Deliberation and Protest: A Closer Look at Social Fora dynamics

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Abstract

The paper focuses on two key domains: the psychosocial dynamics of protest in social movements and deliberative democracy theory and practice. Explorative research on an Italian Social Forum has been carried out, aimed at: a) verifying the consistency and the correspondence between the construct of deliberative democracy and the interactive functioning of social fora; b) probing the factors underlying the "social psychology of protest" (Klandermans, 1997); c) integrating the two domains at an empirical level. Results lack generalization but provide useful indications to renew the theoretical assumptions concerning the psychosocial processes involved in deliberative interaction and protest.

Key words: Collective Action, Psychology of Protest, Deliberative Democracy

1. Introduction

In the last decade deliberative democracy has acquired increasing significance as a valuable alternative to the crisis in traditional representation devices. The basis of deliberation, as Habermas (1996) proposed in his seminal work, is discursive practice; through the argumentation of different points of view and opinions, citizens can modify their preferences and take consensual decisions (Dryzek & List, 2002). At present, deliberative democracy has its backers as well as its opponents; those who exalt the virtues of deliberative principles (Fung & Wright, 2000) face those who underline the risks and the pitfalls hidden in this very concept of democracy (Sanders, 1997). Deliberation's desirability (Fishkin, 2000), in fact, is not *per se* a warranty for its correct application. Increasing attention, then, has been given to the empirical translation of principles and procedures (Gutmann & Thompson, 2000; Muhlberger, 2000). Several critiques have shed light on the risk of manipulation implied in deliberative process, as well as on the violation of equity, the systematic under-representation of certain categories and the quality of decisions.

One of the most critical element is certainly represented by the argumentative skill of participants; as Sanders (1997) pointed out, some individuals are more skilled than others in supporting their own preferences by rational arguments. Another critical facet is the problem of issue framing. Prospect theory (Kahneman & Tversky, 1979) unequivocally showed that no neutrality is achievable in information framing: on the contrary, motivations of proponents influence the way information is provided; different decisions are taken depending on whether gains or losses are emphasized. Both these points suggest that persons establishing and managing deliberative settings should be careful and fully aware of the discretionary power they have and of the risks of manipulation they take. Deliberation occurring in weakly institutionalized settings has recently awakened the interest of social movements scholars, since anti-global groups have began to put it into practice. Social movements scholars have repeatedly underlined the articulate and heterogeneous nature of the anti-global movement, but at the same time they have stressed the unitary identity that stems from this variegated archipelago of associations (Diani, 2000; Diani & Bison, 2004; Tarrow, 2005).

The establishment of social fora is the direct consequence of this constitutive heterogeneity, since collective discussion is required to maintain unity. Thus, if social movements can be partly regarded as workshops of participative democracy, social fora represent real 'field experiments' (Della Porta, 2005; Della Porta & Andretta, 2002). Studying such experiences requires that two separate dynamics are taken into account: the dynamic of deliberation, and the dynamics of protest, which is the distinctive attribute of social movements and, generally speaking, is the aim as well as the rationale of collective action. From a social psychology perspective, Klandermans (1997; 2000; 2002) proposed the concept of 'collective action structures' to refer to cognitions that define the collective mental set in which participation is socially constructed.

Beliefs, Klandermans explains, spring from an interactive process through which information available in the media system, in personal experiences, and in common sense are processed and interpreted. Nevertheless, individual dispositions (e.g. reflexivity, involvement, knowledge) and cultural *topoi* decide which is the most influential source and what sort of information processing is to be undertaken. When this complicated device results in a sense of injustice, collective identity and agency, then a collective action structure arises

2. Social Fora: Mixing deliberation and protest

Based on the considerations set forth above, this article presents the results of an exploratory study, planned to shed light on the interlacing of deliberation and protest, respectively regarded as the process and the outcome. The study had two intertwined goals. The first objective was to verify the consistency and the correspondence between the qualities attributed to deliberative democracy and the qualities peculiar to the interaction and the decision making process in social forum settings. The second objective was to probe the dynamics of social fora in the light of the 'social psychology of protest' (Klandermans, 1997). The fundamental research questions were thus the following:

a) Can social fora be regarded as 'deliberative arenas'? Do they own the distinctive features which literature mainly applies to deliberative settings?

b) To what extent these factors which account for protest – a sense of injustice, collective identification and agency – affect, and are affected by the deliberative process?

In order to answer these questions, we analysed an Italian Social Forum hosted in Turin (Turin Social Forum, henceforth on TSF) using its digital interface; we then examined the contents collected in the TSF web site. We selected TSF from a variety of social forum web sites according to two criteria: on the one hand, TSF seemed to express and voice a network of groups whose activity is rooted in a territorial tradition of struggle; to put it in different terms, TSF may be regarded as a representative exemplar of the anti-global movement. On the other hand, TSF has invested in starting up and updating an articulate, well-constructed web site, which is lavish with documentation. Once we had selected the forum as the object of our investigation, we proceeded with an analytic individuation of the elements constituting both deliberative democracy and protest, and proposed an operational definition.

3. Method

Based on the indications found in the extensive literature on deliberative democracy, the following distinctive features were identified: *Logos* (discursive and argumentative practice resulting in a decision concerning collective interests); *Inclusiveness* (involvement of larger and larger groups in the different phases of the decision making process); *Agenda setting/ Issue expertise* (independent identification of priorities and development of expertise); *Shared values* (equality and fairness); *Cooperation* (inclination to collective rather than self-centred solutions). The key factors of the psychology of protest were defined following the theoretical model proposed by Klandermans (1997; 2000; 2002), who puts the *collective action frame* at the heart of the collective action dilemma. This frame is generated by the interaction of three elements: *Sense of injustice*, stemming from the belief that one has been deprived of some good, or has been wronged; *Collective identity*, resulting from the identification in a supra-individual entity (We) opposed to another supra-individual identity (Them), perceived as the main perpetrator of the injustice; *Agency* (or *collective efficacy*), that is the feeling that one is able to influence the course of the events and achieve the expected goals. We proceeded with the empirical translation of the aforementioned components and created a theoretical grid of categories (table 1): two macro-categories (processes) were split into sub-categories (components), each provided with its own operational definition. One more category was included, referring to actions (regarded as the outcomes of both the deliberative and protest process); actions were distinguished according to type, underlying issue and implicated goals. The grid was used to analyse the texts and documents hosted in the TSF web site.

4. Preliminary description of TSF structure

TSF was founded in 2001, when a variety of social and political groups gathered together in a network and subscribed to a political manifesto containing the principles, values and goals shared by the associations and the individuals who decided to join the anti-global movement. TSF structure includes (a) The General Assembly, collecting all the members, either individuals or associations, who contribute to TSF activity. The General Assembly has the task of overseeing activity, both in the planning and in the implementation phase. (b) The Work Groups, intended to deepen specific issues, produce and elaborate papers and documents, according to the indications of the Steering Committee. (c) The Steering Committee, made up of delegates nominated by the Work Groups, the associations subscribing to the manifesto, and by the General Assembly. Every activity, initiative and campaign undertaken by TSF is released and spread on the Internet. The name of TSF official web site is an overt quotation of Plato's 'The Cave' myth. 'The Cave' is a critique of a society where men are forced, as the characters of the philosophical work *Republic*, to see only the shadow of things.

It also contains an invitation to men to free themselves from the bonds of ignorance and to get deepen into the heart of reality. By the same token, TSF's aim is to free people from the social isolation they have been used to living in, and to supply them with a social network where they can debate, access and exchange information, meet each other, face their problems together, produce knowledge and expertise. The web site therefore represents 'a digital place of solidarity', which becomes more and more inclusive as its active members increase. The web site consists of various sections, which we grouped into three categories: (a) 'Who's who', 'Organization', 'Manifesto', 'The Cave: a History, a Myth' represent the ontological statute. The headlines refer to information concerning the organisational dimension of the network, its identikit and political basis. (b) 'Petitions & Announcements', 'Pictures & Papers' outline TSF history, narrated by a variegated video and textual documentation (papers, journal articles, minutes, reports, videos, etc.). (c) 'Genoa…for Us', 'War and related issues', 'Globalisation' are thematic sessions collecting the majority of documents concerning the main political issues faced by TSF. A further section – 'Appointments' – is dedicated to releasing information concerning the activities and the events directly or indirectly promoted by TSF. This, in brief, is the skeleton of TSF; we can then move on to probe it through the magnifying glass of our grid.

5. Results
5.1 In the beginning, there was democracy...

In the web section devoted to the illustration of the network organization, a definition of TSF is advanced as 'an urban place where people can meet each other, listen to each other, debate, discuss, take initiative, voice the civic experiences of associations and citizens convinced that 'another world is possible' and willing to engage in its construction'. TSF puts itself forward as 'a structured decisional setting based on the participation of citizens and on the agreement of the parties concerned'; 'a place where hegemonic positions and lobbies are not allowed to exist'. The favoured 'battle field' is the one in which opinions and ideas are exchanged, despite differences; TSF activists feel that dialogue, along with cooperation, facilitates the achievement of expected goals and reinforces TSF effectiveness. By the same token, leadership attitudes are perceived as signs that there is a lack of democracy and dialogue has been refused.

Several statements, in addition to those aforementioned, refer to shared practices, shared values, shared principles, cooperative interaction. The following quotations make the concept explicit: '…we are engaged in creating new social relationships marked by equality, equal opportunities, self-determination, cooperation, as we are persuaded that these kinds of relationships grant a fair and joint use of common resources'. 'TSF is a place where different groups gather together, unified by the opposition to neo-liberal globalisation, the refusal of any war and the sharing of opinions and feelings concerning the issues of human rights, environmental protection, development of underprivileged nations, citizens participation…'. 'TSF is intended to be a real Forum, kept alive and nourished by the contributions of people who join it and make proposals of general interest'. The dialogic and cooperative pattern of interaction put into practice by TSF members is supported by an organizational frame, a multilevel structure made up of a General Assembly, several Work groups and a Steering Committee. This form of organisation enables everybody to take part in the discussion, to contribute to the implementation of the activities and to collaborate in the definition of the general political guidelines. Nevertheless, representation devices are also used, so that some decisions are taken by a reduced number of people, entitled to speak on behalf of larger groups.

To counter-balance the necessity of turning to representative forms of democracy, TSF engages in continuous efforts to enlarge participation and become more and more inclusive. In the eye of the activists 'it is vital that larger and larger groups of people join our demonstrations, and that we are able to spread our point of view and the reasons of our protest beyond the territorial community directly affected by the problem we want to solve' [railway infrastructure works leading to environmental damages, Note of the Authors]. In order to increase the population's awareness of the issues directly impacting their lives, investigations and thorough analysis are needed. This is why 'Work Groups represent an important tool in widening and deepening our expertise; they are not a barrier to socialize information, on the contrary they put the information into circulation'.

To summarize, TSF network tries to achieve an in-depth and shared vision of problems and issues (*Agenda setting/Issue expertise*) and to promote the involvement of participants in a dialogic decision making process, though using representation devices. The deliberative process is achieved by virtue of the dialogic practice (*Logos*), where everyone – individual or group – is enabled to pursue the democratically fixed goals (*Cooperation*). Cooperation is granted by the *Shared Value* platform underlying the political manifesto subscribed to by the TSF members at the moment of their entry in the network. Through the elements set forth above, deliberation attains to a general agreement of the parts involved.

5.2 An unjust world

The awareness of injustice making the global society so hard to live in, represents the first step towards the construction of 'another possible world'. Insofar as injustice concerns the whole planet, TSF is engaged in overthrowing the status quo. No court is to be delegated to solve the disputes to be found around the world, indeed a general mobilisation of citizens is required to rise against those who systematically violate human rights. The accusation moved by TSF activists concerns 'a world dominated by financial interests and profits; the global economical system is based on the exploitation of poorer peoples, creates and maintains the gap among Northern and Southern populations, and condemns the majority of human beings to poverty, pain and starvation'. In their eye, injustice is 'the violence of capitalism, swallowing into a huge black hole our rights, our freedom, our dignity, and giving us back war, oppression and destitution'.

Concrete violations are thus denounced, so that TSF struggles against: ' war as a tool for international conflict resolution'; 'every form of terrorism …. death and violence ideologies and subcultures'; 'repression exerted by national governments to stop social changes'; 'dictatorship of free market and worldwide commercialization'; 'modern slavery imposed by market, that jeopardizes the conditions of workers'; 'the education system, ruled by company-minded strategies and aimed at fulfilling market needs… commercialization and private use of knowledge'; 'the transformation of social rights such as education and health in goods available according the socio-economical resources of individuals'; 'cultural barbarism, xenophobia, repression of dissent, criminalization of immigration flows' . Although TSF acknowledges the particular features of each single violence and takes into account the context in which they are embedded, all violations are traced back to the same source. The boundary line between just and unjust makes only one world legitimate: 'a world of solidarity, able to grant every human being fundamental rights: sufficient quantity of healthy food, drinkable water, a secure job, health assistance, education and open access to knowledge, freedom of expression and self-organization, an unpolluted environment, the right for every man and woman to express their own personality and to have a valuable and satisfying life'. Injustice, then, is twofold: it is both an act of violation and an act of denial.

Acts of violation correspond to the misappropriation of a good, a right, a faculty or a power. Acts of denial hamper and finally block the process of change. TSF, thus, not only denounces the missing acknowledgment of what is due, what is deserved, what is owed to individuals and populations all over the world, but also laments the impossibility of making any step forward, that is to advance toward the construction of the 'other possible world'. The injustice consciousness raising process is accompanied by the experience of an intense emotional involvement, resulting in harsh feelings of anger and rage; a sense of deprivation transpires, which is felt either in a vicarious form (that is on behalf of those individuals whose rights and resources are actually denied: ethnic minorities, disabled, etc.), or it stems from the perceived gap between the real conditions of life and the ideal status expected.

5.3 Identity 'against'

The denouncement of injustice, while guiding the protest, outlines a neat opposition between the perpetrators of violence and those who are against it. TSF members have steadily chosen to back the arguments of the anti-global movement, indeed they have chosen to be 'against'. Against 'the policy put into practice by supranational economical organizations (World Trade Organization, World Bank, International Monetary Fund), national and local governments and multinational companies'. It thus becomes apparent that joining the anti-global movement implies identifying with a collective 'We', enabling each of its members to share values, goals and intentions. TSF identity, then, seems to rally around the rationale of the protest. The perceived acts of injustice strengthen the reciprocal tie linking individual and groups gathered together in TSF, reinforce their cohesion and identity by contrast with the adversary. The collective identity, then, takes its shape as the antagonists are identified: those who are placed 'on the other side', who advocate different core values, who don't have to defend themselves from any violation; those who are responsible for the unjust status quo. Although TSF activists acknowledge the unifying power stemming from fighting together against the actors of globalisation, they are perfectly aware of differences among them. All in all, TSF 'it is not intended to be the sum of the groups that join it; it aspire neither to represent, nor to substitute nor to overlap them'. Belonging to the movement does not imply that previous sub-identities fade; TSF membership is just one of the memberships in which individuals and groups might recognize themselves. The heterogeneity of TSF components results, thus, in a loose collective identity, which drives activists to negotiate time after time any decision they are bound to take. TSF identity is characterised by multiplicity and complexity, but a superordinate goal makes activists overcome the ingroup differences and rally around the same objective: fighting the common enemy.

5.4 (Un)Achievable Goals

The engagement of TSF members in pursuing their ultimate goal – social change – is nourished by the belief that there is a real chance of reaching it. As it is often stated, 'another world is possible'. This conviction makes the individuals and group efforts and the resources available converge in a single force, providing the basis for the development of a sense of collective efficacy. Nevertheless, the sense of efficacy showed by TSF activists is, to a certain extent, abstract: it does not refer to the capability of influencing particular decisions or policy, but to the need of subverting the whole power system. Because of such abstractness, when the anti-global activists happen to reflect on the outcomes achieved, or on the outcomes they are willing to obtain, they become aware of their powerless condition: 'it is hard to shift from verbal critique to effective influence on institutions. Making a feasible proposal implies that there is at least one interlocutor available to listen to it, and this is something very hard to find and to reach. All in all, the movement lacks a political-decisional counterpart'. Put in different terms, the perception of efficacy not only varies according to the subjective importance attributed to the collective aim and to the usability of available resources, but also according to the response of institutions and society to the inputs of change. Consequently, the visibility of initiatives on the one hand, and the subjective engagement on the other, do not automatically warrant success.

The anti-global activists show a higher sense of efficacy when they act as a 'resonance box', that is to say in counter-information and consciousness raising activities; their perceived efficacy decreases as the initiatives require interaction with interlocutors belonging to the outgroup. Facing the part of the world which metaphorically lies 'on the other side of the barricade' induces activists to take a step backward; moreover, it makes them aware that they cannot fill with ideals and values the gap between the resources and skills they own and the extent of the outcome they expect to achieve. They are caught in a paradox: the need to turn the adversary into an interlocutor they can have dialogue with. In conclusion, the thermometer of sense of efficacy goes up and down. It goes up when TSF acts as a resonance box for experiences, opinions, information, skills, and values; it goes down any time the success depends not only on the subjective committment, but mainly on the force opposed by the counterpart.

5.5 What Are Social Fora Driving at?

The repertory of actions undertaken by TSF members turns out to be extremely heterogeneous and variegated: 'We use peaceful and non violent forms of protest; since we give a great importance to the mobilization of people, we are willing to negotiate the type and kind of actions we intend to undertake'. Or also: 'We want to link the awakening of the public opinion on the damages produced by the neo-liberal policy at a global level to the awareness of people at a local level; indeed, people can experience the impact of globalisation on their daily life in neighbourhoods, cities and in any other territorial community they live in'. Two aspects are worth mentioning: a) consistently with their value system, TSF members are inclined to undertake actions inspired by tolerance; b) community-based activities, mostly organized as campaigns, are planned and aim at stopping the negative effects that globalisation has on specific geographical areas. Exemplars of activities promoted by TSF are 'seminars, assemblies and discussion groups aimed at increasing the dialogue between citizens and institutions'.

Two different groups of activities are planned: demonstrations and sit-ins are the most frequent forms of collective mobilization through which anti-global activists try to put pressure and to exert an influence on the institutions. Furthermore, cultural initiatives are promoted, such as conferences, thematic sessions, open debates, with the aim of creating a shared structure of knowledge: 'The conference is intended to carry out a joint analysis of the plans instrumental to big economical interests; this step is the necessary premise to identify alternative proposals and claims concerning both the contents and the method of planning, that is the way citizens can democratically take part in decisions affecting their personal lives'. The examination of the documents hosted on TSF web site shows that there is a clear demarcation line between the cooperative actions aimed at deliberation and the competitive or conflictual actions aimed at protest. Cooperation involves TSF activists, but also other 'resistance groups' such as trade unions, voluntary associations, students organizations, etc. The attribute of resistance summarizes the reactive nature of the actions undertaken against the socio-political system.

6. Discussion

In general terms, our analysis supports the idea that social fora are workshops of participative democracy. Before discussing this point, it is worth stressing that, as far as structure is concerned, social fora have the characteristics of weak institutionalized settings, since they are ruled by informal norms and procedures. This is not to say that, once the agreement has been achieved, the decision is not binding: weak deliberation is not synonymous of weak consensus. A comparison between the qualities generally attributed to deliberative arenas and those retrieved in the analysis we conducted is reproduced in table 2.

Convergences and divergences emerge. Unlike other types of deliberative settings, social fora rise spontaneously; they are not established because of the will of a third party, nor do they break up when an aim is achieved. Moreover, whereas deliberative arenas are mainly focused on a single issue, have a limited duration and an instrumental nature (insofar as they are intended to take a decision whose effects affect a limited number of actors), social fora are multi-focused, have no time limit and a peculiar expressive valence normally unknown to groups of people who meet for a single experience of deliberation. With deliberative arenas, social fora share the process rather than the structure. Peer-to-peer dialogic interaction enables individuals and groups to give their contribution, to share it with the other participants, and eventually to achieve a general consensus. Nevertheless, even if no hierarchical frame occurs, to a certain extent representation devices do exist: the need to warrant effectiveness and concrete results leads social forum participants to have delegates and therefore decision taken by proxy. Hence, consensus results from a balanced mix of deliberative interaction and representative democracy. Paradoxically, the cooperative basis underlying the relationships between ingroup members is bound to turn into conflict when outgroup members are faced. Thus, if a peculiar trait of social fora deliberation can be identified, this is self-anchorage: as a matter of fact, trust in argumentation and reflexive capabilities applies to activists, but not to the counterpart, where mistrust prevails and opposition takes the place of dialogue. Deliberation, thus, while favouring inclusiveness, reinforces exclusion.

From a psychological point of view different cognitive approaches are implied in the two types of social relation: whereas deliberative interaction may promote a psychological status open to seeing and in some cases accepting multiple perspectives – that is to say willing to develop new points of view, new attitudes and opinions (Pantaleo, 1997; Wicklund, 1999) – conflictual interaction may foster a mental condition where the need for cognitive closure (Webster & Kruglanski, 1994; Kruglanski & Webster, 1996) swiftly increases. Need for cognitive closure is a cognitive–motivational construct defined as the desire for firm or stable knowledge. Although it has been regarded mainly as an individual stable dimension, need for closure may vary as a function of the situation. In fact, specific given conditions such as time pressure, mental fatigue, information overloading and conflict, may increase the costs of openness, as well as the benefits of closure.
Hence, whereas the ties linking individuals belonging to the anti-global movement are peer-to-peer, mutual and horizontal connections, the relations between activists and the outside world are hierarchical, stratified and even antagonistic. The classification proposed by Hamilton and Sanders (1992) applies to the social interactions just mentioned (see figure 1). The shift from intra-group to inter-group process, that is from deliberation to protest, leads us to take a closer look to the psychological facet of protest.

As we illustrated above, Klanderman's proposal (1997; 2000; 2002), which requires the co-presence of three key elements (sense of injustice, collective identity, and agency) fits the empirical case we focused on. Anti-global activists firmly denounce unbearable, huge injustice; as we stated above, they perceive the world they live in as fundamentally unjust. In fact, they show a distributive concept of justice, inspired by equality and concerning the status of the individuals (Dar & Resh, 2001). Research into sense of injustice (Lupfer et al., 2000; Mikula, 2003; Miller, 2001; Scher & Heise, 1992) suggests that there is a tight association between the concept of injustice and the concept of deprivation; in fact, injustice may consist in being deprived of a good, either material, relational or symbolic. When individuals perceive a discrepancy between the condition they experience and the condition they expect to experience, the comparative evaluation results in a feeling of deprivation. Anti-global activists experience a twofold deprivation: because they feel they are denied access to a just world, and because they take charge of the violations undergone by other groups 'as though' they were the wronged subjects. Thus, in one sense they feel they are deprived of a good that no one else enjoys, an ideal good they wish to achieve but which is, at present, unachieved; perception of injustice does not arise from a comparison with other social categories, it rather springs from the appraisal of the present time and the expected future. In another sense, they experience a deprivation concerning someone else, 'as though' they were someone else, or 'on behalf' of someone else.

Through an empathic process involving both the cognitive (perspectives, points of view) and the affective functioning (feelings, emotions), they turn themselves from sheer bystanders of injustice into potential advocates of victims. Psychologically speaking, they are prone to intervene in order to re-establish equity and justice. Anti-global activists, we suggest, voice a world view opposite to the vision implied in the belief in a just world (Lerner, 1980), according to which people deserve what happens to them. Such belief expresses a reassuring and irresponsible approach to reality, and not infrequently distinguishes the psychology of both potential persecutors and bystanders. Unlike these figures, activists take a stand against such an approach, indeed they reverse it; according to their perspective, not only it is unacceptable to justify injustice by blaming the victim, but the persons responsible are to be identified.

The theme of responsibility then (conceptualised as *causation* and *intention* but not necessarily *control*, cfr. Mikula, 2003) displays its great importance both in the justice and identity frame. The process of causal attribution, in fact, is also the key to clarifying the formation of collective identity: involvement in collective action is fostered by identification in a 'We' as opposed to 'Them', and politicized collective identity stems from the conflictual interaction with a counterpart. As Klandermans (1997) points out, the ingroups-outgroups dynamics occurs within a conflict from which a politically significant identity arises. The link between collective identity and inter-group relations, at present well established in social psychology research, has been first theorized in Social Identity and Self-Categorization Theory (Tajfel, 1978; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), whose main assumption is that the categorisation of individuals on the basis of distinguishing features is a fundamental stage in social perception (Tajfel, 1981; Brewer, 1988; Fiske & Neuberg, 1990; Stangor et al. 1992) and is the origin of social identity. It is suggested, in fact, that our self-concept is derived from both our membership of a group and the value and emotional significance of that membership.

As a consequence, the more positively these groups are perceived, the greater the positive esteem individuals can draw from their membership (Turner, 1981). SIT also argues that such categorisation is a precursor of ingroup favouritism and the development of negative beliefs about members of groups to which one does not belong to (outgroups stereotypes). A strong group identification, however, does not necessarily imply a diminution in individual contributions. As a matter of fact, anti-global activists attribute great importance to subjectivity and acknowledge the positive value of the initiative of each member. So, although individualism has been traditionally regarded as an impediment to the development of collective action, it seems unlikely that self-centred behaviours will always clash with the achievement of collective goods or the use of collective resources. Besides sense of injustice and collective identity, which we have been discussing up to this point, protest occurs because of agency. Until few years ago, the mainstream position on the determinants of participation considered dissatisfaction and discontent as the key factors activating protest; it was assumed that the more the disease experienced, the more likely the protest.

Eventually, the postulate showed itself to be false, and subsequent studies attributed more and more significance to the role played by cognitive and interactive processes. On the cognitive side, the perception of efficacy proved to affect both the decision to get involved in active forms of participation and the duration of the commitment. Briefly, individuals do not become activists unless they do not presume to have at least a chance of succeeding, both as individuals and as a group (Klandermans, 1989). Anti-global activists experience an unsteady sense of efficacy according to the type of goal they are pursuing. When their efforts are aimed at mobilizing public opinion or raising the public level of consciousness, activists feel they can really exert an influence. When they have to interact with institutions and to put pressure on them, outcomes are less satisfying. To summarize, activists feel they can be effective on a cultural level, whereas they perceive themselves as less competent in concretely affecting the political agenda.

7. Conclusion

In presenting the results of our research we have tried to outline the collective action structures, that is the cognitions defining the collective mental set in which participation is socially constructed. According to the Klandermans' model (graphically represented in fig. 1), deliberation represents the step in which cognitive frames are constructed and the necessary (though insufficient) pre-conditions of collective action are set. Deliberation, of course, is just one of the instruments individuals can use with the conscious or unconscious aim of elaborating new frames; it definitely seems to be the most favoured by social fora members. The outcomes of our analysis suggest that because of its distinctive qualities (inclusiveness, cooperation, consensus orientation), deliberation might prove particularly influential in promoting group cohesion and therefore in strengthening the motivational basis of collective identification. At the same time, results warns of the risks implied in strong identities: ingroup favouritism, outgroup stereotyping, groupthink, polarization, are likely to occur in deliberative settings. This point challenges a simple version of discursive democracy and claims an in-depth understanding of the psychosocial aspects implied in identification processes and group dynamics. Although some proposals shape well (see for instance Sunstein, 2000; Steenbergen et al., 2004), these facets of deliberation have not been studied to a sufficient degree, neither at the theoretical nor at the empirical level. On the contrary, we suggest that more research into psychology of deliberation should would prove useful in clearly defining the virtues as well as the flaws of deliberative settings.

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Table 1 – Analysis grid

Processes	Components	Operative definition	Outcomes
Deliberation	Logos	Argumentative discussion	Actions:
	Inclusiveness	Involvement of a large number of participants	- type
	Agenda Setting/ Issue expertise	Autonomous agenda setting	- issue
	Shared values	Set of principles shared by participants (equality, freedom, equity)	- goal
	Cooperation	Collaborative interaction resulting in general agreement	
Protest	Injustice frame	Identification and appraisal of injustice	
	Identity frame	Connotation of We (beneficiary of the protest) and You (adversary, responsible for injustice)	
	Agency/Collective efficacy	Perception of effectiveness and influence (success/failure)	

Table 2 – Deliberative arenas and social fora: a comparison

		Deliberative arenas	Social fora
Structure	Instituted by a third party	☐	x
	Limited duration	☐	x
	Single issue focused	☐	x
	Expert assisted process	☐	x
Process	Shared rules	☐	☐
	Inclusiveness	☐	☐
	Argumentation	☐	☐

Figure 1: Structure of social relationships (Hamilton & Sanders, 1992)