Capitalism’s Crises


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Two recent developments stimulate me to rethink the role of the political party in the context of Europe in the twenty-first century. The first is the narrowing of democracy, in contrast to the far-reaching horizons of those who originally fought for it. This narrowing has been a continuing process of containment of democratic pressures since the moments when popular movements eventually won the universal right to vote in different countries at different times. These movements for democracy (in the first instance, the universal franchise) had two features in common: one was an umbilical link between social and economic demands and political power (‘social happiness is our goal, political power is the means’ [Thompson 1984], as the Chartists put it), and the second was a belief that the franchise was just the beginning of a process of achieving popular self-government, not an end in itself.

The second development is the conservatism and defeat of the nationally organised labour movements of the post-war settlement in Europe which could have been sources of counter-power to the economic and state pressures that were narrowing democracy. This does not mean that organisations of labour cannot be built anew. Indeed, the question of what such a rebuilding involves and what the conditions for its possibility are, will be a theme later in the
chapter. Such recreation (because it certainly will not be rebuilding of the old) of organisations of labour is, I will contend, a key aspect of new forms of political organisation. But this will require a radical break from the organisational forms of the past.

THE LASTING POLITICAL LEGACY OF THE REVOLTS OF THE SIXTIES AND SEVENTIES

Exhaustion of the social democratic and communist traditions
Neither the marginalisation of trade unions nor the related narrowing of democracy proceeded without resistance. Indeed, the neoliberal counter-revolution was itself a response to movements to extend the principles of democracy and self-government to every level of society in the late 1960s and early 1970s. These movements were created by a generation whose expectations had been heightened by taking for granted the welfare state and its capacities, which were enhanced by the massive expansion of higher education.

As the social-democratic and communist parties of the post-war decades failed to drive forward the desire for a thorough-going democracy, the new generation came to political maturity in the late 1960s with high expectations of social change and began to search for effective means of achieving it. This search involved experiments beyond electoral politics in forms of direct action and self-organisation, often combining self-change with social change and no longer delegating politics to an increasingly distant and unaccountable ‘political class’ of professional representatives. The innovations in this new do-it-yourself political organising have been seen more in practice than in theory, and hence have often been ephemeral and unconsolidated. However, it is striking how regularly these innovations have resurfaced, with new elaborations, in every generation of activists since the ‘class of ’68’.

Two understandings of power
The neoliberal counter-revolution across Europe ensured that the option of radical democracy was generally a suppressed, marginalised option, though like a mountain stream it periodically bubbles up in new forms and contexts. As we shall see throughout this chapter, it does not disappear.

One reason why the repercussions of this moment of revolt keep bubbling up is because it changed the political mentality of a generation. In particular,
their processes of struggle and experimentation have produced, again more in practice than in theory, insights into power that can act as a compass to guide us in uncertain but creative times.

On the one hand, there is ‘power over’. This is the power of government, for example, or the power of the boss or that of the patriarch. It could also be described as power-as-domination, involving an asymmetry between those with power and those over whom power is exercised.

On the other hand is ‘power to’, ‘power to do or transform’ or power-as-transformative-capacity (Bhaskar 2008). This is the power discovered by social movements as they move beyond protest to practical, prefigurative solutions, from the student movement through the radical workers’ movement to the feminist movement. Frustrated by the workings of power-as-domination exercised by political parties of the traditional Left, these movements took power into their own hands, discovering through collective action various capacities to bring about change. This included women changing their relations with men and with each other, workers collectively improving their working conditions and extending control over the purpose of their labours, as well as community movements blocking eviction or land speculation and campaigning for alternative land-use policies for the wellbeing of their communities.

The distinction between the two forms of power will be central to my analysis of the 40-year search for appropriate forms of transformative political organisation in Europe; a search stimulated by the failures of the traditional parties of the Left to bring about the changes in which their supporters had believed and for which they had worked. Moreover, it is a search taking place simultaneously with attempts by the ruling, market-dominated order to appropriate the emancipatory aspirations of social movements. This attempted appropriation produced extensive ambivalence in many spheres – from gender and sexuality through to education and health, between personal freedom through market choice and money and individual self-realisation through collaboration and solidarity in producing a good life for all. The movements of the sixties and seventies involved a rebellion whose dynamic was literally ambivalent, having the potential to develop in two different directions. The question of what the conditions are for individual realisation through mutuality as distinct from through money and the capitalist market is a theme that will recur as the ambivalence of neoliberal politics becomes clear.

Historically, mass social-democratic and communist parties have been built around a benevolent version of the understanding of power-as-domination. Their strategies have been based on winning the power to govern and then using
the ‘levers’ of the state apparatus paternalistically to meet what they identify as the needs of the people. The term ‘paternalistically’ is used here to highlight the social relations involved in the benevolent exercise of power-as-domination: as with the traditional power of the father over the child, the assumption is the inadequate capacity of the people to govern themselves.

**Power-as-transformative-capacity**

The emergence of power-as-transformative-capacity had its contemporary origins in the rebellions of the late 1960s and early 1970s. A central and common theme of these rebellions was a challenge to all conventions and institutions based on deference to authority, whether it be children’s obedience to their elders; students’ acceptance of the authority of those acting *in loco parentis*; women accepting their secondary position to the supposedly superior male; workers acquiescing to management prerogative (Beynon 1975); or citizens deferring to the authority of the state. The other side of the movements’ refusal of these forms of authority was a pervasive and self-confident assertion of their own collaborative capacity.

Along with this self-confidence in their transformative abilities went inventiveness about forms of organisation that would build that capacity. The distinctive feature of these movements that I want to highlight, in understanding power-as-transformative-capacity, was their tendency to emphasise the valuing and sharing of different kinds of knowledge: practical and experiential as well as theoretical and historical (Wainwright 1994). In their refusal to defer to authority, they broke the unspoken bond between knowledge and authority – the idea that those in power knew best, including what was best for you. The uncertain, experimental process of democratising knowledge, in practice, usually involved an emphasis on decentralised and networked organisational forms, sharing and developing knowledge horizontally and breaking from models that presumed an expert leadership and a more-or-less ignorant membership (Michels [1911] 2007). A rekindling in new forms of an older socialist and labour movement tradition of self-education, cooperation and self-realisation has also been significant (Yeo 2002).

These radically democratic approaches to knowledge laid the organisational and cultural foundations that have underpinned social movements ever since, from the alter-globalisation movement of the late 1990s through to Occupy and the Indignados. The emphasis on sharing knowledge and decentralisation also
helped to create the conditions for the web – born as it was of the Californian counter-culture of the late 1960s – and has created receptivity towards, and creativity with, techno-political tools in the evolution of transformative political organisation (Turner 2006).  

Can power-as-domination be a resource for power-as-transformative-capacity?

A central question for political organisation in the future is how far, and under what conditions, power-as-domination (essentially having control over state institutions) can be a resource for power-as-transformative-capacity, essentially in the initiatives civil society, including the economy, has taken to refuse reproducing the status quo, thereby beginning a process of transformation independently of political institutions. In other words, although there is a sharp distinction between these two types of power, they are not necessarily counterposed. Power-as-domination can in theory combine with or be a resource for power-as-transformative-capacity. For example, a change in the balance of power in society – often due in part to the widespread exercise of transformative capacity – can lead to progressive control over the state or progressive shifts within governing parties, which can in turn lead to some form of governmental support for a transformative movement. This can generate deep social changes of which governments on their own, however radical their intent, are incapable.

One example is in the impact of the feminist movement throughout society and how that changed the balance of power to such an extent that governments – for example the 1974 Labour government in the UK – felt obliged, under direct political pressure, to introduce legislation against discrimination on grounds of gender. This in turn legitimated and stimulated women in their own pursuit of self-liberation.

More recently, the decision of the European Parliament in 2013 to award the annual European Citizenship prize to the anti-eviction movement in Spain (Plataforma de Afectados por la Hipoteca [PAH]) gave a significant boost to the grassroots movement as it faced attacks from the Spanish state (and thus domination also has different levels that can contradict each other). There are many examples at municipal level of governmental power being used to support the autonomous exercise of transformative power in the economy or society. A contemporary example is the way that Syriza, the party of the radical and social-movement Left in Greece, decided not to retain the 8 million euros it received as a result of its electoral success for its parliamentary or inner-party
activities. Instead, as one of their political organisers, Andreas Kazantzis, reports: 'The biggest part of the new funds should go to what we can do in the neighbourhoods. For example, to employ people to spread initiatives like social medical centres.'

The question of how far the institutions of power-as-domination can support power-as-transformative-capacity remains. It cannot be answered in abstract from the political and social balance of power. The issues involved could be very different, for example, in the context of small left parties in opposition or where social movements have made an important impact, compared to the case of left parties which are on the eve of capturing power under unprecedented conditions of crisis. For this reason, the core of this chapter is a reflection on different examples of attempts to combine the two forms of power, some fairly successfully, some not, and ending with two examples from southern Europe, Syriza and Podemos, that have been electorally successful – though with a changing and often problematic relation with the movements, which in Greece, at least, face their own problems. We need to explore critically their assumptions about the control over institutions that power-as-domination can offer to their struggle for social justice.

The changing historical circumstances of the two sources of power and their relationship

As a background to these examples, it helps to identify significant underlying changes since the 1970s regarding both forms of power, which constrain and shape possibilities for the radical egalitarian change that actors in these examples were working for.

Power-as-transformative-capacity: A decisive weakening of nationally organised labour

A distinctive but short-lived feature of the movements of 1968 and the early 1970s was the active collaboration and cultural cross-fertilisation between radical, mainly young intellectuals and grassroots labour activists. It was not only students who listened to Bob Dylan. And it was not only students and middle-class women who aspired to lives beyond the factory production line and the kitchen sink. A politics of liberation crossed traditional social divides; workers' control and self-management were part of a wide radical consciousness. But it was rarely expressed through national labour movement institutions.
BEYOND SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC AND COMMUNIST PARTIES

(union or party). On the contrary, the legacy of the Fordist organisational forms that shaped labour movement organising and dominated production – centralised command, a reduction of the scope for distributed initiative and denial of the capacities of the membership⁴ – meant that the leadership of both traditional trade union and party organisations were generally suspicious of the rebellions of the sixties, whose subversive political culture threatened to overturn many of the traditional conventions, boundaries and vested interests in established union organisation. National trade union leaderships generally missed the opportunities of renewal and regeneration that these rebellions potentially offered.

On the other hand was the concerted, politically and ideologically driven defeat of the traditional forms of working-class organisation that had underpinned the class-based social-democratic and communist parties of the Left. A long, drawn-out process of defeat, resisted through some epic struggles, it had multiple driving forces. First, by the late 1960s, employers were facing squeezed profit margins as workers’ demands for higher wages as a reward for the tedium and exhaustion of work on the assembly line could no longer, in conditions of intensified international competition, be passed on as price rises. Employers turned instead to reducing the cost of labour, making redundancies, outsourcing and casualising labour, undermining collective bargaining and generally weakening workers’ organisations. Employers were looking, too, for a political environment more conducive to their interests than the regulated regimes of post-war social democracy. They found it in the new conservatism that, on both sides of the Atlantic, was translating free-market fundamentalism into a practical programme for dismantling the social-democratic state and its class compromises in the workplace. The political champions of this new creed made the defeat of labour its battle cry and the destruction of the ‘nanny state’ its regularly repeated mantra.

The end result, internalised and reproduced by ‘new social democracy’ – whether ‘New Labour’ in the UK or the Democratic Party in Italy – was a political culture of almost cold war taboos on trade union militancy, state intervention and left-wing politics. The other side of this development was that this new kind of capitalism, unleashed from the macro-economic policy framework and social regulations prescribed by John Maynard Keynes and William Beveridge and reinforced by the institutional innovations brought on by war, involved its own distinctive combination of power-as-domination
and power-as-transformative-capacity. To understand this we need to explore further the ambivalence of the rebellions of 1968. Neoliberal political leaders such as Margaret Thatcher and Tony Blair used power-as-domination to dismantle state-based systems of resource allocation, for example in the UK’s National Health System, and to give openings to market actors to exercise their own transformative capacities in pursuit of profit. No doubt these entrepreneurs included those whose sensibilities and ‘go-getting’ entrepreneurial capacities were influenced by the spirit of the sixties but separated from, and uninhibited by, the social critique of that rebellion (Boltanski and Chiapello 2006). In this way we can see the irony of the ambivalence noted earlier: just as the agents of social critique and egalitarian change who gained strength from the revolts of the sixties were facing defeat, the innovative entrepreneurial culture of this period was being appropriated and supported as a force for capitalist renewal.

**Power-as-domination: Globalisation, corporate domination, financial and institutional crisis**

At the same time as the emergence of significant, economically rooted forms of power-as-transformative-capacity was facing both defeat and appropriation, power-as-domination was being reconfigured, becoming more mobile and flexible and less tied to the nation state and the political institutions of supposedly ‘representative’ democracy. With the beginnings of financial deregulation in the 1970s and the growth of the transnational corporation, the power of national governments to dominate the state and the economy was diminishing, their leverage eroded by corporate capture, the force of deregulated financial flows and the diktats of US-dominated international economic bodies, notably the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Trade Organisation (WTO), as well as the intergovernmental treaties of the European Union. Moreover, by the early seventies, especially with the quadrupling of the oil price in 1973, the world economy entered the first of what developed into a series of severe recessions over the last quarter of the twentieth century. This tendency towards recession combined with a faltering of productivity, an intensification of international competition and the increasing mobility of finance to follow maximum profits. This combination of different levels of economic, industrial and social crisis led to the breakdown of the post-war compromise between labour and capital which had underpinned the welfare state and the rationale of social-democratic parties, and which reinforced, after World War II, the essentially national, corporatist institutions of most of the nation states of Europe.
Organisational form according to purpose
A point to bear in mind in drawing lessons from the following narrative is that forms of political organisation should be closely related to collective purpose: we are doomed to impotence if we fetishise a particular form, whether horizontal or hierarchical, regardless of purpose and the level of society and social institutions at which the activity is taking place. The framework of two forms of power that I have suggested helps us to clarify distinct purposes and their associated organisational logics, as long as in applying it we recognise the ambivalences discussed above. For example, the organisational forms appropriate to gain sufficient leverage over power-as-domination to introduce legislation that prohibits evictions – which requires a presence within, and an ability to engage with legislative and electoral institutions – is likely to be very different from the organisational forms necessary, for example, to sustain viable squats in empty buildings. It is important therefore to clarify the strategic issues that shape our purposes so that this can guide our choice of the appropriate forms of organisation and identify what forms of power are most effectively mobilised for what purpose.

TWO HISTORICAL EXPERIENCES OF MOVEMENTS ENGAGING WITH GOVERNMENT

In this section I will develop tools to understand contemporary possibilities and constraints of engaging with political institutions, by analysing critically two earlier phases when transformative movements engaged critically with dominant political institutions. These were periods – the mid-1970s and the 1990s – when power-as-transformative-capacity was developing, experimentally and uncertainly. However, at the same time there remained a legacy of faith in the efficacy of representative democracy, the knowledge of state experts, the power of the nation state and the possibility of closed political systems.

First, I analyse an experience in the UK in the 1970s, of the radical grassroots workers’ movement acting in close collaboration with the Left of the Labour Party. Second, I explore experiences of new parties of the Left that emerged after a split either from a social-democratic party in the 1990s, such as the Socialist Left Party (SV) in Norway, or from a communist party, as with Rifondazione Comunista (PRC) in Italy, but were working explicitly as voices of the social movements. I consider both their potential and their tendency to
fail, and what can be learnt from this about the need for transformative organisations to tread warily on the treacherous terrain of parliamentary politics.

**In and against the state in the UK**

First, then, is the 1970s experience of the militant workers’ movement engaging with the UK state, mainly through Tony Benn, then minister for industry in a Labour government. The very fact that someone radicalised by a workers’ occupation – the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders – could be in such an institutional role was a product of the ambiguous position of the Labour Party as simultaneously a block to, and a means of, political expression for workers’ demands.

*The British Labour Party: The ambiguities of trade union/party links*

The Labour Party’s origins in trade union campaigns for political representation led to a dense network of institutional links between workers’ organisations at every level of party and union, yet the party’s founding leadership gave the parliamentary party an autonomy and overriding power that tended to blunt the possibility of these institutional links becoming a channel for militancy. Moreover, these links were based on deeply rooted conventions dividing politics (understood as strictly the responsibility of the party) and industrial relations as limited to collective bargaining over wages and conditions (the responsibility of the trade unions). These institutional links between party and unions in normal times, in conditions of boom, served to depoliticise trade union militancy. However, in times of crisis they engendered expectations and a consciousness of the political character of the factory struggle that under circumstances of continued trade union strength posed a challenge to the parliamentary custodians of the status quo. The workplace trade union militancy in the manufacturing industry in the 1960s and 1970s produced what was for ruling elites an alarming conjuncture of events with highly confident social and labour organisations putting radically transformative, and hence political, projects into practice and finding support and legitimacy, albeit from a minority, within the political system.

The 1970s was the decade which the Trilateral Commission condemned as producing ‘an excess of democracy’. These were circumstances in which, a bit like today, the demand for ‘real democracy’ could not be easily contained by a highly secretive oligarchic political system. At that point the contradictory structures of the Labour Party sometimes bent under the pressures of a strong political militancy.
Workers enter Whitehall – shock!
The result was that, much to the alarm of UK ruling elites, the occasional radicalised politician spurned the unspoken compromises with the Whitehall/Westminster/City establishment that allowed Labour to govern, and made alliances with activists untamed by the bureaucracies and career ladders of trade union/Labour Party institutions. This was exactly the case with Tony Benn as minister for industry. During the late sixties and early seventies, the worker occupations of factories doomed by corporate management to closure had convinced him that the future of crisis-ridden but complacent British industry lay with workers like those who had organised a ‘work in’ to keep the Upper Clyde Shipbuilders open in 1969. He consequently insisted on meetings with shop-floor leaders, and not simply national union officials, and encouraged these shop-floor activists to develop their own plans for the future of their companies, which he promised to support using government powers of conditional funding, purchasing and so on (Panitch and Leys 2001).

The most notable example is the ‘alternative corporate plan for socially useful production’ drawn up by the multi-plant, multi-union joint shop stewards’ committee of Lucas Aerospace. A tape recording of the shop stewards’ meeting, discussing what the shop stewards’ ‘combine committee’ should do in response to a meeting with Tony Benn, provides evidence of enhanced self-confidence from the knowledge that they had support from a government minister. Out of this sense of new possibilities, an important radical initiative was born: the workers’ own plan for their company, based on matching their capacities with unmet social needs. This was a challenge to the logic of private accumulation and an insistence on the logic of use value. The initiative consequently inspired many other examples and helped to strengthen a radical and increasingly political movement of workplace activists.

This movement was defeated, however, not just industrially but also within government (under pressure from corporate business and the financial interests of the City of London) and within the Labour Party (by members of parliament fearing that they would lose their seats if Labour appeared too left wing).

Workers, black activists, gays and lesbians and women enter County Hall – shock!
Before neoliberalism gained a firm grip in Britain – in the mid 1980s with the defeat of the Miners’ Strike – there is an example of a part of the state offering support for transformative working-class initiatives and self-organisation. It
was again a political initiative that arose from the ambiguous potential of the Labour Party as an institutional channel for popular aspirations and demands. This was the experiment of the Greater London Council (GLC), led by Ken Livingstone.

It was a four-year experience of many extra-parliamentary attempts to achieve social justice and liberation, through a combination of self-organised community, social movement and labour organisations. Their initiatives included community-controlled childcare, community monitoring of the police, support for black self-organisation against racism and for labour and technology strategies influenced by the experience of Lucas Aerospace. Again, the project was about opening up local government to poor and marginalised people to whom in the past it was distant and unresponsive. It was not a revolutionary project but it was radically transformative and challenged many private vested interests that in the past would have had cosy, if not corrupt, relationships with municipal officials and politicians (Mackintosh and Wainwright 1987).

The reaction of the political and economic elites was unanimously hostile. Margaret Thatcher’s right-hand man Norman Tebbit summed up the political vitriol of the time when he said, ‘this is modern socialism and we will kill it’. Kill it they did: in 1986 parliament passed a law abolishing the GLC. Such are the unwritten rules of the British constitution: that a prime minister can destroy a whole level of democratic government in pursuit of a political vendetta. It was an experience not forgotten.

Perhaps, given the international power and position of the City of London as a financial centre, and the UK’s historical imperial and industrial position, this corporate capture and fusion of state and business is particularly notable in the UK. But experiences in Sweden, for example, of the hostile response of business to the proposals of Rudolf Meidner for ‘Employee Funds’ (which would have gradually given workers majority ownership and control of the companies they worked for), confirm that the opposition of private business to even modest attempts to extend principles of democracy to industry was at that time an international phenomenon. Indeed, such attempts at democratising industry seem to have contributed to employers’ determination to install political regimes in the subsequent decade that would put labour back in its place.

Lessons to carry forward
What lessons can be found in these experiences for the discussion of social
movements and political institutions today?

**When the balance of power is shifted …**

When the balance of power in society is shifted, albeit briefly, away from capital and towards working people and this is somehow reflected (even in a small, mediated way) within political institutions of power, it is possible for parts of the state – its funds, its contracting powers, its legislative, taxation and ownership powers – to be used to support and facilitate the transformative initiatives of working people.

It is important to note that the movements behind this shift in the balance of power were not simply movements of protest or civil-society lobbies; they were transformative organisations of civil society working to bring about radical changes to which radical politicians were committed and for which they had an electoral mandate but which they found impossible to implement through relying on the state apparatus and its expertise. Instead, their ability to bring about change depended on highly practical and productive alliances with knowledgeable, powerful forces for change, outside the political system and based within production and the wider society.

**The extent of corporate capture**

We can learn from these experiences the extent of the corporate capture of politics and the integration of corporate interests and personnel into the political elite, and the way that this elite mobilise their allies in industry and the media to prevent any shift in state alliances from capital to labour taking place.

**The intensity of class war**

The shift from the class compromise of 1945–1979 to class war which included the explicit goal of killing ‘modern socialism’, the politically driven defeat of the National Union of Mineworkers, the abandonment of collective bargaining and the dismantling of the legal infrastructure that sustained it was perhaps most explicitly announced in the UK. However, a similar attack on organised labour and the legal framework of rights that underpinned it occurred in most European countries, undoing the gains of the post-war years. An implication is that policies of class compromise, far from being the orthodoxy they had once been, became the object of vilification and contempt by the political and media elites. Even policies that were purely defensive of wage justice and social provision became, from the late 1990s, policies that could not be won without
a militant struggle. Periodic financial crises reinforced this vulnerable position of labour and of social provisions as they were increasingly framed, along with immigration, as scapegoats for the crisis.

The internationalisation of the terrain of conflict
The struggles of the 1970s, especially those that looked to governments or municipalities as a source of support, faced the emerging realities of globalisation. Globalisation pushed the balance of forces further against workplace struggles, at several levels. At one level, the increased mobility of capital meant that threats of investment strikes and general financial instability were more effective at blackmailing national governments to block industrial strategies that challenged management prerogative or shareholder interests. At a company level, the increasingly transnational nature of major corporations meant that international manoeuvres such as double-sourcing and threatened factory closures could undermine local bases of militancy.

Shop-floor trade unions responded by becoming increasingly internationally organised, with the creation of organisations that brought together workplace leaders from across Europe and sometimes across the world. Notable examples were in Ford and Dunlop Pirelli. An organisation, the Transnational Information Exchange (TIE), was created with the support of the World Council of Churches. From a base in Amsterdam, the TIE facilitated international conferences of workplace trade union organisations in different industrial sectors and across chains of production. However, at the same time as international linkages were being created, workplace organisations were being destroyed locally, undermining the foundations of the new international infrastructures. Nevertheless, a consciousness of the importance of international strategies was established that later, in the 1990s, came into its own, as the alter-globalisation movement created a new basis for the confidence and capacity to organise globally. This posed again the problem of where in a globalised world the political leverage is to support extra-parliamentary transformative power.

Mechanisms of marginalisation
We can see how the political system works to isolate and marginalise those whose actions as champions of extra-parliamentary change upset the established order. The systems of patronage available to prime ministers, including Labour prime ministers, meant that anyone wanting a political career kept their distance from Tony Benn. Challenges from the Left are defined as ‘divisive’
by party leaders and the media alike, and this has implications for public perception.

The exception that proves the rule is Ken Livingstone’s radical GLC, which was able to reach the public and win support in spite of a hostile press, so much so that a decade after the GLC was abolished, when Tony Blair’s New Labour created the post of mayor of London, Ken Livingstone was able to win the election as an independent candidate despite (or maybe in part because of) Blair’s hostility.

The importance of autonomy

Finally, these experiences also point to lessons learnt by the movements that participated, sometimes cautiously, sometimes enthusiastically, in these engagements with political institutions. Above all is that of the importance of movements’ developing their autonomous political perspectives and organisational bases so that the relationship with political institutions, which was based on winning power-as-domination could, nevertheless, simultaneously strengthen their transformative capacity. This means that they were able to oppose the state and simultaneously work towards new, more radically democratic, political structures through engaging with the state as a necessary part of a process of transition.

This leads us to what is perhaps the most important insight arising from these early experiences: the idea, drawing on a metaphor from the subversive, transformative movements emerging around the new ITC, of hacking political institutions, that is, entering political institutions to understand their logic, then redesigning and subverting them from inside for a radical, oppositional social purpose.

Hacking political institutions?

The authors of the influential book In and Against the State (1979) worked mainly as professionals for the state, especially the ‘welfare state’.6 The group of authors addressed the contradiction that ‘as “clients” we need the resources the state offers but that in satisfying this need we are necessarily held into the state form of relations’ (London Edinburgh Weekend Return Group 1979: 6). They emphasise that the state is not just a set of institutions, but a pervasive form of social relations. The social form that they highlight is the way the state ‘treats us as individual citizens, families, communities, consumer groups – all categories which obscure class’ (1979: 5). They explore the ways in which it is possible,
even from within the state, to resist and subvert this fragmentation and individualisation and resist collectively with alternative solutions. In the context of cuts and privatisation, they insisted on ‘ways of fighting back oppositionally, rather than simply defending a state we know to be indefensible’.

One might draw on the hacker phenomenon in computing to explore the potential of this improvised and yet rich concept of ‘in and against the state’. Just as hackers know from the inside the rules and contradictions of the system they are hacking, it is similarly so with activists who are in and against the state. And just as hackers use this knowledge to break open a software system and redesign it on the basis of hacker ethics of transparency and collaboration, similarly, radicals working ‘in and against the state’ used their knowledge of the individualised and fragmented daily lives of state workers, and of the contradictory moments of connection with ‘clients’ of the state, to turn the paternalistic rules of public provision into a terrain of struggle for popular control and an increase in the social wage.

An example of this was when the New Labour government set up a scheme for ‘community-led regeneration’ of impoverished estates in the 1990s, mainly intended to bypass left-wing local authorities and facilitate a process of bringing business into local service provision. However, some groups of mainly young people in one of these local estates, on the outskirts of Luton, subverted the policy by ‘occupying the rhetoric’ of community regeneration and organising local residents to create genuinely community-controlled projects and services (Wainwright 2010).

A theme which will recur later is the possibilities and conditions for hacking political institutions themselves; opening them up and redesigning them to favour movements for radical social and economic transformation.

**Party realities: Hopes, traps, blocks and illusions**

Against this background, the attraction of a political organisation that gives a public voice to the demands of transformative movements is considerable. An organisation could show during election time – the time of maximum public political intensity – that there is an alternative to the marketised politics that frames and constrains political debate in the UK. Such an organisation, which could bring together different movements and campaign on the basis of common principles and work collaboratively to develop a common strategy, is, in other words, a political party.

Looking across to the European continent with such an (albeit simplistic)
ideal in mind, the possibilities for parties of the radical Left looked hopeful on first impressions. From our offshore island backwater, many pinned hopes on the New Left parties gaining support across Europe. If only, we thought, we could win proportional representation, we could gain the same kind of breakthroughs. The actual experience of these parties, however, indicates that more fundamental problems arise once such parties break through the hallowed walls of the political system.

Across the continent, from the German Greens through to the SV in Norway to the PRC in Italy, parties of the radical Left faced a contradiction which halted their momentum. The problem was that these parties were campaigning for office within a discredited political system that they opposed. Indeed, they won support on the basis of this opposition. Yet at the same time, in order to win the support of groups of voters beyond their committed supporters, they had to appear governmentally credible as well as radically transformative. This contradiction was especially acute when they entered government. One danger was that in the attempt to be credible and under the pressure of both the privileges and the constraints of government office, they ended up becoming part of (or behoven to) the existing political elite, losing credibility with the very movements on which they depended.

I will briefly highlight two of these experiences.

The context of parties of the radical Left in the 1990s

Ever since the rebellions of the late 1960s, parties formed from varying combinations of communist, Trotskyist, Maoist and independent green-left traditions have occasionally, usually fleetingly, acted as a magnet for popular disillusion with mainstream politics. But the constituency for an alternative to neoliberalism was by the late 1990s far greater than any electoral support for the parties of the radical Left.

This constituency was reflected in opinion polls indicating majorities against both the Iraq war and privatisation and most of all in the recurring eruption of resistance on the streets to the global institutions through which the US government and its corporate allies sought to destroy the post-World War II settlement.

A new generation was being radicalised but had no voice in a political system where the main parties had converged, on Margaret Thatcher’s insistence that ‘there is no alternative’. These young people, supported by older extra-parliamentary leftists, took direct action in many different ways. They organised their
own political platforms, media and networks of critical research and education. They also organised their own dramatic ways to attract the attention of the mainstream media and communicate their message, their own means of coordination, alliance-building and deliberation on their demands, and increasingly their own culture and way of illustrating their values in everyday life.

By the 1990s, many of Europe’s radical Left parties (formed earlier) were still struggling to develop new projects for social, economic and political change. In the process, many of them became increasingly aware of their own limitations, including the debilitating legacy in their institutions of the traditions of the old communist and social-democratic Lefts from which they had broken. They were seeking therefore, quite explicitly, to refound themselves as new kinds of parties, by working with the radical social movements, organisations and networks that had been gathering momentum transnationally since the 1999 ‘Battle of Seattle’, when labour, environmental and democracy movements converged to oppose (successfully) a decision by the WTO to lift all social and environmental regulations on corporate investment.

‘Social movements are the engines of transformation,’ said Fausto Bertinotti, leader of Italy’s PRC and the Mediterranean maestro of this strategy for outflanking conservative political institutions. He also said that the new kind of party allying itself to social movements was ‘one actor amongst many’, thereby, rhetorically at least, breaking from the traditionally monopolistic view that social-democratic parties had of their role as the leadership of social change.

Even with the benefit of hindsight, it is not clear how these party leaders understood the distinctive role of social movements. There was an ambiguity about how far they were seen as sources of pressure reinforcing the influence of the parties; as outriders for the party or recruitment grounds for new party members; or as autonomous sources of transformative capacity to be supported and listened to by the party.

The Norwegian Left Party: Influential but invisible

Norway, with its uniquely proportional electoral system, could be seen as a laboratory for the radical Left’s experiment with a pluralist approach to power, although its context is distinct, with revenues from oil softening the repercussions of the economic crisis and a geographic context where the small size of the country facilitated public access to politicians, mitigating against a political class distanced from the people.
This was the context of the rise in influence of the Norwegian SV. After an uneven rise to prominence, and riding a wave of labour movement anger over the anti-union measures of a Labour government at the turn of the century, the SV became part of a three-way coalition with the Labour Party and the Agrarian Party in 2005. In 2005, the influence of SV, aided considerably by the pressure of social movements, provided an exemplary case in northern Europe of a positive dialectic between left party and radical extra-parliamentary movement. 'The changes we have achieved would have been impossible without the pressure and initiatives of the movements since Seattle,’ commented veteran member of the party’s leadership, Dag Seierstad, in 2004. On the other hand, the decline of the SV by 2013, both electorally from 35 seats to 7 and in terms of its credibility with social movements, is indicative of the potential problems of this engagement with parliamentary politics, and especially of participation in government, even in relatively favourable conditions.

The SV’s twin-track strategy of working with a global justice movement closely linked to trade unions and campaigning electorally for a coalition of leftist parties, including a reluctant Labour Party, finally bore fruit in 2005. When the left coalition won in 2005, SV – a party committed not only to defending public services and public ownership but also to withdrawal from the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) – found itself in government, even though its share of the vote had dropped somewhat from the previous 2001 election when the Labour Party was veering more towards the right. SV’s presence in Norway’s governing coalition, plus the militant pressure of the unions, stopped in its tracks the privatisation and deregulation programme promoted by the outgoing Conservative government. SV can also claim credit for the reallocation of Norway’s oil surplus as development aid, the commitment to withdraw Norwegian troops from Iraq and the withdrawal of Norwegian staff from NATO’s Afghanistan operations.

SV remained powerful for a short period because its presence provided a channel into government for movements that have their own social, economic and cultural strength. ‘Every day of the three-week-long negotiations, there were demonstrations outside that could be heard as we talked,’ remembers Seierstad. The demonstrators symbolised why the government had to listen to SV. Paradoxically though, it was the Labour Party that benefited electorally from the considerable achievements of the government, not SV.

One factor here was that SV complied with parliamentary and state procedure to a point of taking its own beliefs and political identity out of the public
picture of politics. It accepted the parliamentary convention whereby neither ministers nor members of parliament express dissent with governmental policies. Moreover, the party remained silent too. On several occasions, the government implemented policies, for example on immigration, contrary to SV’s programme and the basis of their relations with campaigning movements, yet SV members of parliament said nothing. In effect they let the imperatives of being ‘in’ the state overwhelm their commitment to act ‘against’ the state with the autonomous energies of social movements. As Dag Seierstad said: 'If you cannot express your beliefs, then being in government is useless.'

Many party activists shared Seierstad’s assessment. The inability of SV politicians to speak out caused confusion and demoralisation. After initial efforts to retain its autonomy, the party and its elected leaders became increasingly subordinate to the parliamentary party as the media tended to pounce on and highlight the slightest sign of division. The consequence was that although party members did not leave in large numbers, they lost their will to campaign for the party, choosing instead to devote their political energies to social movements and initiatives. Seierstad estimates that of its 10 000 members in 2013 only 3 000 to 4 000 are now active. The party’s loss of its ability to speak out clearly and champion campaigning movements also reverberated in the movements, reinforcing a pre-existing wariness toward political parties.

*Rifondazione Comunista: Too deeply in the state to be against it*

Italy’s PRC faced a different political situation, defined most notably by massive distrust of the political system. A survey in 2006 reported that 75.3 per cent of Italians have little or no trust in parliament (reference to come). As one left analyst put it: 'Italy is a country in which the level of corruption is very high and where the political parties are seen as bearing the main responsibility for this' (Ginsborg 2006: 14–16).

As its representatives prepared to enter the Italian parliament, PRC made no clear and strong challenge to this corruption of democracy. It went into the state without making very clear that it was also against it, not just against Silvio Berlusconi’s particular brand of corruption. Indeed, the general secretary of PRC, Fausto Bertinotti, accepted and seemed to enjoy the ‘insider’ position of president of the parliamentary chamber. ‘We were implicated in a crisis of legitimacy, representation and of politics generally,’ declared PRC MP Paolo Cacciari, a leading urban activist, architect and academic in Venice. One factor encouraging this was no doubt the symbolism of what radical journalist
Marco Berlinguer described as ‘the transferring of the party and of its leaders into the state institutions’.

Disillusionment was felt not simply by party activists but by voters too, leading to the collapse of electoral support for PRC in the 2008 elections, followed by a split and effective collapse. The initial euphoria at defeating Berlusconi through the Unione coalition which PRC had helped to put together gave way to dismay as the party made compromises that achieved nothing beyond propping up the government and keeping PRC parliamentarians in their privileged places. The record of the Prodi government was dismal: the withdrawal of Italian troops from Iraq, for example, was not accompanied by an abandonment of the War on Terror or a withdrawal of Italian soldiers from Afghanistan. The government almost fell on this issue in a parliamentary vote, after a huge demonstration against the building of a US military base in Vicenza, near Venice. Radical members of parliament were forced to appeal to the fear of letting Berlusconi get back in to justify their support for the government. Nevertheless, they were ostracised from demonstrations. There were similar problems when it came to taking on the church regarding civil partnerships, low wages and the high cost of living, over which no action was taken.

Nationally, intentions to be ‘in and against’ the state and make a reality of Bertinotti’s claim that the social movements were the engine of social change were effectively overwhelmed by the iron logic and soft embrace of parliamentary politics. This was exacerbated by the narrowness of Unione’s majority.

Locally, however, the dynamics were more complex. In many regions, cities and small towns, PRC members were highly creative in building and basing themselves in transformative social movements. In this way, they worked in new ways to shift the balance of power in local politics and achieve changes impossible through either movements or political parties alone. There are many examples of this. Activists involved in continuing well-rooted local experiments in politically supported transformative initiatives will keep experimenting, turning to or helping create whatever political instrument is most fit for the purpose. The failure of PRC was a defeat, but one from which to learn.

Moreover, one should not underestimate the creativity and strength of the Italian Left, constantly reappearing in new and effective forms in what is fundamentally a conservative society. The successful campaign of the National Water Forum in 2009, one year after the Left’s electoral debacle, is evidence of this. They campaigned for a million signatures for a referendum on keeping water public, gaining 1.4 million. They spread the arguments for water as a
commons so effectively through alliances with local communities, use of social media and various cultural initiatives as well as through alliances with trade unions and traditional political campaigning that there was a turnout of over fifty per cent, gaining a ninety-four per cent si to keeping the water public. Thus, hardly a year after the demoralising collapse of the Unione coalition, a powerful campaign defeated Berlusconi’s attempt to force municipalities to privatise water. There is no doubt that the erstwhile activists of PRC were on the streets ensuring this victory.

Emerging themes and questions
In the chapter’s concluding section, I argue that a challenge now facing any left political organisation (whether it is a party, a movement or a platform) is how to occupy the narrowing open space that remains within the political institutions, through a strategy which changes the balance of forces away from the political caste in favour of transformative popular initiatives without being crushed by the gravitational pull of the state apparatus. Vital to this is for transformative organisations to remain autonomous in both their organisation and their principles as they engage with these political spaces left open by the dominating institutions – including unresolved contradictions that de facto create space for dissent, if cleverly deployed.

Any discussion of the future of transformative politics in the twenty-first century needs to take account of both the destruction of organised and permanent labour and the fact that the precarious and part-time workers struggling to survive in ‘flexible’ labour markets, are often creating new, temporary but often highly creative organisational forms, which the traditional labour organisations have been slow to recognise, let alone support. Thus, while the left leaders of 1970s social democracy could take militant workplace organisation for granted, the new political forms of the twenty-first century have no such sustained, or homogeneous, organised base. Therefore a shared means of inter-communication – horizontal connection that does not go through a single centre – is increasingly replacing the primacy of centralised organisation, and there are often dense networks of action and solidarity-oriented organisations amongst precarious workers and their communities (Milkman 2004).

Moreover in these circumstances, left populism – the people versus the elites – has tended to become the basis for building a political movement of the Left. Often this involves a broadening of the concept of class – to those who depend on their creativity for the means of livelihood – and a reaching out to
struggles and movements challenging oppressive power beyond the traditional workplace, rather than a rejection of class. The question for the future is how these anti-elite movements can be both populist, in appealing directly to the people (e.g. through a charismatic leader), and democratic, in building forms of popular self-government that harness the transforming capacity of each for the benefit of all.

**SYRIZA AND PODEMOS: THE POTENTIAL AND LIMITS OF LEFT POPULISM?**

Given the chance, different generations create their own politics influenced by their cultural and technological environments. But often an older generation holds on to a great deal of political space and control. By contrast, Synaspismos – the radical Euro-communist coalition that widened and opened up to become Syriza in Greece – did break their habits of control, which proved vital to the emergence of Syriza as a distinctive kind of political organisation. The choice of Alexis Tsipras, then a 32-year-old engineer, to stand as the party’s candidate for mayor in Athens in the 2006 municipal elections, is a good example of this new spirit. The success of this initiative (Tsipras won an unprecedented 10.5 per cent of the popular vote) strengthened and stabilised the party’s new strategy. Moreover, the president of Synaspismos gave up his position and urged party members to support Tsipras as his replacement. This kind of handing over to a new generation was apparent throughout the party’s leading bodies.

One consequence for Syriza was that through its new leaders, it became influential in the student movement, which in Greece has long been highly political and constantly mobilised and has significant influence with the wider Greek public. This proved decisive in Syriza’s early years when, between 2006 and 2007, students mobilised against a constitutional amendment that would allow the private sector to establish universities. Syriza was pivotal in changing public opinion to such an extent that the social-democratic Panhellenic Socialist Movement (PASOK) was forced to change its position on the issue. Increasingly, it became evident that Syriza was not just another political organisation treating the movements as instruments for its own party-political electoral purposes but a full participant in the movements and a source of political support. This was a product less of a conscious strategy and more of the instincts and political aspirations of the new generation of activists (Tsakalotos 2013).
The young activists and intellectuals who helped to found Syriza were from the first generation that rejected capitalism after the fall of the Soviet Union, and who came to the Left independently of any ‘actually existing’ alternative. Their involvement in movements and struggles was itself part of a process of developing an alternative rather than promoting one that had already been worked out.

They knew that governing from above would not work, but they did not know what would. ‘We try to find another way,’ says Andreas Karitzis, a young colleague of Tsipras in the leadership of Synaspismos and then Syriza. ‘I believe you need state political power but what is also decisive is what is you are doing in the movements/society before seizing power. Eighty per cent of social change cannot come through government.’

When, nine years and many movements later, the growing forces of change converged on Syntagma Square, Syriza members were there too. They helped to build the movement, not to recruit to the party, to push a line or take control. They shared principles – for example, not allowing any anti-immigrant slogans – and applied these to find practical solutions through the general discussions. On the first day, for instance, many people came to the demonstration with Greek flags and did not allow party flags. After a few days and much argument the idea emerged of having different flags of other nations, including from the Arab Spring. ‘It changed the image of the action,’ says Yanis Almpanis, a Syriza member active in the Network of Social and Political Rights, ‘This is how to build a radical and political movement.’

It was this principled immersion in the movements, including the uprising in 2008 following the police killing of Alexandros Grigoropoulos, which led many people to decide that Syriza was the instrument they could trust to help them rid Greece of the European Union (EU)/IMF memorandum imposing austerity and privatisation. ‘Syriza was always with us,’ said Tonia Katerini from the Open City coalition. It was a sentiment repeated again and again.

When in January 2012, Tsipras declared that Syriza was prepared to form a government to stop the memorandum and break the old ruling order, he linked anger with hope. The parliament building stands some distance back from Syntagma Square. Syriza was committing itself to open up a two-way channel of power and energy from the squares and society to parliament and back. But how is this to be done effectively, rather than the road to parliament being a dead end or hidden trap from which few return? This is the key question running through this chapter.
Syriza addressed this question first internally, by strengthening the democratic power of the elected Syriza politician responsible for monitoring and challenging a department of state. Instead of having a single ‘shadow minister,’ Syriza created an open committee of members of parliament, experts, civil servants and civic organisations whose purpose is to expose to public view the activities of the government minister and propose alternative policies. ‘Through Syriza members who are frontline civil servants – and Syriza won over 50 per cent of the vote of these workers – we are mapping the obstacles, knowing who to rely on, how to release the ideas of staff with a commitment to the public good,’ said Aristedes Baltaz, coordinator of Syriza’s open parliamentary committees.20 These committees are also intended, through their openness and links with social movements, to counter the tendency of parliamentary procedures to protect the political class rather than open it to public scrutiny.

It is an ambitious strategy for democratising a state that is institutionally deeply corrupt. It is also a direct challenge to the Troika’s claim to be modernising the Greek state through privatisation. For each ministry, Syriza committees are preparing to sweep away corruption and open the ministry’s work to the stifled capacities of front-line civil servants, encouraging the latent honesty that Baltaz is convinced generally exists amongst public-service professionals.

Alongside these various preparations for government, inside parliament and outside, activists were alert to the dangers of losing their social roots, and becoming ‘another PASOK.’ In the formation of the new party, a shared priority is to create, as new member of parliament Theano Fotiou put it, ‘a structure for the people to always be connected to the party, even if they are not members of the party, to be criticising the party, bringing new experience to the party.’21

One factor pulling radical parliamentary representatives in Norway, Italy and Germany away from social struggles has been the resources bestowed on them by the state while the party outside parliament, and often the movement, loses key cadres to the parliamentary routine. I discussed earlier how Syriza will distribute the 8 million euros it will receive as a result of its electoral success, to support and help spread the neighbourhood-based solidarity networks providing medical help, food and so on to those whose lives are being devastated by the government and Troika’s austerity measures. Syriza, forged in the heat of the most extreme manifestation of neoliberal austerity, has begun to show that movement-style organising combined with a bold intervention in the political system can win overwhelming popular support.
On 26 January 2015 Syriza won sufficient popular support to form a government, though without an overall majority. They formed an alliance with the right-wing nationalist Independent Greeks, on the basis of a common rejection of the austerity policies of the Troika and its brutally harsh memorandum. Syriza’s claims to govern differently, refuse modernisation via the private market and insist on democratisation are now being put to the test. But it is a test in circumstances where the government has a pistol aimed at its head, or at least the politically concerted threat of bankruptcy from the EU finance ministers, the European Central Bank and the IMF.

Democratising the Greek state, eliminating the corruption and clientelism that has been endemic to its state apparatus, is central to Syriza’s programme and way of governing. It is not merely an ethical ‘add on’ to economic and social policies, but integral to their interpretation of democracy. To implement this approach, Syriza has set up a Ministry for Public Service Reform and has appointed strong and radical women to leading positions in the Centre for Public Administration and Local Government, an important public-sector body responsible for training civil servants and local government officials. The Ministry’s brief is to prepare legislation to introduce transparent and democratic procedures for the selection of public servants and end corruption, nepotism and clientelism. The Centre’s brief is to reinforce this with a process of cultural change in the mentality and training of public servants. Regarding the importance of transformative capacity as a source of power, it is notable that Syriza has not stopped at changes made through the levers of government. It has sought transformative allies in society.

Its first ally has been the networks of the solidarity economy which emerged to meet urgent daily needs created by the Troika’s destruction of basic public service. It has created a department in the Ministry of Labour with specific responsibility for working with and providing support for the solidarity economy. But this department also has the brief to facilitate a learning process whereby innovations in the ways that services are delivered – for example in the social health clinics – become a catalyst and possibly a model for transforming the organisation of the state’s same services.

Syriza’s second potential ally is workers in the public sector and the communities which they serve. Still only a potential, it is limited by the conservatism and clientelist routines of most trade unions. But the strength of resistance to the Troika’s attempt to privatise water awoke a consciousness, especially in the region of Thessaloniki, amongst water workers and their trade union
organisers of the value of their work in providing a public utility and a common
good. They, in turn, alerted and activated the community who depended on
this service, to defend it against private take-over (Wainwright 2014). In the
process, the flaws of the existing public management became apparent and
the successful ‘save our water’ campaign turned into a movement to improve
the quality of water delivery. Both processes of using governmental power to
support popular transformative capacity, in public service workers and the soli-
darity economy are severely constrained by what is, effectively, financial starva-
tion imposed by the Troika.

Podemos and the challenge of left populism
The rise of Podemos in Spain has many parallels with Syriza, though the two
organisations have different strategies and organisational forms. They are
already collaborating with each other in the European Parliament and their
activists are organising together in transcontinental campaigning networks, for
example around housing, health and the environment.

Their differences stimulate useful questions for our exploration of political
organisation in this era of global politico-corporate elites. Since the search for
a single model of radical political organisation is futile, and I certainly have no
model in my back pocket, I will end with these questions. But first I introduce
Podemos (which translates as ‘We Can’) to readers unfamiliar with the new
bright star that appeared suddenly on Europe’s dark sky at the European elec-
tions. Podemos, only six months since it was founded, lit up the dull political
landscape of the normally low-turnout, low-interest elections for the European
Parliament by winning 1.5 million votes, or eight per cent of the overall vote
count, and gained five seats. Since then its support has grown further, drawing
level with the main parties in opinion polls.

Podemos’ spokespeople spurn the language of Left and Right. Indeed, sev-
teen per cent of its voters previously voted for the conservative Partido Popular.
Their slogans echo the anti-elite language of Occupy, ‘We are the 99 per cent’,
and of the anti-austerity movement in Europe: ‘The debt is illegitimate.’ Anti-
elitism drives their strategy. ‘All that’s left in Europe is a political elite that kneels
before the financial powers … some Europeans don’t want to be colonies of
the Troika,’ said Pablo Iglesias, the politics professor and TV star who initiated
Podemos and is its current figurehead. Against the elites and the establish-
ment parties, the sworn mission of Podemos is to restore politics to the people.
‘We propose a grassroots politics – that is, to do away with the establishment parties and, from there, put in motion a method,’ said Iglesias.23 Podemos is a method for both change and popular empowerment. Eduardo Maura, another Podemos spokesperson, explained: ‘Podemos is not a vanguard of the people: it’s the people organising itself, it’s the people doing politics, not delegating, not having to choose between one option and the same.’24 This raises wider questions about the character of such a party.

Combining defensive action with transformative capacity in conditions of economic and political crisis

I raise these questions in a context where the institutions of formal political democracy have been almost entirely corrupted or hollowed out through a process of corporate capture, facilitated by privatisation and deregulation. All that remains in Europe of the democratic gains that followed the defeat of fascism is the formality of the vote: now a vote between elites trying to manage the global corporate market. This process, however, has not been socially neutral. People’s lives have been destroyed through the denial of the right to a home and the destruction of the right to employment. Millions are desperate and engaged in a struggle for survival. In social and economic terms, we are back to the problem that faced the Chartists: social misery compounded by political powerlessness. Where they faced the power of aristocratic autocracy, we face the tightening hold of market authoritarianism.

In these circumstances there is a growing popular pressure not only to resist austerity but, positively, to secure conditions of basic security: of a home, a basic income, a pension, preferably a job and fundamental rights. Such basic securities are conditions for developing and asserting power-as-transformative-capacity. Yet, because they involve questions of redistribution and other society-wide, institutional changes, they usually can only be achieved through the exercise of power-as-domination. Today this involves occupying the diminishing spaces of formal democracy, to force them – possibly breaking them in the process – to widen through militant assertions of popular power against all political elites and the institutions that protect them. The memory and associated expectations of securing formal democracy are still fresh, especially in southern Europe. The rapid rise of Podemos in Spain and the success of Syriza are evidence of this desire to use what formal spaces still exist not as an end in itself, of ‘getting into power,’ but as a resource for deeper, transformative sources of power. This chapter will end by exploring tentatively the possible
dynamics of these radical experiments in power-as-transformative-capacity, testing how far the institutions of government using power-as-domination can be remade to provide resources for democracy against the tightening grip of market authoritarianism.

Left populism and its importance now
In an overview of debates on and analyses of populism, Margaret Canovan (1999) suggested that ‘Populism in modern democracies is best seen as an appeal to “the people” against both the established structure of power and the dominant ideas and values of society’. It can be based on working-class solidarity and self-organisation. Laclau (2005) argued that such a base in democratic working-class organisations is a condition of ensuring that populism is not hijacked by charismatic but self-seeking individuals and parties. Clearly, there is a considerable variety of populist articulations: populist movements of the Right fuelled by xenophobia or nationalism, as well as egalitarian democratic ones that react to increasingly despotic and oligarchic forms of government with a strong force for democratisation and an inclusive understanding of ‘the people’.

Populism becomes relevant in certain conditions. It seems we are in one of those moments now. This can be understood most clearly through a comparison with Chartism, the nineteenth-century English movement of working people for democracy and economic emancipation.

The Chartist tradition
The appeal of populism to ‘the people’ depends on identifying a ‘them’: a common enemy of the people. This in turn creates the basis of a discourse that is popular, appealing to the mass of people, rather than sectional, appealing only to particular groups and interests among the people. Chartist discourse did just this: it identified society’s ills as being the product of the abuse of power by parasitic and speculative groups who controlled political power. Chartist discourse divided society into two camps, producers versus ‘idlers’: the victims of corruption, on one hand, and monopoly power and its beneficiaries, on the other (Stedman Jones 2004).

This brought together not just workers but the many groups affected by enclosures, arbitrary landowner power and an authoritarian state. This created a basis of what Ernesto Laclau, in his classic analysis of populism (Laclau 2005), describes as a logic of equivalentional demands rather than differential ones, that
is, demands through which different groups could identify a common cause. In the case of the Chartists this was the universal franchise, recallable members of parliament and annual parliaments. The role of the state in maintaining and participating in the great corruption involved excluding the aspiring middle class as well as working-class people from political power. Economic exploitation and exclusion were seen by all social groups beyond the landed aristocracy and its wealthy industrial cousins as being protected and reproduced through corrupt, closed forms of political power and the laws imposed by this corrupt elite. Rallying to confront this common problem provided the basis of a truly mass movement. The Charter had over 1.3 million signatures when Chartist leaders presented it to parliament. As Dorothy Thompson put it: ‘thousands of working people considered that their problems could be solved by a change in the political organisation of the country’ (Thompson 1984).

There are many explanations for the disintegration of this massive popular force. But there is one overriding explanation: it is the break-up of the unifying ‘enemy’ and with it the demise of the conditions that created a common problem and favoured the equivalence of the demands of diverse social groups.

In the 1830s, the confrontational, authoritarian state policy of the period was discontinued and instead more humane legislation was introduced on housing, health and education, thereby responding to some of the needs of the destitute and the working poor. Moreover, the state disengaged from the workings of market forces, placating the concerns of the middle and emerging capitalist class. These changes in the character of political power meant that the interests of the working and the middle or emerging capitalist class began to diverge. The equivalential bonds drawing together the demands of the poor and the demands of those with money but previously deprived of political access were broken. Demands became differential, not automatically convergent. Especially important here was the growing separation of the economy from the state. This withdrawal of the state became a foundation stone of ‘liberal democracy’, legitimating capitalism with the appearance of political equality, and hiding economic power relationships by which some people have sources of power beyond the vote. The conditions for Chartism as a populist movement, a movement uniting ‘the people’, collapsed.

I argue that this sheds light on the conditions for a populism of the Left today. My suggestion is that today we are seeing a reversal of the conditions for the disintegration of Chartism: a new concentration of power – this time driven by the logic and power of the global corporate market, rather than of feudal aristocracies – and a return of state intervention in the economy, but this time
in the financial rather than industrial markets. A shared political problem is producing a convergence of social protests not simply to found new parties, but to transform political space and its relation to social and economic life.

To apply these thoughts to our analysis of Podemos and Syriza, the two parties born out of the resistance to austerity: Syriza recognised the trend towards an increasing concentration of power, conjoined and reinforced in Greece by PASOK and New Democracy, the two governmental parties of the old regime. It understood that under conditions of impoverishment and the final closure of democracy through the Troika's imposition of the austerity memorandum, people were breaking from old party loyalties in anger and frustration and becoming more fluid in their loyalties. Moreover, the increasingly fragmented labour markets, due to the spread of subcontracting, and the impact of new technology on traditional mass production processes, simultaneously weakened trade union organisation, which was, in addition, closely allied to and dependent on the clientelism of the two main political parties. These conditions of concentration of political power and fragmentation of popular organisation led Syriza's young leadership with their sensitive political antennae toward a populist discourse. Syriza understood that if it was to represent the majority and win their support, it had to move its discourse from talk of ‘movements’ and ‘youth’ to ‘the people’. This is exactly what it did, as is evident in Tsipras' speeches and in Avgi, the only daily newspaper supporting Syriza.25

From its origins, Podemos defined its project, as we’ve seen, as overcoming the separation of the people from politics. It ‘systematised the limits of democracy within the bourgeois state’ (Zelik 2015). It identified the enemy as the political elite that ran the Spanish state, in close collaboration with the banks and major corporations: ‘La Casta’, as Podemos labelled them. The new party does not deny its populism but seeks to reframe populism. One of its spokespeople, Eduardo Maura, put it like this: ‘Right-wing populism appeals to people’s prejudices, we appeal to people’s intelligence.’ He added,

‘We appeal to a tired, hard-working, mature, capable people: to the same people that were able to make Spain a democratic open society, to the very same people that have witnessed the dramatic decline of the institutions of the Regime of 78 [the democratic institutions built after the death of Franco]. Democracy is always an open process: it has to be like that. 78 had its moment. Now it's time for change.’26
Podemos’ populist project has recent foundations in popular support for the Indignados. Surveys in 2011 showed that eighty-five per cent of the population supported the protests that set up camp in the main square of Madrid. Podemos’ notion of opening politics to the people, breaking through the self-protective barriers of ‘La Casta’, was inspired by the experience of these occupations; both their protests against the political system and the direct forms of democracy in the running of the mini-cities that took over the squares of Madrid and Barcelona. Moreover, as a German analyst put it: ‘That Podemos is more than a fleeting protest party like the Pirates in Germany has mainly to do with the 15-M movement and the Mareas (“waves” of specific protests and actions in different spheres of society) that followed it.’ These movements provided the social roots and radical consciousness that propelled Podemos into prominence. Moreover, inspired by these movements in Spain as well as popular political organisations in Latin America, Podemos is, in its practice, interpreting the idea of popular democracy literally by opening its organisation directly to the participation of the public. The idea is that it is on the basis of what the people decide, through an impressive process of online participation, that they intervene in the political institutions.

The leadership of Podemos opened their first congress, which would decide on their programme, norms and identity, to everyone willing to participate, whether or not they were a member, with around 150 000 people. Similarly, Podemos’ local circles are open to anyone. Maura explained: ‘We don’t think that this should be a process only for people already engaged in politics. We think that this kind of process is a good way of drawing people in and a good way of making people feel that politics is not what they think politics is … Some of them became members, others didn’t, but they are willing to participate and we are happy they want to do it.’ Their methodology here reflects the influence of hacker thinking, referred to earlier. Maura explained: ‘We operated from the very beginning in what we call the logic of proliferation – the hacker logic. You have to be everywhere, you want to be everywhere.’

Thus, the populism of Podemos is not simply discourse but is integral to the way they are building their organisation and their direct forms of democracy. Their populism involves treating the people seriously, in the organisation of the party at least, as knowledgeable, social individuals, active citizens with whom power should be shared. Its vision, evident in the open participatory way that the party has been organised – including limits on Pablo Iglesias’ role as leader and the importance of a collaborative leadership with others – is of redefining
political representation as a means of opening politics to the direct presence of the public.

A question arises, however, about their perspective on power-as-transformative-capacity from their conscious separation of the role of the party from that of social movements. Podemos recognises the importance of social movements in changing popular consciousness towards seeing supposedly individual problems, such as not being able to pay the rent, as common ones that demand collective action. The social power of the movements prepared the ground for the rapid rise of Podemos whose leadership stresses the autonomy and distinct functions of party and social movements: 'Movements should be autonomous and self-regulating. Parties should appeal to other people,' remarked Mauro when asked about how he understood the relation between Podemos and social movements. This stress on autonomy makes sense and is another lesson to be learnt from the experiences of the 1980s and 1990s in Norway and Italy when the leadership of radical political parties expected social movements to give the party the support it needed on the terms that it laid down. But the open question remains: does a party have any role in at least supporting, facilitating or being a platform for the emerging, transformative power located in social struggles and sometimes gaining their sustainability through becoming a social movement, or is its function to focus on convincing voters to elect it to office? In practice, how far are these different roles in conflict?

It is too early to come to substantial conclusions but I would suggest several lessons can be learnt and also several questions posed to guide our understanding of and engagement with Podemos and Syriza (whatever their ambivalences) as well as the Scottish Radical Independence Campaign.

The first is that populism, normally a term of abuse or contempt for people organised as a collective force, can and should be claimed positively and subverted. Just as the gay and lesbian movement claimed the pejorative ‘queer’ and proclaimed a queer politics as a refusal of binary sexuality, so we should turn populism (and expressions of contempt for popular mobilisation) against the political caste and extol people’s active participation, insisting that populism is a logical implication of democracy; a belief in people’s capacities for self-government, valuing people’s intelligence rather than pandering to prejudice.

But where does this lead? Through what kinds of organisation and relationships can this capacity be realised and what is the role in this of a political party, and what kind of political party? Here the experiences and prospects of Syriza and Podemos are different. This is partly because of the differing forms
that ‘La Casta’ takes in each country and the differing strategies by which the European ‘Casta’ imposes its austerity measures. This is also partly because of the differing nature of the movements that preceded and accompanied the parties’ formation.

On the one hand, though protests similar to the 15-M movement in Spain converged on Syntagma Square in Athens and the White Tower Square in Thessaloniki, they did not have deep roots in local neighbourhoods or the capacity to produce movements of sustained action in different spheres, like the movement against evictions, PAH, or the many practical neighbourhood assemblies that have grown since 2011 across Spain. Syriza’s involvement with the protest movements since 2009, and its position as a clean critic of the discredited regimes of PASOK and New Democracy and of their collaboration with the hated Troika, meant that when Tsipras declared that Syriza was willing to form a government, it was to Syriza that the Greek people, at the end of their tolerance of austerity, turned. Syriza won office on a strong wave of indignation. High hopes were invested in the new champions of the people against the elites. However, beyond the beleaguered networks of the solidarity economy, focused as they were on the struggle to survive, they had few allies actively engaged in social and state transformation, besides occasional groups like the water workers in Thessaloniki. Moreover, the party itself, although ending its programme with a resounding exhortation to mobilise, is currently so preoccupied with government that is has shown itself almost incapable of any deep social mobilisation in the neighbourhoods and workplaces where it matters.³⁰ In Gramsci’s terms, it has been a scenario of winning the war of position without first conquering the foothills; without a war of manoeuvre. Or in this chapter’s terms, it has been a case of gaining power-as-domination, without the foundations of deep or extensive transformative capacity. This is now a major challenge but in a context which is exceedingly tight for any expansion or transformation of the public realm. Stimulating transformative change from within government, while lacking appropriate forms of agency to do so, with a noose around its neck, and drip-fed rather than having direct control over public resources, could be an impossible task.

Podemos, by contrast, could benefit from movements whose deep roots produced a continuing momentum following the occupations of the squares in 2011. The millions in the squares created ‘waves’ (mareas), deepening the struggles within different parts of society (health, education, housing, culture and so on), taking direct action such as blockades against evictions, occupations in
defence of hospitals, theatres, libraries and other public spaces or using social media to expose tax evaders and bring them to court.

Although these movements have mainly been ones of protest rather than creating alternatives, their experiences are pertinent to the concept running through this chapter of power-as-transformative-capacity. Transformative capacity begins with active, self-confident refusal, refusal to reproduce relations of oppression and subordination that depend on complicity for their sustainability. And successful refusal, as in much of the activity of the Spanish *mareas*, activates actors across the chains of social relations which keep that complicity in place. These acts and chain reactions of refusal build a sense of capacity and power that an alternative could exist, and whether or not it does depends in part on those who are engaged in the acts of refusal. People are searching for the political support, legislation and other exercises of governmental power that could enable them to realise the transformation for which they struggle.

This logic of transformative capacity indicates the importance of a relationship of support and alliance with social movements on the part of a party committed to radical change. ‘Regulation’ or some other erosion of autonomy is not the only possible relation between a party and social movements. Alliances can and need to respect the autonomy of social movements; their transformative capacities are generated through this autonomy. They depend on it. Therefore, alarm bells sound when I hear Podemos’ representatives stress the need for their separation from social movements, which are seen to have a ‘different’ constituency, as Eduardo Maura has: ‘They have different audiences, different targets, a different goal. Once you’ve developed a party, of course you are going to get a lot of input from the social movements … in terms of policies … [however] society is more than activists.’

Clearly, a radical political party aiming to win elections does need to win the support of a wider public, beyond the activists. But electoral politics has its own powerful logic determined by a highly monopolised media closely allied with the political elite, as well as the domination of the electoral field by two main political parties that presume their right to govern and that listen to the preferences of powerful financial and industrial corporations rather than amplifying the voices of the people. Unless a radical party can support, stimulate and amplify an alternative logic rooted amongst the people as organised social forces (rather than as a passive mass to be rhetorically evoked), it becomes a light vessel buffeted this way and that and is often overwhelmed by the waves of the market and the dominant culture.
This has, indeed, begun to happen to Podemos. After reaching an electoral height as a convincing contender for government in January 2015, after a period of stagnation it has suffered from a decline.\textsuperscript{32}

Questions for the future of political organisation
Although I must stress that these issues and difficulties facing both Syriza and Podemos, in different ways, will only become clear through the laboratories of experience in the coming year or so, it would be useful to at least explore the implications of our focus on Syriza and Podemos for political organisation. It is clearly insufficient to understand them only through the term of left populism; they have different relations to ‘the people’ as sources of organised and transformative power. Here, it is interesting to reflect on the differences in organisation and language between Syriza and Podemos, not in order to judge which is ‘better’ but because the comparison raises important questions.

We have seen a glimpse of how Podemos is emerging, involving a radical break from the organisations of even the radical Left. Whereas the decision-making congress of the parties of the radical Left – PRC and Syriza, for example – are based on delegates from branches, Podemos’ congress is open to all, one person one vote. Techno-political tools are used extensively to enable people to contribute online and through mobile phone apps while on the move.

Political debate in Syriza is organised through various ideological tendencies based in part on the political organisations that originally came together to form Syriza. In Podemos, by contrast, proposals come from individual participants on an open, crowd-sourcing basis, some of which gain support and gather momentum, while others do not. This is fed into the physical conference debates.

There are snags with both methodologies: the old, more closed, ideologically based system and the new, open, super-participatory system based on the practical needs and demands of disaffected individuals. Tendency-based discussions, though formally democratic, can become inflexible and dogmatic. Debating political issues through the mediation of tendencies is not always appropriate for learning from new experiments by local circles, issue-based projects or emergent developments outside the political categories and beyond the leading personnel of the tendency debate. This mediation can disempower local assemblies in favour of the struggles between factions. Whether this has been the case in Syriza, I do not know, as there are various pressures at work, including the centralising consequences of government; but it is clear that the
neighbourhood branches have become weak since Syriza won the election in early 2015.

The difficulty with the Podemos approach is that it might reinforce rather than challenge the atomistic individualism that underpins a liberal – and ultimately elite – approach to democracy. The problem with liberal democracies has been a narrow form of representation in which citizens are treated as individuals in an entirely abstract way rather than as part of embedded social, and at present unequal, relationships. It is a political process which consequently tends to disguise rather than expose inequalities, and protects rather than challenges private economic power. For the Chartists and many Suffragettes, the vote was the opening of a new phase in this political struggle, not a plateau on which to remain. Political representation meant for them a means of ‘making present’ in the political system struggles over social and economic inequality. How does Podemos’ individual-based approach to participation achieve this? And how does its individual basis of participation avoid reproducing social inequalities in its ranks, or producing the ‘tyranny of structurelessness’ that became a much-debated problem in the women’s liberation movement? It deals with the danger of its founding leadership concentrating power by separating the functions of spokesperson and central decision maker. Does this work in practice? Can the distinction be maintained, given the speed with which spokespeople often have to react in a media-dominated society?

Podemos partially resolves this contradiction between the individualist basis of the franchise and the social nature of struggles over economic inequality by holding to a sharp distinction between the tasks and targets of a party and those of a movement. But since its founding congress in 2014 when it decided to go all out for an electoral victory, with a blitzkrieg-style ‘electoral war machine’, the party leadership at times counterposed this electoral goal with social-movement activism, including the activism that was at the foundation of the party in the 1 000 citizens’ ‘circles’ that appeared across the country after the decision to stand in the European elections. However, it was not long before, from the point of view of the electoral machine, the circles were flagged by the electorally oriented leadership as ‘militant obstacles’. It was said that the considerable weight in the party of these activist circles impeded wider communication with the unmobilised majority.33

Syriza would, judging by its practice, take a different view. While sharing Podemos’ belief in the autonomy of social movements, their work implies a commitment to act consciously as a resource and support for social movements.
Networked political organisation

This raises the questions: how many of the necessary functions of transformative politics should be combined in a political party? Are these functions in fact best carried out through a single, unified organisation? To return to the two understandings of power introduced at the beginning of this chapter, is it appropriate – politically effective – for a party both to seek to win control over power-as-domination (seek to win elections, including becoming part of government) and to act as a resource and support for social movements and power-as-transformative-capacity? Or should political organisation have a more modular character, focused on different tasks, shaping organisational form to the nature of the task? Wouldn't this approach give organisations – both movements and parties – a greater ability to be responsive, creative and flexible?

For example, rather than a party doing everything through a single organisation, one could have different organisational forms for different functions which would all be transparent and loosely networked. Thus, there would be a ‘platform’, which would be the basis of an electoral intervention – rather like Barcelona en Comú, the electoral platform of movements and parties that successfully campaigned to elect the leader of the anti-eviction movement, Ada Calau, as mayor of Barcelona – with a separate infrastructure of communication available as a resource for the use of social movements, and a separate capacity for popular education. Such a modular approach could also involve collaboration and coordination on the basis of shared values and a common goal. But it is sufficiently spacious to allow for different views, for reflection and for experimentation. Call it a party or a movement – it would be a political organisation of a new type and one in process, not a final static form. It would also be more attuned to making the most of new technology and the collaborative tools and value that it would generate.

CONCLUSION

One main trend seems to span the four decades that this exploration of political organisation examines. It is the recurring formation of radical organisations – whether movements, networks or projects – with transformative goals but independent of political parties, which do however take a pragmatic approach towards electoral parties for particular purposes. I refer to the networks that
sprang up around the time of a radical engagement with national and local government in the UK in the 1970s and 1980s, for example, for health and safety at work and other themes of workers’ control, promoting social responsibility in science and technology, democratising the health service, promoting local cooperatives and many more. A similar network formed in Italy more recently, with the movements that converged to stop the privatisation of water. We have seen how the ability of political initiatives to win control over power-as-domination has a tendency to be short-lived, whereas organisations that work in society or culture to assert or build power-as-transformative-capacity persist, sometimes lying low but reappearing perhaps in a modified form. At times I have believed that the main challenge is to work for these latter ‘fragments’ to coalesce or interconnect to be an effective political force. But either this is a very slow process, or maintaining their autonomy is part of the very nature of these organisations (for example, because their energies are so focused on their specific and demanding work that they have little energy left for the equally demanding work of coalescing beyond for practical one-off purposes).

In the meantime, as is evident in Greece and Spain, the pace at which political and economic power is being exercised at the expense of the 99 per cent requires an attempt to win governmental office, initially simply to end the imposition of austerity, far more urgently than these processes of coalescence from below are able to move.

Yet we have also learnt from the experiences described above, especially those of the UK in the 1970s and in Norway and Italy in the 1990s, that the possibilities of winning power-as-domination – government office and so on – to support emerging sources of power-as-transformative-capacity depend crucially on the autonomous political perspectives of these extra-parliamentary organisations. And yet, as the leadership of Podemos shows, this can nonetheless be seen to be in tension with the imperatives of winning elections.

The task of winning political office – with all its secretive, compromising and constraining logics – is more often than not in conflict with the development of transformative capacity in society. This has to be acknowledged as a condition for combining both, preferably in some modular political framework. Such self-conscious acknowledgement of this acute tension can set in motion a process of creating both material and cultural antidotes to the logic of power-as-domination at the same time as protecting and nurturing transformative capacity. This would help to create the conditions where electoral success could open up a dynamic of deeper democratisation, including economic democracy,
rather than allowing electoral success to become an overriding end in itself. But the dynamics and conditions of this require deeper interrogation of experience beyond Europe, in Latin America and at this moment in South Africa especially, as well as a permanently reflective and self-conscious engagement with the acute and difficult struggles and organisation building that we now face.

NOTES

1 See for example the importance of collaborative information and communications technology (ICT) tools in the development of the Spanish party Podemos. See also the collaborative discussions since 2006 of the group Networked Politics across generations and left traditions while focused on the significance of new ICTs for political organisation, both practically and in terms of language, metaphor and paradigm.

2 The Spanish government party, the Popular Party, fiercely but unsuccessfully opposed this award in the European Parliament.


4 The term ‘rank and file’ with its military evocations of those in the ranks following orders from above, says it all.

5 The break of the US dollar from the gold standard, the deregulation of financial flows in the US and then the UK and the eventual breakdown of the post-war financial order institutionalised in the Bretton Woods arrangements.


7 ‘A hacker seeks to learn and build upon pre-existing ideas and systems. He believes that access gives hackers the opportunity to take things apart, fix, or improve upon them and to learn and understand how they work. This gives them the knowledge to create new and even more interesting things’ (Levy [1984] 2010).

8 Speech made at the decisive 2006 Congress of Rifondazione Communista.

9 By ‘pluralist’ I mean a break from the idea that the party has a monopoly on the process of social change, and recognition of a plurality of sources of transformative power.

10 Interview with the author, Oslo, 2004.

11 Including of a relatively strong trade union movement with considerable influence over the Labour Party.

12 Interview with the author, Oslo, 2006.

13 Telephone interview with the author, early 2015.

BEYOND SOCIAL-DEMOCRATIC AND COMMUNIST PARTIES


16 ‘All Italy’s history shows that it is basically a right-wing country, heavily influenced by the Vatican. The composition of the Italian middle classes goes very much in Berlusconi’s favour, and dependent workers in small family firms tend to vote the way their bosses vote. But there is also a very strong, though minority, tradition of left-wing action and mobilisation. That is far from dead. It now has to be put in an organisational and intellectual context that is radically new.’ (See Wainwright, H. 2008. A Red guide to Italian politics. Accessed 14 August 2015, http://www.redpepper.org.uk/A-red-guide-to-Italian-politics/.)


19 Ibid.

20 Ibid.

21 Ibid.


23 Ibid.


25 Characteristic Avgi headlines included ‘The People and the Left for the new Greece’, ‘Do not corrupt the mandate of the people’. These had not been typical of Avgi in the past. Similarly, Tsipras started, very soon after the election where Syriza won a stunning twenty-seven per cent of the vote, to speak like this: ‘Sunday is not just about a simple confrontation between Syriza and the political establishment of the Memorandum. […] It is about an encounter of the people with their lives. An encounter of the people with their fate. […] Between the Greece of the oligarchy and the Greece of Democracy. […] The people unite with Syriza.’


29 Ibid.

30 Though the strength of the ‘No’ vote on the EU/IMF austerity memorandum indicates that they have the potential for such mobilisation.


32 Though the electoral alliances in Spain’s main cities, of which Podemos was but one part, have been more successful, which partially reinforces my argument here.

REFERENCES