"Vulnerable Workers in Action:
Self-Organization and Unionism in the Work Fragmentation"

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Introduction

In the present paper we discuss the main findings of a research project on "vulnerable workers and subjectivity". Goals of the project are: a) the analysis of the working and living conditions of vulnerable workers; b) the analysis of the vulnerable workers' collective actions to affirm their rights and their idea of society; c) the analysis of the relationship between vulnerable workers' actions and the union actions.

Our research methods are: analysis of data and literature; in-depth interviews with unionists, activists, workers, unemployed people; workshops; participative observations.

In *Chapter 1* we analyze the link between vulnerability and flexibility, considered as the main trend in the contemporary world of work; in *Chapter 2* we analyze some experiences of vulnerable workers' collective actions in Italy; in *Chapter 3* we analyze the vulnerable workers' meaning of action, considering the need to socialize and to share the experiences and the need to affirm the democracy taking into account: a) fundamental and universal rights; b) participatory and deliberative democracy at company, local and global level, also considering the renewal of trade union organizations and strategies.

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1. From flexibility to vulnerability

In the last two decades in Italy, as well as in the advanced European economies, the transformation of the world of work is going towards an increase in the flexibility and fragmentation of the production processes with many negative impacts on the individual working conditions: the *individual incertitude* in front of the risk society and lack in protections (Beck 1986; Castel, 2009), the *precarity* of the working conditions (Standing, 2011), the *commodification* of the work-force with a restriction of the workers' rights (Gallino, 2007), as well as the corrosion of character (Sennett, 1998) and the *weariness of the Self* (Ehrenberg, 2010; Giorgetti Fumel & Chicchi, 2012).

We are nowadays witnessing to the emergence of many types of *vulnerabilities*, due to the individual's difficulties to have a certain degree of (a) protections and (b) control over his own job and life[2].

It happens for individuals usually considered as "vulnerable" subjects (i.e. migrants and low-skilled workers in the small companies) as well as for individuals previously considered with a "strong" position in the labor market and in the social context (i.e. high-skilled workers and free-lance professionals).

It happens because there is a strict link between: (a) the orientation towards flexibility and fragmentation of the value chain (two main trends in the working processes) and (b) the individual's working conditions.

The distinguishing feature of production processes is the increased demand for functional flexibility from firms seeking to compete in the globalised market. This flexibility is achieved through an increased fragmentation of work-force and supply chain (par. 1.1), together with a centralization of decision-making power (1.2) and a crisis of democracy (1.3). These processes pushes working conditions down, especially for those most marginalized in production networks/value chains and in the social contexts, with an increase in the individual's vulnerability (1.4).

1.1 Flexibility and fragmentation of production processes

Over the past three decades, deep economic and social changes in the advanced capitalist economies have increased flexibility in the production processes of goods and services, mainly due to three main drivers (Accornero 2005; Gallino 2007; Huws et al. 2009):

a) the need for businesses to adapt to an increasingly competitive globalised market;

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[2] This is the definition of "vulnerability" considered in the present paper.

b) the need to meet new and changing demands from consumers and market, preferably through *on demand* and *just in time* production processes;

c) the need to introduce new fast-paced technology and continuous process innovations.

The "*lean production model*" (Schonberger 1986; Chandler et al. 1986; Coriat 1991) has spread in the industries and services, because work organization requires a commitment of resources under the constant pressure of the previous three drivers.

At more general level, we can say that not only "*lean production models*" but "*flexibility-based management models*" have developed within networked organizations where the boundaries between individuals, firms and Countries are blurred (Castells 1996; Sennett 1998).

In particular, flexibilisation has developed at four levels (Atkinson, 1984): a) between firms, b) between the company and workers; in work organization, including working time (c) as well as methods and jobs (d) (cfr. Flecker et al. 2009)[3].

a) Inter-firm relations have become increasingly irregular and dynamic; subcontracting and outsourcing are on the rise, and the link between the company and a specific geographical and production context has weakened.

b) Relations between the company and the work-force have become more fragmented and flexible, by the development of fixed-term contracts and "*non-standard*" employment relations as well as by the frequent downsizing processes (job dismissals) implemented during the current crisis. There is a proliferating variety of working relationships, internships, profit-sharing partnerships, and VATable self-employment, in most of which cases the occupational status is a poorly-protected form of employment, including for higher-level knowledge workers. At the same time, the bargaining power of permanent employees is diminished by the threat of layoffs, off-shoring and outsourcing.

c) At company level, work organization is characterized by an high fragmentation, with the increase in part-time arrangements, shift work, faster work pace, to satisfy a trend towards a continuous and just-in-time production process.

d) Methods of work change frequently, as well as the skills needed to perform it.

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[3] For a more detailed analysis of restructuring in Europe, see the results of the WORKS – Work Organisation and Restructuring in the Knowledge Society – research project, http://worksproject.be

1.2 Centralization and concentration of decision-making power

Flexible production processes are going together with a move towards centralization of decision-making power, risk outsourcing and individualization of risk which are giving rise to new forms of exploitation along the value chain[4]. The company general trend is to focus on the core business of their production or service processes and to outsource other activities to specialized providers, considering company as well temporary workers (Huws et al. 2009; Flecker et al. 2009).

In this way, a chain develops where at the highest level (businesses companies constituting the central nodes of the process) highly skilled workers are employed on knowledge-rich tasks and enjoy a high level of security, while at the lowest level in the secondary nodes, employees perform more physical or lower-skilled work and have fewer rights. As a result, businesses occupying a central position in value chains seek to exercise control and decision-making power: a) over firms in the chain to optimize management of the entire work process, b) over individual workers and the workforce as a whole, c) over work organization, in terms of both working hours and methods. In this scenario, the most powerful actors – in economic, political and/or quantitative terms – seek to control an increasingly fragmented production chain. Thus for many workers (especially the lowest-skilled and most in need of an income) and many firms (especially the smaller and less innovative ones), the scope for governing work processes and their own business objectives narrow along with their degree of autonomy (Di Nunzio et al. 2009).

So, the centralization of decision-making power is accompanied by a decentralization of work-performance activities (Castells 1996; Crouch, 2011), creating new forms of concentration of power (Sennett 1998) in the entrepreneurial centers that frame binding strategies for all nodes while control becomes increasingly less visible and more anonymous.

1.3 Centralizaion of power *VS* democracy

These processes are part of the wider scenario of the dematerialization of production which Gallino (2011) defines as "*finanzcapitalism*" (finance capitalism) comprising the imposition of a "*social megamachine*" able to maximize the value from individuals and ecosystems by its financial power. Therefore, a growing separation is occurring between economic activities, organized at global level, and political and social institutions operating in a more limited local, national, or macro-regional setting (Beck 2006; Castells 1996; Sassen 2007; Touraine 2005).

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[4] Porter (1985) identifies the business functions of the value chain as: research and devel¬opment; design of products, services and processes; production; marketing and sales; distribution; customer service.

Thus, globalization can be considered as a form of capitalism in which the economy is increasingly more driven by impersonal market forces than by political and social choices, such that many people feel they have lost control of both their own lives and the processes of community life (Touraine 2005). So, considering the two basic dimensions of democracy (individual rights and decisional power, cfr. Touraine 1992) we have a reduction in the fundamental rights as well as in the democratic mechanism to govern the productive and social life.

Considering the world of work, fundamental rights as established in the collective agreements have been circumvented by the increased use of temporary contract and outsourcing that enable workers to be easily isolated and placed in a subordinate position in the power relationship with their employer. Many authors underlines the negative impact of restructuring model based on market labour policies orientated towards an increases of flexibility, because there is a reduction of workers' bargaining power, both for skilled and unskilled workers (Gallino, 2007; Regalia, 2012; Carrieri & Treu, eds., 2013).

1.4 Vulnerable workers: individualization of risks, uncertainty, marginalization, precariousness, exploitation.. the lack of fundamental rights, crisis of unionism and participation

The reduction in individual and collective bargaining power in front of the concentration of decision-making power in the core business activities leads to an increased exploitation of workers who are subjected to the permanent blackmail of unemployment and devoid of control over the complex fragmentation of production processes.

Trade union action and democratic public regulation are losing ground to the determination of key entrepreneurial nodes to arrogate most of the profit and control to themselves. The new model reshapes the boundaries between institutions and increases the centralization of power while de-centralizing (outsourcing) risks.

An unequal distribution of risk (Beck, 1986; Beck, Giddens, Lash, 1994; Castel, 2009) is therefore creeping in through the creation of different levels of inclusion and exclusion from the protection system along the value chains, with the share of outsiders steadily increasing relative to that of insiders. The impact of increased outsourcing and risk individualization – more apt to affect the employee or company in isolation – is intensified for the more marginal and isolated actors.

The cause of this unequal risk distribution can be found in the differential allocation of rights and protections between workers since, as Ulrich Beck (1986) argues, the ability to cope with, avoid or

compensate for risk situations is probably unevenly distributed within the economic and cultural stratification of society.

Overall, from an in-depth analysis of the literature on the subject, Haigh and Mekel (2004) identify the following differences between the security of 'non-standard' workers and workers on permanent contracts: a) agency workers often work in high-risk environments (even in service settings where, for example, they are employed in the noisiest environments), and perform their tasks in the most awkward and tiring positions, with repetitive movements and a higher workload; b) these workers are less well covered by the health surveillance system and the health and safety regulations; c) they have the unhealthiest conditions and are more at risk of work accidents; d) they have less control over working hours and work organization than permanent workers; e) they have less access to information and training, whether job- or health and safety-related; f) they are less well-integrated into the work setting, both in terms of individual relations (relations with superiors and co-workers) and collective relations (lower unionization rates); g) they have fewer career prospects; h) they have less job satisfaction and greater uncertainty about their future.

However, these problems seems to affect not only the workers with a temporary contracts but, also, workers with a permanent contract in the marginal places of the value chains or under the fear of unemployment for the menace of dismissals or outsourcing.

A recent study funded by the European Commission (Di Nunzio et al., 2009) with 58 case studies of international companies shows that corporate restructuring strategies underway in Europe are oriented towards the centralization of decision-making, the process rationalization and risk outsourcing along an increasingly fragmented "value chain", with negative consequences for workers: a) a reduction of each worker's influence over the work process, b) an intensified workload c) increased uncertainty from lesser predictability of both the workload and the job; d) individualization of the employment relationship and a lack of union support. The general trend is therefore towards worsening working conditions and increased exploitation of workers, especially the most vulnerable: those on the margins of work and society, working in the "peripheral areas" of the value chains.

According to Gallino (2009) and Standing (2011), non-standard work violates a host of fundamental rights and guarantees which the ILO says define "decent work": a) job security (protection during hiring and firing); b) security at work (valuing occupations and skills); c) safety in the workplace (protection of health against work accidents and occupational diseases); d) income security (creating and maintaining adequate resources); e) welfare benefit security (the ability to maintain an appropriate level of income even after exiting the labour market); f) guarantees of representation (trade union membership and the right to strike).

1.5 *Focus*: vulnerability in Italy

In Italy the crisis has accompanied and stressed out a process of flexibilization of work begun in the last two decades, so the rise of unemployment is linked to a fragmentation of production processes and a growing uncertainty of employment by the use of temporary contracts, especially for most marginalized people in the social contexts and in the value chains, such as young people and migrants (Di Nunzio, ed., 2013). Moreover, these processes are aggravated in Italy by competition based on cost-cutting rather than innovation and quality of work (Perulli & Pichierri, eds., 2010). Today's, workers have to fall in with market changes with no real hope of a long-term and safe job, upsetting the qualitative balance between work life and social life, and flouting the Fordist and Keynesian compromise between subordination and security (Accornero 2005).

Between 2007 and 2013 percentage of people looking for work in Italy has doubled, passing from 6.1% to 12.2, surpassing the UE average of 10.8%. At the beginning of 2014 there are 22,259,000 employees and 3,293,000 unemployed people and unemployment rate is increased to 12.9%.

Unemplyment rate, 2007-2013, UE28, Italy

		2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
European Union (28 countries)	Total	7.2	7.0	9.0	9.6	9.6	10.4	10.8
	Males	6.6	6.6	9.0	9.7	9.6	10.4	10.8
	Females	7.9	7.5	8.9	9.6	9.7	10.5	10.9
Italy	Total	6.1	6.7	7.8	8.4	8.4	10.7	12.2
	Males	4.9	5.5	6.8	7.6	7.6	9.9	11.5
	Females	7.9	8.5	9.3	9.7	9.6	11.9	13.1

Source: Eurostat, 2014

If we analyse the quality of work during the age of crisis in Italy, we can observe these trends:
- increasing in the part-time employment (from 13.6 in 2007 to 17.9 in 2013) (Istat data-base, 2013);
- the incidence of temporary employment is growing during recent years: in 2013 about 13.2% of employees had a fixed-term contract (in the first phase of the crisis temporary workers were the first to be expelled from the production processes);
- in Italy there is an high incidence of "autonomous work" (22% of the total amount of workers) and this incidence is stable during the years (Istat data-base, 2013);
- aging of the working population: in 2012, about 22 million are employed, of whom 5% are under 25 years old and 21% between 25 and 34 years (Istat data-base, 2013);

- Wage Guarantee Found[5] increased by 473% from 2008 to 2013, reaching more than 1 billion of hours per year. In 2013, it involved 6.838 companies (12,025 business units) and above 515,000 workers (if we consider full-time workers) (Inps data-base, 2013);

- in 2012, in Italy, 18.2 million people, or 29.9% of the population, were at risk of poverty or social exclusion, a higher rate than European average (24.8%), with an increasing during recent years, compared with 25.3 in 2008 (Eurostat, 2013);

- considering the relationship between crisis and social dialogue, in the framework of a recent ILO research project on industrial relations in a number of European countries, the analysis of the Italian case (Pedersini and Regini, 2013) underlines two basic trends: a) the absence of any significant revitalization of social concertation and rather the reinforcement of the trends towards a weaker role of tripartite dialogue in the discussion of economic and social policies, with the abandonment of any commitment to reach an agreement with the social partners on measures and interventions; b) lacking the macro-level tool of social concertation, adjustment moves to the micro-level of the firms, where collective bargaining can, under certain circumstances, play a significant role;

- the Italian economic structure is based almost entirely on micro, small and medium-sized enterprises: during the crisis the fragmentation of the productive processes is increased, with a reduction of the workforce employed in large companies in favour of an increase in those tiny, thus the share of workers employed in firms with fewer than 15 employees has increased from 36% in 2007 to 40% in 2012 (Istat data-base, 2013), with a negative impact on collective bargaining system and on the efficacy of unions' actions;

- incidence rate of artisans and skilled workers is reducing, as well as the presence of skilled professions while number of executive workers in commercial activities and services (especially personal care workers and clerks) and unskilled workers is increasing. Considering the skilled professions, group of managers and entrepreneurs at the end of the four years lost well 449 000 units (equal to -42.6 per cent), almost 100 thousand last year alone, in most cases small entrepreneurs and business leaders (Istat, 2013, p. 97).

- duration of unemployment has increased: people looking for work at least 12 months increased from 2008 (+675,000 units) and they are 53% of the total in 2012 (Istat data-base, 2013).

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[5] Wage Guarantee Found ("Cassa Integrazione Guadagni") is a special fund used to protect workers' income, financed by companies and the state and administered by the National Institute of Social Insurance (INPS). In cases laid down by law, the Wages Guarantee Fund makes up the pay of employees affected by lay-offs or short-time working , up to 80 per cent of the lost pay. However, it has a limited coverage in term of sectors, size of enterprises and typology of contracts (it doesn't exist for atypical and autonomous workers).

In this scenario, we have to consider the differences at regional level: the North of the country shows high labour market participation and employment rates for both men and women, while the South presents a significantly worse picture. At a general level, an unequal distribution of risk is creeping in through the creation of different levels of inclusion and exclusion from the protection system along the production processes and in the labour market, especially considering young people and migrants, as we well analyse following in the present chapter.

2. From vulnerability to worker's affirmation: some experiences of collective actions

In Italy, as well as in Europe, individuals try to organize themselves to cope with the rise of vulnerability and the crisis of unions organizations, political institutions, democratic life.

In this chapter, we analyse how individuals try to cope with the lack of protection and control over their work and life, organizing collective actions.

We present, in brief, some emblematic experiences of collective actions promoted by vulnerable workers, considering self-organization as well as the actions carried out by unions (2.1), with the aim to underlines common trend considering goals (2.2) and methods (2.3) of their actions.

From many years, in Italy and at global level, there are several experiences of workers and unions actions to cope with the precarity and, at general level, with the work fragmentation[6].

At the beginning of XXI century, the informal relations set up by the Seattle movement between different realities - social centers, students' movements, associations, unions, self-organized groups - flowed into the so-called May Day parade, an event first organized by precarious workers in Milan on 1 May 2001 (Standing, 2011; Murgia, 2013).

At the same time, "traditional" unions try to cope with this problems and in 1998 the biggest Italian union, Cgil, founded the Nidil-Nuove Identità di Lavoro (New Work Identities) to provide representation for workers involved in new forms of employment relationships - such as temporary agency workers and those in consultancy and "coordinated" freelance work. The aim of Nidil is to introduce protection for these workers through collective bargaining as well as through legislation.

In the recent years, after the last Congress in 2014, Cgil proposed to orient the unionists' actions towards the "*inclusive bargaining*", that is the horizon of the new unionism (Lani I., ed., 2013) to recompose the range of rights, including all the contractual typologies in the National Agreement and establishing for all fair wages and new rights related to training, autonomy and professionalism. "*Inclusive bargaining means looking at the whole production cycle and using the levels of greater union strength to establish decent working conditions for the weaker sections, for example, contracted or sub-contracted companies*" as explained by a unionists. This commitment to inclusive bargaining is accompanied by resettlement policies able to count on the participation of all individuals with forms and methods that may be different from the traditional ones.

However, beyond the great national demonstrations and the institutional union actions there are many experiences of struggles, protests and, also, bargaining for precarious workers' rights at local or sectoral level, involving self-organized groups as well as unionists.

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[6] Cfr Gumbrell-McCormick & Hyman 2013; Lani (ed) 2013; Leonardi 2013; Quaderni di Rassegna Sindacale. Lavori, n.1, *Rappresentare i lavoratori non standard*, Ediesse, 2014.

Especially during the last ten years, in Italy as well as in Europe, there are not big general demonstrations of precarious workers but we have many experiences of local, sectoral or professional actors. Looking to these experiences can help to better understand the meaning of action (Touraine, 1993; Dubet, 1994) of vulnerable workers (the goals of the actions and the methodology of the actions) with the aim to analyze the common topics as well as the common orientations to propose a new meaning of work and society.

We focused our attention on several workers' experience carried out from 2011 to 2014, considering self-organized workers actions as well as actions organized by a network of associations with the contribution or promoted by the CGIL, the biggest Italian trade union.

Professionals workers self organizations

Among precarious professional workers there are many experiences of self-organization, considering both formal and informal associations.

"Iva Sei Partita"[7] ("Iva You Left", joking with the name of the Italian typology of autonomous contract called "Partita Iva") was founded in 2010 as a website by a small group of autonomous workers, most part of them architects and engineers, with the aim to give information to free-lancers. In 2013, the website had 20,000 monthly contacts and it was a reference point for information and exchange of job proposals, but also to organize collective actions, especially flash-mob and workshops to propose solutions to improve working conditions of professionals.

"Errori di Stampa"[8] (Printing Errors) is an informal local network of journalists based in Rome. It was created in 2010 following similar experiences from other cities. They try to denounce the journalists' working condition also by surveys on precarious workers with the aim to understand how much (few) they are paid by the several newspaper and communicational companies and actually they are involve in the debate to improve the law on journalists' "fair pay" passed by the Parliament.

"Strade, Sindacato dei Traduttori "[9] (Streets, Translators Trade Union) was born in 2010 as an association of free-lancers translators and interpreters. They try to collaborate with the Unions to improve their rights and, also, they want to improve the protection and participation of individuals offering personal services, as: mutual services for health problems, fiscal assistance, training courses, conventions with schools of languages. Also, these services are proposed in collaboration with other professionals' associations and some services are open to non-members. Moreover, they

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[7] http://www.ivaseipartita.it/
[8] http://erroridistamparm.blogspot.it/
[9] http://www.traduttoristrade.it/

try to better understand the work organization of the editorial working processes, by surveys. Recently, in 2013, they organized a survey[10] in collaboration with the Ires Emilia Romagna (a research institute affiliated to the Cgil) and with another self-organized network: Re.Re.Pre., Rete dei Redattori Precari (Network of Precarious Editors)[11], a network born in 2008 in Milan during a local assembly and, after, widespread at national level in many cities with a website as a common point of reference.

Free-lance professionals

"Con il contratto"[12] is a campaign to improve the rights of autonomous workers in professional studios, promoted by Filcams Cgil (Commerce Union), and Nidil Cgil (Union for Atypical workers) and Cgil National Department for Youth Policies in collaboration with two self-organized network of autonomous workers: Iva Sei Partita (a network of professionals and free-lancer, in particular engineers and architects) and "Associazione IV Piano" (a network of lawyers in apprenticeship). This campaign started after the renewal of the National Collective Agreement of Professional Studios signed by employers and employees associations (Cgil, Cisl, Uil) in 2011. More than 700,000 professionals work as autonomous workers in the Italian offices and professional studios in very bad conditions: usually with a low pay, low autonomy and a lack of rights. Considering that these workers usually are in micro and small workplaces the campaign used the web to reach them, with the aim to inform that the new National Collective Agreement of Professional Studios - previously dealing only with standard employees - offers some opportunities to have rights also for autonomous workers. National agreement gives the opportunity to improve rights at local level, by local agreements and so, as explained by a unionist: "*it needs to build collective actions in collaboration with the self-organized association in the territories, with the aim to understand how we can affirm rights considering the real workers' needs and the real work organization in a workplace*". Consequently, the campaign aims to improve the fundamental rights at local level and to extend rights at national one, especially considering: fair pay, training, health and safety rights, welfare and unemployment benefits.

Bogus autonomous workers

"Dissociati!"[13] (Dissociate yourself!) is a campaign against the use of "associazione in partecipazione" (a typology of autonomous working contract) in the retail sector, promoted by

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[10] Dieci D., Fontani C., Rinaldini F., *Editoria invisibile*, Ires Emilia Romagna, 2013.
[11] http://www.rerepre.org/
[12] http://conilcontratto.it/
[13] http://dissociati.it/

Filcams Cgil (Commerce Union) and Nidil Cgil (Union for Atypical workers). In the most cases, the subordinate salaried are forced to use this kind of contract to work in a shop with a high degree of subordination, allowing the company to reduce their pay and to escape from the need to comply with the national agreements. So, these workers are bogus-autonomous workers in a condition of subordination, control and isolation. Unionists started the campaign on the web, with the aim to inform the workers about their rights. After the reports from some workers, unionists started to act at company level with the aim to transform these contracts in standard contracts. At the same time, unionist organized demonstrations to have a better legal regulation of this contractual typology in the commerce sector.

Young unemployed people

"Giovani NON+ disposti a tutto"[14] (NOT-Available Young People) is a campaign promoted by the Young Policies Department of Cgil Nazionale with the aim to organize precarious and unemployed young people. This campaign followed two steps: a) a denounce of the indecent jobs proposals; b) the organization of local committee. The national web-site collected many stories of precarity and indecent job proposals with which workers are confronted every day looking for a job. As explained during the interview: "*usually workers are alone searching for a job; on the contrary, workers built a collective story of precarity sharing the indecent job proposals*", passing from loneliness to self-representation and, then, to collective action. Some "NON+ committees" were born at local level (Rome, Pisa, Florence, Trieste, Bergamo, Naples, Salerno, Forlì, Parma Sicily) and they organized flash-mob and other initiatives of information and protest, especially denouncing indecent job proposals, i.e. in the case of internships proposed by a big company in Rome (a stage with the opportunity to use a "desk" as benefit) or in a shopping centre in Naples during the Christmas time.

Migrants in the black economy

"Invisibili" (Invisible) is campaign for migrant workers in condition of "almost" slavery in the South of Italy promoted by Flai Cgil (Italian Union of Agriculture-Industry Workers). In the South of Italy thousands of migrants work in very bad conditions and this is due to two main factors: a) they need to have the residence permit which is linked to the job; b) they are illegal immigrant in the black economy. In some cases, they are in a condition of slavery, because they are without a regular employment contract and because they are under the dominion of the recruiters of day laborers. They work in off-limits zone in the irregular economy, without a contact with institutions or associations, isolated in the farmland: so, it is very difficult for the unions to build a collective

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[14] http://www.cgil.it/Archivio/Politiche%20giovanili/Piattaforma_campagna_diritti_non_piu_parole.pdf

action. By the campaign "Invisible" unionists try to cope with this problems *going to the workers, without waiting for them into the chamber of labor*" as explained by a unionists. Unionists used camper as mobile office in the farmlands and in the places of the "black market of arms", with the aim to offer information, assistance and protection for the migrant workers. Unionists try to build network with associations and institutions with the aim to rebuild legality and democracy in these territories, with a strict collaboration with migrant people and involving the migrant leader in their actions. In some cases, i.e. in Puglia, they were able to sign an agreement to regulate the placement of workers, in collaboration with the local institutions and some regular companies[15].

Athletic trainers in the gyms

In Florence, one of the largest gyms employed about 90 athletic trainers, nearly all employed by a contract of coordinated and continuous collaboration which is used by amateur sports clubs. After a reduction of the wage some workers asked for help to the local unionist of Nidil. Most part of the workers did not know the role of the union and they were very afraid. So, the first step of the unionist was to inform workers about their rights and to reassure them to have their trust. Many individual and group meetings were organized outside the company and the union places: in pubs and parks. At the same time, some workers' leaders have been trained by the unionists to explain to the workers the opportunities of the union action. In all the process, as counted by a unionist, it has been important to explain that "*union is not a bureaucratic institution but workers are the protagonists, also considering the different needs and expectations among them*". After the bargaining activities workers and employers signed an agreement: 30 workers have been hired by permanent contracts, other 30 workers have a temporary contract with more rights (health and safety, unions' rights as the right to vote the workers representatives) and autonomy because they want to be free-lancer with the opportunity to work for several gyms controlling the working time.

Open chambers of labour and local and itinerant union offices

Starting from 2010 some unionists proposed a new organization of the Cgil chambers of labour with the aim to create specific spaces for the vulnerable workers and, after some pilot experiments, from 2011 the National Cgil started to support other similar experiences, even if there is not a real plan of action. Actually, there are several experiences, among others, Toolbox (Bergamo, since 2010), Spazio Sociale Lavoro (Lecce, since 2012), Reset (Padova, since 2012), Plas (Firenze, since 2012). Aim of these local spaces is to "*open the chambers of labour to all the workers*", as explained by a unionist, to improve the involvement and the protection of vulnerable workers, especially

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[15] http://www.flaipuglia.it/certificazione-etica-regionale

considering young people.

At the same time, some unionists try to open some local and itinerant union offices with aim to meet the vulnerable workers. Among others, from 2012 Flc Cgil has an office in Università La Sapienza (Rome) for the precarious workers, from 2013 Nidil anc Cgil Roma-Lazio in collaboration with the association "Scosse" have an itinerant office in Rome for precarious workers.

These spaces offer: a) services (fiscal services, job orientation, legal services also for dismissals, support service for unemployment benefits); b) union support; c) aggregative opportunities (cultural activities, seminars). At general level, by these actions unionists aim "*to offer to the workers the opportunity to meet each other and to participate to the union actions*" as explained by a unionist.

Working for art and culture

"Teatro Valle"[16] in Rome is an ancient theatre established in 1727. In June, 14 2011, it was occupied by the workers themselves the day after the closure of the theatre by the Italian government to avoid the privatization or change of use. It was also the day after the victory of the national referendum for water as a "common good", voted by 27 millions of italians, and the occupiers put on the facade a long piece of cloth with written on: "*Like Water, Like Air, Let's Recalme Culture!*".

The occupants of the Teatro Valle are workers in the entertainment business (cinema, theater, dance), artists, technicians and operators (most part of them free-lancer) mobilized against the cuts to the culture and the crisis of the world of art and knowledge. However, in few months, this space has become a referent point for all the activists and workers involved in the struggle to defend the culture, art and, at general level, the common goods. The occupiers have issued an appeal signed by over 8,000 people to preserve the theatre. Citizens, artists, professionals, famous people of Italian and international culture gave life to the Teatro Valle Occupato organizing seminars, protests, workshops, shows. The activists' goal was to transform the Teatro Valle in a "Foundation": Fondazione Teatro Valle Bene Comune (Foundation Teatro Valle as Commons) is an economic and juridical alternative model based on the self-government of the workers of art and culture and the citizens and on a direct democratic system. The principal vocation of the theatre is to be always open to offer a wide permanent education for professionals and for the citizens as a "*contemporary agora*", with a plural artistic direction, a price policy accessible and progressive, boards for independent monitoring, transparency and readability of financial statements published on the web, developing a code of ethics, as model for all theaters and companies.

After the Teatro Valle, many other similar experiences are born: Nuovo Cinema Palazzo

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[16] http://www.teatrovalleoccupato.it

(www.nuovocinemapalazzo.it), Coppola Theatre of Catania (www.teatrocoppola.it), the Garibaldi Theatre (www.teatrogaribaldiaperto.com), the collective of the Balena of Naples with the "Asilo della creatività e della conoscenza" (labalena.wordpress.com), Macao in Milan (www.macao.mi.it) and the already existing S.A.L.E. Docks in Venice (www.saledocks.org), are all experimenting new models of daily bottom up productions.

Precarious workers' national demonstration

"Il nostro tempo è adesso"[17] (Our Time is Now) is "*a network of network*" of precarious workers with a national committee established with the aim to organize a national demonstration in April 9 2011. So, this campaign was a "*path to build a collective elaboration about the precarity, to give a self-representation against the idea of the "choosy" young people, an adjective used by Minister Elsa Fornero to insult a generation. The network wants to express the precarious people's needs and want to propose their own solutions*". The national committee is an open-organization composed by several members: individuals and members of self-organized network of precarious workers, institutional associations, left parties and unionists (especially of Cgil). They used several tools: a website, flash-mobs, national and local demonstrations, assemblies. The two days national assembly after the demonstration (November 19 and 20, 2011) proposed a "*decalogo*", a sort of chart of fundamental rights, to cope with the precarity, asking for: 1) standard contract for standard work; 2) fair pay; 3) universal unemployment benefits; 4) minimum income; 5) fair pay for retirement; 5) unions rights (vote, assembly, representation, consultation, strike); 7) maternity and paternity; 8) health and safety; 9) benefits for housing; 10) training and fair apprenticeship and stage.

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[17] https://www.facebook.com/pages/il-nostro-tempo-%C3%A8-adesso/201822493179015

3. Meaning of action: the affirmation of democracy by fundamental and universal rights and participative and deliberative democracy

By the analysis of these experiences we want to highlight some key issues of the vulnerable workers' collective actions.

In the present age, individuals try to cope with the crisis of the democracy and with the vulnerability of the subjects, with the aim to affirm a new democratic life able to enforce the personal subjectivity (Touraine, 1993), also considering the role of work at individual and collective level.

Our analysis shows that this collective actions seems to have some common orientations, considering:

a) socialization;

b) the affirmation of fundamental and universal rights;

c) the affirmation of participative and deliberative democracy at any level of the social life, also considering the renewal of the social dialogue at company, local and international level as well as the renewal of the union organizations of the labour movements as basic steps to affirm the Arendt's idea of the "*right to have rights*";

3.1 Socializing

Vulnerable workers feel the need to escape from the condition of "*isolation*" and "*atomization*" (words often used by the actors during the interviews). These feelings are due to the fragmentation of working and living conditions. On the contrary, they need to share their experiences, viewpoints, feelings. "*Sometimes it feel to be part of a collective therapeutic group, as the people with psychological problems*", as explained by an interviewed person. Therefore, the collective organization is a way to meet new people and to share the personal point of view, not only regarding the solutions and the organization of protests but, also, about their private experiences.

Moreover, collective organizations are a useful tool to meet colleagues and to exchange professional information: contacts, documents, professional experiences, expertise and knowledge. In some cases, the collective actions are useful to create new job opportunities as well as to do co-working activities.

3.2 Fundamental and Universal Rights

Fundamental rights are at risk for a growing part of workers: they are guaranteed especially for full-time, permanent, standard contracts (even if the outsourcing processes and the recent crisis presents new challenges for all) while the new contractual typologies as well as autonomous workers have a

restricted access to fundamental rights.

Our analysis shows that against the fragmentation of work (at company, local and global level) and the lack in protections, vulnerable workers propose the affirmation of fundamental and universal rights, both as workers and as citizens.

1) Vulnerable workers ask for a set of fundamental rights for any contractual and professional typology ("*equal rights for each worker*").

   If we look to the rights associated to the working life, we can highlights: a) fair pay ("*equal pay for equal work*"), b) health and safety at work; c) maternity and paternity leave; d) continuous professional training e) unions rights (*"the right to have rights"* by information, consulting, vote, representation, etc.); f) benefits in case of dismissals and unemployment

2) Vulnerable workers ask for universal rights as worker and, also, as person. Considering that the unemployment is a growing problem as well as the discontinuous work, they ask for more rights directly associated to the citizenship.

   If we look to the rights associated to the citizenship, we can highlights the rights to: a) access to a good job (as employer, self-professional or employer); b) basic income to avoid poverty and occupational blackmail; c) creation of an autonomous life and family; c) education and continuous training; d) public health and safety; e) housing; f) common goods.

3.3 Participative and deliberative democracy

Vulnerable workers feel to have lost control of their own life as well as of the social life, because "*the market is governing the society*" and *"there is a crisis of democracy not only an economic crisis"*, as they said in the interviews.

Consequently, vulnerable workers want to affirm the democracy at any level: at company, local and global level. They want to affirm the "*right to have right*" (Arendt) and, so, the democracy of the decisional processes against the concentration of decisional power.

Also, they ask for a renewal of traditional decisional institutions as parties and unions to affirm the participative and deliberative democracy in a more democratic social dialogue.

However, even if the vulnerable workers ask for more opportunities to affirm their voice in the unions and in the companies, the most part of them didn't refuse the representative democracy and they didn't see the representative democracy in opposition with the deliberative one: at one side, they ask for a real debate and a strengthening of the direct involvement in the social dialogue; on the other side, they ask for a real representation at company, local and global level: the opportunity to chose their representatives and leader and the opportunity to have a continuous dialogue with

them.

Most part of the vulnerable workers ask for a "*new unionism*" or a "*real unionism*" as a starting point to change the society and to affirm the democracy at any level.

Focusing our attention to the renewal of the unions, looking to our research experiences, we can observe some key elements requested by the vulnerable workers (basic elements in the analyzed experiences) with the aim to strength the workers participation and voice.

1) *Information, awareness, knowledge*: workers needs to know their rights and they need to know the working processes and the work organization at local/company/value-chain level. At the same time, they need to know the role of the unions, bargaining and social dialogue.

2) *Open dialogue*: they want to share and to discuss their problems, expectations and solutions.

3) *A wide range of tools, with the aim to offer many opportunities to participate to the collective actions*: i.e. web, new technologies, demonstrations, flash-mob, physical meetings and assemblies, itinerant camper and offices, opening the chamber of labour in not-conventional hours offering space of actions and services.

4) *Workers are the leaders of their own actions, considering the goals as well as the strategy*: workers want to participate to the union actions also changing and renewing the conventional role of the unions, to adapt the unions to their needs.

5) *Self-representation, direct representation, continuous representation*: a) vulnerable workers want to have voice about their real working conditions and they want to widen a true information (i.e. also by some surveys, forum or open assemblies); b) they want to have voice in the social dialogue, also by the opportunity to chose their representatives and leaders and their "agenda"; c) they want a continuous dialogue among workers and their representatives, considering on-line forum, assemblies and individual meeting.

6) *Networking unionism*: they want to enforce networks among workers, associations, institutions, self-organized groups, with the aim to affirm a wide participative process.

7) *Considering the specific professional expectations in a general perspective*: the specific professional identity (or, better, the individual professional project) is a driver to build a collective action, because the individual - especially considering high-skilled workers – build his own personality also by his worker experience. This happens in a positive way (i.e. considering the importance of their skills or the role of a profession in the society) as well as in a negative way (i.e. considering the condition of precarity, exploitation or slavery). At the same time, they want to find a way to match this specific expectations with a general perspective to affirm universal rights and a fair society.

3.4 Democratic unions to affirm a democratic social life

In brief, we can say that:

- vulnerable workers' collective actions try to affirm a contemporary idea of democracy able to enforce the subjects, based on two main pillars: fundamental and universal rights and a participative organization of the social life at any level (Touraine, 1993, 2005);

- vulnerable workers ask for fundamental and universal rights and, in particular, for the "*right to have rights*" (Arendt) proposing a transformation of the social dialogue and of the decisional processes;

- they ask for a more participative and deliberative democracy, searching for more opportunities of "self-organization" and asking for a renewal of the union organizations, because they didn't oppose the participative and deliberative democracy to the representative democracy, as we can see from some collaborations between the self-organized groups and the traditional unions.

Many authors identify the importance of the struggles for democracy in the contemporary age. As analyzed by some authors, in the present age democracy need to be participatory and deliberative, not "just" representative. Democracy had to come from the bottom up but there also had to be input at the top as well as the support of organized networks. In general, participative and deliberative ideals have been diffused widely in the "new social movements" (Touraine, 1993; Della Porta e Diani 1997). In particular, deliberative ideals received popular recognition and appreciation due to the mobilizations of the "Global Justice Movements (GJM)" (della Porta, 2009) as well as in the precarious workers movement (Standing, 2011). Even if some author prefers to stress the differences among representative, participative and deliberative democracy, others prefer to focus the attention on the relationships among these ideals (Touraine, 1997; Urbinati & Warren, 2008; della Porta, 2009).

Our research show that vulnerable workers ask for a more participative and deliberative unionism to build a more democratic social life, at company, local and global level. Vulnerable workers try to reach these goals by their collective actions, with the aim to change their working conditions, the working processes and the society but, also, to change the union itself, proposing an idea of workers movements and unionism based on the universal rights as well as on the participative and deliberative processes.

By this way, vulnerable workers transform the collective institutions of the workers movements by their collective actions: they want to change the unions' actions and unions' institutions to change the workplace and the society.

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