

THE EMERGENCE OF EUROPEAN MOVEMENTS? CIVIL SOCIETY AND THE EU

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I. EU COUNTERSUMMITS AND EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUMS: AN INTRODUCTION

On June 16 and 17 1997, in Amsterdam, notwithstanding the approval of a new Treaty, the summit of the European Councils failed to deliberate on the large institutional reforms the European Commission was hoping for. On the first day of the summit, a coalition of NGOs, unions and squatted centers staged a demonstration. The coalition European March for Unemployment mobilized 50,000 people that arrived from all over Europe to ask for policy measures against poverty, social exclusion and unemployment. In symbolic protest, about 500 young people reached Amsterdam on foot, having left from different European countries on Labour Day. During the days of the summits, groups of young activists distributed joints asking for free drogues in all Europe and gay associations marched in the red light district demanding equal rights. The headquarters of the Central Bank, where Heads of State, Ministries and dignitaries met, were protected by 5,000 policemen.

Three years later, another important step in European integration was met by protest. On December 6 2000, the day before the opening of the European Summit, 80,000 people gathered in Nice, calling for more attention to social issues. The event was called for by an alliance of 30 organizations from all over the Europe. Together with the European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC), there were associations of unemployed, immigrants and environmentalists, "alterglobalist" ones as ATTAC, progressive and left-wing parties, communists and anarchists, Kurdish and Turkish militants, women's collectives, Basque and Corsican autonomists. In various French cities, activists built travellers' collectives, asking for free transportation to the summit. The Global Action Train, transporting about 1500 activists from squatted youth centers, Ya Basta, White Overalls, and the youth association of the Italian Communist Refoundation party, was blocked at the border, in Ventimiglia, where sit-ins were staged. The mayor of Ventimiglia declared, "Which Europe is this, that closes its borders when there is a summit?" In the following days, the press contrasted the "street party" of the peaceful demonstrators with the "street battles" staged by a minority of radical "no global". On December 7, attempts by a few thousands activists to block the avenue of the summit ended up in police baton-charges, with use of tear-gas. According to the chronicles, notwithstanding the deployment of anti-riot

special police, armed with flash balls and rubber bullet pistol, the works of the summit were disturbed by the protest—among others, the tear-gas entered in the summit avenue, making Mr Chirac sneeze. On the same day, an assembly of the Cross Roads for Civil Society met to develop a “true constitution”, while a sit-in of European federalist was charged by the anti riots police.

The following year, protest escalated in Gothenburg, where the Swedish Old Left and Euro-sceptics met with new and “newest” movement activists. On June 14, 2001, a “mass mooning” (with activists showing their naked bottoms) greeted the visit of U.S. President Bush. Some of the protesters clashed with the police, who had surrounded their sleeping and meeting spaces. On June 15, thousands marched on the headquarter of the summit, with some members of the non-violent network climbing the fences around the congress centre contesting what they defined as the exclusion of the people from a meeting that had to discuss policies that would reconcile environmental protection and economic growth. Notwithstanding the arrests of bus-travellers at the borders and the strict controls on the 2025 protestors singled out as dangerous by the Swedish police, on the evening a Reclaim the City party escalated in street battles that ended up with 3 demonstrators heavily wounded by police bullets. The dinner of the European Council was cancelled due to protest. On June 16 2001, in what was defined as the largest protest staged by the radical Left in Sweden, 25,000 marched “For another Europe”, “Against Fortress Europe”, defined as a “police superstate”, and “Against a Europe of the Market”, with the opening banner proclaiming that “The World is not for Sale”. Sit-ins followed in front of the Swedish embassies in Britain, Germany, Spain, The Netherlands and other European countries protesting among others against the deployment of masked police, carrying semiautomatic rifles with laser sights in what was defined as a “police riot”.

On the following year, three EU summits are to be met by protest. On March 14-16 2002, a three days of protest targeted the EU summit in Barcelona, whose main focus was market liberalization and labour flexibility, later to be presented in the media as “an exit to the Right” from the Lisbon strategy (notwithstanding the Head of the EC, Romano Prodi, talked of reconciling solidarity and free market competition). The protesters planned not only to contest the EU policies in the street but also to discuss alternatives during a countersummit. On Saturday 16, 300,000 people marched on the slogan “Against a Europe of capital, another Europe is possible”, from Placa de Catalunya to the Mediterranean harbour front in the largest demonstration against EU policies. Initially called by the Confederation of European Trade Unions,

with representatives from the 15 EU countries, the event was joined by new unions, “soft” and “hard” environmentalists, anarchists and independentists (no dictionary recognizes this word), anti-capitalists and different civil society organisations. Following an opening banner proclaiming that “Another World is Possible”, protesters called for full employment and social rights against free-market globalization. While the long march (exceeding by far the organizers’ expectations) proceeded peacefully, at its end some more militant groups clashed with the police, deployed “en masse” (8500 policemen) to protect the summit. Once again, demonstrators were rejected at the borders, after passport controls had been re-established between France and Spain. While the Italian Premier Silvio Berlusconi stigmatized the “professional globetrotters in search for a reason to party”, the Minister of Interiors of Spanish centre-right government so justified the rejection of peaceful marchers at the borders: “Some people think that they can do things that do not meet the approval of the vast majority of the population”.

A few months later, on the occasion of the EU summit held in Seville on June 20–22 June, the Seville Social Forum organised two days of conferences, seminars, and grassroots discussions on issues relating to immigration, social exclusion, and the casualisation of labour. While the opening day was marked by a general strike organised by the Spanish trade unions, with reports of up to 85 per cent participation, the counter-summit conference ended with a demonstration of about 200,000 marching “Against the Europe of Capital and War”. At the same time, 300 international activists and immigrants locked themselves into the Salvador University to protest against the “anti-immigrant initiatives of the EU”.

Six months later, on December 13–15, a countersummit was organized by an Initiative for a different Europe. Against a Europe that “does not like democracy”, the coalition of grassroots movements, social and students’ organizations, trade unions and left wing political parties asked for a Europe without privatization, social exclusion, unemployment, racism and environmental destruction. While the summit discussed civil rights, the protesters called for a right to free movement and dissent. The countersummit (organised by 59 NGOs from all over Europe) included lectures, discussions, and demonstrations against attacks on the welfare state throughout Europe, the economic and social consequences of EU plans for eastward expansion, and the process of growing militarism, as well as EU policies on migration. On December 13, about 2000 marched on the summit denouncing racism; on the next day, 10,000 marched behind the opening banner “Our World is Not for Sale”.

This brief chronicle of recent EU summits and countersummits shades

doubts on the image of a broad “permissive consensus” around the EU. If truly European protest events might be few, they seem however to be prominent events in the history of an emerging movement, protesting for global justice. At the same time, the protests show that it is not the European level of governance which is contested, but first of all the content of the decisions made by the European institutions. The ideas emerged during the countersummits are developed within a different form of protest that started in the year when our story ended: the European Social Forums.

Countersummits against the official summits of International Governmental Organizations (especially the G8, World Bank and IMF, WTO, and the EU) represent quite disruptive forms of protest at the transnational level. Differently from a countersummit, that is mainly oriented to public protest, the Social Forum is set up as a space of debate among activists. Although originally indirectly oriented to “counter” another summit—the World Social Forum (WSF) was organized on the same date and in alternative to the World Economic Forum (WEF) held in Davos (Switzerland)—the WSF presented itself as an independent space for encounters among civil society organizations and citizens. The first WSF in Porto Alegre in January 2001 was attended by about 20,000 participants from over 100 countries, among them thousands of delegates of NGOs and social movement organizations. Its main aim was the discussion of “Another possible globalization”. Since then the number of organizers and participants as well as the organizational efforts of the following WSFs (in Porto Alegre in 2002 and 2003, than in Mumbai in 2004, and again in Porto Alegre in 2005) increased exponentially. The WSF also gained a large media attention. According to the organizers, the WSF in 2002 attracted 3,000 journalists (from 467 newspapers and 304 radio or TV-stations), a figure which doubled to more than 6,800 in 2005. Notwithstanding some tensions about the decision making process as well as the financing of the initiatives, the idea of open arenas for discussion, not immediately oriented to action and decisions, has spread with the global justice movement.

Since 2001, social forums were organized also at macro-regional, national and local level. Panamazzonian Social Forums were held in Brasil and Venezuela in 2004; African Social Forums in Mali and Ethiopia, Asiatic Social Forums in India. Among them, the European Social Forum (ESF) played the most important role in the elaboration of activists’ attitudes towards the European Union, as well as the formation of a European identity.

The first ESF took place in Florence on November 6-9, 2002.

Notwithstanding the tensions before the meeting, the ESF in Florence was a success. Not only was there not a single act of violence, but participation went beyond the most optimistic expectations. Sixty thousand participants – more than three times the expected number – attended the 30 plenary conferences, 160 seminars, and 180 workshops organized at the Fortezza da Basso; even more attended the 75 cultural events in various parts of the city. About one million participated in the march that closed the forum. More than 20,000 delegates of 426 associations arrived from 105 countries – among others, 24 buses from Barcelona; a special train from France and another one from Austria; a special ship from Greece. Up to four hundred interpreters worked without charge in order to ensure simultaneous translations. A year later, as many as a thousand Florentines (300 went to London in 2004) and 3000 Italians went to Paris for the second ESF.

Since 2002, activists have met yearly in European Social Forums to debate Europeanisation and its limits. The second ESF has been held in Paris in 2003, involving up to 60,000 individual participants, 1,800 groups, 270 seminars, 260 working groups and 55 plenary sessions (with about 1500 participants in each), and 300 organizations, among which 70 unions, signing the call, 3000 volunteers, 1000 interpreters. According to the organizers, 150,000 participated in the final march. The third ESF, in London in 2004, involved about 25,000 participants and 2,500 speakers in 150 seminars, 220 working groups and 30 plenary sessions, as well as up to 100 000 participants at the final march). The third one in Athens in 2006 included 278 between seminars and workshops, and 104 cultural activities listed in the official program, 35,000 registered participants and up to 80,000 at the final march.

The impressive success of the first ESF in Florence, in 2002—with 60,000 activists from all over Europe participating in three days of debate and between half and a million activists in the closing march—was the result of networking between groups and individuals with, at least, partly different identities. The multiform composition of the movement is reflected in a differentiated attention paid to how ‘globalisation’ affects human rights, gender issues, immigrant conditions, peace and ecology. But the different streams converged on their demands for social justice and “democracy from below” as the dominant interpretative scheme, able to recompose the fragments of distinct cultures. A multilevel public intervention able to reduce inequalities produced by the market and the search for a new democracy are in fact the central themes of the emerging European movement. The first ESF presented itself as an important moment in the construction of a critical public sphere for the discussion of the European Convention and its limits. Together with the democratisation of the European institutions, the activists demanded a charter of social rights

that goes beyond the commitments written in the Treaty of Nice.

As we are going to see in this chapter, more and more, Europeanised protest addresses the lack of concerns at the EU level for social equality. Since its origins the EU has been in fact a reaction to the weakening of the European nation state in certain key areas: from the military defence of the frontiers to the expansion of markets. As Bartolini put it, the process of territorial de-differentiation that is at the base of European integration was pushed by the evidences of the intolerable consequences of historical rivalry between the European states as well as the growing risks of an economic marginalisation of Europe in the world economy. The deepening of this process demands, however, the creation of cultural identity and citizenship that can sustain the social sharing of risks and legitimate political decisions. The EU's launch of campaigns on general ethical issues (such as gender equality, anti-racism, human rights) are evidence of the search for a moral basis for collective identity: such a moral basis would be an equivalent to what the nation had represented in the construction of the state. One of the main instruments in the construction of the nation-state—citizens' rights—are however still weak at the EU level. The process of European integration advocated at the European level the tools of economic policies, necessary for the implementing of social policies, without however investing in the latter.

In fact, it is precisely against European economic and social policies that protests are focusing the supranational level, with some early mobilizations that though rare, represent nevertheless an important signal of change (for instance, in the European Marches against unemployment in 1997 and 1999). The search for 'another Europe' is most in evidence in the movement for globalisation 'from below' that called for the mentioned countersummits, but also organized the first European Social Forum (ESF) in Florence in November 2002.

In what follows, we are going to look at the European Social Forums as emerging structures of a European social movement which is made of loosely coupled networks of activists endowed with multiple associational memberships and experiences with various forms of political participation (part 2). Looking at the frames and discourses of these activists, as well as their organizations, we shall discuss the development of a form of "critical Europeanism" which is fundamentally different for the populist Euro-scepticism on which research focused in the past (part 3). As we shall discuss in the conclusions, protestors expressed strong criticism of the forms of European integration, but no hostility to the building of supranational, European identities and institution. They can therefore be seen as a critical social capital for the emerging of a European polity.

II. THE EUROPEAN SOCIAL FORUMS: THE ORGANIZATIONAL DIMENSION

The common basic feature of the social forum is the conception of an open and inclusive public space. Participation is open to all civil society groups, with the exception of those advocating racist ideas and those using terrorist means, as well as political parties as such. The charter of the WSF defines it as an “open meeting place”. Its functioning, with hundreds of workshops and dozens of conferences (with invited experts), testifies for the importance given, at least in principle, to knowledge. In fact, the WSF has been defined as “a market place for (sometime competing) causes and an ‘ideas fair’ for exchanging information, ideas and experiences horizontally”. In the words of one of its organizers, the WSFs promote exchanges in order “to think more broadly and to construct together a more ample perspective”.

The ESF is however also a space of networking and mobilization. The spoke-person of the Genoa Social Forum (that organized the anti-G8 protest in 2001), Vittorio Agnoletto, writes of the ESF as a “non-place”: “it is not an academic conference, even though there are professors. It is not a party international, even though there are party militants and party leaders among the delegates. It is not a federation of NGOs and unions, although they have been the main material organizers of the meetings. The utopian dimension of the forum is in the active and pragmatic testimony that another globalization is possible”. References to “academic seminars” are also present in the activists’ comments to single meetings published online. Writing on the ESF in Paris, the sociologists Agrikoliansky and Cardon stressed its plural nature:

“[E]ven if it re-articulates traditional formats of mobilizations, the form of the ‘forum’ has properties that are innovative enough to consider it as a new entry in the repertoire of collective action. ... An event like the ESF in Paris does not indeed resemble anything already clearly identified. It is not really a conference, even if we find a program, debates and paper-givers. It is not a congress, even if there are tribunes, militants and mots d’ordre. It is not just a demonstration, even if there are marches, occupations and actions in the street. It is neither a political festival, even if we find stands, leaflets and recreational activities. The social forums concentrate in a unit of time and space such a large diversity of forms of commitment that exhaustive participation to all of them is impossible.”

What unifies these different activities is the aim of providing a meeting space for the loosely coupled, huge number of groups that form the

archipelagos of the GJM. Its aims include enlarging the number of individuals and groups involved but also providing a ground for a broader mutual understanding. Far from aiming at eliminating differences, the open debates should help increasing awareness of each other concerns and beliefs. The purpose of networking (through debating) was in fact openly stated already in the first ESF in Florence, where the Declaration of the European social movements read:

“We have come together to strengthen and enlarge our alliances because the construction of another Europe and another world is now urgent. We seek to create a world of equality, social rights and respect for diversity, a world in which education, fair jobs, healthcare and housing are rights for all, with the right to consume safe food products produced by farmers and peasants, a world without poverty, without sexism and oppression of women, without racism, and without homophobia. A world that puts people before profits. A world without war. We have come together to discuss alternatives but we must continue to enlarge our networks and to plan the campaigns and struggles that together can make this different future possible. Great movements and struggles have begun across Europe: the European social movements are representing a new and concrete possibility to build up another Europe for another world.”

Democracy in the forum is an important issue of discussion, with tensions between different models (horizontal versus vertical, but also as oriented to action or discussion) testified for by the different structures present within the fora. Social fora belong, in fact, to emerging forms of action that stress, by their very nature, plurality and inclusion. Similar forms of protest that favours networking and successively “contamination” (or cross-fertilization) are the “solidarity assemblies”, a series of assemblies where multiple and heterogeneous organizations active on similar issues are called to participate with their particular experiences or the “fairs on concrete alternatives” whose aim is to link together various groups presenting alternatives to market economy ranging from fair trade to environmental protection. Degrees of structuration, inclusivity and representation are always at the center of the discussion.

The networking capacity of countersummits and social forums is reflected in the overlapping membership of its participants. According to a survey at the first ESF, participants are deep-rooted in dense organizational networks. The activists were well grounded in a web of associations that ranged from Catholic to Green, from voluntary social workers to labour unions, from human-rights to women’s organisations: 41.5% are or have been members of NGOs, 31.8% of unions, 34.6% of parties, 52.7% of other movements, 57.5% of student groups, 32.1% of squats for the young, 19.3%

of religious groups, 43.1% of environmental associations, 51.3% of charities, 50.9% of sport and recreational associations (table 1).

Table 1. *Partecipation (present and past) in associations by nationality*

	IT	FR	DE	ES	UK	Other non-italian	Total non-italian	Total ESF
<i>Unions</i>	26,3	48,9	29,1	27,1	79,7	38,5	44,6	31,8
<i>Parties</i>	30,3	33,1	27,8	28,1	78,0	45,7	44,5	34,6
<i>Student groups</i>	55,6	44,9	45,6	54,7	85,4	66,0	61,8	57,5
<i>Youth social centers</i>	36,9	26,5	22,7	22,1	13,8	20,6	21,0	32,1
<i>Religious groups</i>	20,2	12,4	19,0	13,5	16,3	19,9	17,1	19,3
<i>Enviromental associations</i>	42,9	12,9	48,8	45,3	53,7	51,1	43,5	43,1
<i>Movements (in general)</i>	46,5	56,9	69,6	40,0	88,6	70,1	66,9	52,7
<i>Voluntary groups (charities)</i>	49,3	52,2	40,0	58,3	55,4	60,8	55,9	51,3
<i>Recreational associations</i>	51,7	48,6	56,3	47,4	53,3	46,6	49,1	50,9
<i>NGOs</i>	32,1	48,2	65,4	58,3	61,8	71,0	63,2	41,5

While respecting existing differences, the activists share a *common set of values*. If doubts about liberalization of markets and cultural homogenization are also expressed in religious fundamentalism or conservative protectionism, these expressions of anti-globalization are not, however, present in the movement, which has a clearly left-wing profile. Significantly, activists interviewed at the European Social Forum mainly defined themselves as “left” (Table 2), with a significant component saying “extreme left”, and limited acceptance of the category “centre-left”. With the exception of British activists, the great majority of whom were extreme left (67.2%, followed at a distance by the French at 37.1%), placement on the left ranges from 44.3% of Germans to 53.4% of Spaniards, confirmed at around 50% of Italians. From this viewpoint, in the various countries the movement emerges from a critique of national governments’ policy choices – including left-wing governments – as well as of intergovernmental organizations.

Table 2. Self-location on the left-right axis by nationality

	<i>Extreme left</i>	<i>left</i>	<i>Center-left</i>	<i>center</i>	<i>Center-right and Right</i>	<i>Refuse to locate</i>	
Italy	25,0	49,0	10,2	0,4	0,4	15,0	1683
France	37,1	44,7	4,5	0,8	0,0	12,9	132
Germany	25,3	44,3	12,7	0,0	0,0	17,7	79
Spain	19,3	53,4	5,7	1,1	1,1	19,3	88
Great Britain	67,2	27,7	2,5	0,0	0,8	1,7	119
Other non-italian	41,6	33,2	9,7	3,9	0,6	11,0	310
Total non-italian	40,5	38,0	7,4	1,9	0,5	11,5	728
Total ESF	29,7	45,7	9,3	0,9	0,4	14,0	2411

III. CRITICAL EUROPEANISTS?

The Declaration of the Assembly of the Movements of the 4th European Social Forum, held in Athens on May 7th 2006 so addresses the European Union:

“Although the EU is one of the richest areas of the world, tens of millions of people are living in poverty, either because of mass unemployment or the casualization of labour. The policies of the EU based on the unending extension of competition within and outside Europe constitute an attack on employment, workers and welfare rights, public services, education, the health system and so on. The EU is planning the reduction of workers’ wages and employment benefits as well as the generalization of casualisation. We reject this neo-liberal Europe and any efforts to re-launch the rejected Constitutional Treaty; we are fighting for another Europe, a feminist, ecological, open Europe, a Europe of peace, social justice, sustainable life, food sovereignty and solidarity, respecting minorities’ right and the self-determination of peoples.”

Here as well, the statement does not reject the need for a European level of governance, nor the development of a European identity (that goes beyond the borders of the EU), but criticizes the EU policies asking for “another Europe”. To the contrary, it links different specific concerns within a common image of a feminist, ecological, open, solidaristic, just

Europe. Many issues are indeed bridged in the process of the European social forums that we shall address here as an illustration of the development of a European social movements. The document approved by the Assembly of the Movements, held at the third ESF, stated:

“We are fighting for another Europe. Our mobilisations bring hope of a Europe where job insecurity and unemployment are not part of the agenda. We are fighting for a viable agriculture controlled by the farmers themselves, an agriculture that preserves jobs, and defends the quality of environment and food products as public assets. We want to open Europe to the world, with the right to asylum, free movement of people and citizenship for everyone in the country they live in. We demand real social equality between men and women, and equal pay. Our Europe will respect and promote cultural and linguistic diversity and respect the right of peoples to self-determination and allow all the different peoples of Europe to decide upon their futures democratically. We are struggling for another Europe, which is respectful of workers' rights and guarantees a decent salary and a high level of social protection. We are struggling against any laws that establish insecurity through new ways of subcontracting work.”

Similar attitudes are widespread among activists. Previous surveys have indicated that activists internalized the criticism of representative democracy. Among the participants in protest against the G8 in Genoa, trust in representative institutions tended to be low with however significant differences regarding the single institutions. In general, some international organizations (especially the EU and the United Nations) were seen by activists as more worthy of respect than their national government but less so than local bodies. Research on the first ESF confirmed that diffidence in the institutions of representative democracy is cross-nationally spread, although particularly pronounced where national governments were either right-wing (Italy and Spain at the time), or perceived as hostile to the GJM's claims (as in the UK). Not even national parliaments, supposedly the main instrument of representative democracy, were trusted while there was markedly greater trust in local bodies (especially in Italy and France), and, albeit somewhat lower, in the United Nations. The EU scores a trust level among activists barely higher than national governments (except, in this case, for the more trustful Italians). Similar data on the second and the fourth ESF confirm the general mistrust in representative democratic institutions, although with some specification. Among other actors and institutions, we might notice a strongly declining trust in the church and mass media, as well as in the unions in general and a stable (low) trust in the judiciary and (even lower) in political parties. Activists continue to trust instead social movements (and less, NGOs) as actors of a democracy from below.

In seeking “another Europe”, one central feature is mistrust of the parties and the representative institutions. The common location on the left is blended with high interest in politics, defined as politics “from below”, but mistrust in the actors of institutional politics. Above all, there is great, spatially fairly homogeneous trust in the social movements and the voluntary associations as actors of a “different” politics (ranging from some 85% among the Germans and British to 95% among the French). By contrast there is little trust in political parties (Table 3), in which a bare 20.4% of interviewees from the European Social Forum have fair or great trust (even less than in the Genoa survey),

Table 3. Trust in actors of political participation and representative institutions by nationality (in italics data referring to entire population)

Trust much or enough	IT	FR	DE	ES	UK	Other non-italians	Total non-italians	Total ESF
Parties	21,4	22,7	6,1	17,3	23,0	17,9	18,1	20,4
Unions	-	67,2	38,1	43,8	71,1	56,3	57,3	-
<i>Cisl/Uil</i>	13,7	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Cgil</i>	64,8	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<i>Sindacati di base</i>	58,9	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Moviments	89,8	95,4	85,1	92,4	84,4	86,8	88,5	89,4
Local governments	50,6	46,8	28,0	34,7	15,4	41,3	35,7	46,2
National Government	5,6	9,5	8,6	2,2	2,4	12,1	7,2	6,1
National Parliament	14,9	20,5	14,8	16,3	1,6	17,7	15,1	14,9
European Union	33,9	12,6	10,1	9,9	4,1	12,3	10,5	26,9
United Nations	32,0	27,3	37,6	18,4	9,0	26,8	24,0	29,6

Also confirmed is activists’ mistrust of the institutions of representative democracy – not just national governments, which even if left-wing obtain the trust of not more than 10% of activists (with barely 2.2% of activists

expressing at least fair trust in Britain, but even among Germans a very low 8.6%); not even parliaments are trusted. There is decisively greater trust in local bodies (especially in Italy, France or Spain), and even though lower, for the UN (especially in Germany). A declining trust in the EU reflects the growing criticism of EU policy and institutions, with a politicization and polarization of positions during and after the French referendum on the European constitutional treaty. Similarly, the decline of trust in the UN between Florence (similar in Paris) and Athens confirms the growing dismay also among more moderate NGOs that had once trusted that institution.

The activists mistrust the EU accused of using competences on market competition and free trade to impose neoliberal economic policy while the restrictive budgetary policies set by the Maastricht parameters are stigmatized as jeopardizing welfare policies; privatisation of public services and flexibility of labour are criticized as worsening citizens' wellbeing and job security. Under the slogan 'another Europe is possible' various proposals were tabled at the first ESF, including 'taxation of capital' and, again, the Tobin Tax. Demands were also made for cuts in indirect taxation and assistance for weaker social groups, as well as for strengthening of public services such as education and health care. At the second ESF, the European Social Consult stated "we have learnt to recognize the strength of coordinated action and the vulnerability of the 'untouchable' organizations of capitalism. We need to deepen our contact and communication with society, decentralizing our struggle and working in local and regional context in a coordinated way with common objectives... the European Union is being shaped under the neoliberal politics. The European constitution comes to reinforce it and next year it will be our main goal to fight it".

The constitutional treaty is feared as "constitutionalization of neoliberalism". A participant at the seminar "Pour une Europe démocratique, des droits et de la citoyenneté", referring to the constitutional treaty, claims that:

"The first part of the text is similar to a constitution. But the third one, which focuses on the implementation of concrete policies, goes beyond the normal frame of a constitution. It constitutionalizes competition rights. Making rigid the policies to be followed, it takes away from the citizens all possibilities to change the rules. It is an unacceptable practice because it is anti-democratic. Anyway, all changes are made impossible by the need to obtain an unanimous vote by 25 states".

In the third part, "everything is subordinated to competition, including

public services, the relations with the DOM-TOM, and the capital flow (something that, by the way, make any Tobin Tax impossible)".

In particular, the lack of democratic accountability is criticized: "at the local level we have very low influence in the decision making process, but our influence becomes null in questions as the European constitution or the directives of the WTO or the IMF. We are even criminalized when we attempt it...". The WIDE-European NGO Network together with the Rosa Luxemburg foundations ask for basic services and goods, such as education, health and water, subordinated to democratic decisions, involving the local community, stating that public service as bases of fundamental rights, and stressing also the need to democratize the provision of public services.

Criticism of conceptions of democracy at EU level is also addressed towards security policies, with a call for a Europe of freedoms and justice against a Europe "sécuritaire et policière". In the first ESF, EU stances in foreign policies are considered as subordinated to the US, or environmental issues as dominated by the environmental-unfriendly demands of corporations, in migration policy as oriented to build a xenophobic "Fortress Europe". In the Paris ESF, the construction of a European judicial space is considered as a way to control police power. In particular, EU legislation on terrorism is criticized as criminalizing such categories as young, refugees, Muslims. EU immigration policies are defined as obsessed with issues of security and demographic needs (with a semantic shift from Muslim to young to potential terrorist). The official lists of "terrorist organizations" are considered as arbitrary (including groups that had already been funded by European institutions). Repressive measures are also criticized as ineffective, and the need for political solutions stressed. While terrorism is stigmatized, there is a call to "take a clear stand for international law, including the right of people's to fight occupation", but also to "defend national sovereignty". As for the EU foreign policy, there is criticism of the subordination of humanitarian politics and developmental help to commercial and security aims, recognizing the important role of the local population. Solidarity groups denounce the role of European states and corporations in Haiti, Latin America, Africa, aggressive EU trade policies, asymmetric negotiations of commercial treaty. In terms of defense policies, proposal ranges from "a Europe without NATO, EU-army and US bases" to the multilateralism and refusal of a nuclear Europe, more resources to the UN and the introduction of an Art. 1: "Europe refuses war as an instrument of conflict resolution".

Activists present at the various ESFs share these criticisms of EU politics

and policies. Interviewees from different countries stated in fact that the European Union strengthens neoliberal globalisation and a shared mistrust in the capacity of the EU to mitigate the negative effects of globalisation and safeguard a different social model of welfare (table 4). The data from the survey at the demonstration in Rome in 2005 called for protesting against the Bolkenstein directive confirm this image (with even stronger disagreement on the capacity of the EU to mitigate the negative consequences of economic globalisation). A later survey in Athens, showed a widespread belief in the need of building (alternative) institutions of world governance (93% of the respondents).

Table 4. How much do you agree with the following statements? (equilibrated sample)

	IT	FR	DE	ES	UK	ESF Total (%)	Rome 2005
<i>a) The European Union attempts to safeguard a social model that is different from the neo-liberal one</i>							
not at all	46.7	50.7	47.4	51.4	68.3	53.7	42.4
a little	43.7	35.8	43.6	38.5	26.1	36.8	37.7
Some	8.9	8.2	7.7	6.4	4.2	7.0	11.7
very much	0.7	5.2	1.3	3.7	1.4	2.5	4.0
Total	135	134	78	109	142	598	410
<i>b) The European Union mitigates the most negative effects of neo-liberal globalization</i>							
not at all	31.7	50.0	29.7	44.0	59.4	44.4	41.8
a little	51.1	27.9	48.6	40.4	21.7	36.6	40.5
Some	15.1	13.2	14.9	10.1	5.6	11.5	11.7
very much	2.2	8.8	6.8	5.5	13.3	7.5	1.5
Total	139	136	74	109	143	601	410
<i>c) The European Union strengthens neo-liberal globalization</i>							
not at all	3.6	3.0	2.4	1.5	6.1	3.6	4.6
a little	18.7	6.0	4.9	6.3	5.4	8.6	11.8
Some	43.2	32.8	35.4	38.7	15.0	32.3	31.7
very much	34.5	58.2	57.3	53.2	73.5	55.5	48.2

Total	139	134	82	III	147	613	410
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Respondents at the first ESF in Florence were convinced that the EU favors neoliberal globalization, and that it is unable of mitigating the negative effects of globalization and safeguarding a different social model of welfare. While Italians expressed greater trust in the EU, and British activists were more euro-skeptic (followed by French and Spanish activists), the differences were however altogether small. Respondents in Athens confirmed a widely shared skepticism that strengthening the national governments would help achieving the goals of the movement (only about one fifth of the activists responded positively). Confirming the trends already observed on the battery of questions on trust in institutions, between the first and the fourth ESF there is a decline in those who support a strengthening of the EU (from 43% to 35%) and/or the UN (from 57% to 48%).

In general, the movement seems however aware of the need for supranational (macroregional and/or global) institutions of governance. At one of the plenary assemblies of the second edition of the ESF, Italian activist Franco Russo stated: “There is a real desire of Europe... but not of any Europe. The European citizens ask for a Europe of rights: social, environmental, of peace. But does this Constitution responds to our desire for Europe?”. And the representative of the French union federation GIO Solidaires, Pierre Khalfa, declared that the Constitutional treaty “is a document to be rejected... [but] the discussion of the project is the occasion for a Europe-wide mobilization”.

The image of “another Europe” (instead than “no Europe”) is often stressed in the debates. During the second ESF, the Assembly of the unemployed and precarious workers in struggle states “For the European union, Europe is only a “large free-exchange area”. We want a Europe based upon democracy, citizenship, equality, peace, a job and revenue to live. Another Europe for another World”. And also, “To build another Europe imposes to put the democratic transformation of institutions at the center of elaboration and mobilization. We can, we should have great political ambition for Europe... Cessons de subir l’Europe: prenons la en mains”. Unions and other groups active on public services proclaim “the European level as the pertinent level of resistance”, among others against national decisions. The “No to the Constitutional draft” is combined with demands for a legitimate European constitution, produced through a public consultation, “a European constitution constructed from below”. And many agree that “the Europe we have to build is a Europe of rights, and participatory democracy is its engine”. In this vision, “the European

Social Forum constitutes the peoples as constitutional power, the only legitimate power". In a report on the seminar "Our vision for the future of Europe", we read "Lacking a clear and far reaching vision the EU-governments are stumbling from conference to conference. In this manner the EU will not survive the challenges of the upcoming decades! Too many basic problems have been avoided for lack of a profound strategic position. In our vision we outlined an alternative model for the future of Europe. It contains a clear long range positioning for Europe making a clear choice for the improvement of the quality of life for all and for responsible and peaceful development".

When moving from assessment of the existing institutions to the imagined ones, the activists of the first ESF expressed strong interest in the building of new institutions of world governance: 70% of the respondents are quite or very much in favor of this, including strengthening the United Nations, an option supported by about half our sample (see table 5). Furthermore, about one third of activists agree that in order to achieve the movement's goals, a stronger EU and/or other regional institutions are necessary (with higher support for the EU among Italian activists, and very low support among the British activists).

Statistic analyses (available on request) show that opinions about the strengthening of different institutions are not much influenced by gender, age or occupation (although support for the EU declines among manual workers and employees, trust in Europe and attachment to Europe among unemployed, attachment to Europe again among workers). The younger activists and the more educated are more in favor of the building of alternative institutions of world governance. Activists who locate themselves at the radical Left are more skeptical about the utility of strengthening the EU as a way to reach the movement's aims (the same applies to the strengthening of the national governments), and are more convinced that the EU strengthen neoliberal globalization, trust less the EU and feel less attached to Europe. Significantly, according to the data on the anti-Bolkestein protest, the belief that the EU strengthens neoliberalism and does not defend the social model is especially widespread among those who work in education and third sector.

Table 5. In your opinion, to achieve the goals of the movement would it be necessary: (ESF, equilibrated sample)

a) to strengthen national governments?

	Italy	France	Germany	Spain	Great Britain	Total

not at all	57.3	49.6	56.3	48.5	87.9	(61.4) 362
A little	26.6	18.7	27.5	25.2	4.3	(19.5) 115
enough	14.0	20.3	11.3	15.5	5.7	(13.2) 78
very much	2.1	11.4	5.0	10.7	2.1	(5.9) 35
Total	143	123	80	103	141	590

Cramer's $V = 0.21$ significant at 0.001 level

b) to strengthen the EU and /or other regional institutions (Mercosur, Arab League, etc.)?

	Italy	France	Germany	Spain	Great Britain	Total
not at all	33.8	32.8	44.4	34.6	85.2	(47.5) 281
A little	28.1	18.0	22.2	28.0	5.6	(19.8) 117
enough	27.3	25.4	14.8	25.2	4.9	(19.5) 115
very much	10.8	23.8	18.5	12.1	4.2	(13.2) 78
Total	140	123	81	107	142	591

Cramer's $V = 0.27$ significant at 0.001 level

c) to strengthen the United Nations (giving them power to make binding decisions)?

	Italy	France	Germany	Spain	Great Britain	Total
not at all	27.7	29.4	27.4	27.4	76.9	(39.1) 234
A little	18.4	12.7	14.2	14.2	7.0	(13.9) 83
enough	29.8	26.2	31.1	31.1	6.3	(23.2) 139
very much	24.1	31.7	27.4	27.4	9.8	(23.9) 123
Total	141	126	83	106	143	599

Cramer's $V = 0.26$ significant at 0.001 level

d) build new institutions of world governance?

	Italy	France	Germany	Spain	Great	Total
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			y		Britain	
not at all	24.1	15.3	31.3	11.4	21.3	(20.3) 123
a little	15.6	4.4	13.4	10.5	6.4	(9.7) 59
enough	24.8	27.7	21.7	23.8	7.1	(20.8) 126
very much	35.5	52.6	33.7	54.3	65.2	(49.3) 299
Total	141	137	83	105	141	607

Cramer's $V = 0.18$ significant at 0.001 level

Moreover, the activists of the first European Social Forum expressed quite a high level of affective identification with Europe (see table 6): about half of the activists feel enough or strong attachment to Europe, with also in this case less support from British and Spanish activists and more from French, Germans, and Italians. The activists of the ESFs therefore do not seem to be euroskeptics, wanting to return to an almighty nation state, but “critical Europeanists” (or “critical globalist”), convinced that transnational institution of governance are necessary, but that they should be built from below.

Table 6.. *To what extent do you feel attached to Europe?*

	Italy	France	German y	Spain	Great Britain	Total ESF %
not at all	17.9	9.1	12.8	20.7	27.8	18.2
a little	29.3	31.8	29.5	49.5	31.9	34.2
enough	45.7	43.9	37.2	28.8	26.4	36.5
very much	7.1	15.2	20.5	0.9	13.9	11.1
Total	140	132	78	111	144	605

These positions are in line with the debates in the ESFs. Already in the first ESF in Florence, specific proposals for changes in EU policies come from networks of social movement organizations and NGOs, often already active on specific issues. So the European assembly of the unemployed and precarious workers in struggle stress the importance of developing claims at the EU level (e.g. a minimal salary of 50% of the average revenue), a

network of unions of cadres proposes a Charte de responsabilité de cadres à l'échelle européenne; groups involved in the promotion of Esperanto as well as associations from ethnic minorities make proposals for linguistic and cultural rights, the European social consult states asks to "strengthen and widen the European social fabric in a network that should be participatory, horizontal and decentralized, as much in the taking of the decisions as in the realizations of actions". Proposals for economic reform are developed by European Union for research in economic democracy. Humanitarian NGOs debate measures against religious and ethnic discrimination, including the potentials of EU directives and national legislations.

Concrete proposals to improve the quality of democracy were also suggested during the second ESF. They went from the establishment of an annual day of action devoted to media democracy to the building of alternative media (workshop on Reclaim the channels of information: media campaigns and media protest), from the reduction of import taxes on medicines to the increase in the use of non-conventional medicine (seminar on Health in Europe: Equity and Access), from the introduction of the right to asylum in the European constitution to the regularization of all "no-papers" migrants (workshop on Right to migrate, right to asylum); from a European social charter that recognises the right to decent housing to the occupation of empty buildings (workshop on "Housing rights in Europe: towards a trans-European network of struggles and alternatives"); from the dialogue with local authorities to participation of the people in the development of international experiences of cooperation (workshop on Decentralized cooperation: a dialogue between territories as a response to global challenges); from the quality control on hard drogues to liberalization of light ones (Workshop on Perfect enemies: the penal governance of poverty and differences) all at the first ESF. Specific debates focused upon issues such as the EU policies on commercial agreements; youth rights in Europe; Christianity, Islam and Ebraism in Europe; national extremism in Europe; financierization and workfare; the contribution of the Churches to the construction of a new Europe; European policy on employment; Europe seen by African eyes; Ecological crises in Europe; the place of Islam in Europe and islamophobia.

Europe remains similarly central at the fourth edition of the Forum where seminars (that in large majority have "Europe" in the title) discuss at the European level issues as diverse as the fight against poverty and institutional racism, the Charter of common principle of another Europe and the restriction of liberties, health systems and NATO, camps for migrants and the Ocalan case, education and relations with Southern Mediterranean countries, corporate politics and labour rights, relations with

Latin America and with the UN, the populist Right and new oppositional actors, left-wing journalisms and housing problems, the Bolkenstein directive and precarious workers, the Lisbon and Bologna strategy and constitution building, local governance and the WTO, taxation and Islamophobia, violence against women and students' mobility, linguistic equality and basic income, Roma's rights and the US military bases, agricultural policy and madhouses, human trafficking and sanctions against Israel, monotheistic religions and position towards Cuba. The Call of the European Social Movements in Florence framed all these themes under the label of a struggle against neoliberalism:

“We have gathered in Florence to express our opposition to a European order based on corporate power and neoliberalism. This market model leads to constant attacks on the conditions and rights of workers, social inequalities, and oppression of ethnic minorities, and social exclusion of the unemployed and migrants. It leads to environmental degradation, privatisation and job insecurity. It drives powerful countries to try and dominate the economies of weaker countries, often to deny them real self determination. Once more it is leading to war.”

The discourse on the defence of public good (such as water) is framed as oriented to overcome the culture of merchandizing, but also of a national sovereignty that refuses solidarity with the external world. At the same time, there is the attempt to enlarge the notion of Europe beyond the European Union and the fear of an exclusive European identity as representing the “civilized” culture against the non-European civilization. Criticizing “the arbitrary decision of the EU to cut funds to the National Palestinian Authority is unacceptable and exacerbates the whole situation”, the Declaration of the Assembly of the Movements of the 4th European Social Forum focuses attention on the dangers of a polarization of the global citizens along a “clash of civilization”, which would justify a further discrimination against the people of the South. It stated in fact that: “Conservative forces in the north and the south are encouraging a “clash of civilization” aimed at dividing oppressed people, which is in turn producing unacceptable violence, barbarism and additional attacks on the rights and dignity of migrants and minorities.

Beyond the concrete policy choices, criticism also addresses the secretive, top-down ways in which these policies are decided. The Assembly of the third ESF asked, among others, for more participation “from below” in the construction of “another Europe”: “At a time when the draft for the European Constitutional treaty is about to be ratified, we must state that the peoples of Europe need to be consulted directly. The draft does not meet our aspirations. This constitutional treaty consecrates neo-liberalism

as the official doctrine of the EU; it makes competition the basis for European community law, and indeed for all human activity; it completely ignores the objectives of ecologically sustainable society. This constitutional treaty does not grant equal rights, the free movement of people and citizenship for everyone in the country they live in, whatever their nationality; it gives NATO a role in European foreign policy and defence, and pushes for the militarisation of the EU. Finally it puts the market first by marginalising the social sphere and hence accelerating the destruction of public services”.

IV. A EUROPEAN SOCIAL MOVEMENT? SOME CONCLUSIONS

“One can be against a Europe that supports financial markets, and at the same time be in favor of a Europe that, through concerted policies, blocks the way to the violence of those markets... Only a social European state would be able to contrast the disaggregative effects of monetary economy: so one can be hostile to a European integration based only upon the Euro, without opposing the political integration of Europe”:

“Contestation is a crucial pre-condition for the emergence of a European public sphere rather than an indicator for its absence. The more contentious European policies and politics become the more social mobilization occurs on European issues, the more we should observe truly European public debates. If political issues are not contested, if European politics remains the business of elites, the attention level for Europe and the EU will remain low. European issues must become salient and significant in the various public debates so that a European public sphere can emerge.”

Support for Europe is a polymorphic term that refers not only to different processes, but also to different ‘Europes’. In our research we have discussed different indicators of support for Europe, and the different imaginations of Europe: as it currently stands, and as it ought to be (according to our interviewees). A first finding, which we think is worth stressing, is that if European integration has long been an elitist project, its evolution involves pressures “from below” – from social movement organizations, associations and NGOs. The ideology of a regulatory Europe, legitimized by good performances, appears less and less convincing: producing policies, the EU became a target of claims and protest. In this process, national actors of different types started to address the EU. If those richer in resources have been the first to open headquarters in Brussels, resource-poor actors have also started to network supranationally and framed European issues. Vertical integration created horizontal processes that while legitimizing the European institutions by

recognizing them, also politicized the European public sphere by contesting public decisions.

Our analysis on the European Social Forums have shown the emergence of European protest actors, who are innovative in term of identity, strategies and organisational structure that go beyond the boundaries of the nation states, addressing the institutions of the multilevel European Governance. They are characterized as loosely structured networks of networks of organizations and activists, with frequent overlapping membership at micro-level as well as interlocking campaigns at the organizational level. Activists are experienced with various strategies of political participation and, although critical of the European institutions, promote through their action and campaign a European identity.

Looking at the frames and discourses of these activists, as well as those of their organizations, we have observed the development of a form of “critical Europeanism” which is fundamentally different from the traditional ‘nationalist’ Euro-scepticism on which research on Europeanization focused so far. According to our survey activists from different countries express strong criticisms of the actual politics and policies of the EU, but they also show a high identification with Europe and a certain degree of support for the European level of Governance.

As occurred during the construction of the nation state, the focusing of protests at the national level followed the centralization of decisional power. Social and political actors also moved on multiple territorial levels: alliances with the *state-builders* targeted local governors, but there were also alliances among the periphery against the center. The construction of the nation state has however been a conflictual process: citizens’ rights are the results of social struggles. Democracy emerged with the contestation of public decisions: criticism of national governments contributed to legitimizing the state as the main decisional level. Even avoiding pushing too far the parallel between nation building and the construction of peculiar and anomalous supranational institutions, such as the European Union, our research appears to confirm the development of a “Europeanization by contestation”.

As observed in the two quotes reported in the *incipit*, support for the process of European integration cannot be measured in terms of (more or less permissive) consensus towards the decisions of European institutions. Even supporters of the construction of supranational institutions might stigmatize, even radically, a community treaty considered as too intergovernmentalist or too neo-liberal. Those who criticize free market Europe, could support – as Bourdieu did – a social Europe. A contested

public debate is indeed – as Thomas Risse recalled – the only path towards the creation of a supranational democracy. It is indeed not a silent consensus with the governors that signals a democratic process, but instead to submit their decisions to the “proof of the discussion”. It is not the agreements upon borders, ideologies and various cleavages, but the public debate about them which indicates the existence of a European public sphere. Civil society actors appear in this frame as critical Europeanists, in favor of deeper integration but with policies very different from those that have thus far characterized the “negative integration” dominant in the EU. In line with the results of other research – departing from an analysis of party positions based on expert evaluations – our data confirms that a call for more integration on environmental, labor, and cohesion policies tend to meet with demands for more European integration. Social movement criticisms are in fact directed toward what is perceived as the survival of the prevalently economic nature of European integration, linked to the idea of Europe as part of the Western world, thus emphasizing Western values. The stability pact in particular is criticized as one of the principal examples of the neo-liberal policies privileged by already privileged groups, which reduce welfare for the poor and disadvantaged. They do not call, however, for a return to the nation state, but for a process of Europeanization from below.