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Title

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Abstract

Introducing the special issue on global protest and democracy since 2011, this article surveys the key dimensions of the debate. It provides a critical overview of significant protest events in the post-2011 period and explores a range of the analytical tools that may be used to understand them, before proceeding to identify, disaggregate and draw into question some of the major claims which have emerged in literature on the post-2011 mobilizations. The articles contained within this volume are then outlined, revealing the novel and nuanced insights provided by the contributors with respect to the post-2011 protests' composition, mobilization forms, frames, democratic practices, and interrelationships with other actors in pursuit of democratic reform. The article concludes with a discussion of the opportunities for further research into protest and democracy.

Introduction

The cycle of protests since 2011 rapidly captured the public imagination, as well as the attention of analysts, commentators, and academics around the world. This was due both to the dynamic nature of

the protests – with millions of individuals appearing to mobilize 'spontaneously' in a rapid succession of events – and their geographical spread – from the streets of Madrid to squares in Cairo, New York, Istanbul, Santiago, and Kiev, among many others. In a context marked by global economic crisis and the accentuation of political and economic inequalities under austerity, observers have treated these mobilizations as a new global swing of the Polanyian pendulum. The post-2011 protests have been modelled as a symptom of the widespread dissatisfaction of citizens across the world with the diverse asymmetries pervading contemporary societies and the political (economic) projects that sustain them, be they democratic or not (Della Porta & Mattoni 2014).

Many of these events, from Occupy Wall Street to the 'Arab Spring', are said to have reaffirmed the ever-present transformational potential of collective action and social movements, bringing to mind Alain Touraine's (1981: 1) claim that people 'make their own history: social life is produced by cultural achievements and social conflicts, and at the heart of society burns the fire of social movements'. As many times before, people raised their voices and came together, appearing to seek to expand their rights, safeguard and improve their living conditions, oppose oppression, challenge existing categories and boundaries, and assert their identities and values. Across North and South, in liberal democracies and repressive autocracies, there have been calls for a change of existing political leaderships, institutional arrangements, and political projects. Protest actions, from mass assemblages and public space occupations to art interventions and digital campaigns, have embodied certain era-defining claims - against austerity and socio-economic inequality, against the deleterious consequences of market forces, as well as the ongoing struggle for enhanced democracy. In the process, new political actors, groups, and leaderships appear to have surfaced, *some* authorities have lost office, *some* dictators have fled, and *some* reforms have been made.

2016 marks five years since the beginning of the wave of global protests under discussion in this special issue. With some critical distance, it is possible to take stock and reflect on the struggles, advances, retreats, and unforeseen developments since 2011. Overcoming the optimism triggered in the early phases of the 'Arab Spring' and developments in Europe (Della Porta 2013), we are now forced to address some tragic outcomes in Egypt, Libya, and Syria (Davies 2014), the rising tide of fundamentalist and nationalist ideologies, and the fading visibility of the Occupy Movement in its

various manifestations (New York, London, Kuala Lumpur and Hong Kong, among others). Moreover, for all their espoused novelty, these so-called 'networks of outrage and hope' (Castells 2012) have been challenged and in some cases subsumed by a set of broadly familiar factors and antagonists including geopolitical, territorial and economic powers and interests. If one takes Touraine's view, this is hardly surprising since from that perspective history is formed by two ever-battling forces: one that seeks to break down the existing order by cultural innovation and social mobilization, and another that seeks to stabilize these struggles into organization, order, and power (Touraine 1981).

In light of these observations, this special issue explores and discusses the meaning of the post-2011 wave of protest for international politics and global democracy, inquiring whether these '21st century protests' do in fact mark a new stage in the development of social mobilization and an ostensibly new democratising trend. Or, are they rather a recurrent symptom of the structural asymmetries lingering within modern polities in a neoliberal and territorialized context? This special issue combines critical and reflective studies of some of the principal post-2011 protest episodes, including experiences in the Middle East, the USA, and Europe. However, it also highlights some 'less visible' manifestations of contentious politics in locations such as Armenia and Chile. The issue aims to shed light on a number of questions relating to the complex the relationship between these mobilisations, democratisation, and state power in a globalised world (Scholte 2014; Tilly & Tarrow 2007). On the one hand, we have questions of significance and transcendence: to what extent it is possible to frame and examine these events through a global and/or transnational lens? Even if many observers and activists rely on 'global' master frames and cosmopolitan calls for revamping democracy and opposing neoliberalism, many protesters, even if inspired by ideas and repertoires from abroad, seemingly target their nation states with specific calls for improving public services, enhancing transparency, and augmenting efficiency. In this regard, have efforts to cast developments as part of a global fight against neoliberalism and for democracy clouded more localized contentious claims? What, then, is novel about these mobilizations, beyond the widespread use of social media technologies to diffuse frames, symbols, and slogans? What new actors, spaces, and repertoires have emerged and how have they impacted in the outcomes of the mobilizations?

This special issue is also concerned with the achievements of these movements and the extent to which they have contributed in some form the status quo in a significant and sustainable manner. Do we have better democratic institutions as a result of the energy spent in the street? As Giugni (1998) once asked 'Was it worth the effort?' It is evident that citizens around the world appear to be more connected and in certain aspects may have more voice, but is there any evidence that governments and policy makers are 'listening' as a result of this (Dobson 2014; Flinders 2015)? Lastly, there is a concern for the concepts, categories, and methods available to explore and interpret these events. Thus, during a special workshop held during the 2015 BISA Annual Conference, attended by many of the contributors to this issue, one participant challenged the need for new conceptual and theoretical approaches to study contentious actions and social movements. This is a valid question: do existing conceptual tools and categories really fall short in their application and ability to explain current events? What, if anything, are we missing?

We are certain that any potential answers provided by the articles ahead will be insufficient fully to address these concerns, and some of their insights may become rapidly obsolete. Nonetheless, we consider that out of this collective enterprise a more nuanced and critical perspective emerges regarding the relationship between collective action and democracy in the 21st century; a perspective that places greater emphasis not on what we want these events to mean, but the achievements, limitations, and recurrent challenges faced by groups of people struggling for political change. The contribution of this special issue is further explained and developed in the following four sections, correspondingly providing an historical and regional overview of the main contentious events since 2011, a discussion of key definitions and general theoretical frameworks conventionally used to conceive the link between protest and global democracy, a brief analysis of the main premises and assumptions in existing work, and a review of the different articles in this special issue and how they engage with these assumptions. The final section concludes by outlining remaining gaps and avenues for further research.

A new protest wave? An overview of key events

Unpacking the historical significance of the latest wave of protests is beyond the scope and possibilities of this special issue. However, it is indeed possible to provide a background discussion of some general considerations in order to (i) delineate the particularities of recent events in different regions, and (ii) critically contrast these features against previous readings of 'grand' movements and contentious waves, in particular as many observers have attributed the latest series of protests with a distinctive if not superlative character. Hence, British journalist Paul Mason (2013), in his book 'Why it's kicking off everywhere', suggested that we have been witnessing a 'global revolt' of those left out in an exhausted system of global capitalism, revolts re-energized by the democratizing and mobilizing power of social media and the internet. For scholars such as Manuel Castells (2012: 2), the mass protests of the 21st century come to represent an era-defining crisis of legitimacy triggered by the 'cynicism and arrogance' of financial, cultural, and political elites, resulting in an ecumenical, emotional, and networked response against injustice. Similarly, Cristina Fominaya (2014: 1) evaluates recent protests as an indication that people around the world are 'questioning the ability of traditional political actors to represent their interests, and are increasingly seeking a more direct and unmediated relation to power'. Other authors have drawn more limited conclusions, but it is rare to find a comment on the contentious events taking place worldwide since 2011 that does not establish a degree of continuity and inspiration with mobilizations triggered, according to the broad consensus, by the self-immolation of Mohamed Bouazizi in Tunisia in December 2010.

It is notable that in this process, recent events have gained a certain distance from two previous major cycles of 'transnational' contention that marked the entry to the current millennium: the global justice movement (GJM) and the 'colour revolutions' in the post-Soviet world. Nonetheless, these previous waves of contention indicated some of the major tropes that are still found in the analyses of recent mobilizations. Thus, the GJM came to be considered as a 'movement of movements', presenting a sustained and indeed global challenge 'from below' to the main institutions of neoliberal globalization (Moghadam 2009: 91), and a transnational field of meanings 'where actions, images, discourses, and tactics flow from one continent to another via worldwide communication networks in real time' (Juris 2004: 345). Similarly, as with the 'Arab Spring' almost a decade later, the revolutionary movements

that engulfed Georgia, Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, and Serbia, among other countries, were initially considered as 'second-stage revolutions' that would bring the laggards of the third democratization wave up to date with rest of the Western World (Kalandadze & Orenstein 2009: 1403). Therefore, while the former are indicative that this is not the first time that neoliberal grievances have mobilized protests around much of the world and the latter serve as a reminder of the limits of 'people power' and the importance of contextualizing contentious struggles (Way 2008), these insights seem to have receded into the background, often supporting simplistic and optimistic analyses about the novelty and possibilities of social mobilization in the internet age. Interestingly, Kurt Weyland (2012) attributed both the rapid spread and the limited results of 'Arab Spring' mobilizations in terms of altering the status quo to 'cognitive shortcuts', by which observers and activists stretched the significance of the Tunisian 'success', overestimated parallelism with their own countries, and jumped to overly optimistic conclusions.[1]

So what is indeed new? What do recent mobilizations tell us regarding the relationship between protest and democracy? A review of some of the main protests since 2011 suggests that similar axes of (structural) tension – i.e. the global and the local, market and society, institutions and the people – continue to shape the manner in which the link between mobilization, protest, and democracy is conceived, both among scholars and activists. Thus, following the events in Tunisia and its rapid contagion to Egypt, Bahrain, Libya, Syria, Yemen, Morocco, and South Sudan, among others, the 'Arab Spring' became the main(stream) tag under which developments in the Middle East and North Africa were framed. Analysts were quick to comment on the reasons behind the rapid propagation of the protests, the intensity of social contention, capable of destabilizing regimes that had previously enjoyed a substantial degree of stability, and on the possibilities opened by these 'revolutions'. Two main aspects were highlighted. First, authors acknowledged the impact of new social media as a mobilizing, transnationalizing, and empowering tool for the citizenry, particularly in societies characterized by low levels of civil society development, the absence of open media, and young populations (Khondker 2011; Lotan et al. 2011; Breuer et al. 2014). Twitter, Facebook, and WhatsApp were seen as a game-changer, enabling oppressed and disorganized majorities to link with each other and with the outside world, thus (potentially) initiating a new era in terms of democratization, civil

activism, and political participation (Howard & Hussain 2013). On the other hand, for authors such as Lisa Anderson (2011) the key question remains to understand how similar claims – calls for personal dignity, opposition to ineffectual and corrupt governments, and the lack of opportunities and unemployment – resonated in particular political environments, and the manner in which demands and movements would interact with opponents and existing political structures. In her view, more than ideas, tactics, and moral support from abroad, these latter aspects would determine the outcome of the protests (and the rather tragic evolution of developments in the region may validate her suggestion, confirming the relevance of political opportunity structures as an explanatory factor).

Irrespective of outcomes, the 'Arab Spring' was portrayed as the inspiration for many of the subsequent mobilizations taking place in North America, Europe, and other regions, particularly in terms of the consolidation of 'new' contentious repertoires and performances, such as the mass occupation of public spaces and the widespread use of social media as a basic mobilizing tool (Castells 2012; Bennett & Segerberg 2012). Under the shadow of the 2008 financial crisis, where the exhaustion of a financial and debt-led model of accumulation contributed to the reduction of social and welfare benefits in some of the wealthiest countries in the world, popular claims appeared to assume the form of a widespread rejection of the political class and the economic status quo, considered to favour economic elites and to be conducive to socio-economic inequality (Castañeda 2012). In this manner, the mobilizations that affected the US and various countries in Europe were portrayed as presenting a challenge to modern democratic institutions and liberal market values, and associated – in many instances quite directly – with the increasing electoral appeal of populist, 'radical', and far-right political alternatives. Understandably, these protests led some authors to see the continuation of GJM-type of agendas, and to examine the lingering tension between globalized market structures and national polities (Kaldor & Selchow 2013; Glasius & Pleyers 2013), while in others it renewed concerns about democratic deficits, in light of popular calls for more direct and participatory models of democratic functioning – as Spanish activists put it, a 'Real Democracy Now!' – and the proliferation of 'movements of mistrust' (Krastev 2014; Matthijs 2014).[2] For Krastev (2014, p10), the latter reflected a contradiction of modern democratic societies, as elections simultaneously lose their capacity to capture the public's imagination, and 'in most of Europe, they now give birth to governments that are saddled

with massive public distrust as soon as they take office', confronting authorities with groups that (often) do not propose clear political alternatives nor will they be satisfied with specific reforms.

The case of Turkey, in particular the long mobilizations around Gezi Park, also received substantial attention, and indicated a dual character apparently present in many of the recent mobilizations, conflating some of the themes observed during the 'Arab Spring' and the European 'indignados' protests. Thus, events in Turkey were read as an expression of 'people power' resisting both the authoritarian tendencies of the Erdoğan administration, as well as a movement rejecting developmental projects of neoliberal extraction (Farro & Demirhisar 2014). In this sense, this event represented another trope characterizing protests since 2011, particularly noticeable in mobilisations taking place in the periphery of the EU and in other developing nations: not so much demands for the radical upheaval of democracy, but rather calls for more just, responsible, and transparent administrations, and the moderation of illiberal, exclusive, and authoritarian policies (Kuymulu 2013).[3] Thus, both in Turkey and in other countries, mass protests were not so much representative of the disenfranchised and precariat sectors activated by the global financial crisis, but rather of a civilian, libertarian, and pluralistic movement – often involving students, middle-class professionals, and activists of different orientation, from feminist to Islamists – dissatisfied with the way majority politics worked (Göle 2013). Thus, a common characteristic of this third trope has been the reinvigoration of opposition and party politics, and/or the consolidation of political projects proposing some form of 'modernization'.

In this regard, there is a strong parallelism between these protests and recent mobilizations in Latin America. Differing from previous contentious experiences throughout the 1980s and 1990s, mainly defined against a background of democratic transition, neoliberal reforms, and debt-crises, many protests taking place since 2011 in countries such as Bolivia, Brazil, and Argentina challenged governments representative of the Latin American 'pink tide', the series of left-of-centre candidates, often of social movement extraction, that came to power in the early 2000s (Levitsky & Roberts 2011; Philip & Panizza 2011; Arditi 2008). In these instances, large sectors of the population that supposedly benefited by the reforms and stability brought about by these governments, appeared to be 'counter-intuitively unsatisfied with the process of change' (McNeish 2013, p. 222). This was the case during

the 2011 TIPNIS protests, where indigenous groups clashed with the first indigenous government in Bolivian history (Webber 2012; Ryan 2013), and also during the 2013 'Confederation Cup' protests in Brazil, where millions took to the streets to demand the Worker's Party government of Dilma Rousseff for improvements in transport infrastructure, health, and education (Saad-Filho 2013). In this regard, some of the mobilizations in Latin America presented a more 'middle-class', republican, and even conservative component that distinguished them markedly from those in other locations, even if claims for better democracy continued to prevail.

Lastly, the situation in East Asia, if it can synthesized at all, has been portrayed as displaying similar characteristics in terms of mass discontent against ruling parties and leaders, but often in contexts where political freedoms are restricted and where the risk of authoritarian regress cannot be dismissed (Case 2011). Thus, in countries such as Thailand and Malaysia, often viewed as representative cases of authoritarian electoral regimes, are said to have witnessed mass mobilisations calling for greater transparency, democratic reforms, and clean elections, thriving in the context regulations and mechanisms that restrict speech and assembly. In these conditions, political contention was characterized by the blurring of the distinction between movements, interest groups, and political parties (Balassiano & Pandi 2013). In Thailand, protesters were successful in challenging authority, ultimately contributing towards the ousting of Prime Minister Yingluck Shinawatra in 2014, but this was followed by a subsequent military coup and the return of a military junta.

The risks faced by pro-democracy struggles in this the region have logically drawn public and scholarly attention to the Hong Kong 'Umbrella Movement', taking place under the attentive gaze of one of the world's most successful repressive systems. Influenced by the Occupy movement and previous 'color' revolutions, the Umbrella Movement again may be portrayed as showing the dual-edge identity apparently salient in many of the 21st century mobilisations so far mentioned: one oppositional, aimed at pressuring the authorities to respect the promise of universal suffrage, the other as a secessionist challenge to the authority of the Chinese Communist Party. In this regard, the movement integrates multiple and often divergent facets, as well as many possibilities in terms of outcome: from liberal democratic reforms and the spread of cosmopolitan values, to nationalist, linguistic and even class-based tensions (Perlin 2015).

In this manner, while 'democracy' appears to be a recurrent ambition behind recent social struggles, possibly even on a greater scale than before, it is also evident that the meaning of the concept, and the mobilizing agendas that stem from these interpretations, have become increasingly diffuse and ambivalent. This is because democratic regimes are now being subjected to a type of criticism previously experienced by Communist and repressive governments: incapacity to deliver economic progress and social welfare, and lack of legitimacy in their political institutions. In this sense, and bracketing the array of possibilities opened by the supposed social media revolution, one recurring democratic dimension that can be readily attributed to recent mobilizations is arguably the erosion of the North/South divide in political contention, as economic insecurity, social inequality, and political dissatisfaction develop as apparently 'global' grievances that can resonate both in Manhattan's Zuccotti Park and in the streets of La Paz. The next section ahead unpacks wider dimensions concerning the relationship between protest and democracy since 2011.

Analysing protest and democracy since 2011: dimensions of the debate

There are numerous aspects of the protests that have taken place since 2011 and of their relationship with democracy, many more than can be covered in a single volume such as this. Before identifying the particular ways in which this volume challenges conventional interpretations of these phenomena, it is important to set out some of the key dimensions of the debate regarding protest and democracy. In this section, we shall evaluate in turn different aspects of protest, democracy, their relationship, and the factors influencing their relationship, in order to provide a general framework for understanding the position of the papers in this volume in relation to the broader debate on protest and democracy.

Dimensions of protest

While protests are widely understood to involve actions 'expressing disapproval of or objection to something' (OED), this leaves open multiple dimensions contested in the social movements literature. For instance, whose actions are to be considered: those of individuals or only joint actions? What is the focus of disapproval / objection: must it be a political or social problem or grievance? What types of actions are to be considered as protest actions: are they exclusively irregular actions beyond day to day

activities? And do protests necessarily aim to bring about change through influencing other actors? Existing literature on social movements has had a tendency to concentrate on collective rather than individual actions of protest going beyond regular activities and aiming to bring about change in respect of political and/or social problems by influencing other actors (Opp 2009).

The broad analytical toolkit offered by social movement theory helps to unpack the contested characteristics of protests since 2011 across four aspects. First, analysis of frames helps us to disaggregate the ideational dimensions of the protests. If one assumes that contemporary protests target identifiable political and/or social problems, then Benford and Snow's (2000) seminal elucidation of diagnostic, prognostic and motivational frames provides three key dimensions for unpacking contrasting perspectives. Do post-2011 protests share a common set of identified problems, and are these different from those previous mobilizations have identified? Do the solutions to these problems put forward by protesters demonstrate novel characteristics? And are new framing strategies being put forward by protesters to motivate participation in protest actions? Beyond these three aspects, one can examine the extent to which new framing processes have developed. For instance, have protests since 2011 articulated new democratic frames, or transformed existing frames? To what extent have themes such as austerity and corruption been bridged with problems of democracy? And how have protesters deployed 'master frames' to bring together otherwise disparate perspectives: do notions such as 'the 99 per cent' represent promising new master frames? (Kioupkiolis and Katsambekis 2014).

While the literature on framing helps with the identification of contrasting aspects of the ways in which protests shape ideas and understandings, that on mobilizing structures helps us to unpack the various configurations by which human and material resources are mobilized in protests. Do, for instance, protests since 2011 represent a transformation away from hierarchical and centralized forms of mobilization towards more horizontal and decentralized configurations? (Juris 2012). To what extent have organizations been replaced by network structures? Has 'scale shifted' from local to global levels or vice-versa? (Tarrow and McAdam 2005). To what extent have the social, demographic and cultural composition of protesters and their sources of financial support been transformed? And do post-2011 protests display unprecedented speed, intensity and extensity of mobilization? (Castells 2012).

One can further interrogate the extent to which protests since 2011 have implemented novel tactical repertoires. Have, for instance, social media enabled new forms of online activism, enabled the transferral of offline activism to online, or simply enhanced existing offline forms of activism? (Vegh 2003) What role have social media played in diffusion of repertoires of contention from one location to another? (Rane and Salem 2012). And have the protests since 2011 revealed the use of previously neglected forms of offline activism exploiting cultural, emotional and other dimensions of power? (Jasper 2008).

Fourth, through its exploration of opportunity structures social movement theory points us towards the significance of the context within which protests take place. Traditionally opportunity structures have been understood very narrowly in terms of governmental structures at the national level. A further area of debate in relation to the post-2011 protests, therefore, relates to the extent to which new opportunities have opened for protest groups at the global and regional levels in addition to the national, and in terms of actors beyond governments (Sikkink 2005).

Dimensions of democracy

Although there is general consensus that 'according to its etymology … "democracy" means "government, power, or rule of the people"', contemporary understandings of democracy vary considerably (Flores 2014: 105). A widely held misperception equates 'democracy' with regularly elected national governmental institutions, while more sophisticated accounts draw a contrast between 'formal' democratic institutions including 'inclusive citizenship, the rule of law, the separation of powers (executive, legislature and judiciary), including an independent judiciary capable of upholding a constitution, elected power holders, free and fair elections, freedom of expression and alternative sources of information, associational autonomy, and civilian control over the security forces' and 'substantive' democracy, defined as 'a process, which has to be continually reproduced, for maximising the opportunities for all individuals to shape their own lives and to participate in and influence debates about public decisions that affect them' (Kaldor 2008: 35).

Over the course of the 1990's it became commonplace to suggest that with the end of the Cold War and the disintegration of the Soviet Union, there had been a triumph of democracy. Even if

democratic government did not triumph everywhere, scholars contended that among the twentieth century's most important legacies to carry into the new millennium was 'the assertion of democracy as the legitimate system of government' (Archiburgi, Held and Kohler 1998:1). Holden (2013) suggests that democratic principles began to hold sway not just within nation states but beyond them too, and a raft of scholarship offered visions and challenges for 'global', 'transnational' or 'supranational' democracy (See Held 1991; 1995). Much of the recent discussion on 'global democracy' has been underpinned by a realisation that globalization processes have fundamentally altered the ability of the people within a state 'to control what happens to them, through controlling the state' (Holden 2013: 3). In order to address this, citizens must themselves find alternative means of popular control.

Smith (2008: 5) claims that 'social movements have promoted their own vision of global integration by exploding global agendas, promoting multilateral initiatives, encouraging national implementation of international law and generating alternatives to the programs of governments and corporations'. Despite their potential to generate and enact new ways of doing politics, social movements have been frequently overlooked and under-theorised in conventional accounts of international relations and 'global democracy'. Sociologists and social movement theorists, however, have been more attentive to social movements as sites and sources of political change. Della Porta (2013), for instance, has elaborated on the contributions of social movements to participatory, deliberative, and radical forms of democracy.

Dimensions of the relationship between protest and democracy

One can unpack the relationship between protests and democracy by disaggregating internal and external dimensions. In their own internal practices, protesters may be regarded as enacting (or failing to enact) representative, participatory and deliberative forms of democracy (Blee 2012; Della Porta 2013). A recurring theme in recent literature on protests since 2011 is to emphasise the role of social media in facilitating internal democratic practices among protesters (Hardt and Negri 2011).

It is also possible to disaggregate four principal external dimensions of the relationship between protests and democracy in terms of democratic practices of actors other than the protesters themselves. The first of these, and the most commonly researched, is the role of protests in facilitating governmental

transitions from dictatorship to representative democracy (McFaul 2005). The second is the contribution of protests to transformed electoral dynamics within existing representative democracies, for instance in strengthening opposition parties (McAdam and Tarrow 2010), while the third aspect is the role of protests in influencing participatory, deliberative and radical aspects of national democracy (Della Porta 2013). The fourth external aspect refers to external actors beyond national governments, such as international organizations and transnational corporations, the democratic practices of each of which may be transformed in response to protest activities (Scholte 2002; Smith 2008).

With respect to the processes by which protests may influence democratic changes among external actors, it is useful to distinguish between ideational and material dynamics. On the one hand, through framing processes protesters may make an important contribution to transforming understandings of the nature of democracy and of democratic practice. Alternatively, through the wielding of human and material resources, protesters may exert leverage over other actors to transform their practices. Third parties may play a key role in facilitating democratic responses to protest, and these third parties may include other governments (Keck and Sikkink 1999), and/or intergovernmental institutions and transnational corporations (Willetts 2011). Furthermore, emotional and cultural dynamics may be as influential in bringing about change as material aspects (Jasper 2008).

The contributions of protests to democracy are likely to be influenced by factors both internal and external to the protests. The nature of the frames, mobilizing structures, and repertoires of contention of the protests are all likely to have a bearing on the outcomes of the protests for democracy. So too are key aspects of the context in which the protests take place, including the nature of the regime, the presence or absence of splits among protest opponents, the sympathy of third parties, population demographics, and communications resources (Ackerman and Kruegler 1994; Chenoweth and Stephan 2011).

It is possible to identify four key contrasting possible outcomes of protest for democracy: two variants of 'success' and two of 'failure', each of which may be considered in short, medium and long terms. Successes may be disaggregated between ideational and procedural outcomes: (i) transformed understandings of democracy; and (ii) transformed democratic practices, which in turn may be disaggregated by actors the practices of which are changed, whether these be governments, as

traditionally focused on, or other actors including intergovernmental institutions, transnational corporations, or civil society actors and the protesters themselves. Failures, which also can be considered in short, medium and long terms, may be disaggregated between (i) failures to achieve either of the two successful outcomes just identified, and (ii) unintended consequences, with protests aiming towards democratic reforms contributing towards outcomes including civil war and international armed conflict, or some form of democratic regress (Davies 2014). Moreover, it is important to consider that not all movements or participants hold 'progressive' views oriented toward democratic advance in the first place. The extent to which these movements succeed in their aims raises important and sometimes uncomfortable questions about what 'being democratic' means and who is entitled to a platform for airing their views.

The burgeoning literature on the *new* 'new movements'

The scale, reach and velocity of protests from 2011 has prompted some analysts to suggest that they indicate an ostensibly new phase or cycle of contentious politics (See for example Langman 2013 and Lynch 2014). Departing from the depictions of increasingly professionalized movement organisations and identarian movements which had dominated the literature since the late 1990s, some scholars have moved to develop new concepts and tools for thinking and speaking about activism today. Common to the *new* 'new movements' literature are claims suggesting that (i) a shift in information and communications technologies and practices, (ii) new organisational forms, and (iii) an emphasis on the need for 'real democracy' and an 'end to austerity', mark something of a break with past models of claim-making and goals of activism. But just how novel and how useful are these conceptual tools and advances? What new aspects of activism do they bring into focus? And, crucially, what might they miss?

Globalization is frequently described as a set of processes through which societies are becoming increasingly interconnected. As Guidry et al (2000) have shown, transnational and local social movements sometimes develop to resist processes related to globalization such as migration, economic interdependence, and capitalist expansion. However, social movements are also aided by globalization in particular ways. The work of Smith and Johnson (2002), Della Porta, Kriesi and Rucht (2009) and

most recently Fominaya (2014) shows how globalisation processes have shifted the tools, techniques and timescales involved in political activism. In Fominaya's account, globalization is credited with helping to bring historically marginalized actors and movements into the public eye. Of the various dimensions of globalisation - economic, cultural, political and technological - that have been brought into focus by scholars, it is technological globalisation in particular which has become the focus of the *new* new movement scholarship. Hence, Castells' (2012) work on 'networks of outrage and hope', illuminates the importance of internet social networks and multimedia communication networks to contemporary movements. Angling in on post-2011 protests, from the Arab uprisings to the *Indignados* movement in Spain, and the Occupy Wall Street movement in the US movements, Castells (2012) argues that, rather distinctively, the new movements have their origins in online social networks and that their messages were spread with an unprecedented rapidity in a world of wireless and mobile communication that enables the viral exchange and circulation of information. Castells expounds the importance of digital technologies in creating a 'space of autonomy' where new modes of political participation may be forged.

Castells' technological optimism appears to be supported by a number of ways by which developments in information and communications technologies seem to have transformed possibilities for collective action. For example, drawing on survey data from Egypt, Tufekci and Wilson (2012) argue that social media in general and Facebook in particular played a key role in building awareness and influencing individual choices to participate in or to support the protests. Meanwhile, Lotan et al (2011) find that Twitter usage played a vital role in amplifying and spreading timely information about the Tunisian and Egyptian Revolutions from the local level to much of the rest of the world. Marc Lynch (2011) posits that perhaps the most fundamental challenge to the authoritarian states posed by digital social media will be of a generational rather than immediate nature, working by slowly widening Arab public spheres. However, he also cautions that technological shifts have 'strengthened some of the core competencies of authoritarian states' (Lynch 2011:301) and underlines that 'generational changes may be sufficiently slow that Arab states can comfortably absorb them without relinquishing the core of their power' (Lynch 2011:302).

A further obstacle to digitally induced political transformation lies in the prevailing inequalities that characterise the field of communication online. As Robinson et al (2015) write, 'As the internet matures, forms of digital exclusion proliferate. First-level digital disparities in access are joined by digital engagement gaps, chasms between content consumers and producers, and disparate forms of participation in the high-tech economy'. As the digital technologies are increasingly integrated in our everyday lives and routines, forms of disadvantage themselves mutate and combine with racial, class, gendered and other existing forms of inequality.

Moreover, the techno-deterministic accounts of Castells and contemporaries also tend to neglect the role and importance of agency. Who are the protesters? How does their social positioning relate to their ability to exercise voice online or offline? And through what means do they exert power and resistance? Bruce Cammaerts (2012) takes up the latter question, introducing the concept of 'the mediation opportunity structure' in order to interrogate the wide variety of ways in which media and communication are relevant to protest and social movements, including the ways in which movements have increasingly 'become the media' themselves. Cammaerts shows how activists use their lay-knowledge of how the mainstream media and technologies operate, and adapt this knowledge strategically in order to advance their own claims. In this view, social movements themselves become agents and networks of communication, with implications for the ways that we understand and theorise modes of organisation in collective action.

In many ways, the *new* new movements literature has undertaken to rethink of the role of organisation in contentious politics. There are of course innumerable factors that could help to cement bonds between individuals and groups in society, serving as a basis for organisation, such as ideology, ritual, culture and emotion. However, earlier political process literature focused rather narrowly on structured models of organization, looking at the relative merits of hierarchical versus more horizontal membership structures and the utility of appealing to pre-existing membership bases. Against this backdrop, the *new* new movements literature illuminates the apparent predominance of networked and horizontal forms within a 'prefigurative politics'. As blogger and artist Leah Lakshmi Piepzna-Samarasinha puts it: 'Prefigurative politics is a fancy phrase for the idea of imagining and building the world we want to see now. It's waking up and acting as if the revolution has already happened'. A key

part of this is developing new political and communal relationships that purport to eliminate the hierarchies of power inherent to representative democracy under capitalism.

Yates (2014) writes that the term 'prefigurative politics' and its key ideas - direct democracy, anti-institutionalism, creativity and effectively, *building a new world in the shell of the old* - 'have been increasingly deployed for making sense of a variety of protest activities, and for an array of political movements including environmental direct action (Szerszynski 1999), the alter-globalisation movement (Maeckelbergh 2011) and recent occupations of public space such as the Spanish Indignados and Occupy (Juris 2012, Rasza and Kurnick 2012).' Indeed, The Occupy Wall Street movement has self-consciously identified with a 'prefigurative politics,' aimed at bringing about a future purportedly egalitarian and democratic society through experimentation with a form of 'direct' democracy that enacts and embodies political change. (Farber 2014). Yet, the idea and practice of prefigurative politics are by no means new. Engler and Engler (2014) highlight that the term was '[c]oined by political theorist Carl Boggs and popularized by sociologist Wini Breines' in the 1980's. It emerged out of the New Left movements in the United States that were at the time rejecting both the Leninist models of the Old Left and conventional party politics. Not only have early examples of supposedly horizontal organising and experiments in direct democracy and autonomous community organising been seen in the US however. Marina Sitrin (2011) for one, notes the strong resemblance of the Occupy and *Indignados* movements to the earlier apparently 'horizontalist' and 'autonomist' movements in Latin America; namely, the Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico and Argentina's *piquetero* (picketer) movement.

Pickerill and Krinsky (2012) draw attention to 'the politics of prefiguring a new society (and its contradictions)'. For them, 'Occupy throws the work of prefigurative politics into stark relief, and challenges us to evaluate critically the balance of effort between living and acting a prefigurative, autonomous politics of mutual aid in "camps", and working within, even on the edge of, "normal" movement politics to win tangible reforms and alterations of behaviour in various parts of the state' (Pickerill and Krinsky 2012: 282). Significantly, the sociologist Wini Breines who is credited with popularising the concept of the pre-figurative in the late 1980's counterposed 'prefigurative politics' to 'strategic politics' and certainly within the *new* new movements literature, there has been an emphasis on 'means' as opposed to 'ends' (Yates 2014). But are strategy and pre-figuration necessarily at odds

in the post-2011 movements? Just what are the goals of these movements? And do they all fit the mould - can we observe the 'literal embodiment' of alternative networks through 'prefigured utopian alternatives' (ibid.) in each of the post-2011 examples? Or, is there a risk of overstating the cohesion and similarity of *new* new movements under this framing?

Fominaya (2014) observes that in the recent wave of social movements there has been a shift away from the critique of capitalism and abstract financial processes to a call for democracy and socio-economic justice. But, she notes, these are not appeals to a set of abstract universal values but rather they represent demands that are firmly rooted in national contexts and local grievances. As we have already underlined, many post-2011 mobilizations appear to have a dual character, and a close reading of their stated aims and practices often reveals a complex hybrid of local, national and global mobilization trends, influences and aims.

Contributions in this special issue

Three key aspects of much of the existing work on protest and democracy since 2011 are challenged by a number of the contributions in this volume. The first of these aspects relates to the assumed novelty of the protest mobilizations: as Carothers and Youngs (2015: 11) have argued, a questionable 'vision of the unprecedented' has been developed in much existing work emphasising the supposedly unique characteristics of this protest wave in comparison with previous mobilizations; and as the previous section has highlighted, novelty has especially been claimed in respect of the impact of new media, the development of purportedly horizontal mobilization forms, and presumed novel methods of democratic practice. The second aspect challenged by some of the papers in this volume relates to the focus in much of the existing work on apparent 'success stories' and assumed new opportunities for significant positive impact: as Davies (2016) has argued, cases of failure have commonly been overlooked even though much can be learned from them. Third, a prominent theme in much of the existing work on protests since 2011 has been emphasis on the role of democratic reform as a key objective for the protests: as Brancati (2013: 25) argued, other factors motivating protests have been neglected in favour of emphasis on portraying the protests as 'a result of pent-up frustrations over the lack of democracy finally breaking through the surface of society'. The following paragraphs will show how each of these propositions

have been challenged in contributions in this volume, before proceeding to highlight how the studies in this volume have also provided alternative new insights into the post-2011 protests and their relationship to democracy.

In contrast to conventional studies emphasising the novelty of the protests since 2011, many of the contributions to this volume reveal the importance of continuities with the past. Grasso and Giugni's study of the composition and issue-orientation of participants in European anti-austerity protests, for instance, reveals significant continuities in respect of their composition both with earlier 'old issue protests' centred around labour and trade union mobilization and with 'new issue protests' centred on identarian and cultural concerns. Furthermore, the anti-austerity mobilizations share more in common with 'old issue protests' than with 'new issue protests' in respect of protester attributes such as gender, class, and social libertarianism.

The continuities relate not only to the composition of the protesters but also to the nature of the context within which protests have operated. Koca's study of the Gezi Park mobilizations in Turkey, for instance, diverges from the dominant tendency in the literature on the significance of social media and highlights instead the importance of more established mainstream media in facilitating contemporary protest mobilization, thereby challenging the conventional assumption that mainstream media frame protest in favour of power elites.

Moreover, several of the contributions to this volume explore protests which despite being associated with the post-2011 wave in terms of their characteristics, originated significantly before this timeframe. The student protests in Chile from 2006 onwards explored in Donoso's contribution and the civic initiatives begun in 2007 evaluated in Ishkanian's study, for instance, reveal the need to consider events taking place since 2011 as part of a longer-term set of developments.

In addition to shedding light on the continuities before and after 2011, a number of the studies in this volume depart from the traditional focus on apparent 'success stories' and aim to evaluate cases that may in certain respects be portrayed as failures. In his study of de-democratization in Bahrain since 2011, Jones provides insights into the obstacles that protest mobilizations may encounter. Whereas it has been common to emphasise the opportunities provided by external actors for protest movements, most notably in Keck and Sikkink's (1999) much-cited 'boomerang model', Jones reveals in his piece

how governments may also draw on external actors' support, and exploit it in crushing protest mobilization, in addition to making strategic use of sectarianism domestically.

While Jones highlights the role of factors external to the protest mobilization in facilitating repression, Savio's study reveals some of the limitations of the mobilization forms that have characterised some of the post-2011 protests. In his evaluation of Occupy New York's presence in Zucotti Park, Savio reveals not only ways in which occupation of a public space served to facilitate the conducting of various organizational tasks beyond traditional organizational structures, but also the vulnerability of such an approach to police repression.

Ishkanian's piece on civic initiatives in Armenia reveals a third way in which insights may be drawn from apparent instances of failure, which is to look beyond the aspects that traditional analyses would lead one to conclude as an example of failure and to draw attention to other aspects of their work that may be of greater long-term significance. In her contribution, therefore, Ishkanian explores the importance of the civic initiatives in Armenia for democracy despite their lack of influence at the policy level.

Beyond revealing continuities and drawing insights from apparent failures, some of the contributions in this volume also contrast with much of the existing work in revealing how post-2011 protests cannot simply be understood to be a 'result of pent-up frustrations over the lack of democracy'. In their study of the summer 2013 Bulgarian protests, for instance, Hallberg and Ossewaarde reveal that despite conforming to many of the attributes commonly associated with the purported 'new cycle of global protests' including promotion of improved democratic practices, central to the summer 2013 Bulgarian protests were also nationalist concerns and local identities.

The three clusters of contributions made in this volume elaborated so far - the continuities with earlier mobilizations, drawing insights from failure, and revealing factors other than demands for democratic reform in motivating protest - contrast with the optimism of some of the initial literature on the protests since 2011 with respect to these mobilizations' novelty, impact and relationship to democracy. However, the contributions to this volume also provide us with a more sophisticated understanding of where their novelty, impact, and relationship with democracy may be found.

In their evaluation of the composition of anti-austerity protests in Europe, for example, Grasso and Giugni reveal that despite the continuities between anti-austerity protests and 'old issue protests', their composition is novel in that they are more likely to be male, younger, less educated, poorer, and less socially liberal than the stereotypical participant in 'new' cultural movements, while at the same time showing a more independent event-based style of participation, thus differing from traditional labor and political mobilizations. Hence, their findings suggest that budgetary cuts and welfare state retrenchment appear to have mobilized a different strata of contemporary society, the young *precariat*, but around old concerns, such as economic redistribution and social inequality.

Turning from protest composition to forms of protest mobilization, Savio's contribution sheds light on what the Occupy Wall Street movement can teach social movement theorists about processes of organisation. His article traces the development of scholarship exploring the role of organisation within social movements, and he underlines a gradual shift in emphasis away from the role of pre-existing formal organization to the role of looser social ties and self-organising networks. Drawing on in-depth ethnographic research carried out with the Occupy Wall Street movement in Zucotti Park, Savio finds that it was not formal organisation but rather a set of self-reproducing networks of interaction that enabled a basic level of coordination among participants in the occupation. In the case of Occupy Wall Street, Savio argues that the ongoing occupation of Zuccotti Park facilitated the formation of a series of network connections which helped carry out the organizational tasks of messaging, recruitment, increasing commitment, and connecting participants to each other.

Many of the contributions to this volume explore the ways in which democracy is framed among recent protest mobilizations, and the crucial role of local context. The contribution from Hallberg and Ossewaarde highlights how some grand narratives attributed to the recent protests – i.e. calls for more transparent and more democratic politics, and opposition to cronyism and elite rule – combine with contextual and historically-rooted cleavages, generally of nationalist extraction. In this case, Hallberg & Ossewaarde claim that the Bulgarian protests embody a lingering tension between an exclusive and oppressive framing of the 'State' – associated with experiences of Ottoman domination and Communist rule – and an inclusive, heroic, and emotional representation of the 'Nation' and

Bulgarian legacy, simultaneously articulating nationalist and pro-European claims and identities alongside calls for democratic reform.

In her evaluation of civic initiatives in Armenia, Ishkanian also explores how resistance has manifested in ways that are tied intimately to local context and history, but emphasising its democratic potential through transformed understandings. Looking specifically at privatisation and deregulation in the Armenian mining sector, Ishkanian contrasts the passive, non-confrontational and formalistic responses of post-soviet environmental NGOs with those of anti-mining activists involved with the Save Teghut Civic Initiative (STCI). She illustrates how such 'civic initiatives' (*qaghaqaciakan naxad'er'nowt'yownner*) may represent a new phase in Armenian civic action, involving informal, volunteer-based, horizontally structured and loosely organized groups which do not receive any funding from donors or the government. Ishkanian registers the success of these groups in terms of their ability to create new spaces for activism, foster dissensus and prompt a re-examination of the meaning of citizenship and civic duty in contemporary Armenia.

In contrast to earlier literature looking to fill the democratic deficit at the transnational and global level through efforts to promote 'global democracy' through global institutions, Ariemma and Burnside-Lawry also draw attention to the significance of the local level. They illuminate one of the many 'glocal' struggles characterizing contemporary societies, both in the developed and developing world: those that pose small communities and activists against state-sponsored large infrastructural projects. Relying on the case of the Movement against the High Speed Train project (NO TAV Movement) to link Lyon with Turin, the authors provide a detailed examination of the democratic alienation and resistance resulting from the widening distance between local citizens, decision-makers, and authorities. In the process, the authors provide a reflection about conflict of two global visions pervading post-industrial visions of progress and development: one pointing to the benefits of increasing connectivity and cohesion, and to the economistic synergies resulting from productive clusters, new technologies, and the green economy, and another that opposes to the finance-led rationality of mega-projects and their disruptive impact over local communities and identities. They point to the democratic promise of a 'local approach to global problems' apparent in the No TAV movement.

While the articles by Ishkanian and Ariemma and Burnside-Lawry concentrate our attention on the democratic frames and practices of the protesters themselves, the contribution by Donoso turns our attention to the democratizing potential of recent social mobilizations in terms of compelling governments to increase public participation in the policy-making process. Exploring the success of the Chilean student movement, which commanded large protests both in 2006 and 2011, Donoso concludes that the movement created an opportunity for centre-left political forces to reorient their political agenda, thus contributing to shift the focus of post-transition politics in the country towards equity-enhancing and democratising reforms. In this manner, the author considers that the expansion of political opportunities that is necessary to pursuing democratising reforms is not only driven "from above", due to changes in elite alliances and institutionalized regime configurations, but can also stem "from below", with social movements playing a key role.

Anna Grasso's article also explores the importance of new democratic configurations in national democratic institutions, but through providing new light on the role of religious actors. Traditional analyses of the aftermath of the 2011 Arab uprisings have tended to be preoccupied with the role of Islamist groups, and have commonly drawn simplistic dichotomies between religious and secular mobilizations. In contrast to this, Grasso reveals the ways in which the democratization process in post-revolutionary Tunisia has facilitated the opening of political space not simply for Islamist groups but also for a much broader array of religious leaders aligning themselves with secular parties. In this manner the transition process has brought about unanticipated new democratic configurations.

For Koca, the key relationship explored is between the protests and traditional media institutions. His focus, the Gezi Park mobilization in 2013, brought together previously divided groups including both Muslim and secular activists, LGBTTQs, Alawites, Kurds, students amongst others. Koca's analysis of Turkish media coverage of these events reveals not only that traditional media remain highly important even for contemporary forms of protest mobilization, but also that assumptions in existing literature concerning the likelihood that mainstream media will frame such mobilizations in favour of perceived power elites need to be subjected to critical scrutiny. As Koca reveals, mainstream media in Turkey framed the relationship between the protests and democracy in contrasting ways:

whereas right wing media tended to draw a contrast between electoral democracy and the protest movement, those on the left emphasised the role of the protests in reconfiguring democratic practice.

In the final contribution to this volume, Jones returns our attention to the significance of the political opportunity structure. He focuses on one of the lesser-examined episodes of contentious politics in the 'Arab Spring' - the case of Bahrain. In February 2011, activists and opposition groups in the small state of Bahrain rose up in a series of protests against the ruling *Al Khalifa* family. However, demonstrations were quickly and violently suppressed by government forces. The government's response involved the killing, torture and imprisonment of protesters and revocation of citizenship for many - actions which have drawn widespread condemnation from Human Rights observers. In this paper, Jones asks, what does the government's response to the uprising tell us about democratisation in Bahrain? And what does it spell for the future of democratisation and democratic transition in Bahrain? Using Ronaldo Munck's definition and indicators for 'quality' democracy, Jones argues that the 2011 uprisings bring into sharp relief two overriding impediments to 'quality' democratic reform in Bahrain: i) a conservative, post-Independence Al Khalifa-Saudi coalition assisted by large military resources and ii) the protracted communal tension brought about by the government's exploitation of sectarianism in countering (including counter-framing) the protests.

The road ahead

The chapters in this volume reveal the significant diversity of motivations, methods, opportunities and impacts of protests since 2011. Sweeping generalizations about the novelty, impact and democratic potential of these mobilizations are increasingly hard to sustain. Many of the contributions to this volume lay special emphasis on the significance of local context not only for understanding the nature of the mobilizations but also their democratic potential. A comprehensive understanding of the post-2011 protest wave will require further in-depth, case by case analysis.

This volume sheds light on multiple dimensions of the debate elaborated in the third section of this introductory chapter. These include the focus of disapproval of the protests, the types of actions undertaken by the protesters, and efforts by protesters to bring about change both by influencing other actors and by pioneering practices amongst themselves. Frames put forward by protesters are explored

and the democratic potential of these frames is evaluated. Contrasting forms of mobilization are also examined, including the rejection of traditional mobilization structures, and the development of new tactical repertoires. Traditional analyses of opportunities 'from above' are challenged through exploration of their opening up 'from below'. Furthermore, the range of forms of democracy evaluated spans both 'formal' and 'substantive', governmental and non-governmental, instantiations. The cases covered include both campaigns for transformations from authoritarian to representative democratic rule, and those for enhanced deliberative and participatory democracy, as well as the promotion of democratic confrontation of global and transnational challenges. Factors influencing success and failure are probed, and the cases covered include apparent failures as well as claimed successes.

Nevertheless, there remain a large number of aspects that merit further consideration, and it is hoped that this volume will serve to promote their exploration. The unanticipated consequences of protest actions deserve further investigation, as do the relationships between protesters and a wider array of external actors, including the complex interface between formal, semi-formal, and informal political institutions and mechanisms. In this sense, significant space for inquiry is open in terms of examining how existing democracies can change to accommodate and respond to complex social demands. Furthermore, there is much work yet to be done to explore the role of emotions in catalysing protest responses as well as the cultural outputs of social movements and the relationship of these outputs to democracy.

The ways in which apparently promising and novel democratic practices among protest actors can function across other institutions of social and political life - not merely governmental but also corporate, educational and professional institutions - needs much greater attention. It is widely held that democracy is a process, and if one considers the population of the world as a whole and the vast array of institutions of political, social, cultural and economic life through which power is exercised, it would appear that the process of enabling the 'people' to 'rule' remains very much at an embryonic stage.

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Footnotes

[1] In his view, the more appropriate reference for the Arab Spring would not be the post-Cold War revolutions but the failed revolutionary wave of 1848.

[2] Then again, authors noted how the evolution and outcomes of different mobilizations remains conditioned by the local political context. Andretta & Della Porta (2015), for instance, argue that anti-austerity movements in Spain and Italy display particularities in line with each country's contentious traditions: more cohesive, informal, and radical in Spain, while in Italy protests were moderated by the presence of formal networks and organizations (such as left-wing political parties and trade unions).

[3] Even if in some cases, these frames were combined with identarian and nationalist claims, as in the Ukrainian Euromaidan.