

# PLURALITY OF RESISTANCE AND CHANGES IN THE MEDITERRANEAN REGION

## An Introductory Discussion on Differences and Similarities of Protest Practices

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In the European countries next to the Mediterranean Sea, we presently observe not only the manifold effects of austerity policies but also significant political and social changes triggered by the (economic) crisis since 2008. In many of these countries, we perceive new forms of social practices of networking, leading to growing opposition and protest articulated by local communities or by social movements, which are based on common acts of solidarity, cooperation and the establishment of (close) personal relationships. Many of these forms of protest do not seem to be characterized by typical and well-known political ideologies or trade unions' demands (cf. Žižek 2012). Instead new practices develop, such as the (re)appropriation of public space, networking, alternative ways of protesting (such as in the case of Occupy or the Indignados<sup>1</sup>), and sharing, inspired by concepts of grassroots-democracy, solidarity, and anti-consumerism (see, e.g., Corredera 2012; Fernández-Savater 2012). These movements can be understood as newcomers in the political arena of many Southern European countries, since they see themselves in a distinct opposition to the established – often clientelistic – political structures of their societies.

The present special issue of *Ethnologia Europaea* focuses on these emerging collaborative protest

practices in Mediterranean countries, which are related to or can be seen as effects of the ongoing economic crisis. Building on the assumption that the Mediterranean can be understood as a common frame of reference for comparative research and analysis (Kavanagh & Lauth Bacas 2011), six case studies are presented, which – based on in-depth fieldwork and participant observation – reflect collaborative interactions as practices of resistance and social or political change within new protest groups, solidarity initiatives and cultural projects related to specific local conflicts that have arisen in the wake of the crisis.

In this introduction to the special issue, we will first present the basic analytical concepts referred to in the title of this volume: a heuristic definition of the concept of *resistance* as well as our understanding of *the Mediterranean* as a comparative framework for anthropological study and analysis. Second, we introduce the six ethnological and anthropological case studies. Based on ethnographic research in France, Italy, Slovenia and Greece, they address the social practices of networking and close collaboration in the context of social change or political activism since 2008. In a third and fourth step, we investigate the differences and the similarities of these new Mediterranean protest movements alongside the fol-

lowing questions: First, which different visions and differing resistance practices are developed and collectively applied to accomplish political goals? And second, are there any similarities between the social movements and initiatives presented here, which can be related to “the Mediterranean” as a common frame of action and reference?

### Concepts of Resistance and “the Mediterranean” – a Heuristic Approach

*The Oxford English Dictionary* defines “resistance” as the refusal to accept or to comply with something. This starting point allows for an understanding of resistance in relational arrangements of symbolic and social power relations, in which social actors oppose something they see as unjust or unfair. In contrast to social “protest”, which is characterized by its being an event, by the collectivity of the actors (Thiele 1992), by its being public and by the existence of social or political causes, practices of resistance can be more continuous. They can also be expressed in symbolic acts or subcultural rituals (Hall & Jefferson 1976), or can be less visible and more hidden (Scott 1985, cf. below) and not necessarily connected with a political goal or concrete demands. At the same time, resistance is distinguished from protest in that it not only means the voicing of dissent, but also undertaking concrete actions for change. Finally, while public protest often becomes professionalized in the course of the development of a social movement (Rammstedt 1978), resistance is less likely to be. Of course, the distinction between the two concepts may be blurred when applied to concrete case studies.

Inspired by James Scott (1985), Stellan Vinthagen and Anna Johansson (2013) distinguish between the following types of resistance: first, publicly declared resistance (e.g. revolts, petitions, demonstrations, or invasions), which may appear amongst others in the form of counter-ideologies; second, disguised resistance which is characterized by its low profile, being held secret, or happening from within the accordant system. This disguised form can exist as everyday resistance (e.g. poaching, squatting, desertion, evasion), composed of direct resistance by disguised

resisters, hidden expressions of anger or dissident subcultures. Everyday resistance thus is characterized by individual as well as collective actions that are not organized, formal or necessarily public or intentionally political. It is this latter type of everyday resistance that is of particular importance for the approach of this themed issue. Diverging from the original understanding of “civil resistance” as mass movements (see Ortner 1995: 174), for the analysis of our case studies we focus on small-scale or micro-level forms of resistance<sup>2</sup> by local actors, especially on concepts of everyday resistance such as brought into focus by James Scott (1985, 1989, 1990) and described, for example, by Gary Marx (2009). In a theoretical meta-analysis, Jocelyn Hollander and Rachel Einwohner (2004) have highlighted some kind of action and a sense of opposition as central for definitions of resistance. Action is in this case defined as active behaviour which opposes opponents or ideas perceived as being unjust or unfair. This distinction will be important for our argument in the following, as we discuss the contributions to this issue by comparing the *how* and *against whom*.

In a next step, we would like to reflect on the concept of “the Mediterranean” and its analytical relevance for our comparative approach. Stereotypes about the Mediterranean way of life are widespread, for example the *dolce far niente* (sweet doing nothing), and the Mediterranean, patriarchal man who is characterized by familism, sensuality, hospitality, but on the other hand also by his unpredictability and violent behaviour. Not only have they been produced by the tourism industry, the media and fictional products of pop culture such as films or TV-shows, but also by early anthropological Mediterranean Studies of the 1960s and 1970s (see for example Peristiany 1963; cf. Driessen 2001: 15, 21). The tendency was to conceptualize the area of the Mediterranean’s littoral states as a more or less culturally homogeneous unit, imagined as persisting until the present (the 1960s) or at least as having existed until very recently. Georg Stauth and Marcus Otto (2008: 20) argue that this imagery of the Mediterranean’s origins always have implied the notion of a lost unity.

However, since the 1980s, the supposed “unity of the Mediterranean area” has been increasingly contested, deconstructed and criticized as culturalist, orientalist and stereotypical (Herzfeld 1984; Llobera 1986; Pina-Cabral 1989; Giordano 1990). Although basic categories such as honour and shame have been questioned and deconstructed (Herzfeld 1984; Dir 2005: 8, 22), the term Mediterranean is nevertheless used in an on-going process of categorization, as Henk Driessen has pointed out (2001: 15). Within current Mediterranean Studies, the Mediterranean is clearly no longer understood as a homogeneous space of traditional ways of life or traditional attitudes. Today, ethnologists and social anthropologists working in the region are convinced that an unreflexive concept of a “Mediterranean culture area” merely reinforces stereotypes. Thus, another concept of “the Mediterraneans” (in the plural) has been introduced (Abulafia 2005; Greverus & Welz 2001), with the aim of departing from the theoretical perspective of the Circum-Mediterranean area as an all-encompassing entity and, in its place, referring to the multiple realities of the region. This acknowledgment of the de facto pluralization of cultural practices and discourses in Southern Europe is a relevant starting point for our comparative approach and analysis, too.

On the other hand, the unforeseen persistence of certain cultural patterns, to which Klaus Schönberger (2015) recently pointed, prompts anthropologists to reflect carefully on their analytical tools. Lidia Sciamia (2013) and Paola Sacchi and Pier Paolo Viazzi (2014), for instance, have argued that a more reflexive understanding of honour and shame can prove valuable for empirical and historical research within different Mediterranean societies. Sciamia (2013) stresses the complexity of the relationships between people in the Mediterranean, which makes it problematic to categorize the accordant countries as a unified cultural region, but she nevertheless finds overlapping regional realities. Goddard, Llobera and Shore propose to make the concept of “the Mediterranean” productive by widening the analysis beyond old terms and concepts: gender and kinship should be related to personhood and seen

within the context of civil society; likewise, focus should be on Europe instead of being on the Mediterranean only (Goddard et al. 1994: 86).

William Kavanagh and Jutta Lauth Bacas (2011) also propose a non-essentialist research approach to the littoral countries of the Mediterranean, arguing that socio-cultural differentiations have to be taken into account. Thus, the Mediterranean space can be seen as a patchwork of interrelated regions and micro-regions as well as a relevant base of reference for regional comparisons. This understanding of the Mediterranean as a frame encompassing a patchwork of different regions and pluralized cultural practices opens up comparative approaches also presented in this special issue. Therefore, a reflexive reevaluation, a de-essentialization and a recontextualization of the basic categories of Mediterranean Studies – honour, patronage, familism<sup>3</sup> – can still be used as approaches for a better understanding of changing conditions within the multiple realities of the Mediterranean (Lauth Bacas 2013: 224). In the closing part of our introduction, we will discuss whether this reflexive concept of the Mediterranean can be applied on current protest movements, too. In comparing the protest movements, our aim in this special issue is to provide a deeper understanding of how protest and practices of resistance are contextualized, how they make use of localized social and cultural resources and achieve complexity in local response to austerity and neoliberal state politics.

### **Current Practices of Resistance and Social Change in the Mediterranean: Six Case Studies**

The ethnological and anthropological case studies included in this special issue portray six different protest groups and their actors, their visions and goals and the forms of their social action and resistance practices as engaged responses to crisis situations in different countries next to the Mediterranean. The issue starts out with a new type of digital resistance developed in a harbour district of Marseille, moves on to urban gardening in Ljubljana as an everyday form of resistance, and continues with a spotlight on Genuino Clandestino, a network

of small-scale farmers in Italy. Three vivid protest movements against austerity politics are presented, which are all staged in crisis-driven Greece: two case studies investigate solidarity networks in urban contexts (Athens and Volos), and one study investigates the urban-rural nexus and rural solidarity networks on the Peloponnese peninsula.

In his paper, the anthropologist Philip Cartelli describes a media-based protest against the commodification of the Panier, a historic harbour-district of Marseille, and against the orchestration of Marseille as a Mediterranean port city, through the web documentary project of the Tabasco video collective “Et le Panier dans tout ça?” (And what about the Panier?). The project functions as digital resistance, creating a counter-public and giving a voice to residents, the marginalized, ethnic minorities, and to working-class perspectives regarding the metamorphosis of their quarter. While the Tabasco video project was supported by the cultural institutions that undertook the urban renewal project of the Panier – the MuCEM and the Villa Méditerranée administration – it questions the positive role of these institutions, showing for example that the concept of the Mediterranean is quasi only employed by the institutions promoting it and contrasting this fact with the strong local identity of the quarter’s inhabitants. The video documentary points to the eviction of citizens and marginalized groups in the course of the redevelopment of the Panier, such as people who publicly drink alcohol, recreational swimmers, and fishermen. The documentary also shows the emergence of practices of resistance, such as swimming there and climbing the representative buildings despite the presence of security guards. As Cartelli points out, in France there has not been a huge anti-austerity movement such as in Spain or Greece. In Marseille, a protest rather manifests itself in form of everyday discourse. In this context, Cartelli interprets the Tabasco video project and the accordant workshops as a form of political action. As Adriana de Souza e Silva (2006) has pointed out, the use of digital media can lead to a reconfiguration of social space facilitating networking and the exchange of information between social actors facing similar problems.<sup>4</sup>

Practices of everyday resistance are also the topic of Saša Poljak Istenič, a social anthropologist, in her analysis of urban gardening in Ljubljana, which she interprets as a practice opposing the growing neoliberal market economy. She points out to the ambiguity of these protest practices, which at the same time contribute to market and advertisement logics promoting the city as a “European Green Capital”. Poljak Istenič shows that in the case of the Slovenian capital, urban gardening as a form of protest combines the nostalgic reinvocation of socialist ideas and neoliberal practices. Analysing two strategies of resistance – horizontal, leaderless anarchist initiatives with guerrilla tactics of occupying and squatting and creative communities of mainstream culture – Poljak Istenič comes to the conclusion that only the anarchist initiatives are not incorporated into mainstream discourse while the creative groups are. Using the example of the Zadruga Urbana, Poljak Istenič shows this group’s aim to create a utopian non-hierarchical, non-commercial society of equality and solidarity on the basis of a shared economy. The initiative produces food sustainably, transforms places into collective gardens, conducts public dinners and organizes alternative non-profit markets. The gardens also serve as manifestations of critique against consumption as predominant practice and the capitalist management and commodification of urban places.

Poljak Istenič hints at ambiguities and ambivalences of the local protest movement Zadruga Urbana, which was not successful insofar as it did not lead to a changing of the rules of the city regarding the temporary use of gardens. However, the participation in ecological projects and alternative markets has strengthened participants, given them agency and a sense of community and connected them as equals, changing power relations. By producing food in a way that assumes other parameters – leaning on solidarity and reciprocity, undermining austerity economy and constructing relationships of personal trust in the intimate social environment – control over the participants’ own lives is partially reestablished, which Poljak Istenič interprets as a potential of resistance. At the same time, grassroots activities

fulfil gaps created by austerity measures, and the positive alternative futures that they create to protest against the neoliberal system (e.g. self-management of public spaces, participatory decision-making, horizontal cooperation, production of local food etc.) become incorporated into dominant urban policies.

The importance of personal trust is stressed by an initiative showing some similarities to Ljubljana's urban gardening movement: the network *Genuino Clandestino* in Italy, which has been researched by ethnologist Alexander Koenler. *Genuino Clandestino* is a network of small-scale farmers, who produce ecological food and oppose bureaucratic EU-regulations imposed on their production process in the name of transparency, food safety or environmental protection. According to the viewpoint of *Genuino Clandestino* members, the EU-regulations de facto erode informal personal relations and favour large industrial productions, thus fostering a continuous transformation of farming into global agribusiness. *Genuino Clandestino* sees its network as based not on impersonal rules of the Brussels bureaucracy, but on personal trust. Members sell their products on informal markets, in squatted social centres and during alternative festivals. The movement has established an alternative system of self-certification reinventing the modes to certify in more democratic and inclusive ways. In a first wave of experiments, producers would exhibit statements describing the way in which they produced their products. In a second wave, many groups of *Genuino Clandestino* considered the need to develop more sophisticated alternative certification principles, with evolving definitions ranging from "participatory self-certifications" to "participatory guarantees". Thus, the movement shows evolving modes of the governance of transparency and the possibilities for opposing and reinventing them, based on personal trust.

Trust is of special relevance in the context of the Greek crisis, as citizens' *distrust* in state institutions and in national politicians had risen to a peak level after the introduction of far-reaching austerity measures. To briefly recall their history: After the signing of the first Memorandum in 2010, the Greek

government decided to implement a neoliberal re-adjustment programme by raising taxes and cutting wages, salaries and pensions. As a result, most private households in Greece had to pay the price of neoliberal reforms; they had to cope with less income and higher taxes as well as higher everyday expenses. Not surprisingly, next to strikes and demonstrations, a large number of local protest movements mushroomed all over the country, which also triggered the interest of researchers. Three pieces of this new research on recent Greek social movements are included in our special issue.

Starting with fieldwork in 2014, anthropologist Andreas Streinzer investigates a local solidarity network in Volos, a port city in Thessaly situated midway between Athens and Thessaloniki. To cope with declining cash income, a group of citizens in Volos developed a Local Exchange and Trading System (a so-called LETS). Its members exchange household services and goods for private consumption between each other, which are internally assessed and calculated in a complementary currency, the so-called TEM. By participating in this Volos-based exchange and trading system, its members intended to practically enact their resistance to austerity policies imposed by the Troika and to eurozone capitalism as a whole. By invoking notions of solidarity as a guiding principle for their actions, the LETS founders in Volos aim at building a new form of relational arrangement that would allow them to enact economic relations otherwise than how they are enacted under the prevailing (euro) economy. Resistance, in this case, is a feature of social practice that takes an oppositional stance towards hegemonic practices or groups. By now (five years after its inauguration), the Volos-based TEM has developed into the largest complementary currency in Greece in terms of membership and turnover.

Anthropologist Monia Cappuccini investigates the Greek capital of Athens as another relevant hub for developing strategies against austerity policies. Researching two social movements, the Syntagma Square movement and the Social Solidarity Network of Exarchia, Cappuccini studies the interactions and impacts of grassroots mobilizations as resistant

practises in response to the economic crisis. Starting from an interest in the occupation of the Syntagma Square as a social protest in an urban public space, Cappuccini turns to the inner urban neighbourhood of Exarchia, attempting to portray how this “resistance identity” has developed and transformed into a more “everyday practice”. As Cappuccini’s data show, her interlocutors chose to take action against neoliberal strategies in small-scale and well-connected solidarity networks; its members became active in order to prevent that private households had their electricity supply cut off as a consequence for not paying the E.N.F.I.A, a newly established real-estate tax (referred to by many Greeks as “charatsi”). For their form of localized protest, a fast response based on close communication (via mobile phones) and mutual trust and reliability is essential; every time the state-owned Electricity Company DEI sends out its employees to cut off the electricity supply of a flat in Exarchia, Social Solidarity Network members set up a picket line in front of the house to prevent the personnel from cutting off the electricity. This model of protest is working – the solidarity movement has successfully prevented many power cuts since 2012.

Studying rural solidarity networks in Greece, James Verinis argues that because of or despite the lack of institutional support frameworks, local farmers affected by the Greek crisis have found ways and new forms of coping and collaborating on their own terms. In his research in the Laconia district of the Peloponnese peninsula, Verinis investigates newly emerging forms of solidarity between Greek farmers and non-Greeks (Albanians most notably) who have become landowning farmers in the past decade. As his ethnographic findings show, rural families and local business-owners in the periphery of Greece are presently extending their social networks and incorporating non-Greeks into their personal and professional lives by, for example, becoming god-parents of immigrant children and also by selling local non-Greeks portions of their farmland – as opposed to absentee Greek landlords. By doing so, they aim at establishing sustainable face-to-face networks on local terms. These solidarity networks are

based on local concepts, seen by the actors as forms of reliance on kin networks, neighbourhood, or the village. This reconfiguration of social relations between Greek farmers and Albanian immigrants through arrangements of reliance on “each other” is considered by Verinis as novel in the agricultural landscape of the Peloponnese peninsula with transformative potential in the context of an encompassing economic crisis.

### **The Plurality of Resistance Practices and Meanings**

As stated above, in contrast to public protest as an event, practices of resistance are more continuous and more polymorphous in their appearance: taking place in a broad spectrum of everyday to more organized collective actions, expressing opposition in more symbolic or hidden to more direct or open ways, being more or less recognized by the powerful (see also Hollander & Einwohner 2004).

Starting from this recognition of the potential variety of acts of resistance, we now move on to a discussion of the six case studies included in this special issue, not to construct a typology, but to evaluate the examples from France, Slovenia, Italy and Greece as case studies providing different information in their own right. In comparing these cases through an anthropological lens, we recognize a number of differences between these protest movements and their localized practices of resistance, thus spelling out the many meanings of resistance and the plurality of resistance practices in varying Mediterranean contexts. The above-mentioned multiple realities of the Mediterranean region (cf. Greverus & Welz 2001) are characteristic for the social movements of the region, too: Social protest and practices of resistance are always related to their specific historical and regional contexts. They make use of contextualized social and cultural resources and achieve an impact by locally responding to austerity and neoliberal politics.

One might ask why the Slovenian case study should be seen as belonging to the Mediterranean region, given the fact that Slovenia only possesses some kilometres of coastline bordering the Mediter-



raean Sea. In the course of the preparation of this special issue, Saša Poljak Istenič herself reflected on this issue. In a note to the guest editors, Poljak Istenič argued that, while only a few Slovenian anthropologists have engaged in research reflecting “the Mediterranean” framework (cf. Brumen 2000; Baskar 2002), the city of Ljubljana, Slovenia’s capital, in their public relations communication occasionally refer to “the Mediterranean”.

We can see that within the researched movements, change is related mainly to modifying *local* life worlds and conditions through practices of empowerment and participation or mutual cooperation. With regard to the practices deployed to accomplish their goals, the cases demonstrate an impressive variety of offline- as well as online-practices of resistance by activists, which include on-the-spot actions like the formation of picket lines, middle-term actions like urban gardening and squatting – leading to long-term actions documenting and publishing oppositional world views, such as video activism. This categorization is made mainly for heuristic reasons: in reality, strategies and practices of resistance can have overlapping effects. For example, the activity of a group of citizens in Exarchia, Athens, who occupy the entrance of a flat and prevent state employees from cutting off the electricity supply has a short-term effect: the tenants staying there are able to use their electric devices despite their (due to austerity measures) unpaid bills. The middle-term effect is public protest articulated in media; the long-term effect can be seen in the punctual boycott of state measures introduced to the Greek public sector in accordance with the neoliberal demands of the Troika.

Klaus Schönberger and Ove Sutter have differentiated protest practices into actions which appeal, actions which mobilize, actions which inform and actions which provoke (Schönberger & Sutter 2009: 20–22). In contrast to such forms of protest striving above all for mobilization and third-party-effects, the practices of resistance observed in the case studies presented in this issue mostly aim for particular changes in the lives of the participants and can be, thus, related to everyday resistance. An exception is

Cartelli’s example of video activism, which points to the creation of counter-spaces as resistance to commodification. In the case of the urban gardening practices in Ljubljana, activists do both: creating a counter-public and, at the same time, improving their living conditions by harvesting their own, organic food. According to Henri Lefebvre (1996), especially marginalized people construct counter-spaces in which they strive to maintain their attachment to particular localities and assert their right to determine the activities that go on in particular spaces. Counter-spaces, Lefebvre implies, are necessary spaces of concrete personal relations, as they are in part a protest against the abstraction imposed by authorities as part of their arsenal of social control. All examples of everyday resistance presented in this volume are at the same time situated locally and globally framed as collective practices responding to aspects of global changes and conditions such as neoliberalism and the crisis.

All of the cases point to the relevance of materiality and embodiment, of face-to-face interactions, as opposed to forms of protest that are based only on digital practices,<sup>5</sup> for even if in the case of the Tabasco video collective, the dissemination of information via the internet facilitated the emergence of a counter-public, the workshops, which were conducted in the form of face-to-face communication, were directly effective in raising consciousness and changing perceptions. As Judith Butler (2011) has stated: “For politics to take place, the body must appear.”

In some of the cases, resistance *promoting* change is being pursued – rural solidarity networks, peasant activism and urban gardening being the examples – while in others, the goal is resistance *against* an unwanted change, as in the case of the Tabasco video project and the Exarchia solidarity networks. Some of the initiatives try to reestablish social life as it is envisioned as having been predominant in the past, characterized by close relationships, interactions in small-scale social networks, and personal trust.

However, the examples of the Tabasco video project as well as of the urban gardening initiatives described by Poljak Istenič also show the ambivalences

of conducting protest from a position of being part of the neoliberal system, which is, at the same time, directed against the system. Thinking about governmentality (see Foucault 2004) and about the theory of empire by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2002), one can ask: Is there an alternative to neoliberalism and techno-capitalism? Apart from those cases where a revolution intends to overthrow the societal order, activists more or less tend to run into danger of being absorbed or instrumentalized by hegemonic discourses. Movements are, like any other social actor, influenced by the cognitive, emotional, cultural and epistemic horizon of their society of origin (see Baumgarten & Ullrich 2012; Ullrich & Keller 2014). This embedding of protest practices in their societal context will be investigated in the next section in more detail.

Yet, as we can see from the examples of the six case studies presented, activists are successfully creating spaces of resistance and alternative forms of living, creating in their interactions little pockets of freedom in the sense of Hannah Arendt (1968: 326): spaces that enable participation and give people the freedom and warrant to enact relationships and practices that differ from those characterizing mainstream society, testing and demonstrating alternative possibilities. These small acts of resistance holding the potential for lasting change begin with vital issues directly affecting people's everyday lives, such as the reappropriation of control over life conditions, as it is represented in the form of food activism – a phenomenon currently on the rise in countries like Germany and the USA related to the perceived uncertainties and mounting mistrust regarding the industrialization of food production – and also, in resistance against the attempts to being cut off from electric power.

### **The Relevance of Mutual Trust in Mediterranean Protest Movements**

How do the six different case studies presented here show similarities regarding the modes and forms of protest, which could be related to their common Mediterranean context? Based on a reflexive understanding of the Mediterranean, presented here

as a fragmented reference frame (cf. Kavanagh & Lauth Bacas 2011: viii), how do these Mediterranean cases depart from other forms of protests? Or can the strategies and actions of the activists in France, Slovenia, Italy and Greece be seen as effects of the all-embracing worldwide crisis, of neoliberalism or post-democracy more generally (c.f. Crouch 2008)?

More broadly, and not only in the Mediterranean countries, the crisis has led to growing debt (cf. Wallerstein 2010: 137) and rising social inequities (Della Porta 2015: pos. 887f.). The overall situation in crisis-driven countries (in Europe and beyond) is characterized by rising unemployment, the stagnation of wages, the reduction of social services (Streeck 2014: 149), the privatization of public services and goods (Graefe 2004). Post-democracy, which is characterized by a feeling of impotence towards global developments and the power of companies and banks, can lead to a distance between institutions of the state and a strong localism. In this situation, in many European countries, protests, movements and initiatives emerge sharing certain structural similarities that exceed the different societies.

Describing social movements, which have developed in reaction to said crisis, Donatella Della Porta (2015) has coined the term anti-austerity movements. Those movements oppose austerity measures and can be read as a symptom of the crisis of neoliberalism and of political responsibility: institutions are (and are perceived to be) particularly closed towards citizens' demands. Members of such movements are mainly the precariat, as Della Porta argues, and young people who are often unemployed and have a high level of education. They are organized through direct democracy. They fight for an alternative to globalization as it exists and for social equality. Also, they are oriented towards the common good, consensus, equality, inclusion, and transparency. As examples for anti-austerity movements Della Porta names the Indignados, the J14 protesters occupying Rothschild Boulevard in the Israeli capital, Tunisia, the protests of Egypt, and Occupy (Della Porta 2015).

One could argue that the cases presented in this



special issue function as austerity movements; the reason for the protests is the crisis and the protesters are the so-called precarious – people who suffer most from the crisis. As we can see, however, this is only partly true. In the case of the Tabasco Video Project described by Cartelli, the reason for protest is rather the commodification of public places and thus, the protest can be linked to the right to the city movements (cf. Lefebvre 1996) – the right to the city meaning the right to centrality and to participation in public life and against gentrification. Furthermore, while the resistant voices in the videos belong to marginalized groups, the initiative took its starting point in collaboration between not entirely underprivileged film-makers and the municipal institutions. In the case of Genuino Clandestino, while the crisis may have fuelled incentives for establishing an alternative system of food production and its evaluation, the protest originated in resistance against EU regulations. Also, the activities of the peasants emerge from a decade-long activism on the margins of communist and anarchist ideologies; the activists themselves are mostly dropouts of all age groups belonging to the educated middle classes. Interestingly, Dieter Haller has pointed to the fact that the current movements in the Mediterranean have been sustained by the middle classes, their rage against the impositions of the neoliberal system and their mistrust towards political elites (Haller 2011: 10) – supporting the thesis of similarities between the initiatives, which can be related to their situatedness in the Mediterranean region.

To elaborate on this thesis, we can identify common features between the cases presented in this special issue; however, we are definitely not arguing for homogeneity in Mediterranean protest movements. Instead, we would like to develop a more complex understanding of the field under study by identifying some common underlying features in these clearly different yet related practices of protest.

Firstly, in all cases we see a political discourse being established in which the activists stress the *everyday* importance and the *local* dimension of the “problem” triggered by their social protests and practices of resistance. The “local” becomes important and rele-

vant to political actors as a socially perceived “place”, as “their place”, and as being threatened. As social anthropologists working in the Mediterranean have shown, the significance of a specific village, town or region to the people who work and live there, is related to complex processes of identity formation and making the locality meaningful as their own “place” (see Kavanagh & Lauth Bacas 2011).

It seems that the observed Mediterranean protest movements managed to mobilize their participants; they were successful in linking the big issues of austerity and neoliberal politics to a notion of locality and to the everyday experiences, emotions and perceived needs of local actors. In all of these cases, protest is successful in the form of small local initiatives, which establish change through continuously challenging hegemonic practices. All of the protests are based on common acts of solidarity, locally-based strategies of cooperation and the establishment of (close) personal relationships.

Secondly, another common feature is the major role of face-to-face interaction and *mutual trust*. In all case studies, the interlocutors stressed the importance of close relationships and the relevance of trust within the group of actors. This observation that mutual trust is seen as a central concept for many actors engaged in the here discussed Mediterranean protest movements will be taken as a starting point for further arguing. The actors’ viewpoint that mutual trust is an essential element and precondition for cooperation and practices of protest has to be understood in relation to the societal context their movement is situated in.

In the Mediterranean, the issue of personal trust is of special relevance; many Southern European societies have been described by ethnologists and social anthropologists as societies characterized by a “culture of public *distrust*” (Giordano 2007; Roth 2007). The ethnologist Klaus Roth (2007: 1) points to a basic dichotomy that runs deeply through these societies, namely the opposition between the public and the private spheres. Researchers familiar with the social worlds of actors in Southern Europe often agree with the statement that “the societies and their entire social life have a binary structure, consisting

of two clearly separated spaces to which people attach very different values, the private space being viewed as familiar, friendly, and intimate, while the public space is perceived as unfriendly, dangerous or even hostile” (Roth 2007: 1). Therefore, acting in the public sphere (outside the private circle of family and close friends) is always related to a set of behaviours, attitudes and norms that teach actors to move carefully and with a generalized distrust in the Other in a potentially hostile surrounding.

To overcome this deep inner logic of a binary social order – said to be a relevant feature of most Mediterranean countries – and to enable actors to come together in “altruistic” protest activities and civic engagement in the public sphere, the rhetoric of mutual trust turns out to function as a relevant cultural code that is important for building political engagement beyond established party structures. In a more general sense, Giordano (2007) stresses this high relevance of personalized trust situated in an overall “culture of public distrust” as a very rational behaviour, given the historical experiences of actors in the Mediterranean with clientelism, nepotism, corrupt political elites, and “mafia-style” structures and practices. Personal trust in these specific socio-historical – Mediterranean – contexts can be understood not only as a useful cultural resource for building social networks of trustworthy persons beyond the private sphere. As Streinzer in his case study of the Volos-based TEM exchange networks shows, the rhetoric of trust (and of disappointed trust) can also be employed as a socially accepted code of control in relation to network members, who are accused of free-riding in the local exchange network (see Streinzer 2018 in this volume).

To sum up: Based on the concept of the Mediterranean as a patchwork of regions (and micro-regions) providing a basis for comparative reasoning and research, we argue that the esteem of trust and close relationships expressed by many movement members is related to the societal context they live in: that is the context of *generalized distrust* existing in transformation societies and Mediterranean societies towards politicians, institutions, and unknown groups, as explained by Roth (2007) and Giordano (2007). In

societies of generalized distrust, people who are not part of already existing kin groups or close social networks are generally not trusted; in order to establish trust to such “strangers”, social manoeuvres like face-to-face communication have to be employed. Therefore, an emic emphasis on trust and solidarity as normative code and behavioural expectation can be regarded as a relevant characteristic feature of protest movements within the Mediterranean.

Our suggested approach is supported by results from the research of other current movements within states surrounding the Mediterranean. For example, personal trust played a leading role as internal norm of the Italian feminist movement *Se Non Ora Quando* (When not now, when then?), founded in 2011, as shown in a study by Marion Näser-Lather (2015). The valuation of personal trust led to the feminist movement *Se Non Ora Quando* using restricted modes of digital communication on the local level such as closed Facebook groups only for trusted members who knew each other personally and in many cases were friends. However, on the national level, personal trust could not be established; instead, mistrust against leading activists who were at the same times influential members of political parties or trade unions dominated. General mistrust towards politicians – a characteristic of Italian political discourse – aggravated conflicts within the movement.

Other recent studies have pointed to similarities regarding communication practices. Daniel Trottier and Christian Fuchs argued in 2015 that in Southern European countries, stronger social networks exist and face-to-face interactions in these countries are very important. In addition, Dieter Haller has perceived similarities of the revolutionary movements of the Maghreb in 2011. He states that the collective engagement in spaces of social proximity where face-to-face interaction takes place plays a major role for those movements. Haller names the integration of sensual components and the construction of a “*comunitas*” as necessary factors for success of these movements, meaning that bodily experience and social engagement come together. He comes to the conclusion that this is a Mediterranean characteristic, referring to the traditional importance of places

in Mediterranean cities as space where conflicts are sorted out. It could, however, be argued that also within Occupy and other protest movements, which are not situated in the Mediterranean, physical co-presence plays a major role.

One might argue that characteristics such as the relevance of relationships and face-to-face interactions could be related to economic factors, for example the crisis and the scarcity of social services as well as the influence of organized crime. However, while this is undoubtedly true, those conditions are a characteristic of all the countries around the Mediterranean, and all these conditions lead to solidarity in little groups, which are of social and political importance for the involved actors in a larger sense.

These effects are reinforced, of course, by socio-political circumstances such as the crisis, but also – taking a long-term perspective – to developments taking place in the course of modernity. Nico Schrode links the growing importance of personal trust to the fact that societal trust in the system has collapsed in the context of reflexive modernization<sup>6</sup> because of the perceived fragility of social reality and of crises, of the lability of societal systems and the decreasing security (Schrode 2014).

In this respect, an anthropology of the Mediterranean, that is, the understanding of the Mediterranean as a relevant reference frame for comparison, could be useful for a better understanding of dimensions, structures and successful use of cultural resources and social capital of the actors engaged in the protest movements under study. To underline its non-essentialist meaning, we would rather speak of protest movements *in* the Mediterranean, stressing the contextualization that has to be taken into account in any anthropological analysis. On one hand, the movements and initiatives we refer to portray cases that are unique in their specific historical and socio-cultural context. On the other hand, they are situated in a wider framework, which is not only historically connected but also characterized by the present experiences of austerity and neoliberal politics that affect Mediterranean countries and its citizens in manifold ways.

In short, the contributions in this issue support

the argument that resistance movements have to be understood in a context larger than anti-austerity movements; instead, these locally active resistance movements open up the space for creative actions and participation beyond the more classical core of opposing austerity and neoliberalism. The studies collected here show the emergence of a vivid plurality of resistance practices nevertheless characterized by some similarities: by their reliance on personal trust and their being rooted and being effective in local communities and locally-based practices. In evaluating their impact, we agree with Richard Sennett (2000: 203), who has pointed to the fact that change develops in small-scale, local practices, and not through mass uprisings. The movements and initiatives presented in this special issue accomplish this desire to actively contribute to social change through solidarity networks where mutual trust has been highlighted by the participants as the most prominent cultural resource of their resistance activities in reaction to the crisis situation they encounter.

## Notes

- 1 The protest practices of the Spanish movement *15M*, also called the *Indignados*, and of the international movement *Occupy*, are characterized by not raising political claims in the parliamentary arena, but by occupying public places for months, thus demonstrating alternative ways of living together and of basic democracy (see Corredera 2012; Hammond 2013).
- 2 For the distinction between macro-, meso- and micro-levels of resistance, see Williams (2009).
- 3 A critical reflection and reevaluation of the concept of familism in relation to anthropological studies in Southern Italy is provided by Carlo Capello (2013).
- 4 Many different researchers have stressed the facilitation of protest through the use of digital media, e.g. Schönberger (2004), Benkler (2006), Shirky (2008), and Castells (2012).
- 5 The question whether activism only relying on online-practices can be successful in the sense of engendering change has been widely discussed (see, e.g., Ayers 2003; Hamm 2006; Morozov 2011).
- 6 The theory of reflexive modernization, established by Ulrich Beck and Anthony Giddens, thematizes the unintended effects of the global dominance of industrialized modernity, which question modernity itself, e.g. through the individualization of social inequality (see Beck 1986; Giddens 1997).

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