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## BOOK REVIEW

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de Nardis, Fabio & Galiano, Angelo (2025), *Margins in Revolt. Extractive Rule and Social Struggles in Southern Italy*, Bradford, UK: Ethics International Press, pp. 480.

**Irene Strazzeri**

University of Salento

This book review examines *Margins in Revolt. Extractive Rule and Social Struggles in Southern Italy* by Fabio de Nardis and Angelo Galiano, situating the volume within contemporary debates on social conflict, neoliberalism, and political subjectivation. The book proposes a critical rethinking of classical categories of conflict and advances a territorial perspective that conceptualises place as a site of meaning production and resistance. Based on a mixed-methods study of territorial protests in Southern Italy between 2007 and 2017, the volume analyses labour, environmental, and migration-related conflicts as processes capable of generating political subjectivities beyond institutional outcomes. The review highlights the book's theoretical and empirical contributions, while also discussing some analytical limitations related to the operationalisation of subjectivation and protest typologies.

*Margins in Revolt* contributes to contemporary debates on social conflict by proposing a critical rethinking of the conceptual categories traditionally employed to analyse collective action in modern societies. The book questions classical dichotomies such as capital/labour, state/movements, and institutions/civil society, which have long structured the analysis of conflict within Western democracies (Touraine 1978; Offe 1985).

A central theoretical move of the volume concerns the reconceptualisation of territory. Rather than treating it as a residual or merely contextual dimension of social conflict, the authors distance themselves both from modernist approaches that privilege urban space as the primary locus of contention and from perspectives that frame peripheral territories in folkloristic or identity-centred terms. Territory is instead theorised as place insofar as it integrates cognitive and relational dimensions, functioning as a space of meaning-making and a potential site of political subjectivation (Pellizzoni 2011).

From this perspective, territories are simultaneously strategic nodes for the localisation of global flows and possible arenas of resistance to processes of transnational homogenisation. The core argument developed by the Authors is that territorial protests should not be understood merely as reactive or defensive mobilisations,

but as processes capable of activating forms of political subjectivation and collective identity formation that are not fully aligned with neoliberal rationalities.

This hypothesis is empirically explored through a mixed-methods study conducted in the area of Terra d'Otranto, encompassing the Italian provinces of Lecce, Brindisi and Taranto. The temporal focus (2007–2017) corresponds to the decade following the global financial crisis, which the authors interpret as a turning point in the consolidation of neoliberalism as a dominant form of governmentality. The crisis marked the erosion of optimistic narratives of globalisation as a vehicle for the universal expansion of rights and welfare, previously promoted by significant sectors of transnational political elites.

In the post-crisis context, austerity policies are analysed not as temporary corrective measures, but as structural instruments of capitalist restructuring. Drawing on a Foucauldian framework, neoliberalism is defined as a form of governmentality in which the market assumes a normative role, shaping both public policies and subjectivities oriented towards competition, responsabilisation and self-entrepreneurship (Foucault 2005). Methodologically, the research combines 48 unstructured interviews with the application of Protest Event Analysis (PEA). This methodological triangulation allows the authors to balance the media-driven visibility of protest events with the narratives and experiences of activists, providing a more nuanced reconstruction of local conflict dynamics.

The empirical analysis is organised around three main conflict arenas. The first concerns the social disintegration produced by the crisis of the textile and footwear industries (notably the Adelchi and Filanto cases), which led to widespread labour precarisation. These processes are further intensified by the structural weakness of trade unions and the diffusion of labour relations that can be described as para-slavery, consistent with Gallino's analysis of neoliberal "productive archaisms" (Gallino 2011).

The second arena includes so-called "border conflicts", particularly migrant workers' struggles against labour exploitation and gang mastering, as well as environmental mobilisations such as the NO TAP movement and the "Popolo degli Ulivi". These cases reveal a structural continuity between the violent exploitation of migrant labour and the broader condition of dispossession and vulnerability affecting citizen-workers, in line with Fraser's analysis of contemporary capitalism and the crisis of social reproduction (Fraser 2017). The third arena concerns processes of social recomposition emerging from protest practices located in highly symbolic spaces, such as the Women's Houses in Lecce and Taranto. These sites are analysed as spaces of meaning production, alternative social practices and collective identity formation, partially countering the individualising effects of neoliberal governance.

At an interpretative level, the authors identify two ideal-types of territorial protest: adversivism, characterised by reactive opposition lacking structured political projectuality, and antagonism, which displays greater organisational capacity and strategic vision but is constrained by limited political mediation and vanguardist dynamics. Consequently, the outcomes of mobilisation are not primarily institutional but rather symbolic and relational, contributing to the sedimentation of political subjectivities embedded in places and collective memories.

As the authors themselves clarify, the book is neither a conventional study of social movements nor a territorially bounded case analysis. It is instead conceived as a critique of authoritarian neoliberalism, understood as a dispositif operating through both the repression of protest and the production of market-oriented subjectivities. In this sense, the renewed attention to superstructural dimensions and to the relationship between social being and collective consciousness (Marx 1859) retains analytical relevance in a context where conflict increasingly unfolds within the sphere of social reproduction and everyday life.

Overall, *Margins in Revolt* represents a significant contribution to the study of territorial conflicts and processes of political subjectivation under neoliberal capitalism. One of the book's main strengths lies in its ability to combine a broad and theoretically informed framework with a solid and carefully designed empirical analysis. The mixed-methods approach—integrating Event Protest Analysis with qualitative interviews—allows the authors to capture both the public visibility of protest events and the less observable symbolic, relational, and subjective dimensions of mobilisation.

A further merit of the volume is its analytical centrality attributed to territory, which is treated not merely as a contextual variable but as an active site of conflict and meaning production. In doing so, the book contributes to overcoming the persistent urban bias in social movement studies and offers insights that are particularly relevant for understanding conflict dynamics in peripheral and non-metropolitan areas. This perspective enables a fruitful dialogue with broader debates on neoliberal restructuring, political participation, and social reproduction.

At the same time, the conceptual breadth of the book also raises some analytical challenges. In particular, while political subjectivation is a key concept throughout the volume, it sometimes remains more theoretically invoked than empirically operationalised. A clearer specification of the criteria distinguishing enduring processes of subjectivation from more transient effects of mobilisation could have further strengthened the analytical robustness of the argument. Similarly, the typology of adversivism and antagonism, though heuristically effective, might benefit from a more systematic engagement with existing classifications in the social movements' literature.

Despite these limitations, the book succeeds in avoiding reductive interpretations of territorial protest as either defensive reactions or expressions of localism. Instead, it offers a nuanced account of how conflicts rooted in specific places can generate lasting symbolic, relational, and political effects. As such, the book constitutes a valuable contribution not only to empirical research on protest in Southern Italy but also to wider sociological debates on neoliberalism, territory, and political subjectivity. It will be of interest to scholars working on social movements, political participation, and the transformations of contemporary capitalism.

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