

Democracy in Europe
and the Mobilization of Society
demos

WP7 – Executive Summary

DEMOCRACY IN EUROPE AND THE MOBILIZATION OF SOCIETY

Edited by
Donatella della Porta
and
Herbert Reiter

European University Institute
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I. SUMMARY OF POLICY RELEVANT RESULTS

The results of the DEMOS research project underline the relevance of the global justice movement (GJM) as a political actor, innovative in participants, organizational form and claims. The importance emerges of opening multiple channels of communication and participation, with special attention to demands for policy reform advancing the cause of justice (economic, social, political, and environmental) among and between peoples across the globe.

- Developing in political conditions shaped by challenges to the nation-state and representative democracy, the global justice movement (GJM) emerged as a relevant political actor, imposing the theme of justice (economic, social, political, and environmental) among and between peoples across the globe on the public sphere, producing independent expertise and presenting challenging alternatives to existing forms of global governance.
- The emergence of a global movement with transnational identity and concerns did not lead to the disappearance of specific national movement characteristics nor did it translate into an exclusive preoccupation with international issues. It did, however, bring about the framing of concerns emerging on different territorial levels in a global context.
- The GJM developed innovative organizational features, in particular close networking across traditional barriers of national and political cultures and in spite of heterogeneous characteristics of the associations involved (tradition, age, size, etc.).
- Organizations and individuals active in the GJM show a high level of identification with the movement and a common basis of shared values and beliefs, enabling the movement to

pursue a cross issue approach in which specific concerns are bridged by the common demands for social justice and democracy from below as well as the rejection of neoliberal forms of globalization.

- Organizations and individuals active in the GJM show variegated strategies and action repertoires, often combining conventional and unconventional forms of political participation (e.g. lobbying and protest). They attribute special value to the spreading of information, raising awareness about global problems and the promotion of alternative social and economic models.
- Critical of existing forms of global governance and representative democracy, organizations and individuals active in the GJM experiment and propose new forms of democracy from below, attempting to construct participatory and deliberative arenas and to implement participation and deliberation in group life.
- Notwithstanding their critique of existing forms of global governance and of representative democracy, GJM organizations interact with political institutions, albeit often in a critical and selective way. In the case of institutionally sponsored experiments of participatory democracy, activists and their organizations point out the shortcomings of top down models with uncertain citizen empowerment.
- Playing a role of “critical collaboration” or “democratic control”, the organizations and individuals active in the GJM may play a role crucial for the emergence of a contested public sphere at the transnational and in particular the European level, fundamental for the creation of a supranational democratic polity.
- The conceptions and practices of democracy that have developed in the GJM, with reference to both the *internal organization of social movements* and *public decision-making*, constitute important contributions to the experiments in creating

transnational, national and local participatory and deliberative arenas that regard citizens as actors of politics.

II. EXPOSÉ OF POLICY RELEVANT RESULTS

Developing in political conditions shaped by challenges to the nation-state and representative democracy, the global justice movement (GJM) emerged as a relevant political actor, imposing the theme of justice (economic, social, political, and environmental) among and between peoples across the globe on the public sphere, producing independent expertise and presenting alternatives to existing forms of global governance.

The GJM developed in political conditions shaped by challenges to the nation-state and representative democracy, in particular the development of (closed) international governmental organizations (IGOs) and the decline of the (identifying functions of) national political parties. Without implying a demise of the nation state or the end of representative democracy, the transformations in both the boundaries of the polity and the main political actors have affected the traditional functioning of the democratic state and have defined the context for the new forms of contentious politics.

The emergence of global issues and the growing role of international governmental institutions (IGOs) have facilitated the development of transnational networks of social movement organizations as well as experiences of international and inter-issue collaboration. At the transnational level, however, the institutional system is particularly closed, leaving limited if any access “from below”. Indeed, if the movement stresses the need for political governance of globalization it sees existing IGOs as gravely deficient in democratic standards, a position expressed in the opening slogan for the international parade at Genoa: “You G8, we 6 billion”.

Moreover, not only on the transnational but also on the national and local level the problem of finding alliances in the political and institutional system presented itself in new terms. While the interactions between institutional politics and politics from

below continue to be important, the image of a division of labor between (especially left-wing) parties and movements – with movements pointing out a problem and parties developing a political solution – is turning more and more problematic. In modern representative democracies politics increasingly becomes an exclusive activity for professional politicians, who take decisions legitimated by electoral investiture. The GJM not only articulates a demand for politics but also advances a proposal for “different politics”; that is, for participatory politics carried out in arenas open to citizens regarded as subjects and actors of politics.

While the political conditions therefore seemed unfavourable to the birth of a movement on issues of globalization – openness of the political system and the availability of allies among institutional political actors have been regarded as decisive for collective mobilization and its success – the movement has made major inroads towards redrawing the boundaries of politics, broadening them to include a public opinion increasingly receptive to criticism of globalization. It seems as though changes in public debate where criticism of neoliberal globalization have encountered growing sympathies, have counted for more in the birth and consolidation of the movement than codified political opportunities.

The GJM emerged as a relevant political actor in particular by imposing the theme of justice (economic, social, political, and environmental) among and between peoples across the globe on the public sphere – as the American weekly “Newsweek” wrote (13/12/1999, 36): “one of the most important lessons of Seattle is that there are now two visions of globalization on offer, one led by commerce, one by social activism”. Not limiting itself to pointing out negative repercussions of globalization processes, the movement was also instrumental in fomenting the discussion on alternatives, producing independent expertise and pushing concrete counter proposals. In fact, in interviews we conducted with representatives of more than 200 organizations active in the social forum process the role of the GJM in the building of alternatives was particularly stressed.

The emergence of a global movement with transnational identity and concerns did not lead to the disappearance of specific national movement characteristics nor did it translate into an exclusive preoccupation with international issues. It did, however, bring about the framing of concerns emerging on different territorial levels in a global context.

After Seattle, ever more frequent mention was made of a *global* movement. Although the majority of demonstrators at Seattle were North American (some estimated 20-25 thousand from Washington state, 15-20 thousand from elsewhere in the USA, and an additional 3-5 thousand from Canada), the international nature of the event is confirmed by the parallel initiatives organized in more than a hundred cities in the world's north and south for the “Global Action Day”. Subsequently, the transnational character of the GJM found expression in particular in the organization of successive World, European, Asian, African and American Social Forums.

The establishment of a global movement requires groups to frame their action in terms of *global identity and concerns*: identifying themselves as part of a “global movement” and targeting “global enemies” within a global field of action. It should be stressed, however, that global concerns do not translate into an exclusive concentration on international politics, but into the framing of concerns emerging on different territorial levels in a global context. In this sense, the GJM pursues objectives on the local, the national, the European and the global level (e.g. the popular initiative for a new regional law on water in Tuscany; the French initiative to tax flights; the mobilization against the Bolkestein directive; the proposal of the Tobin tax).

Moreover, the emergence of a global movement did not lead to the disappearance of national movement characteristics. In our research we addressed the network of the GJM by looking at linkages among transnational, national, and local groups that have mobilized on global justice issues. Even if local and

national organizations interact transnationally, reacting to supranational institutions of governance, they remain embedded in national traditions and opportunities. At the risk of some simplification, we have singled out the presence of *two different constellations of the GJM* in the countries under study: on the one hand, a *Southern European constellation* (Italy, France and Spain) where protest dynamics appear as dominant, with a greater political content of mobilisations and a greater role of trade unions in the GJM (both traditional ones and grassroots unions of recent formation). In general, the political opportunities appear as closed, and forms of action more radical; the GJM is stronger in terms of its capacity to mobilise in the street, more heterogeneous and decentralised, framing the struggle against neo-liberalism at home within a global discourse. In *the Northern European constellation* (Germany, Switzerland, and the UK), the role of associations and Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is more visible, critical unions are weak and traditional unions remain more distant from the GJM. With more open political opportunities, the GJM tends to prefer moderate, conventional forms of action, relying less on street mobilisation. The global justice issues are framed especially (although not exclusively) in terms of solidarity with the South.

The GJM developed innovative organizational features, in particular close networking across traditional barriers of national and political cultures and in spite of heterogeneous characteristics of the associations involved (tradition, age, size, etc.).

In all countries under review (France, Germany, Britain, Italy, Spain and Switzerland), we observed the convergence of new social movements, NGOs and solidarity organizations, trade unions, left-wing groups, and grassroots organizations. The global justice movement is in fact a “movement of movements”, linking different types of organizations, belonging to various movement traditions.

Our analysis of more than 200 organizations involved in the social forum process confirms their pluralistic and heterogeneous nature. These organizations cover a wide range in terms of *size of membership*: about 50% declare (individual) membership of up to 1000 individuals and about one third of more than 10.000; those organizations that allow for collective membership, often involve quite a large number of groups (more than 25 in half of the cases). Also the *age* of the organizations varies: about one third of the organizations in our sample were founded before 1990 (13% before 1968), one third between 1990 and 1999 and one third after the year 2000. As far as *organizational resources* are concerned, 16.7% declare a variable or limited *budget*, and a quarter a budget of less than €50,000. The remaining part is equally divided among those who declare between €50,000 and €500,000 and those who declare more than €500,000. Similar variation exists on the presence of *paid staff*, with only one third of our groups that have none, 44.4% up to sixteen, 14.1% between sixteen and 100 and 11.2% more than 100. On the number of *volunteers*, the groups are equally divided between those who declare less than 16, those who declare between 16 and 100 and those who declare more than 100. The organizations of our sample also present different levels of *formalization, centralization, formal accountability,*

and *autonomy from external actors*.

Heterogeneity, however, is not seen as a weakness within the GJM. To the contrary, in their fundamental documents 47% of the organizations analyzed mention difference/plurality/heterogeneity as a positive value. The inclusive structure already typical of other movements (especially the women's and peace movements) appears in the GJM in a more highly networked version. The new communication technologies – primarily the Internet – have not only steadily reduced the costs of mobilization, allowing slim, flexible structures, but also facilitated transversal interaction among different areas and movements. Close networking is also aided by multiple membership of movement activists, in organizations also of different tradition and thematic orientation.

A common characteristic of the organizations we analyzed is in fact a high degree of *reticularity*. In their fundamental documents, as many as about 80% of the organizations analyzed mention *collaboration/networking* with other organizations at the national level and about the same percent also at the transnational level. Among those who mention this information, about one third (slightly more at the transnational level) point at the relevance of collaboration with groups working on other issues than themselves, but sharing the same values. Consequently, in the interviews we conducted the representatives of the sampled organizations declared to perceive the GJM first of all as an area for encounters, exchanges, networking, and collective mobilization.

Organizations and individuals active in the GJM show a high level of identification with the movement and a common basis of shared values and beliefs, enabling the movement to pursue a cross issue approach in which specific concerns are bridged by the common demands for social justice and democracy from below as well as the rejection of neoliberal forms of globalization.

Both organizations and individuals active in the GJM show a high level of identification with the movement as a whole, and not only with single organizations or movement sectors. As far as activists are concerned, according to a survey conducted at the first European Social Forum (ESF) in Florence in 2002, 75% identified with the GJM as a whole. Of the activists we surveyed at the Athens ESF in 2006, 39.4% declared to identify very much with the GJM and a further 47.4% quite a lot. A high level of identification with the GJM emerged also for the organizations we analyzed. Almost 80% of the representatives of the sampled organizations we interviewed declared that their organization identified fully with the movement, while only very few groups (less than 10%) don't perceive themselves as being part of a GJM or don't have a shared view on the question.

However, in politics as well as in social science the opinion has been voiced that we are confronted with varying coalitions mobilising on different global justice themes rather than with a movement characterized by shared concerns, values and beliefs. The expression of feelings of belonging to this "movement of movements" might not be sufficient for assessing to which extent diverse actors and campaigns do conform to an analytic definition of social movements that stresses the qualifying characteristic of "shared beliefs".

The responses to open questions about the main aims and strategies of the GJM in our interviews with representatives of the sampled organizations allow us to address this issue. First of all, organizations tend to perceive the GJM as a space in which their own specific concerns (including social issues,

international concerns, ecological values, women's rights, migrant rights, peace, etc.) can find a larger audience. These, however, are not understood as "single issue" concerns, but as core topics to be put on the agenda of a complex movement. In addition, if the language used is often resonant of the different ideological and political traditions represented within the movement, there are three main bridging themes located at the basis of the GJM that are shared also by the respondents underlining their specific core issues: social justice (perceived as a "broker frame" that connects all others), democracy from below (linked with social justice and perceived as the construction of participative and deliberative spaces), and the global nature of action (expressed in the large use of words like "global", "international", or simply "world" in the answers to the open questions). This common basis of shared values and beliefs enables the GJM to pursue a cross issue approach.

Organizations and individuals active in the GJM show variegated strategies and action repertoires, often combining conventional and unconventional forms of political participation (e.g. lobbying and protest) They attribute special value to the spreading of information about global problems and the promotion of alternative social and economic models.

Groups can employ different *strategies* to reach their goals: protest, lobbying, constructing concrete alternatives, or promoting political education and trying to raise citizens' awareness. If protest is mentioned in the fundamental documents of a large majority of the organizations we sampled (more than two thirds), a similarly large share mentions influencing the media, spreading alternative information and raising awareness as a main function of their groups, and almost half of the organizations mention the political education of the citizens. Although smaller, the significant number of groups mentioning lobbying (more than one third), the defense of specific interests (almost one fifth), political representation, advocacy, provision of services and self-help (between 11 and 22%) signals that most organizations engage in different types of activities. This multiple repertoire confirms the pluralistic nature of the movement, with a (somewhat pragmatic) orientation towards using multiple tactics.

In fact, according to the interviews we conducted with representatives of the sampled organizations, most groups do not limit themselves to a single strategy but try to maximize their possibility of success by employing and mixing different strategies (also depending on the political situation they face). Contrary to the assumption that lobbying and protest are opposite strategies used by different actors, we found evidence of use of both by a significant percentage of our groups. This result is consistent with most observations concerning the Seattle protests and similar events: involved organizations feel that a heterogeneous blend of tactics and strategies can multiply the opportunity to reach their objectives. Only few groups (less than

10 per cent) focus on a single strategy. More than two thirds of the organizations employ at least three different strategies at the same time while one fifth employs two.

The activist survey we conducted at the Athens ESF gives some indication on which strategies are particularly valued within the movement. We asked participants of the Athens ESF to rank five strategies which the GJM should pursue in order to enhance democracy according to their perceived importance. The most traditional form of political participation, contacting political leaders, has the lowest support: for only 17.9% this is the most important or second most important option. Although significantly more supported, also the reliance upon street protests is considered a priority (first or second option) only by about one third of the activists (31.1%). Practicing democracy within their group was chosen as the most important or second most important option by 45.7%. Above all, according to activists, the movement's objective should be to "make the world aware" and to promote alternative social and economic models. To spread information about global problems to the public is indicated by 58.2% as the most important or second most important strategy to be pursued by the GJM in order to enhance democracy. 62.9% opted instead for the promotion of alternative social and economic models.

Critical of existing forms of global governance and representative democracy, the organizations and activists of the GJM experiment and propose new forms of democracy from below, attempting to construct participatory and deliberative arenas and to implement participation and deliberation in group life.

The activist survey we conducted at the Athens ESF revealed very low degrees of satisfaction with existing forms of global governance and representative democracy. Looking at the overall results for single institutions, international organizations, in particular the EU (14.5%) and the UN (18.1%), scored slightly higher than national governments (11.5%) but less so than institutions of local government (26.8%). Trust remains at a low 20.5% for national parliaments. Trade unions (ca. 50%) are trusted much more than political parties (21.2%). The only political actors enjoying high levels of trust are NGOs (67%) and social movement organizations (SMOs - 86%). A critical view on the established ways of representative democracy at the large (national) scale prevailed also among the groups we studied using the technique of participant observation. The groups tend to view this kind of democracy as dominated by power games instead of substantive political goals such as intense participation, equality, solidarity and justice. In other words: These groups are extremely sensitive to the *forms* of politics, the way of discussing, organizing and decision-making at all levels.

Two main conceptions of democracy—alternative to the dominant definition of democracy—are central focus for our analysis regarding the new forms of democracy from below which the GJM advances: *participatory* and *deliberative* conceptions. Traditionally, social movements have emphasized a *participatory* conception of democracy, stressing the importance of increasing participation in direct forms. In recent theorisation and practice, the traditional conception of participatory and direct democracy has been linked with the emerging interest in

deliberative democracy—concerned, in particular, with the quality of communication.

In their fundamental documents, half of the organizations in our sample support an *associational* conception of internal decision-making. This means that – at least formally – a model based upon delegation and the majority principle is quite widespread. The importance of the associational model is however only part of the picture. Many of these organizations, in fact, mention participation as an important internal value. In addition, 13.1% of the organizations were classified as *assembleary*, since the participatory elements are emphasized via the important role attributed to the assembly and its inclusiveness, rejecting delegation, but consensus is not mentioned as a principle, nor used as a decision-making method. In an additional one fourth (23%) of the organizations, the deliberative element comes to the fore. In particular, these organizations stress the importance of *deliberation* and/or *consensus* over majoritarian decision-making. We can distinguish between a 13% of the organizations which combine consensus with delegation (deliberative representation), and a 9% which apply consensus within an assembleary model (deliberative participation).

In parallel to our approach to formal documents, we dedicated a central part of our interviews with representatives of movement organizations to internal models of democracy. On this basis, 38.0% of the selected organizations fall in the deliberative representative category where the principle of consensus is mixed with the principle of delegation. 30.9% of the groups adopt an associational model that is based on the majority vote and delegation. 21.7% of the groups follow a deliberative-participative model combining consensual decision-making with the principle of direct participation and the refusal of the delegation of power, while 9.8% of the selected organizations mix the principle of direct participation with the majority vote (assembleary model).

Comparing the results of the interviews with those we had obtained analysing formal documents of the sampled

organizations, few differences emerge for the dimension *participation*. However, interviewees tend to stress *deliberation* and *consensus* more than the organizational documents do. This can be explained in different ways: respondents might be more up to date and accurate in describing the actual decision making in their groups, or they may want to give an image of their organization's procedures conforming to a fundamental innovation in decision-making accompanying the social forum process. Whatever the explanation, norms of consensus appear as very much supported by the organizations active in the GJM.

In order to shed light on the activists' ideal type conceptions of democracy, we asked them whether in political decision-making direct participation or delegation and consensus or majority voting should be employed. Comparing the results with the other parts of our project, we see that the activists' democratic ideal is far more participatory than the reality of SMOs emerging from formal documents or interviews with group representatives, whereas deliberation is valued by slightly less than half of our respondents. The associational model remains the ideal for only 19.1%, and with 8.2% the deliberative representative model finds even less support. The activists clearly favour participatory organizational forms, employing either the majority vote (assembleary model, 35.9%) or the consensus method (deliberative participative model, 36.7%). Participation and (to a lesser extent) deliberation are therefore considered as main values for another democracy.

If the differences between formal rules, the perception of group functioning relayed by the representatives interviewed, and democratic ideals of the activists have to be considered, there is no doubt that participatory and deliberative values and practices enjoy high support within the GJM. Above all, within the movement we find concrete attempts to construct participatory and deliberative arenas (e.g. in the social forum process) and to realize participation and deliberation in group life. In fact, in the groups we studied using the technique of participant observation, we found a significant degree of participation as well as good standards of communication. Participants tend to respect each

other and welcome the full deployment of individual skills and propensity. In general, attitudes are inclusive and a strong sense of autonomy in the choices of actions prevails even within groups that are formally a chapter of a national or supranational organization. Consensus is a widely supported principle; taking a vote is rare. Additionally, various rules (facilitator and note-taker roles, distribution of information, anti-hierarchical settings) develop in order to improve communication and participation.

Notwithstanding their critique of global governance and representative democracy, GJM organizations interact with political institutions, albeit often in a critical and selective way. In the case of institutionally sponsored experiments of participatory democracy, activists and their organizations point out the shortcomings of top down models with uncertain citizen empowerment.

Notwithstanding their critical position, social movement organizations *interact with the institutions of representative democracy*. Our organizations are quite open to interactions with institutions—they are not just emphasizing a negative message, but also often accepting to collaborate on specific problems. At the same time, however, they tend to be critical of those institutions, and to perceive their own role as actively engaging in citizens' control of institutional politics and implementing channels of discursive accountability. In formal organizational documents, statements of open refusal of relationships with representative institutions are rare (11.5%), while an attitude of either collaboration or democratic control is more frequent (about one third each). Relations of collaboration are more often mentioned at the national than at the supranational level (where instead relations of democratic control prevail). Differences between institutions are however limited, indicating that attitudes tend to spread from one institution to the others.

The representatives of organizations we interviewed also indicated a willingness of their organizations to interact with political institutions. In this interaction, however, they tend to take on the role of critical collaborators or democratic controllers. Refusal of any collaboration is very rare: from a very low 4.4% for local institutions, to 11.8% for the national and 13.5 for the international level. If the refusal is the highest for IGOs, it remains nevertheless only slightly higher than for national institutions and in general terms low. The sampled organizations tend to collaborate especially with local (as many as 70%) and national (67%) institutions, but also with IGOs

(almost half of our sample). Many groups declare to collaborate with different territorial levels at the same time, testifying to an adaptation to multilevel governance. These groups, however, often qualify their collaboration as critical or selective, with a less critical attitude towards local governments and growing criticism towards the national and the supranational levels.

These results were further confirmed by the in-depth studies of selected groups, using the technique of participant observation. In their activities most groups are outward-oriented, addressing institutions at different levels. In interactions with institutional politics—from student councils to the UN—the groups under study express a strong critique of organizations that follow a logic of delegation and majority rule. Interactions are framed within a strong criticism for what is perceived as a misfit between the way in which these institutions function, and the democratic ideals of the groups and are therefore only accepted to the extent that they are considered as necessary in order to make “another world possible”.

The criticism of institutional politics emerges also from activists’ attitudes towards experiments of participatory democracy, promoted institutionally especially at the local level. Actors associated with social movements intervened in the development of some of these processes, sometimes as critical participants, sometimes as external opponents. Various groups involved in the GJM have in particular sponsored participative budgeting that allows citizens to decide upon part of a city’s expenditures. In fact, 34.2% of the activists surveyed at the Athens ESF strongly agree that the involvement of citizens in decision-making processes practiced in experiments like Agenda 21 or participatory budgeting improves the quality of political decisions and a further 49.9% agrees, while only 13% disagree and 2.9% strongly disagree.

The interviews with representatives of GJM organizations also revealed a critical attitude towards existing experiments of participatory public decision-making, not precluding, however, active involvement. About 40% of the groups did not discuss

this issue or have no clear stance on it. Over one third declared that these participative experiments improve the quality of political decisions; about one fifth was skeptical. When asked to qualify their judgment on experiments of public decision-making, almost one fifth of the groups spoke of both advantages and risks. About half underlined the positive aspects and almost one third pointed at the negative side of institution-driven experiments. Criticism concerns both the input and the output sides of the decision-making process. Such experiments are considered “top-down” (promoted and implemented from the top of the political system), elitist (“they involve mostly experts and not citizens”), lacking in empowerment (“no real changes occur”), or even dangerous (“serve for cooptation of critical engagement”). Other interviewees underlined however the positive effects of public decision-making based on citizens’ participation on both the input side of the decision-making process (“they stimulate active citizens’ participation”) and on its output side: they attribute more responsibility to the people, foster transparency and publicity of the decision-making, produce a more consensual decision-making and allow for the emergence of new political styles and administrative practices.

Playing a role of “critical collaboration” or “democratic control” the organizations active in the GJM may be crucial for the emergence of a contested public sphere at the transnational and in particular the European level, fundamental for the creation of a supranational democracy.

Already at the first ESF in Florence in 2002, almost 70% of the activists had expressed a strong interest in the building of new institutions of world governance. Furthermore, in order to achieve the goals of the movement more than half of the activists saw a stronger UN as necessary and more than two fifth of them a stronger EU and/or other regional institutions (with higher support for the EU among Italian activists, and very low support among the British activists). At the Athens ESF in 2006, the belief in the need of building institutions to involve civil society both at the EU and at the global level became virtually unanimous (88.8% and 92.5%, respectively). The activists of the GJM therefore should not be defined as euro-sceptics, wanting a return to the nation state, but as “critical Europeanists” or “critical globalist”, convinced that transnational institution of governance are necessary, but should be built from below.

GJM organizations and activists in fact converge on the necessity to build ‘another Europe’, advancing demands for social justice and ‘democracy from below’. Since 2002, attention to the construction of ‘another Europe’ has developed at the European Social Forums, with the presentation of demands for democratization of European institutions and for a charter of social rights. Our activist survey conducted at the Athens ESF confirmed strong criticism of the existing European institutions, but also indicated a high affective identification with Europe and a medium level of support for a European level of governance. GJM organizations and activists therefore represent a ‘social capital’ of committed citizens that might provide an important source for building a European citizenship.

It has been pointed out that contestation is a crucial precondition for the emergence of a European public sphere, and a

contested public sphere is the only path towards the creation of a supranational democracy. In this sense, the reaction of European institutions – which (in varying degrees as far as the Parliament, the Commission or the Council are concerned) show many of the aspects of closure typical for supranational institutions – is of crucial importance for the development of a democratic EU. Building legitimate authorities and democratic political processes to address global issues is a fundamental request of the GJM. These concerns can be shared by EU policies.

Besides democratic legitimacy and effectiveness, the fundamental requests of the GJM have been rooted in the rejection of neoliberal globalisation and of market driven policies. In this regard, due to the EU's strong liberalisation policies on trade, investment, finance, intellectual property and other issues, the GJM has generally considered the European Union as part of the problem rather than part of the solution. In few other cases - such as human rights and the environment - the transnational networks and organisations associated to the GJM have found possibilities of convergence with EU policies, and in these cases major achievements (such as the creation of the ICC and environmental treaties) have been obtained. In the current European debate, there is a renewed discussion on the need to reconsider neoliberal policies and to address their negative distributional consequences in several fields; the extent of social mobilisations may have had an influence on such developments. The lessons of such conflicts and convergences between the GJM and EU policies suggest that social movement actors should be recognised as having a legitimate voice in the process of deliberation about European policies, and should be encouraged to participate in a more open and democratic process of policy making. This process is likely to lead to more effective and democratic outcomes for EU policies. If the demands advanced by the GJM for greater democracy and for policy alternatives are given serious consideration, new ideas and social actors could be integrated in the European political process; the state of European democracy would be strengthened.

The conceptions and practices of democracy that have developed in the GJM, with reference to both the internal organization of social movements and public decision-making, constitute important contributions to the experiments in creating transnational, national and local participatory and deliberative arenas.

In their search for participatory arenas involving citizens beyond the electoral moment, political institutions have a lot to learn from the conceptions and practices of democracy that developed in the GJM. First, most of the groups we analyzed are very sensitive to issues of power and democracy, showing an open and accessible style of communication, willingness to listen to different viewpoints, readiness to rotate leadership roles or to accept moderators or facilitators, and preference for interactive discussion. Second, in spite of often very informal organizational structures, these groups are not only able to manage their communication and activity at a small scale but also, though with much greater difficulties, at national and even transnational levels. Third, based on our research findings we can conclude that deliberation, at least at the level of small-scale groups, is not just a dream but happens, even to a greater extent than we expected when beginning our research, and in particular when decisions on actions had to be taken.

It is certainly true that in GJM groups, as probably in any social groups, one can observe informal hierarchies, struggles over and misuse of power, forms of incivility, and so forth. As the results of our survey at the Athens ESF show, the (self-reflective) activists of the GJM are critical about the degree to which participation and deliberation in decision-making are realized both in their own groups and in the movement as a whole. However, even though not completely conceptualized and realized by the groups we analyzed, the method of consensus reflects a conception of democracy as an instrument for developing mutual understanding. If total horizontality seems a utopia, a self reflective attitude and the search for instruments to

keep the effects of inequality and hierarchy under control have a positive function. Our analysis of conceptions and practices of democracy that have developed in the GJM underlines that politics is not only the negotiation between actors with “hard power” and points to the importance of a conception of politics as dialogue.

III. Appendix: The Research Design

The central concerns of our research project are the conceptions and practices of democracy that have developed in the GJM, with reference to both the *internal organization of social movements* and *public decision-making*. The different conceptions and practices and the ensuing debate on democracy are particularly relevant both for the development of a transnational civic society, and for the legitimisation of political institutions at the local, national and supranational level. Representative models of democracy are in fact challenged by crises of legitimacy as well as efficiency: decline in conventional forms of democratic participation is accompanied by perceptions of poor performances of government. Other models of democracy (re)emerge as possible correctives to the malfunctioning of representative democracy. In fact, experiments in participatory and deliberative forms of democracy are underway not only inside movements but also in political institutions.

Focusing on six European countries (France, Germany, Britain, Italy, Spain and Switzerland), and the transnational level we analysed conceptions and practices of democracy in the GJM's interaction with institutional politics, the organizations involved with the GJM, and the individual activists. The single parts of our research design consisted in the analysis of:

- the development of the GJM and of the political opportunities and environmental resources available to it, on the basis of published sources and secondary material;
- the impact of new communication technologies on social movement dynamics emerging from the websites of selected social movement organizations (SMOs) involved in the GJM;
- the organizational ideology and the visions of democracy of the sampled SMOs contained in their formal documents produced by them;
- the implementation of principles of horizontal participation

and consensual decision-making, and the extent and type of interaction with authorities emerging from semi-structured interviews with representatives of the sampled SMOs;

- the patterns of political activism and the democratic visions and practices of GJM activists on the basis of a survey conducted at the ESF in Athens in 2006;
- the practices of deliberative democracy registered in the course of participant observation of the activities of movement groups and in particular of their experiences with participatory and/or deliberative decision making.