

## [Critical Trust: Social Movements and Democracy in Times of Crisis<sup>1</sup>]

*Abstract:* The recent financial crisis and, especially, anti-austerity policies, reflects and, at the same time, contribute to a crisis of representative democracy. In this article, I discuss which different conceptions of trust (and relations to democracy) have been debated in the social sciences, and in public debates in recent time. The financial crisis has in fact stimulated a hot debate on “whose trust” is relevant for “whose democracy”. After locating the role of trust in democratic theory, I continue with some illustrations of a declining political trust in Europe, coming from my own research on social movements, but also of the emergence, in theory and practices, of other conceptions of democracy and democratic spaces, where *critical* trust develops. Indignados’ movements in Spain and Greece as well as the Occupying Wall Street protest in the US are just the most visible reaction of a widespread dissatisfaction with the declining quality of democratic regimes. They testify for the declining legitimacy of traditional conceptions of democracy, as well as for the declining trust in representative institutions. At the same time, however, these movements conceptualize and practice different democratic models that emphasize participation over delegation and deliberation over majority voting. In doing this, they present a potential for reconstructing social and political trust from below.

*Keywords:* Democracy, Trust, Social movements, Austerity.

In this article, I want to discuss which different conceptions of trust (and relations to democracy) have been debated in the social sciences, and in public debates in recent time. The financial crisis has in fact stimulated a hot debate on *whose trust* is relevant for *whose democracy*. Let me illustrate these core questions with two vignettes, before passing to a review of the (changing) role of trust in democratic theorization and to an analysis of empirical research on different conceptions of trust and democracy and social movements, going then back to a reflection on models of democracy.

### Vignette 1. Whose trust? Market against citizens

*July 2012. After the head of the Confindustria (the interest group of the Italian industrial firms) Giorgio Napolitano had joined on the previous day Susanna Camusso, the secretary of the labour union CGIL, in criticizing the governmental decree on the spending review, accused of “social butchery”, Italian Premier Mario Monti, stigmatizing the event, declared: “statements like this, as it already happened in the past months, made the spread (the differential between the Italian and the German interest rate on bonds) increase, and this not only for the state but also for the enterprises. So, I invite not to damage the enterprises”. He stated that those criticisms were just the last of a long series of attacks to the government’s economic politics. He contested that Confindustria and CGIL wanted to “give a vote” to the government, while the government did not “give a vote” to them. As it is well known, Monti is a “technocrat”, with bi-partisan support. Very much sponsored by the president of the republic, he represents the idea that, when politics fails, technocrats—especially economists—have to be called in, to save the market. Called in to “reduce the spread” in the cited statement he stigmatized political criticism against his government as economically dangerous—as risking reducing the trust of the (anonymous) market, and therefore to increase the infamous spread. Similarly, and even more explicitly, a few days ago, during a debate at the Italian television I also participated, an economist stated that what Italy needs is the trust of those who invest pension funds. I suggested that the continuous search for the “trust of the market” jeopardized political trust. Mr. Monti was also later on criticized in the international press for his mistrust in the role of parliaments in times*

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of economic crisis.

## Vignette 2. Whose democracy?

November 2011. During a speech at the European University Institute Herman Van Rompuy, president of the European Council, after declaring that Italy «needs reforms, not elections», so presented his conception of democracy: «There is the time of parliamentary democracies: of legislative procedures, of votes, the work to get a majority. ... There also is the time of public opinion, which needs to be convinced, taken along a road. There finally is the time of implementation, of executing the measures once they are agreed». PhD students, from all over Europe, showed posters with written «Democracy?». In a document they distributed they charged that: «the office of President of the European Council is the symbolic incarnation of the ever more blatant, democratic deficit at the heart of the European Union. The unelected and unaccountable head of a European people whose popular consent in the appointment was deemed superfluous ... However, the crisis of democracy in the European Union is much more insidious than the simple appointment of a presidential figure head. The undemocratic ethos has infiltrated the very structures of the Union, evident in its consistent disregard for the expressed popular will of its citizens. As the EU becomes ever less accountable to the people of Europe, it has hastened its drift away from its core founding values». This deficit notwithstanding, they declared, «we are of the view that another Europe is possible... Our Europe can and will once again be rooted in its founding values of human dignity, freedom, equality and solidarity, constructed upon and protected by accountable and truly democratic political institutions». Among their «95 theses», two reads so: «No common currency without a common democracy!» and «You can't balance the budget with a democratic deficit!». (Della Porta 2013)

It is indeed the topic of what is (whose) trust and what is (whose) democracy in times of austerity that I would like to illustrate. In order to do so, I would like to start by locating the role of trust in democratic theory, and in what Robert Dahl called «really existing democracies». I will continue with some illustrations of a declining political trust in Europe, coming from my own research on social movements, but also of the emergence, in theory and practices, of other conceptions of democracy and democratic spaces, where *critical* trust develops. I will end up observing that a reflection is needed about how democratic institutions can make good use of this critical trust, by increasing first of all the occasions for the citizens to participate in the decisional process, as well as by listening to the ideas that are developed in social movements' deliberative public spheres.

### *Trust and democracy. An introduction*

Democratic theory has suggested that democracies need trustful citizens. This is the case because, symbolically, governments and parliaments have to enjoy legitimacy between an election and the next, but also because, pragmatically, mistrustful citizens tend to pay less tax.

For a long time, deferent citizens were considered as the most supportive of democratic institutions, as they were ready to recognize their own limitation (according to e.g. Schumpeter, in knowledge and rationality) and trustfully delegate power to the (political) experts.

When Tocqueville was re-visited in the 1980s, social trust (as indicated by associational memberships as well as norms of reciprocity) has been considered (influentially by Putnam) as conducive to political trust. The assumption is that people that engage in associations are more likely to meet obligations and also to pressure for better public performances. Only some organizations - tame and unpolitical - were however considered as sources of trust.

Since the 1980s, much research, by scholars such as Samuel Barnes, Max Kaase (Barnes et al 1979), Russell Dalton (2004), Pippa Norris (2001), suggested that citizens were becoming more and more critical: they were less supportive of those in power and they used non-conventional forms for putting pressure on governors (not relying just on elections). What was a more, not marginal person were more critical, but rather the younger and the most educated. Additionally, those who mistrusted parties and institutions were still interested in politics.

As confirmed over and over again by numerous empirical researches, trust in real democracy as a regime based upon electoral accountability is limited by widespread phenomena such as the decline of electoral participation, but also the deep transformation in the political parties that, giving continuity in time to pre-electoral promises, allowed implementing electoral accountability. The decline in the number of party members and, especially,

activists (with the related spread of member-less and personalized parties) and the weakening of party loyalties (with the increase in electoral volatility and opinion voting) are tangible signs of these transformations.

Nevertheless, theoreticians of a “participatory revolution” were not so pessimistic about the consequences of a fall in political trust. Rather, they talked of a democratic Phoenix, ready to (re)emerge. Critical citizens were rather considered as better democrats than deferent ones as they tended to choose voice over exit. In fact, together with narratives of increasing “crisis” there was some stressing a sort of revival for democracy.

What is the right amount of trust/mistrust in a given democracy is however an open question. Charles Tilly (2007) explained democratization as the integration of networks of trust in the state. In fact, a mechanism of democratization was, according to him, the disintegration of existing segregated networks of trust, given the decline in patrons’ ability to offer goods to their clients and consequent withdrawal of clients’ trust. The creation of publicly recognized associations is seen instead as a sign of trust-network integration in the state. However, he also recognized a democratic dilemma of needing trust but also mistrust to function, as «contingent consent entails unwillingness to offer rulers, however well elected, blank checks. It implies the threat that if they do not perform in accordance with citizens’ expressed collective will, citizens will not only turn them out but also withdraw compliance from such risky government-run activities as military service, jury duty, and tax collection» (Tilly 2007: 94).

The question of how much trust versus mistrust is needed for a healthy democracy is linked to another one: how can institutions adapt to changing levels of trust/mistrust. As Pierre Rosanvallon observed, however, in his book on *Counter-Democracy. Politics in an Age of Distrust* (or better, *defiance* - which is different from *méfiance*), institutions must change if they need to adapt to more and more critical citizens.

The paradox of an increase in the number of democratic countries but, at the same time, a growing dissatisfaction with the functioning of democracy, even in the most “advanced democracies”, is often mentioned in academic debates on contemporary, trouble times. Addressing these debates, Pierre Rosanvallon opens his *Counter-Democracy* noting that «the democratic ideal now reigns unchallenged, but regimes claiming to be democratic come in for vigorous criticism almost everywhere», warning that «in this paradox resides the major political problems of our time» (Rosanvallon 2006: 1).

An original and valuable contribution of *Counter-democracy* to the problematization of the definition of democracy passes through the distinction between *legitimacy*, considered as a juridical, procedural attribute, and *trust*, conceived as the invisible institution that expands legitimacy, involving a *moral* dimension of integrity and a *substantive* dimension related with the pursuance of the common good.

By distinguishing between legitimacy and trust, Rosanvallon goes beyond the list of challenges to representative democracies, by also singling out some democratic opportunities instead. If mistrust is the disease, it might be part of the cure as well as «a complex assortment of practical measures, checks and balances, and informal as well as institutional social counter-powers has evolved in order to *compensate for the erosion of trust, and to do so by organizing distrust*» (Rosanvallon 2006: 4). The different elements of what Rosanvallon defined as counter-democracy do not represent «the opposite of democracy, but rather a form of democracy that reinforces the usual electoral democracy, a democracy of indirect powers disseminated through society - in other words, a durable democracy of distrust which complements the episodic democracy of the usual electoral representative system» (Rosanvallon 2006: 8).

An important contribution of his volume is in fact in linking counter-democracy to deep rooted traditions in both democratic thinking and the development of democratic institutions that go beyond electoral accountability. This emerges, for instance, in the discussion of the powers of oversight. In fact, «In order to understand the nature of such powers and trace them back to their inception, we must first recall that the idea of popular sovereignty found historical expression in two different ways. The first was the right to vote, the right of citizens to choose their own leaders. This was the most direct expression of the democratic principle. But the power to vote periodically and thus bestow legitimacy to an elected government is almost always accompanied by a wish to exercise a more permanent form of control over the government thus elected» (Rosanvallon 2006: 12). This second conception of sovereignty found its incarnation in growing societal powers of sanction and prevention. In fact, the understanding of democratic experiences requires the consideration, at the same time, of the «functions

and dysfunctions» of electoral representative institutions but also of the organization of distrust.

With these reflections Rosanvallon points at the presence (in theories and practices) of different conceptions of democracy, that put different emphasis on different democratic qualities - electoral accountability being only one of them. As he notes, in the historical evolution of democracy, near to the growth of institutions of electoral accountability, there has been the consolidation of a circuit of oversight anchored outside of state institutions. If electoral accountability has been for a long time privileged in justification of democracy, nowadays the challenges to procedural democracy bring attention back to the “counter democracy” of surveillance. While «Until now, historians and political theorists have been primarily concerned with the first aspects» (Rosanvallon 2006: 5), he convincingly observes that «the democratic form of political distrust is especially important because of the erosion of trust in contemporary society... the strategy is thus one of institutionalizing distrust in a positive way, so as to serve as a kind of protective barrier, a guarantee of the interests of society» (Rosanvallon 2006: 9).

Recognizing the democratic potential of mistrust means to push forward the reflections of the democratic role played by protest and on social movements as actors of the political system. For research on social movements and civil society, Rosanvallon's contribution has high value in pointing at the (potential and actual) democratic role that these actors play in really existing democracies. Paradoxically, notwithstanding their obvious relevance, social movement research has been rarely concerned with their democratic functions. This is true, with few valuable exceptions, for analysis concerning all the different steps in the process of democratization. While social movement scholars have mainly considered democracies as the context in which these actors move, the study of the effects of social movements on policies, politics and political is still in its infancy. On their side, political scientists have focused their attention upon more institutionally recognized actors and processes, as political parties and elections.

As I am going to suggest in what follows, social movements are made for sure of critical citizens, who challenge existing institutions. At the same time, however, they build spaces in which social (selective) trust is formed.

#### *Other democratic qualities: social movements and democracy*

In 2011, the protester has been named person of the year by the Time magazine. The Arab Spring has been read as yet another testimony that democracy is becoming «the only game in town». The effects of the wave of protest that brought about democratization processes in an area of the world traditionally defined as dominated by resilient authoritarian regimes for sure contributed to challenge the idea of a clash of civilization based on the incompatibility of Islam with democracy. Moreover, they have shown that, even in brutal dictatorship, citizens do mobilize, and not only on material issues. Interpreting the Arab Spring as merely a call for representative institutions will however be misleading. The protestors in the Tahir Square were calling for freedom, but also practicing other conceptions of democracy that, if not opposed, are certainly different from liberal representative democracy, resonating instead with ideas of participatory and deliberative democracy.

Not by chance, when the ideas of the Arab Spring spread from the MENA region to Europe, they were adopted and adapted by social movements that criticized indeed the functioning of liberal, representative democracy. Even before 2011, the Icelandic citizens went into the street to protest against what they saw as a corruption of government, and called for another democracy. Austerity measures in Iceland, Ireland, Greece, Portugal and Spain were in fact met with long-lasting, mass protests. In part these protests took the more traditional forms of general strikes and trade union demonstrations contesting the drastic cuts to social and labour rights. Another protest was also seen—not against the former, but certainly different and more directly concentrated on themes of democracy: the criticism of democracy as it is now, but also the elaboration of possible alternatives.

Directly inspired by the Arab Spring, the Spanish and then Greek Indignados not only protested austerity measures in their respective countries, but also asked for more, and a different democracy. “*Democracia real ya!*” was the main slogan of the Spanish *indignados* protesters that occupied the Placa del Sol in Madrid, the Placa de Catalunya in Barcelona and hundreds of squares in the rest of the country from 15 May on, calling for different social and economic policies and indeed greater citizen participation in their formulation and implementation. Before this example in Spain, self-convened citizens in Iceland had demanded the resignation of the government

and its delegates in the Central Bank and financial authority between the end of 2008 and the beginning of the following year, while in Portugal, a demonstration arranged via Facebook in March 2011 brought more than 200,000 young Portuguese people to the streets. The *indignados* protests in turn inspired similar mobilisations in Greece, where opposition to austerity measures had already been expressed in occasionally violent forms (Della Porta 2013).

Similarly, when the Occupy Wall Street started in the United States, quickly spreading in thousands of American cities, the concern voiced by the protestors addressed the financial crisis, but even more the failure of democratic governments to live up to the expectation of their citizens. Their very democratic quality was in fact contested. On October 15 2011, the protest events registered in 951 cities in 82 countries challenged not only the economic and social policy choices, but even more what they saw as a deterioration of representative liberal democracy. What is more, the occupations represented not only occasions to protest but also experimentations with participatory and deliberative forms of democracy. The very meaning of democracy was, that is, contested.

There is in fact no doubt that the crisis in Europe is a crisis of democracy as well as, or even more than, a financial crisis. Neo-liberalism was and, in fact, is, a political doctrine that brings with it a minimalist vision of the citizens and democracy – as Colin Crouch (2003) demonstrates so well in his *Post-Democracy*. It foresees not only the reduction of political interventions to balance the market (and consequent liberalisation, privatisation and deregulation) but also an elitist concept of citizen participation (electoral only, and therefore occasional and potentially distorted) and an increased level of influence for lobbies and strong interests. The challenge to a liberal concept and practice of democracy is however accompanied by the (re)emergence of diverse concepts and practices of democracy, elaborated and practiced by – among others – movements that are opposing a neo-liberal solution to the financial crisis, accused of further depressing consumption and thereby quashing any prospects for development (whether sustainable or not).

Accused of being apolitical and populist, these movements have placed what Claus Offe (1985) long ago defined as the «meta-question» of democracy at the centre of their action. The *indignados*' discourse on democracy is articulate and complex, taking up some of the principal criticisms of the ever-decreasing quality of representative democracies, but also some of the main proposals inspired by other democratic qualities beyond representation, that are based on electoral accountability. These proposals resonate with (more traditional) participatory visions, but also with new deliberative conceptions that underline the importance of creating multiple public spaces, egalitarian but plural.

Above all, the protesters criticised the ever more evident shortcomings of representative democracies, mirroring a declining trust in the ability of parties to channel emerging demands in the political system. Beginning from Iceland, and forcefully in Spain and Portugal, indignation is addressed towards the corruption in the political class, seen in both bribes (the dismissal of corrupt people from institution is called for) in a concrete sense, and in the privileges granted to lobbies and common interests shared by public institutions and economic (and often financial) powers. It is to this corruption - which is the corruption of democracy - that much of the responsibility for the economic crisis, and the inability to manage it, is attributed to.

If the centrality of the condemnation of corruption has bent some noses out of shape on the left (which still sees anti-politics more in the criticism of corruption than in corruption itself), the slogan «they don't represent us» is nevertheless also linked to a deeper criticism of the degeneration of representative democracy, in turn related to elected politicians' failure to 'do politics'. The latter are often united in creating an image suggesting that no alternatives are available – an image that protesters do not accept. Representative democracy is also criticised for having allowed the abduction of democracy, not only by financial powers, but also by international organisations, above all the International Monetary Fund and the European Union. Pacts for the Euro and stability, imposed in exchange for loans, are considered as anti-constitutional forms of blackmail, depriving citizens of their sovereignty.

Liberal democracy is so presented as eroded from the market as well as from international institutions. Rather than calling for a return to liberal democracy, the protestors propose and practice however different visions of democracy. In the entire world, *indignados* citizens have occupied squares, transforming them into public spheres made up of "normal citizens". It is an attempt to create high quality discursive democracy, recognising the equal

rights of all (not only delegates and experts) to speak (and to respect) in a public and plural space, open to discussion and deliberation on themes that range from situations suffered to concrete solutions to specific problems, from the elaboration of proposals on common goods to the formation collective solidarity and emerging identities.

This prefiguration of deliberative democracy follows a vision profoundly different to that which legitimates representative democracy based on the principle of majority decisions. Democratic quality here is in fact measured by the possibility to elaborate ideas within discursive, open and public arenas, where citizens play an active role in identifying problems, but also in elaborating possible solutions. It is the opposite of a certain acceptance of democracy of the prince, where the professional elected to govern must not be disturbed - at least until fresh elections are held.

### *Desperately seeking politics-democracy and austerity*

Conception and practices of democracy, as well as their links with (selective) trust emerge from surveys conducted in several countries during protests against authority. As I'm going to show in what follow, these surveys indicate a) strong mistrust in institutions, but also (and almost paradoxically, b) sense of efficacy, as well as c) a search for (more) politics against market inequalities.

The data I shall refer to come from surveys at three demonstrations on similar issues of workers' rights and social justice, but each with different promoters, that all took place in Italy in May 2011: the EuroMayDay parade on precarity issues in Milan on May 1; the Labor Day union march in Florence on the same day; and the national general strike against austerity policies, which we surveyed in Florence on May 6 (della Porta and Reiter 2012). The first involves young people that face conditions of job precarity mobilizing into a "parade". The organizing groups have their roots in the global justice movement and squatter youth centers, locating themselves under several aspects on the new social movement side. The second belongs to the long tradition of May Day celebrations, organized jointly by the three main Italian trade union confederations. The third is the march that accompanied a general strike against austerity measures, called for by the main Italian trade union, the CGIL (traditionally communist-socialist), but joined also by activists of other social movement organizations. The last two marches are therefore rooted in so-called «old social movements».

While trust is low in institutions, there is instead high confidence in one's own efficacy. The next set of questions confirms the low confidence in parties and the political class. Politicians are thought to not fulfill their promises, and voting in elections is seen as (much) less useful than unconventional forms of participation. There is significant agreement with the statement that «most politicians make a lot of promises but do not actually do anything». Even though confidence in politicians is extremely low, there is nevertheless confidence in the capacity of citizens to have an impact on political decisions, especially if citizens organize themselves and if they do so transnationally.

Additionally, while extremely critical of the working of existing institutions, our interviewees express a very strong search for politics—to the point of demanding the strengthening of the power of the very institutions they mistrust. When moving from the assessment of responsibility to potential solutions, our activists agree that it is necessary to strengthen all levels of governance

Summarizing, protestors on social justice and labor rights expressed extremely low levels of trust in government, parliament, and political parties. Even trust in the unions was surprisingly low, especially if we consider that union activists were largely present in these protests and that unions had participated in calling for the protests. At the individual level, we also noted that age indeed tends to have an impact, with younger people being more distrustful than older cohorts; the younger participants expressed the highest levels of mistrust in representative institutions, parties, and unions. Opinions on politicians were consistent with this mistrust, as the activists seemed to agree with the Indignados' slogan, «They do not represent us».

As representative institutions loosen—or give up—their capacity to influence the market, the visions spread of political institutions captured by strong economic interest (the 1% according to the demonstrators) and no longer representing what the activists define as the 99% of the citizens (in the slogan of the Occupy campaign). Trust in parties and parliaments falls accordingly. Not only institutions are mistrusted, however; the traditional actors of mediation in institutional politics (the parties) and functional representation (the unions) are less and

less trusted, with only about 1 out of 20 having some or much trust in them. In line with our expectations, we have seen that critical attitudes are even more widespread among EuroMayDay participants, young activists, and those more to the left.

Mistrust can bring about a sense of disempowerment towards a low-quality (or no-quality) democracy, and therefore can spur apathy. How are citizens to influence corrupt politicians who are sold out to financial capital? Nevertheless, there is also another, very different reaction, which we found widespread among the activists we interviewed: a belief that, notwithstanding the lack of capacity of elected politicians to “represent us,” there is the possibility to influence policies from below. Lack of trust in the actors of traditional institutional politics is coupled by our interviewees with confidence in the capacity of the citizens—especially if organized at the international level—to take the world in their hands: «we don’t need Wall Street and politicians to build a better society» is what we read on the website of Occupy Wall Street (Occupy Wall Street 2011). Optimism about the capacity to produce changed through action from below was widespread across demonstration, age, and political positions.

In opinion polls, some scholars try to assess the consistency of respondents’ attitudes. No doubt that the demonstrators we have interviewed showed some apparent degrees of inconsistency, or at least tensions, at various levels. First and foremost, while not trusting political institutions, our demonstrators are in favor of strengthening all the various levels of governance. They believe that in order to reduce social inequalities and other dangerous consequences of neoliberal globalization, it is imperative that politics re-gain control over the market. Also, because the challenge is global, various levels of governance have to be strengthened, with particular attention to the EU and the local level. One should not, however, expect a univocal trend towards “de-nationalization”. Our protestors ask for the strengthening of national institutions as well. Compared to the activists at the first European Social Forum in Florence in 2001 (Della Porta, Andretta, Mosca, Reiter 2006), the percentage of those who believe in the need to strengthen the national government more than doubled. Facing the complex challenges of a financial crisis, which is global, but with specific national consequences, the activists promoted solutions based on integrated, multi-level governance.

#### *Back to theory: not one but four models of democracy*

I have mentioned different conceptions of democracy than the (neo)liberal ones. In the intense debate in normative theory, we can single out two dimensions of democratic conceptions that are relevant for our reflections on social movements, trust and democracy. The first dimension refers to the recognition of participation as an integral part of democracy; a second one looks at the construction of political identities as exogenous versus endogenous to the democratic process. In political theory from Dewey to Habermas, it is often observed that the principle of representation is balanced by the presence of participatory spaces and the majoritarian principles, central to liberal definitions of democracy, are in various ways balanced by the presence of deliberative spaces.

First of all, a general mantra of discussion on democracies in so called «empirical theories of democracy» is that democratic institutions are representative. While the ideal of democracy as government of, by and for the people locate the source of all power in the citizenry at large, democratic institutions are called to restrict the number of decision makers and select them on the basis of some specific qualities. A distinction is in fact usually made between the (utopist) conception of a *democracy of the ancients*, in which all citizens participate directly to the decisions about the public goods, and a (realistic) *democracy of the moderns*, where elected few govern. The size and complexity of decision making in the modern state is often quoted as imposing severe constraints on the participation in the public decisions of the many and, especially, of the normal citizens, often considered as too inexperienced, if not too emotional, to take part in the choices which will affect them. Electoral accountability should then give legitimacy to the process, by allocating to the citizens-electors the power to prize or punish those in government, every once in a while. Trust is conceived here as a synonymous of deference, and should allow to keep high level of compliance between one election and the next. Low level of compliant trust and highly critical citizens challenge this model of democracy.

If the liberal theories have underlined delegation, electoral accountability, has however been considered as insufficient in other theorizations. In particular, so called participatory theories have affirmed the importance of

creating multiple occasions for participation. Elections are in fact at best too rare to grant citizens sufficient power to control the elected. Additionally, elections offer only limited choices, leaving several themes out of the electoral debates and citizens' assessment. More and more, election showed to be manipulated given the bigger capacity of some candidates to attract, licit or illicit, financing as well as to command privileged access to mass media. In parallel, the quality of decisions could be expected to decline with the decline of participation, as the habits of delegating tend to make citizens not only more apathetic, but also more cynic and selfish. Participation is instead praised as school of democracy: capable of constructing good citizens through interaction and empowerment. Critical trust - including self-confidence - is here considered as a positive condition for participation, at the same time increasing with use.

Not only delegation, but also majoritarian decision making has been criticized. A "minimalist" view of democracy as the power of the majority has been considered as not only risking in terms of thwarting the rights of the minorities, but also as reducing the quality of decision making. As there is no logical assumption that grants more wisdom to the preferences which are (simply) more numerous, other decision making principles should at least temper the majoritarian one. In normative debates, deliberative theories have in fact promoted spaces of communication, the exchange of reasons, the construction of shared definitions of the public good, as fundamental for the legitimation of public decisions (among others, Miller 1993: 75; Dryzek 2000: 79; Cohen 1989: 18-19; Elster 1998; Habermas 1981; 1996). Not the distribution of pre-existing preferences, but the quality of the deliberation would here grant legitimacy as well as efficacy of decision. By relating with each other - recognizing the others and being by them recognized - citizens would have the chance to understand the reasons of the others, assessing them against emerging standards of fairness. Communication not only allows for the development of better solutions, by allowing for carriers of different knowledge and expertise to interact, but it also changes the perception of one's own preferences, making participant less concerns with individual, material interests and more with collect goods. Critical trust would develop from the encounter with the other in deliberative settings

Participation and deliberation are in fact democratic qualities in tension with those of representation and majority decisions, and alongside these in a precarious equilibrium in the different conceptions and specific institutional practices of democracy. Crossing the dimensions of delegation versus participation and majority vote versus deliberation I single out four different models of democracy. Liberal democracy privileges - as mentioned - delegation and majority vote. The assumption is that deciding on public issues is too complex a task to be left to the mass of citizens. Their task is rather to legitimize the power of elected elites. As power originates, indeed, from the people, they are expected to exercise it, as electors, in specific moments. Electoral campaigns should be able to inform the citizens about past performances and political programs, as well as personal skills of candidates; elections should allow the citizens to choose those who will then govern for an allocated time-span. The fear to be put out of power at the coming elections should make the elites in government sensitive to the people's judgment. The distinctive institutions of Dahl's polyarchic democracy are in fact based upon the presence of officials elected in free, fair and frequent elections, as well as freedom of expression and association and alternative sources of information (Dahl 1998).

Moreover, in liberal democracy, even if with some caveats, the majority wins. This means, decisions are made by measuring the degree of support for opposing views and allocating the victory to those who are more numerous. In principle, ideas, interests, preferences and/or identities are assumed to develop outside of the democratic process, that channels them ex-post inside the political system. Decisions are then made on the bases of the measurement of the support for each of them among the citizens. The legitimizing principle is the "one head, one vote" one. In Anthony Downs' (1957) influential version, democracy works as a market where politicians aim at collecting votes, and citizens have (exogenously generated) preferences. While of course interests differ, a broad consensus is assumed among compatible interests, and conflicts tend to be considered as negative, as they risk overloading the system (Crozier, Huntington, Watakuni 1975). The actors carrying fundamental conflicts are seen as anti-systemic (Sartori 1976).

This liberal conception of democracy, however, does not sufficiently reflect the real functioning of democracy in any periods of its existence. Really existing democracy incorporates in fact institutions based upon different principle of legitimation. Referendums, considered as a residual vestige of direct democratic procedures are

spreading institutions, and so are institutions based on principles of restricted delegation or including representatives chosen by lot (see e.g., chap. 9). Moreover, that conception is partial as it implicitly looks at the public institutions as the only democratic arena. Research on social movements, but also on political parties, called instead for attention to the many arenas in which democratic forms are based upon different principles than the liberal ones. Mechanisms of institutional accountability, through control by the people as source of democratic legitimacy, require (many and varied) societal institutions that works as channel of political communication and socialization to the public good. Both (negative) controls but also (positive) stimuli have to come from the citizens continuously if good decisions are to be made. In the same line, research on long processes of first democratization stressed the importance of non-electoral circuits for the functioning of the democratic state. The influence of protest in regimes with restricted electoral participation did not pass through elections, even though the parliaments were targets of claims-making. In fact, in their concrete evolution, the existing democratic states and societies have mitigated the ideal-typical principles of liberal democracy, mixing them with others, linked to other conceptions of democracy.

The liberal conception of democracy has been, first of all, challenged by a *participatory* one. Recognizing the existence of deep conflicts in society, the theorists of participatory democracy have stressed the importance of involving citizens beyond elections (Arnstein 1969; Pateman 1970; Barber 1984). Participation in different forms and in different moments of the democratic process is in fact considered as positive both for individuals, who are socialized to visions of the public good, and for the very political institutions, that might increase their trust and support. Especially challengers to élites—from the labour movement to the most recent Indignados—have nurtured a participatory vision, extending also the forms of legitimate political involvement well beyond the votes. Conceptions of democracy as open participation tends in fact to limit the functions of delegates and expand instead (assembleary) arenas for decisions open to all. Moreover, the space for politics broadens in participatory visions, as democracy is considered as fundamental not only in parliaments, but also in civil society organizations: from parties to social movements, from working places to neighborhoods. While collective identities are still, as in the liberal model, formed outside of the democratic process, and might carry conflictual interests, agreement on the basic principles of decision making is a precondition for peacefully managing those conflicts.

Beyond the set of criticisms addressed to delegation, another one targeted the principle of majority vote. A second alternative to liberal conceptions of democracy has stressed in fact the importance of the communicative dimension. Decisions are, in this sense, not made of counting votes, but rather of the more complex process in which opinions are formed. While liberal democracy assumes a political market in which candidates try to sell their products to electors, who already have their preferences, *liberal-deliberative* conception of democracy are most attentive to the way in which those preferences are set. The assumption is, in fact, that decisions are only legitimate and, additionally, better the more interests and collective identities emerge, at least in part, throughout a high-quality democratic process. In Habermas' (1981) theorization, deliberation should be based on communicative rationality, through an exchange of opinion based on reasons. While debated is the extent to which deliberation implies the actual building of consensus (Dryzek 2010), for sure good communication implies a recognition of the others' reasons and an open-minded assessment of their own reasons. In this direction, the theorists of deliberation have looked at the ways in which preferences are formed within democratic institutions (Dryzek 2000: 79). Even though the decisional process often ends up with a vote, democracy should not however be identified with the principle that the majority wins over the minority. What counts as democratic is rather the possibility, during the democratic process, for holders of different points of view to interact and reciprocally transform each other views.

Combining both criticisms to the liberal conceptions of democracy, a forth model of democracy stresses *participative-deliberative* qualities. In political theory, the feminist critique of Habermas has stressed in fact the importance of looking not only outside public institutions, but also beyond a mass-mediatic public spheres, creating places in which especially the weakest groups can be empowered. Free spaces, with high quality communication, are here considered as fundamental for the formation of collective identities. Not the bourgeoisie, but rather the subaltern classes are seen as the carriers of these democratic visions. Especially the most recent waves of social movements, from the global justice movement to Occupying Wall Street, tried to put these norms in practice, by

creating public forums, open to the participation of all citizens, in which a plurality of opinions are represented. The public sphere is here considered as a conflictual space, but there is also a reflection on the conditions for the formation of collective identities along the democratic process. Here, critical trust is created in conflict.

### *Concluding*

Different theorizations have given different emphasis on the need for trust for democracy. After a period in which (deferent) trustful citizens were considered as the most democratic, a sort of “critical” (mis)trust started to be considered as not only proper to democratic citizens, but also as necessary to perform democratic control;

There are two caveats though. First, empirical research has indicated a continuous growth in mistrust that has reached extremely high level, so as to represent a threat for democracy functioning. Second: there is a need for political institutions to adapt to the increasing levels of mistrust.

As we observed, liberal conceptions of democracy are the most challenged by these developments, towards what has been defined as a “neoliberal” conception of democracy, which reduces the role of citizens to that of electors if not of costumer (Crouch 2003). The need develop therefore to think about other democratic qualities, that are better able to put at good use citizens’ capacity of surveillance.

Participatory and deliberative conceptions of democracy come then to the fore, as social movements put them forward in their conceptualization and in their practices. Yet, this does not imply a disavowal of the function of the state, but rather a request of politics as capable to reduce economic inequalities and their inefficiencies together with un-fairness. In fact, democratic states have legitimated themselves not only in terms of political equality (and negative freedom) but also (in the output) because of they claim to provide a modicum of welfare to their citizens.

The explosion of social inequalities even in advanced democracy is not only a cause of economic crisis, given reduced consumption and saving, but also a challenge for the image of political equality—a challenge the reference by the Occupying Wall Street to the 1% against the 99% symbolizes very well. We can indeed conclude with Tilly (2007: 110) that «social inequality impedes democratization and undermines democracy under two conditions: first, the crystallization of continuous differences ... into everyday categorical differences by race, gender, class, ethnicity, religion and similar broad groupings, second, the direct translation of those categorical difference into public policies». This is what’s happening now, reducing trust in liberal institutions, but also creating spaces for other models of democracy and construction of critical trust.

Even though no ready model is available to do this, democratic innovations should include increasing channels of participation beyond the electoral moment as well as allowing for the development of inclusive and plural public spheres, where ideas can be elaborated through citizens deliberative.

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