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Democratic transitions of Southern Europe in the 1970s have been revisited by the social sciences with some regularity, especially by national studies and more rarely from a comparative perspective. Ceci etant dit, Southern Europe as a region or unity of analysis has survived very well in recent years and is nowadays a consolidated field of studies in the social sciences. In certain areas of research there were changes in the disciplines involved, with history breaking out and offering studies with great and solid empirical evidence. In recent decades, with the consolidation of democratic regimes “Southern Europe” as a unit of analysis of the three countries dissolved a bit, with History prevailing in national studies. However, a note of caution: comparative analysis since democratic transitions has continued to be the subject of many studies from disciplines such as sociology, economics, anthropology and others.

Keywords: Democratization, Southern Europe, Social Sciences, Portugal, Spain, Greece
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Mots-clés : Démocratisation, Europe du Sud, sciences sociales, Portugal, Espagne, Grèce

Tres notas sobre los debates pasados y presentes acerca de la democratización del sur de Europa en la década de 1970

Las Transiciones democráticas del Sur de Europa en los años setenta han sido revisitadas por las ciencias sociales con cierta regularidad, sobre todo a través de estudios nacionales y con menos frecuencia desde una perspectiva comparada. Dicho esto, el Sur de Europa como región o unidad de análisis ha sobrevivido muy bien en los últimos años y es ahora un campo de estudio consolidado en las ciencias sociales. En algunas áreas de investigación se han producido cambios en las disciplinas implicadas, destacando la Historia, que ofrece estudios con una amplia y sólida evidencia empírica. En las últimas décadas, con la consolidación de los regímenes democráticos, el “Sur de Europa” como unidad de análisis de los tres países se ha disuelto un poco, prevaleciendo la historia en los estudios nacionales. Sin embargo, una advertencia: el análisis comparativo desde las Transiciones democráticas ha seguido siendo objeto de numerosos estudios desde disciplinas como la sociología, la economía, la antropología y otras.

Palabras clave: Democratización, Europa del Sur, ciencias sociales, Portugal, España, Grecia
Democratic transitions of Southern Europe in the 1970s have been revisited by the social sciences with some regularity, especially by national studies and more rarely from a comparative perspective. Ceci etant dit, Southern Europe as a region or unity of analysis has survived very well in recent years and is nowadays a consolidated field of studies in the social sciences. In certain areas of research there were changes in the disciplines involved, with history breaking out and offering studies with great and solid empirical evidence. For reasons that are easy to guess only the 1974-75 rupture of regime in Portugal, given its revolutionary character, was immediately the target of several disciplinary (from the dominant Political Science to Sociology or Anthropology) and theoretical perspectives (from functionalism to varieties of Marxism). In the case of Greece and Spain, given the character of a more strict political regime change, with a lighter social, economic and even international disruption, it was natural for political science to dominate the field. In recent decades, with the consolidation of democratic regimes and the synchrony of the three countries’ joining of the European Union’s predecessor, the EEC, “Southern Europe” as a unit of analysis of the three countries dissolved a bit, with History prevailing in national studies. However, a note of caution: comparative analysis since democratic transitions has continued to be the subject of many studies from disciplines such as sociology, economics, anthropology and others. On the other hand, even previous studies of the 1980s already had a more interdisciplinary component. The most extensive and systematic collective study, further developed in the 1990s, coordinated by Richard Gunther, Nikiforos Diamandoros e Hans-Jürgen Puhle, although partly published at the beginning of the 21st Century, was no longer exclusively dominated by political science. Unfortunately, the volume on society has never been published, but from the economy to state-society relations and gender, several societal and economic dimensions have been addressed.

This “dossier” is an excellent attempt not only to balance, (carrying out a rigorous “state of the art”, where most of the literature is quoted), but also to successfully pointing out new analytical perspectives of the processes of democratization. More importantly, taking the comparative method seriously. These short conclusive remarks follow the structure of the Dossier and of its thematic sequence, and has modest intentions, reflecting on three themes addressed by the articles: the nature of the Transitions, national and international factors, the social dimensions and legacies of the Transitions and their impact on contemporary Portuguese, Greek and Spanish democracies.

1 Gunther, Diamandouros and Puhle, 1995; Diamandouros and Gunther, 2001; Gunther, Diamandouros and Sotiropoulos, 2006.
Process of Regime Change in Southern Europe. 
“Close, Yet (Very) Different”

I took this title from one of the articles in this dossier to point out what Balios and Sánchez write in their article: “If the collapse of the Southern dictatorships was not even considered a remote possibility, the outbreak of a revolution belonged even more to a political science fiction scenario”, but if this surprise effect was clear, “finalism” is an analytical advantage of the social sciences. In fact, if one of the limitations encountered in some studies about Southern European democratization is their teleologic nature, based on the subsequent consolidation of liberal democracy, the truth is also that in the so-called “third wave” of democratizations, we find many derailed processes, which help us to better understand the process of “equifinality” present in the cases of Southern Europe.

The pioneering article of P. C. Schmitter on the breakdown of the Portuguese Dictatorship in 1974 had the title “Liberation by Golpe”, demonstrating the scant awareness of the wave of democratization that would follow. Some of the characteristics of the Portuguese transition to democracy—particularly the role of the military, the state crisis and the momentum gathered by social movements—were difficult to integrate into the comparative study of third-wave democratization processes. As Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan noted, “we all too often tend to see [Portugal] in the framework set by later transition processes”, forgetting the greater degree of uncertainty and the extreme conflict path of regime change that, according to some authors, “was not a conscious transition to democracy”. This first comparative literature made Portugal a deviant case, almost always focusing on the difficult path endured towards democratic consolidation. With the majority of third-wave democratizations based on élite-pacted transitions, Portugal was considered a negative case, with a wide segment of political science literature considering it as proof that “central and direct involvement of mass actors in the transition can, as the Portuguese experience indicates, derail democratization and reduce the chances of consolidation”. Let us recognize however, that the dominant models of the global wave of democratization after the end of the “cold war” did not go through the Portuguese case since both in Latin America and central Europe the dominant model passed through the initiative of segments of the authoritarian élite and a negotiation model with segments of the opposition.

Citing another article of this dossier, I would not go so far in characterizing the on-going debate on whether one should present the Portuguese

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2 Schmitter, 1975.
1 Schmitter, O’Donnell and Whitehead, 1986; 117; Linz and Stepan, 1996, p. 117.
5 Diamandouros, 1997, p. 15.
revolution as a precursor of the third wave of transitions to democracy or as the last ‘Leninist theatre’ of Europe”, but it certainly had aspects of a “western revolutionary crisis” after 1968-69, not present at all in Greece and even less in Spain⁶. What happened in Portugal in 1974 was a militarily protected “transition by rupture”, that was not just a political and institutional break with the authoritarian regime, but also, and especially from 1975 onwards, an attempt to promote an economic and social model that served as an alternative to capitalism. The combination (or overlapping) of factors (democratization, decolonization, radical changes in the economic and social structure) increased the uncertainty about the outcome of the transition process. Because of all these factors, the theoretical and empirical mobilization of social sciences went largely beyond the ‘transitology’ of political science and, given its initial characteristic of a pre-revolutionary crisis, it mobilized greater analytical and disciplinary diversity.

With the second wave of studies on the Southern European transitions and consolidation of democracy, Portugal continued to embody a case study of a sort of negative and complex path towards a consolidated democracy, contrasting with the other Southern European cases. Both in Greece and Spain the process of regime change was clearly élite driven, but in the case of Greece it was the past democratic right of Karamanlis who “got the power” from the Military Junta. “The transition was based on a centre and centre-right founding coalition, whilst the consolidation was supported by virtually the entire political spectrum” and Metapolitefsi was “both an epilogue to a system of power and a continuation of a long historical cycle of socio-political modernization”, (Balampanidis and Rezola), but the rupture with the authoritarian past was clear. As Balios and Sánchez write “Most of the personalities who participated in the National Unity government had previous political experience in the pre-junta period, and Karamanlis himself had been prime minister (1956-1963), and responsible for the pro-European orientation of the country that had derived in the association to the EEC in 1961” (Balios and Sánchez). The abolition of the Monarchy, the legalization of the Communist Party (KKE), and with the “Dejuntification” process that trialed the main leaders of the Military Dictatorship, were elements of rupture with the authoritarian and semi-democratic past. As Cerezales and Sório write “In the cases of Greece and Portugal, the outgoing regime élites had very limited power over the process. A new civilian élite replaced the colonels in Greece and a military-led coalition in Portugal did the same with the dictatorship’s political élite. In Spain, in contrast, the outgoing élites held significant power, but it was limited by transactions with the opposition and the social and political mobilization that supported them”. Although it is impossible to ignore the importance of “street pressure” and of civil

⁶ Sweezy, 1975.
society in the democratization process of Spain, the Transition was launched from above, by and through the political institutions inherited from the Dictatorship. More important, the process was led by electoral legitimated center-right élites coming from within the Dictatorship. This characteristic of Spanish democratization and its (for many, negative) consequences for the consolidation of democracy is one of the best studied and debated aspects in Spain.

Philippe Schmitter used the term “equifinality” to conceptualize how countries can take radically different paths to converge toward similar outcomes, in this case liberal democracy. But here again the “radically different path” is important for the case of Portugal and much less so for the case of Greece or Spain, since in the later cases the synchrony of the projects of the dominant political élites and of their electoral legitimation is much clearer in their road towards the consolidation of liberal democratic regimes. Associated with democratic consolidation another important debate refers to the agents of “equifinality”, in this case “Europe”, meaning here EEC Membership as a guarantee for the young democratic institutions and modernization of the economy.

Both Balios and Sánchez, and Balampanidis and Rezola, directly grasp the central theme of Schmitter’s equifinality: To what extent was the prospect of joining the European Union the main agent of democratic consolidation, after very different transitions in all three cases? Their chapters, to quote one “builds on the idea that with regard to institutional change and structure, the three countries present different transitional experiences although the different paths followed end up converging in a certain institutional, political and “cultural”/civic modernisation—at which point we may wonder if the integration into the European Economic Community and “Europeanisation” have been perceived in all three cases as the capstone of the transitional institutional reforms and as a critical lever for their consolidation” (Balampanidis and Rezola). From this perspective, I may add, regardless of the more or less importance of the dynamics “from bellow” in the processes of regime change, the road towards EEC membership was also an élite driven process even if with electoral legitimacy, what brings me to a clearly underestimated factor by the initial literature of political science on Southern European transitions to democracy: international factors.

Political conditionality was considered a powerful tool to keep the three countries on the path towards democratization and the Iberian authoritarian leaders were already aware of it since the 1960s. An early process of political learning for authoritarian leaders of Spain and Portugal came when the EEC froze the association agreement with Greece and isolated the country in the Council of Europe until it was forced out in 1969.
Democratization and Social Movements

A classic theme of the literature on regime change is the role of social movements and the political mobilization of legal or clandestine opposition parties, before or during the processes of democratization. As Cerezales and Soriano underline “In general terms, there has been a widespread critique of the “top down” view of transitions, both as an ideal model but also as a description of realities that were messier and more uncertain. Scholars have explored the transitions “from below”, demonstrating that collective actors from the broader population—of men and women—were also active agents in proposing alternative and competing visions of a democratic future”. These works on social movements, and I quote Papadogiannis and Pinto, “questioned the place of politics”, introducing towards longer processes of change and to a broader constellation of collective actors. Again, we must be careful with generalizations, because the critique of the “top down” perspective can be applied to Spain and to a lesser extent Greece, but that was never the case of the studies on Portugal, where the “bottom up” perspective is obviously present since the very beginning of the Transition.

Simultaneously and their studies are an illustration of this, interdisciplinary research on protest has helped to refine the study of political developments before, during and after democratization, especially, I will stress, for Spain and Greece. New social movements and new political actors of the “global 1960s”, associated with a new radical left and the student movements were in fact a significant actor in the three Southern European transitions. But even if we extend the chronological scope of the analysis is still difficult to associate the processes of breakdown of dictatorships in Southern Europe with the role of anti-authoritarian social movements. Their importance starts to be clear during the Transition, not before. Here yes, “the question of establishing a role for collective actors in the Transitions is, to a large extent, a battle long won” (Papadogiannis and Pinto). Again, I can just agree with Papadogiannis and Pinto when they stress the importance of a new body of literature that sees Southern European transitions with the lenses of the “long 1960s” and of its global effects.

In their chapter on Gender and women in Southern European transitions, Ortega López and Yannakopoulos write:

In comparing the three cases, the role of gender was one of the most similar features across the three transitions. In all cases, the political Transitions brought some changes to what had been very rigid and traditional gender systems during the dictatorships, but also left much of this untouched, either due to political indifference or conservative social attitudes. What seems clear is that promoting transitions in gender and sexual norms were not among the highest priorities of the political élites who led the institutional transitions. At the same time, cultural and social changes that began under the dictatorships
quietly undermined these norms and set the stage for accelerated change in the decades after the Transitions.

Basically, “There were some basic changes in formal political rights but no major ‘gender transition’ accompanying the regime changes”. Here I would like to have seen some generalizations for Southern Europe of some hypothesis that a pioneering article of the sociologist Virginia Ferreira applies in “Engendering Portugal: social change, state politics and women’s social mobilization”, about “juridical equality imposed from the top down” and the social impact of the fact that “law preceded emancipation”.

Legacies of Authoritarianism and democratization

Finally, to quote from the introduction of the organizers, “Was the dismantling of the authoritarian structures an important factor for the ‘quality’ of the new democracies, like the Portuguese one? And what difference did it make that Greece applied transitional justice while Spain did not?” One of the assumptions (often more stated than proved) that dominated the initial literature on democratization is that the survival and reconversion of important segments of the authoritarian élites and the impunity of those in the previous regime that were more actively involved in decision-making and repression have had a severe impact on the quality of post-authoritarian democracies. This is a topic on which national and comparative research in Southern Europe has come a long way since the pioneering comparative studies of Hite and Cesarini and (I dare quote) mine with Leonardo Morlino. A major problem, visible in some articles here as well, is how to disentangle specific legacies of the previous authoritarian regimes from historical legacies tout court, since what is in the closet when transitions open the doors of previous dictatorships is much more than authoritarianism.

When dealing with the “politics of memory” or “politics of silence”, of the memory debates and battles on both the late stages of the authoritarian experiences and contemporary democracies of Portugal, Greece and Spain, Fytili and Cardina are in some cases dealing with the more general “politics of the past”, something that is inherent to liberal democracies and that I have once defined as “an ongoing process whereby élites and society revise, negotiate and (sometimes) clash over the meaning of the authoritarian past and past injustices in terms of what they hope to achieve in the present and future quality of their democracies”. Accountability is central to the very definition of democracy, and new processes can be unleashed in any

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7 Ferreira, 1998.
8 Pinto and Morlino, 2010.
9 Pinto, 2010.
post-authoritarian democratic regime. As they stress in their article, there are major issues that have been kept in relative silence in Portugal, Greece and Spain, but we are dealing here with “public official memory”. During the initial phase of the Transition in Portugal, decolonization was accompanied by a strong anticolonialism discourse. Even the political right was “forced” not to oppose decolonization. Are the contemporary memory debates in Portugal about the colonial wars and the legacies of colonialism as such related with democratization? Legacies of colonialism and racism in Portugal, or of civil wars in Spain and Greece, and the more current “politics of apologies” are maybe an example of a more general “politics of the Past” present in old and new democracies.

The variety of Transitional Justice procedures adopted by democratizations have been very well studied for the three cases in Southern Europe and the presence of punitive transitional Justice in Portugal and Greece and its absence in Spain, is strictly related with the different types of democratization. More complex as it is clear in the contribution of Fytili and Cardina, are the factors that might explain the “the return of some restless ghosts”.

To conclude with the difficult question of the legacies of the different types of transition to the quality of Southern European democracies there were some interesting developments we need to introduce, unfortunately just looking at the two Iberian democracies. In fact, contrary to the fears of the early literature on democratic consolidation, some scholars have emphasized the enduring positive legacies of the Portuguese democratization process, rooted in the country’s unusual pathway towards democracy. For these scholars, the “democratic social revolution” that characterized the Portuguese Transition led to the emergence of an inclusionary form of democratic practice and a more inclusive and pluralistic civil society, thus promoting high levels of “democratic depth”\textsuperscript{10}. Drawing plainly different conclusions from his predecessors on the significance of Portuguese Transition, Robert Fishman stated that Portugal stands out as “an unusually successful example of the democratic genre”, with “great relevance for how students of democracy everywhere understand the ingredients of successful democratic politics”\textsuperscript{11}. The political inclusion divide in Iberia leads the author, in his conclusion, to emphasize the positive effects the Portuguese standard of democratic practice has had on democracy, demonstrating the lasting advantages of a social revolution for deepening democracy in terms of inclusion and equality. Conversely, the Spanish case reveals the costs of ignoring the cultural dimension of democratization and highlights the negative impact that a democratic practice based on an exclusionary and segmented vision can have on the functioning of democracy.

\textsuperscript{10} Fernandes and Branco, 2017; Fishman, 2019.

\textsuperscript{11} Fishman, 2019.
In the introduction to this “Counterpoint”, I have underlined that the comparative analysis of Southern Europe since democratic transitions has continued to be the subject of many studies. Just to quote four among many recent studies: H. Gibson (ed.), *Economic Transformation, Democratization and Integration into the European Union: Southern Europe in Comparative Perspective* (2001); Maurizio Ferrera, *Welfare State Reform in Southern Europe: Fighting Poverty and Social Exclusion in Greece, Italy, Spain and Portugal* (2005); Donatella della Porta, Massimiliano Andretta, Tiago Fernandes, Eduardo Romanos, and Markos Vogiatzoglou, *Legacies and Memories in Movements. Justice and Democracy in Southern Europe* (2018); Luigi Burroni, Emmanuele Pavolini, Marino Regini (eds), *Mediterranean Capitalism Revisited: One Model, Different Trajectories* (2022). Southern European studies therefore seems to be in good health and this special issue of *Mélanges* is an excellent example.

**Bibliography**


