

The Social Bases of the Global Justice Movement

*Some Theoretical Reflections and Empirical
Evidence from the First European Social Forum*

Donatella della Porta



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Contents

Acronyms	ii
Summary/Résumé/Resumen	iii
Summary	iii
Résumé	iv
Resumen	v
Introduction	1
1. Social Characteristics of Political Activists: Four Main Hypotheses	1
2. The Global Justice Movement as a “Movement of Movements”?	6
3. Generations of Activists	9
4. Gender in Movements	10
5. New Middle Class and New Social Movements	12
6. The Return of Labour?	15
7. Religions and Movements	19
8. Movements and Parties	20
9. Social Bases and Types of Involvement	24
10. The South	26
Conclusion	28
Bibliography	30
UNRISD Programme Papers on Civil Society and Social Movements	35
 Tables	
Table 1: Age of ESF activists by country	9
Table 2: Present and past organization affiliation of ESF activists by country	11
Table 3: Gender of ESF activists by country	12
Table 4: Work status of ESF activists by country	13
Table 5: Work sector of ESF activists by country	13
Table 6: Education level of ESF activists by country	13
Table 7: Employment status of ESF activists by country	17
Table 8: Left-right political self-identification of ESF activists by country	21
Table 9: Correlations between sociographic characteristics, type of involvement in the movement and organizational experience (Cramer’s V)	24
Table 10: Correlations between organization, type of involvement in the movement and political repertoire (Cramer’s V)	25
Table 11: Correlations between organizational experience and self-collocation in the left-right scale (Cramer’s V)	26

Acronyms

ACLI	Associazione Cristiana dei Lavoratori Italiani (<i>Italian Workers Christian Association</i>)
AFL–CIO	American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations
AGESCI	Associazione Guide e Scouts Cattolici Italiani (<i>Scouts and Guides Italian Catholic Association</i>)
ATTAC	Action pour la Taxation des Transactions Financières pour l'Aide aux Citoyens (<i>Association for the Taxation of Financial Transactions for the Benefit of Citizens</i>)
CGIL	Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (<i>Italian General Confederation of Labour</i>)
COBAS	Comitati di Base (<i>Base Committee</i>)
ESF	European Social Forum
EU	European Union
FIOM	Federazione Impiegati Operai Metallurgici (<i>Federation of Metallurgy Workers</i>)
G7/8	Group of 7/8
IMF	International Monetary Fund
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NSM	New Social Movement
NGO	non-governmental organization
ÖTV	Gewerkschaft öffentliche Dienste, Transport und Verkehr (<i>Public Services, Transport and Traffic Union</i>)
PCE	Partido Comunista de España (<i>Spanish Communist Party</i>)
PCF	Parti Communiste Français (<i>French Communist Party</i>)
PDS	Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus (<i>German Communist Party</i>)
RC	Rifundazione Comunista (<i>Italian Communist Party</i>)
SUD	Solidaires, Unitaires et Démocratiques (<i>In Solidarity, United and Democratic</i>)
UN	United Nations
UNRISD	United Nations Research Institute for Social Development
UPS	United Parcel Service
US	United States
WTO	World Trade Organization

Summary/Résumé/Resumen

Summary

Questions about the social basis of support have re-emerged in the social science discussion of contemporary global social movements, prompted by the apparent *heterogeneity* in the social background of activists of protest campaigns on issues such as debt relief, international trade rules and barriers, global taxation, fair trade and peace. During the 1990s, political scientists and sociologists expected that post-Fordist social fragmentation as well as postmodern individualization would reduce the opportunities for collective action. Since Seattle, however, it has become increasingly evident that, although with different forms and strategies than in the past, social movements have not only remobilized, they have once again become visible “on the street”. How was this possible? And who are the new “cosmopolitan” activists? What is their social background? And what is their political socialization?

This paper discusses the main hypotheses developed in social science research with reference to the social basis for social movements – distinguishing in particular between hypotheses of social centrality, collective identity, social cleavages and class conflict – and considers the relevance of these questions for research on contemporary protest, in particular those mobilized around claims of global justice. Hypotheses are discussed using mainly – but not only – data from a survey of activists from campaigns for debt relief and fair trade, the movement to change international trade rules and barriers and the global taxation initiatives who took part in the European Social Forum (ESF) in Florence, Italy, in November 2002. The interviews allow for the investigation of the social composition of the supporters and sympathizers of the various initiatives that have converged in the so-called global justice movement, with particular reference to age groups, gender distribution, the role of the “new middle classes” and of labour in the recent protest movements, as well as involvement in religious groups and political parties.

The data indicate that the hypothesis that the “social centrality” of individual resources increases the propensity to mobilize is only partially useful in identifying the social background of the activists, since the profile that emerged included not only well-educated and predominantly middle-class activists, but also a high number of workers. Furthermore, there was no overrepresentation of male or middle-aged groups of the population. Moreover, in line with a second hypothesis that stresses the development of “persistent activist careers”, the social background of the activists is linked to their participation in previous protest movements and the civil society groups that developed from these protests – for example, students often had experiences in student groups, women in feminist collectives and workers in trade unions. The social bases of the “global” protest seemed, indeed, to reflect the range of social cleavages already mobilized, as a third hypothesis would suggest. Indeed, following the concerns expressed in the fourth hypothesis, the dominant identification with the “left” of the political spectrum seems to testify to the re-emergence of conflicts based on social inequalities and which had previously been considered primarily appeased.

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Donatella della Porta is Professor of Sociology at the European University Institute in Florence, Italy.

Résumé

Les questions touchant à la base sociale de l'aide ont refait surface dans le débat des sciences sociales sur les mouvements sociaux mondiaux contemporains, à cause de l'hétérogénéité apparente des origines sociales des contestataires qui font campagne sur des questions telles que l'allègement de la dette, les règles et barrières du commerce international, la fiscalité mondiale, le commerce équitable et la paix. Pendant les années 90, politologues et sociologues s'attendaient à ce que la fragmentation sociale post-fordienne et l'individualisation postmoderne réduisent les possibilités d'action collective. Or, on s'est aperçu depuis Seattle que, même si les formes et stratégies sont différentes de celles du passé, les mouvements sociaux ne se sont pas seulement remobilisés mais sont une fois de plus descendus "dans la rue". Comment une telle chose a-t-elle été possible? Et qui sont ces nouveaux militants "cosmopolites"? Quelle est leur origine sociale et quelle est leur mode de socialisation politique?

Ce document traite des principales hypothèses avancées dans les recherches des sciences sociales sur la base des mouvements sociaux—en distinguant en particulier les hypothèses de la "centralité sociale", de l'identité collective, des clivages sociaux et du conflit de classes—et montre l'intérêt de ces questions pour les recherches sur la contestation contemporaine, en particulier sur les mouvements réclamant plus de justice dans le monde. L'auteur examine ces hypothèses en se servant principalement—mais pas uniquement—de données provenant d'une étude faite par des militants faisant campagne pour l'allègement de la dette et le commerce équitable, du mouvement en faveur du changement des règles et des barrières du commerce international et des initiatives tendant à une fiscalité mondiale, qui ont participé au Forum social européen (FSE) de Florence (Italie) en novembre 2002. Les interviews permettent d'enquêter sur l'origine sociale des partisans et sympathisants des diverses initiatives qui ont convergé pour former le mouvement dit de la justice dans le monde, et de se renseigner en particulier sur leur groupe d'âge, leur répartition par sexe, le rôle des "nouvelles classes moyennes" et de la classe ouvrière dans les mouvements contestataires de formation récente, ainsi que sur la participation des groupes religieux et des partis politiques.

Les données indiquent que l'hypothèse selon laquelle la "centralité sociale" des ressources individuelles accentue la propension à la mobilisation n'est que partiellement utile pour déterminer l'origine sociale des militants, puisque, selon le profil qui s'est dégagé, il y avait parmi eux non seulement des militants instruits, issus dans leur grande majorité de la classe moyenne, mais aussi un grand nombre d'ouvriers. De plus, les hommes et les groupes d'âge mûr n'étaient pas surreprésentés par rapport au reste de la population. Selon une deuxième hypothèse qui souligne le développement de militants "de carrière", l'origine sociale des militants est liée à leur participation à des mouvements contestataires antérieurs et aux groupes de la société civile qui se sont développés à partir de ces contestations—par exemple, les étudiants ont souvent fait partie d'organisations d'étudiants, les femmes de collectifs féministes et les ouvriers de syndicats. La base sociale de la contestation "mondiale" semblait, en fait, représenter l'ensemble des clivages sociaux déjà mobilisés, comme le laisse à penser une troisième hypothèse. En fait, selon les craintes exprimées dans la quatrième hypothèse, l'identification dominante avec la "gauche" du spectre politique semble témoigner de la réapparition de conflits fondés sur les inégalités sociales, conflits considérés naguère encore comme apaisés.

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Donatella della Porta est professeur de sociologie à l'Institut universitaire européen de Florence, Italie.

Resumen

Algunas cuestiones sobre las bases sociales de la ayuda han vuelto a surgir en el debate de las ciencias sociales de los movimientos sociales globales contemporáneos. Vienen de la aparente *heterogeneidad* de la procedencia social de los activistas que participan en las campañas de protesta sobre temas como el alivio de la deuda, las normas y obstáculos en el comercio internacional, la tributación mundial, el comercio equitativo y la paz. Durante los años 90, los sociólogos y científicos políticos pensaban que una fragmentación social post-Fordista, así como la individualización posmoderna, iban a reducir las oportunidades de acción colectiva. Además desde Seattle se ha hecho cada vez más evidente que, aunque se manifiestan de forma y usan estrategias distintas que en épocas anteriores, los movimientos sociales no sólo se han removilizado, sino que han vuelto a constituir un factor visible “en la calle”. ¿Cómo es esto posible? ¿Quién son estos nuevos activistas “cosmopolitas”? ¿Cuáles son sus antecedentes sociales? ¿Cuál es su socialización política?

Este documento trata de las principales hipótesis que se han formulado en la investigación científica sobre la base social de los movimientos sociales. En particular distingue entre las hipótesis de centralidad social, identidad colectiva, división social, y conflicto de clases—e indica la importancia de estos temas para la investigación sobre los movimientos de protesta contemporáneos, especialmente los que se movilizan por reivindicaciones de justicia global. Se examinan las hipótesis utilizando principalmente—aunque no exclusivamente—datos provenientes de una encuesta de activistas en campañas para el alivio de la deuda y el comercio equitativo, el movimiento para cambiar las reglas del comercio internacional y sus obstáculos y las iniciativas de tributación global que participaron en el Foro Social Europeo (FSE) en Florencia, Italia, en noviembre de 2002. Las entrevistas permiten la investigación de la composición social de los partidarios y simpatizantes de las distintas iniciativas que convergieron en el llamado movimiento para la justicia global, haciendo hincapié en factores como los grupos de edad, el género, la función de las “nuevas clases medias” y la fuerza laboral en los recientes movimientos de protesta, así como la participación en grupos religiosos y partidos políticos.

Los datos muestran que la hipótesis de que la “centralidad social” de los recursos individuales aumenta la tendencia hacia la movilización, nos ayuda solamente en parte a identificar la procedencia social de los activistas, ya que el perfil resultante incluía no solamente activistas cultos de la clase media sino también un alto número de trabajadores. Es más, no había una representación desproporcionada de hombres o de personas de mediana edad. También, en consonancia con una segunda hipótesis que pone el énfasis sobre el desarrollo de “carreras de activismo persistentes”, los antecedentes sociales de los activistas están relacionados con su participación en anteriores movimientos de protesta y los grupos de la sociedad civil que surgieron a partir de estas protestas—por ejemplo, los estudiantes a menudo habían participado en grupos estudiantiles, las mujeres en colectivos feministas y los trabajadores en sindicatos. Las bases sociales de la protesta “global” parecen, de hecho, reflejar la gama de divisiones sociales ya movilizadas, como sugiere una tercera hipótesis. En efecto, siguiendo las preocupaciones expresadas en la cuarta hipótesis, la identificación dominante con la “izquierda” del espectro político parece constituir una prueba del crecimiento de conflictos basados en desigualdades sociales y que anteriormente se habían considerado básicamente apaciguados.

Este documento fue preparado en el marco del proyecto del UNRISD sobre Movimientos sociales civiles mundiales: La dinámica de las campañas internacionales y la implementación nacional. Este proyecto está dirigido por Kléber Ghimire, con la ayuda de Anita Tombez, Murat Yilmaz, Britta Sadoun y Santiago Daroca. La investigación ha sido financiada por una donación del Organismo Suizo para el Desarrollo y la Cooperación, y el presupuesto de base de UNRISD.

Donatella della Porta es Profesora de Sociología en el Instituto Universitario Europeo de Florencia, Italia.

Introduction

A main set of questions related to the research on social movements addresses the characteristics of their activists, in particular in terms of their social background and political careers. These questions are relevant to the description of social movements that, in their claims as well as in their strategies, are influenced by the “human capital” at their disposal. Indeed, a homogeneous social background has often been reflected in the very definition of specific movements. The first mention of social movements was in reference to the labour movement—with its base of workers—but peasants’ movements have also played an important role in history. More recently, the protests in many Western—but not exclusively Western—countries at the end of the 1960s have been defined in terms of a student movement. Other social characteristics have been used to define women’s, gay and youth movements. The social background of social movements—of their members as well as supporters and sympathizers—has also been discussed in terms of the representation of movements and the capacity of democratic systems to provide opportunities to different social groups to “speak up” as well as to improve their chances of being “listened to” by decision makers.

Questions about the social basis of support have re-emerged in the social science discussion of contemporary global social movements, prompted by the apparent *heterogeneity* in the social background of activists of protest campaigns on issues such as debt relief, international trade rules and barriers, global taxation, fair trade and peace. During the 1990s, political scientists and sociologists expected that post-Fordist social fragmentation as well as postmodern individualization would reduce the opportunities for collective action. Since Seattle, moreover, it has become increasingly evident that, although with different forms and strategies than in the past, social movements have not only remobilized, they have once again become visible “on the street”. How was this possible? And who are the new “cosmopolitan” activists? What is their social background? And what is their political socialization?

In this paper, I first summarize the main hypotheses developed in social science research with reference to the social basis for social movements, distinguishing in particular between hypotheses of social centrality, collective identity, social cleavages and class conflict in section 1; and focus on the relevance of these questions for research on contemporary protest, in particular those mobilized by claims of global justice, in section 2. I also discuss the different hypotheses using mainly—but not only—data from a survey of activists from campaigns for debt relief and fair trade, the movement to change international trade rules and barriers, and the global taxation initiatives who took part in the European Social Forum (ESF) in Florence, Italy, in November 2002. The interviews allow for the investigation of the social composition of the supporters and sympathizers of the various initiatives that have converged in the so-called global justice movement, with particular reference to generation (section 3), gender distribution (section 4), the role of the “new middle classes” (section 5) and of labour (section 6) in the recent protest movements, as well as the involvement in the movements of religious groups (section 7) and political parties (section 8). I then explore the extent to which the various “areas” that have been singled out in the movement vary in terms of social background and political attitudes (section 9), as well as speculate on the social background of similar mobilizations in the South (section 10). The aim, of course, is not a political judgment, but instead a scientific assessment of the social and political characteristics of the political activists, and the capacity of existing social science approaches to explain recent mobilizations.

1. Social Characteristics of Political Activists: Four Main Hypotheses

Social science research on political participation has developed four main hypotheses: (i) the investment of individual social resources; (ii) the development of collective resources; (iii) the emergence and consolidation of societal cleavages; and (iv) the centrality of a (changing) class conflict.

The first hypothesis is that political participation increases with social status. The initial studies, based on surveys, revealed very low levels of participation (Lagroye 1993).¹ Moreover, the number of citizens involved diminished dramatically for the more demanding forms of participation. The normative problems involved in this selectivity was increased as a result of the non-representation of those who participated: in fact, there were higher levels of participation for activists identified as, *ceteris paribus*, better educated, middle class, male, middle aged, married, city resident, belonging to an ethnic majority and involved in voluntary associations (Milbrath and Goel 1977). In a similar vein, in their research on participation in the United States (US), Verba and Nie (1972) observed that the higher the social status of an individual, the higher the probability of participation; this observation has been confirmed in a seven-nation comparison (Verba et al. 1978), which concluded that social inequalities are reflected by unequal political influence.

In fact, higher social status usually implies more material resources as well as more free time to invest in political participation, but also a higher probability of being successful—via personal relationships with influential individuals—and especially a greater sense of personal achievement. Psychological disadvantages overlap with social disadvantages, reducing the perception of an individual's "*droit de parole*" (Bourdieu 1979:180). If participation responds to demands for equality, it also tends to reproduce inequalities since

any individual participant, at least potentially, with the differential (or unequal) coefficient (if we do not want to use the word 'privilege', that would have an *ancien régime* flavor) that characterizes his/her position in the system of private interests (Pizzorno 1966:90).

Also, research on social movements has looked at the social characteristics of activists, reaching some similar conclusions. First, it has often been observed that the New Social Movements (NSMs) tend to recruit from a specific social base, mainly from the middle class. Second, in order to account for the overrepresentation of young and student activists, the concept of *biographical availability* was used to identify the circumstances that increase free time and limit family responsibilities, reducing constraints to participation in movement activities (see McAdam 1988).

After the path-breaking research of the 1950s and the 1960s, more recent research has stressed an increasing degree of participation and its reduced selectivity. In particular, in Western Europe—at least until 1990—political participation grew, with a reduction of the percentage of passive citizens from 85 per cent in 1959 to 44 per cent in 1990 (Topf 1995). Additionally, while conventional participation remained stable, unconventional forms have drastically increased, with a decreasing inequality as far as gender, age and education are concerned (Topf 1995). Indeed, as Norris has recently observed, citing the data from a worldwide survey on political participation (World Value Surveys), that

there are many reasons to believe that the shift from traditional interest groups to new social movements has influenced the agencies, repertoires, and targets of political participation...The analysis of protest politics shows that many of these forms of activity, such as petitions, demonstrations, and consumer boycott, are fairly pervasive and have become increasingly popular during recent decades. Protest politics is on the rise as a channel of political expression and mobilization (2002:221).

According to Norris' data (2002:197), in "older democracies" 60.7 per cent of the population have signed a petition, 19.1 per cent have attended a demonstration and 17.1 per cent have joined in a boycott. In eight postindustrial societies—Austria, Finland, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Switzerland, United Kingdom and the United States—the proportion of activists

¹ In the United States, according to Milbrath (1965), as many as 60 per cent of citizens had a minimal level of participation and 30 per cent were totally uninterested in politics. Similar results for the United States are presented in Verba and Nie (1972) and for Germany, Italy, Mexico, the United Kingdom and the United States at the beginning of the 1960s in Almond and Verba (1963).

who had signed petitions increased from 32 per cent in the mid-1970s to 60 per cent in the mid-1990s; of those who had demonstrated, from 9 per cent to 17 per cent; of those who took part in boycotts from 6 per cent to 15 per cent, of those who occupied buildings from 1 per cent to 2 per cent, and of those who took part in unofficial strikes from 2 per cent to 4 per cent (Norris 2002). If labour mobilizations declined, research on contemporary movements identified this as a result of a class cleavage, with increasing activism also by unions (della Porta 2004, 2003).

Especially with the growth of political participation and the increase in research on unconventional forms of action, the debate about the *degree* and *sources* of selectivity re-emerged, albeit with a new focus on the role of collective identities in overcoming individual lack of resources.

The second hypothesis, suggested by this stream of research, is that participation increases with the development of collective identities. Pizzorno (1966) had already noted that the characteristic of politics is to refer to *systems of solidarity* that are at the basis of the very definition of interest: interests can in fact be singled out only with reference to a specific value system, and values push individuals to identify with wider groups in the society, providing a sense of belonging to them and a willingness to mobilize for them. From this perspective, participation is an action of solidarity with others that aims at protecting or transforming the dominant values and interest systems (Pizzorno 1966). Therefore, the process of participation requires the construction of solidarity communities within which individuals can perceive themselves—and are recognized—as equals. Political participation itself aims at this identity construction: before mobilizing as a worker, I have to identify myself as a worker and feel that I belong to a working class. Identification is the awareness of being part of a collective “us” that facilitates political participation and that, as Pizzorno (1966:109) stated, “increases (it is more intense, clearer, more precise), the highest is class consciousness”. In this sense, it is not the “social centrality” mentioned by Milbrath, but the centrality with respect to a class—or a group—that defines the individual’s propensity for political participation. And this explains why some groups, though composed of individuals that are endowed with low status, under some conditions are able to mobilize more than other groups. Participation is therefore explained not only by individual resources, but also by *collective* resources.

If the construction of a collective identity is a precondition for action, it is also a consequence of it. In fact, participation itself changes individual identity, increasing the sense of belonging to some groups, while weakening other potential identifications. Identity is produced and reproduced in collective action (della Porta and Diani 1999). Barricades for revolutionaries, strikes for workers, occupations for students are all actions oriented to influence public authorities, but also have internal effects insofar as they strengthen “class consciousness”—or, in more modern words, collective identification.

Participation, therefore, in a sort of virtuous circle that increases the sense of belonging that in turn pushes for more participation. During action, participants tend to identify not only with the “self”—the “us” they identify with—but also with the “other”—the opponents considered responsible for an unjust situation. It is indeed “in action” that the process of “cognitive liberation”—that is, the attribution of a social and addressable cause to an individual problem—develops (della Porta and Diani 1999; McAdam 1988). And it is in the course of “actions” that the struggle for the recognition of emerging identities—recognition that is part and parcel of the process of identity building—evolves (Pizzorno 1991; della Porta et al. 2000). As McAdam (1988) had singled out in his perceptive study of the Freedom Summer activists in the United States,² specific experiences of protest participation play an important role in determining subsequent choices. Also, research on most extreme forms of political activism, such as activism in terrorist organizations, has indicated that militant identities develop during long-lasting

² McAdam’s research focused on activists, from various states, who in the mid-1960s went to the southern states in order to help the local activists of the civil rights movement to convince African-American citizens to register to vote, notwithstanding the violent resistance of racist groups as well as local authorities.

activist “careers” (della Porta 1995). Investigating the peace movement, Downton and Wehr (1997) explained the consolidation of “persistent activism” as an effect of attitudinal availability (deriving from socialization), situational availability (such as flexible careers, part-time jobs, no children) and the role of external circumstances as catalysts, but also the reflexive effects of movement participation in terms of the strengthening of an alternative value system.

The third hypothesis links the development of collective identities, and hence conflicts, to some main societal cleavages that became politicized a long time ago. The effects of socioeconomic characteristics on social and political conflicts have also been often addressed by looking at *political cleavages*, that is, along the main politicized conflict lines (Lipset and Rokkan 1967). Political cleavages have traditionally been associated with a model of collective action in which actors: (i) fought against each other in order to protect material or political interests relating to the control either of economic activity or of the state; and (ii) defined themselves, as members of a class, faction or national group, in relation to these interests. Structural interpretations of social movements in industrial society have normally associated them with two fundamental processes.³ The construction of nation states involved territorially based conflicts between the central areas of new states and the peripheral areas, as well as conflicts between the emerging lay state and those who supported the temporal power of ecclesiastical structures (church-state conflict). The advent of the market economy resulted in the centrality of conflicts between capital and labour, but also in another cleavage: opposing urban and agrarian social sectors. Rokkan and Lipset (1967) are especially concerned with party systems, and also the social movements that developed around the same cleavages. The principal conflicts that have characterized contemporary society have developed around these tensions: the consolidation of cleavages and their institutionalization have produced a configuration for political systems, and in particular their party systems, which remained stable until the last decades of the twentieth century (Rokkan 1982; Bartolini and Mair 1990).

In the fourth hypothesis, social movements reflect the central class conflict in society. If the working class was the protagonist of the conflicts in the industrial society, in contemporary society the social conflicts are linked to the production of knowledge and to symbolic manipulation, and identify a major stake of conflict in the control of those activities.⁴ The response of European social sciences to the rise of the movements of the 1960s and the 1970s was in fact a critique of the Marxist models of interpretation of social conflict, both the structuralist ones, deriving class conflict directly from the mode of production, and the ones extending the range of attention to class consciousness. The social transformations that occurred after the end of the Second World War challenged the centrality of the capital-labour conflict. The deterministic expectation that the evolution of social and political conflicts depended upon the level of development of productive forces was also criticized, together with the tendency to compress the multiplicity of concerns and conflicts under the dominance of the labour class and its organization (for a critique, see Touraine 1981, 1977). Scholars of new movements have suggested that conflict among the industrial classes is decreasing in relevance, criticizing that representation of movements is largely from homogeneous actors.

Some of the new social movement scholars searched for a new central conflict that would characterize the model of the emerging society, defined at times as postindustrial, post-Fordist, technocratic or programmed. An influential exponent of this approach, Touraine, wrote that

social movements are not a marginal rejection of order, they are the central forces fighting one against the other to control the production of society by itself and the action of classes for the shaping of historicity (1981:29).

In the industrial society, the ruling class and the popular class opposed each other, as they did in the agrarian and the mercantile societies, and as they will do, according to Touraine, in the

³ See Rokkan (1982); Lipset and Rokkan (1967); and Giddens (1990).

⁴ See della Porta and Diani (1999), which has inspired this part of the report, for more details on this approach.

programmed society, where new social classes will replace capitalists and the working class as the central actors of the conflict. The way in which each society functions reflects the struggle between two antagonistic actors who fight for control of cultural concerns that, in turn, determine the type of transforming action that a society exercises upon itself (Touraine 1977). In contrast with Marxism, classes are not defined only in relation to the system of production (see, for example, Miliband 1989), and action is, in fact, the

behaviour of an actor guided by cultural orientations and set within social relations defined by an unequal connection with the social control of these orientations (Touraine 1981:61).

A particular trait of the programmed society is the “production of symbolic goods which model or transform our representation of human nature and the external world” (Touraine 1987:127; 1985). It is the control of information that constitutes the principal source of social power. In consequence, conflicts tend to shift from the workplace to areas such as research and development, the expansion of information, biomedical and technical sciences and the mass media. The central actors in social conflict are no longer classes linked to industrial production, but groups with opposing visions concerning the use and destination of cognitive and symbolic resources. Mobilizations by social movements address, therefore, the defence of the autonomy of civil society from the attempts of public and private technocratic groups to extend their control over ever-widening areas of social life.

The break between movements of the industrial society and new movements was also stressed in the 1980s by the German sociologist Claus Offe (1985). In his view, movements develop a fundamental metapolitical critique of the social order and of representative democracy, challenging institutional assumptions regarding conventional ways of “doing politics” in the name of a radical democracy. Among the principal innovations of the new movements, in contrast with the workers’ movement, are a critical ideology in relation to modernism and progress, decentralized and participatory organizational structures, defence of interpersonal solidarity against the great bureaucracies and the reclamation of autonomous spaces, rather than material advantages. The NSMs are characterized, in Offe’s view, by an open, fluid organization, an inclusive and non-ideological participation and greater attention to social than to economic transformations.

Melucci (1982, 1989) made another contribution to the definition of the characteristics of new movements in the programmed society. Drawing upon the image proposed by Jürgen Habermas of a colonization of lifeworlds, Melucci (1989) described contemporary societies as highly differentiated systems, which invest increasingly in the creation of individual autonomous centres of action, while at the same time requiring closer integration and extending control over the motives for human action. In his view, the NSMs try to oppose the intrusion of the state and the market into social life, reclaiming the individual’s identity and the right to determine a private and affective life, against the omnipresent and comprehensive manipulation of the system. Unlike the workers’ movement, the NSMs, in Melucci’s view, are not limited to seeking material gain, but also challenge the diffuse notions of politics and of society itself. New actors do not, therefore, ask for an increase in state intervention to guarantee security and well-being, but resist the expansion of political-administrative intervention in daily life and defend personal autonomy. Mobilizations by social movements address, therefore, the defence of the autonomy of civil society from the attempts of public and private technocratic groups to extend their control over ever-widening areas of social life.⁵

⁵ Similar themes are found in the work of Habermas (1976); Melucci (1989); and Giddens (1990), among others. For a critical synthesis, see Scott (1990).

2. The Global Justice Movement as a “Movement of Movements”?

The four hypotheses are not mutually exclusive; however, they have been applied to the analysis of various forms of political participation with differential degrees of success. Moreover, with each new wave of protest, the issue of the activists’ social and political background has re-emerged as relevant not only to describe political actors, but also, in normative terms, to assess the degree of representation of different actors. In particular, in recent waves of mobilization on issues of global justice or peace and war, an image of internal diversity has emerged—with commentators stressing the presence of different generations and social groups, with heterogeneous, if not incompatible, political positions. In what follows, I therefore discuss the extent to which hypotheses focusing on social background, collective identities, social cleavages and class conflict are useful in order to assess contemporary movements. As previously mentioned, my aim is not to express political judgments on the forms and aims of the global justice movements, but to use social science approaches, developed from other types of movements, to explain the social characteristics of the activists.

In fact, I take into account the above-mentioned theoretical approaches in looking at a contemporary social movement—or, according to some scholars and coalitions of movements—that has been defined as the *global justice movement*, or the movement that neoliberal forms of globalization confronts. As is well known, this movement became visible in particular with the protest against the World Trade Organization (WTO) Millennium Round in Seattle at the end of 1999. Seattle has been defined as a turning point, but also the highpoint of an aggregation process involving groups and organizations active in countries all over the world: blue-collar workers and farm workers, consumers and environmentalists, churches and feminists, pacifists and human rights associations. In fact, even before Seattle, heterogeneous and initially loosely connected groups had mobilized together, mainly against international organizations.

The movement developed from a series of transnational campaigns and counter-summits. Environmentalists targeted the WTO, which had condemned the United States for breaching free trade agreements by prohibiting the importation of prawns caught in nets without a Turtle Excluder Device, which allows sea turtles to escape; Japan for not allowing importation of products treated with pesticides; Europe, for its laws against importing meat from animals fed with hormones; and Canada, for banning petrol containing a methanol additive. In 1990, Indian farmers demonstrated against the WTO-favoured patenting of genetically modified seeds and organisms. Consumer protection organizations mobilized against supra-national agreements—the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade and the WTO—for allegedly lowering consumer protection standards in the name of free trade. At the United Nations (UN) conferences on women’s rights, feminist groups from the North met their counterparts from the South. Development non-governmental organizations (NGOs) pressed for an increase in aid to developing countries and even called for reparation of the historical, social and environmental debts that the North imposed on the South. Supported in particular, but not only, by religious groups, the Jubilee 2000 campaign asked that poor countries’ foreign debt be cancelled. Pacifist and human rights organizations added their voices to these demands by calling for freedom of movement for migrants or denouncing anti-personnel mines.

One common theme of these campaigns was criticism of the developments that the market economy had undergone since the 1980s when neoliberal economic doctrines had become hegemonic. In particular, these critics accused governments of strengthening market freedom at the expense of social rights that, in the North at least, had become part and parcel of the very definition of citizenship rights. In addition, while many economists were still pointing to the advantages for the South in abolishing protectionist barriers, “counter-experts” mobilized in the protest also argued about the overall negative effects of these measures in developing countries. Protests were thus targeted against what Susan Strange, an expert in international relations, called a “*corporation empire*”, namely an “imperial” bureaucracy headed by the US Treasury and

multinationals that together controlled the leadership of the international financial organizations:

Authority in this nonterritorial empire is exercised directly on people—not on land. It is exercised on bankers and corporate executives, on savers and investors, on journalists and teachers. It is also of course exercised on the heads of allied and associated governments, as successive summit conferences have clearly shown (1989:170).

Furthermore, a factor common to all of the campaigns is seeing market deregulation not as a “natural” effect of technological development, but as a strategy adopted and defended by international financial institutions—the World Bank, International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the WTO—and by the governments of the most powerful nations, in particular through the Group of 7 (G7) and the Group of 8 (G8), to the advantage of multinational corporations.

This is one of the reasons why movement organizations have often spurned the definition of “no-global”, preferring instead terms like movement for global justice, new-global, *altermondialiste* or *Globalisierungskritiker*; indeed, they maintain that they do not oppose globalization either as the intensification of cultural exchanges or in the development of supranational governmental structures. They do, however, challenge the specifically neoliberalist policies of free trade and privatizations that are followed by international institutions and national governments, and call instead for a *different* form of globalization, involving global citizenship rights. Especially after Seattle, criticism of neoliberal forms of globalization and demands for “another globalization” entered the public sphere. The American weekly magazine *Newsweek* wrote:

one of the most important lessons of Seattle is that there are now two visions of globalization on offer, one led by commerce, one by social activism (13 December 1999:36).

Since Seattle, more frequent mention was made of a *global* movement. Although the majority of demonstrators at Seattle were North American—an estimated 20,000–25,000 from Washington state, 15,000–20,000 from elsewhere in the United States, and an additional 3,000–5,000 from Canada—an international dimension of the demonstrations is confirmed by the parallel initiatives organized in more than a hundred cities in both the North and South for “Global Action Day”. In addition, after the WTO clashes, protest on the issue of globalization continued in dozens of countries and went on to gain increased visibility. From Seattle onward, every international summit of any importance was accompanied by counter-summits and protest demonstrations that often got wider press coverage than the official agenda did: *inter alia*, in 2000, at the World Economic Forum in Davos in January; at the IMF and World Bank meetings in Washington in April; at the UN summit on poverty in Geneva in June, at the IMF and World Bank meetings in Prague in September and at the European Union (EU) summit in Nice in December. Nor were the demonstrations to diminish the following year, with protests in February 2001 again at Davos at the World Economic Forum, in April in Quebec City against the Free Trade Area of the Americas, in June in Gothenburg at the EU summit and in July at the Genoa G8 summit. The number of counter-summits and transnational protests continued to rise in 2002 and 2003 (Pianta and Silva 2003), while threats of war in Iraq led to an additional wave of demonstrations, culminating in a global day of protest on 15 February 2003.

After Seattle, it was said that protests, if nothing else, had had the immediate success of bringing international summits out from the shadowy world of reserved agreements between diplomats and technocrats and into the media spotlight:

Never before had the beginning of multilateral trade negotiations been at the centre of the international public sphere (Pfeil 2000:16).

The movement organized not only transnational protests and counter-summits, but also its own global events. “Another possible globalization” was discussed at the World Social Forums in Porto Alegre (Schönenleitner 2003), growing from the 16,400 participants of the first meeting in January 2001 to 52,000 in 2002 and 100,000 in 2003. In thousands of seminars and meetings, proposals of a more or less realistic and original consistency were hammered out for a “globalization from below”; alternative politics and policies were debated, and some of them already tested—including the “participatory budgets” that, among others in Porto Alegre, involved citizens in public decision making. Especially after 2002, the experience of the Social Forums as a place to meet and engage in debate has been extended to local and macro-regional levels. In particular, in the autumn of 2002 Florence hosted the first ESF with three days of seminars attended by 60,000 participants. Debates on alternative development models—building “sustainable societies”—were held in Bamako, Mali, at the African Social Forum; in Beirut, Lebanon, at the Middle East Social Forum; in Belém do Pará, Brazil, at the Pan-Amazon Social Forum; and in Hyderabad, India, at the Asian Social Forum. In November 2003, a second ESF was held in Paris.

The activists framed their protest as a sign of the emergence of a “movement of movements”, bridging together movements—for example, feminists, ecologists, human rights’ supporters and unionists—that in the past had been split and focusing on “single issues” or “interest politics”. Commentators, however, objected to this rosy image, stressing two elements in particular. First, internal diversity is reflected in ideological divisions that jeopardize the development of a common world view, as well as of specific proposals. The mobilizations on global justice issues have therefore a strong reactive character—better able to criticize the existing situation than to propose alternatives. What is more, due to this difficulty in developing a new common identity, the movement risks being prey to “old” actors, especially in the form of the radical left. Second, as far as the degree of networking inside the protest milieu is concerned, global encounters seem too rare to be able to build a dense network, and appear more as the product of occasional coalitions than of the shared organizational structure of a movement. Continuous divisions between activists of the North and the South, as well as “old left” and “NSM” visions of the world are reflected in only temporary, and turbulent, alliances.

In what follows, I do not provide a response to the intrinsic nature of the mobilization of global justice, but more moderately focus on some empirical data that might help single out the characteristics of the different activists’ “nodes” that converged—even if temporarily—in common networks of mobilization. In particular, I refer to results of a survey conducted at the ESF in Florence in 2002.⁶ During the ESF, some 2,400 questionnaires, which had been translated into English, French, German, Italian and Spanish, were administered (including to non-Italian activists). The issues touched on in the survey, through mainly semi-closed questions, concerned social background (gender, age, profession), associative experiences, forms of political participation, confidence in the institutions and identification with the movement. The representativeness of the sampled interviewees was monitored to reflect the known dimensions of the forum⁷ and was well balanced in terms of nationalities and gender. However, it should be noted that since the ESF, although “European” in scope, was held in Florence, capital of the Italian region of Tuscany, the sample of the activists attending the forum is overrepresented by locals—Italian and Tuscan in particular. And since I assumed that proximity to the event might affect the characteristics of protest participants, in most tables I have presented Tuscans separately from the Italian subsample.

As previously mentioned, I have analysed data on ESF activists based on their age group, gender, work, religious beliefs and political leaning.

⁶ The survey was coordinated by Massimiliano Andretta and Lorenzo Mosca; Maria Fabbri was responsible for data input. I am grateful to Claudius Wagemann for his help in analysing the data.

⁷ In fact, we compared the distribution of our sample in relation to the nationalities of enrolled participants at the ESF.

3. Generations of Activists

The data, as well as other evidence, indicate that the global justice movement mobilized a *young generation*. Although research on young people has if anything stressed their political apathy, the prominent presence of youth was noted at Seattle (Burbach 2001); at the Washington protest against the World Bank and the IMF summit, where among the more surprising aspects commented on was “the large number of young people, a level of participation never seen in the United States since the end of the Vietnam war” (Aguiton 2001:9); and at the Genoa protest against the G8 summit (Andretta et al. 2002).

The data on the ESF activists indicate the existence of a multigenerational movement: almost half of the activists are under 25 years old, about a quarter between 26 and 35, and the remaining one quarter older than 35. The correlation coefficient (Cramer’s V)⁸ tells us that the age profile of the activists changes by nationality. Although Tuscans are a bit younger (as much as 61.5 per cent are younger than 26), the other Italians have a more average profile. Among other countries’ activists, the Spanish are particularly young, while the French tend to be older with the highest percentage in the more than 46 year old category (see table 1). Also, as noted in table 7, students form a large component of the activists—with an especially high rate among Tuscans (65.9 per cent) and also high German representation, while the French are underrepresented.

Table 1: Age of ESF activists by country (*per cent*)

Age	Tuscan	Other Italian	Total Italian	French	German	Spanish	British	Others	Total
Under 26	61.5	50.0	55.5	29.2	56.0	66.4	27.3	53.7	52.7
26–35	21.6	32.1	27.1	27.8	20.2	12.0	25.3	23.3	25.7
36–45	7.6	9.0	8.3	13.9	10.7	7.8	27.3	9.5	9.9
46 +	9.3	8.9	9.1	29.1	13.1	13.8	20.1	13.5	11.7
Total no.	860	926	1786	144	84	116	150	283	2563

Note: For Tuscan/Other Italian only, Age Cramer’s V = 0.13 significant at 0.001 level. For Italian/Other countries activists, Age Cramer’s V = 0.15 significant at 0.001 level.

Moreover, our data on membership in sociopolitical organizations indicate that the presence of young people is linked to the capacity to involve political groups where young people are overrepresented. More than half of the ESF activists interviewed were, or had been, part of student groups—confirming the important role that schools and universities play in political socialization. Also significant, especially for young people, is participation in youth self-managed social centres—usually organized in squatted buildings. This is the case for 32.2 per cent of our sample, with higher percentages among non-Tuscan Italians (46 per cent) and Germans (22.4 per cent), reflecting the strength of autonomous youth centres in both countries (see table 2).

Youth movements have (re)mobilized in the globalization protests. In the United Kingdom, since 1995, the young members of Reclaim the Streets have organized impromptu street parties under the banner “Free the City—Kill the Car” against pollution caused by the overuse of private modes of transport, as well as against the privatization of public transport. In American universities, the organization United Students Against Sweatshops have been active on 175 campuses, and the activists have denounced the miserable working conditions in the sweatshops that produce the shirts and other merchandise emblazoned with their university’s name. In Italy and Spain, youth subcultures have grown in self-managed social centres. In Italy these centres, though numerous—there are around 200 across the country—yet heterogeneous in terms of cultural references and methods of action, have reinforced calls for the protection of

⁸ Measuring how much two variables (or dimensions) are related to each other—in this case, if there are particularities of activists from specific countries as far as age is concerned.

those groups that are most marginalized within society, for the re-appropriation of public spaces and identity construction. Although many of the Italian social centres, some of which date back to the 1970s, are now stable structures handling consistent budgets, this evolution—often dismissed as “commercialization”—has not reduced their relevance. The centres continue to play an important role in cultural innovation and political protest, especially on subjects such as the decriminalization of light drugs, the recognition of self-managed social spaces and the extension of citizenship rights to immigrants. In particular, the social centres of the zone that saw the active emergence of the *Tute Bianche* (the White Overalls)—today called the *Disobbedienti* (the Disobeyers)—in Genoa, are characterized by the entrance of some activists into local government, and by a more moderate repertoire of actions.

While research on conventional forms of participation has stressed that those who participate the most are in middle age, and therefore more “central” in the terms of societal status, studies on social movement activism have often noted that the required biographical availability is higher for young people. Besides having the time to invest in political activities, young people are usually unmarried and without a family to care for and therefore feel more available to take risks. Young people also have a higher degree of enthusiasm for moral causes and propensity for radical uncompromised views and to be more easily influenced by peer groups. The 1968 movement has been typically defined as a “generational movement”, carrying with it the criticism of the youth of the time against the unfulfilled promises of their parents. Indeed, many activists came from left-wing or liberal families and criticized the “moderation” of their parents in pursuing their values (for a review, see Giugni 2004). Research on the structural bases for the mobilization of young people has stressed that some social evolution—such as the enormous rise in access to higher education in Western societies in the 1960s—have improved the conditions for the involvement of young people in movements. In particular, mass education spread those egalitarian and anti-authoritarian values, which are overrepresented among at least some sectors of the new middle class (Rootes 1995).

As previously mentioned, not only young people are mobilized in the global justice movement. Members of the so-called 1968 generation are also very active. Generational approaches to activism have in fact linked the propensity to participate in collective action to generational experiences (Pakulski 1995; Braungart and Braungart 1992, 1986). The experience of having taken part in historically relevant events tends to remain imprinted in individual histories. Indeed, “old” activists tend to remobilize in the global justice movement, which is often described as a movement of “fathers and sons” or “mothers and daughters”.

4. Gender in Movements

Contrary to the expectations coming from the social science literature on conventional forms of participation, women show a high degree of commitment to the global justice movement. In the EFS survey, women represented about half of the sample. As shown in table 3, activists are quite balanced by gender, although with some notable exceptions. In Italy, women were more numerous among the Tuscan interviewees (52.2 per cent) and Spanish (53.9 per cent), but less so among other Italians (40.8 per cent) and British respondents (40.7 per cent). Altogether, however, even among distant-traveller activists, gender is quite balanced. In fact, women are very visible in the movement, both among the obvious speakers for the movement—for example, Vandana Shiva, Susan George and Naomi Klein—and the rank and file.

Table 2: Present and past organization affiliation of ESF activists by country (*per cent*)

Type of organization	Tuscan	Other Italian	Total Italian	French	German	Spanish	British	Others	Total	Tuscan/ Italian Cramer's V	Italian/ Others Cramer's V
Political party	25.3	34.9	30.3	32.1	27.5	27.2	78.5	44.1	34.6	.11	.25
Union	25.3	27.2	26.3	48.2	28.8	28.1	77.2	36.6	31.9	n.s.	.27
Social movement	35.2	56.7	46.5	56.8	68.8	40.7	89.3	70.1	52.7	.22	.25
NGO	27.8	36.1	32.1	46.8	65.8	56.1	63.5	72.4	41.5	.09	.31
Voluntary association	49.0	49.3	49.2	53.6	40.7	52.6	57.1	62.3	51.2	n.s.	.10
Women's organization	13.6	18.5	16.2	30.5	17.3	38.6	36.2	38.7	21.7	.07	.22
Environmental organization	41.4	44.2	42.8	12.9	48.1	46.9	55.0	50.4	43.1	n.s.	.17
Immigrant	18.7	34.4	27.0	48.2	32.9	46.5	67.1	45.0	33.6	.18	.24
Social centres	26.8	46.0	36.9	27.5	22.4	20.5	14.8	21.2	32.2	.20	.16
Religious	21.6	19.0	20.2	12.2	20.0	12.4	18.1	19.7	19.2	n.s.	n.s.
Student	53.3	57.7	55.6	45.7	46.3	51.3	82.6	67.3	57.4	n.s.	.16
Local committee	15.5	20.4	18.1	42.3	22.8	31.6	22.4	30.3	21.8	n.s.	.16
Sports	57.3	46.7	51.7	48.6	56.8	44.2	54.7	45.8	50.9	.11	n.s.
Total no.	823–828	907–915	1730–1742	138–142	76–81	112–114	147–149	264–279	2475–2503		

Note: n.s. = insufficient data.

Table 3: Gender of ESF activists by country (*per cent*)

Gender	Tuscan	Other Italian	Total Italian	French	German	Spanish	British	Others	Total
Women	5.2	40.8	46.3	46.5	50.0	53.9	40.7	54.4	47.3
Total no.	860	926	1786	144	84	116	150	283	2563

Note: For Tuscans/Other Italians only, Gender Cramer's V = 0.11 significant at 0.001 level. For Italian/Other countries activists, Gender Cramer's V was not significant.

Here as well, the social characteristics are related to the capacity to mobilize specific pre-existing movements—in this case, the movement for women's rights. According to the survey, about one-fifth of the activists had experiences in women's associations, with a particularly high percentage for the French, German, British and Spanish (see table 2). Many feminist groups have in fact highlighted the "gender" consequences of globalization: cuts in welfare services that oblige women to take on second jobs, often involving heavy work loads, but also the ghettoization of women underprotected in temporary jobs. As early as 2000, the platform for the worldwide March of Women against Violence and Poverty—called by 140 women's organizations demonstrating in different cities, including a 30,000 strong march in Brussels on 14 October 2000—stated that while women all over the world are the principal victims of neoliberal policies, they are also participants, innovators and leaders of alternatives to poverty and violence. Moreover, the issue of gender is linked to environmental activism—for example, as demonstrated by the particular sensitivity of women to the destruction of natural habitats.

In addition, the increase of women's participation in social movements—more than in conventional forms of politics—has been linked to social changes. A fundamental force of change is the result of the massive entry of women into the paid labour force, in particular the service sector in Western societies (Castells 1997). Continuing wage differentials between men and women are an obvious source of complaints, especially since the level of women's education has increased dramatically. At the same time, the combined impact of women's growing economic independence and professional commitments have shaken the base of patriarchy, both in the home and within the professions, and amplified conflicts in the private sector (Walby 1997). In fact, gender conflicts penetrated even the most "machoist" institutions, such as the Army and the Catholic Church (Katzenstein 1998).

Moreover, the shifts of mobilization from the role of production to that of reproduction and consumption have given women a central role. For instance, research on boycotts—one of the preferred protest strategies of the global justice movement—has stressed the particular sensitivity of women to the issue of a fair and safe consumption (Micheletti et al. 2004).

5. New Middle Class and New Social Movements

Despite cross-national differences, especially in the North, many participants in the global justice movement have a middle-class background. The data on the work status and work sector of ESF activists—excluding students (see tables 4 and 5)—indicate that most participants that are active in the labour market are employed in the service sector (87.4 per cent of the total), with almost equal shares between the public and private sector. A very high number (14.6 per cent) of activists are teachers or university professors, with higher representation for the French (19.0 per cent) and British (25.5 per cent). The number of managers is also very high (10.8 per cent), with the French and Spanish higher than average, as is the number of professionals (22.1 per cent), with the Italians and the Germans higher than average.

Table 4: Work status of ESF activists by country (*per cent*)

Work status	Tuscan	Other Italian	Total Italian	French	German	Spanish	British	Others	Total
Manual worker	16.8	10.6	13.1	6.7	4.0	8.5	23.5	13.7	13.1
White collar employee	37.6	43.8	41.3	47.6	40.0	46.8	31.4	27.5	39.4
Teacher/ professor	10.4	11.4	11.0	19.0	12.0	8.5	25.5	22.1	14.6
Manager	8.0	7.8	7.9	18.1	12.0	17.0	6.9	19.1	10.8
Professional	27.2	26.4	26.7	8.6	32.0	19.2	12.7	17.6	22.1
Total no.	250	360	610	105	25	47	102	131	1020

Note: For Tuscans/Other Italians only, Work position Cramer's V was not significant. For Italian/Other countries activists, Work position Cramer's V = 0.15 significant at 0.001 level.

Table 5: Work sector of ESF activists by country (*per cent*)

Work sector	Tuscan	Other Italian	Total Italian	French	German	Spanish	British	Others	Total
Industrial sector	12.7	8.5	10.3	6.0	6.9	8.5	5.6	5.5	8.6
Private service	36.8	45.1	41.5	34.0	37.9	51.1	22.4	41.7	39.2
Public service	45.9	42.3	43.8	53.0	55.2	34.0	71.1	50.4	48.2
Agricultural sector	3.8	2.4	3.1	5.0	0.0	6.4	0.9	0.8	2.8
Service sector	0.8	1.7	1.3	2.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	1.6	1.2
Total no.	266	355	621	100	29	47	127	127	1031

Note: For Tuscans/Other Italians only, Work sector Cramer's V = 0.11 significant at 0.001 level. For Italian/Other countries activists, Work sector Cramer's V = 0.10 significant at 0.001 level.

Table 6: Education level of ESF activists by country (*per cent*)

Education level	Tuscan	Other Italian	Total Italian	French	German	Spanish	British	Others	Total
Before high school	29.4	12.0	20.3	3.0	22.4	2.8	8.6	19.1	17.8
High school	50.5	57.9	54.4	25.1	43.8	38.5	18.5	32.0	47.3
Under-graduate	20.1	30.1	25.3	71.9	33.8	58.7	72.9	48.9	34.9
Total no.	821	901	1722	135	80	140	140	272	2458

Note: For Tuscans/Other Italians only, Education Cramer's V = 0.22 significant at 0.001 level. For Italian/Other countries activists, Education Cramer's V = 0.25 significant at 0.001 level.

In addition, the data on ESF activists confirm (see table 6), for all countries, a high degree of education with 34.9 per cent with university degrees, a percentage that rises to 71.9 per cent and 72.9 for the French and British respectively, but declines to 20.1 per cent for Tuscans, where there is a higher participation by young activists as well as by workers. This reflects, among others, the characteristics that social scientists have often mentioned for the environmental movement activists—as much as 43.1 per cent of participants in the ESF are or have been members of environmental organizations of various types (see table 2).

A number of scholars have stressed the fact that social change has produced a new social stratum—the so-called “new middle class”.⁹ Analyses of the postindustrial society have revealed, in parallel with the growth of the administrative/service sector in society, the emergence of a new middle class (see, among others, Scott 1990) constituted from sectors of the population that are highly educated and tend to be employed in the service sector. Because of their technical and cultural skills as well as their occupational position, members of the new middle class tend to be more sensitive to the new “class” issues mentioned in section 1. Kriesi (1993, 1989) has identified the distinctive characteristic of the new middle class as exercising some control over organizational resources and/or over professional skills, but not possessing the means of production. The middle class activists working in the service sector is particularly overrepresented in the NSMs by managers and those who fulfil clearly technical roles.¹⁰

It does not seem, however, that this common structural background has produced a class-consciousness, or at least recognition as a distinct group and internal solidarity (della Porta and Diani 1999). It should also be noted that other social strata have been highly mobilized in specific conflicts. The traditional middle class—such as shopkeepers or, in general, the autonomous *petit bourgeoisie*—have mobilized in the antinuclear movement¹¹ as well as in citizens committees organized against “locally unwanted land uses” (della Porta 2004).

From this perspective, opposition to nuclear power, and indeed to other dangerous plants, is not only the sign of a progressive shift towards battles around ‘postindustrial’ conflicts such as those relating to the control of development. It also shows the diffidence of the traditional middle classes towards activities and technical competence which are outside their traditional domain, such as high-tech applications; dimensions of moral revolt against the subordination of ‘traditional’ values such as health to the imperatives of efficiency and modernity; the reaction to the threat which derives from living with a potential source of environmental damage (della Porta and Diani forthcoming).

Moreover, “new” social movements present some characteristics typical of traditional middle class moral protest (Eder 1993). More generally, middle classes have frequently been said to focus on group identity, social positioning and moral codes.¹²

Indeed, the *petit bourgeoisie* came to focus on symbolic production and on the defence of its own social status as a result of its uncertain place in the class system (della Porta and Diani forthcoming).

Section 6 describes how belonging to the working class facilitates mobilization in social movements, with alliances between “old” and “new” forms of class opposition frequently occurring.

The “new middle class” in particular is mobilized within the NSMs, which traditionally have been considered as “left-libertarian”—this is particularly true for ecologists, who generally have a strong middle class background (della Porta and Diani 2004). Within a broad section of the movement the theme of globalization is linked to environmental disasters, which, according to the environmentalists, are provoked by the lack of will to control economic development. Calls to mobilize against globalization have in fact often come from transnational environmental organizations such as the Worldwide Fund for Nature and Friends of the Earth, or from national organizations such as the Legambiente (League for the Environment) and the Lega Anti-Vivisezione (Anti-Vivisection League) in Italy or the Bund (League) in Germany. The main criticism of globalization by the environmentalists is that it privileges production and trade

⁹ This part is drawn from della Porta and Diani (1999:chapter 2) and della Porta and Diani (forthcoming:chapter 2).

¹⁰ See Kriesi (1993); Cotgrove and Duff (1980); Jamison et al. (1990); Dalton (1994); and Diani (1995).

¹¹ See Rüdig (1990); Flam (1994); Klandermans and Tarrow (1988); and Pichardo (1997).

¹² See Calhoun (1993); D’Anieri et al. (1990); and Gusfield (1963).

above the protection of nature, and especially health. Within the traditional environmental discourse, those policies that in the name of development deny the limits inherent in the exploitation of natural resources are criticized.

However, the ecologist movement was also among the first to express a wish for global solutions to problems that cross national borders. If, during the 1980s, a recognition of the limits of development seemed to have emerged, for example with the signing of international protocols for sustainable development, then neoliberals are now accused of reducing these controls in the name of market freedom. In this, they are accused of subordinating the common good to the economic interests of multinationals. In particular, with respect to issues such as genetically modified organisms and hormones, the precautionary principle—as a mechanism for protecting citizens and consumers from products that are potentially damaging to health—was opposed to the doctrine of the free market, in the name of which sanctions banning the import of products not demonstrated to be safe have been imposed on states (see section 2).

6. The Return of Labour?

Not by chance, the social movement literature in Europe systematically and explicitly contrasted new movements with old labour. The research on the NSMs in the 1970s in Europe had developed from within the study of labour politics, in which influential NSM scholars such as Alberto Melucci, Claus Offe and Alain Touraine had been involved, and had indeed stressed the differences between the emerging actors and the old labour movements. A network structure, strong solidarity, the use of disruptive repertoires of action and conflictual aims were among the main characteristics of the new movements; bureaucratic and hierarchical organizations, representation of interests, concerted decision making and compromise seemed to more and more permeate the unions—at least in the North.

Certainly, the unions have often been an important ally for emerging actors, such as the student movement or the women's movement, particularly in Europe. With a social base and often privileged channels of access to institutional decision makers—both directly through the public administration and indirectly through the political parties—the unions can increase the mobilization capacities and chances of success for social movements. The weaker the institutional recognition of workers' representatives in the workplace and the decision-making process, the greater their propensity to assume a political role, allying themselves with social movements and taking part in public protest. The more influential that interest groups become, the smaller the space for relatively unorganized movements will be because

a well-resourced, coherently structured, and professionalized system of interest groups may also be able to prevent outside challengers from having access to the state. Moreover, highly institutionalized, encompassing arrangements of policy negotiations between the public administration and private interest associations will be both quite inaccessible to challengers and able to act (Kriesi et al. 1995:31).

According to this point of view, neo-corporatism—with monopolistic, centralized interest representation (Schmitter 1974) and concerted decision making (Lehmbruch 1977)—reduce the incidence of protest. Access to the institutional system of public decision making could facilitate agreement between different social groups and the state without the need for non-institutional forms of collective action. Both control over the formation of social demands (Schmitter 1981) and the capacity to satisfy those demands (Nollert 1995) might have the effect of discouraging protest. In fact, it was especially where neocorporatist assets had developed that industrial relations appeared as more pacified: as one of the leading figures of neocorporatist studies, Philippe Schmitter (1992, 1974) demonstrated that neocorporatism and protest are inversely correlated—the strongest effects of concertation being to reduce strikes and improve public order.

Although with different national degrees and forms, neocorporatism and concertation could be seen in fact as a point of arrival in an evolution toward the institutionalization of the labour movement, which had among its consequences a separation between the two fields of interest: politics and social movements. Kitschelt suggested that in post-Fordist society we assist an increasing differentiation in the modes of collective interest mobilization:

Parties focus increasingly on electoral competition, at the expense of interest group representation or social movement protest actions. Interest groups try to set themselves apart from the arena of electoral politics as well as disruptive street politics. Social movements, finally, concentrate on public actions outside [the] institutionalized arena of bargaining to affect public opinion and political elite through the media (2003:97).

However, at the turn of the millennium, several trends seem to produce a *rapprochement* between not only labour movements and the NSMs, but also between scholars in the two fields. More or less explicitly, researchers of labour unions started to identify—after the decline of union membership and labour strikes in the 1990s that had brought about if not the death of, then at least a serious malaise in, labour organizations—some signs of life, even if in new forms. In many ways, it seems that, in this domain as in others, some of the strategy, organizational structure and identity definition is reminiscent more of the first emergence of the labour movement than of its full development in the neocorporatist era.

The material and redistributive conflicts—which never completely disappeared (Brooks and Manza 1994)—are becoming more and more central. Mobilizations for the development of collective services in urban areas and for urban renewal are concerned about collective and non-material goods, such as those associated with the quality of life, but also with the redistribution of material resources.¹³ In conflicts about urban development between poor groups and “business coalitions”, the working class has allied with community groups (Brecher and Costello 1990). Moreover, mobilization developed against “new poverties”: homeless people have organized (Cress and Snow 1996) and initiatives supporting the unemployed and marginal groups have spread (Bagguley 1995, 1991; Pearce 1994).

In particular, in the global justice movement, a heterogeneous social base has been highlighted as an innovative feature or an enhancement by comparison to movements of the past.¹⁴ A characteristic of this movement is in fact the participation of trade unions side-by-side with other social movement actors. And it is not only in the movement that there is explicit criticism of the concertation pacts, signed by the official unions, that in many European countries accompanied the austerity policies, as well as privatization and increasing flexibility of the labour market. Moreover, in the movement, unions act according to a different logic than that prevailing in neocorporatist agreements: they protest more than “concert”, they build horizontal networks with other movements instead of developing hierarchical organizations, and they construct encompassing collective identities instead of focusing on the defence of economic interests.

The data on ESF activists confirm the image of social heterogeneity (see table 7). And if there are many students in the global justice movement, there are also workers as well as the unemployed and irregularly employed—and a particularly substantial number of retired workers in the French group. In particular, about one-quarter of the interviewees are dependent employed, with an especially high percentage among the British and French. A relevant 5.1 per cent of the interviewees declared themselves to be unemployed—though the French reported twice as much—and 6.1 per cent are irregular workers. It should be noted that 8.6 per cent of the interviewees work in the industrial sector—a percentage that drops to 6.9 per cent for the Germans but rises to 12.7 per cent for the Tuscans—with a still high 10.3 per cent for Italians (see table 5). Participants from the agricultural sector are low in numbers—less than 3 per

¹³ See Castells (1997, 1983, 1977); Lowe (1986); Feagin and Capek (1991); and Bagguley (1994).

¹⁴ See Epstein (2000); Gill (2000); Ayres (1998); Piven and Cloward (2000); Andretta et al. (2003); and della Porta et al. (2005).

cent—but with a significantly higher percentage among the French, reflecting the relaunch of the peasants' movement in that country.

Table 7: Employment status of ESF activists by country (*per cent*)

Employment status	Tuscan	Other Italian	Total Italian	French	German	Spanish	British	Others	Total
Student	65.9	55.4	60.4	24.0	65.0	56.9	19.5	48.8	54.7
Housewife	0.4	0.3	0.4	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.7	1.5	0.5
Retired	2.1	1.2	1.7	7.8	1.2	0.9	2.8	1.5	2.1
Unemployed	3.1	6.2	4.6	10.0	3.8	3.7	6.9	5.8	5.1
Irregular employment	4.3	7.7	6.1	7.0	5.0	5.5	5.6	6.9	6.1
Dependent employed	17.9	21.5	19.8	35.7	17.5	23.9	56.9	27.7	23.8
Autonomous	6.3	7.7	7.0	14.7	7.5	9.1	7.6	7.8	7.7
Total no.	808	884	1692	129	80	109	144	274	2428

Note: For Tuscans/Other Italians only, Employment status Cramer's V = 0.14 significant at 0.001 level. For Italian/Other countries activists, Employment status Cramer's V = 0.14 significant at 0.001 level.

Moreover, a very high percentage of the ESF activists are or have been members of unions: 31.9 per cent of the total sample, over one-fourth of the activists for each country, and almost two-thirds of the British and half of the French (see table 2). Return to protest, and to forms of protest outside factories, is not rare. In the second half of the 1990s, protest extended in particular to public services, aimed against privatization and its effects on domestic work conditions and the global efficiency of services. The strikes at the Royal Mail and the London Underground in the United Kingdom and the public sector in France, Germany and Spain belong to a larger trend. Accused of defending old privileges, the public sector unions often sought consensus in public opinion by claiming to defend public against private values: service against goods. Apart from public transport, opposition to neoliberal economic policies also extended to schools and public health. These protests often involved various forms of participation by "outsiders". As Piven and Cloward (2000) noted, if there was a decline in traditional strike activities, there has also been a return to old forms of "secondary actions" such as community boycotts, sympathy strikes and general strikes. As a unionist recalled, if in Seattle only a few of his colleagues took part to the blockade of the delegates, after Seattle "a lot want training in direct action" (McNally 2001:81). In Italy, and also in France and Spain, the turn of the millennium has also been characterized by general strikes against pension reform, privatization of public services, and cuts in public health and education. In these actions, the trade unions joined with various networks of movements, bridging labour issues with global justice, defence of the environment, peace and gender equality. Protest no longer seems to cut a clear cleavage between old and new movements.

In the various waves of strikes in public services in the second half of the 1990s in countries with pluralist patterns of industrial relations, and with various representative organizations competing with each other, new unions highly critical of the various forms of privatization arose and expanded—from Coordonner, Ressembler, Construire and Solidaire, Unitaire, Démocratique in France (Bérout et al. 1998) to the Criticos faction of the Commission Obreras in Spain (Moody 1997). The most disempowered categories of workers specifically seek the support of public opinion, often successfully, via actions of civil disobedience, as was seen during the Justice for Janitors and the wider Jobs with Justice campaigns. Here again, the same international agreements created opportunities for transnational cooperation between trade unions as in the case of NAFTA (Gabriel and Macdonald 1994; Ayres 2001), the Euro-strike by Renault workers in Belgium, France and Spain (Lefébure and Lagneau 2002) and the transnational strikes by United Parcel Service employees. One effect of this evolution has been a revival of protests concerning work, not only demanding interventions to rebalance market policies, but also proposing the democratization of trade unions and the formation of broader

alliances (Aguiton 2001:101). In more recent years, participation in protests among workers with temporary contracts and little protection has in fact increased.

However, the protests also drew on the more established unions. In Seattle, a fairly large number of the protesters were mobilized via their membership in the American Federation of Labor–Congress of Industrial Organizations (AFL–CIO). The AFL–CIO underwent profound transformations in the 1990s, most visible in the rise of John J. Sweeney—a vocal critic of globalization—to the organizations leadership in 1995. While many saw the participation of US trade unions in the protests as opportunistic and geared toward reducing competition from Southern workers, others pointed out a high level of participation, even in direct actions—for example, the multiethnic dockers union (Lichbach and Ameda 2001). In Italy, the relations between the movement and the Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (CGIL) intensified during the general strike called by the Unions in the spring of 2002, in which 500,000 protesters organized by local Social Forums participated. These events lead the CGIL to participate in the organization of the ESF in Florence in 2002. In France, the Confédération Générale du Travail played an important role in the 1990s mobilizations, having distanced itself from the Parti Communiste Français (PCF), and adopted more participatory internal structures. As one of the leaders of the French “Altermondialistes” wrote, global protests would not have occurred

without the 1995 strike in France and the birth of the unemployed movement, without the strikes at UPS [United Parcel Service], General Motors and Boeing in the United States, without the Korean workers’ strike in 1997–1998 (Aguiton 2001:12).

For the movement’s critics, it was precisely the presence of trade unionists that proved its traditional nature—resistance to modernization and the (re)proposal of old, failed, ideological schemes (Kraushaar 2001)—and thus its short-lived opposition. Taking up these accusations, one trade union leader proclaimed in Seattle that

the cacophony of voices from the streets of Seattle represents the challenge of tomorrow, not the nostalgia of yesterday (in Kaldor 2000:113).

The development of a frame of global injustice has been perceived as another recent tendency in the labour movement. NAFTA produced increasing transnational campaigns from workers in Canada, Mexico and the United States.¹⁵ The dockers of Seattle, who had already taken part in a transnational strike started by the dockers in Liverpool (Moody 1997), also supported the protest against the WTO, extending their solidarity from the local to the international level (Levi and Olson 2000). In these waves of mobilization, labour movement organizations and activists mixed with other movements—for example, environmentalist, feminist and urban groups (della Porta et al. 2005). In the so-called neo-corporative countries, with occupational representation confined to a single organization, public sector unionists took the most radical positions—for example, the German unions of the public sector, ÖTV (Gewerkschaft öffentliche Dienste, Transport und Verkehr) and then Ver.di.

The global justice mobilizations reflect the environment in which these changes took place. By looking at both individual and organizational characteristics, it is possible to single out consistent participation of unions and unionists—or at least unionized members—in the mobilization of global justice. While the critical unions—such as the Italian COBAS (Comitati di Base) and the French SUD (Solidaires, Unitaires, et Démocratiques) among others as well as the Italian metal-workers’ union FIOM (Federazione Impiegati Operai Metallurgici)—have been members of the organizing committees in Genoa, mainstream unions are also more and more involved in global justice organizations, for example, the European Trade Union Committee—which was among the organizers of the first ESF in Florence—and ATTAC (Action pour la Taxation des Transactions Financières pour l’Aide aux Citoyens). In fact, in many campaigns on global justice—such as Jubilee 2000 or the anti-NAFTA campaigns—unions allied with various

¹⁵ See Gabriel and Macdonald (1994); Ayres (1998); and Evans (2000).

movements. NGOs and unions also protested labour exploitation in less developed countries, often using the at times effective strategy of boycott—for example, the successful campaign against Gap (Anner 2000). This “global social unionism” has been defined as a vehicle for broad social mobilization against injustice (Josselin 2001:179).

7. Religions and Movements

Religious groups have also supported the globalization movement. In the latter half of the 1990s, the Jubilee 2000 coalition had united Catholic, Evangelical, Baptist, Methodist, Buddhist and Jewish groups, along with secular organizations—including trade unions—to demand the cancellation of the world’s poorest countries’ foreign debts. The action was called for on the basis of the principle of sustainable debt—that is, debt that can be sustained without renouncing economic development or national sovereignty. The coalition, which also worked with experts such as the economists of the New Economic Foundation, described as deeply immoral the fact that impoverished people were being forced to pay debts incurred by elites, mostly unelected and often pushed by bankers, governors and rich countries to borrow money that was then often used for individual gain or the purchase of arms.

The Jubilee 2000 campaign marked the transition from what had been largely a lobbying campaign to one of visible protest. This culminated on 16 May 1998 in Birmingham at the G8 summit with a human chain—symbolizing the slavery of debt—over 9 kilometres long and handing over a 35 million signature-strong transnational petition. Many of the activists arrived from long pilgrimages on foot, by bicycle or by boat. Bishop John Davis recalled the atmosphere of collective enthusiasm:

I got up with a group of 16 bishops...we walked the length of the human chain, which stretched as far as the cathedral...the procession was an incredible experience ...as we walked we were greeted with chants and drums...as if we were the winning football team (in Pettifor 1998:17).

Demonstrations on these themes were also held at the following G8 summit in Cologne in 1999.

However, the experience of interaction between religious groups and social movement activists was not limited to the Jubilee 2000 campaign, which was called Drop the Debt and changed to Jubilee South after 2000. During solidarity actions in developing countries and humanitarian crises, but also on the edges of large Northern cities, volunteers from religious and secular NGOs often worked together and made joint declarations denouncing the rise in poverty following cuts in public spending. The strong presence of religious groups was noted in Germany at protests concerning “distant” issues, in particular in solidarity with Southern countries (on Germany, see Rucht 2000). Also, in Seattle

the churches play an important role, disseminating information on the protest and welcoming various initiatives, providing legitimacy and other resources. Jubilee 2000 was largely based on churches and religious groups active in the area of social justice, and brought many protesters to Seattle (Smith 2000:5).

In France, leftist groups and groups with religious origins came together in the mobilizations for the most marginalized social groups: the *sans papiers* (immigrants without papers/visas), the unemployed and the homeless. Organizations like Droit devant!!!, Agir ensemble contre le chômage and Droit au Logement participated in the mobilizations against neoliberal globalization, accused of ushering in the dismantling of the welfare state, and with it the abandonment of the most impoverished sections of the population to dependency on charitable voluntary associations.

In Italy, criticism of market globalization also came from the religious milieu, in particular from Catholic groups, and subsequently crossed paths with parts of the NSMs during actions

concerning marginalization and poverty. In 2000, there was an aggregation and mobilization on the themes of solidarity with the South, and thus criticism of the disaggregating effects of globalization. On several occasions the Pope requested the cancellation of the poorest countries' debt to the world powers, inviting them during the G8 meetings to "listen" to the peaceful protestations of the youth. The Catholic Church's social doctrine was recalled in the "manifesto for the leaders of the G8", signed by numerous Catholic associations including the Associazione Cristiana dei Lavoratori Italiani (ACLI), Associazione Guide e Scouts Cattolici Italiani (AGESCI), Azione Cattolica and Focolarini. These groups, although they did not participate in the protests, presented requests similar to those made by the protesters in Genoa: cancellation of the poorest countries' debt; imposition of a financial transfer tax; access to medicines during health emergencies; and ratification of the Kyoto protocol. Catholic associations were also present at the Genoa Social Forum, and subsequently in local Social Forums.

In particular, interaction between secular and Catholic groups in Italy was at its most intense in the Rete di Lilliput (Lilliput Network), which, according to its founding declaration, was born

to unite in a single voice the many forms of resistance to economic choices
that concentrate power in the hands of the few and place market logic and
consumerism before human dignity, health and environment.¹⁶

It is precisely within the Rete di Lilliput that associations similar to those in a Catholic mould might be found – in particular Mani Tese (founded in 1964 and especially active in development cooperation), Pax Christi (founded in 1945 as an international peace movement), the Rete Radie Resch (involved in development projects in poor countries since 1964), the Beati costruttori di pace (Blessed Builders of Peace) and *Nigrizia*, a Combonian missionary magazine directed by Alex Zanotelli. Many NGOs are also in close contact with Rete Lilliput and involved in grassroots work in the South, as well as the current array of fair trade groups, such as the Ctm-Altromercato consortium and the Botteghe del Mondo Association (Andretta et al. 2003, 2002).

This is also reflected in the data: almost 20 per cent of the ESF activists have participated in religious groups, with similar percentages from all of the nationalities, although there is a somewhat higher representation among the Tuscans and somewhat lower among the Spanish and French (see table 2). About a third of the activists have also participated in groups engaged in the rights of immigrants and about half of them were involved with voluntary groups and charities.

8. Movements and Parties

Traditionally, the success of social movements has come from their capacity to forge alliances with institutional actors who brought with them the means of accessing the decision-making process. Furthermore, waves of protest have often spurred political institutional actors into creating new parties and transforming others. In particular, the activists mobilized in the campaigns on global justice have approached – and affected – left-wing parties.

Leftist protests are becoming more important and increasingly visible. In the globalization protests, many left-wing parties have in fact converged through a discourse based in large part on the defence of social democratic economic policies. If the principle charge against neoliberal globalization is that it subordinates citizens' rights to the free market, thereby widening the gap both between North and South and within individual countries, then the warning signs of Seattle are found, at least in part, in some of the evolutions within the left.

¹⁶ *Il Manifesto della Rete di Lilliput* (The Lilliput Network's Manifesto—author's translation). See Web site www.retelilliput.it/index.php?module=ContentExpress&func=display&ceid=10&meid=, accessed in December 2005.

The data on ESF activists indicate a definite left-wing profile with three-quarters declaring themselves either radical left or left, ranging from the most radical British to a more moderate French to the least radical Tuscans (see table 8). Less than 10 per cent declared themselves centre-left, although the percentage was slightly higher for Tuscans and Germans. A relatively high 14 per cent declined to identify themselves on the left-right axis, perhaps preferring a territorial-ethnic identity—for example, the Spanish—or a “new politics” position—for example, the German.

Table 8: Left-right political self-identification of ESF activists by country (*per cent*)

Left-right position	Tuscan	Other Italian	Total Italian	French	German	Spanish	British	Others	Total
Radical left	17.8	31.5	24.9	37.3	25.0	23.6	68.1	38.8	29.7
Left	54.8	43.8	49.1	44.8	43.8	52.8	26.4	33.2	45.7
Centre-left	13.2	7.3	10.1	4.5	13.8	5.7	2.1	10.5	9.3
Centre-right	0.9	0.8	0.8	0.7	0.0	1.9	1.4	4.8	1.3
Declined to identify	13.3	16.6	15.1	12.7	17.4	16.0	2.0	12.7	14.0
Total no.	803	878	1681	134	80	106	144	268	2413

Note: For Tuscans/Other Italians only, Left-right Cramer's V = 0.19 significant at 0.001 level. For Italian/Other countries activists, Left-right Cramer's V = 0.13 significant at 0.001 level.

However, relationships with the social-democratic and centre-left parties have been more tense. Despite the almost natural premise for dialogue, if not alliance, on the issues of social justice and sustainable development, these parties hesitated to recognize the movement as a legitimate political actor. The very issues raised by the movement, which take up the traditional social-democratic critique of liberalism as being incapable of guaranteeing economic development and social justice, embarrass centre-left governing politicians that have accepted and practised some of these liberalist ideas. Moreover, the movement “for a globalization from below” criticized institutional politics, calling for participation instead of representation and consensual instead of majority decision making. On the occasion of the G8 meeting in Genoa, most of the members of the European governments, even from the centre-left, emphasized, based on their experiences, just how useless protest is for addressing the problems of the South, with some even voicing doubts about the legitimacy of the demonstrations by the “self-appointed saviours of the Earth” with their protests against summits held by democratically elected representatives (della Porta et al. 2005:chapter 7).

After Genoa, the original hostile diffidence gave way to timid overtures, although with substantial differences between countries. As the movement was able to focus attention on the issue of globalization and in particular on neoliberalism, the social democrat parties were initially quite embarrassed, in particular about the issues of their involvement at local and national levels, in the privatization of public utilities and loosening of the labour market. The social democrat parties continued to insist on their political monopoly regarding the forms of protest, while the movement was relegated, at most, to “being a marker” for—or identifier of—the problems, and being denied any role in working out the answers. In their reflection on globalization, and especially on trade liberalization, for a long time European social democratic parties were advocates of the positive effects it brought in terms of development and equality, although there was also no lack of dissent. As early as 1998, the Socialist International Council had underlined the risk of globalization strengthening social inequalities and the vulnerability to economic crises, criticizing right-wing globalization policies that were based on principles of deregulation as leading to economic recessions and social dumping (Socialist International Council 1998). By 1999, the Socialist International Council redoubled its criticism of the neoliberal policies of the “almighty marketplace” that reduced state interventionism to a minimum and of an “individualism destroying the public sphere” (Socialist International Council 1999), proclaiming “the primacy of politics for providing answers to the challenge of globalization; regaining its independence in order to reach the common good.” After the Genoa

demonstrations, a richer debate began to emerge on globalization and in the movement within the left-wing political parties in various European countries. It was especially through the organizational process of the ESF that a part of the institutional left got closer to the movements.

The fact that social democrat parties have to a certain extent taken criticism of globalization on board could be explained by the potential competition they faced in elections from the communist and green parties, which seemed to have been favoured and transformed by the movement. Indeed, both communists and greens, with different emphases in different countries, have always been open to initiatives for another globalization, with the green parties interested in denouncing environmental disasters resulting from deregulation and the communist parties more oriented toward criticizing the social effects of neoliberalism. Although quite a few initiatives launched by the movement explicitly excluded political parties in order not to be taken advantage of, both greens and communists—and especially their youth federations—were present at the Global Social Forum as well as the ESF.

Although especially after the fall of the Berlin wall they were seen as being doomed to a more or less rapid demise, the French (PCF), Spanish (Partido Comunista de España/PCE), Italian (Rifondazione Comunista/RC) and German (Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus/PDS) communist parties saw an opportunity for remobilization in the globalization protests. It is no coincidence that the Web sites of these parties not only dedicate ample space to globalization-related issues, but they also have areas dedicated to the movement and links to its organizations. In general, communist parties emphasize the anticapitalist dimension of the struggle against deregulation, focusing on social issues and employment. When European parties on the left—including the PCF, PDS, RC and the Spanish Izquierda Unida—met in Paris on the occasion of the second ESF, they declared that “Europe has to be a factor of progress and promotion of human rights”, denouncing the Maastricht agreements as instruments of “inequality, unemployment, precariousness and exploitation” (Left European Parties 2003). On the same occasion, the seventh conference of the European Anti-Capitalist Left, including the French Trotskyist party, Ligue communiste révolutionnaire, proposed “another Europe, built from below by the revolt of the exploited and oppressed from all member countries” (European Anti-Capitalist Left 2003). Referring to the class struggle, the RC promoted an Alternative Forum for a Social Europe (Rifondazione Comunista 2003), the PCE declared itself part of the “resistance movement for an alternative to neoliberal globalization, which represents the present-day, world-wide expression of the capital-labour contradiction” (PCE 2002), while the PCF aimed at “calling into question the dogma that the market is sacred” and setting up in Europe

alternative economic and social policies with different priorities to benefit employment and training, public services, and a courageous policy of investment in the environment. What is needed is taxation on capital movements. What is needed is a shift in priorities: the human being and not money (PCF 2003).

The European green parties have also forged alliances with the movement for global justice, in many cases since the very first protest demonstrations, emphasizing in particular the need to defend sustainable development against “the sack of the planet’s environmental resources” (The Federation of European Green Parties 2003) and growing awareness on social issues. For instance, as early as January 2000, calling for participation in the demonstrations against the World Economic Forum in Davos, the French Verts denounced

those who, for over thirty years, have organized deregulation and laid the greater part of humanity open to precariousness, impoverishment and the destruction of resources and the environment (Les Verts 2000).

Involved with the government since 1988, the German Gruenen was often accused of taking compromising positions, especially on social rights, as criticism of globalization as “wrong in principle” began to emerge.

The timid efforts on the part of the socialist parties are most likely the result of the consistent criticism levelled at neoliberal globalization by trade unions (see section 2) and, on a more general level, by public opinion. Indeed, protests against globalization seem to have been successful in sensitizing public opinion to some of their claims. In June 2001, a short time before the G8 summit in Genoa, an opinion poll run by the Italian market research firm CIRM revealed that 45 per cent of Italians were sympathetic to the movement's arguments, 28 per cent were not sympathetic and 27 per cent had no opinion.¹⁷ A later survey by an Italian research group, the Simulation Intelligence Research, showed that 81 per cent of Italians were in favour of cancelling the debt of developing countries, 63.5 per cent in favour of the Tobin Tax (on movement of capital), 70.4 per cent in favour of doing away with tax havens, 79.7 per cent in favour of "equality of economic and working conditions for workers worldwide", 70.4 per cent in favour of the battle against genetically modified foods, 55.3 per cent in favour of freedom of movement for migrants and 73.8 per cent were unconditionally opposed to war. Overall, 19 per cent of those surveyed replied that the "noglobal" movement was very positive and 50.9 per cent considered it quite positive—only 16.1 per cent felt it was quite negative or very negative. In Italy, again, a 2003 survey conducted by the poll firm Demos showed that 52 per cent of the population had taken part in political and protest demonstrations over the previous year, with an especially high percentage among the young. This same survey revealed that 33 per cent of Italians had taken part in peace marches during 2003, 15.5 per cent had taken part in boycotts against certain brand names and 65 per cent were concerned about the possible effects of globalization.

While unemployment was one of the most serious problems identified by the interviewees, private institutions—such as the stock exchange, banks, industrialist associations and privatized health care—saw public trust in them drop sharply: 74 per cent of those interviewed replied that "the state should not 'make room' for the private sector in health care and education".¹⁸ According to a 2004 Demos survey, the position of rigorous pacifism—"against the war, without ifs and without buts"—was supported by two-thirds of the Italian population and about one-third of the sample stated that they took part in protests against the Iraq war.¹⁹

Dissent concerning neoliberal strategies is also emerging among the political and non-political elite. In the mid-1990s, leaders of many Western states were moving away from the pure liberalism of the Thatcher and Reagan years. In the international arena, opinion makers called attention to the issues of social services and market re-regulation (O'Brien et al. 2000). A 1997 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development report stated that

Rising inequalities pose a serious threat of a political backlash against globalization, one that is likely to come from the North as well as from the South (Klein 2001:262).

According to the *Financial Times* of 31 August 1999, there was a sudden shift "from the triumph of global capitalism to its crisis in less than a decade". After the Asian crisis, disagreement also emerged between the World Bank and the IMF. At the dawn of the new millennium, greater openness with respect to economic policies oriented toward toning down free-market excesses was symbolically applauded by awarding the 2001 Nobel Prize in Economics to George Akerlof, Michael Spence and Joseph Stiglitz, three American economists who proved that even within a system of free-market competition, an asymmetric distribution of information has negative effects on the markets that were not contemplated by neoliberal theory. Joseph Stiglitz, former advisor to US President Bill Clinton and a leading economist at the World Bank until 1999, maintained that

¹⁷ Data from *La Repubblica*, 17 June 2001.

¹⁸ Data from *Venerdì de La Repubblica*, 19 December 2003.

¹⁹ Data from *La Repubblica*, 23 May 2004.

capital market liberalization has not only not brought people the prosperity they were promised, but it also has brought these crises, with wages falling 20 or 30 percent, and unemployment going up by a factor of two-, three-, four- or ten (in Brecher et al. 2000:8).

9. Social Bases and Types of Involvement

So far, I have presented the data on the ESF, singling out the characteristics of different political components. I now return to the question of the role played by the sociographic characteristics and political cleavages in the explanation of collective mobilization, looking at measures of correlation between the different political areas of the movement and the biographical characteristics, political repertoire and identification.

To begin with, sociographic variables differ in how much they account for militancy in the diverse areas that merge in the “movement of movements”. As Table 9 shows, sociographic variables do not significantly predict participation in environmental associations or in religious movements/communities. Participation in pro-immigrant associations (33.5 per cent) is not correlated with either gender or age, but instead with profession: participation is low among students, but rises among graduates (43.7 per cent). More definable in sociographic terms are members of women’s associations (21.7 per cent), where militancy is correlated with gender (rising to 33.3 per cent among women), age (rising homogeneously from 8.5 per cent for teenagers to 35.6 per cent for the over 36), profession (particularly low among students) and education (rising from 12.3 per cent for those without a university education to 30.9 per cent for graduates).

Table 9: Correlations between sociographic characteristics, type of involvement in the movement and organizational experience (Cramer’s V)

Type of organization	Gender	Age	Profession	Position in the labour market	Education
Women’s	0.27 (women)	0.21 (3,4,5)	0.19 (4,6,7)	0.08	0.17 (3)
Environmental	0.02	0.08	0.06	0.14 (3,4,5)	0.08
Pro-immigrant	0.02	0.16 (3,4,5)	0.17 (except for 1)	0.05	0.18 (3)
Student	0.04	0.22 (1,2)	0.17 (1)	0.02	0.07
Religious	0.02	0.6	0.06	0.10 (4)	0.03
Union	0.11 (men)	0.41 (4,5)	0.42 (5,7)	0.26 (2,3,4)	0.16 (3)
Political party	0.12 (men)	0.21 (4,5)	0.21 (5,7)	0.09	0.10 (3)

Note: Age: 1=less than 18 years old; 2=19–25; 3=26–35; 4=36–45; 5=46+. Profession: 1=student; 2=PhD student or post-PhD; 3=unemployed; 4=irregular workers; 5=employed; 6=professional or business; 7=housewives or retired. Position in the labour market: (students are excluded): 1=workers; 2=public/private employed; 3=professor; 4=manager; 5=professional. Education: 1=low degree; 2=secondary level; 3=university.

A low female presence and a similarly scarce presence of the youngest generation characterize trade unions and political parties. Participation in trade unions (31.7 per cent) is correlated with gender (falling to 26.5 per cent for women) and age (rising constantly from 13.5 per cent for teenagers to 65.9 per cent for those over 36), as well as being linked to education level (up to 41.8 per cent of graduates) and working conditions, with higher values for educated pensioners (80 per cent) and company employees (30.7 per cent) – higher for white collar workers than blue collar, and obviously lower among the liberal professions. Participation in political parties (31.8 per cent) is correlated with gender (falling to 26.5 per cent for women) and age (rising constantly from 20.6 per cent for teenagers to 50.9 per cent for the over 36), as well as with working conditions, with higher values for pensioners (60 per cent) and company employees (49.1 per cent).

Correlation is also detected for education (rising with education level to 41 per cent for graduates). Conversely, young people are largely involved in social centres and student collectives (57.5 per cent). Participation in student collectives is not correlated with gender, but rather age, falling from 73.3 per cent for teenagers to 43.1 per cent for those over 36, and occupation (for obvious reasons, participation is higher among students). Males are overrepresented in the social centres, which also have a higher presence of young (aged between 19 and 35) activists with a higher presence of unemployed and temporary workers with medium levels of education.

Some differences also emerge in the use of specific forms of action. The activists are characterized by considerable experience in a wide range of participation: almost all have participative experience such as assemblies, petition signing and strikes; two-thirds have more disruptive experience such as sit-ins, building occupations and boycotts; half are familiar with political party or electoral activities; but only 8 per cent have been involved in damage to property. Participation in women's organizations increases the tendency to participate in party activities, volunteer work, sit-ins and boycotts. Activists in environmental associations, more than others, make use of petitions, letters, referenda, sit-ins and boycotts. Among participants in associations for the activists involved in the defence of immigrants' rights and social centres tend to participate in occupations – such as those carried out by student groups – or to increase violent action. Table 10 shows that while membership in religious movements or communities reduces the tendency to participate in occupations, activists in trade unions and parties are more likely to use forms of action such as party canvassing, party activism, petition-signing, letters and referenda, strike action, volunteer work, sit-ins and, in the case of trade unions, boycotts and violent action.

Table 10: Correlations between organization, type of involvement in the movement and political repertoire (Cramer's V)

Political repertoire	Women's	Environment	Pro-immigrants	Student	Religious	Union	Political party
Convincing voting for a party	0.07	0.02	0.06	0.08	0.02	0.22 (yes)	0.36 (yes)
Party's activities	0.13 (yes)	0.03	0.16 (yes)	0.14 (yes)	0.05	0.35 (yes)	0.73 (yes)
Petitions, letters	0.09	0.14 (yes)	0.13 (yes)	0.05	0.01	0.14 (yes)	0.14 (yes)
Leaflets	0.13 (yes)	0.08	0.25 (yes)	0.19 (yes)	0.04	0.21 (yes)	0.27 (yes)
Assembly	0.03	0.04	0.04	0.11 (yes)	0.03	0.04	0.07
Strikes	0.02	0.01	0.03	0.08	0.09	0.12 (yes)	0.06
Sit-ins	0.11 (yes)	0.12 (yes)	0.20 (yes)	0.15 (yes)	0.08	0.15 (yes)	0.17 (yes)
Boycotts	0.13 (yes)	0.15 (yes)	0.25 (yes)	0.10 (yes)	0.02	0.10 (yes)	0.10 (yes)
Squatting public and private places	0.06	0.04	0.17 (yes)	0.24 (yes)	0.12 (no)	0.00	0.04
Violence	0.05	0.05	0.10 (yes)	0.05	0.07	0.11 (yes)	0.08

Note: (yes) = correlated with positive answers to questions about participation in political repertoire.

Activists that strongly identify with the left also show an intense level of participation and a passionate identification with the various organizations (see table 11). Those participating in organizations and those who identify closely with the movement also tend to place themselves more on the left. In particular, participation in women's associations, defence of immigrant rights, student collectives, social centres, trade unions and parties increases the tendency to identify with the left, while participation in religious movements or communities reduces affiliation with the extreme left – though it does increase affiliation with the centre-left. Groups

active with immigration issues are more likely to identify with the world as a whole, while participation in religious movements or communities is correlated with an important affective link to the local community, city, nation and Europe.

Table 11: Correlations between organizational experience and self-collocation in the left-right scale (Cramer's V)

Organization	Left-right
Women's	0.13 (yes = extreme left; no = refuse to collocate)
Environmental	0.06
Pro-immigrant	0.21 (yes = extreme left)
Student	0.14 (yes = extreme left)
Religious	0.21 (no = extreme left)
Union	0.28 (yes = extreme left; no = refuse to collocate)
Political party	0.32 (yes = extreme left; no = refuse to collocate)

Thus, the ESF data confirm that protests about global issues mobilized various and heterogeneous networks of activists, each with specific differences in terms of sociographic background and repertoires of action and political stances.

10. The South

The data presented here have an obvious limit: they refer to the activists in the (rich) North. As previously mentioned, the activists link their claims to "global justice", and more specifically, advocate social rights for the South. The southern hemisphere is not, however, only represented in the "new global" protest via solidarity associations. In fact, there are numerous social mobilizations in developing countries that have been, at least in part, linked to the "global justice movement". Although there is yet no systematic research on the social background of the activists in the South, the increasing knowledge we have on these movements indicate that social mobilization on global issues is by far not limited to the Northern hemisphere. The three World Social Forums that took place in Porto Alegre, Brazil, and in 2004 in India are indicative of the – more than symbolic – importance of protest in the South.

In fact, it has been in the South where protests addressing the policies of international government organizations emerged in the 1980s. Long before Seattle, urban bread riots in Latin America as well as in Africa had dramatically contested the free trade policies – and the austerity measures connected with them – demanded by the IMF and asked for "work, bread, justice and liberty".²⁰ While the Bretton Woods institutions traditionally favoured policies for state-supported economic development in the Southern countries, from the 1980s onward, deflationary and free trade policies were applied through Programmatic Structural Adjustment Credits. Protest movements addressed issues such as: (i) cuts in public spending and public services; (ii) elimination of subsidies and price-controlled merchandise; (iii) reductions in taxes – particularly on capital; (iv) privatization, including in the agricultural sector; (v) deregulation of the labour market; and (vi) devaluation of local currency and thus lower salaries in real terms. According to the movement activists, these policies create poverty, illiteracy, famine and epidemics, as well as increased interethnic violence. For instance, the introduction of fees for schooling and health care vouchers was blamed for excluding the poorest from access to education and health services (Mies 2002).

Community groups and trade unions alike organized strikes and protests following the crises in Mexico, the Asian Tigers and Argentina. From January to September 2001 alone, there were 48

²⁰ See Walton and Seddon (1994); see also Eckstein (2001) on Latin America, and Bennani-Chraïbi and Fillieule (2003) on Islamic countries.

major protests against privatization and austerity measures in 13 Latin American countries (Lichbach and Ameda 2001). The urban poor and unemployed were among the protesters. In Argentina—where the military regime received international loans that were then deposited in foreign accounts and used for personal gain—privatization and deregulation economic policies are blamed for pushing half of the population below the poverty line and for favouring, among others, foreign shareholders, who purportedly controlled 90 per cent of banks and 40 per cent of businesses (Mies 2002). The *piqueteros*—unemployed people often with previous experience in trade unions—mobilized in a “strange marriage” with the impoverished middle class: both were the protagonists of the *caerolancos* protest, so-called because pans were used as drums. In areas of larger cities, *barrio* assemblies were formed: in 2001 there were 272 such gatherings, with 40 per cent of them in Buenos Aires. Among other things, these groups organized cooperatives for buying and exchanging goods through the Red del Tregue Solidarian.

Trade unions have generally been represented at demonstrations against globalization, especially those from the Republic of Korea and the Central Unica de Trabajadores del Brasile.

Native populations have also been very relevant in protest movements in the South, mobilizing in support of their community rights and against massive displacement imposed by large infrastructural projects, often supported by international governmental organizations as well as private corporations. At the root of the Mexican Zapatista movement, which played an important and not only a symbolic role in the development of the global justice concern and transnationalization of movement structures, is—among other things—the defender of the *ejido*, the traditional Mayan common lands recognized in Article 27 of the Mexican constitution that was abolished following the conclusion of the NAFTA agreements for economic liberalization between Canada, Mexico and the United States (De Angelis 2000).²¹ The Chiapas mobilization claimed to defend indigenous peoples, who were seen as the principle victims of neoliberalism: advocating the right to a life in harmony with nature, they denounced the unchecked exploitation of the Earth’s resources and the brutal development imposed by multinational companies and international financial organizations. In March 2001, the march from Chiapas to Mexico City, in which the Zapatista leaders participated—unarmed but masked—demanded rights for indigenous communities from cultural autonomy to self-government, economic and social justice and democracy.

Among other things, the claims of the indigenous populations were linked, especially in the South, with those of farmers regarding the *patents on living beings and plants* as foreseen in the agreement on Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights, in force since 1995. Throughout the 1990s, farmers in India had protested against the multinational company Monsanto, which had developed and marketed sterile seeds, and against the patents awarded in the United States for the neem plant and basmati rice, both traditionally grown and widely used in India. Apart from the rejection of patents on living beings and plants, other claims of the Via Campesina platform, the umbrella organization for farmers’ groups active in several countries, include: (i) the “sovereignty of food”—the right of governments to introduce restrictions on the commercialization of agricultural products considered dangerous to human health; (ii) the protection of biodiversity within a free market that is seen as pushing poor countries toward monoculture; (iii) agricultural reforms to redistribute land among small farmers and to reintroduce common land; (iv) the refusal of genetically modified organisms; and (v) a real opening of the market to Southern goods.²² In Canada, India and Thailand, for example, farmers and indigenous peoples

²¹ In fact it was on the very day that NAFTA entered into force—1 January 1994—that the Ejército Zapatista de Liberación Nacional began its protest in Chiapas with armed assaults against the town halls of several municipalities. Clashes with the Mexican army that left hundreds dead, was followed with a ceasefire and finally the opening of negotiations, although large areas remained under Zapatista control.

²² Founded in 1993, Via Campesina brought together 69 organizations from 37 countries at the time of its second conference in Mexico in 1996. Today it comprises organizations with 50 million members in 50 countries. Its most visible leaders include personalities such as French farmer José Bové and his Confederation Paysanne. At the second World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, agricultural workers’ organizations from Argentina, Belize, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, India, Indonesia, Madagascar, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru and the Philippines were present alongside Brazilian Sem Terra (landless) organizations (Jampaglia and Bandinelli 2002).

protested against the construction of enormous dams and the forced relocations that followed in affected areas.

In short, the same cultural globalization, combined with interventions by international NGOs at the beginning of democratization processes in many Southern countries, has led in the latter to an awareness of themes usually considered as “postmaterialist” (Morris-Suzuki 2001). For example, women’s groups have developed and made contact with one another during transnational conferences, some financed by the UN and others held with the groups’ own resources. Among these are the Indian women’s movement Chipko, the Revolutionary Association of Women in Afghanistan and the Green Belt movement, which gathers together 80,000 Kenyan women. In many of the mobilizations against the construction of dams, which were initially designed to defend jobs, ecological themes have become more and more important. For instance, the protest campaign against the construction of a large dam in southern Brazil, began in 1979 principally as a campaign for the rights to alternative homes and jobs for those that would be affected by the project, but has also developed discourses on the protection of natural habitats since local people—the protagonists of the first collective actions—met with other NGOs, resulting in mutual “contamination” (Rothman and Oliver 2002:128). In Chiapas, too, religious and secular NGOs, together with development projects, have brought self-management experiences (Benenati 2002).

Conclusion

I now return to my initial hypotheses about the social background of activists. The prediction of the hypothesis on the “social centrality” that individual resources increase the propensity to mobilize is only partially useful in explaining the social background of our activists, those that emerged as well-educated and predominantly middle class, but also with a high component of workers and no overrepresentation of male and middle-aged groups of the population. Moreover, in line with the hypothesis that stresses the development of “persistent activist careers”, the surveys showed that the social background of the activists was linked to their participation in previous waves of protest and the civil society groups that developed from these protests: students often had experiences in student groups, women in feminist collectives, workers in trade unions. The social bases of the “global” protest seemed to reflect the range of social cleavages already mobilized, as the third hypothesis would have suggested, without the clear emergence of a “new cleavage”—for example, between “winners” and “losers” of globalization. Indeed, the dominant identification with the “left” of the political spectrum seems to testify to the re-emergence of conflicts on social inequalities, and which the fourth hypothesis considered as mainly pacified.

Little can be said, yet, on the generalization of our findings. The first ESF in Florence developed during a moment of strong mobilization, with rising enthusiasm and hope for a common ground—in an “almost messianic atmosphere”, as an activist described it (quoted in della Porta 2005). It remains to be seen if the various movement’s components, and with them the heterogeneity of the social basis, will be able to remain together even when mobilization declines. Additionally, my research has mainly addressed the movement in the North and therefore describes only a slice of it, however influential it might be. The movement initiatives in the South, such as the World Social Forum, have networked with many different groups, from the Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem Terra and more generally the peasants that formed Via Campesina, to the dynamic unions in the recently-developed countries. Moreover, more than in the North, issues of social justice and “democracy from below” have been intertwined with the ethnic claims of the indigenous people as well as demands for community rights. This points to the need for further comparative research, going beyond the traditional Northern constituency of social movement that is familiar to Northern movement scholars.

Some paths and mechanisms of social and political participation that emerged from the research on the ESF can be generalized to transnational activism elsewhere. Indeed the data at the micro

level indicate that the mobilization on global justice emerged from long-lasting experiences in previous movements. While the protest became visible at the turn of the millennium, it grew from previous—less visible but more widespread—mobilizations in the forms of transnational campaigns as well as local action on global issues. If the 1980s had been the years of single-issue movements, in the 1990s various streams of political participation came together, beyond borders but also beyond specific topics. This helps to explain the generational, gender, social, religious, ideological diversity of the global justice movement. Many of these campaigns started defensively, in order to combine resources against an “enemy” that was perceived as extremely powerful. However, in the course of these interactions bonds of mutual trust developed, together with the belief to share not only a common opponent, but also a common identity, even though a pluralistic one. The coming together of members from different pre-existing organizations favoured the development of tolerant identities (della Porta 2005) with an emphasis on diversity and cross-fertilization.

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