Article

Generations in the Feminist and LGBT Movements in Italy: The Case of *Non Una Di Meno*

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Daniela Chironi[1]

Abstract

The article analyses the participation of young people in emerging social movements, focusing on the experience of the Italian *Non Una Di Meno* (NUDM) movement combatting male violence against women. Challenging scholarly assumptions of growing youth apathy in democracies, the analysis reveals high levels of participation on the part of the younger population engaged in gender-related struggles. Hit by both conservative and austerity policies associated with the economic and political crisis, feminist and LGBTQI (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and intersexual) Millennials reacted by increasing their involvement in contentious politics. In the protest arena, they have crossed paths with older generations, activating processes of exchange, but also intergenerational tensions. Based on original qualitative data from ten semi-structured interviews with movement activists in Florence and Bologna, this piece of research sheds light on the role of young people in the birth and evolution of NUDM, and the relationship between different generations of activists within this movement. More specifically, it explains continuities and discontinuities between veterans and younger activists' sources of theoretical inspirations, organizational models and mobilization resources, strategic priorities and action repertoires. Millennials embrace intersectional feminism and queer theory; opt for grassroots, horizontal organizing; adopt a conflictual attitude towards the state, and dialogical, introspective dynamics within the movement. Intergenerational disagreements especially relate to sex work, and surrogate motherhood.

Keywords

feminism, LGBTQI activism, youth participation, *Non Una di Meno*, Italy

[1]European University Institute, Fiesole, Tuscany, Italy

Corresponding Author:
Daniela Chironi, European University Institute, Via della Badia dei Roccettini, 9, Fiesole, Tuscany 50014, Italy.
Email: daniela.chironi@eui.eu

Introduction: Feminist and LGBT Youth Activism in Antiausterity Times

Since the outburst of the economic, financial, and democratic crisis in 2008, gender movements have been among the largest and most active in Italy. Indeed, neoliberal policies associated with this crisis have hit especially disadvantaged social categories (Crouch, 2011; della Porta, 2016a, 2016b; Gallino, 2011; Streeck, 2014, 2016), among which women, as well as gay, transgender, and intersexual people are to be included. On the one hand, they perceived a worsening in their material conditions due to the contraction of public services, such as "counseling clinics," and an increase of labor precarity and competitiveness, which had a negative backlash on female workers and those considered socially undesirable (Allon, 2014; Federici, 2012; Fraser, 2013; Mies, 2014). On the other hand, the crisis was accompanied in Italy by the shift to the right of both society and the political system (Conti, 2013; for an analysis of the evolution of the Italian party system, see Chiaramonte & Emanuele, 2014). The right-wing coalition, composed of Forza Italia, the Northern League, and National Alliance,[1] supported traditionalist visions of sexuality, gender roles, and family. Moreover, Forza Italia embodied a subaltern conception of women as sexual objects, which was expressed in Silvio Berlusconi's sexist jokes about female politicians[2] and inappropriate behavior, including relationships with minors, often in exchange for money or expensive presents. The center-left Democratic Party (PD) has taken a moderate stance on both bioethical issues and the extension of civil rights.

In a similar context, both women and citizens with different sexual orientations and identities protested intensively. Preexisting groups reactivated after a period of quiescence, and new youth organizations joined gender politics. After a phase of compartmentalized struggles and failed attempts at constructing a unitary mobilization, in 2016, different generations of activists converged together into *Non Una Di Meno* (NUDM, Not One Less), the Italian section of the international movement against male violence over women. Challenging beliefs of growing youth political apathy in Western democracies (Armingeon & Schädel, 2015; Gallego, 2015; Henn, Weinstein, & Forrest, 2005; Kimberlee, 2002; Sloam, 2013; Wattenberg, 2006), this article sheds light on the role of young people in the birth and development of this movement, and relationships between different generations within it. Strongly penalized by the economic, social, and political transformations associated with the crisis, Italian feminist and LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) Millennials reacted by increasing their level of engagement.[3] In the protest arena, they have crossed paths with older generations, activating processes of exchange and also intergenerational tensions.

Moving from these premises, the article analyses the participation of young activists in emerging social movements. More notably, it focuses on the feminist and LGBTQ galaxy, answering the following key questions: Why did young people incline toward movement politics rather than more conventional engagement? Did they bring to the NUDM movement alternative organizational models, radical ideas, and new forms of action? If yes, did their innovations contrast with previous frames, leading to conflicts between generations? And how were these difficulties overcome (if they

were)? I will examine qualitative data coming from 10 semistructured interviews with representatives (between 27 and 70 years old) of grassroots local organizations engaged in gender struggles in Florence and Bologna.[4]

In the next section, I will present my theoretical framework and the central arguments. Subsequently, I describe the context in which the NUDM developed, highlighting which generations were included in it. Then, I stress the contribution of young people across three movement dimensions—organizational models and resources available for mobilization, frames and claims, and repertoires of action—and unveil the sources of intergenerational tensions. In the conclusion, I summarize the main findings.

Youth Studies and Social Movement Research: Gaps and Points of Contact

A "disaffected citizen" frame is widespread in youth studies, suggesting that a majority of young people today are apolitical, indifferent, or apathetic toward politics (Cammaerts, Bruter, Banaji, Harrison, & Anstead, 2014; Earl, Maher, & Elliott, 2017). Based on analysis of party politics and elections, this pessimistic frame is partially contradicted by research on alternative forms of political participation (Earl et al., 2017; Loader, Vromen, & Xenos, 2014). Social movement scholars have explained citizens' distance from representative politics as a reaction to unpopular public policies (especially cuts to the welfare state) and political corruption (della Porta 2016a, 2016b; della Porta & Mattoni, 2014; Oikonomakis & Roos, 2016; Sergi & Vogiatzoglou, 2013). Media scholars have interpreted youth rejection of professional politics as "the beginnings of a legitimate opposition" (Loader, 2007, p. 10) at the same time showing the potentialities of the Internet and network communication technologies in favoring new forms of youth civic engagement (Cohen, Kahne, Bowyer, Middaugh, & Rogowski, 2012; Loader et al., 2014; Xenos, Vromen, & Loader, 2014). Both proved that indignation toward mainstream parties and national governments was pivotal in triggering a new wave of protest in which young people constituted a major component and played a fundamental role (della Porta, 2016a, 2016b; Loader et al., 2014).

Largely focused on antiausterity mobilizations, recent literature has overlooked other types of social movements. Despite being lively and long-lasting, feminist and LGBT movements in Italy have been little investigated by political sociologists. Contemporary Italian gender studies tend to deal with social and legal discrimination (Garbagnoli & Prearo, 2017; Peroni, 2014; Zambelli, Mainardi, & Hajek, 2018), evolutions in LGBT discourse (Prearo, 2015), and feminist theory (see, for instance, Casalini, 2017), while there is only scant empirical analysis on movement dynamics. A recent exception is the work of Pavan and Mainardi (2018) on NUDM, which addresses online social and semantic networks. Consequently, important movement features remain unexplored. Among these, the role of generations in contemporary gender movements is a puzzling topic. This is even truer if we consider that previous studies have demonstrated that generational turnover influences processes of change and continuity in women's movements (Whittier, 1997).

As Whittier (2013) argued, a generational approach helps us to understand social movement origins, change over time, and their decline or demise. Complementing prevailing theories in movement studies, she highlighted that "shifts in political opportunity provide an impetus for change; generational processes of recruitment and cohort turnover are one micro-level mechanism by which such change occurs" (Whittier, 1997, p. 761). Following her suggestion, I shall take into consideration the context in which recent feminist and LGBT movements emerged in Italy. Extraordinary contextual characteristics linked to the crisis, both at the social and political levels, might indeed induce young women and LGBT citizens to enter the field of contentious politics in a moment of broad social protest. This would create a high rate of cohort replacement, which contributes to rapid change in the movement.

As the movement makes the transition from abeyance to renewed mobilization and as long-time activists pass the torch to new recruits, "the differences, connections, and conflicts between political generations become important" (Whittier, 1997, p. 775). Once mobilized, I expect young feminist and LGBT activists to promote innovation in three movement dimensions: (a) organizational structures, with greater propensity toward horizontal and informal models (Earl et al., 2017); (b) frames and claims, embodying a new conflictual identity and adding new grievances to older political perspectives (Whittier, 1997); (c) action repertoires, with a preference for direct action, prefigurative politics, and online networking (Bennett & Segerberg, 2013; Cohen et al. 2012; Loader et al., 2014; Pavan & Mainardi, 2018; Xenos et al., 2014).

Generations in Emerging Movements: The Rise of *Non Una Di Meno*

The Antecedents: SNOQ and Women in the Crisis

The awakening of the feminist movement occurred when a right-wing government, led by media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi, was in power. In 2011, a judicial inquiry into the links between power and sex triggered a wave of public indignation. Women known in the cultural and political spheres (such as film directors, actresses, professors, politicians, unionists, and so on) called for action against "a model of relationship between women and men, displayed by one of the higher office-bearer in the State, which deeply affects the life styles and the national culture, legitimating behaviours that violate dignity of women and institutions" (*Se Non Ora Quando* [SNOQ; If not now, when?], 2011). The appeal marked the birth of *SNOQ*: Flash mobs and marches took place all over the country on February 13,[5] March 8, and December 11, 2011. Occurring after the fall of the Berlusconi cabinet, the latter day of action aimed to clarify that the government was not the only problem, as issues of women's bodies and their dignity remained in Italy (Cavallari & Robiony, 2017).

SNOQ prompted an eventful wave of protest, led by influential women and mostly expressed at the cultural level (IIG1, IIG6, IIG7). Nonetheless, it also represented the occasion for Italian feminist groups to resume a dialogue and for new activists to approach feminist issues and join rank-and-file organizations (IIG5, IIG6, IIG7).

While SNOQ's claims remained rather vague and its fortune inextricably linked to that of its founders, the social capital accumulated in this phase was important for building future mobilizations (IIG7).

In 2012, in the midst of the economic crisis, grassroots feminist collectives allied with women coming from trade unions and radical left organizations to form the network *Donne nella Crisi* (Women in the Crisis). Their interest focused on the effects of austerity policies over women underlining how they "pay the higher price because doubly exploited both in the job market (lower wages, more job insecurity and precarity, less labour protections, and so on) and at the social level ([due to] the dismissal of the public systems of social protection)" (Pirotta, 2015). In 2014, the network promoted fundraising to finance the self-managed social clinics in Greece,[6] and inform about the retrenchment of the public health service in Italy. Similarly to SNOQ, Women in the Crisis contributed to strengthen connections in the feminist arena and increase the number of activists.

A further step toward the construction of a large social movement was, in 2014, the *Io decido* (I decide) solidarity campaign with the Spanish women fighting against their government's proposal to dramatically restrict access to abortion. Also in this case, the political developments occurring in other Southern European countries hit by the crisis became the occasion to denounce the conservative wind blowing in Italy (IIG3).

Non Una Di Meno *as an Intergenerational Movement*

The events that succeeded one another during the years of crisis were accompanied by daily activities in major cities. National coordination and a real social movement dynamic were lacking until the NUDM arrived in Italy in 2016. Following a mechanism of movement diffusion in times of crisis (della Porta & Mattoni, 2014), NUDM was the local version of the movement born the previous year in Argentina to protest against male violence over women. After the brutal murder of a 22-year-old student in Rome, a national assembly was called to contrast the dominant narrative that described this type of crime as due to an excess of love on the side of the male partner. Different subjects converged there: Historical feminists, collectives of recent formation, groups based in squatted social centers, antiviolence centers, LGBT and queer collectives. A 70-year-old feminist explained that during the crisis, "the younger generation of women has joined movement politics. At this point, only those in their fifties were missing, as they didn't experience a large movement" (IIG7). According to her, each of the previous movement waves—the 1968, the 1977, the alterglobalist movement of the 2000s, and the "movements of the crisis"—had the effect of involving the coeval youth cohort: "Those who are now in their forties had joined in the alterglobalist phase, after Genoa; recently, the student movements and other [anti-austerity] mobilizations have brought activists who are in their thirties, or younger" (IIG7). A 30-year-old transfeminist queer activist confirmed that "within the NUDM movement interesting evolutions are taking place from the generational point of view, interesting evolutions are taking place within the NUDM movement. There is a core of young people, around their thirties, but also the feminists of the 1970s are present"

(IIG4). In sum, NUDM became the point of connection between different generations and between feminist and LGBT movements, which had traditionally remained separate (IIG1, IIG2, IIG3, IIG4, IIG7).

The first goal was the collective elaboration of a "feminist plan against male and gender-based violence" that would implement the lines foreseen by the Istanbul Convention[7] and advance concrete proposals to overcome discrimination and gender violence in the workplace, language, education, and health system (NUDM, 2017). Initially, the movement spread at the local level through city assemblies. Later, over 250,000 people with different political and generational belongings demonstrated in Rome on November 26 for the global day against violence over women, marking a turning point in the construction of the movement. After the march, activists met in the Sapienza University and divided into "thematic tables" in which the contents of the mobilization were further discussed and unitary documents were produced. More than 1,000 women attended the concluding assembly. Massive participation attracted intense media coverage and encouraged the organizers to continue their efforts. A series of initiatives followed in the subsequent two years, both at the national (particularly large assemblies and marches for the women's day and global day of action against gender violence) and at the local levels (with permanent assemblies taking place in major cities at least once per month).

When the Youth Organizes: Reviving Tradition

Young feminist and LGBT activists show a clear propensity toward fluid organizing, based on (a) intense participation rather than formal membership; (b) maximum inclusivity and openness; (c) horizontality; (d) temporary commitment, often in coincidence with the preparation of mass events and issue-oriented campaigns; and (e) the reconstruction of social ties in free, self-organized spaces. From this point of view, the involvement of Millennials in the feminist and LGBT environments played a role in recovering the radical horizontality which had been typical of the origins of both movements. Young activists contributed to enliven some of the preexisting organizations, as in the case of *Ireos*,[8] in reviving "self-help" practices and informality, as in the *Gruppo Giovani LGBTI** (LGBTI* Youth Group) and the *Smaschieramenti* Laboratory,[9] in creating gender-based collectives within preexisting groups, particularly social centers, as in the case of the *Assemblea di Genere del CPA* (Gender Assembly of the Popular Self-Managed Centre of South Florence). Moreover, young activists challenged the principle of "separatism" (or sexual homogeneity) and tended to reject durable structuration.

Significantly, all the groupings studied in this article have a strong connection with a specific generation of activism. The oldest organization is the *Giardino dei Ciliegi* (Cherry Orchard), founded in the late 1980s by ex-1968 feminists who had joined the Italian Communist Party (PCI). Their aims were to transform the communist political culture, to push for more female candidates, and also "to strengthen their connections with the external world" (IIG7). Though linked to the PCI, the Cherry Orchard opted for a horizontal model, based on the assembly of members and a steering committee

composed of volunteers. Distancing from the PCI and its successors (PdS/DS/PD)[10] increased with time until full independence, while internal decision making remained inspired by informality, as "all the decisions are taken by discussing all together [. . .] in a fluid manner, on the ground of mutual trust" (IIG7).

Compared with this experience, the separation between feminist and LGBT organizations and political parties has become progressively visible in Italy. The older LGBT associations in Florence, *Azione Gay e Lesbica* (Gay and Lesbian Action) and *Ireos*, were both born in mid 1990s out of a split from the national association ARCI Gay,[11] which was close to the Democrats of Left Party (PdS). As recalled by the ex-President of *Ireos*, the reason for dissent was the division between ARCI Gay, which would enrol male members "and was looking for a strong link with the PDS," and ARCI Lesbian, which would represent the lesbians "and underwent an antagonist path" (IIG10). Against this separatist choice, the Florentine hub left the ARCI,[12] in turn itself split, and created two associations, both characterized by the simultaneous presence of gays and lesbians (IIG8, IIG10). A leading figure of Gay and Lesbian Action clarified that their "structure is basically that of an ARCI circle [local unit]: an assembly and the steering committee that manages the association. Obviously, there's also a legal chief, because this is necessary" (IIG8). Socialized to movement politics in the 1980s, the founders of these LGBT organizations refused party affiliation and preferred the associative form. Formal associations provided with a statute and rules could indeed satisfy the need to build safe spaces for interaction, while granting continuity in action and external legitimacy (IIG8, IIG10).

At the turn of the century, the alter-globalist movement brought back principles of radical horizontality and networked informal organizing, that participants transposed in their thematic fields of action (IIG3, IIG5, IIG6, IIG7). For instance, one of the founders of the feminist collective *Libere Tutte* (All Free) described it as a network of local groupings created in 2005 by ex-1968 activists and women in their thirties, which never adopted a formal status, preferring to nominate spokespersons "among those of us who are available" (IIG5).

Similar choices are widespread in the youngest generation of feminist and LGBT activists who feel at ease in grassroots collectives, as happens in the gender assemblies of social centers, in the *Intersexioni* national collective, in the *Smaschieramenti* Laboratory and in the LGBTQI* Youth Group. These groups were all created in the 2010s by young people who participated in the Social Forums as teenagers and, later, in the student movement *l'Onda* (The Wave) (IIG1, IIG4, IIG9). Expressing the view of Millennials living in liquid societies (Bauman, 1997), a 27-year-old LGBT activist thought of her political collective, the LGBTQI* Youth Group, as

> a sort of protected space where people could discover the LGBT world and speak of their problems with those experiencing the same situation [. . .]. Though Florence is full of LGBT associations, a youth group of this type was missing until 2011. (IIG2)

Dialogical attitudes and self-help aims reentered preexisting organizations where young people took over the lead. For instance, when a young activist became the

president of *Ireos* in 2004, he contrasted the older members' attempt to structure the association and reinforce its identity, working to maintain "the traditional openness to external groups and informal coordination" (IIG10). In his words, "the horizontal model prevailed [. . . and] the executive organ expanded from five to fifteen members, all elected by the assembly" (IIG10).

Millennials look with circumspection not only at political parties, but also at large national associations, such as ARCI Gay, often considered part of the political mainstream. An activist in Bologna explained the reasons for his diffidence:

> We had many occasions to discuss and collaborate with *Cassero* [provincial committee of ARCI Gay] and the feminist association *Orlando* [. . .]. They are small organizations instrumentally used for launching personal political careers in view of becoming candidates for some party. (IIG4)

Horizontal and Diffused: Non Una Di Meno

Young people's preferences are reflected in NUDM organizational choices. As other "movements of the crisis," NUDM promoted social, rather than organizational inclusiveness (della Porta, 2016b).[13] It established in Italy the "feminism for the 99%" (Fraser, Bhattacharya, & Arruzza, 2019), where self-organization, grassroots groups, and individual participation occupy center stage (IIG3). An activist in the gender assembly of the [social center] CPA emphasized that the origins of this movement are in grassroots politics, positively influencing its capacity for expansion, duration and radicalism: "SNOQ was very institutional and far less durable [. . .]. It produced one mass demonstration, but a large slice of SMOs, including us [social centers], was not present. NUDM was born from below, as the first national assembly was called by young movement activists, and it will continue to be like this" (IIG1). From the organizational point of view, "it's a grassroots international network that even includes the women in Chiapas and in Kurdistan" (IIG1).

While the major political and syndicalist organizations seemed reluctant to fully support the movement, activists refused clear leadership, and organized large national assemblies where thematic tables facilitated horizontal discussion (IIG3, IIG7). The result is an open and inclusive movement:

> NUDM doesn't claim monopoly over anti-sexism, but in this moment it's the larger movement bringing forward gender issues. Born as a global movement, it helps smaller movements to grow and forces all SMOs, even those that don't participate in the mobilization, to rethink themselves. (IIG1)

At the municipal level, permanent assemblies became the instruments for spreading the movement over the national territory, and involving social centers and young participants:

> NUDM was able to push a part of existing social movements to think about sexism and gender violence [. . .]. It also attracted people from outside the movement environment.

> In Florence, some girls who were not used to political participation found their space in the local assembly of NUDM. (IIG1)

Young activists' visions influenced the evolution of NUDM, particularly as regards the refusal of "separatism" and durable structuration. Compared with traditional feminism, SMOs run by Millennials are less interested in sexual homogeneity. In groups such as the Cherry Orchard, All Free and the *Librerie delle Donne* (Women's Libraries), contacts with male activists are frequent, but moments of interchange among women are still considered of paramount importance: "We need moments for ourselves, when we discuss about our issues, those that are specific of feminism, such as women's freedom, self-determination, abortion and so on" (IIG5). While "none of us today declares herself to be a separatist" (IIG7), mature activists insist on the necessity that women take over the lead of NUDM (IIG3, IIG5,IIG7). As a 70-year-old feminist underlined,

> the presence of men for me is sometimes a problem, while it's less so for the younger people. An example: In the protest against the policemen that raped two US girls in Florence, men monopolized the microphone [. . .]. I think men should develop their discourse both on violence and abortion; as a woman I don't ask for their solidarity, but for a self-reflection. (IIG7)

Younger women, and particularly activists in the social centers of nonseparatist tradition, have instead a positive perception of "mixed" movements:

> While in the 1970s male comrades were excluded from feminist movements, now you can share your thoughts with them [. . .]. It's good that we are all together: If you are a man, and you do put yourself into question, you are welcome. This enriches us all. (IIG1)

Another tension within NUDM, partially overlapping with the generational dimension, regarded the proposal for structuring the movement by designating spokespersons for every local assembly and a national steering committee. Aimed at granting continuity over time and efficacy, "this proposal did not find a lot of consensus" (IIG7). While it arose from movement leaders in their forties, it was sustained by older activists, who seem to be more concerned about the lack of structuring than Millennials. As a 70-year-old feminist explained,

> There was a national demonstration of migrants and NUDM did not participate, because some of us wanted to and others didn't, and in the meanwhile the deadline for adhesions expired. If we have to involve all the hubs of the network for every decision, the result is paralysis [. . .]. My impression is that situations that are too fluid risk becoming oligarchic. (IIG7)

According to some interviewees, in the current fluid situation, some key activists and groups are emerging over others, provoking the distancing of those activists who believe in radical democracy:

> An identitarian thrust is coming from the most powerful groups where women who feel capable—maybe because they see that a demonstration was successful—are convinced that they were the creators of the event. Provided with such a belief, they want to take the lead. (IIG3)

Youth Resources: Free Spaces and the Internet

Reconnecting to the tradition of gender movements, young activists stress the importance of having physical spaces for social activities. While older SMOs used to occupy, rent or obtain from public institutions their headquarters, youth groups' activities are often "itinerant" (IIG2). An activist in the LGBTI* Youth Group underlined that this choice comes from the need to reclaim the city (see Milan in this Special Issue):

> We have a weekly meeting [. . .] at the Giava Centre [. . .] but we are not interested in managing a place permanently. On the contrary, we try to move and interact with different zones of the city [. . .]. Our headquarter is itinerant! (IIG2)

In other cases, young activists reinvented the function of preexisting spaces. For instance, a member of *Ireos* recalled that:

> [This] was a "serious" association, focused on culture, cinema, health services [. . .]. Some of us expressed their wish of socialization and we started organizing funny, homemade parties that involved different type of people: The transsexuals, the old homosexuals who feel uncomfortable in discotheques, and so on. [. . .] Behind all this there was a group of young students. (IIG10)

While the mix between cultural and political events and social dinners is typical of all the SMOs considered, night parties are more closely associated with the LGBT movement. A 50-year-old activist explained that night parties are not only a means for raising funds but also occasions for interacting with nonpoliticized young people:

> Times have changed [. . .]! Even a night party can be political if you have the place full of people and you show them something different than the usual drag queens (who are offensive for women), the strippers or the anointed men [. . .]. In our nights, we can do a speech from the stage, we distribute materials and we get in touch with people we would never meet with our associations. (IIG8)

Where physical spaces are absent, interaction is granted by the web. According to a 33-year-old LGBT and feminist activist, the ability of exploiting the potentiality of the web is what distinguishes the Millennials from previous movement generations:

> I consider myself as part of the young movement generation, because my way of doing politics is very different from the previous ones. I'm active since I was in the secondary school and I learned from older people how to do politics. Then, when I became an organizer I used different methods, in particular social networks, through which I found the other volunteers to launch the LGBTI* Youth Group. (IIG9)

Young interviewees confirmed that social networks are intensively used to publicly debate and spread grievances (Juris, 2012; Cohen et al., 2012), and also to recruit new individuals for nonvirtual movement actions:

> I still use the Facebook groups for politics. For instance, few years ago I created a group that is called *Poliamore Toscana* (Polyamory Tuscany) where we discuss about the forms of relationship different than monogamy. The group was joined by a lot of people who decided to also meet in real life, at the beginning once per month and now even more often [. . .]. In these Facebook groups, I intervene, speak, express my ideas. (IIG9)

As another young activist affirmed: "We expand through friendship and social networks" (IIG2).

Anonymity in the web is also said to help overcoming contemporary isolation: "We have a secret Facebook group where components can add other people, start discussions, make friends, without informing the external world. Then, when one is ready to expose herself and go public, she can do it" (IIG2).

Leftist, Libertarian, and Intersectional: Millennials in Gender Movements

NUDM has inherited movement values built over time through a process of progressive accumulation in which generations played an important role.

The 1960s wave of feminism singled out social equality and freedom as basic values, giving the movement a left libertarian orientation. Still today, all interviewees define themselves as leftist, though their attitude toward mainstream political parties and trade unions is extremely critical. Born as a feminist spinoff of the PCI, the Cherry Orchard development is paradigmatic of a detachment from institutional politics: "The Orchard is a cultural place which is purposely open, where possible interdisciplinary, intergenerational and intergender. Our political positioning is in the left, but probably the historical streak PCI-PDS-DS is no more represented in our group" (IIG7). Similarly, "the LGBT movement is traditionally leftist, sometimes even in a dogmatic way. In this moment, the primary value is inclusivity" (IIG8). For younger activists, being leftist does not regard labels and self-definitions "as the concepts of left and right are debatable nowadays, but certainly we are not right-wing and we stand for human and civil rights" (IIG2). In some cases, their organizations were born as issue-oriented, but "given the current political situation, it's impossible to remain neutral, we decided to take sides [. . .]. We feel the need to assume clear and radical positions against the degeneration towards the extreme right in Italy" (IIG2).

In the words of a senior activist, a second

> central value is freedom, and there cannot be freedom if there is male violence and the state is not yet secularized, because the lack of secularity hits us all, and women in particular [. . .]. The 8 March, each of us brings a yellow object, an umbrella or something else, because yellow is the colour of jealousy and we are jealous of our freedom! (IIG5)

The claims for sexual freedom, freedom of choice, freedom from societal oppression, and gender roles pass through the history of the feminist and LGBT movements. More recently, freedom is also understood, particularly by Millennials, as the necessity to overcome the binary distinction between female and male sexes, the possibility to reject gender identities (IIG9) and the ability to voluntarily use one's body in different ways, including paid sex work and surrogate motherhood (IIG4).

The activists formed in the student movements of the 1990s directed their efforts to fertilizing the alter-globalist discourse with gender issues. By joining the Social Forums, they were able to (partially) transform the leftist agenda from the inside:

> At the beginnings of my political engagement, the feminist struggle was always seen as something separated from the other leftist issues. Compared to those early years, there was an important evolution. A bit of frustration still exists when you realize that women's culture has not been fully assimilated and digested even in social movements, which often maintain macho arrangements. (IIG6)

A significant achievement was the introduction of gender language in leftist environments, which consists of refusing the "male neutral" in neo-Latin languages and declining all adjectives in both male and female forms: "We are still far from the full adoption of gender language, but we managed to break the wall of traditional grammar" (IIG6).

Starting from the mid-2000s, collaboration between feminist groupings and the LGBT associations grew, contributing to expand previous visions and involve a larger public in movement events (IIG6). As a result, inclusion and opposition to discrimination of all types (sexual, racial, or linked to social class and personal choices) have become fundamental values of both feminist and LGBT movements.

The tendency to bridge different struggles and connect a plurality of subjectivities increased even more in very recent times. Millennial activists formed in university collectives and social centers express a clear intersectional perspective (IIG1, IIG2, IIG3, IIG4, IIG7, IIG9). Originally born in the United States to criticize white feminism for its indifference toward racism, this is a critical feminist thinking that does not assign priority to sexism as compared with other forms of discrimination and oppression, rather analyzing the intertwining of class, race, sexual orientation, age, disability, and gender in contemporary society. This new strand of thought is supplanting the "feminism of difference," which had traditionally prevailed in Italy (IIG3, IIG7, IIG9) and departs from female sexual difference, present since the origin and foundation of a female identity not subordinate nor assimilated to male identity. This strand of thought is about the recognition and valorization of women's difference, and also contrasts with "equality feminism" that focuses on the basic similarities between men and women, and whose ultimate goal is the equality of the sexes in all domains. Among the interviewees, only the All Free activists define themselves as "feminists of difference" (IIG5, IIG6), while all the others declared their interest in intersectional feminism, "according to which" — reported a NUDM activist — "each of us is defined by her/his class, racial, gender and sexual belonging" (IIG7).

This new wave of feminism underlines that "we cannot defeat inequalities only because we are all together. If we have different incomes, we might be on the opposite sides even though we are both women" (IIG3), and implies a conflictual attitude toward institutions and the rejection of party mediation. Both the intersectional vision and "queer culture," which consists in the rejection of binary gender identities, are well rooted in NUDM, particularly among young activists (IIG3, IIG7). A 70-year-old activist described the movement as

> a mix of contradictions, where intersectional feminism predominates. I remember when one participant said: "I belong to the queer culture." Then I raised my hand and said: "Me too." At this point, I realized that she was looking at me in a weird manner because, being the same age as her mother, I could not be queer!" (IIG7)

For younger activists, intersectional feminism grasps the core of the feminist and LGBT struggles, which is the "union of all the oppressed against the oppressors: Women, homosexuals, transsexuals, migrants, workers, disabled; we're all on the same side" (IIG2). In this context, the "equal opportunities" strand of feminism is very often targeted as a "weak and moderate feminism" (IIG7). Some more mature feminists lament instead that the movement is led by "vanguard groups, very disruptive and rooted in social centers; for me it's difficult to identify with this type of feminism" (IIG6).

Linked to intersectional feminism is queer theory, also popular among the youth, "because it's obviously easier for younger people, more confident with English and politically virgin to get closer to recent positions" (IIG9). A member of the *Smaschieramenti* Laboratory explained that queer activism consists in "questioning the gender assigned and reflecting on the type of violence that gender in itself entails" (IIG4). According to another young interviewee,

> the discussion about the deconstruction of models is a purely youth issue. The older feminists went through historical periods in which it was necessary to claim, even aggressively, women's identity, their freedom of expression. Now many of them are floundering [in front of the new theory] and react by locking themselves in their cocoon of certainties. (IIG2)

Intersectionality and queer theory brought about a renewed interest in fighting racism and capitalism. In the case of the Youth LGBTI* Group, "fundamental values are inclusivity, anti-fascism and anti-racism" (IIG2); for the *Smaschieramenti* Laboratory, "we need to find large alliances to move toward an anti-capitalist transformation, which has to be also anti-patriarchy and against compulsory heterosexuality" (IIG4).

Finally, the recent involvement of the young militants of social centers has led to a greater interest in antifascist values. According to one of them, "if you fight for women's rights, against sexism, against patriarchy, you cannot be but anti-fascist [. . .]. Anti-fascism is a leading value of these movements" (IIG1). Confirming this narrative, also an older feminist talked of her commitment in contrasting neo-fascism: "We

collaborate with anti-fascist networks in the city, especially since when [the far right party] Casa Pound started opening its headquarters in several neighborhoods" (IIG5). An important outcome of feminist action in this field is the rehabilitation of the role of women during anti-fascist Resistance: "For the 8 March we organize initiatives to remember female partisans, in order to let them emerge from the total obscurity to which they had been relegated" (IIG5).

The complex of values and interpretative frames, historically stratified and generationally situated, became a general inheritance of the NUDM movement thanks to long discussions in thematic tables. Movement activists praised this dialogical model for promoting cultural cross-fertilization and innovation:

> Thematic tables regarded a variety of issues: Health, sexuality, labour, migrant women, media communication and anti-violence centres. The table on health was a positive experience: Different visions on how to understand health from a feminist perspective were discussed and different types of feminisms, basically that of the difference and intersectional feminism, could finally confront, also here in Italy, where the feminism of difference had always prevailed. (IIG3)

Having substantially embraced intersectional feminism, NUDM documents do not mention the plural term "feminisms," rather referring to a singular "feminism" (IIG7). However, plurality remains a shared value:

The movement must "move," try to have few, but clear ideas from which to develop concrete actions without the pretension for a homogeneous identity, because all those coming from other histories should feel welcome, come and go. (IIG3).

While young activists accept that "feminisms are many and different, and this is a richness" (IIG4), older groups seem open to the new perspective. For instance, "the Orchard prefers the plural term "feminisms"; it promotes pluralist initiatives, always taking into account a plurality of attitudes" (IIG7).

Similarly, the LGBT movement is described as inclusive and diverse (IIG2, IIG8, IIG9). Welcomed by younger activists (IIG2, IIG9), the attitude of including more and more subjectivities is criticized by older homosexuals. One of them described the LGBT movement as

> a sort of vegetable soup where there is space for everybody: The rainbow families, which focus only on having children [. . .], transgender people who deal only with procedures for changing sex, and so on [. . .]. This is why the acronym often used is LGBTQAI+, where A stands for asexual people, who refuse sex and don't want sentimental relationships; I stands for intersexual people, who are very few in Italy, but we represent them as well [. . .]. And there is the "plus" that means a bit of everything [. . .]. But what do I, as a lesbian, have in common with a person who decided of not having sex? Nothing! (IIG8)

Particularly stigmatized by Millennials are the "trans-excluding feminists," largely present within the ARCI Lesbian organization: "According to them transsexual women cannot be included in a feminist struggle because they had the privilege of being men [. . .]. I see a generational split in this" (IIG2).

Rights for All: Millennials' Claims

The new perspectives described above contributed to increase the number of issues that the gender movements deal with. Nowadays, topics such as self-determination of women, freedom of choice, combatting male violence, and discrimination of homosexuals are accompanied by the quest for human, social, and civil rights for "a vast amount of subjectivities which are somehow eccentric and oppressed" (IIG4).

Traditional feminist struggles are well summarized by an All Free activist:

> We have focused on defending the law number 194 [on abortion], and issues linked to procreation and women's self-determination in all the choices concerning their bodies and their sexuality. These issues were soon intertwined with secularity of the state and male violence. (IIG6)

Young activists have updated this discourse by adding that "violence is not only male violence, but also the assignment of two genders considered complementary and asymmetrical" (IIG4). For instance, "*Intersexioni* works for the rights of intersexual people.[14] Our main claim is that the State respects the integrity of intersexual bodies, because they often suffer surgeries, which are similar to female genital mutilation" (IIG9). Typical of Millennials collectives is direct participation of those in difficult conditions, so that the *Intersexioni* network is composed of "trans and non-binary people who have experienced misalignment with the gender they were assigned to at birth [. . .]; other members are people with a different sexual orientation, such as homosexuals, bisexuals, pansexuals and asexuals" (IIG9). Similarly, the LGBTI* Youth Group is "a space of equals who share the same age, similar experiences and the same preoccupations. We often meet with LGBT migrants because we try to unite all social categories who are pinched by dominant thought" (IIG2).

Older and new claims are unified under the umbrella of human and civil rights. *Intersexioni* "fights against surgeries imposed on people who cannot express their consent, which is a serious violation of human rights" (IIG9). The LGBTI* Youth Group

> is strongly in favour of human and civil rights [. . .] same sex marriage, in order for us not to be second-class citizens, access to adoption for homosexuals and access to all facilities that allow you to construct a family [. . .]. A normal life means: Equal rights for everybody, possibility for self-determination, abolishment of the law that forces transsexuals to chirurgical conversion of their body before receiving an identity document, then there are all the instances that regard intersexual people, and so on [. . .]. Also a law against homophobia would be important. (IIG2)

The civil rights frame was also embraced by traditional feminism, though not all the new grievances were incorporated. While "a new elaboration started that goes beyond individual rights of women to affirm the rights of the people in general" (IIG6), issues such as "surrogate motherhood" and sex work remained controversial within the NUDM movement. A common terrain was found on "freedom of choice in the field of

sexuality, the extension of civil rights for everybody and opposition to all forms of discrimination" (IIG5).

Resistance toward the pervasiveness of the State and religion in personal choices led feminist and LGBT groups to involve migrant women, homosexuals, and transsexuals in their activities (IIG7), and shed light on the problems they face in other countries and in the global South. For instance, "violence is an issue that is strongly and sadly related to the history of women in Afghanistan where there is an emergency due to a context of war and religious fundamentalism" (IIG6). Pointing toward religious oppression, feminists also innovated the leftist agenda:

> We have always tried to show the similarities between different fundamentalisms on all sides of the globe and this discourse found a fertile ground in the Social Forums. In the beginning, Social Forums only talked about the economic foundations of wars, but had overlooked the role of religious fundamentalism in the war machine. (IIG6)

Another activist underlined that

> the three monotheistic religions are all equally sexual-phobic and against women. Think of the Jewish prayer that says "I thank you God for not having made me a woman!" Or think about Christianity: Eve was born to help Adam. From this, the imposition of an unnatural, altruistic model of the "devoted woman" derives: the role of women as (unpaid) caretakers is justified by religion. (IIG5)

While they agree with this reading, young people also focus on the influence of society and family on private choices (IIG4). In their vision, even "coming out" is a political action that needs to be prepared and sustained by group solidarity (IIG2).

In this changing context, the Argentinian *Ni Una Menos* movement represented a stimulus to unify different generations under

> the exhortation to re-activate and find a new way to fight male violence; we were tired of the typical "let's save the victims" attitude. We wanted women to be presented not as victims, but as survivors of cultural violence; we needed to create a new imaginary and detach from that paternalistic idea; we had enough of demonstrations with candles and torches that victimized women. (IIG3)

Another important stimulus came from

> the struggle for the liberation of Kurdistan. Kurdish women have written inspiring documents and have constituted a female army. They face all the contradictions of fighting in an Islamic environment, not only to improve their life conditions, but also to transform the mentality of Kurdish men. I think also of the documents produced by women in Chiapas. For sure, in this historical moment internationalism gave us remarkable insights for reflection. (IIG1)

The new movement thus became the laboratory where old and new grievances were further discussed and intertwined. While consensus was reached on major and urgent topics, differences emerged on "surrogate motherhood" and sex work, again unveiling a generational divergence. A minority of feminists, who mostly belong to the 1968 and the 1977 generation (IIG4), oppose surrogate motherhood: "They believe this is a form of exploitation of woman's body; they are against sex work and prostitution for the same reason" (IIG2). On the contrary, younger activists prefer "to ask for regulation of surrogate motherhood precisely to avoid exploitation of poor women living in the global South. Taking a stance against this claim is certainly conservative" (IIG2). They also consider that "sex work is work. Of course we are strongly against human trafficking [. . .]: To force people to prostitute themselves is slavery, and slavery shouldn't exist. In other cases, prostitution is a voluntarily chosen job" (IIG4).

Fragile Bodies Against Oppression: Youth Action Repertoire

Feminist and LGBT movements have always embraced a vast set of actions. Direct interaction with public institutions and relationships with political parties and trade unions have recently declined. Even the older feminist groups, once linked to party politics, reverted to cultural activities because of a perceived closure of institutional channels:

> In the beginning, the activities of the Cherry Orchard were of traditional type: Conferences and events about women's participation in politics and reflection on politics. Later, we focused on cultural aspects, for instance on literature, conceiving it as a political activity: A way to understand the world and promote social change. (IIG7)

Only few groups, such as All Free and *Ireos*, never renounced negotiation with public institutions through advisory tables and committees. However, "the outcomes [of these activities] are limited to theoretical analysis, but we have a minimum effect on public choices" (IIG5).

Involved in this climate, Millennials are in favor of direct action and social conflict. Contrasting the tendency of some senior activists to focus on the obtained results, a young LGBT activist urges for new goals:

> Some older activists say: "We obtained civil unions, and therefore we can stop protesting." The same problem arises when we organize a Pride: You can prepare a Pride to struggle for some issues, or you can have a celebrative Pride. I believe that in Italy there is a tendency toward celebrative Prides, while we still have a long way to go. Therefore, to maintain a high level of conflict is important. (IIG2)

From this vision come prefigurative attempts, such as the "square health service" organized by the NUDM movement, which consisted in offering free medical and psychological support in city squares. While this is much appreciated by Millennials (IIG3), some mature feminists are sceptical as

> initiatives of this type were valid in the 1970s, when there was the need to shake the national culture. Today it's difficult for us to understand why we have to substitute the State in providing efficient public services that are being shut down for precise political choices. From our point of view, our role should be to claim for public services. (IIG6)

The same type of criticism is extended to younger activists' proposal for giving birth at home to contrast the medicalization of childbirth (IIG6). Other activists are instead in favor of the new approach, which reminds them of the great conquests of the past:

> What did they do in the 1970s? 12,000 women went on the same day to police stations to denounce themselves for having aborted. You must open a conflict with institutions [. . .]. NUDM wrote an alternative plan against violence: Some of us want to present it to the government! A movement doesn't set a dialogue with the government [. . .], but not everybody has this clear. (IIG3)

While pushing for a conflictual attitude toward the State, young activists pursue dialogical, introspective dynamics within their groups and the NUDM movement. Typical of 1970s' feminism, self-reflection activities, such as "listening groups" for sharing experiences and fears, have now transmigrated to the LGBT community:

> I began my political engagement in 2001, when my homosexual path reached maturity. Then I felt the need to find proper fields to express my identity and meet other homosexuals [. . .]. I was looking for a place to exchange life experiences between peers, not a therapeutic group. (IIG10)

Linked to the need for reconstructing interpersonal relationships are recreational activities, such as night parties, understood as moments of fundraising, sociality and countercultural struggle (IIG10).

Young interviewees also talk of their good connections with other feminist and LGBT organizations. For instance, the LGBTI* Youth Group "tries to collaborate with all the LGBT groupings, such as the Rainbow Families, Gay and Lesbian Action, the queer collectives, and we have been involved in the organization of the local Pride since the beginning" (IIG2).

Young activists assign a great value to cultural work aimed at transforming the dominant thinking: "We often organize book presentations, movie screenings, public meetings and other social events [. . .]. We are very concerned about creating a climate of acceptance within society" (IIG2). Similarly, *Intersexioni* devotes a lot of energy to spreading knowledge about transsexuality, intersexuality and gender identity:

> We do it by talking with parents, translating and publishing articles in English or videos filmed abroad, [. . .] participating on TV and radio shows (IIG9). Book presentations are very common, especially in Women's Libraries, where "they are never formal, but always sources of discussion." (IIG7)

Particularly important for young activists are projects of education in the schools, where they apply innovative approaches (IIG2, IIG9, IIG10). As one of them

summarized, "we experiment the so-called education to differences. Our method is different from the frontal lesson. We rather want students to speak about their personal experience" (IIG2). Education is also understood as self-learning, and cultural activities are not only addressed to the external world, but also to movement activists. For instance, *Intersexioni* educational activities are often developed in People's Houses (leftist clubs) and LGBT associations' headquarters (IIG9), and the *Smaschieramenti* Laboratory main goal is "to contaminate social movements with our theoretical elaboration" (IIG4). Processes of this type are said to connect different generations (see also Portos in this Special Issue), strengthening NUDM coherence: "After strong initial resistances, the 1970s feminists have started to digest new concepts and now most of them are open to transfeminism" (IIG4).

Young activists are ready to protest in demonstrations, sit-ins, LGBT prides, as for them "it's fundamental to be collectively present in social struggles" (IIG4). The scope of direct action is not only cultural sensitization, but also institutional pressure. Though prefigurative, feminist and LGBT youth also believe in the necessity to obtain favorable public policies (IIG2, IIG10). Their contribution in this field lies in the ability to revive old repertoires interpreting them in new ways. An example is the Women's Strike organized for the March 8, 2017, regardless of the support of major trade unions. When the Argentinian movement launched the idea, Italian feminists met in an assembly of 2,000 people in Bologna (February 4-5, 2017) to discuss the proposal and decided to join the international initiative. While two out of three of the union confederations took full distance, the CGIL committed to organize assemblies in the work places, even if not calling for the general strike (IIG3).[15] Interviewees consider the Women's Strike as a successful event, where youth creativity replaced unions' support:

> We spent the day in the squares, we had laboriously planned the actions. Those who had participated in preparatory meetings organized their initiatives, such as laboratories, counselling services and funny activities; each of us brought a piece of herself [. . .]. It was a massive demonstration, which mobilized the energies of several groups, managed to involve new people, younger and older protesters, associations of people with disabilities, all the groups you didn't know their existence showed up. (IIG3)

Reviving old repertoires also means interrupting the "normalization of gay Prides" (IIG4), which is due to the meddling of local institutions, the search for powerful economic sponsors, and the emphasis on the quest for the same lifestyle as heterosexuals. To manifest their critical stance, young activists tend to organize their queer sections within the main parade, where "we can say something about family, marriage and couple as institutions, though without opposing the quest for equal rights for all" (IIG4).

Protest is in the streets, but also in the web, which is used not only for counterinformation and sharing opinions but also as a means to broaden youth participation (see Xenos et al., 2014). A recent example of this last possibility was the circulation of the Twitter hashtag "#Metoo" to denounce sexual and power abuses. Older activists are critical of the transmigration of debates and struggles to the web, which is said to produce individualization and jeopardize the mobilization. However, they also recognize

that "the web and social media are the only means to spread some contents and debate. We might not like this modality, but it's the product of our times and we need to acknowledge it" (IIG3).

While attracted by direct action, young activists are described as disinclined to attend time consuming meetings: "I note that young women are more willing to participate in demonstrations than in long meetings" (IIG7). Nonetheless, "their presence is essential, because it's important that they express themselves [. . .]. Contamination is the best practice" (IIG3). The need for grasping their attention and stimulating their involvement led in fact NUDM to innovate face-to-face meetings:

> Discussions take place in workshops rather than classical political assemblies. For instance, here in Florence we presented the movement plan against violence in a participatory meeting where participants expressed their opinions on some sentences extracted from the plan. In other cases, each participant writes her thoughts on a topic in a slip of paper and then we comment them all together. Or we can simulate certain dynamics, by acting different roles. (IIG1)

It is worth noting that young feminist and LGBT activists are not only interested in eventful protest. For them, direct action and creativity are ingredients of everyday struggle against discrimination. While they dislike the stereotype of the militant, as "our bodies are not prepared for clashes with the police" (IIG4), they use "performativity and extravagant masking, irony, daily commitment against discriminations in the workplace, efficient forms of communication because we don't want our movement to be self-referential" (IIG4). A typical example is a deep renewal of language. Queer groups

> reject the hegemonic male neutral and adopt the universal female language to stress that the Female is not negative, and that I'm not exactly a man, a male, I'm what I want to be. Then there is the re-appropriation of offenses. You try to offend me by saying that I'm "fag," and I say yes, I'm "fag," where's the problem? (IIG4)

A final field of intervention is internationalist action and solidarity, which is important for older activists, young occupiers of social centers, and LGBT groups composed of young people. A 70-year-old feminist underlined that

> though locally based in Florence, we even supported and participated in global initiatives. When the Polish women rebelled against the attempt to ban abortion, we demonstrated in solidarity with them. In 2013, we joined a large solidarity campaign with Greece, where poorer women could not access medical assistance and were forced to give birth at home. (IIG5)

More inclined to move abroad, young people are used to interact with groups based in foreign countries: "Some of us are coming back from Berlin, where they attended a training in a German association with which we collaborate within the Erasmus Plus framework. We organize these type of exchanges since three years now" (IIG2).

Precarious and Disadvantaged: Visions of Millennials

All interviewees agree on the existence of a Millennial generation with specific qualities. For older activists, this new generation is first of all characterized by labour precarity (see also Zamponi in this Special Issue):

> Everything is unsteady and unfortunately these young people live thanks to the economic support of their families [. . .]. It's a generation of young men and young women whose lives revert around precarity and around the attempts to survive this condition, by finding temporary solutions. (IIG5)

In precarious jobs and dispossessed of basic labor rights, "[young people] work for three euros per hour and have known a job market without rules" (IIG8). They feel abandoned by institutional politics and betrayed by leftist parties and trade unions "which don't understand their problems and don't accept their claims" (IIG5). Mistrust also regards large LGBT associations, as "everything that is structured somehow stinks" (IIG10). Young movement activists clarify that

> the problem is the equation between institutional politics and politics *tout court*. I hear too many young people say: "I don't care about politics." The truth is that in order to do politics in my generation you have to take distance from political parties, you have to be independent, organized and conscious, but those of us who are aware of this are still a minority. (IIG2)

A second characteristic is loneliness, due to the ways in which society is organized: "There is individualism, not in the sense of egoism, but in the sense of atomization of the social fabric in which young people are immersed" (IIG1). A 27-year-old activist confirms that "we are the children of Berlusconism, of unbridled individualism, of competitiveness. Those who go in the opposite direction are the more stubborn, determination is the virtue of those young people who mobilize" (IIG2).

Though atomization does not automatically entail resignation, it influences the action repertoires, leading to the prevalence of online participation:

> The #MeToo web campaign is the product of our times: The single person takes the floor and this is almost the only way in which talking is allowed. We should transform this #MeToo into #WeToo, and denounce that gender violence is a problem of us all and not only mine [. . .]. At this point we should construct a common struggle, but the passage from "me" to "we" is not an easy one. (IIG3)

A divided society is said to produce sectorial struggles:

> Young people tend to form single-issue groups and pre-existing LGBT organizations were not always able to adapt to social transformations. An organization like *Ireos* wanted to unite gays, lesbians and transsexuals under the same political project [. . .]. Today, the

> diffusion of social media has favoured the birth of sectorial groups which don't want to be incorporated in one single association. (IIG10)

Though facing many difficulties, the youth is described as more open and free than previous generations:

> They see gender identity and sexuality in a modern way. Many of the old taboos on homosexuality and transsexuality have declined. Today's young people have more freedoms than us; also thanks to decades of movement campaigns, they have less prejudices towards feminism, homosexuality, and transsexuality. Sexuality is regarded with more maturity. (IIG1)

Openness is due to previous conquests, but also to new opportunities. Young people travel more, study more and speak more languages (IIG8). Though subjected to "a type of education that is qualitatively low" (IIG8), they have more instruments to access information on the web:

> The Internet is the main resource of teenagers. They find videos on YouTube, testimonies, and also theoretical discussions. Then, there are the Facebook groups and many other channels. When I give lectures in high schools, it happens that students suggest me new concepts and words that I have to check when I come back home. (IIG9)

Another characteristic is fluidity, both in interpersonal relationships and in their own, personal identity:

> Very young people have a different way of facing and living relationships, and they even run the risk of getting mad. For them it's easier to have homosexual relationships, but they don't identify themselves as homosexuals [. . .]. Many of them define themselves as queers, and in the end of the day they are heterosexuals and after a while you find them with a child. (IIG1)

In a similar interpretation, "they have another modality of sentimental and affective relationship. They might say: 'Yes, this is a very important relationship,' and two weeks later: 'No, we split!'" (IIG8).

Young generations are said to show curiosity for feminist and LGBT issues:

> For instance, many high schools called us to give lessons on anti-fascism, sexism, gender violence and violence against women. It was fun, because there was a virgin soil, but also a strong interest and a new way to approach these topics. (IIG1)

Their interest is also due to a perceived push toward conformity coming from society and politics, which according to older interviewees is much stronger than in the past:

> Those in their forties have understood late the problem of being a woman in this world [. . .]. Younger women realize it before, because if there something we're back on, I'm sure, it's stereotypes. Choice possibilities have diminished. When my daughter was a

child, I wasn't invaded of pink clothes to dress her, now stereotypes (expressed in colours, clothes, toys) have increased compared with the 1970s. (IIG7).

Conclusions

This article has analyzed the role of generations in feminist and LGBT movements in Italy during the global economic and financial crisis. Aiming at filling some gaps in youth and movement literatures, attention has been devoted to the effects of generational turnover on the origins of new movements and change in previous features. Contextual factors were instead considered as the spark triggering youth interest in contentious gender politics.

First of all, a mix of growing economic inequality, legitimacy crisis of political institutions and social pressure toward conformity has contributed to increase mobilization of young women and LGBT activists. Disconfirming expectations of apathy and disengagement, young people occupied center stage in feminist and LGBT movements and had a primary role in constructing NUDM. Within this movement, they stressed their generational diversity and adopted a dialogical attitude that favored intergenerational connections.

The outcome of their renewed centrality is a deep innovation of previous organizational forms, frames and claims, and action repertoires. Critical toward institutional politics and its agents, Millennials opt for grassroots, radically horizontal organizing. Sensitive to new perspectives developed abroad, they embrace intersectional feminism and queer theory, which imply fighting against all sorts of discrimination (of women, homosexuals, transsexuals, migrants, disabled people) and claiming more rights for disadvantaged social categories, including sex workers. Finally, they tend to adopt a conflictual attitude toward the State, and dialogical, introspective dynamics within the movement. Their action repertoire aims at reviving old struggles with new means, such as the Women's Strike, constructing creative spaces for interaction, and bringing forward educational activities.

Generational differences brought about some tensions. While the "gender equality" perspective was substantially isolated, a contrast emerged between the "feminism of difference," traditionally well rooted in Italy, and the new intersectional and queer theories. Even though plurality remains a movement value, generational replacement led to a final predominance of intersectional feminism and growing diffusion of queer perspectives. Compared with the Spanish feminist movement (Portos in this Special Issue), in Italy the middle-aged cohort of activists had not a role of brokerage, especially because women in their fifties were almost absent. The interaction between contextual factors, in particular widespread disillusionment toward representative politics and a historical propensity for horizontality, allowed for addressing internal disagreements, which remain however common. Partially overlapping with the generational dimension, they regard especially prefigurative practices, relationships with the state, sex work, and surrogate motherhood.

Appendix

List of Interviewees

IIG1. De Vita, Alessia, *Assemblea di Genere del CPA*, feminist and LGBT movement, Florence, 43 years old
IIG2. Di Pierro, Gaia, *Gruppo Giovani LGBTI**, LGBT movement, Florence, 27 years old
IIG3. Fiorentini, Lea, *Libreria delle Donne*, feminist movement, Florence, 44 years old
IIG4. Ioseffi, Dario, *Laboratorio Smaschieramenti*, transfeminist and queer movement, Bologna, 30 years old
IIG5. Petrucci, Luisa, *Libere Tutte*, feminist movement, Florence, 70 years old
IIG6. Picchi, Debora, *Libere Tutte*, feminist movement, Florence, 44 years old
IIG7. Picciolini, Anna, *Giardino dei Ciliegi*, feminist movement, Florence, 70 years old
IIG8. Santini, Valeria, *Azione Gay e Lesbica*, LGBT movement, Florence, 50 years old
IIG9. Troise, Alice, *Collettivo Intersexioni*, LGBT movement, Florence, 33 years old
IIG10. Zanaboni, Mirco, *Ireos*, LGBT movement, Florence, 38 years old

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Notes

1. This latter was the heir of the neofascist *Movimento Sociale Italiano* (MSI; literally Italian Social Movement).
2. To give some examples, in 2009, Berlusconi insulted the PD MP Rosy Bindi in a TV talk show for her physical appearance and in 2011 it was discovered that in the past he had done offensive sexual allusions over the German Chancellor Angela Merkel.
3. Millennials are all citizens born from 1980 to 2000 (Goldstone, 2015).
4. The full list of interviewees is reported in the appendix.
5. More than one million people took to the streets in Rome and tens of thousands in the other 230 Italian cities (and even abroad).
6. The social clinics were part of a broad set of self-organized solidarity structures set up by Greek antiausterity activists after 2012 to provide food and other goods to the population in need (Vogiatzoglou, 2016).
7. The Convention of the Council of Europe to oppose violence against women, signed in Istanbul in 2012, and received by the Italian Parliament in 2013, provides for a series of

actions and policies against gender violence, and defines a broad concept of violence, which includes forms of symbolic, psychological, and material violence.
8. An ancient Greek word, *Ireos* means both "lily," which is the symbol of Florence, and rainbow, which is the symbol of the LGBT movement.
9. The name of this group is a play on words that cannot be translated into English. It expresses the idea of a laboratory to unmask the social impositions that stand behind gender identities and roles.
10. The PCI dissolved in 1991 and changed its name into Party of the Democrats of the Left, simply called Democrats of the Left since 1998. In 2007 the DS merged with a part of the old Christian democracy to found the Democratic Party.
11. The acronym ARCI stands for Recreational and Cultural Italian Association.
12. Similar splits occurred in other cities, among which Florence, Pisa, Rome, Sassari, and Turin (IIG10), liberating energies and resources for the birth of independent SMOs.
13. "Differently from the GJM, which had presented itself as an alliance of minorities in search of a broad constituency, the anti-austerity movements have constructed a broad definition of the self, as a large majority (contrasted with the network of minorities of the GJM) of the citizens" (della Porta, 2016b, p. 27).
14. Intersexual people are "those who are born with physical or biological sex characteristics (such as sexual anatomy, reproductive organs, hormonal patterns and/or chromosomal patterns) that do not fit the typical definitions for male or female bodies" (United Nations Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner, 2016).
15. The two confederal unions that remained distant from NUDM were the CISL and the UIL, both carrying a traditional political culture and usually closed to social movements.

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Author Biography

Daniela Chironi holds a PhD in comparative political sociology from the European University Institute (EUI). She is researcher for the project 'Critical Young Europeans' at the Scuola Normale Superiore (SNS), and member of the 'Centre on Social Movement Studies' (COSMOS), in Florence. Her interests concern social movements, political parties and the relationships between them. Her articles appeared in the following journals: *PACO-Partecipazione e Conflitto* (with D. della Porta, 2015; with R. Fittipaldi, 2017); *South European Society and Politics* (with D. della Porta and J. Bergan Draege, 2017). She has co-edited the Special Issue 'Refocusing the Analysis of Mobilizations. Capitalism in Social Movement Research' of *Anthropological Theory* (with L. Cini, E. Drapalova and F. Tomasello, 2017).