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INTRODUCTION: RETHINKING THE CONSEQUENCES OF SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND CYCLES OF PROTEST

INTRODUCCIÓN: REPENSANDO LAS CONSECUENCIAS DE LOS MOVIMIENTOS SOCIALES Y LOS CICLOS DE PROTESTA

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Street demonstrations, the occupation of public squares and houses, strikes, the formation of new political parties or, simply, the sending of emotional letters to political representatives are all common ways for citizens in democratic countries to make their voices heard. Examples are easy to come by nowadays: protests against austerity measures in crisis-stricken countries such as Greece, Iceland, Spain and the UK; pro-democracy protests in Armenia and Ecuador; and pro- and anti-radical right protests in welfare states such as Sweden. All of these events receive coverage in the media, and their outcomes are of great interest to activists as well as scholars interested in social change. How, if at all, do activists achieve their goals? Does participation in these events play a role in the activists' subsequent political behaviour? What role do social movements play in the broader political and societal changes in contemporary society?

This special issue aims to answer these questions by putting forward new and interesting theoretical discussions about the consequences of social movements, as well as some empirical examples of how different movements have achieved political change in Southern and Northern Europe. This special issue emerges from the mid-term conference of the European Sociological Association's research network on social Movements (RN25) that we organized at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid, running from 19 to 20 February, 2015. During this conference, we engaged in fruitful discussions about new trends in analyses of how contentious actions transcend the internal life of social movements or influence the rest of society. We found that the presented papers were extremely rich, not only because they empirically addressed emerging protests, but also because of their theoretical potential. Much recent research has been devoted to the political or biographical consequences of social movement mobilization, but theoretical frameworks could be further developed, and it is necessary to discuss the mechanisms which explain how and why protest events and social movements sometimes achieve the stated goals and sometimes lead to negative unintended consequences.

We decided to make our discussion available to the wider public through an open-access publication, thus allowing us to reveal the richness of the conference's debates and to prompt new questions and reflections on the political consequences of protest and the related mechanisms of social movement outcomes in today's societies. The limited space available required us to select only certain contributions. The articles were selected following a thematic focus on political consequences. As a conscious choice, this special issue includes scholars who are at different stages of their careers and experts from both the fields of political science and sociology; the aim is to exploit the potential of interdisciplinary approaches, as well as to foster inter-generational dialogue. All contributions to this special issue, except for one, were presented at the ESA mid-term conference. We would like to thank the participants of this conference for their inspiring comments on the first draft of the articles and for the lively discussions about the political consequences of protest and mechanisms of social movement outcomes that stimulated the writing of the Introduction to this special issue. We are also grateful to the editors of the RIS and the anonymous reviewers for their very helpful feedback. Eduardo Romanos acknowledges the support of the Spanish Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness (grant number CSO2013-41035-P). Katrin Uba acknowledges the support of the Riksbankens Jubileumsfond (P09-1020:1-E).

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Protest mobilization, whether via street demonstrations, a general strike or a symbolic action such as walking out of a church when a priest advocates banning abortion, is expected to have some kind of impact on its targets. Such actions also influence society at large and the activists themselves. The number of studies on such kinds of consequences of social movement mobilization has increased significantly since the early studies by Gamson (1975), Piven and Cloward (1979) or Schumaker (1975) were undertaken, and they have been well described in several reviews (Amenta et al. 2010; Bosi et al. 2016; Burstein and Linton 2002; Giugni 1998; Uba 2009). The focus of recent studies has moved away from simple analyses of success or failure, and more frequently one can note discussions on possible mechanisms which explain why, when and how movements can and do bring about political or social change.

Early analyses of the political consequences of protest mobilization sometimes argued that the combination of protest strategies and political opportunities were responsible for the movement achieving its goals (e.g., Kitschelt 1986). Today, the focus is more on the combined effects of various factors such as public opinion, powerful political allies and different mobilization strategies (e.g., Agnone 2007; Andrews and Caren 2010; Olzak and Soule 2009), and instead of the movement, the analysis centers on targets and asks why politicians, political parties, market actors or citizens actually listen to protest mobilization (e.g., Luders 2010; King and Soule 2007; Piccio 2016). This focus means that more attention is paid to the mechanisms or processes of change. It allows researchers to demonstrate how the different contextual factors, such as political regimes, party systems and cultural experiences, interact with the movement strategies and how this all aids or hinders the achievement of the movements' goals.

These theoretical developments also require further methodological advancement in order to demonstrate the expected theoretical relationships. The issue of causality has long been under discussion (Diani 1997; Earl 2000), as studies that focus only on one specific movement have difficulty demonstrating what the outcome would have been if there had not been any mobilization at all. Recent studies often use a comparative structure and opt for rigorous methods of data collection and statistical methods of analysis to demonstrate how protests bring about social and political change (e.g., Biggs and Andrews 2015; Branton et al. 2015; Huff and Kruszewska 2016). There are also increasing numbers of studies which provide careful documentation and analysis of the process of political and social change using ethnographic studies and process tracing (e.g., the articles by Bosi, and Romanos and Sádaba in this issue).

Although recent improvements have resulted in several questions that were posed by earlier reviews in the field being answered, there remain unanswered theoretical questions, such as those on the mechanisms of how social movements affect policy-makers, how mobilization changes political institutions and what the implications of failed mobilizations are. European cases in general, and Southern European or Scandinavian cases in particular, have not received as much empirical coverage in prior

research as movements from the U.S. (Amenta et al. 2010; Uba 2009). This special issue looks for answers to some of the remaining theoretical questions and covers in detail the consequences of social movement mobilization in Southern (Portugal, Spain) and Northern Europe (Northern Ireland, Sweden).

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The main challenge to research on the political consequences of social movements is the theoretically grounded 'calculation' of the costs of concession; however, providing the mechanisms which demonstrate the causal relationship between protest and political change is also difficult. The articles included in this special issue contribute to the latest debates on the consequences of social movements by addressing this challenge in two, interrelated ways: extending the existing theoretical framework of social movement theory, and developing an in-depth analysis of emerging forms of contention based on new empirical research.

First, **Fishman and Everson** make an important theoretical contribution by increasing our understanding of how the simultaneous operation of diverse mechanisms can increase the likelihood of a movement's success. Their empirical analysis of protests and policy process in the U.S., Spain and Portugal provides a unique comparative picture of the consequences of citizens' mobilization. Specifically, they seek to specify crucial analytic differences between forms of practice adopted by movements in their search for success. The authors begin with a critical review of the literature on the political consequences of social movements. Specifically, they critically confront the assumption that disruption is the primary mechanism used to achieve social movement outcomes. Instead, they propose three main mechanisms (conversation, displacement and disruption), offering an interesting theoretical reflection on these mechanisms as ideal types. They accurately and clearly define what each mechanism is and then analyze each of them using one or more case studies.

The following, more empirically focused, articles study new issues within research into the consequences of social movements. **Uba** studies issues that are similar to those discussed by Fishman and Everson, as the quality of discussion between activists and authorities, focusing on how the deliberative quality of protest letters can play a role in decisions on school closures in Sweden. While prior research has usually focused on the strategy of protest – whether these are disruptive or not – she demonstrates that the content of protest letters, particularly their framing and deliberative quality, increased the likelihood of a positive response, and the postponement of the closure of the affected primary schools, from local decision-makers. According to Uba, the existing literature on the political outcomes of protests highlights two points – electoral interest and the authorities' interest in stability – but overlooks the contents of activists' claims. In her article, she combines the literature on deliberative democracy and social movements to paint a much richer picture of the persuasive potential of activists' claims. The empirical case under study is a decade of mobilization against school closures in Sweden. By combining quantitative and qualitative (content) analysis and providing a triangulation of data sources, the author offers a reasoned discussion of possible constraints in a political context: political allies and public support are not relevant, unlike the proximity of elections and the size and distance of schools. The article examines protest claims and the way they are formulated. In this regard, it provides an interesting scale against which to measure the deliberative quality of protesters' messages. Results provide empirical support to the findings from other contexts (e.g., McCammon 2009) that argumentative and credible frames help movements to attain their goals. In this sense, the article demonstrates that the deliberative qualities of protest messages matter: They can affect the ability of movements to achieve activists' goals.

Helander continues the discussion by focusing on Sweden and the political struggle over school closures from a rarely examined angle. She focuses on individual citizens and their political activism after participating in protests with different consequences. She demonstrates that failed protests do not automatically lead to alienation and quiescence, but the effect is dependent on the perceived procedural injustice, that is, the way activists perceive politicians' behaviour and response to their protests. Her results indicate that the perceived justice of policy-making processes is an important factor in explaining citizen's attitudes toward political activism. The article helps us to better understand future mobilization trends in contemporary social movements, as well as, more generally, the interrelated consequences of political activism.

Individuals' roles in increasing the impact of social movements on political change is also important in the article by **Romanos and Sádaba**, but their empirical focus is on Spain and the effects of the recent mass mobilization by the *indignados*. They demonstrate how movements use digital technologies to influence the domestic political process and how this has affected the institutionalization of recent protest movements. Some scholars have demanded that research on the political outcome of social movements take the role played by information and communication technologies (Earl 2016) more into consideration, but to date little empirical analysis has been carried out, as this article clearly shows.

Finally, **Bosi** moves back to a more general discussion on the consequences of social movement mobilization, but in contrast to many previous studies the focus is on inter-related effects of mobilization. In particular, he discusses how the responses of the British State at policy level toward the disruptive mobilization of the Catholic community in Northern Ireland and to the armed campaign of the PIRA have shaped the post-movement life of PIRA volunteers. His research represents a step in breaking with the excessive compartmentalization found in studies of the consequences of social movements. The article is structured in three main parts: a theoretical discussion, empirical analysis, and conclusions with an agenda for future research and complex issues that remain unresolved. This article shows how small, specific consequences of mobilization play a role in larger processes of social change.

Although all of the articles in this special issue are important contributions to the field, they cannot provide answers to all our questions on the political consequences of social movement and protest mobilization. We still lack comparative empirical analysis, which would help us better understand the political power of different movements in various political contexts such as young and unstable democracies in Eastern Europe or Latin America. The rise of populist movements in Western Europe and the U.S. also acts as the ideal context for studying how general public opinion influences social movement mobilization and the political consequences of such mobilization. New data sources, such as social media, allow us to move beyond the statistical measures of public support and focus more on the changing claims and arguments that activists, their followers, and their targets put forward. Analyses of such data would improve our understanding of the processes by which some movements achieve significant concessions even in a hostile environment, whilst others fail within the most beneficial contexts.

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