

# Protests and protestors in times of financial crisis in Italy

by MASSIMILIANO ANDRETTA, LORENZO BOSI,  
DONATELLA DELLA PORTA and HERBERT REITER

## 1. *An introduction*

When the Indignados movement spread from Spain to Greece it had a weak following in Italy (Zamponi 2012). Some camps were set up in Italy's main cities, but they usually remained small in proportion. The global day of action on October 15<sup>th</sup>, in 2011, saw hundreds of thousands of demonstrators in Rome, but the day ended in violent outbursts that neither the protest organizers nor the police were able to control (della Porta and Zamponi 2012).

This was all the more surprising as Italy is quite a contentious country. It produced the largest Communist movements in Western Europe, and a strong and politicized labour movement, often ready to join forces with other social movements. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Italian «long autumn» was compared to the «short French May» as the student movement was accompanied by a widespread cycle of protest (Tarrow 1989; della Porta 1995; 1996). In the 1980s and, especially, the 1990s, the collapse of «real socialism» and the gradual strengthening of neoliberal views had obvious repercussions on the Italian Left, but in the 2000s Italy harboured an extremely vital movement for global justice – the strength and influence of those mobilizations were testified by the hosting of the first European Social Forum in Italy (della Porta *et al.* 2006; della Porta 2007; della Porta 2009).

But was it true social peace, or did the convergence of attention on the Indignados hide other contentious forms of actions on the issues of the financial crisis and the policies adopted to address it? While the main Indignados' forms and frames did

not spread in Italy, given their limited resonance in an already dense social movement family (della Porta and Zamponi 2012; Zamponi 2012), research based on protest event analysis indicated indeed that 2011 was not a quiet year: protest developed on a number of issues, with claims on labour rights dominating the scene (della Porta, Mosca and Parks 2012). Taking a different perspective, in this article we will address the role of antiausterity motivation at individual level by analysing results of surveys conducted in 2011 at four demonstrations, three of which directly addressed issues of social justice, one focusing on peace<sup>1</sup>.

Social movement scholars usually classify protest events in different categories, according to their ideology, participants, issues raised, goals, type of organization and of change (Buechler 1995; Cohen 1985; Inglehart 1981; Melucci 1994; Offe 1994; Kriesi *et al.* 1995). So for example new social movements are contrasted with old ones because they have ideologically a cultural focus (not a political one), their participants are said to be mainly new middle classes (rather than labours), they have post-materialist goals (not materialist ones), they are composed of informal grass roots organizations (not centralised and hierarchical); they aim to change society toward direct action (not institutional action). In this article we base the distinction between old and new protest events on their main claims. Among others, old and new claims are contrasted, the first, by traditional labour movement, are usually conceived as calls for social rights (and labour rights, first of all), the second, by new social movements, are calls on gender rights, environmental protection, and peace. Comparing participants in demonstrations on traditional social rights with those at a march for peace we would like to see to which extent this distinction is still valid, by comparing participants' frames of their claims, political positions, trust in institutions<sup>2</sup>.

In what follows, after discussing methodological issues related to our surveys (part 2), we shall compare the framing of the problems and solutions (part 3), moving then to the analysis of differences in political attitudes and behaviour (part 4) and in

<sup>1</sup> Two recent special issues of international journals have hosted reflections on anti-austerity mobilization across the globe: «Social Movement Studies», 2012, 11, 3-4; «Interface», 2012, 4, 1.

<sup>2</sup> It is worthy to remember that the Perugia-Assisi march in 2011 took place during a wave of protest against the financial crisis (and related austerity policies) and this was reflected in the general slogans of the march: «bringing peace and social justice».

(mis)trust in institutions and confidence in protest (part 5). In the conclusion (part 5), we shall return to the distinction between old and new social movements, looking at its persisting predicting capacity, but also some limitations in it (part 6).

## *2. Surveying demonstrations: the methodology*

The research we present is based on surveys at four marches: the Labour day union march in Florence on May 1, 2011; the Euromayday march against precarity in Milan on May 1, 2011; the national general strike against austerity policies called for by the main trade union, the Confederazione Italiana Generale del Lavoro (CGIL) in Florence on May 6 2011 and the Perugia-Assisi March from September 2011. The first march belongs to the long tradition of May Day celebrations, and was organized jointly by the three main Italian trade union confederations; the second involves a network of local organizations, grassroots unions and alternative media groups that reject the traditional unions and parties and are willing to represent young people who face conditions of job precarity mobilizing into a «parade», that from 2001 created an alternative demonstration to the May Day of the traditional left (Choi and Mattoni 2010); the third is the march accompanying a general strike against austerity measures, called for by the main Italian trade union, the CGIL (traditionally communist-socialist), but joined also by activists of other social movement organizations. The Perugia-Assisi in 2011 march marks the 50 years anniversary of a traditional event of the Italian peace movement which took place for the first time in 24th, September, 1961<sup>3</sup>.

Although sometimes used for discussing the characteristics of «protest-oriented» citizens (Barnes and Kaase 1979; Dalton 2002; Norris 2002), surveys on the entire population have usually been considered as minimally useful for the study of social movements, since their members are generally too few to allow for statistically significant analyses. While the use of questionnaires has been rare in research on protestors, there are however

<sup>3</sup> Peace marches are of course only a type of new social movement activities. We have surveyed also a Pride demonstration in 2012, and plan to cover also an environmentalist and a women's right one in 2013.

more and more examples of surveys during protest events (see Favre, Fillieule and Mayer 1997; Fillieule 1997; van Aelst and Walgrave 2001; Andretta *et al.* 2002; 2003; della Porta *et al.* 2006; Agrikoliansky and Sommier 2005; Walgrave and Rucht 2010; della Porta 2009). Beyond providing data on the socio-graphic and political backgrounds of the activists as well as their individual attitudes and behaviours, the above-mentioned research also helped to raise some main methodological caveats in this specific use of survey data.

In particular, as far as the representativeness of the sample is concerned, Pierre Favre, Olivier Fillieule, and Nonna Mayer (Favre *et al.* 1997) were among the first scholars to devise a method to randomly sample demonstrators. As Fillieule and Blanchard (2008, 11) recently summarized, «Since it is not possible to use a sampling strategy based on quotas, one has to use a probabilistic method, that is to say, to guarantee that all possible participants would have equal opportunity of being interviewed.» To devise a technique that would support this aim, the researcher has to consider the symbolic allocation of spaces in a demonstration, as well as demonstrators' habits. In order to offer all participants equal chances to be interviewed, further surveys at demonstrations have also usually sampled the Nth person in every Nth row of a march (e.g. van Aelst and Walgrave 2001). It is important to note that, with this sampling strategy, the persons (pointers) who select the people to be surveyed are different from those who actually handle out the questionnaires (interviewers). In our research, we have adopted this strategy to randomly select interviewees (Walgrave, Wouters and Ketelaars 2012).

Although the action repertoire of protest movements encompass more than demonstrations, we limit ourselves to a single means of action, namely street demonstrations. Different means of protest have sometimes very different dynamics. Therefore, we decided to control for that source of variation by restricting our study to a single but frequently employed protest form. Identical data have been collected in the countries included in the project and at the EU level protests (see [www.protestsurvey.eu](http://www.protestsurvey.eu)).

We have used a core questionnaire for the postal survey and a shorter version for face-to-face interviews oriented to check for response biases. We also used fact sheets to assess context variations, which include both short interviews with organizers

and the police (both before and after the demonstrations) as well as an analysis of the media coverage of the events. For each demonstration, the interviewers are asked to complete another short survey which reports on some characteristics (number of participants, slogans, weather conditions, etc.) of the demonstration, as well as specific questions about the responses to the survey. In order to reduce the selection bias linked to the preference of interviewers to select some categories of interviewees, «pointers» have been asked to assign randomly selected demonstrators to the interviewers (Walgrave *et al.* 2012).

The core questionnaire included questions about socio-demographic variables; mobilization channels and techniques used by participant, social embeddedness, instrumental, identity and ideological motives, emotions, political behavior (conventional and unconventional), political attitudes (interest, left-right placement, political cynicism), and awareness of and identification with protestors elsewhere in the world.

About 1000 questionnaires were distributed at the Euromayday; the general strike and the Perugia-Assisi; and, due to the limited number of participants, 500 at the Labour day demonstration by teams of about 12 interviewers and four pointers. Response rate has been of about 20% for the postal survey (from 13% in Euromayday to 27% in the General Strike), 100% for the face to face interviews<sup>4</sup>.

Very briefly, before looking at the way in which protestors framed their claims, we think it is worthy to underline those most relevant socio-biographical characteristics of participants at our four demonstrations. The three labour demonstrations seem to have attracted a larger presence of male participants than the Perugia-Assisi peace march (49.4% and 40.2% respectively).

<sup>4</sup> The short face to face interviews were administrated to 20% of the sampled interviewees: interviewers have been instructed to administrate such short questionnaires every five people selected. This allowed us to control for possible bias introduced in the return of the questionnaires. The variables included in the short face to face questionnaires that can be confronted with those in the longer postal questionnaires are: gender, education, age, membership in organizations staging the demonstration, participation in past demonstrations, and the extent to which interviewed were determined to participate in the selected demonstrations. Our bias analysis demonstrated that on only two variables (gender and past participation in previous demonstrations) and only in some of the demonstrations there were statistically significant differences between the two samples. These were however weak differences which do not impact on the significance of the data frequencies and correlations used in this article (see Andretta 2012).

This reflects the fact that women are less unionized than men in Italy as they still suffer a higher level of no-employment. In the labour protests one of the strongest channels of information for mobilization is represented by co-members of organizations (46%), which in these cases are in great majority unions. The age cohort does not seem to be a relevant dimension for explaining the different composition of participants in the labour demonstrations and the peace demonstration. Instead, looking at the educational variance, we can observe that the population of participants with an upper secondary certificate is larger among those who were at the Perugia-Assisi march (39.1%) than among those who participated in the labour demonstrations (upper secondary 25.9% and Post-secondary, non-tertiary 5.9%). This confirms what the social movement literature has said regarding the presence among new social movements of better educated participants coming mostly from the middle class. Finally, considering the employment conditions, we note that full-time employees dominate the labour demonstrations (51.9%) as well as the protest for peace (43.2%). Unemployed are less prone to mobilize in both our types of demonstrations.

### 3. *The framing of protest*

Protestors, as we have said in our introduction to this article, march in the streets, raising old and new claims. In this section, we compare demonstrators' frames in anti-austerity and peace protests, to check to which extent they conform to or challenge clean social science distinctions, as the one between old and new claims.

The individual framing of protest is in fact most relevant to address the mentioned question. Snow and Benford (1988, 199-200) suggested to look at three dimensions of a frame: a) the diagnostic dimension – «diagnostic framing involves identification of a problem and the attribution of blame and causality»; b) the prognostic dimension – «a proposed solution to the diagnosed problem that specifies what needs to be done»; c) the motivational dimension – «a call to arms for engaging in ameliorative or corrective action».

Although Snow and Benford have especially focused on the way in which social movement organizations frame their activities

in order to get public attention and to involve citizens in their mobilization efforts, in this article we pay attention to the micro level, by looking at how participants framed their protests, what kinds of motivations they mentioned and how their frames were resonant with the meaning of the protest given by the organizations which promoted the demonstration under analysis.

There are several reasons why in theory we may expect among respondents from the Perugia-Assisi march very different frames from those found in the labour demonstrations. People here in fact deal with a very different issue, which implies a very different articulation of all levels of framing. First of all, peace is often considered a post-materialist value, thus (apparently) opposed to the classic materialist theme of labour (Inglehart 1989); second, peace implies an immediate link with international politics and relations (Giugni 2004), labour instead especially with domestic politics; and third, in the peace protest both the diagnostic and the prognostic levels of framing may in theory focus more on the ethical and cultural dimensions (Nardin 1996; Woehrle 2008), rather than on the political and economic dimensions focused upon by labour protests. In theory, because the peace movement is actually a very composite network of very different organizations, groups and individuals, some of which with deep roots in movements and organizations dealing with traditional issues, such as labour, social rights and the like (Klandermans 1991). Trade unions and political parties have a good tradition of participation in peace movement mobilizations and, especially in the context of the Perugia-Assisi march, also institutions are involved. In addition, and maybe because of the latter argument, peace movements also focus on social justice, considered as a cause of wars (Selby and Goldstein 2000). Finally, since the Global Justice Movement mobilization the peace movement has interacted with other movements, and their frames have been integrated in a master-frame which includes social justice and anti-neoliberalism (Andretta *et al.* 2002; della Porta *et al.* 2006).

Based on (recoded) open questions on why they participated, who (according to them) is to be blamed for the problems they raise, and what (according to them) should be done to solve those problems, we can observe similarities and differences.

When we look at «why» individuals decided to participate in the Perugia-Assisi march, obviously enough, most of the participants simply declared to be there because they worry about



peace in the world («it is a march or peace and solidarity with all peoples living under military occupation or under a state of war», said one of the participant) (46.8%); because they wanted to make pressure in order to achieve it («I'm convinced that there are many people who move towards the same goal and generate right questions to governors») (44.6%); or because they traditionally took part in the march or were part of personal networks involved in the peace movement («I participate every year because it is the place where people express their love for peace») (17%). As expected, about one fifth of participants said that the lack of a peace culture and ethics pushed them into marching («I believe in the principles of respectful, aware and positive human relations»); but, at the same time, about the same percentage were worried about social and economic injustices («without social justice there cannot be a peaceful world»), that they perceived as relevant for the peace problem; and about 7% declared to mobilize because they think political institutions and actors, and specific policies should be criticized for their impact on (the lack of) peace («we want to show to our so called representatives that they must operate only for peace»)

When we turn to the perceived causes for the lack of peace, we find however a couple of unexpected results. First, the economy was the most referred cause of the problem («the hegemony of the economy», «banks and corporations», «the cynic economic growth», and similars) (42%), to which it should be added the related frames of capitalism or globalization (8%) and social injustice (14%). Second, politics was referred to by 33% of the participants («the ruling class pushed by economic interests», «the political class and their bad policies», etc.) (As many as 35% (also) thought that peace is undermined by «wrong» (consumption or power oriented and individualistic) cultures and ethics («the personal and collective egoism and the lack of culture»).

Finally, participants thought that in order to solve the problem, culture and ethics should be changed («we need to establish a culture based on reciprocal respect», about 46%), but also institutions and policies («politicians should operate for a real international cooperation», 36%); some referred to economic change («we need a new model of economic development, based on respect and solidarity», 13%), while others claimed that social justice had to be struggled for («to redistribute the world income», «to redistribute resources», 28%), and still others



said that pressure from below could be a solution («we need to create social movements of good citizens with democratic ideals», about 7%).

As for the labour protests, most of respondents (about 52%) declared that they participated in the demonstrations because they felt work conditions and social rights were under attack: «gradual reduction of workers' rights» (open answer, General Strike's demonstrator); «new forms of slavery» (Euromayday) and similar phrases were used by participants to explain why they were protesting have been classified in this category<sup>5</sup>. As many as 31% of them protested because they «dislike the reforms about social work, economic and constitutional issues of the current executive» (Labour day) or in order to «manifest our disagreement with the decisions taken by the government» (Euromaday), but also in order to express discontent with the «current opposition» (General Strike), in any case, criticizing «national politics or policies»<sup>6</sup>. About 26% declared that they participated because they traditionally do so in such events or because they wanted to express their solidarity with workers<sup>7</sup>; about 25% because «they believe that protest improves the quality of people's life» (Labour day), or because it is always important to participate in order to get things changed<sup>8</sup>. Only 4% and 3% wanted to express opposition to local and global politics, respectively (only 3.1% of the answers could not be classified in any of our categories).

When we asked who or what was to be blamed for the situation which brought them into the streets, participants had

<sup>5</sup> It is worth noticing that for each categorization of the respondents' answers there are variations between the three labour demonstrations. For instance, those who perceived an attack on «work conditions and social conditions» were about 60% in both the General Strike and the Euromayday march, but only 30% in the traditional 1<sup>st</sup> May Labour Day.

<sup>6</sup> This category was obviously more widespread during the General Strike, which is by definition a protest against the national government (about 58%), while less so in the traditional 1<sup>st</sup> May Labour Day (26%) and the Euromayday (14%).

<sup>7</sup> It is interesting to note that «tradition» is evoked also in the relatively new event of the Euromayday; I participate «for tradition and because I believe that the 1<sup>st</sup> May Labour Day is important» answered one of the participants. As much as 28% of participants in such march shared this frame. Obviously, this motivation is much more present in the traditional 1<sup>st</sup> May Labour Day (71%) and insignificant in the less routine-based General Strike (4%).

<sup>8</sup> This frame frequency varies from 17% in the 1<sup>st</sup> May Labour Day to 25% and 30% respectively in the General Strike and the Euromayday.

few doubts: the national government – «who is only able to care about the interest of the premier» (General Strike) – was the main response for as many as 71% of them<sup>9</sup>. A further 22% believed that it was mostly the fault of «the banks and capitalism» (Euromayday) or other actors/institutions of the «capitalist globalization»<sup>10</sup>, 15% that this specific economic crisis was to be blamed<sup>11</sup>, while 12% accused the entrepreneurial class<sup>12</sup>, and 10% attributed responsibility for things getting worse (also) to the trade union organizations<sup>13</sup>. Others underlined the way in which society is (dis)organized (11%) or the wrong values and the dominant culture – of a «society based on profit instead of rights» (Euromayday) (12%)<sup>14</sup>. Finally, 6.6% of respondents gave (also) answers that could not be classified.

As for the prognostic dimension, with little variation between the three demonstrations, most of the respondents think that the solution is «to create serious labour policies, abolish all temporary contracts, and establish serious controls on underpaid jobs and the black market» (General Strike), or «to act at Governmental level in the economic field» (Labour day). Those and other similar answers, given by 54% of respondents, seem to underline that only by «bringing politics back in», that is by re-embedding the economical sphere within the larger society through political control and actions (policies), things could get better. Other participants (28%, again with little cross-demonstration variation), instead, think that attention should be paid to the educational system – by «informing and investing on education for everybody!! Then we should wait... it is required time to see changes» (Euromayday); «investing in school and sentimental education» (Labour day) – through which

<sup>9</sup> This is unsurprisingly the most diffused frame among the three labour protest events, the frequency varying from 62% in the 1<sup>st</sup> May Labour Day to 78% in the General Strike, with the Euromayday in between.

<sup>10</sup> 29% in the 1<sup>st</sup> May Labour Day, 26% in the Euromayday, and 18% in the General Strike.

<sup>11</sup> From 14% in the General Strike to 17% in the Euromayday.

<sup>12</sup> Equally distributed amongst the three demonstrations population.

<sup>13</sup> Interestingly this frame is also present in the traditional trade unions-lead protest events, such as the General Strike. As one of the participant observed, «separate agreements should stop, we need trade unions unity» and one in the 1<sup>st</sup> May Day in Florence said «trade unions are to be blamed as well». The frequency of this frame varies from 6% in the 1<sup>st</sup> May Labour Day to 18% in the Euromayday, with the General Strike in between.

<sup>14</sup> From 17% in the General Strike to 27% in the Euromayday.

the dominant culture can be transformed, while for 16% it suffices to «to change the government and the economic system» (Euromayday), «send the current government home» (General Strike), and substitute it with «a ruling class animated by high ideals and long term perspective» (Labour day)<sup>15</sup>. Strengthening democracy through active participation can be a solution for about 14% of respondents in each demonstration, while about 7% state that only a real revolution can improve the situation<sup>16</sup>; a few think that if trade unions change their strategy this may help (about 3%). Finally, some simply admit they don't know what is to be done (about 2%) and about 8% of respondents gave (also) answers that could not be classified.

Overall, most of the people mobilized against the worsening of workers' conditions and social rights, and attributed the responsibility for this situation to the national (Berlusconi) government. If (national) politics is the problem, however, the solution is not «less politics»; on the contrary, participants mostly believe that politics must regain its control on economy and society to make things changed. About 23% of our total sample made such explicit links between the diagnostic and prognostic level of their frames: I'm protesting «to launch a message to the ruling class of the country: we are hungry for real rights!», and what is needed is «wealth redistribution amongst the lower classes, implementing socio-economic policies aimed at increasing the wealth of many and not of the few» stated a participant in the General Strike; while for a demonstrator in the Labour day «the attack by the national government to workers rights has downgraded the country and the democracy» and only if «political parties in general, being them in the government or in the opposition, work for the country» things can improve.

If we compare the data on the frames of participants at the peace demonstration with the data on the frames of participants at the labour demonstrations, we note some categories that both types of participants refer to. As far as the reasons for participation in the demonstrations are concerned, these are «tradition, solidarity», «social rights» (work conditions are in-

<sup>15</sup> But this frame is unequally distributed between the three labour events: 5% in the 1<sup>st</sup> May Labour Day, 15% in the Euromayday and 22% in the General Strike.

<sup>16</sup> 4% in the General Strike, 7% in the 1<sup>st</sup> May Labour Day, and 13% in the Euromayday.

cluded in this broad category), «participation and change», and «politics». For the frames on who or what is the cause of the problem, common categories are «politics/policies», «capitalism or globalization», «economy» and «culture and ethics»; for the frames on «what should be done», they are «democracy and participation», «changing politics» and «changing culture and ethics» (tables 1, 2 and 3). For each of these common categories there are, however, relevant differences in the frequencies of references made. As for the reasons for their protest, 26% of the participants at the labour demonstrations referred to «tradition/solidarity» against 17% of the participants at the peace demonstration, 51% to «social rights» against 16%, 25% to «participation and change» against 45%, and 38% to «politics/policies» against 7%. As for the perceived causes of the problem, 71% of the labour demonstrators referred to «politics» against 33% of the peace demonstrators, 22% to «capitalism and globalization» against 8%, 27% to «economy» against 41%, and 12% to «culture and ethics» against 35%. Concerning the solution of the problem, 14% of the participants at the labour demonstrations referred to «democracy and participation» against 7% of the participants at the peace demonstration, 66% to «changing politics/policies» against 33%, and 28% to «changing culture/ethics» against 46%.

Participants in the two types of demonstrations differ then in their diagnostic, prognostic and motivational framing. In the labour protests a master frame links the opposition to the worsening of labour conditions and social rights to a call for more politics.<sup>17</sup> In the peace demonstration no master frame clearly dominates the meaning space. Rather, there are three types of meanings associated with the peace issue. One is dominated by the culture/ethics path, and is based on the idea that the cause of the problem (diagnosis) is to be found in the cultural sphere dominated by egoist, power and money orientated and individualist values. The solution (prognosis) therefore is to change the minds of people: about 48% of those who said they got involved because of this kind of reason also identified culture/ethics as the cause of the problem (Cramer's V of the

<sup>17</sup> A master-frame is a the dominant frame in a specific context and emerges when different actors come to see problems in the same way (Snow *et al.* 1986; Andretta 2005).

TAB. 1. «*Why frame*» categories by type of demonstration (Column: % of yes; number of cases: 668; missing cases: 9,1%)

	Labour demonstrations	Peace demonstration	Cramer's V
Tradition, solidarity	26.2	17.1	.10**
Work conditions, social rights	51.3	15.8	.34***
Participation, change	24.7	44.6	.20***
Politics/policy	37.9	7.2	.32***

TAB. 2. «*Who or what to blame frame*» categories by type of demonstration (Column: % of yes; number of cases: 668; missing cases: 9,1%)

	Labour demonstrations	Peace demonstration	Cramer's V
Politics	70.8	33.1	.36***
Capitalism/Globalization	22.4	7.6	.18***
Economy	26.6	41.4	.15***
Culture/ethics	12.4	34.7	.26***

TAB. 3. «*What should be done frames*» categories by type of demonstration (Column: % of yes; number of cases: 667; missing cases: 9,3%)

	Labour demonstrations	Peace demonstration	Cramer's V
Democracy and participation	14.3	6.7	.11**
Changing politics/policy	66.3	33.3	.31***
Changing culture/ethics	27.6	46.2	.19***

cross-tabulation between the «why you participated» category and the «who or what is to be blamed» category is .14\*), and as many as 65% saying that «culture and ethics» is the cause of the problem, also said that the latter needs to be changed in order to solve the problem (Cramer's V = .28\*\*\*). Note that only 17% of participants referring to culture and ethics as cause of the problem mentioned «changing institutions, politics or policies» as a solution; 30% referred to changes in the socio-

economic sphere. The second meaning path is associated with the socio-economic sphere instead: whatever participants said about why they demonstrated, about 50% of those referring to socio-economic causes of the problem (social injustice and wrong economy) referred also to socio-economic changes in order to solve the problem (Cramer's  $V = .23^{***}$ ). About 36% of these participants referred to cultural and ethical changes and 34% to changing institutions, politics or policies. Finally, there is a political path: 47% of those referring to institutions, politics or policies as cause of the problem also mentioned changing these aspects in order to solve the problem (Cramer's  $V = .21^{***}$ ). A main similarity is instead in the relevance given by participants to all demonstrations to issues of social justice.

#### 4. *Political belongings*

The difference in the diagnostic and prognostic frames could be related with different political attitudes and behaviors. In general, while old social movement activists tend to locate themselves firmly on the Left of the political spectrum, new social movement activists have been said to challenge the mono-dimensional definition of the political spectrum in Left and Right, introducing a new, «post-materialist» dimension. As we are going to see, cross-demonstration differences on this dimension are in fact sometimes notable.

The participants in the three demonstrations targeting labour issues show a slightly higher interest in politics than participants in the Perugia-Assisi peace march, with 89% declaring to be quite or very interested against 80% (Cramer's  $V = .13^*$ )<sup>18</sup>. This persists even if we concentrate, among the labour related demonstrations, only on the general strike, i.e. on the protest event attracting more «ordinary» people than political activists. Participants in the three labour demonstrations also declared to talk slightly more about politics than participants in the peace demonstration, however to a statistically not significant extent.

Significant differences between peace and labour demonstrators emerge if we look at the self-collocation on a left – right scale. Comparing means shows that participants in the labour

<sup>18</sup> For the first of May 91.7%, general strike 88.1%, Euromayday 87.2%.

demonstrations define themselves as clearly more to the left than participants in the peace demonstration (1.2 *vs.* 1.7; ETA .18<sup>\*\*\*</sup>)<sup>19</sup>. As much as 46% of the participants in the labour related demonstrations collocate themselves in the category most to the left and 19% in the next. Also the population at the Perugia-Assisi march is clearly left-wing, but with lower one third locating themselves in the category most to the left on the ten digit scale and 15% in the next category. In fact, the difference remains significant even if for the labour related demonstrations we concentrate on the Euromayday parade, i.e. the one where participants emerge as less to the left (compare means = 1.3 *vs.* 1.7; ETA .12<sup>\*</sup>).

Considering these differences in the left – right placement, our results for the political party with which participants identify most closely are however surprisingly similar between the labour demonstrations and the peace march (see table 4)<sup>20</sup>. Results are most similar between the Perugia-Assisi peace march and the demonstration in occasion of the general strike, while more significant differences emerge with the first of May demonstration (where participants tend to identify more with the socialists/social democrats) and the Euromayday parade (where results for no party, communist and left liberal are higher). On the whole, however, we can conclude that although peace demonstrators see

<sup>19</sup> Responses to the question to place themselves on a left – right scale are surprisingly similar in the three labour demonstrations: 48.6% of the respondents at the first of May demonstration, 45.8% of those at the Euromayday parade and 44.4% of those at the march in occasion of the general strike («missing» and «do not know» excluded) placed themselves in the category most to the left. Roughly 20% each 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% *vs.* 2.3% for the general strike and 1.8% for the first of May) – a significant number (ca. 10%) chose one of the center categories.

<sup>20</sup> Perhaps more interesting to note is the different weight of parties of or with their roots in the traditional left – socialist/social democrat, left socialist and communist – among the participants in the three labour demonstrations. These parties account for 93.5% for the First of May, 74.6% for the general strike and 63.4% for Euromayday. Moreover, the three trends of the traditional left show a very uneven distribution, with the moderate social democratic left scoring particularly low among Euromayday participants, but being closely trailed by the left socialists – in their main expression, the party «Sinistra ecologia e libertà», of very recent formation – also among participants in the First of May demonstration and in the march in occasion of the general strike. These results indicate a strong disillusion with the main institutional left party, particularly acute among Euromayday participants, but clearly present also at the first of May and general strike demonstrations.



themselves as significantly less to the left than labour demonstrators, they identify more or less with the same political parties.

TAB. 4. *Party identification by type of demonstration (n.s.)*

	Labour	Peace	Total
Socialist or social democrat	32.9	35.7	33.8
Left socialist	32.6	29.1	31.4
No party	16.3	16.7	16.5
Communist	9.2	8.4	8.9
Left liberal	7.8	9.3	8.3
Right populist	0.5	0.9	0.6
Green	0.5	0.0	0.3
Conservative	0.2	0.0	0.2
Total N.	435	227	662

No difference between Labour and peace demonstrators (nor between the three labour demonstrations) exists also on the closeness to the party with which they identify most, with (among both types of demonstration), 22% feeling not very close, 58% quite close and 20% very close. Results remain statistically not significant also if we compare the Perugia-Assisi with the single labour demonstrations. For both participants in the Labour related demonstrations and the peace march, identification is highest for communist sympathizers and lowest for sympathizers with the socialists/social democrats. In addition, no differences between peace and labour demonstrations emerge on trust in political parties, which remains very low, regardless of party identification. Therefore, also for the participants in the Perugia-Assisi march we can presume a considerable level of disillusionment with political parties. In fact, if anything, peace activists show even less trust than labour activists (quite/very much is 5.5% *vs.* 7.2%), with especially the communist sympathizers within the peace demonstration declaring, differently from their colleagues in the labour demonstrations, no trust whatsoever and (in the peace demonstration) only the sympathizers with the socialists/social democrats scoring above average.

Notwithstanding the signs of disillusion with political parties, the overwhelming majority of the participants in both types of

demonstrations did vote at the last general election (94.2% of the peace demonstrators *vs.* 91.1% of the labour demonstrators). Comparing the single demonstrations, participants in the Perugia-Assisi march voted as much as participants in the first of May (94.3%), with participants in the general strike (90.5%) and in the Euromayday parade (88%) trailing behind.

Analyzing the political parties voted at the last general election, peace demonstrators emerge as politically more moderate than labour demonstrators (see table 5; deliberately not valid and blank votes excluded). They tended to privilege to a greater extent the main institutional centre-left party, i.e. the socialists/social democrats and tended to vote considerably less for communist parties.

TABLE 5. *Party voted at the last general election by type of demonstration (Cramer's V = .20<sup>\*\*\*</sup>)*

	Labour	Peace	Total
Socialist/social democrat	52.6	57.5	51.9
Communist	20.9	11.7	17.5
Left socialist	17.6	15.4	16.8
Left liberal	8.3	10.7	9.2
Green	0.3	3.3	1.4
Other	0.3	1.4	0.7
Total N.	363	214	577

Comparing the party voted at the last general election with party identification expressed at the time of the demonstrations, both socialist/social democratic and communist parties register a considerable drop, whereas the left socialists experience a boom. Excluding for party identification the option «no party», among labour demonstrators the socialists/social democrats drop from 52.6% to 39.3%, among peace demonstrators from 57.5% to 42.9%; the communists, respectively, from 20.9% to 11% and from 11.7% to 10.1%. The left socialists instead move from 17.6% to 39% among labour demonstrators and from 15.4% to 34.9% among peace demonstrators.

These changes, however, occur within one political party sector, while results for the whole sector remain relatively stable. If we consider the parties with their roots in the traditional

labour movement (i.e. socialists/social democrats, left socialists and communists) together, 91.1% of the participants in the labour related demonstrations declared to have voted for them in the last general election and 89.3% to identify most closely with them. For the Perugia-Assisi peace march results are 84.6% and 87.9%, respectively. Concerning party identification, for the peace activists we can in addition compare our 2011 results with our data on the 2001 edition of the Perugia-Assisi march. At that time, 84.2% of the participants had declared their closeness with one of the parties with their roots in the traditional labour movement, with however the communist party of *Rifondazione Comunista* emerging as absolutely dominant with more than 65%. In particular with the Genoa G8 counter-summit, *Rifondazione* had gained considerable credence as the one left-wing party close to the movements, a prestige subsequently lost when entering the centre-left government coalition in 2006.

If for the decision to cast a vote for participants in both the labour demonstrations (ETA .16\*\*\*; compare means for year of birth, participants born 1991 and later excluded) and in the peace demonstration (ETA .19\*\*) age seems important, with older demonstrators tending more towards voting than younger ones, this correlation is less evident for party preferences. In fact, among peace demonstrators we can observe a decline in support for the main institutional centre-left party among younger participants similar to the one among labour demonstrators, but of less dramatic proportions. If among labour activists the left socialists in particular benefit from this decline, this trend is far less evident among peace activists, where the left socialists score relatively high already among older participants and other parties (like the left liberals) also show strongly among younger participants.

As far as party preferences are concerned, also other socio-demographic indicators give different results for the three labour demonstrators on the one hand and the Perugia-Assisi march on the other. For the labour related demonstrations, gender emerges as significant (Cramer's  $V = .18^{**}$ ), with no party, the left liberals and the communists being predominantly male preferences and the socialists/social democrats a female one. For the peace demonstration, instead, the correlation is statistically not significant, and female participants are more numerous among those declaring a preference for no party and for the socialists/

social democrats, male participants for the communists. Other socio-demographic indicators, e.g. education and subjective class collocation, give similarly contradictory results.

Turning from party preferences to the connection between organizational membership and the demonstrations covered, a first important result is that two thirds of the participants in the labour related marches declared membership in one of the staging organizations but only one third of participants in the Perugia-Assisi march. Even less participants in the Euromayday parade (only 12%) than in the Perugia- Assisi march declared membership in one of the staging organizations, but close to 70% in the other two protest events.

Turning to organizational membership in general, some important differences emerge between participants in the labour and the peace demonstrations (see table 6). If for membership in political parties and sports and cultural organizations results are very similar<sup>21</sup>, peace activists tend to be more often members in SMOs and above all in religious and welfare associations. The particular importance of membership in SMOs and religious or welfare organizations for peace demonstrations had already emerged in our survey of the 2001 edition of the Perugia-Assisi march, with 79.2% and 54.3%, respectively.

TAB. 6. *Organizational membership (active and passive) by type of demonstration.*

Type of organization (Cramer's V)	Labour (%)	Peace (%)	Total N. (%)
SMOs (n.s.)	44.2	51.0	319 (46.8)
Trade union (.29***)	55.3	25.5	300 (44.0)
Sport and cultural (n.s.)	31.4	30.9	213 (31.2)
Church/welfare (.18***)	24.6	41.7	212 (31.1)
Party (n.s.)	27.0	21.2	169 (24.8)
Total N.	423	259	682

<sup>21</sup> But differences exist between the three labour demonstrations. For political parties, the membership ranges from 16% in the Euromayday to 38% in the First of May, with the General Strike (about 30%) in between. For Sports and Culture the membership is about 26% in both the First May and the General Strike, but as much as 50% in the Euromayday.

Looking separately at the results for the four demonstrations we surveyed in 2011, a considerable similarity between the Euromayday parade and the Perugia-Assisi march seems to emerge, in particular as far as membership in SMOs (Euromayday = 50.8%) and in trade unions (Euromayday = 25.6%) is concerned. However, the peace demonstrators stand apart for their numerous membership in religious and welfare organizations. In addition, checking for relations between membership in the different types of organizations reveals at least three constellations: Among participants in the Euromayday parade we find a positive correlation between membership in trade unions and SMOs (Cramer's  $V = .22^{**}$ ) that for participants in the first of May and general strike demonstrations turns negative (Cramer's  $V = -.21^*$  and  $-.19^{**}$ , respectively), a possible explanation being that among the Euromayday population membership in grassroots unions dominates and among participants in the other two events membership in traditional trade union confederations. Among participants in the Perugia-Assisi march only a fairly weak negative correlation between membership in trade unions and in religious or welfare organizations emerges (Cramer's  $V = -.15^*$ ), whereas the strong correlation between membership in SMOs and in religious or welfare organizations that we can observe among the Euromayday population (Cramer's  $V = .31^{***}$ ) is absent.

The correlations between the organizational membership of participants and their political position as expressed in party identification that we had observed for the three labour related demonstrations are a lot weaker for the peace demonstration, with only the correlation between membership in a political party and party identification remaining statistically significant.

Cross-tabulating age categories with organizational membership reveals that the decline of union membership among the younger participants of the Perugia-Assisi march (Cramer's  $V = .20^*$ ) is far less dramatic than among the same age cohorts of the three labour related demonstrations (Cramer's  $V = .32^{***}$ ). For peace demonstrators, the only other statistically significant correlation between age categories and organizational membership concerns membership in religious or welfare organizations (Cramer's  $V = .25^{***}$ ). Differently from the labour related demonstrations (n.s.), in the Perugia-Assisi march it is above all the younger and the youngest participants that declare membership in this kind of organization.

For the Perugia-Assisi march, correlations between other socio-demographic indicators and organizational membership seem weaker than for the three labour related demonstrations. Membership in religious or welfare organizations emerges as more female (Cramer's  $V = .22^{***}$ ), membership in political parties as more male (.13\*). Further statistically significant correlations between organizational membership and socio-demographic indicators do not exist. Moreover, both populations are equally rich in, often multiple, organizational belongings (see table 7).

TAB. 7. *Multiple organizational activity by type of demonstration (n.s.)*

	Labour	Peace	Total
None	25.7	21.7	24.2
In 1	31.2	31.7	31.4
Between 2 – 3	34.6	36.1	35.2
In more than 3	8.5	10.4	9.2
Total no.	413	249	662

### 5. *Political (mis)trust*

The mentioned differences in framing could also interact with degree of trust in politics. Given the assumed characteristics of old and new social movements one could expect a more traditional trust in representative democracy in old social movement activists and less instead in the new ones.

Contrary to this expectation, activists of all demonstrations share a very high degree of mistrust towards some main institutions of representative democracy, even if with some difference between institution and institution. As we can observe in table 8, the degree of trust is at the lowest for the national government, growing only very slightly when looking at the national parliament. Extremely low is also trust in political parties, with the judiciary enjoying the highest level of trust. Trust in unions is higher, but still low for demonstrations that are called for by the unions themselves<sup>22</sup>. No significant difference exists between the two types of march.

<sup>22</sup> For all the type of actors, excluding the Judicial System, the Euromayday participants show a statistically significant lower trust than the participants in the other two labour demonstrations.

TAB. 8. *Trust in institutions (Column: % of agree/strongly agree).*

	Labour demonstrations	Peace demonstration	Cramer's V
National government	1.3	3.8	n.s.
National parliament	5.9	7.6	n.s.
Political parties	6.6	5.7	n.s.
Trade unions	33.1	26.9	n.s.
Judiciary	57.1	52.7	n.s.
European Union	43.9	40.9	n.s.
United Nations	25.5	29.9	n.s.

While mistrusting institutions, and politicians' promises, our activists do not however lose faith in their own capacity to influence public decisions. Very similar is in fact trust in one's own efficacy, especially through collective action and especially when organized at supranational level (see table 9 and 10).

TAB. 9. *Efficacy (Column: % of agree/strongly agree).*

	Labour demonstrations	Peace demonstration	Cramer's V
Most politicians make a lot of promises, but do not actually do anything	92.1	88.3	n.s.
I don't see the use of voting, parties do whatever they want anyway	22.1	23.5	n.s.
My participation can have an impact on public policy in this country	66.2	72.0	n.s.
Organized groups of citizens can have a lot of impact on public policies in this country	75.6	78.8	n.s.
If citizens from different countries join forces, they can have a lot of impact on international politics	79.2	84.5	n.s.

While extremely critical of the working of existing institutions, our activists express a very strong search for politics – to the point of demanding the strengthening of the power of the very



institutions they mistrust. When moving from the assessment of responsibility to potential solutions (table 10), our activists agree that it is necessary to strengthen all levels of governance. In this sense, they share a belief in the need to strengthen politics against the dominance of the market. Here, participants to the peace marches are even more convinced that those participating in the labour movement of the need to strengthen non only supranational institutions, but also the national level<sup>23</sup>.

Tab. 10. *Which level of government should be reinforces (Column: % agree/strongly agree).*

	Labour demonstrations	Peace demonstration	Cramer's V
Local	63.1	63.3	n.s.
National	45.6	59.5	.13***
EU	63.5	82.2	.20***
Global level	42.3	76.9	.33***

## 6. *Conclusions*

Social movement studies have postulated important differences between old and new social movements that would be reflected in individual values: more oriented towards social justice in the old social movement, more on freedom in the new social movements. The concept of left-libertarian movements (Kitschelt 1988; della Porta and Rucht 1995) has bridged the two aspirations, but still characterizing new social movements by their attention to libertarian values. To a certain extent, these differences are expected to nurture different conceptions of politics and democracy. Old social movements have developed together with representative institutions with quite symbiotic relations between the labour movement and its parties of reference (della Porta 2011). New social movements have been instead, since their very beginning, more critical of representative institutions, presenting what Claus

<sup>23</sup> Though, significant differences can be found between the three labour demonstrations when dealing with strengthening the local level (from 60% of agreeing participants in the Euromayday to 80% of those in the 1<sup>st</sup> Mayday, with those in the General Strike in between – 70%); and the EU level (Euromayday 44%, General Strike 50% and 1<sup>st</sup> May Day 60%). While, when dealing with strengthening the national and the global levels, there are not statistically significant differences.

Offe defined as a main challenge on the meta-issue of democracy. They not only have stressed participatory conceptions of democracy, but have also been more jealous of their autonomy vis-à-vis political institutions. In fact, they have emerged at the moment of the so-called historical compromise between capitalism and democracy, when the welfare state seemed to have pacified the class cleavage, and were expected to be the carriers of new cleavages. Neoliberalism and post democracy as its political expression might have however challenged this neat distinction.

Our comparison of protestors' attitudes in marches traditionally classified as belonging to old versus new movements stressed, at least in times of austerity, a strong convergency on concerns with economic inequality and demands for social justice. The financial crisis and the related political crisis seem to have indeed produced a shared agreement on the defense of the attacked social rights.

In agreement on their demands, participants to the two types of protest seem however to vary from each others, in ways that confirm some of the expectations we have derived from the social movement literature. As we have noted, antiausterity protest participants were in fact more oriented to blame political decisions and, then, capitalism for the crisis, and to ask for political change, while peace activists developed a more ethical discourse, with more focus on cultural than on material conditions, and more confidence in ethical change, involving a transformation on the civil society, than in institutional policies. In sum, looking for ways to realize the demanded changes, participants at the two types of demonstrations differed however in the reliance on politics, with participants in demonstrations on labour rights relying more on political reform versus those participating in the peace march believing more in personal transformations.

These differences notwithstanding, protestors at all the surveyed marches showed however many more similarities in political attitudes and behavior. Very interested in politics, they also expressed very similar electoral preferences on the left side of the spectrum. While the pacifists self-represented themselves as slightly less leftists in the political spectrum, in the limited party system supply (lacking in particular a relevant Green party) they much resembled the participants in antiausterity demonstrations in their vote distribution. With the obvious difference of more participations in unions for anti-austerity protestors, and more

participation in religious and charity associations in the pacifist ones, participants in both types of protest shared however a quite dense social capital in terms of associational memberships.

Differences between participants in our old and new social movements disappear however when addressing the issues of mistrust in representative institutions, which was indeed – contrary to expectations derived from social movement studies – extremely high in both. In contrast, and to a certain extent paradoxically, both types of activists converged in showing, nevertheless, a high confidence in their own capacity to affect social and political changes through collective and, possibly, transnational forms of protest. Beyond specific characteristics of specific movements, the long-lasting effects of the global justice movement are still visible in the spreading of some norms and visions of participatory democracy across various movements (della Porta *et al.* 2006). While the financial crisis, its roots in neoliberal political choices, and the austerity policies chosen (without apparent success) to address it, have for sure increased mistrust in representative institutions, hopes in the potential for resistance from below, nurtured by previous waves of protests, seems still alive.

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