RESEARCH ARTICLE

CONSTITUTING THE SOCIAL BASIS OF THE EU
Reflections from the European Margins

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ABSTRACT: The article addresses significant aspects of the constitution of the European Union's social basis from the broader perspective of a European space under construction. The specific point of view regards the process of Europeanization through enlargement to the post-socialist Eastern and South European countries, and conditionality as its main instrument. In the light of the five-year moratorium proposed by the Juncker Commission in 2015, the process is examined particularly from its margins by considering the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), i.e. the last country in the 'Western Balkans', together with Kosovo, that is not yet a candidate for EU membership. The analysis aims to shed light on two different and conflictual forms of agency: first, the institution building process through accession procedures; second, social dissent patterns and citizens' mobilization in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The purpose is to analyze if and how these diverse agencies cross borders and soften boundaries to constitute an emerging European society. A constant methodological concern of this study is if and how an ethnography of the process may contribute to the analysis of European integration in its complex, non-linear and often contradictory nature (Kauppi 2013).

1. Introduction

The European Union as an imagined community developed through the process of gradual integration and enlargement of the European nation states and citizens (Delanty 1995). The institutionalization of the European Union in its 'deepening' dimension, as a project of common citizenship, much more than in its 'widening' dimension as a supranational organization in expansion, has been based on a specific capacity of its protagonists to revolutionize given cognitive patterns using social imagination (Inglehardt 1970, Scartezzini 2009). This capacity has been indispensable, but also insufficient, for the creation of new models of social solidarity, and thus of an alternative political and cultural (re)production and redistribution of material, symbolic and power resources among *peers* (Barbier and Colomb 2014; Ferrero 2004, 2005; Fraser 2013). In this sense, acquisition of and participation in the new European citizenship today may be seen as an extremely difficult and manifold challenge.

From the perspective of principles, the EU is structured as transversal and transnational – and thus border-crossing – on the basis of a range of shared universal and democratic values, and it is open to negotiation on other values that are culturally, historically and scientifically questioned. From the point of view of policies and practices, although the current transitional European elites are strongly nation-biased, they have to deal with an agenda of pressing common issues, such as the economic and financial crisis; Euroskepticism (de Wilde, Michailidou and Trenz 2013), but also the indifference of a huge number of (Western) European citizens towards EU integration (Van Ingelgom 2014); social protests against austerity policies (and not only) throughout the member countries (della Porta and Mattoni 2014); the migrant 'question' (Favell 2014) and refugee crisis between the 'open city' (Sassen 2014) and 'fortress' model of Europe (Zielonka 2006); violent conflicts in its liminal zones of the aspirant states – from Turkey to Ukraine; and terrorism.

When the European identity is discussed, this new (utopian?) kind of a common and transnational citizenship in terms of belonging – the intimate cosmopolitanism of Europe (Beck 2012) – refers not only to the nation-state citizens of the member countries, and migrants as denizens, with differentiated status of residence, of its wide territory. It also becomes a desirable aim for many citizens of the aspirant countries, one able to mobilize huge social energies, as in the case of the EuroMaidan square in Kiev. This article begins by asking if and how the EU membership negotiation process concretely achieves empowerment of the democratic institutions of these countries through the political, social and economic emancipation of their citizens.

It seems that what is effectively happening remains at the level of the bureaucratic procedural dimension of Europeanization as a mere normative 'harmonization' of the aspirant nation state's legislation with the 35 chapters of the *Acquis*. The 'enlargement fatigue', after the block integration of 'ten plus two' post-socialist countries in 2004 and 2007, followed by the silent entrance of Croatia in 2013, ended with a five-year moratorium imposed by the Juncker Commission. If the main criteria for membership have not yet been met by so many candidate and potential candidate states, as was confirmed by Progress Reports of the European Commission for 2015, one of the reasons is the predominant type of EU governance. The democratic deficit of the EU then clashes with the deeper democratic deficit of these societies (Western Balkans countries and Turkey), with unpredictable consequences.

The common feature of the broader European space – including neighboring countries that aspire to EU membership – is a growing critical mass of 'hopeless and helpless', under-represented and voiceless 'residual' social groups and categories: unemployed and precarious workers; young people; poor children, elderly persons and women; minorities; the ill and disabled; refugees and asylum seekers; 'clandestine' and regular immigrants. This situation undermines the core principles of an inclusive European democracy unable (and sometimes unwilling) to include them as political subjects without the support of a new transnational welfare project. These emerging forms of social conflict, based on new, not yet recognizable social cleavages, are generating waves of protest throughout the European space. Monitoring and analysing their subterranean magmatic flow, with intermittent violent eruptions, may be one of the major challenges for interdisciplinary scientific research.

It is not the intention of this article to provide answers to all the questions raised in the introduction. In what follows I will try to shed light on some important dimensions of the transnationalisation of the European societies, both within the institutions and outside them. The first section of the article will problematize the notion of a 'European society' and the process of constructing a new European citizenship as highly controversial. The second section will address the idea of citizenship constructed in practice by exploring 'troubles and issues' that have been emerging for a European transnational society through the enlargement/accession process. The analysis will adopt a twofold perspective on the negotiating character of the institutional framework of this process, and of the methodological problem of how to explore forms of agency of actors directly involved in it.

The 'enlargement fatigue' since 2007 and the current five-year moratorium point to the intrinsic institutional and structural deficiency of EU governance, accused of double

standards and criteria, or of having a 'Janus-faced' nature where "one face promises op-portunities, the other poses threat", as Barbier and Colomb put it (Barbier and Colomb 2014). In this sense, the 'Western Balkan' countries frame a specific European space-set for analysis of this kind because the current stagnation, and the slow and inefficient pro-gress of the negotiations, reopen the spectrum of new conflicts. Thus, the paradigmatic case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, significant as a European 'black hole', will be examined in the third section, considering, among other dimensions, recent mobilization and civic protests of its citizens as part of a global and European waves of protest in 2013 and 2014. Focusing on this specific case may yield better understanding of the weight and importance of every single act or decision in the current watershed situation of the Eu-ropean integration process.

There is still no valid empirical evidence on the relationship between these protests, in Bosnia and other 'Western Balkan' countries, or in Turkey[1] and Ukraine, and the shift of EU politics towards further enlargement after the announcement of a five-year mor-atorium in January 2015. However, an attempt to determine essential features of social and political claims arising from the atonal clamour of a multitude of these interpretative subjectivities, regarding both norms and practices, with potential unattended conse-quences, may be considered another important approach to the question of a new Eu-ropean citizenship, if any (Favell and Giraudon 2011).

2. Is there any such thing as a European society?

More than anything else, the year 1989 opened a horizon of hope for the citizens of Central and Eastern Europe.[2] Nowadays, the democratic and liberal transformation of those societies – aspired to as a project for an immediate better future, constructed day-by-day, and no longer a utopian fallacy to which everyday life must be sacrificed – is proving much more arduous than was imaginable at the beginning.

The two *Europes*, West and East, are now strongly united in the crisis of a 'European democratic model' and its ability to produce and distribute wealth for its citizens and, at the same time, safeguard the ideal of social justice (Delanty 2014). The deep-lying rea-sons for this crisis are too easily dismissed by governments (right-wing and left-wing) or

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[1] Actual refugee crisis and the controversial March 2016 agreement between EU and Turkey, in which the re-opening of the negotiations of the accession process was one of the main conditions imposed by Turkish President Erdogan, opened a new chapter in this story that should be carefully observed.
[2] As Adam Michnik wrote in an article for the twentieth anniversary of the 'velvet revolution', it was an 'Annus mirabilis' (Michnik 2009).

by the EU elites, and the new (neoliberal) policy choices seek legitimacy as the indispensable and inevitable means to meet the challenges of globalization, thereby gradually reducing many important achievements by Western democracy in the twentieth century. The main outcome, with long-term damaging consequences, concerns the human rights and fundamental freedoms of people embraced by national state and EU citizenship, and the institution of the social state in Europe's labour-based societies.

The new democracies have proved even more vulnerable as the socialist welfare state has been dismantled and scrapped as a remnant of the communist regime, leaving its citizens without a minimum of social security (Offe 1994, 1997), and exposed to the impact of a kind of Marxian primitive accumulation of capital without real control by the weak democratic institutions of the new states: a kind of 'rebuilding a ship at a *stormy sea*' (Elster et al. 1998). Consequently, the 'future' as a real and realistic project of social action, of 'acting in concert' (Arendt 1958), seems to have become increasingly opaque and illegible.

Western European political, journalistic and even sociological discourse on the 'future' involves another social category that has become opaque: young people as without a future, or deprived of a future. More than a real concern for the younger generation, this discourse reveals a profound inability of political elites and intellectuals in Europe, and more in general of European civil society (or societies), to meet the new social challenges and to transcend outdated patterns of conceiving and governing the (nation-state) common space still based on the presumption of (ethnic, national, religious, cultural) separation and confinement. Thernborn spoke of the current European crisis in terms of the devastation, among other things, of a "large portion of the youth cohort (…) outside education, training and employment", especially in the Southern and Eastern European countries (Therborn 2014: 477).[3] As a consequence, the 'outraged young' have become a major social force of resistance through the civic protests that have erupted in recent years around the globe, in some cases producing violent conflicts and even war, as in the Arab Mashrek and the Middle East (Hessel 2010, 2011; Sloam 2014; Kaldor and Selchow 2013). The global wave of protests has had a particular impact in the EU countries most affected by the crisis, like Greece and Spain, but also in a number of aspirant countries like Turkey, Ukraine, and in the 'Western Balkans'.

However, a profound social discontent, flowing as a slow and steady underground process since the late 1980s, has brought to light new social cleavages in European societies, mixing Western and Eastern patterns of social inequality. The new movements,

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[3] Thernborn also referred to Ireland as one of the "Southern victims of the Anglo-Saxon financial crisis" (Therborn 2014).

not yet socially definable, seem to be the major indicators of the ongoing transformation. The main players of these spreading protests, characterized by their transnational mobilization and symbolism (della Porta and Mattoni 2014), consist of newly pauperized, socially indeterminate middle classes, 'crucially including students' (Thernborn 2014: 10); and in some cases, particularly the post-communist countries, of a completely disempowered working class, as in Bosnia and Herzegovina or in Croatia.

Apparent in this complex situation, without a clear horizon of either an imminent future or a distant one, is the weakness of a supra and transnational Europe in terms of its democratic deficit, and the crisis (economic, financial, political and social) of the European project. (Beck 2012; Habermas 2012, 2015; Outhwaite 2014)

The European Union is today composed of 28 national states, while eight others are closely and institutionally related to it as candidate countries with different statuses of negotiation – ranging from the frozen status of Iceland, through that of Turkey and FYROM, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania, which have been undergoing the process of harmonization with the *Acquis communautaire*, to the potential candidate status of Bosnia and Herzegovina and the special status of Kosovo and the Turkish-Cypriot Community. Whilst these formal procedures of 'enlargement' towards 'accession' may be observed and investigated with more traditional methods of analysis, because they are fairly transparent and well defined considering the institutions and norms, roles and responsibilities of the actors involved, and more linear and predictable in regard to the flow of actions, the complementary processes of 'integration' versus 'Europeanization' are less visible (if not opaque), resistant to definition, fluid and unpredictable in their interconnectedness. The organizational and institutional structure of the EU, or the way it operates at different levels, may be criticized, even fiercely, because the object of such criticism is a concrete set of problems: the EU's financial and monetary austerity policies, for example, or its weak foreign policies. This is not the case if integration and Europeanization are considered: in these cases we, as social scientists, must deal with truly profound societal changes correlated to the emergence of a new historical epoch, not only post-modern, but beyond modernity, yet rooted in the aftermath of the modern organization of social life. Because Europe is a locus of multiple contradictory transformations, Europeanization may be seen as a reframing, re-domaining and recoupling process (Rumford 2014) that requires a complex, dynamic and troubled translation (Balibar 2010).

Integration as Europeanization cannot be observed directly, and requires serious methodological consideration. Exploring Europeanization as just 'harmonization' with a set of (Western) values, principles, norms and forms of representation (Scartezzini 2009)

is not only a complex but also disputable aim; above all, it is not enough. All these elements are constantly re-configured within the dynamics between the 'European sphere' – defined in terms of the EU's geopolitical and economic interests and influences – and a 'European space' which frames a flow of interaction and communication among its different parts, conflictual but open to mutual understanding and the creation of meaning, which builds new forms of belonging and solidarity, and which potentially embraces both its actual and future citizens.

If the 'harmonization' is related to the Copenhagen principles as such, it is not difficult to achieve a discursive consensus on them among collective and individual social actors throughout the European space. But whether the political and social experience of citizens is really based on and gives life to those principles, in day-to-day interactions and practices, is another question.

The Europeanization process is not uni-directional and linear. Although it is sometimes simplified into a mere *transfer* of achievements already accomplished in the core EU states, this simply does not correspond to the reality. European societies are at present highly turbulent, and the idea of harmonization as such does not convey the complexity of different aspects of Europeanization *inside* the EU, in terms of 'deepening', not considering its 'widening' dimension (Wallace 1993).

Hence the question of whether there is any such thing as a European society proves to be also a conceptual and methodological one, as the critique of methodological nationalism has partly demonstrated (Beck and Grande 2006; Wimmer and Glick Schiller 2002). The modern theory of society was nationally framed, from the political philosophy of the Enlightenment to the theories of Marx, Weber, Durkheim, Simmel and other classics of sociology and of political and social theory, as an essentially modern science which built its concepts and categories to describe, comprehend and interpret the new social reality of the past two centuries. Yet the notion of nation, related to the state, remains the central tool with which to explain European society defined as: a. the sum of the national state societies of its members, and, conditionally, of the aspirant states' societies; b. exclusive supra-national society of the EU (from 6 to 28); c. inclusive trans-national society of Europe in terms of the cosmopolitan Europe as described in Beck and Grande (2006) or in Rumford (2008).

Thus the notion of European integration through enlargement and accession assumes different meanings: becoming a EU member state means also being part of EU society, and a constitutive element of a transnational European society. In its more visible dimension, integration may be seen as a process of gradually redefining the borders and boundaries among states and nations through formal and informal normative and pro-

cedural redefinition of the barriers to full citizenship, but also as participation and empowerment – citizenship constructed in practice – blurring the boundaries between political and social citizenship (Bifulco 2015). Although it does not exhaust all dimensions of the process, the gradual redefinition and acquisition of social (in its enabling dimension) and civic citizenship (as participation in a political life in the European public space), through the process of negotiation that precedes full membership, is a core element of integration. *Time* is its fundamental structural component, because multiple constituent elements and dimensions of citizenship must be discussed *during* the accession process: rights, obligations and liberties, but also belonging and identity. Others must be constructed, acquired and even learned, because the political, social and civic empowerment supported by access to the EU's resources passes through the acquisition and building of a new patterns of democratic participation, and it needs to be embodied in new social, cultural and political practices. The complementary *spatial* dimension of this constant questioning and discussion regards the public space not only of the aspirant countries but also of the actual member ones (Bauböck 2010; Bee and Scartezzini 2009; Fossum 2009; Soysal 2001).

These growing social and civic rights, obligations and liberties of the candidate (and potential candidate) countries' citizens, as limited forms of EU citizenship, still enable them to participate in the political dimension of opinion formation (Urbinati 2014). The aspiration to become part of the EU may act as a powerful incentive in regard to political and economic, social and civic capabilities (Appadurai 2011; Bifulco 2015; De Leonardis 2011; Sen 1999).

Finally, despite the profound crisis of the EU, and the objections to both its legitimacy and its capability to deal with the numerous challenges analyzed before, it seems that a 'European society' emerges slowly and turbulently, through the process of reframing the resistant Europe of the Nations. The condition of democratization through Europeanization, imposed by the EU to the aspirant, periphery and marginal countries, turns out to be coercive for the EU as such, as no integration is possible without deep core transformations.

In the next section I will analyse the effects of new conditions to the enlargement imposed by the five-year moratorium trying to imagine its possible unattended consequences, both for the accession countries and for the EU.

3. The conditionality of the accession and the moratorium to the enlargement

The elections of the new European leadership in 2014 were held in a situation of a deep economic and financial crisis of the EU. The tension among its member states and its supranational institutions continues to undermine the democratic structure of the EU's governance, dominated by the neoliberal and neo-functionalist approaches. Populism and other forms of anti-politics have entered the political arena throughout Europe, generating negative effects at the EU level. Another threat to democracy – knowledge-based government by technocrats as an 'epistemic' response to the crisis (Urbinati 2014) – continues to be proposed as a solution. Growing economic and social inequalities, the increased social polarization, and the decreased efficiency of social justice mechanisms that have characterized post-communist transitional societies from 1989 on, are now shared with many European countries, in particular with the Mediterranean ones, without a strong alternative political option in opposition to the neoliberal one. Furthermore, a specific model of identity conflicts, based on claims to the right to self-determination, has been radicalized in recent years as another indicator of the current tension between state and nation even in core European states like the UK or Spain.

Anyhow, important goals were accomplished during the five-year mandate of the second Barroso Commission: Croatia became the 28th member of the EU (July 2013), while Montenegro (December 2010), Serbia (March 2013) and Albania (June 2014) acquired the status of candidate countries, and Kosovo a special status (2013). Yet, the memberships of Turkey (candidate since 1999), FYRO Macedonia (candidate since 2005), and Bosnia and Herzegovina (potential candidate since 2005) are still at stake, and turbulent events in two past years, and the current refugee crisis involving these countries should be considered in connection to the EU politics of enlargement.

However, this is the first time in the history of the European Union that the leadership has imposed a formal five-year moratorium on the enlargement process, although all these applicant countries, with the status of either candidate or potential candidate for membership, have been undergoing the procedure at different levels.

The entire region of the 'Western Balkans' remains highly conflictual after its specific 'troubles and issues' exasperated throughout the 1990s. Intrinsically European, it should be considered, not just as a group of states involved in a procedure of accession, but also as a specific European space-set in its specific supranational and transnational dimension. The constructiveness of the social reality here finds its evidence, and the process of European accession and integration is fundamental for the creation of a range of possible futures for the citizens and societies of this part of Europe (Petrović 2012).

In the Western Balkans, the European Union is constantly challenged by its own goal of democratization and Europeanization of the region's transitional societies –post-communist, post-Yugoslav and post-conflict–, as a kind of a specular reflection of its own 'deepening' deficit. Sedelmeier discussed this difficulty in terms of the stress of an unprecedented EU engagement in the 'adjustment efforts' of the CEE states, because 'a key novelty in the eastern enlargements' was that the new candidate countries were in the process of post-communist transition and not yet ready to enforce the *acquis communautaire* (Sedelmeier 2011: 5).

Although many goals have been achieved in a number of CEE countries, a large part of 'what remains of the Balkans', notwithstanding the efforts made by the EU accession institutions and programs, still does not fulfil all membership criteria. It is thus legitimate to ask why in these cases, including Turkey, the EU device of conditionality as a basic component of the accession process has not been effective enough?

After several years of 'enlargement fatigue', a five-year moratorium may be interpreted as a kind of admission of failure in regard to the applicant states, and as an admonishment to the new aspirants. Public opinion in the EU members seems to be indifferent to many other European issues (Van Inglegom 2014), but it is still quite committed to the widening perspective. As Hobolt shows in her recent study, a positive attitude towards further enlargement has significantly decreased since 2010 in all member states; but it is radically low in creditor states of the Eurozone, where citizens, especially those with high levels of social and cultural capital, much prefer the deepening dimension of European integration to the widening one (Hobolt 2014). Many questions arise: what will this 'five-year break from enlargement' mean for the European integration process? What could be its impact on the 'three strategic benefits of enlargement': making Europe a safer place, improving the quality of people's lives, making Europeans more prosperous? (EC Strategic paper 2014)

The problem concerns the risk of 'removing' the commitment to the applicant countries as if the moratorium could (or should) freeze the present political, economic and social (bad) conditions of those societies. Botta and Schwellnus have demonstrated that the effectiveness of EU conditionality decreases during the accession end-game, when the date of accession is fixed, because of a relaxation effect (Botta and Schwellnus 2014: 5). Other empirical evidence shows that the widening of the EU has had a 'catalyst effect on deepening' in terms of the paradox of unattended consequences. (Heidbreder 2014) What will happen to this effect if the process is put on hold?

Some of the main problems relative to the WB societies – ethnic-based nationalism and populism; the problem of a democratic representation model able to resolve the

tension between nationhood and citizenship; the difficulty of defining the political subject of sovereignty (state or nation/people), which was fatal for the former Yugoslavia, if associated with the principle of the right to self-determination; the inclusion of minority groups as equal citizens and the respect of their fundamental human rights –, can all be considered as quite similar to the problems regarding the construction of a supranational and transnational Europe (Sekulić 2014). It is as if the communicational problem of translation among these different European space-sets constantly produces a kind of residual dimension of Europeanization, both in the EU and the WB countries; something that escapes the attention of the actors and institutions involved. Here emerges the methodological problem of how could we search for a specific evidence and knowledge of these processes beyond the analytical dimension of the research? What kind of an ethnography of the process may help to grasp better 'what is hiding beyond the text'?

An ethnography of the European integration process is far away from what can be simply described as 'get out on the street and look around', as it has to deal with diverse and multiple problems (Vidali 2013), regarding a multitude of different sites (Burawoy et al. 2000; Hannerz 2003). At the same time it has to be a methodology "able to reveal the effective practices of the social actors in their social, professional and day-by-day contexts" (Dal Lago, De Biasi 2004: p. VIII), making institutions ethnographically accessible (Smith 2005).

3.1 Participation through institution building process

The process of enlargement in general and, in our case, regarding the Western Balkan states, is put in act through the network created among institutions and actors that have been concretely dealing with the association procedure: those with seats in Brussels (Directorate General for the Enlargement of the EC and the Missions and Embassies of the WB countries) and in capitals of the WB countries (state institutions as parliament and government; Delegation of the EU to the applicant country; NGOs, selected groups of intellectuals). Although this network constantly grows in its extent – especially for the countries that are more successful in fulfilling various conditions and passing through the stages of integration, the effective group of people connected in the network remains circumscribed. The dynamics of communication within this network(s) emerged to be quite similar in different cases explored, and strongly related to the personal ability and affinity among concrete actors. The institutional involvement of civil society through the NGO sector, and in some cases other civic actors like trade union or religious community representatives in periodic consultations with governmental and parliamentary

institutions in these countries, still seems insufficient to involve citizenry in a public debate on European integration. Strained scientific capacities of the academic and research communities in these countries, hit by a severe structural deficit of resources for a long period of transition, and therefore non-competitive at international level, produces limited knowledge about the respective society. The access to the European funds prevalently regarded for a long time asymmetrical Tempus projects based on the transfer of knowledge (from West to East), instead of common research projects with equal opportunities of participation (Sekulić 2011). The Eurobarometer progressively included statistics on in-coming candidate countries, yet no standardized comparative information about these countries was available for many years.

Thus, exploring the internal institutional dynamics within these networks involved in the accession process remains partial, as it seems not yet able to involve huge segments of societies. The substantial stagnation of the process, notwithstanding several positive advances in the cases of Croatia, Serbia, Montenegro and Albania, seems to be one of the causes behind growing social dissent in the Western Balkans, and in Turkey, sometimes with nationalistic and populist features, bringing these countries closer to the EU in a paradoxical way[4].

An analysis of a new patterns of mobilization by citizens in the condition of political and social crises, inside and outside the EU, and the looming menace of violence, can perhaps shed light on the residual zones of the process of integration, in both its political and social dimensions. From Spain and Greece[5], Bosnia and Turkey, to Ukraine, these protests highlight a certain shift of social cleavages increasingly expressed in claims for a new social justice, and acting as a 'challenge of the existing political hierarchies and values' (Kauppi 2013: 6). Consequently, a new question arises: what systems of meaning do these movements produce? Can they be interpreted as an effect of Europeanization of the European space-sets? (Recchi and Kuhn 2013; Heidbreder 2014)

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[4] The current refugee crisis that strongly involved Western Balkans and Turkey cannot be tackled here, as it brings two many open questions regarding the EU integration.

[5] These social movements had a strong impact on recent elections in Greece and Spain, with Syriza winning the political elections, and Podemos winning first the administrative elections in Madrid and Barcelona, and then being one of the major political parties involved in the government formation in 2015/2016. The election results in Turkey (June 2015) seem again to reveal the direct influence of the Taksim Square and Gazi Park protests.

3.2 Constituting the European society from below: outrage, street protests, flare-ups, insurrections as forms of active citizenship

The mobilization of citizens in many European and non-European countries against growing social inequality, destruction of the welfare state(s), the increasing rate of unemployment and new forms of discriminatory employment, especially among young people, defines the object of criticism against the neoliberal conception of capitalism that resists regularization and destroys the fundamental democratic assumption of the equality of citizens.[6] The occupation of squares as key public spaces seemed to send a message that problems, needs and interests, 'troubles and issues', were once again defined in social and class terms, which had enormous significance in the case of 'Western Balkans' ethnicized societies. The violent response of the authorities, democratic or otherwise, has been the rule in the majority of cases on a global level: Genoa, Puerta del Sol, Wall Street, Taksim Square; Tahrir and other space-sets of the 'Arab revolutions'; and in case of a tragic spread of violence and the shift towards 'ethnic' and geopolitical conflict after months of resistance by (Euro)Maidan civic protestors. The new wave of civic indignation and protests in some of the post-communist European countries should be analyzed in relation both to the revolutions of 1989, thus regarding contextual forms of democratic transition, and to the process of European integration.

In light of the foregoing discussion, a draft analysis of a paradigmatic case of Bosnia and Herzegovina will be proposed in the following section as highly significant for, and complementary to research on the constitution of the European social basis. Two different and conflictual forms of participation will be taken in exam: the institution building process through accession procedures, and social dissent patterns and citizens' mobilization in the case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the purpose being to analyze if and how these diverse agencies cross borders and soften boundaries to constitute an emerging European society.

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[6] The current crisis has mobilized many political and intellectual actors in European and non-European countries, creating an authentic public space in which to discuss diverse elements of a European project within the new global constellation: the fundamental principles of the European community as such, patterns and steps in its construction and coming-to-reality; the leftist and rightist populist contestation of the EU, as well as a re-actualized 'yearning for the nation-state' (Habermas and Streeck 2013; Pikkety 2014; Glienecker group 2013; Martinelli 2013).

4. Europeanization from the margins: BiH *versus* the European Union

Bosnia and Herzegovina was identified as a potential candidate country for EU membership in June 2003, and the Stabilization and Association Agreement officially opened in Sarajevo in November 2005. However, the SAA was ratified and implemented only in June 2015, and the application for membership was submitted in February 2016, despite several negative considerations of the European Commission's last *Progress Report* (November 2015).

The trustworthiness and accountability of the political leadership in Bosnia and Herzegovina have long been the subject of constant criticism by domestic intellectuals and media, European and international institutions, but with no concrete solution. The structural model of government imposed by the Dayton Peace Agreement in 1995 – two ethnonationally defined entities: Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina composed of 10 cantons, Republic of Srpska, and the autonomous Brčko District – is embodied in the collective 'three-headed' presidency accompanied by a 'zero instance' of the High Representative of the 'International Community' and the EU Special Representative, with the right of interference and veto. This power structure constantly blurs the real holder of political responsibility towards the citizenry. The coexistence of multiple, hierarchical instances of authority continuously produces a situation in which the political holders of the mandate on all levels of the government, state, entity or local, can afford to indulge in a kind of 'infantile' behavior, testing the limits of patience of the 'international community' or the EU, on the one hand, while taking subjection of their ethnonational electoral bodies for granted, on the other.

The society of this country appears trapped between the counter-narratives of recent war history in the 1990s, unable to draw new arguments with which to restore a new joint project of the state that would make sense for the new generations. Citizens of the country have not even had the chance to express what model of state they would like to have, both in terms of their (ethno)national collective identity, and, especially, in terms of their individual freedoms and rights regarding political, cultural and social citizenship. In fact, the Constitution was written in 1995 as the Annex IV to the Dayton Peace Agreement, according to which a significant part of the new state-level political institutions, the Presidency and the House of Peoples, excludes those citizens who do not define themselves as Serbs, Croats or Bosniaks, the only three groupings recognized as 'constituent nations' (Sekulić 2014).

Notwithstanding a number of significant problems in the country, the deadlock of the accession process, which lasted from 2009 to 2015, was formally caused by the sentence of the European Court for Human Rights in the case of "Dervo Sejdić and Jakob Finci v.

Bosnia and Herzegovina", in June 2009. The ruling of the ECHR followed the complaint of two Bosnian citizens who, as members of 'national minorities', Roma and Jewish respectively, could not stand for election to the Presidency and to the House of Peoples. The Court found in favor of the plaintiffs because their case was recognized as violating Article 14 of the European Convention on Human Rights. The ruling obliged the state to supplement the law to comply with European legislation, and at the same time obliged the EU bodies and representatives to bind the next steps and decisions regarding the pre-association process of the country to the judgement. Yet the sentence could not have been implemented without a substantial change of the Constitution which strongly affected the precarious equilibrium among the political (ethnonational) leaders of the country.

The EU institutions applied strong pressure on the counterpart, through initiatives of the Directorate General of the EC for Enlargement and the Delegation of the EU in BiH, supported by the Office of the High Representative, in order to force state institutions and party leaders to open a public discussion about the new Constitution. But the choice of the interlocutors in that profoundly complex and delicate discussion was exclusively elitarian – among EU/EC officials and representatives, on the one hand, and the political leaders on the other. The last Sarajevo initiative in February 2014 partially included representatives of civil society, as a demonstrative act of the EC, but with quite limited effects.[7] The negotiations remained out of the public sphere, however, and have not yet produced significant results.

At the end of 2014, the European Commission decided to unlock the accession process, initiate 'a new approach to Bosnia and Herzegovina', and 're-sequence the conditionalities' in its European path, in spite of the failure of the ECHR ruling implementation. (Progress Report 2015: 4) This contradictory decision by the new Commission leadership, especially in light of the simultaneously proclaimed moratorium on enlargement, may be seen, optimistically, as a sign of greater awareness among these specific institutional actors regarding the complexity of the context, which requires something other than a mere bureaucratic approach.

The scant effectiveness and efficiency of the state created by the Dayton Peace Agreement still depends only in part on its model of governance. There are many states in which local autonomy is constantly improved, and where a sovereign competence on *res*

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[7] Stefan Füle, at the time Head of Directorate General for the Enlargement, expressed his concern about the negotiations in these words: "Implementation of this judgment is not a remote or virtual issue. It is an international obligation of Bosnia and Herzegovina that, following the will of the Member States, is now a key to progress on the EU path. It has *real* consequences."
http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_MEMO-14-117_en.htm

publica and a *public good* is negotiated, defined and distributed on each of these levels. In the context of Bosnia and Herzegovina, the main problem is not just the governance and administration of the territory and of the citizens. What is missing is public discussion and deliberation of a civic, democratic and state identity, beyond the ethnonational discourse: the same reflection that regards the democratic deficit of the European Union.

The waves of mobilization of the citizenry in 2013 and 2014 were seen by many as the first significant breaches of that discourse.

4.1 Crossing ethnic borders: transnational mobilization of citizens in BiH

The triggering event for the widespread social protest and civil disobedience started on 5 June 2013 in Sarajevo's Parliament Square. It concerned the case of a three-month old baby, Belmina, one of more than three thousand new-borns in Bosnia and Herzegovina to whom, from February to June 2013 no personal ID number (JMBG) – and thus no formal citizenship – was assigned. Belmina needed medical treatment abroad but could not leave the country without a passport. The previous law regulating the assignment of ID numbers had expired in February 2013, and the new one was still being discussed in the State Parliament: as a consequence, those children were actually stateless, and thus rightless (Arendt 1958).

This first wave of civic protest lasted several months, although the peak of participation was reached in the first weeks of June when about 15 thousand people in both entities were involved across ethnic lines. The protests were carried out by the young adult, middle class urban cohorts. The State Government (the Council of Ministers) was forced to apply a temporary ruling and the babies were registered, while the law was enacted in the autumn of the same year. The main result of the first wave of protests was that "the malfunctioning of the ethnonationalist system happened" (Mujkić 2014).

The second wave of protests started on 4 February 2014 in Tuzla, and it immediately spread to the other cities of the Federation (Sarajevo, Zenica, Mostar, Tešanj), Republic of Srpska (Banja Luka) and the Brčko district. The difference with respect to the protests of June 2013 was evident, because this time the main players in the outburst were desperate social groups and categories, some of which used violence against material and human symbols of power – governmental buildings and the police – rather than 'acceptable' forms of civil disobedience. Buildings representative of a corrupt power were burned: the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina; cantonal buildings in Tuzla, Sarajevo, Zenica, Mostar; several municipal seats; ethnonational party headquarters in Mostar.

The phase of direct violence lasted for a few days. Burned buildings and blocked streets had a particularly upsetting impact on public opinion in a country still dealing with the horrific legacy of the war in the 1990s, particularly in the case of Sarajevo and Mostar, cities that had experienced sieges. Many contrasting interpretations immediately emerged. On the one hand, they sought to explain the violence in ethnonational terms, given that conspiracy theories seem to be privileged means to make sense of events in this part of the world. On the other hand, the events were seen as a positive and hopeful awakening of citizens no longer willing to submit to the coercion of a totally alienated political power (Buden 2014; Kazaz, Papić and Dmitrović 2014; Štiks 2014).

Most comments and analyses of these events agree on two characteristics of the protests, both expressed in Žižek's words on their deep-lying cause: a radical demand for justice, and rebellion against nationalist elites (Žižek 2014). Živanović, a philosopher from Banja Luka, emphasized the question of human dignity and humiliation considered as the common feature of the actual condition of a huge number of Bosnians and Herzegovinians (Živanović 2014).

The 'collective effervescence' of the protests, maintained through the institution of a permanent assembly of citizens (*Plenum*), began to subside during and after the environmental catastrophe provoked by the floods that hit the Western Balkans, and in particular Bosnia and Serbia, at the beginning of May 2014. Border-crossing solidarity among people who helped each other across the territory of the state, and through the former Yugoslav space, evoked other times of 'brotherhood and unity', and reinforced the impression that a strong social cleavage based on ethnonational identity, imposed by instrumental violence during the war in the 1990s, had started to lose its strength.

However, the reasons for the rather modest outcomes of the uprising (a few cantonal governments resigned), should be explored much more closely than is possible here. A few hypotheses may be put forward. First, Bosnian-Herzegovinian society as a transitional democracy is still characterized by a weak civil society, organized mostly through the NGO sector, with all the negative aspects that this can entail. There is a lack of alternative channels for civic action and active citizenship, and the administrative barriers between entities or among cantons of the Federation – such as separate Ministries of Culture and Education at all levels, or the absence of public transport between Sarajevo and East Sarajevo – continue to hinder the creation of stronger ties between new cohorts institutionally divided by their supposed ethnonational belongings. Second, the specific transition of Bosnia and Herzegovina, and of the entire former Yugoslav space throughout the wars (1991-1999), did not help at all in the construction of a political democratic culture of citizens.

The uprising in Bosnia and Herzegovina did not have sufficient force to become a movement, to acquire its political quality (Arendt 1990). On the contrary, the organizers of and participants in the plenums and forums continued to repeat that their intention was not a political one, that no existing political party was welcome to the sessions, and that their goal was not to constitute themselves as a party. Third, the outbreaks of June 2013 and of February 2014 arose from different parts of Bosnian society: the first group, which seemed in a certain sense better equipped for political action (and at the same time less motivated), did not give clear support to the second one, for reasons yet to be explored. The February movement lacked a capable leadership, which in part diminished the authority of its representatives who had to deal with the authorities. Finally, and for our purpose most importantly, the indecision of the EU in many respects regarding Bosnia and Herzegovina's 'troubled' society was evident once again. No effective measures were taken to apply pressure on the local elites, to combat corruption, to support progressive social partners substantially. The strongest reaction of the EU politicians during the protests, in the year of the political elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina held in October 2014, was expressed in one of the chapters of the European "Council conclusions on Bosnia and Herzegovina" (Foreign Affairs Council Meeting, Luxemburg 14 April 2014):

> The Council heard the public protests and calls by BiH citizens to improve the social and economic situation in the country. All BiH citizens, including the younger generation, need to be given new opportunities. It strongly urges the BiH institutions and elected leaders to reach out to the people, engage with civil society and provide responsible and immediate answers to their legitimate concerns. The Council emphasizes that it is the collective responsibility of all BiH political leaders. Ahead of the general elections in October 2014, more needs to be done, not less. (European Council 2014)

These protests, not yet articulated as movements, caused by the social despair of citizens, have begun to create in this country a new public sphere, with its double meaning of being transnational – locally and globally – and to define the needs and interests of individuals and groups on grounds other than those that led to the destruction of the previous society. The citizens involved in these protests break through the barrier of social and political indifference and apathy, contesting the ethnonational discourse and practice in which partition, as basically territorial and related to the redefinition of borders, is deeply embedded in the European national state tradition, as a privileged solution for political and social conflicts.

5. Summary

In this article I have considered the constitution of a social basis of the European Union from the broader perspective of a European space, in which the citizens of the applicant countries are taken into account as members of the same society with limited, but also growing rights, obligations and liberties. The problem of democratization through Europeanization was tackled in the first two sections, as crucial for the construction of a new democratic European society. In its more visible dimension, as the process of integration through enlargement and association procedures, it was approached by the analysis of the conditionality as a main instrument of the institution building process in aspirant countries, with a particular concern to the empowerment of civil society actors. The residual social space, not less important for these transformative processes, in which the new wave of citizens' mobilization has come about in the past few years, was also briefly investigated as constitutive for the new European public space.

The paradigmatic case of Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the only Western Balkan country, together with Kosovo, which has not fulfilled the criteria for the status of a candidate country, was considered in the final part of the article. The political and social conditions of this country, and the dynamics of its relations at regional (former Yugoslav space) and European level points to a number of significant questions concerning the process of the EU's deepening versus widening, were a number of 'troubles and issues' seems to be shared by BiH and EU.

The image of a 'black hole' that can be traced in informal expressions by European officials when referring to Bosnia and Herzegovina and the *Balkans* in general, assumes multiple meanings here. In physics, the danger of black holes is their enormous concentration of negative energy able to attract and absorb space bodies which enter their range. The lack of a 'credible accession perspective' not only for this country, but also for other WB candidate countries and Turkey, with no plausible response to the aspirations of others like Ukraine, opens a new chapter in the history of European integration, with uncertain aftermaths (Sedelmeier 2011). Has Europe lost a historical opportunity to constitute the Union based on solidarity among its people, when the opening towards the post-communist countries became enlargement instead of (re)unification? (Supiot 2010)

Nevertheless, the real effects of the five-year moratorium on the process of accession of aspirant countries are still to be observed and explored. In conclusion, I return to the problem of tension between the consideration of a European society as a composition of the societies of its member-nations and, conditionally, of the applicant countries; as

a supranational society of the EU(6-28-?); and as a trans-national society of Europe. Because the discourse on democracy remains biased in a national framework, and because the definition of *demos* relative to a specific groupings is defined in cultural, social and political terms and circumscribed to the territorial context of a national state, thinking about the EU *outside* this perspective seems extremely difficult (Bellamy and Castiglione 2013; Urbinati 2014). Consequently, thinking in terms of a European society as such seems to be a contradiction.

One possible way to resolve this contradiction might be to reverse the approach by questioning the ability of a late modern national state to fulfil its essential conditions any longer: to achieve the 'utopia' of the congruency of the political and national body, defined in cultural terms and territory (citizenship towards nationhood); to regulate national capitalist oligarchs and movements of capital and labour; to produce and preserve the nation's cultural homogeneity; and to fulfil the promise of social justice through welfare (Altvater et al. 2013; Blokker 2014). Moreover, there is a certain shift between the state and the nation, because the state seems to be ever more distant from the expectations of its 'people(s)' or its 'nation(s)', and in some cases is considered to be a political enemy of the ethno-national community. As Show and Štiks argued, citizenship may prove to be a tool of fragmentation, dissolution and ethnic engineering, as happened in Yugoslavia's successor states, with unpredictable social consequences. Anyhow, as Ferrera demonstrated, European integration has led indeed to a partial disjunction between social citizenship and national territory (Ferrera 2005; Bifulco 2015).

The European Union still has a chance to rediscover its own founding principles and move towards an 'equalisation in progress' of life and work conditions of its citizens (Supiot 2010). At the same time the EU still has a chance to fail, as the Greek crisis, or even more current refugee crises have been demonstrating, if its attitude would continue to be what an angry Habermas called 'a comic uniformly nation-state way of thinking'. No European society is possible without a political Europe in which citizens 'must retain the final say in existential questions for Europe' (Habermas 2015).

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