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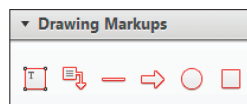
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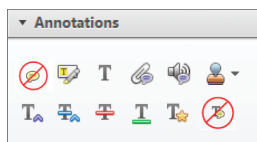
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Participants in trade union-staged demonstrations: a cross-country comparison

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Summary

Drawing both on social movement studies and labour studies, this article investigates the kind of people who join trade union-staged marches during the current crisis, looking at the presence of (politicized) grievances, collective identity and the embeddedness of mobilization. Data were taken from surveys conducted during 13 marches organized by the main trade unions in five European countries. They show that participants in union-staged demonstrations in countries in which a corporatist model dominates and trade unions have a tradition of business unionism (Belgium and the Netherlands) are characterized by higher political trust, more moderate positions on the left–right continuum and stronger organizational ties. On the other hand, in countries in which unions are less institutionally recognized and with a tradition of oppositional unionism (Italy and Spain), participants in union-staged demonstrations are more mistrustful of politics, located more to the left and rely more upon informal social networks to mobilize. The United Kingdom falls between these two poles.

Résumé

En s'appuyant sur des études portant à la fois sur les mouvements sociaux et sur le mouvement syndical, cet article examine les caractéristiques des participants des manifestations organisées par les syndicats durant l'actuelle crise: il analyse la présence de revendications (politisées), le senti- ment d'identité collective et le cadre dans lequel se situe la mobilisation. Les données proviennent d'enquêtes effectuées à l'occasion de 13 manifestations organisées par les principaux syndicats dans cinq pays européens. Elles montrent que les participants aux manifestations organisées par les

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syndicats dans les pays dominés par un modèle corporatiste et où les syndicats s'inscrivent dans une tradition de syndicalisme d'entreprise (Belgique et Pays-Bas), se caractérisent par une confiance plus grande dans le monde politique, par un positionnement plus modéré sur l'axe gauche-droite et par des liens organisationnels plus forts. En revanche, dans les pays où les syndicats bénéficient d'une moindre reconnaissance institutionnelle et qui possèdent une tradition de syndicalisme d'opposition (Italie et Espagne), les participants aux manifestations organisées par les syndicats sont plus méfiants vis-à-vis du monde politique, se situent plus à gauche et recourent davantage à des réseaux sociaux informels pour organiser la mobilisation. Le Royaume-Uni se situe entre ces deux pôles.

Zusammenfassung

Der vorliegende Artikel beruht auf Studien sowohl über soziale Bewegungen als auch über die Arbeitswelt und befasst sich mit den Menschen, die sich vor dem Hintergrund der aktuellen Krise gewerkschaftlich organisierten Demonstrationen anschließen. Er untersucht die Bedeutung von (politisierten) Missständen, kollektiver Identität und der Einbettung der Mobilisierung. Die Daten stammen aus Umfragen auf 13 Demonstrationen, die von den größten Gewerkschaften in fünf europäischen Ländern organisiert wurden. Sie zeigen, dass für die Teilnehmer an gewerkschaftlich organisierten Demonstrationen in Ländern mit einem vorwiegend korporatistischen Modell und mit Gewerkschaften in der Tradition des „Business Unionism" (Belgien und die Niederlande) mehr Vertrauen in die Politik, moderatere Standpunkte innerhalb des Rechts-Links-Kontinuums und stärkere organisatorische Bindungen typisch sind. In Ländern hingegen, in denen die Gewerkschaften als Institutionen weniger anerkannt werden und in denen Gewerkschaften traditionell auf Konfliktkurs eingestellt sind (Italien und Spanien), misstrauen die Teilnehmer an gewerkschaftlich organisierten Demonstrationen eher der Politik, sind vorwiegend links zu verorten und verlassen sich für die Mobilisierung auf informelle soziale Netzwerke. Großbritannien nimmt hier eine Stellung genau zwischen diesen beiden Polen ein.

Introduction

In this article the focus on trade unions as protest actors challenges research both on social movements and on labour activism. In fact, the former has largely considered trade unions as – often – opponents of new social movements, or at best occasional institutional allies of left-libertarian movements, but rarely as protest actors themselves (for a review, see Fantasia and Stepan-Norris, 2004). At the same time, the labour activism literature has focused mainly on trade unions as either actors within industrial relations or, sometimes, as interest groups endowed with special channels of access to institutional decision-making. Only recently has the first research emerged on the return of protest repertoires in industrial conflicts, especially since the austerity imposed in the wake of the financial crisis has been accompanied by exclusionary attitudes towards trade unions (Hyman, 2015).

   As we shall see in this article, trade unions currently under siege from neoliberal attacks on labour rights and social policies are responding with, among other things, attempts to go back to (or

step up) reliance on protest activities and movement-like strategies. General or protracted strikes, occupations and street blockages have been more frequent during the current economic crisis, to a certain extent in response to the weakening of neo-corporatist agreements and of potential party allies (Pianta and Gerbaudo, 2012; Della Porta, 2015; Peterson et al., 2015; Zamponi and Bosi, forthcoming).

Nevertheless, we can expect that this return to street politics on the part of the trade unions has different characteristics according to the specific interest-representation regime, along the spectrum between corporatist and pluralist systems, as well as trade union traditions. Regimes that offer better opportunities for dealing with labour issues at the institutional level might involve less resort to protest activities (Gentile and Tarrow, 2009). In fact, the (limited) social science literature on relations between trade unions and social movements suggests that in a *neo-corporatist* model of interest representation, with monopolistic, centralized trade union organizations (Schmitter, 1974) that participate in public decision-making (Lehmbruch, 1977), access to the latter tends to facilitate agreement between different social groups and the state with less need for non-institutional forms of collective action. Both control over the formation of social demands (Schmitter, 1981) and the capacity to satisfy such demands (Nollert, 1997) are expected to discourage protest (Armingeon, 2002). In *pluralist* situations, by contrast, in which trade unions are divided and lack institutional access channels to decision-making, they compete with each other and resort more often to confrontational strategies to gain bargaining power. Trade union traditions are shaped by and also help shape the system of interest representation in their countries. Building on Hyman's work (1994, 2001), we differentiate between business unionism and oppositional unionism. We expect the first to promote more moderate repertoires of action, the second more confrontational ones. The extent to which these assumptions still hold true in the era of neoliberalism and the current crisis is a question we will address through empirical evidence from surveys at union-staged demonstrations in Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, Belgium and the Netherlands.

After presenting the main hypotheses and empirical research introducing the main characteristics of trade unions in the selected countries, we will compare participants in street protests in terms of sets of variables that we consider relevant in order to assess sociographic characteristics, grievances, identity and embeddedness in participation in union protests during the current economic crisis.

Main hypotheses

In this article, we discuss the general hypothesis that inclusive regimes that incorporate unions within neo-corporatist agreements induce them to invest organizational resources – in terms of membership and unitary structure – in institutional bargaining, with little need for protest action, and a focus on protecting their members. By contrast, exclusionary regimes, in pluralist situations tend to restrict institutional access and thereby favour the development of organizationally weaker but identity-oriented unions, which resort more to protest action. 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. Also, the more influential interest groups are, the smaller will be the room for relatively unorganized movements because:

> a well-resourced, coherently structured, and professionalised system of interest groups may also be able to prevent outside challengers from having access to the state. Moreover, highly institutionalised,

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)

As micro-mobilization is context- and organization-driven (Klandermans, 2004), we can expect these differences to impact not only on trade unions' propensity to protest, but also on the way in which people are mobilized and the type of people mobilized in trade union protest. To investigate these two types of impact on the 'who' and the 'how', we will focus on three main aspects: the presence of (politicized) grievances, collective identity and the embeddedness of mobilization. While grievances and collective identity clearly address the type of militancy that characterizes participants in trade union protest (answering the 'who' question), embeddedness describes *how* trade unions recruit those participants.

Grievances

Social movement studies have developed on the assumption that, while grievances are always present in the population, what explains collective action is rather the availability of resources to be mobilized (Klandermans, 1997; Snow and Soule, 2010). While resource mobilization is certainly important, recent reflections have brought the issue of grievances back into the debate. As Van Stekelenburg and Klandermans (2010: 2) recently argued, 'at the heart of every protest are grievances, be it the experience of illegitimate inequality, feelings of relative deprivation, feelings of injustice, moral indignation about some state of affairs, or a suddenly imposed grievance'. If grievances do not produce protest automatically, the current economic crisis and the spread of protest in many countries have brought renewed attention to the structural socio-economic transformations, giving rise to various grievances and collective action and, especially, to their interactions with the crisis of political legitimacy, as indicated by increasing discontent with (and mistrust of) political elites (Della Porta, 2015).

The literature on neo-corporatism versus pluralist models of representation (see above) would suggest that grievances are felt more strongly and, especially, expressed as political discontent in countries with an oppositional trade union tradition within a system of interest representation in which trade unions are not institutionally included (non-neo-corporatist systems).

Identification

Alessandro Pizzorno (1966) noted that political participation is rooted in the systems of solidarity that form the basis of the very definition of interest: interests can be singled out only with reference to a specific value system, and values push individuals to identify with wider groups in society, providing a sense of belonging to them and a willingness to mobilize for them. In this perspective, participation is action in solidarity with others that aims at protecting or transforming the dominant values and interest systems. The process of participation requires therefore the construction of solidarity communities within which individuals perceive themselves and are recognized as equals. Political participation itself aims at this identity construction: before mobilizing as a worker, individuals have to identify themselves as workers and feel that they belong to the working class. Identification as awareness of being part of a collective *we* facilitates political participation. In fact, the latter 'increases (it is more intense, clearer, more precise) when class consciousness is high' (Pizzorno, 1966: 109). In this sense, it is not the 'social centrality' mentioned by Milbrath and Goel (1977), but rather the centrality with respect to a class (or a group) – as linked with the

identification with that class (or group) – that defines an individual's propensity to political participation. And this explains why some groups composed of individuals endowed with low status are under some conditions able to mobilize more than other groups. Participation is therefore explained not only by individual resources, but also by collective resources. Furthermore, in social movement studies collective identification is expected only if there is awareness of the fact that one's own destiny is in large part linked to material conditions, while the lack of such awareness is defined as false consciousness (Snow and Lessor, 2013). Moreover, both shared norms and values are embedded in tactical repertoires (Taylor and Van Dyke, 2004).

We can expect that, in countries where trade unions have an oppositional tradition, collective identities are based on more conflictual values and experiences with greater use of protest repertoire. In countries with a tradition of business unionism, collective identity can be expected to be based on more moderate values, with the countries with an integrative tradition lying in between. Thus, in countries with a neo-corporatist system of interest representation, if identification with trade unions is high, the values and tactics are likely to be more moderate, while the contrary tends to apply to countries in which trade unions lack such political integration.

Embeddedness

Another aspect in terms of which participants in trade union-staged demonstrations may vary is embeddedness in social networks (Diani, 1992). Participation in protests requires supporting networks that provide positive incentives, not only in affective terms but also in cognitive ones. Networks that are relevant for political participation are those that provide information about protest events, as well as emotional support. In line with the literature on social capital, these networks are expected to provide norms of reciprocity and reciprocal trust that are relevant for collective action. Embeddedness helps overcome the free-rider problem by providing a sense of commitment, as well as social control, so much so, that the single most relevant factor in explaining participation in protests is whether or not one has been asked to participate (Schussman and Soule, 2005).

We can expect that in neo-corporatist systems, trade unions can rely on strong organizational channels, reaching both members and non-members with their calls for mobilization. Trade unions with a low level of organization may rely instead on relations with other types of groups, such as social movements and voluntary organizations, to convince non-trade union members also to participate in the protest. Moreover, less integrated trade unions should also be more able to activate other groups by framing their protest in a more confrontational way.

Method and data sample

In testing the above-mentioned hypotheses, we will use data on surveys of protest demonstrations carried out by an international consortium Contextualizing Contestation (see www.protestsurvey.eu). The surveys were carried out mainly between 2010 and 2013, in the years of deepest recession. They covered dozens of demonstrations in countries hardest hit by the crisis, such as Spain and Italy, and others that were less hard hit, such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Switzerland and Sweden, with the Czech Republic and the United Kingdom in between. To investigate the extent to which regime openness and trade union tradition bring about differences in the way unions mobilize people through protest and in the type of experiences with protest repertoires of the participants in trade union street mobilization we analyse the results of surveys conducted during 13 marches organized by the main trade unions in five European countries: Italy, Spain, the

United Kingdom, Belgium and the Netherlands. We have selected those countries for two main reasons: on the one hand, they vary in terms of both regime inclusiveness and trade union traditions; on the other hand, the trade union mobilizations surveyed are relatively comparable, being related to the economic crisis and the policies adopted by governments in that period: cuts in public expenditure, labour market 'reform' and similar (see Appendix).[1]

Participants were sampled randomly and given a questionnaire to mail back. About 1000 questionnaires were distributed at each demonstration, with an average return rate of something more than 20 per cent (see Appendix).[2] The core questionnaire included questions about socio-demographic variables; mobilization channels and techniques; social embeddedness; instrumental, identity and ideological motives; emotions; conventional and unconventional political behaviour; political attitudes (including political interest, left–right self-placement, political cynicism); and awareness of and identification with protestors elsewhere in the world.

Before starting our analysis, we shall describe the most relevant socio-biographical characteristics of the sample of participants in our 13 demonstrations who answered and sent back the questionnaires. Our study includes five demographic measures: gender, age, education, profession and social class self-placement.

Gender is fairly balanced, with slightly more women in the United Kingdom (52.3 per cent) and in Belgium (50.9 per cent) a slight majority of female participants, but the reverse in Italy (46.1 per cent), Spain (44.4 per cent) and the Netherlands (40.7 per cent). Our sample has a slight over-representation of female respondents if we compare trade union memberships in each country, although this might have something to do with the specific unions that called for the demonstration. Age cohort distribution varies more across countries. In general, young participants (those born after 1987) are under-represented among our respondents, confirming a trend in trade union membership, with old cohorts generally more unionized than young ones. The United Kingdom, with 26.5 per cent of respondents born after 1987, presents an exception, which could be linked to the object of the demonstration, namely cuts in public education; for the same cohort, Italy has 8.7 per cent, Spain 1.7 per cent, Belgium 2.7 per cent and the Netherlands 3.4 per cent. The Netherlands shows the highest rate of older respondents (born before 1956) in the demonstrations we selected, with 44 per cent (Italy 32.9 per cent; Spain 21.4 per cent; United Kingdom 28.5 per cent; Belgium 26.9 per cent). As for the education level of our respondents, the percentage of those with a second stage of tertiary education is quite high in Italy (38.9 per cent), Spain (48.9 per cent) and the United Kingdom (38.7 per cent). Belgium and the Netherlands show instead the highest rates of respondents among those who had, respectively, secondary education (66.0 per cent) and primary education (32.9 per cent). Within our respondents there is a large representation of full-time employees in all countries, whereas Spain has the largest presence of unemployed respondents (7 per cent) (see Table 1).

Our respondents tend not to place themselves in the upper middle class, with the exception of the Netherlands, where 43.8 per cent chose that option. Italy (54.5 per cent) and the Belgium (48 per cent) have the largest number of respondents who identify themselves as lower middle

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1   For the sake of comparability, we have excluded from our analyses First of May demonstrations as their meaning varies across countries: in some cases they tend to be a festivity parade, while in others they have a political character.
2   For details on the methodological strategies used to carry out those surveys see Van Stekelenburg et al. (2012) and Andretta and Della Porta (2014).

Table 1. Job status by country (N = 2924).

	Italy	Spain	UK	Belgium	Netherlands
Full-time	58.8%	72.7%	43.3%	66.1%	48.8%
Retired	13.6%	8.3%	12.5%	7.3%	11.2%
Part time	8.8%	4.8%	8.5%	22.6%	22.0%
Self-employed	5.3%	2.2%	4.0%	0.5%	9.6%
Student	8.0%	5.0%	28.7%	0.7%	4.3%
Unemployed	5.3%	7.0%	3.0%	2.9%	4.0%
Total (n)	374	458	328	593	1171
Cr.s V	.21***a				

[a] Cramer V (Cr.s V) is a measure of association that tells us how much (between 0 = no association and 1 = full association) two nominal variables co-variate. The asterisks indicate the statistical probability that the results in the sampled population reflect those in the real population.
Source: Survey results.

Table 2. Subjective class by country (N = 3057).

	Subjective class				
	Italy	Spain	UK	Belgium	Netherlands
Upper middle class	13.1%	9.0%	17.3%	15.7%	43.8%
Lower middle class	54.5%	20.4%	38.4%	48.0%	28.4%
Working class	26.0%	67.2%	31.4%	33.1%	27.1%
None	6.3%	3.5%	12.9%	3.3%	0.7%
Total (n)	412	466	341	611	1227
Cr.s V	.27***				

Source: Survey results.

class. Spain has the largest presence of respondents who position themselves as working class, at 67.2 per cent (see Table 2).

Degree of openness and trade union tradition

Even admitting high internal variations in so-called national trade union models (Meardi, 2004, 2011) we expect that particular regimes' degree of openness towards trade unions, as well as their trade union traditions still play a role in shaping trade union repertoires of action.[3] Crossing the type of regime inclusiveness with trade union traditions we obtain four possible representations of the socio-political system (see Table 3).

Belgium and the Netherlands, with their classic small corporatist market economies, have unions that tend to focus on the broader society (education, public finance, defence spending, environmental protection, women's rights, abortion and other issues) (Hyman, 1994), also because they are often associated with political power. Trade unions in both countries have similar long-standing labour movements and have been fully institutionalized in the state apparatus for a long

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3   In reconstructing trade union national cultures we have relied on Hayward (1980); Cella and Treu (2001); Hyman (2001); Upchurch et al. (2009); Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman (2013).

Table 3. Classification of countries on the basis of trade union tradition and type of interest representation system.

	Interest representation model	
Trade union tradition	Exclusionary/pluralist	Inclusive/neo-corporatist
Between oppositional and integrative unionism	Italy Spain	
Between integrative and business tradition	UK	Belgium Netherlands

Source: Authors' typology.

time; they are historically part of the 'pillarized' structure and play a major role in their societies (Table 3, lower-right quadrant).[4] In Belgium and the Netherlands trade unions have a lower propensity to strike compared with the Italian and Spanish cases; and the Dutch strike rate is considerably lower than its southern neighbour.

Italy and Spain fall into the category of mixed market economies with a history of adversarial and weakly institutionalized industrial relations. They also industrialized relatively late (Table 3, upper-left quadrant). Historically, trade unions in these two countries have been divided along ideological lines. In this context, rival confederations have emerged and the most important union–party relationship has developed between communist parties and the dominant trade union confederation. However, whereas in Spain trade unionism is closer to the integrative type found in Belgium and the Netherlands, with a more bargaining-oriented culture, Italy has a radical-oppositional trade union tradition, which tends to focus on class, due to the historical presence of a very strong communist party in the country.[5]

Britain is often categorized as a classic liberal market economy. Since the early 1980s the state has attempted to regulate the unions and strike activities. Business unions tend to focus on a 'militant, but sectional and defensive, economics' (Hyman, 2001: 68) (Table 3, lower-left quadrant). Most British unions (90 per cent) are members of the Trades Union Congress (1868), which is a loose-knit confederation. The TUC has extensive links to the Labour Party. Trade union membership in Britain has been in decline since the 1980s and today stands at fewer than 6 million

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4   There are three main confederations in Belgium: the socialist union confederation ABVV/FGTB, the Catholic union confederation ACV/CSC (Algemeen Christelijk Vak/Confédération des syndicats chrétiens) and the smaller liberal union confederation ACLVB/CGSLB (Algemene Centrale der Liberale Vakbonden van België/Centrale générale des syndicats libéraux de Belgique). In the Netherlands, we find two main confederations organizing manual and non-manual workers: the FNV (Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging, the social democratic trade union federation) and the CNV (Christelijk Nationaal Vakverbond, the Protestant trade union), which were initially divided along ideological/confessional lines.

5   In Italy there are three main politically aligned confederations: CGIL (Confederazione Italiana Generale del Lavoro, the left-wing trade union), CISL (Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori, the Christian Democrat trade union) and UIL (Unione Italiana del Lavoro, the centre-left trade union). There also exist numerous independent unions that emerged from the late 1970s due to rising dissatisfaction with the main confederations (examples include COBAS, CISNAL and UGL). In Spain there are two main national trade unions, with only minor differences between them. They account for three-quarters of union members: CCOO (Comisiones Obreras, historically close to the Communist Party) and the UGT (Unión General de Trabajadores, historically close to the Socialist Party). There are also regional trade unions. Both main trade unions in Spain have moderated their demands, although they have remobilized during the crisis (Hyman, 2015).

members. It is worth recalling that the United Kingdom is the only country that does not have non-socialist unions.

Empirical findings

Grievances

In order to investigate grievances, in particular their political expression, we focus on protestors' attitudes toward the political system and the main political actors, as well as on their satisfaction with democracy in their country. This we take as a proxy for political dissatisfaction, which tends to be associated with social discontent, all the more so as political parties on the right and the left are perceived as converging in support of austerity policies (Della Porta, 2015, Chapter 3; Bermeo and Bartels, 2014). Trust in political institutions is generally very low among the protestors we surveyed: trust in national government is at its lowest in Italy, where only about 1 per cent of protestors trust it quite a lot or much, while this percentage rises slightly in the other selected countries, to about 10 per cent in the United Kingdom and 14 per cent in Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain. Also low is trust in parliament: about 4 per cent in Italy, 12 per cent in the UK, but around 17 per cent in Belgium and Spain and 20 per cent in the Netherlands. Trust in the European Union is highest in Italy (as many as 28 per cent trust it) and in the United Kingdom (26 per cent), and lower in Belgium, the Netherlands and Spain (about 20 per cent). Trust in the main political actors specializing in political representation is generally low among our protestors: political parties are trusted by around 6 per cent of participants in Italy, the United Kingdom and Spain, with a slightly higher 13 per cent in Belgium and 18 per cent in the Netherlands. More trusted are trade unions, but with very different results across countries: 25 per cent trust unions in Italy, 41 per cent in Spain, 52 per cent in the United Kingdom, 55 per cent in the Netherlands and as much as 77 per cent in Belgium.[6]

Distrust in institutions seems to go hand in hand with dissatisfaction with democracy in one's own country (Andretta et al., 2015). On an 11-point scale, this indicator scores only 4.6 on average, with even lower scores in Italy, medium scores in the United Kingdom and Spain, and slightly higher scores in Belgium and the Netherlands. Another indicator of dissatisfaction with democracy is the degree of agreement with the statement 'I don't see the use of voting, parties do whatever they want anyway', which we measured on a 5-point scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree): 32 per cent in Belgium, 27 per cent in Italy, around 18 per cent in Spain and the United Kingdom and only 11 per cent in the Netherlands, agree or strongly agree with the statement.[7]

Overall, trust in political institutions and actors and satisfaction with democracy seem to be very low among participants in trade union-staged demonstrations in all five countries selected. However, protestors are slightly less dissatisfied and more trustful in countries where trade unions are more integrated in the political system through neo-corporatist practices and institutions. While the level of mistrust can have different causes (among which the degree of disruption that the financial crisis and austerity policies have caused in citizens' lives), social science literature on neo-corporatism has long stressed how the integration of various collective interests through channels of functional representation helps to increase the legitimation of the political system (for example, Schmitter, 1974, 1981).

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6   The variables on trust, originally based on a 5-point Likert scale (from 1= not at all to 5 = very much), have been transformed in to dummies (1 = quite a lot or very much trust; 0 for the other options). The number of cases for cross-tabulation is 3091; and the Cr.s V are: .13 (National government), .15 (Parliament), .16 (Parties), .31 (Unions), and .08 (EU), all significant at the .001 level.

7   The ETA of the scale means differences is .47, significant at .001 level. ETA is a measure of association that measures the statistical strength of the relationship between the variables of interest.
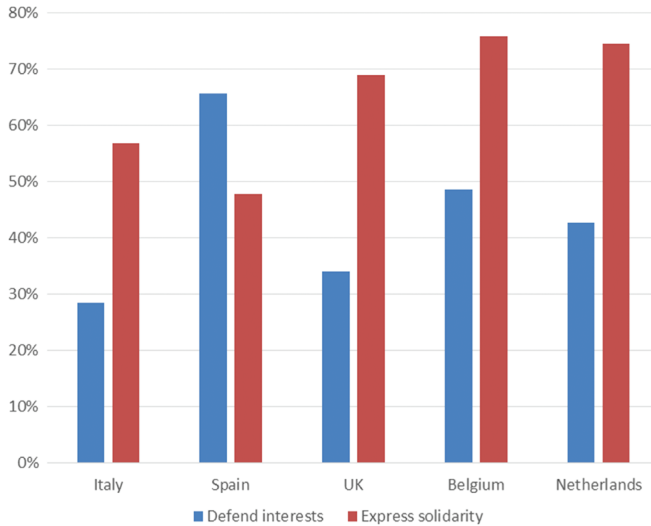
Figure 1. Motivations of participation by country (Sample N, without missing cases: 2915/2949).*
* Cr.s V of cross-tabulations are .22 for both items, significant at the .001 level.
Source: Survey results.

Identification

Collective identity formation is a complex process, which is not amenable to empirical research. As far as our data are concerned, the relevant indicators included in the questionnaire, which can be considered as proxies for collective identity, are identification with other demonstrators and the organizations staging the demonstration, as well as various motivations, values and norms that pushed participants onto the street.

As far as identification with other demonstrators and the organizations that called the march is concerned, this is generally very high, and not much difference can be found between countries: around 85 per cent in Spain, Belgium and the United Kingdom, 80 per cent in Italy and 72 per cent in the Netherlands identify quite a lot or very much with other participants. In parallel, 80 per cent in Belgium, about 70 per cent in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands, and around 60 per cent in Italy and Spain identify with the organizations (trade unions) staging the demonstration.[8] These data seem to confirm the general perception that demonstrations organized by trade unions attract individuals who are embedded within trade unions' networks or who are very close to them, even though this could have different motivations in different union models.

With regard to motivation, we focus on two items expressing to what extent participants are motivated by 'defending their interests' and by the need to 'express solidarity', both strongly related to the definition of collective identity discussed above. Figure 1 shows that people most motivated to defend interests are found among Spanish, Belgian and Dutch protestors, and those most motivated to express solidarity are again in Belgium, the Netherlands and – a bit less – the United Kingdom.

But both interests and solidarity can be politically framed in different ways. If we look at the left–right self-placement of the participants, they are more frequently on the left in Spain and Italy

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8   Sample N without missing cases: 3022 (participants) and 2930 (organizations). Cr.s V for cross-tabulation are, respectively: .14 and .17, both significant at the .001 level.
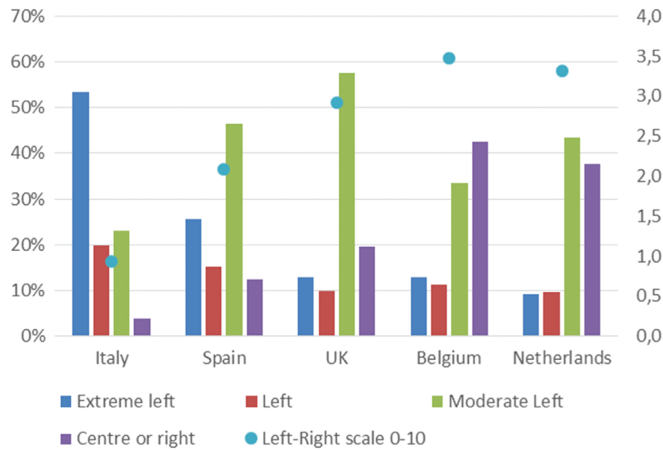
Figure 2. Left–right placement by country (Sample N, without missing case: 3043).*
* The 11-point scale has been aggregated as follows: 0 (extreme left), 1 (left), 2–3 (moderate left), 4–10 (centre or right). The Cr.s V of cross-tabulation is .27, significant at the .001 level. The ETA of the scale mean (where 'don't know' has been excluded) is .36, significant at the .001 level.
Source: Survey results.

than in other countries (Figure 2). Moreover, where in Belgium there is even a higher percentage of centre-right participants in comparison with moderate leftist, in the Netherlands the percentage of those placing themselves in the centre-right part of the spectrum is only a little bit smaller than the percentage of moderate leftists. In the United Kingdom the moderate left position prevails.

Political self-placement is mirrored in the values shared by participants in the different countries. A range of items on which respondents stated their degree of agreement was meant to capture the extent to which they hold leftist or libertarian values: the first item was how much they agree with 'redistribution', the second concerned the 'right to migrate', the third the importance of children obeying their parents and the last on 'privatization'. Figure 3 shows the percentage of participants strongly agreeing (for redistribution and migration) or disagreeing (for children and privatization). The line represents the mean by country on a normalized index from 0 to 1 (strongly agreeing on the first two items and disagreeing on the second two). As for left–right placement, participants share more leftist and libertarian values in Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom.

As mentioned in the introduction to this section, norms and values are embedded in practices and actions. Looking at the forms of action that the surveyed individuals have been involved in in the past, following the usual distinction in the literature on political participation, we considered contacting politicians and donating money as conventional expressive forms; boycotting, buying products for ethical reasons and using badges or stickers as expressive forms; and demonstrations, strikes and even the use of violence as more confrontational ones. Figure 4 shows that participants' repertoire of action includes more forms among participants in trade union demonstrations in Italy and Spain, but also in Belgium, where participants strike and use direct or violent forms of action much more than in the United Kingdom and the Netherlands.

Summarizing, collective identity is based on more leftist (and libertarian) values in Italy, Spain and the United Kingdom, and on more moderate values in Belgium and the Netherlands. Italy is the only country where the extreme leftist position is prevalent. But when we turn to the practices in which those values are embedded, we find more radical participants in Italy, Spain and Belgium. Overall, the oppositional trade union traditions in Italy and Spain, and the neo-corporatist trade
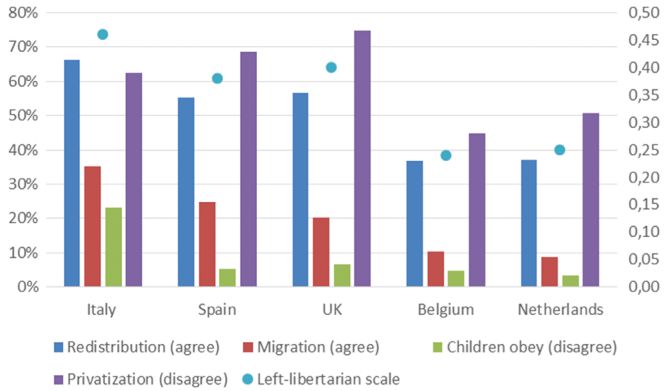
Figure 3. Left-libertarian values by country (percentages and means) (Sample N without missing cases: 3011).*
* The Cr.s V of the cross-tabulation are respectively: .23, .26, .26, .21, all significant at the .001 level. The ETA of the left-libertarian scale means is .32, significant at the .001 level.
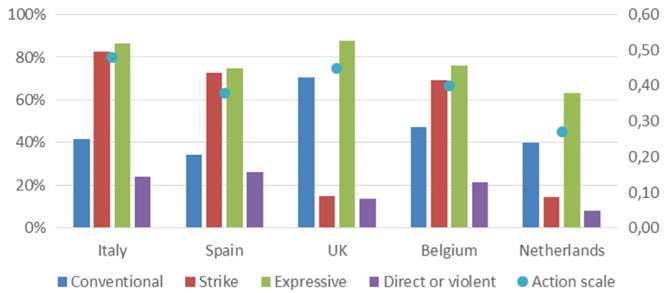Source: Survey results.

Figure 4. Repertoire by country (Sample N without missing cases: 3179).*
* The Cr.s V for each cross-tabulation are: . 20 (conventional), .60 (strike), .21 (expressive), .20 (direct or violent), all significant at the .001 level. The action scale indicator has been built as follows: A scale from 0 to 1, where 0 means the respondent engaged in no other type of political action in the past 12 months and 1 means the respondent engaged in all four other types. The ETA of the mean by country is .36, significant at the .001 level.
Source: Survey results.

unions' inclusion in the Netherlands may account for the differences found. The Belgian case is, however, more ambivalent: participants are more moderate in terms of values, but have more experience of the use of more disruptive protest.

Embeddedness

To operationalize network embeddedness we use three sets of variables: the first set includes the people with whom respondents were protesting (alone, with their family, with friends or colleagues, or with other members of the organization they belong to); the second includes the most important channels of information through which protesters knew about the demonstration (mainstream or alternative media, family, informal, work or organizational channels); the third encompasses their membership of different types of organization.
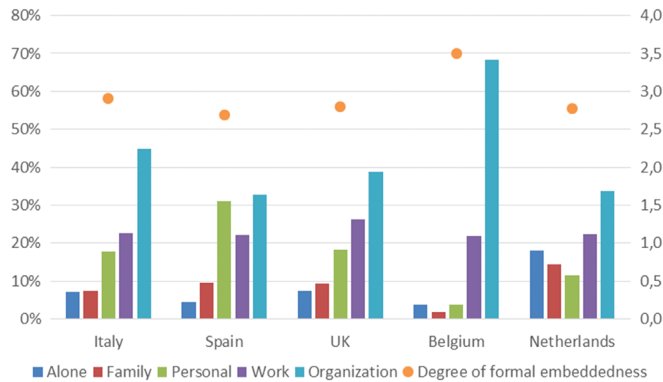
Figure 5. Network embeddedness (type and degree of formalization) by country (Sample N without missing cases: 3115).*
* The Cr.s V of the cross-tabulation is .20, and the ETA of the degree of formal embeddedness mean is .30, both significant at the .001 level.
Source: Survey results.

The first set of variables has been combined in a scale of network embeddedness. If a protesting person was alone, we allocated him or her a value of 0, if accompanied by members of the family 1; if with friends and acquaintances 2; if with colleagues 3; and with other members of an organization 4. Work and organization links are extremely important in the Netherlands and Belgium, where there is a strong identification with the organization that is organizing the demonstration. Here trade union demonstrations seem to be capable of mobilizing mainly workers and members of the organization. In the other countries, in particular in Spain, trade union-organized demonstrations are more capable of activating other networks as well, in particular personal ones (Figure 5).

Participants in trade union-staged demonstrations were asked how they found out about the demonstration (Figure 6). Organizations played a prominent role in spreading information for the purpose of mobilization in all the countries, with more importance in Belgium and the Netherlands. Mainstream media were important in spreading information in Italy and Spain, but very rarely so in the other countries we surveyed. Alternative/social networks online were important channels in the United Kingdom and Italy, which are the two countries with the highest percentage of young participants in the sample of respondents.

If we look at organizational membership (Figure 7), we can see that trade union affiliation was relevant in all cases, but especially so in Belgium and the Netherlands. The United Kingdom shows the largest variation in affiliation among those respondents who participated in trade union protests.

Summarizing, trade union networks and embeddedness seem very important for mobilization in all the countries, and in all countries trade unions rely on several networks to recruit protestors. However, in Belgium and the Netherlands more than in other countries, the organization that stages the march is the most important channel of recruitment.

Conclusions

While in Fordist society the class cleavage was proclaimed a thing of the past and the trade unions co-opted within institutional politics, neoliberalism and the crisis have brought mobilization against social inequality back on the streets (Della Porta, 2015). From surveys made at
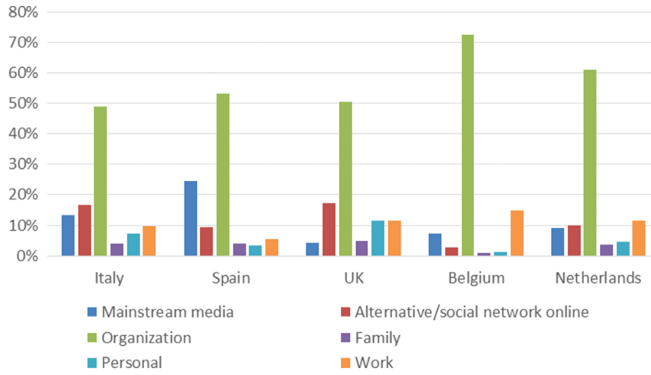
Figure 6. Most important channels of information (Sample N without missing cases: 2852).*
* The Cr.s V of the cross-tabulation is .16, significant at the .001 level.
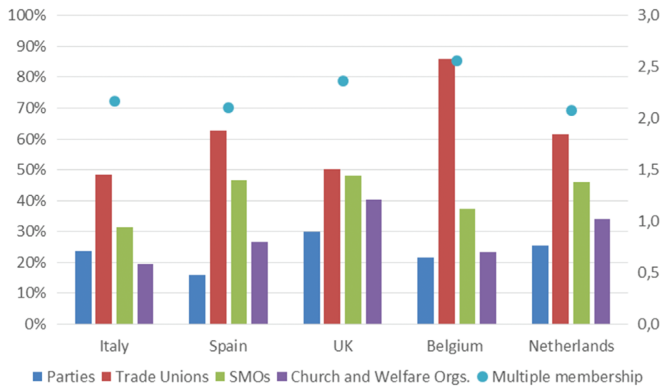Source: Survey results.

Figure 7. Organizational membership (type and multiple membership) by country (Sample N without missing cases: 3030).*
* Membership of types of organization are dummy variables (that is, variables that have only two values: 0 and 1). The Cr.s V of each cross-tabulation are: .09 (parties), .26 (trade unions), .12 (SMOs), and .15 (church and welfare organizations). Multiple membership ranges from 1 (none) to 4 (more than 3 organizations). The ETA of the mean is .20, significant at the .001 level.

demonstrations staged by trade unions in Belgium, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain and the United Kingdom at the peak of the financial crisis, we notice that those participating in these protest events have high levels of mistrust in politics. In general, they tend to identify with other participants, as well as with the unions. They also share left-wing visions about how to redress the situation. Finally, they are still embedded in dense organizational networks.

Within these similarities with regard to unions' (re)turn to the streets, we notice some cross-national differences, which seem to reflect different union traditions and different models of interest representation. In particular, in line with our expectations, participants in union-staged demonstrations in countries in which a corporatist model dominates are characterized by higher political trust, more moderate positions on the left–right continuum and stronger organizational ties. By contrast, in countries in which unions are less institutionally recognized and were for long

repressed, participants in union-staged demonstrations are more mistrustful of politics, located more to the left and rely more upon informal social networks to mobilize.

Recent research on trade unions has pointed to a search for new strategies that could make up for their loss of political influence, as well as loss of members. In the light of the precarization of the labour force, community organizing has re-emerged as a way to address a scattered potential base. Also, given harsh attacks on working conditions, including mass dismissals, radical forms of labour protest have re-emerged (Hyman, 2015). While our findings cannot tell us how widespread the use of protests by unions is in Italy, Spain, the United Kingdom, Belgium and the Netherlands (but see Hutter, 2014 for data on the increase in protests on socio-economic issues), they do indicate some characteristics of the unions' mobilizable base that could facilitate interactions with other movement organizations: from appeal to general values and strong discontent with institutional politics to embeddedness in broader networks and (still) high levels of collective identification. As research on Latin America has indicated, the weakening of corporatist agreements could bring about the development of loose alliances between labour and other movements with identification outside the working location (Silva, 2009). While some cross-national differences still exist, reflecting different models of interest representation, the general attacks on labour rights could explain a generally high level of similarities. More research on the general characteristics and experiences of union members and sympathizers is needed in order to understand the potential for broader alliances between 'old' and 'new' movements, which have often been pitted against each other but have, in reality, often supported each other, especially in hard times.

Funding

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Appendix

Demonstration	City/Country	Date	Number of returned questionaires	Goal 1	Goal 2	1 Organized by	2 Organized by
Retirement demonstration	Rotterdam	21 November 2009	294	To tackle the crisis together	65 must stay 65	Federation of Dutch trade unions (FNV), largest trade union organization of the Netherlands	Socialist Party. Parliamentary party on the very left of socialist on the political spectrum
March for Work	Brussels	29 January 2010	129	More jobs for young people and the unemployed	No more state aid to companies without conditions on the retention and creation of jobs	ABVV (Socialist trade union)	ACV (Christian trade union)
Demonstration against the new labour law	Santiago de Compostela	30 June 2010	168	Show my rejection of the lowering of dismissal	Show my rejection of welfare cuts	CCOO (Comisiones Obreras)	UGT (Unión General de trabajadores)
No to Austerity	Brussels	29 September 2010	144	The account of the crisis must be paid by the banks, not by the workers	The government should not save money but invest in green and renewable energy	ETUC European Trade Union Organization	ABVV
Against Labour Law	Madrid	29 September 2010	308	Against labour reform approved by the government	Workers should not cover the costs of the economic crisis, should make banks and other large corporations pay	CCOO (Comisiones Obreras)	
Fund our Future: Stop Education Cuts	London	10 November 2010	147	Defend rights of students and university staff	Secure accessible further and higher education for generations to come	NUS/UCU	

Appendix (continued)

Demonstration	City/Country	Date	Number of returned questionaires	Goal 1	Goal 2	1 Organized by	2 Organized by
Together strong for public work	The Hague	17 February 2011	348	No budget cuts without reducing tasks	To show that we demand respect and quality in our jobs	Abvakabo FNV, the largest union in the public sector. They represent the interests of workers in different occupations, from hospitals to post offices, from university to public transport. Abvakabo FNV has about 350,000 members.	CNV, Public Affairs is a union for: personnel in government, staff of independent governmental institutions, health care workers, staff in welfare
TUC's March for the Alternative: Jobs, growth, Justice	London	26 March 2011	211	Give a national voice to all those affected by the cuts in spending on public services	Show that people reject the argument that there is no alternative to cuts in spending	Trades Union Congress	
General strike	Florence		235	Workers' rights	Social justice	CGIL (Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro)	
Non-profit demos	Brussels	6 January2012	197	Problems in the non-profit sector	The government urgently has to come to an agreement with the non-profit sector on a new social plan	ACV: Christion union	LBC-NVK

Appendix (continued)

Demonstration	City/Country	Date	Number of returned questionaires	Goal 1	Goal 2	1 Organized by	2 Organized by
Stop budget cuts	The Hague	19 September 2011	293	To stop the stacking of budget cuts on care and welfare	To stop budget cuts without vision in purchasing power, job security and tasks	Chronisch Zieken en Gehandicapten Raad Nederland (Dutch Council of the Chronically Ill and the Disabled). The council is an umbrella organization for organizations of people with a chronic disease or disability. It represents over 160 national and regional organizations.	FNV (Federatie Nederlandse Vakbeweging; Federation of Dutch Labour Unions). This is an association of unions that works for the interests of employees and persons entitled to benefit.
We have alternatives	Brussels	5 December 2011	169	Current economic problems	Eliminating the public deficit has to be done by raising new revenues, not by austerity measures	ABVV: Socialist union	ACV: Christion union
No Monti Day	Rome	27 October 2012	193	Against Monti's government	For another Europe	Movimento No Tav Val di Susa	Comitato No Debito

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