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Democracy in movement: organizational dilemma and globalization from below¹

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1. Democracy in movement: an introduction

Reflection on models of democracy has assumed a central role in the theoretical elaboration and practices of social movements. Past research has indicated that social movements have produced criticism of representative institutions and proposed alternative models of democracy (Offe 1985). From this point of view, "the struggle of left-libertarian movements recalls an ancient element of democratic theory, which calls for an organization of collective decision processes variedly defined as classical democracy, populist, communitarian, strong, grassroots or direct, against democratic praxis in contemporary democracies defined as realist, liberal, elitist, republican or representative democracy" (Kitschelt 1993, 15). Moreover, movements experiment with these models of democracy both in their internal structure and in their interactions with the political institutions. Internally, social movements have — with a greater or lesser degree of success — attempted to develop an organizational structure based on participation (rather than delegation), consensus building (rather than a majority vote), and horizontal networks (rather than centralized hierarchies). Social movements are in fact loose networks of organizations and individuals, with common identifying values that mainly use unconventional forms of political participation in order to reach their political aims (della Porta and Diani 1999, chap. 1). Their activism is based on the voluntary work of their adherents, whose commitment is maintained especially by incentives of solidarity and identity. Although they have not developed satisfactory solutions for the many implementation problems of direct democracy, the recent history of social movements testifies to the relevance of their search for alternative forms of political participation.

The search for a participatory model of internal democracy assumes an even more central role for the "global movement" that has mobilized transnationally, concerning the governance of the process of market liberalization, with demands for social justice (a "globalization of citizens' rights") and participatory democracy ("globalization from below"). This movement has to contend, internally, with mobilizing a heterogeneous base composed of different generations and social positions, and, externally, with the challenges of multilevel governance.

In this paper, I shall discuss the organizational dilemma of the new global movement, focusing on the achievements and limits of the solutions that have been adopted until now. In doing this, I shall try to exploit the tool-box made available from research on previous movements, at the same time indicating how concepts and hypotheses should be adapted in order to understand an emerging movement. I shall try therefore to go beyond the two extreme positions that tend to emerge in such circumstances: all is new, and nothing is new under the sun. In fact, as will be indicated by the empirical research, this movement, like other movements, developed under a situation of "constrained" learning, that is, on the one hand, the repertoire of organizational solutions is limited, and builds upon the experiences of previous movements; on the other hand, however, past experiences are not adopted uncritically, but on the contrary are critically reflected upon and new solutions are elaborated, discussed, adopted, criticized, changed, adapted etc.. The organizational dilemmas the activists have to face are largely the same as other movements had to

¹ The introduction to this paper develops part of a research project on deliberative democracy and social movement (DEMOS). I wish to thank Anna Carola Freschi for her help in its preparation. The focus groups have been run by Elena Del Giorgio, with the help of Fiammetta Benati.

suffer; at the same time, however, there are also new dilemmas coming from new challenges and opportunities. What is more, external circumstances such as phases of mobilization and what the activists call "emergencies" rapidly change, and the same organizational structure works very differently under different circumstances.

Another main dilemma for social movements has to do with the balance between participation and representation. Social movement organizations, traditionally poor in material resources, have to rely upon the voluntary work of their members — thus developing a "membership logic". Participatory models are adopted in order to enhance the distribution of identity incentives; in particular, the assembly represents the place *par excellence* of an open and (in principle) egalitarian space; the small "affinity" groups stimulate the development of solidarity among equals. As with other forms of "applied" democracy, however, the practical functioning of these organizational structures is much less than perfect. Unstructured assemblies tend to be dominated by small minorities that often strategically exploit the weaknesses of direct democracy with open manipulation; "speech" resources are far from equally distributed; the most committed, or better organized, control the floor; solidarity links tend to exclude newcomers. Consensual models, developed to contrast the "tyranny" of organized minorities, have their own problems, mainly bound up with extremely long (and sometimes "blocked") decisional processes.

When protest declines (and with it, resources of militancy), movement organizations tend to survive by institutionalizing their structure: they look for money, either by building a mass paper-membership, selling products to a sympathetic public or looking for public monies, in particular in the Third Sector economy. Movement organizations—as recent research indicated—tend therefore to become more and more similar to lobbying groups, with a paid, professional staff; commercial enterprise, with a focus on efficacy on the market; and voluntary associations, providing services, often contracted out by public institutions. These changes have usually been interpreted as producing institutionalization of movement organizations, with ideological moderation, specialized identity and the fading away of disruptive protest. This evolution produces critical effects: bureaucratization, while increasing efficiency, discourages participation from below; interactions with the state and public institutions raise the question of the "representativity" of these new lobbyists.

Although, as we shall see, the development of the new global movements helped correct some of these assumptions—locating them within cycles, instead of as univocal trends — organizational dilemmas are not solved. The debate on democracy is fundamental to the functioning of social movements:

- the internal dynamics of movement organizations: many social movement organizations reject the consolidated rules of majority and representation but emphasize consensual decision-making and direct participation; the alternative practices are, however, difficult to develop;
- the internal dynamics of movement families: many mobilized citizens are attracted by new forms of participation specifically because of their discontinuity with the representative organizational logic (in the shape of political parties), but (problems) of internal accountability often emerge when common campaigns are organized;
- the relationship with political institutions and decision makers: social movements propose new forms of "deliberative", "participatory" decision-making, but the appeal to different models of democracy makes reciprocal recognition between societal and institutional actors difficult;
- the relationship with the media and the general public: although social movements invest energies and resources in constructing alternative media channels and public spheres, among others, their fluid and acephalous (or multi-cephalous) structure makes it difficult for them to interact with the "official" media and reach the greater public.

The 'democratic issue' can seriously affect the evolution of the movements and their capacity to reach their policy goals in the framework of an enhanced dialogue with the institutions. This paper will therefore address the following questions. What does the deliberative/participatory method mean for movements in theory and practice? How do movements implement the "new

democratic model" in their internal processes in terms of organizational structure, internal and external flows of information, decision-making processes, identity construction, 'quality' of policies proposed, infra- and inter-organizational relationships, at international level too, and relationships with institutions and with the media system? Which forms of hybridization between different models of democracy are encouraged by or suitable for them?

Internal democracy is particularly relevant for a multifaceted, *heterogeneous* movement (which has significantly defined itself a "movement of movements") that incorporates many social, generational and ideological groups. As the first studies on this subject are pointing out, this movement has a more pluralistic identity, weakly connected organizational structure, and multiform action repertoire than those of previous movements (Andretta, della Porta, Mosca and Reiter 2002 and 2003; della Porta and Mosca 2003). Internal differences are the impetus in the search for forms of participation that respect individual "subjectivity", avoiding exclusive commitments and vertical control; consensus rules are privileged *vis-à-vis* majority rules; direct participation is emphasized against representative mechanisms, leaders are considered as 'speakers' or 'facilitators'. In internal practices, an emphasis on deliberative talk was perceived: "they expected each other to provide legitimate reasons for preferring one option to another. They strove to recognize the merits of each other's reasons for favouring a particular option... the goal was not unanimity, as much as discourse. But it was a particular kind of discourse, governed by norms of openness and mutual respect" (Polletta 2002, 7).

The relevance of the debate about internal democracy is also increased by the transnational nature of the global movement. A rapidly growing literature has recognized the rise of a transnational movement and movement organizations (see Keck and Sikkink 1998; Waterman, 1998; Della Porta, Kriesi, and Rucht 1999; Florini 2000; Cohen and Rai 2000; O'Brien *et al.* 2000; Anheier, Glasius and Kaldor, 2001). The origins of such activism lie in the social movements that developed around the themes of peace, women's and human rights, solidarity, development, ecology, flexibility of employment and work conditions. Much of the activity in the sphere of global civil society consists of what Falk (1999: 130) has termed '*globalization from below*', a project whose 'normative potential is to conceptualize widely shared world order values: minimizing violence, maximizing economic well-being, achieving social and political justice, and upholding environmental quality'. Starting with their own specific issues, many of these social movements have developed an ability to address problems of a global nature, build information networks, stage actions, and find self-organized solutions across national borders. While social movements have traditionally operated within the nation-state, developing conceptions of citizens' rights and democracy within this territorial level, multilevel governance poses new challenges

In this contribution, I discuss some emerging developments in social movements' internal democracy in the light of the growing literature on deliberative democracy.² Although with relevant differences (in particular, on the role of emotions, values, direct participation), deliberative democracy has been defined on the bases of the following characteristics:

- a) **Preference (trans)formation.** It is "a process through which initial preferences are transformed in order to take into account the points of view of the others" (Miller 1993, 75). In fact, "deliberative democracy requires the transformation of preferences in interaction" (Drizek 2000, 79). In this sense, deliberative democracy differs from conceptions of democracy as aggregation of (exogenously generated) preferences.
- b) **Orientation to the public good.** In this model, "the political debate is organized around alternative conceptions of the public good", and, above all, it "draws identities and citizens' interests in ways that contribute to public building of public good" (Cohen 1989, 18-19). Democratic self-restraints should prevent people from pursuing self-interest (Miller 2003, 195). A deliberative setting facilitates the search for a common end or good (Elster 1998).
- c) **Rational argumentations.** Deliberative democracy is based on reason: people are convinced by the force of the better argument. In particular, deliberation is based on horizontal flows of

² Similarly, concepts such as associative democracy (Hirst 1994) or radical democracy (Mouffe 1996) also stress the need for complementing representative democracy with alternative models of democracy.

communication, multiple producers of content, wide opportunities for interactivity, confrontation on the basis of rational argumentation, attitude to reciprocal listening (Habermas 1981, 1996). In this sense deliberative democracy is discursive.

d) **Consensus.** Decisions are reached by convincing the others of one's good argument. Decisions must therefore be approvable by all participants (unanimous), by contrast with majoritarian democracy, where decisions are legitimated by votes. In this sense, deliberative democracy is consensual.

e) **Equality:** it "requires some forms of apparent equality among citizens" (Cohen 1989, 18); in fact, deliberation takes place among free and equal citizens (as "free deliberation among equals", *ibid.* p. 20). At least, "all citizens must be able to develop those capacities that give them effective access to the public sphere", and "once in public, they must be given sufficient respect and recognition so as to be able to influence decisions that affect them in a favourable direction (Bohman 1997, 523-24). Deliberation must exclude power—deriving from coercion, but also an unequal weight of the participants as representatives of organizations of different size or influence.

f) **Inclusiveness:** all citizens with a stake in the decisions to be taken have to be included in the process and able to express their voice. This means the deliberative process takes place under conditions of plurality of values where people have different perspectives but face common problems. Deliberation (or even communication) is based upon the belief that, while not giving up my perspective, I might learn if I listen to the other (Young 1996). In this sense, deliberative democracy is linked to the concept of associational democracy.

g) **Transparency.** In Joshua Cohen's definition, a deliberative democracy is "an association whose affairs are governed by the public deliberation of its members" (1989, 17). Publicity pushes to "replace the language of interest with the language of reason" (Elster 1998, 111).

These seven elements might be distinguished in conditions, means and effects: under conditions of equality, inclusiveness and transparency, a communicative process based on reason (the strength of the good argument) is able to transform individual preferences and reach decisions oriented to the public good.

Deliberative democracy has been seen as a solution to two related challenges to democratic governance. On the input side, contemporary democracy faces a problem of declining political participation, at least in the conventional forms. The declining capacity of political parties to bridge society and the state adds to this problem, while the commercialization of the mass media reduces their capacity to act as an arena for debating public decisions. On the other hand, legitimation from the output, i.e. from the production of welfare, is jeopardized, among other things by the increasing risks of complex (and global) societies. The two problems are related since the weakening of institutional actors to intervene in the formation of collective identities reduces their capacity to satisfy (more and more fragmented) demands. Deliberative democracy is therefore an alternative to top-down imposition of public decisions, which not only appears increasingly deprived of legitimacy, but is also becoming more difficult to manage, given both the increasing complexity of problems and the increasing ability of un-institutionalized actors to make their voices heard. Deliberative processes should in fact promote the acquiring of better information, producing more efficient decisions, as well as fostering both participation and trust in institutions that representative models are less and less able to provide. Indeed, scholars highlighted a "moralising effect of the public discussion" (Miller 1993, 83) that "encourages people not to merely express political opinions (through surveys or referendum) but to form those opinions through a public debate" (*ibid.*, 89). Deliberation as a "dispassionated, reasoned, logical" type of communication promises to increase citizens' trust in political institutions (Dryzek 2000, 64).

While in these concepts deliberation — pluralist, egalitarian, transparent, argumentative, consensual, and directed to transform preferences in view of the public good — is at the basis of a (re)legitimization of democracy by improving both input and output, the discussion about the building of public fora where such deliberations can take place usually remains within a merely normative approach.³ Existing research on attempts at enlarging policymaking to citizens'

³ Moreover, this trend of research is particularly focused on individual participation.

participation — in the forms of auditing, people's juries etc. — usually focuses its attention on the capacity of these instruments to solve problems created by local opposition to locally unwanted land use (LULU) (Bobbio, Zeppetella 1999, Sintomer 2001). While some studies conclude that citizens participation in policy-making increases efficiency, others express doubts about its capacity to solve free-rider problems and produce optimal decisions, or facilitate the achievement of the public good (Renn et alii 1996, Petts 1997, Hajer and Kesselring 1999, Grant, Perl and Knoepfel 1999).

Besides this, students of deliberative democracy disagree on the locus of deliberative discussion, some of them being concerned with the development of liberal institutions, others with alternative public spheres, free from state intervention. Habermas (1996) postulates a double-track process, with an "informal" deliberation taking place outside institutions and then, as public opinion, affecting institutional deliberation. According to Joshua Cohen, instead, deliberative (associational) democracy develops in voluntary groups, in particular in political parties. A strong supporter of the latter position, Dryzek (2000) has indicated social movements as best placed in order to build deliberative spaces, maintaining a criticism of the institutions. Also Mainsbridge (1996) supported the view that deliberation should take place in a number of enclaves, free from institutional power —social movements being among them. According to Young, discourse does not exclude protest: "processes of engaged and responsible democratic participation include street demonstrations and sit-ins, musical works and cartoons, as much as parliamentary speeches and letters to the editor" (2003, 119). On the other side, in the movements for a globalization from below deliberative practices have attracted a (more or less explicit) interest.

But how do the criteria for good, deliberative democracy apply to the internal praxis of the movement/s? If in principle the movements' activists and organizations state that they want to build new collective identities oriented to the public good, if they value reason and consensus, if they are formally egalitarian, inclusive and transparent, how much are these criteria implemented in movement praxis? Already in the past, movement appeals for direct and participatory democracy concealed elitist, manipulatory experiences. Is there uncritical reproduction of the same mistakes in today's movements too? Otherwise, what solutions have been elaborated in order to solve past problems?

As we shall see, these problems have been neither uncritically repeated nor entirely resolved — but experimentation is under way, with alternate results, to seek more democratic models of internal organization. The organizational instruments chosen adopt, while adapting, instruments from the past to a current situation typified notably by heavy networking (section 2). While the assembly remains one of the principle arenas of internal democracy, there is nonetheless a search for new rules (facilitators, limitation of delegation, search for consensus) that can limit the traditional problems of direct democracy (section 3). Over and above formal rules, the functioning of democracy within the movement in fact takes over some defining elements of deliberative democracy, which however need to be specified in order to apply them to movements' empirical experience (for a summary, see Scheme 1):

- First, while widespread conceptions of representative democracy have emphasized a communicative model based on reason and oriented towards consensus, in the movement there are *tolerant* (or inclusive) *identities*, but not an absence of value options. Further, there is an appeal to the construction of specific knowledge, and rejection of sacrifice in the name of a future ideal, something that does not rule out attachment to an (ideological) vision of the world (section 4).
- Second, while widespread conceptions of representative democracy call for an inclusivity, transparency and equality among participants, with horizontal communication, in actual experience the rate of discussion seems variable, ranging from assemblies of equals (with a heavy presence of individuals, and appeals to subjectivity "in movement") and negotiating tables of representatives (section 5).
- Third, as regards the transformation of initial preferences with an eye to the collective good, the capacity to seek the common good over and above individual interest

also seems variable. One should at any rate stress the bonds of trust that derive also from the transparency/publicity of the decision-making processes, with a capacity for "contamination in action" that slowly contributes to transforming preexisting identities into a position of synthesis (section 6).

Scheme 1. Deliberation in movement/s In theory: <i>Discursive practices as rational, dispassionate, founded on reasoning</i> In practice:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tolerant identities <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Acceptance of differences ◦ Trust in knowledge
In theory: <i>Inclusive, egalitarian, transparent arena with horizontal communication</i> In practice:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subjectivities in movements <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Refusal of delegation ◦ Emphasis on the role of the "singles"
In theory: <i>Deliberative practices as able to forge preferences/identities oriented to the public good</i> In practice:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contamination in action <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Interactions in campaigns ◦ increasing reciprocal trust

As we shall see, this "movement of movements" has the peculiarity of building itself upon a dense and rich network of movement organizations, often the product of previous protest cycles. That means it also build upon experiences of organizational institutionalization, but also reflexive criticism of it. These networks of networks provide important resources, but also the challenges of maintaining open public spaces, without discouraging individual participation. In terms of the building of internal public spheres, the challenge is the maintenance of a deliberative form of communication versus a strategic one.

2. Between nodes and networks: opportunities and challenges

By contrast with parties and pressure groups, social movements adopt a network structure; a low level of institutionalization: formal associations coexist with small informally structured groups; coordination is weak and a recognized leadership is often lacking; organizational boundaries are flexible; membership in a movement rarely involves holding a membership card. The social movements have been described as typified by a segmented organizational structure, with groups arising, mobilizing and declining continually; *polycephalous*, with a plural leadership structure; and *networked*, with groups and individuals connected through multiple links (Gerlach 1976).

These general features of the movement appear in even more emphatic form in the globalization mobilizations. In internal practices, the challenge of building a transversal and supranational identity brought about a search for an organizational structure that emphasizes some social-movement characteristics: in particular, reticularity (versus hierarchy), direct participation (versus delegation), consensus (versus voting). Descriptions of Seattle already highlight the flexible organization of the protest, with participation by both more formal organizations (the trade unions and big environmentalist associations) and small groups – including the hundreds of affinity groups defined in a platform convoking the Seattle event as nuclei, of 5-20 people, made up of "friends, people from your town, neighbours or colleagues from work, organization or community, or with whom you have some other shared affinity, interest or identity". Subsequently too, major supranational mobilizations were to be organized by public interest associations and small affinity groups, coordinated in flexible networks, with consensus decision making and spokesmen instead of leaders. More generally, the heterogeneity of the reference base is interwoven with a culture that stresses subjectivity and diversity, explicitly seeking cooperation rather than homogenization. A "Lilliputian" strategy – pointing to the joint effort of a multitude of small groups against the giant

Gulliver – is called for by groups built around single issues and then linked through transnational networks, seeking to take advantage of resources (primarily ease of communication) that are a result of globalization itself.

The networking functions both through virtual channels – especially the Internet – and by providing arenas for real face-to-face encounter, at local, national and supranational level. The search for new models of democracy is expressed in experiences like local social forums, self-organized citizen assemblies, civic society thematic councils (such as those concerned with immigrant conditions), coordinating umbrella committees, and transnational movement networks. Here, importance is given to dialogue among individuals and groups of diverse positions and frequent recourse is made to specific 'alternative' expertise and competencies. In the Social Forums or similar networks, participatory practices could be traced in the internal structure of the thematic working groups, open to citizens' participation, and in the periodic public local assemblies. The Forums frequently single out speakers for thematic areas and facilitators in public discussions, seminars, and assemblies. Their public mandate is generally limited in time and confined to a thematic field; they are frequently carriers of specific substantive competence (environment, immigrants, social policy, urban planning, gender issues, information, civil rights), although a specific transversal relational competence (i.e. mediation of conflicts, dialogue and hearings) is also emerging. The voting procedure generally follows wide debates oriented toward consensus-building, and is limited to final documents proposed at the local assembly, national forum or international, global forum.

These forums, especially the social forums, represent experiments in a form of democracy that the academic debate, though not it alone, has called deliberative, participatory, discursive or "from below" democracy. Stressing the respect for differing opinions (and for all the subjectivities), the social forums are supposed particularly to be a locus for exchange of ideas where – on the basis of argumentation open to everyone's contribution – consensus is reached around values built up together. While in practice the danger has emerged and been perceived and discussed by activists that the best organized may prevail in discussion; there is also emphasis, much more than in past movements, on the importance of reaching consensual decisions (even if on the basis of a low common denominator) and on tolerance, and in fact on openness towards differing experience (Epstein 2000). In this search for a new form of active citizenship the movement organizations have encountered (but also clashed with) those involved in more traditional representative democracies. As far as the organizational dimension is concerned, however, while some observers accept that the organizations critical of globalization have the reticularity that is the condition for the existence of a social movement, others instead stress the still occasional and transitory nature of interactions at supranational level (e.g., Tarrow 2001).

Membership in a movement is in general favoured by the insertion in formal and informal networks of individuals sharing certain values: through these links "the potential activist develops a certain world view; acquires the minimum information and skills needed for collective action; is confronted with the example of those already engaged in it and derives encouragement and opportunity therefrom" (della Porta and Diani 1997, 132). The formal organizations also often operate as channels for "en bloc" recruitment of people who already have political motivations and experience of collective actions. According to much research, the associational density of the rank and file of the social movements promotes their mobilization by offering not just logistical resources but also structures of loyalty and mutual solidarity. More generally, it has been noted that attainment of the collective goals is always furthered by the presence of a "social capital" made up of interaction networks and norms of reciprocity: the associations are seen as the main sources of production and reproduction of social capital. Associational membership in fact makes individuals trust self and others more, habituating them to a less egoistical way of thinking and to joint action in a community.

Activists in the globalization mobilizations seem to be rooted in a very dense network of associations, ranging from Catholics to ecologists, from social volunteers to trade unionists, from human rights supporters to women's liberation, often with multiple membership in associations of various types. While 97.6% of demonstrators interviewed at Genova stated they were or had been members of at least one association, 80.9% said at least two, 61% at least 3, 38.1% at least four, 22.8% at least 5, and 12.6% six or more (Andretta, della Porta, Mosca and Reiter 2002, 184). Research on the

activists in the European Social Forum held at Florence in November 2001 confirms the density of multiple and plural associational membership (Andretta, della Porta, Mosca and Reiter 2003). As can be seen from table 1, the activists who took part in the Florence European Social Forum have – previous or contemporaneous – experience of participation of various types, often overlapping: from NGOs to voluntary associations, from trade unions to religious groups, from parties to social movements. This rich, varied social capital does not seem to have been reduced by the Genoa events, with the subsequent debate inside and outside the movement on forms of action, nor by the terrorist attacks of 11 September—which brought some talk, especially in the US, of an early end to mobilization against neo-liberal globalization, caught between the terrorist threats and the winds of war. Indeed, after Genoa and after 11 September, the organizations critical of globalization seem to have extended their capacity to persuade and to involve particularly the activists, (but also the leaders) of the trade union movement. While the heterogeneity of the reference base is confirmed in all European countries analysed, there is however no lack of national peculiarities to underline the role of the resources and political opportunities specific to each country. A comparison between Germany and France, for instance, confirms the stronger presence in the German case of activists from “new social movements” and ecologist associations, as against the trade union component in the French case, which has, particularly through the new trade unions, had strong influence on the development of the “*altermondialiste*” movement. The greater heterogeneity of associational experience of activists in Italy and Spain by comparison with, for instance, Britain seems to point to the greater appeal of the movement in countries marked by particularly closed structures of domestic political opportunity, with centre-right governments backing neo-liberal positions and (by contrast with France) favourable to military intervention in Iraq.

Table 1. Present and/or past associational participation of European Social Forum activist

Present and/or participation in past	% participants							
	Italy	France	Germany	Spain	Britain	Other non-Italians i	Total non-Italians	Total ESF
NGOs	32,1	48,2	65,4	58,3	61,8	71,0	63,2	41,5
Trade Unions	26,3	48,9	29,1	27,1	79,7	38,5	44,6	31,8
Parties	30,3	33,1	27,8	28,1	78,0	45,7	44,5	34,6
Movements	46,5	56,9	69,6	40,0	88,6	70,1	66,9	52,7
Student collectives	55,6	44,9	45,6	54,7	85,4	66,0	61,8	57,5
Social centers	36,9	26,5	22,7	22,1	13,8	20,6	21,0	32,1
Religious movements	20,2	12,4	19,0	13,5	16,3	19,9	17,1	19,3
Environmental associations	42,9	12,9	48,8	45,3	53,7	51,1	43,5	43,1
Social volunteer associations	49,3	52,2	40,0	58,3	55,4	60,8	55,9	51,3
Sport or recreational associations	51,7	48,6	56,3	47,4	53,3	46,6	49,1	50,9

Source: Andretta, della Porta, Mosca e Reiter 2003.

The mobilization of these associational networks is fitted by a particularly flexible multi-centred organizational structure. By comparison with past movements, the “movement of movements” highlights more the presence of weak links between groups with differing organizational models. Mobilizing heterogeneous groups in fact requires a network structure that respects their specific features by bringing them into contact. The organizational model has been described as: from below, inclusive, parity-based, solidary, contaminated; all by contrast with a vertical, top-down, exclusive, hierarchical, unequal, totalizing conception.

The open and inclusive structure, already typical of other movements (particularly the women’s and peace movements) appears in globalization movements in a version with heightened reticularity. The objective becomes especially to facilitate relations by building a network of

individuals and associations – as one activist observes, “A word I feel is key to a different way of doing politics is the concept of relations...the ability to create and amplify relationships counts more than the ability to send them down from above, so another specific feature is succeeding in bringing into relation different backgrounds, different people, to create occasions that can repeat themselves: that is, I feel, a heritage of these movements of the last few years...and the capacity to bring about relations is as such horizontal...” (from Del Giorgio, Focus N.3 (woman 28 years old), p.252).

International counter-summits and campaigns, but also local-level protests, are normally organized by structures coordinating hundreds if not thousands of groups. The first Intercontinental Meeting Of Peoples Against Neo-Liberalism organized by the Zapatistas in August 1996 saw the formation of People’s Global Action, a flexible coalition of hundreds of groups from South and North brought into contact through a website. As Subcomandante Marcos, spokesman of the Chiapas rebels, said, “this intercontinental resistance network will be the means through which the various resistance movements can help each other. This intercontinental resistance network is not an organizational structure, has no head or leaders, no supreme command or hierarchy” (in Reimon 2002, 40). At Global Action Days (the first being on 18 June 1999) these activists called simultaneous protests in various parts of the world, with repertoires ranging from street fairs to caravans distributing information material to “go-ins”, a type of symbolic occupation. (Habermann 2002).. The sit-ins at Seattle were, as we have said, organized by the Direct Action Network, a network of groups that also proposed the Washington demonstrations on 16 April the following year. Mobilization against G8 in Genoa was largely coordinated by the Genoa Social Forum (GSF), which brought together some 800 groups of extremely varied sizes and origins (including, Attac Italia, Arci, Cobas, Sin. Cobas, Tute Bianche, Rete NoGlobale di Napoli, Network per i diritti globali, Giovani Comunisti, Rifondazione Comunista, Comitati Unitari di Base, Fiom, Lavoro/società-cambiare rotta della Cgil, Legambiente, Rete Lilliput, Carta, Sdebitarsi, Marcia mondiale delle donne).

Many of these combinations were formed “ad hoc” to organize a big event: being temporarily structured they often take as their name the date of the planned event. (J18; N30, A16, S26)--“Once these events are over they leave no trace behind but an archived website”. (Klein 2002, 18). Yet not only are they evidently capable of developing long-term projects, but in some cases of surviving over time, albeit with other names. For instance, the GSF was initially conceived of as a body with a limited time frame and light structure, intensely using the Internet to maintain contact between the organizations supporting the initiatives and a board of spokesmen. The logistical resources came chiefly from the most structured organizations that had joined the Social Forum. Subsequently, however, the Genoa experience continued both in the Italian Social Forum and in local social forums involving hundreds of groups that continued to have a life of their own in a common, variable-geometry assemblage, according to the various cities and undertakings. The functioning of the coordinating bodies and their spokesmen is continually discussed with attention to respect for the autonomy of the various inspirations, along with the endeavour to avoid competition among them. The search for dialogue and consensus, continually underlined as a positive factor, is translated from the organizational viewpoint into a rediscovery of assemblies for developing common values, as well as of involvement in small groups.

This search for new forms of participation also develops at local level.. Even in the past, social movements (from the feminist movement of the 70s to the pacifist one of the 80s) experimented with self-run political communication areas in small cohesive groups that coordinated with others around specific campaigns, or even general issues. Both for the Genoa demonstrations and subsequently, these public spaces were created in the local social forums which, springing up spontaneously in various Italian cities during preparation for the anti-G8 demonstrations, subsequently multiplied and restructured. The process of “empowering” the local community is, moreover, a central feature of the Zapatista proposal claiming to aim not at conquering power but at acting on human nature.

The movement is in fact defined as “a debate between different realities” (IH, p. 29); “a network of contacts”, or, more explicitly:

“a form of relations among forces, political movements, organizations etc., that have not previously worked together; it manages to hold so many approaches together by endeavouring – and I think this is the great effort – not to compel them, basically, in this way

broadening the fight ... and creating a spirit, a cultural and political breeding-ground that brings strength over time, perhaps not directly but much more indirectly, to all the other approaches" (2B, p. 38);

"a network bringing into communication a whole series of environments, of people with a common sense of things they want to change, even if among them the differences are profound. What is, I feel, very positive is the force this movement can find in having a common substrate among all these identities inside it, managing on that basis, while for a moment setting aside for the sake of the movement the more specific objectives each identity has and certainly must maintain as its own, nonetheless to realize the strength to be found from unity in diversity" (2C, p. 38).

The movement's strength is thus seen as its capacity to "*network*" associations and "individuals" – given that "for an individual it is easier to approach the movement rather than one specific association, whether party or trade union, since the movement is also broader ... in short, it's also freer, opener – there you are ... probably also for the non-organizational form it has" (3G, p. 64). The movement manages to bring together "many situations ... that in previous years, especially the last ten, did not come together enough, met around big issues for very short periods, always with a highly emotional impetus, while instead this is, I feel, the first experience I have had in such an alive way of contact and networking where the fact of being in contact and in a network is one of the most important factors ... this is the positive thing ... eh ... the value of the Social Forums ..." (4G, p. 89). The network is defined as more than a sum of groups: for it is in the network that the activist "gets to know people, forms relationships, becomes a community ..." (4A, p. 92).

4. Assemblies: between participation and delegation

The activists start from a conception of participatory democracy as counterposed to representative democracy, which anyhow does not work any longer (della Porta 2003). As emerges from the focus groups, the demand for politics coincides with a demand for *participation*, and one criticism of the parties is that by now they have become bureaucracies founded upon delegation. In one activist's words, the movement marks "the passage from representation to participation: what the movement is looking for is not to involve people through delegation" (2C, p. 42). It's the discovery that "I don't have to be represented but represent myself, so that I myself have to participate in something and don't have to feel locked out" (4A, p. 88).

Though they are modelled on types of direct democracy from past movements, the heritage has not simply been taken over uncritically. The errors of the past are recognized, and solutions to them sought, if not always found. While the main institution of the social forums is the assembly – held regularly – there are nonetheless some adjustments aimed at avoiding the flaws of past „assemblyism“. In particular, while the assembly remains as a central institution, new rules are worked out aimed at reducing the risks for both manipulation and weakness. At both Lucca and Massa, the "formula everybody could agree on" was a weekly assembly on a set day, effecting the objective of "bringing people with different backgrounds into dialogue". (Massa, man, 33 years old, Attac, p. 5).

Associated with the rejection of delegation is the option at least in principle for a *consensus method*: while the majority method provides for taking decisions by counting votes, the consensus method instead calls for debate aimed at reaching a common decision. During discussions the clash of different positions is supposed to help reach better solutions. As an activist of the Lucca Social Forum explained, after "extensive, highly charged" initial debates on the organizational formula, "we reached a sort of synthesis; organizationally, it is supposed to work like this: the assembly takes decisions and is sovereign, but hardly ever with votes, but seeks to reach a synthesis equilibrium, a decision that is maximally shared by all, with practically no decisions taken with a noose round your neck, so that an event is organized but nobody comes, so the people don't simply just say yes... that's the reason why there are hardly any votes; if there is a vote heads are counted, individuals, again, to emphasize the value of the assembly, and the associations are not counted." (Lucca, man, 28 years old, Assemblea Spazi Autogestiti, p. 4).

While the consensus method was already proposed by the student movement from its outset and later taken up with more conviction by the feminist movement, it nonetheless proved hard to

run, by slowing down decision to the point of obstructing action. Many "new global" groups revived the consensus model but created new, more or less formalized, rules to help overcome the blocks on decision created by continuing differences of opinion or manipulation of the process by a few.

One complex formalization of the consensus-oriented deciding process was, for instance, developed by the Direct Action Network that coordinated the blockade on the Seattle delegates. Within small affinity groups seeking to network, two "facilitators" (chosen by rote) are charged with leading debate and encouraging participation by all. When it seems a consensus is close, the facilitators summarize the proposal emerging from the debate and invite participants to express their position, which may range from a veto to support through a range of intermediate choices like non-support, reservations and abstention.

As one sociologist who has studied the evolution of participatory democracy practices in American movements notes, "a 60s activist would be surprised by the procedural machinery that today accompanies the democratic deciding process. There are formal roles – timekeepers, facilitators, observers of feelings – and a sophisticated range of gestures. Raising moving fingers as if playing a piano indicates support for a point; making a triangle in the air with fore-finger and thumb of both hands indicates concern with respect for rules of the deliberative process; a raised fist indicates an intention to veto the decision" (Polletta 2002, 190-91). The consensus method is thus supposed to enable all to express their opinion, learn from others and reach decisions that are easier to implement just because they are shared. The new globals differentiate themselves from what they criticize as the "California style" favouring feelings over action and seek to combine consensus and decision, with a certain pragmatism that sometimes even goes as far as accepting the principle of qualified majority (often two thirds) (ibid.). If consensual and participatory democracy has been stressed also by previous movements (Mainsbridge 1985; Breines 1989, Lichterman 1996), the challenge for the "global movement" is to combine the expressive advantages of deliberation with pragmatically efficient decision-making. In fact, "Today, direct action activists embrace consensus but not the deliberative styles that they associate with 'new age' or 'Californian' protest — self oriented... and unconcerned with practical politics" (Polletta 2002, 4).

Research on the social forums in Tuscany too highlights a search for innovation, partly through new rules. Exclusion of the weaker is to be avoided both through the presence of mediators/facilitators and by rationing discussion time. For instance, at Lucca "there's a rotating coordinator for every assembly, who takes minutes and receives material for drawing up an agenda for the next one, at which the new coordinator is appointed and it starts all over again ... this is what enabled us to make the Lucca social forum, this form that is not institutionalized and emphasizes participation", (Lucca, man, 28 years old, Assemblea Spazi Autogestiti, pp. 4-5).

"Leaders" are replaced by spokesmen, also by rotation, always many, specifically to inhibit centralization mechanisms. The rotating of chairs of meetings too is to avoid the formation of a leadership. The very complexity and articulation of the issues handled leads to "a very mobile leadership" for handling the specific tasks appropriate to the moment. At both Massa and Livorno the choice of spokesmen emerges "from time to time according to what's got to be done", rewarding competence and involvement in the movement (Livorno, woman, 23 years old, Giovani Comunisti, p. 6).

Especially where assemblies are structured into working groups, the commitment of individuals takes shape around specific initiatives: "we discussed how we should go forward, and the situation got blocked; after that the idea was to launch issue platforms and work through work groups on particular questions and give more strength to the individual groups ... then every group, and this is a nice bit, every group has people interested in that issue taking part in it" (Arezzo, man, 28 years old, Coop. La Fabbrica del Sole p. 7) "Those who can make their skills available" (...) (ibid.).

In reality, though, many activists remain critical of the assembly aspect. Activists especially note the stagger between the theoretical participatory, horizontal functioning and the actual hierarchical, exclusive functioning. Though "we all know we have to find new ways of doing politics...nobody ultimately gets what these forms might be". (Massa, man, 27 years old, Attac p. 7). In particular, if commitment by "individuals" is high in stages of heavy mobilization, "once mobilization ebbs and there's a calm period all the problems associated with internal organization return ..." (Livorno, man, 33 years old, individual, p. 11). The representativity of the assembly aspect

above all is regarded as doubtful: "thank God", notes one activist, "this is not a movement of big meetings, since I've got some problems with assemblyism, since at big meetings it's hard for anything to be decided seriously... who is to be represented, who's there besides, but what about who's not? Why aren't they? The participation summing up on Porto Alegre taught us a few things about this, I mean, what assemblies are really representative" (3C, p.66). In particular, at times of low mobilization the assembly mechanism cannot keep the non-organized participating "because instead the viewpoint we have is that in a stagnant phase when the impetus of new things, younger things, inevitably flags ... we are left to ourselves, and since we have a lived history behind us, I repeat, not just belonging to some organization ...it's a meaningful history, and everyone has their history, their practice, and according to me the risk is that maybe *people risk losing that because we present ourselves as a place politically and intellectually equipped in a way they are unable to accept*" (5E, p. 133).

Indeed, the very associational density – in terms both of the multiple memberships of activists and of the structure around social forums bring together various types of organization – offers particular challenges for building a deliberative atmosphere. As one participant in the focus groups notes "the biggest problem ... is still how to combine differing, historically established practice ... a fluid thing like the movement with organized areas ... not that I've anything at all against the organized areas, and I believe they are needed today as they were yesterday ... nonetheless it is hard. It's not hard for me to get along with A, in no way, it's harder to relate to structure as such, which at a certain point has its position, has to maintain it, and the practice of contamination and consensus can break down and lead to the things you were talking about, namely that this movement has in fact never set up representation to date, and I don't think its even able to do so today" (3E, p.65).

One much-felt risk is *manipulation* by the best organized – what the activists call "putting on a hat". Among "flaws I can see" one activist cites "the tendency to hegemony by some groups ... which I feel would mean destruction ... since ultimately as long as it's varied it's a movement, but once it's the expression of a voice, calling it a movement, well" (1D, p. 11). The assembly, as emphasized in much research, in the past too, can be controlled by "leaders and petty leaders, men and women, who turn up at the forums and try to hegemonize, little games and that ..." (2G, p. 44). At the forums, especially some of them, "this attempt to put a hat to lead us in one direction or another ..." (5D, p. 131) is noted and feared. The risk of "putting on a hat" seems, however, to be limited by the weakness of the organizations involved: "actually, the left is fragmented, and if there were a really strong party on the left ... if there really were anyone with any balls, anyone in a position to do so would definitely have put on a hat." (2E, p.47).

What is feared more than control by a political force is, however, the prevalence of *organizational logics* that make it harder for a movement identity to emerge. A critique of "the media protagonism of some people that make a move only to get into the papers" (1D, p. 11) blends with the one of organization representatives who "act as such". As one Florentine social forum activist says, "I call it the *showcase mechanism*, the fact that everybody needs to defend their identity, only to go and repeat things that have already been said, announce things everybody knows, repeat the content of leaflets being distributed, bits of communication that are just to show they exist, and all that burdens the discussion a lot ... instead of a discussion with intersecting opinions ... but this is a historical limitation, it is very tiresome ... but it's a real ritual of the assembly and if you don't deal with it, this mechanism of representing oneself, of occupying space and time, is triggered" (4G, p.96).

Additionally, if the assemblies have a symbolic function as the formally deciding body, in reality many decisions are taken not just informally but in rather more elite fashion: "but in fact this movement, as well as having these broad participatory moments, also has much more restricted sessions, in which, obviously it is me saying this, agendas, proposals and political documents are drawn up; objectively, these sessions involve representatives of organizations who are not always the epitome of novelty even in terms of their practices; there are also people there who come directly out of the movement, from a social forum or things, networks, born from the movement or its environment ... so it is not that I want to demonize those sessions, but I think they are a transition, the least evil, something temporary, in a sense it's something that has to be done ... for instance, the assembly of social forums that closed the European Forum ... while there was the assembly and all

the networks brought their agendas up, for all the 360 things that were said, it was then a restricted group not elected by anyone that actually pulled the threads together ..." (3C, p.66). The lack of transparency in assemblies is also complained of: "according to me the problem is the way we are organized...for example, the Florence-wide assemblies are really dreadful, with really useless discussions because the decisions are then taken by the three that turned up and then arranged to meet the next day and put them on the list at 2 in the morning, saying tomorrow at 3 we'll meet at the Casa del Popolo...so as to screw them all ..." (1E, p.30).

The "showcase mechanism" tends to reduce room for the non-organized to participate — "there was this magnificent charter according to which political and deciding power lies with the assembly which meets every fortnight and is the sole body that can vote and take decisions and is run dreadfully according to me ... *it's so boring ... it's always the same ones that talk*, with 20 years of political experience behind them, and ultimately the language is exclusive, and if you try to bring up some innovative aspiration you're of course expelled ... I'm saying this because I participated a lot at the beginning, trying to get something else done, but ultimately what's the use ... in fact I've reached the conclusion that the assembly exists, but I've stopped going there except in a few cases" (4A, P.96). In fact the very creation of solidarity internally reduces openness to the outside: "after a bit, at the full assembly, with all the discussion of everything and everyone some people couldn't stand it any more. Those who stayed on were in a sense amalgamated, and the new ones that came along, I've seen this even recently, didn't find things easy ..." (Arezzo, 30 year old man, Cooperativa la Fabbrica del Sole, p. 7).

A mechanism of "intergroups" is stigmatized as an expression of "bossiness" by the better organized over the "individuals". The weakness of some forums at both local and national level is explained by the "individual who maybe goes away again because within the Forum or during some more local affairs there's a sort of quote-unquote "bossiness" by already organized groups seeking to hegemonize the Forum and draw attention to a few issues that are their previous struggles, in short, logics of political power too, by parties dialoguing with the movement" (2E, p.44). Even the "long-range identity" of the more structured organizations is seen as a barrier to the growth of the movement — to the point that in the perception of one participant the activists from areas with more decentralized structures tend to interact better among themselves than with the representatives of bureaucratic structures: "The Lilliput and the Disobedients are, for me, more part of an area that has affinities of method ... in short, of ways of working, whereas I see it as harder to get ... say ... ARCI and Lilliput to communicate ... or in short, the parties, the big associations...I think they're what slow things down most because they have different identities....different methods of working" (4G, p.90).

It is particularly at national level that the risk is seen as greatest of "federations of organizations that sometimes reach agreement but then compete when they can ... look at the thing about the processions...the CGIL, the COBAS and all the rest of them ... because those organizations are in competition and cannot accept one of them following after the other and so forth" (5E, p.132). What here prevails is in fact the logic of intergroups — "in the sense that what is represented are genuine organizations, associations, with a name ... there's delegation, there's representation" (4G, p.108). Mere coordination – with "the envoys of the various parties trying to get out of it what they can" (4A, p.108) — is presented as rather undemocratic because it excludes the less organized – "I've been at some assemblies and some meetings in Rome, and according to me it's a real disaster there, I even felt they were mocking me in a way... anything but consensus method, who decides is a small group of people that speak a language all of their own" (4°, p.108).⁴

⁴ This is seen as entailing a loss of social rootedness – "I think there shouldn't even exist an Italian Social Forum because ... it arose to organize Genoa, the Genoa Social Forum, in which I took part... after Genoa it should have dissolved, since otherwise the way it's gone there's a risk of becoming a political entity and losing identity as a movement and discrediting the movement ... it represented one political area, that's all ... it's going badly because the Italian Social Forum is a sort of political organization ... that is, it may call itself a movement, but it's a political thing ... a thing instrumentalized by politics, whereas the European Social Forum or the World Social Forum are broad things, no longer political ..." (1E, p.29).

As we shall see below, however, some features of the movement seem, at many times, to enable the overcoming of the limits of direct democracy through the building up of tolerant identities, the emphasis on subjectivity and a certain contamination in the course of the action.

4. Tolerant identities

In general, as has been noted in previous research too, the emerging movement devotes particular attention to open confrontation between different positions and identities. For instance, Francesca Polletta stresses the use by activists of deliberative talk: "they expected each other to provide legitimate reasons for preferring one option to another. They strove to recognize the merits of each other's reasons for favouring a particular option... the goal was not unanimity, so much as discourse. But it was a particular kind of discourse, governed by norms of openness and mutual respect" (Polletta 2002, 7). Also our militants stress tolerance as a positive and innovative characteristic of the new movement.

If the prevalence of organizational logic is regarded as negative, that does not mean that dissolution of the movement is proposed. Instead, what seems to be spreading is a conception of multiple identities, in part incorporated in "histories" of organizations, which are asked not to abandon their own path but instead to engage in dispassionate, open confrontation. As one activist says, who says she is „not politicized in the strictly bureaucratized sense....“ ,

"I see these petty leaders endeavouring to hegemonize, and I see there are many people like me who not only try to stop them but to ... tell them '... make your objectives clear' because ... let's be concrete ... if Rifondazione [refounded Communist party] is in, it's because they have a set of objectives they believe in and ... that's not to attribute bad intentions to Rifondazione ... but only if instead of stating you're from Rifondazione and fighting for something, that this is the issue and is what it's important to act on, so that I can give you a clear, logical, rational answer, so that we can talk about it, if instead you start playing games Then ... if they are told to state their intentions the movement will have the strength to respond, to throw out these games, if they state them, for there's no problem with being a party political force that's in, as long as the objectives are declared ... it's obvious that on the one hand there's consensus and on the other dissent ... the more the position is objective ... I, if I'm there, I'm not out of time or out of history ... I've got my own history, my own personality, and that may also be true of an organized group, I've got a whole series of traits I carry inside, but I have to objectivize them and make them collective" (2G, pp. 44-45)

The concern for the consequences of competition among organizations in the movement is further mitigated by the movement's perceived capacity to *transform initial identities*, especially by building up relations of mutual trust:

"I'm more worried that what exists may not manage to find the room, the ways, to really build up a network ... that it may stay shut into an informal dimension, which is fine by me ... but for it to be communicating, to be a fabric, and this is a fear I have ... always with the proviso that according to me what is surprising about this movement by and large is a great ability to correct itself ... so it's as if it started off with a tradition already, even a bit antiquated, but there was this capacity for self-correction ... at a certain point there's also trust, maybe if you know that there has to be someone that takes in hand things that have to be done, and all in all that point is accepted ... but there's the fact that the organizations are not just organizations and that's all, and those in them have sold their brains for the sake of belonging, and maybe even don't think for themselves ... because I don't think that people always need disclosure of how things are in the world, sometimes maybe they need to be heard, need another way of talking, not intellectual systematization, or militancy, let's say ... that's what I think..." (5E, pp. 132-33).

The construction of identity also runs through adoption of a common logo, like the one consisting of the very name of social forum, adopted by locally different organizations that are evolving in the same direction. This emerges, for instance, from the following dialogue recorded during a focus group:

"B: I'm afraid ... that in some ways the various Social Forums are being used by various people a bit like a *logo*, that is, I also saw the situations in the provinces where people always sought to get active on the social side etc. etc. and couldn't manage to find any self-definition, and at a certain point in the wake of Genoa this logo of Social Forum came along to give an identity to those who wanted to do something around certain issues but without being on the inside of previous structures, well, according to me this aspect is there as well ... there's talk of the proliferation of social forums in Italy by comparison, maybe, with other situations elsewhere, and I see that maybe at Campiglia Marittima the social forum is ex scouts, whereas somewhere else the social forum people are Rifondazione lads plus two or three friends that came along later ...this is another aspect that's there ...anyway, it serves ...

F: it works ...

C: it works ... and then anyway it's a fruitful thought that one chooses self-definition as social forum ... that is, it's like saying that I consider myself to be working on certain issues, and I acknowledge that what I'm working for does not belong to me alone, so that in a way it's as if a door were opening, onto the forum, onto the piazza ...

G: you feel less contradiction about belonging to a party, a trade union, and to one association, and at the same time to other ones ...".

Something seen as "kind of epoch making" is the fact that "there really is belonging ... yet they're actually not exclusive, that's the novelty...". The action itself reflects and promotes mutual contamination, with simultaneous expression of multiple identities:

"G. we are going to the demonstration, what part of the demonstration will we be with? What banner do we parade under? Well, someone who's from the CGIL, but even ... well this is something obvious but it gets the point across...identity as a social forum is, according to me, taking roots from the identity viewpoint ... according to me, yes ... those that belong – myself, by the way, I don't belong to anything, but those who belong to bigger organizations, according to me they feel belonging to the social forum is something that matters ...

B: and try to shift the banner as close as possible ...

G: yes, that's true ... at the European Social Forum demonstration there was some wonderful dancing around this sort of thing ... you wanted to be in 4 or 5 places at once ...

C: I think it's a kind of sign of the times too ... as well as the fact that today you can even experience belonging in a different way ... there's no longer political belonging in a strong sense, but you can experience belonging in a different way, maybe by discussing the type of theoretical analysis lying behind it, saying: no, I don't accept the world the way it is ..." (pp. 89-93).

In joint actions – especially when it comes to smaller scales, such as small working groups – the capacity is seen for building common values, for being "contaminated", or as one activist says, of "fluidifying". The various organizational solutions adopted are thus often defined in pragmatic fashion as experimentations, efforts to get as close as possible to the participatory model:

"I personally, in the contamination and in participation in the movement, have come back to believing in certain things and have come to realize that ... it's one thing to arrive at a democratic situation more or less in assemblies where de facto more or less preconstituted positions clash, and then there's a vote and a majority and a minority, that's quite different from building a participatory pathway, in mutual respect, where the various positions fluidify and the various areas, even the organized ones ... for in the Forum there are areas and organizations ... including mine ... that are really organized, yet there's a *new willingness to really fluidify*, for confrontation without wanting to pull this way or that, more or less, some people more and some less, then in the end you can do it all the same, but those who do not vote or maybe occasionally vote against are really such a marginal proportion, and those who have really shared their their own motivations with others, that ultimately there's not that trauma that there is in the long run in those organizations that work with the old system instead ..." (3C, p. 66)

Building a common organization thus does not rule out other membership – indeed, the copresence of organizational memberships and identities is seen as an enrichment, enabling a specific nature to be kept while building common identities. As one activist explains, there is participation “as long as I can manage to find myself”:

“For instance, my collective ... we joined the Social Forum right from the beginning, and kept it up, and what keeps us there is also collaboration at the tables that might even have interested us rather more, since a university collective like ours often chooses to be ... in parallel is crude ... but transversal to the Forum. Certainly, there are interpretations, confrontations, identities that also lead you to create a group, and hence also have positions about things, and develop analyses of questions, when you go into eminently practical questions, small ones, we find ourselves giving an interpretation of the DS {democratic left} party within the mechanism of war, of city or regional questions etc. etc., and maybe you go into the streets with the Social Forum and you can see there’s some difficulty in taking a position on the DS, the choices at that point become specific ... or we try an internal battle within the Forum itself, by encouraging group divisions, and ultimately you are going to block the work of a whole series of people or comrades, or else the fact of saying *I participate as long as I can manage to find myself* ... maybe choose to have more external participation, to go along to give a contribution on individual questions, and it’s there that the various collaborations arise among groups about pieces of knowledge, training and all the rest ...” (2D, p.46).

Fluidity and multiplicity of belonging is even presented as a vaccine against the risks of manipulation — “the movement is not a container, but creates a series of relationships ... in the sense that I with my collective, inside my university, never felt the problem of hegemony inside the movement ... since in relation to the work I do ... in the sense that anything that has been done by the Florence Social Forum never affected my work, and this gives me incredible tranquillity ... it’s because of the general structure of the movement, which makes it *hard to hegemonize* by any single force, maybe just because there isn’t one strong enough, but I think that this very structure makes it not possible to hegemonize” (2B, p.47).

5. Subjectivity in the movement

The reticularity of organization is displayed in respect for differences. The acceptance of diversity is counterposed to the homogenization (“macdonaldization”) of “top-down” globalization; differentiation versus homogenization. Against exclusive belonging to an organization, multiple identities are emphasized. According to one activist from Bologna, “[I believe that] one of the great steps forward is that you can say one day I’ll go and keep the Tobin Tax stand, another I’ll go with the Lilliput network, or I’ll put on the white overalls The strength of this movement is the very fact you can do things and join things, make your contribution even if you have no faith-like swallowing of everything, you can join, one time 20%, or 30%...” (from del Giorgio, Focus N.3, 29 year old man, p.234).

Linked with multiplicity, respect for *subjectivity* is in fact perceived as a new and positive aspect of the movement: “it’s the jump there has been from the 70s to today... it’s the fact that there’s no longer a homogeneity, whether theoretical or practical, but diversity that is the objective to maintain and strengthen” (from Del Giorgio, 24 year old woman, Focus N.2). The difference is a value for the activists: “it’s just this that’s the challenge, the fact that anyhow everyone that comes into the movement brings along themselves, their own identity, their own vision, but it’s not that this vision stays unchanged, unaltered, stopped and static there, it is the fact that things then shift a bit, intersect, come together, and some visions are contaminated by others too, and ultimately what comes out is never the same as what went in” (Del Giorgio, 26 year old man, Focus N.2).

The activists themselves, moreover, perceive their individual participation as fundamental, building a conception of militancy that values individual subjectivities. While the individualization of “postmodern” cultures has traditionally been regarded as a barrier to collective action – isolating individuals from the sources of collective solidarity and emphasizing egoism and egocentrism – in the globalization mobilizations there seems to be developing a type of militancy that instead respects subjectivity. By contrast with the totalizing model of militancy in past movements, in fact, there is

affirmation of the value of individual experiences and capacities. For the emphasis is on the individual, before the organization: the style of militancy has to respect the various "subjectivities" instead of annihilating them in the community. As Italian activists say, "if subjectivity dies then the whole movement dies a bit, or else it ends up like everything else, like the parties Subjectivity can change the frames it's set in, but cannot die"; "for me subjectivity is our ideal horizon, or point of arrival ... for me doing politics also means building a society in which subjectivities can coexist, can be rich, since otherwise we would have to be content with the levelling-down model that is imposed on us... obviously we want to struggle, because we are different, and we build a subjectivity on the basis of contrast with the other that is facing us ... subjectivity is me with what I have to say, it is what I propose."

The involvement of individuals is regarded positively and also in terms of specific contributions to the construction of knowledge. In the words of one participant in the focus group,

"... there are events that tend to structure responses, not just state themes ... since if the full meetings were really very broad, so that the issues were tackled on a broad spectrum ... for on all these problems there are so many answers ... it was the workshops on more specific themes that were the potentiality existing in parallel inside the Forum ... that's what ought to come forth, and this has to be the line to bring out those who are working inside with *specialist knowledge* greater than mine and make them disclose it to me ... for by putting everybody's skills together, everyone looking for an alternative system, we can say I'm not against but I'm for, and that's a verbal gap that is not easy ... the most complicated part ... because what comes out is people, what they do, what they are in life over and above political activity, since what you do is specialist knowledge... so I know that at the point where I need to talk about information, I'll go and see a group of people working on that" (2, pp. 44-45).

From the organizational viewpoint, in fact, the working group on specific issues, with a smaller number of participants and oriented to building knowledge as well as joint initiatives, is seen as more constructive than the assemblies. As one activist says, "there are working groups in the Florence Forum that work ...it's those small groups that work" (1E, p. 30).

In the working groups there is in fact a perceived presence of "mutual listening", as well as a building of knowledge regarded as of increasing importance. Given that "waiting for a confrontation, and this is true of both the European Social Forum and the world one, for the local Forums there's a bitter confrontation requiring not just the contribution of ever broader, more widespread energy but also more skill. That means the working groups are very important from my point of view, giving the capacity to grow together, in the search for and also production of content in the working groups ... so much so that by now in the Florence Social Forum alone there are some ten groups, and they're getting along wonderfully. They are getting along that way because they are attached to some sort of knowledge, to a content, to some substance, and they go on to produce initiatives" (5D, p. 131).

6. Contamination in action

Even if organizational identities are kept alive and at some points decisive, the activists in various areas of the movement share the impression of an improvement in mutual relationships. Commitment to common campaigns as regarded as a basis for construction of relations of mutual trust – according to one participant "we've improved a lot ... I feel the last assemblies were more ... I'm not saying all of them, since every so often there are those assemblies that fall back into those mechanisms of assemblyism, self-referentiality etc. ... but all in all the assemblies also manage to get something together ... also because, this is banal, but we've got to know each other better, there's a relationship aspect that goes on to grow, and a certain diffidence there might have been at the outside evaporates, so that..." (4C, pp.96-97).⁵

⁵ One activist from the Lilliput network recalls that "on 24 July 2001 a demonstration in Florence after the Genoa event, and we, as Lilliput, decided to take part, but there were a lot of problems for this organization that the

Interaction around concrete objectives helps, in the activists' view, to build an ever solidier common base. Different subjects join together to "get it together" around concrete objectives, and at any rate build a gradually broader common path:

E: a Forum brings together absolutely different entities, but at least on the big issues they manage to come together ... that's its richness ... the capacity to bring together differing entities that can at least talk about the big issues

C: I feel there's also a certain weakness in the Forum, namely ... that according to me there's a weakness up to a certain point because even if it's maybe been a strategically winning choice ... namely to go forward for a long time coming together around particular points, leaving aside more systematic discussions, theoretical ones and so on ... the way the Florence Social Forum too was born, bigger communicative capacity and a blending of languages ... that is, I believe that even only a year ago, for instance, it would have been impossible to confront each other the way we are doing now, even if according to me confrontation does not come into the questions all that much ... I repeat, it's fine that way, since if the confrontation had been a year ago according to me the Social Forum would immediately have split, it wouldn't have stood up, and maybe today the times would be ripe, perhaps ... I don't know, to try to do, I am not saying a systematic analysis we can all agree on, but at least to try focusing a little more

F: Yes, I too think this method worked, I don't know whether over time, there you are ... but for now it's maybe the method that has enabled so many different entities to stay together ... the method you were talking about, of going ahead only on some things, emphasizing the points of convergence, and going forward only on the basis of ...

G: maybe without going further into ...

F: without tackling any maybe too thorny points, no? But likely in time the thing ... but so far the experience is very positive in that sense ... me, given we're talking about the 80s ... I don't remember anything of this sort

F: yes ... but there's always been communication difficulties among different universes ... this type of capacity for synthesis has never existed, and that's very positive, even if it's based on the premise of not tackling some thorny points that sooner or later will come along.

From an initially instrumental impetus to act as a coalition there ensues the start of a process of building a collective identification – albeit partial, given that "the relationship with any organization ought properly to be to take a critical position but try to form part of a general scheme *even not taking totally on board everything that's offered to you, but at any rate belonging to something*" (IG, p. 19).

7. A New Public Sphere?

For all the risks of manipulation and bureaucratization the activists identify, their shared hope is that the flexible, multilayer organizational structure may build up arenas for confrontation among different associations and subjectivities, that do not just act in common but also transform each other reciprocally, building new identities and values, becoming communities:

Florence Social Forum had made, not typical of our ways of doing things, it didn't really respect the non-violence clause, since what happened going along Via Martelli was shouts of 'murderers', and in the Lilliput style that's really not something you say, and talking on the platform there was Alessandro Santoro the priest from Le Piagge, and there were lots of comments....'yes, he does speak well, but in the last analysis he's a sort of dependent of the Pope' because Alessandro Santoro is a priest and a priest ... and this problem is one I've discussed a lot since, a big problem that has not been solved, this division according to which so many Catholics are the ones a bit on the right, those are ultimately the baddies, and I don't think it can be easily solved, but the situation has improved, from Genoa to the European Social Forum the situation improved a lot, in short, there's a lot less tension (1E, p. 13).

"the desire for change is so widespread that it overcomes the organization, the organizations can't manage to sustain it ... the organizations have a logic of their own whereby if you're a member of the CGIL you'll probably go on the CGIL bus and take as yours what is the objective of its struggle, if you're a member of Pax Christi you'll go with Lilliput ... in this sense the organization is very broad and very varied, but for God's sake let the talking not stop there....there's this great spread of mailing lists, initiatives, leafletting: there's no one site or body that brings them all together ... there's a very broad offer, in which the individuals can orient themselves without having to select exclusively, this is a movement open to all and then from a certain point of view the offer from the organizations is magnificent, visible in all the stands at the European Forum ... everyone around realized how varied the actual situation is ... I got caught up in the wave of enthusiasm too, and got involved in 45 different activities ... according to me the individual is activated specifically by curiosity, from having heard something said, by all these colourful demonstrations, by the desire to be there ... you get there ... you also see yourself being offered nice things, and maybe you'll join and go in a direction your way of feeling takes you ... *you won't stay aside to check out everything, probably you'll come into the network, get to know some people, form relationships, become a community* ... of whatever type ... and then maybe gradually you'll become aware of all the entities, and leave some to join others ... there's a lot more room for such things ... (4A, p.92).

Concluding, at least from the normative viewpoint, there is trust in a deliberative democracy where the individuals (still more than the associations) bring their contributions to the *debate*, helping the emergence of the common good. The deliberative element emerges particularly in the acknowledged higher capacity for dialogue – "the Forum has something evangelical, that is, something new, something we were waiting for, something there was a need of ... how is it new? It's new particularly ... in the way of arguing, the way of confronting each other, in its caution, its different mode of approach, avoiding oppositions: it's bringing together components that are very far from each other and very different, that see each other a different way today ..." (6G, p. 144). For all the difficulties the activists acknowledge and discuss, politics is experienced as an involvement of citizens (even "individuals") in developing "demands" and "responses":

"the movement of movements associated with the Forum has, according to me, also the ability to bring organized structures (even old ones, with ideologies etc.) into relation with individuals, and hence with the movement in the truest sense ... even a guy speaking at a meeting is at least making a contribution, bringing a change even in relation to his own ideas, his own sensitivity ... it's no longer the way it was, with the movement on the one hand with its spontaneity, asking questions, and on the other the politicians giving answers or trying to ... in this case the answers come along with the questions, and the questions come along with the answers, because the thing is being built: that is, the possible world is being built. Parties, associations, organized groups, were just what historically set themselves up as the ones that gave answers (from an ideological, institutional, existential viewpoint). Today it's not that way, today there's this movement that is first and foremost building a spirit ... that is, building a surplus, an added value which neither the individuals nor the organizations have by themselves, but by putting themselves together, looking in this way for a sort of alchemy, something rather unusual, since in Italy or in Europe no dynamic of this kind has ever been seen" (2A, pp. 42-43).

For the older activists, the movement reopens a public sphere that had been shut off in foregoing decades: "I come from the old twentieth-century militancy of the Fifties, Sixties and Seventies, but then came the yuppie years, the Eighties and then the terrible Nineties where there was no room for political action except what was decided by political bureaucracies of varying kinds ... so for me it was a reopening of a public space of confrontation, debate, initiative, which certainly ... may also be the beginning of a new politics, no longer delegated or entrusted to the competent, to technicians, but taken on by people as their own prime responsibility" (6E, p. 143).

The very essence of the movement, its "constant becoming", is also regarded as being the search for questions and answers involving the activist in the wealth of his "subjectivity": "politics is also a struggle of ideas, not just organizing something, it's also choosing what to organize around, since otherwise we risk falling into a logic that I feel is old, for which politics is organization, is the

bureaucratic thing, is coordination, is you having one job and him another, is him being up top and you down below ... the notion is that just because it is a movement it has no programme, no preconstitution, but it's something being built" (2A, p. 48). Particularly the new generations are acknowledged to have a sensitivity towards a politics based on confrontation and search rather than on demand and delegation. In the observations by "fathers" and "mothers", sons and daughters convey a vision of politics as the building of values – as "making the *polis*" in the words of one participant in the focus groups:

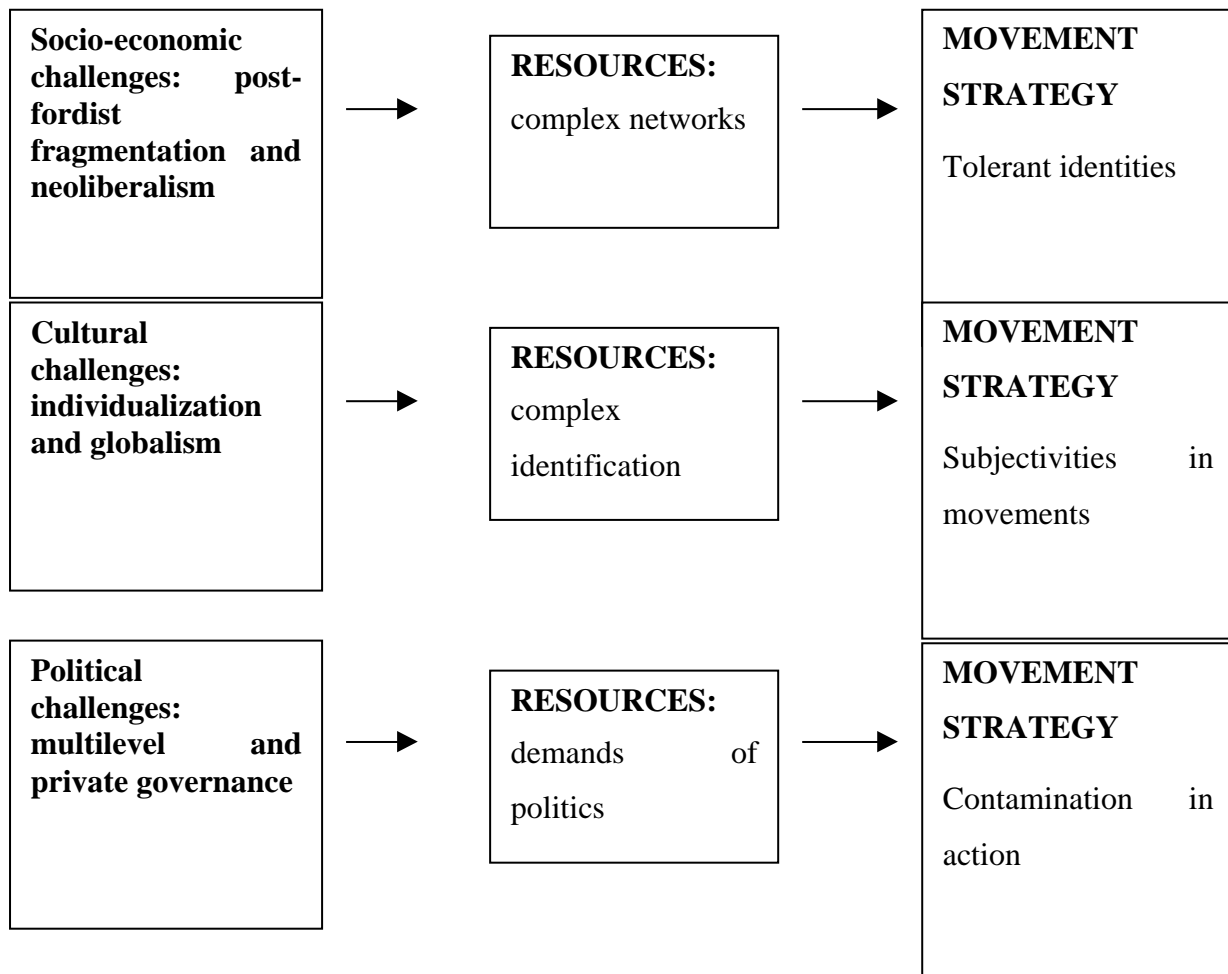
"the encounter between this crisis for my politics (which was nonetheless also a desire for politics, since otherwise I'd have stayed home) and these ex-students of mine, these young people that seemed to me to have ... the same desire for something different, but something very instinctive, joyous, celebratory, practical (not just theorized but practised). So this encounter was really something great for me, the possibility of a way of doing politics which is immediately a building of public places, building the *polis*, not organizing in order to gain votes, become a majority, govern, change the world, but immediately, on the spot, because you manage to build relationships, set up contacts, do concrete things, no? Doing politics straight away in this sense, making society, *making the polis*, has for me been the most exhilarating aspect" (5E, p. 123).

8. Democracy in movement: some conclusions

A typical feature of the globalization movement is a stronger emphasis on the presence of multiple identities, networked thanks also to respect for differences, valuing of subjectivities and of contamination in action. This is why the internal organizational structure emphasizes consensus and rejection of delegation – with rotating spokespeople (who are *ipso facto* often criticized). Elements that resonate with the definition of deliberative democracy are the inclusive, horizontal structure, the stress on individual participation and knowledge, and the development of new syntheses on the basis of different positions.

Organizationally, these features have led to a highly networked structure. As summarized in Scheme 2, the organizational elements we have highlighted represent adjustment to a number of challenges that the movement has faced, given their resources available to it.

Scheme 2. Challenges, resources and movement strategies



In the first place, the challenge of post-Fordist society is a weakening of traditional identities, with fragmentation particularly of the social basis of the workers' movement. The deregulation of the economic market, with the spread of non-traditional jobs, has helped to fragment the social reference basis for protest. Even the social movements of the libertarian left have seen a tendency to specialize around single issues. At the same time, however, there has been a structuring of more or less formal organizations and groups linked to various movements emerging in the seventies and eighties, but also to the "old left". In these conditions the movement faces the challenge to keep different, heterogeneous groups together by developing tolerant identities. In a reticular, flexible structure, the forums represent arenas open to horizontal communication that tends to be based on respect for differing opinions.

Second, one element of postmodernity is a spreading of a culture that emphasizes the role of the individual. Processes of "individualization" have in fact been seen as obstacles to the development of collective action, taking away the strong identifications of the past. On the other hand, however, as some scholars of social movements have already indicated (especially Melucci @@), contemporary societies offer multiple resources for building up complex identities. In some circumstances collective action has been observed even on the presence of a culture marked by personalism, i.e. "ways of speaking or acting which highlight a unique personal self. Personalism supposes that individuality has inherent value, apart from one's material and social achievement, no matter what connections to a specific community or institutions the individual maintains" (Lichterman 1996, 86). The challenge for the contemporary movements is, then, to develop a model

of internal democracy able to bring all the subjectivities together by valuing the role of individuals instead of sacrifice for the collective.⁶

Finally, neo-liberalism, by stressing markets' capacities for self-regulation, has emphasized the difficulties of representative democracies that appear as crises of consent. Globalization as liberalization of movements of goods and capital has in particular spread an image of growing inability of national governments to intervene in the major economic and social problems (starting with unemployment), with deterioration in particular in policies for reducing inequality. The international organizations seem for their part to be oriented towards investment in a policy of favouring free trade, with a growing democratic deficit in public decisions. If these circumstances seemed to be reducing citizens' trust and interest in democratic participation, in fact by contrast the new cycle of protest is witness to a growing demand for politics, albeit of a new, unexpected type, in particular from the new generations. In this sense, the challenge for the movement is to build an organizational model that can enable broad participation in joint campaigns, thereby promoting contamination in the course of action.

The network structure has undeniable advantages at times of mobilization, enabling very broad aggregations. The fact that the various groups retain their autonomous identities encourages broad participation and a search for agreement, a prerequisite for common mobilization. By not compressing differences, the movement expands its potential reference groups. It was already noted in connection with the Seattle demonstrations that "fluidity makes the movement able to adopt to rapid changes; the affinity groups, with high personal responsibility, are less permeable to fragmentation – even though it is hard to solve internal conflicts, overcome the competition, not be taken over, define criteria of representativity and pluralism" (from Starhawk, "How we really Shut Down the WTO"). As this description of the Direct Action Network brings out, a flexible organization also facilitates more disruptive action, reducing the risks of deference: "Two or three times a day, a little before the demonstration, DAN scheduled meetings of affinity group spokesmen, the *spokecouncils*, to assign specific roles and tasks, control the various areas and establish the organization of specific formations and strategies for non-violent struggle. Several hundred people took part in such meetings. The militants were always informed at the last moment by mobile phone, to advert the risk of police intervention" (Aguillon 2001, 8). The federative structure allowed both extensive mobilization before the counter-summit and efficient logistic organization. It has, for instance, been noted that at Seattle demonstrators were perfectly prepared: from the distribution of maps and gadgets to the independent mass media centre (Lichbach and Ameda 2001). As "The Economist" (11-17/12/1999): writes "The non-governmental organizations that fell upon Seattle were an example of everything the trade negotiators were not. They were well organized, had built unusual coalitions (environmentalists and trade unionists, for instance, overcame old divisions in order to act together against the WTO). They had a clear agenda: to obstruct the negotiations. And they were extremely able at exploiting the media." (p. 82).

The rejection of permanent leadership limits the dangers of personalization or oligarchization. The plurality of groups, foundations, churches, intellectuals, associations and communities reduces the weight of identification with a single organization, and the associated danger of bureaucratization, understood also in the sense of a prevalence of a dynamic of organizational survival over realization of the objectives. The decentralized structure is presented as an explicit rejection of the centralization of the big corporations, and dispersion of power as a contrast with the concentration of power. (Klein 2002, 21). One recent study has brought out the growth of networked non-governmental organizations in the form of lightly coordinated coalitions (Anheier and Themundo 2002), enabled by the reduction of communication costs, but also more harmonious by comparison with an individualized culture. Moreover the evolution from hierarchic centralization to a network structure concerns not just the movement organizations but also firms and public administrations, given the effectiveness of networks in reducing coordination costs and facilitating transmission to the centre of information collected on the periphery (Anheier and Themundo 2002).

⁶ Research on local groups in Attac-France also brings out rejection of the idea of sacrifice for the sake of the cause: activists do not want to conform to the group but to make available their own diversity, seeing themselves as specific individualities and bearers of resources (Szczepanski, in press).

There nonetheless remain some difficulties with network structures, associated particularly with the high time investment needed to take decisions and the risk of fragmentation, especially in stages when mobilization declines. As the social forum experiences are showing, the various ideologies in the movement sometimes have difficulty staying networked, with a tendency towards distrust of political commitment among Catholic groups, the tensions of national politics on the wing closer to the "old left", and the search for autonomous means for expressing social conflict among the Disobedients. The Italian Social Forum, born in Florence in October 2001 to coordinate the local forums, was indeed not to have an easy life; there were frequent criticisms of personalism directed at the spokesmen,⁷ and fears are often expressed that the coordination might act as an intergroup thing rather than a deliberative arena. The ideal of deliberative democracy, based on openness to others' arguments, in fact requires large doses of mutual trust and solidarity, often more present at local than at national level. The stress on consensus does not eliminate the more or less frequent need for majority decisions, nor the problem of representativity and of control of delegates and spokesmen from below. The decentralized structure is defined as better adapted to the extension of mobilization than to developing proposals for synthesis (Klein 2002, 23). Tendencies for better-structured organizations to instrumentalize, along with poor transparency of deciding processes, have often been stigmatized by the activists themselves, who nonetheless believe in their search for a different model of internal democracy. More generally, there is a fear that the need for a more stable organizational structure may in future generate notable conflicts within the movement on the conception and practice of democracy (Rucht 2002b).

Even though intermittently, with particular success in the stages of mobilization to act, the movement nonetheless seems to have succeeded in the more delicate task: to build collective identities that can be presented as plural and tolerant. Valuing knowledge, subjectivity and publicity can be seen as basic elements in the new deliberative arenas – at least at the times when "making the polis" prevails over "intergroups".

⁷ "Another handicap is personalization, but that was something that was in the order of things ... this point that according to me was very clear ... the Genoa spokesmen might well step down, but it was obvious that the newspapers would keep on looking for the same people, and also clear that they would be wishing for people that could put on a show, no?" (5E, p. 133).

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FONTI:

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