

Social Citizenship in the Context of Europeanization and Growing Inequalities: An Empirical Contribution to the Theoretical Debate

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The political and economic crisis of Europe and the austerity programs within EU countries have brought back to center the issues of inequality and social justice in Europe that during the Twentieth century have been addressed through the institutionalization of social citizenship. Europeanization and globalization challenge social cohesion and alters the basic institutions on which social citizenship was constructed in welfare societies. Starting from the results of an empirical study, the aim of this article is to give new impulses to the theoretical reflection on social citizenship as a distinct issue, although related with the concept of citizenship. The focus of the analysis is on members of transnational civil society organizations and their ideas and practices enhancing new forms of a more inclusive and sustainable social citizenship. Conclusions discuss how social bonds and solidarity are reframed transnationally across national, regional, European and global borders, and the implications of this process for the reformulation of the concept of social citizenship.

Introduction

The economic crisis that is affecting Europe has serious social impact, which is reflected in the Greek emergency. The ambiguous role of the EU towards Greek population's claims has brought back to center the issue of solidarity and the problems of inequality and social justice. Furthermore, the EU inertia approaching the refugee issue and the rise of anti-European and xenophobic reactions make evident the more general political crisis of European institutions and governance. During the Twentieth century the problems of inequality and social justice have been addressed through the institutionalization of social citizenship, which today is challenged not only by the problem of social inequality but also by diversity and difference.

The relationship between social citizenship and social inequality is present in the first formulation that Thomas H. Marshall (1950) gave¹, referring to the

¹ On Thomas H. Marshall see e.g. Mezzadra (2002) and Baglioni (2009).

national industrial societies of the Twentieth century. The welfare state, the redistribution of material resources are an integral part, the entitlements are the prerequisite (Ross 1995, Crouch, 1999, Giddens 2007, Therborn 2009). Social citizenship holds and guarantees civil, political and social rights into a single set and they cannot be separated without losing effectiveness. It is considered an antidote to class inequalities generated by the market. The role of citizenship is conceived as a potential de commodification and social inclusion: allowing each individual subject, regardless of his/her market value, to access to provisions that guarantee protection and social security. This process involves the redistribution of resources based on shared principles of social justice and raises the question of solidarity. Social citizenship, in fact, on the one hand assumes to be a part of a shared responsibility towards the society as a whole, and, on the other hand, an implicit form of willingness to donate, whose motivation is linked to forms of solidarity and cooperation in the production of public goods (Offe 1993). Therefore, it requires an agreement on values and norms that are linked to institutions and traditions that have long had as reference the national community and now find it difficult to be re-calibrated in the European context.

Rights protection and social security are still fundamental for European citizens. Faced with the economic crisis and growing inequalities they are even more. This article concentrates on the redefinition of social citizenship and the mechanisms of solidarity on which it relies, on how the values of social justice and redistribution principles are reshaped, and how these are modulated in a transnational sense. We argue that a counter movement (Polanyi 1957) is rising as a reaction to the lack of social citizenship in Europe (Caporaso and Tarrow 2008, Standing 2014). We focus on transnational civil society members, which participated to the event of the European Social Forum (ESF) of 2012, since we consider them as emblematic bearers of new values and interests for a sustainable social citizenship in Europe, especially in the period following the great financial and economic crisis, which has exacerbated the problems already inherent in the process of Europeanization – regulated according to neoliberal principles – and has further helped to «desocialize» citizenship (Touraine 1997).

We set also ourselves the goal to understand the role that individual and organized social actors ascribe to different political centers, democratic institutions and the market, as reliable promoters of new forms of social citizenship. The deterritorialization of some rights of citizenship (Sassen 2002, Soysal 2012) and at the same time, their reterritorialization (Faist 2000, Ferrera 2005, Kivisto and Faist 2007, Bifulco 2014) pose problems of their redefinition on a multi-level scale. The EU has become a laboratory for differentiated and «realigned citizenship», which according to Bauböck and Guiraudon

(2009: 440) «refers both to macro level processes changing constellations of political boundaries and to the individual level of vertical relations with political authorities and horizontal ties among co-citizens».

The paper presents a first introduction where the key concepts are clarified, starting from the sociological approach to social citizenship, which forms the theoretical framework of the research; in the second section the case study is described and the main results of the research are presented. In the final part, the empirical findings are discussed in order to contribute to reframe the theoretical paradigm on social citizenship.

Conceptualizing social citizenship in the context of increasing inequalities and Europeanisation

In the mainstream academic debate citizenship is defined as the status of individuals in relation to a political unit and is mainly investigated in the interweaving of the political and legal dimension (Olsen 2012), while the social dimension is underestimated. In the sociological analysis, the empirical dimension of citizenship does not only include the component of the rights and obligations, but it is defined in terms of full social participation and social practices (Turner 1993). The sociological approach focuses on the effectiveness and inclusiveness of citizenship, as a result of belonging, social ties, social compromises and redistribution of resources and recognition. The concept of citizenship becomes 'social' and it is not given once and for all but it is subjected to changes in time and space, under the pressure of social and political conflicts.

The history of social citizenship is described as a continuous effort on the side of those who enjoy the benefits to restrict access to certain groups. On the other hand, there is the struggle for access to social citizenship by categories that are excluded (women, minorities, wage earners, immigrants, etc.) (Hall and Held 1989). Mechanisms that regulate the processes of inclusion and exclusion in different socio-historical contexts are important in order to understand the transformations of social citizenship. Just because it is the product of a relationship between equality and inequality, which involves social identities, social citizenship is a place of constant disputes and requires a continuous negotiation (Eder and Giesen 2001, Kohli 2000).

The configurations of social citizenship are defined by legal and symbolic, tangible and intangible, boundaries. These elements are also defined in relation to physical and geographical borders that delimit the area of the community. The empirical analysis of social citizenship, therefore, involves paying attention to the processes that reconfigure the boundaries between places and territories, and their effect on identities and social relations. In fact, as shown

by the classical sociologists, such as Durkheim and Elias (Leonardi 2011), boundaries' change even redefines power relations, reshaping individual and collective identities, influencing the dynamics of recognition and social inclusion, which are at the basis of social citizenship. The structural dynamics of integration or disintegration of the higher levels of pre-existing social units («survival unit» for Elias) – such as the European integration process and the collapse of the Soviet Union – have a direct influence on social relations. This also involves a reorganization of social life and a shift of power centers that regulate the distributive conflicts and govern the recognition of the identity of different groups.

The consequences of these processes of integration and disintegration directly affect social relationships and forms of solidarity that are at the basis of citizenship. The issue of social ties is important because social rights and corresponding policies require generalized reciprocity among citizens (i.e. the generational contract for pensions) and widespread solidarity (i.e. the welfare policies).

The concept of social citizenship has to be discussed in the light of transformation of both socio-economic inequality and cultural difference, as well as related to Europeanisation.

Economic crisis emphasizes the issue of inequality in terms of economic and income distribution (Piketty 2013), overshadowing other dimensions of social inequality related to diversity and difference. The picture emerging from the comparison of economic inequalities among OECD and EU countries, as measured by the Gini coefficient, is quite fragmented. The role of redistribution and welfare regimes is still relevant in Europe (Whelan 2011). If we take into account not only labour income and capital but also the disposable income, which includes government transfers after tax, the picture of inequalities is reduced. Europe has still a more egalitarian distribution of income than other realities, such as the United States, largely due to the role of redistribution (OECD 2011, Joumard *et al.* 2012).

Inequalities, however, are distributed with a different weight in different social contexts and affect more people doing low-skilled jobs, occupied by non-standard, poorly-educated, living in households with only one income earner, with children, who are in disadvantaged areas in terms of development, depending on the transfer of resources. These people are often young people, immigrants and women (OECD 2014, Saraceno 2015). Each national and local reality is somewhat different with regard to these structural aspects, with internal differences to many European countries and regions. The inability of nation-states to respond to the new needs of protection and social security and policies of public spending cuts have consequences on the different categories of citizens in the various territories. The growth of inequality is

typically connected, on the one hand, to the different exposure of individuals and social groups to the risks arising from participation in the market and, on the other hand, with the access to different forms of social protection and redistributive public policies that give effectiveness to citizenship rights. It is often underestimated the role of actors and social institutions (family, intermediate associations, networks of mutual aid) of what is called civil society – which also produce material and symbolic resources that create the conditions for a full participation in the field of social citizenship.

The issues of diversity and difference, in contemporary European societies are related to immigration and growing pluralization which are the main phenomena that can be considered as factors of a new relationship between social citizenship and identities. The request of rights supersedes the confines of a state-led project and are no longer just about the struggle for equality: «Citizenship is about reconciling the pursuit of equality with the recognition of difference» (Delanty 2000: 132). The process of European integration has redefined the spatial framework of social citizenship, interfering with national rules and causing a partial disjunction between social rights and national-territory.

The ‘social malaise’ of Europe dramatically comes to light, due to the fact that the EU citizenship has little to say on questions of solidarity and social justice, and social rights are still confined within the national state. The accorded priority to economic efficiency – through the free circulation of goods, services and productive factors – has meant that the EU would operate on the political aspect in the sense of a disanchorage of the economic institutions in the social dimension. A separation that can be translated into a functional subordination of the social dimension to the imperatives of the European economic integration (Scharpf 1999, Streeck 2013). This has contributed to postpone the issue within the national borders about the matter of redistribution, giving up, beyond the rhetoric, the development of common principles of solidarity and social justice at supranational level.

Some national societies have felt threatened in their social standards by the European Union, as it was found, for the first time with evidence, at the time of the Dutch and French referenda. To what degree the issue of social solidarity is intertwined with that of solidarity between member States and at EU level?

The current economic crisis has exposed the negative impact of economic and financial concentration of power and lack of political control over the conditions of life and well-being of European citizens. The ‘extremism in the budget deficit’ (Sen 2000), which involves drastic cuts in public spending, especially in Southern European countries and in the social sector, resulted in high social costs. The process of affirmation of social citizenship in the last

mid-century was made possible thanks to the pressure of class conflict (Dahrendorf 1988, Giddens 2007). Today this would be considered an unlikely scenario, in a fragmented and individualized society, and it is difficult to refer to a social class, conceived as a collective actor whose members share a common position within the social relations of production and authority, which can mobilize and organize itself in order to change the balance of power through an awareness of common interests. «Classless class relations» characterize contemporary capitalism (Beck 2007). Inequalities are individualized and structured on the basis of cultural issues. According to Delanty (2008: 686): «Consciousness of inequalities and social problems as class-based is less likely in the context of what Bauman (2000) liquidity societal terms; instead, problems become framed in different and often more culturally among the major vehicles for the expression of social discontent. The rebellious masses include the middle classes, whose political dissatisfaction has increased due to the precariousness of their social situation and the perceived loss in status and reward». In view of growing inequalities, multiple forms of social exclusion are produced but many people experience situations of «social disqualification» (Paugam 2005), while maintaining a certain amount of cultural and relational capital that enables them to develop an awareness of their condition to draw particular visions of social injustice and coping strategies.

The crisis has shown that austerity programs and the social regulation driven by the market risks to erode the social bases of economic growth (Heise and Lierse 2011). The lack of social cohesion undermining our societies also means that the non-economic institutions, cultures, values and social norms usually allowing the sustainability of economic growth have been weakened. The political and legal dimensions are fundamental both in regulating the economy and, playing a role alongside the civil society, enabling the social mechanisms that ensure co-operation between individuals and groups carrying different interests and values. In a time of great social change, increasing individualization and growing differentiation, redefining the material and symbolic boundaries, between communities, groups, and territories, where new social divisions are produced, it returns topical Durkheim's thesis: social cohesion cannot be simply guaranteed through forms of government, but it depends on social bonds and civic forms of public service.

Social citizenship from below: A framework for a new concept coming from civil society

The issue of social citizenship has become more and more relevant for civil society organizations and movements' activists. Civil society actors tend to

debate about global transformations which affect societies, political and economic relations and the power shift to supranational levels. They are self-reflexive and transnational critical actors which present claims to various political centers and debate about the relation between capitalism, welfare state and democracy as a central stake (Della Porta 2009). Social citizenship is at the core of this debate.

Hence we propose to discuss the issue of social citizenship in the light of an empirical research conducted on civil society actors who participated to the ESF in Florence in 2012². The ESF is a transnational public space, a place of meeting for different types of organizations which mobilize on common interests and some shared beliefs, such as the defence of human rights, the fight against the power of international corporations and the construction of a «different Europe»³. Participants come from diverse countries and political traditions, held different backgrounds and strategies of action. Their campaigns involve people across national borders and their activities are at the same time global and rooted at local level (Della Porta *et al.* 2006). Thanks to new technologies they can networking and meet in transnational events sharing practices. Although there is no homogeneity among them, their strong commitment to some common interests and goals allows them to act collectively and create transnational solidarity, accepting diverse subjectivities.

The social basis of the movements and associations as well as activists' political socialization and commitment to social justice ideals make them the bearers of a specific vision of European citizenship. Social citizenship and its reshaping in the European framework were at the core of the 2012 forum.

According to the list of participants in the 2012 ESF, about 4,200 people and 300 networks and organizations from 28 countries from all over Europe and beyond took part in the event. Almost half of the participants (52%) were Italians; 45.5% came from other EU countries – those most represented being France, Denmark, Belgium, Germany, Spain, UK, Norway, Austria,

² Our study is founded on a twofold methodology. First, a collection of data at the individual level, based on a survey on 175 randomly selected participants, by way of questionnaires answered face-to-face. Secondly, a systematic content analysis conducted on both the open space for comments present at the end of the questionnaire and on the documents, calls for action and outcome reports jointly created by activists during the ESF and published on its website. These documents were the result of a collective exchange, reflection and debate by all organizations participating to the ESF.

³ Participant organizations can be mainly grouped in: human rights and peace associations; NGOs, altermondialists; pro-migrant, feminist and ecologist movements; European and national trade union confederations; students collectives, solidarity and social voluntary associations; citizens and neighborhood committees from different European regions.

Portugal, The Netherlands, Greece; and 2.5% came from non-EU countries. Our sample consisted of 72.4% Italians, 22.9% other Europeans and 4.7% non-EU citizens⁴. It was formed mostly by young and adult people: 32 was the average age; 49.5% were between age 19 and 29; 27.1% between age 30 and 39; 18.2% age 40 or older; and 5.3% age 18 or younger. The sample was well-balanced in terms of gender (45.2% women and 51.4% men; 3.4% unspecified). The activists in our sample were well-educated (67.8% holding a bachelors, masters or PhD degree; 32.2% holding a secondary school diploma) and were distributed according to the following professions: university students (36.7%), researchers or teachers (21.3%), professionals/self-employed (18%), NGOs and human rights workers (6.7%), public employees (7.3%), retired (2.7%) and unemployed (7.3%).

What is especially interesting is that among the professional categories to which the activists of the sample belong, in particular the public sector – education, university and research – but also self-employees and young newcomers to employment, there is a high percentage of non-standard, poorly paid, insecure and unprotected employment. In the last decade a re-emergence of conflict on social and labour issues have been identified (Della Porta 2009) and the role of the ‘precariat’ has been underlined (Standing 2014). With the increase of internal and geographically interrelated inequalities due to the economic and financial European crisis, the decrease in job security and the increase of unemployment and precarious working conditions in many European countries, especially in the Southern ones, trade union mobilization and citizen protest against austerity have become widespread. As described below, ESF participants focus on labour and social rights as key issues in the settlement of the European social citizenship.

The vast majority of the sample declared a leftist political orientation (62.8%) or radical leftist one (30.2%) and 7% declined to state any political attitude or criticism of the political system, except that they did not recognize themselves in any political party.

The ESF reports analysis shows that the most relevant value for activists is social justice, which is always linked to the principle of solidarity. Solidarity among people, as the way to construct a different Europe, was the message they want to spread: a Greek, a German and a migrant, together, were in charge for the inauguration of the meeting.

⁴ This is a general limitation of surveys carried out at social movements events or protests in terms of representativeness and generalisation. Given the high material and psychological costs of travelling, national and local activists are usually largely overrepresented (Della Porta 2009).

We will go on uniting our forces and rebuild solidarity in discussions and common actions all working together, not underestimating the dimension of the clash between capital and nature, labour/social rights, commons, democracy [...]. We will fight for social equality and justice, putting the human being with the environment and the future generations into the center instead of the tools [...]. Poverty and inequality in the societies of human rights are the paradox of democracies (ESF report, Florence, November 2012).

Shared meanings of social citizenship, based on human rights, participation, equity, security, sustainable development and common goods are the key words in numerous ESF calls for action.

Exploring activists' social representation of Europe, the set of values and ideas associated to it, none of the above quoted values is mentioned. Critically, activists speak about Europe as 'an economic union aimed at maintaining alive the capitalist system', which fosters 'crisis', 'democratic failure' and a 'self-defeating austerity'.

The value which represents Europe is neoliberalism. Market decides all (woman, 55 years old, French, teacher).

A different idea emerges from the 'imagined Europe' that activists seek. Europe as a society, based on social relationships among people, who are engaged in common interests and share institutions which provide protection and guarantee a common living standard.

It's hard to speak about what Europe is today, but if you ask me how I would like Europe to be, I would reply *a social community* (woman, 47 years old, Italian, employee).

Respondents have been asked to choose among four alternative definitions of Europe and a multiple choice of values, which, according to them, Europe represents. The crosscheck data on these questions highlights two main attitudes. Those who refer to positive values – 'democracy' (31.2%), 'peace' (13.4%), 'economic wealth' (13.4%) – define Europe firstly as a 'common cultural and historical heritage'. Those who focus on 'individualism' (24.8%) as the value of Europe, see it as a mere 'common market of goods and services' and, secondly, a meaningless 'geographical region'.

The few surveyed activists which have chosen 'social justice' (8.3%) and 'solidarity' (6.4%) as the values of Europe, recognize it as a 'political community'.

'Individualism' reaches a very high percentage among activists from the South of Italy (50%) (Figure 1) while it is not present at all among non-EU

activists. Other Europeans focus on ‘peace’ (45%) while the point of view of Non-European participants is particularly dissonant from the EU’s ones: from outside, they still consider Europe based first of all on ‘economic wealth’ (62.5%) (Figure 2).

Figure 1 – *Most representative values for Europe among the Italian sample*

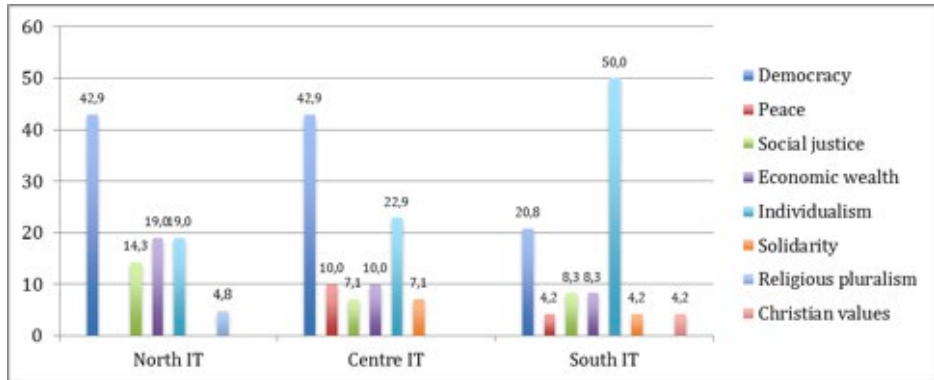
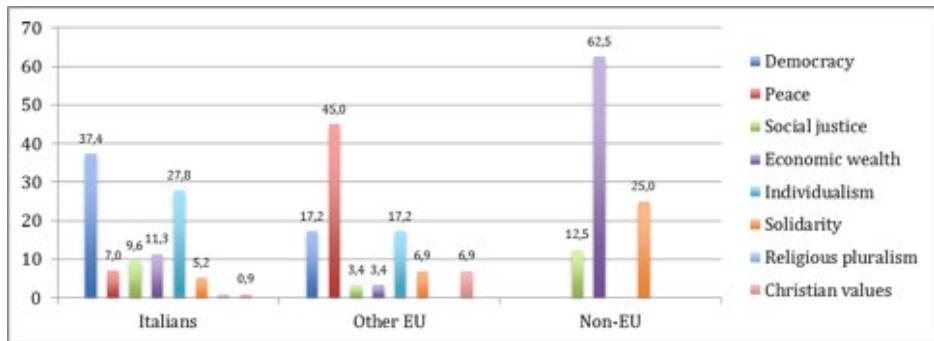


Figure 2 – *Most representative values for Europe*



Activists oppose a new set of values to the dominant culture, based on commons:

Commons are our values. Natural, social, digital commons and public services, land, food, water, energy but also social rights, education, knowledge. We must fight for the expansion of commons and the blocking of privatization and profit driven public infrastructures (man, 37 years old, Swedish, NGO worker).

Common goods are the means they consider able to strengthen social bonds and ‘feeling a community’, against individualism and neoliberalism. According to them, austerity policies adopted by European national governments increased privatization and commodification of goods, eroding democracy, because commons are ‘essential goods for satisfying social needs’. By rethinking the relationship between democracy, liberty and community, they propose an alternative paradigm to capitalism, funded on self-management of resources by local communities.

They tell us that the privatization of our commons is a way out of debts. However, we know that the truth is vice versa: privatization is actually one of the reasons for the public debt [...]. As long as we remain within the discourse of money, we remain within their finance driven logic. A logic that is monetizing everything, commodifying nature and the commons and by selling them off they are cutting the possibilities of political influence; they are destroying democracy bit by bit [...]. Defending our commons and developing alternatives is jumping out into a new logic based on mutuality, social relations, collaboration and participatory processes. It opens up many possibilities for all forms of activities from below at local levels and so many citizens can take up actions wherever they are (ESF report, Florence, November 2012).

Inequalities and differences: New demands of redistribution

The non-correspondence between material inequality – measured, for example, using the Gini coefficient – and the perception of inequality by social actors, reminds us of the importance of the world of representations, beliefs, values and political traditions (Dubet 2006 and 2009) to understand the forms of legitimation of inequality and allow us to explain the differences between activists from different nationalities in our sample. Although 98.3% of the activists states that there are too much inequalities among European citizens, 25 per cent of Non-Europeans denies the presence of inequalities in Europe.

Asked in which sectors Europeans are more unequal, the sample points out first income and labour market (67.6%), then welfare systems and education (17.9%) and rights and equal opportunities (14.5%) as the issues which influence inequalities most.

72% of the Italians focus on inequalities in the labour market (Figure 3). The condition of social disqualification which characterizes many young and adult Italians, middle class and well educated represented in the sample, related to their work condition, that make them more at risk of losing social provisions and citizenship rights, is highlighted in our results. These data show

the awareness of activists that labour market opportunities are unequally distributed not only among Europeans, but also within national societies and between sub-groups.

Figure 3 – *Inequalities in Europe*

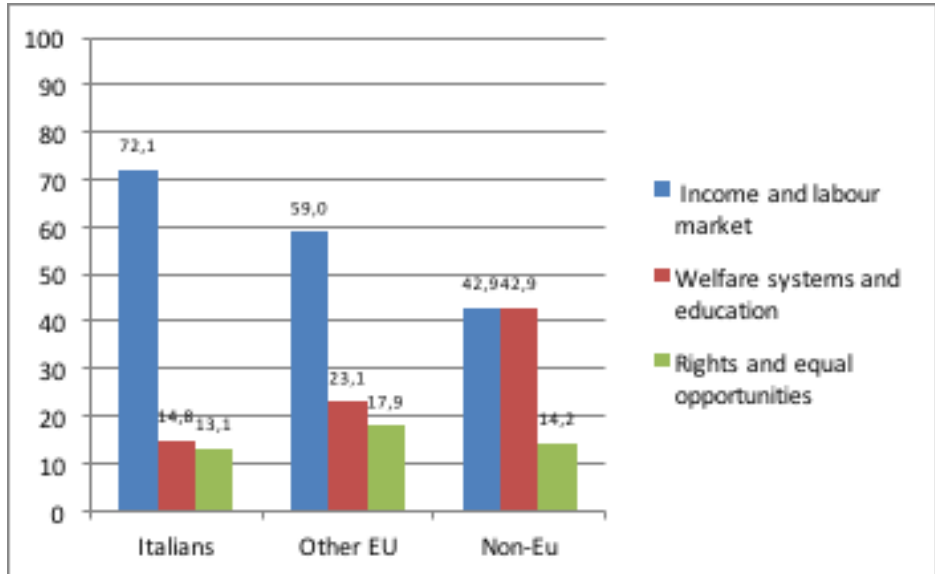
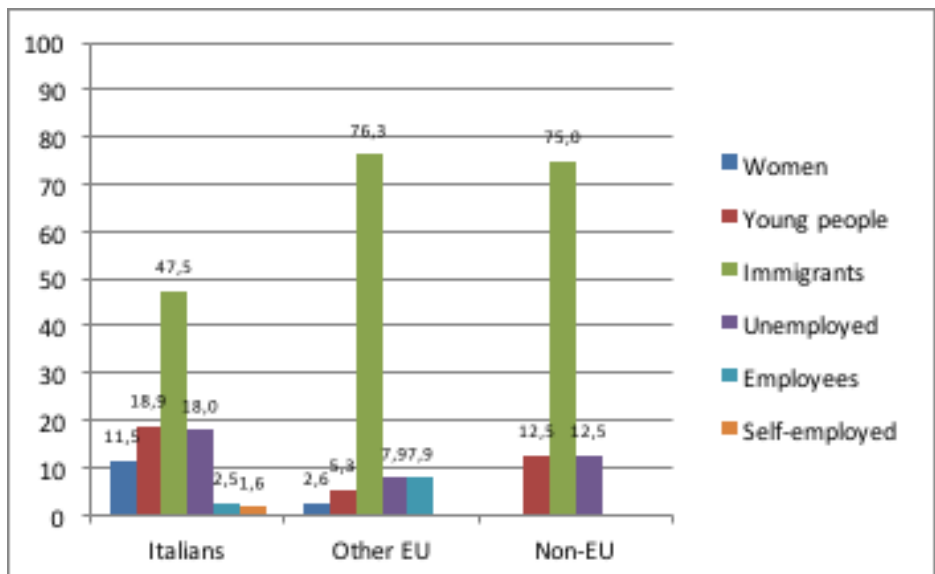


Figure 4 – *Disadvantaged groups*



This result is confirmed by data on the perception of disadvantaged groups. Among those who are affected by inequalities, respondents consider the most disadvantaged group mainly immigrants (54.1%), followed by unemployed (15.9%), young people (19.5%), and women (9.2%). The distribution by nationality highlights that other categories of “disadvantaged” obtain high percentages among the Italian activists, in particular women, young and unemployed people (Figure 4). The failure of redistributive policies and weaknesses of the welfare state, which are also one of the cause of the persistent weigh of gender roles, make Italy a society which maintains relatively high levels of inequality among citizens.

European citizens are unequal in terms of public assistance, healthcare and education. I think that these are included under the term *rights*. Welfare cuts are making all of us disadvantaged, also public and private employees (woman, 31 years old, Italian, PhD student).

Also for migrants, their inequality status is associated with their precarious position in the labour market. Migrants tend to be perceived as most likely to be involved in high job instability, vulnerability and disempowerment due to a lack of legal protection and limited social benefits. Activists also assume that as a consequence of austerity policies conducted in each national framework, some parties take advantage of the widespread sense of uncertainty and answer to social suffering with xenophobia and marginalization of migrants and minorities, fostering nationalism and attacking people’s solidarity.

Human rights and workers’ rights are kept together and the full respect and implementation of international conventions on human rights of migrant workers is asked. ‘Another Europe’ is necessarily an open and inclusive Europe able to be responsible towards ‘the people of the world’, starting from the Mediterranean area:

We can’t exit the crisis unless we build a Mediterranean space of peace and justice. The *Fortress Europe* paradigm is no longer tenable. European policy incoherences are part of the problem, and not a problem apart (ESF report, Florence, November 2012).

When asked about the causes of inequalities, 64.6% of the sample attributes responsibility to the ‘market dynamics, neoliberal policies and labour market flexibility’; 24.8% of them accuses the ‘national states policies of welfare and public spending cuts’; 7.4% mentions ‘globalisation’ and only 3.2% gives direct responsibility to the EU.

Neoliberal policies, as the principal cause of growing inequalities, are not simply attributed to globalisation, but to governments' responsibilities. Globalisation is not the cause of inequality, but it has to be democratized changing its emphasis towards rights and inclusive citizenship. 'Globalization of social rights' is what they propose as solution to poverty, unemployment and unequal distribution of resources.

What is under discussion [...] is the failure of an economic model based on public and private indebtedness that has dismantled welfare state and economic and social rights for the benefits of private investors and markets [...] worsening living conditions of people and workers (ESF report, Florence, November 2012).

The decisions by economic and political elites of imposing austerity and weakening labour laws and rights are considered as non-democratic and dangerous:

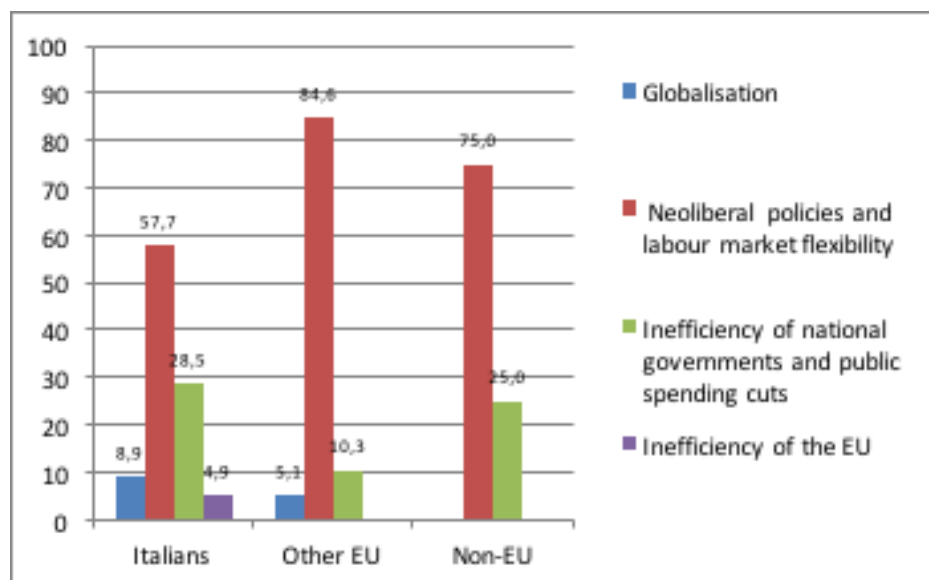
In the sovereign debt crisis will be consuming an escape from democracy, which empties national representative institutions without creating a supranational democracy (ESF report, Florence, November 2012).

They also denounce the little opportunity by people to exercise their citizenship's political rights and articulate their priorities and alternatives at national and European level:

Citizens are almost entirely excluded from having a say in the current debate about economic and political crisis [...]. On the one hand citizens are given the option of supporting deeper integration of the EU based on competition, deregulation and liberalization with no increase in democracy [...]. On the other hand, there are right-wing populists calling for a strengthening of the nation state [...]. We need to open up a third space [...] and struggle for the construction of another Europe where citizens [...] return to have a say over their collective future [...]. Now is time for solidarity across borders and sectors, to be the force to create real democracy and social justice (ESF report, Florence, November 2012).

Nevertheless 28.5% of Italians accuses the national government (Figure 5), underling their incapacity to control and steer the market and criticizing their deficits of democratic accountability. National representative democracies are considered powerless and inadequate to control global processes.

Asked about the relationship between nation states and the EU, 41.6% of activists declares that national interests are better preserved in the common

Figure 5 – *Causes of inequalities*

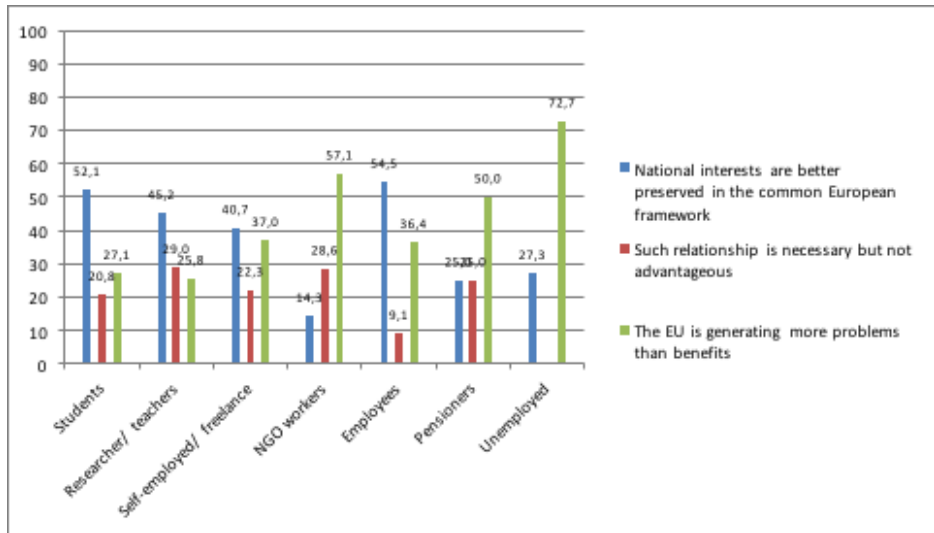
European framework, 21.7% considers that such relationship is necessary but not advantageous and 36.6% declares that the EU is generating more problems than benefits.

The EU is an important opportunity, but if they continue to base discussion on money and economy, Europe is destined to fail! (woman, 26 years old, Italian, journalist).

As counterbalance of the low trust in national institutions, trust in the EU is higher among the Italian sample. NGO workers, pensioners and unemployed people are those who criticize more the role of the EU (Figure 6). On the contrary, Italian knowledge workers (students, researchers and teachers) consider the EU as a resource and an opportunity. These categories, who are strongly hit by national and local public spending cuts and precarious forms of employment, are among those who take more advantage of the European citizenship's right of mobility, living and working in other European countries (Scalise 2014). The crisis increases the opportunity gap that divides Southern and Northern Europe. Those who reap the opportunities afforded by freedom of movement across an enlarged job market are more and more high skilled people of the countries where the recession is deeper and the economic system is not able to employ them. Re-activating the migratory channels between South and North, they move to countries with more dynamic economies.

Such dynamics increase the divide between central countries with strong and competitive economies and peripheral countries, which are more and more marginalised (Franzoni *et al.* 2012).

Figure 6 – *The relationship between nation states and the EU*



Participants share the principle that society's institutions must counter the tendency to aggregate wealth and power in the hands of few by mandating downward redistribution of wealth. 56.1% of the sample declare that the EU doesn't help in re-balancing territorial economic differences, among the richest areas and the less developed ones, explaining that different citizenships prevail in diverse places: in some areas there is an inclusive citizenship, in other places citizens are excluded from rights. The geographical dimension of inequality which characterizes Italy and the uncertainty which affects some professional categories emerge again on this question: 68% of activists coming from the South of Italy and the majority of unemployed (72%), retired people (99%) and self-employed (60%) denounce the ineffectiveness of the EU on the reduction of inequality between wealthy regions and less developed ones. The growing perception of 'two Italies' confirms that the idea of the division between few wealthy and a majority of disadvantaged people living in the South is more and more spread in Italy, and the EU is seen as responsible for those growing territorial disparities in living conditions. Nevertheless, the EU is not rejected as level of governance and it is the central actor to whom some new identity groups and civil society organizations address their claims for recognition.

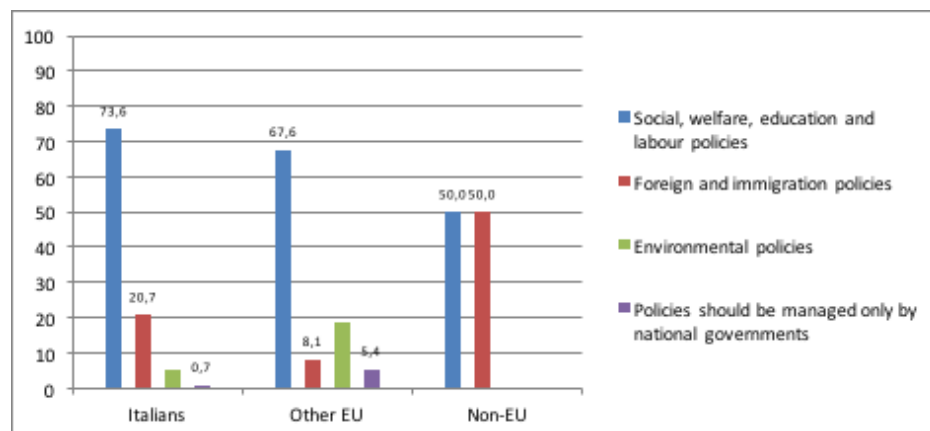
Asked about the effects of EU integration, 40.4% of students, 50% of researchers and teachers and 54.5% of employees highlight the positive aspects of facilitating people mobility, increasing cultural exchanges, ensuring peace and increasing economic growth; other activists, especially belonging to groups hit by social spending cuts (72.7% of unemployed, 75% of retired people, 40% of NGO workers) believe that it has worsened the quality of life, reduced job chances, closed borders keeping out immigrants and reduced Nation-state's power.

All of them oppose to the current European order, criticize EU policies and ask for a 'just Europe' that preserve rights and social protection, the quality of environment, respect for diversity and the right of self-determination, allowing people to decide upon their futures democratically.

The EU contributed to increasing the economic growth but not the quality of life! I would like the EU intervene more on immigration and environmental issues, but how? In which way? Neoliberal? (man, 58 years old, German, teacher).

A strong claim for a European intervention on redistribution and requests for social citizenship are at the core of the movements' calls for action. This is confirmed by the sample's reply to the questions on which issues the EU should intervene more: 'social, welfare, education and labour policies' is the first answer (71.3%), followed by 'foreign and immigration policies' (19.3%) and 'environmental policies' (7.6%). Social issues score high percentages among Italians, while non-EU activists focus on migration and foreign policies.

Figure 7 – On which issues should the EU intervene more?

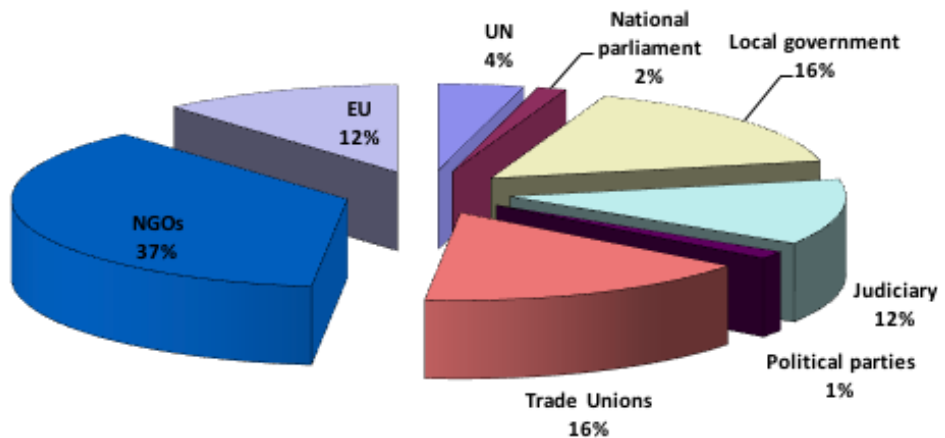


The most important specific claims concern an effective European social policy and the reinforcement of the welfare state.

Poverty, precariousness and inequalities are more and more weakening the social cohesion in the EU and putting under question the functioning of European democracies: «How can people living in poverty make their voices heard in polarised societies?» (ESF report, Florence, November 2012).

Activists show extremely low levels of trust in political institutions, as it was already emerged from other empirical studies carried on a similar topic (Della Porta 2009, European Observatory on Security 2013 and 2014), but express more confidence in the local institutions, trade unions, judiciary and in the EU (figure 8).

Figure 8 – *Which institution or international organization do you trust more?*



Municipalities and the regional levels are considered the most important dimensions for civil society organisations. It is the space where everyday activities take shape, where they can interact with local institutions and «people can participate in decisions concerning the territories in which they live» (ESF report, Florence, November 2012).

Against the mechanism of the concentration of decision-making powers, activists propose a «constitutional process from below to build a democratic pact of citizenship» and affirm the right to decide on public choice collectively at all territorial levels. The alternative model to the «constitutional process from the bottom» is a new logic based on mutually social relations and participatory processes from below at local levels.

Reconstructing social citizenship: New impulses to the theoretical reflection on 'social citizenship'

During the ESF interesting cases of 'reconstructing citizenship' by initiatives promoted by civil society's organizations have been shared. By way of example, through the coordination between local and transnational organizations, an international campaign of solidarity to Greek people have been launched and various activities of social solidarity in different fields, have been developed⁵.

In the sector of health, where radical cuts of the expenses undermined the quality and sufficiency of health services in Greece, while the imposition of fees for accessing caused the exclusion of hundreds of thousands of people, a network of social clinics and pharmacies have been set up by volunteers for serving uninsured and unemployed people.

To cover eating needs, a series of practices have been developed like the social kitchens for food distribution to homeless, unemployed, people in need and workers on strike, and social grocery shops which connect directly producers of agricultural products and consumers in urban areas.

Forms of solidarity economy like free share bazaars and direct moneyless exchange of services have been also developed, and co-operatives of unemployed women and social enterprises have been established. Solidarity lessons and social evening classes for educational support of children coming from families in need and free legal support around labour issues, pensions, and taxation have been organized.

Such examples of a tendency of re-establish, at local level, social citizenship, and to intervene through citizens practices for covering needs which should be guaranteed by social citizenship come also from Italy. Emergency, the Italian NGO which usually provides free medical and surgical treatment to victims of landmines and poverty in war zones, has decided in the last years to set up clinics also in Italy to guarantee timely free medical assistance in areas with a strong immigrant presence, such as agricultural areas, camps of nomads or refugees. After the onset of the crisis, more and more residents in need, unemployed, homeless, precarious people and pensioners have become their patients, proving the lack of capabilities to access the health system, as a result of a "truncated" citizenship.

Our study shows the role of individual and collective social actors, associations and organizations, as a field of practice for the reconstruction of networks of solidarity, reciprocity and social dialogue that does not replace the social citizenship, but certainly, it is an important prerequisite. They

⁵ For more information see <www.solidarity4all.gr>.

show that the principles of solidarity and social justice are still mechanisms that regulate social relations and they are socially produced, in the form of assumption of responsibility towards others and willingness to redistribute resources. The corresponding social practices can constitute forms of resistance but also social innovation, creating a barrier to social disintegration. However, to restore the function of reduction of inequalities to the social citizenship, it is required reconnecting market activities with democratic participation, and the reference to a political center that is able to guarantee it legally and give it effectiveness. In the current context, in which the complexity is given by the multiplicity of social structures, cultures, levels of governance, it is important to understand what social subjects can mobilize to claim social citizenship. This is a starting point also to see which political centers are identified as entitled to adjust the social question, both as guarantors of entitlements and of redistribution of resources.

The main points to be considered in order to reformulate the concept of social citizenship are the following:

a) Social inequalities are still interpreted by social actors in relation to the capitalist economic system and as a result of the lack of a barrier to the market regulations and its penetration into the world of life. Social citizenship is still seen as a tool that can limit this by strengthening the capabilities of citizens. Solidarity, redistribution and principles of social justice are incentives to forms of civic participation based on the social bond and, at the same time, strengthening it. Many social practices of solidarity, involving in various ways different actors and social institutions, are a response to the weakening of the effectiveness of the rights of citizenship for many categories of people. Inequalities and lack of effective redistributive policies exclude from the area of citizenship those who, formally, are citizens with full rights. These practices not only serve to compensate a lack of resources that do not allow citizens to enjoy their rights: they are also a social factor in the revitalization of the social fabric.

b) The area of inequality cannot be brought back, as in the past, to some internal homogeneity in terms of class. Individual situations are different and involve different orientations, especially in the identification of a political center that is able to reconstruct the reference unit, able to work through the guarantee of rights and the redistribution according to criteria of social justice. This last point is particularly controversial: some categories, such as people working in the field of knowledge, experience as an opportunity the rights under European citizenship. In this case, although critical towards the EU, they identify it as the institutional actor still to put trust and above all as a political center more able than others to intervene in social policies. Other categories of people living in the poorest areas, less educated, unemployed or

retired, are also the least likely to consider or even to imagine the EU as an opportunity. These people hardly grasp opportunities of the European citizenship as a result of the material conditions of life and work, and which are the most tangible consequences of the lack of a social policy at European level in the face of European constraints that force nation states and municipalities to cut resources and adopt austerity measures.

c) The principles of social justice and redistribution are no more reframed referring only to national levels. The local and European levels, considered in a transnational framework, are the most mentioned as strategic for the creation of social bonds and solidarity, and, above all, for the democratization of social relations. Social citizenship is effective in the practices of citizenship and in the initiative of civil society; the latter, in turn, needs democratic and political institutions. The so-called democratic deficit of the EU, is now linked to the lack of a sustainable social citizenship at the European level. New values emerge from our study that, in addition to re-establish democracy on new rules, it would give way to rebuild social citizenship according to new principles of social justice, taking into account the qualitative differences emerging within the excluded categories and the multiplicity of borders, typical of contemporary European societies, not related to national homogeneity. Emblematic examples are the reference to the common goods, as well as migrants as the main target to be included, which lead to a new economic and at the same time political ethics, enabling differences to come into dialogue and to cross territorial and symbols borders.

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