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MOBILIZING FOR DEMOCRACY

Comparing 1989 and 2011

Donatella della Porta

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For Herbert

Acknowledgements

This book, as many, starts from (some) challenges and (many) opportunities. I encountered the first challenge in the very limited attention that social movement studies had paid to democratization processes, strongly paralleled by the very limited attention democratization studies had paid to social movements. This puzzled me all the more, as in my life history there have been at least two moments of intense participation in struggles for democracy. First, I come from a country, Italy, in which the collective memory of the popular resistance to fascism and Nazism had a foundational value in the development of the Republic's identity. While I was not present in 1945, the myth of resistance became part of my personal memory. Second, I happened to be in Berlin in 1989, at the Wall that separated the West and the East, a few hours after it started to fall. Throughout this eventful moment, citizens mobilized in various forms of protest with high degrees of emotional intensity. Shortly after I started my research, the Arab Spring emerged as yet another testimony to the role of people—and social movements—in history.

If the gap in the social science literature was certainly a challenge, further challenges emerged in the attempt to fill it. First, there were theoretical challenges related to the richness in social movement studies of a toolkit of concepts and theories, built however on so-called advanced democracies. Second, from the empirical point of view, working on geopolitical areas I had little frequented in the past was also a clear challenge.

A series of conjunctural and structural opportunities pushed me to face the challenges of entering a largely unknown terrain. First, at the European University Institute (EUI) I had the enormous luck to work with PhD students and post-doctoral fellows, as well as colleagues, who stimulated me to overcome the limited, mainly west-European, borders of my empirical research. Second, a generous Advanced Scholars' Grant from the European Research Council (GA 2691) has given me enough resources to engage in the ambitious project of bridging, so to speak, social movement studies and democratization studies, through research on democratization from below. I am grateful to ERC for this opportunity, while, of course, they are not responsible for the ideas developed in the text.

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Abbreviations

AGEG	Anti-Globalisation Egyptian Group
ANC	Anti-Nuclear Campaign Hungary
ATTAC	Comité pour l'Annulation de la Dette du Tiers-Monde— Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt Association pour la Taxation des Transactions financière et l'Aide aux Citoyens' (Association for the Taxation of financial Transactions and Aid to Citizens)
ATTAC-CADTM	Comité pour l'Annulation de la Dette du Tiers-Monde— Committee for the Abolition of Third World Debt Association pour la Taxation des Transactions financière et l'Aide aux Citoyens' (Association for the Taxation of financial Transactions and Aid to Citizens)
BSPSH	Union of the Independent Trade Unions of Albania
CF	Civic Forum
COMECON	the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance
CPG	Phosphate Company of Gafsa
CPY	Communist Party of Yugoslavia
CSCE	Conference for Security and Cooperation in Europe
CTUWS	Center for Trade Union and Workers Services
DA	Initiative for a Democratic Awakening
DDR	German Democratic Republic
DN	Democracy Now
DP	Democratic Party
DTK	Democratic Society Congress
ECPR	Economic Consortium for Political Research
EHOR	Egyptian organization for human rights
EKA	Opposition Round Table (Ellenzéki Kerekasztal)
END	European Nuclear Disarmament
EPCSI	Egyptian Popular Committee in Solidarity with the Intifada
EUI	European University Institute

Abbreviations

FDJ	Free German Youth (Freie Deutsche Jugend)
FIDESZ	Young Democrats (Hungary)
FJF	Independent Lawyers' Forum (Független Jogász Forum)
FLN	National Liberation Front
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany
FSA	Free Syrian Army
GDR	German Democratic Republic
GJM	Global Justice Movement
HDF	Hungarian Democratic Forum (Magyar Demokrata Fórum)
HuT	Liberation party (Hizb al-Tahrir)
IFM	Initiative Frieden und Menschenrechte (Initiative for Peace and Human Rights)
IGL	Initiative Group for Life
ISP	Independent Smallholders' Party
KAN	Club of Non-Party Engagés
KDP	Kurdish Democratic Party
KOR	Workers' Defense Committee (Komitet Obrony Robotników)
KPD	Communist Party of Germany
KPN	Confederation of Independent Poland (Konfederacja Polski Niepodległej)
LCCs	Local Coordination Committees
LCCS	Local Coordinating Committees of Syria
LFL	Lithuanian Freedom League
LIFG	Libyan Islamic Fighting Group
LNIM	Latvian National Independence Movement
LTDH	Tunisian league of Human Rights (Ligue Tunisienne de Droits de l'Homme)
MB	Muslim Brotherhood
MDF	Hungarian Democratic Forum (Magyar Demokrata Fórum)
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MKS	Inter-Factory Strike Committees (Międzyzakładowy Komitet Strajkowy)
MOST	The Bridge (civic initiative)
NC	National Coalition for Syrian Revolutionary and Opposition Forces, or National Coalition
NEM	New Economic Mechanism
NF	New Forum (Neues Forum)
NPA	New People's Army
NPD	National Democratic Party
NSC	National Security Council
NSF	National Salvation Front

NTC	National Transitional Council
NZS	Niezależne Zrzeszenie Studentów
OAS	Organization of American States
ORT	Opposition Round Table (Ellenzéki Kerekasztal)
PDS	Party of Democratic Socialism
PDsh	Democratic Party of Albania (Partia Demokratike e Shqipërisë)
PKK	Partiya Karkerên Kurdîstan (Kurdish workers' party)
PLA	Albanian Party of Labour
PPU	Plastic People of the Universe
PREs	Politically Relevant Elites
RCD	Constitutional Democratic Rally (Rassemblement Constitutionnel Démocratique)
RCP	Romanian Communist Party
RPP	Republican People's Party
RSA	Movement for an Alternative Society (Ruch Społeczeństwa Alternatywnego)
SB	Security Service (Służba Bezpieczeństwa)
SED	Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands)
SFB	Sender Freies Berlin
SFRY	Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia
SMO	social movement organization
SNC	Syrian National Council
SPD	Social Democratic Party
STUHA	student organisation (Czechoslovakia)
SSM	official students union (Czechoslovakia)
SZDSZ	Alliance for Free Democrats (Szabad Demokraták Szövetsége)
UGTT	Tunisian General Labour Union (Union Générale Tunisienne du Travail)
UL	United Link
VONS	Committee for the Defense of the Unjustly Persecuted (Výbor na Obranu Nespravedlivě Stíhaných)
WiP	Freedom and Peace (Wolność i Pokój)

1

Democratization and Social Movements

Introduction

Most scholars of democratization have either ignored movements altogether or regarded them with suspicion as dangers to democracy, while most students of social movements have focused on fully mature democratic systems and ignored the transition cycles that place the question of democratization on the agenda and work it through to either democratic consolidation or defeat (Tarrow 1995, 221–2).

Strangely enough, while the pictures used to illustrate the most recent wave of protests for democracy in North Africa represent mass protest, as Sidney Tarrow stated some time ago, research on social movements and on democratization have rarely interacted. In this volume, I aim at filling this gap by looking at episodes of democratization through the lens of social movement studies. Without assuming that democratization is always produced from below, I will however single out different paths of democratization by looking at the ways in which the masses interacted with the elites, and protest with bargaining. My focus will be on one of these paths: eventful democratization, that is cases in which authoritarian regimes break down following—often short but intense—waves of protest. Recognizing the particular power of some transformative events (Sewell 1996), I will however locate them within the broader mobilization processes, including the multitude of less visible, but still important protests that surround them. In this, using Sidney Tarrow's concepts, I will try to combine attention to eventful history and the one on event history with detailed descriptions of some 'great protest events' but also consideration for the cascades of small protest events that accompany, precede and follow them (Tarrow 1996, 586). Following recent research on social movements, I will look at the relations between structure and agency within these transformative moments. Cognitive, affective and relational mechanisms will be singled out as transforming the contexts in which dissidents act.

While in eventful democratization protests develop from the interaction between growing resources of contestation and closed opportunities, social movements are not irrelevant players in the other two paths. First of all, when opportunities open up because of misalignment in the elites, participated pacts might ensue from the encounter of reformers in institutions and moderates among social movement organizations. Protest, although rarely used, is nevertheless important here as a resource to threaten or use on the negotiating table.

If in participated pacts a strong (or strengthening) civil society meets emerging opportunities, more troubled democratization paths ensue when very repressive regimes thwart the development of any autonomous associational form. In these cases violence often escalates from the interaction of suddenly mobilized opposition and brutal regime repression. Especially when there are divisions in and defections from security apparatuses, skills and resources for military action contribute to coups d' état and civil war dynamics.

In all three paths, mobilization of resources, framing processes, and appropriation of opportunities will develop into action, in different combinations. The comparison of different cases within two waves of protests for democracy, in Central Eastern Europe in 1989 and in the Middle East and North Africa in 2011, will allow me to describe and theorize about causal mechanisms and conditions as they emerge in the three mentioned paths.

In this analysis, democratization struggles will be seen as processes whose outcomes are influenced by the interaction of different players, some of whom pursue democracy as a goal, some oppose it, while others initially remain neutral. For most of them, positions towards democracy tend however to change during the action, as frames on democratization are bridged with socio-economic and/or ethno-nationalist frames.

In this introduction, I will first look at the literature on transition as well as on social movement studies in search of some key contributions that could help us understand processes of democratization from below. Then I will present my research design and the structure of this volume.

Social Science Literature on Transition and Social Movements: Bridging Gaps

The social science literature on democratization is large, but fragmented. Not only has 'first' democratization (in its slow form) attracted the attention of major scholars, but each new wave of (rapid) regime shift has produced related waves of research and thinking. Case studies and within-area comparisons have thus flourished, bringing not only rich empirical evidence, but also new concepts and interpretative frameworks.

However, the very spread and depth of democratization studies have also contributed to fragmentation in the field. First, political and social sciences have focused on the West and the North of the globe, where core disciplines such as comparative politics and political sociology have flourished, while the various waves of democratization have been addressed mainly by area studies. With all their value in attempting to go beyond ethnocentric visions of politics and society, however, area studies are pillarized around homogeneous geographical areas, each with their own focuses and biases. The very efforts involved in learning the histories and the languages of these areas have encouraged high levels of specialization (e.g. Dutton 2005; Burawoy 2005). With few, valuable exceptions, new waves of democratization in different geopolitical areas were in fact addressed by different (area) specialists, who stressed different aspects: for example, political parties and elite pacts in Southern Europe, military power in Latin America, civil society in Eastern Europe, electoral processes in the 'orange revolutions', religion in North Africa and the Middle East.

There is also another reason for fragmentation. Democratization can be (and has been) related to various processes: slow or fast, violent or non-violent, radical or moderate, nationally chosen or internationally imposed. This has been reflected in the fact that democratization processes have been addressed under that label, but also under others—for example, revolutions or non-violence or civil society—with, unfortunately, little communication between different subfields or between those subfields and social movement studies. While the literature on revolutions originally concentrated on violent processes and deep social transformation, it has now expanded (perhaps with good reason) to include non-violent regime changes, although remaining quite isolated from studies on democratization or social movements. Similarly, research on non-violence has developed, especially on some waves of democratization, but with limited interactions with studies carried out, often on the same empirical realities, under different labels. The focus of non-violence literature on Gandhi or anarchist theorists—which never occupied centre stage in cognate research fields—as well as its orientation towards activists and its rootedness in peace studies have contributed to the lack of dialogue with other related fields (Schock 2005). Since the wave of democratization in the late 1980s in Eastern Europe, attention has focused on the role of civil society, defined as 'a solidarity sphere in which a certain kind of universalizing community comes gradually to be defined and to some degrees enforced' (Alexander 1998, 7). While often looking at the same empirical reality, studies on social movements and studies on Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) developed within political sociology and international relations respectively, with different theoretical focuses and, again, few reciprocal contacts.

As McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly (2001) rightly observed, if conceptual distinctions are indeed useful to avoid theoretical confusion, a more intense dialogue among different streams of literature could help in identifying similar dynamics, as well as differences in structural conditions. As I will argue in what follows, it would be especially important to bridge social movement studies and democratization studies, which have remained, until now, worlds apart.

Even though social movement organizations (SMOs) are increasingly recognized, in political as well as scientific debates, as important actors in democratic processes, their performance during the different steps of the democratization process has rarely been addressed in a systematic and comparative way. On the one hand, in fact, social movements have been far from prominent in research on democratization, which has mainly focused on either socio-economic preconditions or elite behaviour. As Nancy Bermeo (1997) aptly synthesized, in general the literature on democratization 'accords much less attention to popular organizations than to political elites. Thus, the role of popular organizations in the transition process remains a subject of some confusion. Many of the major theoretical works on democratization suggest that popular mobilization is important for regime change, but even this very simple proposition is not universally shared.' On the other hand, social movement scholars, until recently, have paid little attention to democratization processes, mostly concentrating their interest on democratic countries (especially on the West European and North American experiences), where conditions for mobilization are more favourable.

Democratization Studies

Research on democratization developed initially with a structuralist approach. Within *modernization* theory, Martin S. Lipset's (1959) pioneering work associated the potential for the emergence of a democratic regime with economic development. Although powerful in explaining the survival of established democracies, modernization theory tended however to ignore the role of social actors and movements in crafting democracy, leaving the timing of democratization processes unexplained. Democratization has also been linked to elite strategies oriented to state building or political competition (Rokkan 1970, 3). When scholars within this approach did examine the role of organized and mobilized actors in society, they tended—as did Samuel Huntington (1965, 1991)—to consider mobilization, particularly of the working class, as a risk more than an asset.

Results on the relations between democracy and capitalism are ambivalent. Various streams of literature have paid particular attention to the role of

capitalism in the development of democracy. In particular, but not only in the traditional Marxist approaches, democracy has often been presented as the typical political form of capitalism. As Dietrich Rueschemeyer, Evelyn Huber Stephens, and John D. Stephens (1992, 1) summarized, 'in this view capitalism and democracy go hand in hand because democracy, while proclaiming the rule of the many, in fact protects the interests of capital owners.... The unrestrained operation of the market for capital and labour constitutes the material base of democracy.' Even though capitalism might prosper without democracy, 'virtually all full-fledged democracies we know are associated with capitalist political economics' (Rueschemeyer et al. 1992, 2).

Even though scholars have often stressed the link between democracy and capitalism, different trends of research on social structures and democratization have offered different conclusions. Quantitative research, based on large-N comparisons, consistently presented a positive correlation between economic development and democracy; small-N comparisons have instead limited this relationship to specific—and even rare—historical conditions. Lipset (1959, 1980) stated early on that the economically better off a country, the higher the chances that it is a democracy (1980, 31). Education, along with related values of tolerance and moderation as well as the development of a middle class, are considered main causal mechanisms. Linking democracy to modernization theory, Cutright (1963) explained the dominance of democracy in modern countries, citing their complex structure, which made democracy effective in dealing with increasingly differentiated societies. Cutright and Wiley (1969) confirmed the role of literacy as a relevant measure of social development, also observing the stabilizing effect of high provisions in social security: by satisfying the needs of the population, democracies increase support for the status quo.

Some comparative historical investigations (O'Donnell 1973) pointed instead at the capitalist interest in authoritarian regimes, especially in dependent countries. According to Ken Bollen (1979), the development of capitalism favoured the development of democracy only for earlier economic development (and first democratization), while latecomers (especially at the periphery) were more likely to be ruled by autocrats. Barrington Moore (1966) influentially singled out various paths to economic development, with a fascist path dominated by powerful landowners and a bourgeoisie that needed protectionist support by the state. In his work, O'Donnell (1973) stressed an 'elective affinity' between bureaucratic authoritarianism and capitalist development, while even democracies offer to different classes asymmetrical chances to articulate their interests, privileging some over others. In fact, Offe and Wiesenthal (1980) have noted the paradox that democratization represents primarily an increase in political equality, but with tensions between democracy and inequalities, as 'democracy may soften but it certainly does

not eliminate the differences of power, wealth and status in class-divided societies' (Offe and Wiesenthal 1980, 43).

These debates are also reflected in discussions on the role of some social classes as main carriers of democratization processes (see also above). Barrington Moore Jr (1966), R. Bendix (1964), and T. H. Marshall (1992) all recognized the impact of class struggles in early democratization. While the focus has usually been on the middle class as promoters of democratization, more recently Rueschemeyer, Stephens, and Stephens have pointed to the role of the working class in the last two waves of democratization in Southern Europe, South America, and the Caribbean. According to them (1992, 6), 'one would have to examine the structure of class coalitions as well as the relative power of different classes to understand how the balance of class power would affect the possibilities for democracy.' The assumption is that 'Those who have the most to gain from democracy will be its most reliable promoters and defenders' (Rueschemeyer et al. 1992, 57; see also Collier and Collier 2002).

While for some scholars democracy can fit various social structures, these three authors emphasized a mutual reinforcement between democracy and capitalism: 'capitalist development is associated with democracy because it transforms the class structure, strengthening the working and the middle-class and weakening the landed upper class. It was neither the capitalist market nor capitalists as the new dominant force, but rather the contradictions of capitalism that advanced the cause of democracy' (Rueschemeyer et al. 1992, 7). In contrast to Barrington Moore's approach, they stated in fact that 'The working class was the most consistent democratic force' (Rueschemeyer et al. 1992, 8). Noting that 'It is ironic that not only liberal historians but also the orthodox Marxist accounts of the rise of democracy see the bourgeoisie as *the* protagonist of democracy', they assert instead that 'it was the subordinated classes that fought for democracy' (Rueschemeyer et al. 1992, 46). In their view, 'the chances of democracy then must be seen as fundamentally shaped by the balance of class power' (Rueschemeyer et al. 1992, 47). The middle class usually played an ambivalent role, pressing for its own inclusion, but only occasionally (when weak) allying with the working class in order to extend democracy to them as well. The peasantry and rural workers took different positions, according to their capacity for autonomous organization and the influence of dominant classes upon them (Rueschemeyer et al. 1992).¹

Even if the urban and rural middle classes might play an important role, the working class has been considered here as the most coherent pro-democratic actor (e.g. Theborn 1995). 'The primary economic interest of the bourgeoisie

¹ In particular, small independent family farmers tended to be more pro-democratic than were peasants from large land holdings.

as a class lies in the development and guarantee of the institutional infrastructure of capitalist development—in the institutions of property and contract, in the predictability of judicial decisions, in the functioning of markets for capital, goods and services, and labor, and in the protection against unwelcome state intervention’ (Rueschemeyer et al. 1992, 61). A dependent development restricts the differentiation of the capitalist class as well as reducing the margins of negotiation with exploited classes.

Whatever the chosen class, a structuralist bias in the traditional vision of democratization is criticized by the *transitologist* approach, which stresses instead the dynamic characteristic of the process, while focusing on elite strategies and behaviour (O’Donnell and Schmitter 1986; Higley and Gunther 1992). This trend of research has the advantage of refocusing attention towards agency. As Terry Lynn Karl (1990, 1) summarized, ‘the manner in which theorists of comparative politics have sought to understand democracy in developing countries has changed as the once-dominant search for prerequisites of democracy has given way to a more process-oriented emphasis on contingent choice. Having undergone this evolution, theorists should now develop an interactive approach that seeks explicitly to relate structural constraints to the shaping of contingent choice.’ The inconsistent results of the structuralist approaches pushed scholars away from the search for general theory aimed at discovering identical conditions for the presence or absence of democratic regimes,² and towards the analysis of ‘a variety of actors with different followings, preferences, calculations, resources, and time horizons’ (Karl 1990, 5–6).

Indeed, literature from the transitology perspective tends to downplay the impact of structural conditions, which had received much attention in the past, instead stressing the role of leadership. For O’Donnell and Schmitter, transitions from authoritarian rule are illustrations of ‘underdetermined social change, of large-scale transformations which occur when there are insufficient structural or behavioral parameters to guide and predict the outcome’ (1986, 363). In fact, their influential collection of research on the transition from authoritarian rule emphasizes its ‘structural indeterminacy’.

In these underdetermined processes, in times of uncertainty, the predispositions of elites are seen as determining whether democratization occurs at all. They are linked not so much to their material interests as to a sort of concern for their future reputation. In this narrative, ‘Individual heroics may in fact be key: the “catalyst” for the process of democratization comes,

² In particular, research on Latin America pointed at the need for revision, indicating that ‘there may be no single precondition that is sufficient to produce such an outcome. The search for causes rooted in economic, social, cultural/psychological, or international factors has not yielded a general law of democratization, nor is it likely to do so in the near future despite the proliferation of new cases’ (Karl 1990).

not from a debt crisis or rampant inflation or some major crisis of industrialization, but from gestures by exemplary individuals who begin testing the boundaries of behavior' (Bermeo 1990, 361). This stream of research has also been said to be extremely stato-centric, with a privileged role accorded to institutional actors. Class also tends to stay out of the picture, as strategies are analysed in game theoretical terms as interactions of incumbents and challengers, soft-liners and hard-liners.

Non-elite and non-institutional actors are considered as marginal. As Ruth Collier (1999, 5) summarized, transitologists emphasize 'elite strategic choices, downplaying or ignoring the role of labour in democratization'. If social movements might be effective in promoting the transition process, the 'resurrection of civil society' is seen as a short disruptive moment in which movements, unions, churches, and society in general push for the initial liberalization of a non-democratic regime into a transition towards democracy. In their seminal work, in fact, O'Donnell and Schmitter (1986, 53–4) observe that: 'In some cases and at particular moments of the transition, many of these diverse layers of society may come together to form what we choose to call the popular upsurge. Trade unions, grass-roots movements, religious groups, intellectuals, artists, clergymen, defenders of human rights, and professional associations all support each other's efforts toward democratization and coalesce into a greater whole which identifies itself as "the people."' Even if these are moments of intense expectations, 'regardless of its intensity and of the background from which it emerges, this popular upsurge is always ephemeral' (O'Donnell and Schmitter 1986, 55–6).

While mass mobilization is recognized as important in expanding the limits of mere liberalization, defined by some increase in civil and political rights, and partial democratization, contentious action is seen more as a symptom than a cause. Moreover, masses are presented as vulnerable to elite co-optation or manipulation, often focusing on very instrumentally defined purposes (see Przeworski 1991, 57; for a critique, Baker 1999). The analytic framework 'focuses squarely on the strategic choices of elites, and popular action is considered relevant primarily for its indirect effects on intra-elite bargaining in situations in which a transition is already underway' (Ulfelder 2005, 313). Mass mobilization is thus conceived of as a short phase, while the analysis addresses 'the process by which soft-line incumbents and moderate opposition party leaders reach some implicit or explicit agreement on a transition from an authoritarian regime. To a substantial extent this is a model of democratization in which collective actors, mass mobilization and protest are largely exogenous' (Collier 1999, 6).

As in this wave of reflection the *reforma pactada/ruptura pactada* in Spain was considered (explicitly or implicitly) as the model for successful democratization, the ephemeral life of civil society tended to be perceived as not only

inevitable—given the re-channelling of participation through the political parties and the electoral system—but also desirable, in order to avoid frightening authoritarian soft-liners into abandoning the negotiation process with pro-democracy moderates. Moderation was therefore seen as a positive evolution, as the attitudes and goals of the various actors change along the process. This point was neatly made by Huntington, who stated:

If democratization did not produce the dangers they feared, people who had been liberal reformers or even standpatters might come to accept democracy. Similarly, participation in the processes of democratization could lead members of extremist opposition groups to moderate their revolutionary propensities and accept the constraints and opportunities democracy offered. The relative power of the groups shaped the nature of the democratization process and often changed during that process. If standpatters dominated the government and extremists the opposition, democratization was impossible, as, for example, where a right-wing personal dictator determined to hang on to power confronted an opposition dominated by Marxist-Leninists (Huntington 1991, 589).

A somewhat more positive view of intervention from below developed with research on the wave of democratization in Eastern Europe. Influentially, Linz and Stepan (1996) suggested that ‘A robust civil society, with the capacity to generate political alternatives and to monitor government and state, can help transitions get started, help resist reversals, help push transitions to their completion, help consolidate, and help deepen democracy. At all stages of the democratization process, therefore, a lively and independent civil society is invaluable’ (1996, 9). This theoretical attention notwithstanding, their empirical research still focused on the elites.

So, even though the dynamic, agency-focused approach of transitology allowed for some interest in the role played by social movements especially in the phase of liberalization (Pagnucco 1995), it did not bring much attention to them.

Democratization in Social Movement Studies

In contrast, the field of social movement studies has stressed the relevance of contention. Rarely focusing on social movements in democratization phases, such research has flourished in (and on) established democracies (for a review, see Rossi and della Porta 2009). Even in established democracies, the relationship between movements and democracy has been mainly looked at in terms of institutional opportunities for protest, rather than the attitudes on and practices of democracy by activists and their organizations (della Porta 2009a, 2009b; della Porta and Rucht 2013). As critics have observed, even the rare

research concerned with the issue 'stops short of a systematic inquiry into the political principles of popular organizations and strategic choice, and so fails to pursue the connections between popular politics and processes of institutional change within political regimes' (Foweraker 1995, 218).

If a systematic analysis of processes of transition from below is lacking, however, there has been some potential for the development of research on social movements and democratization. On the one hand, the emergence of the global justice movement encouraged some social movement scholars to pay more attention to issues of democracy, as well as to social movements in the global South (e.g. della Porta 2009a; della Porta and Rucht 2013). At the theoretical level, recognizing the structuralist bias of the political process approach, a more dynamic vision of protest has been promoted, with a focus on the social mechanisms that intervene between macro-causes and macro-effects (McAdam et al. 2001).³ Recently, some scholars within this approach proposed the reformulation of the transitology perspective, taking into account the role played by contentious politics (McAdam et al. 2001; Schock 2005; Tilly 2004). Like transitologists, they have stressed agency as well as the importance of looking at democratization as dynamic processes. On the other hand, some pioneering research has aimed at applying social movement studies to research on authoritarian regimes, from the Middle East (Wiktorowicz 2004; Hafez 2003; Gunning 2009) to Asia (Boudreau 2004) and the former Soviet Union (Beissinger 2002). Moreover, however dominant, the 'elitist' approach has not gone unchallenged in studies of democratization.

First of all, some normative reflections have pointed at the democratizing capacity of civil society, theoretically located between the state and the market, with diminishing confidence in the role played by political parties as carriers of the democratization process. The very conceptualization of a global civil society emphasizes the democratizing input coming 'from below' (Kaldor 2003; Keane 2003). In some of these interpretations, civil society is conceptualized as almost synonymous with social movements (Cohen and Arato 1992; Kaldor 2003). Within this frame, several programmes of civil

³ A similar evolution was identified in the related field of revolutions. Foran (2005) distinguished different generations in research on revolutions. The first generation tended to present a natural history of revolution, which starts when intellectuals cease to support the regime and continues with regime changes (reform and crisis), conflicts within the opposition between radical and moderates, who usually eventually prevail. A second generation stressed instead root causes such as dysfunctions, which bring about relative deprivation; structural causes are also emphasized by a third generation, which focuses on socio-economic as well as international conditions. Against the structuralist dominance, a fourth generation searches for agency, as organizational resources, emotions, and culture. So, Foran (2005, 18) singled out five necessary conditions for a successful revolution: '1) dependent development; 2) a repressive, exclusionary, personalist state; 3) the elaboration of effective and powerful political cultures of resistance; and a revolutionary crisis consisting of 4) an economic downturn; 5) world-systemic opening (a let-up of external controls)'. These various conditions and mechanisms have been seen as supporting each other.

society promotion have been initiated, sponsored by international governmental organizations as well as individual states.

An empirical linkage between social movements and democratization processes has been established as well. Among others, Charles Tilly has observed 'a broad correspondence between democratization and social movements'. On the one hand, many of the processes that cause democratization also promote social movements, and 'democratization as such further encourages people to form social movements' (Tilly 2004, 131). On the other, 'under some conditions and in a more limited way, social movements themselves promote democratization' (Tilly 2004, 131).

Historical research has pointed at the pivotal role (some) social movements played in the struggle for expanding social rights. The labour movement was particularly active in calling for the right of association, as well as the right to form unions, and for increasing political participation (Sewell 1996; della Porta 2011). Even when 'only a very small number of well-to-do English men (no women, no poor) could actually vote, parliamentary elections became occasions to air different viewpoints' (Markoff 1996, 47). Claims framed by movements in the name of rights, citizenship, and their political practices played a crucial function in creating citizenry (Foweraker and Landman 1997; Eckstein and Wickham-Crowley 2003), as 'the struggle for rights has more than a merely rhetorical impact. The insistence on the rights of free speech and assembly is a precondition of the kind of collective (and democratic) decision-making which educates citizens' (Foweraker 1995, 98).

Movements on behalf of excluded groups often cooperated and learned from each other. Many activists in the movement for women's rights before the American Civil War had experience in the abolitionist movement, for example, just as the 'British antislavery movement was a major source of many forms of activism in that country' (Markoff 1996, 57). There were also alliances between women's and labour movements for suffrage and welfare (Markoff 1996, 84; also della Porta, Valiente, and Kousis forthcoming). The labour movement developed specific public spheres in which a taste for freedom was nurtured as a necessary complement to calls for social justice (della Porta 2013a, 2005a). Also later on, case studies as well as comparative analyses have shown the crucial role played by mobilized actors in the emergence of democracy, and in its preservation or expansion (della Porta 2007, 2009a, 2009b).

In addition, case studies on recent transitions have demonstrated the importance of social movements in the struggle for democracy, and in its preservation or expansion (see Rossi and della Porta 2009 for a review). As Ulfelder (2005, 313) synthesized, 'Various subsequent studies of democratic transitions have afforded collective actors a more prominent role, allowing for the possibility that mass mobilization has a substantial impact on

the transition process and is sometimes the catalyst that sets a transition in motion.' Not even in the Spanish case can transition be considered a purely elite-controlled bargaining process, as massive strike waves, terrorist attacks by nationalist movements, and an ascending cycle of protest characterized the transition (see, among others, Foweraker 1989; Maravall 1978; 1982; McAdam et al. 2001, 171–86; Reinares 1987; Sánchez-Cuenca and Aguilar 2009; Tarrow 1995).⁴

Much research has indicated that protests (especially strikes) often constitute precipitating events that trigger *liberalization*, spreading the perception among authoritarian elites that they need to open some spaces of freedom in order to avoid an imminent or potential civil war or violent takeover of power by democratic and/or revolutionary actors (e.g. Bermeo 1997; Wood 2000). Already research on first democratization had noted the importance of liberalization, as the granting of opposition rights, and the gradual extension of these rights, as a main path to democracy (Dahl 1971). Also in other cases, liberalization, in turn, opened up some (although limited) opportunities for social movements to develop. Trade unions and urban movements often exploited those openings, pushing for social rights but also political reform (Slater 1985; Collier 1999; Silver 2003; Schneider 1992; 1995; Hipsher 1998a), sometimes in alliance with transnational actors (e.g. in Latin America, as well as in Eastern Europe; Keck and Sikkink 1998; Glenn 2003).

During the *transition*, old movements and new social movements have been noted as participants in large coalitions asking for democratic rights and social justice (Jelin 1987; Tarrow 1995). The mobilization of a pro-democracy coalition of trade unions, churches, and social movements has often been pivotal in supporting the movement towards democracy when faced with contending counter-movements opposing liberalization. Protests can then be used by modernizing elites to push for free elections (Casper and Taylor 1996, 9–10; Glenn 2003, 104).

Social movements are then important in the *consolidation* phase, which opens up with the first free elections, the end of the period of uncertainty, and/or the implementation of a minimum quality of substantive democracy (Linz and Stepan 1996; O'Donnell 1993, 1994). In some cases, this phase is accompanied by a demobilization of civil society organizations as energies are channelled into party politics; in others, however, democracy fuels social movements. The presence of a tradition of mobilization and of political allies can in fact help maintain a high level of protest, as with the shantytown dwellers' protests in Chile (Hipsher 1998b; Schneider 1992; 1995), the peasants' and labour movements in Brazil (Branford and Rocha 2002;

⁴ This would in fact be better defined as a destabilization/extrication process (Collier 1999, 126–32) or as 'a cycle of protest intertwined with elite transaction' (McAdam et al. 2001, 186).

Burdick 2004), or the environmental movements in Eastern Europe (Flam 2001). Movements then call for extending rights to those who are excluded by 'low intensity democracies' and target authoritarian legacies (Eckstein 2001; Yashar 2005; della Porta 2013a). Also later in the consolidation phase, movements' alternative practices and values have often helped in sustaining and expanding democracy (Santos 2005; della Porta 2009a). Keeping elites under continuous popular pressure after transition can be important for a successful consolidation (Karatnycky and Ackerman 2005).

When looking at the impact of social movements on democracy, however, the empirical evidence is mixed. First, as mentioned, their relevance in democratization processes is discussed within a 'populist approach' emphasizing participation from below—with social movements as important actors in the creation of democratic public spheres—but denied by an 'elitist approach' considering democratization as mainly a top-down process (Tilly 2004). Moreover, empirical research has noted the potential but also the limitations of development from below, both during and after democratization processes (della Porta 2005b). Research on the global South, but also on transnational institutions, has addressed the inconsistent qualifications of civil society organizations and social movements in terms of their autonomy from the political system, their civility as inclusive conceptions of citizenship, their plurality as the capacity of representation of different groups in the population, as well as their legitimacy and internal accountability. In contemporary social movements, participatory and deliberative practices have indeed attracted some interest, but they have also been difficult to implement, as activists are the first to admit (della Porta 2009a, 2009b). Considered as particularly relevant for the successful implementation of a democratic process, to which they can contribute important resources of knowledge and commitment, civil society organizations are often quite critical participants and/or observers of the institutional policies that aim at implementing these goals.

Indeed, social movements contribute to democratization only under certain conditions. Collective mobilization has frequently produced destabilization of authoritarian regimes, but it has also led to an intensification of repression or the collapse of weak democratic regimes, particularly when social movements do not keep to democratic conceptions. Labour, student, and ethnic movements brought about a crisis in the Franco regime in Spain in the 1960s and 1970s, but the workers' and peasants' protests and the fascist counter-movements contributed to the failure of the process of democratization in Italy in the 1920s (Tarrow 1995). Beyond a social movement's propensity to support democracy, democratization processes might follow different paths, being more or less influenced by the mobilization of social movements. Some democratization processes are protest-driven, others moved by

pacts. And social movements might be strong in mobilizing, but also opt for bargaining instead.

As the relationship between social movements and democratization is not simple, a systematic cross-national comparison is needed to single out the conditions and mechanisms through which democratization is moved from below. A similar question has been addressed by Ruth Collier who, comparing Latin American with European experiences, asked ‘whether a group of workers became part of the democratization process as a self conscious collectivity and played an active role that affected the democratic outcome’ (1999, 15). In this volume, I intend to broaden this question in time and space, as well as with reference to types of social movements other than labour. Bridging the useful insights arising from existing research on democratization processes with those developed within social movement studies, I will focus on participation from below in episodes of democratization.

Democratization from Below: The Research Questions

Building on the most recent developments in social movement studies as well as democratization studies, I will pay particular attention to the causal mechanisms that intervene between macro-causes and macro-effects, in order to understand the way in which social movements exercise, or do not exercise, agency within a certain structure.

My research aims at understanding what I define as democratization from below, looking at the protest waves that accompanied democratic reforms. With Beissinger, I define protest events as ‘contentious and potentially subversive practices that challenge normalized practices, modes of causation, or systems of authority’ (2002, 14). Protest events might indeed change structures, as they are, in Hannah Arendt’s words, ‘occurrences that interrupt routine processes and routine procedures’ (1970, 7).

Of course, events are also rooted in structures (see Figure 1.1). Giddens (1979) speaks of an intrinsic relation between structures and actions, as agency is inherent in the development of structure and structure influences, to a certain extent, action. Also according to Beissinger, pre-existing structural conditions are embedded in the orderliness of institutions as ‘institutions constrain and otherwise positively define the ways in which agents pursue their interests through their power to instil regularity and predictability in social affairs and to preclude alternative ways of acting’ (2002, 13). It is therefore important to consider the influence of structures, including political opportunities, as well as the capacity for agency in participation from below in the different stages of democratization processes (della Porta and Diani 2006; Rossi and della Porta 2009).

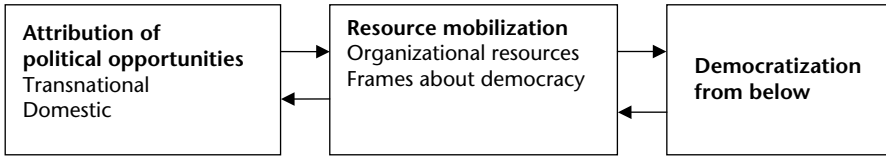


Figure 1.1 The theoretical model

What to Explain: Democratization from Below

A very first and general way to look at *democratization from below* would simply aim at balancing the mentioned empirical focus on elites with more attention to what non-elites (in particular, social movements) have done. As Collier and Mahoney stressed, ‘The dominant paradigm has built upon the founding essay by O’Donnell and Schmitter, which emphasizes the role of leadership and elite interaction. While that essay suggests that “the greatest challenge to the transitional regime is likely to come from the collective action of the working class”, it also emphasizes the ephemeral nature of the “popular upsurge” and the subsequent “decline of the people”’ (1997, 285). Addressing democratization from below would first of all help in redressing that bias.

My research design, however, goes beyond this empirical enrichment by aiming at explaining different paths of democratization from below, with particular attention given to eventful democratization, that is, protest-driven episodes of democratization. Following Ruth Collier (1999), we might distinguish different meanings of the term ‘from below’ as linked to: a) the power of certain actors, distinguishing insiders from outsiders; b) the social background of those actors, distinguishing, in particular, between upper and lower classes; c) the arenas in which the conflicts take place, distinguishing institutional arenas from protest arenas.

Additionally, we can easily assume that the balance of participation by outsiders and contention in empirical cases varies. Focusing attention on the mobilization of labour, Ruth Collier (1999) has indeed inductively distinguished different paths. Assuming that each empirical case involves a combination of different aspects, and leaving aside for the moment the social background of those who mobilize, I started by building a typology that crosses the dimensions of insiders versus outsiders and moderation versus contestation. The first dimension defines the degree of participation of civil society and the second its forms.

The ensuing types are reported in Table 1.1. Differently from *pacted transition*, where citizens are not mobilized, in *participatory pacts* social movements are strong enough to push for democratization; in *disruptive coups d’état*, elites

Table 1.1 A typology of episodes of mobilization for democracy

	Elite driven	Mass driven
Moderation	[pacted transition]	Participatory pact
Contestation	Disruptive coup d'état	Eventful democratization

manipulate mass protest in order to win over conservative groups in participatory pacts; and in *eventful democratization* it is protest by outsiders that moves the episodes of democratization.

Explaining Democratization from Below

The research presented in this volume focuses on paths of democratization from below, with particular attention given to eventful democratization. As democratic transitions display a wide variety of trajectories and outcomes, 'the role of social movements within them is conditioned by the specific rhythm of the "protest cycle", the shape of the political opportunity structure, and the contingency of strategic choice' (Foweraker 1995, 90, n. 2).

Breaking with essentialist, deterministic, and structuralist understandings, the project follows Beissinger's (2002) stress on temporality, contextualization, and agency. I consider agency as inherent in the development of structure, and structure as influencing action, at least to a certain extent. As Beissinger observed in his illuminating analysis of the breakdown of the Soviet empire, 'nationalism needs to be understood not only as a cause of action, but also as the product of action. This recursive quality of human action—the fact that action can function as both cause and effect—and the significance of this for the study of nationalism are the central theoretical issues' (Beissinger 2002, 11). A causal analysis, artificially distinguishing dependent and independent variables, risks obscuring this continuous relationship. In Beissinger's words, 'the idea that identities could be defined in the context of agency or that nationalism is both a structured and a structuring phenomenon has not received sufficient attention' (2002, 9).⁵

In parallel, when looking at social movements more in general, we should understand them as both structured and structuring phenomena. They are, that is, both constrained in their action by the context in which they move, but also able, through their action, to change relations among and between

⁵ As he notes, even constructivist approaches have not sufficiently 'investigated the ways in which the action itself may be constitutive of nationhood' (Beissinger 2002, 11), for example by looking at how nationalism suddenly crystallizes rather than developing gradually (Brubaker 1996).

actors. As Sewell (1990) has shown in his brilliant analysis of the Bastille take-over, this does not happen only in the long term, but also in the (very) short, *événementiel* one, as events are relational processes in which various actors make choices that are, at least in part, linked to others' expected reactions.

In my study I want in fact to stress the effects of protest on the social movement itself, by focusing on what, inspired by the historical sociologist William H. Sewell (1996), I have called 'eventful protest' (della Porta 2008). Sewell defines events as a 'relatively rare subclass of happenings that *significantly transform structure*', and an eventful conception of temporality as 'one that takes into account the transformation of structures by events' (Sewell 1996, emphasis added). I suggest that, especially during cycles of protest, some contingent intense events tend to affect the given context by fuelling mechanisms of social change: organizational networks develop; frames are bridged; personal links foster reciprocal trust. In this sense, some protest events constitute processes during which collective experiences develop through the interactions of different individual and collective actors, taking part with different roles and aims. The event has a transformative effect as it alters the conditions for action 'largely by constituting and empowering new groups of actors or by re-empowering existing groups in new ways' (Sewell 1996, 271). Predictability and structural determinacy are indeed challenged as these protest events set in motion social processes that 'are inherently contingent, discontinuous and open ended' (Sewell 1996, 272).

This bridging of structure and action can be observed through a focus on protest events during episodes of democratization. While the social science literature on first democratization paid attention to long-lasting processes of increase (and sometimes, decrease) in democratic rights, literature on transitology has looked at relatively short moments. Rather than analysing the long-term effects of these moments as foundational (or not) for democracy, I will reconstruct protests during episodes of democratization, their origins, characteristics, and short-term effects. Without assessing the long-term consequences of these episodes to see if they bring about sustained changes, I define them on the basis of their short-term effects in moving a step forward in the direction of democracy.

When looking at eventful democratization, I shall indeed focus on short periods of intense protest, looking at the relational, affective, and cognitive mechanisms that take place within them. As we will see, the historical context of the selected cases varies, as do the characteristics of the selected organizations. Rather than searching for invariant determinants, I want to identify some common dynamics that are present in the evolution of various cases of democratization. For this purpose, I use the concept of causal mechanisms.

In recent years, the language of mechanisms has become fashionable in the social sciences, signalling dissatisfaction with correlational analysis

(Mahoney 2003). Distinguishing as many as nine ways to define a mechanism, Gerring (2007) proposed a minimal common denominator in the search for the means through which a cause produces an effect. Thus, he singled out the core meaning of mechanism in 'the pathway or process by which an effect is produced or a purpose is accomplished' (Gerring 2007, 178).⁶ In one understanding, the concept of causal mechanism has then been used to refer either to (historical) paths, with a search for events, which are observable and context dependent, or to micro-level explanations, with a search for variables at the individual level in the quest for universal, law-like causal explanations. In macro-analyses, causal mechanisms have been linked to systematic process tracing (Hall 2003) through a causal reconstruction that aims at explaining a given social phenomenon, be it an event or a structure, by singling out the process through which it is generated (Mayntz 2003). Mechanisms refer, therefore, to intermediary steps between conditions and outcomes. In micro-level explanations, instead, the theoretical focus is on individual agency. According to Hedstrom and Bearman (2009, 4), 'Analytical sociology explains by detailing mechanisms through which social facts are brought about, and these mechanisms invariably refer to individuals' actions and the relations that link actors to one another.'⁷

In my own understanding, mechanisms are categories of action that filter structural conditions and produce effects (see della Porta 2013b). Following Tilly (2001), I conceptualize mechanisms as relatively abstract patterns of action that can travel from one episode to the next, explaining how a cause creates a consequence in a given context. I would not restrict capacity of action to individuals, however, instead including collective actors. I will in fact consider mechanisms as a concatenation of generative events linking macro causes (such as contextual transformation) to aggregated effects (for example, cycles of protest) through individual and/or organizational agents. In this way, I believe that the search for mechanisms helps in combining attention to structure and to agency.

Looking at mechanisms, my approach is *relational*, as it locates eventful democratization in the interactions of various institutional and

⁶ Mahoney (2003) instead considered mechanisms as 'unobserved entities, processes or structures through which an independent variable exerts an effect on a dependent variable' (Mahoney 2003, 1). They generate outcomes, but do not themselves require explanation as they are 'hypothetical ultimate causes' that explain 'why a causal variable exerts an effect on a given outcome variable' (Mahoney 2003, 1–2). Identifying mechanisms with general approaches, he distinguishes three main mechanisms: rational choice (micro-level); structural functionalism (macro-level); and power of collective actors (meso-level).

⁷ Mechanisms should allow us to build general causal explanations: 'A mechanism is a precise, abstract and action-based explanation which shows how the occurring of triggering events regularly generates the type of outcome to be explained' (Hedstrom and Bearman 2009, 6).

non-institutional actors; *constructivist*, as it takes into account not only the external opportunities and constraints, but also the social construction of their experiential reality by the various actors participating in social and political conflicts; and *emergent*, as it recognizes that democratization from below involves the capacity of events to change structures (della Porta 2013b). Cognitive and affective processes intervene in the mobilization, contributing to define the situation as well as forging solidarities and identities. Considering the constraining power of the context in which episodes of mobilization take place, I shall address both endogenous, social movement properties and exogenous, environmental ones.

First, I shall look at democratization events as transformative, insofar as they alter the cultural meanings or signification of political and social categories and fundamentally shape people's collective loyalties and actions (Sewell 1990). They are settings in which one sees better the structural influences, but also 'the spectacle-like quality of the event makes it an important site of cultural transactions at which national identities are potentially formed' (Beissinger 2007, 22). The contention intrinsic to the event is strongly constitutive of identities (Beissinger 2007, 23). As Jeffrey Alexander noted, 'Social dramas, unlike theatrical ones, are open-ended and contingent. They can be staged, but nobody is certain whether the actors will arrive, who they will be, how events will unfold, which side will win a confrontation, and what the drama's effects on the audience will be' (2011, 36).

Even recognizing this transformative capacity of events, however, I expect the relevance of opposition from below during democratization processes to be influenced by some characteristics of the social movements that mobilize. Social movements are here defined as (1) informal networks of individuals and organizations, based on (2) shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilize about (3) conflictual issues, through (4) the frequent use of various forms of protest (della Porta and Diani 2006, ch. 1). Even as social movement studies tend to consider democracy as a precondition for their development, various actors (sometimes defined as civil society) have targeted the legitimacy and the (national and international) support for authoritarian regimes (on the Latin American cases, see Jelin 1987; Corradi et al. 1992; Escobar and Álvarez 1992). Among the social movement organizations that have played a pro-democratic role are church-related actors (see Lowden 1996 on Chile; Burdick 1992; Levine and Mainwaring 2001 on Brazil; della Porta and Mattina 1986 on Spain; Glenn 2003; Osa 2003b on Poland); human rights networks, sometimes in transnational alliances (Brysk 1993; Brito 1997; Sikkink 1996; Keck and Sikkink 1998, ch. 3; Wright 2007); cultural groups (Glenn 2003 on Czechoslovakia); as well as, very often, the labour movement, sometimes in alliance with new social movements. Human rights' movements campaign to delegitimize authoritarian regimes in international forums such as the

United Nations, and in clandestine or open resistance to the authoritarian regime at the national level.

Following social movement studies, we can assume that three sets of characteristics of these networks can affect their role in democratization processes: their frames on democratic issues, organizational structures, and action repertoires (on these concepts, see della Porta and Diani 2006).

Frames are schemata of interpretation that enable individuals to locate, perceive, identify, and label occurrences within their life space as well as in the world at large (Snow et al. 1986, 464). Social movement framings about democracy and democratization vary. For example, past research indicated that the labour movement was often divided in its positions about representative democracy. Even if it tended to support the various stages of (initial) democratization, cross-national differences were relevant (Marks, Mbaye, and Kim 2009). More generally, social movements propose alternative conceptions of democracy, often mixing participatory and deliberative models. Beyond support for democracy in general, specific conceptions of democracy vary. On the whole, social movements tend to consider a representative conception of democracy as, at least, insufficient, focusing instead on democracy as a *process* that is variously defined as participatory, direct, open and deliberative. Traditionally, social movements have emphasized the *participatory* conception of democracy, stressing the importance of increasing direct forms of participation. In this line, social movement organizations have been said to assert that direct democracy is closer to the interests of the people than is liberal democracy, which is based on the delegation of power to representatives who can be controlled only at the moment of election and who have full authority to take decisions between one election and another (Kitschelt 1990). Moreover, following visions of *deliberative* democracy, recent movements have stressed the importance of building public spaces where consensual decision-making develops. Conceptions of democracy are also embedded in visions of the enemy and the self, in diagnostic and prognostic assumptions, in which a civil society is often pitted against tyranny. Different (more or less inclusive) appeals to the nation might be mobilized as well. The moderation versus radicalization of claims for autonomy/independence has been mentioned as favouring rather than jeopardizing the transition to democracy (among others, Oberschall 2000; Glenn 2003; Reinares 1987).

As already proved by previous research on social movements in democracies (della Porta 2009a, 2009b, 2013a), I expect that, in democratization processes as well, conceptions of democracy interact with other *organizational characteristics* of social movements. Since an organization is also a 'context for political conversation' (Eliasoph 1998), frames interact with organizational structures as well as the repertoire of contentious action. Indeed, organizational forms have been analysed in relation to the cultural meaning that