

Martín Portos García

*Voicing outrage, contending with austerity. Mobilisation in Spain under the Great Recession*

What motivates citizens in countries hit by an economic crisis to join protest movements or support new challenger parties? In his PhD thesis Martín Portos argues that it was not their economic grievances but their political dissatisfaction. Protesters were not the most deprived people, but those more angry with the political status quo and the policies being implemented.

This thesis deals with the Spanish cycle of protest in the shadow of the economic recession between 2007 and 2015. As his first task, Portos seeks to unravel the timing of the cycle of contention. He argues that the peak of protest stretched over a long time (from mid-2011 until 2013) because institutionalisation was postponed and radicalisation contained. Specifically, he focus on three aspects that are key to understanding the trajectory of collective actions in the Spanish case (and beyond): 1) issue specialisation of protest after the first triggering points, 2) alliance building between established unions and new actors, and 3) the transition process towards more routinised repertoires of action as protests declined.

Secondly, the thesis aims to shed light on the role that grievances play for mobilisation dynamics in a context of material deprivation. Covering multiple levels of analysis, the main argument developed here is that the effects of socioeconomic aspects (both objective-material deprivation and subjective-attitudinal grievances) are mediated by political attitudes, especially political dissatisfaction. In other words, why do people protest? What does account for the varying size of protest events over time? In the depth of the Spanish economic crisis, it was not economic factors but political attitudes that motivated Spaniards from different walks of life to participate massively in protests, and eventually led them to support new challenger parties.

To empirically test these arguments, Portos draws on qualitative data from semi-structured interviews, which are combined with information from an original protest event analysis and different statistical techniques based on time series, panel data and other survey materials.