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European anti-austerity and pro-democracy protests in the wake of the global financial crisis

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Abstract

European protests in the wake of the global financial crisis have been a double-edged sword. On the one hand, they have been a critique of the austerity measures imposed by governments and international institutions. On the other hand, they have been a critique of the global financial system itself. This article examines the role of social movements in the wake of the global financial crisis, and how they have shaped the political and economic landscape of Europe. It argues that social movements have been a significant force for change, and that they have helped to bring about a more just and equitable society. It also discusses the challenges that social movements face, and how they can overcome them. Finally, it offers some suggestions for how social movements can continue to play a role in shaping the future of Europe.

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political and economic oligarchies; and mobilized newcomers through an inclusive collective identity constructed around the 'ordinary citizen' as political subject. Democratic regeneration emerges as a significant demand, but is uneven in its resonance. It finds its clearest and most emblematic expression in the 'movements of the squares'. To the extent that the 'twin' crises (financial/democratic) are framed synergistically, they can be seen as counter-hegemonic, as they seek to rupture the consensus of the 'post-political'. The presence or absence of a strong pro-democracy narrative that connects actors across sectorial and organizational differences could help explain variation between cases. Transnational diffusion processes have been crucial but have not (yet) led to a transnational movement. Given the significant role of the Troika in the bail-outs, debt renegotiations and austerity policies of those countries hardest hit, the low visibility of 'Europe' in the mobilizations is surprising.

Keywords: Anti-austerity, democracy, Europe, financial crisis, Indignados, legitimization crisis, mobilization, Occupy

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Notes

1. Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellowship of Austerity: A comparative analysis of the impact of austerity (2015). This research is based on secondary data and...
2. See a...
3. Marie...

4. By which they mean grassroots activism, protest and various 'new' types of political phenomena not usually visible in mainstream debates.
5. This analysis is drawn from my Marie Sklodowska-Curie research.
6. The analysis in this section is drawn from my Marie Sklodowska-Curie research.
7. For more on protest camps, including many in the global movement of the squares, see Feigenbaum, Frenzel, and McCurdy ([2013](#)).
8. I realize that what movements are called are often contested, the result of early media labels, etc. I nevertheless usually opt for the label I think most people will understand.
9. I was astonished to discover, during a research event I co-coordinated at Harvard's Berkman Center for Internet and Society in 2012, that some local activists had never heard of the European protests, and thought that the Occupy style movements such as OWS and Occupy Boston were unique to the US.
10. Despite the Pirate Party polling at 22%, above the Independence Party, the latter was the most voted party in the 2016 general elections, with 21 MPs. The Pirate Party nevertheless jumped from 2 to 10 MPs.
11. See the manifesto here: https://www.euro-planb.eu/?page_id=96&lang=en.
12. But see Power ([2015](#)) for why this did not happen in the Irish case.

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