Abstract:

As academic studies and political commentators try to make sense of grassroots organizing efforts, protests like those that took place in Spain during the summer of 2011 are continuously being rebranded – 15-M Movement, #spanishrevolution – and boxed into didactic causal frameworks. However, rather than looking outward – attempting to lay additional claims on the “true motivations” of the protesters – this study focuses on the voices and stories of the people in the middle. Stemming from a grounded theory research tradition, this study invoked in-depth and group interviews, community mapping and observation. It also developed a participatory technique – which we called the ‘story graph’ – that provided twenty-five respondents with a blank slate upon which to ‘map’ their story. By bringing academic conversations of space, tactical carnival, revolution, and social change to the streets of Barcelona, this study contributes empirical research on the role of social media, the person and the “liberated space” in global movements.