

# Overview of European Anti-austerity mobilizations

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# Political-economic context

- 2008 neoliberalism leads to deregulation of the financial sector, (high risk lending practices, housing bubbles) collapse of major bank, stock market tumbles, triggers:

## **Global Financial Crisis**

European context: increasing social inequality and precarious labour

New high level of unemployment

Very uneven effects of crisis from country to country

Bank bailouts huge expense

Substantial increase in national debt

Imposition of austerity measures to reduce public debt

Young people and immigrants likely to be generic targets for worst effects

# Protest and mobilization

- Right-wing, xenophobic, ultra-nationalist
- Progressive, anti-austerity, civil disobedience
- Alternative solidarity economies and practices
- Increased mistrust of financial sector and political class as a whole

# Iceland Saucepan Revolution 2008

- Occupation of Reykjavik's main square every Saturday from 11 October 2008 to 14 March 2009
- Demands:
  - resignation of the government,
  - parliamentary elections,
  - electoral reform,
  - prosecution of bankers and politicians responsible for mishandling nation's finances,
  - a new constitution,
  - a referendum to decide whether or not Iceland should assume the debt generated by the collapse of its three main banks

# Iceland Saucepan Revolution 2008

- President resigned,
- a new constitution was drafted using participatory methods
- Icelanders voted “No” on two referenda refused to assume debt
- Youth played key role at critical moments

# Greece

- Mass mobilization 2008, 2010
- May 2010 Memorandum of cooperation signed
- 3 periods of protest:
- April 2010-April 2011: Traditional mass protest, strikes
- May 25 2011-August 2011: Indignados movement, occupation of squares
- September 2011-present civil disobedience wide range of sectors of society

(Sergi and Vogiatzoglou 2013)

# Portugal

- Inspired by Arab Spring:
- 12 March 2011 Youth of “desperate generation” (Geração o rasca) organize the biggest protest since 1974 revolution-one day
- Inspired by Spanish 15-May/Indignados: mobilize in a series of national and global days of action
- Mass demonstrations, general strikes 2010-2013

# Spain 15-M/Indigandos

- 15 May 2011, inspired by Arab Spring, by Iceland and by student protests in Europe
- Mobilized by existing networks of activists, including youth and student activists (Juventud sin Futuro)
- Campaign of many social movement groups:
- REAL DEMOCRACY NOW
- Central square occupation Madrid, spread across Spain
- Youth key actors



# 15 October 2011 global protests

- Inspired Arab Spring, Iceland, Indignados

- **Real Democracy Now**

- European countries:

Spain, Italy, Germany, Cyprus, UK, Ireland,  
Slovenia, Finland, Hungary, Portugal, Greece,  
more

Some also had Occupy movements (UK,  
Germany, Ireland, France, etc.)

# Common to all protests:

- -a rejection of austerity measures imposed by International Financial Institutions,
- -a defence of the welfare state,
- -a critique of neo-liberal global capitalism and
- -a deep critique of the political class and calls for democratic reform.
- -rejection of social inequality

# Youth issues

- Precariousness:
- High unemployment
- University reforms, corporatization of university
- Poor quality and temporary labour
- Lack of affordable housing, lack of credit

# Major claims

## **Arab Spring (Egypt)**

- “Bread, freedom, human dignity”
- Poor economic conditions and Social inequality
- Lack of democracy and human rights
- Police corruption and abuse

## **European Spring**

- - rejection of austerity measures
- - defence of the welfare state
- -a critique of neo-liberal global capitalism
- -critique of the political class and calls for democratic reform.
- -rejection of social inequality