationalised during the revolutionary period such as banks. This initial market liberalisation politicised and made visible issues that had not emerged until then and brought to the fore social rights and public services. By the end of Silva's third term in 1995, contestation was high and marked by several disruptive events, and for the first time since the revolution, labour issues did not dominate protest activities.

Reforms in the education sector led to cycles and mini-cycles of protest throughout the 1990s, with both a national and a local character (Drago, 2003; Mendes & Seixas, 2005; Seixas, 2005). Nationally, mobilisations started

in 1989 against the introduction of a new type of university admissions exam at the end of secondary school. These continued in 1991 as the government introduced tuition fees in higher education. The mobilisations lasted for almost an entire decade and not only delayed the implementation of tuition fees for several years, but also overthrew several education ministers. These protests formed and “trained” a generation of activists that would be behind future mobilisations (including the anti-austerity cycle of protest).<sup>15</sup> Mendes and Seixas (2005) show that at the local level primary education was one of the main protest issues in Portugal between 1992 and 2002. Moreover, besides education, these local protests were rooted in problems related to housing, living conditions, and fundamental social rights.

In 1994, almost at the end of Cavaco Silva’s third term as prime minister, a 50% rise on the tolls on the (then) only bridge over the Tagus river in Lisbon led to months of protest mobilisation. After a week of drivers honking as they crossed the tolls (the honking would last from June to December), the protest escalated as truck drivers were joined by others in blocking the bridge. This was followed by harsh police intervention and confrontations with protestors lasting until the early hours of the following day. Even if later the government partially conceded on this measure, the repressive actions taken resulted in several people being injured and arrested. Having already been punished at the polls, Silva’s centre-right government ended up deeply delegitimised, and it could be argued that the conflict over the tolls led to its demise. The 1990s brought about new trends in Portugal. At both national and local levels, contention was largely that of players outside the traditional circuit that displayed some degree of autonomy and innovation. It is particularly important to note that these players were not from the labour world and were reacting to welfare retrenchment and rising taxation.

As such, protest did not disappear after the transition, as is usually thought: as democracy consolidated, new issues, players and repertoires became increasingly prevalent. In Portugal, unions maintained strong links to political parties, while in Spain, even if unions became progressively institutionalised, the links with parties were progressively disrupted. Political violence was particularly visible in Spain as a result of the Basque conflict, and in Portugal with FP25 (although on a very different scale).

<sup>15</sup> The link between different cycles of protest in Portugal is not clear, but from my interviews there seems to be some continuity over time that would be worth exploring in future projects. This is important since, despite the lack of a comprehensive history of protest, social movements and political citizenship in Portugal, it is possible to trace links between the activists that were present in the anti-fees education movement of the 1990s and later in the anti-austerity one.

With the demise of political violence by the late 1980s and increasing market liberalisation, new and alternative forms of mobilisation developed throughout the 1990s outside the labour world. In Portugal, reactions against welfare retrenchment and liberalisation, for example in education, grew in importance as an alternative to traditional institutional actors. In Spain, local groups, even if small, developed horizontal practices that would become important throughout the 2000s. In both countries, these would become mainstream forms of mobilisation fuelled by global economic and political dynamics.

### **New millennium contentious transitions**

New dynamics of protest emerged at the turn of the millennium. The GJM, active throughout the 1990s and 2000s, appeared as a response to political and economic globalisation and introduced new repertoires, discourses and organisational forms in Portugal and Spain, albeit in different ways.

As a transnational social movement, the GJM involved a global network of actors from NGOs, grassroots organisations, trade unions and political parties facilitated by recent advances in communication technologies (della Porta, 2007). Despite their heterogeneity, the different players shared a critique of neoliberal globalisation, resistance to hegemonic economic models, and proposals for radical changes (Baumgarten, 2017c). While their campaigns were global in nature, covering a range of economic, social, political, and environmental issues, local networks committed to participatory democracy launched this agenda into practice (della Porta, 2013a). Protests against the World Trade Organisation meeting in Seattle (1999) and the G8 meeting in Genoa (2001) constituted landmark events of resistance to international organisations and neoliberal globalisation. Alongside these, the GJM developed counter summits and meetings such as the Social Forums in Porto Alegre (the World Social Forum, in operation since 2001) and Florence (the European Social Forum in 2001) (Baumgarten 2017c, della Porta, 2013a).

Emerging at the intersection of national contexts and transnational protest dynamics, the GJM was crucial in leading nationally focused social movements to adopt similar repertoires, practices, and issues, forming a generation of activists with similar references and experiences (Flesher Fominaya, 2014; Romanos & Aguilar, 2016). Nevertheless, the configurations that the GJM took on in each country varied as this adaptation was mediated by the existing cultures and structures of mobilisation. The GJM not only influenced the formation of later protest movements, but was also

important for the renewal of – and introduction of new ideas and practices to – political parties at the national level.<sup>16</sup>

By the late 1990s emanations of the GJM started to become visible in Portugal, rearranging the relations between social movements and institutional actors. Drawing on activists from the 1990s mobilisations (e.g. against tuition fees), the *Bloco de Esquerda* (BE, or Left Bloc) was founded in 1999, and it could be argued that it became one of the expressions of the GJM in the country – at least it espoused many of its principles. Initially created as a movement-party, it organised itself through principles of deliberative and participatory democracy (Soeiro, 2009). Likewise, the new party presented itself as a strategic ally that could collaborate with, leverage, and support the growth of various new movement groups.<sup>17</sup>

But the creation of the BE was not the only change at the party level that contributed to the reorganisation of the political sphere during this period. Upon the fall of the Soviet Union,<sup>18</sup> dissident voices began criticising the Portuguese Communist Party's stiffness and hierarchical organisation due to its lack of pluralism and internal debate (and the punishment of any deviation from the official line), and its lack of collaboration with other left organisations.<sup>19</sup> The communist leadership considered such calls reformist, resulting in well-known militants, known as *renovadores*,<sup>20</sup> being expelled or leaving the party. These dissidents formed small reflection groups and created associations such as the *Renovação Comunista*<sup>21</sup> and, in some cases, later joined the Left Bloc.<sup>22</sup>

Concurrently, the GJM network led to changes beyond political parties. However, there is little published research on these groups in Portugal, and

16 I do not intend to overstate the importance of the GJM and of this period. Rather, I aim to reconstruct mobilisations that influenced the anti-austerity cycle of protest.

17 It is important to note that BE was formed after the collaboration of three radical left parties throughout the campaigns to liberate East Timor and for the 1st referendum on the decriminalisation of abortion, both in 1998. I will develop the history of the party in detail in the last empirical chapter of the book.

18 Aligning with the same critics, after the dissolution of the USSR there was an internal movement for the PCP's renewal. Many of these militants left the Communist Party and formed the *Plataforma de Esquerda* in the 1990s. Later they either joined the PS or the BE. Unlike in Spain or Italy, the Portuguese Communist Party never followed a Eurocommunist line and remained in tune with a Marxist-Leninist approach.

19 To this day the Communist Party plays a crucial role in the formation of political cadres: more than half of my interviewees were part of the party at some point.

20 Translated as Renovators.

21 Translated as Communist Renewal.

22 This tendency defended a closer relation or pacts with other leftist forces and came to be crucial in the left pact formed in 2015 (I will discuss this in more detail in chapter five).

no full description of their characteristics other than agreement that, in comparison with other countries, the network of civic organisations was limited and precarious (Lima & Nunes, 2008). The idea for the *Fórum Social Português* (FSP) was first proposed in 2002 by activists, intellectuals and personalities linked to the BE and the Portuguese Communist Party (PCP) who had participated in international events associated with the GJM (Nunes, 2011). Preparatory initiatives happened throughout 2002<sup>23</sup> and the first FSP in June 2003. The event brought together social movement groups (focused on LGBT and women's rights, human rights and development, and the environment) together with political parties and trade unions. The objective was to form a unitary platform to coordinate actions oriented towards global aspects of political and economic life.

Contrary to the principles established in the World Social Forum, the Left Bloc and the Communist Party were present and involved in the FSP's organisation from the start. Nunes (2011), as well as some of my interviewees, point out that their participation was controversial.

... in the FSP, from 2003 to 2006 ... I experienced assemblies where the PCP brought buses with people to win debates, where you would have one person telling a hundred how to vote. (Interviewee 12, Portugal)

Among social movement groups there is a widespread impression that as political parties monopolised the FSP, this blocked the possibility of it becoming a permanent platform for debate and discussion (Nunes, 2011). Nevertheless, despite several attempts to limit the participation of institutional actors, social movement groups decided not to exclude parties, since their members would be present anyway given overlaps in membership between these players (Soeiro, 2014).<sup>24</sup>

Paradoxically, Nunes (2011) shows that the confrontation between political parties in this platform allowed Portuguese GJM groups some autonomy to develop their actions in the first Forum. While it was active, the FSP participated in international protest events such as the demonstrations against the war in Iraq and the contestation of the 2001 G8 meeting in Genoa.<sup>25</sup>

23 See for example the following published in *Público*: "Movimento anti-globalização junta PCP, BE, associações e sindicatos": <https://www.publico.pt/2002/05/30/politica/noticia/movimento-antiglobalizacao-junta-pcp-be-associacoes-e-sindicatos-147469>

24 Activists or militants with multiple affiliations simultaneously belong to political parties and social movement groups.

25 See "Marchas contra a guerra no Iraque: 80 mil pessoas em Lisboa e 5 mil no Porto": (<https://www.publico.pt/2003/02/15/mundo/noticia/marchas-contra-a-guerra-no-iraque-80-mil-pessoas-em->

Nevertheless, as the BE abstained from participating in the second gathering in 2006, it allowed the PCP and its satellite groups to gain dominance over the organisation. As a result, shortly afterwards the platform was disbanded.

Overall, GJM-linked movements never gained much traction in Portugal as institutional players subjugated the attempts to build a Portuguese version. Nevertheless, the GJM did introduce new ideas and repertoires of action that reshaped the political arena, even if institutional players appropriated them. In Spain, in contrast, the GJM was a heterogeneous network comprising groups that emerged after the transition to democracy (ecologist, radical feminist, antimilitarist, squatters, etc.). The “movement of the movements” in Spain favoured a leftist and decentralised culture and practice. It had higher levels of informality and localism compared with the GJM in other countries. Despite the Spanish GJM movement’s heterogeneity, at the heart of its identity and practice lay a unifying principle based on participatory and radical democracy that reinforced the characteristics they introduced. This led to an important renewal and resignification of previous repertoires and practices in new forms of street actions and performances (Jiménez Sánchez & Calle, 2007).

It was in this context that social centres<sup>26</sup> became popular. They combined the GJM’s transnational influence with long-standing traditions of local and grassroots activism that sprang out of neighbourhoods across the country, as well as the numerous squats that had formed since the 1980s (Martínez López, 2018; Rubio-Pueyo, 2016). As these spaces emphasised openness to the community and activist-based forms of knowledge creation, they came to constitute the backbone of the infrastructures of mobilisation for the GJM movement’s core participants. These centres provided – and continue to provide – spaces for interaction, meeting, and socialising activists into new ideas and practices (Alonso, Betancor Nuez, & Cilleros Conde, 2015; Rubio-Pueyo, 2016).

In line with a precedent set in previous decades, political parties and trade unions were mostly absent from the protest movement field during this period. Two points seem to confirm the autonomy of – and lack of cross-pollination between – institutional and non-institutional actors in Spain. First, Flesher Fominaya (2007) observes that in Madrid at the

lisboa--e-5-mil-no-porto-280140) and “Portugueses à margem do movimento antiglobalização” (<https://www.publico.pt/2001/07/28/jornal/portugueses-a-margem-do-movimento-antiglobalizacao-160242>)

<sup>26</sup> Social centres are self-managed community centres that are run democratically and horizontally. They tend to be closely affiliated with anarchist or autonomist groups.

beginning of the 20th century, the division between political actors was along autonomous and institutional lines: despite left wing parties' (*Izquierda Unida* – IU) attempts at collaboration, social movement actors avoided them. Second, my interviewees barely mentioned the presence of parties in the social movement milieu or simply discarded their importance during this period. With the exception of the CGT, an anarcho-sindicalist union that has similar organisational practices and repertoires to the grassroots movements, trade unions and political parties barely collaborated with social movement actors (and when they did the relationship was strained). Social movements aspired to autonomy from institutional actors such as the IU and the major trade unions (CCOO and UGT), which they saw as not only wanting to capture them, but also complicit in the economic policies they opposed (Díez & Laraña, 2017; Flesher Fominaya, 2007, 2014). Nevertheless, Flesher Fominaya (2007) points out that despite the tensions between groups, instances of collaboration did exist: while the autonomous social movements retained discursive legitimacy based on their principles of horizontality, openness and integration in global networks, institutional leftists remained hegemonic at an organisational level. Thus, autonomous groups collaborated with and relied upon parties for space and financial and legal support, resulting in some cases of overlapping militancy.

Politically, several eventful mobilisations marked the second Aznar term (2000-2004).<sup>27</sup> The first, the platform *Nunca Más* (Never Again) mobilised against the mismanagement of the accidental oil spillage on the coast of Galicia in 2002. The movement organised demonstrations in Galicia and Madrid throughout 2002 and 2003 (Aguillar & Ballesteros, 2004; Cruz, 2015). The second was the 2003 protest against the war in Iraq and the Spanish conservative government's support of it. Protests occurred in over 55 cities across the country, and conservative estimates reported that over three million people were in the streets (Jiménez Sánchez & Calle, 2007). These were not isolated mobilisations, and a network of trade unions and social movements campaigned for more than a year afterward (Cruz, 2015).

However, the most emblematic and remarkable mobilisations were the actions preceding the 2004 general elections in the wake of the terrorist attack on the Atocha train station in Madrid (just three days before the general elections).<sup>28</sup> Despite Al-Qaeda claiming the action, the government

27 José Maria Aznar was prime minister of Spain between 1996 and 2004 and leader of the centre-right party *Partido Popular* between 1990 and 2004.

28 Cruz (2015) points out that almost 12 million people across the country protested on the day immediately after the attack.

of the *Partido Popular* (PP) led a misinformation campaign blaming ETA, as admitting that it had been perpetrated by Islamic terrorists would have political consequences in the upcoming elections due to their involvement in the Iraq war.

Calls for protests started emerging in the GJM network. As outrage increased with the conservative government's management of the situation, anti-globalisation activists circulated an SMS message calling for a demonstration in front of PP headquarters the night before the election day (Flesher Fominaya, 2011; Sampedro & Sanchez, 2011). Consequently, knowledge of the protest expanded beyond the usual networks of activists and spread quickly from Madrid to other cities, and the protest became a national one. This mobilisation relied on broad generic frames that expressed distrust in political parties and excluded them from mobilisation. The famous "they [the parties] do not represent us" or "they call it a democracy, but it is not" from the anti-austerity mobilisations were heard for the first time here (Flesher Fominaya, 2011). The protests were crucial in unmasking the misinformation campaign and shifting public opinion, which resulted in the victory of the centre-left PSOE (Flesher Fominaya, 2011) and shaped the trends that developed in the years preceding the crisis.

### **Anti-austerity antecedents (2005-2010)**

If the early 2000s reshaped the protest arena, the period from 2005 to 2009 saw the emergence of players that were direct precursors to the mobilisations against austerity, and that shaped the turning points of the cycle of protest decisively, as will be seen in the next chapter. Besides the patterns that developed throughout the GJM, other factors came to the fore, namely the development of a structure of opportunities during the 2008 financial crisis and the Eurozone crisis. Alongside this context, centre-left parties governed Portugal and Spain both before and during the first phases of the Great Recession.

As centre-left parties came to power in both Spain and Portugal (2004 in Spain and 2005 in Portugal), new sets of demands and struggles emerged that would more directly shape the post-2011 mobilisations. The new centre-left governments in Spain and Portugal pushed for liberalising and market-oriented policies (López & Rodríguez, 2011). Apart from these reforms, they also enacted several socially liberalising policies that fulfilled the aims of social movements and contributed to a decrease in the number of protests. For example, responding to LGBT and feminist demands, both

countries legalised same-sex marriage and abortion (Alonso et al., 2015; Jiménez Sánchez, 2011; Monteiro, 2012). Nonetheless, as a result of Zapatero's reforms (e.g. allowing gay marriage and abortion), Spain experienced counter-mobilisations pushed by a network of right-wing and conservative organisations (Aguillar, 2012; Cruz, 2015; Díez & Laraña, 2017).

In Portugal, the BE brought many of the demands on same-sex marriage and abortion to parliament with multiple goals. First, the BE wanted to be able to articulate their views on issues of recognition. Second, and more strategically, the BE wanted to ensure access to a media space where it was both prominent and able to compete with both the PCP and the PS by going beyond labour issues. As previously noted, the BE had worked to amplify social movements' messages. The second referendum on abortion (2007)<sup>29</sup> was an example of this strategy, as it mobilised the institutional and non-institutional players equally and also, most importantly, saw an alliance emerge between various groups on the left (Melo, 2017). Despite the involvement of multiple social movement groups, institutional actors also played a major role (Monteiro, 2012): political parties supported many of the campaigning platforms with resources and personnel.

More importantly, new issues developed that came to mark the anti-austerity mobilisations in Portugal. First, the Socialist government pursued policies that entailed the closure of public services such as schools and health care services around the country. As a result, reflecting a trend already underway in the 1990s, protests erupted all over the country, especially in the countryside where, due to depopulation, there was a retrenchment of educational and health care services (Nunes, 2008). At the trade union level, in the period between 2007 and 2009, teachers contested the reforms undertaken in the education sector (Stoleroff & Pereira, 2008) and organised large demonstrations that mobilised most of their professional class. Also, a proposed reform of the labour law was met with protests in the streets and a general strike while being discussed in parliament in 2007, before being passed in 2008.

Alongside these mobilisations, in the years preceding the crisis the most important dynamic was the formation of networks around labour precarity (Soeiro, 2015).<sup>30</sup> The BE also conducted various campaigns on the topic throughout this period (Lisi, 2013). In particular, the adoption of the

29 The first referendum on this issue happened in 1998, and resulted in defeat for the decriminalisation proposal.

30 Soeiro (2015) extensively describes the mobilisations against precarity. FERVE (*Fartos destes Recibos Verdes* – Tired of this Precarious Condition) is an example of a transversal group that deals with all economic sectors, while ABIC (*Associação de Bolseiros de Investigação Científica* – a group formed to address research assistants' precarity issues) is an example of a sectoral one.

EuroMayDay in Portugal was central to the formation of networks around precarity active throughout 2011-2015 (Cairns, Alves, Alexandre, & Correia, 2016; Soeiro, 2015).<sup>31</sup>

It is impossible to understand the 12th of March (*Geração à Rasca* – GàR) without understanding all the movements against precarity that were formed from 2000 onwards, starting with Stop Precarity ... when a demonstration like the 12th of March happens, it does not happen spontaneously, it emerges from a set of networks, themes that were constantly on the agenda. (Interviewee 10, Portugal)

What the 12th of March did was to continue these processes: if initiatives like the MayDay didn't happen before, the *Geração à Rasca*<sup>32</sup> could have happened but it wouldn't have happened in the same way ... there was a lot of collective work done in the Portuguese social movement between different organisations and issues that allowed the GàR to happen ... a lot of the mobilisation structures and knowledge already existed since 2007 (Interviewee 11, Portugal)

The EuroMayDay in Portugal resulted from the confluence of activists coming from different sectors, namely of students associated with the BE, the GJM network and autonomist groups. Their main objective was to create a collective identity based not on labour sectors, as trade unions do, but rather on a transversal, shared and lived experience of precarity by all workers. This broad alliance of collectives adopted a more spontaneous and fluid repertoire of action, as well as the assembly style of organisation typical of the GJM and the autonomist movements. On the 1st of May, they would organise a picnic and later an independent march that joined the one organised by the CGTP, albeit not without conflicts with – and resistance from – this trade union. Interviewees report that from 2007 to 2011 the annual march grew not only geographically, expanding to Oporto, but also in terms of the number of participants.

The EuroMayDay protest in Portugal can be considered an early experience of the conflicts that would emerge in the anti-austerity cycle

31 The EuroMayDay was an event parallel to the traditional Mayday celebrations all over Europe organised in protest against labour precarity since the mid-2000s. Rather than being organised by trade unions, it was autonomist and libertarian collectives that mobilised for this event.

32 A protest that happened in March 2011 in Portugal and was central to contesting austerity. I will discuss it in detail in the next chapter.

of contention between activists closer to the Left Bloc (who would later create the *Precários Inflexíveis* – PI),<sup>33</sup> and the autonomist sector, but also trade unions (CGTP). The central tension within the EuroMayDay between these groups was, as it was earlier in the Portuguese Social Forum, about the group's relationship with trade unions and political parties. While the former group defended some collaboration by joining the CGTP march, the latter preferred to constitute an independent space outside the control of institutional players. This divergence led to a split (see Soeiro, 2015, pp. 186-187; Alves, Cairns, Alexandre & Correia, 2016; Interviews), which ultimately resulted from a core conflict within the Portuguese left: some see any participation of institutional actors as an intrusion into or interference with the autonomy of social movements, while others disagree. This approach is significantly different from that of the myriad groups close to the Left Bloc, such as *Precários Inflexíveis*, which saw such collaboration as fundamental to their activities. Nonetheless, the CGTP was also reluctant to collaborate with the EuroMayDay: not only was the communist-aligned union federation critical of alternative movements and forms of activism, pejoratively calling them “inorganic,” they were also aware of the connection of these groups to the BE.

A lot of people connected to the BE ... then people coming from the autonomist space, like RDA, that left the MayDay organisation due to political disagreement, because they wanted a different type of relationship with the trade unions ... they lost that battle. In 2009, the biggest year of the Mayday, there was an assembly – since the beginning there was an important issue about trade unions because the Mayday at the European level develops a critique of trade unions. The idea behind the Mayday was that it was a fluid movement representing the precariat, the precariat as something different from the working class ... what we did here was to think about precarity as a labour relation, our understanding is that precarity is not a new thing ... it is the loss of rights achieved during the 20th century. ... On the other side, there was an understanding of precarious workers as being a class in itself and a strong critic of trade unions ... the connection with trade unions was a strategic question of the Mayday, because there was a different understanding of what precarity was. (Interviewee 11, Portugal)

33 *Precários Inflexíveis* was created in 2007 with the EuroMayDay. As an organisation close to BE, it was one of the main contenders of austerity and precarity in the public sphere (Alves, Cairns, Alexandre & Correia, 2016).

From 2010 onwards, in an already austerity-ridden context, protest became increasingly visible. By the end of that year, two crucial mobilisations had set the scene for the upcoming anti-austerity protests of 2011. First, social movements supported the general strike (jointly organised by the CGTP and the UGT) against the ongoing cuts in the public sector. Although trade unions did not organise street protests during the general strike, non-institutional players organised a march and rally in Lisbon with the support of the BE. Second, at the end of 2010, multiple protests involving both trade unions and autonomous groups confronted the NATO summit in Lisbon.

In Spain, apart from the dynamics already discussed in relation to the GJM and the autonomous sector, several sectoral mobilisations developed from the mid-2000s onwards. In contrast to Portugal, where public finances were already under strain and public sector cuts were felt before 2010, Spain went through a period of economic growth in which a housing bubble developed (bursting in 2008/9). In this context, as reported by Portos, “a multi-organizational field of activist networks proliferated and consolidated during the low peak of the mobilisation wave, between 2003 and 2010,” which “created a deposit and developed an expertise on which protesters in the shadow of austerity built” (Portos, 2016, p. 191). A plurality of movements developed throughout this period, shaping the upcoming anti-austerity mobilisations.

There were five types of movement active in this period that would also be central during the anti-austerity cycle: (1) nationalist movements, especially in Catalonia; (2) the housing movement; (3) student and anti-precarity movements that developed outside the institutional sphere; (4) groups that directed criticisms at the political system (against political parties, the electoral system, corruption or the management of historical memory); and (5) internet-based mobilisations.

The first of these gained momentum in the years immediately before the crisis, as the Basque conflict settled and mobilisations for the referendum in Catalonia emerged (della Porta, O'Connor, Portos, & Subirats, 2017). These would become a central aspect of the political crisis in Spain. This set of political and nationalist groups were absent from Portugal and constitute one of the main differences between the two countries. Among internet-based mobilisations, the demonstrations against *Ley Sinde*, a law intended to regulate and limit online downloads, are usually named as one of the main predecessors of the 15M (Morell, 2012). The online activism of the Free Culture and Digital Commons Movement shaped the 15M movement decisively, not only in its composition but also in its framing and organisation. The housing movement gained traction when immigrant collectives,

such as *V de Vivienda*, mobilised against rising housing costs. Despite these collectives' assemblies and horizontal forms of organisation, research points out that their radical framework and scant number of alliances limited their mobilisation potential (Aguilar & Fernández, 2010). The student movement, which had enjoyed a long tradition in Spain under democracy (Diez & Laraña, 2017), was a central actor in establishing the 15M (Flesher Fominaya, 2020): in the years preceding the crisis, students mobilised strongly against the Bologna Reform. Their claims had both an economic and a political nature: if, on the one hand, they held that the Reform commodified higher education, on the other hand, they regarded it as anti-democratic due to its top-down and mercantilist nature. More importantly, as would happen later in 2011, these political claims already called for an alternative democratic model of the university (Alonso et al., 2015; Zamponi & Fernández González, 2017). The student movement shaped the anti-austerity mobilisations in Spain decisively as a "[broker] in the adaptation of the anti-neoliberal discourse in the new context, with the goal of addressing a wider audience" (Zamponi and Fernandez, 2017, abstract). In the post-Bologna mobilisations, amid the highest levels of youth unemployment and precarity in Europe, the group *Juventud sin Futuro* (Youth Without Future) had by the end of 2010 grown in various universities. Based on these recent mobilisation experiences, these groups' discourse went beyond youth, pointed to shared lived experience across generations, and built transversal loyalties (Alonso et al., 2015; Zamponi & Fernández González, 2017).

Parallel to this, between 2005 and 2010 various initiatives were aimed directly at the political system, echoing some of the criticisms present at the 2004 demonstrations against the PP in the aftermath of the Atocha attacks (Flesher Fominaya, 2011). Although small and relatively underground, groups such as *No les Votes* (Do not vote for them) and *Rompamos el Silencio* (Break the Silence) denounced the concentration of power under the two main parties (PP and PSOE) and the corruption and complicity between business and politics (Cruz, 2015). Moreover, these groups implicitly critiqued the pacted transition to democracy, which they considered incomplete (Diez & Laraña, 2017).

In both Iberian democracies, openness increased around questions of recognition under centre-left parties in the years immediately preceding the crisis. The new policies dealing with abortion and same-sex marriage mobilised many groups. Simultaneously, the ongoing economic liberalisation, the future financial disruption and Great Recession in 2008, and the 2010 austerity measures led to a deterioration of labour conditions in both countries. Not only did unemployment rise steeply, but precarity and

underemployment disproportionately affected young people, leading to new forms of mobilisation and contestation. While trade unions continued to confine themselves to the protection of insiders (i.e. workers with stable jobs), outsiders had to look for alternative forms of mobilisation. The responses in the two countries diverged. In Portugal, the emerging movements were restricted to the themes of labour and precarity, without elaborating on the political conditions in which they developed. In Spain, besides economic issues, multiple sectors were already questioning the regime.

### **Diverging paths to the anti-austerity cycle of protest**

Despite the apparent historical similarities, Spain and Portugal experienced two distinct paths of mobilisation up to the 2008 financial crisis. Even if embedded in the same international scenario, with some parallels between protest cycles, different contentious responses erupted. Between the transition to democracy and the emergence of the crisis, a complex picture of mobilisations emerges. Differences stem from multiple interactions not only between institutional and non-institutional contentious players, but also between structures of opportunities, networks, and cultures of mobilisation, debunking further interpretations that portray the 2011 mobilisations in the two countries as spontaneous or novel. Despite being unpredictable, the protests that emerged during the anti-austerity years followed similar patterns to those established in previous decades.

In Portugal, protest in the decade preceding the crisis flourished. However, contention existed within the limits of a restructured left (with the emergence of the BE and the group that left the Communist Party in the 1990s and 2000s). The creation of the BE as a strong institutional player in competition with the PCP was of great importance. It created opportunities for the non-institutional players to grow, allowing them more resources and coordination outside the control of the PCP. This would later feed back into the recomposition and creation of the groups linked to the BE that intervened in the anti-austerity cycle of contention. The main contrast is in the relationship between institutional and non-institutional players. In the years before the anti-austerity mobilisations, the space of contentious politics in Portugal underwent a constrained renewal, whereby renovation of the social movement field took place within the sphere of political parties; in Spain, this renewal involved autonomy between institutional and non-institutional players.

While trade unions were major contentious actors during the transition to democracy, upon institutionalisation street politics became secondary for

these actors. Nonetheless, alternative and autonomous players sprang out from already existing cultures of protest in combination with transnational forms of mobilisation that emerged during the 1990s/2000s. Rather than being linked to political parties, movements in Spain tended to have an open character that integrated assemblies at every step (which would reemerge during the anti-austerity protests, even if they came to be transformed and resignified).

Besides the repertoires and configurations of contention, another important aspect to consider is the nature of the conflict *per se*. In Portugal, in the years before the crisis, this contention was almost solely focused on labour and precarity and the retrenchment of the welfare state, and did not develop a critique of the regime. Activist groups were not able to expand beyond core militants and become a transversal movement, as they did in Spain. The movements that emerged in Spain were more diverse thematically (centred on housing, youth, and a critique of the regime), and developed a frame that went beyond labour issues and immediately became transversal upon the eruption of the crisis. As such, movements in Spain articulated a new discourse that criticised the regime, while in Portugal there was an acceptance, to a certain extent, of the regime's status quo.

As a result, in both countries, the political arena that emerged between 2008 and 2011 crystallised the axis of contention that had developed in the years before the crisis. While in Portugal new forms of protest and institutional actors cooperated, in Spain the conflict kept the groups autonomous from each other. In Portugal, parties played a role connecting with other actors (the PCP with the CGTP; the BE with their satellite organisations, e.g. the *Precários Inflexíveis*), while autonomous groups tried to develop outside their sphere of influence. In Spain, beyond local dynamics of protest, social movements were autonomous and stronger than in Portugal. As I will show in the following chapters, taking account of all these factors will be essential to understanding how contentious responses to austerity developed.

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### 3 Turning points

#### Going beyond the core

##### Abstract

This chapter focuses on the first mass-scale mobilisations contesting austerity outside the trade union field, which – as eventful protests – brought new dynamics, players and claims into the protest arena in both countries. Nevertheless, it also reveals how, after this turning point, the two countries followed different paths: in Spain, there was a crescendo of social movement contentious activity; in Portugal, social movements never became leading actors, managing only to mobilise upon specific contingencies. This divergence results not only from different contextual opportunities, but also from the different capacities of emergent movements to establish an open and broad discourse and effective structures of mobilisation allowing them to go beyond their core of activists.

**Keywords:** cycle of protest, eventful protest, social movement, frames, connective structure

*Several aspects of the functioning of democracies are currently a source of intense discontent among their citizens. There is widespread dissatisfaction that democracy has been unable to generate socioeconomic equality, to make people feel that their political participation is effective, to ensure that governments do what they are supposed to do and not what they have no mandate to do, and to balance public order with noninterference in private lives.*

– Przeworski, 2016, p.4

#### Setting the scene for austerity

As described in the introduction of this book, Portugal and Spain followed a parallel story when it came to the implementation of austerity. With the

2009 Greek debacle, pressures from the European Union (EU) and financial markets for budgetary constraints increased as risk spread in the European semi-periphery. In 2010, Spain and Portugal, led by their respective Socialist Parties, pursued austerity policies that envisaged wage cuts and welfare retrenchment to answer the ongoing market pressures. However, this not only opened a rift in the party system between supporters and opponents of austerity; social movements also erupted to contest the package of measures announced.

In Portugal, even though the centre-left government initiated austerity measures in 2010 to generate market trust, political tensions slowly rose with mounting pressure for a bailout. In 2011, in a short but eventful period of time between March and June, the *Geração à Rasca* (GàR) protest occurred, Socialist prime minister José Sócrates resigned over parliament's rejection of an additional fiscal austerity plan and, finally, the out-going government requested financial assistance from the European Union-European Central Bank-IMF Troika, with the support of the right-wing opposition parties, the PSD (centre-right party) and CDS-PP (right-wing party). Between April and June, not only did elections take place, but negotiations with the lenders were ongoing. At the end of May, the caretaker government,<sup>34</sup> with the agreement of the right-wing parties, signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Troika that would commit the country to extensive budget cuts, whatever the outcome of the elections.

Despite the rising discontent, this situation led to a state of political paralysis in which the discussions with the Troika and the upcoming elections were at the centre of political debate. The institutional players that were involved in protests (the Communist Party – PCP – and the Left Bloc – BE) focused on the elections, and the legitimacy of austerity was barely disputed in the media. Apart from the BE, the PCP, and the *Confederação Geral de Trabalhadores Portugueses* (CGTP), there was barely any discourse countering austerity, which made articulating grievances using that rhetoric more difficult. As was the case in Italy with Berlusconi (Zamponi, 2012), Prime Minister Sócrates became such a divisive figure and the target of so many grievances that his resignation partially made mobilisation seem redundant. In June, the election of a technocratic flavoured right-wing government (exemplified by Vítor Gaspar, Minister of Finance, who had credentials in international institutions) was well received, and contestation

34 Even though the government resigned, it remained as a caretaker government until the elections in June.

would only rise again in mid-2012. The Troika's bailout was legitimised as the only alternative to crisis.

In Spain, the first austerity measures were announced in May 2010. As conflict escalated, the political conditions for the PSOE's government also worsened. During the regional elections of May 2011, all over Spain, protesters challenged the ban on remaining in public squares during the "reflection day" that preceded elections in an act of civil disobedience. Even if there was a growing crisis in Spain, the pressure to accept an external bailout was not as strong as in Portugal, translating into a very different conjuncture for non-institutional movements. In April José Luís Zapatero, at the time President of the Spanish Government, announced that he would not stand as a candidate in the upcoming November general elections. Unlike in Portugal, there was no key personality to rally against, and together with more politically directed criticisms from the movements, there was a broader focus on the theme of an overall corrupt party and political system. Furthermore, due to the lack of external intervention, blame could not fall on international institutions.

The national character of the Spanish process was reinforced by the proposal submitted by the PSOE (and supported by the *Partido Popular* – PP) in September to inscribe a maximum budget deficit in the Constitution (also known as the "golden rule"). The constitutional reform reinforced the 15M's frame of a critique of the transition to democracy. The blame lay not so much with a particular prime minister, but rather with the system or political elite as a whole; the external imposition was softer and could be interpreted as a political choice made by the elites, which intensified the impression of an oligarchic takeover. Nonetheless, the PP won November's general elections with its largest majority ever.<sup>35</sup>

Austerity policies intensified under the right-wing governments elected in both countries in 2011. If trade unions led the initial opposition, calling for general strikes, it was only in 2011 that new players from outside the institutional arena emerged, leading to the intensification of protest that will be discussed in the remainder of the chapter.

35 One final argument centred on context has to do with the type of debt held by the country. Portugal's debt was mainly public, while Spain's was mainly private, and it gave rise to a housing bubble. Hence, in Portugal the cuts were directed towards the public sector, resulting mainly in trade union protests, while in Spain the housing bubble affected people's livelihoods directly, leading to local forms of grassroots movements that interacted with other protests and, therefore, exponentiated protest.

## Networks and players

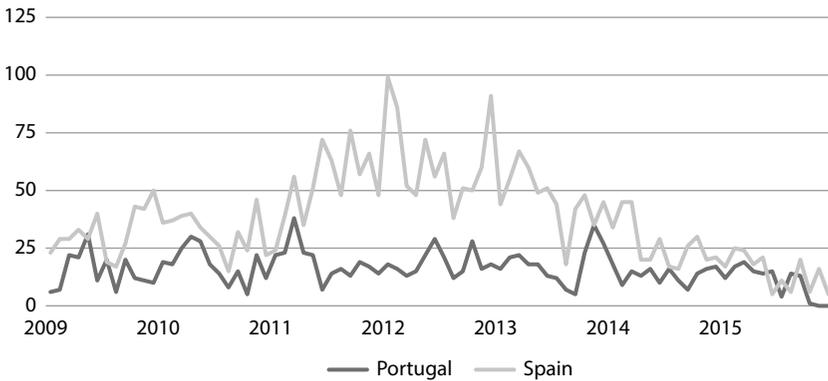
Like in many other countries between 2010 and 2011, following the financial crisis of 2008, Portugal and Spain were part of the global wave of contestation that emerged with the Great Recession. This wide range of protests that started with the “pots and pans revolution” in Iceland (2008) was followed by the Arab Spring in the Middle East and North Africa, the *Indignados* and anti-austerity movements in the Southern European countries, and Occupy Wall Street in the USA (2011); it went as far as Turkey and Brazil (2013) and later to France with *Nuit Debout* (2016). These protests affected the political process by introducing new discourses and repertoires that, as Przerworski (2016) puts it in the passage quoted above, attacked rising inequality and citizens’ feelings of ineffectiveness and lack of influence over the political system and their representatives. In most cases, this discontent resulted in prolonged occupations and re-claiming of the public space. The emergence of new protest players shaped the political process and arena in both the short and long term.

In Portugal and Spain, two eventful protests (della Porta, 2008) shifted the direction of the cycle of protest: *Geração à Rasca*<sup>36</sup> (GàR) in Portugal (March 2011) and 15M (May 2011) in Spain (Portos & Carvalho, 2022). These inflections can be considered the turning points of the cycles of contention. Turning points are here understood as the first protest events during the cycle that successfully mobilised beyond trade unions, and through which latent contentious issues and networks, described in the previous chapter, scaled up to mass protests. As McAdam and Sewell put it, events “become turning points in structural change, concentrated moments of political and cultural creativity when the logic of historical development is reconfigured by human action but by no means abolished” (McAdam & Sewell, 2001, p. 102).

After 2011 the character of mobilisations changed decisively. Before 2011, apart from small protest actions by autonomous movements or general strikes by trade unions, large protest events led by non-institutional players were non-existent. Nonetheless, with the introduction of austerity measures between 2010 and 2011, social movements became a central player in the political process and introduced a particular set of repertoires and discourses.

The number of protests per month in both countries followed a similar trend between 2009 and 2011 (Figure 4.1). However, after 2011, protest in

36 Usually translated as “Screwed Generation” or “Desperate Generation.”

**Figure 4.1 Number of protest events per month in Portugal and Spain (2009-2015)**

Portugal deflated and followed a stop-and-go pattern, while in Spain it escalated into a sustained wave of contention until the end of 2013.

### Turning points in Portugal

In Portugal, at the beginning of 2011, seemingly out of nowhere, the self-named group *Geração à Rasca* called for a demonstration in March through social media (Facebook). The name was a play on the term used by a journalist (Vicente Jorge Silva) to designate the young people protesting against the introduction of tuition fees in the early 1990s who lowered their trousers and showed their bottoms to then Minister of Education, Couto dos Santos. *Geração Rasca* has a negative connotation, referring to a generation (*geração*) that is ordinary or without value – lousy or trashy (*rasca*). But, in Portuguese, adding *à* changes the meaning of *rasca*, so that the name refers to a generation with difficulty making ends meet and planning their future. With this wordplay, the group linked the struggles of two different generations and cycles of protest. In fact, the link was not merely symbolic: some of their main organisers backstage were very active in the student movement protest cycle of the 1990s mentioned in the previous chapter.

The GàR preceded most of the so-called “movement of the squares” in Europe. Together with the “pots and pans” revolution in Iceland, it was the first significant protest event that touched upon how the situation of young people – and that of the overall population – had been worsened by austerity. It was a clear precursor to the mobilisations that followed in most Southern European countries, influencing their repertoires and discourses (Baumgarten, 2013; Flesher Fominaya, 2017).

The mass media in Portugal picked up the GàR's call, and the exposure led to the initial large protest event outside the trade union circuit (Baumgarten, 2013; Estanque, Costa, & Soeiro, 2013; Soeiro, 2015). The official story, propagated by the mass media at the time, was that a group of friends not known to the public and without previously established activist networks formed the GàR. Despite not being prominent activists, the four friends had political experience either in their universities or in short periods of political party membership. Inspired by the ongoing mobilisations of the Arab Spring, they joined forces with more established and experienced social movement militants who had been active since the tuition fees protest in the 1990s.

As a media strategy, the actual group was divided in two: one group (the four friends) was visible to the mass media, while another group of activists was responsible for setting up the media strategy and mobilisation of other groups behind the scenes. This played well into a romantic and strategic narrative of innovation and spontaneity.

The GàR is organized by eight people, those four appeared publicly ... and then other people: mainly doing media training to prepare them for the hardest TV interviews, since it was something some of us had already done for the LGBT movement ... it was a group of eight to ten people, between those that collaborated in the graphic design and other things, behind the guys that would appear publicly .... (Interviewee 12, Portugal)

Although the GàR protest (March 2011) was initially scheduled to happen only in Lisbon, as political tension in the country rose due to austerity measures and conflicts between the main political parties, it attracted broader involvement and groups around the country joined to organise local protests. Even though initial estimates counted three hundred thousand people in the streets, one of the organisers interviewed recounts that after giving that number to the press, they realised that slightly over five hundred thousand people demonstrated across Portugal (about 5% of the country's overall population). The organisers reached younger and older generations, both affected by the crisis and precarious labour conditions, bridging "social organisations (feminists, LGBT, among others), organised sectors of the anticapitalist left (such as the BE), some right-wing sectors (like the PSD youth party branch JSD), and also, for example, the then leader of the biggest Portuguese Trade Union, Carvalho da Silva, and even some members of the far right" (Soeiro, 2015, p. 308).<sup>37</sup>

37 Translated from Portuguese.

Despite the initial enthusiasm, the organisers were unable to expand beyond the core and establish a network that would have the capacity to mobilise in upcoming months. Nevertheless, this protest was the first major eventful protest of this cycle (i.e. it was a turning point), showing that there was mobilisation capacity beyond trade unions.

The next large protest event would only take place in October, as part of the Spanish 15M-organised Global Action Day. Although there were small, scattered protests between the GàR event and October, no large protest performances materialised, aside from CGTP-sponsored events. The GàR protest was followed by a period of “platforms and assemblies” (Baumgarten, 2016) that started with the *Acampada do Rossio* (May 2011) and expired with the Global Action Day (October 2011), from which the 15th October (15O) platform emerged.

The *Acampada* started with activists gathering in front of the Spanish consulate in Lisbon in solidarity with the ongoing 15M mobilisations in Spain. After the initial assembly, the group decided to move to Rossio (a big open square located in Lisbon’s downtown). The protestors remained camped in the square for three weeks, and more people joined, especially for the assemblies. The *Acampada* was the first meeting point of different players after the GàR (Baumgarten, 2013). However, no direct organisational link existed between the major players in the GàR and the *Acampada*: even if some of the GàR organisers participated in the latter, they did not lead it.

Emerging spontaneously, the *Acampada* brought together anarchists, libertarians, autonomists, anti-party groups, and members of several groups within the Left Bloc. In a joint article evaluating the movement of the squares in Europe, one of its participants, Luhuna Carvalho, explains that this occupation was not

buil[t] on a previous network of social, countercultural, or political movements. These movements existed, but not on an organised or tangible scale capable of giving an infrastructural substance to the occupations, which then fell into a mere reproduction of the ‘popular assemblies.’ (Fernández-Savater, Flesher Fominaya, C., Carvalho, L., et al., 2017, p. 122)

Contrary to what was happening in Spain (as will be discussed shortly), the *Acampada* was a small event composed mainly of seasoned activists and party militants, bringing together various factions of both institutional and non-institutional players. While many newcomers became engaged

with politics for the first time, they largely remained within grassroots subcultures of the movement and participated in establishing a “network of autonomous spaces, practices and movements” (Fernández-Savater, Flesher Fominaya, C., Carvalho, L., et al., 2017, p. 122) in Lisbon that never expanded.

Even if there had been potential for radical anti-systemic mobilisation in Portugal, these contentious events never reached the same scale as in Spain. At its peak, around 500 people participated in the assemblies of the *Acampada* (as estimated by one interviewee). However, the *Acampada* sowed the seeds for the constitution of a platform that would organise the Global Action Day.<sup>38</sup>

Rossio is an important moment in all of this, which went unnoticed. If you weren't there you wouldn't have any idea, but most of these people met in Rossio ... it brought together people with experience with people that had never done anything like this before. Plus, it coincided with the general elections, with the memorandum, and symbolically it had some effects. So, the 15O was born from various people that were present in Rossio, that – knowing that there would be an international demonstration – started to meet regularly. People from Rubra, MAS<sup>39</sup> and then people with no connections ... that's the moment that a lot of people start to meet ... it was very small, but at the Lisbon scale it had some importance. (Interviewee 14, Portugal)

The fact that it brought so many groups together, that were close within themselves, potentiated a lot of things. It ended up working as a catalyst for what happened after. (Interviewee 13, Portugal)

The Global Action Day in October 2011 was the first mobilisation attempted outside the CGTP's sphere of influence that protested against the austerity policies of the right-wing coalition government elected in June 2011. Distinct from the GàR, instead of being organised by a small clique of activists, the organising platform was a coalition of more than 40 collectives of social movement groups (Soeiro, 2014). Following the organisational patterns found in other countries, the preparation

38 The Global Action Day occurred on October 15, 2011 to mark the five-month anniversary of the first protest in Spain (15M). Despite being called from Spain, groups in various countries organised events as well.

39 Movimento Alternativa Socialista

assemblies used an open, deliberative model without formal structure or leadership. The organisers estimated that a hundred thousand people protested all over the country.

Despite the wide range of groups that supported the Global Action Day, it is important to note the ongoing tensions between autonomous and libertarian groups with an anti-party discourse and more institutional players. In addition, rival factions within the BE competed for the control of movement groups. Again, Luhuna Carvalho points out that the participants of the *Acampada*

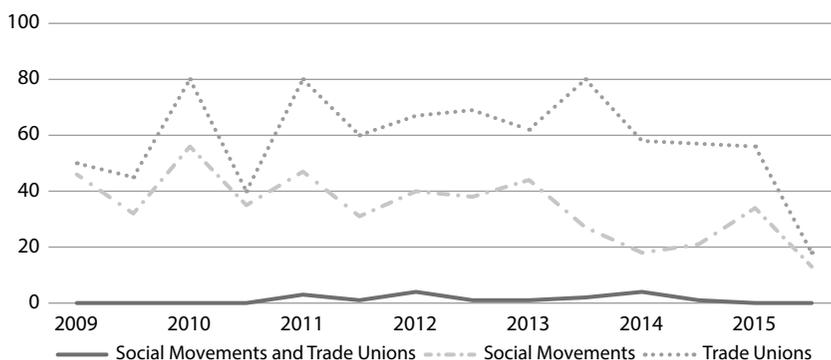
had a complex relationship with the institutional left and these mobilisations against austerity were eventually co-opted by the political parties or by the groups who aspired to become the new political parties. The content of the demonstrations turned from a blatant refusal of austerity without specific demands into something instrumentalized toward reclaiming new elections and hence the victory of a hypothetical 'unified left.' (Fernández-Savater, Flesher Fominaya, C., Carvalho, L., et al., 2017, p. 122)

The newly emerging groups were overtaken by their institutionally linked counterparts, which then allowed the better-established groups to dominate the arena. One factor that was frequently mentioned in interviews was the disruptive nature of infighting between BE-associated factions. These divisions would endure until the Ruptura-FER<sup>40</sup> came to control the 15O platform after the General Strike of March 2012. As this happened, the groups still affiliated with the BE (e.g. *Precários Inflexíveis* – PI) disconnected from the platform, leaving a rift between them and the Ruptura-FER faction of the movement. The groups that continued to be affiliated with the Left Bloc would later embark on a mobilisation platform called *Que se Lixe a Troika* (which I will discuss in the next chapter).

Besides political parties' backstage infighting, trade unions were also important throughout the cycle of protest. In fact, in contrast to what I will show in the next section for Spain, trade unions were the dominant protest actor throughout 2009 to 2015, as can be seen in Figure 4.2. Moreover, the PEA data indicates that very few instances of collaboration existed throughout the cycle, which contrasts with Figure 4.3 in the next subsection.

40 Ruptura-FER was one of the minority tendencies inside the Left Bloc that would abandon the party in late 2011 and form a new political party called MAS (*Movimento Alternativa Socialista*). They were very active throughout the protest cycle.

**Figure 4.2 Number of protests (per half-year) by type of player in Portugal (2009-2015)<sup>41</sup>**



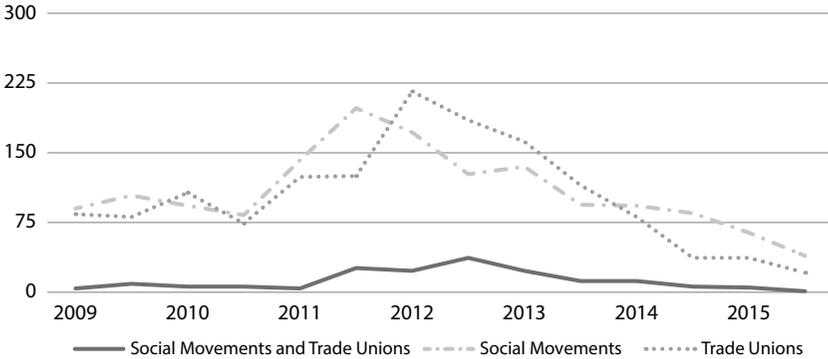
### Turning points in Spain

On Sunday, May 15th of 2011, a week before the regional elections of May 22nd – two months after the GàR in Portugal – and after a growing process of mobilisation by different youth groups, a joint effort by *Democracia Real, Ya!* and *Juventud Sin Futuro* constituted the turning point of the protest cycle in Spain (Calvo, 2013; Díez & Laraña, 2017; Flesher Fominaya, 2020; Portos, 2016, 2019; Portos & Carvalho, 2022; Romanos, 2013, 2016). After the demonstration, attended by around twenty thousand people, a small group of protesters decided to camp in one of Madrid's central squares, the *Puerta del Sol*. However, during the first night these protestors camped out, the police repressed the initiative, sparking solidarity mobilisations from other groups to take the square (*toma la plaza*).

This event triggered a massive wave of mobilisation led by horizontal autonomous groups that came to occupy squares all across the main cities in Spain. Most of these camps lasted for about two months (depending on the city and the degree of repression) and held daily public assemblies to discuss matters such as education, healthcare, feminism, and democracy. As a turning point, the 15M constituted the most emblematic protest event leading to almost three years of sustained protest, generating multiple spin-offs, and giving visibility to the mobilisations, frames and players discussed in the previous chapter. Consequently, their symbols and forms of organisation came to mark all the mobilisations that emerged afterwards.

<sup>41</sup> I have combined the protest activities of trade unions and social movements to show that there were various instances of collaboration in protest.

**Figure 4.3 Number of protests (per half-year) by type of player in Spain (2009-2015)<sup>42</sup>**



After more than two months (from May to July) of occupying squares throughout the whole country, the movement dispersed into neighbourhoods. The local assemblies that then formed were networks of groups working together on the ground, and were vital to the 15M's ability to sustain mobilisation. During this period (Summer 2011) the first sectoral struggles also began. After the summer, mobilisation campaigns in the education sector that would become known as *Mareas* (tides) emerged, incorporating practices, resources and members of both trade unions and social movements.<sup>43</sup> A feedback effect arguably reinforced these tendencies towards simultaneous decentralisation and specialisation.

Another outcome of this initial stage was the organisation of the Global Action Day initially promoted by *Democracia Real, Ya!*. This initiative would incorporate more than one million people all over Spain and extend beyond its borders.

### Going beyond the core: a summary

One of the most important features of the Spanish 15M was the ability to mobilise and politicise a whole new generation of activists (Antentas, 2015; Romanos & Aguilar, 2016). Taibo (2011) suggests, however, that despite the movement's novelty, 15M combined previously existing social movements (which he calls "critical social movements," among which he includes, for

<sup>42</sup> I have combined the protest activities of trade unions and social movements to show that there were various instances of collaboration in protest.

<sup>43</sup> I describe and analyse mobilisations for social rights in more detail in the next chapter.

example, the Global Justice Movement (GJM), feminists and squatter groups in Madrid) and the new groups that came to organise the demonstration. This collaboration would persist throughout the two to three months of the encampments in Spain. In the Portuguese case, even though the GàR mobilised people on the day of the demonstration, it was not able to sustain mobilisation afterwards.<sup>44</sup>

Second, the different strengths and positions of the institutional players vis-à-vis non-institutional players during this period were also crucial. In Portugal, this stage of fitful mobilisation ended with the general strike in November 2011, organised by the main trade union federations, the CGTP and the UGT, with explicit support from social movements. By then, it was clear that trade unions were the dominant protest player in Portugal. Furthermore, it is possible to observe other players linked to the BE disputing the social movement space with non-institutional groups. Despite the emergence of new forms of protest throughout 2011, the social movement entered 2012 in a state of disarray, broken and divided. These later protests never created a momentum that allowed new sectors to form a stronger countermovement against austerity. In contrast with the Portuguese case, trade unions and political parties in Spain were barely present or visible in the 15M-related mobilisations: indeed, they were unpopular among the protesters. The delegitimised parties and trade unions would only gain traction in later stages of the cycle of protest.

As such, the main difference at the turning point in the two cases under analysis was the ability of protest actors to sustain protest by going beyond the core, generating multiple spinoffs, and amplifying the protest capacity of pre-existing groups.

### **Between democracy, precarity and austerity: movement culture and frames**

As Tarrow remarks (Tarrow, 1989, 2011), turning points of protest cycles exhibit both previously existing trends as well as an open, broad discourse that mobilises beyond its normal core constituency. With the movements of the crisis (della Porta, 2015), an overarching and transversal critical discourse directed at both governments and economic players emerged, carrying signifiers that resonated with distinct segments of the population. Overall,

44 This will prove consistent throughout the whole cycle of protest, as I demonstrate in the following chapters.

the initial wave of anti-austerity mobilisations demanded a democratisation of politics and full inclusion of citizens, as opposed to what they viewed as an oligarchic takeover of political institutions (Gerbaudo, 2017). Their purpose was to make democracy “more democratic” through full participatory inclusion of citizens and opposition to established elites. At the turning point of the cycle of protest this democratic desire was expressed by what Gerbaudo (2017) calls “citizenism,” referring to views that oppose anti-oligarchic forms of citizenship. This polarising discourse with populist traits can be seen both as a demand for inclusion and as a source of collective identity that, due to its transversal appeal, unites multiple groups contesting austerity.

Claims to and frames of representation thus play an essential role at the opening of cycles of contention due to their ability to mobilise broader sectors: they both constitute diagnoses of injustice and have a strategic purpose. However, limiting the analysis to broad claims about participation and representation would reproduce a romantic narrative transmitted by the movements to researchers: typically, spontaneity and novelty were used to broaden participation and present the mobilisations as distinct from previous ones (Flesher Fominaya, 2014). Besides the modularity and resonance of the frames these discourses provided, movements also translated these discourses into practices, repertoires and organisational forms, which enabled broader and more inclusive recruitment and gave these mobilisations a more extensive symbolic apparatus.

At the turning points some degree of innovation and openness introduced new repertoires and claims based on democracy and political rights. However, as I show in the following chapter, as austerity endured, new players emerged, and labour and social rights progressively became the central protest issues in both countries. By emphasising the processual and relational origins of claims, it is possible to observe how different articulations of citizenship rights emerge throughout the cycle of protest.

In Spain, the 15M's discourse and organisation built on two main ideas. The first was to engage ordinary people in politics through discussion and collective decision making. Secondly, the movement opposed any kind of representation of collectives by individuals. As such, the movement's practices positioned it as an alternative to representative democracy.

Instead of being a one-off event without broader repercussions, this movement gave rise to a sustained protest wave that lasted for almost three years. Even if the 15M was not a unified or centralised movement, it evolved in accordance with the austerity context and interaction in the anti-austerity arena. In fact, the 15M became an umbrella term for a variety of different groups that shared a common approach to a popular, horizontal and

deliberative model of democracy (Romanos, 2016). The movement appeared in three forms throughout the peak mobilisations between 2011 and 2014: unitary (15M), sectoral (*Mareas*, which stood in defence of public services) and local groups (neighbourhood assemblies, which will be discussed in the following section). These components were not mutually exclusive but overlapped and cooperated to different degrees depending on the type and period of mobilisation.

The 15M featured a compound repertoire of permanent occupation and claims to public space, open and deliberative assemblies, and civil disobedience. Formed outside the institutional sphere, its language was open, inclusive and tolerant, avoiding attachment to identity symbols such as flags and closed political ideologies, which resulted in an attempt to simplify both online and offline communication (Anduiza, Cristancho, & Sabucedo, 2014; Castells, 2012; Morell, 2012).

I believe that they [participants in *Democracia Real, Ya!*] were people without previous political experiences, maybe some, but the important thing was not so much where people came from, but rather the space they created ... what they proposed and created is a UFO ... it opens a new space ... where all of us feel included, it is a space without flags, without identities, without ideologies, where the language is very direct and it relates to ordinary people and creates a certain imaginary of the problems ... (Interviewee 18, Spain)

Finally, the groups on the ground subscribed to a more autonomist and looser definition of the movement. Amador Fernández-Savater, considered one of the “intellectuals” of the movement, defined the 15M as a “climate” that spread, changing the understanding of politics and society beyond the squares, and uniting groups with the common objective of transforming society.<sup>45</sup> Likewise, many of my interviewees underscored how touching the first moments of the public assemblies at *Puerta del Sol* were.

I went with my partner and some friends. We arrived at *Sol* and we saw 40 thousand people: the square was completely occupied, it was an awesome feeling, especially when they said this is an assembly ... and people sat down to do the assembly. It really started to change my mind. (Interviewee 3, Spain)

45 See Amador Fernández Savater – “Como se organiza un clima?” <http://blogs.publico.es/fueradelugar/1438/%C2%BFcomo-se-organiza-un-clima>

It was very exciting ... we were all at the *Puerta del Sol* and suddenly there was someone who says ‘comrades, this is a citizens’ assembly’ and the word citizen assembly gave me goosebumps. (Interviewee 15, Spain)

When it comes to this period in Portugal, protests featured horizontal democratic practices and demands for deeper democratisation, but they were more limited and in general less hostile toward institutional politics. At GàR there was a discursive element of self-organisation and open demonstration. The organisers framed this initial protest as “peaceful, secular and non-partisan” (which they explicitly contrasted with “apolitical”) and encouraged people to bring their demands.

Inspired by transnational repertoires and ideas, GàR’s frame appealed to a project of political transformation whose objective was, in the organisers’ own words and inspired by the Portuguese Nobel Prize winner José Saramago, to “turn every citizen into a politician.” The 1974-1975 revolutionary moment in Portugal was depicted as an inspiration to the GàR, since the Portuguese Revolutionary Period (PREC) constituted, in their view, a moment of true democracy with grassroots mobilisations ranging from the urban movement to student protests, but also including the occupation of lands and factories. They felt that the end of the revolutionary period coincided with the entrenchment of a shallow democracy in institutions.

There was a premise that what happened after the 25th of April, in terms of participation – the whole period of the PREC, with a huge participation of people and civil society, [a period] that is usually considered of instability – was in reality a period of true democracy. Our analysis is that that was the period of the deepest democracy in Portugal, and that it was from the moment that democracy enclosed itself in parties and institutions that democracy lost its intensity ... We thought it was our responsibility to be part of the solution. It was a bigger question – for us democracy exists when people living in a society can enjoy their freedoms and rights ... like Saramago would say ‘to turn every citizen into a politician’ ... it’s not only about voting every four years ... people can decide how to live in the different dimensions of their life. (Raquel Freire,<sup>46</sup> Portugal)

However, while the GàR intended to reinforce participatory democracy, its manifesto largely focused on labour and social rights. And even if participation was the principle under which its organisers arranged the

46 This interviewee asked to be identified.

event, analysis reveals that their discourse and claims – in contrast to those of protest leaders in Spain – focused mostly on redistributive claims rather than on representation. As stated before, the name of the event combined both an expression of youth and generational discontent (building on previous mobilisations on the topic). Soeiro (2015) reinforces this observation: GàR organisers asked participants to bring their written demands to deliver to Parliament, and almost 50% of those demands were related to labour precarity, while only 23% of them related to the political system or transparency.

However, the influence of transnational discourses of “citizenism” and representation was explicit from the *Acampada do Rossio* through to the Global Action Day in October, though it was not dominant afterwards and remained only at a subterranean level. One of the main mottos of the *Acampada* was “democracy is questioned when austerity is the law” (interview). At the *Acampada*, the repertoire of assemblies, occupation of spaces, and direct democracy was central and had the clear intent of going beyond the representative institutions. Daily life in the square also revolved around these principles of self-organisation. Nonetheless, the group remained small and attracted very few new members. Despite the new repertoires and discourses, the movement never fully reached beyond already dedicated activists.

There was a bit of an idea of going beyond the political agents in the parliament and that all of the rest is civil society, almost as a separation of activities. I think that was the big message from the *Acampada*: people in a square also do politics ... the attempt of self-organising to organise a demonstration, to create a communal kitchen, ... the idea that politics belongs to institutional politics, that it belongs to certain agents suitable for the position ... Still, we felt it was a truly marginal thing ... being ridiculed in the press ... what happened in Spain was totally different from what happened here. We were portrayed as freaks camping in a square, but if you were to go there, you would understand it was something somehow different ... it was amazing for our size. (Interviewee 13, Portugal)

Later, the Global Action Day in October 2011 – organised by the groups present at the *Acampada* – made a mix of economic and political claims. Fernandes (2016) notes that the 15O protest was framed around claims for democracy based on the memory of the PREC. João Labrincha, one of the GàR organisers, points out that “there were moments during the PREC ... where people could participate in popular assemblies but since then it has

not happened again” (Público, 16 October 2011) (T. Fernandes, 2016, p. 189). GàR-inspired protesters referenced the revolution more infrequently after the Global Action Day, and when they did, the references generally framed 1974-1975 as the moment when labour, education, and health rights were established. After this stage these opposition groups started to adapt their discourses to logics closer to the classic left (Baumgarten, 2013, p. 467). As a result, political claims for representation never became dominant. Opposition to institutional players never reached the same level in Portugal as it had in Spain. Even though there were demands for open democracy, these became progressively subordinated to economic ones (Carvalho & Ramos Pinto, 2019).

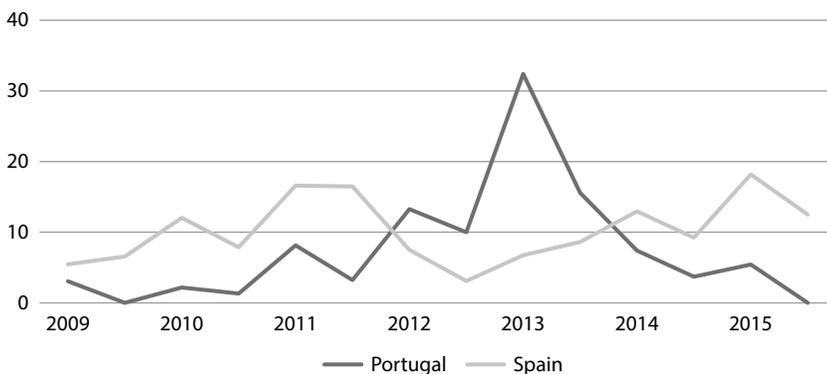
It is important to note that in Portugal – unlike in Spain – few groups questioned the legitimacy of the regime born out of the process of democratisation. Two interpretations of the revolution subsisted among contentious players. The “unfinished revolution” is a future-oriented frame, where the past is not presented as the genesis of the regime, but rather a future not yet achieved, i.e. the promise of the revolution remains to be fulfilled. This interpretation was not dominant, exhibited only in a few documents and interviews by small autonomist groups. The “defence of the revolution” discourse, on the other hand, is a present-oriented and defensive articulation of the past. It sees the revolution as a foundational moment for a range of social rights, or what is normally referred to as the “conquests of the revolution” (Carvalho & Ramos Pinto, 2019). Because this dominant frame was intrinsically linked to institutional players, the Portuguese movement never left the sphere of social rights and defence of the regime born out of the 1970s transition to democracy (Carvalho & Ramos Pinto, 2019).

As such, it is important to note that, when demands related to representation and participation in Portugal reached their peak in the first half of 2013 (see Figure 4.4), rather than calling for a democratic opening-up, they instead called for the government’s resignation.<sup>47</sup> Furthermore, these political claims were made not only by social movements but also by trade unions. Hence, protest groups would come to focus on the dispossession of social rights due to austerity rather than an overt critique of the country’s political foundations, as in Spain. In the latter country, the frame was directed against “politics as usual,” criticising representative democracy and corruption:

... activists have demanded a number of basic citizenship rights that political elites had neglected while prioritizing the interests of powerful

47 I discuss this in more detail in the next chapter.

**Figure 4.4** Number of protests (per half-year) with demands about representation and participation (%) in Spain and Portugal (2009-2015)



economic actors. Activists have also clarified that the crisis was not only of the economy but also of an institutional system that facilitates corruption and impedes the emergence and development of an alternative to neoliberal policies. (Romanos, 2016, p. 131).

The differences in discourses between countries have broader implications for movement frames and cultures. Gerbaudo (2017) argues that “citizenism” contrasts with class-based sources of mobilisation, as it seems to be more attractive in countries where the discourse of class has lost traction and is not a constitutive part of mobilising cleavages. For example, Cruz (2015) argues that over the last 40 years the “empire of class” and the mobilising capacity of trade unions in Spain declined. Even if in Portugal trade unionisation, linked to the extensive precarisation of the workforce, has decreased, social and labour rights continue to constitute the central axis around which the regime was built and consequently dominate the field. Furthermore, in Spain, even groups like *Juventud sin Futuro* that operate with an explicit critique of youth precarity frame it within a political discourse and a critique of the regime.

In Spain, the discourse of dissatisfaction with the political status quo went beyond core activists. After three years, 70% of the population still agreed with the demands of the movement (Sampedro & Lobera, 2014). Even if Portuguese players had begun to utilise this type of anti-regime discourse, they were never able to make it resonate as it did in Spain and remained entrenched in labour issues.

## Networks of resistance

Scale shift, or the capacity of an initial mobilisation to generate spinoffs, is central to the process of expanding the protest cycle (Tarrow 2011). As discussed in the previous sections, while in Portugal protest organisation was mostly top-down and decentralisation spinoffs were weak, one of the main characteristics of the Spanish movement was the shift toward locally based assemblies in neighbourhoods. In other words, in Spain the mobilisation process entailed a downward scale-shift (Portos, 2019) that, as it will be seen, was almost absent in Portugal.

After a turning point, spin-off movements tend to develop (McAdam, 2013) reinforcing and reconstituting ties that transform later stages of protest. Local networks of resistance are crucial to mobilisation capacity, even if they are not directly visible during protests. These generate connective structures that are central to contentious processes as they sustain mobilisations (Tarrow, 2011).

The impact of the crisis in people's livelihood sparked the emergence of local forms of direct social action (Baumgarten, 2017a; Bosi & Zamponi, 2015; Kotronaki & Christou, 2019). This downward scale-shift implies both an organisational format, and a repertoire of direct action. Bosi and Zamponi define direct social action as "forms of action that focus upon directly transforming some specific aspects of society by means of the very action itself, instead of claiming something from the state or other power holders" (Bosi & Zamponi, 2015, p. abstract). Comprised of a variety of repertoires that rely on alternative forms of resilience such as political consumerism and occupations, these are embedded in the countries' contentious history.

In terms of the forms that direct social action took, Portugal and Spain differed substantially. Anti-austerity protests in Portugal centralised their activities and focused on large protest events led by institutional players or their partners. The absence of a direct social action and autonomist culture and similar spaces in Portugal in the years preceding the crisis affected the capacity of groups to mobilise to protest against austerity policies. In Spain, decentralisation fuelled mobilisation capacity by drawing on energy from local groups. As these spaces were already established in Spain, they played an essential role in enabling groups to position themselves in the urban landscape. These groups created meeting spaces for activists, laypeople, and collectives, which were the building blocks of future mobilisations.

In Spain, after more than two months occupying squares and other public spaces throughout the whole country, the movement dispersed into

neighbourhoods and formed local assemblies.<sup>48</sup> The decision to decentralise did not come quickly or easily. For several weeks, the movements in the squares debated whether to disperse, as the objectives of that mobilisation seemed not to be achievable anymore in the squares. Several attempts to leave the square (*levantar campo*) stalled, as more radical or persistent groups would remain camped. Eventually, however, unceasing police violence and institutional pressure led to the abandonment of the camp. If participants felt that disbanding brought the risk that the movement might totally disappear, they also believed it was an opportunity to reinvigorate the movement from below.

A lot of people thought that we should leave because the environment was degrading, and that the key was to move to the neighbourhoods. (Interviewee 3, Spain)

The decision was taken because there was a risk of the movement disappearing; the assemblies started to lose quality and it provoked a reaction that I thought was smart. Let's move into the neighbourhoods, let's try to decentralise our struggles and develop them in smaller areas. (Interviewee 1, Spain)

By dispersing and recuperating a long and established tradition of local grassroots activism and structures, the process of decentralisation led to a network of local groups acting on the ground and in close contact with communities. This move was of great importance given the intense and daily nature of contentious action between 2011 and 2013. The flexible and robust network of support allowed the activists to communicate quickly and easily. As this arena extended beyond the neighbourhood, inter-network collaboration helped to sustain broader mobilisations.

These networks' structures had capillary and rhizomatic features. First, inter-neighbourhood assemblies helped to coordinate actions between neighbourhoods. Additionally, many of the assemblies' activities established partnerships with unitary and sectoral groups. Most neighbourhoods in Madrid developed specialised working groups on topics related to public services, such as health and education (also in parallel with housing), and as I will show in the next chapters, these constituted critical contentious issues. As the regional government attempted to privatise public services, these movement groups collaborated with local public service workers. As

48 As my fieldwork was centred in Madrid, the description corresponds to this city.

such, these local assemblies expanded while supporting the activities of more extensive networks and movement issues.

It was a very intense year, not only because we had the neighbourhood assemblies, but also because we participated in inter-neighbourhood assemblies, for coordination between all the groups. But we also coordinated ourselves with other movements. (Interviewee 3, Spain)

The 15M ... [has] ingrained all types of struggles since it happened. The 15M of Carabanchel was one of the most potent ones, it was big and we divided ourselves into various working groups, working with pre-existing associations in the neighbourhood ... we work a lot on housing and still to this day the housing assembly has more than a hundred people ... we established a public services commission that worked along two axes: education and health. In health it coincided with the plan to privatise six hospitals and healthcare centres. The workers opened their assemblies to the 15M and to the citizenship, and we were able to have a continuous mobilisation until last year [2014]. (Interviewee 4, Spain)

In Portugal, there were efforts to extend the on-going mobilisations either by shifting mobilisations to the local level or by constituting unitary platforms. These efforts went through various stages and were made by the various players. After the initial demonstration, the GàR core group created the M12M<sup>49</sup> platform to unite the assemblies that emerged across the country from the event, while attempting to decentralise the movement. However, they never gained traction due the lack of resources – in particular personnel – that could coordinate activities across the country.

Later, inspired by the Spanish example, the *Acampada do Rossio* attempted to continue its activities through decentralisation as part of its philosophy. Different activist groups also tried to decentralise their activities by forming local popular assemblies (Baumgarten, 2017a; Carvalho, 2014).

I think there was never the capacity to take it beyond the square, I think it could have had some effects and made a difference to take this into the neighbourhoods ... there were several attempts, but it never became powerful .... Creating an alternative to the trade unions, the political parties, the institutional powers – that failed completely. (Interviewee 13, Portugal)

49 Movimento 12 de Março.

As in Spain, the main idea was to stimulate community activism around neighbourhoods, but it hardly reached beyond the activist groups. A few assemblies emerged around Lisbon – e.g. in Barreiro, Algés, Graça and Benfica – and they tried to embody a spirit of resilience based on self-organisation, urban gardening (production and consumption), and solidarity-based exchanges (Baumgarten, 2017a; Carvalho, 2014).

Several other projects expressed the same concerns: groups such as RDA69 emerged around one of Lisbon's main avenues (Av. Almirante Reis) in 2010 and were much closer to the squats and libertarian groups in Spain. These autonomist groups were outsiders throughout the whole anti-austerity cycle of mobilisation, holding a critical view of the involvement of institutional players with social movements. It is important to note that, despite their omnipresence throughout the cycle, they remained either invisible or not dominant.

However, despite never being able to reach a broader audience, and even if small in scale, these autonomous groups became the basis for the emergence of an alternative circuit to the ones dominated by institutional players. The groups that emerged out of the *Acampada* met again in Coimbra (in July 2011) and decided to join the pan-European Global Action Day protest against austerity (in October 2011). Though in many cases invisible throughout the cycle of protest, they occupied unused public property and abandoned buildings in Lisbon and Porto in mid-2012, and they organised the celebration of Global Spring in 2012 (Baumgarten, 2013, 2016). Rather than being able to scale up like in Spain due to their small size, these groups constituted a sort of avant-garde type of action.

This is fundamental to understanding the different paths taken in each country. Spain and Portugal have different traditions at the local level: in Spain there were more long-standing local networks (as described in the previous chapter) that supported decentralisation, but in Portugal these only became visible and constituted themselves during the anti-austerity cycle of protest, making it harder to take root. Furthermore, the dominant players also had different interests, and in Portugal, social movement groups were not able to generate enough resources to enlarge their bases:

Groups remain small, and activists report a lack of support, particularly in smaller cities. There is a constant debate within and among groups about how to attract new participants and engage them in politics. New activists also cannot be recruited easily through personal networks (Baumgarten, 2013, p. 460).

Different local networks of resistance were important. If in Spain the long-standing local structures were invigorated by 15M's decentralisation, which

created a basis for sustained protest, in Portugal there was only a small network of secondary groups that never became relevant. Finally, in the case of Spain, interviewees established a connection between the process of decentralisation and the emergence and sustenance of the *Mareas*; I examine this progression in greater detail in the following chapters.

## Opening the way forward

Despite the eventfulness of 15M and GÀR, the cycle of protest did not end here. However, it opened a way forward and, in many ways, shaped what came afterwards (Portos & Carvalho, 2022). The emergence of non-institutional players redefined the anti-austerity arena, constituting a turning point in the cycle that helps us understand Portugal and Spain's divergent paths. What lies at the heart of this phase is the capacity (or lack thereof) of protest movements to go "beyond the core" of their supporters and expand their bases and actions. Movements in Spain were more successful at building infrastructures of mobilisation than those in Portugal, due to different practices, culture, discourses and networks. A stuttering start in Portugal meant that the movement never developed a network that could withstand internal conflicts and pressure from institutional players. In Spain, pre-existing structures that developed outside the control of institutional players helped create a broad and inclusive movement.

There were also fundamental differences between these two countries' political contexts. In Portugal, the turning point occurred in the shadow of external intervention and a government's resignation combined with general elections, which seemed to diffuse grievances. Protest focused mainly on labour precarity and economic grievances, and claims about the legitimacy of the regime were subsumed under these themes. Largely directed by institutional players, the main objective of the protest groups was to restore the "Spirit of April," or revive the post-1974 social contract. Additionally, the movement was not able to decentralise or build sustained grassroots mobilisation. A different scenario emerged in Spain, where groups with open discourse and grassroots mobilisation constituted themselves as alternatives to institutional players and challenged the status quo. Additionally, the lack of external intervention focused the blame on the domestic political class.

The protests in Spain amplified the potential for future protests. As many of my interviewees remarked, the 15M movement leveraged a variety of pre-existing groups. In the first year of mobilisation, everything seemed possible. In Portugal, rather than decentralising tendencies taking hold,

one-off events centralised mobilisations. In fact, despite some unifying events, the strength of institutional players combined with the weakness of non-institutional players disrupted the emergence of new demands and structures of mobilisation.

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## 4 Enduring austerity

### From representation to redistribution

#### Abstract

*Enduring Austerity* compares the differences in the unfolding of the cycle of protest between 2011 and 2013, arguing that as austerity persisted, new coalitions of players emerged, and claims for representation gave way to claims for redistribution. If in Spain social movements allied with trade unions and sustained the wave of protests, in Portugal a strategic alliance between parties, trade unions and some movement players dominated protest. Rather than a discourse that was critical of the regime, as in Spain, mobilisations in Portugal were characterised by demands for the defence of the legacy of the 1974 revolution. Claims for democratic representation never dominated in Portugal, and were only visible amongst fringe groups of marginal significance to the anti-austerity protest dynamics.

**Keywords:** redistribution, trade unions, cycle of protests, frames

*The most forceful argument of this study will be that people engage in contentious politics when patterns of political opportunities and constraints change, and then by strategically employing a repertoire of collective action, creating new opportunities, which are used by others in widening cycles of contention. When their struggles revolve around broad cleavages in society; when they bring people together around inherited cultural symbols; and when they can build on – or construct – dense social networks and connective structures, these episodes of contention result in sustained interactions with opponents in social movements.*

– Tarrow, 2011, p. 29

### Enduring austerity

In 2011, general elections led to a right-wing turn in both Spain and Portugal, resulting in the biggest defeat of centre-left parties in government since the

1970s. While in Portugal, the PSD (centre-right) and the CDS-PP (right-wing) formed a post-electoral coalition, in Spain the *Partido Popular* (PP) secured its most significant majority ever. The new governments pushed austerity programmes further and deepened the so-called structural reforms with budgetary cuts and privatisations. Despite the emergent wave of protest, no institutional alternatives developed at this point.

Under the Memorandum of Understanding and surveillance of the Troika, the Portuguese right-wing coalition government committed itself to “go beyond the Troika” as a way not only to counter the spillover effects of the Greek crisis, but also to ensure market trust (Moury & Standing, 2017; Ramalho, 2020). As a result, the recently elected government announced new austerity measures. Between its election in June 2011 and January 2012, the government issued several decrees cutting public sector wages. In December 2011, following the Spanish example, the prime minister of Portugal, Pedro Passos Coelho, suggested the addition of a deficit “golden rule” – i.e. the introduction of a deficit limit in the Constitution – which never happened due to the lack of social and political support. Furthermore, at the beginning of 2012, the partners involved in the country’s process of social concertation (i.e. the joint platform for cooperation between trade unions,<sup>50</sup> employer confederations and government) reached agreement on a new labour reform. This entailed fewer unemployment benefits and holidays, and less collective bargaining power for workers.

In Spain, upon being elected the PP government took up the Partido Socialista Obrero Español (PSOE) austerity agenda, proceeding immediately with a labour reform that brought trade unions to the forefront of protests. Similarly, in the summer of 2012, not only did the PP government nationalise Bankia,<sup>51</sup> but the ECB, in exchange for more austerity measures, bailed out the banking system. Given their autonomy, regional governments also applied austerity measures and attempted to privatise public services. For instance, in the summer of 2011 and the fall of 2012, the Community of Madrid moved forward with reforms in education and healthcare services, which met resistance as will be seen in the following sections of this chapter. The reforms served as a blueprint not only for other regional governments but also for the central government. Following the reforms, a new education law was implemented by the central government in 2013. If movements for

50 Only the UGT, employers’ confederations, and the government signed the deal. The CGTP did not.

51 Bankia was a private bank founded in 2010 that merged various regional savings banks. In 2012 the bank was on the brink of bankruptcy and was partially nationalised.

education were starting to fade away at that point, they were rekindled by the new measures. Reactions that started at regional level quickly spilled over to other regions and to the national level. Furthermore, multiple corruption scandals developed during the crisis that affected the PP government and created a sense of indignation among the population.

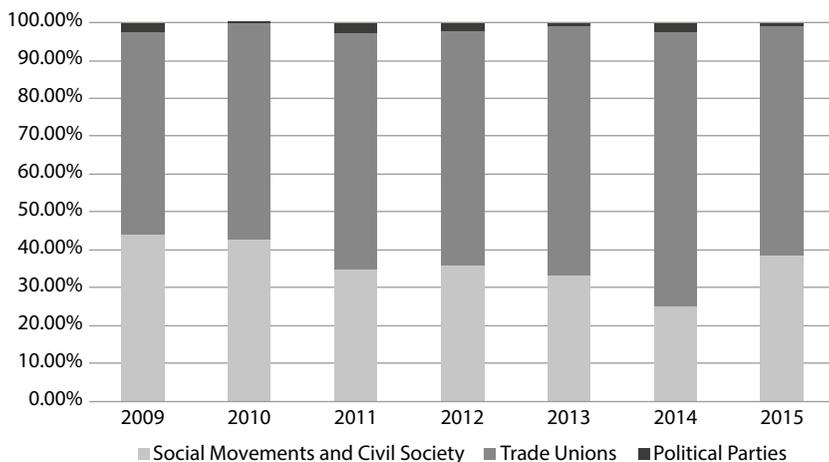
Following the turning points of mobilisation discussed in the previous chapter, in the following sections I will analyse how the cycle of contention unfolded in Portugal and Spain between 2012 and 2014. It is important to note that the ability to go beyond the core discussed previously continues to be a critical explanatory factor. However, after the initial turning point new protest dynamics emerged. Instead of being broad in scope, the claims by different contentious players during this stage targeted specific policies linked to social rights pertaining to education, healthcare, housing, and labour. Furthermore, there was a resurgence of trade unions, who played a key role at this stage.<sup>52</sup> Discursive repertoires changed in both countries: the centrality of political claims decreased in relation to the previous phases and, as a result, labour and social rights became the prominent issues, and new players came to the fore. As a result, in both Spain and Portugal, as austerity measures endured throughout the cycle of protest new forms of protest were prompted. Despite retaining many of the organisational features identified before, these new forms of protest, such as the *Mareas*, were conceived to fight back against specific measures. Nevertheless, whereas in Spain, the persistence of protest resulted in “overlapping dynamics,” in Portugal the protest followed an almost linear sequence. The changes reflect the internal plurality of the anti-austerity arena: alongside social movements, trade unions and political parties were also essential.

### Players and claim-making between 2009-2015

The mobilisation structures were different in the two cases under analysis. In Portugal, throughout 2009 to 2015, trade unions were dominant, particularly after 2011, while social movement and civil society actors were less expressive (see Figure 5.1). This contrasts with the Spanish case, where social movements organised a larger number of protest events. Nevertheless, trade unions in Spain had a significant role as well, being present in more than 50% of events coded in 2012-2013. This is in line with some previous research

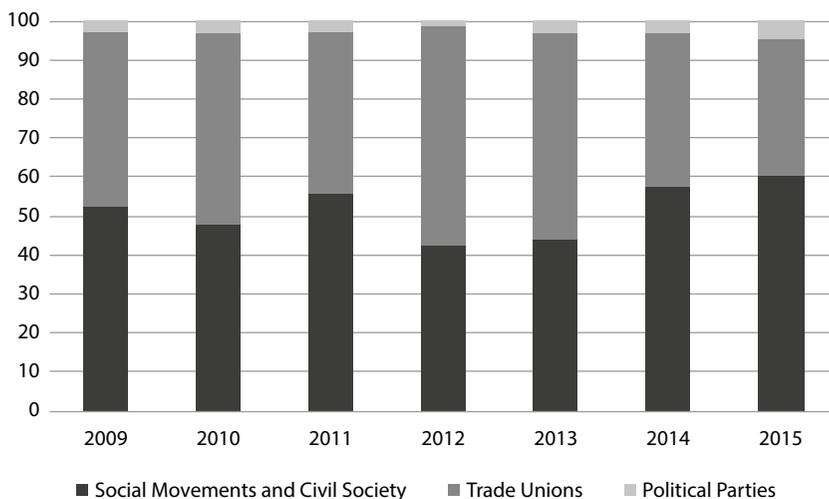
<sup>52</sup> Which does not mean that they had been absent before, but just that they had not been the main protagonists.

**Figure 5.1 Protest events organised by political parties, trade unions and social movements (%) in Portugal (2009-2015)**



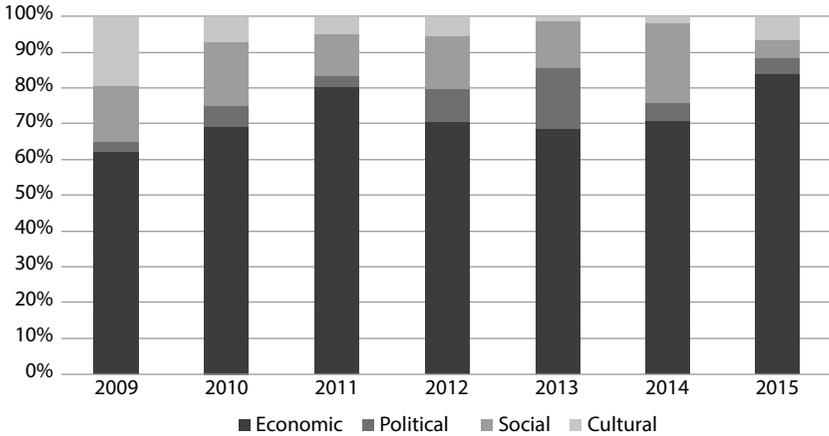
Note: Multiple choices were possible. Data were weighted by the number of events and adjusted to a 0-100 scale.

**Figure 5.2 Protest events organised by political parties, trade unions and social movements (%) in Spain (2009-2015)**



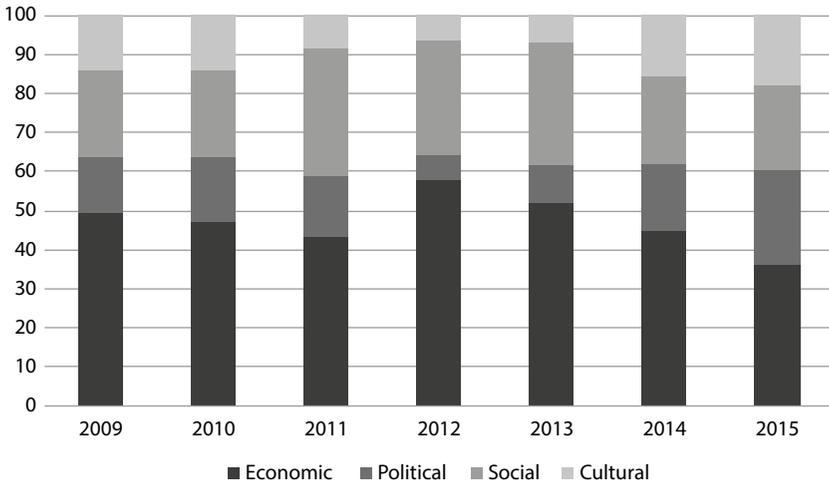
Note: Multiple choices were possible. Data were weighted by the number of events and adjusted to a 0-100 scale.

**Figure 5.3 Claim-making in Portugal (%) (2009-2015)**



Note: Multiple choices were possible. Data were weighted by the number of events and adjusted to a 0-100 scale.

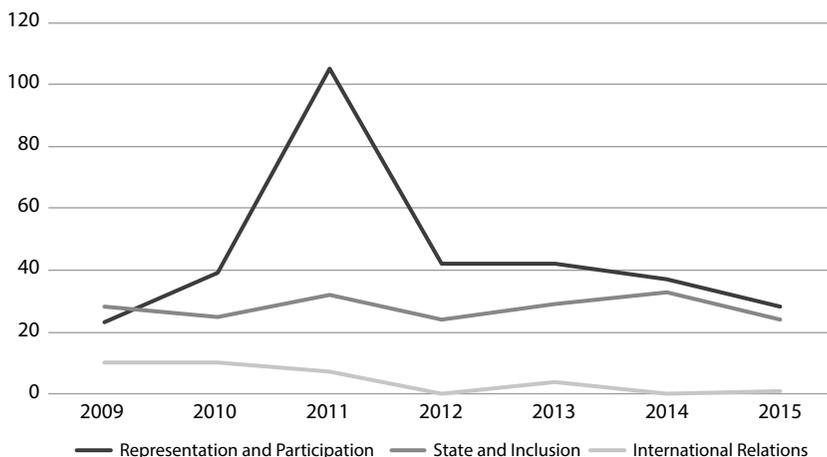
**Figure 5.4 Claim-making in Spain (%) (2009-2015)**



Note: Multiple choices were possible. Data were weighted by the number of events and adjusted to a 0-100 scale.

and challenges the idea that the anti-austerity cycle of contention was led solely by social movements (Accornero & Ramos Pinto, 2015; Portos, 2019).

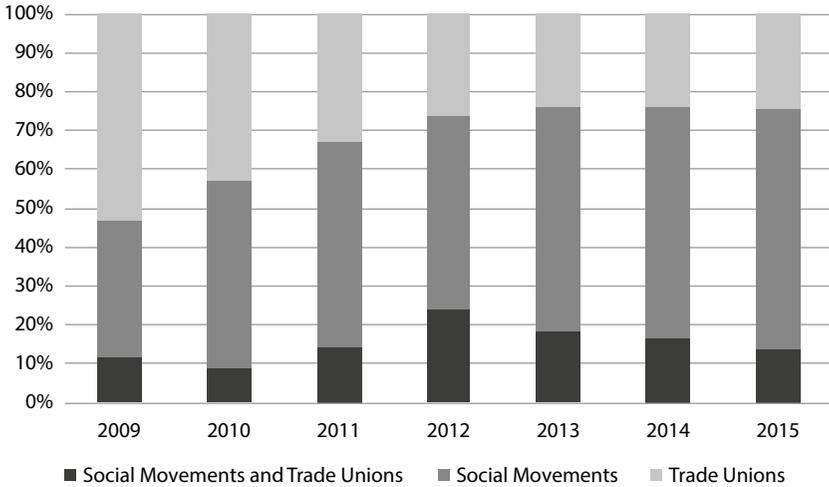
Between 2009 and 2015, economic claims were predominant in both countries. While in Portugal economic claims were present in over 70% of the events in most of the years, in Spain economic claims barely surpassed 60%

**Figure 5.5** Number and type of political claims per year in Spain (2009-2015)

in 2012. It is thus possible to see that political claims had more preponderance in Spain than in Portugal. Between 2009 and 2015, political claims accounted for 16.9% of the total number of events, while amounting to only 9.7% in Portugal. As discussed in the previous chapter, these claims only became relevant in Portugal in 2012 and 2013 and focused mainly on the call for the government's resignation rather than a political renewal and institutional transformation. As can be seen from the data on the types of political claim in Spain (see Figure 5.5), claims about participation and representation peaked in 2011, while claims about the state and inclusion (i.e. nationalist demands such as those related to the territorial conflict in Catalonia) remained relatively stable throughout the whole period.

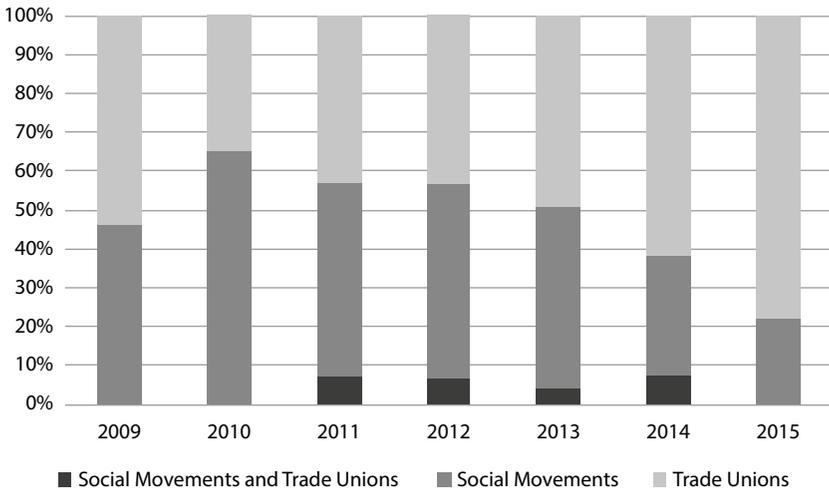
When it came to social claims, no clear differences existed between Portugal and Spain. Between 2009 and 2015 in Spain, social claims accounted for 25% of the 3,221 events, while in Portugal such claims were present in approximately 21.5% of the total number of protests. However, differences emerged in terms of the organisational basis of protest and overall types of claim: in Spain, claims associated with education were present in 10.3% of the protest events ( $n = 332$ ), those associated with healthcare in 7.1% ( $n = 230$ ), and with housing, 7.5% ( $n = 240$ ). Despite the joint rise in 2011, the mobilisations had multiple peaks throughout 2011 to 2013. In Portugal, a different picture emerges, with education (11.7%;  $n = 158$ ) and health (7.4%;  $n = 99$ ) constituting the bulk of claim-making, and housing irrelevant (0.6%;  $n = 8$ ). In both countries social movements and trade unions were central players.

**Figure 5.6 Type of players (%) in social claims per year in Spain (2009-2015)<sup>53</sup>**



Note: This graph depicts only protests for social claims, not all protests.

**Figure 5.7 Type of players (%) in social claims per year in Portugal (2009-2015)**

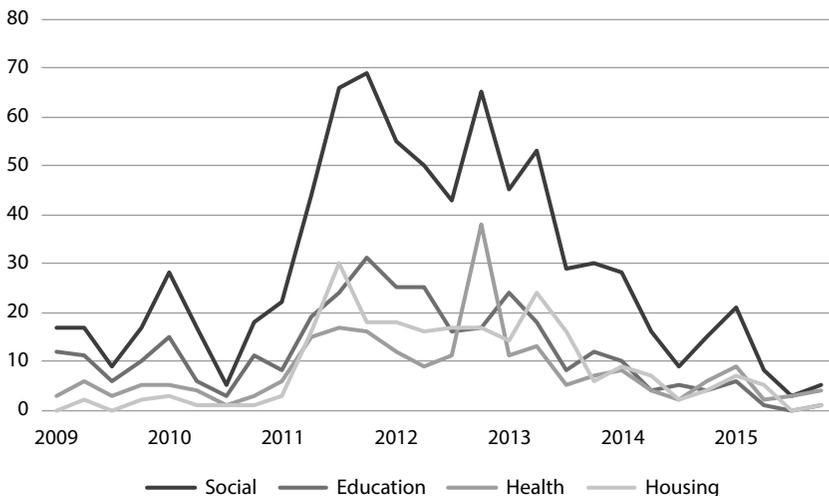


Note: This graph depicts only protests for social claims, not all protests.

Figure 5.8 shows a clear trend among protests, with claims for social rights following the same trajectory as the total number of protests in Spain. Moreover,

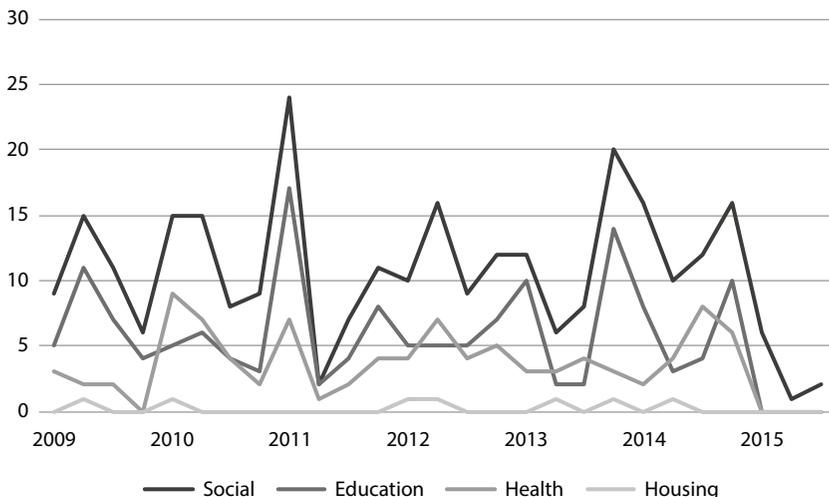
53 Social Claims correspond to those claims made about education, healthcare and housing – see Appendix III.

**Figure 5.8 Type of social claims (%) per three months in Spain (2009-2015)**



Note: "Social" refers to the total amount of events that included welfare-related claims such as those about education, healthcare and housing. Breaking this down into subcategories helps elucidate the ebbs and flows behind its variation.

**Figure 5.9 Type of social claims (%) per three months in Portugal (2009-2015)**



Note: As with the previous figure, "social" claims correspond to all welfare claims, while the claims centred specifically on education, health, and housing are subcategories of the broader category.

there was a steep rise after Zapatero announced the first austerity measures in May 2010: the number of reported protests more than doubled, going from less than 10 events at the end of 2010 to almost 70 events by the end of 2011. The number of protests remained constant until 2013. Thus, it can be argued that the 15M extended its activity through its offspring, through the enhancement of previously existing groups such as the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca*, and in the form of *Mareas*, as will be seen in following sections.

Unlike in Spain, in Portugal trade unions led the defence of social rights at the peak of the implementation of austerity measures. Social movements and civil society players, as shown in previous chapters, were particularly active in the mobilisation build-up between 2009 to 2010 due to the closure of services in depopulated rural areas. Between 2011 and 2014, policies targeted mainly wages and labour rights in healthcare and education. The policies generated campaigns solely concerned with labour rights in these sectors rather than the alliances seen in Spain. Furthermore, housing issues were absent from the agenda in Portugal due to the lack of a speculative bubble of the kind that existed in Spain.

An analysis of the Protest Event Analysis data reveals the different paths followed after 2011 with regard to players and claim-making. Whereas in Portugal protest was predominantly confined to economic claims and trade unions, with some glimpses of social movement action, in Spain social movements and trade unions collaborated on an equal footing, and both economic and social claims were important.

## Overlapping dynamics of contention in Spain

One of the main features of the Spanish cycle of protest was its sustained levels of protest between 2011 and 2014 due to “overlapping dynamics” that involved multiple issues and players that collaborated throughout this period. Four main protest dynamics co-existed. The first consisted of the movements in defence of education and healthcare that involved an alliance between trade unions and social movements acting as a sort of hybrid player, and which fought against attempts at privatisation and cuts in these public services. Secondly, as house evictions intensified, the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (PAH) mobilised strongly in both the streets and institutions (Santos, 2020). The third dynamic was the formation of multiple coordination platforms that brought together multiple players to organise large protest events. Finally, throughout this period, small labour protests developed across the country, especially in the private sector.

### **Mareas as a hybrid: between social movements and trade unions**

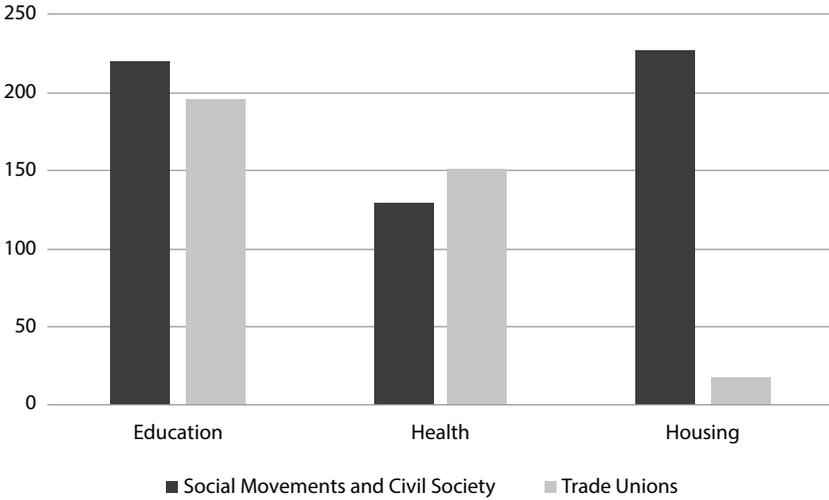
From 2011 onwards, labour cuts and the privatisation of public services such as healthcare and education led to the emergence of sectoral mobilisations that came to be known as *Mareas* (or Tides). The use of the term *Mareas* was symbolic of the type of repertoire and movement practices these mobilisations involved. The notion of a “tide” suggests a more fluid, autonomous, decentralised, leaderless and democratic movement, with a somewhat spontaneous character. This aspect was reinforced by protestors wearing t-shirts of the same colour at demonstrations. Aerial photos of their demonstrations had a wave-like similarity with an immense visual impact.

In fact, the *Mareas* were hybrid players that involved both elements traditionally associated with trade unions and various social movements. These mobilisations were inclusive when it came to their membership, involving an alliance between public sector workers, citizens, and users of public services, i.e. everyone who had a stake in the loss of social and economic rights. As such, if on the one hand 15M practices, repertoires and frames were crucial for mobilisation, on the other hand, trade unions provided important resources in terms of personnel and infrastructure. Despite the presence of labour organisations, the trade unionists upheld the movement practices that diffused after the 15M turning point. In the so-called “Green” and “White” *Mareas*, this hybridity resulted in a combination of economic and social claims that were simultaneously against austerity cuts, in favour of better labour conditions, and in defence of public goods. Rather than only defending labour rights, the *Mareas* defended the universality of public services against privatisation. For example, referring to the *Marea Verde* (Green Tide) for education in Madrid, one interviewee commented:

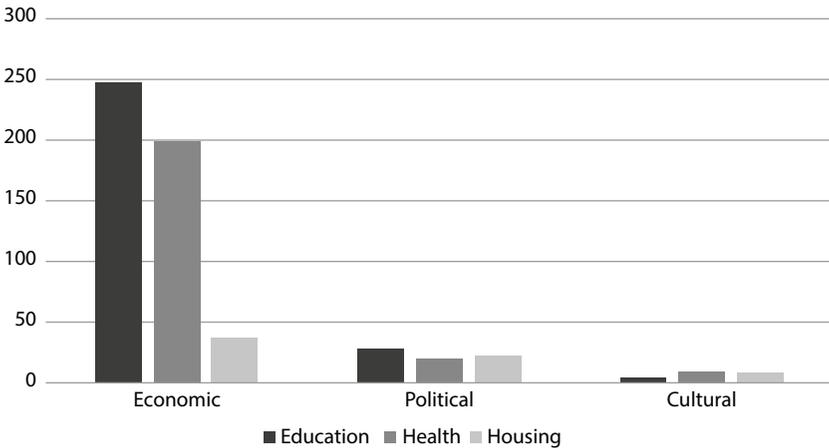
In the school year of 2010 we already started to note cuts in education in some places like *Vallecas* ... there we started a movement at the neighbourhood level that unites teachers and parents ... we launched a very horizontal movement without trade unions, but just with the educational community. (Interview 7, Spain)

In Madrid, there were big demonstrations; you organised them together with your parents ... the students' unions were implicated as well. What started as a teachers' protest for their labour conditions ... transformed itself into a more general struggle about public school. (Interview 7, Spain)

**Figure 5.10** Players by types of social claims in Spain (2009-2015)



**Figure 5.11** Type of social rights claims by economic, political and cultural claims in Spain (2009-2015)



The formation and mobilisation of the *Mareas* in the education and health sectors was analogous. In both cases, previously formed small local platforms provided the basis for the first mobilisation. Moreover, threats evolved from a regional level to a national one, which resulted in a scale-shift (Tarrow, 2011).

The *Marea Verde* had its beginnings in July 2011 when – while the 15M encampments were still active – the Government of the Community of Madrid announced cuts and privatisation measures in the education sector.

In response, an already-existing group formed by teachers and parents in 2010 in *Vallecas*<sup>54</sup> launched a horizontal platform to involve the entire educational community. It was this small initial mobilisation that developed the slogan “public school belongs to everyone and is for everyone,” by which they meant that public school was a universal right. This slogan would later become one of the rallying cries of the mobilisation at national level.<sup>55</sup>

As with the *Marea Verde*, the *Marea Blanca* (the White Tide – the mobilisation in the health sector) emerged after an initial plan presented in 2012 by the Government of the Community of Madrid to “sustain” and transform health care services in the region.<sup>56</sup> Initial reactions started at the *Hospital de la Princesa* in Madrid, where local mobilisations made use of civil disobedience, blocking roads and occupying the building. Figure 5.8 shows the eruption of both *Mareas*. In education the announcement of cuts and privatisation measures led to the number of protests increasing in late 2011. The number of protests decreased slightly afterwards, resurging in 2013. Health mobilisations peaked by the end of 2012.

The *Marea Verde* developed a repertoire that diffused to other sectoral protests. During the summer of 2011, teachers’ assemblies in Madrid belonging to a network of regional schools decided to strike. These small-scale mobilisations led to an intense strike campaign between September and November of 2011, which also involved multiple protest actions.

Other regional governments in Spain slowly undertook similar austerity policies throughout 2011 and 2012. Cuts affecting education led to continuous protests and mobilisation that, in May 2012, peaked with the first general strike that united all levels of education, from primary to higher. Not only that, but in 2013 the central government passed a bill, the LOMCE (or “ley Wert,”<sup>57</sup> as it came to be known) which led to a second sectoral general strike in October of that year (Rogero-Garcia, Fernández Rodríguez, & Ibáñez Rojo, 2014). In the health sector the mobilisation followed the same process; as austerity policies took over in other regions of the country and the central government tried to implement them at a national level, protests spread and scaled to the national level (Sánchez Bayle & Fernandez Ruiz, 2014).

Movements became the main defenders of social rights, organising 55% of this type of protest, as trade unions mobilised for 28% of these events.

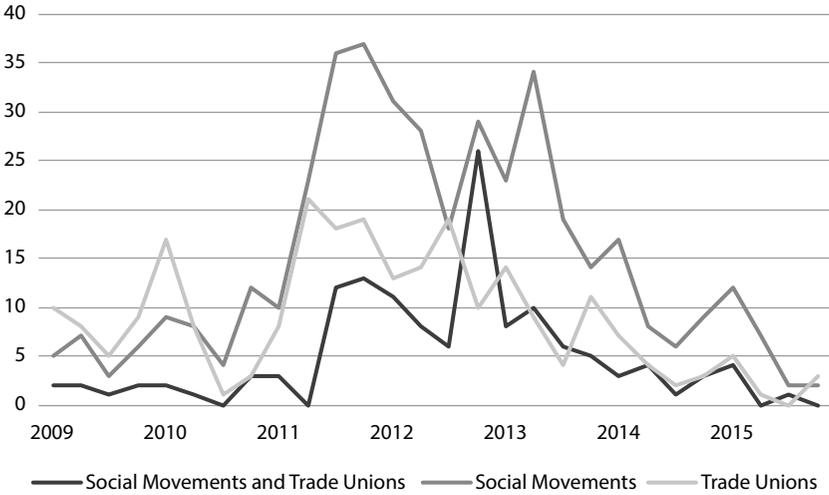
54 Vallecas is a working-class neighbourhood in Madrid with a culture of community organising.

55 Translation of *escuela pública de todos para todos*.

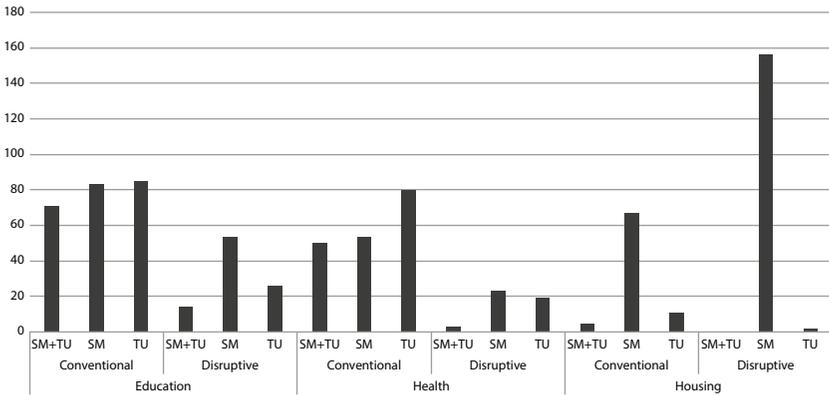
56 This was to be known as the “Lasquetty Plan,” named after the regional health minister.

57 LOMCE – *Ley Orgánica para la mejora de la calidad educativa* – was a law to reform the education system statewide.

**Figure 5.12** Number of social claims by players per three months in Spain (2009-2015)



**Figure 5.13** Repertoires in social claims by types of players in Spain (2009-2015)



Joint actions between trade unions and social movements accounted for approximately 18% of protests focused on social claims.

When examining the repertoires of action, it is important to consider the combination of both conventional actions – in the streets as well as the institutions – and disruptive ones.<sup>58</sup> In the *Mareas* and in the housing

58 “Conventional repertoires” refers to demonstrations, marches, strikes, manifestos, and petitions; “disruptive repertoires” refers to *escraches*, occupations, blockades, and flashmobs.

movement there were actions in the courts and in the parliaments, which challenged the institutions directly. More importantly, there was a notable difference when trade unions took part in the protests. Whenever social movements were the sole organisers, protests tended to have a disruptive element (Figure 5.13). Nonetheless, protest actions performed by trade unions alone seemed to be more disruptive than protests that included both trade unions and social movements.

Overall, there was agreement among my interviewees (especially among activists who participated in social movements) that the main trade unions (the Comisiones Obreras and the UGT) were close to, or part of, the state apparatus and accomplices of the first austerity measures under Zapatero. The deep delegitimisation of trade unions among social movements led trade unionists to involve alternative mobilisations. Even if they emerged as alternatives to the trade unions, the activists and players in the social movements had a broader constituency and objectives. The *Mareas* ended up allying with unions as their resources provided mobilisation capacity. This gave the *Mareas* a para-trade unionist nature, as they simultaneously defended social and labour rights, connecting up different groups and interests across different sectors. The involvement of trade unions' top leadership was scarce; rather, it was the rank-and-file militants who carried the mobilisations forward. These mobilisations were able to stop some of the austerity measures in the education and health sectors. For example, the Community of Madrid was unable to follow through on the privatisation measures underway in the health sector after the intervention of the regional courts.

### **Housing, civil disobedience and relation with Institutions**

Besides the mobilisations for health and education, the housing movement constituted another cornerstone of the cycle of protest in Spain. This evolved from locally based grievances to formulate a broader framework diagnosis centred on the relationship between housing, crisis and democracy (Flesher Fominaya, 2015; Martínez, 2018). Its mobilisations were based on civil disobedience and used far more disruptive repertoires.

A central feature of the Spanish crisis throughout the Great Recession, in contrast to the Portuguese crisis, was the bursting of a housing bubble that had been developing prior to 2008 (López & Rodríguez, 2011). As the crisis progressed, and unemployment rose, people found it increasingly difficult to pay their mortgages. This coincided with legislation that punished homeowners who defaulted on loans, leading to extremely high levels of

evictions. Housing issues constituted a central axis of the Spanish mobilisations under the anti-austerity cycle of protest, and illuminated a reaction to a form of accumulation by dispossession of public and common goods (della Porta, 2017). Interestingly, in Spain – following in the footsteps of the 15M – housing was framed not only as matter of social justice, but above all as a democratic right (Flesher Fominaya, 2015).

As with the *Mareas*, housing mobilisations began prior to the 15M, but were amplified by both enduring austerity and the 2011 movement of the squares. Mobilisations for housing had developed initially between 2008 and 2010. Nevertheless, at this point, the already existing mobilisations around housing still lacked national projection and integration in broader activist networks. National level exposure came with the 15M assemblies, which amplified these mobilisations by triggering a support network that allowed them to expand.

There was already a movement before the 15M, but being able to speak about it in the square – that people would come saying they weren't able to pay for their house – took it further. ... it isn't something that emerged from the 15M, but the 15M had a lot to do with the expansion of the movement. (Interviewee 15, Spain)

The housing movement involved various players, from the groups squatting houses and buildings in the main urban centres, to the *centros sociales* that had been emerging since the early 2000s, to several different groups that emerged from the outset of the 2008 crisis onwards, such as *V de Vivienda*<sup>59</sup> (2006) or *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca*<sup>60</sup> (PAH) (2009). In pursuing its demands, the PAH followed a clear repertoire of civil disobedience, even if combined with conventional forms of action following legal and institutional channels (Santos, 2020).

In both *V de Vivienda* and PAH, individuals in local, non-hierarchical solidarity structures (what they called “chapters”) met weekly to discuss cases, prepare activities, and help each other with regards to eviction processes. A horizontal structure was at the core of their activities, empowering lay citizens to deal with problems while simultaneously being supported by the community. As one of my interviewees remarked, the non-hierarchical structure generated a “tissue” or a connective structure (Tarrow, 2011) for the defence of other social rights.

59 Translated as H for Housing.

60 Translated as Platform of those Affected by Mortgages.

In the short term, the PAH's primary objective was to stop people from being evicted. However, as Flesher Fominaya points out, its demands went beyond that. It expected the "retrospective application of assets received *in lieu* of payment (allowing mortgage debt to be cancelled by bank repossession); ... the development of social rent regimes (e.g. rent control and council housing)" (Flesher Fominaya, 2015, p.7). As Fominaya argues, the PAH's objective was to ensure that the right to decent housing inscribed in the Spanish constitution was guaranteed: in this sense, they equated social rights with democracy.

The housing movement combined different repertoires of protest. It not only acted in the streets by mobilising to stop evictions or demonstration, but also targeted institutions. Between 2011 and 2012, its main campaign was called *Stop Desahucios*,<sup>61</sup> framed as a form of civil disobedience, its activists aimed to block the fulfilment of eviction mandates by standing in front of people's houses and preventing authorities from entering them. The second campaign was *Dacion en Pago* (created in 2010),<sup>62</sup> which called for mortgage debt to be cancelled, since despite citizens being evicted debt would have to continue to be paid. Finally, the third campaign was *Obra Social La PAH*, which consisted in the occupation of houses and buildings owned by bailed-out banks or vulture funds. In the campaigners' view, these buildings were the people's property due to the ongoing bank bailouts involving public money. According to their figures, thus far they have been able to stop more than 2,000 evictions from taking place and rehoused about 2,500 people.<sup>63</sup>

This platform engaged actively with Congress as well. In March 2011, the PAH allied with other social movement groups and trade unions, and submitted a citizens' petition to Congress called *Iniciativa Legislativa Popular (por la Vivienda Digna)* – People's Legislative Initiative (for dignified housing) (ILP). The main political forces in Congress (the PSOE and PP) effectively blocked the ILP until September 2011, stopping the signature collection needed for the petition to be discussed in the chamber. Between September 2012 and February 2013, the PAH collected close to 1.5 million signatures (only 500,000 were required for the bill to pass). After that, while the petition was discussed in Congress, the PP limited the scope of the PAH's proposal.

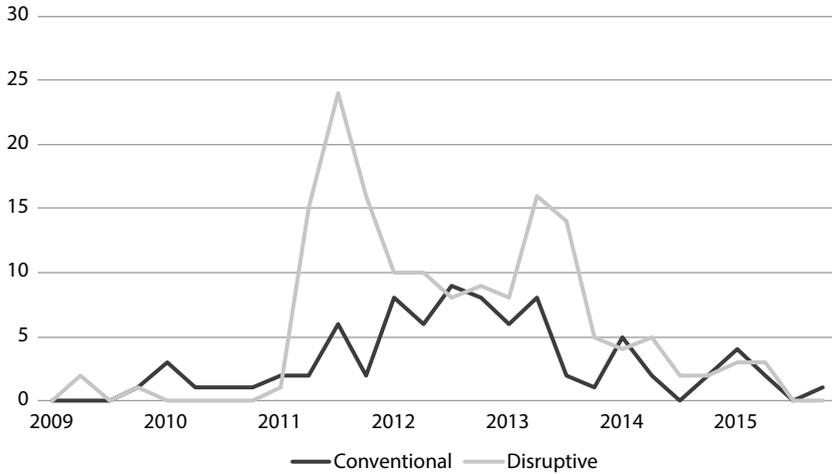
There were two peaks in housing mobilisations. The first peak occurred in 2011, shortly after the campaign to stop evictions started. The second

61 Translated as Stop Evictions.

62 Translated as *in lieu of* payment.

63 Data from their website: <http://afectadosporlahipoteca.com>

**Figure 5.14** Number of housing repertoires per three months (2009-2015)



Note: In this figure, I have included only the events which pertain to housing issues in Spain.

peak was a consequence of PP politicians’ lack of response to the ILP, as a campaign of *escraches*<sup>64</sup> began (Flesher Fominaya, 2015; Martinez, 2018; Romanos, 2016).

As Romanos (2016) observes, the housing movement leads us to question the central argument – present in the literature about Spain – that there tends to be a lack of interaction between protest movements and institutions. Despite being a horizontal movement, with a cultural and transversal discourse that puts the guarantee of housing as a social right at the heart of democracy, we can see that the PAH’s action targeted institutions directly. The movement combined repertoires ranging from contentious to legal actions that entailed scale-shift mechanisms. While their activities started on a local level, they quickly reached a national scale and, with the ILP, moved to the European courts. At the same time, the PAH pressured municipalities and regional governments to stop and prevent evictions at the national level.

**Recentralisation, platforms and protest events: post-15M dynamics**

Despite the rise of political claims with the 15M, what stands out in the cycle of protest is the dominance of austerity and labour-related demands

64 *Escrache* is a type of demonstration that gathers people next to the homes or workplaces of decision-makers.

(Figure 5.15). Labour issues played an essential role in mobilisations, even if often combined with other types of claims. One such example was the 15M: despite the apparent invisibility of economic claims in the movements, there was a critique of labour relations and precarity coming from groups such as *Juventud Sin Futuro* (Flesher Fominaya, 2020).<sup>65</sup> Furthermore, as seen in one of the sections above, the *Mareas* had a labour component to them alongside the defence of public services.

Nonetheless, with the slow dissolution of social movement mobilisations after mid-2012, protest dynamics were reconfigured and a “recentralisation” occurred. As used here, “recentralisation” implies the reassembling of smaller groups into larger platforms to organise protest events with broader claims instead of sectoral ones. Despite the conflict between social movement and trade unions, alliance building was central to this process.

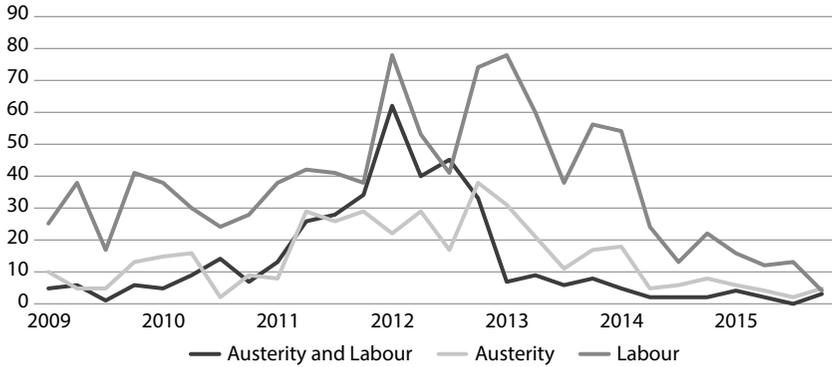
There were two phases of recentralisation in the post-2012 mobilisations. The first started with initiatives such as the union-led platform *Cumbre Social* (Social Summit) and an international general strike. Adding to this, in September 2012, the *Rodeo al Congreso* (Siege of the Congress), a “faction” of the 15M movement, mobilised to “lay siege to the Congress” in what came to be some of the most conflictual and violent protests of the cycle. Still, even if they supported its claims, the majority of the 15M assemblies did not support the use of violence (Romanos, 2016).

In the summer of 2012, the CCOO created *Cumbre Social* to bring its allies and the dispersed social movements together in a single platform. The CCCO strategy was not particularly successful in uniting disparate groups, as the trade union faced hostility from social movements (de Guzmán, Roca, & Diaz-Parra, 2016). Nevertheless, despite the animosity against the broader structures of the CCOO, this platform served as the core player in the European General Strike in November, with social movement groups being widely involved. This led to a connection between more traditional working-class organisations’ approaches and social movement practices.

Despite their initial resistance and systematic critique of trade unions, movements brought innovative repertoires and discourses to the General Strike. For example, participating movements asked for a strike that would go beyond “the worker” as the main subject. Initiatives like *Toma la Huelga* (Take the Strike) suggested that not only should production be affected, as it is traditionally in strikes, but also consumption activities by citizens should stop. The restructuring of Fordist labour relations, or even their disappearance, the workforce’s precarisation, and the emergence of new

65 Translates as Youth without Future.

**Figure 5.15 Types of economic claim: austerity and labour in Spain (2009-2015)**



forms of labour representation (social movement unionism) and repertoires by social movements all led to what could be deemed an alliance.

The second phase of recentralisation occurred in 2013. In the first phase, at the turning points of the protest cycle, the Spanish anti-austerity arena opened up and stretched out to new people, reshaping protest dynamics decisively; in the second phase, even if it meant losing some vigour, the different groups gathered around bigger platforms and unitary initiatives. If in the initial phase the 15M dispersed to the neighbourhoods, while simultaneously creating the *Mareas*, in this phase there were new centralities created around groups such as *Mareas Ciudadanas*<sup>66</sup> and *Marchas de la Dignidad*.<sup>67</sup> As the cycle unfolded, institutional players had a more significant presence and influence, and large protest events were organised by outsider and minority unions such as *Marchas de la Dignidad*.

*Mareas Ciudadanas* emerged in the winter of 2012 in a period of decreasing activity for social movements. Taking inspiration from the ongoing *Mareas* mobilisation, the objective was to converge into a unitary platform fighting against austerity, debt, and privatisation in the footsteps of 15M. The slogan for the *Mareas Ciudadanas*' initial demonstration (February 2013)<sup>68</sup> was "against cuts and for a true democracy" (Pastor, 2014). This platform brought together not only the existing *Mareas* but also trade unions, the housing movement, and various political parties.

The 2014 Dignity Marches can be considered the symbolic end of the protest cycle. As the upcoming electoral cycle approached there was an

66 Translated as Citizens' Tides.

67 Translated as Dignity Marches.

68 23rd of February is the anniversary of the failed military coup of 1981.

overall protest demobilisation, with activists starting to look for ways to have an impact on institutions beyond protest. Called for by the *Sindicato Andaluz de Trabajadores* (SAT),<sup>69</sup> the Dignity Marches had the support of the whole anti-austerity arena, from 15M to other social movements and emerging political parties (Romanos, 2016; Pastor, 2014). Using a typical Spanish working-class repertoire, these protests consisted of long marches from different areas of the country that converged in Madrid on the 22nd of March. On converging, the protesters numbered around one million. More importantly, claims for redistribution were the key demand of the Madrid protest; thus, if the cycle of protest began with indignation, it closed with claims pertaining to dignity.

### Labour from below

While the previous section discussed large protest events and the constitution of platforms where social movements and trade unions coalesced around the defence of broad economic and social rights, there was also a labour protest dynamic emerging from below. This labour mobilisation developed as an alternative to – and independent of – the main trade unions (CCOO and UGT), primarily in the private sector, in which workers adopted more disruptive repertoires in their local settings. Rather than being a unified group or platform, labour mobilisations from below were constituted by multiple and dispersed protest events around Spain. While large trade unions were absent from this type of mobilisation, smaller, alternative trade unions had a presence here (de Guzmán et al., 2016).

As shown in Figure 5.15, despite work-related claims being significant at all times between 2009 and 2015, from 2011 to mid-2012 austerity-related claims emerged either on their own or in combination with labour issues. After mid-2012, austerity- and labour-related claims appeared separately, as during this period the private sector fired a sizable number of workers. Therefore, after 2013, the bulk of events that pertained to economic demands were mostly factory-level mobilisations by groups of workers who either risked losing their jobs or found themselves in a very precarious situation.

Despite the lack of unity in mobilisation given the different sectors of activity, a clear trend can be identified. Throughout the whole cycle, the crisis had an impact on business, and much of the labour protest occurred in factories or at the workplace. There are multiple examples that stand out throughout the protest cycle (and in the Protest Event Analysis) such

69 Translated as Andalusian Workers' Union.

as factory workers employed by multinationals such as Coca-Cola and Panrico, or even coal miners from the region of Asturias. There were also protests by public-sector workers such as cleaners and garbage collectors. Another group that appeared throughout the protest cycle was that of communication workers laid off by regional TV channels (e.g. TeleMadrid).

So, while trade unions had to ally with social movements at national level due to their delegitimation, from 2013 onwards mobilisations happening at the factory level were totally disconnected from national-level trade unions.

### **From movement void to strategic alliance building in Portugal**

In Portugal, contention between 2012 and 2014 significantly differed from that seen in Spain. Rather than displaying overlapping dynamics, the Portuguese anti-austerity arena was restricted to fewer actors and claims. If, on the one hand, there were constant trade union protests, especially in the public sector, on the other hand, social movement events re-emerged in September 2012 with the *Que se Lixe a Troika* (QSLT),<sup>70</sup> following a period when social movement groups were almost absent and rarely participated in protest. Due to the movements' inability to establish a stable mobilisation structure, they were only able to mobilise successfully upon the development of particular political opportunity structures. During this time, alliances developed between the QSLT and the *Confederação Geral de Trabalhadores Portugueses* (CGTP). Trade unions and the QSLT were able to control the emergence of an alternative discourse that was critical of the regime and asked for the fulfilment of more radical ideas of revolution. Nevertheless, the message of players involved in this alliance changed after the Constitutional Court ruled against some of the austerity measures passed by the Portuguese government months before. After this judicial decision, the alliance focused on social rights and on the "defence of the revolution" (Carvalho & Ramos Pinto, 2019), and the more radical project of "going beyond the revolution" never gained ground.

#### **Trade unions and movement void**

As noted previously, despite their emergence in 2011, movement protests were sparse. While there were small and scattered protests, most large performances did not occur beyond the CGTP-launched events. Nonetheless, despite the reported clash between the different social movement sectors,

70 Translated as "Screw the Troika."

both left-wing parties and autonomous groups supported trade union actions with varying degrees of intensity (Soeiro, 2014).

At the end of November 2011, the CGTP and UGT formed an alliance – with the support of the Communist Party (PCP), the Left Bloc (BE) and the existing social movement platforms – for a General Strike against the new austerity measures announced by the right-wing coalition government elected in June 2011. The event was the first instance of collaboration between “old” and newly constituted players during the cycle, as a variety of social movements joined the protest march and other actions during the day of the General Strike. However, the joint endeavours faded away, especially those between the two major trade unions, the CGTP and UGT. The following months led to a rearrangement of alliances that lasted until the emergence of the QSLT (Baumgarten, 2016).

In contrast to the same period in Spain, the first half of 2012 in Portugal was marked by an almost complete lack of social movement protests, and a dominance of economic claims related to austerity and labour (see Figure 5.16). During this period, the CGTP became the quasi-hegemonic actor contending austerity and organising labour protests. As Accornero and Ramos Pinto (2015) remark, anti-austerity movements stood divided by the fault line of the long-term rivalry between the PCP and BE. The links between the 15th October (15O) platform and the CGTP were damaged as the platform came to be dominated by a specific group (MAS – *Movimento Alternativa Socialista*) which was extremely critical of the union’s stance and strategies. In fact, MAS declined to join the general strike the CGTP-UGT alliance called and organised a parallel public march. Despite supporting the reasons for the strike, MAS did not back the organisers or their strategies.

Furthermore, the fragile alliance between the CGTP and the UGT broke again as the moderate, conciliatory strategy of the latter group gained ground. In early 2012, the right-wing government passed a labour reform that the UGT signed, leaving the CGTP as the sole player contesting this reform, which it did by spearheading a General Strike in March. During this period, most groups that joined the 15O platform abandoned the platform’s mandates due to internal contradictions and tensions principally generated by the dominance and strategies of MAS.

Against this background, Baumgarten (2016) defines the beginning of 2012 as a phase of “experiments with event-based organizations” for social movement groups:

From the lack of continuity of activism in the first phase activists learned the necessity of working together, while from the second phase they

remembered the bad experiences of working together in a platform. So, the new attempt at organizing this time involved creating events without establishing a new platform. (Baumgarten, 2016, p. 173)

Regardless of the dispersion and divergence among social movement groups, a parallel trend of small “autonomous” groups emerged with a repertoire of occupying public buildings and spaces (for example in Lisbon), and closed schools (in Oporto), as well as small protest events in other locations (Baumgarten, 2016).<sup>71</sup> These small groups were at the forefront of the “Global Spring,” which occurred in May 2012, and which attempted to “reanimate” mobilisations but again was plagued by divisions and conflicts. Many of my interviewees agreed that this was a moment of movement stasis characterised by an incapacity to mobilise continuously due to conflicts, lack of resources, size, and an inability to establish connections with institutional players. The mobilisation capacity of social movements decreased dramatically and was restricted to the organisation of small events with an internationalist appeal, as well as limited support of the CGTP protests and initiatives. Nonetheless, Baumgarten (2016) argues that despite the low degree of activity, this period was central to how groups came to act and organise in the following phase. As one of my interviewees put it:

I: When moving into the creation of the QSLT, the BE had good intentions. This departs from an analysis that the 15O had destroyed the relations between the various collectives and the possibility of unitarian work. ...

T: There were almost nine months without significant protests...

I: It was depressing...

T: I mean there was the Global Spring..

I: The biggest demonstration had 1,000 people ... We were there, but more and more reduced regarding participation and numerically. (Interviewee 12, Portugal)

However, the intensification of austerity would lead to the emergence of the QSLT and a rearrangement of the contentious arena, as I will show.

### **Constitutional break and the QSLT – Alliance building and exclusions**

In the summer of 2012, the political opportunity structure changed, leading to an intensification of protest among both trade unions and social

71 It is important to note that these events are barely traceable by the Protest Event Analysis, and this analysis is based on observation made in the field and interviews.

movements. At the heart of the process was a constitutional debate that sparked a new frame, which led to rearrangements in the anti-austerity arena. In July 2012, after various left-wing MPs called for a review of several austerity measures introducing cuts in the public sector, the Constitutional Court overruled the cuts as unconstitutional. From this period onwards, both social movements and trade unions focused on using the discourse of the revolution and the 25th of April to frame their action (Carvalho & Ramos Pinto, 2019). Contentious players see the Portuguese Constitution as an inheritance of the carnation revolution that ensures fundamental and untouchable social rights. An attack on such a symbol led the various contentious actors to rely upon this reference in their mobilisations to gather support from multiple groups. As Rodrigues and Silva (2016) show, a debate over the Constitution – both between political parties and also in civil society – marked the years during which the Memorandum of Understanding with the Troika was being implemented. Despite being contested in many ways, the heritage of April 25th is visible in many political debates. Due to the profuse presence of social rights in the Constitution, during this period leftist actors and other social movements took the Constitution as a legacy to defend (Rodrigues & Silva, 2016; Silva & Vieira, 2016). There was an understanding that the 25th of April and the revolutionary period was central to not only political and civil liberties but also social rights that ensured emancipation (Fishman, 2019).

It was in this context, in September 2012, that the prime minister announced the reduction of the payroll tax. After more than a year of austerity, the announcement of this new measure – a continuation of previous measures intended to reduce labour costs – invigorated protest. The payroll tax was a measure that the Troika had long been insisting on implementing, but that unleashed contestation from virtually every sector of society, from social movements to the junior coalition partner, the CDS-PP, and from workers to employers. The measure was censured for its iniquity, as it would increase workers' tax contribution and decrease that made by employers. As Valentim (2018) shows, in comparison to the *Geração à Rasca* (GàR) March 2011 protest, the QSLT enjoyed a more positive reception among the mass media. Contestation of the measure lasted for two weeks, after which the government conceded to pressure, withdrawing it and proposing alternatives.

The spark in protest mobilisation was also the result of a restructuring of the anti-austerity arena, which led to a new peak of mobilisations between September 2012 and March 2013. Not only was there a particularly conducive opportunity structure, as described above; the preceding months were

also marked by attempts to reorganise that involved certain players taking strategic actions to address the problems of immobility and mobilisation incapacity.

These dynamics came together in the first QSLT protest, which can be classified as an eventful protest (della Porta, 2008). The march organised by this platform condensed many of the population's frustrations and grievances with the ongoing austerity, but also reconfigured the political landscape: it marked the political agenda and changed the path of the cycle of contention by introducing new repertoires and frames. Initially formed as a group of people subscribing to a manifesto, the first QSLT protest quickly expanded and brought a new language for contesting austerity into the public sphere. The protest was also able to sustain smaller and more symbolic events, maintaining their visibility on the internet and in the mass media. This new platform emerged with the support of the BE and, to some extent, ensured the backing of the CGTP-PCP axis. According to one of my interviewees:

Around June, I was contacted to subscribe to a QSLT manifesto that was more or less fully drafted ... even taking into account the GàR protest, no one was expecting the size of the demonstration, because since the beginning no one structured it as a movement. It was just a manifesto, a group of people that subscribed to a manifesto and was willing to organise a demonstration. Of course, we knew that the resources had to come from somewhere, but it is also true that no one went there to defend the position of a party or trade union ... there was already a draft ... and it was permeated by a political sensibility that we could associate with the BE, that in the sphere of the social movements translates to the *Precários Inflexíveis* (PI). (Interviewee 20, Portugal)

From its creation, the QSLT was meant to serve as a uniting force following the disputes within the 15O discussed in the previous chapter. As mentioned above by one of the interviewees, it was an initiative by the Left Bloc to federate all groups under its influence, but also members of the Communist Party. The QSLT's founding principles built on two critiques of the GàR and the 15O. First, demonstrations should be an expression of political grievances, and not merely a platform for citizens to express their discontent, as in their analysis happened with the GàR. Second – as happened with the 15O – open organisational structures can lead to opportunistic takeovers by small organised groupuscules, which destroys the possibility of collective work.

As a result, the QSLT deliberately decided to close itself off in order to prevent infiltration. New members could only join the group with the

agreement of all existing members. Thus, its main objective was to make its mark on the political agenda while excluding its “opposition” and reanimating social movement protests. Its objective was a cohesive structure that was not plagued by conflicts.

What happened is that when the QSLT emerged, there was a double critique, one of the GàR and another one of the 15O. The critique of the GàR was the following: it isn't worth doing a demonstration if it isn't politicised, with few political objectives ... everyone goes and you can have people side by side with a skinhead or someone from the PSD that's unhappy ... This is unfair because the GàR organisers are not that, it's rather the way it was seen and it led nowhere. Our manifestos were always very political ... the 15O and its organisation was open, anyone could participate, but it led to people being expelled or leaving. Why? Because small groups end up controlling it and everyone else ends up leaving since no one has the patience for discussions with them. Therefore, we created a closed structure as we did not intend to be democratic, we do not represent people. It was a group with connections to the social and political movements. It is a plural group, but a closed one, only those there discuss it. (Interviewee 19, Portugal)

Many social movement groups that are satellites of the BE, (e.g. *Precários Inflexíveis* – PI), constituted the QSLT's logistic organisational basis.<sup>72</sup> The PI was one of the most active groups throughout the anti-austerity cycle of protest, playing a crucial role in the preceding years by building a frame around precarity that came to diffuse throughout this period (Cairns et al., 2016). With a headquarters that also functioned as a cultural space and bar – at the time situated in one of Lisbon's busiest areas for nightlife – the group lent important organisational resources. It was here that most of the QSLT meetings happened and it was here that many symbols used at demonstrations were painted. Unlike a broker, the PI was a pivot player: located at the middle of the network, it not only constituted a defensive line that was always present in protests, but also distributed resources for other players such as the QSLT.

Membership overlap of the second and third ranks of party members show that these satellite groups were part of the same network. These spinoff groups were critical as their relationship with civil society actors was very different

72 Fieldwork observation done in 2013 for the documentary *Precarious Inflexible Workers* (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=H7dU5-qmT1A>).

from the top-down interactions between movement actors and the PCP or the unions. Accornero and Ramos Pinto (2015) point out the alliances that developed during the cycle of protest, which led to larger and stronger protests by the trade unions. They further contend that, though new movement actors emerged, the actors seemed to rely largely on trade unions for mobilisation, as the trade unionists appeared capable of sustaining large protests.

The creation of the QSLT was remarkably different from that of previous groups. Informed by their previous mobilisation experiences, its members tried not to recreate what they saw as obstacles to effective protests. Their actions and discourses lasted for almost a year and transformed the anti-austerity arena. They did so not only by configuring players and building strategic alliances between institutional and non-institutional players, but also discursively, by introducing a more politicised frame that contested not just austerity and precarity, but also the government and the Troika, making explicit reference to the foundational moment of democracy in Portugal.

### Claim-making and repertoires in the QSLT

The QSLT sustained its activity from its first demonstration in September 2012 through to March 2013. Using the song lyrics of “Grandola, Vila Morena” by Zeca Afonso, one of the most important revolutionary singer-songwriters, its core frame mobilised under the banner *O Povo é quem mais ordena* – a kind of “power to the people” message that made direct reference to a symbolic imaginary of the revolutionary period, in which the ideal of equality is asserted. As noted above, the mobilisation process for the first demonstration in September 2012 had few resources or mobilising events.

The initial QSLT members launched a manifesto to announce the demonstration in late August 2012, which resonated in the mass and social media, especially due to the opportunity structure mentioned above. They organised a flash mob in front of the IMF offices in Lisbon. Together with the announcement of new austerity measures, the demonstrations created a wave of discontent that translated into the mobilisation, according to the organisers’ estimates, of one million people all over the country on the 15th of September 2012. As a result of the successful protest, the group progressively expanded. For example, while in September 2012 the signatories and organisers of the demonstration were about 30 people from different quadrants of the left, by March 2012, the number of subscribers and members of the group surpassed 100.

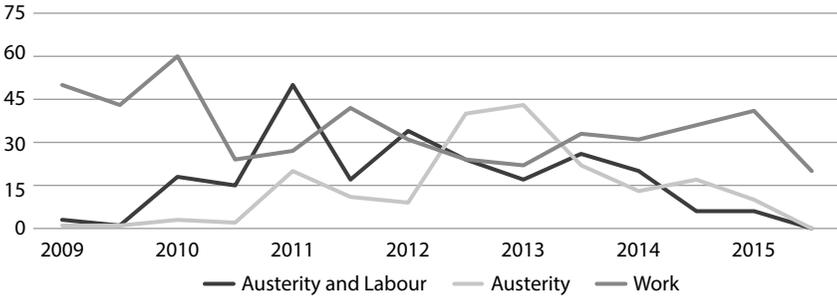
The emergence of the QSLT led to a shift in claim-making, frames and repertoires used, which involved a reconfiguration in politics, aesthetics, and

action (Carvalho & Ramos Pinto, 2019). The name QSLT was highly symbolic and intended to represent the political division between those who signed the Memorandum of Understanding with the Troika and were in favour of austerity measures, and those situated in the opposite camp. The aim was to establish not only an ideological and political line of demarcation, but also a social one, whereby large numbers of street protestors would affirm their disapproval of the ongoing austerity. Moreover, its name was chosen not only in order to resonate widely, but also as part of a social movement strategy whereby organisers adapted to the context of continuous austerity and the slashing of social rights (Tarrow, 2013).

The QSLT, who staged small disruptive events as well as large protests, adapted the repertoires and frames of the context in which it acted, going beyond precarity and austerity. The frame it developed was open and transversal and resonated due to the use of symbols related to the revolution, which, over time, became more performative and mediated, and reached a broader audience. The best example, due to its symbolic and historical charge, is the use of the song *Grândola, Vila Morena*, with which the group disrupted cabinet members' public appearances in actions that resembled the *escraches* performed in Spain during the ILP housing campaign by PAH. The song directly evoked the memory of the 25th of April, 1974, resonating with the public and helping the QSLT to mobilise for the March 2013 demonstration. It is evocative of principles of equality and fairness inherited from the revolution and inscribed in the Constitution (Baumgarten, 2017b; Carvalho & Ramos Pinto, 2019). By using these symbols, which have multiple interpretations due to the positive but polysemic meanings of the April 1974 coup (Costa Lobo, Costa Pinto, & Magalhães, 2016), the QSLT produced not just resonance (Benford & Snow, 2000) but also strategic modularity (Tarrow, 2013), the result of which was the articulation of a "new" message.

By uniting so many disparate groups, the QSLT framed itself as a resistance movement with a "minimal programme" to "give a voice back to the people," instead of stating broader goals such as renegotiating the debt. Its objective was, on the one hand, to demonstrate dissatisfaction with the Troika and its policies, while on the other hand demanding the government's resignation. In its view, by focusing on these objectives it could show that the government's measures and policies – which contradicted the programme the coalition promised during the election – made the government illegitimate in democratic terms. Nonetheless, despite the non-partisan, pacifist, and secular narrative they espoused, repeating the same frame of the GàR, a critique of the party or political system was still absent.

**Figure 5.16 Type of economic claims: austerity and labour claims in Portugal (2009-2015)**



During this phase of protest, there was an upsurge in claims against austerity, as well as demands for the resignation of the right-wing government (as seen in chapter 4, Figure 4.3). Figure 5.16 shows that while economic claims varied throughout the process, demands solely related to austerity (and not combined with work issues) were mostly visible in the period of more intense action by the QSLT.

**Demobilisation**

Protest numbers started to decrease after the QSLT’s March 2013 demonstration and reached their lowest levels in the summer of that year. Again, as seen in previous moments of protest mobilisation in Portugal, the demobilisation appeared to be the result of particular structures of political opportunities in the summer of 2014, but also of internal disputes over political strategy and organisation. Many interviewees suggested that, by June 2013, when the platform organised an international protest, the QSLT had run into failure. The failure could be measured primarily by the plummeting numbers of participants. The already-existing fissures within the group expanded further and led to a period of inactivity. However, the QSLT kept supporting trade unions’ activities throughout the remainder of the year. Closing this phase of the cycle, in the same month the CGTP and the UGT formed an alliance again to jointly organise the last general strike of the protest cycle, where many actors converged.

Following this last general strike, a government crisis unfolded in which, following various ministerial resignations and presidential intervention, the coalition was reinstated. Many of my interviewees stated that this crisis had a demobilising effect, as it appeared that nothing could move the government from its position in support of austerity. Nevertheless, as can

be seen, despite the decline in the number of protests, those led by trade unions continued. But with the tense political situation it was not until the new budget was approved that street politics re-emerged.

## A plural arena

The path taken in each country throughout the cycle of protest varied. Rather than being predetermined, it was instead relationally constituted, as it depended on the interactions between players in the anti-austerity arena. The differences between Portugal and Spain show not only that the political process was key, but also that pre-existing players, repertoires, and claims were fundamental. These elements were essential components of the cycles of contention; as the mobilisations were dynamic, interactive and relational, they evolved with time.

In Spain, the dynamics of contention between the end of 2011 and the end of 2013 were more complex than in Portugal, due to both the heterogeneity of the players in the arena, and the relative autonomy of social movements from institutional players. Rather than there being a dominant form of mobilisation, various overlapping dynamics co-existed: after the decentralisation (or scale-shift) into the neighbourhoods, four protest dynamics developed. First, a defence of social rights, which pertained to various issues such as education and healthcare. This defence triggered joint mobilisations between social movements and trade unions on an equal footing. Secondly, movements for housing were equally important and helped to amplify local grievances at a national scale. Thirdly, there was a continuous stream of labour protests at the factory level. However, these movements lacked coordination and were not directly connected to major trade unions. Lastly, apart from these small, continuous mobilisations, large protest events were organised at which all these platforms converged against austerity measures.

Despite the innovation in both the scale and scope of protests, the novelties should be contextualised. The period under analysis saw regressive cuts in social rights and the liberalisation of public services. The retrenchment of the welfare state and growing unemployment led to contentious mobilisations by various players which underwent different phases in the two countries.

Two factors combined to produce these different trajectories. On the one hand, there was a sort of “equilibrium” between players in Spain that was absent in Portugal. As Spanish trade unions were delegitimised due to their collaboration with neoliberal reforms, non-institutional protest movements constituted the main channel through which citizens voiced

their grievances. Nevertheless, the trade unions still held organisational resources that led to “spaces of confluence” (i.e. the different platforms in which both social movements and trade unions worked together). On the other hand, movements’ relationship to the crisis was different. If in Spain the 15M continuously questioned the democratic regime resulting from the transition, in Portugal the protest movements reinforced the status quo of the regime, putting the constitution and its origin at the centre of their demands and discourses. Moreover, while in Spain, there was a scale shift whereby local mobilisations expanded and became national, in Portugal mobilisations appeared to be driven institutionally, from the top down rather than from grassroots levels.

In Spain, mobilisations for social and economic rights were always built on and framed around political rights and dissatisfaction with what is usually translated as the “crisis of democracy.” The inability of political parties to sustain and provide citizenship rights created an effectiveness problem, leading social movements to criticise the institutions that resulted from the transition to democracy as still partially Francoist. In Portugal, the same social and labour rights were framed differently, with their origins being situated in the revolution and constitution. Contentious players in Portugal did not form a transversal alliance between movements and unions immediately. Cooperation only emerged strategically at a particular intersection of the cycle of contention. Thus, when it came to social and economic rights the relations between institutional and non-institutional actors were different. In Spain, rather than being marked by competition, non-hierarchical and cooperative relations came to exist (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). However, as shown before, in Portugal the relations tended to be exclusionary, with institutional players who dominated the field refusing to cooperate with non-institutional ones and failing to enable the constitution of more transversal actors.

As with many other cases, the cycle of protest ended up transforming the political sphere, with social movements integrating into, and coming to influence, institutions directly.

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## 5 From the streets to institutions

### Reconfiguration of the left after the anti-austerity mobilisations

#### Abstract

This chapter focuses on the dynamics within party systems – specifically in relation to left-wing parties – that resulted from the contentious cycle during the electoral period of 2014-2015. While the dynamics observed previously were critical to changing the party-system, these did not result solely from social movement action but also from ongoing dynamics within existing left-wing parties. In Spain, *Podemos* resulted from both social movement dynamics and internal struggles within the pre-existing party *Izquierda Unida*, while in Portugal, with the social movements domesticated and remaining backstage, the debate on the left revolved around the unity of the left against austerity.

**Keywords:** institutionalisation, political parties, outcomes, cycle of protest, demobilisation

#### Dynamics of demobilisation

An institutional and electoral phase comprising local, regional, national, and European elections followed the highly contentious anti-austerity cycle of protest in Portugal and Spain. By examining the path to the 2015 general elections in both countries, we can better understand the institutional transformations that had occurred by the end of the cycle of protest. Even if protest decreases as many of those actively involved in protests start building alternative political parties, this decrease relates not only to movement and party formations but also to contextual dynamics. Following the trends identified in the previous chapters, the path towards demobilisation resulted from both economic recovery and institutional processes. Besides a shift in strategy that comes with institutionalisation, political opportunity structure and shifts in the anti-austerity arena also played a role.

After the explosion of the economic crisis and the harsh austerity measures taken to control public debt and spending, European Union (EU) institutions attempted to absorb and manage the crisis by imposing measures on countries and pursuing monetary policies with the European Central Bank (ECB). Two episodes attest to this. In July 2012, in a press conference in London, the then president of the ECB pledged to do “whatever it takes to preserve the euro,” contributing to a reduction of interest rates in the European semi-periphery. The main idea behind the so-called “Draghi declaration” was to reassure financial markets that the EU institutions would not allow any country to default and would keep the Eurozone stable. Moreover, in 2015 the ECB started a strategy of quantitative easing, which allowed the funding of national economies by buying debt or government bonds in the secondary markets, leading to a decrease in interest rates.

Concurrently, as the international economy improved slightly and the EU institutions became more collaborative, a slow economic recovery began in both Portugal and Spain in the summer of 2013. Not only that, the strict austerity programmes – which had slashed public services and trimmed labour costs – officially came to an end around 2014 (even if countries were still under observation and had to follow European dictates about budgetary rules).

Protest demobilisation can be related not just to a political economy opportunity structure, but also to the political events within the cycle of protest beyond wider European macroeconomic conditions. In Portugal, the turning point was the government crisis in the Summer of 2013. The resignation of then Finance Minister Vítor Gaspar, who held an important symbolic position as the chief defender and executor of austerity, led to a government crisis as the junior partner (CDS-PP) objected to the chosen replacement. As a result, the leader of the CDS-PP and Foreign Minister Paulo Portas quit the government as well, leaving the coalition in turmoil. After the *Que se Lixe a Troika* (QSLT) protest in March 2013, mobilisation had faded; to reanimate street politics, there were now calls for new protests claiming the loss of the government’s legitimacy and demanding new elections. To solve the political crisis, the President proposed a grand coalition between the then government parties and the centre-left (PS) that could avoid political instability and yet another rise in interest rates. The Socialist Party refused to participate in a new government but, after some uncertainty, the President ensured that the PSD (center-right party) and CDS-PP could continue to collaborate until the 2015 general elections. The two parties also considered it more beneficial to keep collaborating as early elections would be damaging for both (Fernandes, 2016; Fernandes & Jalali, 2017). The

leader of the junior coalition partner agreed to continue in government as deputy prime minister, with more decision-making power.

The lack of success of street politics in pressuring for new elections led to an overall demobilisation, as most groups realised that their objectives were not achievable through protest. Moreover, after a succession of “failed” protest mobilisations in which social movements were unable to diffuse beyond their core, large protest events slowly faded and were only conducted by the communist trade union (see chronology in Appendix). The government crisis seemed to add to this dynamic, as the protests’ primary objective had been to defeat austerity in elections. After the summer and the resolution of the government crisis, protest continued mainly through small sectoral strikes, such as those in the transport and communication sectors.

Nevertheless, there were underground mobilisations and attempts to radicalise. Among the latter was the attempted occupation of the port of Lisbon during a *Confederação Geral de Trabalhadores Portugueses* (CGTP) protest in November 2013 by various groups allied with dockers – an attempt that failed due to small protest numbers and police intervention. A perhaps more significant event was the celebration of the 40th anniversary of the Revolution in April 2014. Autonomous groups organised an event called *Rios ao Carmo*,<sup>73</sup> which other social movement sectors joined. As many of my interviewees reported, it was the first time since Global Action Day (October 2011) that there had been peace among the different social movement sectors in Portugal. The name of the event was a metaphor for its fluid organisation, contrasting with the centralised organisation common previously. All groups autonomously converged on the *Largo do Carmo*, where Marcello Caetano – prime minister at the time of the 1974 military coup – had hid and resigned, rendering the coup successful and initiating the 1974-1975 revolutionary period. The objective of this demonstration was to oppose the institutional and official celebrations that normalise the military coup and take away its revolutionary impetus. Not only that, but the frame of the protest also contrasted with the prevailing attitude towards the revolution – i.e. that its existing gains should be defended – that inspired most of the claim-making throughout the cycle. Rather, the protesters aimed to explore the potential of the revolutionary imaginary of democracy made in the streets (Carvalho & Ramos Pinto, 2019). This demonstration marked the symbolic end of the cycle of contention and gave rise to new groups that oppose the consequences of the tourism boom and housing speculation in Lisbon (Accornero & Ramos Pinto, 2020; Carvalho & Accornero, 2023).

73 Translated as Rivers into Carmo.

In Spain, the mobilisation process lasted slightly longer (Portos, 2019, 2021; Portos & Carvalho, 2022). As seen in previous chapters, the decrease in the overall number of protests started in the summer of 2013, but it was only from 2014 onwards and especially after the Dignity Marches (March 2014) that this dynamic was accentuated. Concomitantly, the Catalan mobilisations started emerging as a significant process from 2013 onwards (della Porta, O'Connor, et al., 2017; Miley, 2017). Nevertheless, unlike in Portugal, demobilisation led to two different movement paths. One was the path of institutionalisation, which would lead to the formation of national, regional and local political parties that I will analyse in the following sections. The other was that of direct social action, whereby certain sectors of the 15M movement refused to participate in institutions (as many others had done since the early days of mobilisation) and preferred to engage in grassroots actions. The high levels of heterogeneity among players in the Spanish cycle of protest led to different trajectories to which I will return later in this chapter.

Moreover, repression, even if soft, also played a role in demobilisation. In Portugal, three episodes of police repression and action during general strikes – although not against trade unions – contributed to the regression of protest. These occurred in March and November 2012, and finally in June 2013. It is important to note that in Portugal the police never intervene directly in trade union events, as the CGTP, the country's main trade union, has its own security service that ensures orderly protests. During these demonstrations, the *modus operandi* was similar: the police would intervene only after the trade unions actors had left the streets and would target those who remained. The common feature of these interventions may have been that they repressed the autonomous sectors of social movements, while simultaneously delegitimising trade unions and general strikes. In Spain, besides the customary conflict between protestors and police forces, the PP government passed the *Ley Mordaza* or Gag Law,<sup>74</sup> which specifically targeted many of the repertoires of action developed by the 15M, the *Mareas* and the *Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca* (PAH) (Calvo & Portos, 2018). This law was an institutional reaction to the wave of protest that effectively shut down street politics.

Due to the overall political opportunity structures, interactions amongst different players, and repression, the year 2013 constituted a turning point in mobilisation strategies. The upcoming electoral cycle “forced” players to attempt an “assault” on institutions and to change politics and institutions from within. In this period there were European elections (May 2014),

74 *Ley Orgánica 4/2015, de 30 de marzo, de protección de la seguridad ciudadana.*

regional elections (May 2015 in Spain), local elections (Portugal – October 2013; Spain – May 2015) and finally general elections in October 2015 (Portugal) and December 2015 (Spain). As a result, various political projects emerged to contest institutions.

### **Reshaping the left: between party elites and social movements**

It is important to note that explanations for party-system transformation normally focus on structural determinants. To counter these perspectives, in their classic work, Linz and Stepan (1978) propose to focus on processual and relational aspects of party-system changes. In their view, as with Tilly (1978), political change is the culmination of an incremental process as similar structural conditions might result in divergent outcomes. Reequilibration emerges as the core concept in this approach, whereby after a period of crisis and breakdown a new regime consolidates and realigns. Nonetheless, despite considering the broader economic context, these authors focus on institutional and party-system dynamics, barely considering social movements and other contentious players. Overlapping partially with Linz's perspective, but introducing social movements as important players, Koopmans points out that the end of the cycle is one where the "contraction of protest waves is best conceptualized as a process of restabilization and reroutinization of patterns of interaction within the polity" (Koopmans, 2004, p. 37). As Tarrow adds, "as the cycle winds down, exhaustion and polarization spread, and the initiative shifts to elites and parties" (Tarrow, 2011, p. 212).

Applying these analytical tools to the cases under study, we can see that the transformation of the party system – understood as an outcome of the cycle of contention – followed divergent paths in the two countries. While in Portugal there is a one-level party system, with five main national parties since the emergence of the Left Bloc (BE) at the beginning of the 21st century (Lisi, 2009), the party-system in Spain is multi-level (Gunther & Montero, 2009; Wilson, 2012) with multiple interactions and influences between regional and national levels. Moreover, if in Portugal, the Communist Party (PCP) and BE occupy, in different ways, the space to the left of the Socialist Party, in Spain *Izquierda Unida* fulfilled that role almost exclusively until 2014.

Rather than involving the creation of new political parties – at which there were several attempts – the transformation of the Portuguese party-system amid post anti-austerity mobilisations led to an "unprecedented strategic

alliance between left-wing parties” (Accornero & Ramos Pinto, 2020, p. 45), and a reconfiguration that could be understood as contract parliamentarism (De Giorgi & Cancela, 2021; J. Fernandes, Magalhães, & Pereira, 2018; Lisi, 2016). With the pact, the left-wing parties obtained policy benefits without compromising their core identity. Despite the apparent stability, as Ferreira da Silva and Mendes (2019) argue, there was a “surreptitious transformation” of the political space in Portugal between 2005 and 2015 marked by a growing distance between the two major parties (the PS and PSD) as the PS moved further to the left of the political spectrum. Moreover, as seen in previous chapters, claims and cleavages remained grounded in the economic domain despite the climate of political dissatisfaction (Accornero & Ramos Pinto, 2020; Ferreira da Silva & Mendes, 2019). And as also seen in previous chapters, “factions” of the BE were closely involved in the protest movements through their satellite groups. As movements remained within the institutional actors’ sphere of influence, their discourse and action had a less significant role as the cycle progressed. Their contestation focused mainly on social rights and austerity, without pushing for further political change, as seen in other countries. Debate between the different players in the political arena happened within the space of the institutional Left. In this sense, the reconfiguration of the Left in Portugal was the logical conclusion of a process where movements contested austerity but were not completely disruptive of the political sphere.

In Spain, the transformation of the party-system led to the emergence of new political parties on both sides political spectrum; an “imperfect bipartisan system with a stable bipolar conflict structure” thus became a “fluid landscape with new actors and issues that have rocked the ‘old’ political system” (Vidal & Sanchez Vitores, 2019, p. 75), i.e. that challenged *Partido Socialista Obrero Español* (PSOE) and PP hegemony. As the crisis progressed the structure of conflict involved economic, cultural and territorial dimensions alongside social movements. These dynamics had already found expression in the initial decline in support for the PSOE in the 2011 elections (Martín & Urquizu-Sancho, 2012) and the slow increase in voting intentions in favour of parties such as the *Unión Progreso y Democracia* (UPyD) and *Izquierda Unida* (IU), which in many ways came to occupy a similar political space (Vidal & Sanchez Vitores, 2019). Arguably, these two previously existing parties could have benefited from the ongoing political and economic crisis but ended up being surpassed by new political forces such as *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos*. Moreover, *Podemos*’ voter base had higher levels of education and political dissatisfaction, were younger, and had unfulfilled expectations (Gomez & Ramiro, 2019; Sola & Rendueles, 2018).

Unlike in Portugal, in Spain conflict revolved around democracy and political dissatisfaction, which spread from the social movements. Nonetheless, *Podemos* was not the natural evolution of the mass movement in Spain (Flesher Fominaya, 2020). In this sense, as will be seen in the remainder of the chapter, alongside these dynamics, the transformation of the left resulted from the combination of strong social movements discussed in previous chapters, with internal dynamics and elite disputes within the *Izquierda Unida*.

Aside from the distinct party-systems in each country, we should also note the specific relationships between parties on the left of the political spectrum. As we will see, in Portugal the debate between institutional players on the left was around the type of alliances that radical left parties should establish with the PS in a period of austerity. In Spain, meanwhile, social movements throughout the cycle of protest developed an overarching critique not only of the bipartisan duopoly of the PP and PSOE and their austerity measures, but also of the IU's bureaucratic encroachment. Movement players believed there was a need to develop a "new electoral tool" that could question the framework that emerged with the transition. The reconfiguration of the party system by the end of the contentious cycle resulted not only from movement action, but also from the interactions between movements and political parties. Following the analytical framework we have used so far, the rest of this chapter will shed further light on the relations between institutional and non-institutional players throughout the cycle of contention.

### **Breaking hegemony: Podemos and the party-constellation**

After the December 2015 general elections, the Spanish party-system changed. Rather than one of the two hegemonic parties – the PP and the PSOE – ending up victorious, two new political forces erupted onto the Spanish national scene. *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos* were born out of dissatisfaction with the political system (Vidal, 2018; Vidal & Sanchez Vitores, 2019). The 2015 electoral results led to a tie between the so-called "old politics" of the PP and the PSOE and the "new politics" of the emerging parties, in which no clear majority of either the right-wing or the left-wing bloc existed.<sup>75</sup>

The reconfiguration of the Left in Spain led to the formation of a party-constellation, i.e. as various political parties emerged at the municipal and regional levels they coalesced around *Podemos*, which functioned as their

75 This chapter is based on interviews and observation done throughout fieldwork.

gravitational centre due to its nationwide importance. The 15M had quite clearly influenced these actors' discourse, repertoires and practices (della Porta, Fernández, et al., 2017; Flesher Fominaya, 2020; Portos, 2021). There were important disputes within IU aiming at its renewal that should be considered as well.

As the 15M was a broad, heterogenous and all-inclusive movement, it led to diverging strategies with respect to institutional action: there were those who proposed working within institutions, and those who wanted to carry on their work outside the state and market spheres. The latter consisted of autonomous, libertarian groups employing direct social action at the local level (Bosi & Zamponi, 2015) that rejected any type of institutionalisation project. Instead, they preferred to contest the system without integrating into it, by doing local grassroots work in assemblies and creating self-managed autonomous spaces. These two strategies – that of forming a party and that of direct social action – correspond to two of different modes of being anti-capitalist proposed by Eric Olin Wright (2019). While the former corresponds to a strategy of taming capitalism within institutional boundaries, typical of social-democratic parties, the latter movement's strategy is one of eroding and transcending capitalism through everyday practices. Moreover, as Kriesi and colleagues (Kriesi et al., 1995) point out, social movements can follow different paths after a cycle of protest. In other words, while one undertakes an "institutional assault," the other continues its non-institutional and grassroots activities.

To sum up, three levels of parties emerged that relate directly to the structure of the state in Spain: local/municipal parties, which have more explicit links with and influence from social movements; regional parties; and national parties. Each one of them has very different origins in the political space (Martín, 2015), but all are nonetheless connected and formed a *party-constellation* (a term that I will use to describe the amalgamation of forces on the left).

### **Municipal projects: the case of Madrid**

Various social movement groups undertook what they called an "assault" on municipal and local-level institutions, while keeping a social movement ethos of autonomy. However, these groups allied with institutional actors to run for elections in broader, transversal platforms. Municipal candidacies constituted one of the primary paths for institutionalisation. Despite the geographical dispersion of these groups across the country (Rubio-Pueyo, 2017), two major municipal projects stand out: *Ahora Madrid* and *Barcelona*

*en Comú*. Ada Colau, the spokesperson of the PAH until 2014, headed the latter project, which coalesced several already existing forces (e.g. *Iniciativa per Catalunya Verds*) with social movement actors.<sup>76</sup> *Ahora Madrid* was what the constituting groups (*Ganemos* and *Podemos*) called an instrumental party, as it served the sole purpose of running in the 2015 municipal elections, and did not compete later with *Podemos* at the municipal level.

The establishment of *Ahora Madrid* started with neighbourhood assemblies' discussions about the possibility of combining street politics and institutional action to renew local politics. While some interviewees reported that the first initiatives failed, the assembly *Alternativas desde Abajo*,<sup>77</sup> created by the Anticapitalist Left (IA), came to facilitate initial discussions about the mobilisation experiences of the anti-austerity cycle (of housing activism, the *Mareas*, the neighbourhood assemblies). Rather than being a party format, AdA was branded as a "citizenship space" with the purpose of building a collective dynamic for the municipal elections of the following year. In their view, while there was a need to enter institutions, the new players should retain a collective and participatory process.

IA was also involved in a parallel process of building up *Podemos* to run in the European elections (May 2014), and invited the groups forming part of *Alternativas desde Abajo* to join. However, social movements within AdA – who wanted to retain autonomy from national parties and structures – perceived this invitation as a strategy of co-option. They thought that local institutions were better suited for independent grassroots activism. The remaining groups therefore decided not to join *Podemos* but instead to gather forces to contest the municipal elections a year and a half later. However, as IA left to focus on *Podemos*, these groups lost their capacity to operate as they had been relying on the resources and coordination capacity that IA had provided.

At the beginning of 2014, a new initiative called *Colectivo en Rede*<sup>78</sup> emerged. This group wrote a "letter for democracy" that proposed to "take the institutions" and attempt what they called a constituent process from below. Emanating from *Traficante de Sueños*<sup>79</sup> and *Patio Maravillas*,<sup>80</sup> the remaining groups of *Alternativas desde Abajo* joined this new initiative.

76 In this section, due to the similarities in the process and because I have not collected data directly on *Barcelona en Comú*, I will focus on the creation of *Ahora Madrid*. Similar political parties emerged in Valencia and Galicia.

77 Translated as Alternatives from Below.

78 Translated as Networked Collective.

79 A bookshop in Madrid.

80 An important social centre in Madrid.

From the summer of 2014 to January 2015 they promoted a space of reflection called *Municipalia* in which groups from the 15M, *Podemos*, IU, *Equo* and other small parties would also converge.

This process resulted in the creation of *Ganemos Madrid*, which involved a heterogeneous collective (IU, *Colectivo en Rede*, *Equo*, ecologists, feminists and 15M-related groups). As a newly created party, *Podemos* decided not to participate both due to the lack of local infrastructure and resources, and in order to prioritise the 2015 general elections. This strategy had already been decided on in their first Citizens' Assembly (October 2014). Moreover, despite common objectives, there were tensions due to the different organisational models that *Ganemos* and *Podemos* espoused. If the former focused on a participatory and assembly driven type of decision making, replicating the type of repertoires the 15M had employed, the latter had a top-down, centralised approach through which all aspects of the candidacies were to be controlled. This tension generated a stalemate, as without *Podemos*, *Ganemos* would not have been able to field candidates successfully (as some of my interviewees claim).

Nonetheless, as *Ganemos* generated resources and recognition through public campaigning throughout 2014, they reached an agreement with *Podemos* to run jointly in the elections. Their pact contemplated the creation of a so-called instrumental party – *Ahora Madrid* – that would combine the two parties but should not develop to the extent that it could compete with *Podemos* in its own right in future elections. As such, *Ahora Madrid* blended both institutional and non-institutional collectives: as pointed out by Martin (2015), the municipal candidatures that emerged in the summer of 2014 had a closer link to the movements and more internal pluralism.

Despite coming second in the municipal elections, *Ahora Madrid* came to govern the municipality with the support of the PSOE, as the PP was not able to hold the majority of the seats. As a similar process happened in Barcelona, the relationship between institutions and non-institutional players at the local level changed. But this is just part of the story; we also need to look at the creation of *Podemos* and the internal disputes within IU.

### **Podemos, IU and the recomposition of the left**

At the national level, there was a long process of recomposition on the left beyond the PSOE, starting before the creation of *Podemos* in 2014. Established in 2012, *Partido X* replicated the 15M's horizontality, its participatory democracy, and its connection to the free culture movement (Martin, 2015).

Nevertheless, even if created by people linked to the 15M, *Partido X* never achieved any type of political representation.

While *Podemos* took on the discursive structure of opportunities created by the 15M and articulated it within a Latin American populist framework, its emergence and success cannot be detached from dynamics within the IU. When examining its creation, most studies establish a direct link between *Podemos*, the cycle of mobilisation and the 15M (Flesher Fominaya, 2020; Portos, 2021), and overlook party-political dynamics in the anti-austerity arena. In fact, as Flesher Fominaya (2020) argues, *Podemos* was not only an unintended consequence of the cycle of mobilisation, but also disrupted the participatory logic of the movements. From 2008 onwards, there was a process of defections and internal pressures to reform that should be considered.

The United Left was created at the end of the 1980s out of a crisis of the Spanish Communist party. Developed initially with the intent to constitute a political and social movement that would aggregate dispersed leftist forces, it proposed to reform the space to the left of the PSOE into a broader and more open arena of collaboration rather than forming a coalition. Despite the efforts and calls to develop a horizontal organisation, this new political player kept a vertical structure in which the Communist Party assumed a leading position. During the 1990s, the new party radicalised and broke its ties with *Comisiones Obreras* due to its collaboration with the PSOE and its liberalising policies. After an improvement in electoral results in the 1990s, the party experienced a steep decrease in vote share at the beginning of the 2000s (Ramiro, 2004). Until the start of the Great Recession in 2008, IU would remain a marginal force despite aggregating various dissidents that ranged from Marxist-Leninists to autonomist groups.

Multiple attempts to reform the IU emerged after the eruption of the financial crisis. In 2007, the Trotskyist faction *Espacio Alternativo*<sup>81</sup> abandoned the party and created a new one called *Izquierda Anticapitalista* (IA).<sup>82</sup> This group criticised the IU's heavy bureaucratic and institutional apparatus, lack of internal pluralism and non-existent street-level mobilisations. Their newly created party envisaged occupying the political space brought about by the Great Recession, which in their view IU was not fit to fill. Despite their unsuccessful candidacy in the 2009 European elections, the party came to play a role during the anti-austerity cycle of mobilisations.

Simultaneously, and with a similar mindset, younger party members closer to social movements proposed to reform the party in events called *Refundación*

81 Translated as Alternative Space.

82 Translated as Anti-Capitalist Left.

*de la Izquierda*.<sup>83</sup> As in the 1980s, the purpose was to converge beyond the party, transforming it into an open and transversal platform. Nonetheless, two elements reportedly stopped this shift: on the one hand, there was internal resistance within the IU; and, on the other, the emergence of the 15M led to a set of political opportunities for new political parties to emerge.

By 2013, groups on the left had decided that the United Left's prospects for renewal were not good. Despite the crescendo in the polls, the United Left was involved in several corruption scandals (especially in Madrid) and barely had contact with the ongoing anti-austerity mobilisations. Its apparent inability to go beyond party structures and institutions led to a repetition of the arguments made since 2008 by IA and *Refundación de la Izquierda*. The context seemed more favourable to the aspirations of a younger generation within the party due to the crisis of *bipartidismo* and particularly the PSOE 2011 electoral results (which were the worst to date) (Martín & Urquizu-Sancho, 2012), 15M's strong grassroots mobilisations, and the emergence of SYRIZA in the previous year in Greece.

As a result, besides the municipal and regional projects discussed previously, there were also national projects. In 2013, alongside their involvement in local projects, IA began to build the relationships that would allow them to establish a platform for the 2014 European elections. They made contact with Pablo Iglesias,<sup>84</sup> as he enjoyed both significant media exposure and close ties with IU. Moreover, Iglesias, as a Political Science lecturer at Complutense University (Madrid), was part of *Contrapoder*,<sup>85</sup> a group of activists and intellectuals from which a lot of the first *cadres* of *Podemos* came. It is important to note that previously Iglesias and Iñigo Errejón had been involved in initiatives in *Galicia* as advisors of the *Alternativa Galega de Esquerda* (a coalition between IU and Anova).<sup>86</sup> There, they rehearsed the Latin American populist repertoire of action and discourse for the first time with good results (Iglesias, 2015a, 2015b; Torreblanca, 2015): the coalition finished in 3rd place in the regional elections of 2012 with 13.91% of the votes and nine regional MPs (out of 75). This constituted an essential breakthrough, showing that political campaigns could be conducted differently.

83 Translated as Refoundation of the Left.

84 Pablo Iglesias is the current leader of Podemos; Inigo Errejón was his strategist and right-hand man until 2017.

85 Translated as Counter Power.

86 *Alternativa Galega de Esquerda* (Galician Left Alternative) was a left-wing coalition regional Galician party created in 2012 that brought together ANOVA, IU, *Equo* (an environmental party) and *Espazo Ecosocialista Galego*. ANOVA – *Irmandade Nacionalista* was also formed in 2012 out of a schism in the *Bloco Nacionalista Galego*.

Despite their criticisms, the primary objective of the groups that later came to form *Podemos* was to renew the political space to the left of PSOE by breaking the generational gap and the IU's bureaucratic stagnation. Their view was

that such a project could only be carried out in collaboration with the existing left. The proposal we made to the left parties for joint open primaries signalled this orientation. We thought that opening the choice of candidates to the citizens would help to tilt the balance of forces on the political board in our favour: the left would look more like the people. (Iglesias, 2015a, p. 15)

The objective of the Anticapitalists and Pablo Iglesias, together with *Contrapoder*, was to create a convergence platform like those deployed in the municipal elections (as described in the previous section). Rather than a broad coalition, they aimed to build a new, reformed political formation that IU could be part of and to which it would lend its resources. The 2014 European elections were, in their view, an opportunity to open a breach in the political field. This was due to two factors, in their analysis: (1) in Spain, the fact that the whole country is a single constituency in the European elections makes it easier for smaller parties to elect MEPs; (2) voters tend to express their dissatisfaction by voting for parties other than those they vote for in legislative elections. However, despite the attempts at internal renewal within IU mentioned previously, its leadership refused to create a new political platform for the European elections in which it would not be the leading player.

Therefore, when faced with the IU's refusal, IA and the group around Complutense University (composed of professors and groups like *Contrapoder*, *Juventud Sin Futuro*, *Promotora*), decided to create a new political party that strategically combined two elements. The first was the already-existing IA party structures all over the country; the second was media leadership together with a new, alternative discourse and program that could translate and channel the 15M's political shift into the electoral arena. The mass media exposure that Iglesias received throughout 2012 and 2013 on local TV and talk shows associated with the right wing gave him the needed media leadership and exposure; Portos (2021) identifies this as the symbolic construction of leadership. The alternative discourse and program translated into the initial manifesto (*Mover Ficha: convertir la indignación en cambio político*)<sup>87</sup>

87 Make a Move: turning indignation into political change.

launched in a public event in January 2014 in Madrid. Signed (and written) by people from different sectors of the Left outside the sphere of the IU, its intention was to project an image of plurality and renewal (contrasting with that of the IU). The manifesto gave expression to transversal popular discontent and calls for democratic renewal, resonating with the frames of the 15M. The manifesto obtained 50,000 signatures in 24 hours. As a result, in May 2014, *Podemos* elected five European MEPs with about 8% of the national vote. Even though it remained behind IU, whose share of the vote was around 10%, *Podemos* generated significant momentum. If initially their objective had been to pressure the IU to create a joint platform, this result had shown that it was possible to go beyond the IU and change the relationship between the two parties.

After this initial breakthrough, as *Podemos* rose in the polls, IU fell. Until then, despite its entrenchment, IU was the main party benefitting from the crisis, and had it not been for the emergence of *Podemos* it could have been the main party on the left. As the future leader of IU Alberto Garzón said: “If IU had done its work, *Podemos* would not exist today.”<sup>88</sup> From this point onwards, the tensions that had been building up between IA and the *Complutense* team became more visible. The latter group embarked on a project of centralisation and plebiscitary democracy to build up an “electoral war machine” that gave less importance to participation on the ground than it had initially intended. Its first Citizens’ Assembly, in October 2014, concluded the process of party creation. The so-called circles – established at the foundational moment of *Podemos* to emulate neighbourhood assemblies – barely received any power, and the party centralised around the core of the general secretary and the *Consejo Estatal* (State Council).

Furthermore, the party leadership forbade double party membership with the intent of constraining the Anticapitalists, as the latter party continued to exist independently of *Podemos*. Throughout its first year, it conducted a process of political articulation (De Leon, Desai, & Tugal, 2009), in which it redefined its populist discourse, setting up an opposition between those from below and those from above by using floating signifiers (Laclau, 2005; Sola & Rendueles, 2018). The clearest example of this was the articulation of the division and opposition between the “caste” and the “people” (i.e. between economic and political elites and the rest of the population).

88 Interview with Alberto Gárzon in *Publico.es* – Alberto Garzón: “Si IU hubiera hecho sus deberes, Podemos hoy no existiría” <https://www.publico.es/politica/alberto-garzon-iu-hubiera-hecho.html>.

## The road to the general elections and the party-constellation

After the 2014 European elections, the power balance between IU and *Podemos* shifted. Not only did the new party attract multiple groups from a more “reformist faction” of social movements, but various young *cadres* from IU also started joining. The latter group was prominent in redefining the party through the addition of their own political project and experience.

Participation in multiple elections marked *Podemos*' early period. In the municipal and regional elections (2015), the question of how to build a party and the tensions on the left around allying with IU emerged again, as the young middle-rank *cadres* once again pressured the United Left. For example, in Madrid Mauricio Valiente (municipal candidate) and Tania Sánchez (regional candidate) won the IU primary elections and started negotiating a candidacy with *Ganemos*. However, facing resistance from the IU's top leadership they decided to leave the party to found alternative projects. Tania Sánchez formed *Convocatoria por Madrid*<sup>89</sup> with the objective both of enabling other militants to abandon IU, and of building a unitary candidacy from below that would aggregate multiple forces such as IU, *Podemos* and social movements.<sup>90</sup>

After *Podemos* and its partners' successes in local and regional elections, in which they achieved better results than IU and became a close competitor of the PSOE, there was an attempt to bring IU, *Podemos*, other parties (such as *Equo*) and independent activists together. The idea was to replicate the alliance model adopted by *Ahora Madrid* and *Barcelona en Comú* for the general elections of December 2015. Nonetheless, as *Podemos* refused to participate, this project changed its name from *Ahora en Común*<sup>91</sup> to *Unidad Popular*,<sup>92</sup> and was effectively led by IU and Alberto Gárzon. To choose its candidates, this platform organised primary elections run by those of the younger generation who remained in the party. Established around Gárzon (who participated in the 15M, was the youngest MP elected in 2011, and was later elected leader of IU in May 2016), the group tried to emulate *Podemos*' success. Nevertheless, this attempt failed as more groups and individuals left IU to join *Podemos*.

The two parties ran separately, with *Podemos* (and the confluences)<sup>93</sup> able to elect more than 60 MPs, while IU only elected two. In December 2015,

89 Translated as Call for Madrid.

90 In 2016, after the December 2015 general elections, this group joins *Podemos*.

91 Translated as Now in Common.

92 Translated as Popular Unity.

93 As their regional allies came to be known.

*Podemos* came third behind the PSOE and PP. As *Podemos* established itself as the strongest party on the left behind the PSOE, it could then reintegrate IU into its own platform on its own terms.

By the end of the protest cycle in Spain, multiple parties on the left had thus converged. It is possible to understand this convergence as follows. Driven by a wide generational gap and opposing strategies, *Podemos* initially emerged as a vehicle to pressure the IU to reformulate its action. However, as it electorally surpassed IU, *Podemos* became the national gravitational force around which a variety of players coalesced at multiple levels: (1) municipal projects that brought together social movement groups, IU, *Podemos* and other smaller parties; (2) IU, which came to be controlled by a younger generation that remained in the party and allied with *Podemos* in 2016; (3) confluences – regional parties (in Valencia, Galicia and Catalonia) that, while running together with *Podemos*, kept their independence and led at regional levels. Finally, *Podemos* would split into three factions: (1) Anticapitalists (former IA members), who kept their autonomy, controlled the party in Andalucía, were strong in Madrid, and present in the European institutions; (2) Pablistas, among which Pablo Iglesias was the central figure, uniting various tendencies that had left the IU, who took a more critical stance towards the PSOE, refusing to ally with this latter party after the 2015 elections; (3) Errejonistas, who connected more clearly with Latin American experiences, defending transversal populism and the reconstruction of the left beyond its “old symbols,” and were more belligerent against the alliance with the IU and more in favour of deals with the PSOE. These last two factions ended up fighting for control of the party, with that under Iglesias’ control coming to dominate the party. This story came full circle during the elections of June 2016, as IU/UP and *Podemos* finally allied with one another in *Unidas Podemos* and ran together in elections.

## **Resilience and the recomposition of the left in Portugal**

The transformations of the Left in Portugal led to a realignment of the party system. For the first time in the history of Portuguese democracy, various parties on the left supported a Socialist government. The fact that no new political party emerged in Portugal is due not only to a lack of social movements that reconfigured the political sphere, as appeared in Spain, but also to an existing tension in the party system between the radical left (the BE and PCP) and the PS. Unlike in Spain, the main question that emerged

throughout the cycle of contention was that of what type of relationship these parties, and particularly the various tendencies of the BE that I will describe below, wanted to establish with the PS in order to defeat and replace austerity policies.

An analysis of the Left Bloc's internal conflicts is vital to understanding why this party came to be at the centre of leftist political turmoil from 2011 onwards. There were splits from the BE, and new parties emerged with the objective of occupying the BE's space in order to reach an agreement with the socialists and fight back against austerity. This strategy materialised in the creation of *Congresso Democrático das Alternativas*,<sup>94</sup> a political initiative that intended to federate the left around a programme with a minimal set of common objectives. Despite the BE's constant refusal to move in this direction, it ended up collaborating with the PS after the elections.

As discussed in chapter two, the BE resulted from the confluence of small left-wing parties (*Partido Socialista Revolucionário*, *Política XXI* and *União Democrática Popular*) and social movement groups that had been involved in the anti-globalisation struggles, the mobilisations for the independence of East Timor, and the abortion referendum of 1999. From its formation onwards, the party conducted both institutional action and street politics. The objective was, to use its own words, to build a "social majority" that could transform Portuguese society. During the first few years of existence, its organisational structure and decision-making process were that of a polyarchic executive, i.e. the party would function through horizontal links and decentralisation (Lisi, 2009, 2013; Noronha, 2014; Soeiro, 2009).

Nevertheless, in 2005 it started a process that involved both centralisation and verticalisation, transforming its engagement with civil society groups. From this point onwards, the party played a more prominent role in the social movement arena through its satellite organisations. The formation of an alternative left in Portugal thus went from the dream of a movement-party, as it called itself, to its centralisation.

Between 2005 and 2011, the party reinforced its electoral base, going from two to 16 MPs (and from 2.44% to 9.82% of the vote). Throughout this period, it attempted to broaden its influence by supporting the alternative socialist presidential candidate Manuel Alegre<sup>95</sup> (both in 2005 and 2011), and by articulating issues in political movements and protests. Its

94 Translated as the Democratic Congress for the Alternatives.

95 Manuel Alegre is a former Socialist MP who ran for President in 2006 as an independent against his own party. In 2011 he ran again with the support of the PS and the BE.

main objective was to pressure the Socialist Party and present itself as an alternative.

However, as the Eurozone crisis progressed in 2010-2011, political tensions rose in Portugal. The BE played a significant role by supporting a no-confidence vote in the socialist government in 2011, and by refusing – along with the Communist Party – to engage with the Troika during the negotiations of the Memorandum of Understanding. In the 2011 snap elections the party lost half of its MPs and a right-wing coalition came to power under the auspices of the Troika's Memorandum of Understanding. In this new political landscape, its strategic position towards the socialists changed. With ongoing austerity and the right-wing coalition in power, multiple factions of the BE started pressuring the party leadership for a broader collaboration with the Socialists despite them having signed the MoU.

### **Left Bloc from 2011 to 2015: crisis, internal dynamics and re-shaping of the Left in Portugal**

The Left Bloc was in crisis between 2011 and 2015 as it faced conflicts between different factions, leadership problems, and more importantly defections from core and founding groups such as *Política XXI*. Besides, the party had to make strategic choices about its relationship with the Socialists, while various left groups pressed for full-front unity against austerity.

Francisco Louçã, who had been the uncontested leader of the BE since its foundation (and especially after 2005), abandoned both parliament and his leadership role in 2012. He was replaced by two spokespersons (Catarina Martins and João Semedo) from the same internal group. This meant that the Socialist tendency – a newly formed group that combined the former PSR (*Partido Socialista Revolucionário*) and parts of the *Política XXI* tendencies – came to dominate the party, and pushed aside *Esquerda Alternativa*,<sup>96</sup> which led to a conflict.

There were two main causes of this conflict. First, the BE lost half of its MPs in 2011, which meant it lost resources that were important for the party. Second, and perhaps more importantly, there were competing conceptions about what strategy it should adopt towards the Socialists.<sup>97</sup> In many ways,

96 Alternative Left – previously *União Democrática Popular* (UDP), a Maoist tendency.

97 It was in part this conflict that was present in the 2014 convention between the two main lists, which seems to have been a result of an internal crisis due to the party's decline in the last elections. The 2014 convention was where the dispute was most intense; there seems to

this conflict was the consequence of its failure to take over the PS – which had been its strategy in previous years.

The central strategic question for the party was what position it should take towards the Socialists. Should it invest in a long-term strategy to unite all the forces of the left? As I have been arguing, the BE's relationship to the centre left is key to understanding its formation and evolution – even more so during the austerity years.

As a result, two camps started to coalesce within the party, one supporting the party's entrenchment in its existing position, and another supporting a broader coalition with the socialists and other forces of the left to challenge austerity. As discussed previously, at its foundation, the Left Bloc intended to create an alternative left project to both the Communists and Socialists. Nevertheless, in the period between 2011 and 2015 various groups left the party due to disagreements with the leadership over strategy. The first group to leave the Left Bloc was MAS (*Movimento Alternativa Socialista*), formed by one of the BE's internal tendencies (*Ruptura-FER*) (December 2011). Despite being a political party, MAS was highly involved in street politics: its strategy was to control movement platforms throughout the cycle of protest. One such example was the platform that emerged out of the Global Day of Action (15th October – 15O), as seen in previous chapters. Present at every demonstration, it tried to constitute an alternative to other movements – but was never successful due to its entryist tactics (which led many other groups to either block or refuse to collaborate with it).<sup>98</sup>

Additionally, a different set of groups emerged to defend an alliance of the whole of the left. Most of these groups came together, in one way or another, in the 2015 general elections. They formed an electoral platform called *Tempo de Avançar*<sup>99</sup> composed of *LIVRE*, *Fórum Manifesto*, *Renovação Comunista* and *Manifesto 3D*. The process was mediated by *Congresso Democrático das Alternativas* and preceded by political initiatives that prepared the ground for a more organised political force that would unite the left against the retrenchment of the welfare state.

have been a struggle within a weakened party apparatus over positions and resources. The convention resulted in a draw that led to a balance of power between the majoritarian factions, as well as the formation of a new internal minority that was closer to the movement circles, less institutionalised, and more radical in its stance towards Europe. This took place after all the groups had already fled.

98 MAS became a fringe party that later tried to control an alternative movement – calling it *Juntos Podemos* – that sought to replicate *Podemos*' success in Portugal. This led to its disbandment and to the party AGIR. They never achieved any electoral success.

99 Translated as Time to Move On.

## From Congresso Democrático das Alternativas to a recomposition of the left

From 2012 onwards, various initiatives for a project of “left unity” began to emerge, leading to *Congresso Democrático das Alternativas* (CDA).<sup>100</sup> This platform was an integral part of the contentious cycle and is key to understanding the various responses to austerity and the formation of new political entities. The platform originated from three smaller groups: Communist Renewal, independents and finally people connected to *Forum Manifesto* (part of the BE’s Política XXI).

The CDA diagnosis was that with the Troika and the right-wing coalition government there had been a paradigmatic shift in Portuguese society, in which welfare state retrenchment constituted an attack on the core foundational ideals of the regime. This situation demanded that the left unite under what they called “programmatic minimum denominators,” and converge in a unitary platform and space of reflection. These groups’ objective was to pressure the Left Bloc to reconvene in a larger political space. Still, as I will show below, the BE’s internal disputes blocked this process.

Coming from a similar political area and with similar objectives to CDA, a group of people led by Rui Tavares launched the *Manifesto para uma Esquerda Livre*.<sup>101</sup> They criticised the whole of the left for its lack of political solutions against austerity, and censured the parties for competing with each other rather than developing opportunities for cooperation and compromise. Noticing their overlapping objectives, the groups preparing for the CDA invited Rui Tavares and his collaborators to participate in the upcoming Congress.

There was a critique of the left using two expressions that were used at the time. One was the soft left (the Socialists), which does not become autonomous in relation to particular interests, and which – when it gets into power – has a much more right-wing agenda than a lefty one. The other one was the inconsequential left, about the BE and the PCP, always in a position of not wanting to be part of a government solution, always with an outsider strategy, but always very critical ... it is almost a bipolar left, between the softness of the PS and the inconsequence of the BE and the PCP ... it was not sustainable to keep the left like this as the country was facing the abyss. (Interviewee 2, Portugal)

<sup>100</sup> <http://www.congressoalternativas.org/>

<sup>101</sup> Translated as Manifest for a Free Left.

The first meeting of the CDA happened immediately after the first demonstration organised by the QSLT, on a highly symbolic date that celebrates the establishment of a republic in Portugal (October 5th). It is important to note that there was barely any relationship between the CDA and the QSLT, except that they both emerged at the height of contestation to austerity. Other than the groups already mentioned, the Socialists, CGTP, social movements and independents were also present. The CDA functioned as a convergence point and a bridge between groups that favoured a common left programme and joint action. As such, the platform can be considered the starting point for the realignment process that occurred after the 2015 elections, as it was here that such a process was first conceived.<sup>102</sup>

Despite being a reflection group, one of the discussions was about whether the platform should become a political party. Apart from engaging in endless deliberations, participants voted that already-existing parties should converge into broader political projects. Moreover, it is important to note that the BE, as with the IU in Spain, did not want to lose relevance by becoming a broader political player. Faced with the impasse, new and more concrete political initiatives emerged from the CDA to solve the BE's "immobilism." As in Spain, its main objective was to run in the European elections of 2014.

The first attempt to federate the left was *Manifesto 3D*, which gathered together former members of the Communist Party, *Fórum Manifesto* (formerly *Política XXI*,<sup>103</sup> which would then leave the BE in 2014), as well as independents.<sup>104</sup> Another initiative stemming directly from the CDA was a new political party, LIVRE, set up by the former *Manifesto para uma Esquerda Livre*. If *Manifesto 3D* originated mainly from the "old left" and already-established groups, LIVRE gathered people who had never been involved with political parties and came mainly from cultural and intellectual circles.<sup>105</sup>

In an attempt to enlarge and create a new political entity, *Manifesto 3D* proposed to the Left Bloc the creation of what they called an "envelope

102 The CDA kept meeting throughout the next year to discuss the welfare state, resulting in multiple books and reflections.

103 *Fórum Manifesto*, which many members of *Manifesto 3D* later ended up joining, was previously known as *Política XXI*. This group was led by Miguel Portas and reunited old PCP and MDP members. It was the smallest tendency of the BE at its formation, the one with the least impact, and the closest to social democracy. The *de facto* leader of the group after the death of Miguel Portas, Ana Drago, stayed in the party and remained an MP until July 2014.

104 <http://manifesto3d.blogspot.co.uk/>

105 <http://livrept.net/>. Their "leader" was Rui Tavares, who was elected as an MEP by Bloco in 2009, and then left due to conflicts with Bloco, continuing to be a MEP.

party.” The project entailed *Manifesto 3D*, the BE and LIVRE presenting a joint European candidacy supporting new and independent figures. The BE refused since, as part of the proposed deal, their members could not be candidates. As a result, at the European elections, BE and LIVRE ran separately while *Manifesto 3D* did not field any candidates at all. BE lost two MEPs and LIVRE did not elect anyone.

The continuous refusal of the BE, even in the face of bad results, to compromise and open up to new political projects led *Fórum Manifesto* to abandon the party in the summer of 2014 after the European elections. The group left not because of a programmatic divergence, but because of a strategic one.<sup>106</sup> In its view, there was a need for a platform for dialogue between socialists, communists and independents that could face a scenario of prolonged austerity. Furthermore, they believed that the party was stagnating, having lost its movementist mission and openness to a social majority.

In this sense, the radical left seemed to be in disarray. At the November 2014 Convention, the remaining tendencies in the BE (Socialism and the Alternative Left) disputed the control of the party. As their prognosis about future electoral results was not promising, each faction of the party wanted to secure a share of the resources and positions in a smaller party for itself until the left’s eventual comeback. Therefore, instead of running in joint lists as in previous conventions, their dispute centred around what political strategy to follow and which group would come to control the party structure. By the end of the convention, there was a tie between Socialism and the Alternative Left, leading them to have to negotiate every single aspect of party control and resources.

Two left-wing political projects ran in the 2015 general elections. While one wanted to commit to a broader alliance of the left against austerity, the other pointed to the impossibility of reaching agreements with the Socialists. As a result of this divergence, the groups that emerged from the CDA and the BE defections converged in an electoral platform called *Tempo de Avançar* (Time to Move On)<sup>107</sup> which brought together LIVRE, *Fórum Manifesto*, *Manifesto 3D* and independents.

However, despite all the predictions, in the 2015 general elections BE had its best result ever, while its direct competitors (*Tempo de Avançar*) were not able to elect a single MP, leading the BE and the PCP to support the

106 <http://manifesto.com.pt/>; <http://www.esquerda.net/artigo/associacao-manifesto-preparasaidas-do-bloco-de-esquerda/33396>

107 [http://www.jn.pt/PaginaInicial/Politica/Interior.aspx?content\\_id=4245073](http://www.jn.pt/PaginaInicial/Politica/Interior.aspx?content_id=4245073); <http://tempo-deavancar.net/>

socialist minority through a parliamentary agreement. This electoral result seems to have been a consequence of a good electoral campaign, overall internal cohesion despite the tensions within the party, and a leadership effect around Catarina Martins, but also internal renewal.<sup>108</sup>

The emergence of a new and unexpected government coalition resulted from the rejection of the right-wing coalition and its austerity policies. Nevertheless, it is important to note the conjunctural nature of this alliance: this parliamentary pact avoided the PS leader's resignation and the eventual demise of the party, as happened in Greece with PASOK. The effects of the cycle of contention, with new cleavages and discourses together with new leadership, enabled the BE to defeat new competing parties.

### Political outcomes and post-2015 alliances

When contrasting the Spanish and the Portuguese cases, two important differences in the political process become clear. If in Spain the debate on the left was about the creation of an alternative left platform to the PSOE whilst renewing the left as a whole, in Portugal the players discussed what kind of relationship the “radical” left should have with the PS to defend the regime. The role of social movements and other contentious players in this regard was also different in the two cases. In Spain, anti-austerity movements influenced significantly new political formations and their discourse, while in Portugal, the non-disruptiveness of these contentious players made them less relevant in shaping the transformations of the party system. As shown in previous chapters, and highlighted by Accornero and Ramos Pinto (2020), it is important to note the complexity of contentious processes. Different configurations of the anti-austerity arenas and the interaction between institutional and non-institutional players affected the formation of new political parties. The two distinct outcomes of the cycle of protest can only be understood when considering a broader spectrum of players and their interactions within an arena.

As Tarrow (1989, 2011) suggests, after a highly contentious period, new players, repertoires and frames access democratic institutions. However, as noted throughout this chapter, elites and political parties also play a central role in how the process unfolds. If in Spain a set of new political parties and

<sup>108</sup> One such example was Mariana Mortágua, a young MP who gained visibility during a parliamentary commission that investigated the corruption scandal associated with one of the biggest private banks in the country, *Banco Espírito Santo*.

alliances linked to social movements reached institutions throughout the electoral period of 2014/15, in Portugal a shift in the party system occurred, with the radical left supporting a centre-left government for the first time. In the Portuguese case, intermediary platforms and internal party dynamics mediated the process of conjunctural realignment. Within the left, the debate aimed mostly at federating the left, with the most pressing issue being what position to take towards the Socialist Party. Therefore, social movements played a lesser role in the recomposition of the left since their intention was to conserve the status quo of the welfare state, which had resulted from the close links with political parties. This meant that rather than producing a radical shift in the political sphere, social movements did not emerge as an alternative to institutional action but instead came to reinforce it. In this sense, as movements never transformed into political parties, demobilisation was concurrent with their non-institutionalisation.

The Spanish case involved two political dynamics that account for the emergence of new left-wing parties. On the one hand, social movement groups led to the creation of alternative political parties; on the other hand, there were multiple defections from the traditional left to launch new political projects that would break through the existing generational gap. These two dynamics came together to produce a *party-constellation*, where local, regional and national parties coalesced around *Podemos* (the national gravitational centre), creating a political dynamic quite distinct from that which existed previously. This outcome should not, however, be seen as the logical or natural conclusion of the cycle. In Spain, throughout the past decade there had already been similar forces – namely the UPyD and IU – that had occupied similar positions, and that could have exploited the structure of opportunities produced by the crisis. Instead, *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos* established themselves as the new players in the political arena. The transformation of the left resulted from the combination of the strong social movements discussed earlier and the disputes within IU. Their debate was about the best strategy for creating an alternative that could – in a situation of crisis – both take over from and replace the PSOE as the main political force on the left. Contrasting with this, in Portugal, political players discussed mainly how to establish a fruitful relationship with the PS and recover the political status quo. If the Spanish social movements were of crucial importance in the emergence of the party-constellation, in Portugal the recomposition came from disputes within the left. Nevertheless, such disputes were not absent from the context that led to *Podemos'* emergence, and there is a case to be made that to a certain extent *Podemos* is part of a process of IU's *rebranding* (even if not intentionally).

This realignment of the party system at the end of the cycle of contention is, I contend, a fragile one that persists to this day, especially with the emergence of new parties on the right. Even though “new” repertoires and frames have been slowly incorporated, its bases are delicate, and they could be merely circumstantial adaptations to the EU “austeritarian” rule. In this way, in Portugal, the so-called *Geringonça*, or Contraption – which reunited the BE, PCP, Greens and PS in a parliamentary pact – was initially received with enthusiasm on the grounds that it could turn around more than four years of austerity. In the beginning, few people believed that such an agreement could last for the whole term (J. Fernandes et al., 2018). Nevertheless, given that their votes were needed to pass laws and the yearly budget, the agreement gave the left-wing parties a position of influence in a minority Socialist government. Austerity was indeed reduced to a certain extent, and some redistributive measures were ensured by the pact (and facilitated by the improvement of the overall international economic situation). However, this constituted a sort of trap for the left-wing parties: breaking with the existing political arrangement could lead to substantial losses if a blame game was to be played.

Furthermore, the EU managed to control the so-called left-wing success case by nominating the then Portuguese finance minister, Mário Centeno, as president of the Eurogroup – a position that requires its incumbent to follow and impose budgetary prescriptions. This meant that, rather than going against and beyond austerity, Portugal was still locked into an austerity agenda that led to one of the lowest levels of public investment in decades.

In Spain, the post-2015 political reconfigurations were marked by the potency of the new parties and a hung parliament with no clear majority. The nationalist cleavage arising from the Catalan dispute played an important role. After the general elections of December 2015, in which the PP could not secure a majority in Congress, Mariano Rajoy (the PP’s leader) refused the King’s offer to form a government due to the lack of parliamentary support. This left the second most voted-for party, the PSOE, to try to form a government. The initial idea was to attempt a political pact, following the Portuguese example, with *Podemos* and *Ciudadanos*. However, these two parties refused to work together due to their diametrically opposing views on social policy and the ongoing conflict in Catalonia. Besides these parties, the PSOE would need the support of several small regional parties, which *Ciudadanos* rejected, while *Podemos* was open to the idea of a referendum in Catalonia, which the PSOE opposed. Moreover, having secured a substantial share of the vote, *Podemos* demanded to be part of the government, which the PSOE resisted. Under these circumstances, Pedro Sánchez was unable

to gain the support of Congress, leading to new elections in June 2016. The PP won again, albeit not with a majority, and *Ciudadanos* offered its support in Congress. As this happened, internal disputes within the PSOE forced Sánchez to resign as he refused to abstain to allow Rajoy to be prime minister. As a leaderless PSOE abstained, Rajoy renewed his mandate.

In many ways, these were all latent tensions that the crisis and the cycle of contention only brought to the surface. The resultant reequilibration, even if fragile, stemmed from regimes and parties and the way they were built. The question now is how long this will persist for and whether these reconfigurations will crystallise in the future. Only time will tell.

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# Conclusion

## Abstract

The Conclusion provides an overview of the anti-austerity cycle of protest in Portugal and Spain and synthesises the book's main contributions to the field of social movements and contentious politics. It summarises how, aside from a detailed analysis of the two countries, the previous chapters have revealed how the interactions between institutional and non-institutional players are crucial in shaping how protest cycles unfold. Finally, the book finishes with suggestions of new avenues for research and new approaches that might reinvigorate the analysis of mobilisation from below amid processes of market liberalisation and austerity.

**Keywords:** austerity, cycle of protest, players and arenas, Portugal, Spain

*But even as we congratulate ourselves for living through an important moment in history, we should not forget that protest occurs every day, all around the world, and probably always has – whether or not it is dramatic and sustained enough to attract media coverage. Protest is a fundamental part of human existence.*

– Jasper, 2015, p. 9

As James Jasper states, protest is part of both life in society and our existence. Even if protest is one of the many things that contentious players do, it is their core form of action and the one with most relevance and visibility in the public sphere. Protests come in waves and cycles that cluster in specific periods of time, and are for the most part “unfinished business” dependent on the interaction between contextual factors, relations between players, and the overall symbolic environment in which they happen.

In this book, I have compared the contentious responses to austerity between 2009 and 2015 in Portugal and Spain in the context of the Great Recession. I have done so by conducting a detailed analysis of the anti-austerity cycle of protest, from the initial mobilisations at the beginning of

the crisis to the transformation of the party systems. I paid special attention to the analysis of (1) the relations and interactions between institutional and non-institutional players, and (2) the range of repertoires and claim-making used throughout the cycle. While Portugal and Spain are neighbouring countries at the European periphery, in a context of budgetary constraints, rising debt, unemployment and immigration, the protest cycle took different paths in each. The analytical tools I have deployed have helped to illuminate the reasons behind this divergence.

In fact, although economic factors led to the emergence of the so-called movements of the crisis, the political responses around the world were heterogeneous and involved a plurality of players and claims. Rather than treating the cases in this wave of contention as similar, I viewed them as being embedded within national dynamics. More than focusing on the transversal and transnational features of protest, I have instead aimed to look in detail at the particularities of each country's responses to austerity.

In this way, I have pursued two main ideas about political processes in Spain and Portugal. Firstly, even if the movements of the crisis were a consequence of the Great Recession, the collective reactions to the financial collapse were not solely restricted to social movements. Secondly, to fully grasp the spectrum of reactions and the contentious assemblages against austerity, we need to examine the entire cycle of contention. Instead of analysing one-off events and protest players, I therefore conducted an integrated analysis of the sequence of events, the opportunity structures, the interactions between players – both institutional and non-institutional – and their multiple claims.

Understanding how the sequence of mobilisation events unfolds was one of the key aspects of this comparison. The notion of an open-ended and relational process, where agency and eventfulness are combined with structural elements, provides an analytical framework that considers historical continuities but also closely considers contingency. A processual and relational analysis shows that social movements were not the only players to contest austerity and market liberalisation, and the nature of the political arena in which they were acting is crucial to understanding how change was brought about. Moreover, this book, as well as other important research in the field (Bailey et al., 2018; Portos, 2019, 2021; Portos & Carvalho, 2022), demonstrates the need to expand the diversity of cycles of protest studied in order to understand the role of agency and interactions among players in shaping patterns of protest mobilisation. Finally, different temporalities help us to situate the different aspects of mobilisation within the broader cycle. Della Porta (2015, 2017) posits the existence of three temporalities to which we should pay attention:

short, middle, and long term. This analytical framework has made possible a granular analysis and comparison of two episodes of contention that resulted from short-term changes in capitalism and the development of the crisis.

While I followed a chronological order and processual logic throughout this book's empirical chapters, their organisation was also to a certain extent thematic. This is because each phase brought its own sets of issues, repertoires, and players. In this sense, the chapters translate the idea of the cycle of protest, broken down into its different stages, from the initial mobilisations through to peak protests and finally institutionalisation.

The background to the cycle – consisting of previous mobilisations and the wider political landscape since the transition to democracy in Portugal and Spain – was reconstituted on the basis of secondary data, the relevant research literature, and interviews with important players from social movements, trade unions and political parties. The objective was two-fold: on the one hand, to historically contextualise past contentious events and how these came to shape following cycles; on the other, to test claims that the movements of the crisis were spontaneous or novel. The findings of this study are that many characteristics of the contentious players involved in the mobilisations throughout the anti-austerity protest cycle were not new. Even if the turning points (GàR and the 15M) constituted explosive moments that “came out of nowhere,” they incorporated many of the features of past mobilisations in each country.

To some extent, the key findings of the chapter “Preludes to the Anti-austerity Mobilisations” show that the political dynamics that came to define the anti-austerity cycle of protest were established in the early 2000s. In Portugal, the emergence of the Left Bloc (BE) not only transformed the party system; it also influenced movements in a process of what I called constrained renewal. Due to its initial movement-party nature, it came to influence and shape the protest field. This was especially relevant in the case of grievances about labour precarity: groups associated with the BE formed platforms against precarity that were central in the anti-austerity cycle of protest. In Spain the decentralised and autonomous network of movements, which was detached from institutional players, would later form the core of the anti-austerity actions. The network espoused a discursive repertoire critical of the regime and favourable to participatory democracy – which, again, was already in place in the mid-2000s. As such, it is possible to detect the development of actions and relationships between players before the cycle of protest – actions and relationships that help to explain many features of the protest mobilisations that occurred between 2010 and 2014. These findings show that, although some spontaneity and novelty is possible,

there were clear continuities between the different stages of mobilisation. One important reflection coming out of this chapter concerns the links with previous contentious cycles. Despite the arguments that there was an overall scale shift in terms of the *locus* of conflict worldwide, from the Global Justice Movement (GJM) to the national structures of anti-austerity and Occupy type of movements, there is an important continuity in how the GJM stimulated and develop particular mobilisation structures in each country.

The following two chapters focused on mobilising under austerity, which comprised two main phases. In the first – *Turning Points* – previous latent contentious tensions and trends, which I explore in the previous chapter, exploded in the public sphere through eventful protests that reshaped the anti-austerity contentious arena. In the second – *Enduring Austerity* – as austerity continued, this brought about the collaboration between institutional and non-institutional players, even if with different configurations. It is important to note that, as many analysts of cycles of contention propose, protest follows different stages in which arenas and players' protagonism change. Portugal and Spain were no exception in this sense, even if they followed distinct trajectories.

I compared the emergence of social movements in each country in 2011, at the turning points of the cycle of protest. I showed how these came to redefine the anti-austerity protest arena, and explored why the cases followed different paths from then onwards. Until then, despite being on the rise, protest was dominated by trade unions and small movement groups; but after these events movements became a strong and visible player. While in Spain the 15M led to almost three years of consistent mobilisations, in Portugal such protest movements never recurred with comparable frequency. The main difference at the turning points was the diverging capacity of the movements to involve people beyond their core activists, i.e. to extend their mobilisations beyond their usual activist networks. In Spain, the 15M expanded their actions to those who were not typically engaged in such activities, whilst in Portugal – despite multiple attempts – the movements recruited few new people.

I argue that the capacity for movements to sustain mobilisation in the long run is linked to their ability to go beyond the core of their activists, expand and politicise new members, and diffuse new repertoires and discourses. Both endogenous and exogenous factors affected the protest field. Endogenous factors include: (1) the ability to establish connective structures and build networks that ensure permanent, rather than intermittent, mobilisation (Tarrow, 2011); and (2) the openness of movement culture

and an appealing and inclusive frame. Exogenous factors include: (1) the strength of institutional actors and their capacity to control “insurgencies,” and also non-institutional players’ ability to maintain their autonomy; and (2) the overall political and economic context.

While in Spain the discursive repertoire and organisational practices were open, and employed by a variety of different groups that fiercely critiqued the existing political parties, trade unions and institutions, in Portugal this type of claim-making and organisation never gained ground, with protest instead focused on labour precarity (a problem and grievance that affected most young people). The connective structure – the network and links between different individuals and groups – also mattered. In Spain, the 15M’s decentralisation of activities to neighbourhoods appeared to increase its mobilisation capacity, due to a pre-existing network of groups and activists at the local level who were able to mobilise their resources in new directions. The opposite transpired in Portugal. Even though there were efforts to expand, the assemblies created around Lisbon remained insular, and were much less able to win over new members.

This finding seems to be in line with work on direct social action done over the last few years in Southern European countries (Baumgarten, 2017a; Bosi & Zamponi, 2015; Carvalho, 2014; Kentikelenis, 2018; Kotronaki & Christou, 2019; F. G. Santos, 2020). Evidence shows that grassroots and community action were of extreme importance in constituting and supporting larger mobilisations. In this comparison I reinforce this argument, but I also make clear the importance of the frames developed over this period in both countries. As Tarrow (2011) argues, besides contributing to resonance, frames and claims fulfil a strategic role at the turning points of a cycle of contention. Yet in Portugal, the weakness of autonomous movements throughout 2011 – due to the failure to form a connective structure – also affected the diffusion of this type of frame.

As the cycle of protest progressed, between 2012-2013 claims evolved from those of representation to those of redistribution. I argue that as austerity persisted, the dynamics of the anti-austerity arena changed. Claims about representation increasingly gave way to claims about redistribution in relation to labour, education, healthcare and housing. This was particularly evident in Spain where overlapping dynamics were generated by a coalition between social movements and trade unions. Movements were not subjugated by institutional players and reflected a bottom-up type of mobilisation. The protest dynamics spurred on by the 15M lasted for three years and entailed the collaboration of several types of player at different phases of the cycle of contention. Since most institutional players had been

delegitimised due to their earlier support of austerity policies, they were not able to mobilise as strongly as social movements. In a second stage, this compelled trade unions to collaborate with movements after the turning point (2011). If the movements provided legitimacy, the trade unions would provide the resources to sustain them (Portos & Carvalho, 2022).

Nothing comparable happened in Portugal. After a period of movements' absence at the beginning of 2012 – a moment in which social movement players almost disappeared altogether – a strategic alliance between parties, trade unions and some movement groups connected to institutional players came to dominate the arena with claims targeting redistribution. Claims for democratic representation were never dominant in Portugal, and by 2012 they were only visible amongst fringe groups of marginal significance to anti-austerity dynamics. Thus, after 2012, Portugal was dominated by institutional players: trade unions disputed austerity in the streets, and political parties – particularly the BE, via groups associated with it – influenced the social movements' mobilisations. Even if social movement players were relevant in specific moments of the cycle, it was institutional players – in the form of trade unions and political parties – who were the main protagonists. Autonomous social movement players were never able to sustain mobilisation in a continuous way, emerging only at particular moments within the structure of opportunities.

In analysing these two phases, and by using a flexible combination of the concepts of players and claim-making, I developed a critique of the “excessive” focus in the literature upon social movements. This was made possible by a fine-grained analysis that allowed us not only to identify shifts in the cycle of protest, but also to consider how plural arenas of collective action develop. The cycle of contention involved close relations of different types between institutional and non-institutional players – sometimes of co-option, sometimes alliance building and sometimes hybridisation. Claim-making went beyond merely economic grievances associated with austerity to include demands for a more transparent and fully participatory democracy; various conceptions of democracy and citizenship rights were deployed throughout the cycle of contention by its constituent players, with the legacies of the transition shaping much of the players' discourse. As argued in the theoretical chapter of this book, claim-making evolves historically, with citizenship demands targeting the state. A cycle-based approach helps shed light on the variety of claims made throughout this process: by analysing the whole sequence of events and how they influence each other – rather than focusing on one-off events – we are able to observe the full diversity of claim-making and from whom it stems.

Lastly, it is important to stress that the dynamics observed throughout 2010-2014 were central to the transformations that emerged in the party system, and especially on the left, during the electoral cycle of 2014-2015. Nevertheless, in both countries, the transformations in the party system did not result solely from social movement actions but from ongoing dynamics within the existing left-wing parties. In Spain, *Podemos* benefited not only from an opening in the opportunity structures and discourses created by social movements throughout the cycle, but also from the dynamics within the IU, the main left-wing party at the time. For several years, a younger generation had pressed for the party's renewal. If the IU had resolved its internal disputes and given voice to this younger generation, it could have benefited from the general and widespread discontentment with the mainstream parties. In Portugal, the weakness of the emerging movements was related to new parties' lack of success. Here the project of transforming the left involved a broader alliance between already-existing parties rather than the creation of new ones. This comparison reinforces the idea that different models of mobilisation and of the transformation of the party system were operating in the two countries. In Spain, movements led to its change, whilst in Portugal they were absorbed by the already-existing institutions. The transformation of the party system after an intense cycle of mobilisation is not solely a direct consequence of protests; the strength of political parties and their strategies also play an important role. The multiple interactions amongst players, and the strategic decisions made by them, are of great importance to understanding the shifts identified.

The formation of the anti-austerity contentious arenas in each country reflects two different and contrasting models of the relationship between players and their discursive repertoires. In Portugal it is centralised and top-down. In Spain there is greater autonomy between institutional players and mobilisations from below.

So why did the cycle of protest and outcomes differ? Returning to the debates I outlined at the outset of this book, a first answer has to do with the different impacts of the crisis in each country – primarily, the crisis led to more unemployment and emigration in Spain than in Portugal. Nonetheless, the political conditions were similar: in the context of the Eurozone crisis, the ruling socialist parties started austerity in 2010. These parties lost the general elections and were supplanted by right-wing majorities that continued down the path of austerity. The main difference between these countries' responses to austerity instead has to do with the different configurations of their contentious arenas. The trajectory of protest followed

in each country was not pre-determined but rather based on relations and interactions in the anti-austerity arena. Despite the importance of structural approaches, we have seen that this trajectory was in many ways shaped through an open-ended, dynamic, and relational process where the interaction between players and their reaction to a given situation shaped much of the contentious responses to austerity observed.

This study deepens the analysis of the political processes in Spain and Portugal and tells us more about the relationships between austerity, political crises, social mobilisation and change. It also suggests avenues for future research.

In Spain and Portugal, the crisis “reanimated” the study of Southern European countries. Given the commonalities and differences between the countries during the crisis, it brought back discussions about the impact of the transition in shaping institutions, democracy and the responses to the crisis. In this sense, this book provides empirical evidence to inform the ongoing debates about Southern European democracies, while opening up avenues to understand the non-institutional side of democracy and its impacts on institutions. In contrast to many past analyses that have tended to focus on institution building after the transition to democracy, this study highlights the important role played by social movements and civil society in relation to the state, instead of taking an institutionalist or elitist approach. Another important point is that, besides the comparative work done, as I argue with Accornero (Carvalho & Accornero, 2023), the “... less intriguing and explosive nature of the Portuguese anti-austerity movements with respect to their Spanish and Greek counterparts may also be the reason for the country being overlooked in most international comparisons. Actually, these specificities make the Portuguese case particularly interesting for comparisons.”

In these two cases, the findings show that political transformations were not driven solely by the economic and financial crises, but also stemmed from the actions of political agents. The contrast between the two countries seems to point to two different models (or ideal types) of mobilisation, each treating the political sphere as an arena where movements and institutional actors interact. The first may be termed top-down, and the second bottom-up. This enlightens us not only about how cycles of protest unfold, but also about how the different configurations and arrangements in the two countries produced different outcomes.

This research began from a Polanyian interpretation of the crisis and of austerity as reflecting a planned liberalisation movement in response to which spontaneous counter-movements of protection appear. Nonetheless,

if the Polanyian framework aids our understanding of the triggers of protest, it cannot explain fully the shape and nature of the counter-movements. By adding the tools developed by social movement studies over the last fifty years to an analysis that identifies broad economic and political dynamics as resulting in mobilisation, we can better understand the ongoing shifts in political arenas all around the world. Doing so also contributes to debates and work that bridge political economy and social movements (della Porta, 2015, 2017; Hetland & Goodwin, 2013; Ramalho, 2020).

I proposed viewing the interactions between different types of players as the principal factor shaping the evolution of cycles of contestation. These two case studies show that we need to reconsider the relations between social movements and institutional players. These relations are not one-directional, going from movements to parties, but instead go both ways and involve different types of relation: the control of social movements by political parties through satellite actors, for instance, or the formation of hybrid actors such as the *Mareas* in Spain. Players are not stable or fixed, but instead are embedded in a political arena.

The combination of tools from structural and agency/interactionist perspectives proved fruitful. If on the one hand, attending to *cycles* of protest allowed us to identify patterns and phases of protest, on the other hand, analysing the relations between players helped us better understand why cycles followed different paths despite similar opportunity structures. In fact, the evolution of the anti-austerity arena in both countries over the cycle of protest shows us that arenas are continuously being formed, re-shaped and repurposed. Even if they already exist, contentious arenas can shift according to more immediate struggles. The case of the anti-austerity arenas in the Iberian democracies shows how austerity and neoliberal policies give preponderance to the economic arena, which comes to dominate all the other arenas. This has an important implication: that the political field mediates contentious responses to austerity. This goes some way towards explaining why in Portugal we find no new political party but rather a reconfiguration of the political system. It is to the details of this novel contribution to the field of protest studies that we now turn.

One important aspect of this research is to assume the predominance of political parties as major players in a cycle of protest, not only as targets of social movements, but also as actively intervening in the contentious arena. Political parties, as seen in the Portuguese case, play a considerable role in mobilisation. Given the configuration of the contentious arena in the country, and the overlapping membership discussed throughout the chapters, political parties helped sustain mobilisation, lending resources

and people to support major protest events. But the interplay between institutional and non-institutional players is also visible in Spain, despite autonomy between social movement groups, trade unions and political parties having been of major importance. In fact, upon the successful mobilisations of the *indignados* movement, alliances on an equal footing led to a sustained level of protests for almost three years (Portos, 2019, 2021; Portos & Carvalho, 2019). In both cases, the interaction between institutional and non-institutional players shows us not only the blurred lines between these players, but also the need to advance to more complex forms of analysis. Rather than focusing on the simplicity of the classic polity model, adopting the notion of a plurality of players in hybrid forms enables a more fine-grained analysis (Goldstone, 2015). Contentious configurations are, therefore, extremely important to determining both the shape of the cycle of protest and how discontent is channeled.

As far as future research is concerned, this book provides the foundations for further studies on Southern European contentious dynamics post-2015. The period during which mobilisations against austerity occurred constitutes a critical juncture that is key to a historical understanding of how political dynamics unfolded after that period. How have the movement infrastructures established during this period shaped current activities? How much of the experience acquired in the austerity period is shaping their current mobilisations?

Another important consideration is the extent to which this model of the relationship between players and political change pertains beyond the European periphery. Even though the crisis was more intense in the periphery, it was also felt in the core countries of the European Union. In what ways were movements accommodated by institutions in such countries? How are Southern and Northern European countries similar, and how do they differ? An unusual and potentially illuminating case of the relations between institutional and non-institutional actors would be the transformation of the Labour Party in the UK under Jeremy Corbyn. A long-time backbencher with the support of a wider grassroots movement, Corbyn was able to bring about change from within. This case would appear to reflect a different model that should be added to our approach, especially when analysing the period after 2015.

Finally, as with all research, this work too has its limitations. The first of these is the absence of an analysis of nationalist dynamics in relation to Catalonia, and of how these interacted with the anti-austerity mobilisations in Spain. Second, focusing strictly on the national level has meant neglecting the potential transnational diffusion of frames – i.e. how frames

travelled from one country to the other. These are not closed cases, and one can observe a degree of interaction that future work in this area might be well-advised to take into account.

With this, I hope to have shown that protest is more than merely an expression of disarray and dissatisfaction, and instead has significant institutional roots with important consequences for the political process. Protests illuminate wider political power arrangements, making them a perfect observation point from which the structures of modern democratic politics can be apprehended. They drive political change, and they generate discourses and associations that influence institutional politics. These contributions will be of interest not only to the growing field of contentious politics and social movements, but also to the study of democracy's non-institutional aspects, and the impact of crises, helping us to better understand contemporary political life.

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# Appendices

## Appendix I Chronology

In this chronology I have systematically listed important political, economic and protest events between 2007 to 2015. This timeline allows us to go beyond the quantification of the Protest Event Analysis and understand more broadly the structure of political opportunities and threats at a given moment. Such opportunities and threats include institutional episodes (e.g. government resignation or crisis), austerity measures (e.g. the Memorandum of Understanding in Portugal) and international events (e.g. Draghi's "whatever it takes" declaration in July 2012). I have identified both small episodes and campaigns of contention as well as eventful and transformative protest events. To build this timeline I used multiple sources on the topic: newspapers, interviews and data collected during fieldwork.

Portugal	Spain	Europe/World
<b>Month</b>	<b>2007</b>	
1	Demonstration against ETA in Madrid (150,000); 80,000 in Bilbao	
2	January to March – Campaign of Demonstrations against the Zapatero Government for the negotiations with ETA supported by the PP and AVT (from 60,000 to 340,000)	
3		
4		
5	General Strike (CGTP) against the ongoing labour reform	
6		
7	Week of protests by <i>Rompamos el Silencio</i>	Subprime mortgage bubble burst, starting a period of recession in the USA that would lead to financial instability and bank bailouts in the following year (Great Recession)

	Portugal	Spain	Europe/World
8			
9		UPyD is created (Rosa Díez as leader)	
10		Housing protest in Madrid with the slogan <i>No vas a tener casa en la puta vida</i>	
11	State Budget for 2008 approved; General Strike in the Public Sector (by from CGTP and UGT) against the government's unwillingness to negotiate wage increases	Gürtel Case investigation starts (corruption case involving the PP)	
12		<i>Espacio Alternativo</i> leaves IU and forms <i>Anticapitalistas</i> ; Housing and banking crisis starts	
<b>2008</b>			
1			
2			
3	FENPROF, teachers' demonstration against new regulations (100,000 in Lisbon)	PSOE wins elections; Zapatero as President of the Government for a 2 <sup>nd</sup> term; PSOE wins elections in Andalucía	
4			
5		Student strike and demonstration against the Bologna Treaty (which kept going throughout the year)	
6	Demonstration by CGTP against the Labour Reform (200,000); Truck Drivers' strike almost paralyses the country		
7			
8			
9			Beginning of the Great Recession, after bankruptcy of Lehman Brothers. US government bails out several banks and the financial system to prevent the crisis spreading
10			German, Dutch, Belgian and British governments give support to banks in an approach that in Europe followed public investment

	Portugal	Spain	Europe/World
11	Labour Reform is approved; Bankruptcy of BPP and bailout by the Government; FENPROF, teachers' demonstration against new regulations (125,000 in Lisbon); Bankruptcy of BPN and nationalisation by the government	<i>Refundación de la Izquierda</i> – project approved by IU to renew the left in Spain, which other forces came to join	
12		Fusion of regional savings banks, which created Bankia	
<b>2009</b>			
1	Government announces several investment policies and a Robin Hood tax to help the middle class	Creation of the PAH in Catalonia	German government presents a new plan to support banks
2			
3	General strike (by one trade union – CGTP) against the labour code + demonstration (200,000); Public workers' general strike	Regional elections in the Basque Country, where the PSE wins; Regional elections in Galicia, where the PP wins	
4			After months of protest as part of the "Pots and Pans Revolution" in Iceland against the banks' and government's management of the financial crisis, the country elects a new left-wing government
5	Teachers' protest in Lisbon (55-70,000 protestors)		
6	European Parliament Elections – the PSD wins with 31.71%	European Parliament Elections – the PP wins with 42.12%	European Parliament Elections
7		Week of protests by <i>Rompamos el Silencio</i>	
8			
9	National elections, in which the PS wins but loses majority previously held		
10	Municipal/local elections – Socialist Party pulls ahead in the number of municipalities controlled	Demonstrations against the Abortion Law Reform (250,000)	PASOK wins early elections in Greece
11			
12	Financial rating cut by agencies	Budget for 2010 incorporates first austerity measures; Manifesto with 50,000 signatures against Sinde Law	Greek plan to cut deficit after discovering it is higher than expected; ratings agencies pressure both Greece and Portugal

	Portugal	Spain	Europe/World
	<b>2010</b>		
1	Privatisation of one of the bailed-out banks (BPN); government launches investment plan; first signs that the government wants to reduce deficit; CDS helps PS approve the budget for 2010	Spain launches an austerity package; <i>Compromís</i> is created in the Community of Valencia as a political coalition between <i>Bloc Nacionalista Valencià</i> , <i>Iniciativa del Poble Valencià</i> and Greens to run in the upcoming elections of 2011; Demonstration in Galicia (Contra o Decretazo do Galego – 40,000; Queremos Galego, parties and trade unions)	Greece announces a “Stability and Growth” plan backed by the EU, unleashing strong protests in the following months
2	Suspension of infrastructure investment is announced		
3	1st austerity package for 2010-2013 approved in Parliament with abstention of the PSD (main opposition party); General strike by both trade unions in the public sector (UGT and CGTP); pressure from ratings agencies continues; new leadership in the PSD (Pedro Passos Coelho); Budget revised with more austerity measures (abstention of PSD and CDS)		
4	European Commission says that ongoing austerity is not enough; interest rates rise; new austerity package negotiated between the PS and the PSD		Negotiations for Greece’s bailout plan start, and are approved a month later
5	2 <sup>nd</sup> austerity Package (PEC II) approved the following month; PCP proposes a vote of no confidence in the government, which is rejected with the abstention of the PSD and the CDS-PP; Demonstration by the public sector unions (CGTP + UGT) (300,000)	Spanish government approves an austerity plan with 5% wage cuts for public workers – extraordinary measures to reduce public spending; <i>Plataforma Queremos Galego</i> protests in Galicia; General strike in the Basque Country; Last week of protests by <i>Rompamos el Silencio</i>	Emergency fund created by the EU; Austerity plan in Italy
6		Labour Reform; Constitutional Court revokes the Statute of Autonomy approved in 2006; General Strike in the whole country; General Strike in the Basque Country	EU demands structural reforms to Portugal and Spain

	Portugal	Spain	Europe/World
7		Demonstration in Barcelona against the decision of the Constitutional Court about the Statute of Autonomy (1 million)	Ratings agencies pressure Ireland
8			
9	New austerity package announced (approved in November) – PEC3; Government announces cuts in public sector wages	General strike (CCOO, UGT, CGT) in Spain to protest against cuts, retirement age, pension freezes and Labour Reform (1 <sup>st</sup> in 8 years); ETA announces the end of their attacks	
10			
11	General Strike by both Trade Unions (UGT and CGTP) against the wage cuts to public sector workers announced by the government; Budget approved with abstention of the main opposition party (PSD)	PAH launches its campaign <i>Stop Desahucios</i> ; Elections in Catalonia (CiU wins)	Ireland asks for external intervention (bailout)
12		December – budget for 2011 approved	Beginning of the “Arab Spring” with Tunisia revolt, which spreads quickly to other countries in the Mediterranean basin. Algeria follows the same path by the end of the month.
<b>2011</b>			
1	Cavaco Silva re-elected as President; European Union pressures for a bailout	General strike against the pensions reform organised by the ELA, LAB, CIG, CGT and the CNT in Catalonia, Galicia, Basque Country and Navarra	Protests start in Jordan, Oman, Egypt, Yemen
2		Creation of <i>Juventud Sin Futuro</i> and <i>Democracia Real, Ya!</i>	Protests in Libya, Kuwait, Morocco, Lebanon, Syria
3	Vote of no confidence in the government by the BE (abstention of PSD and CDS); 4 <sup>th</sup> austerity package is presented by the government, but does not have enough support in Parliament to be approved; Government resigns; <i>Geração à Rasca</i> protest all over the country against precarity (500,000); José Sócrates re-elected as leader of PS		

	Portugal	Spain	Europe/World
4	External intervention requested by the government and negotiations with Troika begin – PSD and CDS participate, but BE and PCP refuse	Zapatero announces that he will not stand for re-election; <i>Juventud Sin Futuro</i> organizes its first protest	
5	Bailout approved and signed; <i>Acampada do Rossio</i> in solidarity with 15M in Spain (lasts 3 weeks); CGTP demo (65,000)	15M emerges in Spain, lasting for several months camped out in several squares across the country, large demonstrations; PSOE loses local elections	
6	National elections, new government (coalition between the PSD and the CDS-PP); Rui Tavares breaks with the BE and joins the Greens in the European Parliament	Protest blocks Catalan Parliament; Demonstration against the Euroagreement (global action)	“Haircut” in Greece; Mario Draghi is nominated President of the European Central Bank
7	Additional austerity measures announced; António José Seguro elected as new leader of the PS	<i>Comunidad de Madrid</i> announces cuts in education leading to mobilisation in the sector ( <i>Marea Verde</i> )	European Stability Mechanism (ESM) created by the EU; New bailout for Greece
8		Summer: decentralisation and formation of the 15M local assemblies	Riots in the UK
9	1 <sup>st</sup> evaluation changes the MoU – additional austerity measures announced; Constitutional Court approves measures after some MPs ask for them to be revised	Budget equilibrium inscribed in the Constitution in Spain (Constitutional Reform); <i>Marea Verde</i> start their campaign of mobilisation with protests and strikes	New austerity package in Italy; Occupy Wall Street in New York (USA) starts a wave of protests all over the country
10	PM announces more cuts to the Christmas and Holiday allowances for public workers; Global Action Day Demonstration (100,000); Big CGTP demonstration (130,000)	Global Action Day Demonstration; ETA declares the official end of its activities	
11	General Strike by both trade unions (UGT and CGTP) against the measures announced by the PM in the previous month; Demonstration by public sector trade unions (190,000); Budget for 2012 approved	The PP wins national elections in Spain (biggest majority in 25 years)	Government of National Unity in Greece
12	PM suggests that the Golden Rule to block deficits should be inscribed in the Constitution; <i>Ruptura/Fer</i> leaves the BE and later forms <i>Movimento Alternativa Socialista</i> (MAS)		

	Portugal	Spain	Europe/World
<b>2012</b>			
1	Social Concertation Agreement between UGT and Patronal Confederation reducing unemployment benefits, holidays and collective negotiation rights; Troika insists on the TSU measure that would decrease the private sector contribution to social security while increasing that of workers; 150 protest – confrontations with far right	Deal for employment and collective negotiation signed by the CEOE, UGT and CCOO	
2	CGTP demonstration	Government announces Labour Reform; Valencian Spring (students' protest); Alfredo Pérez Rubalcaba becomes PSOE leader	Greece gets a 2nd bailout
3	General strike and demonstration (100,000) by CGTP in response to the January social concertation agreement, confrontations between the protesters and the PSP in <i>Largo do Chiado</i> ; Amended budget is approved	General Strike + Demonstrations against the Labour Reform; Elections in Andalucía, PP wins with relative majority, but PSOE and IU strike a pact to get into government	Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union
4	Portugal is the 1st country to ratify the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union; <i>Fontinha</i> school in Oporto is occupied	Schism in DRY	
5	Global Spring; "Manifesto para uma Esquerda Livre" is launched (this group would later join CDA and found a new party, LIVRE); A building in <i>São Lazaro</i> (Lisbon) is occupied	Anniversary of 15M; Global Spring; General strike in the education sector; Miners' protests	
6	Vote of no confidence in the right-wing coalition government by the PCP	Nationalisation of Bankia; Bankia starts to be investigated; 200,000 demonstrate in Madrid against the cuts in social rights by the government	
7	Constitutional Court considers cuts to the Christmas and Holiday allowances proposed by the government unconstitutional (OE 2012)	Spain gets assistance from the ESM to address financial sector and banks issues; Government announces extra austerity measures + helps different regions to pay their debt; CCOO and UGT create <i>Cumbre Social</i>	New Democracy (center-right) wins elections in Greece; Mario Draghi announces that the ECB will do "whatever it takes to preserve the euro"

	Portugal	Spain	Europe/World
8			
9	Additional measures announced (TSU) but withdrawn after a national demonstration, government crisis and presidential intervention through a State Council; 1st demonstration by QSLT (1 million people); Demonstration at <i>Conselho de Estado</i> (10,000); Demonstration by Trade Union (CGTP) (300,000) - <i>Terreiro do Povo</i> ; September-December is called Hot Autumn	Diada (Catalonia); 1 <sup>st</sup> and 2 <sup>nd</sup> <i>Rodea al Congreso</i> in Madrid with violence and arrests	
10	Vote of no confidence by PCP; Demonstration for Culture in Lisbon (QSLT) (100,000); "Siege" of the Parliament is called by more autonomist groups; CDA meets for the first time	Lasquetty plan is announced (cuts in the health sector in Madrid); Regional elections in Galicia and Basque Country – Pablo Iglesias and Inigo Errejón as advisors in the campaign in Galicia; PNV wins; 3 <sup>rd</sup> <i>Rodeo al Congreso</i>	
11	European General Strike (in Portugal against the new budget) – ends with a police charge; PS votes against the budget for 2013; Francisco Louçã leaves the coordination of the BE	European General Strike; Elections in Catalonia (CiU - Artur Mas elected president); <i>Marea Blanca</i> emerges to contest the Madrid health policies (petitions, occupations, demonstrations, strikes)	European General Strike: coordinated action between Spain, Portugal, Greece and Cyprus
12			
<b>2013</b>			
1	Return to the bond market	Caso Barcenas starts to be judged; <i>Party X</i> is created	
2		<i>Marea Blanca</i> protests across the country; Demonstrations against austerity and Rajoy; Demonstration <i>Marea Ciudadana</i>	
3	Demonstration against austerity (QSLT) which is preceded by a campaign of "Grandoladas" (500,000); Economic growth restarts	PAH at the Congress – ILP (1.5 million signatures collected); <i>escraches</i> are carried out against the politicians that refuse the ILP	Extension of adjustment programmes approved for Portugal, Ireland and Greece; bailout of Cyprus
4	Vote of no confidence by the PS; Constitutional Court declares measures proposed at the OE2013 unconstitutional (one of the measures was the suspension of holiday subsidies in the private sector)	Demonstration by JSF – <i>No nos vamos, nos echan</i>	

	Portugal	Spain	Europe/World
5		First general strike in public education sector against LOMCE (100,000)	
6	General strike/demonstration by trade unions (CGTP and UGT) against austerity measures and cuts in the public sector; Demonstration against austerity (QSLT) - People's Spring – <i>Povos unidos contra a Troika</i> ; Budget amendments	<i>Alternativas desde Abajo</i> meets in Madrid, convened and led by <i>Izquierda Anticapitalista</i> , to run 2015 local elections; at the same time IA participates in the construction of <i>Podemos</i>	
7	Government crisis (resignation of coalition partner) which is solved at the end of the month with the coalition being redesigned after PR pushes for a Grand Coalition (PS, PSD, CDS); Vote of no confidence by the Greens		
8	Constitutional Court considers cuts proposed by the government unconstitutional; PM mentions possibility of a new bailout due to the constitutional court's decision		
9	Mariana Mortágua replaces Ana Drago in Parliament	Diada (Catalonia); Demonstration in Madrid defending public health systems; Demonstrations in Balears against the ongoing education reform (110,000)	
10	Local elections with PS winning more municipalities; CGTP demonstration in Lisbon	2 <sup>nd</sup> general strike in the education sector against LOMCE; Strike at Panrico (conflict lasts for more than a year); Demonstration against ETA by AVT (100,000);	
11	Budget for 2014 approved; Public sector general strike (support from both trade unions) and demonstration (50,000)	1.7 million signatures are collected against LOMCE; Pro-life groups pressure government to change the abortion law; <i>Cumbre Social</i> demonstrates to defend public services/goods; LOMCE approved; <i>Ley Mordaza</i> (Gag Law) approved;	End of the bailout programme without additional assistance required in Ireland
12	<i>Manifesto 3D</i> for a convergence of the Left in the European Parliament Elections is launched; Constitutional Court considers cuts proposed by the government unconstitutional	Protests against the new abortion law ( <i>Reforma Gallardon</i> ); Economic growth restarts	

	Portugal	Spain	Europe/World
	<b>2014</b>		
1	Standard & Poor's takes Portugal out of observation; BE, Greens and PCP ask for supervision of 2014 Budget; Convergence on the left fails; Strike at "Linha de Saúde 24" (precarious health workers)	<i>Podemos</i> is launched/created; IA leaves <i>Alternativas desde Abajo</i> and <i>Colectivo en Rede</i> is created by activists as an alternative; <i>Plan Lasquetty</i> is defeated (he resigns after <i>Tribunal Superior de Justicia de Madrid</i> paralyzed the process); Protest in Burgos (Gamonal) against the redesign of street and public spaces spreads to other cities in the country; Strike at Coca-Cola in Madrid starts	
2			
3	LIVRE, a new left-wing party, is created to run in the European Parliament Elections; "Manifesto dos 74" for the restructuring of debt is launched	A student strike starts with demonstrations in 50 cities. They protest against budget cuts in education, the LOMCE law, low quality of education and the dismissal of thousands of teachers: about 50 people detained by police; <i>Marchas por la Dignidad</i>	
4	Separate celebrations of the 25 <sup>th</sup> of April; <i>Rios ao Carmo</i>		
5	European Parliament Elections; End of the bailout programme without additional assistance required; Constitutional Court declares measures proposed at the OE2014 unconstitutional	European Elections; <i>Podemos</i> elects 5 MEPs	European Parliament Elections
6		<i>Manifesto Guayem Barcelona</i> calls for a transversal candidacy in Barcelona (later they would change their name to <i>Barcelona en Comú</i> ); <i>Jornadas Municipalia</i> in Madrid, which would change its name to <i>Ganemos Madrid</i> ; King Juan Carlos I abdicates and his son Filipe takes over – republican protests emerge as a result	
7	<i>Fórum Manifesto</i> leaves the BE; Constitutional Court approve CES (extraordinary contribution of solidarity)	New leadership in the PSOE (Pedro Sánchez)	
8	Intervention in one of Portugal's main banks (BES) (crisis started the months before) – as a consequence <i>Novo Banco</i> is created		

	Portugal	Spain	Europe/World
9	New leadership in the PS (António Costa)	<i>Reforma Gallardon</i> stops – Gallardon resigns and Rajoy takes the bill out; <i>Diada</i> (Catalonia)	
10	Minimum wage rises; BES Inquiry Commission starts and lasts until May	<i>Operación Púnica</i> starts; <i>Podemos</i> holds its first and constitutive Citizens' Assembly – <i>Vista Alegre</i> ; <i>Barcelona en Comú</i> holds an open day ( <i>jornadas</i> ) to produce an ethical code by consensus, all the parties from the left participate; corruption scandal <i>Tarjetas Black</i> comes to light	
11	BE convention: Catarina Martins remains the sole coordinator of the party; former PM José Sócrates is arrested under suspicion of corruption	Referendum in Catalonia; <i>Ganemos Madrid</i> makes its debut	
12		Congress approves <i>Ley Mordaza</i> (starts in 2015); Tania Sanchez and Mauricio Valente win the primary elections in IU Madrid	
<b>2015</b>			
1		<i>Ciudadanos</i> starts emerging at national level; <i>Ganemos</i> and <i>Podemos</i> reach an agreement to create <i>Ahora Madrid</i> to run in the municipal elections; <i>Marcha del Cambio</i> ( <i>Podemos</i> ) (100,000)	Syriza wins the legislative elections in Greece and forms government. ECB starts quantitative easing
2		After celebrating deals between the whole of the left in Catalonia (excluding PSC and CUP) Ada Colau presents her candidacy in Barcelona ( <i>Barcelona en Comú</i> ); Tania Sanchez leaves IU (Madrid) and launches <i>Convocatoria Por Madrid</i> ; Alberto Garzon is chosen as IU's candidate for the general election	
3	A new left-wing party called AGIR founded	<i>Ahora Madrid</i> is launched as a confluence of movements, associations and parties; 3 <sup>rd</sup> edition of <i>Marchas por la Dignidad</i>	
4			
5		<i>Barcelona en Comú</i> wins elections; <i>Ahora Madrid</i> is 2 <sup>nd</sup> , but is elected with support of PSOE	

Portugal	Spain	Europe/World
6	<i>Ahora en Común</i> is created (later <i>Unidad Popular</i> is added to the name); IU (federal) decides to expel IU-CM for corruption and obstacles to candidates (which leads to the creation of a new party at the regional level)	
7	<i>Catalunya Sí que es Pot</i> is created to run in the upcoming regional elections in Catalonia, integrating <i>Equo</i> , <i>EUiA</i> , <i>ICS</i> and <i>Podem</i>	Bailout referendum in Greece – rejected by 61%.
8		New MoU is agreed in Greece; Tsipras resigns and calls for snap elections in Greece
9	Diada (Catalonia); Elections in Catalonia – JxSi wins elections	Syriza wins the legislative elections in Greece and forms government
10		
11	<i>En Marea</i> (Galicia) is formed as an electoral coalition of <i>Anova</i> , <i>Podemos</i> and <i>Esquerda Unida</i> to run in the General elections in Galicia. Protest against gender violence	
12	General elections – no clear majority in Parliament, and after months of impasse new elections are held in June 2016	

Sources: Observatório sobre Crisis e Alternativas (<https://ces.uc.pt/observatorios/crisalt/>); 15Mpedia (<https://15mpedia.org/wiki/Portada>); *El País*; *Diário de Notícias*; Miley (2017); Portos (2016, 2017); Cruz (2013); Salmon (2017); Interviews and fieldwork observations;

## Appendix II Interviews

### Portugal

Interviewee	Groups
1	Manifesto por Uma Esquerda Livre, Congresso Democrático das Alternativas, Livre, Tempo de Avançar
2	Congresso Democrático das Alternativas, Manifesto 3D, Fórum Manifesto, Tempo de Avançar
3	Bloco de Esquerda, Fórum Manifesto, Congresso Democrático das Alternativas, Tempo de Avançar
4	Bloco de Esquerda, Fórum Manifesto, Congresso Democrático das Alternativas, Tempo de Avançar
5	Bloco de Esquerda, Manifesto por Uma Esquerda Livre, Congresso Democrático das Alternativas, Livre, Tempo de Avançar
6	Bloco de Esquerda, Congresso Democrático das Alternativas
7	Congresso Democrático das Alternativas, Fórum Manifesto
8 (Raquel Freire)*	Geração à Rasca, Congresso Democrático das Alternativas
9	Partido Comunista Português
10	Bloco de Esquerda, Congresso Democrático das Alternativas
11	Bloco de Esquerda, Precários Inflexíveis
12	Bloco de Esquerda, Autonomist Groups, Acampada, Geração à Rasca, Rios ao Carmo, 15 de Outubro
13	Autonomist Groups, Acampada, 15 de Outubro, Rios ao Carmo
14	Autonomist Groups, Acampada, 15 de Outubro
15	Bloco de Esquerda, Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses
16	Partido Comunista Português, Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses
17	CGTP, Partido Comunista Português
18	Partido Comunista Português, Que se Lixe a Troika, Juntos Podemos
19	Que se Lixe a Troika, Juntos Podemos, Agir
20	Que se Lixe a Troika
21	Que se Lixe a Troika, Bloco de Esquerda, Acampada, 15O
22	Autonomists, Police Violence
23	Partido Socialista

\* The interviewee asked to be identified.

## Spain

Interviewee	Groups
1	15M
2	15M, Autonomist and Ecologist groups
3	15M, Mareas Ciudadanas, Asembleas de Barrio, Alternativas desde Abajo-Ganemos-Ahora Madrid
4	15M, Izquierda Unida, Feminists, Asembleas de Barrio, Ganemos-Ahora Madrid
5	15M
6	15M, Internet based action
7	Marea Verde, Mareas Ciudadanas, Comisiones Obreras, Izquierda Unida, 15M
8	Comisiones Obreras, Izquierda Unida, Anticapitalistas, Podemos
9	Izquierda Unida, Convocatoria por Madrid, Podemos
10	Unidad Popular/Izquierda Unida
11	Partido Comunista Español, 15M
12	Podemos
13	Izquierda Unida, Anticapitalistas, Podemos
14	Marea Blanca
15	15M, PAH, Feminist groups, Alternativas desde Abajo-Ganemos-Ahora Madrid
16	Podemos
17	15M, Marea Blanca, Autonomist Groups
18	15M, Autonomist Groups
19	15M
20	Ecologistas en Accion, 15M
21	Podemos, Complutense Groups

## Appendix III Protest Event Analysis Codebook

### Introduction

In this Appendix I will define the main guidelines of the codebook of the Protest Event Analysis I have conducted for this research. Despite being inspired by previous research, I have adapted the codebook to the objectives at hand.

### What constitutes an event? Procedures and delimitation

One of the main issues that emerged during the coding process was the delimitation of what constitutes an event. The main question that arose was whether particular events constituted multiple or single events. The following questions emerged:

- 1 If a protest event extends across time without gaps, does that constitute one event or several? In the same vein, if there are gaps, but they are coordinated, is it one or several events?
- 2 Does a protest happening in different locations simultaneously with a single organiser constitute one event or several?
- 3 What if there is a protest that is coordinated across time, but in different locations?

It is possible to observe three variables that are pivotal in this delimitation: actor, time and space. The first logical consequence of this is that whenever a different actor organises an event this constitutes a different event. As such, the real question here is how space and time change for the same organisation. I took into account the following:

	Same Actor	Time continuity	
		No	Yes
Space continuity	No	Different events, e.g.: demo or strike in different time or space	Different events, e.g.: coordinated demonstrations that last several days in a row but the locations are different
	Yes	Different events, e.g.: strike or demonstrations that happen in the same place, but across time in a coordinated way	Same event, e.g.: strike or sit-down that lasts several days in a row

## Data collection and coding process

No sampling was done to collect data; instead of selecting various days per week, I have collected all the data concerning protest events, taking into consideration the definition of event, claim, actor and period. This involved going through the online daily archives of each newspaper to collate all of the articles about protest events into a single document in order to code them into the database. The coding followed a codebook (next section) with a clear definition of the variables, but this was refined and improved throughout the coding process. The coding process followed two stages: (1) reading each article, summing up all the information in an excel spreadsheet with the terms used by the newspapers; (2) standardising the information following the codebook and transferring it to SPSS.

## Codebook

The codebook was organised according to the four dimensions defined in the methods chapter: (1) time and space; (2) actors; (3) claims and issues; (4) modes of protest.

Variable name	Description	Measurement
<b>Origins of the Information</b>		
Event code	Code of each event	
Number of sources	Number of newspaper articles reporting the protest	
<b>Time and Space</b>		
Country		(1) Portugal; (2) Spain
Year, Half-Year, Three Months and Month	Different variables that allow for the measurement of when the event happened	Year – 2009 to 2015 Half-Year – 2009(1) to 2015(2) Three Months – 2009(1) to 2015(4) Month – 2009(1) to 2015(12)
Location Portugal	Location of the Event in Portugal	(1) National; (2) Disperse; (3) Lisbon Area; (4) North; (5) Center; (6) Algarve; (7) Alentejo; (8) Madeira & Açores

<b>Variable name</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Measurement</b>
Location Spain	Location of the Event in Spain	(1) Andalusia; (2) Aragon; (3) Asturias; (4) Balears; (5) Canarias; (6) Cantabria; (7) Castilla y Leon; (8) Castilla-La Mancha; (9) Catalonia; (10) Comunidad Madrid; (11) Comunidad Valenciana; (12) Disperse; (13) Extremadura; (14) Galicia; (15) La Rioja; (16) Melilla; (17) Navarra; (18) Pais Vasco; (19) Region de Murcia; (20) National;
<b>Actors</b>		
Actors – Social Movements and Civil Society – Labour and Trade Unions – Political Parties	Three variables that indicate who was involved in the organisation of the protest	(1) Organiser; (2) Not an organiser
Other actors support – Social Movements and Civil Society – Labour and Trade Unions – Political Parties	Three variables that indicate who supported the protest	(1) Supporter; (2) Not a supporter
<b>Claims and Issues</b>		
Economic – Austerity – Work – Consumers – Producers	Variables that indicate the presence of these claims and issues in the protest	(1) Present; (2) Not Present
Political – Representation and Participation – State and Inclusion – International Relations		

Variable name	Description	Measurement
Social		
– Education		
– Health		
– Housing		
– Other		
Cultural		
– Identity Politics		
– Neighbourhood, Urban Issues and Environment		
– Other		
Modes of Protest		
Repertoire	Type of action	(1) Demonstration/march; (2) Strikes (3) Disruptive (e.g. Occupation, Boycott); (4) Written Demands (e.g. Manifesto, Petition)
Target Portugal	To whom are the protests directed	(1) Government; (2) Parliament; (3) Prime Minister; (4) Minister/Ministries; (5) Local Authorities; (6) Banks/Company/Business; (7) Society; (8) International Actors; (9) President
Target Spain	To whom are the protests directed	(1) Government; (2) Parliament; (3) Prime Minister; (4) Minister/Ministries; (5) Local Authorities; (6) Banks/Company/Business; (7) Society; (8) International Actors; (9) King; (10) Regional Government
Place	Place where the protest happened	(1) NA; (2) Public Space; (3) Official building/public infrastructure (inside or in front of); (4) Private company/location (inside or in front of); (5) Other
Length	Number of days the event lasted	(1) 1 day or less; (2) 2-5 days; (3) >5 days
Violence	If there was violence during the event	(1) Yes; (2) No

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