

**‘Mild Mannered’?**

**Protest and Mobilisation in Portugal under austerity, 2010-2013<sup>1</sup>**

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**ABSTRACT:**

Anti-austerity mobilisations in Southern Europe since 2010 have been widely debated in recent times. Commentators have emphasised the emergence of new political subjects such as the ‘precariat’ organised into loose, IT-connected movements. But to what extent do these portrayals reflect the underlying dynamics of this protest cycle, and how do these movements interact with traditional political actors? Using Portugal as a case study, this article maps the cycle of anti-austerity contention between 2010 and 2013 to reveal a more complex picture, where traditional actors including labour unions and left-wing political parties emerge as key actors, facilitating and sustaining the discontinuous mobilisation of new forms of

activism, while seeking to gain access to new constituencies through them.

Keywords: protest; social movements; labour movements; austerity; protest event analysis

*Introduction: crisis and protests in Southern Europe*

This article analyses the political consequences of the economic crisis and of the adoption of austerity measures on Portuguese citizens' mobilisation by charting the development of demonstrations, strikes and other forms of collective contentious action between the start of 2010 and the summer of 2013.

In recent years, strong waves of mobilization have been felt through different areas of the world, from Northern Africa to, more recently, Brazil. A combination of various political, social and economic reasons, different in every country, have been at the root of these protests (Bartels and Bermeo 2013, Tejerina and Perugorria 2012b, Kriesi 2012). Surveying social protests between 2006 and 2013 in 87 countries encompassing 90 per cent of the world's population, Ortiz et al. stress high incidence of contention also in European countries, mainly originating in the context of the 2008 financial crisis (Ortiz et al. 2013). This escalation of various forms of contentious politics –

demonstrations, occupations, popular assemblies – has been similarly noted by several authors (Tarrow 2011, della Porta 2012, Campos Lima and Martins Artiles 2014). According to the European Social Survey's (ESS) data for 2012, the percentage of people who reported participation in at least one demonstration grew significantly between 2008 and 2012. The largest increases occurred in Spain (from 15.9 to 25.9 per cent), in Ireland (from 6.5 to 10.5) and in Portugal (from 3.7 to 6.8).

One feature that is often highlighted in this wave of protests is the role of networks of young people characterised by their transnational connections, use of ICT as a mobilisation tool, the combination of material, political and identitary demands and particularly the establishment of new forms of organisation, especially horizontal, direct or diffuse modes of decision-making and representation – what have been called 'new new' social movements (Feixa, Pereira and Juris 2009, Fonseca 2012, Alberich Nistal 2012). At the same time, a number of authors have also noted the return of a more traditional instrument of protest: the political strike (Campos Lima and Martin Artiles 2014, Gall 2013, Hamann, Johnston and Kelly 2013, Kousis and Karakioulafi 2013, Campos Lima e Martin Artiles, 2011). In this emerging ecology of contention, the boundaries between material and economic protest are increasingly blurred and the objectives of different actors, such

as the so called ‘new new’ movements and the trade unions, coincide more and more.

Southern European countries have been active participants in this global cycle of protest. In this region, worsening economic conditions, driven by the adoption of drastic austerity measures following sovereign debt crisis, have provided the initial motivation. Soon, however, economic-driven protests extended to a contestation of political institutions deemed unable to rise to the challenge, if not responsible for it in the first place. Across Southern European countries, trust in public institutions has been decreasing (Matthijs 2014), while electoral participation is at an historic low. Social conflict has taken various forms across the different countries of southern Europe: in Italy it has been expressed in the emergence of a new political party, the Five Star Movement (Bosco and Verney 2013, Bordignon and Ceccarin 2013, Baldini 2013, Bartlett et al. 2013), whereas Greece experienced a fragmentation of the vote and violent polarisation of protest, as well as the appearance of direct democracy movements (Bosco and Verney 2013, Sotirakopoulos and Sotiropoulos 2013, Kousis and Karakioulafi 2013).

In Spain, the *Indignados* movements, especially the platform ¡*Democracia Real YA!* (DRY - Real Democracy NOW!) has come to represent a ‘model’ for anti-austerity movements.

Using Twitter and Facebook, DRY eschewed party political references to call on ‘the unemployed, the poorly paid, the subcontractors, the precarious, the young people’ to take to the streets. After the large protests of 15 May 2011, demonstrators occupied streets and squares, giving way to the encampments (*acampadas*) in one of Madrid’s iconic squares. There they held public assemblies, which from mid-June, spread to smaller meetings in villages and neighbourhoods of large cities (Tejerina and Perugorria 2012a).

These mobilizations have been viewed as a part of a transnational movement, relating them to the ‘Arab Spring’ (e.g. Cox, Fominaya and Shihade 2012). Other scholars have argued that the actual transnational coordination of protest is lower than in other recent movements, such as the Global Justice Movement (della Porta 2012: 275), and that domestic political contexts have shaped the implications of the global crisis in each country (della Porta 2012, Tarrow 2011).

Our study builds on these observations about the importance of local contexts, exploring a single case in its fuller political, social and historical process, with the aim of situating the response to the broad economical crisis in the context of the national political opportunities and mobilization resources.

In common with Greek, Spanish, and to an extent, Italian citizens, the Portuguese have suffered in this period the

imposition of drastic measures of fiscal contraction which, aside from worsening the economic situation, have deeply undermined what in the country are considered the ‘conquests’ of the 25 April 1974 revolution that ushered in Portugal’s democracy – a set of social rights in terms of labour law, healthcare and access to education. Starting from an already unfavourable situation – the country has long been amongst the poorest in Western Europe – the living conditions in austerity Portugal have deteriorated significantly. The litany of problems is depressingly familiar, and needs only a brief reminder: GDP contracted in three of the five years between 2008 and 2012, unemployment rose from 8.6 per cent in 2008 to hit 15.3 in 2013, reaching 37.7 for the under 25s.<sup>2</sup> The impact of these measures has been particularly unequal in a country that is already amongst the most unequal in Europe: the largest fall in disposable household income has been felt in the poorest tenth of the population (Carmo, Cantante e Carvalho 2012).

As in other countries, the measures that have prompted these developments have not gone unchallenged by civil society, and there has been an intensification of protest. The ESS participation in demonstrations data cited above is confirmed by figures from the Portuguese police force which show that in Lisbon, the capital, the frequency of demonstrations increased

from 244 in 2010, to 298 in 2011 and to 579 (one every 15 hours) in 2012 (Elias and Pinho 2012: 43).

This increase in social conflict can be seen across all forms of contention, and the years between 2010 and 2013 have seen a multiplication of protests, from fairly ephemeral ‘media-friendly’ actions to more low-profile but enduring conflicts, such as a months-long dock workers’ strikes. Some events have had significant media impact, as was the case of the 12 March 2011 demonstration, when 200,000 people marched on behalf of Portugal’s ‘Desperate Generation’ (*Geração à Rasca*) - the name of the Facebook group and blog that was unexpectedly responsible for what was the largest street protest in Portugal since the revolutionary period of 1974-1975 (Baumgarten 2013, Ramos Pinto 2012). In the ensuing months, demonstrations of different sizes have taken place. By most accounts, the largest demonstration within this period occurred on 2 March 2013, organized by the *Que se Lixe a Troika* (‘Fuck the Troika’ - QLT) platform. However, this event also seems to have the peak of this cycle, and a follow-up demonstration organised by the QLT movement on 1 June 2013 gathered in Lisbon only a few hundred of people.<sup>3</sup>

The cooling down of the frequency and intensity of protests in the second half of 2013 and beyond (at least until the time of writing of this article) marks the period between January 2010

and July 2013 as a cycle of protest, in Sidney Tarrow's definition 'a phase of heightened conflict and contention across the social system' involving, among others features, 'a rapid diffusion of collective action from more mobilized to less mobilized sector' (Tarrow 1998: 42). Protest cycles feature elements such as the emergence of new groups, the mobilization of new actors, innovation in the repertoires of action, and the elaboration of new cognitive, cultural and ideological frames – features we can observe in the Portuguese case.

The Portuguese 'austerity cycle of protest' is only now beginning to be analysed in earnest. Baumgarten's field study offers us invaluable insights into the internal dynamics of the new social movement organisations that have appeared in this period, as well as the working of their internal identity and democratic processes (Baumgarten 2013). Estanque, Costa and Soeiro, building on Sousa Santos, emphasize the connection of these emerging domestic protests with global protest movements in terms of emotional activation (Estanque, Costa and Soeiro 2013, Sousa Santos 2011). Our work differs from this to the extent that we look to shift the focus away from these social movements and networks in and of themselves, and instead try to analyse them as part of a broader cycle of contention, and in relation to other social and political actors.



Our aim is to test the claims about the reach, scope and impact of these mobilisations on the field of contention as a whole, and in relation to traditions and existing modes of social mobilisation in contemporary Portugal.

In order to do this we have constructed a database of protest events in Portugal between January 2010 and July 2013. Using a Protest Event Analysis (PEA) methodological framework, we sampled three weekly issues of the online platform of the daily national newspaper *Diário de Notícias*, which includes the newspaper's news, as well as agency material from the Portuguese news agency *Lusa*, sampling the Monday, Wednesday and Friday issues of the newspaper between 1 January 2010 and 31 July 2013. We established a number of criteria for selection of the news items to include reports on any form of 'contentious' claim-making: that is, interaction between collective actors taking place outside established channels of representation and exchange (such as elections, parliamentary debates, 'concertation' meetings or other forms of 'ordinary' political interaction). The resulting episodes of contention were coded according to primary actor (who was responsible for the contentions episode), the claim or issue at stake, the primary target of the action, the type of action (e.g. demonstration, occupation, petition or strike), as well as number of other characteristics of the action, if available: place,

numbers involved, duration and whether or not violence had taken place.<sup>4</sup> The database covers protest events in multiple dates as long as they are reported in the dates sampled. While not able to provide a day-by-day account of protest events, this allows us to elicit changes in the frequency and repertoires of protest and the role played by different categories of actors.

The central part of our study is thus the evolution of political contention in Portugal between January 2010 and June 2013, the period that precedes and follows the Portuguese bailout by the IMF-EU-ECB *troika* in May 2011.

*Portuguese civil society activism in historical context: the 'mild-mannered' disaffected*

The appearance of a seemingly sustained cycle of extra-parliamentary protest in Portugal has to be understood in the context of a still-prevalent tendency in the scholarship to see the country's public sphere as relatively acquiescent. Influential studies on the political attitudes and participation of Portuguese citizens have argued that the country is characterised by comparatively low levels of political involvement, (Freire 2000, Freire and Magalhães, 2003, Freire 2003, Magalhães 2005). This portrayal has to be qualified by a longer view – Portuguese civil society has, at times, mobilised forcefully and,

as Fishman argues, Portugal's political system has been more open to mobilisation and non-conventional forms of claim-making than other Southern European countries, on account of the nature of its transition to democracy (Fishman 2011).<sup>5</sup>

Portuguese democracy was forged in an atmosphere of heightened mobilisation. The Portuguese revolutionary period (the nineteen months that followed the removal of the dictatorship by a military coup in 25 April 1974) was characterised by almost daily demonstrations, public meetings, strikes and other forms of unconventional political activity that included the occupation of houses, firms and agricultural land, when high levels of voter turnout also characterized this period (Accornero 2013, Ramos Pinto 2013, Palacios Cerezales 2003, Bermeo 1997,).

Although at a lower level of intensity than during the revolutionary period, protest and social mobilisation persisted through the years of austerity that preceded Portugal's entry to the European Economic Community in 1986. During this period the country was forced to resort to IMF bailouts in 1978 and 1983, and witnessed its first general strike since 1934 in 1982. Data on contention in Portugal for the years 1980-1995 shows that high levels of labour mobilisation characterised the first two decades of Portuguese democracy, reaching a peak in 1982, another year of economic crisis, preceding the second

IMF bailout in only five years. After a period of relative quiet, frequent protests returned (albeit at a lower level) between 1988 and 1989, in opposition to the market-oriented liberalising reforms of the second *Partido Social Democrata* (Social Democratic Party, PSD, centre-right) government under Cavaco Silva.<sup>6</sup>

Since then, the picture has changed somewhat. After the mid-1990s, the availability of data on various types of protest is more fragmented, but the evidence suggests that 1995 closed a cycle of contention and opened a period of relative quiet. In the field of labour protest, with the Portuguese economy buoyed by membership of the European Economic Community, labour conflicts entered a decade of progressive decline (Figure 6).<sup>7</sup> There were no general strikes during the 1990s, and only two were called in the decade following the millennium (Table 2). Charting the evolution of non-labour contention using protest events analysis for the years 1992-2002, Mendes and Seixas noted a tendency towards a decrease for the average number of participants in protests: while the number of contentious events increased, these tended to attract fewer participants, and be marked by more ‘spectacular and radical’ actions (Mendes and Seixas 2005: 119-120).

In addition, the findings of more recent participation studies do show decreasing levels of engagement with politics and trust in

political institutions, showing that if the picture of a passive civil society is not necessarily true for the whole of Portugal's democratic period, it is coming to characterise the last two decades (Magalhães 2005, Magalhães 2009, Costa Pinto et al. 2012). In a 2005 study Magalhães identified a sense of 'democratic disaffection', noting the distance of Portuguese citizens from political institutions and showing that, even if support for democracy is solid, there was a strong sense of disaffection expressed in low levels of political participation and engagement, conventional and otherwise (Magalhães 2005: 988).

This increasing distance from institutions reveals itself in different ways. One is decreasing participation in elections. Already in 2002, Freire and Magalhães highlighted that 'while in the 1970s Portugal was one of the Western nations without compulsory voting where turnout was higher, turnout today is already below the average for the West European democracies without compulsory voting, in what represents the sharpest decline among OECD countries' (Freire and Magalhães 2002: 47–50). In the intervening decade since their study, the situation has not improved: while a slight rise can be seen in the proportion of those resident in Portugal voting, the return of a pattern of emigration continues to depress voting turnout (see Table 1).

While there are no systematic comparisons of participation and incidence of contentious political mobilisation, a preliminary analysis suggests that, in the period 1989-1995, Portugal showed a drastically lower level of participation in protest activities than Greece (Accornero 2012). Rejecting ‘fatalistic’ and ‘culturalist’ explanations for these patterns of participation, recent scholarship has emphasised the importance of a shortfall in levels of education in depressing participation, generating ‘political alienation’ and feelings of ‘distance to power’ (Villaverde Cabral 1997 and 2000; Freire 2000). One of the pernicious legacies of authoritarianism was a chronic shortfall in education: among the 15 countries that composed the European Union in 2002, Portugal had, by far, the lowest percentage of the population in the 25-64 age group who had completed secondary education (21 per cent).

#### *Protest and austerity in Portugal since 2010*

In summary, it is clear that Portuguese civil society has been far from static over the past four decades. Periods of intense mobilisation have punctuated a gradual erosion of the weight and role of traditional forms of political participation. How do the anti-austerity mobilisations of the 2010-2013 fit into this pattern?

The data collated for this study, summarised in Figure 1, reveals an evolving protest cycle with a number of peaks and troughs. The first half of 2010 sees a concentration of protest events that coincides with the shockwaves of the global economic crisis hitting Portugal. By the beginning of the year, the Socialist minority government was forced to admit that significant budget cuts would be necessary in order to meet the Eurozone's deficit target. Pay freezes and other deflationary measures were strongly contested by multiple actors, with the most high profile actions being a public sector strike in early March and the organisation of simultaneous nationwide demonstrations by the trade union CGTP (*Confederação Geral dos Trabalhadores Portugueses*, General Confederation of the Portuguese Workers) in early July. A second peak can be found around the time of the resignation of the Socialist government under worsening economic conditions. Following the general strike of November 2010, the incidence of protest events grows markedly, culminating in the large *Geração à Rasca* demonstration of 12 March 2011. On 22 March 2011, the socialist government saw its proposals for restricting public spending and limiting the growth of the budget deficit defeated in Parliament.

The rejection of the government's plans made external intervention inevitable, and the government's position

untenable. It duly resigned 10 days later and began negotiations for a rescue package with the EC-ECB-IMF *troika*. The 78 billion Euro bailout was agreed by May, immediately before the June 2011 elections which saw the appointment of a coalition government formed by the centre-right PSD (*Partido Social Democrático* - Social Democratic Party) and the right-wing PP (*Partido Popular* – Popular Party). While public spending cuts had begun under the Socialist government, the most hard-hitting measures have been applied since its resignation, as the bailout conditions required painful cuts to salaries, pensions, benefits and the public services, as well as steep tax increases (de Sousa et al 2014). These measures have had a significant effect on the financial security of many in the country, with knock-on effects on consumption, and through that on employment, creating what feels to many as a vicious circle (Castro Caldas 2012).

After the 2011 legislative elections, two more peaks of protest emerged: in the second half of 2012, and more recently, between March and June 2013. Both of these were marked by some of the largest public demonstrations recorded in Portuguese history, on 15 September 2012 and in 2 March 2013. Both were organised by the social movement *Que se Lixe a Troika* – exactly the kind of the ‘new politics’ that



commentators have argued we are beginning to see emerging across different polities, not only in Europe, but also elsewhere.

As showed by this brief account, the growing pattern of contention through late 2010 and early 2011 should be seen in the context of the political crisis caused by government's response to the financial crash, and the increasing division between political elites<sup>8</sup> in respect to the solutions for the country's financial situation. This created an opportunity for a number of constituencies (old and new) to inset claims into the fractures among institutional actors, contributing to transform what were scattered events into a cycle of protest. Seen in this light, this cycle started to wane only from the spring of 2013 onwards, in the face of a renewed cohesion of the mainstream parties around the politics of austerity, and the failure of the protest movement in converting street protests into a wider challenge to the system.

This broad overview based on event counts alone cannot give us a complete picture of a complex cycle of contention. Measuring the weight of different protests in terms of participation is notoriously difficult, and is not reflected in pure event counts. For instance, four of the five general strikes seen in Portugal in this period, which mobilised many thousands of citizens, appear in months where the sample shows relatively small numbers of protest events. A more nuanced picture can

be gleaned from an analysis of forms of action used, and the categories of actors who were reported as leading or initiating the protest events in the database. This shows that the cycle of protest did not finish without partially changing the landscape of political opposition, with the affirmation of new political actors and the consolidation of new alliances.

Our analysis highlights two clear patterns: that a shift in the kind of protest used is observable between early 2010 and 2013, and that, contrary to the emphasis on ‘new new’ movements, labour has remained throughout the most significant protest actor, even if it has been forced to look for new allies beyond its traditional constituencies.

Firstly, the sample reveals overwhelming predominance of labour-initiated protest. Despite the focus by the Portuguese and international media on new actors, particularly the supposed centrality of labour market outsiders to anti-austerity protests, our sample shows that ‘traditional’ labour organisations are still at the forefront of protest in Portugal. Across the period, 78 protest events (47.9 per cent of the total) were initiated by public sector trade unions, to which we can add the further eleven organised by national trade union federations such as the CGTP or UGT (*União Geral de Trabalhadores*, General Union of Workers), and the 19 led by workers in the private sector. Overall, two-thirds of protests

(66.3 per cent) in the sample arose from the world of work and workers representative organisations (Figure 4). In contrast, political groups such as QLT, M12M or *Geração à Rasca* appear as the lead actors in only 19 events (11.7 per cent), barely more than in protests organised by users and consumers of public and private services (15 events).

A second notable feature is that the sample shows strikes and demonstrations appearing in different cycles. These forms of action overshadow all others in the sample: 66 of the 163 events listed are demonstrations (40.5 per cent) and 76 strikes of various durations and scope (46.6 per cent). Other types of action, including petitions, public assemblies and occupations characterise primarily only 12.9 per cent of protest events. But the way in which they are distributed through our period differs – strikes are concentrated in two peaks of protest that preceded the 2011 election (Figure 3). After that their frequency diminishes to emerge once again, although with slightly lower intensity, in the last 6 months. Demonstrations on the other hand, become more common in the periods of contestation in mid to late 2012 and since March 2013 (Figure 2).

*Mobilising against the austerity: Labour and 'New New' Social Movements*

The connection between these two findings – the role of labour, and the increasing number of demonstrations - can be made clearer by charting the political evolution over the two and half years in question. From this we argue that throughout the period, the public sector and its unions have become increasingly central in contesting the government's austerity programme. In addition, protest became increasingly coordinated as the two main trade union federations began to agglomerate what had begun as more isolated protests by sector or company-level unions. Accompanying this evolution, a number of 'new new' social movements have emerged, but it is not clear that they have been able to sustain high levels of mobilisation when not supported by union action. However, while their capacity to mobilise large numbers of supporters remains limited, in recent times these movements seem to have adapted to use high-visibility protest actions (demonstrations) by small groups of activists as a means to gather media attention and drive their campaigns forward.

At the beginning of the period sampled, during the first wave of protest (the first half of 2010), over a third of labour-based protest originated in the private sector, notably over pay and layoffs (Figure 5). Over the remainder of the period, the incidence of private sector labour conflict diminishes, and public sector workers and trade union federations take a leading

role in protest. Official data on the pattern of strike action in Portugal seems to confirm this trend, although figures for 2013 are not yet available: the number of work days lost to strikes has been on the increase since 2010, as is the rate of strike participation as measured by official statistics. In addition, the incidence of strikes across multiple companies (a sign of coordination) has increased, from 18.6 per cent of strike events in 2010, it was a feature in 39.7 percent in 2011 and 28.3 in 2012.<sup>9</sup> The increase in coordination of protest by labour is evident in the growing use of the general strike as a tactic: during the first 35 years of democracy (1974-2009), Portuguese trade union federations called general strikes on five occasions (See Table 2). Since 2010, however, a similar number has taken place in only three years. This development has been facilitated by an increasing collaboration between the two main trade union federations, traditionally rivals rather than allies. In fact, only once in the previous three decades had both trade union federations joined forces in supporting a general strike. The CGTP and the *União Geral dos Trabalhadores* (Workers' General Union – UGT) have long represented different political leanings of Portuguese labour, with the CGTP working closely with the PCP, and the UGT more in line with the Socialist Party. This link to one of the two ruling parties means that in the past the UGT has been more willing to negotiate with government (Royo 2002: 94-5). Yet, since 2010, the

federations have put their differences aside on three occasions, most recently in June 2013. In this the UGT seems at times to have been pushed by its membership: when it decided not to support the November 2012 general strike, 23 of its 49 affiliated unions (including 6 large public sector unions) decided to join the strike nonetheless.<sup>10</sup> Whether or not this growing coordination of the labour movement has been accompanied by a strengthening of its capacity for mobilisation is, however, a question for which we do not yet have an answer. It is difficult to estimate the impact and scope of each of these general strikes, and available data on union affiliation, while it shows a steady decline in trade union density rates, is only available until 2010.<sup>11</sup>

What is clear is that new organisations have appeared on the field of protest, and have been particularly active since the summer of 2011. Movements such as *Geração à Rasca* and *Que se Lixe a Troika* have been the focus of media attention, which identifies them as a new form of civic and political engagement and as the principal civil society response to austerity measures.

The first of these movements to appear – *Geração à Rasca* – predates even the Spanish *Indignados*. The manner and speed through which this movement emerged is indeed testament to the role of ICTs in supporting mobilisation: the demonstration

was called by three friends who started a Facebook group and blog after being inspired by a popular song by the Portuguese band Deolinda, *Parva que sou* ('How dumb I am'), whose lyrics express the anxieties caused by the lack of job security and prospects of Portuguese twenty-somethings.<sup>12</sup> As Baumgarten has suggested, despite references to international movements and themes that included the Arab Spring of 2010, the focus and key references of this emerging movement were principally national (Baumgarten 2013: 465-466). This is clear in its name, *Geração à Rasca*, a reference a 1990 student mobilisation, the so-called *Geração Rasca* - 'Trashy Generation' (Seixas 2005).

Ostensibly non-partisan, even anti-political in the sense of a rejection of established political parties, the 12 March *Geração à Rasca* demonstration was a success. However, after these auspicious beginnings, the ability of 'new new' social movements to sustain mobilisation has been mixed: if in some instances they have been able to mobilise in very large numbers, being responsible for some of the largest demonstrations since the Revolution; in between these events they have been less successful at maintaining significant levels of participation in other demonstrations, public assemblies and other initiatives.

A number of organizations and movements appeared after March 2011, as smaller protest organisations coalesced and created alliances. The following month, the organizers of the *Geração à Rasca* demonstration created the platform M12M: *Movimento 12 de Março* ('12 March Movement'). Again emphasizing its non-partisan, neither right nor left position, and eschewing any programmatic positions, the movement invoked Portugal's Nobel prize in literature, José Saramago, in their aim 'to make every citizen a politician'. By the summer of 2011 they joined other groups - many recent offshoots of global networks such as *Indignados Lisboa*, *Acampada Lisboa* - *Democracia Veradeira Já*, *Portugal Uncut*, or *ATTAC Portugal* - to create the 15-O Platform, coordinating with similar organisations across the world to stage the international demonstration on 15 October 2011. This was also a significant protest, if considerably smaller than the March 2011 events.<sup>13</sup>

Through the end of 2011 and beginning of 2012 there were signs of the anti-austerity movements splitting along the traditional divisions on the left, caught between the rivalry between the PCP and the *Bloco de Esquerda*. After the March 2012 the secretary-general of the CGTP, Arménio Carlos accused the 15-O of having provoked clashes with the police during the strike, a tactic he believed distracted attention from the real issues and allowed the police to stoke up a climate of



fear, and suggested instead that the CGTP only recognised a different anti-austerity organisation, the *Precários Inflexíveis* ('Inflexible short-term contract workers' – PI). However, among other players, collaborations had already begun developing, with several 'new new' movements engaging with established political actors in initiatives such as the creation of a 'Citizen Audit on Sovereign Debt' (*Auditoria Cidadã à Dívida Pública*) aimed at promoting debate around debt restructuring or even its cancellation, whose organizing committee included a former secretary general of the CGTP union federation and a former socialist junior minister, amongst others.<sup>14</sup>

This tendency towards greater collaboration was evident in October 2012, when the leaders of the M12M joined others close to the CGTP and the left-wing party *Bloco de Esquerda* in organising a 'Democratic Congress for Alternatives' (*Congresso Democrático das Alternativas* – CDA). Despite drawing criticism from both the Communist Party and the UGT union federation, the Congress brought together around 1,500 people aiming to create a common platform unifying the various movements and groups fighting against austerity.<sup>15</sup>

The CDA, together with other groups and organisations, supported a further demonstration-organising platform: *Que se Lixe a Troika. Queremos as Nossas Vidas de Volta* ('Fuck the

Troika: we Want our Lives Back!’ – QLT). As with M12M and 15O, the QLT has defined itself as non-partisan in its slogans, communiqués and publicity. The terms right or left are barely mentioned, and there are many expressions of independence. Nevertheless, its positioning is evident, if only because of the pattern of alliances it has established with left-wing parties (PCP and *Bloco de Esquerda*) and with the trade union federation CGTP.<sup>16</sup> Despite its earlier suspicions over the CDA, and having often publicly criticised the ‘new new’ movements (most recently in a highly sceptical editorial of its members’ newspapers), it seems that the PCP changed strategy in 2012, and opted for a closer collaboration with the non-aligned anti-austerity protests.<sup>17</sup> One newspaper reported that the QLT organising committee included several leading PCP members, alongside other BE leaders.<sup>18</sup> Although this does not mean that the QLT is a ‘front organisation’, it does show that since 2012 there has been a significant degree of coordination between ‘old old’ and ‘new new’ politics: a few days after the demonstration of 15 September, the QLT organizers called on its supporters to attend a demonstration convened by the CGTP on 29 September 2012, while the CGTP supported the QLT’s 2 March 2013, demonstration, which once again was said to have broken participation records. And once more, alongside the decidedly ‘internationalist’ feel and claims of the organisers, the historic symbols of protest and democracy the country are

recurrently used by the QLT, as is the case with the song *Grândola, Vila Morena*, symbolic of the 1974-5 Revolution.<sup>19</sup>

### *Concluding reflections*

Looking across the two and a half years since the start of 2010, we can therefore see an evolving and shifting pattern of contention, but one where multiple forms of mobilisation of civil society interact, build alliances and adapt strategies. We do not see a ‘mild mannered’, quiescent response to austerity. Despite the continued significant inequalities in political resources that depress participation in Portugal when compared to other western nations, we can also say that the capacity for mobilisation of Portuguese civil society is not fixed by what could be called ‘supply-side’ factors (the characteristics of the population), but also responds to contexts and opportunities. In this case the opening for mobilisation was the weakening and the delegitimisation of the PS government, and the combination of the subsequent electoral campaign with the negotiations for an external bailout. The results of the 2011 elections, which brought to power a coalition committed to the politics of austerity offered fewer opportunities for a stronger push from both new and traditional challengers, but encouraged the attempts to form alliances between them. These dynamics remind us that, as Tarrow noted, ‘while the financial crisis sparked a great deal of contention, it was differently affected by

the political opportunity structure of each country' (Tarrow 2011: 27).

Yet, even if our findings are necessarily tentative, aiming as they do at a moving target, some broader preliminary conclusions are possible. First, that in assessing the current cycle of protest in European democracies we need to consider the limits of 'new new' movements, as much as their potential. Second, our analysis of the Portuguese case suggests that traditional – 'old old' – actors seem to retain a central role in extraordinary political mobilisation. Yet, we also note that unions and left-wing parties are acting from a position of weakness, drawing on highly depleted constituencies. Taken together, the limitations of both 'old old' and 'new new' in fact suggest that the road ahead for such actors lies not in competition, but in cooperation – something we see developing in the Portuguese case.

The new social movements we charted in relation to the broader field of anti-austerity politics in Portugal certainly do evidence many interesting and novel characteristics: their mode of mobilisation does rely extensively on ICT; their discourse makes original identity claims based on traditionally silent vectors (informal or insecure employment, the idea of a 'generation'); and they do advocate, in many cases, non-hierarchical forms of mobilisation and participation. On the

other hand, our data suggests that these movements' ability to mobilise extensively has been sporadic and discontinuous. In part this may be connected to the relative absence a long-established autonomous infra-structure of civil society – Portuguese 'new new' social movements have a relatively sparse network of autonomous social justice and campaigning social movement organisations to draw support, expertise and members from. As such these movements may be less rooted in their constituency than is often suggested. As work on Russian opposition networks has argued (Beissinger 2013), IT connected movements – 'virtual civil society' – which are not embedded in consolidated forms of association – 'conventional civil society' – increases their volatility. As a result, these new anti-austerity movements have adapted their tactics and repertoires, moving away from large demonstrations towards high-profile, highly-visible actions by small numbers of activists, such as the disruption public appearances by government ministers. But more importantly, our evidence suggests that, especially in 2012 and 2013, they have increasingly relied on alliances with political parties and in particular trade unions for major actions, and they appear to be less likely to mobilise extensively when not backed by such established actors.

In contrast, in terms of sustained mobilisation, the politics of labour have not diminished in importance: even if mass demonstrations under the anti-austerity ‘generation’ or ‘precariat’ banners have attracted most media attention, the most important component of the mobilisations between 2010-2013 have been the ‘traditional’ forms of protest and, foremost amongst them that classic weapon, the general strike. The early signs are that there has been a relative strengthening of the mobilising capacity and political influence of labour unions in Portugal, even if membership and strike action are still below the levels seen in the cycle of contention of the 1980s and 1990s.

As we saw, our analysis echoes very recent work on other European politics that questions the death of the ‘old old’ political actors and issues in the current cycle of protest (Wahlström, Wennerhag and Peterson 2013, Bosi and della Porta 2013, Rüdig and Karyotis 2013). Some authors have also underlined that there has been a significant increase in the number of public sector and general strikes in several European countries (Hamann, Johnston and Kelly 2013 and Gall 2013). Moreover, Gall considers that since the late 2000s, ‘political mass strike’ is now ‘the mainstay in the repertoires of contention of union movements in France, Greece, Italy, Portugal and Spain since the late 1990s’ (Gall 2013: 685).

Our findings warrant a final reflection on a critical issue: what could be the actual political and social consequences of this cycle of mobilisation? Time will tell, but we would emphasise two aspects: it is evident that neither the massive demonstrations, nor the multiplication of the general strikes, nor the months-long strong strike of the dock-workers seem to have had much effect in reversing the application of austerity measures. The weapons of anti-austerity mobilisation are, at first sight, blunt. Yet, intriguing synergies have emerged from the participation of these two types of actor in anti-austerity protests in Portugal.

There is, as of yet, limited data available on the values and practices of those who take part in these acts of protest, and relatively little can be said on whether participation in this cycle of contention has changed political attitudes and affiliations. ESS results for the 2010 and 2012 waves, however, suggest that such mobilisations have made some inroads in attracting those who have not felt represented by institutional politics. While membership of political parties has remained low in European terms, since 2010 there have been increases in the proportion of respondents stating having signed petitions or, particularly, attending demonstrations, an indicator where the Portuguese reached the European average for the first time in a decade (de Sousa et al 2014: 18). Overall, the proportion of

respondents stating participation in a public demonstration in the previous year more than doubled, from 2.4 per cent in 2010 to 6.8 in 2012. While there was, as is to be expected, a strong representation of supporters of the more oppositionist left-wing parties (the PCP and, mainly, the BE), it is also notable that the number of those who protested but report no sympathy for any given political party increased from 36.4 in 2010 to 49.6 per cent, and a similar pattern is observable amongst those who have never belonged to a trade union. Clearly, the wider scope and diversity of the protests in this cycle have grown to encompass at least some of Portugal's 'disaffected democrats'.

The same ESS data shows that almost two thirds of those who participated in demonstrations in 2012 had voted in 2011, as opposed to less than half of those who had not attended one. It is not out of the question that such kinds of unconventional participation could be a route towards 'mainstream' participation, although in a transformed political space. This finding confirms that contentious forms of politics are not always in contrast with institutional participation and that cycles of protests might lead to an increasing participation both in conventional and non conventional channels (Tarrow 1989, McAdam 1998, Cerezales 2003).

Moreover, even if the direct consequences of the cycle of protest analysed in this article are hard to measure and the



policies of austerity continue, mobilization did introduce modifications in the political landscape. New political actors emerged, as was the case with the *Congresso Democratico das Alternativas*, from which two more organizations were born: the platform 3D (Dignity, Democracy and Development) and the new left-wing party *Livre*. If on the one hand this multiplication of political parties at the left end of the spectrum runs the risk of compromising some of its parts, such as the *Bloco de Esquerda*, overall, there seems to be an increase in the vote in political parties on the left, who have been the main beneficiaries of shifting electoral preferences. The PCP, which as we have seen changed towards a strategy of alliance building across the unions and new movements, has steadily made gains, winning 11 per cent of the vote in the local elections of 2013, its best result since 1997. The 2014 European elections saw the range of parties to the left of the PS win an unprecedented 29.9 per cent share of the vote.<sup>20</sup> The main opposition party, PS, seems not to have been able to capitalize on these dynamics, even if together with governing centre-right coalition it continues to hold a (diminished) majority of votes cast.

While a direct link between the cycle of protest and electoral results cannot be established, in other areas we can clearly identify some effects. Aside from the re-emergence of labour protest, the mobilisation of ‘new new’ social movements has

had an undeniable influence on the trade unions – they have been led to negotiate, coordinate with and in many cases participate in emerging constellation of new organisation seeking to represent new constituencies. If sustained and developed, such collaborations, forcing traditional political actors to reach out to new constituencies – labour market ‘outsiders’ and the young, for instance –, and new movements to form alliances with institutionally established pressure groups, have the potential to radically transform the political map. This is particularly the case if these encounters turn out to be mutually reinforcing, as Campos Lima and Martin Artiles have argued (Campos Lima and Martin Artiles 2014: 142), a process apparent in Greece, where Kousis and Karakioulafi found both diverse movements coalescing into ‘meganeetworks’, a process perhaps in development in Portugal following an earlier period of competition between them (2013).

It is therefore in the beginnings of a collaboration between broad-based anti-austerity movements and the traditional actors of the left that we see the possibility of developments that may impact the nature of Southern European politics in the medium-term.

## Notes

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<sup>2</sup> Source: EUROSTAT: Labour Force Survey.

<sup>3</sup> 2,500-3,000 demonstrators according the organizers and approximately 1,000 according to the chief of the *Polícia de Segurança Pública* (Public Security Police, PSP). Source: *Público*, 2 June 2013.

<sup>4</sup> Our methodology draws on both the PEA and ‘Contentious Politics’ approach, combining the systematic coding of newspaper events with content analysis of the same, as well as broader contextual sweep of available materials, seeking to map the field of contention, rather than focusing on single actor. See: Earl et al 2004 Koopmans and Statham 1999, Tilly and Tarrow 2007.

<sup>5</sup> In respect to the effects of a revolutionary transition on the development of Portuguese civil society see also Fernandes (2014).

<sup>6</sup> Data from the European Protest and Coercion Database (EPCD), retrieved from <http://web.ku.edu/~ronfrand/data/>

<sup>7</sup> Unlike the EPCD data, which draws on news sources, Figure 6 draws on governmental statistics drawing on legal notices of strike action, which results in the reporting of a much wider range of actions. As a result of different methods of collection the two series cannot be combined, but they show roughly comparable fluctuations.

<sup>8</sup> Political elites divisions are frequently at the origin of an opening in the Political Opportunity Structure, which can ‘provide incentives for people to

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undertake collective action by affecting their expectations of success or failure' (Tarrow 1996: 54).

<sup>9</sup> Data from *Estatísticas em Síntese - Greves*. Gabinete de Estratégia e Estudos, Ministério da Economia e Emprego, 2010, 2011 and 2012. The 2010 figure seems to be the continuation of a pattern, with the proportion of multiple company strikes similar to those observed in 2005, 2006 and 2007 – the closest years for which data is available.

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.publico.pt/economia/noticia/23-sindicatos-da-ugt-emitem-preavisos-de-greve--1572243>

<sup>11</sup> According to the ICTWSS Database, reported union density rates have steadily fallen from 60.8 in 1978 to 19.3 in 2010: Jelle Visser, ICTWSS database (Institutional Characteristics of Trade Unions, Wage Setting, State Intervention and Social Pacts, 1960-2010), version 4.0: <http://www.uva-niias.net/208>

<sup>12</sup> <http://www.publico.pt/sociedade/noticia/um-desempregado-um-bolseiro-e-uma-estagiaria-inventaram-o-protesto-da-geracao-a-rasca-1482270>

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.publico.pt/politica/noticia/stop-troika-e-passos-ladrao-comandaram-a-revolucao-dos-indignados-1516693#/0>

<sup>14</sup> <http://www.auditoriacidada.info/>.

<sup>15</sup> <http://www.congressoalternativas.org/>

<sup>17</sup> <http://www.omilitante.pcp.pt/pt/324/Tema/797/>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.ionline.pt/artigos/outros/se-lixo-troika-nucleo-duro-dominado-militantes-be-pcp>

<sup>20</sup> We included, in this figure, the 7,15% of votes obtained by the MPT (*Partido da Terra*, Earth Party) even if its location on the left-right axis is still quite problematic.

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**Tab. 1 Abstention index in Portugal**

Year	Total	Residents in Portugal	Not Residents in Portugal
1975	8,5	8,3	36,8
1980	15,2	14,6	39,5
1983	22,2	21,4	54,6
1985	25,7	24,6	70
1987	28,5	27,4	73,5
1991	32,6	31,8	67,4
1995	33,8	32,9	76,2
1999	39	38,2	76,5
2002	38,4	37,7	75,6
2005	35,6	35	75,3
2009	40,3	39,5	84,7
2011	41,9	41,1	83,1

Source: PORDATA

**Tab. 2 General Strikes in Portugal since 1975:**

<b>Date</b>	<b>Organiser</b>
1982 (12 February)	CGTP
1982 (11 May)	CGTP
1988 (28 March)	CGTP and UGT
2002 (10 December)	CGTP
2007 (30 May)	CGTP
2010 (24 November)	CGTP and UGT
2011 (24 November)	CGTP and UGT
2012 (22 March)	CGTP
2012 (14 November)	CGTP
2013 (27 June)	CGTP and UGT



Figure 1

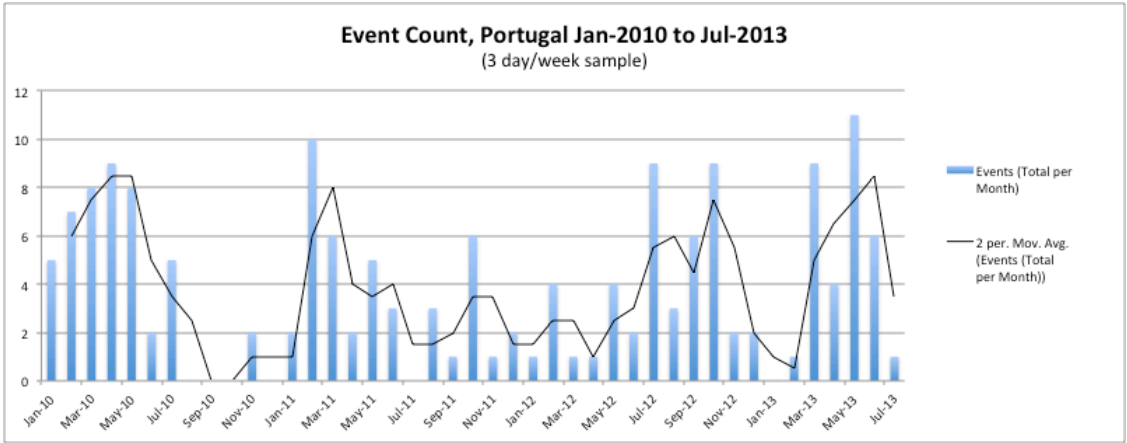


Figure 2

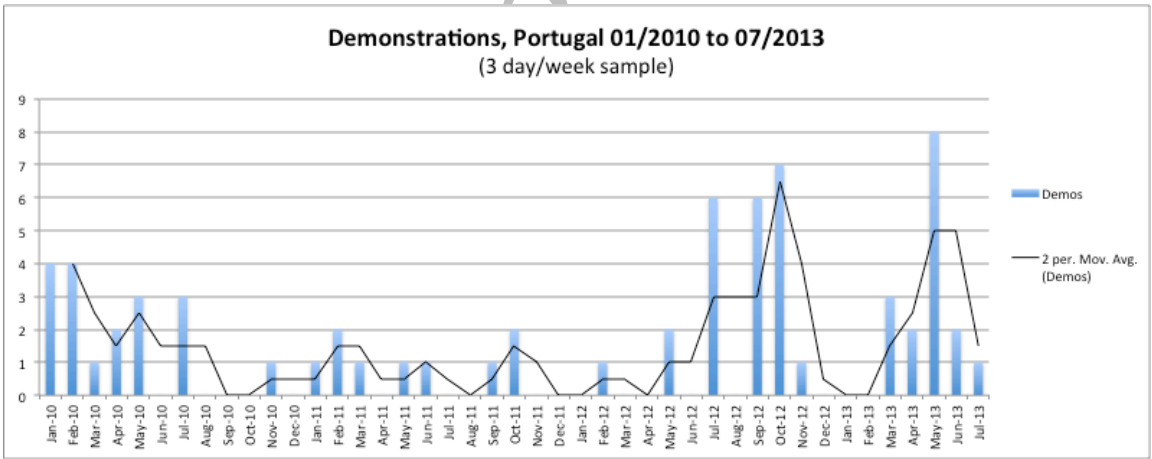


Figure 3

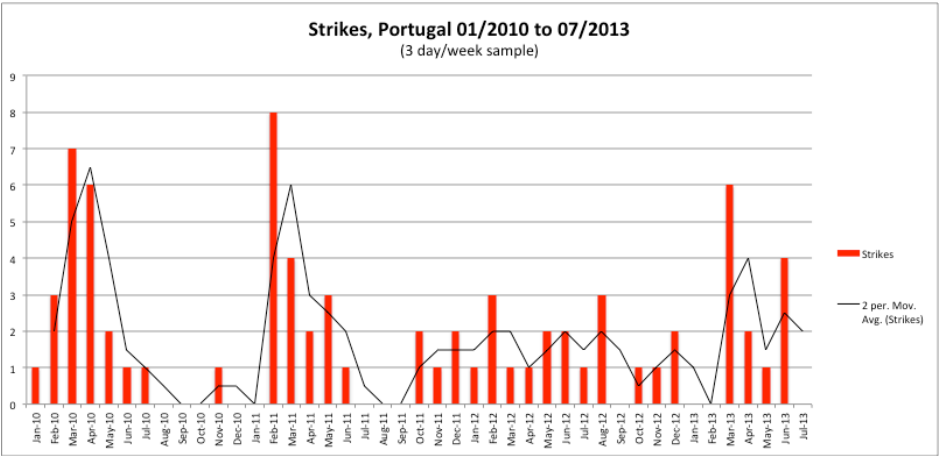


Figure 4

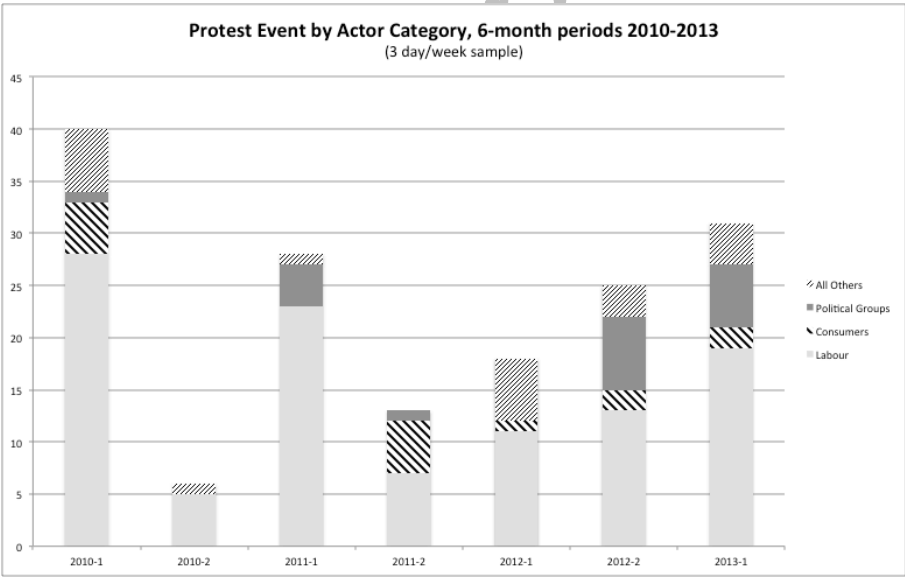


Figure 5

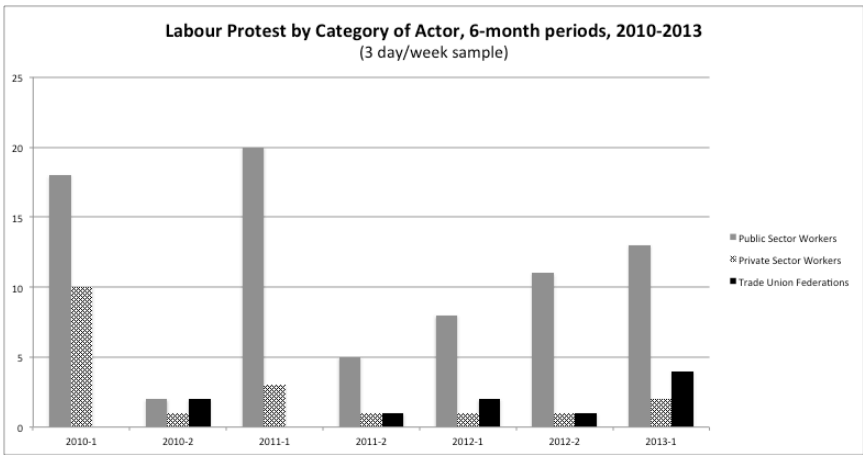


Figure 6

