

Plunging into Turmoil in the Aftermath of Crisis

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Edited by

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INTRODUCTION

CRISTINA MONTALVÃO SARMENTO

Plunging into Turmoil in the Aftermath of Crisis

The 2008 economic and financial crisis marked the beginning of a global crisis that quickly overcame its economic and financial origins and led to a period of social transformation and uncertainty that characterizes present and future social development in unplanned and unexpected ways, with frequently harmful effects.

These changes have highlighted the need for a deeper understanding of crises phenomena and how they affect the overall course of human development. In particular, the role of the social sciences as a tool of knowledge production about human social existence and crises processes has become all the more evident in this context. On the one hand, the social sciences constitute a means for better understanding the rapid and complex social transformations associated with crises. On the other hand, they can orientate people and social practices regarding how a greater degree of collective and democratic control can be acquired over the manner and direction of social processes in crises contexts.

This book brings together a team of international scholars in order to address the notion of crises and their connection with the social sciences, namely how the social sciences can help understand crises and their effects. Two main strains of inquiry orientate this study. First, it questions how different sociological and theoretical approaches might contribute to explaining crises phenomena, analysing their effects, and identifying their potential future paths of development. And second, it considers how crises processes and their effects on human social existence demand a rethinking of the role of the social sciences in society, and what such a role might be. The chapters of the book are organized around a set of three common themes through which these strains of inquiry are addressed: The role of the social sciences in society and in crises prediction, analysis and resolution; Crises as multidimensional phenomena that encompass not only economic but also social, political, ecological and civilizational

processes; The impact of crises processes on the social sciences and their future development; providing an interdisciplinary engagement with each of these dimensions in the study of crises by bringing together scholars with different social-scientific specializations, with the purpose of providing not only new theoretical perspectives on crises processes but also addressing several comparative case studies that illustrate their interdependent connections.

Therefore, this tome not only opens future lines of research by providing a comprehensive approach to crises phenomena but it also fills an important gap in the literature about crises. In fact, this literature is frequently focused on only one of these dimensions and/or on particular historical contexts rather than attempt to produce more comprehensive frameworks regarding the study of crises processes as a whole.

As such, even though there's a growing number of research on crises studies, this book constitutes an innovative contribution to this field by providing an interdisciplinary approach that is not only focused on several dimensions of crises but also seeks to address common dynamics to different crises processes. The book therefore establishes a basic groundwork for the development of more comprehensive and all-encompassing studies about crisis processes.

I. The 2008 Global Crisis and Beyond

The first section encompasses chapters that, using the 2008 global crisis as their initial background, apply different theoretical approaches to an understanding of crises processes. Primarily, Cristina Montalvão Sarmiento, taking the impact of the crisis in Portugal and Spain as a starting point, draws wider implications for the future of democracy and civilization. Her work contends that the emergence of democracy and the access of the masses to politics, combined with crises processes, unleashed an unending spiral of turmoil and reconfiguration of Western societies, discussing of the so-called *future post-modern crisis*.

In the second chapter, Manuel Couret Branco addresses the theoretical connection between crises processes, economic development and democracy. In particular, it considers the role economics should be called to play in the search for “substantive democracy”, an issue that has become all the more critical in modern forms of crises, in which economics plays a central role in the definition of major global political issues.

A third chapter, by Lere Amusan calls for academic interrogation. Through application of constructivist and embedded liberal theories, it

concludes that until social contract is well captured by introducing social justice and international sovereign equality, developing areas will remain underdeveloped under questionable theories that were tagged as global models of development imposed on them specifically from the 1950s by social scientists from the West. For any meaningful development in TWSs, there is a need to internalise any theory to accommodate the peculiarities of every environment.

Lastly, Jonas Van Vossle, in the fourth chapter, draws our attention to an inquiry into “crisis” as an analytical concept, eventually to be applied to “democracy”, exploring the boundaries between judgement and process, between ideology and material circumstances, and which is therefore closely linked to the historical, dialectical, critical and emancipatory perspectives in social science.

II. Empirical Approaches to Crisis Phenomena

The second section brings together several cases studies focusing on different effects of crises processes. In the fifth chapter, Filipa Brandão, using a multidisciplinary approach that ranges from political science to political philosophy, human geography and urbanism aims to shed light on the political impacts in scenarios of post-catastrophe, and discuss an ongoing process of depoliticization of politics and social sciences in general. Since the politics of urban space have always been associated with politics of containment, she aims to explore how New Orleans, in what it has called its process of recovery, has engagingly changed the city’s landscape and social fabric. New Orleans appears almost as an epitome of this reality, where economic turmoil and social crisis come together and dictate the decadence of a highly lived cultural city and its “catastrophizing”, which calls for the attention of social scientists and their critical minds.

Secondly, in the sixth chapter, Raúl de Arriba and Maria Vidagañ, analysing the experience of the Spanish economic crisis, conclude that economic policy didn’t detect the structural problems of the Spanish growth model nor predict its crisis. Moreover, it has been unable to mobilize the adequate instruments to reduce the social impact of the crisis or to share the costs in a balanced way. It is particularly surprising that this crisis, which has affected different countries with completely opposite situations in terms of competitiveness, trade deficits, productivity, employment, wages and budgetary situations, has received similar economic policy programmes across Europe, based on fiscal austerity, wage moderation or weakening of the welfare state. This fact reveals deficiencies in the design

of economic policy. Moreover, some shortcomings in setting priorities and policy objectives are detected. From the analysis of the Spanish experience, this work draws some conclusions about the failure of the economic policy.

In their turn, Patrícia Oliveira and Patrícia Tomás, in the seventh chapter, focus on the Portuguese case. Crisis is approached by a discursive institutional point of view, with reference to the 2008 global crisis and the austerity measures that accompanied it. By relocating the analytical attention to the discursive aspect of crises processes, initially looking at how state actors use discourse to construct crises narratives and then how these narratives allow them to define a “state of exception”, which in turn helps depoliticize issues and delegitimize alternatives, and especially how the community reacts. Analysing the public protest, they manage to describe an entire *generation in turmoil*.

In the eighth chapter, Zhaohui Wang analyses the nature of the US–China economic relations based on their structural positions in the world economy. It is argued that the symbiotic but asymmetric relationship between the United States as the core and China as the semi-periphery, which underlies the structural crisis of the world economy and contributes to the recent global financial and economic crisis, is not sustainable in the long term. It also examines China’s policy response in both domestic and international domains after the global crisis.

Finally, in the ninth chapter, Samuel de Paiva Pires puts into perspective the possible implications of the euro crisis in the future political architecture of the European Union (EU) by elaborating what is called the trilemma of the future of the European Union. The roots of the crisis lie in the imbalances inherent to non-optimal currency areas, the accumulation of private sector debt and the structural weaknesses of the EMU.

III – Future Trends on Social Sciences and the Crisis

In the final part of this book, demands for future trends, Carlota Vaz, in the tenth chapter, maintains that an interdisciplinary approach is essential to understanding the present world considering that the history of scientific and technological development contributed to social, economic and political change and promote a debate on the social theory. In this context, the development of natural sciences promoted by the European scientific revolution in the 16th and 17th centuries, the scientific and technological discoveries of the industrial revolution in the 18th and 19th centuries and

the revolution of telecommunications and informatics in the 20th and 21st are in the background of the social dynamics.

In the eleventh chapter, Leonid Issaev and Andrey Korotayev, raising the question of the Revolutionary Wave of 2013–2014, maintain that the processes of modernization in any major countries are unevenly different parts of them. There is reason to believe that such a centre-peripheral dissonance factor played an important role in that destabilization wave.

Gregory Tzanetos, in the twelfth chapter, brings us the theoretical context of exploration of a possible common ground between international relations theory and social science in explaining society in the global space by the reason of ethics. In this post-positivist approach, answers are given to the impact of the crisis on social science and its future, setting the challenge for social science to introduce post-positivist approaches to its epistemological tools and logical methodologies in order to reflect the common reasoning of people on the process of society globally. This chapter proposes an alternative approach to the crisis of capital as essentially a crisis of civil society; the crisis is particularly expressed by the unreasonable overturning of the common sense of people for equilibrium in the normality of life.

Jorge Botelho Moniz, in the thirteenth and last chapter, asks us to view the crisis through the profound political and social repercussions of the late 2000s financial crisis that compelled the Catholic Church to reflect on its origins. Notwithstanding the technical (short-term) aspects of the crisis, the Church pointed out its moral, ethical and humanistic (long-term) implications. By recalling the principle of charity and adapting it to contemporary societies and the inherent problems of poverty, selfishness and materialism, the Church proposes a new humanistic synthesis to a world in need of profound cultural renewal.

Thus, this book is a reference work in the further development of crises studies in different areas of the social sciences such as sociology, international relations, economics, political science and ethics studies.

As an outcome of the conference organized by the Political Observatory and held at the Institute for Social and Political Sciences of the University of Lisbon, in Portugal, 2013, this volume focuses on an international audience by framing its case studies in theoretical contributions that link particular crises with wider considerations about crisis processes and how the social sciences can address this topic.

I.

THE 2008 GLOBAL CRISIS AND BEYOND

CHAPTER I

FROM SHATTERING IBERIA TO THE FUTURE POST-MODERN CRISIS

CRISTINA MONTALVÃO SARMENTO¹

Introduction

The Iberian societies of Portugal and Spain are facing political problems of cultural identity (Archer 1996), which manifest in a crisis of objectives and options for their political future. Our main objective is to demonstrate the existence of a "crisis of future". This adversity results from three different orders.

Starting with a historical point, the old Atlantic empires – now integrated into Europe – were defrauded in the European political proposals which seduced them and appeared to them to be a political alternative. From the theoretical point of view, the intellectual responses from the continental and global post-modernists do not allow the cherishing of new orientation perspectives for a Europe capable of stimulating its societies (Sarmiento 2014b). Finally, and from the point of view of political action, the current answers – demilitarized and infused with pacifist ideology – are unable to alter the situation of a hopeless mass democratic society (Braithwaite 2004). Together with the new world

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globalizing conditions (Robertson 1992) and a networked society (Castells 1996, 2012), the Iberian countries are confronted with divided and impoverished societies unable to straightforwardly define their future.

Historical Changes and New Standards Under European Union

In the 20th-century contemporary historiography, there seems to be consensus that the 60s witnessed a remarkable change in cultural values (Sarmiento 2008) which preceded the end of authoritarian regimes in southern Europe, namely in Spain and Portugal. This social and political revolution constituted perhaps the greatest change in western societies since the Second World War and would carry great weight on the events that determined the end of the Cold War.

In particular, in the Portuguese case, this process was extended until the mid-70s and entailed the loss of Portugal's status both as an imperial power and as a welfare state, given the liberalization of social values the Portuguese society was experiencing.

At the turn of the century, democratization seems to have been understood by Portugal and Spain as a condition and result of Europeanization. Turning to Europe meant a new direction for both countries' foreign policy and was believed to be the only possible and natural geopolitical move at the time, one which would set up the necessary conditions for the kind of economic growth that the consolidation of democracy called for.

European integration yielded new possibilities and stimulated the collective imaginary of many Portuguese and Spaniards. Historically and geographically far from the centre and highly conditioned by their quality as peninsular countries – with a vast historical tradition of permanent expansion into the Atlantic, which once had led them to divide the whole world in two – Portugal and Spain jointly integrated the European project in the mid-80s, causing a generalized euphoria amongst their populations.

In the Portuguese case, the so-called "revolutionary process" of the Carnation Revolution, the 70s and the turbulence that followed it would give way to a period of political normalization that waged the connections and openness of the country's landlines further, carrying with it the opening-up of Portugal's airspace as well as the privatization of the industry services of infrastructural investment (Santos 2014).

The considerable improvement of the social conditions significantly boosted the generalization of education, which, adding to the increased levels of household income, cash flow among banks, companies and

businesses and a wider access to credit, apparently led to the rise of an unprecedented modern "Eldorado" whose success was mainly due to its integration in the EU.

Under these conditions, a new middle class emerged, whose role in assuring the sustainability of the democratic processes was believed to be indispensable (Pippa 1999). Democracy ought to be supported by a state able to secure the sort of collective well-being that had once been denied to most in the European southern periphery.

Until then left to its "dignifying poverty", Portugal had survived under the umbrella of its imperial resources, which were harshly maintained through painful colonial wars. These wars, however, had already become unsustainable throughout the 60s, both materially and diplomatically.

The emerging and newly rebuilt national elites struggled to adapt to this novel era. Political parties, as well as public institutions of all kinds, were perfected and subjected to reform in order to suit the new democratic game and control it in a time of widespread trust in the endless potential for progress of an almost new-born country.

Backed by the belief in the unlimited capacity for internationalization, national institutions successfully blended their action into regional and global networks of multilateral cooperation and supranational governance. These organizations were, after all, founded in the sort of humanist and western principles believed to be sufficiently diffused so as to bring about the sort of global regulation that world peace and stability begged for (Jessop 2002).

Although this late modernity (Held 1991) instilled in Iberian spirits a strong belief in European unity, it is also the case that the countries that constituted the new Europe remained nonetheless eager to pursue their realistic interests. After the inclusion of Portugal and Spain, which signposted the final reach of the Atlantic Sea by the European integration process, European countries pursued further their liberal march into new markets and territories, thus turning to Eastern Europe.

The historical defeat of communism, along with the lack of success of a strict economic planning strategy, has turned the liberal order into the real winner of the Cold War. Liberalism has since gained a life of its own that not even the political elites of western countries – caught up in the midst of the vigour and weight of the changes brought about by globalization – could predict or control in any easy way.

The gradual integration process at the turn of this century, namely at the European level, dictated Portugal and Spain's relative alienation of control over their economic strategies to foreign powers while they were becoming simultaneously more internally limited by the democratic

anxieties and pressures of their people, who were gradually awakening from a half-century of dictatorial sleep.

Materially disarmed, these two political communities have remained limited in the difficult game of international negotiation where the soft power of language and culture is their only means of getting access to new markets and goods.

In the meantime, the holders of natural resources within the global space – once released from their century-old colonial pressure – were determined to learn the rules of the non-democratic game of the new global economy (Brenner, Peck and Theodore 2010), and hence be emancipated from the black hole of economic exploitation to which international institutions had forced them.

No matter how destined to their existential call as universal powers – perhaps the very consequence of being set apart from central Europe by the Pyrenees as linguistic and religious exceptionalism – Spain and Portugal are today confronted with the inferiority that naturally follows from their position as the European periphery.

The growing impoverishment of their populations, imposed by the aggressiveness of global liberalism and its undemocratic institutions, has accompanied the wave of hasty industrial relocations and the unbalanced shifts of political, economic and natural resources within Europe.

The liberalization of capital flows has been added to the pressure coming from the development of a model of economic growth founded in an economy with a strong cultural and creative vocation (Harrison 1992; Featherstone 1991). Unable to counter the scarcity of natural resources, this process has operated as both the starting and ending points of a general loss of state sovereignty, thus becoming an imperative step towards the constitution of the organizational core of this new form of European empire.

After such speedy developments, Portugal and Spain are now confronted with the decay of working conditions, the impotence of traditional means of resistance, a demographic retreat, the vulnerability and corruption of elites, and the enormous increase in the freedom of social networks, which led in turn to the development of biopolitical control under the close scrutiny of the state.

Confronted with these challenges, these countries balance between the traditional answer to economic crises, namely emigration, particularly in Portugal, and new atypical forms of contestation and refusal of the contemporary democratic model.

Hence, this model might be facing a crisis that carries with it consequences on its further viability as a social and political model, let

alone compromises its future in general (Dryzek 1990). But the fact that democracy is undergoing a crisis also means that the future prospects once projected for these two countries are also going through a crisis. On that account, the crisis of democracy also and necessarily is a crisis of future.

Theory Impossibilities and Rhetorical Confusions

This crisis of the future has been anticipated by most intellectuals and has been diagnosed in detail by some of them. Since the 1980s, the idea of a "post-modern" turn gained considerable momentum among many and has come to accommodate most of the thinkers marking the intellectual agenda of the end of the 20th century.

The so-called post-modern thinkers do not constitute a coherent homogeneous family. Difficulties inherent to these views become more evident and problematic when they delve into such different areas as art and literature, history or the economy, education or ethics, politics or religion, often resorting to the same critical and deconstructive lenses (Sarmiento 2012b).

From a philosophical perspective, the views about post-modernism differ greatly. Many consider post-modern thinkers an obscure group of hermetic writers that think about everything and nothing. The most radical critics think of post-modernists as mere leftist intellectuals that have vainly and superficially sought to question western civilization.

However, the most benevolent critics regard post-modernism as standing at the endpoint of a historical-political legacy of a teleological, authoritarian, racist, colonial and dominant Europe. When quoted by philosophers, the term post-modernism is used to describe primarily a movement that developed in France during the 60s, also known as post-structuralism. This movement claims – among other things – that the real world cannot be discerned in one simple way.

Notwithstanding, the challenge posed by post-modernism is neither simply due to the multiplicity of authors and themes which it houses nor as a mere outcome of the demanded theoretical predispositions or its frequent overlaps with other methods.

The ambiguity of the term stems instead from two fundamental assumptions that underlie post-modernism: (1) the need to know what exactly we mean by modernism, modernity or modern world, and how these have been interpreted; and (2) the supposed obsolescence of modernism implied in the prefix "post".

As a whole, one can affirm that the word "modern" – etymologically derived from the Latin word *modo* – is used to characterize what belongs

to the present day and what operates a rupture with a traditional form. In the political sense, for instance, the term modernity signifies the apex of "modernization".

It would be too ambitious to attempt to summarize the dramatic changes that have stimulated European modernity as they are understood at the macro-social level. From the Great Reform of the 16th century to the subsequent scientific revolution, many were the events that carried a deep impact upon the European mindset and, in turn, originated an entirely new worldview.

The modern world is the world of industry and commerce, a world that belongs to the cosmopolitanism of great cities where, on the one hand, the life rhythm is increasingly determined by machinery, but, on the other, human rights have come to replace the divine right of kings. It is a world where noblemen have given way to tradesmen, cities have become home to many foreigners and new ways of thinking have sprouted from the press and from science and made their way to the street which, in turn, has replaced the pulpit as the major site of public manifestation and consciousness.

Many philosophers call it "the age of reason" and have coined the 18th century as the Enlightenment Century. While Descartes, Condorcet and Kant formulated this new rationality, Rousseau and Burke alerted us of its dangers.

Then, in the 19th century, the most forceful criticisms of the modern world were expressed by Hegel, Marx and Nietzsche. However, all of them would be somehow caught up in modernity's own terms and hence remained enmeshed in the struggle over modernity's vindication of the power of reason, progress and freedom as well as the intrinsic relation between the three.

The 20th century has witnessed the materialization of modernity in every single front, from Max Weber's fundamental steps in the social sciences to Sigmund Freud's foundational role in psychiatry, both leading the way towards a new understanding of power. Ferdinand de Saussure in linguistics, Le Corbusier in architecture and Charles Baudelaire in literature stand as great examples of an accomplished modernity. In philosophy, the phenomenology of Edmund Husserl and the ethics of Ludwig Wittgenstein – or even still the existentialism of Jean-Paul Sartre – constitute new stages of modern thinking.

Their revolutionary ideas would later be turned into the so-called critical theory of Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno (Adorno 1991), whose breakthrough consisted of identifying a general intellectual and cultural trend specific to the modern period, and which they described as

the Dialectic of the Enlightenment. This movement, which came to be known as the Frankfurt School, launched a radical assault on political authority, allowing for a full recast of the meaning of modernity as well as the possibility of internal criticism (Marcuse 1964).

Long after the hostilities broke out, post-modernism asserted itself at the forefront of this movement, spreading across all areas of knowledge. With Heidegger's letter on humanism and the stunning revelations brought by Thomas Kuhn's research into the history of science, the stage was set for the debates around a post-industrial society and the presumable death of ideologies to arouse. In France, while Jacques Derrida heralds the end of the book and the beginning of writing, Foucault revisits Nietzsche's genealogy in order to question yet again the problematic relation between truth and power.

Post-modernism sets in. By the time Jean-François Lyotard writes his essay on knowledge and what he calls the post-modern condition, the movement is at its most mature stage, finally spilling over to architecture due to the pioneering work Robert Venturi and Charles Jenks as well to education due to Henri Giroux.

In ethics as in politics, error and virtue became the objects of a thorough reconsideration by Mark Taylor and Alasdair McIntyre. But it was in the critique of late capitalism developed by Frederic Jameson and Richard Rorty that the idea of a critique to blind reason became a dominant feature of contemporary thought, with its apex in the work of Jürgen Habermas, who, in light of the principles of critical theory, succeeded in restoring the paradigm of modern reason from an immanent viewpoint in what he deemed a communicative reason. More recent authors, such as Andrew Linklater, have, in turn, upgraded and expanded this notion to other realms, like international relations.

The main guiding principles of the post-modernist theoretical body can be summarized in the critique of four concepts: the presence, the origin, the unity and the transcendence of norms. These require, in turn, the employment of a specific methodology.

By presence is meant the quality of immediate experience, which is set against representation. Many post-modernists thus seek to replace the analysis of representations by a careful study of the real, which includes its representation. In much the same way, the critique of the origin implies the notion of knowledge source. For this reason, the project of an enquiry into the origins, understood as an effort to see through the phenomena in order to find its actual foundations, is put aside so as to balance the value of a source with the other analytical elements.

But among all of these principles the idea of unity is perhaps the one that raises the most suspicion. Cultural elements such as language, existential experiences and emotions, societies themselves, are constituted by a series of multiple relations that are inevitably plural.

Finally, post-modernism is also invested in denying the transcendence of norms such as truth, goodwill and rationality, arguing that these cannot be seen as independent from the social processes that govern and judge society. These norms should instead be regarded as an inherent outcome of those processes that lead to a renewed interest in the study of power relations.

From a methodological point of view, post-modernists reject the possibility of establishing the ultimate roots of knowledge in an attempt to reverse and undermine the very distinction between the real and the ideal, the objective and the subjective, reality and appearance, facts and theories, with a view to offer a more integrated understanding of how human interests are weaved into such binary thinking.

In this sense, post-modernism can be interpreted as a purely negative philosophy that seeks to highlight the inadequacy of knowledge without offering any explicit alternative.

If it is the case that all these critiques are followed by a new take on subjectivity, in which innovative epistemologies of the feminine and gender abound, it is also the case that they merely recall Freud's pioneering incursions into the legitimacy of the modern age as well as the itineraries of other early 20th-century theoreticians.

We may consequently follow David Hall in saying that we live in a post-modern western world in which the end of modernity will go down in history as the death of the West itself, of its power and authority. A death which current political thought mirrors as it becomes more and more impotent to respond to the future.

The Lack of Hope and the Critique of Mass Democracy

This post-modern notion of a crisis of the future has prompted new forms of contestation in our societies (Mathieu 2011), which add to the loss of trust in politics, now a common feature of mass democracy.

Di Palma (1970), the eminent intellectual backbone of mass democracy, has traditionally been associated with the development of communication technologies that feed the intellectual and cultural critique of the media with fears and anxieties towards valueless urban masses in highly populated industrialized societies that extend over broad territories.

The analysis of mass society started with a characterization of the negative aspects that accompany its definition: together with the now known forms of alienation, cynicism, atomization, egocentrism and individualism, this society is characterized by a sense of rootless homogeneity and moral void as well as a generalized lack of consistency of social bonds, which are gradually evaporating.

However, the originality of mass societies lies in the relationship between the crowd and the social centre (Eisenstadt 1966). Societies are built around centres that are no longer imposed by coercion or manipulation. They function as a general value system, in which one of the core features is the positive or negative attitude towards the established order or authority.

This order is inherent to the general value system, and it is in light of it that such values are legitimized. This order is nonetheless also made up of dynamic potentialities, namely of a critical judgement about its own value system and its own institutional system.

Thus, contemporary societies are characterized by a common consciousness whose unprecedented density derives from the unification of economic markets, political democracy and interdependence among different sectors of the population caused by rapid urbanization and generalization of education.

But just as this consciousness allows for greater levels of political and social ordering, it can also become the source of a generalized rebuttal of the same value system that stood at its beginning.

Consequently, a broader basis of participation in the central value system, operating through generalized education and an established culture of political rights and freedoms, creates in most a sense of belonging and appropriation of that same value system.

This means that at least specific sectors of the population feel entitled to a degree of moral responsibility and lead the way when it comes to committing to rules and their enforcement, sharing, redistributing and delegating authority or simply contesting and resisting it.

Political apathy, frivolity, vulgarity, irrationality and a certain liability towards demagogy will certainly continue to accompany the development of mass societies but the emergence of a generalized culture of criticism is an undeniable outcome of the incorporation of the masses in central institutional and value systems.

The emergency of the neoliberal state, with its plurality of religious bodies, diverse political parties, balance of power systems and established institutions specifically directed toward conflict resolution among different classes or sectors of society, has certainly reduced the demands of social

stability required for a society to function peacefully. Notwithstanding, as Raymond Aron once reminded us, technical progress has not put an end to the fight for a better redistribution of outcome. Consequently, the combination of democracy and an industrialized civilization might constitute the very root of the sort of social agitation that it was supposed to resolve in the first place.

It is therefore relevant to note that the most important turns and changes in the symbolic and structural premises of the western tradition that crystallized initially under the controversial impact of protestant ethics, of the Great Reform, the Enlightenment and the industrial revolution have created new ways of protest and heterodoxy. The quality of these protests and heterodoxy are visible in the value change that took place in the 60s. As previously affirmed, they signalled the outset of those transformations that also changed popular perceptions about how politics functions (Inglehart 1990).

The end of the Second World War and the peace that characterized the Cold War – during which hostilities occurred outside the West and far from the Anglo-American sphere – has brought new models of contestation of political systems.

The eve of the crisis of the future enmeshed within the post-modern condition has entailed political practices of pacifism. As a theoretical judgement used to classify the forms of intervention of the political system, the conceptual autonomy of pacifism emanates from praxis once pacifism carries with it a subjective attitude that turns it into a revolutionary ideology (Sarmiento 2014a).

Within the West, the practice of pacifism gained relevance in the American continent with the civil rights struggle of the 1950s and 1960s in the south of the USA. Organized by Protestant churches and committed to the integration of black people, this struggle involved a pacific resistance to the preconceived and universalistic ideas of a liberal society that sanctioned the racial exclusion and discrimination in the country.

The anti-segregationist movement leaders expanded and connected the criticism of the political system to the fight against poverty and foreign policy, namely, the Vietnam War. In this way, pacifism will remain inseparable from the American internal contestation of a divided Vietnam.

If the concept of scenography or theatology is of any use in bolstering the action of the powerless, it most definitely concerns the imprint of a mark of authenticity in the collective imaginary. The recent political history of the 60s had this unusual projection. The experience of American contestation brought an understanding of political struggle as necessarily

implying the transformation of the cultural setting where real everyday politics takes place.

In the domestic sphere, the movements that vindicated racial non-discrimination and feminist movement were the main allies of the first peace manifestations that took political power by surprise. These manifestations were identical to every political protest, but the difference lay in the presence of self-professed long-haired mystics. They left an indelible stamp on their generation due to a political style that moved beyond the classical rhetoric of the revolutionary tradition so as to give way to an eclectic taste for mystical phenomena, namely, the discovery of Buddhism and oriental mystical traditions that would leave a mark in the so-called counterculture.

This counterculture (Roszack 1980) created its revolutionary heroes, such as Che Guevara, seen by the North-American magazine *Time* as one of the hundred most-important figures of the 20th century. His portrait, by Alberto Korda, is one of the most reproduced images of the countercultural movement, Guevara being its leading icon.

But the essence of pacifism actually lies less in the clear overlap of pacifism with such counterculture and more in non-western roots and at the crossroads of oriental teleological and religious principles, attested by its support for African emancipation, particularly in South Africa. As true founders of myth and heroism, the western world would search for its heroes of peace in leaders such as Ghandi and Mandela, orienting their diplomatic actions towards them without, however, disarming its enemies.

Pacifism thus made its way as an instrument of change in international relations. Grounded in oriental and essentially religious principles, from Hinduism to Buddhism, and captured by Baptist protestants, it would ally with counter-cultural movements while simultaneously be driven by western world diplomacy, whose self-created myths of peace and non-violence would eventually come to serve the national interest under a realist understanding of global politics.

Since then, the conviction that in consolidated democracies peaceful and non-violent change of social conditions and political processes was possible was settled, as much as the belief in its real potential for resistance.

At the beginning of the 21st century, this post-modern crisis of the future is followed by a non-violent contestation to democracy (Sarmiento 2012a). The analysis of the crisis that affects Europe as well as of its consequences – particularly in Portugal and Spain – does not consent to forget the power of the network of ideas as well as its diffusion (Hague & Loader 1999).

From Contestation and Pacific Fight to Democracy Drift

Today, the population comes out on the streets as a heterogeneous crowd in cities like São Paulo, Brazil to protest the corruption of the political system and public spending that is not geared toward the provision of the well-being of most Brazilians. But as far as Europe is concerned, the first surprises came from North Africa during the first decade of the 21st century.

With a social mobilization credited to the interaction capacity offered by social networks, it is difficult to evaluate in what way the virtual means (Dagnaud 2011), in particular the use of the Internet, social networks and mobile phones, have contributed to the fall of regimes, particularly on the southern Mediterranean coast.

However, the mobilization spurred by social networks and its role in movements of the social protest that has agitated the Arab world are unavoidable both in these cases and in other places where these protests have spread, bringing a wave of regime changes in countries such as Libya, Algeria, Bahrain, Iran, Jordan, Morocco and Yemen.

After Tunisia and Egypt, Libya and Morocco also used these virtual platforms for mass mobilization, and social networks ended up becoming the major meeting point for this sort of action. The revolt of February 2011, aimed at creating an Anger Day in Libya, foretold the protest movement in a country that founded itself already in a climate of strong social and political tension. This shows that the Internet and the spread of mobile phones have increasingly become powerful weapons for civilians.

Also in Rabat, social networks were the starting point for the concentration of thousands of people. The webpage of the group that organized the protest against the Moroccan government and its king, The February 20 Movement for Change, gathered the support of thousands.

Despite their Arabian nature, these scenarios are seen as forerunners of the protest movements occurring in America and Western Europe. Hence, in different political scenarios, the means used are the same, and we are far from being able to anticipate all the political consequences that may accrue from such events.

Since the spring of 2011, the Iberian Peninsula witnessed the gathering of hundreds of protestors calling for political, economic and social changes in Spain. These public gatherings – known as the Spanish Revolution – were set up by the virtual platforms of social networks and caused the spread across the country of the protest movement, as well as its expansion to other European cities.

The 15-M movement grew out of the digital platform Real Democracy Now. Its public call was against the high numbers of the unemployed, cuts in social security and the cartelization of the oligarchs that control the political party system in Spain. Political corruption was also a major theme.

Despite the rather unclear initial agenda of the protests, some of the guiding lines can be identified: the call for electoral reforms, more representativeness in politics and concrete measures to counter the economic crisis.

Among other known imperatives, the appeal for the return of Europe to its citizens, to rescue it from becoming an easy hostage of the markets, as well as the demand for better political representation and the conviction that people are not mere merchandise in the hands of politicians and banks, sum up the content of this sort of protest (Brayard 2004). Therefore, as in the Porta del Sol camping at Madrid, Spain, the protestors aim to keep the contestations as peaceful as possible, offering new political agendas, mainly by introducing the debate on corruption.

In Portugal, digital platforms were also the starting point for the creation of new protest movements. The network that hosted more than one initiative was the *Protesto da Geração à Rasca*, a 2012 manifestation in Lisbon and Oporto that counted thousands of confirmed participants.

This protest aimed to give voice to the unemployed, the so-called "quinhentoseuristas" (a nickname for those employees earning 500 euros per month) and other such underpaid workers deemed as "disguised slaves". The movement calls itself non-partisan, secular and pacific and wishes to demonstrate the dissatisfaction of those claiming a right to employment, education and better working conditions.

All these protests will mark the history of this century's second decade (Castells 2012) and they have already had an impact on American society, where the movement Occupy Wall Street (OWS) has reached high levels of adherence with wide international repercussions. Already in 2011, the movement led to the occupation of Zuccotti Park, south of Manhattan, right in the heart of New York's business district.

The protest targets economic and social inequality, corruption and what many consider the corporative influence on government and, in particular, financial services. Its motto – we are the 99% – highlights the inequality of wealth distribution between the richest 1% and the rest of the population.

The OWS movement and its criticisms of the financial system have raised comparisons with other historical protests, but its connection with other democratic manifestations in Europe and in the so-called Arab

Spring has been very consensual amongst analysts, which is aggravated by the recent refugee movement to Europe as a consequence of the Syria war and the multilateral reaction to the so-called Islamic radicalism.

The specific model of contestation followed by these movements, as well as their similarity and contagious effect, has allowed political scientists to carry out a set of parallels and systematic studies, leading them to elaborate new categories such as that of non-conformist democracy, regardless of the fact that many of the protests took place in democratic and non-democratic regimes. In this regard, the cases of Portugal and Spain are not different.

What is new, however, is the capacity of a virtual culture to mobilize the masses on the one hand and, on the other, the ability to fight a regime, albeit democratic, seems to have degenerated into what ancient Greeks described as "plutocracy".

Going back to the Aristotelian typology, plutocracy was the degenerate regime where the rich govern and, depending on the historical contingency, can take many shapes but emerges as constitutive of those regimes where capitalism – depending on the interactions between the public and the private sphere – tends to become the dominant mode of production.

The overlap between these two spheres may be at the core of their criticisms once every social relationship is subjected to the exchange rules of capitalism (Jessop 2002), including the traditional functions of the state.

In this case, the well-being of the members of the community is a direct result of its ability to use and take advantage from the informal rules of collective survival. Corruption is indeed much linked to the creation of unofficial rules created by informal powers, with the significant difference that, in this case, they threaten political power and the rule of law. Nonetheless, at the centre of the phenomenon, there lie deeper issues concerning material inequality, which have permanently accompanied the history of political regimes and the crises that affected them.

Questions for the Future

The critique of the contemporary age has developed around a kind of ideological consensus about the structure of the market economy and its relation to culture. In it it is possible to find terms that are frequently employed to describe not only economic theory but also contemporary political thought, as well as post-modernism, post-structuralism, post-Marxism, neoliberalism, post-materialism, and so on.

The debates about patterns of civic culture in mass society and advanced post-industrial society constitute a diverse and relevant spectrum for the analysis of processes and mechanisms of political change.

Politics possesses a complex cultural dimension that challenges us to search for elements of logic that can help us develop valid interpretations about the rise of new patterns of political culture connected to paradigm shifts on a global level.

Today's political culture has something to do with the emergence of a new political style. What seemed at the start to be a non-conventional study of politics has come to constitute the theoretical horizon within which there is a need to discuss the changes that have shaped the new configurations of power and culture.

If the contemporary contestations to democracy have led more radical authors (Agamben 1998) to argue for a global civil war that has in the current state of exception the dominant paradigm of government of contemporary politics, and in which provisional and exceptional measures are turned into governmental techniques that blur the distinction between democracy and dictatorship; if the revolutionary ideology of pacifism is to be overcome or replaced by other creative proposals, means of resistance and rupture that transform the political system in ways that enable a response to the anxieties that so many people manifest; if the old Aristotelian concept of plutocracy must gain depth among other enquiries – these are the questions posed by our age to which answers can only be found when the crisis of future ends and the emerged results of the crisis stabilized, even if it's a conflict draw.

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