



Language

The financial crisis of 2008 had a disastrous effect on the scale of national debt in Spain and Greece, leading to governments accepting bailouts from the European Bank and IMF in return for stringent austerity programmes cutting jobs and welfare, and privatization of public facilities. Widespread public resistance to austerity measures was launched on 15 May, 2011 in Spain, where the [Real Democracy Now!](#) [1] campaign organized marches in cities and an impromptu protest camp was set up in the Puerta del Sol in Madrid. Thousands more came to the camp and it lasted 78 days; other camps were set up in towns and cities round the country, and the 15M movement (named after the date of the first protest) was launched. Within the broad resistance to the austerity programmes other initiatives have developed: for example to tackle the social crisis of mass evictions in Spain of people defaulting on their mortgages (the [Platform of People Affected by Mortgage \(PAH\)](#) [2]. The multiple crises of food and welfare in Greece have prompted numerous solidarity networks.

The political position in Greece has been particularly unstable, with widespread public anger about the corruption and incompetence of politicians, and demonstrations have quite often become violent. The growth of the Golden Dawn extreme right anti-immigrant party has also been an ominous sign. On the left Syriza, a new radical coalition of small parties, emerged as the party close to popular protest and strongly opposed to the austerity programmes. Syriza was elected in January 2015 with a mandate to renegotiate the terms of continuing IMF/EU financial aid to avoid even harsher austerity measures. Crisis point was reached in June/July 2015. Syriza called a snap referendum on the bail out terms on 5 July, and 61 per cent supported the government in voting 'No'.

Despite this referendum win, the government led by Alexis Tsipras (faced with financial bankruptcy and unwilling and unprepared to abandon the euro) accepted the unmodified harsh EU bailout terms in July 2015. Although opposed by some Syriza members, Tsipras won parliamentary support for his policy, and went on to win (with a reduced majority) the election he called in September 2015. Continuing leftist opposition to the EU terms was dramatized by a 24 hour general strike on 12 November, 2015. Portugal received a large EU/IMF loan in 2011. The victory of a centre-right coalition in elections ensured that the government pressed ahead with austerity measures, leading to high unemployment and widespread privatization. Public sector workers went on strike in protest, but there was not a major popular movement comparable to the Indignados in Spain and Greece.

The linking of privatization measures to austerity programmes has also prompted specific campaigns, for example against water privatization in Greece and a Portuguese strike by postal workers in November 2013 against privatization of the postal service. In addition to protest there have been positive local and democratic alternatives arising from the crisis, such as the neighbourhood assemblies in Spain and imaginative experiments in Greece, for example to bypass use of money through local exchange schemes. All these issues are briefly covered in the references below, although some of these are fairly brief articles from journals sympathetic to the Indignados, such as the UK-based [Red Pepper](#) [3], [New Internationalist](#) [4] and [Peace News](#) [5]; and the [Progressive](#) [6] in the USA.

Carrión, María, [Spaniards Take On the Banks](#) [7], *The Progressive*, issue Nov, 13/11/2012,

Examines campaign against the banks' ruthless treatment of those unable to pay mortgages and other campaigns such as defiance by doctors and health care workers of law requiring them to refuse treatment to immigrants.

Castaneda, Ernesto, [The Indignados of Spain: A Precedent to Occupy Wall Street](#) [8], *Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social and Cultural Political Protest*, Vol. 11, issue 3-4, 2012, pp. 309-319

Builds on participant observation in Barcelona in summer of 2011.

Clark, Howard, [No More Mortgage Suicides! Spain's Social Movements Struggle for Housing Justice](#) [9], *Peace News*, issue 2552-2553 (Dec-Jan), 2012



On the vigorous campaign to support mortgage defaulters and the wider 15M movement.

Dhaliwal, Puneet, [Public Squares and Resistance: The Politics of Space in the Indignados Movement](#) [10], Interface: A Journal for and about Social Movements, Vol. 4, issue 1 (May), 2012, pp. 251-273

Fominaya, Cristina Flesher, [Debunking Spontaneity: Spain's 15-M/Indignados as Autonomous Movement](#) [11], Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social and Cultural Political Protest, Vol. 14, issue 2, 2015, pp. 142-163

Argues emergence of movement not 'new' and 'spontaneous' but product of evolution of a collective identity and culture stressing deliberative democracy since the 1980s.

See also her blog on the OpenDemocracy website: '[Spain is Different: Podemos and 15-M](#)' [12] on the rise of the leftist but non-ideological Podemos party in the European Parliamentary elections of June 2014, and influence of 15-M movement on the nature of the new party.

Garcia, Ter, [A Year of Small Victories for the Spanish Foreclosure Movement](#) [13], Waging Nonviolence, 28/12/2011,

Survey of first year of PAH.

Gerbaudo, Paolo, [Los Indignados](#) [14], Red Pepper, issue Aug/Sept, 2011, pp. 33-35

On launch of movement by Real Democracy Now! on 15 May 2011 with marches and protest camp in Madrid, its spread across Spain and to Greece.

Hancox, Dan, [The Village Against the World](#) [15], London, Verso, 2013, pp. 252

(Successor to ebook Hancox, Dan, [Utopia and the Valley of Tears](#) [16], 2012, pp. 76, on same topic.)

Discusses the small village, Marinaleda, in southern Spain that has battled for decades with the state and capitalist policies, but gained international attention in 2012 when its mayor (and farmers union leader) organized the filling of ten shopping trolleys, refused to pay, and distributed them to the poor from a military base and mansion of a local large landowner.

Katerini, Tonia, [Organising to Survive](#) [17], Red Pepper, issue Dec/Jan, 2013, pp. 43-45

Examines scale of crisis created in Greece by austerity programme and the growing movement Solidarity for All (promoted by the left coalition Syriza) creating support networks supplying food, health, education, cultural activity and legal advice, and setting up informal exchanges of goods and services.

Lamarca, Melissa Garcia, [Sparks from the Spanish Crucible: Resisting evictions Spanish style](#) [18], New Internationalist, issue April, 01/04/2013,

On the Platform for Mortgage Affected People (PAH) set up in February 2009 to campaign about the hundreds of thousands of foreclosures and evictions of people unable to keep up mortgages on their homes, and often faced with a huge debt to the banks even after eviction. The group organized mass resistance to evictions, occupied foreclosed flats and houses to provide shelter for those made homeless, and to lobby Parliament to end evictions, promote affordable rents and changes to the mortgage law.

Ovenden, Keith, [Syriza: Inside a Labyrinth](#) [19], Foreword by Paul Mason. Published in the re-launched Left Book Club series., London, Pluto Press, 2015, pp. 181



Analyzes the rise of Syriza (formed in 2004) within its broader political context, and comments on the problems faced after its victory in the polls and the developments up to early 2015. Chapter 3 'Their Austerity and Our Resistance' focuses on popular resistance by students, strikes by workers, occupations of the squares, environmental struggle, opposition to racism and the major struggle sparked in 2013 by efforts to maintain the national broadcasting and television networks, leading to work place occupations across the country.'

Prentoulis, Marina ; Thomassen, Lasse, [The Legacy of the Indignados](#) [20], OpenDemocracy, 13/08/2013,

Discusses impact two years later of Spanish and Greek movements: their new form of political activism and extended definition of politics.

Reyes, Oscar, [Rooted in the Neighbourhood](#) [21], Red Pepper, issue Oct/Nov, 2012, pp. 36-37

Comments on decline in the neighbourhood assemblies that arose in 2011, but argues widespread willingness to take part in local initiatives survives, and is (for example) strengthening the campaign against eviction of those unable to pay their mortgage.

Romanos, Eduardo, [Evictions, Petitions and Escraches: Contentious Housing in Austerity Spain](#) [22], Social Movement Studies: Journal of Social and Cultural Political Protest, Vol. 13, issue 2, 2013, pp. 296-302

Examines different types of action used by movement against evictions and how a range of people drawn into movement.

Vradis, Antonis ; Dalakoglu, Dimitris, [Revolt and Crisis in Greece: Between a Present Yet to Pass and a Future Still to Come](#) [23], Edinburgh and London, A.K. Press and Occupied London, 2011, pp. 378

Wide range of contributors, including David Graeber, on economic meltdown in Greece and popular responses to government's extreme austerity programme.

See also:

Paul Mason, [Why Its Kicking Off Everywhere: The New Global Revolutions](#) [24], ([A.8.a. General Titles](#) [25]), pp. 87-104 on Greece.

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Links

[1] <http://www.democraciarealya.es/> [2] <http://afectadosporlahipoteca.com/> [3] <http://www.redpepper.org.uk/> [4] <https://newint.org/> [5] <http://peacenews.info> [6] <http://www.progressive.org/> [7] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2012/spaniards-take-banks> [8] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2012/indignados-spain-precedent-occupy-wall-street> [9] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2012/no-more-mortgage-suicides-spains-social-movements-struggle-housing-justice> [10] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2012/public-squares-and-resistance-politics-space-indignados-movement> [11] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2015/debunking-spontaneity-spains-15-m-indignados-autonomous-movement> [12] <https://www.opendemocracy.net/can-europe-make-it/cristina-flesher-fominaya/%e2%80%9cpain-is-different%e2%80%9dpodemos-and-15m> [13] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2011/year-small-victories-spanish-foreclosure-movement> [14] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2011/los-indignados> [15] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2013/village-against-world> [16] <https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2013/village-against-world>



A.8.b. The Indignados: Spain and Greece

Published on CivilResistance.info (<https://civilresistance.info>)

[item/2012/utopia-and-valley-tears \[17\]](#) [https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2013/organising-survive \[18\]](https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2013/organising-survive [18])
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[https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2015/syriza-inside-labyrinth \[20\]](https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2015/syriza-inside-labyrinth [20]) [https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2013/legacy-indignados \[21\]](https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2013/legacy-indignados [21]) [https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2012/rooted-neighbourhood \[22\]](https://civilresistance.info/biblio-item/2012/rooted-neighbourhood [22])
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<https://civilresistance.info/taxonomy/term/206>