Anti-Austerity Movements: Old Wine in New Vessels?

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Panels 6.8 Social movements and political protest in times of austerity (I)
Introduction

Western European countries are still struggling with the negative effects of the Great Recession, particularly high levels of unemployment and lowered purchasing power/living standards. In the UK commentators, left-wing activists and union leaders bemoan the emergence of a “Lost Generation” of youth. As citizens try to cope with the effects of negative economic conditions, attention has also been drawn to the potential social and political effects of the recession. One type of possible negative effect of economic hardship is the decline of participation and protest around “new” issues such as the environment, etc. and a rise of protest against austerity measures and public sector cuts. If citizens need to struggle with working overtime to keep a job, searching for a new job, or more generally dealing with the array of difficulties thrown up by economic hardship, they will have less time and resources to engage in political action to support wider moral causes such as those espoused by “new” movements.

However, while the experience of economic difficulty can certainly be understood to push people away from protesting in favour of animal rights and against nuclear energy, tough economic conditions can on the other hand be seen to generate grievances which people may seek to redress through political participation, and, in particular, protest. As the recent Occupy demonstrations show, economic crisis may provide the political space and motivations for the mobilization of those seeking to criticise what are perceived to be unjust patterns of wealth distribution in advanced capitalist democracies and to draw attention to the fact that not all sections of society bear the costs of economic crisis evenly. This can be most clearly seen in the rhetoric of the Occupy movement which set what they perceived as the greedy, corrupt financial sector 1%, against the 99% of hard-working, law-abiding citizens.

However, the Occupy movement has also been characterised in the media as being unrepresentative of the general population, with activists described as mostly drawn from the relatively secure, educated, liberal middle classes. It has been suggested that the real losers of the current economic crisis, those most hardly hit by the economic recession – the unemployed, for example – did not form part of this movement and stayed at home during the protests. Therefore, while economic crisis might have been the spur for political mobilization and the focus of the Occupy movement’s rhetoric, it is questionable whether it is those people with the most serious grievances to redress which actually engage in protest action of this sort.

Using the paradigm of “exit, voice and loyalty” (Hirschman 1970) one might argue that those hardest hit by economic recession are also those most likely to “exit” the political sphere and withdraw from political engagement. It is only those who are relatively insulated from financial hardship who may have the resources (whether economic or social) necessary to ‘voice’ their concerns and engage in political action. Others still, will choose “loyalty” even in the face of economic crisis – whether due to the fact that they are not exposed to the negative effects of recession or unemployment or because other factors (for example, a conservative political ideology) lead them to support the current economic system, even in the face of unravelling economic problems.

This paper analyses the characteristics of participants in anti-austerity movements. Who do anti-austerity movements attract? To what extent to these movements attract a similar make up for
participants to movements around “new” or “old” issues? We test this primarily by examining differences in the make-up of these three different types of movements in terms of social characteristics (gender, generation), resources (education, SES), political values (democratic satisfaction, social values, economic values), and extent of political engagement (organizational membership, institutional participation, extra-institutional participation, frequency of demonstrating). This is achieved through the analysis of a rich and novel dataset containing data of over 10,000 protestors from 72 demonstrations taking place between 2009-2013 in 7 Western European countries participating in the Caught in the Act of Protest: Contextualizing Contestation collaborative protestsurvey.eu project funded by the European Science Foundation (ESF) and by comparing the characteristics of anti-austerity movement participants to those from movements around “old” issues and movements around “new” issues. To our knowledge this is the first cross-national study to date attempting to understand who joins anti-austerity movements. As such, the main research questions addressed in this paper is primarily descriptive; however, we will also attempt to provide some explanations for differences. To recognise the hierarchically-structured nature of the data we apply multi-level models in the analysis and also provide descriptive results in term of the characteristics of austerity protesters.

The Determinants of Participation in Protest Activities

The debate over whether deprivation leads to an increase or a decrease in protest participation exists in the social movement literature. In this context, older theories popularized in the 1960s, focusing on grievances and relative deprivation as the origins for political protest, have been increasingly dismissed. Instead, mobilization models which emphasise the importance of resources, political opportunities, the construction of political problems and ideological identification for the development of political solidarity and the organizational structures necessary for political action and mobilization, have received more support. The main ideas behind this shift in focus are that: 1) while groups may be relatively deprived, they first need to realise, or perceive this, and also, 2) see themselves as able to mobilise and effect political change, generally through membership of a political group. In the absence of the construction of grievances and relative deprivation as social or political problems which can be redressed through political action, and without the organizational structures, resources, and political opportunities necessary to mobilise and effect political change, the experience of economic hardship or other forms of disadvantage on their own are unlikely to lead to political participation. According to this line of argument, the experience of economic recession, and more specifically, the costs and pressures experienced by individuals suffering economic hardship, are more likely to push them to exit political engagement, rather than mobilise them to action.

In line with this, the post-materialism thesis (Inglehart 1977, 1990) suggests that the experience of relative economic security during the early years of socialization leads to the development of values which emphasise post-material, liberal values over materialist ones and which in turn spur people to anti-state ‘elite-challenging’ political action such as demonstrating, joining boycotts, signing petitions and participation in new social movements. According to this theory, it is the opposite of the experience of economic hardship – material security – which leads to political participation and to the formation of those types of values emphasizing self-expression and universal moral causes which are seen to be conducive to protest participation. As such, one would
expect higher levels of participation amongst those individuals which grew up during relatively affluent times and lower levels of political participation amongst those individuals experiencing their “formative years” (Mannheim 1928) during economic crisis.

However, as the recent emergence of the Occupy movement would support, it could also be suggested that the experience of hard times could lead individuals to focus attention on economic inequalities and the human costs these exert on fellow citizens and therefore lead individuals to develop values which are more supportive of egalitarian redistributive policies and welfare support measures. In other words, that the experience of economic crisis may lead to the formation of left-wing economic values which spur individuals to political action by constructing hardship and relative deprivation as the result of political arrangements which can be altered through political intervention. Moreover, tough economic times can also be seen to provide the basis for political solidarity and identification with political groups, leading people to mobilization and political action. It therefore remains a puzzle as to whether deprivation leads people to engage in protests – particularly those around austerity measures or rather stop engaging.

The patterns of participation of Western European publics have undergone widespread changes since the 1960s. In particular many scholars speak of a rise of extra-institutional repertoires including protest activism and participation in social movement organizations (Inglehart 1977, 1990; Inglehart and Catterberg 2002; Norris 2002; Topf 1995). Extra-institutional participation is seen to be in continuous expansion as a result of the entry into the political arena of younger, more highly educated and protest-prone cohorts since the mid-to-late 1960s (Barnes and Kaase 1979). Novel channels of participation are seen to have flourished in what has been heralded as “the social movement society” (Meyer and Tarrow 1998) developing out of the student revolts of Mai 1968. Those participatory repertoires – marches, rallies, demonstrations, occupations, sit-ins, and other forms of public protest – once perceived to be the sole remit of “anti-state rebels” (Norris et al. 2005) are said to have become widespread and “normalized” (Van Aelst and Walgrave 2001) in contemporary Western democracies.

In particular, Inglehart and Catterberg (2002: 302) have recently argued that “[a]s younger, better-educated, and more Postmaterialist cohorts replace older ones in the adult population, intergenerational population replacement will tend to bring a shift toward increasingly participant publics”. Similarly, Norris (2002: xi) argues that “it is all too easy to equate change with decline”. She suggests instead that, citizens, and young ones in particular, are simply shifting from “the politics of loyalties” to “the politics of choice”; from “citizen-oriented” to “cause-oriented” repertoires of political participation. In summary, the argument is that while “elite-directed” (institutional) participation declines, “elite-challenging” (extra-institutional) participation will continue to rise in post-industrial nations since younger, more “cognitively mobilized” “post-materialist” cohorts prefer to participate via this repertoire (Inglehart 1977, 1990; Inglehart and Catterberg 2002). Scholars have argued that protests have continued to rise since then (Dalton 1996; Inglehart 1997; Inglehart and Catterberg 2002; Jennings and Van Deth 1990; Norris 2002). However, “younger cohorts” will be made up of different individuals at different points in time and “younger cohorts” observed at one point in time will be the “older cohorts” of subsequent studies. But why do people participate in protests? There are four groups of factors that can be identified from a review of the literature:
Firstly, social characteristics such as gender and generation are generally understood to have an effect on someone’s likelihood to protest: research tends to find that men protest more (Schussman and Soule 2005) and that members of “younger generations” coming of age since the 1960s are also more likely to protest (Inglehart and Catterberg 2002). However, some research shows that men and women participate about the same with the liberalization of gender roles and new research has challenged that once the appropriate age-period-cohort analysis methods are applied it is really only the 1960s-70s Generation that stands out as highly participatory (Grasso 2013).

Second, many scholars tend to see resources as instrumental to participation – particularly those coming from the resource mobilization approach: people with higher levels of education and those from the middle classes are seen to have more resources (Brady 1995; Verba et al. 1995). However, grievance theory spells out an alternative mechanism: that it is those with the least resources – those who have the least to lose – that will be more likely to protest in society (Buechler 2004; Snow et al. 2005). In particular for protest and social movements there are notable historical examples of participation by disenfranchised groups such as workers protesting for better work conditions, protests by the unemployed, immigrants, and recently anti-austerity movements (Buechler 2004; Piven and Cloward 1977; Snow et al. 2005; Tilly 1978). Indeed, “new” social movements were seen to be different to previous social movements in terms of their social bases – attracting socio-cultural specialists, not, the traditional working classes. Historically, protest was one of the few repertoires of action open to the disenfranchised and the poor. Strikes, picket lines, and occupations of factories also played a similar role. Therefore, the role of resources for protest and movement participation remains an open question.

There are two main ways to understand grievances- in terms of absolute or relative deprivation. Being from the working class for example can be seen as a proxy for absolute deprivation but “grievances” can also be understood in relative terms, in relation to some kind of reference group – either oneself at other times (including expectations of oneself in the future that are no longer likely – e.g. loss of savings or a home during economic crisis) or some other group of people. This type of grievance is probably better measured through subjective political attitudes e.g. satisfaction with democracy and evaluations of economic situation in the present vs the future etc. Politicization of social cleavages in the public sphere is crucial for inequalities to be socially understood as grievances. In a society that did not recognise inequality as problematic – e.g. in feudal times – being of a lower socio-economic status could not be understood as a “grievance”.

Thirdly, political values are also seen as important to participation. The role of satisfaction with democracy is debated: according to some theorists satisfaction with democracy spurs political action, according to others it is rather dissatisfaction that leads individuals to participate (Dalton 1996; Norris 2002; Verba et al. 1995). For Melucci (1989) new social movements emerge out of one section of the middle class (those in socio-cultural professions) challenging the other section that is in power (mainly managerial, economic, political). On this basis, we expect satisfaction with democracy, which indicates satisfaction with how politicians respond to participation of individual citizens, to have negative impact on protest participation. Research also tends to show that more left-libertarian individuals are more likely to engage in protest. However, it remains unclear whether it is support for economic left values as opposed to socially libertarian values that leads to this effect. Participants in “old” social movements focusing on traditional questions of socio-economic inequality are understood to be more likely to hold left economic values, but not
necessarily libertarian social values (Inglehart 1977; Kaase and Marsh 1979; Kitschelt 1988; Kriesi and Wisler 1996). In particular, the post-materialism thesis (Dalton 1996; Inglehart 1990; Norris et al. 2005; Welzel 2012) sees libertarian, self-expressive values as fundamental to participation. However, economically left-wing values could also be seen to play an important role particularly for participation in movements around “old” issues focused around the economy and more recent anti-austerity protests.

Finally, many scholars agree that mobilization and recruitment through previous political mobilization and/or associational networks are crucial factors (Diani and McAdam 2003; McAdam, McCarthy et al. 1996; Norris 2002; Schussman and Soule 2005) (Klandermans and Oegema 1987; McAdam and Paulsen 1993). However, even here is it unclear whether mobilization occurs through associational memberships or rather political action. It is also unclear whether individuals are mobilized through participation in any type of political activity (i.e. institutional or extra-institutional) or primarily through other modes of extra-institutional participation, or even still whether it is the level of commitment and frequency of activism which is the most important factor.

The Importance of Issues

This paper’s aim is to go some way to examine what characteristics distinguish individuals engaging in different types of protest – namely “old”, “new” and “anti-austerity”. “Old” movements are defined as those struggling for socio-economic issues, “new” movements are those struggling for wider moral causes such as the environment, anti-nuclear, women’s rights, LGBT rights, etc. “Anti-austerity” movements are those emerging indirect reaction to the recent socio-economic crises and against the austerity policies of many governments across Western Europe.

In the social movement research tradition, “new social movement theory” importantly has stressed the difference between “new” movements based on cultural and identity conflicts – emerging since the 1960s – in contrast to the “old” social movements based around socio-economic equality, trade-unions, Marxist-Leninist politics, and the labour-capital struggle (Offe 1987; Touraine 1971; Touraine 1981). According to this body of literature, new social movements share a number of characteristics in terms of social bases, organizational forms, action repertoires, and so forth, setting them apart from other, older movements, and particularly the labour movement based around trade unions. From this perspective, that which distinguishes old from new social movements most clearly are their divergent in their social bases.

Kriesi (1989) famously coined the phrase “social-cultural specialists” to denote that particular segment of the emerging “new middle class” whose members displayed left-libertarian values. Various studies have shown that this social category is over-represented in new social movements (Kriesi 1989, 1993; Kriesi and Van der Praag 1987). Moreover, the new middle class would also be more inclined to engage in the protest activities organized and mobilized for by social movements and social movement organizations: “social-cultural specialists are slightly more likely than unskilled workers to vote in national elections but far more likely to use protest activities to articulate their claims (Kriesi et al. 2012). Kitschelt (1988) termed them “left-libertarians”, given they were both more economically leftist and more socially libertarian relative to other groups in society. In particular, the libertarian value dimension – not solely the left economic value
dimension – was seen as conducive to engagement with new social movements and protest activism.

Having discussed the four sets of factors that tend to be seen to explain protest participation, we now turn to examining the extent to which these should hold for different types of movements. It would seem that for involvement in “old movements” individuals will be more male, older, have fewer resources in terms of education and SES, left-wing but not necessarily libertarian, probably dissatisfied with democracy, and mobilized – both through institutional (the class divide being expressed through voting patterns traditionally) and extra-institutional engagement (particularly strikes, occupations, etc.) – and through organizational membership (trade unions particularly). In other words, here “grievance theory” should be most relevant. On the other hand, for “new movements” we expect gender equality, younger, more resources, more libertarian but not necessarily more left-wing, more satisfied with democracy and mobilized mainly through extra-institutional networks and other forms of protest. However, it is unclear what we should expect from anti-austerity movements. Are they simply “new” “old movements”? Or rather, are they movements made up of “new” individuals struggling for “old” issues? We explore these questions in the remainder of the paper. More specifically, we address the following questions: Who do anti-austerity movements attract? To what extent to these movements attract a similar make up for participants to movements around “new” or “old” issues? We test this primarily by examining differences in the make-up of these three different types of movements in terms of the four different sets of variables identified above: the social characteristics of participants in demonstrations (gender, generation), their resources (education, SES), their political values (democratic satisfaction, authoritarian-libertarian social values, right-left economic values, and the extent of their political engagement (organizational membership, institutional participation, extra-institutional participation, frequency of demonstrating).

**Data and Methods**

To answer these research questions, our analyses rely on data from an original dataset produced in the context of the CCC (*Caught in the Act of Protest: Contextualizing Contestation*) project. This is a collaborative effort, funded by national funding agencies in each participating country coordinated through the European Science Foundation (ESF), which involves 9 countries: Belgium, Czech Republic, Italy, Mexico, Netherlands, Spain, Switzerland, and the United Kingdom, and aimed at studying the impact of contextual variation on who participates in demonstrations, why and how. To do so, national teams of researchers have conducted on-site surveys among participants in demonstrations. A standardized questionnaire was handed out following a sampling method aimed at generating random samples of demonstrators. The questionnaire included questions concerning previous participation in different kinds of political activities and political values, and other indicators.

Additionally, contextual data was gathered concerning both the specific demonstration and the broader social and political environment. Thus, in addition to the individual-level data, we obtained crucial information concerning the organization of the demonstrations, media coverage of the demonstrations, the behaviours of both participants and the police, and more general indicators of political opportunity structures. The data are hierarchically structured, so as to lend
themselves to multi-level analyses in which the individual-level data are nested into the country level. The dataset used in this analysis contains data from 72 demonstrations in 7 Western European countries – Belgium, Britain, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, and Switzerland – containing over 10,000 respondents.

We present three logistic multi-level models. In the first one old and new movement participants are contrasted to each other so as to have a baseline against which to interpret the other two contrasts involving austerity participants. In the second one austerity participants are contrasted to old movement participants. In the third one they are contrasted to new movement participants.

The Appendix lists all the demonstrations included in the dataset and categorises them by whether they are old, new or an austerity march, based on expert judgements, showing that the spread of issues is even, reflecting the fact that the project aimed to survey all large demonstrations (more than 3,000 estimated protesters) occurring in each participating country between 2009 and 2013. Moreover, face-to-face interviews (achieving an almost perfect response rate) were conducted with a sub-sample of respondents to allow for non-response bias checks on the mail-back surveys, thus ensuring a robust methodology and ensuring reliable results that are both representative and generalizable to the population of demonstration participants across Western Europe.

Additionally, the models include a number of other variables. Firstly, we control for gender; we include a variable for cohorts or generations; education; SES; democratic satisfaction (a continuous scale where 0 means very dissatisfied with the way democracy works in the respondent’s country and 10 means very satisfied) and political values – economic and social values – we constructed two scales.

The first, for economic values is a mean scale of two Likert items (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) ranging from 1 meaning Right and 5 meaning Left from two items:

1. Government should redistribute income from the better off to those who are less well off
2. Even the most important public services and industries are best left to private enterprise*

The second item was first recoded in reverse order so higher values signified a more left-wing position. The reliability coefficient for this scale is 0.43.

The second scale for social values, is also a mean scale of two Likert items (Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree) ranging from 1 meaning Authoritarian and 5 meaning Libertarian from two items:

1. Children should be taught to obey authority*
2. People from other countries should be allowed to come to my country and live in it permanently if they want to
The first item was first recoded in reverse order so higher values signified a more libertarian position. The reliability coefficient for this scale is 0.48.

Moreover, we include a variable for organizational membership (this is a continuous variable measuring the number of organizations that the respondent has been involved with in the past 12 months); a variable for institutional participation (an additive scale from 0 to 4 where 0 means the respondent engaged in no institutional activities and 4 means they engaged in all four.) This is derived from two questions. One asking individuals whether they voted at the last election, the other asking individuals the following question (the same on we used from the dependant variable for extra-institutional participation) and allowing individuals to select the activities they engaged in the last twelve months:

Q. There are many things that people can do to promote or prevent change. Have you, in the past 12 months…?

- contacted a politician
- worn a badge or campaign sticker
- donated money to a political campaign

The reliability coefficient for this scale is 0.44 and principal component analysis showed all four items loaded only on one component with an eigenvalue greater than 1 (1.5).

For extra-institutional activism, we created an additive scale where 0 means the respondent participated in none of these other extra-institutional activities and 6 means the respondent engaged in all six, based on responses to the question:

Q. There are many things that people can do to promote or prevent change. Have you, in the past 12 months…?

- signed a petition?
- boycotted certain products?
- bought products for political, ethical or environmental reasons?
- joined a strike?
- taken part in direct action?
- used violent forms of action?

The scale scored a reliability coefficient of 0.50 (Cronbach’s alpha). The results of principal component analysis also showed that all six items loaded on one component with an eigenvalue of 1.7; the only other component with an eigenvalue greater than 1 – of 1.3 – showed that the first three items had negative loadings and the other three had positive loadings highlighting the more confrontational nature of the latter three activities vis-a-vis the more mainstream first three).

For frequency of protest in the last 12 months, response options ranged from never (excluding the demonstration at which individuals were surveyed, so, in fact, 1), to 2-5, to 6-10, to 1-20, to 21+ on a categorical variable.
To reflect the hierarchical nature of the data, and the fact that respondents were sampled within countries and therefore the fact that their errors are likely to be correlated, we apply two-level random-intercept models, with the country as the higher level of analysis. Thus, the models in the analysis will be three logistic multi-level models predicting: 1) being a participant in old as opposed to new movements; 2) austerity rather than old; 3) austerity rather than new social movements.

**Analysis of Results**

The analysis proceeds in two steps: in the first step we describe the composition of the three types of demonstrations according to a number of social, political, and other characteristics: in the second step we run logistic multi-level models with these variables in order to predict participation in anti-austerity movements.

Table 1 shows the descriptives of the variables included in the multi-level models (in terms of percentages or mean values). Overall, differences across the three types of demonstrations are not very large. This would point to a sort of “homogenizing effect” occurred within the social movement sector (Eggert and Giugni 2012), at least among the movements selected in this study. Anti-austerity movement participants have a profile similar to old movement participants on some aspects, while being more similar to new movement participants on other aspects. However, in general, austerity participants seem to be closer to the profile of old movement participants than to that of new movement participants.

**Table 1. Descriptives of old, new, and austerity movement participants**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Old</th>
<th>New</th>
<th>Austerity</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cohorts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-WWII generation</td>
<td>12%</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s/70s generation</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s generation</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>21%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s/00s generation</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary school or lower</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA or equivalent</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA or higher degree</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>45%</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salariat</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>57%</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate professions</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working class</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>9%</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Democratic satisfaction</strong></td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>5.0</td>
<td>4.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Economic values (left-wing)</strong></td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4.2</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social values (libertarian)</strong></td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>3.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organizational membership</strong></td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.3</td>
<td>2.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Institutional participation</strong></td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>2.4</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Extra-institutional participation</strong></td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>2.7</td>
<td>2.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Frequency of demonstrating</strong></td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>1.9</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: the cells without % are mean values
Yet we also observe differences across the three types of movements. In other words, participants in old, new, and austerity demonstrations do not look perfectly alike. For example, women are more present in new social movements that in both old and anti-austerity movements; anti-austerity movement participants are younger than new movement participants and especially than old movement participants; austerity participants seem slightly less educated than both of the other two movement participants; and the share of students is somewhat higher in the former than in the latter two. In terms of values, the most important differences can be observed on democratic satisfaction: anti-austerity movement participants are less satisfied than new movement participants (but equally interested than old movement participants). Finally, austerity participants are less prone to engage in both institutional and extra-institutional participation. These differences can be seen in further detail in the multi-level models below. It should be noted, however, that results might differ in part from the descriptive analyses as the samples used are not the same.

Table 2 presents the results of three logistic multi-level models contrasting participants in old, new, and austerity demonstrations. We first turn to Model 1 which addresses the differences between old and new movement participants. Compared to new movement participants, old movement participants are more male, more likely to come from older generations. They are less educated, more working class but less likely to be unemployed or students. This is in line with new social movement theory, which has depicted the so-called social-cultural specialists – the core constituency of these movements – as being characterized precisely by such social characteristics contrasting them to people engaged in old movements, in particular the labour movement (Kriesi and Van der Praag 1987; Kriesi 1989; Kriesi 1993). So, in spite of indications of a “homogenizing effect” across old and new social movements as suggested above, these two movement sectors are still different in many respects. Additionally, old movement participants are more dissatisfied with democracy, more highly economically left-wing, more likely to be members of organizations, less likely to engage in other extra-institutional activities, and more likely to protest more frequently.

### Table 2. Logistic multi-level models predicting participation in three different types of movements

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fixed Effects</strong></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Male</strong></td>
<td>0.33** (0.07)</td>
<td>-0.07 (0.09)</td>
<td>0.32*** (0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cohorts</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-WWII generation</td>
<td>0.10 (0.12)</td>
<td>-0.44* (0.18)</td>
<td>-0.66*** (0.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960s/70s generation</td>
<td>-0.23* (0.11)</td>
<td>0.32** (0.12)</td>
<td>0.25** (0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980s generation</td>
<td>-0.58*** (0.10)</td>
<td>0.74*** (0.11)</td>
<td>0.07 (0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990s/00s generation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BA or equivalent</td>
<td>-0.35** (0.11)</td>
<td>0.03 (0.13)</td>
<td>-0.28** (0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA or higher degree</td>
<td>-0.39*** (0.09)</td>
<td>0.24* (0.11)</td>
<td>-0.36*** (0.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Occupation</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salarit</td>
<td>-0.44** (0.14)</td>
<td>-0.23 (0.15)</td>
<td>-0.54*** (0.12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate professions</td>
<td>-0.53*** (0.16)</td>
<td>0.06 (0.16)</td>
<td>-0.37** (0.14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ref.: Working class</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>-0.41* (0.18)</td>
<td>0.23 (0.22)</td>
<td>0.08 (0.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students</td>
<td>-0.38* (0.17)</td>
<td>0.54** (0.20)</td>
<td>0.43*** (0.15)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Democratic satisfaction 0.04** (0.02) -0.02 (0.02) -0.01 (0.02)
Economic values (left-wing) 0.63*** (0.07) 0.29*** (0.06) 0.09 (0.05)
Social values (libertarian) -0.10 (0.05) 0.13* (0.05) -0.31*** (0.04)
Organizational membership 0.14** (0.04) -0.10* (0.05) -0.00 (0.04)
Institutional participation -0.01 (0.04) -0.36*** (0.05) -0.28*** (0.04)
Extra-institutional participation -0.26*** (0.04) 0.20*** (0.04) -0.04 (0.03)
Frequency of demonstrating 0.24*** (0.06) 0.22** (0.07) 0.34*** (0.06)

Constant $\gamma_{00}$
-2.98 (2.08) -3.01 (2.97) -1.05 (2.90)

Random Effects
$\sigma^2_u$ 27.78 53.51 51.37

- Log Likelihood -2437.15 -1761.51 -2916.67
BIC 5042.06 3684.80 6003.58
AIC 4912.30 3561.03 5871.34

The main focus of our paper, however, is on austerity demonstrations. So, the main question is: What characterizes participants in those demonstrations, as compared to both old and new movements? Let us have a look at each contrast in turn. The results for Model 2 show that anti-austerity movement participants differ from those from old movements on a number of important dimensions. They are more likely to come from the younger generations (although we cannot exclude life-cycle effects here given that we do not have over-time data following people along their life-cycle). They are more likely to be educated than old movement participants and more likely to be students. They are even more left-wing economically than old movement participants and more socially libertarian. They are less likely to be embedded in networks however and to engage in institutional participation. However they are more likely than old movement participants to engage in other extra-institutional activities and to demonstrate more frequently.

Finally, Model 3 compares anti-austerity movement participants to new movement participants. Anti-austerity movement participants are more likely to be male. They tend to have more individuals from the generation coming of age in the 1980s but about as many of those coming of age in the 1990s/00s. They are significantly less educated than new movement participants, more working class or students, they are less socially liberal than new movement participants, less likely to engage institutionally, but protest much more frequently.

If now we try to wrap up these findings, contrasting austerity demonstrations to both old and new movement participants at the same time (based on the presence of significant coefficients in both contrasts), we can see that the former differ with the latter in four respects. First, austerity demonstrations have a larger share of participants from the 1980s generation than from previous cohorts. Secondly, they have a larger share of students than people from the working class. Thirdly, participants in austerity demonstrations are less prone to be involved in institutional forms of participation (e.g. voting). Fourthly, they are more likely to demonstrate frequently. Thus, in terms of social characteristics as well as in terms of political participation, anti-austerity movements draw in part from a different population than both old and new movements.

However, on some other key aspects anti-austerity movement participants differ from one of the other two types of movements while presenting similarities with the other type. For example, they are more likely to engage in extra-institutional participation than old movement participants, while
there is no significant difference with new movement participants. In this regard, they seem to be closer to the latter than to the former.

The results concerning political values are particularly interesting in this regard. Clearly, old, new and anti-austerity movements behave quite differently on this aspect. On the one hand, anti-austerity movement participants are economically more left-wing than old movement participants, while they do not display any significant difference with new movement participants. On the other hand, they are socially more libertarian than old movement participants, but less so than new social movement participants. As such, anti-austerity movements seem to be located somewhere in between the other two types of movements in the space defined by left-right economic and authoritarian-libertarian social values.

Discussion and Conclusion

Anti-austerity demonstrations and movements form an important share of the extra-institutional contention that has occurred in the past few years characterized by one of the most profound – if not the most profound – economic crises in Europe. Their mobilization in many respects challenges the acquired knowledge about the relationship between economic hardship and protest behaviour. Students of social movements have long argued that former grievance theories do not hold and that protest is not linked – at least not directly – to situations of economic hardship and the social stress as well as the discontent stemming from them. Of course, resource mobilization and political process theories have gone far in this direction, showing how protest emerges from a good mix of endogenous (organization) and exogenous (political opportunities) conditions. Some scholars have recently challenged the assumption that grievances do not matter (Buechler 2004). The emergence of anti-austerity protests in the past few years seemed to bring water to the mill of those arguing that resource mobilization and political opportunity theories have thrown the baby with the water and that grievances are an important explanatory factor of the rise of social movements.

At the individual level of participation in social movements, this debate brings in the question of what is the “average” profile – in terms of social characteristics, resources, political values, and extent of political engagement – of participants in different types of movements. More specifically, the characteristics of participants in anti-austerity movements need to be scrutinized in order to determine whether they resemble or differ from those of participants in other types of movements. Based on a unique dataset, in this paper we have examined the characteristics of participants in anti-austerity demonstrations, contrasting them to participants in demonstrations emanating, respectively, from old and new social movements.

Our findings suggest that anti-austerity movements are not fundamentally different – in terms of their social basis – than old and new movements. On many important dimensions they are quite similar. In other words, participants in anti-austerity demonstrations share some characteristics with either one or both of the other two types of movements. However, similar does not mean identical. Important differences on key aspects could also be observed, in particular concerning political values. We found anti-austerity movement participants to be closer to new social movement participants concerning the economic left-right dimension, while being different from
both old and new movement participants (but in opposing directions) concerning the social authoritarian-libertarian dimension.

Does this mean that anti-austerity movements are old wine in new vessels? In other words, are we witnessing the emergence of protests in novel forms and on new issues, but basically made by the very same people than previous waves of contention? Our findings do not warrant such a conclusion. To be sure, the Indignados, Occupy, and other anti-austerity movements – similar to their precursor, namely the global justice movement – have displayed innovative forms of organizing and mobilizing (e.g. the use of Facebook, Twitter, and other social networks; social forums, participatory budgeting, and other forms of deliberative-participative democracy). Yet they do not seem to be carried by the very same people than old and new social movements. Austerity movements are clearly made up of different constituencies from old and new movements: they are made up of more male, young, less educated, less middle class people; they are more dissatisfied with democracy, less involved in formal politics and networks (both institutional participation and organizations) than old or new movement participants; and they are more authoritarian. They also tend to specialize in protest and not engage in other extra-institutional participation (e.g. boycotts and petitions) as post-materialist theory would suggest. This would seem to support the idea that protest is done to express disapproval with the system. It would seem therefore that austerity has brought back to the streets the “angry young man” fed up with governments and their austerity measures. As such, austerity movements rather support grievance theory and point to the fundamental importance of context for protest. While voting happens every few years and people can join parties whenever they can, people only join a protest when it happens and only if its issue motivates them.

Post-materialist theory is good at predicting participation in protests that tend to be ritualistic and have a constant supply, such as “national climate marches” for example. However, grievance theory is a better fit for explaining the profile of protests which emerge as a result of an actual grievance – in this case government reducing pensions, public spending, student allowances, etc., all things which will make people angry and provoke them to take to the streets against this perceived injustice. This will of course attract a rather different crowd to the one that regularly attends protests organized by their favorite organizations, which they regularly support. Therefore middle-class and working-class protests have different dynamics that deserve future study with context taking center stage: austerity movements show that protest participation cannot be abstracted.
Appendix: Demonstrations included in the analysis

Based on expert judgements:
O = Old demonstrations
N = New demonstrations
A = Anti-austerity demonstrations

Belgium
1. Antwerp, 1st of May March (2010)  O
7. Brussels, Non-Profit Demonstration (2011)  A
8. Brussels, We have alternatives (2011)  A

Britain

Italy
22. Assisi, Marcia Perugia-Assisi (2011)  N
26. Florence, General Strike (2011)  A
27. Florence, Florence 10+10/Joining forces for another Europe (2012)  A

The Netherlands
31. Amsterdam, Student demo 1 (2010)  A
32. Amsterdam, Culture demo Amsterdam (2010)  A
33. Amsterdam, Stop racism and exclusion (2011) N
34. Amsterdam, Anti Nuclear demo (2011) N
35. Amsterdam, Utrecht, Rotterdam, Occupy Netherlands (2011) A
37. Rotterdam, Retirement demonstration (2009) A
38. The Hague, Together strong for public work (2011) A
39. The Hague, Student demo 2 (2011) A
40. The Hague, Military demo (2011) A
41. The Hague, Stop budget cuts (care & wellfare) (2011) A
42. Utrecht, Climate demo (2009) N
43. Utrecht, Culture demo Utrecht (2010) N

Spain
44. Barcelona, Against the Europe of Capital, Crisis and War (2010) A
45. Barcelona, Self-determination is democracy (2010) O
46. Barcelona, We are a nation, we decide (2010) O
50. Madrid, Real Democracy Now! We are not good in the hands of politicians and bankers! (2011) A
51. Santiago de Compostela, Demonstration against language decree (2010) O
52. Santiago de Compostela, Demonstration against the new labour law (2010) O
53. Vigo, Celebration May Day (2011) O
54. Vigo, For employment, not capital reforms. Defend Our Rights (2011) A

Sweden
55. Copenhagen, Climate March (2009) N
64. Stockholm, Anti-nuclear demonstration (2011) N

Switzerland
66. Beznau, Anti Nuclear Manifestation (2011) N
70. Mühleberg, Anti-nuclear (2012) N
71. Zurich, May 1st Demonstration (2010) O
72. Zurich, Pride demonstration (2012) N
References


