

DESPERATELY SEEKING POLITICS: POLITICAL ATTITUDES OF PARTICIPANTS IN THREE DEMONSTRATIONS FOR WORKER'S RIGHTS IN ITALY*

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Social conflicts tend to take different forms. This article compares three demonstrations on issues of social justice in Italy: a traditional Labor Day demonstration, a march supporting a general strike called by the largest trade union CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro, Italian General Confederation of Labour), and the EuroMayDay parade, representing a “new” type of movement. Focusing on conceptions of democracy among activists, the article stresses that the economic crisis is a crisis of representative democracy as well. Protestors on social justice and labor rights expressed extremely low levels of trust in government, parliament, and political parties; the lowest levels were found among younger participants. At the same time, this lack of trust is coupled with confidence in the capacity of the citizens—especially if organized at the international level—to take the world into their hands. Despite high levels of distrust, demonstrators believe that one must strengthen all levels of government to be able to address social inequality—politics must regain control over the market.

Since the 1970s, social movement research has assumed (more or less explicitly) that, while the old labor movement had become institutionalized, new movements were rapidly developing in societies defined as postindustrial or postmaterialist. In particular, attention focused on the ways advanced capitalist societies produced new, *nonmaterial* conflicts. In this theory, new conflicts address, not material production, but the production of meaning, moving from the factory to the personal sphere, from economic power to control of knowledge (Touraine 1981; Melucci 1989, 1999; Eder 1993). The environmental and women's movements have been seen as the carriers of these new conflicts. In Kitschelt's (1993) conceptualization, these movements are left-libertarian, coupling a traditional interest in equality with a new concern, liberty (see also della Porta and Rucht 1995).

While this research indicated macrosociological, epochal transformations, other work addressed the social characteristics of the activists of these movements (for example, Kriesi 1993). In particular, it has been observed that social transformations produced a new middle class that is overrepresented in the new social movements. This new middle class is not only particularly well-educated, but is primarily employed in the service sector (della Porta and Diani 2006). The overrepresentation of this new middle class in these movements reflects, not class interest, but rather a greater tendency of the intellectual middle class to mobilize in social movements.

Though rarely theorized, empirical research tends to distinguish old and new movements in terms of their forms. Old (labor) movement demonstrations were considered more traditionally structured, and activists were considered more moderate in their critique of the political system and more trustful of their parties and unions. New social movements were, instead, said to raise

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a fundamental critique of conventional politics, moving from politics itself to metapolitics (Offe 1985). From this point of view, new social movements were said to propose alternatives to parliamentary democracy, criticizing both liberal democracy and the organized democracy of the political parties. As Kitschelt notes:

The stakes and the struggle of the left and libertarian social movements thus invoke an ancient element of democratic theory that calls for an organization of collective decision making referred to in varying ways as classical, populist, communitarian, strong, grassroots, or direct democracy against a democratic practice in contemporary democracies labeled as realist, liberal, elite, republican, or representative democracy. (1993: 15)

Consequently, new social movements are said to prefer more horizontal organizational formats, which are reflected in a more spontaneous appearance of marches and other protests.

New social movements have also been theorized as being more cosmopolitan. Whereas the old labor movements were seen as more centered on the nation state, the environmental and women's movements are said to "think globally." This is even more pronounced for the global justice movement, at the turn of the millennium, which is seen as yet another step away from national concerns in the direction of the construction of supranational identities (della Porta 2009).

Hypotheses relating to the institutionalization of an old class cleavage and the emergence of a new one have been much discussed (see chapter 3 in della Porta and Diani 2006 for a review). The emergence of a global justice movement has raised serious doubts about the dominance of postmaterialist concerns:

By extending to (or in some cases starting from) the world's South, the global justice movement involves the poorest classes like the Brazilian *Sem Terra* or the Argentine *piqueteros*; but also, in the world's North, it seems to mobilize—at least in some countries—groups described as poor in collective resources (like the unemployed or precariously employed) or lacking the most basic rights (like migrants). Even there, the end of the "mid-century compromise" between capitalism and the welfare state brought to center stage the conflicts on social rights underlined in the definition "movement for a globalization of rights"—albeit not without attention to new themes (like environmental sustainability or gender) that had emerged with the "new social movements." (della Porta 2007: 21)

More recently, the emergence of the Indignados movement in Spain and Greece, as well as the Occupy campaign, which spread from Wall Street in the United States to the world, testify of the centrality of social issues, which the current financial crisis has made all the more dramatic. From Spain to Greece and the United States, what the media called "very new" movements contest growing social injustice at the country and global level. Beyond their calls for policies other than austerity in response to the financial crises, recent protests have also forcefully criticized the corruption of representative democracy, calling for a "*democracia real ya!*" (Real democracy now!).

The traditional distinction between the new social movements, focusing on postmaterial issues, and the old ones, linked to class politics, thus seems more and more misleading. Rather, we can observe that social claims are now raised by different constellations of organizations, some of them more traditional and some of them "newer." In what follows, we investigate whether the specific characteristics assigned to the "old" versus "new" movements are reflected in contemporary mobilization on social rights. In particular, we are interested in exploring differences and similarities in the political attitudes of participants in different types of demonstrations focused on social issues.

With these questions in mind, we shall compare three demonstrations in this article, all three focused on the similar issues of workers' rights and social justice, but each with different promoters. In what follows, we will look at some characteristics of participants at three demonstrations that took place in Italy in May 2011: the EuroMayDay parade on precarity

issues in Milan on May 1; the Labor Day union march in Florence on the same day; and the national general strike against austerity policies, which we surveyed in Florence on May 6. The decision to keep constant country, period, and aim of the demonstration, followed our expectation that quite different types of mobilization contexts can be singled out even within events addressing similar issues. These three cases, in fact, represent different types of marches. The first involves young people facing conditions of job precarity mobilizing into a “parade.” The organizing groups are rooted in the global justice movement and squatter youth centers, and can be located under the new social movement category. The second case belongs to the long tradition of May Day celebrations, organized jointly by the three main Italian trade union confederations. The third is the march that accompanied a general strike against austerity measures, called for by the main Italian trade union, the CGIL (Italian General Confederation of Labor, traditionally communist-socialist), but joined also by activists of other social movement organizations. The last two marches are therefore rooted in so-called “old social movements.”¹ The marches also differ from each other because the types of participants differ.

Beyond comparing demonstrations, we also want to use individual-level survey data to investigate whether some specific protestor characteristics, which vary by demonstration, have an impact on the main dimensions of political attitudes we are going to analyze. In particular, the composition of the three marches vary in terms of two variables that have indeed emerged in previous research as most important in explaining various dimensions of political participation: age and self-location on the left-right axis (see della Porta 2010: 136). Participants in the Labor Day union march are older, with 61 percent born before 1957 and an additional 26 percent born before 1967; on the other extreme, less than 16 percent of EuroMayDay participants are born before 1967 and 60 percent after 1976. The age distribution among participants at the general strike demonstration is more balanced, with 38 percent born before 1957, 25 percent between 1957 and 1966, 20 percent between 1967 and 1976, and 17 percent after 1976 (see Appendix).

The participants in all three demonstrations have a clearly leftist political identity. Their responses to self-placement on a left-right scale are surprisingly similar: 48.6 percent of the respondents at the Labor Day demonstration, 45.8 percent of those at the EuroMayDay parade, and 44.4 percent of those at the march of the general strike placed themselves in the category most to the left (“missing” and “do not know” are excluded). Roughly 20 percent at each event located themselves in the next two categories on the 10 point scale. Only among EuroMayDay participants—among whom those opting for “do not know” were also most numerous (5.6 percent vs. 2.3 percent for the general strike and 1.8 percent for the Labor Day)—did a significant number (around 10 percent) choose one of the center categories. These variables are expected to impact, in various ways, the political attitudes of our activists.

In what follows, we compare three demonstrations with each other on different indicators of positions on the “meta” democratic question. The article’s first aim is descriptive: to understand what protestors criticize and what they claim about existing institutions. The second aim is to look at similarities and differences between the three marches, as well as, at the individual level on some political attitudes, such as trust in political institutions and collective actors and confidence in effects of citizens’ mobilization.

MISTRUSTFUL, BUT CONFIDENT?

Traditionally, research on political participation has addressed differences in attitudes towards politics. Two of the most important attitudes are political trust and the sense of efficacy. While social trust emerged as (weakly) related to social status, political trust has been explained especially by political values and the contingent proximity to those in power (Newton 2007). The sense of efficacy has been thought to grow with personal resources such as material and cultural capital (Bourdieu 1979). Recent research has also indicated that, facing the many

challenges addressed by representative democracy, young people tend to be increasingly distrustful of representative institutions (Dalton 2004).

As for our demonstrations, the organizers of the EuroMayDay parade are the least “central” from the political point of view, being grass-roots social movement organizations and critical trade unions, with more critical views of existing institutions in general. Contrary to this, the Labor Day march is a traditional celebration, recognized by public institutions. Likewise, the general strike focuses on more specific claims for policy changes by actors that are recognized at institutional levels, such as the largest trade union organization in the country. We might therefore expect the activists of the three demonstrations to reflect the different attitudes of those who called for the three demonstrations. We suspect participants in the EuroMayDay parade to be more mistrustful of existing political institutions than participants in the other two demonstrations. At the individual level, the younger and the more left the activists, the more we expect them to mistrust existing institutions.

The distribution by march on the first set of questions regarding trust in institutions tends to confirm our hypothesis, but with some caveats. EuroMayDay participants are indeed the most mistrustful, but with some differences between different institutions. Additionally, trust in representative institutions tends to also be very low among participants at the marches called for by the more traditional, old-left organizations. In table 1, we can observe that the degree of trust is at the lowest for the national government, growing only very slightly when looking at the national parliament. Trust is also extremely low in political parties, with the judiciary enjoying the highest level of trust.

While participants in all three demonstrations equally mistrust the national government, for all other institutions and collective actors, the trust declines from the Labor Day march, to the general strike, to the EuroMayDay participants (t-tests indicate that the Labor Day march and the EuroMayDay parade differ from each other). This is all the more true for political parties and unions. The average trust in political parties is extremely low for the EuroMayDay parade, and higher for the Labor Day march; but even the general strike participants, traditionally considered supporters of the old left, report minimal trust in parties. Trust in unions is higher, but still low for demonstrations that are called for by the unions. Here too, the three demonstrations present different images, with trust in unions declining quite significantly when going from the Labor Day march to the general strike and to the EuroMayDay parade. Trust is higher instead in the judiciary (which in Italy has been perceived as a sort of last protection against the corruption of the political class) and the European Union (EU) (also often perceived as a lesser evil compared to the very low quality of public institutions in Italy).

Table 1. Political Trust by Demonstration; Means and Standard Deviations

	Labor Day	General Strike	EuroMayDay	Total	Eta
National government	1.3 (.69)	1.2 (.55)	1.3 (.59)	1.2 (.60)	n.s.
National parliament ²	2.3 (.96)	2.0 (.90)	1.7 (.84)	2.0 (.92)	.21***
European Union ³	3.5 (.98)	3.3 (1.01)	3.1 (1.00)	3.2 (1.01)	.13*
UN ⁴	3.1 (.93)	2.8 (1.06)	2.6 (1.06)	2.8 (1.04)	.15**
Political parties ⁵	2.5 (.97)	2.3 (.84)	1.9 (.74)	2.2 (.88)	.27***
Trade unions ⁶	3.5 (.88)	3.2 (.90)	2.7 (.93)	3.1 (.95)	.31***
Judicial system ⁷	3.8 (.79)	3.6 (.90)	3.2 (1.06)	3.5 (.95)	.24***
N	103-7	224-28	126-7	456-61	

Notes: This table presents means and standard deviation (within parentheses). Questions are Likert Scales from 1 “no trust at all” to 5 “trust very much.” Here and elsewhere: ***p < 0.001; **p < 0.01; p < 0.05.

The next set of questions confirms the low confidence in parties and the political class (table 2). Politicians are thought to not fulfill their promises, and voting in elections is seen as far less useful than unconventional forms of participation. There is significant agreement with the statement that “most politicians make a lot of promises but do not actually do anything.” Even though confidence in politicians is extremely low, there is nevertheless confidence in the capacity of citizens to have an impact on political decisions, especially if citizens organize themselves and if they do so transnationally. Degrees of confidence are fairly homogeneous across the three demonstrations, even if EuroMayDay participants show the least confidence in the workings of representative democracy.

If we move from the marches as aggregate phenomena to individual level data, we can also confirm that age is negatively correlated with trust in political institutions. With the exception of trust in national government (at minimal levels in all three demonstrations), year of birth is negatively related with trust for all institutions for which it was measured, be it trade unions (Pearson = -0.29^{***}), political parties (-0.28^{***}), the judicial system (-0.25^{***}), national parliament (-0.23^{***}), the United Nations (UN) (-0.15^{***}) or the EU (-0.14^{**}). A weaker positive correlation exists for the statement that voting is useless (.13^{**}). Confidence in one’s own capacity to affect politics from below is not affected by age.

Turning from age to political position, self-location of participants on a left-right scale is expected to impact trust, which is expected to decline with more radical positions. Trust in national government (Pearson = 0.21^{***}), in the UN (0.18^{***}) and in the EU (0.15^{**}) (but not trust in parties or unions) declines with people moving towards the left extreme of the continuum. As far as political confidence is concerned, the more to the left interviewees are, the more they agree with the statements that one’s own mobilization, organized groups, or international cooperation will have a positive impact (Pearson = -0.13^{**}).

To summarize, the participants at the demonstration on social rights we have surveyed mistrust institutions, while still trusting their own capacity to affect politics, especially when active collectively and transnationally. However, we see some differences (individually and at the level of the demonstration): a moderate left position retains some trust in political institutions and confidence in the possibility to exert influence by mobilizing and/or voting,

Table 2. Political Confidence in the Three Demonstrations

	Labor Day	General Strike	EuroMayDay	Total	Eta
Most politicians make a lot of promises but do not actually do anything ⁸	4.4 (.69)	4.6 (.66)	4.7 (.53)	4.6 (.64)	.18 ^{***}
I don’t see the use of voting, parties do whatever they want anyway ⁹	2.0 (1.26)	2.4 (1.26)	2.6 (1.37)	2.4 (1.31)	.16 ^{**}
My participation can have an impact on public policy in this country	3.8 (.82)	3.7 (.92)	3.7 (.99)	3.7 (.92)	n.s.
Organized citizens groups can have a lot of impact on public policies in this country	4.0 (.87)	3.9 (.76)	4.0 (.86)	3.9 (.81)	n.s.
If citizens from different countries join forces, they can have a lot of impact on international politics	4.0 (.75)	4.1 (.75)	4.1 (.79)	4.1 (.76)	n.s.
I consider everybody’s side of an argument before making a decision	4.0 (.78)	3.9 (.79)	4.0 (.74)	4.0 (.77)	n.s.
N	104-6	226-9	126-7	456-61	

Notes: This table presents means and standard deviation (within parentheses). Questions are Likert Scales from 1 “much in disagreement” to 5 “much in agreement.”

but is increasingly incapable of attracting the younger generations. These younger generations continue to mobilize amongst declining trust in institutions, while keeping trust in their own capacity to produce effective mobilization.

DESPERATELY SEEKING (MULTILEVEL) POLITICS

Even though participants are very mistrustful of governments, parliaments, and (especially) parties in all three marches, they were slightly less mistrustful of supranational institutions. Especially in times of financial crises, the belief that national-level institutions are unable to tackle global problems might increase the perception of a need for global governance. Groups of questions in our survey were aimed at understanding the general assessment of globalization and the EU by activists at the three demonstrations.

As expressed by the very name the organizers chose for the EuroMayDay parade, we expect more cosmopolitan views there than at the more traditional old-left demonstrations, which were held by national organizations with substantial roots in the national political system. At the individual level, we also expect younger people to express more cosmopolitan views, as they have been socialized in a more global context. As for the location on the left-right spectrum, we expect more cosmopolitan views on the left than on the right, which has traditionally promoted a more nationalist perspective.

All in all, our marchers do not see neoliberal globalization as an opportunity for economic growth, but rather as the main cause of increased inequalities, which require institutions of global governance to control it. On this dimension, the demonstrators of the three marches show very little difference (see table 3). On average, respondents do not see globalization as an opportunity for economic growth (mean of 1.7), especially when compared to those stating that globalization increases inequalities and that it requires institutional control through the building of institutions of global governance (means of 3.3 and 3.4, respectively).

Looking at the individual level, age is correlated with opinions about globalization. The older participants tend to have a slightly stronger belief that globalization makes the building of institutions of global governance necessary (Pearson = 0.16^{***}) and the younger are more likely to believe that neoliberal globalization is an opportunity for economic growth (-0.17^{***}). The connection between opinions about globalization and political position seems stronger and shows a different pattern. Participants locating themselves more to the right on the left-right scale subscribe more to the opinion that globalization is an opportunity for economic growth (0.34^{***}) and those that locate themselves more to the left tend to consider more often that globalization increases social inequalities (-0.22^{***}).

Table 3. Opinion About Globalization by Demonstrations

	Labor Day	General Strike	EuroMayDay	Total	Eta
Neoliberal globalization is an opportunity for economic growth ¹⁰	1.6 (.73)	1.6 (.71)	1.8 (.88)	1.7 (.77)	.13*
Globalization increases social inequalities	3.2 (.95)	3.3 (.80)	3.3 (.86)	3.3 (.85)	n.s.
Globalization makes the building of institutions of global governance necessary ¹¹	3.4 (.84)	3.4 (.77)	3.2 (.82)	3.4 (.80)	.13*
N	102-6	220-3	123-26	449-51	

Notes: This table presents means and standard deviation (within parentheses). Questions are Likert Scales from 1 “no agreement at all” to 5 “much in agreement.”

Turning to opinions about the EU (see table 4), there is skepticism that it safeguards an alternative model to neoliberalism or mitigates the most negative effects of neoliberal globalization. Rather, the EU is seen as an institution that promotes neoliberalism. The protesters at EuroMayDay emerge here as the most critical. The average support for the statement that the EU strengthens neoliberalism is higher than for the other two statements (even stronger amongst the EuroMayDay protestors). Participants in the EuroMayDay parade take a more negative position on the role of the EU, the Labor Day demonstrators take a more positive one, while the general strike marchers show an intermediate position.

Opinions about the EU are influenced by the age of participants in each of our three demonstrations. The younger the participants are, the more they see the EU as strengthening neoliberal globalization (Pearson = 0.10*), while older demonstrators more often believe that the EU mitigates the most negative effects of globalization (-0.14**) and safeguards a social model different from the neoliberal one (-0.21***). Also, ideological position shows a significant correlation. Participants locating themselves more to the left of the left-right scale see the EU as an agent of neoliberal globalization more than average (-0.14**); those locating themselves more to the right see it as mitigating globalization's negative effects more than average (0.14**) and safeguarding a different social model (0.17***).

While extremely critical of how existing institutions function, interviewees express a very strong search for politics—to the point of demanding that the very institutions they mistrust be strengthened. When moving from assigning responsibility to potential solutions (see table 5), our activists agree that it is necessary to strengthen all levels of governance. The national level is the only level that sees virtually no difference between the three demonstrations. Instead

Table 4. How Much Do You Agree With The Following Statements?

	EuroMayDay	Labor Day	General Strike	Total	Eta squared
The European Union attempts to safeguard a social model that is different from the neoliberal one ¹²	1.9 (.73)	2.3 (.88)	2.2 (.85)	2.2 (.84)	.21***
The European Union mitigates the most negative effects of neoliberal globalization	2.1 (.79)	2.3 (.81)	2.3 (.71)	2.2 (.75)	n.s.
The European Union strengthens neoliberal globalization ¹³	2.9 (.79)	2.6 (.85)	2.6 (.78)	2.7 (.81)	.20***
Total	116-9	95-8	210-1	422-5	

Notes: This table presents means and standard deviation (within parentheses). Questions are Likert Scales from 1 “not at all in agreement” to 4 “very much in agreement.”

Table 5. Opinion About Which Institutions Should Be Strengthened to Achieve Global Social Movement's Goals by Demonstrations

	EuroMayDay	Labor Day	General Strike	Total	Eta squared
Strengthen local governments ¹⁴	2.7 (1.03)	3.1 (.81)	2.9 (.89)	2.9 (.92)	.14*
Strengthen national governments	2.5 (1.12)	2.5 (1.08)	2.6 (1.13)	2.6 (1.12)	n.s.
Strengthen European Union ¹⁵	2.7 (1.06)	3.0 (.84)	3.0 (.93)	2.9 (.96)	.12*
Building institutions of world governance	2.3 (1.12)	2.6 (1.02)	2.5 (1.02)	2.5 (1.05)	n.s.
N	120-24	87-97	194-204	401-425	

Notes: This table presents means and standard deviation (within parentheses). Questions are Likert Scales from 1 “not at all in agreement” to 4 “very much in agreement.”

for the other institutional levels, participants in the general strike closely mirror the total results, with EuroMayDay participants scoring slightly below and Labor Day participants slightly above. On average, among the three demonstrations in 2011, we find the highest support for strengthening the EU and the local level of government, with a lower, but still important, support for strengthening the national level and building of institutions of world governance. Labor Day marchers favor local government over the EU and world governance over national government. In this way they differ from participants in the other two demonstrations.

Controlling for the influence of age, support for strengthening the EU and the global level increases with age (Pearson = -0.191^{***} and -0.102^* , respectively). Younger demonstrators, to the contrary, show less support for a strengthening of government, particularly at the international level. If we divide participants into age categories, those born after 1977 score about average for the local and the national level, but remain below for the EU and the global level. For all territorial levels except the national (n.s.), protesters locating themselves more to the right on the left-right scale favor a strengthening of government, be it at the local (Pearson = 0.12^*), the EU (0.12^*), or the global level (0.13^*). It is, therefore, the older participants identifying with moderate institutional parties who are more in favor of the strengthening of government institutions at all levels.

Finally, we note a significant degree of identification as Europeans. At the three demonstrations in Italy in 2011, 5.6 percent felt emotionally unattached to the EU and 29 percent reported weak attachment. But 44.5 percent reported quite strong and 20.9 percent very strong attachment. EuroMayDay demonstrators show less attachment to the EU (55.4 percent have quite or very strong attachment). They have a very low attachment to the regional level (27.6 percent against 70.4 percent for the three demonstration together), but a higher-than-average attachment to the global level (89.4 percent against 81.4 percent).

The EuroMayDay marchers seem less fearful of globalization than the other demonstrators. Their identification with the highest territorial level is close to the average. As we have seen, however, the high emotional attachment of EuroMayDay demonstrators to the global dimensions does not translate into equally high support for building institutions of world governance. In addition, they show the weakest identification as Europeans and are the most critical of the EU, which they perceive to be a channel for the implementation of neoliberal policies. Yet they favor the strengthening of the EU over the strengthening of local or national government or the building of institutions for world governance.

Euroskeptics or Europeanists?

In sum, protestors address a multilevel system of governance and demand a strengthening, at all geographic levels, of politics over markets. All in all, institutions are mistrusted. However, there is also a strong desire for the strengthening of political governance at multiple levels. The apparent tension between mistrust for existing institutions and demands for their strengthening can be explained by the type of criticism that emerges towards globalization as a source of increasing inequalities and economic crises. Consequently, the demonstrators stated the need for greater institutional control of globalization. As we have seen, the EU is the most trusted (or rather, least distrusted) institution, and also the one that the highest percentage of activists would like to see strengthened. In general, there is a “critical Europeanism,” made up of strong criticism of current EU policies, but also a perception that solutions to the growing injustice and the economic troubles can only come from an institutional strengthening at the EU level. In comparison with the beginning of the last decade, mistrust in the EU has declined, while the demand for its strengthening has increased (della Porta and Caiani 2009).

If this is true overall, and if we build a typology by crossing trust in the EU and demands for its strengthening, then a more nuanced picture emerges (see table 6). Leaving aside the small percentage of the “satisfied Europeanists” who trust the EU and do not want to strengthen it, we have about one-third of the activists who are “expanding Europeanists,” who trust the EU and want to strengthen it. Almost the same percentage, however, is made up of “critical Europeanists,”

Table 6. Attitudes Towards the EU: Crossing Trust and Desire to Strengthen the Institution

	Does not trust EU	Trust EU
Does not want to strengthen EU	EU critics: 22.4%	Satisfied Europeanists: 4.4%
Wants to strengthen EU	Critical Europeanists: 31.6%	Expanding Europeanists: 41.6%

who want to strengthen the EU even though they do not trust it. A fifth are “EU critics,” who neither trust the EU nor want to strengthen it. As for differences between the three demonstrations (Cramer’s $V = 0.153^{**}$), even among EuroMayDay participants we find a majority of critical or expanding Europeanists (33.3 percent and 32.5 percent, respectively), with a strong minority of EU critics (30 percent). More than half (55.1 percent) of the Labor Day demonstrators are instead expanding Europeanists and another quarter (25.8 percent) critical Europeanists, while among general strike marchers we find less expanding (40.4 percent) and more critical (33.7 percent) Europeanists.

EU critics are especially numerous among the younger cohorts (Pearson = -0.18^{***}), with expanding Europeanists instead being more prevalent among the older cohorts (0.141^{**}). If we cross-tabulate our typology with age categories (Cramer’s $V = 0.156^{**}$), we find that among young marchers born from 1977 on, 34.2 percent are EU critics, compared to 33.3 percent being expanding Europeanists, and 26.1 percent being critical Europeanists. Demonstrators born between 1967 and 1977 tend to be critical Europeanists (45.3 percent), while almost half of the older age cohorts (born up to 1956 or between 1957 and 1966) are expanding Europeanists (49.4 percent and 48 percent, respectively). Therefore, if the demand for a strengthening of the EU persists, criticism increases among the younger participants.

The left-right scale gives similar results, showing a higher presence of EU critics among those who self-locate more to the left (Pearson 0.14^{**}), and of expanding Europeanists among those who are instead self-located more to the right (-0.15^{**}). These results are confirmed by the strong correlation between party identification and our typology (Cramer’s $V = 0.25^{***}$).

Focusing on the position supporting the strengthening of political institutions, it does not seem that protestors, in general, perceive a trade-off between the strengthening of one level of governance and the strengthening of others. Support for the strengthening of local, national, EU, and global levels of governance are all above 50 percent, even if only about half of the participants want to strengthen the national and the global level, while almost two thirds want to strengthen the local level and the EU. Rather than a competition between different levels of governance, activists instead perceive a trade-off between political institutions and the market.

A more nuanced view comes when we cross the positions about the strengthening of the national government with that about the strengthening of the EU (see table 7). Nationalists, who are only in favor of the strengthening of the national government, are a very small minority. Also modest is the support for “anti-institutional” positions (those who do not want to strengthen either of the two). Cosmopolitan Europeanists, who want to strengthen only the EU, have more support (27 percent), while the greatest support is for multilevel institutionalists (those who want to strengthen both), which have almost half the sample (43.9 percent).

Table 7. Attitudes Towards Strengthening of the EU and National Institutions

	Does not want to strengthen national government	Wants to strengthen national government
Does not want to strengthen EU	Anti-institutionalists: 20.1%	Nationalists: 7.5%
Wants to strengthen EU	Cosmopolitan Europeanists: 28.6%	Multilevel institutionalists: 43.9%

Controlling for differences between our three demonstrations (Cramer's $V = 0.14^*$), the first significant result shows the dominance of multi-institutionalists in all three demonstrations, with 46.2 percent in the EuroMayDay parade, 45.8 percent in the general strike march, and 41.7 percent in the Labor Day demonstration. Among participants in the EuroMayDay parade, we find 28.6 percent anti-institutionalists. Among Labor Day demonstrators, 38.1 percent were cosmopolitan Europeanists, making them almost as numerous as multilevel institutionalists. General strike marchers closely mirror the overall results.

Controlling for age, we find no correlation between year born and multilevel institutionalists. Cosmopolitan Europeanists can be found more among older demonstrators (Pearson = 0.11^*), whereas anti-institutionalists (-0.10^*) and especially nationalists (-0.17^{**}) more among younger ones. Looking at age categories, multi-level institutionalists show the same strength (48 percent) for those born up to 1956, those born between 1957 and 1966, and those born between 1967 and 1976. In these three age categories, cosmopolitan Europeanists are the second most numerous group, though this decreases slightly with age. Also among younger demonstrators (born from 1977 on), multilevel institutionalists are 38.7 percent and cosmopolitan Europeanists 20.7 percent. The latter are surpassed by anti-institutionalists (27 percent), and nationalists score above average with 13.5 percent. Those born from 1977 on are 40 percent of the anti-institutionalists and 50 percent of the nationalists. As for political position, it is above all anti-institutionalists that locate themselves more to the left on the left-right scale (0.15^{**}), with only minor differences for the other types.

DESPERATELY SEEKING POLITICS: SOME CONCLUSIONS

This article started with the observation that not only are social conflicts back (or, perhaps have never left), but they tend to take different forms as well. We have compared surveys of three demonstrations on issues of social justice in Italy: a traditional Labor Day demonstration, a general-strike march called by the largest leftwing trade union, CGIL, and the EuroMayDay parade that instead represented a new type of movement. Some common trends and some key differences have emerged.

First, protestors on social justice and labor rights expressed extremely low levels of trust in government, parliament, and political parties. Even trust in the unions was surprisingly low, especially if we consider that union activists were largely present in these protests and that unions had mobilized them. More trust was instead expressed in the judiciary, as well as in international institutions such as the EU and (less) the UN. Confirming the expectation that more traditional ("old") marches tend to express a more positive vision of political institutions, on all dimensions, the degree of trust decreased going from the Labor Day march, to the general strike, to the EuroMayDay parade. At the individual level, we also noted that age does indeed tend to have an impact, with younger people being more distrustful than older cohorts. The younger participants expressed the highest levels of mistrust in representative institutions, parties, and unions.

However, differences were relatively small. All in all, our interviews reveal a convergence towards very low degrees of trust in political institutions, especially in parliament and the political parties. We recognize here that Italy is an extreme case in terms of mistrust in institutions, even though this is by no means homogeneous (see also della Porta, Mosca and Parks forthcoming), as Italian respondents tend to be very distrustful of parties and parliaments, but much less so of the EU and the judiciary. Further comparative research would be needed to locate the Italian case in a crossnational perspective. We can say, however, that the widespread mistrust in institutions of representative democracy looks similar to the one expressed by the Indignados, especially in countries that, like Spain and Greece, have been more hit by the financial crisis.

Opinions on politicians were consistent with this mistrust, as the activists seemed to agree with the Indignados' slogan, "They do not represent us." As Colin Crouch (2004) has noted, in contemporary "post-democracies" (characterized by increasing influence of economic lobbies and decreasing capacity of political institutions to reduce social inequalities), governments' support for neoliberal policies goes hand in hand with an exclusive, minimalistic vision of democracy and with the closing down of channels of participation beyond elections. As representative institutions loosen—or give up—their capacity to influence the market, the visions spread of political institutions captured by strong economic interest (the "1%" according to the demonstrators) and no longer representing what the activists define as the "99%" of the citizens (in the slogan of the Occupy campaign). Trust in parties and parliaments falls accordingly. Not only institutions are mistrusted, however; the traditional actors of mediation in institutional politics (the parties) and functional representation (the unions) are also highly mistrusted. Only about 1 out of 20 having some or much trust in them. In line with our expectations, we have seen that critical attitudes are even more widespread among EuroMayDay participants, young activists, and those more to the left.

Mistrust can bring about a sense of disempowerment towards a low-quality (or non-quality) democracy, and therefore can spur apathy. How are citizens to influence corrupt politicians who are sold out to financial capital? Nevertheless, there is also another very different reaction, which we found widespread among the activists we interviewed: a belief that, notwithstanding the lack of capacity of elected politicians to "represent us," there is the possibility to influence policies from below. Lack of trust in traditional institutional politics and politicians is coupled by our interviewees with confidence in the capacity of the citizens—especially if organized at the international level—to take the world in their hands: "We don't need Wall Street and politicians to build a better society" is what we read on the website of Occupy Wall Street (Occupy Wall Street 2011). Optimism about the capacity to produce changes through action from below was widespread across demonstration, age, and political positions.

In opinion polls, some scholars try to assess the consistency of respondents' attitudes. No doubt that the demonstrators we have interviewed showed some apparent degrees of inconsistency, or at least tensions, at various levels. First and foremost, while not trusting political institutions, our demonstrators are in favor of strengthening all the various levels of governance. They believe that in order to reduce social inequalities and other dangerous consequences of neoliberal globalization, it is imperative that politics regain control over the market. Also, because the challenge is global, various levels of governance have to be strengthened, with particular attention to the EU and the local level.

One should not, however, expect a univocal trend towards denationalization. Our protestors ask for the strengthening of national institutions as well. Compared to the activists at the first European Social Forum in Florence in 2001 (della Porta, Massimiliano, Lorenzo, and Reiter 2006), the percentage of those who believe in the need to strengthen the national government more than doubled. Comparisons across events, age, and political positions showed a more complex picture than we expected. In particular, EuroMayDay participants showed a stronger belief in the positive aspects of globalization, a stronger belief that the EU increases inequalities, and were less keen in strengthen it or even institutions of global governance—even though their degrees of emotional attachment to supranational levels was higher. The more to the left respondents located themselves, the fewer activists wanted a strengthening of the existing institutions.

Facing the complex challenges of a financial crisis—which is global but has specific national consequences—the activists promoted solutions based on integrated, multilevel governance. As our first typology indicated, even many of those who mistrust the EU believe that it is necessary to strengthen it in order to reduce inequalities. Also, as our second typology indicated, while a few actors tend to prefer the strengthening of the national level over the EU, and some (especially the younger demonstrators) are skeptical towards both, most of them prefer supranational and/or multilevel solutions. The participants in the three demonstrations for

social justice that we surveyed in 2011 are more interested in the strengthening of the national level of government than the activists of the European Social Forum of 2002 (della Porta 2009; della Porta and Caiati 2009), but are still cosmopolitan and still regarded “another Europe” as a necessary step in controlling neoliberal globalization.

APPENDIX: GENERATIONAL VARIANCE AMONG PARTICIPANTS

Political Generation	Demonstration		
	<i>EuroMayDay</i>	<i>Labor Day</i>	<i>General Strike</i>
<i>Born up to 1956</i>			
Count	10	64	84
% within demonstration	8.3%	61%	38%
<i>1957-66</i>			
Count	9	27	56
% within demonstration	7.4%	25.7%	25.3%
<i>1967-76</i>			
Count	29	8	43
% within demonstration	24%	7.6%	19.5%
<i>1977 on</i>			
Count	73	6	38
% within demonstration	60.3%	5.7%	17.2%
<i>Total</i>			
Count	121	105	221
% within demonstration	100%	100%	100%

Note: Cramer's V 40***

NOTES

¹ About 1,000 questionnaires each were distributed at the EuroMayDay parade and the general strike and 500 at the Labor Day demonstration by teams of about 12 interviewers and four pointers. The response rate is about 20 percent for the postal survey and 100 percent for the face to face interviews. A comparison between face to face and postal surveys indicates that women and organized activists are slightly more likely to return the questionnaire. No differences emerge on the other dimensions we controlled for (della Porta and Reiter 2012). See van Stekelenburg, Walgrave, Klandermans, and Verhulst in this issue for more methodological details.

² In order to better appreciate if the differences in the means are significant, we performed an independent samples test (t-test) for each couple of means. The independent t-test is more appropriate for our analysis since the means are calculated on different individuals. The t-test has been applied whenever the differences between the three means produced a significant eta. For this variable, the t-test between the means calculated for the Labor Day (hereafter LD) and the general strike (hereafter GS) (Equal Variances [EV] assumed) is 2.671**, the t-test between the GS and the EuroMayDay (hereafter Eur) (EV assumed) is -2.564***, and between the LD and the Eur (EV assumed) is -4.584***.

³ The t-test for LD and GS is not significant, for the GS and the Eur it is not significant, while for LD and Eur (EV assumed) it is -2.907***.

⁴ T-test for LD and GS (EV assumed) is 2.538**, for GS and Eur it is not significant, and for LD and Eur (EV assumed) is -3.314***.

⁵ For this variable the t-test for LD and GS (EV not assumed) is 2.459**, for GS and Eur (EV not assumed) is -4.385***, and for LD and Eur (EV not assumed) is -5.640***.

⁶ T-test for LD and GS (EV assumed) is 2.806***, for GS and Eur (EV assumed) is -5.211***, and for LD and Eur (EV assumed) is -6.841***.

⁷ T-test for LD and GS (EV not assumed) is 2.164*, for GS and Eur (EV not assumed) is -3.582***, and for LD and Eur (EV not assumed) is -5.030***.

⁸ T-test for LD and GS (EV assumed) is -2.018*, for GS and Eur (EV not assumed) is 2.510**, and for LD and Eur (EV not assumed) is 3.910***.

⁹ T-test for LD and GS (EV not assumed) is 2.804**, for GS and Eur it is not significant, and for LD and Eur (EV not assumed) is 3.298***.

¹⁰ T-test for GS and Eur (EV not assumed) is 2.482**, for LD and Eur (EV not assumed) is 1.927*.

¹¹ T-test for GS and Eur (EV assumed) is -2.695**, for LD and Eur (EV assumed) is -1.938*.

¹² T-test for Eur and LD (EV not assumed) is -4.073***, for LD and GS it is not significant, and for Eur and GS (EV not assumed) is -4.092***.

¹³ T-test for Eur and LD (EV not assumed) is 3.133***, for Eur and GS (EV not assumed) is 4.006***, and for LD and GS it is not significant.

¹⁴ T-test for Eur and LD (EV not assumed) is -2.845***, for LD and GS it is not significant, and for Eur and GS it is not significant.

¹⁵ T-test for Eur and LD (EV not assumed) is -1.987*, for LD and GS it is not significant, and for Eur and GS (EV not assumed) is -2.060*.

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