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Self-organized educational workers in a context of trade unions'
representation crisis: a comparison between Italy and Spain*

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Trade Unions' crisis of representation and revitalization strategies: an introduction to the doctoral thesis

Introduction

The present section is an introduction to the doctoral thesis on the arising of self-organized movement of social workers in the outsourced public services in Italy and Spain, organized as a collection of independent but interconnected papers. The dissertation especially focuses on the relationship between traditional and new actors of the industrial relations in a context of trade unions crisis' of representation, accounting for the peculiarity of the social sector. The main research interest is the cooperation between old and new actors of the labour movement as a possible answer to the institutional voice's decline of trade unions, exacerbated during the last sovereign debt and financial crisis in these two countries.

This section will be mainly dedicated to reviewing the existent literature on trade unions crisis of representation and renewal. A second smaller part will introduce the collection of papers by presenting the topic and its relevance in the light of the literature considered. Finally, the structure and the content of the different articles will be briefly illustrated.

Trade unions' decline and renewal: a literature overview

This first part dedicated to the literature review has been divided in four main paragraphs. Firstly, the various sources of labour power will be introduced, as a fundamental stepping stone around which the various theories and approaches on trade unions strategies articulate; second, the theories on the trade union crisis of representations will be traced back, starting from the classic theory on the logic of collective action and considering the contributions from social movement literature; third, the state of the art of the revitalization studies will be presented

Trade unions' power and strategies

One of the first important classification of labour power provided by the literature operates a distinction between the structural and the associational (or organizational) power (Wright 2000, Silver 2003). The first is related to the workers' position in the labour market, according to the sector of reference, or to the degree of specialization required. The second is tied to the ability of the working class in influencing their counterpart by organizing through trade unions and labour parties.

Ganz (2000) introduces the concept of “resourcefulness”, which refers to the capability of compensate the scarcity in terms of resources with creative strategies. The “strategic action” is defined on the base of the role played by organization and leadership in influencing the interaction among the actors of a given context. According to this view, an abundance of resources can paradoxically represent an obstacle to the need of strategic innovation, in a situation of changing environment. Conversely, new groups with less resources can result more effective in thinking strategically, also because the lack of strategic legacies. On this respect, Hyman (2007) lately underline the role of the organizational learning and “creative destruction” to boost trade unions’ strategic thinking.

The institutional power represents a further important labour resource detected by the literature. Dörre *et al* (2009), integrate the role of institutions in their “Jena power resources approach”. The institutional power is defined as the set of legal provisions protecting labour, establishing mechanism of collective bargaining and trade unions’ participation in policy making. This approach also reiterate the relevance of the strategic choice: institutions deeply influence the power relationship, but power resources are considered as the necessary but not sufficient condition for labour to succeed. Strategic capabilities are conceived as essential in this sense. One can define it as the ability of effectively activate and combine the resources available. Lévesque and Murray (2010) built a model of trade unions’ power based on this concept. Union capacity, together with the institutional arrangement and the opportunities structure, define the whole labour power. Union capacity is given by a mix of resources and capabilities. The authors detect respectively four types of resources and four types of capabilities. They distinguish the resource of internal solidarity as the cohesion of union’s members and activist; the external solidarity as the development of external ties based on the cooperation; narrative resources such as the range of shared understanding aimed to spread identity and interests; and infrastructural resources referred to the financial and human capital. The four connected strategic capabilities are the intermediation, which is the ability to deal with different kind of actors; the framing, as the capacity of contextualize a problematic issue into a specific framework; the articulation, consisting in the coordination of different level of action; and the learning, as the capacity of identifying and correct errors, overcoming the strategic legacies.

Webster (2015) operates a distinction between the “old” and the “new” sources of power. Structural and associational powers are considered the old ones, while logistic and societal

powers are emerging as answer to the “race to the bottom” effect (Silver, 2003). Logistic power is defined as a form of structural power through which *disruptive politics are drawn from the workplace into the public arena* (Webster, 2015: 1), while the societal power is seen as the capacity of enlarge the scope of an issue to the social sphere to build alliance with social movements, or by using other strategies to influence the political agenda.

The various model on trade unions’ action try to explain which are the factors influencing trade unions strategic choice. The main approaches on trade union strategic action are connected with two main school of thought: the historic institutionalism and the actor-centered perspective. According to the first, institutions shape actors’ behavior and their relationship in a given environment by setting the rules, procedures and practices. The Clegg's collective bargaining model of trade unionism (1976) represents one of the most important contribution to this approach. In the model proposed by the author, the main determinant of trade union behavior is the bargaining structure, which is determined in turn by the employers’ organization. The “path dependence” is a recurrent concept which underlines the role of institutional legacies in influencing trade unions’ strategies. By contrast, the actor-centered perspective lies on the role of ideas and strategic capacity of the actors. Kochan *et al* (1986) provided for the very first conceptualization of the *strategic choice* in industrial relations, looking in particular to employer strategies in US. The authors openly criticize the “contingency theory” which attributed deterministically the organizational structure to the surrounding environment. They argue instead that strategic decision making develop autonomously contributing to shape the relationship of power.

However, other contributions try to bring together the two approaches by considering the role of trade union strategies in the institutional change. The actor-centered institutionalism approach (Sharpf, 1997) proposes a framework based on the integration of rational choice and institutionalism to study policy making. Similarly, the “variety of capitalism” theory (Hall and Soskice, 2000) considers the role of institutions in shaping the structure of opportunities of the economic agents. Hyman’s theory on trade union identity (2001) also put a bridge between “partisan legacies” and strategic choice by considering trade union identity as a mix of class mobilization, labour market and social integration. Trade unionism in UK, Italy and Germany are considered the prototypes resulting from the combination of this three components. The “social movement model of trade unions strategic choice” of Frege and Kelly (2003) integrates Hyman’s

theory with a more explicit role of the institutions. The authors consider three institutional variable affecting trade unions' action: industrial relation system, union structure and employer strategy. Openly inspired to the social movement theory (cfr. next paragraph) they consider the “framing” effect of trade union identity as a process variable influencing trade unions strategy.

According to this approach, institutions and societal changes further affect trade unions actions. Streeck and Thelen (2005) provide for an important contribution on the topic of institutional change. They detect four pattern of institutional reorganization, in which trade unions can be conceived as institutions. The possible combinations of the result of the change (continuity of discontinuity) and the process of the change, (incremental or abrupt) can give rise to a situation of reproduction by adaptation, gradual transformation, survival and return or breakdown and replacement. Another perspective look at trade unions as an agents instead of an institution: the model on trade unions strategies to face changes of Regalia (2009) goes in this direction. The author considers two dimensions: degree of awareness of the change in progress (high or low) and degree of interest or availability to innovate the logic of action (high or low). The categories obtained by crossing these dimensions are strategies of preservation, strategies of resistance to the change, strategies of extension of established practices of representation or strategies of reconfiguration or diversification of traditional practices.

Finally, one have to mention the comparative research on the evolvement of trade unionism to face new challenges undertook by Gumbrell-McCormick and Hyman (2013), which try to systematically put together different revitalization experiences in Europe. The authors conclude the countries review arguing the need of reconcile trade unions strategies and democracy. This goal can be achieved through the representative democracy, by making the trade unions' leader more accountable; or by strengthen the direct democracy and participation, in order to regain legitimacy on the eyes of their base.

Logic of collective action and trade unions' crisis of representation

The concept of the trade union crisis' of representation have to be traced back to the theories on the logic of the collective action. Olson (1965), detects into the free riding an intrinsic paradox affecting the collective action. Free-riding can be defined as the appropriation of a common good by individuals who did not contribute to produce it. In the theory, rational individuals will join a collective action according to the perceived benefit it will lead to in terms of difference between

efforts required and results expected. A particular attention is dedicated to trade unions, as organizations particularly at risk of free riding. Working conditions' improvements as a results of a trade unions' collective action, indeed, will be hardly circumscribed to the people joining the action, or to trade unions' members. In the Olson's analysis, big encompassing organization overcome externally the free riding risk, but the logic of representation on which they rely reproduce it internally. Trade unions in some European countries represent general interest and play a relevant role the socio-economic context. Consequently, they have to filter and synthesize the heterogeneous demands coming from the rank-and-files. If the latter deem not to be adequately represented, they can leave the organization in favor of others subjects representing specific interests. Thus, the unions' base "free ride" as it put personal interests above the general ones (for instance, wage increasing vs inflation's containment). Hirshman (1982) criticized Olson by arguing that the identity component has a strong impact on the personal incentives to join a collective action. In fact, the participation can constitute a value and a benefit *per se*.

Olson also inspired the development of a new paradigm in the social movement studies, developing under the impetus of the social movements' wave of the '70s. The mobilizations occurring all around Europe in the two years period 1968-70 represented the empirical base for the elaboration of the classic theory on the crisis of representation. Pizzorno (1978) articulated this theory around two interconnected concept: the political exchange and the two logic of class action. The first concept refers to the three typologies of bargaining detected by the author: the individual exchange of labour for salary occurring between worker and employer; a collective exchange involving workers and employers' representatives consisting in workers' benefit for against the certainty and the stability of the production; and a third exchange occurring in the so called "political market", in which social peace is exchanged for labour rights and better working condition. This strategy require the trade unions' capacity to mobilize its base, and the State's incentive in keeping the social peace to gain political consensus. The political exchange strategy can also trigger a crisis of representation, provoked by the opposition of two different logic of collective action. Pizzorno argues the occurrence of this two logics of action put in place respectively to trade unions and new movements, looking at the contentions of the '70s. The logic undertook by the new collective identities was based on the direct participation of its members. The protests presented high level of conflict, and its scope had a very general extent, resulting scarcely negotiable. In fact, the scope of the conflict was to strengthen the internal

cohesion of the group and, consequently, the collective identity. The “logic of organization” pursued by trade unions is characteristic of consolidated organizations. Stable relationships of trust built over time allow setting a system of delegation, which give raise to standard procedure. The participation can be expressed by the act of the registration. The request of these organizations are specific and negotiable, and they tend to resort to strategy of conflict containment, as the political exchange. The arising of new actors in the labour movement is the consequence of a trade unions’ crisis of representation. These movements disagree with the strategy of self-containment pursue by unions, so they emerge to contrast such practice. According to Pizzorno, in the cycle of protests of ‘70s, Italian trade unions were able to interact with social movements and ensure the support of their own base by calibrating the two logics of actions, centralizing and decentralizing their action according to the perceived effectiveness of a given strategy.

A further important contribution to the theoretical framework of the logic of the collective action is provided by the study of Schmitter and Streeck (1981) on the business associations. The authors developed a model articulated around two logic of action and two functional exigencies. The logic of membership and the logic of influence are respectively related to an internal and external effectiveness. The first logic refers to the internal efficacy with reference to the members’ interest representation, while the second respond to the external influence in the relationship with the institutions. The functional exigencies of an organization are the logic of goal formation, referring to the process of elaboration of the objectives, while the logic of effective implementation is relate to the way of combining efficiently the resources available to fulfill such objectives. The authors look at the organizations development according to the characteristics of four dimensions: the domain, the structure, the resources and the policy output. The latter refers to the collective goods which can be obtained by the collective action (solidarity, public, selective and monopoly collective goods), and can be related to the four logics detected. Zan (1992) recall the two logic of action proposed by Schmitter and Streeck in one of the organization’s dilemma he detect by studying the interests’ organizations. On the one hand, strengthen the internal democracy of an organization will get members closer, according to the logic of membership. On the other hands, the more an organization decentralize the decision making, the more difficult will be to broaden the scope of the collective action in order to result influent in the external relations. Zan is openly inspired to the “trade union’s dilemma” theorized

by Regini (1982). According to the latter, the primary goal of an organization is to maximize the benefits of its members. In the case of trade unions, this intrinsic goal generate in turn a crucial dilemma: representing the specific interest of their members or representing the entire category of workers enlarging its scope of action. The logic of influence will prevail in the case of big encompassing organizations with the monopoly of the representations. Regini traces back such explanation to Italian trade unions' shift toward a strategy of social partnership after '70.

In that historical moment, the arising of social movement stimulated the development of a flourishing literature on social movement. As already introduced before, Olson's contribution resulted of extreme importance also for the social movement theory. In fact, the Olsonian approach of collective action signed a breaking point into the discipline, previously dominated by the "collective behaviorism" (Smelser, 1962) which was assuming the grievance as the main determinant of the collective action. Olson boosted the emergence of the *resources mobilization approach* (McCarty and Zald, 1977), according to which the sole grievance was no longer a satisfying explanation for collective action. Social movements were conceived as rational actors relying on a cost-benefit logic determined by a structure of preferences, given in turn by the resource's availability and the strategic organization. The rationalist approach would have dominated all the subsequent development of American studies on social movement, leading to the elaboration of the "Political Process Theory", emerged in the 80s. The *political opportunity structure* represent a central concept on this approach, accounting for the role of institutions, politics and collective action. It is defined as the dynamic political context which can foster the arising of social movements. In the theoretical model of McAdam (1982), the collective action is determined by the expansion of the political opportunities structure, together with the enhancing of the indigenous organization and the "cognitive liberation" from the dominant narrative. The contribution of Tarrow (1994) add a cyclical component to the general theory. The cycle of contention represent the enlargement of single episodes of contentions around "cycle of reforms". Social movements arise thanks to the opening of "windows of opportunities" in the public and social sphere. Then, they develop in a cyclical way: they will constantly demobilize, and/or constantly radicalize in terms of escalation of conflict and violence, until being stigmatized and totally repressed; or, conversely, they will evolve in a different subject in terms of structure and organization. The political opportunities structure will determine cyclically the emergence of

social movements. The term “social movement waves” refers to social movements’ cyclical nature.

Tarrow’s theory was based on a previous empirical research on the Italian cycle of protest in the decade 1965-1975. The author underline the peculiarity of the Italian movement and establish a direct connection between cycle of contention and the consolidation of democratic institutions. The length of the protests, the dynamics of the contentions and the reforms resulting from the mobilization generated a deep change in the Italian political culture and endowed the country with new tool for democratic participation (Tarrow, 1989).

The last contribution complementing the theory on the political opportunity structure is the *framing process* (Benford and Snow, 2000), according to which the political opportunity have to be necessarily complemented by the element of the awareness. The possibility of exploiting a favorable chance to claiming request in front of the authority need to be “framed” and interpreted at collective level.

In the European approach on Social movement, the *New Social Movements* theory emphasizes the structural determinant of the collective action and its intrinsic identity component, insisting on the rupture from the class-based pattern of conflicts in the post-industrial era. New movement identity-based struggling for their recognition were opposed to the “old” movement arising for material issues (as trade unionism). The latter were expected to progressively marginalize their role in the post-industrial society. Melucci (1989) define the novelty of this movement on the base of several characteristics he detects: the centrality of information, new form of organization, global awareness and integration of the latent and the visible (the personal and the political side). Beside being among the main theorist on the European approach on social movements, Touraine and della Porta provided for useful contributions on the relationship between trade unions and new social movement. According to Touraine (1984) trade unionism is made of two component difficult to combine in a single labour movement. It is possible simplifying these two categories into two general concepts: corporativism and equalitarism. On the one hand, coherently to the representations’ crisis theory, the more trade unions get close to influence the political power, the more they will detach from their base. On the other hand, the alliance with new identity-based social movements could represents a chance to build a unified labour movement, at the risk of increase, in turn, the detachment with the working class. Looking at new social movements arising in the 2000, della Porta (2006) argues a sort of contaminations between “critical unions”

(so defined in opposition to traditional unions) and such movements, fostered by the institutionalization of the labour conflict and the involvement of labour issues on the global justice movements. Specifically, according to the author such contamination is expressed by the marked disrupted nature of the repertoire of action (e.g. wildcat strikes); and by the networking structure of heterogeneous actors, developed to contrast the hierarchical structures of traditional trade unionism. In a more recent study on the anti-austerity movements, della Porta (2016) notes that in some countries the action undertaken by traditional unions developed separately from the protest camp initiatives of the Occupy movement. Using her words, the fragmentation of the action was a result of the *organizational divergences* (which) *have made coalition building difficult, notwithstanding compatible substantial demands* (della Porta, 2016, p. 420).

With the severe trade union crisis occurring at the end of the '70s, some industrial relations scholars started to look at social movement theories to elaborate a new approach aimed to restore trade unions influence.

Trade Union revitalization: recipes against the decline

The end of the mid-century compromise and the societal and economic changes marking the entrance in the so called “post industrial era” posed important challenge to the labour movement. Baccaro and Howell (2011) examine the development of the main indicators on the institutional characteristics of industrial relations in 30 years (1974-2005) and argue a common trajectory of institutional re-shaping toward the neoliberal model of industrial relations. The studies on *trade union revitalization* (or trade union renewal) start to develop in the '80s as a consequence of the trade unions' decline, manifesting through generalized downward trend in terms of membership and collective bargaining coverage. This field of studies also emerged as an answer to the *transformational literature*: an approach which emphasize the role of strategic human resources management in facing the transformation in progress by influencing corporate management and policy making (Kochan and Useem, 1992). The revitalization scholars critic the individualistic perspective developed by transformational theories and the extreme reliance to the employers' side, claiming for the need of innovative strategies to restore trade unions' influence (Turner, 2005).

Beherens, Hamann and Hurd (2004) provide for a possible definition of “revitalization”, given by the development of four dimensions: the bargaining power, the political power, the membership density and the institutional vitality (namely, the degree of openness on institutional reforms).

Buroway (2007) detect in the third wave of marketization (in 1974, after the first oil shock) the reason of the gradual switch from the prevalence of the Marxist to the Polanyian concept of class struggles on the labour studies, respectively corresponding to two revitalization strategies: the Marxist struggle based on the alliance among the exploited workers, at local as well as international level; and the Polanyian struggles of the communities affected by the commodification. An important component of the revitalization studies indeed argues the need of enlarging the traditional trade unions' field of action to the social sphere by collaborating to community groups (Waver, 1998). This perspective constitute the pillar of the *social movement unionism*, representing the most popular concept developed into the framework of the revitalization studies. Social movement unionism was defined for the first time with reference to the joint role played by trade unions and the civil society in the democratization's process of South Africa (Webster and Lambert, 1988). Subsequently, social movement unionism became popular also among American and European industrial relations scholars. Watermann (1993) endorses this approach by referring to the theory on new social movement. He agrees with this literature on the occurrence of a cleavage in the contents of the post-industrial contentions. While the trade unionism of the Keynesian capitalism was tied to the political concept of class, the post industrial contentions emphasized a social and identity component. Moody (1988, 1997) detects into the international social movement unionism a promising conceptual tool to face the new economic system based on the lean production. In the authors' view, social movement unionism implies an effort to radicalize the trade unions' action and form alliance between labor and social movements, which could be possible through fluid subject, as rank-and-files movements. Traditional consolidated unions are criticized for being highly bureaucratic and not interested in mobilize unorganized workers, so they most likely will pursue conservative strategies.

The different theoretic contributions outline a large variety of terms used in a interchangeable and sometimes confusing way when referring to the labour movement revitalization. However, organizing and coalition building resume the main strategic application of this concept. Hurds and Rouse (1989) take the *Justice for Janitors campaign* as an example to contradict Moody. *Justice for Janitors* was one of the most popular organizing campaigns set by the Service Employees International Union (SEIU), resulting effective in organizing unorganized peripheral workers (in that case janitors, mainly less-educated black woman), obtaining better working conditions while avoiding job cuts. Such results were possible for the conspicuous investment of

SEIU in terms of resources, together with the solidarity provided by the local community in supporting the campaign. In 1995 the change of leadership in the major American union federation AFL-CIO signed the shift toward organizing as core union strategy with the aim of revitalize the American labour movement (Bronferbrenner *et al*, 1998). Voss and Sherman (2000) criticize Moody and the classic theory on the “iron law of the oligarchy”, according to which the organizational imperative implies necessarily a hierarchic leadership mainly committed in self-preservation objectives, to the detriment of the rank-and-files interest. The authors observe the cases of trade unions local unit in US adopting organizing strategies with the aim of detecting the main variables leading the strategic shift. They find three main causes influencing the process of transformation in what they called “fully revitalized unit”: the political crisis, the role of outside innovator and the centralized pressure. They conclude that the revitalized local unit had not become less bureaucratic nor less structured than before adopting organizing strategies. In stating this, they reject the theory according to which consolidated structure are bound to distance themselves to their base’s interest. Baccaro *et al* (2003) argue that the adoption of revitalization strategies is influenced by the institutional resources available. Paradoxically, strong institutional connections will lead unions to disregard organizing, which could decrease their associational power in the long run; but at the same time trade unions’ action without institutional support result hard to manage, as in the case of AFL-CIO strategies. Heery *et al* (2000) examine the first attempt of transfer organizing campaign in UK. The authors recognize the value of this strategy in trying to restore the traditional trade unions presence in the workplace. Among the shortcoming of the organizing, they detect the necessity of a conspicuous amount of resources, which can give raise to internal resistance given by the need of transfer resources to organizing activities. About ten years after, Simms *et al* (2012) return to evaluate the application of organizing strategies in UK, concluding that this strategy has been mainly applied to pursue the goal of member increase without actually foster members’ participation and it failed in strengthen workplace unionism.

Even if organizing strategies have been applied especially in those countries with a liberal market orientation, some studies bring to the attention cases of trade unions embedded in solid coordinated marked economies resorting to actions inspired to social movement unionism. Turner (2009) reflects on the viability of social movement unionism in Germany as an answer to the challenges of the labour deregulation. Looking at the historical German path, he proposes a

perspective integrating institutional building with actor-centered revitalization strategies by considering the role of coalition building with social movements in creating and strengthening industrial relations institutions. Very recent researches consider the application of the organizing model on Netherland, noticing as this strategy is acquiring consent also in consolidated neo-corporative industrial relations system (Connolly *et al*, 2017).

The coalition building can be considered part of the organizing strategy, but some scholars define it separately in order to detect specific pattern of interaction. A first definition of coalition building strategy is provided by Frege, Heery and Kelly (2004). The authors proposed a category articulated around two perspectives. The first considers the interaction and balance of interests among the actors; while the second looks at the status of the actors into the decision making process (insider or outsider). Three different scenarios result according to the degree of development of the first dimension considered: the vanguard coalition, led by an organization receiving support by external actors not directly affected; a common cause coalition in which the actors share a common goal on temporary base and an integrative coalition of actors interacting on a stable basis to fulfill common objectives. The status of the actor into the decision making outlines a possible coalition of interest when they are insiders, and a coalition of protest when they are outsiders, denoting a radicalization of the action. Tattersall (2010) contributed to the study of the coalition building by detecting further dimensions under which observing the strategy of “union community coalition”. The model of Tattersall is built around the combination of four variables: the common interest of the coalition, the structure of the coalition, the organizational buy-in and the geographic space. The patterns emerging by the variables’ combination are the ad-hoc coalition, with a temporary and instrumental nature; the support coalition and mutual support coalition based on a stronger organizational involvement and, to a different extent, to a more stable structure and relationship of trust; and the deep coalition present an high development of all the four variables. Tattersall proposes four way to evaluate the outcomes of a coalition involved in a given issue: the achievement of the common goal; the introduction of the issue on the political agenda; the creation of sustainable relationships; and the strengthen of the coalition partners.

The consistent number of studies undertaken since '90 made the social movement unionism particularly popular, especially in the Anglo-Saxon countries. However, some aspects of this concept have been object of critics. Kelly (1998) disagrees with the occurrence of a cleavage

leading to the progressive overcoming of class-based labour movement, while arguing that the changes occurring in the capitalist societies have a cyclical nature. He rejects the supposed novelty of the collective subject emerged during the last long wave of contention and notices how in reality such new identities match class and non class issues. The authors take as example the case of gay and lesbian employees joining the union and creating a specific section.

Other contributions take issue with the application of the concept of social movement unionism on the Western democracies. Robinson (2000) calls into question whether the neo-liberal restructuring actually pushes toward the development and spread of the social movement unionism. He proposes a model articulated around two dimensions of trade union leadership: level of criticism on the system and level of inclusiveness. Four ideal-types of unionism emerge by crossing these variables: the business unionism, characterized by the lack of developed mechanisms of internal democracy and a scarce activation of the base; the social movement unionism as a form of highly inclusive and critical unionism; the social unionism as an inclusive but not critical orientation; and the sectarian unionism as a critical and exclusive pattern of representing particular segments of the labor force. Robinson argues that the neoliberal restructuring is pushing the trade unions' action in the US toward a form of social unionism rather than social movement unionism, since the shift of strategy of AFL-CIO was lacking of a real critical component on the representation system. Von Holdt (2002) is also skeptical about the application of this concept in the global North. Trade unions' struggle in South Africa together with the local community were embedded in the context of the apartheid regime, so the role of the identity had a crucial impact on the contentions, which were characterized by a high degree of conflict and violence. For these reasons, the author rejects the argument of the neoliberalism pushing toward social movement unionism, as it results extremely hard to transfer this strategy to consolidated Western democracies.

Fairbrother (2008) refuses to conceive the social movement unionism as a particular trade unions' orientation. He rather endorses the concept of "trade union as social movement", stressing the inborn social movement component of trade unionism. This can emerge in particular circumstances, or can be restored. Other critics to social movement unionism developed around the evidence that this approach tackles with strategies mainly addressed to traditional trade unions, while few attention is given to the arising of new subjects and alternative forms of representation. Sullivan (2010) criticizes the organizing strategies for being extremely oriented

to the membership increase, erroneously considered the main indicator of trade unions power. According to the author the strategies resulting from this approach are too markedly *density biased*, representing a union-centric perspective. Upchurch and Mathers (2012) criticize the component the of social movement unionism inspired to the new social movements theories. For the authors, the radicalization of the action and coalition building strategies have to be led by a political class-based component. The revitalization theories have to account for the role played by the state and the institutional context in fostering the adoption of “radical” answer ideology-based against neoliberalism. Ness (2014) provides for an exhaustive collection of cases on the new forms of workers organization around the world. The author looks in particular at alternatives forms of rank-and-file unionism as a consequence of the crisis of the bureaucratic and institutionalized unionism. In his opinion, this forms of unionism derive directly from the anarchist and socialist workers movement of the early 20th century, characterized by the centrality of the struggle against capitalism, self and direct action of workers. Social movement unionism is criticized for underestimating the importance of workers direct participation. Connolly *et al* (2014) examine the development of “radical” form of unionism in Europe emerged during the past economic downturn. The authors provide a wide definition of “radical” unionism, enclosing subject mainly oriented to the class-based militant action and considering themselves as opposed to major trade unions. The economic crisis and the involvement of the rank-and-files are supposed to increase the level of conflict of the collective action. This organizations are seen as promising subjects for empower the labour movement from a revitalized perspective, accounting for a class-based component.

In general, it is possible to conclude by arguing that the last economic crisis represents a further challenge for trade unionism, as well as an opportunities to deal with changes and revive its role in the society.

Theoretical framework and object of the study

The main idea underpinning the literature on revitalization studies is to compensate the weakness in terms of structural and institutional power with the external solidarity by enlarging the traditional trade unions’ field of action. The institutional path dependence emerge as a possible obstacle to the shift of strategic orientation toward grassroots initiatives. The tension between institutions and actors is also a recurrent topic into the academic debate. The perspective

recognizing the role of social movement in the development of democratic institutions creates an effective bridge between these two competing approaches. As underlined by some scholars, the institutional strengthening has to be the ultimate objective of the revitalization strategies, as it represents the main tool by which trade unions can result in influence in the workplace as well as in the public debate. Moreover, such perspectives allow to apply the principle of the social movement unionism also to countries with a coordinated market economy orientation. For the Mediterranean countries, there is a scarcity of contribution related to the trade unions revitalization studies. It mainly depends on the evidence that trade unions in Southern Europe are not particularly involved in revitalization strategies. There, the dynamics characterizing the labour movement during the economic crisis are better explained by the classic theory on the trade unions' crisis of representation.

The aim of this dissertation is to apply this theoretical framework in the actual context of institutional voice decline. One wants to explore 1) the potentials of coming back to a logic of movement by allying with the social movements emerging as a consequence of the trade union crisis of representation, 2) the factors influencing the interaction with conventional and non-conventional actors of industrial relations and 3) the role of a social movement wave of contention in shaping such interaction. These two countries present important differences at the institutional level, but both major trade unions share a common historical and strategic path of former closeness with social movements and a subsequent shift toward social partnership. Both countries are currently affected by the decline of the institutional influence and are experimenting the arising of movement of workers organizing beyond the traditional channels of the trade unions representation. The arising self-organized groups of workers during the crisis did not receive much of academic attention. Yet, these movements are peculiar as they incorporate logic of movement with specific labour issues and experiment innovative "radicalized" repertoire of contention. In the Spanish context a generalized social discontent fosters the emergence of national social movement claiming for a democratic management of the crisis and fighting against austerity policies in the public sector (as 15M and *mareas ciudadana*). The objective of the comparative perspective is to consider the implications of national dynamics into the local labour movement dynamics characterized by the interaction between trade unions and self-organized workers, the outcome resulting from such interaction and the role of the institutional path dependence.

The social sector has been chosen as it presents several characteristics making it particularly suitable in light of the main focus of the research. Firstly, the social workers' working conditions are experiencing a dramatic worsening because of the outsourcing policies led by austerity measures; second, these workers result difficult to mobilize because of the scarce efficacy of traditional collective actions on this sector and the difficulty of developing a class awareness; third, trade union action in the public sector is easily influenced by strategic legacies; but (four) this sector also represents a particularly good field to experiment strategies of alliance with community and social movements for the extreme social value it has by definition.

The selected cases are based on the mobilizations of self-organized educational workers in Italy and Spain during the crisis as one of the most precarious professional figures in the outsourced social service in the two countries. The objective of the dissertation is to contribute to the debate on trade unions' revitalization in Southern Europe by detecting potentials, obstacles and opportunities of a strategy of cooperation with self-organized workers to restore the labour movement. The case studies have been conducted by means of in-depth interviews to trade unions officers and representatives, social movements activists, self-organized workers and other relevant social and institutional actors. A total of 35 interviews has been collected between November 2015 and March 2017 in the two countries, together with notes from the overt participant observation of assemblies, public initiatives and collective actions (strikes, sit-ins, parades, public meetings) organized by the actors involved in the contentions. *Comisiones Obreras* in Spain and *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* in Italy are the traditional unions considered in the research because of their left-wing ideology and their former closeness to social movements which should hypothetically make them closer to self-organized movements compared to the other respective main confederation.

The thesis is structured into three independent but interconnected articles: the first two articles are based on the single case studies. They respectively consist in the within case comparison of the different strategies and orientations of Italian and Spanish trade unions. The third article is based on the comparison of the two cases and tries to answer to the main research question. Every article presents a paragraph of literature review adding specific literature country-based to the general theoretical framework, and a methodology section. Lastly, a conclusive part will summarize the main evidence emerged in the three articles and the contributions the research provided into the debate on trade union revitalization and coalition-building with new movements.

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Trade Unions and Self-organized Groups of Educational Workers in Italy¹

Abstract: The privatization of social services has brought about many social claims regarding the increase of labour market deregulation and employment insecurity during the last years of economic crisis. This article focuses on the experience of self-organized groups of educational workers (*educatori*) in Bologna (Centre-North of Italy) between 2011 and 2016 as a significant case of precarious workers' mobilisation in a local context and specific sector. Several self-organized groups of precarious workers like these ones have spread throughout Europe trying to compete with trade unions for the representation of their interests in the current crisis. The main aim of this research is to describe and to explain the interaction between self-organized groups and trade unions in the outsourced social sector. According to that, new horizons for labour movements and social change can be analysed by exploring the obstacles and the opportunities of the interaction between these two subjects.

Introduction

The Italian trade unions have been able to revive their influence on the public agenda, in a moment in which almost everywhere in Europe trade unions were facing a long period of slowdown membership (Pulignano, 2007). That was mainly determinate by the switch to a political exchange strategy with governmental institutions (Regini, 1981). Historically, the main Italian trade union CGIL has been characterized by a more marked “logic of movement” (Pizzorno, 1978) transpiring in the militant action and the rapprochement with rank-and-file movements of workers. The role of CGIL during the wave of contention of the ‘70s was probably the most fitting example of such orientation.

Trade unions' influence decline in the public sphere has exacerbated the skepticism of their base, contributing to the arising of groups organized by precarious workers beyond the traditional patterns of representation.

The research focuses on how self-organized groups of precarious workers and trade unions interact in the Italian scenario by exploring and describing which obstacles and incentives they have to ally with or not, to compete with for representing a group of workers, to collaborate for a common goal sharing resources or to ignore each other all together. Moreover, it will assess the viability of a strategy of cooperation between trade unions and social movements.

¹ The article has been written in collaboration with Prof. Alessandro Gentile, University of Zaragoza.

The self-organized groups of precarious workers constitute a privileged field of investigation on this topic for their intrinsic peculiarity. In fact, these groups share some characteristics with social movements, but they mobilize for labour-related issues and often compete with trade unions especially for the representation of those workers most affected by employment deregulation. Following such perspective, this article analyses the mobilizations in the outsourced social sector in the metropolitan area of Bologna between 2011 and 2015 and it focus on the events tied to educational workers (*educatori*)² in the framework of outsourced public services for social cooperation.

Social cooperation is a relevant sector in the province of Bologna, containing almost 8,000 workers employed in the outsourced public services. This sector outlines the current welfare privatization process in Italy, entailing a worsening occupational security in the national labour market. Specifically, the budget limitations imposed by austerity policies during the last financial crisis boosted the outsourcing of welfare services to social cooperatives.

Within this framework, the representation of educational workers is very difficult due to their high employment instability. For this reason they were leading autonomously two different initiatives of self-organized groups in response to labour deregulation deployed by the city council of Bologna during the most critical period of the economic crisis. This article is based on the analysis of semi-structured interviews and field notes about these two experiences.

It presents the following structure: in the first section, the classic literatures on the logic of action and the crisis of representation are presented, with a focus on the Italian case, in the second, the research methodology is laid out; in the third, the critical findings on the professional figure of educational workers are described; in the fourth, the main aspect of the conflicts and the strategies put in place are reported, focusing on the logic of action and on the repertoire of contention as the central topics to explore; the fifth provides an interpretation of the conflicts involving the self-organized groups of educational workers and trade unions with an explanation of the main factors obstructing or facilitating their interaction; and the conclusion outlines the potentials of a coalition between trade unions and self-organized workers and the factors influencing this strategy, as emerged by the evidences collected..

² This professional figure is a specificity of the Italian social sector. The educational worker is a social worker specialised in health and social-educational interventions on social marginalisation and disability.

Italian trade unions' path between logic of movement and logic of organization

Hyman (2001) defined the Italian labour movement the most fitting example of a trade unionism between class and society. This definition stems from an historical path reflecting a strong class orientation melting with a component of social integration. The major trade union *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* (CGIL) presents a main orientation toward a “logic of movement”, according to the theory of Pizzorno (1978). The author identifies two different logic of action leading an organization, which are directly connected to his theory on the crisis of representation and political exchange³. The logic of movement characterize the new collective subject emerging as an answer to a trade union crisis’ of representation, given by the conflict containment strategy adopted by trade unions involved in a political exchange strategy. These new subjects reject the practice of the delegation and appear fluid in their structure. The sense of belonging is given by the direct participation and they are strongly oriented to the militant action. Their claims have a large social extent and result hardly negotiable. Conversely, the logic of organization (or institution) lead structured subject organized in a stable base. The relationships of trust allow for the onset of standard procedure and a method of representation based on the delegation, which make the decision making more centralized. Moreover, these organizations framed their claims around a negotiable request. This theory was elaborated trough the empirical study of the social movement wave of contention of the ‘70s. Pizzorno argues that back then Italian trade unions were able to effectively alternate these two logic of action by centralizing and decentralizing the decision making when interacting with these subjects. Tarrow (1989) focuses on the Italian case of social movement wave of contention during the ‘70s, as the country distinguish itself in the European landscape of contention for the length, the magnitude and the outcome of the contentions. In the authors’ view, the Italian labour movement of ‘70s fulfill the institutionalization of important labour right trough the Italian Labour Bill of ‘1970 (*Statuto dei lavoratori*), and the wave of contentions contributed in the consolidation of industrial and political democracy. The theory of Tarrow on the cyclical nature of the contention is to some extent connected with the Pizzorno’s concept of the two logic of action. In fact, Tarrow argue a cyclical process of mobilization and demobilization, in which the new subject would weather radicalize and increase dramatically the level of conflict and violence until being isolated and

³ Pizzorno detects three types of exchanges : an individual exchange between the employer and the employee, the collective bargaining between organized subject representing the two parts, and the “political exchange, where the trade union counterpart is the political administration and the object of the exchange is the political consensus.

represses, or will evolve consolidating their structure. This perspective results particularly fitting with the concept of “trade unions as social movement”, which highlight the nature of “movement” as an essential characteristics of trade unionism (Fairbrother, 2008).

Until the end of the ‘70s and the beginning of the ‘80s, Italian trade unions switched toward a toward a more participative commitment with governmental institutions based on wage moderation and conflict containment, as a strategy to increase the unions’ influence (Regini, 1982). Regini (2000) applies the concept of ‘political exchange’ to the practices experienced by several European countries in the period between the culmination of the Keynesian welfare states and its crises. However, even if trade unions started to consolidate their position in the public decision making, a process of proper institutionalization of industrial relation did not occur.

The future developments of Italian industrial relations will follow a cyclical path alternating unity of action and strategic fragmentation of the three main confederations, given by the different ideology leading the main major Italian unions (Regini and Regalia, 2000, Pulignano 2007). The traditional leftwing orientation and the more marked conflict-orientation of CGIL made it closer to a logic of movement than CISL and UIL. However, since the strategic shift of the ’80, CGIL generally developed a more marked logic of organization and a strategy of partnership with the state through social pact, in presence of a union-friendly government (namely. the Democratic Party).

The last economic crisis signed a dramatic decline of trade unions’ influence in those countries traditionally resorting to social pact. Culpepper and Reagan (2014), argue that the political exchange is no longer an attractive option for governments previously resorting to this pattern of negotiation. With regards to the Irish and Italian cases (two opposing cases of countries resorting to political exchange practices) in the aftermath of the crisis of 2008, the threat of strike calls became ineffective and the trade unions appeared scarcely representative of the groups of population principally concerned by the reforms deemed necessary (as the youth and the precarious workers). In the Italian case, the last social pact traces back to 2007. The anti-union orientation of Berlusconi government first and the union hostility of the Democratic Party’s new leadership of Renzi lately signed the end of the social partnership. In 2014, Renzi government approved a labour market reform (*Jobs Act*); introducing the “rising-protection employment contract” which facilitates the dismissal for the new hired, further exacerbating the structural

labour market dualization. The Attitude of Renzi government produced a rupture between CGIL and Democratic Party, at least at national level.

Moreover, the high degree of segmentation of Italian labour market, the difficulties of trade unions to effectively represent precarious periphery workers and the media attack against trade unions have further fuelled a progressive deterioration of trade unions reputation in the public opinion.

In this framework, new actors arose as a consequence of a trade union crisis' of representation, especially among the outsider workers. The literature analyses two main experiences on this respect: the once of the so-called "knowledge workers" and the case of *San Precario*. Ciarini *et al* (2013) studied the arising of self-organized groups of precarious high-qualified professionals "knowledge-workers". These categories have been largely affected by the Italian labour market reform in 2002, modifying the traditional assets of autonomous work and the access to welfare arrangements. Such groups emerged to represent a category of workers or to support larger political instances more than to fill a representational gap or to supply the lack of social protection. According to the authors, it is possible to operate a rough distinction among these self-organized groups of workers depending on their main goals. Moreover, they argues that Italian self-organized precarious workers search for a more inclusive decision-making process in the system of representation, rather than refusing the practice of delegation.

Other self-organized subjects are characterised by their critical attitude toward traditional trade unions and by a more pronounced orientation to radical militant actions. This is the case, for instance, of *San Precario*, a network of self-organized precarious workers arisen in 2005 from the development of the "Chain workers collective", founding the precarious workers European platform *Euro Mayday*. *San Precario* was lately involved in a specific large labour issue with a large-scale lay-off resulting from the outsourcing of the communication company *Omnia*, in which it took over the trade union role by promoting legal action and protests. (Colleoni *et al.*, 2014).

The main contribution from the trade unions' revitalization literature assume the need for trade unions to radicalize their action and "enlarging the traditional playing field" to the social sphere by building coalition with other external actors (Waver, 1998; Tattersall, 2010). Strategic legacies can obstruct trade unions' innovation, as it has been assessed for union embedded in neo-corporatist countries (Ebbinghaus and Visser, 1999). The lack of institutional consolidation of

Italian industrial relation is supposed to facilitate the awareness around the change in progress and the need of innovate their logic of action (Regalia, 2009). The logic of organization transpiring by the social partnership with the state legitimized Italian trade unions representation as long as they were recognized as influent interlocutors of the public authority. With trade unions' public influence decline, one can wonder if they should go back to develop a logic of movement by connecting with their rank-and-files and radicalizing their action.

Methodology

The research has been conducted through the participant observation of several meetings and public protests developed by self-organized educational workers and trade unions in Bologna from November 2015 to May 2016. Field notes were collected during manifestation, strikes and meeting of the self-organized workers. The participant observation was overt but of a moderate type, meaning that the researcher tried to balance participation and distance in order to avoid possible bias. Fifteen semi-structured interviews have been completed with the main activists of these groups (7), trade unionists (6) and the main representatives of educational workers associations (2). They were selected according to their role played in the conflict and/or for their relationship with trade unions and self-organized groups of workers.

The central thematic pillars of each interview have been: 1) the labour conditions of educational workers; 2) the strategies of each organization involved in the representation of educational workers' interests, and 3) the interaction between these same organizations during the contentions analysed. In order to ensure the confidentiality of each participant, all the interviews have been transcribed and verbatim have been associated with a code as follows: 'Act' represents educational workers militating in the self-organized groups; 'TU-FP' represent trade unionist officers and representatives in the socio-educational sector coming from the traditional trade unions involved in the contentions, and 'TU-USB' are for those coming from a radical trade union. The following sections reports the most important results emerged by the interviews and the discussions carried out during the analysis according to the research topics of this study.

Labour conditions of educational workers

The privatization of social services in Italy provoked specific social claims with reference to the increasing job precariousness due to strong processes of outsourcing in the labour market and to the consequent increase of cooperative associations in the public sector.

The Italian Region of Emilia Romagna represents a paradigmatic case in Italy for the role of social cooperation in the outsourcing of local public services. The regional social expense is one of the highest of the country, which implies an important impact on the occupational level in this sector. The social cooperation has represented a model of local development encouraged by the traditional leftwing political culture of the region. For this reason, Emilia Romagna is the headquarter of some of the most important Italian cooperative associations.

In the province of Bologna, almost all public services are outsourced to social cooperatives and the sector of the social cooperation involved around 8,000 workers, mainly employed in care services, kinder-gardens and socio-educational services. The socio-educational sector concerns non formal education services and social aid addressed to people with disabilities or in a condition of social marginality.

We distinguish three main professional situations in the fragmented sector of social education. In the first one, each educational worker is entitled to display his functions for people with serious disabilities or drug addictions: this worker has a specific title (*educatore professionale*) gained through an academic education in the Faculty of Medicine, or as the resultant of previous legal regularisation of equivalent professional experiences. In the second one, the educational workers have another title gained through a specific degree in the Faculty of Education (*educatore socio-culturale*) which does not allow them to work with people affected by serious disability. These differences are extremely blurring and the normative is subject to various interpretations in each Italian region. The consequent normative void in this regard has created a heterogeneous situation at national and local level. For this reason, a third professional situation may exist in which the educational workers do not have any of the previous academic degrees for their qualifications.

Compared to other groups of social workers, the educational workers are scarcely unionized and more difficult to mobilize. This can be attributed to several reasons. First of all, they have problems in being defined from a legal standpoint. In the national landscape there is a wide variety of professional figures in charge of various tasks as educational workers. The plurality of the working status contributes to consolidate the legal gap. As a consequence, it is difficult to label the educational workers and they may be exposed to an arbitrary management. Another important aspect marking the difficulties of educational workers in terms of representation is the instability of their contractual tenure. In Bologna most of the contracts provide hourly-based payment, but the working schedule can be reduced for reasons unrelated to the workers

willingness (i.e. the closure of the school for weather reasons), affecting the continuity of their salary. The job tenure is related to the awarding of a public call for tender. The social clause in the collective agreement of the social cooperation states that the workers have to be relocated by the cooperative when the services' trustee changes. Nevertheless, sometimes the contractual stability is difficult to guarantee: the cooperatives cannot employ their workers in other services if there are not other jobs available for them. This implies a further vulnerability for these employees, as we outline from evidence collected.

We are all precarious workers ...even if I am hired under an open-ended contract, the cooperative for which I work is always subject to the dynamic of the public call for tender. If the cooperative loses the management of the service, it's hard to relocate me because the job no longer exists, or just few positions are available. If I have always behaved in a certain way, according to the mission of the cooperative, maybe I will be relocated. Otherwise, if I expose myself as being against the cooperative or if I have a polemic attitude, most likely I will not be chosen again for relocation (Act).

The vulnerability of this group of workers is also given by the particular status of the people employed in a cooperative. Most of them are working members of the cooperative of reference, and a less favorable normative is applied for their professional status. Lastly, the difficulty in mobilizing the socio-educational workers comes from the relationship with the people they work with and with their families, which foster a remissive attitude. The lack of a precise and uniform definition of this professional figure is often considered an obstacle for the empowerment of the educational workers⁴ as they are unable to rely on a given set of tasks, duties, and benefits. This is effectively summarized by a key informant's statement:

Often driven by the kindness towards the users, the educational expert accepts tasks and responsibilities that go beyond his role resulting in the exploitation and underestimation of this professional figure (...). If they were aware of their professionalism, of their role, of their tasks, this would happen much less (Act)

Several informants agreed on state that the normative on the professional title is being applied in a more strict way in order to cut workplaces, by restricting the labour market of those without specific degree for their qualification.

In this scenario, two self-organized groups arose protesting against budget cutting in the socio-educational services: *Educatori uniti contro i tagli* (Educational Expert United Against the Cut, *Educit*) created in 2011, and *Rete degli educatori e delle educatrici di Bologna* (Network of Educational Workers of Bologna, *Rete educatori*) created at the beginning of 2015.

This situation shows how different subjects contribute in the representation of the socio-educational sector, each of them pursuing a variable range of strategies and interacting in discontinuous ways, as it is described in the following section.

Contentions in the socio-educational sector of Bologna

Educit and *Rete Educatori* were created in a situation of emergency and with the aim to face consistent budget cuts in the socio-educational services during the economic crisis. In the case of *Educit*, two representatives of the main trade union at provincial level (CGIL and USB) were part of the group and were involved in the negotiations with the cooperative and the institutions against the budget cut in 2011. In that instance FP refuse to call for a strike, so the group organized a protest directed at the administration of the Casalecchio district, which was attended by almost 500 people including the association of parents of the recipients of the services, CGIL and USB., After the mobilisation and the following negotiations, the budget cut was strongly reduced.

The activists of *Educit* considered the lack of a clear defined political ideology as an element of strength allowing them to be highly inclusive. They define actions as creative and originals. A recurring emerging among the activists is the episode related to the building of a snow-panda in front of the Casalecchio City Council, protesting the unpaid hours of the educational workers caused by school closure due to a snowstorm.

You should be the least ideological you can, having the necessity to bring into this path a lot of people whom are not really inclined to this kind of action. I would be willing to occupy the city council, but some kinds of political action scare most of the people (...). We had the necessity to be inclusive, of having as much people as we can. So we were creative, we did original things, effective but inclusive actions for attracting people... in my opinion this is also the reason why we

are still alive as a group after all these years (ACT).

You should do nice and ironic things, when there are not so many persons and they are not able to mobilize the mass...I'll make you an example, I've interviewed a famous local showman who in a minute and half told me who is the educational expert. He told me so many deep and beautiful things...then I have transcript the interview and I have posted it on facebook. It was liked by more than 6000 persons. So that message reached 6000 persons, while a manifestation or a sit-in with a bunch of people probably wouldn't have the same effect. You should also make the sit-in, but in this historical moment getting hit by the police who is not open toward the movement is very dangerous, you risk to be manipulated and strengthen your enemy (ACT).

Once the budget cut was suspended, the group started to change its efforts toward the creation of an identity for the educational worker at a widespread territorial level. At the local level, from 2011 to present, they have been undertaking a project with a local radio station consisting in the weekly broadcasting of a program called 'Ladies and gentleman, welfare has disappeared' where they discuss issues related to the local welfare from the educational workers' point of view. Moreover, *Educit* has collaborated with the group *Rete educatori* for the creation of the guidelines for public call on socio-educational services in the metropolitan area of Bologna, which they promoted at the institutional level.

In 2014 *Educit* developed a network called *Rete Nazionale Operatori Sociali* (National Network of Social Operators, *RENOS*) and formed by other self-organized groups of social workers from all over the country. *RENOS* was founded by self-organized groups of precarious workers coming from different areas of the welfare sector sharing the problems tied to the outsourcing of public services, with a numeric preponderance of workers from the socio-educational sector. Beyond the general aim of defending high quality public welfare, *RENOS* deals with issues strictly related to the employment conditions of social workers, especially those ones from the socio-educational sector.

One of the first documents produced was a platform for social work, representing a draft for a new sectoral agreement aimed at simplifying the contractual heterogeneity characterising the social sector. The platform also refers to the need to recognise the arduous work of social workers, which would make them acquire a higher working status. About a year after the creation of *RENOS*, the educational expert became the central professional figure in the political agenda

of the network, which promoted the representation of this category of workers. Another *RENOS*' topic has been legally discussing defined criteria for accessing this profession, the so-called 'Iori law'. They established direct contact with the congresswoman proposing the law and they participated in the parliamentary audit with other associations of educational workers.

The second group, *Rete educatori*, arose in 2015 after a meeting called by *CGIL* to discuss the consequences of the change of trustee in charge of some of the socio-educational services in Bologna. The workers of the same cooperative met for the first time all together and started a process of mobilisation, distancing themselves from the trade union. An activist of the group speaks about the discourse he gave during that meeting:

The point of view of CGIL was... "Let's negotiate, let's try to take back what we had before". It sounds like what we had before was ok, but this is not true, and it was still not ok. I said...let's block the city council, let's show our opposition. We are not gonna stand with this, they didn't consider us, the educational workers, in writing this call (...) CGIL assumed a wait-and-see attitude. They tried to tone down the issue (ACT).

The educational workers broke into the city council interrupting a meeting and denouncing the large budget cut and the modality of assigning these services, asking for a more participative process in defining the public call on socio-educational services.

After the new trustee renounced to manage the service due to a lack of resources, the cooperative previously in charge of such service was entrusted with it once again. Even if a budget-cut of a different entity was still foreseen (6% below the base bid instead of the 11%), the cooperative declared to be available to personally absorb the costs without affecting the educational workers' employment. When the contention ended, the group decided to continue its activity and organized several public assemblies centred on the public call for tender of welfare services and on the role of the educational experts in society. During the assembly they made contact with the case workers of Bologna and allied with them against the privatization of the services announced by the municipality. They called for a strike and a march towards the city council supported by USB and attended by 500 people, obtaining the postponement of the privatization to 2017. *Rete educatori* decided to create a different group together with the caseworkers called

Coordinamento lavoratori del sociale di Bologna (Coordination of the Social Workers of Bologna).

In the summer of 2015, *Rete educatori* developed a strong tie with the housing movement of Bologna and organized play activities with the children living in the squatted housing areas. As already mentioned, they worked with *Educit* in the creation and promotion of the guidelines on the public call for socio-educational services. In 2016, *Rete educatori* disbanded and continued to collaborate with the Coordination of the Social Workers.

In the five years time considered, the two trade unions locally representative of the socio-educational sector undertook several actions addressed to social workers. The Federation of Public Workers (*FP*) affiliated with *CGIL* is the main union representing the sector at the provincial level, followed by *USB*.

In 2015, *FP* started a process of negotiation with the cooperative associations about a platform for an integrative agreement at the provincial level enclosing common issues for all the professional figures involved in the social cooperation sector. Given by the refusal of the cooperative associations to consider any economic request, *FP* called for an assembly of all the workers within the social cooperation of the province, attended by 650 people. The assembly delegated *FP* to organize an 8-hour strike, which was divided in two sets of 4 hours. The first strike was called for the 3rd March 2016. The educational workers and the kinder-garden workers turned out to be the central groups participating in the strike, with an estimated 70% of the total participation, since they were not subject to the law on the minimum essential services, unlike, for instance the care-giver workers. In response to the persistent indisposition of the counterpart in the aftermath of the strike, *FP* organized a series of flash mobs outside the working hours displaying banners rallying for the provincial contract. These took place in front of the main headquarters of the cooperative associations. They also started a campaign on social networks by trying to undermine the reputation of the cooperative associations. The key informants of *FP* underline the concept of ‘staying in the limit of legality’ when referring to such initiatives.

We made a sit-in in the place in which there was a celebration for the ten years of the consortium of cooperatives entrusted of most of the in-home care services here in Bologna. We didn't want to spoil the party, but we want them to understand, in the limit of the law, of course, that the

provincial contract is something important for 8,000 workers of the social cooperation and we will use all the lawful way for continue to speak up for our willing

(TU-FP)

... In this moment we need alliances for convincing the employers, we are trying to encircle them and who represent them. We agreed with the delegates of avoiding situations which could put walls up... (TU_FP)

Since 2011, *USB* undertook a strategy of claiming better employment conditions in the socio-educational services and resorting to some radical actions addressed mainly to the public institutions (e.g. sit-in of protests, interruption and occupation of the city council). *USB* was not considering the cooperative association as its main counterparts against which to address its claims. For similar reasons, it didn't support the platform of *FP* for the provincial contract. A trade union representative of *USB* explains this choice in the following statements:

We have never mobilized against the cooperative association and I don't think it was necessary. We work on entrusted public services. Every year the municipality decides how many hours of educational support are needed for the minors with certified cognitive impairments. And every year it happens that, for instance, a boy having the right to 10 hours of educational support has suddenly half of the hourly coverage with the new criteria. So, if before three educational workers were needed, now two are enough. In a case like this, I can't see the point in considering the cooperative association as my counterpart (TU-USB).

The cooperative for which I work on the extra-scholastic services recognized the "territorial retributive element" (a local productivity bonus), so the integrative provincial contract doesn't have any sense, also considering that the sectoral collective agreement has been expired since four years (TU-USB).

USB was critical with the city council administration: during the electoral campaign of 2016 they addressed several protests directly at the figure of the mayor, candidate for the second electoral term for the Democratic Party, contesting his policies and the working conditions of educational

workers. The union supported both groups of educational experts, participating in the negotiations related to the budget cut in Casalecchio in 2011 and calling the strike against the privatization of the social assistance on the behalf of *Rete Educatori*.

The overall picture emerging from the commentary on the conflicts is an enlarged labour movement in which heterogeneous sets of strategies are put in place by its components. The factors influencing the strategic orientation of the actors and their way of interacting will be analysed in the next section.

The interaction among the actors

The logic of action and the repertoire of contention are supposed to orient the strategies of the actors and their patterns of interaction. The relationship between *CGIL* and the other actors was undoubtedly the most controversial. Those interviewed from *USB*, *Educit* and *Rete Educatori*, agree in assuming a political connection between Bologna City Council and *CGIL*. *CGIL* is considered as traditionally close to the Democratic Party, at the national and especially local level. This view was shown by the unionists of *USB*, who considered the Democratic Party to be particularly close to the cooperative associations. As a consequence, they depicted *CGIL* as partly responsible for the privatization of welfare and for the worsening labour conditions for educational workers. For this reason, the choice of *CGIL* to negotiate with the central cooperatives without addressing strong claims to the local administration was traced back to political reasoning. The choice of dividing the 8-hour strike in two tranches was interpreted as a strategy of containment, in order to not damage the local administration or the cooperative associations.

The two groups analysed outlined divergent perception over the role of trade unions. Both of them were sharing the idea of trade unions as an ‘institutional tool’ for the workers. Moreover, there was a delegate from *USB* in both groups. Nevertheless, in the case of *Educit*, this idea coexisted ambiguously with a sceptical view toward trade unions. *CGIL* was considered an unreliable subject, especially after some episodes in which they excluded *Educit* from the discussion of relevant issues they had contributed to bringing to the institutional level. At the same time, *Educit* considered the strategy of *USB* too radical and rigid.

Nevertheless *Educit* and *Rete educatori* supported the strike called by *FP* on the provincial contract by writing a joint document. *Educit* invited the unionists of *FP* to participate on their

radio program to promote the strike. The reason for the support on the strike called by *CGIL* was the inclusive nature of the group, which defines itself as a multiplier of educational worker mobilisations.

FP was the main promoter of the platform for the provincial integrative agreement of social cooperation. Beyond the aim of improving the working conditions of the workers of social cooperation, embracing all the professional figures involved, the union wanted to loose the bond with the Democratic Party. The *FPS*' trade unionists were refusing the accusation of political collusion with the city council, even if they admit a general tradition of privileged relationship with the party in power.

Clearly as in all structures there are different cores and among those there are also those who are still very close to this party (the Democratic Party). So, this tie has been true for a period, and I also think that no one would deny it because it was so evident that you cannot hide it. But it is also true that after our group of delegates and trade union officers of the social cooperation started to grow, we started to talk about the fact that CGIL has to take a position on the labour condition of the workers from cooperatives. Especially for the lawlessness that emerged. CGIL cannot turn a blind eye to it (TU-FP).

Even if most of the contents proposed by *Educit* and *Rete Educatori* were appreciated and shared by *FP*, after the end of the contention in Casalecchio there was not any interest in creating a stronger connection with the self-organized educational workers. These groups were perceived by *FP* as political entities lacking professional awareness and concrete requests for improving their labour conditions. At the same time, they were also considered too small numerically and consequently not representative, with a strong lack of any potential influence. Finally, self-organized groups of workers were seen as sectarian and not accountable, meaning they were neither able nor willing to undertake a far-sighted strategy in order to hold together the interests of a consistent number of affiliates.

Rete Educatori and *Educit* were close in terms of contents and goals, but they often defined themselves as distinct. *Rete Educatori* recognised itself as a movement and started to deal with general issues related to local welfare after the main contention. Several squatted housing locations were evicted by the police at the end of the electoral term of the Bologna

administration. The conspicuous presence of families with children demanded the intervention of caseworkers who were already active in the Coordination of the Social Workers with the educational workers.

Such circumstances brought the group to collaborate with the housing movement, organizing play activities with the children in the squatted housing units and supporting the protest against the eviction. They elaborated a large set of overt social claims which presented difficulties to negotiate an end-goal. *Educit's* and *Rete Educatori's* main collaboration came from drafting the guidelines for public call for assistance.

Lastly, *Educit* perceived *Rete Educatori* as too ideological and scarcely pragmatic for its radical style of protest. The group did not join the strike against the privatization of the social assistance organized by *Rete Educatori* and *USB*. They declared their solidarity to the workers on strike, justifying their abstinence of participation on timing and logistics. In the contention of 2011, *Educit* allied with the association of the recipients' families who received services.

Educit also established a connection with other associations of educational workers, as the National Association of Educational Workers. They collide with the Association of Italian Educational Experts and Educational Workers, representing the educational path and standing against educational workers employed without professional titles. The main channel of alliance was the one among the different self-organized groups of educational workers around the country looking toward the creation of a professional lobbying force, maintaining their lean structure.

The scenario that emerged is controversial, resulting from the employment relations in outsourced public services. In spite of the deep changes characterizing the labour movement in the post-industrial context, the analytical approach of Pizzorno still serves the scope of interpreting the dynamics of interaction among the actors playing in the labour movement.

In 2011, *FP* presented a strong logic of organization, due to its consolidated structure and system of delegation, and it was inclined toward actions of low-level of conflict. *USB* mix specific professional claims with a larger political view on social rights, showing to be a trade union more inclined towards a logic of movement, while its repertoire of contention includes high impact of radical actions.

Educit was a newly born group with a more marked logic of action, inclined to innovative actions with low conflict intensity. Moreover, *FP* accepted to share the decisional process with the rank-and-file, getting closer to a logic of movement. *USB* adapted to a more moderate style of protest,

getting closer to the other actors under this aspect. The two unions temporarily overcame their political and strategic fracture concurred in their recipients' parents' involvement in the mobilisation. The need for facing a situation of emergence, the agreement on targeting the municipality as main counterpart and the presence of unionized activists in the self-organized groups, pressing their union of reference for a joint strategy, contributed to fostering a close cooperation among the subjects involved.

In 2015, a new scenario of heterogeneity of the strategies and a sensible distance between the actors. *FP* pursued a bargaining strategy, alternating the steps of the negotiation with less conflictive actions. *FP* considered itself the only legitimate actor in the sector, especially for the high level of participation at the organized assembly. The incentive to cooperate with other actors and share a participative process with the base was consequently low.

Educit registered an evolution in its logic of action, developing the vocation to represent the professional category of educational workers in open competition with trade unions. It refuses to be structured in stable organizations and promotes the direct participation of workers.

Rete Educatori was created as a new entity with strong social movement configuration, as a consequence of its fluid structure and its tendency to enlarge the strict professional claims to other spheres of local welfare. The group immediately collided with *FP* for a disagreement on strategies and oriented toward a radical style of protest. The two dimensions explain the weak connection with *Educit* and *FP* as well as the closeness to *USB*. The rank-and-file union supported *Rete Educatori* with different kind of resources (human, legal and organizational). *Educit* collaborated with *Rete Educatori* for drawing the guidelines on public calls for tender of social-education, as they perceive it to be a concrete labour claim.

The fragmentation of the actions seems to prevail without any urgency to respond to a concrete emergence involving the educational workers. All the actors involved in the arena of the socio-educational sector stay divided pursuing different objectives and interacting just on an occasional basis.

Conclusion

The analysis of the interaction between self-organized groups of precarious educational workers and trade unions in Bologna leads to some important implication with regard to the definition of this new actors, the viability and the effectiveness of a strategy of cooperation or/and alliance

between trade unions and self-organized workers in the Italian framework. Firstly, it is possible to agree with the scholars whom divide these groups between those aimed to represent specific categories of workers or overt general issues. In the case observed, *Educit* reflect the first group, and *Rete educatori* the second. In the first case, the skepticism towards trade unions appears more related to a question of transparency, democracy, and inclusiveness in the decision-making. The cooperation with these subjects by restoring the logic of movement represent a viable strategy for traditional trade unions. The coalition-building between the two trade unions and *Educit* result effective in fulfil the revocation of the budget cut by exerting political pressure. In the case of *Rete educatori* there is an open refusal of the system of delegation, as a consequence of a more accentuate logic of movement. The general social extent of their claims and the radical style of action of this group make it closer to radical unions and social movement. FP demonstrated a certain degree of openness in experimenting new strategies and repertoire of contention. The perception of being the most representative subject in the social cooperation and the characteristics of the other actors showed to be the most relevant influencing factors. The more a subject appears “radical” in terms of claims and mobilization style, the least likely a traditional union will cooperate with him. The main strategic legacy emerged is the difficulty in going beyond the strict labour claim, enlarging to social issues. This is reflected by the choice of targeting mainly the private counterpart in the contention of 2015, when the public responsibility was not that spectacular, as in the previous contention.

In a changed context of growing labour deregulation and job precariousness, the cooperation between self-organized precarious workers and trade unions still represents a valuable strategy for a new endorsement of labour movements, as it has been found for the self-organized groups of educational workers in Bologna. Strategic legacies and the characteristics of the actors involved in the local labour movement result the main determinant leading the choice of adopting or not this approach, in a perspective jointly accounting for institutional context and the actors strategic choice.

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Educational Workers in struggle: Self-organized Groups of Workers and Trade Unions in Spain

Abstract

During the last economic crisis Spanish trade unions suffer of a deep crisis of representation. The institutional voice of traditional trade unions declined, and the working condition of peripheral workers further jeopardized. Such scenario produced two interconnected phenomena at micro and macro level: the arising of a national wave of social movements with a high critical attitude toward trade unions; and local episode of self-organization of precarious workers. This article analyzes the experience of *Educadores en Lucha*, a self-organized group of educational workers from a minors' centre in the city of Zaragoza. It will focus in particular on the relationship between trade unions and self-organized workers, trying to connect the macro and the micro dynamics into a context of the trade union crisis of representation. The research is aimed to shed a light on the obstacle and opportunities of a strategy of closeness with movements of workers

Introduction

Spanish trade unions are experimenting a downturn in terms of legitimation exacerbated to the last economic and debt crisis. The quantitative indicator on associational power cannot grasp the real extent of this crisis of representation, especially if looking at the organization of precarious workers. The last economic crisis further affected working and living conditions of this part of the workforce. Representing peripheral workers has always represented a challenge for Spanish trade unions. The neo-corporative vocation of Spanish industrial relations system is deemed hardly sustainable. This is attributed to its scarce articulation, which implies a weak connection between trade unions and their base (Barranco and Molina, 2014). Actually, the main source of trade unions' legitimation was represented by their strength in terms of institutional voice, dramatically declining with the debt crisis of 2010. Institutional path dependence has been considered an obstacle to experiment innovative strategies (Hamman and Martinez Lucio, 2003), and can lead trade unions to downplay their role (Frege and Kelly, 2004). The ineffectiveness of trade unions' actions in facing austerity measures worsen the detachment of their base, reflected by two interconnected phenomena, at micro and macro level. At national level, several waves of movements highly critical with trade unions arose claiming for a more transparent and democratic way to manage the crisis. At local level, groups of precarious workers organized autonomously from trade unions, openly challenging them. Trade unions' reaction was

controversial, moving from cooperation to disregard. Yet, the main Spanish trade union *Comisiones Obreras* developed from a social movement during Franco regime and used to be close to its base. Previous studies on the interaction between trade unions and social movements (Pizzorno, 1977; Tarrow, 1989, Turner, 2003) detected a connection between social movements and the strengthen of labour right and democratic institutions. One can thus argue weather trade unions would result closer to their base and their action would increase in effectiveness by cooperating closer with these movements of workers.

This article wants to investigate on the dynamics of interaction between trade unions and self-organized workers at local level, with the aim of detecting the potentials of a joint strategy and the main factors influencing their relationship. It will focus in particular on the different logic of action and repertoire of contentions adopted by the different actors composing the labour movement. The research is based on the case study of a self-organized group of educational workers mobilizing against the budget cut on minors' services. This case has been chosen for the peculiarity of the conflict into this specific sector. Firstly, for the precarious working conditions of this group of professional; second, for the difficulties in organizing such professionals for the voluntary vocation of their job and the ineffectiveness of the traditional repertoire of action; third, for the high social impact on the austerity measures on this sector, allowing to switch from a labour to a social issue; and lastly, for the innovative scope of the repertoire of contention adopted. The article is structured as following: a first part will retrace the most recent literature on the Spanish crisis of representation and the arising of national social movements after the economic and debt crisis; a methodological part will illustrate the research strategy adopted; a preliminary part will briefly introduce the sector with a focus on the region of Aragon (North of Spain), where the investigation took place; a part dedicated to the proper case study will trace back the main phases of the conflict, the outcome of the same, and the interaction among the actors looking at the two main variable detected; finally, the conclusion will summarize the main evidence emerged, trying to shed a light on the potentials and the obstacle of a strategy of closeness to movements of workers for unions revitalization.

Trade unions' crisis of legitimation and the arising of new actors

Trade unions' crisis of legitimation in Spain

Traditional trade unions experienced a dramatic decline in terms of legitimation during the last economic crisis in Spain (Köhler *et al.*, 2015). Looking at the quantitative indicator of associational power (membership and workplace election) of the main Spanish trade unions, *Comisiones Obreras* (CCOO) and *Union General del Trabajo* (UGT), they don't look to be subject to such an impressive downturn. The trends of affiliations are in line with the European ones, and the share of representatives elected into the work councils can be considered as an indicator of the persistence of trade union legitimation during the economic downturn¹ (Beneyto, 2016). The picture changes when moving from the union density to more complex indicators, as the capacity to be influent on the public sphere and represent precarious workers. Concerning the first aspect, the strength of the institutional dimension has represented the major trade unions' strategy since the Democratic Transition (1977-1982), reaching its peak in the 1990s with the reform of collective bargaining. This approach appears of controversial application in the Spanish context, because of the tension between the highly fragmented society and the vertical integration of the industrial relations system (Hamman and Martinez Lucio, 2003). In fact, the country presents one of the highest incidence of temporary jobs in Europe resulting in a segmented labour market divided between core and peripheral workers (Polavieja, 2003). From this perspective, the representation of the outsiders has always represented a problematic issue for Spanish trade unions. At the same time, institutional consolidation has been considered hardly sustainable for two reasons: firstly, because of the scarce articulation of the industrial relation system, resulting in an overdeveloped vertical dimension, to the detriment of the horizontal participation² (Barranco and Molina, 2014); secondly, due to the essential role played by the state in fostering the bilateral regulation and the social dialogue (Molina, 2014). Thus, when the state withdraws its support to trade unions after the crisis, the latter lost their main source of power and legitimation. The sovereign debt crisis of 2010 signed the dramatic decline of the social dialogue after the

¹ Trade union representation in Spain is measured by means the number of representatives elected in the work council: the unions reaching the 10% of delegates at national level or the 15% at regional level acquire the status of "most representative" making them entitled to negotiate at higher level. CCOO and UGT are the only unions able to reach such threshold since the Transition. They compete at company level for this reason, while they mainly converge at national level.

² Colin Crouch (1993) use the concept of "articulation" referring to the integration between the vertical and the horizontal dimension of an organization, namely the degree of coordination between the leadership and their base.

temporary recovery in 2008 and 2009 (Molina and Miguelez, 2014). Two labour reforms were approved without trade unions' agreement: in 2010 the government led by the Socialist party (PSOE) approved unilaterally the reform, after the failure of the negotiations; in 2012 the government led by the Conservative party (PP) approved the labour reform without any consultation with trade unions. After those episodes, trade unions refused to engage in social dialogue with the central government and called for a series of general strikes, resulted of scarce effectiveness.

The reform decreased the dismissal costs and facilitated the collective lay-off, increased the degree of decentralization of the collective bargaining by stating the prevalence of the company level agreement in a large set of cases, and introduced the possibility of change unilaterally the labour conditions for the employer. The priority of application of the company-level agreements had the effect of create a two-tier system of wage, with the consequent exacerbation of the labour market dualism (Vivero, 2016). Furthermore, budget retrenchment boosted the process of privatization of public services and hit especially the education and the health system which lost partially their universal vocation. The new labour regulation reduced the security of the overall workforce with a particular incidence over youth and temporary workers, and severely jeopardized trade unions' action without changing the downward unemployment trend (Horwitz and Myant, 2015). The weakness of trade unions action in facing reforms of such extent increased the detachment of the base. The scarce trade unions' articulation and the further precarization of the periferal workers implied a severe crisis in terms of legitimation.

The arising of new actors at macro level: the Indignados

The social discontent boosted by the socio-economic crisis was channeled by a series of collective subjects launching an intense season of mobilization, resulting in the most important wave of contentions since the Democratic Transition. The 15th of May 2011 the platform *Democracia Real Ya!* (Real Democracy Now) called for a protest rallying for a more sustainable and democratic way of managing the crisis against the political and economic interference of EU and strong groups of interest (bankers and financial powers). This protest was the stepping stone for a movement spreading in the whole country known as *Indignados* or 15M. A series of movements of protest know as *Marea ciudadanas* (Citizens Wave) arose as a consequence of specific measures deeply reforming some public services, in particular the health sector (*marea blanca* – white wave) and the education sector (*marea verde* – green wave).

Among the most important movements crossing the country, it is important to mention the 22M, developing under the impetus of the *Marcha por la dignidad* (March for Dignity). The 22nd of March 2014 different parades of people marching from several parts of the country converged in a big concentration in Madrid. The mobilization was endorsed by the radical union *Sindicato Andaluso de los Trabajadores* but developed as an independent and horizontal protest against the austerity policy, under the slogan *Pan, techo y trabajo* (bread, shelter and work).

These protests also witnessed the loss of trade unions' representation monopoly. The socio-political scenario was indeed dominated by new subjects highly critical with them. Traditional trade unions assumed an ambiguous attitude toward these movements and moved from convergence in the purpose (especially in the case of *mareas ciudadanas*) and open declaration of support to competition and discredit. Perez de Guzman *et al* (2016) retrace this attitude to the Pizzorno's theory on the crisis of representation: in the one hand, trade unions wanted to preserve and restore their influence in the public agenda, while in the other they were trying to regain the support of a skeptical base. A further evidence of such attitude was represented by the change of the repertoire of contentions toward the political strike. It was a common trend in Southern Europe during the crisis, explained by the decline of trade unions in influencing the political debate on the reforms (Köhler *et al.*, 2013). In the Spanish case, trade unions started resorting to political strikes to show their mobilization potential, in order to cope with the new subjects trying to lead the labour movement. Köhler *et al.* (2015) propose an explanation of the difficult relationship between trade unions and the social movements emerged in the aftermath of the crisis in Spain. Among the main inhibitors of such strategy, they refer to the different collective action styles; organizational, communication and decision-making style and the different structure of these actors (pyramidal organization vs. horizontal organizations) (Köhler *et al.*, 2015: 255). Della Porta (2015) detect a particular closeness between social movements and critical unions in the Occupy movement and *Indignados*. This is attributed to the mingling of labour issues and social justice characterizing the claiming these wave of movements. These observations recall the classic Pizzorno's theory on the logic of collective action, according to which an organization can be led by two different logic: a logic of movement and a logic of organization. Namely, in the case of trade unions, they can get closer to their base decentralizing the decision making process or, conversely, they can centralize the decision making and strengthen the structure of their organization. The more a trade unions is close to a logic of

organization, the more it will be oriented toward the conflict containment, while the logic of movement is associated with a radicalization of the conflict and the repertoire of contention adopted. According to Frege *et al.* (2004), the social dialogue legacies of Spanish trade unions brought them to downplay their strategic potential and to scarcely relate with other subject beyond the traditional channel of representation. Similarly, some authors argue that the institutional path dependence can represent an obstacle for trade unions' revitalization (Martinez and Hamman, 2003). Accordingly, Gago (2012) argues that, in light of the new scenario of social dialogue's decline depicted by the crisis, trade unions would gain in effectiveness by radicalizing their action and cooperating with social movements. On this respect, studies conducted on the social waves of contention of '70s established a positive correlation between social movement, a democratic strengthen of political institutions and labour right at institutional level (Turner, 2003; Tarrow, 1989).

Spanish labour movement during the crisis appear highly dynamic, but old and new subjects in the could not significantly change the current trend of job deregulation and budget cutting by themselves (Barranco and Molina, 2014). It results thus of a large interest to investigate on the potentiality of a possible interaction between social movements and trade unions in the context of the economic crisis.

New actors in the labour movement at micro level: self-organized groups of workers

The waves of movements spreading in the whole country were claiming for political and economic institutions at the national and European level. Alongside this phenomenon, a similar dynamic also emerged at micro level in the most critical period of the crisis: several movements of self-organized workers arose in specific labour struggles. The topic of self-organization still result understudied, with the exception of few groundbreaking research. For instance, the arising of self-organization among Spanish groups of migrants in the European Union has been considered as a form of *interstitial unionism* (Roca and Parra-Diaz, 2016). This perspective looks at those groups of workers filling a gap of representation partially taking over trade unions' role and action. When the gap is not that evident and trade unions are present in a given sector or in a given firm, the theory on the crisis of representation can provide for an effective theoretical framework. Some of these groups were successful in obtaining effective improvement in terms of

working conditions, and were supported by radical unions³. On this respect, the self-organization at micro level allows for an effective assessment of the output of a conflict, while it would result a long and blurred process in the case of a national social movements (Tarrow, 1989). On the one hand these groups of workers distinguish themselves from the *Indignados* for being related to labour issues with more specific scope of action targeted to a precise employer. On the other hand, they are close to social movements for their innovative style of action and their orientation toward a logic of movement. This is particularly evident if looking at their inclination for the direct participation and their tendency to extend labour claim to the social sphere. In a period of structural weakness of the labour movement and scarce efficacy of strikes, switching an issue from the labour to the social field can enable workers with a new source of power. Social unrest and name-and-shame as mechanisms of voice can result an effective tool for the labour movement, insofar as the conflict is large enough to undermine the reputation of counterpart (Perez de Guzman, 2012).

This article pretends to provide a detailed analysis of a case of self-organization in a context of institutional voice's crisis, focusing on the interaction between trade unions and self-organized workers and on the potentials of these movements of workers in strengthen the whole labour movement.

Methodology

The article is based on the explorative case of *Educadores en lucha*, a self-organized group of educational workers (*Educadores*)⁴ of the *Centro de Observacion y Acogida* (COA), a first help centre for unprotected and vulnerable minors in the city of Zaragoza (Spain). They organized in 2014 calling for an open-ended virtual strike in order to protest against the budget cut on the minor's care and the two-tier wage system resulted from the change of trustee.

The case has been chosen due to the peculiarities of this group of workers, the service they work in and the repertoire of contention adopted. Educational workers in Spain are mainly employed in the outsourced social services: a sector in which the budget retrenchment provoked the

³ It is the case, for instance, of *Marea Azul Telefonica*, a self-organized movement of sub-contracted technicians of *Telefonica*, the biggest communication company in Spain; and *Correo en lucha*, a group of self-organized mail carrier working for the public postal services company *Correo*. Both groups were supported by the radical trade union Confederacion General del Trabajo (CGT). See on this regard <http://teleafonica.blogspot.com.es/> and <http://correosenlucha.blogspot.com.es>, (visited the 22/05/2017).

⁴ The figure of the educational worker is a specificity of the Spanish social sector and correspond to a specific social worker professional employed in the informal educations with vulnerable subjects.

progressive deterioration of the labour conditions along with the worsening of the services' quality. The difficulties in represent this group of workers gave rise to a crisis of representation resulted in the emergence of a self-organized group. The characteristics of the sector created simultaneously a labour and a social problem, leaving room to new strategy of public pressure. This occurred in a context in which the local dynamics mixed with a larger movement for social change.

The main research questions is how trade unions and self-organized groups of workers interact. Following the main evidence of the literature traced back, the variables considered in influencing the interaction among the actors involved are the logic of action, according to the definition of Pizzorno (logic of movement vs. logic of organization) and the repertoire of contentions, as they result the main obstacle for a closer cooperation between trade unions and social movements at macro level.

The research has been conducted by means of 18 semi-structured interviews collected from November 2016 to March 2017 to 19 key informants, among the activist of *Educadores en Lucha* (8), trade unionist particularly involved in the conflict and/or in the sector from CCOO and CGT (5) and other institutional and social actors connected with the group (6), in order to ensure the heterogeneity of the information collected. Fields note has also been conducted during the overt participant observation of several meeting, events and collective action⁵. Trade unionists from UGT have not been take into consideration due to their traditionally marked logic of organization, while CCOO is historically closer to a logic of movement. Interviews and field notes have been transcribed and coded according to the characteristics of the respondents⁶ and the information had been triangulated with the document from the blog of the group and the online press.

The following sections will reproduce the track of the interviews, which aim is to detect 1) the state of the sector in the country 2) the main phases of the conflict; 3) the strategy undertaken 4), the outcome of the conflict and 5) the factor influencing the interaction among the actors focusing in particular on the two independent variables detected. The conclusions will summarize the main evidences emerged, shedding light on the obstacle and opportunities in the interaction between

⁵ Specifically, a sit supporting a legal claim of mobbing on the detriment of the coordinator of the service; a concentration during the hearing for a legal claim on illegitimate lay-off; the event of a neighborhood association and a conference on the minor's service in Aragon in the University of Zaragoza.

⁶ The activist of the group of workers are coded as *Act*; trade unionist from CCOO are coded as *Tu-Ccoo* and those from CGT as *Tu-Cgt*; other social actors are indicated as *Soc* and institutional actors as *Inst*.

trade unions and movements of workers.

Minors' protection and educational workers in the Region of Aragon

The Spanish regions (*Comunidad Autonomas*) have a large degree of autonomy in terms of social policies (as in most of the policies' field) and can highly differ in terms of systems of minors' protection. The Aragon's Institute for the Social Services (IASS) is a public entity seconded to the Regional Council on Citizenship and Social Right of the Regional Government of Aragon, acting in the field of social protection with vulnerable people (as ethnic minorities, elderly people, mental and physic impairment and minors). In this region, most of the centres for minor's protection have been progressively externalized to no-profit organization and private entities⁷.

The professional figures employed in the social education are called *educadores* and *educadores sociales* (educational workers). The firsts are mainly involved in leisure activities and educational intervention for social integration and are required to have a degree of any kind. The seconds have a specific professional title entitling them to work with vulnerable people and unprotected minors acquired through a precise educational path in social education. A specificity of Aragon is the requirement of the professional figure of the *educador social* in the field of the minors' protection, while this is not necessarily compulsory in other Spanish regions. Both professional figures can be public servant or employees of foundations, Ngos or other private entities entrusted to manage public social services. A total of one thousand of educational workers are employed in the field of social education in Aragon. Just a residual number of them (about one hundred) work as public servant into the IASS. They enjoy better working condition and are traditionally organized with the largest trade unions. Within this category, CCOO registers the major presence in terms of representatives elected in the work council. By contrast, educational expert working in externalized social services result scarcely unionized. First of all, one has to take into account the precarity of their job tenure, which depend to the award of a competition for tender. Furthermore, the base-bid of these competitions registered a progressive reduction, going also to the detriment of the educational workers' condition. According to key informants from trade unions, the low degree of unionization of this group of workers can be attributed to the supposed non-profit nature of their employers, which are harder to conceive as proper

⁷ As it will emerge from the case study, the non-profit nature of an organization was not a necessary requirement for the entrustment of a minors' protection service, up to 2017.

counterparts, especially by the public opinion. The remissive attitude of educational workers is also fostered by the emphasis on aid and assistance often characterizing this job and the paternalistic attitude who can assume the managing entities. Finally, a further obstacle in organizing educational expert results from the lack of a degree in Social Education in Aragon, where the only way to obtain the title of *educador social* after 2005⁸ is through an online degree. This concur to generate a deficit of spaces for socialization, in which developing a collective awareness as professionals. Educational workers in Aragon appear thus as a precarious workforce with a strong vocation for their job, but structural difficulties in organizing. At the moment of the investigation, twelve minors' centers out of thirteen were externalized to private company and NGOs. Of those twelve, just two had a unified work council, since they were entrusted to the same entity. These centers were the *Reforma*, the youth detention centre, and COA. The latter distinguish itself in Aragon (and Spain) for the peculiar trajectory of self-organization and unionization. Along the conflict against the budget cut on minors' care, a group called *Educadores en lucha* performed autonomously collective actions collaborating with local movements, platforms, political subject and, especially, with the radical union *Confederación General del Trabajo*.

The case of Educadores en lucha

The COA is a first aid centre for unprotected minors in Aragon located in the city of Zaragoza. Unprotected minors and minors in a situation of vulnerability from all the Aragonian territory are welcomed in this centre until their cases are evaluated, so specific social interventions can be designed.

Since 2003, the management of the educational activities of the COA were trusted to a foundation for children's assistance (hereinafter "Foundation"). Foundation was initially in charge of the educational activities related to the minors from 15 to 17 (the part of the centre still known as COA2). In 2009, Foundation was also entrusted for the remaining part of the centre in charge of the minors from 6 to 14 years (known as COA1). In the same year, Foundation awarded the management of the educational and internment center for minors under judicial measure (hereinafter *Reforma*), located in Zaragoza as well. In 2010, Foundation's work council election

⁸ The educational path of reference to access the profession was established in 2001. People working in social education for a certain amount of year without the title required could follow an educational path entitling them to work in this sector. This transitional period went from 2001 to 2005.

took place: thirteen independent representatives were elected (ten for *Reforma* and three for COA). In 2013, the Foundation's work council negotiated a company agreement improving the working condition of its educational staff in COA and *Reforma*. Such agreement unified the wage levels of the educational workers performing the same tasks, resulting more convenient than the national agreement of reference (Collective agreement on Social Intervention and Assistance). In the meanwhile, the union CGT formed a section into Foundation: even if the number of members was residual (it counted back then three members), it resulted to be the first union section in a minors' centre in Aragon. CGT is a radical union with an anarchist ideology, breaking away from the historic Spanish anarchist union *Confederación Nacional del Trabajo* for reasons of disagreement on the work councils' election boycott carried on by the latter. In the new work council's election, in May 2014, the three new representatives of COA were elected in a list of CGT, even if one of them applied on independent base. Back then, the educational staff of the COA was formed by twenty six educational workers employed on open ended base, plus three or four educational workers employed on temporary base to cover vacations and leaves, conforming to the minimum criteria established by law. Few times after the new work council's election, the granting of the Foundation expired and the COA was put out to tender again. The new public call presented important budget cut. Moreover, a series of cost previously in charge of the region (health care, clothing and school material) were attributed to the managing entity. Before presenting its application, the Foundation met the educational staff of COA, presenting its budget plan. In that meeting the workers were acknowledged that the COA was already registering a yearly lost of 100.000 euros, given by the insufficiency of the public funds. The Foundation was previously able to cover such loss with the profit coming from the *Reforma*, but it would no longer be possible anymore, given by the new cost involved in the call for tender. Consequently, the new Foundation's plan provided for a wage decrease of the ten per cent and a staff reduction of two or three educational workers, according to the share of wage-cut they were willing to accept. The educational staff refused to accept any of the new conditions and set up an assembly formed by the whole workforce. The first of November 2014 the workers declared an open-ended strike, called by the CGT section, and formed a collective subject organized around the newborn assembly, named *Educadores en lucha* (Educational workers on struggle). All the activist interviewed argued that their conflict was not actually based on a labour issue, but they need the labour claim in order to be entitled to call for a strike. As envisaged by the legislation on the

essential services, they formed a strike committee and negotiated with the public authority (represented by IASS) the minimum services they have to provide. The IASS stated the 100% of the hour of service had to be provided in order not to affect the minors' care, actually obstructing their right to strike. The group decided to go for a virtual strike, namely being on strike without abstaining from work. Doing so, they wanted to highlight that the call for tender was elaborated without sufficient resources, so a new competition involving adequate funds was necessary. Thus, the group decided not to recourse legally against the IASS decision, in order not to affect the minors' care they were supposed to fight for. The aim of such strategy was to stress the social component of the conflict rather than the labour one. Moreover, the strike allowed them to preserve their workplace and avoid the staff-cutting as long as the strike was in progress.

Foundation was the only entity presenting to the competition, and awarded the tender with a financial offer 6% below the base bid. After a while, given by the persistence of the strike, Foundation resign from the grant, keep managing the COA until the new assignment. The government of Aragon, lead by the PP until the new election of 2015, threatened the educational workers of COA to get back to a public management, which would have implied their job loss. The group declared to support such perspective, which resulted to be a bluff in order to try to stop the conflict. In the meanwhile, the government was carrying on a new process of direct entrust of COA⁹ without informing the workers. Immediately after PSOE won the elections of 2015, despite the declared engagement in calling for a new competition, the new socialist councilor on social policies authorized the entrustment of COA to a Ngo from Catalonia (hereinafter the "Institute") selected by the former PP government, under the same financial conditions of the previous competition. During the first reunion with the workers, the human resources manager of Institute admitted that the economic conditions provided by the call for tender were not sufficient to cover the costs for managing the centre. As the Institute openly declared, taking the COA was a strategy to enter into a new regional market of social services. The Institute took over the management of COA the first of October 2015, and the group decided to subrogate the strike. The three representatives of the Foundation were subrogated as well, resulting now as workers delegates and maintaining the corresponding labour guarantees.

Few weeks after the entrustment of COA to Institute, the latter started to substitute the temporary which contract had expired. They justified the decision with the need of change the educational

⁹ According to the Spanish Public Procurement Law, the direct entrustment of public services is possible if the first competition fail, after an evaluation of at least three different offers from external entities.

profile of the staff. The new substitutes (totally six) were hired under the national collective agreement, while the open-ended subrogated workers were still covered by the more favorable conditions of the Foundations' company agreement. Consequently, the educational workers started to be subject to a two-tier wage system, accounting for a difference of about four hundreds euros in terms of monetary wage. The general coordinator of the COA, who was also delegate of CGT's union section and member of the *Educadores en lucha*, was relieved of most of his duty and submitted to a new technical manager. Following one of the workers denounce, in July 2016 the Labour Inspection detected some serious irregularities performed by the Institute, as the lack workers' enrolment in the social security system. This news was amplified by an episode of suicide attempt by a minor of the centre, so in August 2016 the COA issue became a central topic in the main regional media. As a consequence of these events, the IASS disposed a monitoring process of the centre, which started in September 2016. The 7th of September 2016, a specific commission for the COA was set up in the Regional parliament. Afterwards, the conflict started to register a progressive slow down, until the group resulted almost totally demobilized as their activities were reduced to sporadic meeting.

After the first year of the conflict until the end of the data collection, eight workers took a sick leave for stress and anxiety. Other eight workers left the centre, four of them for voluntary leave and the other four by resigning the contract. The workers confirmed that the reason of leaving was determined by the burn out triggered by conflict. Nevertheless, the strike had not been revoked when the data collection ended, in March 2017. The self-organized workers were resorting to the strike to obstruct the staff cuts, trying to resist until the new competition, scheduled for January 2018.

Organization and Strategies: an overview

The strategy of *Educadores en lucha* can be articulated in three main interconnected tactics: a communication tactic, a political tactic and a legal tactic. The big goal of their strategy was the call of a new competition for COAs' management providing adequate resources for the minors' care and the abolition of the second-tier wage system. The virtual strike was the main strategic tool around which the three tactics were implemented. During the first year of the conflict, the group divided itself in working group employed in the development of specific tasks, partly

corresponding to the different tactics detected. In all the steps of the conflict, the managing entities and the regional government in charge were the targeted counterparts.

The communication tactic was the central one along all the phases of the conflict. The communication campaign absorbed most of the endeavor of the collective: its declared aim was to acknowledge the citizenship with the situation of the unprotected minors'. *Niños silenciados, Niños olvidados* (Silenced children, forgotten children) was the slogan they choose since the very beginning of the conflict, which reflect such objective. The group created a logo and a small merchandising of bags, pins and T-shirt to promote their cause and raise some funds. The first initiative they organized to promote the strike was a manifestation in the central square of Zaragoza, opened by a flash mob in which they took away a blindfold and screamed, symbolizing the children breaking the silence. A working group was in charge of update the blog they created and to send press releases. They work intensively and continuously on that until the partial demobilization. An independent online newspaper, *Arainfo*, supported their cause publishing all the press release the group forwarded them. They were published in the main regional newspaper (*El Periodico Aragon* and *El Heraldo de Aragon*) at the beginning of the conflict, when they declared the strike, and after the suicide attempt of a minor of the centre. This dramatic event gave also large visibility to the report of the Labour Inspection on the first denounce.

The self-organized workers interviewed insisted on declaring that they never involved the minors in the conflict because it would not have been coherent with the same scope of the conflict, namely to safeguard them. In April 2015, the collective organized a Conference on minors' protection. In that occasion, the mayor of Zaragoza participated to the roundtable of professionals on the minors' protection together with experts from Ngos and social workers. Three boys, formerly unprotected minors attended in the COA, intervned to speak about their experience. Some of them severely criticized specific professional they were attended by. Many key informants of *Educadores un lucha* declared that they lost the support of some colleagues for this reason. Nevertheless, the intern cohesion of the group was not significantly affected.

A particularly original campaign the group launched was the "pink rabbit in struggle". For the first year of strike, the 1st of November 2015, the group produced a video in which some of the activists were telling the history of the COAs' conflict dressing a pink rabbit costume. The video was broadcast by a national television channel (*La Cuarta*) thanks to the support of Pablo Echenique, the secretary of Podemos Aragon. Pablo Echenique endorsed the collective and the

national leader of Podemos, Pablo Iglesias, personally went to meet *Educadores en lucha* to promote their struggle. Few days after the launch of the pink rabbit video, the group organized an itinerant photo call: they invited people passing by the main square to wear the pink rabbit dress and to take a picture to support the struggle of *Educadores en lucha*.

Generally, the communication style of the group sounded extremely direct, even resulting aggressive. For instance, people witnessed the photo call felt offended by the cartel reporting the slogan “PP point, PSOE shot” (*PP apunta, PSOE dispara*), recalling the Basque terrorism¹⁰. They were also used to openly criticize specific politicians and officers of the managing entities through their media, with sharp and ironic comments. They insisted in particular with the regional councilor on social policies, as she did not respect the engagement she personally took during the electoral campaign about calling for a new competition.

The political pressure was a tactic the collective have extensively resorted to during the two electoral campaigns occurring along the conflict: the regional one, in the spring 2015; and the national, in December of the same year. The self-organized workers decided to make use of the regional electoral campaign to make pressure on the parties in competition about the situation of the COA. They asked a written engagement on a document articulated in 5 points: the supremacy of the technical criterion on the economic one when evaluating of the projects applying; the re-internalization of the basic expenses for the minors; a parliament social commission; the inclusion of a social clause and a new call for tender for COA. All the parties in competition engaged themselves in developing these points signing the document, except for the PP who didn't sign and the centre-right party *Ciudadanos*, who signed just the first three points. The party *Izquierda Unida* (United Left) was the only one including these requests in its electoral program for the regional council, and resulted to be the most important support at institutional level. Before the Regional elections, in December 2014, a congresswoman of *Izquierda Unida* invited a spokeswoman of the collective to intervene in a press release in the Aragon's Parliament. The party lost a lot of vote in the election of 2015, obtaining just one representative. Nevertheless, the congresswoman elected fully supported the collective at the institutional level, in particular rising parliamentary question on the COA issue, so the collective could have access to inside information. *Podemos* supported all these initiatives, but despite having fourteen representatives, it didn't prove particularly active in terms of institutional pressure, according to

¹⁰ *Egin apunta, ETA dispara* was a slogan elaborated at the beginning of the '90s referring to the supposed connection between the Basque newspaper *Egin* and the terroristic group ETA.

many activists of the collective. The role of *Podemos* was recognized especially with reference to the promotion of the cause through their media. The national congressman from Zaragoza, Pablo Echenique, was the main supporter of *Educadores en lucha* at mediatic level.

During the two electoral campaigns, the group performed a new repertoire of action named *escrache*, consisting in the contestation of public authorities and politician during their public appearances. One of these *escraches* was addressed to the national candidate of PSOE, Pedro Sanchez, during the visit to Zaragoza for his electoral campaign. There was a specific working group into *Educadores en lucha* aimed to check the politicians' agenda and organizing *escraches*. The tactic of the political pressure was gradually abandoned after the election as it was perceived as time consuming and scarcely effective. The city administration of *Zaragoza en Comun* supported the cause of the collective, but they had no power to influence the process of entrustment at the institutional level. The civic list of *Zaragoza in Comun* was one of the so-called "City council for the change" list inspired to the experience of *Podemos*, running and winning the election in Zaragoza in 2014. The mayor in charge attended some of the events organized by the group, as the conference on minors' protection, and provided solidarity in terms of political support. He collaborated with some activists of the self-organized group some years before the COA's issue, into the Aragon's platform for politic prisoners (*Asociacion de Seguimiento y Apoyo de los presos en Aragon -ASAPA-*). The educational workers of COA attending the Platform formed a specific working group on minors, against the juvenile incarceration. The relationship between the group and the mayor were undoubtedly facilitated by this previous experience of activism.

The legal tactic was particularly used in the last year of the conflict. It distinguishes between the administrative or the labour aspect of the claiming. After the call for strike in November 2014, the self-organized workers presented a claim against the condition set out in the competition to the administrative court for the public service contract (TACPA). The suit was deposited one year after the Foundation resigned the contract, when the Institute took over the COA management. Starting to that moment, the subsequent legal action was an answer to the Institutes' pressure on giving up the conflict. It was not possible to substitute workers on strike nor to lay off the permanent workers because of the labour guarantees established by the right to strike, but there was no obligation to renew the contract those employed on temporary base. Four workers out of the six substituted denounced the Institute for unlawful lay off. The general coordinator of the

COA denounced the Institute for mobbing for being removed from his main managerial task. Moreover, the workers presented totally eight reports to the Labour Inspection about irregularities on contracts, payments and new hirings. In the legal tactics, the support of CGT was considered crucial. The union provided the workers with the lawyers for the labour and the administrative claims, taking charge of the related costs.

The overall strategy results from the calibration of these three tactics. Even if the ultimate goal of was not reached, *Educadores en lucha* contributed, to some extent unintentionally, to produce important changes in the sector.

The outcomes of the conflict

In the two years of the conflict, important changes occurred to the minors' protection services in Aragon. Generally, it is difficult to establish a clear cut correlation between social movements, the reforms promoting social right and development of democratic institution. According to the literature on social movements, this cannot be attributed only to the will of the politics. In fact, the request coming from the civil society through the political pressure is a prerequisite for social change (Tarrow, 1989). The biggest result of *Educadores en lucha*, was to make public the situation of the unprotected minors in Aragon, contributing to open a reflection at the institutional level. In March 2016 the government of Aragon approved unanimously a draft law proposed by *Izquierda Unida* on the reform of minors' protection system, aimed to intensify the families' support to reduce the reliance to the minors' centre. *Educadores en lucha* was included into the process of reform and the CGT's delegates participated to the technical bureau of professionals. In 2017, a new law on the entitlement of the competing entities for minors' protection services management was approved. It established the mandatory non-profit status of the competing entities and required their former presence in the sector and in the local context. Before this law was approved, the competition for the management of *Reforma* confirmed the Foundation management, while the technical project proposed by the Institute was rejected. There was a general agreement among the interviewed (Act, Soc) on the fact that the reputation of Institute was so affected after the conflict that it would have been difficult to award any other call for tender in Aragon.

A further important result of the contention was the new impulse it gave to an organization process of the educational workers. The vocation for this job initially constituted an obstacle for

the mobilization of this group of workers. The same job vocation, though, triggered a process of awareness thanks to the enlargement of the labour issue to the social field. The group decided to maintain a proper identity because of the will of claiming their role on the society: using the word of a key informant, “educational workers as social claimer” (*Educador como rivendicador*) (Act). The collective was not successful in creating a movement made by the educational expert from the different centre around the territory. Such shortcoming was attributed mainly to the specificity of the conflict and to the difficulty of mobilizing this category of precarious workers. Nevertheless, *Educadores en Lucha* contributed to push for a process of organization of the category per se. Along the two years contention, most of the workers decided to affiliate to CGT. The federation of reference was the Education, dominated by the teachers of the public school, because the union wanted to try to bring together the workers from formal and informal education. The number of affiliated to the social educational sector in Aragon (seventy five at the moment of the data collection) would have allowed for the creation of a new category into the CGT. The debate was introduced, and in the meanwhile CGT created a sub-category of Social Education into the Education Federation. A workers’ delegate of COA for CGT tried to endorse a process of negotiation for a regional agreement on social education. Such perspective results particularly hard as CGT should demonstrate to be a representative subject according to the Spanish requirements. Beyond this project, the activists interviewed expressed a spread desire to create a collective subject of educational workers overcoming the single company and the local level. For these reasons, the case of *Educadores en lucha* appear as a peculiar path of unionization and category building at micro level, jointly determined by old and new actors of an enlarged labour movement.

The interaction among the actors

Educadores en luchas developed as an autonomous subject supported by CGT. At the beginning, the presence of this union in the COA was fundamentally determined by one of the long standing workers of the centre belonging to the union and lately elected as representative into the work council. CGT provided the group with legal assistance, spaces for reunions and material for the action they organized. The decision making process was organized around the assembly of educational workers, and the union was involved when needed. The activist and unionist of CGT had a “non-interference” approach, which was particularly appreciated by *Educadores en lucha*.

All the self-organized workers interviewed recognized the importance of the support received by CGT. They declared that the union never tried to address them toward a strategy to follow, nor to gain visibility or convince them to become members.

Most of the educational workers of COA ended up joining the union as a form of gratitude for the support received, while few of them got involved into the union more in deep, willing to be “part of it”. The following statements of two activists of *Educadores en lucha* summarize such shared opinion emerging through the interviews.

The union (CGT) respected us a lot...when we made the manifestation they were at the bottom with their flag...along this process more people joined the union. (...) CGT supported us in a way that...I'm anti union, I don't like the union communication, but the union gave us the logistic support even when there were just 4 people unionized. It made that more people joined the union. I think I have to engage with who defend me...I don't share the ideal of CGT, but they are paying the lawyer, they gave us all the material to make cartels... (ACT)

I applied for the work council as independent, I was not unionized. The experience made me change idea. When I started to work into the work council for the issue of Educadores en Lucha I saw the main support we had was the union, not just for the labour issue, but also for spreading the mobilization, participate to our mobilizations...It came naturally to join the union...I started to believe in it. (...) I wanted to be part of it. (ACT)

Trade unions officials and activists of CGT from different categories used to participate to their sit-in and initiatives. Key informants from CGT declared there was no need to intervene the workers of COA were able to organize autonomously and aware of the peculiarity of the sector they were work in. A key informant of CGT attributed such skills to the previous experiences most of the activist had in local and national movements.

The thing of Educadores en lucha (...) is exactly the opposite of the self-organization. They are people which have participated to political associations and trade unions. In the sector they work there are a lot of people from the radical left...they all have participated to any organizational

process before. Of course, they organized by themselves, but that's much easier if you already had organized more times before. It was a natural process... (TU-CGT)

One of the most engaged educational workers of the collective effectively had previous experiences in national and local movements, as 15M, the platform for prisoners' right and a platform for social education formed in 2011 and active for few years. It was a space of meeting and socialization to reflect on the role of the educational workers in the society, with the preponderant presence of the workers from COA.

From the workers' representation perspective, the peculiarity of this sector extensively emerged from many evidences, together with a strong professional identity. The awareness of a social responsibility of the educational workers boosted a sort of moral obligation to mobilize against the deterioration of the social services. It is the explanations provided with respect to the decision of maintain a proper identity as group of self-organized workers. In this sense, the trade union was perceived as an important tool for the workers, but the self-organization was emphasized. In turn, professional identity and logic of movement allowed enlarging the issue from a labour to a social field, involving the public administration.

I have the impression that we have moved our professional ethic as educational workers of the COA to the labour claim... We have transfer things we were doing working with the guys, we have move it to our relation with the company and the regional government as responsible entity...(...) they are not different things, they cannot be different things....the working conditions and the assistance you provide to people (...). (ACT)

With respect to the relationship with the main trade unions, the workers of COA declared they never kept in contact with them, except when they decide to constitute a work council in 2014. A key informant from CCOO declared there was a former exchange of information with the workers of COA, but since they decide to go for another kind of strategy with another union they did not established a strong connection. The repertoire of the open-ended strike emerged as a factor determining a large distance between *Educadores en Lucha* and CCOO, while the "pink rabbit in struggle" was welcomed as an original action. These two actors had also different vision in targeting the counterpart. The self-organized group addressed its claims on minors' protection

simultaneously to the managing entities and the Regional government; whereas CCOO operated a net division in terms of targeting the private and public entities. The first were the counterparts for a labour conflict, while the second were the main interlocutors for claiming of social and public nature. Mixing these two dimensions was regarded as inappropriate. CCOO strategic orientation contemplated to carry on specific negotiations between trade unions and the regional government in order to obtain a social clause for tenders' processes, while *Educadores en lucha* went into the detail of the financial offer of a specific competition. The two-tiers wage system was seen instead an issue to deal with the managing entities into the work council. The election of representatives was considered the necessary condition to build a collective, so the scarce presence of representatives in this sector represented the main obstacle to organize educational workers. The presence of CGT in the COA was attributed to the closeness in terms of radical leftwing ideology. The self-organized workers were considered highly radical in terms of ideology, repertoire of action and language, while the interviewed of CCOO defined their own approach more "pragmatic" and less ideological. *Educadores en lucha* ha difficulties in detecting intermediate goals, indeed. For this reason, the workers of COA ended up to take decisions which went to their own detriment: the mismatch between the objective and the resources available made the workers paid a price too high in terms of job tenure and well-being at the workplace. The different logics of action of CCOO and *Educadores en lucha* are effectively summarized by the following statements:

When you radicalized a struggle you're a vanguard...maybe so vanguard that you find yourself to be alone. For me the goal (of the union struggle) is...for the political transformation, for the working conditions, for a social improvement...From the point of view of my experience mobilizing was for improving, and you have to go through the negotiation. Someone can see negotiation as ceding....I have no problem in ceding if it brings improvements (TU-CCOO)

I keep thinking the final goal is real...even if right now we are pretty weak and we aren't obtaining anything...I think we can keep working, even if they will kick us out, they fire all of us...finally we can do it (ACT)

Among the most important element facilitating the relationship between the self-organized workers and its supporters emerged in particular the existence of a previous solidarity network and the multiple belonging of the different actors playing into the local labour movement: trade unionists, activist of national and local movements, political movements and *Educadores en lucha*. Given by the consolidation of 15M in *Podemos* and in the “city councils for the change” (in this case, *Zaragoza en Comun*), this network was extended at the institutional level. One of the spokesman of *Educadores en Lucha* was also the first unionized workers of CGT and was active in 15M and other local platforms. One of the main activists of the platform ASAPA would have become the new mayor of Zaragoza in 2014, elected in the list of *Zaragoza in Comun* and supporting the struggle of *Educadores en lucha*. The alderman on social right of the city council of Zaragoza was a representative of CGT into the work council for the city employees. The trade union officer of reference of *Educadores en lucha* from CGT had been one of the spokesman of *Zaragoza en Comun*, member and activist in *Podemos* and coordinator of *Marea Verde*. The person of references for *Izquierda Unida* had been active into the platform for the social education and was a member of CGT; the reference of *Podemos* in the Regional Council was a members of CGT as well, activist in the 15M and the March for Dignity.

In the case of CCOO, the only significant case of multibelonging emerged involved the participation to *marea verde*, even though closeness to *Podemos*, *Zaragoza en Comun* and *Izquierda Unida* cannot be excluded. The Aragon’s assembly of *marea verde* supported the mobilization of COA by spreading information trough their media, but at that moment the movement was already demobilized. Key informants of CCOO stressed the importance of support and collaborate with the *marea ciudadanas*; and the impact of the 15M movement to revitalize the civic society. According to them, the claims of the national movement need to be canalized at the institutional level trough a structured subject by means of the available tools of representation. The evidence collected seuggests as the logic of action and the repertoire of contention of these two subjects acted as a deterrent for the involvement of CCOO in this conflict, while facilitating the relationship among *Educadores en lucha* and the other mentioned subjects. Despite being part of the institutions, *Izquierda Unida*, *Podemos*, and *Zaragoza en*

Comun were political movement stemmed by larger national movement.¹¹ The national movements contributed to the configuration of the political context in Aragon.

Conclusions

The research investigated in depth on the mobilization of a self-organized group of precarious workers arose as a consequence of the trade union crisis of representation. The main research question was the way trade unions and self organized groups of workers interact, in an optic aimed to revitalize trade unions by enlarging their traditional playing field.

The pressure at the institutional level was not evaluated as particularly effective to reach the main goal of call for a new process of tender of the COA with adequate resources. Yet, the breadth of the network of *Educadores en lucha* had a role in keep the issue under the media and institutional attention for a long period of time.

Despite the declared importance attributed to support the *mareas* and social movement by all the key informants of CCOO, they did not get involved into any kind of coalitions. On the one hand, this was probably the result of the highly critical attitude of the national movements, and in particular 15M, toward major trade unions. On the other hand, it was evidently difficult for the union to go beyond the traditional channel of representation, typical of the Spanish “voter unionism”. The union has a tradition of social dialogue into the public sector of the social education and basically wanted to switch the same strategy in the private sector of the minor protection. They did non experiment other techniques to reach this group of precarious workers beyond the work council elections. Consequently, they did not participate to the COA conflict. The “radical” orientation of the group in terms of language and repertoire of action, meaning their more accentuate logic of movement, contributed to the scarce affinity between the union and the group. The open ended strike and the way of targeting the counterparts were not compatible with the strategic orientation of CCOO. Despite originating from a social movement, the historical path of CCOO determined a recalcitrant reliance on a declining institutional dimension. It result an obstacle to experiment new patterns of organizing precarious groups of workers. The institutional decline during the crises is an evidence of the weak bases of the Spanish neocorporativism.

¹¹ *Izquierda Unida* stems from the movement arose around the Spanish referendum against the joining of Nato in 1986 and lately develop as a political movement enclosing radical left parties.

The more developed logic of movements of CGT is reflected by the total decentralization of decisional power to the workers, together with its tie into the local labour movement. It allowed for a stronger connection between the union and the group of workers, resulting into the unionization of a big part of the COA workforce. The process of organization of the whole workforce and their unionization was a bottom up process resulting by further factors, such as 1) a strong professional identity component of this group of workers and 2) the presence of a vanguard group of few people with previous experience of activism in trade unions and social movements.

The conflict of *Educadores en lucha* had two important outcomes: first, the progressive consolidation of the educational workers' organization process; second, the opening of a debate on the minor protection system in Aragon bound to have a strong impact on the design and the management of such service. These results were obtained with a high price paid by the workers, because of the difficulty of calibrating the resources available with their goals.

The peculiar path of this group of self-organized workers shed lights on the potentials of networking and connection among new and old subjects playing into an enlarged labour movement. Moreover, it contributed to the debate on the institutional path dependence of the Spanish trade unions by suggesting the obstacle and the opportunities in changing strategic orientation getting closer to rank-and-files in the current historical moment.

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Social Workers Unionism: Trade Unions and Self Organized Groups of Social Workers in Italy and Spain

Abstract

The object of the research is the relationship between trade unions and self-organized group of workers in the context of the trade union's crisis of representation in a specific and peculiar sector: the outsourced social services. One wants to look at the role of social movements in revitalizing trade unions in Southern Europe. It is especially there that unions used to rely on privileged relationship with the institutions, which had been declining during the last economic crisis. For this reason, the article will focus on two organizations with a similar path of institutional development, but with different labour movement trajectory during the crisis: CCOO in Spain and CGIL in Italy. In fact, Spanish trade unions had to relate with a wave of movement highly critic against them, while it did not occur in Italy. The main research questions are 1) which are the main factors influencing the relationship between trade unions and self-organized workers and 2) whether the occurrence of a social movement wave of contentions at national level do influence the way the various actors interact at local level.

Introduction

Spain and Italy present important differences in terms of labour right and industrial relation institutions, but the respective major unions share a similar historical path. Both *Comisiones Obreras* (CCOO) and *Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro* (CGIL) are leftwing-oriented unions historically characterized by what Pizzorno defined a marked "logic of movement". It means that they used to be close to their base and generally oriented to the conflict as a tool to improve their position in the relationship with state and employers. Italian trade unions distinguish for being particularly active during the contentions of the 70s. According to the main social movement literature, the Italian labour movement of that age is considered the one obtaining the best results in terms of labour right compared to other countries. Once recognized as legitimated interlocutors by both their counterparts, Spanish and Italian trade unions changed their strategy in favor of the development of the institutional dimension. The changing socio-economic equilibrium provoked a dramatic social fragmentation in the two countries, fuelled by a sharp labour market division between outsiders and insiders. The vertical

dimension of industrial relations resulted thus overdeveloped especially to the detriment of the periphery workforce, excluded by the traditional system of representation. The privileged relationship with the institutions resulted consequently the main source of union power, in the face of the progressive detachment of their base. The past economic and debt crisis signed a deep decline in terms of unions' influence at the institutional level, which caused in turn further dramatic erosion in terms of legitimation at the eyes of the rank-and-files.

Together with these macro dynamics, other mainly local episodes of workers self-organization witnessed the increased trade unions' crisis of representation. These movements, especially spread among groups of precarious workers, can arise for several reasons, but the trade unions' crisis of representation represents the common denominator of different experiences. The first research aim is to compare the way in which trade unions and self-organized group of precarious workers interact in the two countries generating strategic patterns. The social sector has been chosen because of its progressive precarization, and for the intrinsic potentials it provides in terms of labour and social revitalization efforts. In fact, in the one hand this sector can presents serious obstacle for the workers mobilization, due to the scarce effectiveness of the traditional repertoire of action (i.e. strike); in the other hand it allows by definition to enlarge a labour issue to the social sphere, so the targeted counterpart could be more easily hit in terms of reputation than it would be the private sector. In Spain, the sovereign debt crisis of 2010 and its management triggered a social discontent which was channeled by a series of social movements, while it did not occur in Italy. The second research aim is to look at the role of a national wave of movements in shaping the way the various actors frame their strategic orientation, moving from a logic of movement to a logic of organization and calibrating consequently their repertoire of action.

The paper will be structured as follow: a first section will trace back the main theoretical reference on the crisis of representation and the role of social movement and self-organization in this context; a second part will explain the methodological strategy; a third will present the two cases; a third will compare the two case; and the conclusion will sum up the main evidences emerged trying to shed a light on the obstacle and the opportunities of strategies of cooperation among old and new actors of the labour movement in a scenario of trade unions' crisis of representation.

Crisis of representation and social movement: a literature overview

The classic theories on the crisis of representation relate the deemed unsatisfactory role of the interest's organizations to the arising of new subject competing with them for the representation of a given group. On this respect, the Olson's theory on the collective action (Olson, 1969) dedicated special attention to labour organizations. Trade unions in neo corporatist systems are considered encompassing organizations of interest, with general responsibilities in the socio-economic sphere. In fact, they have to filter and contain the request of their base in order to safeguard the macro-economic equilibrium. The consequence of the trade unions' self-containment is the arising of subjects aimed to represent specific interests. These subjects are seen as free riders, as they overcome the collective interest to pursue individual objectives. The Olsonian theory turned out to deeply influence the social movement theory as well, signing the switch to the rationalist paradigm: thereafter, social movements were studied as rational actors.

The study of the social movements' wave of '70s had a deep impact on the development of both labour relations and social movements theories. The main contribution came from the Pizzorno's and Tarrow's respective theories on the crisis of representation and the social movement cycle of contention. As in the Olsonian view, new subjects can arise in the labour movement as an answer to the trade unions' conflict containment strategy. Those new actors distinguish themselves from trade unions for the logic leading their action. Namely, the new subjects are led by a logic of movement: the sense of belonging to the organizations is manifested by means of the direct participation of their members. The structure of these organizations is consequently fluid and does not allow for a system of delegation. Their repertoires of action are "radical". Namely, they appear markedly conflict-oriented and the scope of the action has a very general extent and results hardly negotiable. Trade unions instead are led by a logic of organization, allowing for a system of delegation and standardized procedures, because of their solid structure based on stable relationships built over time. The extent of their claims is more specific and negotiable and the repertoire of actions will be consequently oriented to the negotiation and eventually to the conflict containment (Pizzorno, 1978). The arising of social movements is considered cyclical because the new subjects could weather further radicalized, evolving in small isolated groups progressively repressed until disappearing; or they will elaborate their structure evolving in stable organizations. Both cases result in the demobilizations of the movement, while new movements will eventually develop as a consequence of new grievance and opening of "windows" of

political opportunity (Tarrow, 1989; 1994). Both scholars had a respectful eye on the Italian wave of movement of the '70s. According to Tarrow, the Italian wave distinguishes itself from the one occurring in other countries because of its longer length and the results obtained in terms of labour rights. In the long run, the effect of the Italian social movement wave was also reflected by the development of democratic institutions, both at political and industrial level. With reference to Italian major trade unions, Pizzorno argues that they were able to relate with the new subjects by alternating logic of movement and logic of organization, centralizing and decentralizing the decision making process according to the perceived convenience attributed to a given strategy. Beyond the specificity of the Italian case, Turner (2003) lately reiterate the connection between social movements waves of contentions and the development and strengthen of institutions protecting the labour during the cyclical downturns. According to this view, one can consider "Institutions" and "Movements" as two interconnected features, rather than two dichotomous ideal types. Such perspective leaves room to new effort of revitalization considering how to calibrate strategically this two dimensions.

Institutional's voice decline in Italy and Spain

The Italian and Spanish labour movements share a path of former closeness with social movement, and a lately evolvement of the relationship of power which brought both main unions to re-orient their strategy. The two national organizations present for this reason a more marked logic of movement compared to the other respective national major unions (*Union General del Trabajo* in Spain, *Confederazione Italiana Sindacato dei Lavoratori* and *Unione Italiana del Lavoro* in Italy). Both CCOO and CGIL switched their strategy toward the tripartite negotiation (Molina, 2005). In the Spanish case, CCOO historically arose in the '70s as a social movement acting illegally during the Franco dictatorship. During and after the Transition, a process of institutionalization of trade unions was carried out, reaching its peak with the collective bargaining reform of 1990. According to some scholars, the neo-corporative vocation of Spanish industrial relations appear hardly sustainable. It is attributed to the trade unions' low degree of articulation and to the essential role played by the state in promoting social pacts and bilateral agreement (Molina and Miguelez, 2014). The concept of articulation refers to the classic theories on neo-corporativism, arguing the need of a balance between the development of the vertical level of the representation (with institutions and employers representation) and the horizontal

ones (with trade unions' base). Consequently, the state's push to the social dialogue shaped the perception of an institutional power of trade unions which was not actually laying on a solid base. In the Italian case the main union CGIL had an important role in the civil war against the fascism (1943-1945) and developed deep connections with rank-and-files and social movements during '70s, as already mentioned. The Italian labour bill of 1970 (*Statuto dei lavoratori*) established the base of the industrial democracy in the country and is considered one of the most important achievement obtained by a national labour movement during the contentions' wave of the 70s.

The last economic crisis signed a decline in terms of institutional support in those countries particularly affected in terms of public debt and unemployment. The state abandoned the tripartite agreements by because trade unions were no longer considered as attractive social partners for the negotiation of the austerity reforms. That was mainly a consequence of the scarce degree of representativeness of the categories the most affected by the reforms deemed to be necessary, as youth and precarious workers; and of the scarce effectiveness of traditional collective actions which no longer worked as bargaining chip for the social peace (Culpepper and Regan, 2014). The last Italian social pact dates back to 2007, right before the return of the conservative Berlusconi government. The debt crisis of 2011 resulted in the resignation of the prime minister in favor of a provisional government of technicians led by Monti. In 2012, Monti's government approved a labour reform without the trade unions agreement. Afterwards, the explicit union aversion of Renzi government, installed in 2013, deeply affected the traditional collaborative or non-hostile relationship between CGIL and the Democratic Party. The Italian labour reform *Jobs Act* of 2014 introduced the "rising-protection employment contract", which modified the law on dismissal for the new hired with the aim of increasing the exit flexibility in the labour market. The *Jobs act* was approved without the consultation with trade unions and gave rise to a general strike in December 2014 and a referendum initiative to abrogate part of the reform¹.

In Spain, the sovereign debt crisis of 2010 further affected the working and life condition of the most vulnerable part of the population and workforce. The austerity measures and labour reforms adopted by the socialist government in 2010 and by the conservative government in 2012 were pursued without the trade unions agreement or even without any kind of previous consultation.

¹The referendum was cancelled because the government renounced to the introduction of some measures. The abrogation of the part of the reform modifying the dismissals' provision was rejected by the Constitutional Court, which is the organ entitled to established the eligibility of the referendum's questions.

The reforms decreased the cost of lay-off and modified the collective bargaining structure establishing the supremacy of the company level agreement. The overall provisions generally undermined trade unions' role, leading CCOO and UGT to call for a general strike in March 2012.

The use of political strikes was a common pattern in Southern Europe, indicating the general decline of trade unions in influencing the public sphere (Köler *et al*, 2012). At the same time, unions were trying to re-establish the negotiations with their government, adopting a strategy which has been defined "boxing and dancing" (González Begega and Luque Balbona, 2014). Such strategy was following the double aim of connecting with an increasing critical and detached union base and trying to get back to social dialogue practices. In the Spanish case, the phenomenon of political strikes was interpreted also through the lens of the crisis of representation; with reference to the movements arose as a consequence of the debt crisis (Perez de Guzman *et al*, 2016). Among the most important movements, one have to name the 15M movement and the *Marcha por la Dignidad*, claiming more democracy and transparence in the crisis' management; and the *mareas ciudadanas*, emerged against the public services' cut lead by the adoption of austerity measures. In Italy and Spain, the "boxing and dancing" practice cans also be interpreted as the effect of the persistent reliance on the institutional dimension, despite the withdrawal of the public authorities' support in both countries. Some scholars argue that the institutional path dependence still influence trade unions' strategies, creating a tension with the necessity of revitalizing labour organizations (Hamann and Martinez Lucio, 2003). Thus, trade unions can tend to downplay their action, because of the framing effect played by the former institutional power. It is the case, for instance, of Spain and Italy, as Frege and Kelly argue (Frege and Kelly, 2003; 2004). This is considered the reason why the major trade unions have difficulties in changing their strategy. With reference to the Spanish case, Gago (2012) argues that trade unions will gain in effectiveness by radicalizing their action and allying with social movement. Looking at local level contentions, Perez de Guzman (2012) stresses the role of non-union representation and radical unions in enlarge the social relevance of a labour claim by increasing the level of the conflict. In this way, the labour movement is potentially enabled of a new source of power, given by the possibility of undermining the counterparts' reputation. This can results particularly effective in the public sector, as the local government is closely interested in avoid hard claims and critics because of electoral dynamics. At the same time, this is the sector

in which traditional unions will be more likely oriented to contain the conflict, because of their traditional strength in the public sector. Such orientation has the effect of obstruct union innovation strategies in a changing context of progressive outsourcing of public services. The deterioration of the working condition resulting from this process of privatization can lead in turn to increase the rank-and-files' detachments of the most unprotected workers, giving rise to a crisis of representation.

The arising of new subject in the local labour movement

In the Spanish and Italian case, the crisis of representation is not a process which can be grasped through the observation of the union density indicators. In fact, in Spain they result to be in line with the European trend during the crisis (Beneyto, 2016) and they even register an upward trend in Italy (Fouton, 2015). The main unions' challenges are reflected by the institutional voices decline, and the representation of the peripheral workers. The labour market of the two countries is highly divided between outsider and insider, and trade unions are poorly representative of the precarious workforce. In this context, a crisis of representation can foster the arising of movements of precarious workers organizing autonomously beyond the traditional union channel.

Most of the contributions which compose the extensive literature on trade unions' revitalization are characterized by a "union centered" perspective (Sullivan, 2014). Other contributions look at the recent development of independent unionism and new forms of organization. Ness (2014) relates the arising and spreading of new forms of workers' organization around the world to the increased bureaucratization of traditional trade unions and provides for a series of national cases going from the global South to the global North. Phelan *et al* (2014) detect a generalized radicalization of the action of several subjects playing in the labour movement during the last economic crisis, arguing the arising of a "radical political unionism" (Upchurch and Mathers, 2011). These authors look in particular to the spreading of new forms of unionism, while the attention dedicated to the phenomenon of the self-organization as a dependent variable is still short. Nevertheless, one can name some groundbreaking studies conducted in the two countries of reference. The Italian case of *San Precario* distinguishes itself for the construction of a collective subject around an effective symbol (Bruni and Murgia, 2007). Beyond the novelty in terms of narrative, the collective of *San Precario* actually took over the trade unions' role in a

case of collective lay-off following the outsourcing of an Italian communication company (Colleoni *et al*). The arising of new subjects has also been observed in relation to the so-called “second generation self employed” (Bologna,1996): those self-employed professionals working in the service sector and in particular in not regulate professions. This category of workers are outside of the traditional trade union representation because of the essential trade unions’ aim of representing employees. The new organization of the labour and the entrepreneurial culture developed in the post-fordist era led to an increment of self-employed and professionals, in the one hand, and to the precarization of the same in the other hand. Ciarini *et al* (2013) look in particular at professional knowledge workers when observing the development of self-organized movement of workers in the Italian scenario. They divide these groups between movements arising from claims of general extent, or groups aimed to represent a specific category of workers. Such distinction can be connected to some extent with the different logic leading the decision to join an interests’ organization. Taking into account trade unions and associations of professionals, Hovekamp (1997) argues that, even though both are aimed to represent their members, trade unions’ historical *raison d’être* is to reverse the existent balance of power, while this is not the case for associations. The trade unions’ dilemma of Regini (1982) moves exactly from the co-existence of this two logics: represent a specific group of workers or represent the whole category of workers.

A study conducted on Spanish network of migrants define as *interstitial unionism* that form of self-representation led by network of workers, emerging to fill the gap of unions representation, under certain circumstances (Roca and Martin-Diaz, 2016). In the current scenario of trade unions’ crisis of representation in Spain, self-organized movement of workers develop in a national context of generalized social unrest. One can name, for instance, the collective of workers in the postal service *Correo en lucha*, or the group of outsourced technicians of the communication company Movistar *Marea Azul Telefonica*. Partly because of its novelty, the field of workers self-organization in Spain is almost totally unexplored.

The present research is aimed to argue weather with the institutional influence’s decline of trade unions, they should consider a strategy of cooperation and the alliance with these movement of workers, in order to re-establish an attachment with their base and increase the effectiveness of their action.

Methodology

The research is based on a comparative case studies on the mobilizations of self-organized groups of social workers in the outsourced social services in Italy and Spain. In this two countries, the “educational worker” represents a peculiar professional figure into the social sector, working in the non-formal education with vulnerable people. The socio-educational sector has been chosen for its intrinsic peculiarity. In the one hand, its workforce has been subject to a substantial process of precarization and traditional trade unions can hardly deal with that; in the other hand, specific patterns of mobilizations can be put in place for the highly social relevance of such sector. The cases have been chosen as they involved a group of precarious workers arising as a consequence of a trade union’s crisis of representation and the austerity measures adopted during the crisis. The Italian case is based on the contentions of two self-organized groups of educational workers arose in 2011 and 2015 in the metropolitan area of Bologna, following two different episode of budget cut in the socio-educational services. The Spanish case is based on the mobilization of a self-organized group of workers employed in a minors’ centre, affected by an important budget cut in 2014. In the two context selected, the numerical incidence of these professionals is similar, as well as their composition and working conditions, while the main difference, as it will be seen, is the system of professional regulation. The region of Aragon and the metropolitan area of Bologna count about 1000 educational workers (1000 in Aragon and 1200 estimated in Bologna²) over about 1 million of inhabitants (respectively 1,3 million and 950 thousands).

The within case comparison follows the aim of detecting the main factors influencing the relationship between self-organized workers and trade unions, and the outcome of the contentions involving both actors. The principal variables observed are the logic of action and the repertoire of contention, as the main features addressing the actors’ strategy emerged in the literature traced back. The between cases comparison follows the aim of 1) detect patterns of self-organization and 2) investigate on the effect of a national wave of movement in shaping the actors’ strategy at the local level, according to the literature on the crisis of representation and the theories

² In the Italian case the number of educational workers is an unofficial estimation provided by a key informant. It is not possible to provide for an official number because of the above mentioned problems regarding the professional regulation. In the Spanish case, the official number is provided by the professional body of educational workers in Aragon.

connecting social movement contentions, strengthen of industrial democracy and consolidation of labour rights.

The case studies have been carry out by means of semi-structured interviews and the participant observation of the reunions of the groups and the action they organized. A total of 34 interviews were conducted in Italy (16) and Spain (18)³ among the main actors involved in the contentions and key informants representing a reference in the sector or in the social and political context. In both countries, the activists of the self-organized groups were people belonging to different range of age (approximately from less than 30 to more than 50 years old). It suggest the scarce efficacy of an explanation based on a generational gap, while the segmentation of the labour market based on the professional status appear more convincing. The track of the interview was aimed to retrace the main phases of the conflict and the various resources deployed and exchanged; the opinion on the different actors involved (self-organized groups, traditional and radical unions, social movements, political parties and associations) and the strategy pursued by them; and, in the Spanish case, the effect of the national wave of movements in shaping balance of power and relationship among various social and political actors at the national and local level. The interviews have been transcript and associated with codes in order to assure the confidentiality of the information collected. The codes have been assigned according to the status of activist of the self-organized group, trade unionist from a traditional or radical union, and other social and institutional actors. In the Italian case there are not institutional actors interviewed as no relevant key informant was involved into the contentions; while in the Spanish case the institutional variable is more relevant because of the involvement of representatives from party-movement evolved from the 15M movement (as *Podemos*).

The participant observation was of a moderate type in order to assure a balance between an active presence of the researcher and an objective observation. Field notes of the observation⁴ were used to complement the interviews and triangulate the research findings.

³ In Italy, 16 interviews were collected between November 2015 and April 2016; In Spain, 18 interviews were collected between November 2016 and March 2017.

⁴ In the Italian case, field notes were collected in Bologna during the manifestation against the eviction of the 19th of December 2015; in the manifestation during the 4 hours' strike on the integrative agreement on social cooperation the 3rd of March 2016 and the reunion of the Coordination of the social workers the same day; in the broadcasting of the weekly radio program of *Educit* and the reunion of the group the 22rd of March 2016; and the reunion of the National network of social workers in Rome on the 31st of April 2016.

In the Spanish case, fields notes were collected in the Conference on the minor's care the 29th of November 2016; in the sit-in of the 16th of December 2016 supporting the general coordinator of COA, which suited the managing foundation of the centre for mobbing; in the celebration of a neighbors' association symbolically rewarding

In the next sections, it will be firstly presented separately the Italian and the Spanish case, focused on the two variable detected. Then, a comparative part will systematically analyze the two cases detecting patterns of mobilization and the role of the national wave of movement in shaping the local labour movement. Finally, the conclusions will resume the main evidences and contributions emerged for the debate on the trade unions representations' crisis and revitalization.

***Educational workers united against the cut and Educational workers' network:
the Italian case***

The state of the sector at national and local level

In the Region of Emilia Romagna (North of Italy), the social sector is closely bound to the social cooperatives landscape. These organizations were originally created under the leading idea of the workers' participation and corporate social responsibility. They developed in particular in the Centre-North regions with a marked leftwing political culture, in the aftermath of the World War II. Currently, the city of Bologna is the headquarter of the most important Italian cooperative association (as *Legacoop* and *Confcooperative*). The social cooperation initially represented a tool to express such political culture. The relationship between social cooperatives and the former communist party used to be consequently of closeness. However, the social cooperation ended up to recall a classic profit-oriented business. With the affirmation of the new public management, the public services were progressively outsourced to social cooperative. Specifically, the entrustment process in the social sector attracted private interest, especially in a region like Emilia Romagna, which use to register the highest social expenditure in the country. The austerity measures adopted as a consequence of the financial crisis of 2008 provoked important budget cut. In this framework, the figure of the educational workers represents one of the most precarious professionals in the outsourced social sector. Such condition can be attributed to several reasons. One can name for instance the voluntary vocation of this job and the particular relations this workers have with the people they work with. Being working member of a cooperative can also represent an obstacle, because of the less favorable normative applied for this professional status. Furthermore, the uncertainty tied to the regulation of this profession contributed to generate a legislative gap, going to the detriment of the labour rights and conditions of educational workers.

Educadores en lucha for the social commitment, the 18th of December 2016; and the sit in supporting the hearing of trial on unlawful dismissal of one educational worker of COA the 6th of February 2017.

In Italy, the figure of educational worker encloses a fragmented professional scenario formed by people working in non-formal education activities, with an heterogeneous educational and professional path. Two different university degrees are required to work on different area: a degree in the faculty of Education regulates the access to the profession of *educatore socio-culturale*; while a degree in the faculty of Medicine entitle to the profession of *educatore professionale*. The first deal with social marginality and vulnerability but are not allow to work with people with serious disabilities or addiction; and the second can work both areas. Nevertheless, the organization of the sector at local level is heterogeneous, because of the lack of a precise set of tasks and responsibilities of the educational workers. Consequently, an indefinite number of people work in this sector without any of the title required. At the moment of the data collection, the presence of 1,200 workers deploying task of educational workers in the metropolitan area of Bologna was approximately estimated. Moreover, a normative process of professional regulation was actually in progress. The so-called “Iory law” is a draft law adopted in 2016 with the aim of regulating the profession of educational worker. The law reiterated the two university path to access the profession and established a transitory period for the people who were already working in the sector without any title. However, the uncertain situation of the professional entitlement and an opportunistic interpretation of the blurred legal requirement is often used to cut job places when needed. This framework outlines a group of precarious workers left outside the classic trade unions’ representation and difficult to organize and mobilize.

The mobilization of educational workers in Bologna in 2011 and 2015

In the metropolitan area of Bologna, two episodes of budget cut on socio-educational services gave rise to the mobilizations of self-organized groups of educational workers between 2011 and 2016. In this context, *Funzione Pubblica CGIL* (hereinafter CGIL) and the radical union *Unione Sindacati di Base* (hereinafter USB) were respectively the most representative union entitled to negotiate with employers and public authority in the sector of social cooperation⁵.

In the district of Casalecchio del Reno, part of the metropolitan area of Bologna, a consortium of cooperatives was entrusted of the management of all the socio-educational services of the territory. In 2011, workers and union delegates were accidentally acknowledged of a plan of

⁵ In Italy there is not a law establishing how to acquire the status of most representative union. The right to negotiate with public authorities is evaluated case by case according to the presence of the union in the territory and in the sector. In the case of USB, they had to resort to a legal claim to restore their right to negotiate, since the city council administration installed in 2012 tried to revoke it.

budget cut on these services of about one million of euros. The educational workers of different services and different cooperatives related to the consortium created a collective subject aimed to oppose to the budget cut, supported by the unions CGIL and USB: *Educatori Uniti contro i tagli* (Educational workers united against the budget cut, hereinafter *Educit*). *Educit* was organized in an assembly in which they decide how to calibrate negotiations and collective actions. CGIL and USB cooperated with the group conducting the negotiations with managing entity and public authority and discussing with *Educit* about the strategy to pursue. CGIL refused to call for a strike, so the three actors decided to organize a joint demonstration against the budget cut, under the form of a parade. The initiatives was successful in terms of participation. The group was able to involve a parents' association of the services' recipient. Furthermore, *Educit* organized several action of protest addressing particularly to the public administration, as the building of a snow panda in front of the Casalecchio's City Council. A panda was the icon of the group, symbolizing the educational worker at-risk-extinction. Trough the initialed agreement of 2012, the group obtained a written engagement of the part on maintaining the level of resources of the services. With the resolution of the contention, *Educit* did not demobilized and started to present itself as a collective of workers aimed to represent the educational workers. They started to broadcast a weekly program in a local radio on welfare's issues, carrying on this project for several years. Together with other groups of self-organized social workers spread around the country, they found a national network, the *Rete Nazionale Operatori Sociali* (Social Workers' National Network) aimed to build a collective identity of social workers to make pressure on relevant professional issues. *Educit* resulted to be the most committed group into the national network and engaged itself particularly on the professional's entitlement reform stated by the Iori law. The ties between the group and the trade unions they cooperate with in the contention of 2011 got weaker. They developed a critical attitude toward trade unions and were openly challenging their role of representing the category of educational workers.

In 2015, a new self-organized group of educational workers arose in Bologna for the budget cut on the after-school education services established by the related competition. The awarding cooperative should have subrogate the workers of the previous managing cooperative and organize the service dealing with an important budget cut. The group arose after a CGIL reunion with the subrogated workers aimed to tackle the situation, in which some workers openly criticized the unions approach, considered too defensive and poorly demanding. The reunion

represented a chance for workers of the same cooperative to know each other for the first time. In that context they decided to ally and create a new collective subject, *Rete educatrici ed educatori di Bologna* (Educational Workers' Network, hereinafter *Rete Educatori*) by means of which developing an alternative strategy. The twin group *Educit* did not get involved deeply in their contention, merely expressing its solidarity to the group through its media. The union USB actively supported the group by participating to their actions. On February 2015 they broke into the city council meeting protesting against the call for tender. The cooperative awarding the competition finally resigned because of the insufficiency of the resources, and the service was assigned again to the former cooperative with a cut of resources of minor impact. However, the cooperative declared that it would have absorbed personally the cost of the budget cut, in order to safeguard the service's quality and the working conditions of the educational workers. *Rete educatori* tried to remain active for some months, organizing public assemblies on the public welfare. They allied with the case workers supporting their strike against the privatization of the services, called by USB on June 2015. Moreover, they actively supported the housing movement of Bologna by organizing activities in the squatted and participating to the protest against the eviction. On 2016, they formally broke up, since their activities were reduced to sporadic meetings.

The relationship between the two groups of educational workers was of mutual respect and support, but no strong cooperation took place. *Educit* considered *Rete educatori* as led by a radical leftwing ideology, while they stress the importance of being "inclusive", namely politically neutral and adopting a no conflict-ridden repertoire of action. For the same reason, *Educit* was not particularly close to the radical union USB, while the relationship between the latter and *Rete educatori* were highly cooperative. *Rete educatori* participated to the national network of social workers, but it resulted more interested in acting at a local level by cooperating with other movements on issues generally related to the local welfare. The union was seen as a tool for the workers, but the direct participation of the workers was emphasized by both groups. In the case of *Educit*, the utilitarian perception of the unions was more pronounced. In fact, even if they wanted to take over the representation role of trade unions, they refused to constitute a proper structured organization, seen as a danger for their inclusive nature. Thus, they need an institutional channel to lay on. Both self-organized groups were highly critical with the public administration, which was seen as their main counterpart. The main critic they address to CGIL

was his conflict-containment attitude toward the city administration, which was attributed to a supposed closeness of the union with the Democratic Party and in turn to the cooperative associations.

After a first moment of close cooperation with *Educit* in 2011, CGIL lost interest in collaborating with self organized educational workers. In 2015 the union started a campaign aimed to negotiate a territorial integrative agreement on the social cooperation. After coordinating a successful assembly of workers, they called for a four hours strike and organized a series of flash mob addressed to the cooperative associations, viewed as the main counterpart. The perception of CGIL on the self-organized groups was that they were highly political oriented and very small, and, consequently not representative. In the union's view, the self-organized groups were ideologically driven because their claims were too broad and not tied to specific labour-related requests. Moreover, since the self organized workers were lacking of any right of negotiate at the institutional level, CGIL felt like they had no chance to influence any kind of process aimed to improve their working condition.

Finally, USB criticized CGIL for the same reasons of the self-organized workers. Moreover the radical union did not agree on the way of targeting the counterpart. The choice of concentrate the main effort toward the cooperatives associations was still attributed to the closeness with the Democratic Party administration. Concerning the relationship with the self-organized movements, USB was also generally sharing the idea of the trade union as a tool for the workers and had a strategy of cooperation with the local movement and with the movement of workers, especially when close to a leftwing orientation.

In 2016, the situation in the sector appeared predominantly fragmented. The various actors trying to represent educational workers acted mainly separated, targeting different goal and pursuing diverse strategies, scattering the respective efforts.

Educational workers on struggle: the Spanish case

Educational workers and minors' protection in the Spanish Region of Aragon

The sector of the minor protection in Aragon is almost totally outsourced: in 2017 the region counted a total of 13 minors' centre, 12 of which were managed by external entities. Up to that year, there was no particular requirement about the status of the trustee, which could also be a private entity. Nevertheless, the sector was generally managed by non-profit association and

foundations. The regional administration is the public authority responsible for these services' design and is the organ entitled to call for the competition for tender. The professional figure of educational worker is employed in the non-formal education with unprotected minors. In Spain there are two main figure working in the non-formal education: the *educador* and *educador social*. The first has a specific degree in the faculty of Education, while the second just needs a degree, of any kind. The two professionals are subject to different collective agreement. In the national landscape, the different regions can employ the two professionals in different manners and they can also result "interchangeable" into the various services. In the case of Aragon, the region has established a clear division between this two figures. The *educador social* is the professional entitle to work in socio-educational services with vulnerable people, as ethnic minority, elderly people or unprotected minors; while the *educador* is employed in serviced related to leisure and other non-formal educational activities⁶. In Aragon, a very small number of educational workers is employed on a public base for the regional institute seconded to the public administration (named IASS), while most of them are employed in non-profit organizations under worse working conditions. The public educational workers are unionized, mainly with CCOO, while for those with a private contract there was a literal union gap. In Spain, the most important indicator of trade union representations is the number of representatives elected in the work council, determining the status of most representative union and the right to negotiate collective agreements. The dominance of the company level agreement stated by the labour reform of 2012 made the lack of a work council a further feature of weakness for under-represented workers. For educational experts, organizing is particularly hard. This is due to their precarious working conditions, heavily dependent to competitions for tender and to the resources made available by the public authority. The social impact of their job and the non-profit status of their employer make also difficult to develop a proper worker awareness.

The minors' detention centre *Reforma* was the first minors' centre electing a work council in Aragon, but the candidate representatives run as independent workers, released by any trade unions. In 2014, the COA was the first minors' centre electing three representatives from a trade union list of CGT. Few time later, the centre will be object of a long and important contention distinguishing itself for its impact in terms of organization of a category of workers and reform of the related sector.

⁶ Hereinafter it will use the expression "educational worker" to refer to the *educador social*, as it will focus on the minors' services.

The case of Educadores en lucha

The *Centro de Observacion y Acogida* (COA) is a first help centre for unprotected children located in the city of Zaragoza, capital of the region Aragon. Since 2004, the COA is externalized to a foundation for minor's assistance (hereinafter "Foundation"). In 2010, Foundation obtained the management of the biggest minors' centre in Aragon, the minors' detention centre *Reforma*. The workers of Foundation established a work council electing their representatives on independent base and negotiated a company agreement with more favorable conditions than the national contract of reference. In the next work council election of 2014, three representatives of COA out of thirteen were elected in the list of CGT (one of which on independent base). Even with a residual presence, CGT resulted the first union electing a representative in Aragon's minor sector.

At the end of the same year, the tender of COA was about to expire and it was put out to tender again with less economic resources. The COA was not a profitable centre and in 2014 it actually registered a loss of 100.000 euro. Such economic loss was compensate to the revenue coming from other centers, as *Reforma*, but the new competition cut resources and established new cost in charge of the managing entity. Before officially apply to the competition, Foundation presented its plan of budget cutting to the workers, providing for wage and job cut. The educational workers of COA refused the plan and decided to form a collective subject organized around an assembly of workers. They named themselves *Educadores en lucha* and called for a virtual strike against the budget cut on minors' services through the CGT. They stressed that their contention was of a social nature, but they need the labour claim to call for the strike. The public authority decided the amount of the minimum services they have to provide was the 100% of the working hours. Since the declared aim was to ensure the children's assistance, they did not appeal to such decision obstructing their right to strike and rather decided to go for a virtual strike. Doing so, they could highlight the insufficiency of the resources allocated to the service without affecting the recipients. Moreover, as long as the strike was in progress, it wouldn't have been possible to operate the job cut because of the protection stated by the right to strike. Foundation was entrusted of the COA's management, but it resign few time after because of the strike's persistence. A new entity was thus directly entrusted by the regional administration: an Ngo from Catalonia (hereinafter Institute). Institute took over Foundation management at the end of 2015 and started to substitute temporary workers on strike, which contract had expired, with new

workers. The general coordinator of COA, also member of *Educadores en lucha*, was submitted to a technical manager. The conflict started to decline in the summer of 2016, when the COA was put under supervision for proven irregularities emerged in the Institute's management, together with serious episodes of violence at the hands of the minors of the centre. The conflict lasted around two year, but at the moment of the end of data collection, in March 2017, the virtual strike was still in progress. The scope of the strike was to resist until the new competition, planned in January 2018. During that time, the collective performed several action aimed to obtain the calling of a new competition providing for adequate resources.

It is possible to distinguish three main tactic composing the general strategy of the group of workers: a communication tactic, a political pressure tactic and a legal tactic. For each of them, they had a prevalent external supporter. The communication tactic followed the aim of rising the public awareness on minor's protection in the territory. The city administration of Zaragoza led by the civic list *Zaragoza en Común*⁷ (inspired to *Podemos*) supported the group's claims, but mainly at a symbolic level since it had no competences on this policy field. The main contribution provided was to keep the attention on the COA's case. The group resorted massively to social networks, blog and press release. They broadcasted a video of denounce wearing a pink rabbit dress, which was transmitted by a national channel thanks to the support of a congressman of *Podemos* leading the regional party administration. From the communication perspective, *Podemos* resulted the most effective supporter the group had.

The pink rabbit become a sort of symbol of the group. In the political pressure campaign, they performed *escraches*⁸ dressed as pink rabbit. They resorted to this tactic in the two electoral campaign occurring during the conflict: the regional election of 2015 and the national election of December of the same year. They also asked for a written engagement on the COA's issue to the party in competition for the regional elections. The group could access to sensitive information thanks the congresswoman of *Izquierda Unida* in the regional parliament of Aragon. She resorted to all the parliamentary tools available to support the group (as interrogations and audits), resulting the most important ally at the institutional level for the public pressure campaign. Finally, the group intensively resorted to labour claim to denounce the Institute's management,

⁷ *Zaragoza en Común* was an electoral cartel gathering candidate from *Podemos* and the civil society running for the municipal election of Zaragoza in 2014. Starting to this year, several lists like that had run for municipal election in Spain and won in some of the most important Spanish city (as Barcelona, Madrid, Valencia and Zaragoza). They are known as *Ayuntamientos del cambio* (City Councils for the change).

⁸ The *escrache* is a repertoire of action consisting in disturbing public authorities during their public appearances.

with the legal and financial support of CGT. Totally, they presented eight denounces for irregularities to the Labour Inspection (one of which was proven in August 2016), four denounces for unlawful lay off and an administrative denounce against the call for tender designed without the proper resources.

CCOO did not intervene in this contention. The activist of *Educadores en lucha* declared that the union never kept in contact with them, while according to a key informant of CCOO there was a former information's exchange between the group and the union. Later, the union decided to suspend this collaboration since the workers decided to go for a different strategy with another union. CCOO was not agreeing with the strategy carry on by the self-organized workers. They accused them to be "radical" because of the language they were resorting to, for the high conflict orientation and the way of targeting their counterpart. CCOO perceived indeed the public authority as the entity to negotiate with for issues of a general social extent, while the managing entities was the subject to deal with on specific labour issues, through the work council. *Educadores en lucha* was instead mixing up different issues together, and CCOO accused the group to make use of the minors for a labour conflict. The choice of relying on CGT was attributed to the personal political path of some of the educational workers of COA belonging to radical left environments. Generally, the educational workers were considered a group difficult to mobilize, because their precarious working conditions and the innate component of voluntarism of their job. The work council was seen as the stepping stone to organize a group of workers and improve their working conditions. Consequently, a part from the moment of the work council's election, the union appear highly static in terms of recruitment strategies and organizing.

The relationship with *Educadores en lucha* and CGT were based on the exchange of resources in case of necessity. The union was providing the workers with spaces for their meetings, material for the demonstrations, legal support for labour claims and collective actions. Activists and officers of CGT were participating to the group's collective action, even if part of different categories and federations. As a general orientation, CGT tend to support all the movements close to an anti-capitalist ideology, and its anarchist root make it particularly keen to relate with self-organized movements. The union did not participate actively in the processes of organization of the group, since the latter was considered perfectly able to organize and managing by itself. Such ability was attributed to the previous experiences of a vanguard group of activist into local and national movements. The members of *Educadores en lucha* appreciated such non-interference

approach, which contributed to enhance the trust in the union. The latter was considered a tool for the workers, but the self-organization was emphasized, also in light of the role of the educational worker in the society. Most of the workers ended up to join the CGT as a sign of gratefulness for the support received, but they were not necessarily close to union's ideology and orientation.

It is possible to detect two main outcomes resulting from the intense two years dispute of *Educadores en lucha*: the minors' care reforms in Aragon and the organizing process of the educational workers as a category *per se*. In 2016 the Aragon's parliament approved a draft law on the reform of the whole minors' service system, aimed to enhance the services of family support in order to relying less on minors' centre. In 2017 a further law on the trustee entity's requirement was also approved. Thereafter, the managing entities of minors' services had to be non-profit organizations with knowledge and experience on the territory they wanted to operate. One cannot attribute solely to the group the approval of these reforms, but at the same time it is not possible denying that they provided an important contribution on the fulfillment of this result. *Educadores en lucha* was able to rise the awareness on the minors' care in the region by keeping the media attention high and making pressure on the political administration.

The second outcome is the process of unionization of the educational workers of COA. During the conflict, many of the COA's educational workers decided to join CGT, which brought together workers from formal and non formal education under the Education's Federation. Given by the considerable number of members reached in the non formal education, the union started a debate to create a new specific union. In the meanwhile, they developed a sub-category into the Education's Federation. These results were possible mainly for two reasons: firstly, for the strong professional and social awareness shown by the educational workers of COA; second, for the network of supporters activated around the COA's issue. The social vocation of this job, together with the marked logic of movement characterizing the group, transformed a remissive attitude to a sort of moral obligation to mobilize for the minor's care. The network of support was indeed pre-existent, as it consisted in ties developed among key activists of the group and people from CGT, *Izquierda Unida*, *Podemos* and others local platforms and movements. The presence of a vanguard group in *Educadores en lucha* the multi-belonging to the above mentioned organizations were crucial for the activation of this network of support. Nevertheless, the social vocation and logic of movement also signed a difficulty for the self-organized workers in detecting intermediated goal along the conflict. The extreme resistance they showed into the

conflict brought to a dramatic level of burn out, especially among the key activist: in the last year of the conflict, a total of twelve workers left the workplace for sick leave related to anxiety and stress, temporary leave or by renouncing to their contract.

Since the network was not the main focus of the investigation, it is not possible to exclude that the organizations' multi-belonging was also involving members and/or officers of CCOO. Even if so, CCOO did not activate into this contention. The union felt strategically far from *Educadores en lucha* and did not endorse the group. Its strategy of representation was focused on the work council elections, where they have a traditional presence among the public educational workers. CCOO basically wanted to transfer the traditional representation pattern to a group with extremely different characteristics, as the educational workers employed in outsourced services. Doing so, they have shown a difficulty in going beyond the traditional channel of representation and relate with non-conventional actors playing in the labour movement.

The interaction among the actors and the role of national social movement

The two cases have shown patterns of mobilization of the educational workers leading to a variety of interaction and outcomes. The political pressure and the support of actors coming from the different labour and social environments played a crucial role in the resolution of the conflict. In the Italian case, the alliance between the group *Educit* and the unions CGIL and USB, together with the support of the recipients families' associations, had a fundamental role in reaching the agreement with the public administration. Similarly, *Rete Educatori* reached some minor results, as the limitation of the budget cut and the one postponement of the case work's privatization. The path of *Educadores en lucha* lead to less tangible outcomes, but of a long term extent bound to have a deep impact on the sector.

One have to distinguish between external and external factors, which juxtaposition determined the difference in terms of strategic action of the self-organized groups in the cases examined.

Among the external factors, one have to name the different system to regulate the profession of educational expert and the degree of fragmentation of the groups. In the Spanish case, the precise definition of tasks and scope for action of the educational workers fostered the strengthen of a collective identity. In Italy, the lack of a clear path of entitlement, set of tasks and responsibilities created an highly fragmented scenario both at local and national level. In such framework, the process of professional regulation made more likely to generate corporative answers, undermining the collective efforts to create a professional identity.

The fragmentation of the groups in the Italian case reflect to some extent the characteristics of the sector. The socio-educational services in the local landscape observed were not necessarily provided by a single employer and in a single workplace. In the case of *Educit*, workers from different cooperatives were employed together under a consortium of cooperatives managing the whole district. In the case of *Rete educatori*, the workers involved were employed in the same cooperative, but performed their job in different environment (outdoors activities), so the opportunity to meet or even just know each other were less likely to occur. Conversely, the educational workers of COA were periodically meeting each other in the same workplace. Moreover, the active participation to the educational planning was encouraged by the general coordinator of COA. Even if the above mentioned differences in terms of groups' fragmentation don't look to have marked a significant differences in the process of self-organization, they probably had a role in the strengthen the group's cohesion in the case of *Educadores en lucha*.

The internal factors are instead more closely tied to the combination of the variables of interest. Logic of action and repertoires of contention have been selected as they are suppose to shape the actors' strategic choice. For the same reason, the two variables also explain the factors fostering and obstructing relationships of cooperation among different actors. All self-organized groups were characterized by a logic of movement, since they were emphasizing the direct participation; and they all resorted to unconventional repertoire of action. But, looking more into the detail at the way the self organized groups orientate toward these two variables, it is possible to define two ideal types of self-organization.

After the specific labour conflict in the Casalecchio's district, *Educit* pointed to build a professional identity of the educational workers and to represent specific professional issues. The group was trying to be recognized as an influent actor in order to be actively involved in the process of professional regulation. Their action was mainly led by such logic generating more tangible and professional-related request, such as the platform for social workers. The desire of appear "professional" and inclusive, as the activists often recall, is also reflected by their repertoires of contention. Thy addressed mainly to institutional actors (local and regional authority, member of the national congress) as in the case of the parliamentary audit in view of the "Iori law"; or to the civil society, with the aim of sensibilize the public opinion about the intrinsic value of their job, as trough the weekly radio forecasting. They were questioning the

outsourcing of the services, but looking in particular at the implication on their working conditions as a group of professionals with a key role in the society.

Before the labour contention of 2011, the orientation of *Educit* looked more similar to the one of *Rete educatori* and *Educadores en lucha*. The latter arose around specific labour contentions on budget cut, but they differ in trying to broaden the scope of the conflict to the social and political sphere. Similarly to *Educit*, they were questioning the impact of outsourcing strategies on the service, but they also added a component of social justice enlarging their narrative to other labour and social fields: it is the case of *Rete educatori* when allying with the case workers, or *Educadores en lucha* when criticizing the whole system of minors' care. Their logic of action was oriented to openly challenging the social services management through unconventional and conflictive repertoire of action (virtual strike, photo shooting, pink rabbit campaign, city council interruption)

One can name the self-organized movement according to their orientation towards the variables of reference, obtaining two typology: *self-organized lobby movement* and *self-organized critical movement*. The self-organized lobby movement is characterized by a logic of action aimed to obtain the professional and social recognition of a given category of workers and professionals by making pressure outside the classic channel of representation, as in the case of *Educit*. It presents a high degree of decentralization of the decision making and a lean structure, but its style of action is oriented to the institutional pressure rather than the political one. A lobby movement is engaged in building a shared system of value around a specific category of workers, without openly challenging the existent balance of power. This represents the main difference with the *self-organized critical movement*. The latter share some characteristics with social movements, but they arise around specific labour and social issue. They are organized in assemblies, so the decision making is spread among all the members and their structure is extremely lean. Critical movements are inclined to the direct action and tend to target both the public and private counterparts while deploying conflict-oriented actions aimed to undermine their reputation. They share with social movement the cyclical nature, so they will progressively demobilize, or they will evolve in a more structured subject.

The characteristics in terms of logic of action and repertoires of contention of the actors playing in the labour relations arena in terms of will favor or obstruct relationship of cooperation. A radical union is more likely to ally with a self-organized critical movement, since they share a

rank-and-file identity, a critical view toward the system and the idealistic goal of reverse the balance of power by means of highly conflictive action. USB and CGT were particularly close to rank-and-files, and tended to support them in their request rather than address their strategy or getting involved in deep into the organization. In the Italian case, USB and *Rete educatori* established a strong cooperation based on the resources sharing; while in the Spanish one the conflict of *Educadores en lucha* distinguish itself for the activation of a network of cooperation among different subject, including CGT and other political actors with a social movements background. These subjects tend to target the private counterpart as well as public administration because the emphasis they put into the social and political component of a conflict. The more marked logic of movement of the self-organized critical movement can be considered a factor obstructing the collaboration with a self organized lobby movement. In fact, the relationship with USB and *Rete educatori*, in one side, and *Educit* on the other, were reduced to sporadic moments of confrontations and declaration of support, but no strong cooperation was put in place. *Educit* considered USB and *Rete educatori* too radical and politically oriented. Radical unions and self-organized workers shared a critical view toward traditional trade unionism, for obvious reason: self-organized groups and radical unions arose as an answer to the crisis of representation of traditional unions. The latter have consequently high difficulties in relating with union-skeptical subjects, because the attack they receive from them, but also for the remoteness of their strategic approach. Traditional unions are in turn highly skeptical toward those subjects since they perceive them as a sort of idealistic fringe lacking of labour claims, nor influence capability. Notwithstanding both CCOO and CGIL present a strong political and social orientation in their discourse at national level, they don't integrate these aspects in specific sectors and labour conflicts, where they still appear strongly oriented to a logic of organization. Finally, one can argue that the existence of a consolidated professional path for educational workers in Spain was probably the main reason of the absence of a self-organized lobby movement.

Fig. 1

Two patterns of self-organized group of workers

	<i>Lobby movement (Educit)</i>	<i>Critical movement (Rete educatori, Educadores en lucha)</i>
Logic of action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Obtaining specific recognition as group - Represent professional issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Change the balance of power - Represent labour and social issues
Repertoire of contentions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making pressure “from outside” by targeting lobbying institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making pressure “from inside and outside” through the direct action toward public and private entity

However, the strategic orientation of the various actors have to be considered also according to the way they frame a given issue. The role of actor’s choice is evident in the Italian case if looking at the evolution of the relationship among the different subjects. During the conflict of 2011 CGIL was more willing to decentralize and share the decision making process with rank-and-files and other actors. USB and *Educit* accepted to moderate their repertoire of action by renouncing to go for a strike in order to stay unite in a large coalition. In 2015, the situation was changed. The perception of being “strong enough” in terms of representation framed the decision of CGIL to centralize the decision making and going autonomously for a strategy of negotiation, disregarding its former allies. Self-organized groups and USB perceived such orientation as a deliberate strategy aimed not to actually damaging the cooperative associations, nor the public administration, both considered close to the union. With the end of the specific conflict, *Educit* extended its scope to the representation of educational workers in an overall perspective, and developed a pronounced orientation toward the institutional lobby. The new group *Rete educatori* arose in a new specific conflict in open contrast with what they defined the “wait-and-see” strategy of CGIL. *Rete educatori* presented a more marked critical component than *Educit* and perceived itself as a movement, while *Educit* had change its logic of action pursuing different goals trough different strategies they did not agree with. The overall picture result in an extreme fragmentation of efforts and strategies in the same local context.

The role of the national social movement

One of the most evident differences into the two cases is the activation of a network of cooperation in Spain around the COA's issues, while the Italian scenario resulted highly fragmented. As mentioned, a network at a local level involving key activists of *Educadores en Lucha* already existed before the conflict. The national waves of movement extended and strengthen this network at institutional level, by means the installation of representatives coming from party-movements in the local administration. This network evolved also trough the development of an organizational multi-belonging, involving CGT, *Podemos*, *Izquierda Unida*, *Zaragoza en Comun*, and other local platform and movements spread under the impulse of the 15M. As an example, the trade union officer of reference of the group was belonging to CGT, *Podemos* and *Zaragoza en Comun* and had been one of the coordinators of *Marea Verde*. The representative of reference from *Podemos* was also a member of CGT, as well as the reference from *Izquierda Unida*, who was also an educational worker. A vanguard group from *Educadores en lucha* had previous experience in the 15M movement and participated to other local movements, as a platform of social-education formed by professionals with a critical view on the sector. Moreover, key activists were member of the platform of support for political prisoners in Aragon, founded by the future mayor of Zaragoza leading the list of *Zaragoza en Comun*. The multi-belonging contributed to give a continuity to the relationships among the different actors and strengthen the mutual trust. This network resulted fundamental in keeping the attention high for a long period of time to make pressure on the institutions. The results obtained have to be view as the effect of the joint action of a multitude of actors enlarging a specific conflict of a minors' centre to the whole minors sector. The closeness of CGT with the other actors in terms of logic of action and repertoire of contentions made more it embedded and active into this solidarity network than CCOO.

The case of *Educadores en lucha* is an effective example of the potentials of a network of cooperation in pursuing a strategy of political pressure conducted beyond the classic tool of representation; and of the potentials of a logic of movement orientation for workers' empowerment, over certain context and condition.

Conclusions

The comparison between the Italian and Spanish cases of educational workers' mobilizations contributed in deepen the knowledge about the crisis of representation by 1) proposing two different pattern of self-organization, 2) detecting obstacle and incentives to the cooperation between trade unions and self-organized workers and 3) highlighting the role of social movements in strengthen network of cooperation at local level.

The typology proposed integrate the previous groundbreaking studies on self-organization by looking at at the logic of action and repertoire of action. The lobby movement emerged to represent a category of workers and build a professional identity trough institutional and political lobby; while the critical movements arose to challenge “the system” trough conflictive actions in light of their role in the society. The arising of the first is strictly connected to the lack of a professional identity and regulation. Consequently, the lobby movement is additional to a series of movements, associations and trade unions trying to represent different aspects of a fragmented professional landscape. The critical movements are more similar to social movements and share with them a cyclical nature: in fact, the demobilization of the groups correspond to the descendent phase of the conflict.

Both self-organized types developed in a context affected by a crisis of representation, given by austerity measures and trade unions' institutional voice's decline. The outsourced social sector was chosen since classical collective actions result hardly effective and traditional trade unions appear scarcely able to reorient their strategy to deal with the change in progress. According to social movement's literature, the role of the civil society is crucial to push trough reforms enhancing the democracy and the participation, which cannot be attributed only to the political will. The research highlight the peculiarity and the potentials of this sector as a laboratory for experimenting strategies of alliance and political pressure, and for empowering precarious group of workers. The unconventional subjects in the outsourced social sector were able to create a public awareness around the issue of reference and experiment innovative repertoires of action hitting the reputation of both private and public counterparts. The comparison between Italy and Spain stressed a bigger resistance of CCOO in innovating its strategy beyond the institutional tools available. In fact, when its influence's capability was not given by granted, CGIL demonstrated to be open to cooperate with new subjects; while it disregarded workers' movements when perceiving of holding an uncontested primacy in the sectoral and/or local

landscape. Conversely, CCOO ignored the self-organized movement even if the organization was aware of the representative gap of this category. However, the lack of CCOO into the conflict has a double meaning. In the one hand, as just mentioned, the union showed to be resistant to the change on a greater extent than CGIL. On the other hand, the presence of CCOO could have filled the gap between the self-organized workers' goal and the resources available, weather by adjusting the resources or helping the workers to detect intermediate goals. The radical union CGT did not try to orientate the strategy of *Educadores en lucha*, but despite the group appreciated this approach, the price they paid in terms of burn out was too high. Their path appear consequently scarcely sustainable and hardly exportable.

As argued by Regini (1981), the ultimate goal of an associations is to maximize the benefit of its members, and that was the reason leading Italian and Spanish union to orient their strategies toward political exchange and social partnership with the state, respectively in the '80s and the '90s. This strategic path made traditional trade unions in Italy and Spain more likely to perceive self-organization as a disturbing factor rather than a voice claiming for more democracy and participation in trade union's life.

Finally, a national wave of movement went to consolidate relationships of trust into the local labour movement. The organizational multi-belonging fostered by social movements strengthen a local solidarity network. It played a crucial role in the conflict promoted by self-organized group of workers. However, traditional trade unions' difficulty to overcome their strategic legacies fuelled the skepticism of these movements. That contributed to further undermining trade union's reputation. The research wanted to investigate whether the institutional decline of trade unions should push them to calibrate their strategy again toward a logic of movement and, specifically, cooperating with self-organized workers. On the one hand, this study suggests the opportunities for trade unions to strengthen the relationship with their base by enlarging their logic of movement. On the other hand, it has shown the obstacle they have in recognizing and accepting the presence of new self-organized actors into the labour movement and, more in general, in adapting to the changes in progress

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Conclusive remarks

This comparative research was aimed to assess the viability, potentials and determinant of a strategy of alliance and cooperation between unions and self-organized workers. At the same time, this study wanted to look at the role of a national wave of contention in shaping the dynamic of interaction among these subjects at local level.

The thesis was led by the idea, endorsed by the literature, of the institutional path dependence as an obstacle to trade unions' strategic thinking. Italian and Spanish industrial relations' system have a neo-corporatist vocation, but neither can be considered a proper mature neo-corporative system. In the case of Italy, industrial relations are characterized by a more pronounced voluntarism. For this reason, proper neo-corporatist institutions and practices were not fully developed. In Spain, neo-corporatist institutions were set out with the democratic re-establishment, but the state had a primary role in this process. Trade unions' institutional power did not correspond to an actual influence capability. When the state suspended the tripartite negotiation with the economic crisis, no solid institutions could defend the labour from the wind of the austerity, nor strong and representative trade unions. In both countries, the highly segmented labour market results in the under-representation of the fringe of the workforce the most vulnerable, and the most affected by the crisis. Instead of trying to searching for other kind of resources (as external solidarity) to balance the equilibrium of power, traditional trade unions in Italy and Spain kept looking at a (constantly declining) collective bargaining as the main tool to manage employment relations. The arising of new subjects in the labour movement witness the crisis of representation of traditional trade unions. The national wave of protests in Spain are emblematic of a trade unions' decline and of a voice claiming for more participation coming from the rank-and-files. Self-organized movements arise as a consequence of a crisis of representation, as in Pizzorno's theory. But their appearance into the labour movement questions the traditional division between "old" and "new" social movements. The modern literature on trade union's revitalization don't grasps this aspect. Firstly, it is still largely "union centered", meaning that it looks mainly at trade unions' strategies and trade unions' interaction with external subject, where the second are collateral rather than central actors. Second, revitalization literature often reiterait the traditional division between "old" and "new" social movements. This thesis wanted to reverse to some extent the general trend in revitalization studies by looking at self-organized workers as central and relevant actors witnessing the progressive contamination of the two concept of old

and new social movement. With the last economic crisis, the relevance of economic and labour issues into the Occupy movement especially contributed to foster the mingling of social movement and critical unions into the protests, as argued by della Porta. In the cases observed, something similar happened at a local scale.

A revitalization perspective implies the awareness around the change in progress and the willingness to experiment new strategies to cope with the change. As suggested by Regalia, unions should be aware of that and available to change their logic of action to act strategically. The strategic legacies in these two countries instead act as a deterrent to experiment new strategies and repertoires, to change logic of action and to ally with new subjects.

The main contributions this dissertation gave to the literature are related to 1) the definition of new forms of non-union representation and 2) the impact of a national wave of movement on the local labour movement.

Fistly, the research gave an insight of the phenomenon of workers' self organization during the crisis, focused on a specific sector (the socio-educational sector) in a context of trade unions' decline and budget retrenchment. In the cases considered, self-organized group of workers enlarged specific labour issue to the social field and elaborated a specific labour awareness. They developed a peculiar conscience of class *per se*, where the Marxist concept of class struggle merges with the Polanyian struggle against the commodification of the public sphere. Two different pattern of self-organization emerged according to the logic of action and repertoire of contentions they resorted to. The two typology proposed share a logic of movement, since they valorize the direct participation of the workers, but they present peculiar nuances on this respect. Ciarini *et al* already proposed a roughly division between movement of workers representing large or specific professional issues with reference to the Italian experience. Such division can be considered valid, but the comparative case studies allowed to enrich the definition of this two type by using the main variable of reference. The Italian case outlined the emergence of a group aimed to represent specific professional interests in a context of arbitrary regulation and fragmented identity. *Educit* pointed at pressuring institutions to influence the process of professional regulation without resorting to highly conflictive tools. For this reason, it has been labeled "self-organized lobby movement". The logic of action of *Educit* evolved after the specific contention on the Casalecchios' budget cut on socio-educational services. During the contention in which they decide to constitute as movement, they appear more similar to a "critical

movement”, since they were protesting against the budget cut while lacking of specific professional claims. *Rete educatori* and *Educadores en lucha* have been labeled as “critical movements” since they mix their role in the society as professionals with the idealistic vocation of reverse the balance of power through conflictive repertoires of action. Such orientation makes in turn critical movements closer to radical unions sharing with them a highly participatory decision making and a critical view on the system. A lobby movements lack of a proper critical view and rather search for allies which can enhance its influence on specific professional issues. Critical labour movements appear more similar to social movements, while self organized lobby movements are closer to professional and workers’ association, but with a lean structure and a less conventional repertoire of action. This first findings can act as a stimulus for future researches, aimed to put together and classify the different form of non-union representation emerged in the context of the current economic downturn. The case-studies were based on a particular professional figure of the social sector, but it can be extended to other sectors. Moreover, this model can be suitably applied in other Southern Europe countries and in those countries characterized by the adoption of austerity measures and a trade union crisis of representation.

Traditional trade unions in Italy and Spain related with difficulties with self-organized workers, with significant differences between the two countries. In fact, in the Italian case CGIL made itself available to cooperate with self-organized workers and the radical union USB during the contention of Casalecchio, while it decide to go separately for a strategy of negotiation in a subsequent moment. The “density bias” represented a factor of influence, intended in this case as the perception of being numerically representative in the local arena of the social cooperation. CGIL perceived to be numerically prevalent and consequently legitimated by the base, so it did not grasps the request of involvement coming from the rank-and-files. In Spain, CCOO showed major difficulties in going beyond the traditional tools of negotiation available. The election of representatives into the work councils was considered the only possible way to play into a labour environment. Mixing social and working issue was not seen as a desirable strategy, since in the union’s view the two dimensions had to remain separated. The strategy of *Educadores en lucha* demonstrate exactly the opposite obtaining to put the minors’ care in a relevant point into the political agenda. Even if the cases observed do not allow to make general assumptions, it is still possible to attribute to a less rigid institutionalized system a better responsiveness of trade unions

toward the changes in progress, according to the theories on the strategic legacies of neo-corporative systems of industrial relation. It should be made clear that the strengthen of labour rights and participation at the institutional level should be always a primary goal of the labour movement. In order to act strategically, the actors playing into the labour movement should effectively fluctuate between a logic of movement and a logic of organization, radicalizing or moderating their repertoire of contention.

The second main contribution the research gave to the literature was to shed a light on the role of national social movements in influencing the patterns of interaction at local level. The most evident effect emerged is the enhancement of a pre-existent network of solidarity which had a fundamental role in the contentions of *Educadores en lucha*. Even if the self-organized workers did not fulfill their main objective, they obtain to get public the issue of the unprotected minor and to put it in a special place into the political agenda. National social movements as 15M and *Mareas ciudadana* fostered relationship of trust among people already gravitating around local movements. The political movements developing on the wave of the social movement (*Podemos* and *Zaragoza in Comun*) enhance the organizational multi-belonging into this network, ensuring a stable interaction among the different subjects. The belonging of the key actors of *Educadores en lucha* to this network resulted crucial in the contention and for the outcome of the same. Studying network of solidarity into the local labour movement can represent a further stimulus this dissertation can provide for future researches.

The lack of traditional trade unions' support to the self-organized workers has a twofold implication into the local labour movement. In the one hand, traditional unions missed a chance to intercept a precarious group of workers from a revitalization perspective. They reiterate their difficulty in dealing with the changes and a highly segmented labour market, even with a slight difference between Italy and Spain, as mentioned. On the other hand, self-organized movements also loses a crucial ally. The conflict of *Educadores en lucha* demonstrates that the balance of resources outlines a strategy very hard to sustain without a solid structure behind. The personal costs in terms of burn-out the workers of COA had to suffer make this peculiar experience unlikely to spread. The intervention of the major trade unions would have corrected the unbalance of resources and help self-organized workers to detect intermediate goal. What emerged clearly are the potentials of enlarging a labour conflict to the social sphere, as largely assumed by the revitalization literature but scarcely implemented by Italian and Spanish

traditional unions. Social movements represent a chance to strengthen network of alliance empowering the labour movement at a local level. At the same time, traditional trade unions' scarce responsiveness exacerbate their already compromised reputation.

The research outlined new promising forms of workers' organization and suggest that, when institutional influence declines, switching to a logic of movement and radicalizing the repertoire of contention is a viable and potentially effective strategy to strength labour influence in the public debate.