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RESEARCH ARTICLE

CYCLES OF PROTEST AND THE CONSOLIDATION OF DEMOCRACY

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ABSTRACT: Outcomes of democratization paths have been addressed within literature on democratic consolidation as well as on revolution. These approaches have however never been linked with social movement theory that, I argue in this article, can provide new lenses to explain how movements' characteristics at the time of transition might have an impact on the quality of ensuing democracy. As the same time, looking at effects of social movements in terms of democratization can help broadening social movement studies, that have rarely addressed this type of effects. I am in particular interested in linking reflections (and empirical evidence) on effects of social movements to the typology on paths towards democratization that I have developed in other works. Looking especially at Central Eastern Europe post-1989, I single out the different characteristics of contentious politics in countries that underwent, respectively, eventful democratization, participated pacts and troubled democratization. Protest event analysis as constituted the empirical basis for the analysis.

KEYWORDS: Democracy, Democratization, Social Movements, Protest Event Analysis, Political Participation

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1. Cycles of protest and democratization processes: an introduction

Research on social movements and research on democratization hardly communicated. For long time, the former focused on the West, under the assumption that political opportunities must be sufficiently open to enable protest. Paradoxically, after transitions, the assumption tends to be that opportunities are then too open, as then the former oppositional leaders found space to enter parliaments and governments. The latter, tended to assume that democratization processes, although sometimes foreseeing mobilization from below, are mainly moments of constitution of formal political institutions. Mass protest has been indeed considered as dangerous for democratic consolidation, potentially disturbing the establishment of those institutions, read political parties, that are usually seen as main carriers of democracy. As Sidney Tarrow observed long ago, “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). The picture has not much changed since.

These expectations can be however challenged from both a theoretical and an empirical points of view. First, under authoritarian regimes opportunities are certainly rather closed, but at the same time the threat of non-action are high (Goldstone and Tilly 2001). Further, besides domestic opportunities, international ones could become available for movements active in authoritarian regimes, either in the form of potential international allies (Keck and Sikkink 1998), or through shifting positions in international systems. Protest movements themselves, can promote this change by forcing democratic allies of authoritarian regimes to withdraw their support—what Daniel Ritter (2014) has called the “iron cage of liberalism”.

Also the idea that consolidation processes require social acquiescence in order to be successful has been disputed. First, Nancy Bermeo (1997) and others noted that in consolidation of democracy often happen during moments of still high mobilization, which might even take radical forms (as it was the case in Spain, notwithstanding a transition based on pacts among the moderate sides of both incumbents and opponents). Second, democracy itself brings about the conditions for the flourishing of not only political institutions, but also citizens’ participation in unconventional forms. Third, while post-1945 and early 1970s waves of democratization saw much emphasis by democracy promoters on the construction of political parties, with party legitimacy challenged even in consolidated democracies, especially since the 1989 wave of democratiza-

tion in Eastern Europe the belief spread that democracy needs civil society organizations (della Porta 2014).

In my own work, comparing 1989 in Eastern Europe and 2011 in the Middle East and North Africa, I have suggested that even within the same wave of democratization, social movements might play different roles in different paths of transition to democracy (della Porta 2014). In particular, without assuming that democratization is always produced from below, I 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 has been especially 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 have located 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 have combined attention to eventful history with the one on event history, with thick description 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 have looked at the relations between structure and agency within these transformative moments. Cognitive, affective and relational mechanisms have been singled out as transforming the contexts in which dissidents act.

While in eventful democratization protests develop at the intersection 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 given 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 opening 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 develop into action, but in different combinations. To which extent these different combinations play a role in the steps immediately following transition is a

question to be addressed empirically. A way to do this, is to look at how protest events evolve before, during and after transition, expecting different types of mobilization waves in the three paths.

In social movement study, research on protest events developed around the concept of cycle of protest, under the assumption that, as political opportunities open up, causal mechanisms tend to produce a condensation of protests in time, with imitation and competition among different groups (Tarrow 1989). For various reasons, however, protest cycles tend also to decline, as aims are either achieved or proved impossible to achieve, opportunities close down under the pressure of countermovement, private commitments take activists back to normal routines (Hirshman 1982). All along the cycle, some characteristics of the protest are expected to change, with parallel moves towards moderation and radicalization (della Porta and Tarrow 1986). In literature on democratization, the concept of a tide has been suggested. Protest events tended in fact to cluster in time, as 'events and the contention over identity which they represent are not distributed randomly over time and space. Their appearance is structured both temporally and spatially' (Beissinger 2002, 16). In fact, protests come in chains, series, waves, cycles, and tides, 'forming a punctuated history of heightened challenges and relative stability' (Beissinger 2002, 16).

Studying contentious politics in East Germany, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia between 1989 and 1993, during consolidation stages, Grzegorz Ekiert and Jan Kubik (1998) noted that consolidation has been explained by elite pacts (O' Donnell and Schmitter 1986), and especially the elites skills, values, preferences (Diamond and Linz 1989). As Ekiert and Kubik wrote, "existing literature has accorded more prominence to certain dimensions of consolidation and neglected others: institutional choices of governmental structures and electoral institutions as well as the formation of party systems, are usually viewed as the most important elements in the stabilization and consolidation of democracy..." (1998, 550). In fact, "The preoccupation with (1) elites, (2) institutional choices concerning governmental and electoral systems, (3) party systems, and (4) the relationship between political and economic changes is responsible for a considerable gap in the democratization literature. We know very little about the activities of non-elite actors and how these activities shape the processes of democratization" (ibid., 550-551). And the study of the role of citizens in democratic transitions has often been reduced to an examination of political attitudes, conducted on representative samples of the population (ibid., 552). Contention was in fact important in all the countries analysed, but in different ways and forms.

In what follows, I will use data on protest events during late 1980s and early 1990s in Eastern Europe, looking for similarities and differences in cases belonging to the event-

ful protest path (specifically, GDR and Czechoslovakia), to the participated pact path (specifically, Hungary and Poland) and to trouble paths (Albania, Rumania and Bulgaria). Besides the amount of protest, as reported in the media, I will look at their forms as well as claims. After a next part devoted to the justification of method adopted and data sources, I shall devote one part each to the description of the evolution of the amount of protests, their forms, and their claims.

2. Data sources and research design

This paper is based on protest event analysis (PEA), a much used quantitative methodology to study the dynamics of protest in time and space. First employed by Charles Tilly and his colleagues during the 1970s to shed light on the repertoires of collective action, it later on inspired other important studies on the American civil rights movement (McAdam 1982; 1999), the Italian cycle of protest during the 1970s (Tarrow 1989), new social movements in Western Europe (Kriesi et al. 1995), and the transformations of environmental activism in Europe (Rootes 2003). As observed by Koopmans and Rucht protest event analysis “is a method that allows for the quantification of many properties of Protest, such as frequency, timing and duration, location, claims, size, forms, carriers, and targets, as well as immediate consequences and reactions (e.g. Police intervention, damage, counter protests)” (2002: 231). In general, daily press represents the source for the analysis, where articles on protest are found and coded following specific methods of content analysis (Lindekilde 2014) with a focus on protest (Kriesi et al. 1995; Hutter 2014). In this, the primary unit of analysis is the protest events, and information is collected on indicators that usually cover the actors who protest, the forms they use to protest, their claims, and target (as well as place, time, and immediate outcome).

While extremely helpful to define broad trends in protest, protest event analysis must be handled with care (Hutter 2014). In fact, the reporting of protests is quite selective, and selectivity is often a source of bias, as the portion of events which are reported is never a representative (nor a random) sample, but rather it is—*pour cause*—influenced by the logic of the media. This affects tendentially all main dimensions of the analysis, as we can expect that some actors (either more endowed with institutional resources of access to media, or more ‘scandalous’ per se), forms of action (those which involve more people, are more violent or more innovative), and issues (those which address issues which have high news-value within specific issues cycles) will be more likely reported (McCarthy et al. 1996; Fillieule and Jimenez 2003). Reporting can

also be more or less detailed and neutral according to the characteristics of the actors and forms of actions. Additionally, the more frequent protests becomes, the more selective will necessarily be its reporting.

In addressing these biases, two observations have to be taken into account. First, we can assume that as protest is an act of communication, protest event analysis capture those events that have already overcome a first important threshold to influence public opinion and policy makers, being indeed reported upon (Rucht and Ohlemacher 1992). A second caveat is that, as for any sources, we need to be self-reflexive (acknowledging bias and taking them into account when interpreting the results), plus triangulate newspapers-based protest event analysis reporting of protests in other sources.

For this research, data on eastern European countries shortly before, during and after transition come from the European Protest and Coercion 1980-1995 Data Base, founded by the National Science Foundation (SBR-9631229) and a General Research Fund grant of the University of Kansas covering 28 countries in Europe. It is based on news report on domestic conflicts, covering all reported protests and repressive events, for which a date and a location could be identified. Data were coded for each day/event, by one expert coder per country. The primary source was Lexis-Nexis, accessed through Reuter textline library, which provided access to over 400 between wire-services and on-line newspapers and magazines, choosing the highest quality sources in case of divergent reports. We have recoded some variables as indicated below. The variables we use in this paper are event date, form of action, target, issue, number of protestors, number of arrested/injured/killed persons.

3. Paths of transition and protest evolution

Social movement studies have considered the dynamics of protest cycles as influenced by both contextual changes and endogenous relational mechanisms. Protest cycles are usually expected to be linked to the opening and closing of political opportunities, but also, as mentioned, by emulation and competition. In cycles around transition, we can expect opportunities to be extremely fluid. As Ekiert and Kubik (1998) noticed, there is a difference between the structure of political opportunities, characteristic for stable polities, and the unstructured opportunities which characterize transitory, "open" polities. In fact, "in transitory polities this underlying cultural matrix of allies and foes takes on an ambiguous character: former oppositional activists take over the state apparatus and it is no longer clear who is us and who is them. Such conditions, which

we will call unstructured opportunity, offer protesters considerable freedom of action: there are few established organizational boundaries that should be abolished; there are no predefined agendas whose expansion may be demanded; ruling alignments change often; there are potentially many available allies; and cleavages within and among elites are fluid and poorly identified. The state manages to maintain order within the public domain, but it offers little resistance to nonviolent protest actions and it seems to ignore protesters. Additionally, state functionaries do not know how to deal with protesters, as formal and informal procedures through which protesters are either marginalized or included in the policy-making processes are poorly developed” (ibid., 43).

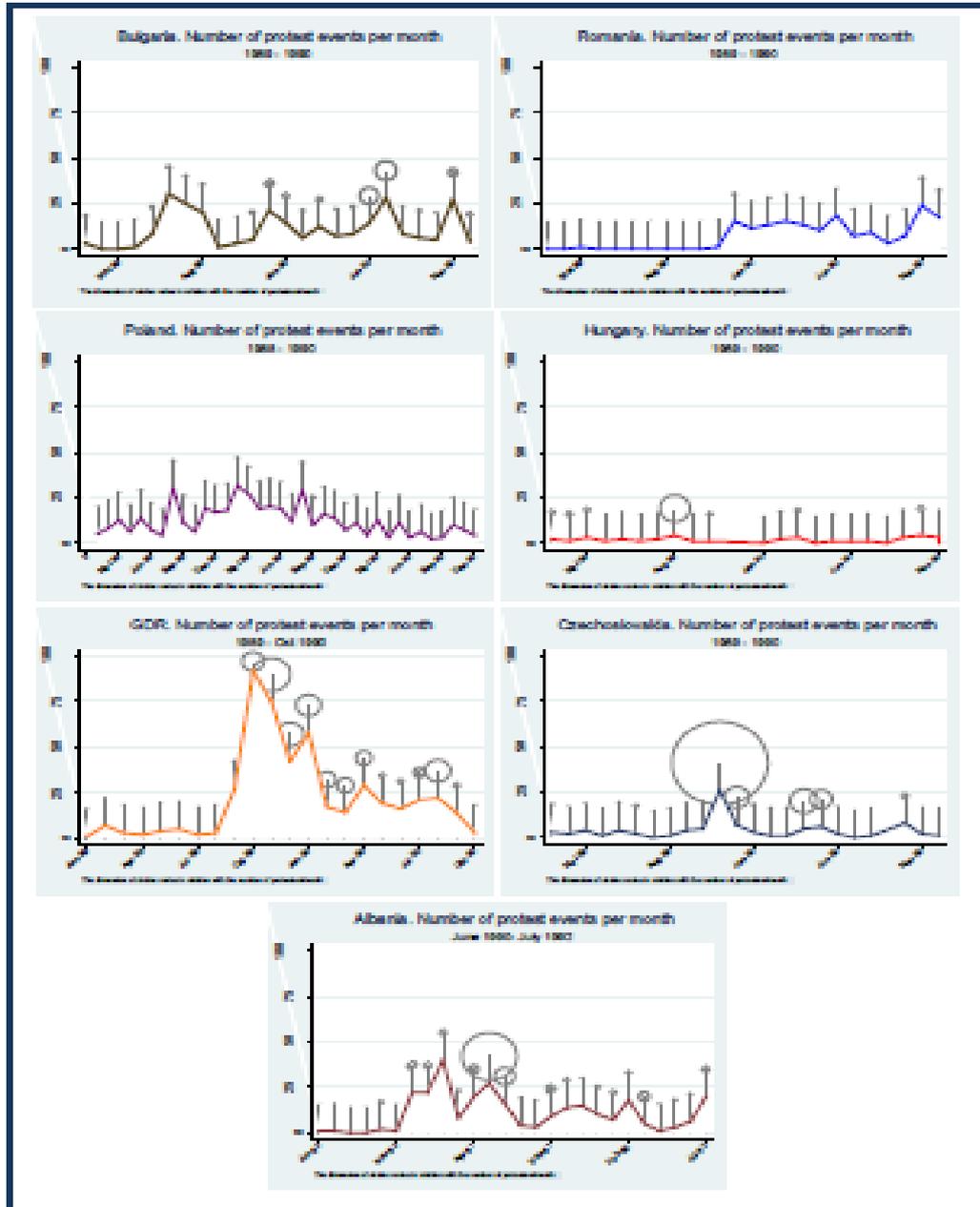
I suggest that these “unstructured opportunities” are affected by the specific paths of intervention by social movements in in transition processes. All in all, we expect that protest grows in eventful democratization, as elites react in exclusive ways to first mobilization. This means that protests then increase in number, reaching a pick before the fall of the regime. There are two rival hypotheses then about what happens later on. One is a sharp decline as democracy is achieved, and activists often enter institutions. On the other hand, one can imagine a normalization, with protest becoming a regular feature of democratic politics. In participated pacts, in contrast, we would expect no cycle, but rather a sporadic increase of protests in some difficult moments in the negotiations, when challengers need to put pressures on incumbents. As pacted democracy is established, protests should then remain low, as the nature of the pact itself is often based on the marginalization of the non-moderate wings for both incumbents and challengers. Finally, we expect quick explosions of protest in troubled democratization, with waves of brutal repressions but, at the same time, moments of quickly spreading radical protests (della Porta 2014).

If we look at the protest events data (see figure 1), we can notice indeed that both cases of eventful democratization--Czechoslovakia and GDR--are characterized by proper cycles with beginning, pick and decline. This happened however with different rhythms, with a short cycle in the Czech case and a longer one in the German case. In Czechoslovakia, there are indeed protests all along 1989, with four days demonstrations in mid-January, hard police intervention and then protests against repression (including against arrests of future president Havel). A tipping point, with increasing participation, is then, on 21 August the commemoration of the 21st anniversary of the Soviet invasion, broken up by baton wielding police. Events increased then in September and October, followed by quickly spreading of marches and strikes in November, until the regime broke down. As shown in the Figure 1, even if protest declined already in January and then in December, there were however still several events involving high

number of participants in the Spring and then the Fall of the following year (Eyal 2003). Not only, in fact, students remain mobilized, but mobilizations become more and more differentiated, with Vietnamese students and Gypsies petitioning for protection against racist attacks, Iraqi and Kuwaiti students protesting the invasion of Iraq, marchers calling for Slovak sovereignty or supporting Polish women denied abortion, beer workers striking for independent company status, hunger strikes celebrating the Chinese students who fought in Tiananmen. At the same time, protests also pushed for deepening of democracy through calls for freedom and human rights, for the withdrawal of Soviet troops, for Havel or against communism (e.g., for investigation into the communist party or the return of public building used by it). So, a short cycle was punctuated with a few very large events, peaking in November 1989, declining later on.

If Czechoslovakia is particularly striking for the large size of the protests (as indicated from the size of the “moons” in the figure), in the GDR there are many more protests in number all along the cycle. The first half of 1989 is characterized by protests on issues of rights to migrate and respect for human rights, which is indeed the main slogan of the path breaking demonstration of 18 September. Calls for political reforms characterized the Fall of 1989, until the fall of the regime (Dale 2005). The protest curve indicates in fact a sharp rising of activity in September and then October, with still high numbers in November. In December, a 600-miles long human chain across the country was organized in order to call for permanent reforms. Even though at lower intensity in terms of number, protest events are still frequent and, often, highly frequented until the fall of 1990. After transition, in fact, protestors continued to raise their voice for the punishment of former corrupted elites, dissolution of the regime party (the SED), and clearing of secret services’ activities. Demonstrations followed for German reunification, with sometimes counter-demonstrations for keeping two Germanies instead. Besides unification, racism became also a divisive issue, with the radical right staging protests against Jews and migrants, the Left counter-mobilizing against discrimination. All along 1990, moreover, protest develops also on the quickly evident downsides of unification: against unemployment and for 1 to 1 rate exchange of the East German Mark against the West German one, for compensation of losses due to price increase and equal income in East and West. While brewery workers blocks roads against plummeting sales after economic merger, peasants protested (even taking pigs and cows in front of parliament or dumping milk outside of state offices), against unregulated imports and called for measures to safeguard farm product and service cut-backs, for better pay and emergency measures to cope with negative effects of free market. While protest events declined in number, they still mobilizing large number.

Figure 1



If mass protest went in cycle in cases of eventful democratization, no cycle is visible in the two cases of participated pacts, with however noticeable differences between Hungary and Poland. In fact, from Protest Event Analysis, Hungary emerges as the least contentious case, with a flat line and small circles, indicating relatively low numbers of participants, the only exception being the protests on August 1989. No cluster of events is indeed visible in mobilizations on topics, that range from environmental issues to solidarity with Chinese or Czech oppositions or for the rights of Hungarian minorities abroad, from denunciation of the Soviet invasion in 1956 to demands of punishment for officials, with a few protest asking for better pay and guaranteed jobs.

In comparison with Hungary, protests were more frequent in Poland but also here involving small numbers in sporadic ups and downs, with no cycle dynamics. All along 1988, protest emerged with (relatively small) events promoted by students and works, with some repression, followed by protest against repression. As a wave of strikes seems on its way to spread, however Lech Walesa and the official leadership of Solidarity actively pushed for demobilization, with the union leader directly calling for halting strikes, as negotiation develop at the round table. In protest accounts, in fact, a contestation against Solidarity emerged, with anti-Walesa youth fighting on the street with the police and disrupting his rallies, calling him traitor. Young people mobilized for more freedom, and also against the conservative union by the once-glorious Solidarity. Politicization happens here as well around issues of repression, but also in demands for deeper democracy, with calls for the Soviet troops to go home, hunger strikes for amnesty and demands for media pluralism. Mobilizations however also spread to address a heterogeneous list of claims: from nuclear power plant to minority rights to German minorities, with also actions against the repression of Chinese students or the Wall in Berlin, freedom in Laos or in Lithuania. It is however especially on socio-economic issues that contentious politics develop, with peasants, miners, telephone workers, post employees, bus drivers, coal workers ask for pay rise and subsidies. So, in Poland, the flat trend is often punctuated by small events, with peaks in September 1988, and then in March and September 1989, and with ups and downs all along the 1990s.

Troubled democratization paths, as repression and protests alternate, are also characterized by a sequence of waves rather than a proper cycle. Also here, we note relevant differences between the short moment of contentious politics in Romania and the longer one instead in Albania. In Romania, protests against the regime emerged and peaked quickly in December 1989, with no proper protest events registered in the rest of the year. While about a week of protests accompanies the regime changes, some mobilizations followed the death of Ceausescu, contesting the decision by the successor of the regime party, the NSF to contest election They called for the punishment of

communist leaders and members of the *securitate*, removal of symbols of the past (including a statue of Lenin), abolishment of media censorship, greater minority rights. While some protests addressed also social issues (e.g., against the abolition of price control) as well as environmental pollution, the more political calls against the resilient power of old incumbents are at the core of protests, that however involve small numbers of participants.

In Albania, protest event analysis points at the presence of quite a lot of protest, without however a cyclical shape. While clearly influenced by the democratization waves in other countries in Eastern Europe, the protests are here however delayed, with some peaks in December 1990, March 1991, (especially large in) May 1991, but also later on (in February and July 1992). The years 1989 and even 1990 remain quite calm, marked however by several instances of citizens escaping from the country until April 1991 as well as some mobilization around the just founded Democratic Party at the end of 1990. Protest spread however all along the following two years, with antigovernment rallies and strikes by workers asking for higher pay and students calling for renaming the Hoxha's university of Tirana. Also strikes continued to spread, and were often met by brutal repression. While protestors stigmatize the continuous power of the old oligarchy, and symbols of the old regime were verbally and physically attacked, claims were pushed forward on human rights. As the economic crisis deepened, however, protest took often the forms of crowds looting food warehouse (as it repeatedly happened in February 1992).

Unachieved transition in Bulgaria also sees no cycle of protest, but rather some peaks in June-August 1989, then December of the same year and July and November in 1990. After daily instances of Bulgarian of Turkish origins fleeing the country to avoid forced assimilation from May to August 1989, protest spread on demands for free speech and the right to assembly, as well as the end of forced assimilation, with counterdemonstrations calling for Bulgaria for Bulgarians and against the persecutions of Bulgarians in Ukraine and Moldova. The following year protests proceed in short waves, addressing a growing number of issues: from opposition to toxic fumes from lead and zinc complex to human chains around a nuclear plant and demonstration in the anniversary of the Chernobyl accident, but also demands for US troops to leave the Persian Gulf and for free Lithuania. Calls for symbols of the regime to be removed (among them the removal of the body of first communist leader from mausoleum) and for the reestablishment of truth about the past were accompanied by demands for resignation of BSP from government but also some demonstration in its support. Highways are blocked to protest shortage of gasoline and food.

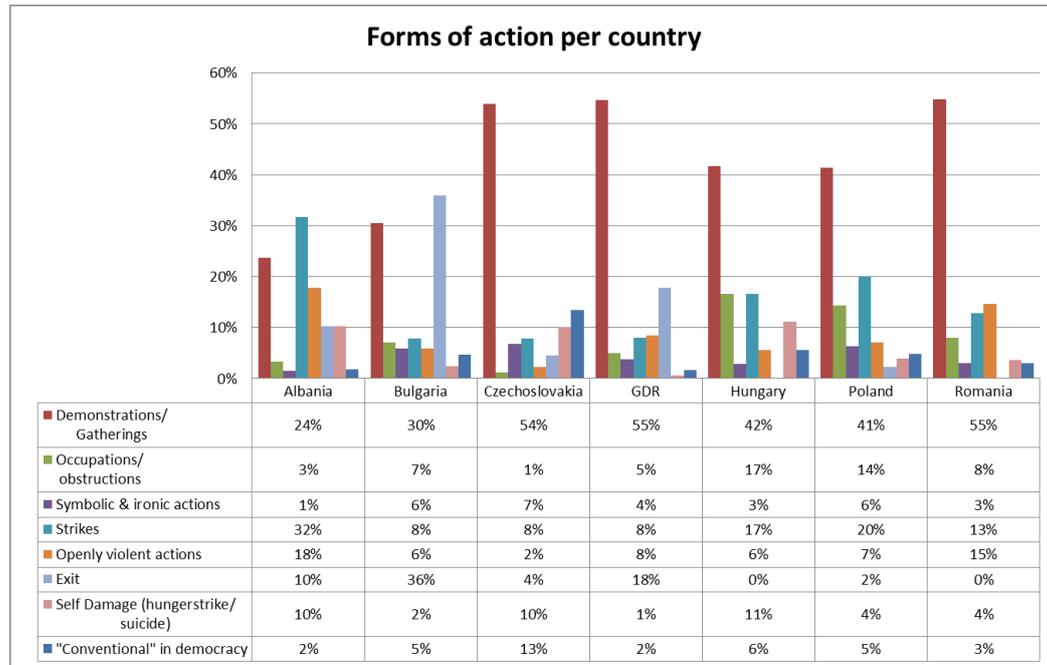
In sum, while protests were present in all paths of transition, only in eventful democratization, we found the development of cycles of protest which lasted well beyond the collapse of the authoritarian regime.

4. The evolution of forms of action

There is also another characteristic of protest during and after transitions which varies the different paths: the forms of action. Building upon Tarrow's seminal work on a cycle of protest in Italy (Tarrow 1989), researchers developed the expectation of high potential for radicalization in the declining phase of protest waves. When competition among political and social groups increases, while protest fatigue spread, the expectation is that some of those who remain active tend to raise the stake and attract or keep commitment by using more radical forms. As media, public opinion and decision makers become accustomed to more moderate forms of action, the need to innovate pushes often towards more radical events. And as the number of participants at demonstrations decline, radicalism could be seen as an alternative logic in order to attract media attention. Finally, frustrated by the paucity of results from more moderate forms, some activists can try and test new ones. This trend is, however, not confirmed in general by our data, as some radicalization happened only in the third, troubled, path (see Figure 2).

In eventful path, at least in this wave of democratization, the forms of action remained moderate, mixing protest and negotiation (Glenn 2003). Beginning with forms of action that require a small number of participants (such as letters to the press, petitions, vigils, or theatrical action), forms of action moved then usually towards massive march, with sometimes strikes punctuating moments of more intense contention. In several cases in the beginning official events are "squatted" by the opposition, in order to use allowed moment of mobilization and to exploit attention to them. In Czechoslovakia, in 1989 demonstrations were indeed a main form of actions, with leaders such as Alexander Dubcek or Vaclav Havel addressing the crowds (Innes 2001). A sign of intensified protest is as marchers grow in numbers, and protest events become daily occurrences. The two hours general strike on November 27 is considered as a critical juncture in pushing for the breakdown of the regime. Also in the next year, forms of action remain stable and non-violent, with several rallies and a few strikes on specific concerns. As the challengers took power, protest clearly declined, without any however visible radicalization.

Figure 2



Also in the GDR the ascending part of the cycle was characterized by peaceful forms (Joppke 1995; Mueller 1999; Opp, Voss and Gern 1995; Pfaff 2006). While frequent episodes of citizens illegally fleeing from the country attracted the media attention, marches organized by those who had applied for a visa were sometimes brutally repressed, while candlelit vigils and religious services put forwards demands for human rights and freedom. Here as well marches –more and more frequent and larger and larger– represent the main form of protest. While even face to repression demonstrations remained nonviolent, some direct action emerged against the large apparatus of secret police, with angry citizens sometimes breaking in STASI (Staat-Sicherheit) offices. Differently than in the Czechoslovakia, there was however some radicalization in the following year, as neo-Nazis attacked migrants and left-wing activists, and some of them responded in kind. Police interventions are here frequent, as are arrests and violence. Also strikes spread however as workers felt more and more exploited and discriminated against vis-à-vis their Western counterparts as factory were privatized and closed down and as unemployment increased. While still remaining mainly peaceful, the de-

clining part of the cycle is indeed characterized by some radicalization as well as a diversification in the repertoire of collective action.

Also in pacted transitions, the repertoire of protest remained quite limited both during and after the transition itself, with however a broader range of contentious forms in Poland, where civil society had been very contentious at the beginning of the decade. In Hungary, 42% of action were demonstrations, 17% strikes and 17% occupation, with some hunger strikes (11%) also going on. The distribution of forms of protest was similar in Poland, with 41% demonstrations, 20% strikes and 14% occupation, with however also a 7% of violent action. Given the higher number of events, there is however, in the latter, also more variety in forms inside those broader categories. So, students climbed on roofs or youth painted trams; they sit in and threaten to burn documents. Typical of Poland during the period of transition were also the frequent appeals by Solidarity leader Walesa to stop strikes, as well as the use of religious services as departing sites for demonstrations. Young people threw percussion grenades and stones at the police, or tried to disrupt Walesa's speeches or official parades and clashed with the police. Farmers organizes blockades, symbols of regime were destroyed and headquarters of previous regime's institutions occupied. Feminists organized pickets at Solidarity buildings to protest against proposals for restrictive abortion law. Also hunger strikes and street theater were used.

In troubled democratization, protests went in a series of (often violent) outbursts. This is the case, with some difference in size and frequency, of Albania and Rumania. In Romania, demonstrative forms of action represent more than 50% of the coded events, strikes are not negligible (with 13%), and violent events reach a quite high 13%. They are however concentrated in December 1989, when demonstrators often clashed with the police, while after Ceausescu's violent death, direct action is limited to the storming of buildings hosting institutions of previous regime, or some disruptions at their rallies and scuffles between dissidents and NSF supporters.

Protest forms were more numerous and varied in Albania, with the highest proportion of strikes (32%) but also of openly violent actions (18%, while demonstrations were just 25% of total events). Violent events included especially in the beginning the destruction of symbols of the incumbent regime or mysterious bombings at Democratic Party rallies and headquarters, as well as clashes with police when the latter intervened to disperse protest. Pro- and anti-Hoxha demonstrations as well as pro- and anti- Democratic party's supporters develop a competitive dynamics still in 1991, when however protests was more and more influenced by the heavy economic crisis, involving strikes but also waves of rides in store and even occasional shoot out with the police, with demonstrators killed and riots, while more and more people fled the country.

While leading to unaccomplished democratization, the events in Bulgaria are significantly less radicalized, with violence present only in about 6% of events and, instead, very high presence of political exiting by ethnic Turks, fleeing from forced assimilation, and some highly educated Bulgarians leaving to the West. Some competition emerges here between claims to citizens' rights by Turks, often incorporated by the new governments, and calls for Bulgarian ethnic dominance.

5. Protest claims

Protest waves and cycles vary also according to the types of claims which are put forward. In general, social movement studies noticed that protest in the beginning tend to focus on some specific issues, then growing in generality as different groups mobilize and, what is more, start to build coalitions or compete with each other (della Porta 2014; Saxonberg 2001). In the declining phase of a cycle, we can expect again a fragmentation of the requests, with more specific demands again dominating, even if on a more plural range of issues. At the same time, we can expect that the degree of politicization—as indicated in particular from the chosen target and the issues addressed—also follows a similar development. In particular, if protests are often not politicized in the beginning, the very interaction with the police forces brings about some first focus on state institutions. Furthermore, the more general the claim, the more we can expect politicization to increase in parallel. Vice-versa, politicization should be expected to go down if and when, with the decline of a cycle, more specific issues come to the fore of contentious politics.

When thinking about protests pre-, during and after-transition, we can modulate these expectations. First and foremost, we can expect that in general politicization and generality increase during the ascending phase of the cycle, as contention politics focuses on regime change, and decline instead after transition with a pattern of protest politics more in line with the normal one in democracies. In our cases, we might therefore expect an increase of the proportion of events on specific issues over the more general ones in the second periods (in 1990). Similarly, politicization should decline in the same periods.

When comparing our three paths, we can expect these dynamics to be more evident in eventful paths of democratization, when cycles emerge in full swing. Moreover, the more moderate protest during participated pacts should leave space to less general and politicized claims. Conversely, we might expect a higher degree of generalization

and politicization in troubled transitions, when episodes of brutal repression focus attention on the state.

Looking at degree of generality (as measured by the presence of a general claims addressing regime transformations or rights versus more specific ones) (see table 1), we notice that, for cases of eventful democratization, protests in the GDR fit indeed our expectations, increasing in generality up to 1990 and then declining. In particular, while claims on general issues and rights dominate between October 1989 and January 1990, later on the protest politics is dominated by specific issues. A similar increase in generality we find in Czechoslovakia, with however no sharp decline of it in the (lower number of protests in) 1990. In GDR, in fact protests' generality increases from 9% to 32% between 1989 and 1990, while protest remains general in claims—but low in number—in Czechoslovakia (only down from 93% to 87%).

A parallel trend has politicization, measured as protest targeting state institutions (as parliaments, governments, or secret services) (see table 2). In the GDR, there is in fact a sharp increase of politicization between October 1989 and January 1990, with then an inversion from 80% in 1989 to 44% in 1990. Also here, since the beginning politicization happens through the chain of protest and repression, with increasing demands for release of prisoners and permission to leave the country, to demands for freedom, human rights, political reform, fair election. After transition, protests tend instead to address a plurality of more specific issues. Only partially similar is the evolution of politicization in Czechoslovakia, with an increase in the proportion of protests oriented against the government until November 1989, and then a trend downward in 1990 (with a drop from 59 to 40%). All along the first half of 1989, politicization happens through, first, protests against repression, including both hunger-strikes in prison and demonstrations outside of the courthouse.

Different is the trend of protest claims in participated pacts, with broader issues dominating only in the Spring of 1989, and more specific issues present all over the period. In general, specific claims have a high percent, going from 40% to 49% between 1989 and 1990. Given the low number of reported events, no particular trend is visible in Hungary. As for politicization, participated pacts seems to keep protestors away from targeting main state institutions; in Poland, protests against government, they remain with a very low 15/20%; in Hungary, they are even less, going from 11% in 1989 to zero in 1990.

Finally, we find again differences in troubled democratization paths. In Romania, we find in fact a low proportion of protest on specific issues, only slightly increasing (from 6% to 13%) after transition. As for politicization, the proportion of politicize event is in general high, but declining from 88% to 52% after transition. In Albania, with higher

amount of reported protests, more general claims dominated in the Winter of 1991 and then again in the Summer of the same year and of the successive one. In Bulgaria, we have a significant increase in the number and percent of specific events since October 1990.

Table 1. Generality of issues by country and time period* during the protests for regime change in seven Eastern European countries. (Number of events in round brackets)

	Albania		Bulgaria		Czechoslovakia		GDR	
	1 st Period	2 nd Peri- od						
Specific Issue	42% (54)	61% (63)	6% (2)	25% (32)	7% (4)	13% (4)	9% (11)	32% (112)
Generic Is- sue/ Right	58% (74)	39% (40)	94% (33)	75% (95)	93% (50)	87% (26)	91% (118)	68% (142)
Total	100% (128)	100% (103)	100% (35)	100% (127)	100% (54)	100% (30)	100% (129)	100% (254)

	Hungary		Poland		Romania	
	1 st Period	2 nd Peri- od	1 st Period	2 nd Peri- od	1 st Period	2 nd Peri- od
Specific Issue	67% (12)	67% (12)	40% (109)	49% (71)	6% (1)	13% (37)
Generic Is- sue/ Right	33% (6)	33% (6)	60% (163)	51% (73)	94% (16)	87% (110)
Total	100% (18)	100% (18)	100% (272)	100% (144)	100% (17)	100% (147)

* The 1st and 2nd time periods represent, respectively, the first half and the second half of the months taken into account for each country. These months are not the same for every country, therefore the time period varies, too. For Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Hungary: 1st time period →1989|| 2nd →1990
For GDR 1st time period → Jan-Nov 1989 || 2nd → Dic 1989-Oct 1990 //For Poland: 1st time period → Jan 1988-jun 1989 || 2nd → Jul 1989- Dec 1990//
For Albania: 1st time period →Jun 1990-Jul 1991 || 2nd → Aug 1991-July 1992

As for politicization, the percent of protests targeting state institutions remained high in Romania, although with a decline from 88% during the upheaval to 52% after transition. Albania, even though with a lesser degree of politicization, has a similar trend, with protests targeting important governmental institutions dropping from 52% to 37% after transition. Finally, in Bulgaria, the percent of protests with high politicization drops from 63 to 48%.

Table 2. Politicization of protest by country and time period* during the protests for regime change in seven Eastern European countries. (Number of events in round brackets)

	Albania		Bulgaria		Czechoslovakia		GDR	
	1 st Period	2 nd Period						
Not opposing Gov.	48% (62)	63% (66)	37% (13)	52% (65)	41% (22)	60% (18)	20% (26)	56% (141)
Opposing Gov. or System	52% (67)	37% (38)	63% (22)	48% (61)	59% (32)	40% (12)	80% (103)	44% (113)
Total	100% (129)	100% (104)	100% (35)	100% (126)	100% (54)	100% (30)	100% (129)	100% (254)

	Hungary		Poland		Romania	
	1 st Period	2 nd Period	1 st Period	2 nd Period	1 st Period	2 nd Period
Not opposing Gov.	89% (16)	100% (18)	86% (234)	80% (115)	12% (2)	48% (70)
Opposing Gov. or System	11% (2)	0% (0)	14% (38)	20% (29)	88% (15)	52% (77)
Total	100% (18)	100% (18)	100% (272)	100% (144)	100% (17)	100% (147)

* The 1st and 2nd time periods represent, respectively, the first half and the second half of the months taken into account for each country. These months are not the same for every country, therefore the time period varies, too. For Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Romania and Hungary: 1st time period →1989|| 2nd →1990
 For GDR 1st time period → Jan-Nov 1989 || 2nd → Dic 1989-Oct 1990 //For Poland: 1st time period → Jan 1988-jun 1989 || 2nd → Jul 1989- Dec 1990//
 For Albania: 1st time period →Jun 1990-Jul 1991 || 2nd → Aug 1991-July 1992

6. Conclusion

In general, we noted that protests around transition periods meet some expectations developed in social movement studies, but also show variation between cases. These variations can in part be explained by the paths of transition. In Ekiert and Kubic's analysis, cited above, modes of breakdown of communist regimes had no noticeable impact on the magnitude of protest. They note in fact that "countries that experienced 'pacted transitions' (Poland and Hungary) have as much variation between themselves as do countries where 'popular upsurge' forced the removal of the com-

munist elites from power (Slovakia and the former GDR)" (1998, 580). Our analysis shows however that, besides the magnitude of protests, the different transition paths show indeed some peculiarity. While proper cyclical dynamics could be found only in eventful paths, with grows in generality and politicization in the ascending phase and converse trend in the descending ones, participated pacts show more moderate forms and specific/non politicized claims, while the opposite was true in troubled transitions.

Ekiert and Kubic also suggested that one can expect more protest where there are more rapid economic transformations. In fact, "The reasoning goes as follows: (1) rapid economic reforms produce higher social costs and more dissatisfaction among the populace than slower, more gradual reforms. In turn, (2) the heightened level of dissatisfaction with the reforms and the elites that designed and implemented them results in the increased protest magnitude. Finally, (3) in tense protest brings about the downfall of the reforming, neoliberal elites" (Ekiert and Kubik 1998). We noted in fact much voice on socio-economic claims against the misery introduced by market building in the GDR, but also in and dramatic protests in Albania, where the economic crisis hit most hard.

In all cases, we can confirm that, as a trend, more and more "Protest is employed as a means of bringing forward demands for reforms and not challenging the legitimacy of the regime; its methods are recognized as legitimate by a large sector of the populace; it is channeled through well-known strategies and coordinated by established organizations" (ibid.). These protests remained however moderate in Central Eastern Europe, in contrast to what happened for instance in Latin America. In fact, Central East European countries in general "experienced no massive and violent rebellions against the economic reforms, despite the deep economic recession, rapidly growing unemployment, and declining standards of living during the initial stages of the reform process. Also, despite the political turbulence and expanding opportunities for collective action, the magnitude of protest in Central Europe was lower than in the established democracies of Western Europe. Throughout the period under study these countries did not experience escalating protest activity that would constitute a significant threat to their newly established political institutions. While the employees of "losing" industries or sectors were often at the forefront of protest activities, as the Olsonian argument would predict, their organizations and leaders rarely challenged the legitimacy of the new socio-political order or the necessity of economic restructuring" (Greskovic 1998,56). The difference with Latin America have however been explained with the different forms of capitalism which developed in the two areas. In fact in general, the socialist regime left societies less prone to rioting or other violent forms of collective action: "The lack of extreme income inequality, the smaller number of marginalized poor, the relatively

lower degree of urbanization of the population, and the absence of recent, violent experiences with coups and riots may all have contributed a stabilizing influence under postcommunism” (ibid., 85). Additionally, “reformers in the East have not been in a hurry to eliminate ‘premature welfare states’ left behind by communism. Indeed, from 1990 to 1993 social consumption increased as a share of the GDP in several East European countries” (ibid, 85). Social pacts have consolidated relations between unions and governments, explaining low levels of strike activities, converging in this with increasing job insecurity and flight in the informal sector. Also, protest did not disappear. Rather, “in East Central Europe protest became one of the routine modes of interaction between the state and the society, a regular feature of many democratic regimes at the end of the twentieth century” (Ekiert and Kubik 1998) .

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