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**"This Struggle Bound Us." An Analysis of the Emotional Dimension of Protest Based on the Study of Four Grassroots Resistances in Spain and Mexico**

**Abstract** The aim of the paper is to present the results of our research regarding the role of emotions in local struggles. Focusing on the analysis from below, we have paid special attention to the emotions felt by ordinary people.

Our research shows that emotions are useful in order to understand struggles because they are present in every phase and every aspect of protest. We have seen that emotions play an important role in the day-to-day practices of the groups we have studied and that they interact with cognition in determining an individual's behavior. Emotions not only motivate individuals but they might change their beliefs, too. In conclusion, we have seen that emotions play an important role in the protest. They not only influence the emergence and maintenance, but also affect some outcomes of the protest at the micro-level, like empowerment.

Our research is based on in-depth interviews and narrative analysis of the biographical material, and the analysis gives special attention to the different labels we have assigned to different emotions, feelings, and moods that play an important role in the protest. We will present some results based on the analysis of four specific case studies: the insurgency of Oaxaca, Mexico (in 2006) and three resistances against dams in Spain and Mexico.

**Keywords** Emotions; Grassroots Resistances; From Below; Transformation of Consciousness and Behavior; Empowerment

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Any person who has ever taken part in a collective action knows the emotional intensity that characterizes this experience. We are dealing here then with the injustice "that rips you apart" (E.Co.8)<sup>1</sup>—the wrath, outrage, and the indignation that lead to action, but also the impotence, frustration, and fear one can experience in the face of the impossibility to defeat injustice, as stated by someone who fought to save their people from the waters of a dam: "a mix of impotence and a lot of wrath, impotence and wrath, wrath and the wish to fight against something so unfair and, for me, inconceivable" (E.Ri.1).

But, these experiences are also characterized by joy, sympathy, and fraternity generated by the people who share the experience of struggle, as this Mexican woman says:

... these are the words of a companion who is dead now: "This struggle bound us." And it is true. We, the women of the collective group, didn't know each other before and that struggle has bound us, and now we want to spread this relationship. (E.Oa.9)

As Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta (2000:78) wrote: "It is hard to think of activities and relationships that are more overtly emotional than those associated with political protest and resistance," but for decades emotions have been excluded, kept away, and ignored by all the political analysts, driven by

<sup>1</sup> In this research, all the interviews are done under the condition of anonymity. For this reason, we will put only a label after each testimony: E.Co (Coín, Spain), E.Oa (Oaxaca, Mexico), E.Ri (Riaño, Spain), E.Sg (San Gaspar, Mexico). In the table at the end of the paper (see: Appendix), we describe gender, place, and time to each quoted interview.

a positivist view of the world that associated emotions with irrationality. In fact, "we have equivocally considered for a long time that thoughts and emotions were different things that could be separated" (Esquivel 2005:24 [trans. from Spanish—AP, TG]), but in the past fifteen to twenty years, "scholars from a wide range of disciplines have challenged the thought/feeling dichotomy and the equation of emotionality with irrationality, arguing instead that feeling and thinking are inseparably intertwined, each necessary to the other" (Gould 2004:162). Thanks to the work of authors who integrate emotions to the study of protest it has been proven that emotions, among other things, "help explain not simply the origin and spread of social movements but also their continuation or decline" (Jasper 1998:416-417). Emotions are "a key feature of society" (Flam and King 2005:3), they have significant effects on movements (Gould 2004), and besides the relational, cognitive, and emotional consequences of protest, they affect the movements themselves (Jasper 1997; della Porta 2008) and are related to the transforming capacity of protest. To conclude our starting point is, as Flam (2005:37) wrote, that "social movements produce a variety of emotions and feelings rules which have various, sometimes counter-intuitive, structural and action consequences," which must be studied in-depth.

Therefore, based on an empirical research where we have studied different experiences of struggles in Spain and Mexico, in this paper, we want to contribute to the comprehension of the role of emotions in the change produced by the participation in collective action. Our objective is not only to provide evidence of emotional intensity these

experiences have, showing the importance of incorporating this dimension to the analysis, but also to prove that emotions can motivate, as well discourage, and generate new outcomes out of the experience of struggle, giving a new meaning to the experience of protest.

The analysis that we present does not suggest incorporating emotions to the study of protest only, but also invert the look to those who participate in these experiences in order to understand their deepest and least visible dynamics, which macro-structural literature cannot perceive. We start by presenting what inverting the look from below consists of, then we present the emotions that play a key role in the analysis of these experiences, and the cognitive-emotional processes that people go through while living them. Lastly, we elucidate additional matters that are essential to comprehend conflict, such as collective, reciprocal, and shared emotions, and emotional energy. The purpose of this paper is to present the results of our research regarding protest and resistance, centered on the experiences of subjects involved in them, since focusing on the verbalized experience rather than the discourse surrounding particular phenomena allows including the processes that motivate people in struggle to change their way to see the world, hence allowing to see the cultural output of the protest.

## Methodology

The methodological tools employed in our research have been a qualitative analysis of information collected through in-depth semi-structured interviews

to participants in the struggle against the dam in Riaño and then the recovery of the Valle (León, Spain, 1986-1987 and 2007-now), the struggle in defense of Río Grande—Grande river (Coín, Malaga, Spain, 2006-2007), the popular insurgency in Oaxaca (Mexico, 2006), and the struggle against the dam of San Nicolas (San Gaspar, Jalisco, Mexico, 2004-2005). The three cases of resistances against dams have been analyzed by Poma (2013), while the insurgency of Oaxaca is the subject of the ongoing research by Gravante (forthcoming).

Although in this paper we have quoted only a few extracts, Poma's research is based on fifty interviews, the large majority of them individual; while the first exploratory fieldwork carried out by Gravante in 2010 is based on nine in-depth interviews. Both researches started with an exploratory fieldwork to collect data about the cases studied and then to carry out some interviews in order to verify the initial hypothesis of these pieces of research and improve the questionnaires.

Every interview was audio-recorded digitally and then transcribed. Regarding the duration, they lasted between 45 minutes and two hours. That depended on the availability of the interviewees and the context in which the interview was carried out (home, work, public space, etc.). After the interviews, we wrote down some notes in our notebook, and for this comparative research we have compared our findings and shared the texts of the respective interviews.

The in-depth interviews were carried out applying the "episodic interview" technique (Flick 2000; 2006). As the author suggests, the researcher needs

to guide the interviewee in order to orient him/her to the topical domains, incentivizing people's narrative. Through storytelling, the interviewees recollect events and memories, and emotions emerge (Atkinson 1998; Poggio 2004).

In order to analyze the emotional dimension of protest, we employed empathy as a tool in order to feel what the subjects have felt, going inside the emotional processes which have been identified as most important in protest. For instance, as we will see next, indignation is a moral emotion which plays an important role in mobilizing people; so when an interviewee affirmed that something outraged him/her during the protest, we invited him/her to tell us what had happened by telling us his/her story. By recalling the event and the emotions related with it, people, to a large extent, re-experienced the same emotions, and shared them with us. Finally, it is important to highlight that working with narrative means not only to focus on the words that people use, but also on body language and other non-verbal communication, such as tears, sighs, silences, trembling.

The use of qualitative research methodology, which also included participant observations,<sup>2</sup> is support-

<sup>2</sup> The participant observation in our research allowed us to become familiar with the groups/collectives/communities involved. Gravante spent several months in Oaxaca (in 2010 and 2013), while Poma, who carried out the comparative study, visited the villages involved in her research several times between 2009 and 2013. Her interviews were carried out from May 2010 to May 2011. Being a participant observer did not mean, in our case, to participate in the protest, but in the everyday life of the people interviewed—because emotions and attachments are visible in the daily routines of people. For instance, a walk along the river or the neighbourhood could enrich what people told us about place attachment; as well, collective events allowed us to observe the bonds created during the protest.

ed by the fact that "qualitative research has a more holistic vision and provides further importance to social interaction processes" (della Porta 2010:13 [trans. from Italian—AP, TG]). It is also necessary to evidence that said look requires an idiographic approach that considers subjects not as variables but as a whole inserted within its ecological, social, and historical context (Sanz Hernández 2000:53).

Working with ordinary people without a previously structured discourse, and focusing our attention on the subjective dimension of protest, we have given special attention to the emotive dimension with a narrative approach as we were more interested in the manner in which people described their world or their experiences rather than their factual reality. Due to the narrations, where both the vision and interpretation of the world of subjects emerge, we are able to comprehend the reality beyond the particular experience since, as written by Jedlowski, "every case reflects elements of the world where one is immersed" (2000:203 [trans. from Italian—AP, TG]).

In conclusion, we also believe, in tune with our analytical proposal that aims to achieve a subjective understanding of conflict, it is necessary to "reclaim the qualitative methods, given that what is expressed through them is the voice, even the gaze, the feel, the subjectivity of the subjects of the investigation" (Regalado 2012:172 [trans. from Spanish—AP, TG]).

All issues considered and based on the results of our empirical investigation will be addressed in the following section on the study of emotions as an

explicative factor of protest, since it is impossible to understand the subjects and their experiences without considering their feelings. We have also decided to enrich this analysis with testimonies taken from the interviews with the participants, regarding their struggle experiences that have been studied by certain authors in recent years because, as stated by Romero Frizzi and Dalton, "the human accounts are the more eloquent" (2012:12 [trans. from Spanish—AP, TG]).

### Inverting the Look Towards the Subjects and From Below

Analyzing the implicit emotional dimension in the experiences of struggle takes us to invert our look towards what Jasper (1997) defined as the cultural dimension of struggle, which encompasses cognitive beliefs, emotional responses, and moral evaluations. To do so, it is necessary to recover the importance of subjectivity and break the macro-structural vision of movements that legitimizes formal organizations, leaders, and activists as actors and recognizes structural changes only as outcomes. In fact, approaches such as political opportunities "ignored actors' choices, desires, and points of view: potential participants were taken for granted as already formed, just waiting for opportunities to act" (Jasper 2010:966). These perspectives in the study of social movements have constituted a barrier for the comprehension of collective action, so now "what is needed is a look towards the inside, capable of capturing all the underlying and invisible processes, and that can only be achieved through a long process of involvement in movements, not only with their leaders" (Zibechi 2008 [trans. from Spanish—AP, TG]).

Due to these reasons, to deeply understand the experiences of protest, it is necessary to set apart the structured discourse and the activists and leaders' points of view to focus on the individual and collective experience of people participating in order to be able to see "the millions and millions of refusals and other-doings, the millions and millions of cracks that constitute the material base of possible radical change" (Holloway 2010:12).

Making the experience of participants the center of analysis allows studying protest as a venue for experimentation where people redefine their way to see the world, making struggle an emancipating experience. To focus on the experience allows us to "comprehend social interaction from the viewpoint of its leading figures" (Jasper 2012:36 [trans. from Spanish—AP, TG]) because, among other things, experience cannot be delegated (Pleyers 2009:144).

Centering the analysis on participants and their experiences suggests inverting the look towards everyday life since "it is the daily experience of people that shapes their grievances, establishes the measure of their demands, and points out the targets of their anger" (Piven and Cloward 1977:20-21). To look at these experiences from below also means to "understand that it is what collective and individual subjects do day in day out, every day, that is intensely political" (Regalado 1990:176).

It is looking at everyday life that one can observe the "infrapolitics," or in other words, "a wide variety of low-profile forms of resistance that dare not speak in their own name" (Scott 1990:19), which is

characterized by "informal leadership and non-elites, of conversation and oral discourse, and of surreptitious resistance" (Scott 1990:200). This concept is essential for the comprehension of apparently casual events of protest or insurrection, for it unveils the existence of a "hidden transcript" of the subordinate, which, on special occasions, emerges and becomes public. This "hidden transcript" "represents a critique of power spoken behind the back of the dominant" (Scott 1990:xii), "[it] is a social product and hence a result of power relations among subordinates ... It exists only to the extent it is practiced, articulated, enacted, and disseminated within these offstage social sites" (Scott 1990:119), and it emerges in the social and marginal spaces when there are more people who share it. And that is where its transcendence lies, in experiences such as environmental conflicts, where this discourse becomes public and stimulates the protest. Although it is true that formal and organized movements can grant arguments to those affected, it is the hidden discourse that forms the substratum that fuels them.

The goal of our analytical proposal is to invert our look, directing it from below and towards the subjects in order to "see resistances beyond the subjects who appear in public space" (Martín 2011:8 [trans. from Spanish—AP, TG]). This way, we discern all those who, confronting reality on a daily basis, search for solutions and create alternatives that are ultimately political, as they turn into "cracks"<sup>3</sup> which undermines the stability of the dominant system.

<sup>3</sup> Metaphor used in Holloway (2010).

### Emotions in Protest

One of the difficulties in analyzing the emotional dimension of protest is determining what emotions we are interested in analyzing are since, as Goleman (1995:289) writes, "there are hundreds of emotions and many more different combinations, variations, mutations, and nuances in each of them." Among all the categories to be found in the literature, Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta (2004), Jasper (1998; 2006; 2011) have been the ones who have mostly striven to theorize and propose a categorization of potentially relevant emotions in protest. From the proposal of this author we will distinguish the emotions according to their cognitive processing, being aware of the fact that emotions act in matrices, that is to say, in the same event, diverse emotions can occur and produce different responses, depending on a subject or a context, as it is, for example, with fear against repression, which sometimes induces people to hide or, in other cases, take the streets.

Therefore, we can identify emotions that are immediate reactions to the physical and social environment, which are notable for being quick—as they occur and end swiftly, for example, changes in the body or facial expressions—such as wrath, fear, joy, surprise, upset, and sadness. These emotions can have diverse effects on mobilization in order to motivate people to get involved in struggle since, despite being quick in expression, their intensity can be high, as it can be read in the following testimony:

I felt this madness ... but this madness to take them and throw them away from where they came. (E.Sg.10)

As we will see next, these emotions play a key role in the moral shock, though they do not influence more elaborate processes due to their swiftness since "other forms of anger and fear, more abiding than these sudden reflexes, are more central to politics" (Jasper 2006:162). Although these emotions represent only the first reaction to an event or information, one of the problems Jasper (2011:287) evidences is that "most authors adopt reflex emotions as the paradigm for all emotions," making it a strong limit to the analysis moving in this direction.

Moods, for instance, differ from the above emotions, as the former last longer and are not targeted to an object. As Jasper (2006:164) states, "moods may also affect our propensity to feel and exhibit other emotions, as in the case of a depressed person inclined to sadness or irritation, [and] filter our intentions and actions, strengthening or dissolving them, changing their tone or seriousness." Some moods, such as optimism or hope, play in favor of political action; others, such as desperation, fatalism, resignation, and cynicism, act against it, as we can read from this testimony of a man from Riaño:

... now you see it, I don't know ... with resignation because that's what you have ... you won't change it. (E.Ri.3)

Moods are important to understand experiences of struggle because they influence the perception of reality and therefore the responses of the subjects, but also a change in moods can result from the experience of struggle, being successful in making, for example, someone an optimist, who was not before.

Other emotions that are fundamental in experiences of struggle are affective ties that can be the attachment or aversion to someone or something, or also the fact of not being related to an object or person but to a vision of the world. As they take much longer to build, they are very solid and difficult to change, making it necessary to have a moral shock for a change; this is why a change or threat to affection may have considerable consequences and lead to a deep change, as confirmed by the following account of a woman who took part in the Oaxacan movement:

... the most important thing is unity, and we have it. For example me, I didn't know my neighbors well, and in the barricades, I met them better ... That's how we created a community and other sorts of relationship, and I think that's the best ever, the ways to relate to each other and be together. (E.Oa.7)

Among the ties that are significant in the study of protest, in addition to the relations between people, we can find the place attachment that triggers many emotions, as seen in this testimony that evidences the pain produced by the threat of the loss of one's land:

... when this movement against the dam starts, the first thing you feel is a lot of sadness because it's a piece of land where you live, and you learn to love it. (E.Sg.7)

Analyzing the role of place attachment in these experiences helps us to explain the intensity with which the affected people respond to the threat, defending their territory and their way of life with wholeheart-

edness, regardless of the magnitude of the physical loss—because the emotional tie turns the threatened territory into something inestimable for them.

Finally, we can find the defined moral emotions, which "require considerable cognitive processing" (Jasper 2006:165). These constitute "the largest group of emotions [that] arise out of complex cognitive understandings and moral awareness, reflecting our comprehension of the world around us and sometimes of our place in it" (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2004:422), for instance, shame, pride, compassion, outrage, indignation, and complex forms of upset, fear, and wrath that have to have been processed cognitively.

Within these moral emotions, outrage is one of the key emotions in the study of collective action because it is considered

a powerful motivation for protest ... It plays a significant role in the delegitimation of the polity and the engendering of collective action whenever state conduct is perceived as arbitrary ... [And] because it provides "targets," it often leads people to confront state authority under revolutionary situations based on the perception of social injustice(s). (Reed 2004:667)

In our cases of study, for instance, outrage was produced due to the behavior of politicians who deceive, lie, and do not respect people, as this Mexican woman asserts:

... the way politicians do ... as trying to fool you ... and I think this was the reason that rumbled us the most ... when trying to fool us. (E.Sg.6)

As read from this testimony, outrage influences motivation for action, but, as the next section will show, it also plays an important role in cognitive processes, such as the creation of threat, the identification of those guilty or the *injustice frame*, all of which may have "altered their assessments of the costs and benefits of participation in protest" (Jasper 1997:203).

Another current figure is indignation—a feeling that is closely tied to the perception of an unfair situation. This emotion "involves a set of concepts, beliefs, and social expectations ... [and] is provoked by the belief that some moral norm has been deliberately broken and that harm and suffering are being inflicted upon undeserving people" (Cadena-Roa 2005:81). In our cases of study, we can find various testimonies that show the emergence of this feeling of indignation, as can be captured in this Spanish woman's words:

... if you start to dig a little, you'll start to get indignant ... with everything that is happening now, people feel indignant. (E.Co.10b)

Indignation "is an emotion that results from empathy with the one who suffers and evaluation of the reasons why he suffers" (Cadena-Roa 2005:81), and this takes us back to the importance of collective emotions, to which we will dedicate our last section in this paper. As well, as Jasper (2011:292) has written, "indignation at one's own government can be especially moving, as it involves a sense of betrayal," that is manifested, for example, when the party in office does not fulfill their electoral promises, as it was in the case of Riaño:

... the people up here deceived,<sup>4</sup> the people down there deceived, and who benefited from this? The party that left office this year ... the Workers' Party<sup>5</sup> ... that I can't tell whether it is for workers or not. (E.Ri.3)

Considered as feelings of approval or disapproval based on intuition and moral principles, moral emotions are related to the feeling of justice and injustice, of good and bad; they are cultural and social, influence motivation, and are so fundamental for change that, as we have mentioned, they have been considered, by authors like Jasper, Goodwin, and Polletta, the most important emotions in political processes.

As observed in this section of the paper, in experiences of protest, diverse emotions interact and influence the dynamics of collective action in various manners. From more instinctive emotional responses to emotions that imply a cognitive process, experiences of struggle are intensely emotional. But, how do emotions change protest? To answer this question in the next paragraph, we will discuss how emotions influence the cognitive-emotional processes through which we will analyze individual change, and its link with social change, considering that "existing studies on emotions suggest that micro-events have the capacity to affect, through time, bigger structures which will lead to the promotion of changes and the redefinition of the relations of power" (Enríquez Rosas 2008:206 [trans. from Spanish—AP, TG]).

<sup>4</sup>"The people up here" refers to people living in the mountains, while "the people down there" are people living on the plains, who were officially the beneficiaries of the water of Riaño's reservoir.

<sup>5</sup> Spanish Socialist Workers' Party (PSOE).

## Emotions and Cognitive Processes

"We will never be the same we were before"—this is what many people having lived an experience of struggle say; but what does this have to do with emotions? According to Jasper (1998), change is related to the emotions in question—the more intense they are, the deeper the cognitive processes experienced will be. In addition, emotions are "provoked by beliefs" (Rodríguez 2008:150 [trans. from Spanish—AP, TG]), an example of this is indignation; however, they also influence change of values and beliefs (Kelly and Barsade 2001), and that is when they become an explanatory factor to analyze cultural change. As Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta (2001:19) assert: "each cognitive shift is accompanied by emotional ones," and this influences the final learning of the experience of conflict, conscientiousness, and the transformation of participants into political subjects that claim rights far beyond the motivation that led them to take part in the conflict.

The role of emotions in cognitive processes, that is, the processes through which human beings interpret the world and give it a meaning, allows us to explain how emotions transform protest into a motor of cultural change.

The cognitive processes we have analyzed in our research are: the moral shock, the sense of threat and the identification of the guilty ones, the injustice frame, the transformation of both consciousness and behavior, and empowerment. We have selected these five processes because we believe they are the ones that best allow us to comprehend the evolution that struggling people experience, making them change

their ideas, beliefs, and values. Each of these concepts has been put forward by experts in social movements to understand various dimensions of protest, but we think that analyzed as a whole, and also integrating emotions, as suggested by Jasper, they will enable us to deeply comprehend cultural change generated after a conflict.

The moral shock is the emotional response to an item of information or an event that puts the security of people at risk, or in Jasper's (1998:409) words, it occurs "when an unexpected event or piece of information raises such a sense of outrage in a person that she becomes inclined towards political action whether or not she has acquaintances in the movement." This moral shock can be produced due to the arrival of an expropriation letter concerning the construction of a dam, or the news of the violation of a human or social right, or as a result of repression in a protest, as exemplified in the following testimony of a woman from Oaxaca, Mexico: "What made us react was the repression" (E.Oa.3).

The moral shock is produced as a result of many emotions, such as surprise, fear, wrath, the feeling of insecurity, disappointment, outrage, indignation, et cetera. These emotions accumulate and are nourished by the hidden discourse that lingers in society (Scott 1990); in fact, there will be even more fear of what a government can do if a feeling of previous mistrust exists. This process is very important because the participation and involvement of people depend on it; also, it has an effect on the intensity that characterize a struggle, as this testimony illustrates:

The time comes when you hear and ask ... and that's when you are doubtful and afraid and you join the

people, unwittingly, I mean, by the time you realize, you're already deeply involved in everything. (E.Sg.9)

However, the moral shock, even though it is, to a large extent, necessary for a person to get involved, is not sufficient for eliciting change since other mechanisms to be analyzed here take place. The first response after experiencing a moral shock is the creation of threat and the identification of the responsible ones, which in turn will trigger other emotions because "when humans can be blamed for causing a threat, outrage is a common response" (Jasper 1998:410).

The construction of threat is important since "some sense of threat can be found in the origins of most social movements" (Jasper 1997:125), and it is fundamental in experiences of resistance. In the struggles, we have analyzed, the construction of threat can be initiated due to the disappearance of a village under water, with all the losses imaginable in terms of social relations, economic support, identity, et cetera, but also the loss of civic or political liberties, or the spaces of a city, which is related to the loss of identity in a certain place or the loss of natural, social, and economic resources, for example, a river, as in the case of Malaga:

When you think about a threat with these characteristics, thinking of the disappearance of a river as a means of life, the truth is that you think about it twice. (E.Co.11)

The construction of a threat is accompanied by a high emotional intensity that goes from sadness after a loss to fear and to the feeling of uncertainty. This construction of a threat is also related to the

idea of security and quality of life, as well as dignity, which is one of the "emotional benefits" (Wood 2001) of protest, and the perception of risk, which also depends on culture and emotions because said risk is perceived when there is only even one and a remote possibility that the threat may destroy the community, the way of life (Jasper 1997:122), as this interviewee states:

They are affecting the only fertile lands we have here in the area ... That's how they are exhausting the villages ... They are wearing us out because it is the only one we have, it is the only heritage for the family and many people depend on it. (E.Sg.7)

Once the threat is built, the next step is to individualize those being guilty, which is an indispensable process in order to target the wrath and rest of emotions towards an objective. Having been able to detect those being guilty or having believed that "motivated human actors carry some of the onus for bringing about harm and suffering" (Gamson 1992:32) opens the path to what Gamson (1992:6) defined as the "injustice frame," that is, "the moral indignation expressed in this form of political consciousness." Framing an experience one has gone through as an injustice and recognizing that one is being a victim of an injustice are both processes that influence the motivation for action and strengthen the reasons to continue being involved in the conflict, far beyond any material interests, cost-benefit evaluations, and discourses, as this Mexican woman points out:

How can you allow an injustice to occur? ... I say, if there are people who want to fight for it, I just have to

join, and, of course, you have to defend it because it represents your dignity, as well. (E.Sg.6)

The processes described thus far let us understand how and why people get involved in a collective action and how far they are willing to go. Both emotional responses and cognitive processes foster each other and encourage participation, but they are also the cause for change that the main stakeholders experience. In order to analyze this change, we have resorted to two processes: the transformation of both consciousness and behavior, described by Piven and Cloward (1977), and empowerment. As written by Piven and Cloward (1977:3-4), "[t]he change in consciousness has at least three distinct aspects ... The change in behavior is equally striking, and usually more easily recognized, at least when it takes the form of mass strikes or marches or riots."

The three aspects of change in consciousness these authors highlight help us define some dynamics we have been able to observe in our cases of study, which we will describe next. The first aspect—where this process takes place—is "the system," that is, when authorities lose legitimacy, as shown in the following testimony:

This guy [tells me], "Since they are from the government, we are going to praise them." [To which I answer], "Why?" (E.Sg.5)

The loss of legitimacy is related to the loss of trust and respect towards the subjects who have been identified as guilty, but also to the loss of fear towards the authority. This loss of legitimacy occurs as a result of the deferred treatment towards those

protesting, but it is also a consequence of what is defined in popular terms as "adding insult to injury," in other words, not only are people deceived but they are being deceived constantly and cynically. The lack of clarity and transparency, the authoritarian attitude, and the lack of respect also take part in the loss of legitimacy, proving that this process is likewise the result of the emotions experienced. The second stage in this process is produced when "people who are ordinarily fatalistic, who believe that existing arrangements are inevitable begin to assert 'rights' that imply demands for change" (Piven and Cloward 1977:3). As we have seen in our cases of study, the loss of legitimacy in media mainstream or regarding the representatives of institutions leads to the pursuit of autonomy, that is, people look for means to overcome the barriers imposed by power. That change in behavior deals with distancing the practice of delegating as a means to meet their necessities, as can be seen in many alternative media arising from a conflict, and in tune with this Mexican interviewee's testimony:

We are not going to leave it in the hands of a lawyer or a political group because this is a problem concerning us. (E.Sg.7)

Furthermore, Piven and Cloward (1977:4) mention the emergence of a "new sense of efficacy" produced in "people who ordinarily consider themselves helpless [but eventually] come to believe that they have some capacity to alter their lot." During our research, we have been able to prove that numerous people taking part in a struggle experience this transformation, and the following account shows this:

We thought we couldn't fight the government ... but we can, if people are united. (E.Sg.2)

This process is also influenced by emotions. In fact, in the cases where people are victorious, even if these victories are small, emotions such as joy and satisfaction nourish self-esteem and the consciousness that many things can change, while when failure to win occurs, emotions such as frustration and pain usually lead to resignation, though emotions like wrath or the feeling of injustice can overcome this mood and provide the energy necessary to retake the struggle, as it occurred in the case of Riaño:

The rage was much greater than the impotence and everything else, even impotence gives you rage, it happened to me. (E.Ri.1)

The last aspect of this transformation of consciousness described by Piven and Cloward (1977) leads us once again to the concept of empowerment, indicating an individual and collective process of the acquisition of power, not as "power on someone," but as "power to," as a potentiality (Dallago 2006). Among the many definitions of empowerment that can be found in the existing literature, we adopt the one which considers it to be "a social-psychological state of confidence in one's ability to challenge existing relations of domination" (Drury and Reicher 2005:35), as regarded by the interviewees as a piece of learning:

The movement gave us a really big lesson, [for instance], the fact that we can get many things just by being organized. (E.Oa.9)

In our cases of study, empowerment, identified by Wood (2001) as an emotional benefit from the participation in a movement, is both personal (overcoming fear, higher self-esteem, etc.) and collective (capability of changing reality, of self-management, of defeating the government, etc.), demonstrating the idea of authors like Drury and Reicher (2005), Lake (1993), or Krauss (1989), who have considered empowerment as one of the outcomes of movements. According to this literature, focusing on internal and subjective dynamics of protest allows highlighting the transforming capability of these experiences that eventually are proven right in social, cultural, and political laboratories.

Finally, we conclude with a reminder of the fact that although it is the individual who experiences these processes and feels these emotions, protest is a social event that both unity and solidarity can strengthen, counterattacking emotions like fear or desperation, which can be discouraging. Collective emotions favor group solidarity and the identification of the movement. Therefore, it is as well important to analyze the emotions between the people that share this experience of struggle, to which we will dedicate the last section of this paper.

### Emotional Energy and Collective Emotions

As we have stated, emotions interact with each other and work in matrices. For example, in face of a police charge, we can feel fear and indignation at the same time, and both emotions can activate a moral shock that can in turn influence our opinions about the government or the authorities. Similarly, the in-

teraction between affective ties and moral emotions can strengthen collective identity, as in the case of many environmental conflicts, where threat to territory to which we feel attached, invoking the feeling of injustice regarding what is happening, strengthens the feeling of belonging to that place and the identification with all those who share the same threat.

As for the interaction among all these sorts of emotions, we found the concept of "emotional energy,"<sup>6</sup> which is dispersed in the social interactions, and that can transform reflex emotions into moods, affective ties, and even into moral emotions (Jasper 2011:294). According to Collins (2012:2), "emotional energy takes the form of courage, feeling strength in the group, and belief that we will win in the end," or in words of a Mexican woman:

... you feel this satisfaction when all these people respond, and all the people are united, that even if things occur, when I see all the people are motivated, eager to defend their rights, I think that is the greatest of satisfactions ... seeing that others want to crush you ... but the positive attitude of people makes them not give in nor quit. (E.Sg.6)

This energy emerging at collective moments and in rituals contributes to change as the fuel for collective action. Hence the importance of collective moments in protest, of music and dance that often

<sup>6</sup> Term employed by Collins (2001; 2012) and Jasper (2011), though the concept is not new in classic literature. Durkheim (1915), for example, addressed "collective effervescence" concerning the importance of singing and dancing as a means to share knowledge and increase the feeling of belonging to the group.

accompany these experiences, of public demonstrations, and small achievements since "each victory, even a small one, yields confidence, attention, and emotional energy, all of which are advantages for further action" (Jasper 2011:296).

The concept of emotional energy takes us back to the collective dimension of emotiveness, where emotions are strengthened, recreated, and are "contagious," all of which made us identify—in the experiences of struggle—collective emotions that are divided into shared and reciprocal emotions. The shared emotions are those that demonstrators share among them, and are, for instance, experienced during protest. They can be attributed to positive experiences, such as the joy after a small or great victory, or negative experiences like repression. These emotions allow enhancing "the affective and moral connections of those who are more identified with the movement" (Romanos 2011:100 [trans. from Spanish—AP, TG]), and help overcome, for example, fear, as this Mexican woman expressed:

We went to some demonstrations, there were two buses, and it is really cool because first you feel this fear as you know what you are going to encounter ... you're always nervous when you go [because] you don't know what is going to happen ... but as everybody goes, and that encourages you. (E.Sg.6)

Reciprocal emotions, on the other hand, are those felt one with another, "these ties of friendship between the members of a social movement ... that encourage the participation of people in the movement" (della Porta 1998:223 [trans. from

Spanish—AP, TG]). Some of these reciprocal emotions are respect, trust, and gratitude that can be felt towards those mostly involved in the organization; and also hate, scorn, and pity towards the ones responsible. This strong emotional intensity strengthens the creation of an antagonist identity between "us" and "them." In addition, reciprocal emotions create new and strong ties between people, and in this sense, said emotions impact upon the unexpected results of protest, and that may give birth to new political and social projects, as stated in this testimony:

I met these people through Río Grande<sup>7</sup> ... through Río Grande there are many people who have realized there are many common interests ... and now, for example, there are groups created to do it, in fact, they are doing it here, as is our case, for example. (E.Co.7)

Reciprocal emotions prove to be the foundations of collective identity that in turn can be defined as "an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice, or institution" (Polletta and Jasper 2001).

In short, collective emotions become stronger with one another, influencing the process of giving a new meaning to the protest and favoring solidarity in the group, as well as the identification of the movement. These emotions also play an important role in the pleasure of the protest and in the creation of a culture of the movement, and this makes

<sup>7</sup> Río Grande is the river threatened by the hydraulic infrastructure. In this case, the name of the river was used by the interviewee to make reference to the experience of the protest.

them a key element to understand not only the motivation to action but also the dynamics that allow the movement or the group to continue and persist. James Jasper adds that while analyzing these emotions, the scale is essential, since emotional dynamics do not develop in the same fashion as in small or big groups, hence the importance to analyze local experiences of struggle from below and also focus on the micro-dimension of the protest, where these dynamics eventually emerge.

Regarding this collective dimension of emotions, it is worthwhile bearing in mind the importance of empathy, as the ability to feel what others are feeling, and the emotional contagion, that is, "the processes whereby the moods and emotions of one individual are transferred to nearby individuals" (Kelly and Barsade 2001:106). This contagion is important since it amplifies emotions and makes people feel them collectively, promoting participation and increasing, for instance, the feeling of efficacy, as this Spanish woman asserts:

... I think that every one of us was transmitting this emotion, the emotion to say, "Great, everyone in Coín has joined thanks to this," and this makes it even more contagious in fact. (E.Co.5)

As Collins (1990:42) suggests, "joy and enthusiasm are particularly strong when an assembled group is collectively experiencing this expectation or achievement of success. Further, the group itself by successful emotional contagion can generate its own enthusiasm." This emotional process explains why people decide to self-organize after the protest. The emotions related to positive experiences

lead people not to lose what they have reached during the protest, such as the new bonds. For this reason, they keep organizing in groups and collectives in order to develop new social and political projects, in which they recreate new spaces (symbolical, emotional, sometimes physical spaces). These people, as a consequence of the protest experienced, for the first time feel they can build their own spaces, and this is a crucial moment in their lives because this is the moment when these spaces become real and these people start empowering themselves.

In the analysis of the protest, empathy is important because, on the one hand, it nourishes indignation and solidarity among those who undergo similar experiences, while on the other hand, the lack of empathy, for example, from governments and politicians, separates citizens from some institutions that do not know, do not want, or cannot understand them, causing a process where we can observe how "the frustration of not having an impact or sometimes not being heard shows why protestors often adopt as targets the governmental procedures that have failed to protect or aid them" (Jasper 2011:291-292). Empathy produces a tie between people who do not know each other and that have not undergone the same experience; however, they recognize each other as they struggle side by side against that antagonist identity between the "us" and "them." Among the unexpected results of protest, empathy makes people participate in other experiences, being supportive to other collectivities or communities, but it also helps to overcome prejudices towards those struggling, as this interviewee points out:

If you see a gathering of people demonstrating, when you have never lived something like that, you usually think it's about people who do not have a reason for what they are doing, and what they're doing is ridiculous. (E.Sg.7)

Although there may be even more issues to analyze, we conclude this section, where we have presented the role of collective emotions in protest, being aware of the fact that an in-depth analysis would take longer. We have, nonetheless, shown here the elements for an analysis of the emotional dimension of protest, which, in our opinion, cannot be ignored in such study, and should only be carried out from below. In order to make an account of what we have presented here, our conclusions regarding this proposal are presented as follows.

## Conclusions

The aim of this article was to provide evidence of the role of emotions in protest—at the micro-level—in order to contribute to the comprehension of the process of transformation of consciousness and behavior as experienced by participants.

Based on empirical work, what our analysis highlights is the relevance of incorporating the emotional dimension of struggles in order to deeply understand, on the one hand, why people protest, and on the other hand, how the experience of protest changes people who protest. Without inverting the look from below, that is, centering the analysis on the experience of ordinary people who protested, which includes the analysis of the emotional

dimension of their experiences, we would not be able to appreciate the effects that the protest produced on people.

Our analysis shows, for example, how the experience of protest helps people to overcome fear and prejudices and create new bonds. If people start to defend their territories because of anger, or even because of the grief they felt when they knew their villages could disappear under the water, during the protest, emotions and beliefs change, eventually altering them, as well. As we have seen, a victory can make someone more optimistic; getting to know people in a barricade can help them to recreate a community. During the protest, people recover solidarity, but at the same time, they change their feelings towards the State, which betrayed or violently repressed the protest.

In order to analyze the emotional dimension of protest, we decided to analyze the emotions that had been considered the most relevant in protest, distinguishing between emotions as automatic responses to events and their most complex variations. Next, we presented how moods can affect the dynamics of protest, favoring or discouraging it, and finally, we dealt with the moral emotions that provide arguments and legitimacy to protest.

Observing emotions in regard to some cognitive processes has allowed us to demonstrate how struggle changes people and how the emotional intensity characterizing these experiences is highly connected to change. Analyzing the moral shock, which produces a change in the way of seeing the world, we can understand how the protest becomes



a breakage in the life of the subjects. Comprehending the threat perceived by the subjects allowed us to understand their response and participation in the protest. In fact, as we saw, a dam is not only a hydraulic infrastructure that changes a stream but it also is the end of a village, meaning the roots, the memories, the human relationships, and the privacy and identity of the villagers, among other features. And it is understandable that against a threat of this magnitude, people react as if they had nothing more important to be worth fighting for. Finally, the transformation of consciousness and behavior shows the processes through which people participating in the protest start to empower themselves.

To conclude, we have described how emotions generate what some authors have named "emotional energy." In fact, it can be asserted that protest, though seen as a tough experience, provides stakeholders with emotional benefits that explain why people get involved, though the costs apparently outweigh the benefits. Emotions associated with both negative and positive experiences act as a whole. However, emotions related to negative experiences allow us to understand, for instance, why people seek peace and quiet after their participation in a protest, as it was evidenced in the experiences of people who participated in the insurgency of Oaxaca.

We have also addressed the importance of ties between people and collective emotions. In fact, conflict is characterized for being a collective experience that creates ties which do not disappear when the experience ends, and that can motivate,

favor, or hamper participation; likewise, we have been able to observe how all these elements influence the empowerment of people. These ties have an effect on the interpretation of reality, trigger action, and are crucial motivations in political action, since it is from personal ties created during the experience of struggle that new political and social projects can arise, solidarity be recovered, and the mutual support and empowerment strengthened.

The analysis we have presented in this article, commencing with the consciousness of the emotional intensity these experiences have, shows how—by inverting the look towards the experience of the subjects—it is possible to appreciate the effects of protest on people. Therefore, not only do we join the authors who have highlighted the importance of emotions in protest in the last twenty years but we also try to contribute and offer an explanation regarding how emotions are important in protest—a research question which undoubtedly needs much more empirical work and theoretical development.

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## Appendix

Table of the interviews.

LABEL	GENDER (M/F)	PLACE	DATE
E.Oa.3	M	Oaxaca, Mexico	Dec. 2010
E.Oa.7	M	Oaxaca, Mexico	Dec. 2010
E.Oa.9	F	Oaxaca, Mexico	Dec. 2010
E.Ri.1	M	Riaño, Spain	Aug. 2010
E.Ri.3	M	Riaño, Spain	Aug. 2010
E.Sg.2	M	San Gaspar, Mexico	Nov. 2010
E.Sg.5	F	San Gaspar, Mexico	Nov. 2010
E.Sg.6	F	San Gaspar, Mexico	Jan. 2011
E.Sg.7	M	San Gaspar, Mexico	Jan. 2011
E.Sg.9	F	San Gaspar, Mexico	Jan. 2011
E.Sg.10	F	San Gaspar, Mexico	Jan. 2011
E.Co.5	F	Coín, Spain	May 2010
E.Co.7	M	Coín, Spain	May 2010
E.Co.8	M	Coín, Spain	May 2011
E.Co.10b	M	Coín, Spain	May 2011
E.Co.11	M	Coín, Spain	May 2011

Source: Self-elaboration.

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