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RESEARCH ARTICLE

Wearing protest. Youth clothing and appearance in the evolution of radical social movements in Italy

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ABSTRACT:

Clothing and aesthetic style have been among the main topics in the study of youth cultures, but so far they have received little attention in research about social movements, despite the fact that youth in particular often developed forms of participation which crossed the boundaries between the two fields. This article deals with the topic focussing on a specific case study – youth in Italian radical social movements – where the aesthetic dimension seems to be at present, and to have been in past, very relevant, in order to develop an interpretative proposal for this dimension of investigation. By drawing on participant observation fieldnotes, photo-video documents, and qualitative interviews with young activists, analysis will focus on three different historical steps of these movements, aiming at highlighting their distinctive traits concerning the clothing and aesthetics of young protesters, as well as at interpreting the change in these elements over time, mixing an approach focussed on "repertoires" derived from social movements studies with one concentrating on "styles" derived from youth cultures studies.

KEYWORDS: clothing; radical movements; repertoires; style; youth.

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1. Introduction. Social movements, youth and aesthetics

One of the main distinctive traits within social movements since the 1960s, at least in the Western context, has been the increasing role of young people (Earl, Maher, Elliott 2017): since that historical moment, youth quickly became, and still often is, the main actor of collective mobilisations. In tandem, relevant changes occurred in social movements with regard to forms of expression and action, in particular through an increasingly relevant role of participants' visual aesthetics, so that bodily appearance as well as bodily performance progressively emerged as new fundamental components of their forms of public presence (Mattoni, Teune 2014; Della Porta, Diani, Doerr, Mattoni, Teune 2015; Fahlenbrach, Klimke, Scharloth 2016).

The aim of the article is to reflect upon the evolution of youth aesthetics in social movements since the 1960s, looking in particular at left-wing radical social movements,[1] in which this aspect is strongly relevant but still weakly explored. The focus is on the Italian context, which has been widely affected by these movements, and three main phases are taken into consideration (Tarrow 1990; Della Porta 1996; Tolomelli 2015): 1965-1979, characterised by the first emergence of youth as a core actor in radical social movements; 1980-1999, marked out first by the extreme weakening and then by the re-emergence of collective mobilisations, and by the centrality of the political squats' movement; 2000 to present, characterised by the emergence and development of global radical social movements.[2]

The hypothesis at the core of the article is that the distinctive traits of youth aesthetics in these movements for each period, as well as their alteration through the time, can be effectively interpreted with reference to the intersection of two different concepts and approaches: that of "repertoires of collective action" and that of "subcultural styles". The former allows interpretation of these elements from a strategic perspective, as means connected with the political goals of youth participation in these movements; the latter permits their interpretation from an expressive perspective, as visual traces of the cultural models shared by those youth who are involved in the movements.

In the investigation of each phase, the article will first introduce the main distinctive traits of radical movements in that historical period, focussing specifically on their young sector of participants, and will subsequently present the main elements characterising the most relevant visual features of these participants and their forms of protest. Obviously, for each of the periods taken into consideration, a huge amount of literature exists concerning collective mobilisations; consequently in each section only those elements about the movements which are essential for the subsequent analysis of aesthetic styles will be presented, and only those texts which have been more directly adopted in their interpretation will be cited.

The article is mainly based on information collected through the analysis of naturalistic documents, photos and videos (available in newspapers, magazines, documentaries and newscasts, nowadays largely uploaded on websites).[3] Referring to the most recent phase, the article is also based on secondary analysis of qualitative

[1] Following Guzman-Concha (2015), radical social movements are here defined by three distinctive elements: they pursue an agenda of drastic changes which would affect elite interests and social positions; they perform a repertory of contention characterised by the employment of unconventional means; they progressively adopt counter-cultural identities that frame and justify unconventional objectives and methods.

[2] For an introduction to youth, politics and participation in Italy see Genova (2010) and Pirni, Raffini (2022); the most recent data from surveys on this topic can be found in the volumes of the series "La condizione giovanile" developed by Istituto Toniolo.

[3] The main obstacle to the collection of this portion of data was that in Italy, on the one hand, natural documents from social movements are scattered among several institutional and activist archives; and, on the other hand, photos and videos in these archives are rarely organised through searchable catalogues. On the basis of the goals of the article, documents to be considered in the research have therefore been selected through a procedure of theoretical sampling on the basis of a principle of saturation (Silverman, Marvasti 2008: chapter 9; Bryman, 2012: chapter 18; Emmel 2013: chapter 1).

interviews with young activists of radical left-wing groups and movements, and on ethnographic notes deriving from participant observation in collective protest events between 1998 and 2019. With the aim of identifying the main distinctive aesthetic traits and profiles in each period, the various data considered in the article have been processed through a qualitative content analysis approach (Schreier 2012; Kuckartz 2014) based on eight main thematic categories: clothing, hairstyles, make-up, accessories, bodily postures, gestures, positioning of bodies, and actions in the places of protest. [4]

Focussing on one period at a time, the analysis aimed: first of all at finding a typology of prevalent models for each category; then at identifying emergent co-occurrences among specific types of different categories, so as to highlight possible comprehensive profiles; and finally, taking all the periods together into consideration, at elaborating a general interpretative proposals for the evolution of clothing and appearance of youth in Italian radical social movements.

2. 1960s-1970s: The "golden horde" and its roots

Before the 1960s, social movements in Italy are mainly workers' movements connected with left-wing parties and trade unions. During the 1950s several critical voices inside the left-wing institutional political area emerge, proposing new interpretative frames and new strategies of action, different from those of traditional Communist and Socialist organisations, but most of them belong to small intellectual groups without a wide popular following (Tolomelli 2015: chapter 1). Similarly, even if, shortly after the end of the Second World War and the fall of the Fascist regime, also the Anarchist movement resumes its activities; however, only about fifteen years later does it begin to represent a relevant collective subject in the Italian socio-political scene (Berti 2016). It is thus possible to observe the emergence of a wider panorama of new social movements including a substantial presence of youth within them only in the early-1960s. And this process has historical reasons, connected with relevant changes which occurred both in the political and in the social fields.

In the political field, from the dialectic internal to the "traditional" left, there gradually emerges a "new left" of organised groups which develops different and heterodox narratives. This process creates space for the

Through an exploration of multiple formal and informal, private and public, archives, as well as by means of a survey of multiple digital platforms, photos and videos have been progressively collected and, in parallel, analysed. For each period which was considered in the analysis, the collection ceased when the analysis did not produce any further useful information. This strategy obviously doesn't produce a statistical representativeness of the results emerging from the analysis of the selected documents with reference to the phenomenon as whole. Nevertheless, on the basis of the heterogeneity of the sources and of the strategies of analysis which have been adopted, the data allow us to qualitatively "defend" the results, although the analysis of further archives and items could identify new aesthetic elements which have not been intercepted in this research, or lead to alternative possible interpretations of these elements (Emmel 2014, chapter 8; Cardano 2020: chapters 3-4). Since the analysis has not been conducted on only one archive of indexed documents, in the subsequent sections it will not be possible to insert references to specific items of a codified collection.

[4] Regarding the interviews, the article is based upon guided qualitative interviews with young activists (aged 18-34) involved in radical movements: 12 of them were focussed on clothing and aesthetic styles; 49 of them had a broader view, investigating distinctive practices of the activists and their meanings, and have been analysed through a secondary-analysis approach. Ethnographic fieldnotes derive from participation in public protest events in Turin, Milan, Genoa, Bologna, Florence, Rome, Naples and Palermo, during both occasional and recurrent demonstrations (such as the 1st of May marches); for the present article, secondary analysis has been developed on these fieldnotes, on the basis of the eight topics which have been mentioned. Further methodological information and findings of the research through which these data have been collected are presented in Berzano, Genova (2002), Genova (2008, 2018a, 2018b). On the use of the different methods and on the triangulation of data in research about social movements, see Klandermans, Staggenborg (2002) and Della Porta (2014); on visual analysis of social movements see Doerr, Teune (2012), Philipps (2012), Doerr, Mattoni, Teune (2013); on qualitative content analysis of ethnographic fieldnotes see Altheide (1987) and LeCompte, Schensul (2012). For a previous investigation into the clothing of young activists in political groups, referring to a specific territorial context, see Genova (2020).

growth of new social movements (Melucci 1980, Touraine 1980, Offe 1985; see also Buechler 1995, Pichardo 1997), different from the traditional ones as to topics and aims, organisational models and repertoires of protest, relationships with the institutional political system and the profile of participants (Tarrow 1990, Della Porta 1996).

In the social field, from the 1950s, young people gradually develop a shared representation of themselves as a collective subject with a common "destiny', and youth progressively becomes a relevant conceptual category in public discourse (Cristofori 1997, Crespi 2002, Merico 2004). A famous research describes the young generation of this decade as being defined by wife-husband, job and car (Alfassio-Grimaldi, Bertoni 1963; see also Ardigò 1966), evoking the image of people focussed on the "private" side of life. But in the second half of the 1950s the arrival of beat culture and rock 'n roll music changes the situation, at first with the development of an "underground" scene and later with the emergence of the first youth cultures, inspired by those which emerged in the British context such as teddy boys, mods, beats hippies (Cavalli, Leccardi 1997, Spaziante 2010; see also Grispigni 1993, Dazieri 1996, Donadio, Giannotti 1996 and Canevacci et al. 1993: chapter 1, Ghione, Grispigni 1998 for an emic perspective). All of these youth cultures expressed transgression of the predominant cultural models, first of all through the adoption of unconventional clothing styles and also more widely of alternative lifestyles; in addition, some of them developed attitudes and discourses which expressed a more-or-less explicitly political criticism of the *status quo*.

The intersection of the emergence of new left groups and youth cultures is precisely the main root of youth involvement in radical social movements in Italy.

2.1 Students and workers

The first youth social movement which appears against this background is the students' movement.[5] Begun in 1965-1967 with some occupations of high schools and universities, the movement has its moment of expansion during March 1968.[6] The movement at the beginning focusses on claims about the organisation of school and university, but quickly wider demands are expressed concerning the modification of models of teaching as well as the politics of knowledge and culture, up to a general critique of dominant culture in a perspective of wider social transformation: anti-authoritarianism, anti-imperialism and anti-capitalism emerge thus as the key words. In this sense students involved in the movement progressively shift from an activism based on their "student" identity to an activism rooted in and oriented to wider social, political and cultural sensitivities.

To correctly interpret youth collective forms of participation in this period in Italy it is however necessary to consider also the 1969 workers' movement (Tarrow 1990: chapters 4, 6; Tolomelli 2015: chapter 3). In these years important changes occur in the productive system, and the main consequences are an intensification of productive rhythms and the emergence of a wide sector of unspecialised blue-collar workers. In parallel, a growing distance emerges between these workers and traditional trade unions due to internal conflicts among the various organisations and their difficulties in keeping up with socio-economic change. As a consequence, new forms of protest emerge, characterised by more radical and more general claims: more participative forms

[5] See Tarrow 1990: chapters 4, 6; Agosti, Passerini, Tranfaglia 1991: part 2; Della Porta 1996: chapter 2; Tolomelli 2015: chapter 3.

[6] A lot of debate and literature exist about 1968 and its interpretations, and obviously it's not possible here even to outline the question. Some interesting introductory texts about the Italian context are Statera 1973; Cortese 1973; AAVV 1988; Mangano, Schina 1998; Ortoleva 1998; Marino 2004; Tolomelli 2008. For an emic reconstruction see Capanna 1988; Scalzone 1988; Bernocchi 1998; Giachetti 1998.

of organisation catch on and at the same time the perspectives of action become more and more political instead of corporative, while more spontaneous and more conflictual forms of protest spread.

The two components, students and workers, and the two movements, have clear and radical differences and divergences as well as relevant interconnections, so that only through conjoint analysis is it possible to understand their cultural constitutive elements and their expressive forms. Also the analysis of their distinctive clothing and aesthetics must then be considered in parallel.

Looking at images of 1969 workers' demonstrations it is thus possible to observe two main clothing styles, even among the youngest participants. The first is that of blue-collar workers. Fundamentally it consists of a coverall, usually blue but sometimes also in other colours (tendentially dark colours because they hide dirt better), and under that a t-shirt, a shirt or a sweater (often turtleneck) usually depending on the season. Often a jacket and a low, round, soft hat are also worn, mainly in the same colour and fabric as the coverall.[7] Concerning female garments, usually a pinafore constitutes the only item of outer clothing (perhaps under a coat), and the colours are quite similar to the male ones. The second style is that of white-collar workers. In this case the classic man's suit, with trousers, blazer and shirt or sweater is typical. Often a tie, and, during cold days, an overcoat or a trench coat are worn. Female style too is classic, usually consisting of skirt, shirt or sweater and coat. On the whole the white-collar workers' style is not very distinctive in itself; however – and this is the point – it is markedly different from that of blue-collar workers.

A lot of students too in this period normally wear classic men's suits (or at least classic trousers, jacket and shirt, often with a tie) or a classic skirt and blouse set; and this is the same style as we often observe during the protests. There is little doubt that UK and US youth cultures' styles, publicised by television, entered Italian youth imagery in this period, and influenced their clothing; and surely some "internationalist" clothes such as the Mao Zedong jacket or the parka were beginning to become symbols of the protest; but most students in the movement actually still had a classic clothing style.

Both for workers' and students' protests occur through marches, often with a huge number of participants, sometimes accompanied by episodes of riots with police. Sometimes participants march in very orderly rows arm in arm, sometimes they walk more freely. Banners and placards with slogans, as well as flags, usually red or with red writing, are very often adopted as communicative instruments. Flags often have large poles, potentially usable as weapons in riots. Referring in particular to blue-collar workers and students, the image is that of two compact collective actors, each defined by their social position, with clear and explicit requests and topics, who protest on the basis of this social position against other specific social actors, who are identified as holders of the power which maintains social structure in its criticised conformation.

2.2 Chosen identities

In several interpretations of the "movements season" in Italy it is affirmed that 1968 in this country went on for ten years, that is until 1977 ("golden horde" is the label that two well-known narrators used to describe the decade (Balestrini, Moroni 1997)). The reason is that during all these years a rich and complex net of collective actors and events emerged and developed from the new-left movements. Clearly it is not possible here to

[7] Sometimes blue-collar workers have the brand of the company where they are employed printed on their coverall, but it is not easy to understand when this "semiotic" expression of belonging to a specific company (or more precisely to the group of blue-collar workers employed in the company) is a reflective choice of the workers and when it is instead an unintended consequence of a material characteristic of the working garments. The fact that often banners with the name of the company, and of specific departments, are carried on workers during the protests suggests that even this use of clothes with the brand of the company is not accidental.

follow the evolution of this course, the history of which is largely still to be written;[8] however, observation of some relevant steps can supply very interesting elements for the analysis of clothing in these protest experiences.

During the first part of the 1970s, relevant transformations occur in both the previous students' and workers' movements. At the beginning of 1969, the students' movement reveals its weakness due to internal fragmentation, and at the same time several of its groups and organisations become openly critical of a strategy of action based on a student identity, by now perceived as too narrow. In a short time some sections of the movement therefore transform themselves into organised groups with a more explicit political connotation, whereas most of the students involved in the protest terminate their activism. In 1970 the workers' movement obtains a new statute of rights (decreeing better conditions for employees), other relevant gains had been conquered during the previous year, and progressively also this movement changes its connotation, becoming less connected to a trade-union approach and more connected instead to a political actors' approach. And during this evolution the internal differentiation, due to divergences about topics, aims and means of action, considerably increases.

As a result, the non-institutional left-wing panorama in Italy in the first half of the 1970s appears as a whole strongly fragmented into lots of organised groups, often characterised by small size and short life. This situation leads to the 1977 movement, where all the different streams of this variegated landscape flow together.[9] What is particularly relevant here is that, for most of these groups, activism is no longer an expression of the individuals' personal position on the labour market (as it largely had been for the previous students' movement and for the workers' movement) nor in general of their social position, but involves the entire set of values and sensibilities of the people, their personal identity. Consequently, different groups put at their core different topics, adopt different strategies of action and refer to different cultural frames. And, significantly, dressing style becomes much more relevant as a field of action and reflection in youth movements.

Considering the already underlined fragmentation of these movements, it is not surprising that also their aesthetic dimension, their clothing style, appears greatly differentiated and fragmented. But if we focus on the main components, some distinctive traits immediately emerge.

On the one hand, 1960s cultural change influenced the everyday clothing style of the students, so that in the first part of the decade the usual school outfit consisted of classic trousers/skirt, shirt and jacket/sweater set, whereas after 1968 dress is more informal and varied. As a consequence, also in demonstrations the students' presence is no longer marked by a classic suit. On the other hand, among young blue-collar workers coveralls and pinafores are less and less frequently adopted during demonstrations, and also young white-collar workers often adopt less distinctive clothing. Finally, placards and banners with slogans are still frequently used, but forms and content are more heterogeneous, more spontaneous, less ordered and less collectively coordinated.

Moreover what seems to distinguish this new season of protest, partially transversally the different components, is the higher absorption by the young protesters of several stylistic elements from contemporary youth cultures, and above all from Great Britain and United States subcultures. The internal heterogeneity of the movement can in this sense be synthesised in two main sectors: creative and autonomist. The creatives, often defined as "freaks", are strongly connected with the countercultures tradition; they have music, art, free sexuality and drug experimentation as their main topics of reference, and their style is strongly influenced by the hippies/flower children culture. Often clothed as native Americans, their main distinctive traits are long

[8] Some introductory elements can be found in Grisoni, Portelli 1976; Ronchey 1977; Tarrow 1990; Monicelli 1991; Mangano 1998; Echaurren, Salaris 1999; Sensini 2010.

[9] See Falciola 2016; for emic perspectives on the movement see AAVV 1997; Bascetta 1997; Bianchi, Caminiti 1997; Del Bello 1997; Grispigni 1997, 2006.

hair, adorned with flowers and jewels, beards, painted faces, large flared trousers, open shirts, colourful clothes. They often participate in demonstrations with street art performances such as theatre and music itinerant shows, so they usually carry musical instruments and jugglers' objects. Irony and parody are their main communicative register; making funny faces is one of their distinctive gestures. The style of the autonomists is very different. These youth are mainly clothed very simply, with jeans and jacket or parka, but they often stand out because of their shoulder bags, crash helmets or hard hats and because of a balaclava or scarf which covers their faces. Rage and aggressiveness are their characteristic traits; the fingers of the hand shaping a gun is their characteristic gesture. Sticks are often carried, and sometimes also guns. Protests mainly occur through quite orderly marches, sometimes with participants walking in rows, often accompanied by riots with police or damaging actions.

3. 1980s-1990s: From no man's land to occupazioni

It is often said that the 1977 movement marks the end of the "movements season" in Italy. Actually several groups survive until the end of the decade, and some continue even later.[10] However, undeniably, they lack the wide participation which characterise the 1970s. Many interpretations have been given of the conclusion of this trajectory, evoking - depending on the case - fragmentation and internal dissent, constraint, economic crisis, diffusion of hard drugs, as the main causes. Whether or not these hypotheses are correct, surely the early 1980s is a period of weakness of the youth social movements in Italy, and in particular of radical forms of protest (Armillei, Tirabassi 1992; Della Porta 1996: chapter 4; De Sario 2012).[11] Only in the middle of the decade do new collective actors emerge, and also radical movements have a new season, with the birth of the occupazioni (political squats) movement.

3.1 Emergence

It is not easy to retrace the origins of this movement, above all because it emerges from the progressive interconnection of different independent projects.[12] Oversimplifying, it could be said that the earliest occupations develop from the meeting of people formerly involved in late-1970s left-wing extra-parliamentary political groups, sometimes still existing, and of people involved in the young Italian punk scene. In this period the demise of the previous networks facilitate the cooperation in particular between Communist and Anarchist organisations who share the desire of developing new experiences of critical cultural and political action independent and autonomous of institutions, moderate trade unions and political parties.

Due to divergences of interpretative frames, forms of action, and also - or mainly - cultural sensibilities, tastes and "social attitudes', the separation between the Communist and Anarchist wings soon becomes even wider, and explicitly breakes up at the beginning of the 1990s, when significantly most of the groups in the first area adopt the self-definition "centro sociale" whilst the ones in the second area prefer that of "casa

[10] The symbolic moment of the end of the movements season is often indicated as the 14th of October 1980, when 40,000 white-collar FIAT workers protested against blue-collar workers picket lines which for 35 days had been blocking access to the factory.

[11] For an emic perspective on youth cultures and movements in Italy at the turn of the 1980s and the 1990s, see Canevacci at al. 1993 and Canevacci, De Angelis, Mazzi 1995.

[12] No systematic work exists about the history of *occupazioni* movement in Italy. Information about specific cases of study can be found in Dines 1999; Berzano, Gallini 2000; Berzano, Gallini, Genova 2002; Mudu 2004; De Sario 2012; Mudu 2012; Pecorelli 2015; Piazza, Genovese 2016; Casaglia 2018; Filhol 2018; Genova 2018b; Mudu, Rossini 2018; Piazza 2018. Interesting readings with an emic perspective are Branzaglia, Pacoda, Solaro 1992; Adinolfi 1994; AAVV 1996; Dazieri 1996; Calia 2014.

occupata". A further division occurs in the mid-1990s when, inside the "centri sociali" area, two different approaches emerge: the first more conflictual and more connected with the radical and anti-institutional tradition of the 1977 autonomist tradition; the second more sensitive to communicative action and more oriented to forms of collaboration with public institutions. In the meantime the Anarchist area too, traditionally more fragmented and composed of groups reciprocally more independent, has an internal debate between groups mainly oriented towards political action and groups mainly oriented towards socio-cultural experimentation, and consequently a distinction emerges between the first, defined "libertarian", and the latter, defined "squatters".[13] What remains beyond these differences is surely the shared idea of being part of an occupations movement with common elements of history and roots.

These distinctions are particularly useful for understanding the different styles of clothing which characterise the different actors. Yet during the 1980s a relevant distinction from this point of view emerges between the Communist and the Anarchist areas. If in the former what prevails is a substantially "sober" style, hardly distinguishable from the average-youth style, in the latter the punk style is prevalent, in particular in its hardcore version, sometimes hybridised with elements derived from the emergent heavy metal style. This punk style is thus at the beginning mainly characterised by sleeveless denim jackets or shirts and mohawk (or similar) hairstyles, but soon army-issue rubber boots, black "Perfecto"-style leather jackets, skinny black leather or tartan trousers, studded leather bracelets and neck collars also become part of this style.

3.2 Diffusion

Between the end of the 1980s and beginning of the 1990s, in particular through the "Pantera" students' movement and protests against nuclear energy,[14] the occupation practice spreads, initially mostly in large cities but gradually also in smaller towns. Obviously this process implies a diffusion-defusion mechanism (Muggleton 2000) which made the socio-cultural composition of the movement, and therefore its stylistic connotation, more heterogeneous, but some characterising traits can be highlighted. In this perspective it is essential to bear in mind that, as happened with punk in the previous decade, during the 1990s some international youth cultures strongly influenced Italian radical youth movements, in particular reggae culture (already appearing in the movement some years before), grunge culture (mixed with some heritage of the hippy culture), hip hop culture and techno culture.

In the Anarchist area, and in particular among the squatters, what becomes thus distinctive is a style mixing punk elements with others derived from techno and rave styles. Short hair, mohawk and dreadlocks are mixed together; tattoos, steel earrings, necklaces, bracelets and post-industrial style accessories co-exist, evoking Mad Max imagery. Black is often the basic colour, but it is mixed with fluo hues or combined with various shades of grey. More or less sober depending on specific groups and individuals, this style is often hybridised with "heretic" elements such as old-style Adidas tracksuit jackets and trousers, old blue-collar jackets, or some showy articles of clothing such as leopard-skin shirts or leggings. Army-issue rubber boots or bikers' leather boots are the typical footwear. Clearly this is a particularly "spectacular" style, which distinguished the squatters despite obvious internal variations. The style of several other Anarchist groups is much more sober, and even though often characterised by clothes in dark colours, it is less rich in distinctive elements. During

[13] The term "squat" in international scientific literature is used to refer in general to all the occupied buildings as collective projects, whereas the term "squatters" will identify in this article one of the areas of the movement, following Berzano, Gallini (2000) and Berzano, Gallini, Genova (2002), where the four labels here adopted have been introduced to describe its internal differentiation.

[14] About the "Pantera" movement, see: Denaro 2007, Albanese 2010, Simeone 2010; about protest against nuclear energy see CMSS 1990, Diani 1994, Giugni 1999.

protests events the collective identity of these groups is mainly expressed with black or red-and-black banners and flags, over which the "ringed (A)", other symbols of Anarchism, or slogans written in red or white, are often present. The squatters too use the same symbols and communicative instruments, even if their main communicative register consists of irony and parody while the other Anarchist sectors adopt a more "serious" and often aggressive and threatening register. Finally sticks and crash helmets can be carried by individuals of both sectors on the occasion of particularly numerous and violent protest events.

Very different from several points of view is the style of the "red" area of the movement. At the beginning of the decade in fact this area lacks a distinguishable clothing style, and also during protest events jeans, t-shirts, shirts and sweaters are the most common garments. Even the colours vary. What is more distinctive is probably only the clothing style adopted during some specific and large protests:[15] on these occasions many people wear handkerchiefs over their faces and sometimes white coveralls; they also have red flags, sticks and crash helmets.

However this stylistic overview quickly changes during the 1990s, in two directions.

First of all because of the influence of reggae,[16] skinhead-ska, hip-hop on one hand, as well as grunge and nu metal on the other. It is not possible here to follow the development of these phenomena in the Italian context. However, what is particularly relevant is to underline that each of these cultures provides the movement with new elements. As a result brown and mustard corduroy trousers and blazers, large flares, checked flannel shirts, army-issue rubber boots and "Clarks"-style shoes are mixed together and often are combined with keffiyehs, or wollen scarfs and caps with rasta colours. Similarly beards, long hair and dreadlocks gradually become characteristic elements. But in other cases oversize jeans, caps and Adidas sneakers are mixed with Rasta colours, studs and large snap-hooks.

Secondly, in the mid-1990s, as has already been underlined, a fracture emerges inside this area between "autonomist" groups, more radical and anti-institutional, and the "white coveralls" or "disobbedienti", more interested in a dialogue with political institutions and more sensitive to a communicative approach to political action. An important element of distinction is the violence topic, because the former sector claims that its use is a licit – although extreme – instrument of political action while the latter sector adopts an explicit refusal of active violence, at least in their public declarations. As a consequence, at the beginning of the 2000s the "disobbedienti" not only nearly always wear a white coverall during protests, but they often also put on crash helmets or hard hats, handcraft armour made of foam rubber or cardboard, and – avoiding any sort of stick of "offensive" instrument – use big plexiglass shields or big air chambers as bucklers to create opportunities of conflict with the police which, however, could be described as non-violent and self-defensive.

4. The new millennium: no-global and beyond

At the turn of the millennium the emergence, both in the social and in the mass-media fields, of the anti-globalisation movement radically impacts on the Italian social movements, on two main levels. First of all, social awareness of the existence of a new and international collective actor stimulates the interest and participation of a copious and heterogeneous sector of the population, in particular among young people. Secondly, contact among several collective actors from different countries and cultures enlarges the repertoires of protest and supports the development of networks inside the movement rooted in the sharing of specific protest practices.

[15] The first and maybe most famous of these events is the national demonstration of the occupations movement which occurred on the 10th of September 1994 in Milan after the eviction of the Leoncavallo squat.

[16] As aforementioned, reggae culture had already been present in this milieu since the beginning of the 1980s, but it had a sort of revival in the mid-1990s.

4.1 The big events of No-Global movement

It is not possible here to follow the development of the movement, even referring only to the Italian context,[17] but what is necessary to underline is that the adoption of different forms of protest during the main demonstrations of the movement from 1999 to 2001 (Seattle 1999, Washington 2000, Prague 2000, Nice 2000, Davos 2001, Naples 2001, Genoa 2001) induces the emergence of four sectors of participants, defined "blocs" as main radical collective actors: pink, yellow, blue and black. People who refer to a specific bloc usually share some interpretative frames as regards representations of the society, topics of intervention and overall forms of action during protests. Moreover for each of these sectors clothing is a fundamental aspect of identity and action, so that the names through which they are identified by the press and popular culture refer primarily to the colours of their aesthetics.

The pink bloc has a non-violent approach, although with more or less radical tactics depending on the specific groups and individuals. This area adopts irony and parody as its main communicative registers: during protests people play drums and other musical instruments, following samba-bands style, dancing and singing slogans while marching. Flags and banners with catchwords and messages are often exposed. Pink is the main colour for clothes and accessories as well as for flags and banners. What is distinctive is also the adoption in garments of a stereotypical childish and girly style, made of tulle tutus, wigs, leg warmers, tights, feather boas, both among men (who sometimes wear skirts) and women.

The yellow bloc is connected with the "disobbedienti" experience, and mixes passive resistance actions with strategies of active interference with the police. As underlined before, typical of this area was the white coverall, although only a minority of the protesters adopt this piece of clothing during the events of the period we are considering. Due to the conflicted conditions which characterise these events, what quickly becomes peculiar to this bloc is the adoption of instruments and clothes which are useful for self-protection in case of clashes with the police. People in this bloc participate in protests creating quite ordered sectors inside the march, and, as in the previous period, the use of crash helmets or hard hats and of plexiglass shields by the front lines is typical; however, in these years shields are used more extensively and with a more coordinated approach, aiming to create a testudo formation in the front of the demonstration, so as to protect the protesters from the police when contact and consequent clashes occur. In the same perspective people more exposed to clashes often wear armour made of foam rubber, cardboard or plastic tubes as well as life vests and shin guards, kerchiefs and gas masks. All these elements have both a strategic and a communicative function: on one hand they concretely protect bodies during police charges; on the other hand they aim to communicate the "passive defence" approach of the bloc and to denounce the "violent approach" of the police, showing that it is forced to resort to self-defence instruments.

The blue bloc is connected with the autonomists and some of the Anarchists, and has a mass direct action approach, including damaging actions, direct clashes and riots. Like the yellow bloc, they participate in protests creating ordered sectors inside the march, but the front lines of the sector are usually lacking in shields or "armour", being instead made up only of people with crash helmets and sticks, the latter usually with red or black flags upon them. It is more difficult however to identify a shared dress style inside this bloc. Blue jeans and hoodies or t-shirts in dark colours, especially dark midnight blue, are very common, but these are probably the only distinctive elements, together with balaclavas and kerchiefs on their faces. Garments seem therefore

[17] See Andretta, della Porta, Mosca, Reiter 2002; de Nardis 2003; Cedroni 2004; Farro 2006.

to have in this case a weak communicative function, and to correspond mainly to technical needs connected with protest actions.

The black bloc finally is often, but not exclusively, connected with Anarchists and has a small-group direct-action approach, mainly through damaging acts, but also through riots.[18] The ways of acting however can be significantly different on the basis of the number of participants in the bloc and of the overall participants in the event. During events with a majority of people involved in the black bloc, people usually march - as in the yellow and the blue blocs - forming compact and quite ordered masses, in front of which a line with a banner can usually be observed. Otherwise, in case of big events with a more heterogeneous composition, people adopting black bloc tactics tend to move through the march in small groups. Damaging actions in places identified as symbols of political and economic power (such as banks, employment agencies, government buildings) represent the typical form of protest for these actors. Very often however the black bloc is also involved in clashes with the police, albeit mainly avoiding direct contact. Clothing is fairly uniform, obviously characterised first of all by the black colour of all the clothes, but also by the diffuse adoption of a sort of "uniform" constituted of trousers - often in military style - and hoodies, balaclavas and kerchiefs on faces, gas masks, sunglasses, caps and gloves are also often adopted; and all these elements are always obviously black. Sometimes black or black-and-red banners are present. Sticks and stones are used during damaging actions. Creative groups with long black flags, drums and accessories in post-industrial style are occasionally present, but they are generally rare.

4.2 The early 2000s

This is a general and very synthetic portrait of the main clothing styles of the radical young activists during the "first" No-Global season. Obviously it doesn't aim to be a complete and exhaustive representation, but only to point out some distinctive elements. After the Genoa 2001 meeting, the anti-globalisation movement keeps on organising collective demonstrations around the world, and often tens of thousands of protesters participate in these events. However, the idea of a transnational protest movement seems to disappear gradually from the mass-media as well as from the imagery of the radical groups in Italy (Alteri 2011). As before 1999, the different collective actors begin to act again on the basis of national and international "affinity" networks but outside well-organised co-operation milieux. Nevertheless, in Italy the No-Global movement is the main movement since the "golden horde", consequently it develops influences and consequences on the diffusion of non-institutional participation and on the repertoires of protest which still last nowadays, although in different organisational forms.[19]

If we look at the twenty years after the Genoa G8, we can observe in radical movements first of all the influence of the blue and the black bloc styles. From this point of view, during the 2000s the black hoodie progressively becomes one the most widespread items of clothing in the movements, even if among the Anarchists it is mainly worn together with all the other pieces of clothes in black, whereas in other sectors it is mainly accompanied by blue jeans deliberately to avoid the all-black style, identified as specifically Anarchist. Moreover balaclavas, which during the 1980s and the 1990s are worn very rarely and only during very violent mass protests, can be observed more often. Even if in recent years, with the influence of the Anonymous project and of the Occupy movement, the Guy Fawkes mask (reintroduced by the V for Vendetta

[18] Actually "black bloc" is the only label which already existed before the emergence of the No-Global movement in the mass-media. Originally however the label did not refer to specific groups or networks but to a protest practice, adopted since the 1980s by several individuals and groups first of all in Europe, mainly in Germany, and later in the US.

[19] In this perspective it is interesting to highlight that during the 2000-2002 hundreds of thematic and territorial "social forums" are born in Italy, but already in 2004 most of them don't exist any more.

movie) often substitutes balaclavas and kerchiefs. Secondly a similar process of reception occurs for crash helmets and hard hats, which during the 1980s and 1990s almost disappeared from the movements (with the exception of strongly conflicted situations), whereas during the mid-2000s they reappear, especially with the emergence of the No Tav movement.[20] On the contrary, "symbolic" protection such as foam rubber or cardboard armour, life vests and shin guards are not used any more since the late 1990s-early 2000s No-Global movement's events, with the exception of plexiglass shields. Finally, the intersection among the pink bloc experience, the "queer" movement and the black bloc imagery leads to a hybrid style (adopted by radical feminist groups) mainly characterised by: the use of shocking pink as a main colour for clothes, accessories, banners and flags, together with black and silver; the mix of male and female garments; the use of black hoodies and pink keffiyehs, balaclavas, kerchiefs to create an "aggressive" image of the movement; the use of sticks during protests.

Nowadays, a predominant radical style can however be identified, mainly characterised by dark colours, mainly midnight blue or black. Jeans or black trousers with side-pockets, t-shirts and in particular black hoodies are the most widespread garments; army-issue rubber boots and sneakers are the most common footwear. The heads of the protesters are often covered by hoods or - in violent demonstrations - by crash helmets or hard hats, and in these situations their hands are covered with gloves, and their faces wrapped in kerchiefs, keffiyehs or balaclavas; dark sunglasses are worn - independently of the strength of the sun - whereas gas masks, knee-pads or shin guards are only occasionally used. Slogans and organisations' names are often printed over t-shirts and hoodies, as well as on the banners in the front lines (often characterised also by individuals arm-in-arm or carrying sticks) and on the red (Communist) or the black or red-and-black (Anarchist) flags. Coloured smoke bombs and fire-extinguishers' dust are sometimes further elements which influence the overall image of the movement during protests, often accompanied by the use of loud firecrackers to create a "coordinated" soundscape.[21]

Depending on the case, and on the number of participants, the protest can be more or less static or dynamic, adopting a march or a garrison approach. In the first case in particular usually most young radical participants can be strewn among the other protesters, but, when the march arrives near the police or near some symbolic places, they re-join each other to develop damaging actions or riots, and subsequently again they tend to disperse. During these actions the protesters wear black hoodies or coveralls, helmets and kerchiefs or gas masks, in order both to protect themselves and not to be recognised; most of these elements are worn before the action, during the march: in some cases, at a certain moment during the march the individuals involved in these actions call one another through hand gestures, gather together, light smoke-sticks or unroll high spools of fabric around them, wear clothes, helmets and gas masks, and the same procedure is repeated after the action, when they undress.

5. Final considerations. Repertoires and styles

As has emerged from the previous sections, in Italy, during the six last decades, different waves of protest had different collective actors as key players, with different drivers of participation, different topics, strategies and forms of protest, and also different specific clothing and aesthetic features. The change of each of these elements over time seems not to be independent from that of all the others, and the visual elements

[20] A protest against high-speed trains in Val Susa, northern Italy, which progressively becomes the main national protest movement, and which attracts the attention of radical movements both in Italy and in other countries.

[21] Other sectors of the movement, connected with "yellow" or "pink" approaches, progressively decreased and disappeared, or survived but no longer adopted specific aesthetic styles.

progressively acquired more relevance; but how to interpret then exactly the evolution of clothing and aesthetics among youth involved in radical social movements?

Referring to social movements studies, the first option could be to interpret it as part of the evolution of the "repertoires of collective action" of these movements. Following Tilly (1978, 1986, 2006) and Tarrow (1996, 2005), collective action includes all the ways in which people involved in a movement join their efforts to pursue common ends. If, as a principle, any form of intervention can be adopted by protesters, they tend to adopt forms already familiar and have previously proved to be effective. At any point in time, any movement, or sector of a movement, has thus a specific repertoire of possible forms of collective actions from which to draw at its disposal, and knows more or less how to execute them, the consequences they can have and under which conditions it is possible and legitimate to use them. Obviously these forms of action are not universal and fixed: not only in different moments and different contexts, different repertoires exist (Traugott 1995), but overall change and innovation are continuous. As a general principle, consolidated forms of contention have the advantage of being accepted, familiar, and relatively easy to employ by protesters, with less risks; but the use of new, transgressive, forms offers the advantages of surprise, uncertainty, and novelty. New means can thus be adopted, old means can evolve and be adapted to new conditions, or be abandoned because proven inappropriate, ineffective, impractical or dangerous. Moreover, since social movements are sustained interactions between protesters, their allies, their opponents and public authorities, all their contentious interactions emerge as combinations of scripts and improvisations.

Adopting this interpretative perspective, changes over time in the clothing and appearance of the young activists involved in Italian radical movements must be interpreted as changes of the repertoires of protest, or at least as consequences of these changes. In 1960s blue collars and students protest "as" blue collars and students, acting largely on the basis of collective identities defined by social position, and the everyday clothes adopted also during protests - in particular for blue collars - clearly express these identities. The use of parkas and Mao Zedong jackets express their political references, just as banners and placards communicate explicit political contents and keywords (not by chance are placards or words on placards in red, the traditional colour of Communist movements). In the 1970s the register changes: the creative area adopts irony and parody as instruments of protest, so street art performances and transgressive clothing are largely present; the autonomist area has illegal and violent strategies, with the consequent adoption of helmets and hard hats as protection, balaclavas and scarfs to hide their faces to avoid legal persecution, sticks as instruments for riots. If in the 1960s the young protesters, through their garments, were more oriented towards expressing their professional collocation, their social positioning; in the subsequent decade they seem more oriented to the communication of personal sensitivities and non-ascribed identities. If in both cases some clothing and instruments have an explicit functional meaning, moving from the 1960s to the 1970s, collective identities publicly expressed through garments are no longer ascribed but chosen; what's more, wider space seems to be claimed for individual than for collective identities.

Social, cultural and political changes occurred between the 1960s and the 1970s, and the results obtained through the different forms of protest and the strategies of control implemented by the institutions obviously have a fundamental impact on these "aesthetic" differences between the two periods. In both of them, however, clothing, and more in general the distinctive aesthetic traits of protesters, are quite directly connected with the strategies of protest, and can be effectively interpreted as part of the repertoires of protest. Nevertheless, several aesthetic elements characterising youth presence in these movements do not seem comprehensible using this approach, and further problems in this sense become evident in 1980s and in 1990s: with the exception of those elements "inherited", inspired, by the previous movements, a growing number of distinctive traits in clothing and aesthetics among young radical protesters cannot be understood as simple instruments of protest. The diffusion of keffiyehs represents supporting the Palestinian cause; the adoption of the "white coverall" is

clearly an instrument of anonymity in illegal actions and recognition during protests; just as foam rubber, cardboard and plexiglass shields are at the same time defensive instruments in riots and metaphors of social conflict. But many other specific components of clothing and appearance – such as those inspired by youth cultures of that period – cannot be interpreted simply as instruments of protest. And a further confirmation of the problem emerges considering the last twenty years. Several aesthetic elements of all the four main "blocs" of the No-Global movement have a clear connection with their repertoires of protest, and with their forms of action. The adoption of irony and parody by the pink bloc; of theatrical and symbolic resistance by the yellow bloc; of direct, massive and frontal clash by the blue bloc; and of direct but fragmented action by the black bloc, clearly have consequences on the clothing of activists and on aesthetic registers. Garments, accessories, instruments "of action" and instruments "of communication" are clearly reciprocally interconnected. And, more explicitly than in the past, the visual appearance of each bloc, in a movement made up of mass events (what's more, strongly covered by the mass media), also becomes a fundamental instrument of identification, distinction and mutual recognition for the individuals during protests, a strategy to concretely organise the presence and collocation of participants in places of protest. Again, however, both in the period of emergence of the No-Global movement and in the subsequent decades – characterised by a reduction of participation and the emergence of a more transversal "dark" style as distinctive of youth radical movements – only some clothing and aesthetic choices can be explained as elements of the repertoire of protest: the different colours of the blocs, as well as the subsequent "dark" style, the specific items of clothing and accessories, are evidently not chosen by chance; nevertheless, they don't have a precise function as instruments of protest, but do have clear references of meaning and semiotic interconnections both with the sensitivities of the activists and the wider cultural background.

On the whole it is evident that interpreting the clothing and aesthetics of youth in radical social movements only through the lens of the repertoires of protest is not enough: too many elements seem to remain unexplained. The main point is that clothing, and more in general aesthetic appearance, emerge among youth involved in these movements not only as instruments of protest but also as elements of self-expression and of cultural self-positioning, as a means to build and communicate tastes and sensitivities beyond perspectives of political action, or more specifically to develop collective identities, and consequent processes of identification, recognition and distinction. In this sense clothing and aesthetics among youth involved in radical social movements – this is the proposal of the present article – should be also interpreted as components of distinctive styles.

The concept of "style", as it is meant here, has emerged in the study of youth cultures. Over time, youth cultures – following subcultural perspectives – have been interpreted as forms of deviance, of resistance, of distinction (Berzano, Genova 2015: part 2), but the transversal idea has been that youth cultures are characterised by cultural traits different from the dominant, mainstream or at least most widespread ones, and that these traits are expressed first of all through the adoption of a peculiar style (Genova 2019).

Following Cohen (1955), who introduced the concept, style is made up of the kinds of clothes an actor wears, his posture and gait, his likes and dislikes, what he talks about and the opinions he expresses, and then image, demeanour and argot (Brake 1980). The adoption of this style by individuals can be intended mainly as the result of socialisation processes – with a more passive representation of the actors, or as the result of individual sensitivities and choices – with a more active representation. Mungham and Pearson (1976) develop this perspective focussing on the material components of the style, and then interpret it as the result of a process of re-appropriation and re-interpretation of objects and symbols available in a socio-cultural context to create a new and coherent set with new meanings, opposed to the dominant ones, on the basis of the potential polysemy of every form. As Clarke (1976), Murdock and McCron (1976), Willis (1978), and Hebdige (1979) highlight, each youth culture chooses, more or less reflexively and consciously, those elements which best

express its sensitivities, its similarities to, and differences from, other youth cultures, and above all its rejection of the dominant culture. More recently it has been stated that youth cultures can also create new material components of style available on the market, with the potential consequent emergence even of subcultural markets; and that style can be interpreted as an expression of shared sensitivities as well as of cultural self-positioning, on principle without any resistant or oppositional approach to dominant or mainstream culture (Redhead 1997, Muggleton 2000, Hodkinson 2002). On the whole, style is thus an instrument to make socially visible collectively shared tastes and sensitivities, and to build and express new collective identities different from the ascribed ones; and from style derive consequent processes of identification, recognition or rejection, and distinction.

When, during the 1960s, blue-collar workers and white-collar workers, as well as students, participate in protests with their everyday clothes, and in particular with those clothes they wear "at work", they aim at expressing, reinforcing, collective identities and distinctions which are socially ascribed, but are intended and presented as chosen and reinterpreted. Placards and banners, as well as flags, can also in this sense be understood as subtitles, a key to read the implicit message in those clothes. Similarly, the adoption of Mao Zedong jackets and parkas highlights similarities and connections with other movements and cultures in different territorial contexts. And these processes become progressively more evident in the subsequent decades. In the 1970s both creatives and autonomists adopt aesthetic styles which conjointly allow them to reciprocally distinguish themselves but also to express their sensitivities. Their clothes, their accessories, their bodily postures and gestures express - through semiotic references - their cultural, other than political, positions, their tastes and their imageries. Ascribed collective identities remain in play but, first, with reference also to gender, nature, in addition to social position, and, second, accompanied by new, chosen, ones, built on values, tastes, preferences and imageries. And in the 1980s this process becomes increasingly stronger: some ideological symbols remain, but the most distinctive aesthetic traits derive from the main international youth cultures of the period, such as punk and heavy metal, and later, in the 1990s, techno, rasta, skinhead-ska, hip-hop and grunge. Through a process of style mixing, all these different sources are combined in cross-over aesthetics which leave room for individual creativity. The aesthetic distinctions between the three main areas in youth radical movements of the period – Anarchist, autonomist and disobbedienti – emerge thus from an explicit intersection between different strategies of protest and different musical and cultural styles of reference, with youth cultures in particular becoming constitutive components of the movements and therefore strongly influent on visual profiles. And this trend continues during the first part of the 2000s, with the No-Global movement, even if with some changes: music cultures are no longer a core element in the definition of styles, which are much more original and innovative; however, each "bloc" clearly adopts a distinctive aesthetic style, and first of all a colour, on the basis partly of its cultural sensitivities and tastes, with explicit strategies of building a collective identity and of processes of reciprocal positioning. As has clearly emerged, clothes, accessories, forms of action and forms of presence in the places of protest are connected with the forms of action of each bloc; nevertheless the features of each of these elements in the different blocs clearly also express their values, their imageries, their past and present political references, their cultural background, their tastes and their sensitivities. All the "visible" elements are then somehow, as usually in youth cultures, a visual expression of cultural "immaterial" traits, and it would be reductive to interpret them just as components of a repertoire of protest.

Why it is then relevant to reflect about the evolution of youth clothing and appearance in Italian radical social movements conjointly through a "repertoires" perspective and a "styles" perspective? The point is that this evolution has been influenced both by the change of the repertoires of protest and the change of the styles of youth cultures interacting with these movements, and these two changes followed different processes on the basis of the influence of different factors. Repertoires of protest mainly changed on the basis of changes in the

number of participants in public demonstrations, with subsequent processes of homogeneisation or differentiation; the socio-cultural profiles of the participants; the drivers and the meanings, the individual reasons, of participation; the topics and the aims of the movements; as well as of the forms of control at micro and macro levels; and on the basis of the results obtained by the different instruments which are progressively adopted. On the contrary, influent styles changed on the basis of the specific youth cultures which emerged in each period, in particular in the UK and the US; their specific absorption and re-interpretation in the Italian context; the consequent processes of collective stylistic identification, distinction and recognition; and, more in general, styles became progressively less defined in their boundaries and in their distinctive elements, as well as more fragmented and individualised.

Only by considering these two streams of change conjointly, with their different drivers, is it possible to efficiently interpret the evolution of clothing and aesthetics among Italian youth involved in radical social movements, whose distinctive traits and meanings seem - at each step - to emerge from a peculiar mix of practical, political, cultural, and identitary perspectives.

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