

Therefore, because rarely Auro acts as an unitary actor during participation to wider movements, it is very difficult to single out which type of external decision-making its activists adopt. When they act as individual actors or representative of the internal groups, it can be said that individuals are probably more incline to transform their preferences and then to act according to the two decisional models closest to the deliberative pole (Deliberative or Deliberative-Assembleary), whereas the activists representing the internal groups – which are small and cohesive – are probably more incline to keep their preferences aggregated and to interact with other groups according to the two decisional models closest to the assembleary pole (Assembleary-Deliberative or Assembleary).

Finally, when activist represent Auro as a unitary actor, they are bound to the mandate of the management assembly, although not in a rigid way, having thus a margin of autonomy in their choices. Therefore, they usually negotiate with other SMOs to find a shared solution, an agreement, (rarely voting) keeping aggregated their preferences, but sometimes they can transform them (thanks to their limited autonomy) to pursue unanimity decisions, according the Assembleary-Deliberative Model.

## **5. Comparative concluding remarks**

In conclusion, I would like to make some considerations regarding the findings of my research and the hypothesis formulated in the introduction from a comparative perspective.

First of all, and after the general review made in the second part of this work, it is necessary to reaffirm that it is very difficult, if not impossible, to consider the area of social centres in Italy as a social movement as a whole, because internal differences are much more numerous than common features and, above all, in the perception of the same activists most divergences are conceived as incompatible. Usually social centres belonging to different national areas and networks, frequently in the same city, rarely communicate and collaborate, and often are not only in competition within the movement for the hegemony of the same audience, but do have indifferent or very hostile attitudes among one other.

The two empirical cases studied in Catania do not represent an exception to this rule: they do not have direct relations, because they consider themselves too different and far from the other social centre. As a matter of fact, if we look at the two social centres investigated, Experia and Auro,

from a comparative perspective, we can easily notice that their main dimensions are all different, as you can see in the Table 2.

According to the typology of Dines (1999), Experia is a “political” squat which organizes political activities and campaigns, and it is also characterized by its social intervention oriented to the lower classes of the neighbourhood in which it is located, while Auro is a typical “countercultural” social centre mainly promoting cultural and artistic activities, giving less importance to the political ones, and is oriented above all towards the youths of the city. As far as other dimensions are concerned, while Experia belongs to the national area of the “Revolutionary Communists”, with a more exclusive collective identity based on a radical Marxist ideology, Auro is a non-affiliated social centre – it does not belong to any national network – with a more inclusive common identity, because its members have heterogeneous ideological leanings. Their denominations, CPO (Occupied People’s Centre) for Experia and CSA (Self-managed Social Centre) for Auro, indicate their different positions towards law and state institutions: the first is an illegally occupied social centre, whose members refuse in principle any contact with institutions, considered their enemy; the latter is officially assigned by local administration, after have been squatted for many years, and its activists are open to negotiations with institutions.

As regards their organizational structures, they could seem similar, both horizontal, non-hierarchical, based on the refusal of delegation upward and on the primarily role of the management assembly, but actually they differ significantly because the structure of Experia is more cohesive and homogeneous, whereas Auro is fragmented in several groups which manage autonomously their own internal spaces.

In connection with this last aspect, the two social centres investigated significantly differ, as regards also the main features I have focused upon in this paper: the internal decision-making (Inside) and the external one (Outside), that is the way in which activists interact with other SMOs in movement decisional arenas. As you can see in the Table 2, Experia and Auro activists follow different models of democracy, both inside and outside, referring to the typology proposed in the introduction.

In fact, as far as the internal decision-making is concerned, it can be said that the process of Experia is closer to the Deliberative Model, while that of Auro to the Deliberative-Assembleary one. Although both social centres activists refuse the internal principle of delegation (the self-management is its denial), adopt the consensual method to solve internal divergences and

to take unanimous decisions, transforming their preferences during the debates, they considerably differ when unanimity is not achieved; while Experia occupants never aggregate their preferences (never vote nor negotiate), no decision is taken and issues under discussion are momentarily suspended to be afterwards faced, the Auro activists aggregate their preferences by voting (majority decision) in order to take a decision in any case (not always implemented by minorities). Therefore, the Experia ‘inside’ decision-making is always deliberative, while that of Auro is only ‘mainly’ but not exclusively deliberative, because it becomes assembleary when their activists are not able to take unanimous decisions.

*Table 2. Main dimensions of the social centres in Catania*

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>EXPERIA</b>	<b>AURO</b>
<i>Type of social centre</i>	Political	Countercultural
<i>Type of activities</i>	Political and social	Cultural and political
<i>National area</i>	Revolutionary Communist	Non-affiliated
<i>Ideology</i>	Radical Marxist	Heterogeneous
<i>Collective identity</i>	Exclusive	Inclusive
<i>Denomination</i>	CPO	CSA
<i>Legal position</i>	Illegally occupied	Officially assigned
<i>Attitudes towards Institutions</i>	Closedness, refusal	Openness, negotiation
<i>Organizational structure</i>	Cohesive	Fragmented

Therefore, in a comparative perspective, Experia internal process is more deliberative than that of Auro, according to the dimensions of the models proposed. Nevertheless, we can not forget that “deliberative process take place under condition of plurality of values, including people with different perspectives but facing common problems” (della Porta 2006: 2), and Experia deliberative decision-making occur in a context ideologically much more homogeneous than the one of Auro, because the latter is more inclusive of the former; moreover, other dimensions (equality, transparency, orientation to common good, rational argumentations) have to be taken in account in order to define a decision-making as deliberative, according to literature (*ibid.*; della Porta and Diani 2006) and, because they have been analysed but not operationalized in this paper, thus I have considered the two decisional processes more or less deliberative only referring to the typology of democracy models.

*Table 3. The internal and external decision-making of the social centres in Catania*

DECISION-MAKING	CPO Experia	CSA Auro
<i>Internal (Inside)</i>	Deliberative Model	Deliberative- Assembleary Model
<i>External (Outside)</i>	Assembleary Model	Assembleary- Deliberative Model

Besides it is necessary to remember that the Experia militants define their decision-making as “assembleary”, because in their view this term means that all decisions are taken during the assembly, while “deliberative” is perceived as a neutral adjective that means “decisional”, and not a specific way to take decision thorough consensus. Moreover, never in their political conception, do they call their practices as “democratic” but always as “revolutionary” or “antagonist” and based on the principle of self-management, because for them “democracy” means only “representative democracy”, which represents – together with capitalism - the target of their conflictual actions. Almost likewise, the Auro activists also call their practices “antagonist” on the basis of the self-management principle, and “democracy” is neither a value nor a model. In sum, according to the conception of the social centres’ activists, their practices do not follow differ-

ent and alternative models of democracy, as these are instead defined in literature, but they are conceived as a different way of doing politics: as it often happens, not always the categories of the scholars coincide with those of the activists.

Even as regards the external decision-making, the two social centres differ according to diverse models of democracy: Experia militants keep relations in a way closer to the Assembleary Model, while Auro activists interact with other groups according to the Assembleary-Deliberative Model. The former present themselves always as a unitary actor, never transform their preferences - on the contrary, they try to transform the preferences of other participants and to aggregate them to their own – and always strategically negotiate with other SMOs to reach an agreement or a compromise (rarely vote); when a shared solution is not found, Experia occupants do not accept the decisions of majority and exit from the arena. On the contrary, the latter hardly participate as delegates of Auro, but mainly as individuals or as representatives of their internal groups, without a single model as reference (they can act each time according to a different model); when activists represent Auro on the whole, usually negotiate with other participants to find a shared solution (rarely vote) keeping aggregated their preferences, but sometimes they can transform them (thanks to their limited autonomy) in order to achieve unanimity decisions. In both cases the activists who participate as representatives of the social centre to the movement meetings, act on the basis of a mandate, but the Experia militants are rigidly bound to decisions taken in their internal assembly, according to the principles of direct democracy, while the Auro ones are more autonomous in their choices.

As you can notice, the decisional processes of Experia are placed on the extreme poles of the continuum – the deliberative one for the ‘Inside’, the assembleary for the ‘Outside’ – whereas the processes of Auro are situated in the intermediate points which correspond to the mixed model, the Deliberative-Assembleary one for the ‘Inside’ and the Assembleary-Deliberative for the ‘Outside’. In my opinion it is not casual, but it could depend on the different degree of ideological rigidity (high for Experia, low for Auro) or type of collective identity (more inclusive the one of Auro, more exclusive the one of Experia).

On the basis of these findings, my initial hypothesis appears only partially confirmed, because the research have provided unexpected outcomes, at least those concerning one of the cases investigated. In fact, while the results of the research regarding Experia decisional processes confirm the

hypothesis that they are characterized by the Deliberative Model for the 'Inside' and by the Assembly Model for the 'Outside', the findings concerning Auro decision-making, both internally and externally, are different, even if not opposite, from those hypothesized in the introduction; the processes of the latter social centre can be defined according to the intermediate models, surprising above all for the use of the majoritarian method and the aggregation of preferences within Auro internal decision-making.

The unexpected findings can be explained, as mentioned in the introduction, through the procedure of re-identification (ends) and/or cultural re-collocation (beliefs and information), according to Pizzorno (2007a). The Italian sociologist, criticizing the rational choice theory (see Pizzorno 1986; 2007b), states that when an unexpected action happens (because the hypothesis foresaw, given certain circumstances, another type of action), it does not mean that it was irrational or not understandable, but that we have to find another kind of rationality to explain it, re-identifying the ends (re-identification) and/or beliefs and information (re-collocation) as different from those we initially supposed (Pizzorno 2007a: 70). In fact, an action can be explained when it is carried out for certain reasons, that is when the means adopted, on the basis of beliefs and information owned by the actor, are effective and coherent to pursue certain ends; when the means adopted appear incoherent or ineffective, it means that the ends and/or the beliefs/information are actually different from those previously supposed as real; thus we have to change the ends and/or the beliefs (identifying the real ones) to reconstruct the meaning of the action, thus re-establishing its rational coherence (*ibid*: 64-65).

Considering my research, I started from the hypothesis that all social centres, in the internal decision-making, adopted exclusively the consensual method (means), in order to take always unanimity decisions, that is firstly shared by all members, then if possible also effective (ends), given their beliefs based on the refusal of delegation and hierarchy and on the principle of self-management. But, discovering that in one case, Auro decision-making, the consensual method is not exclusively adopted, because it becomes majoritarian when unanimity is not reached (means), I have to change its ends (re-identification) and/or beliefs (re-collocation); in fact, the end of Auro decisional process is its effectiveness, that is a choice must be made in any case, possibly a unanimity decision otherwise a majority one, because its beliefs, even sharing the same values above mentioned, in addition stress more the preference for the 'culture of doing something' (action in any case) and internal autonomy, rather than for collective

choices and the social centre cohesion (preferences on the contrary shared by Experia activists).

Thus I have re-established the internal coherence of decisional processes according to scheme 'ends-beliefs-means'; that is, the two social centres adopt different means, because their ends and beliefs are different, although not completely; in other words they do not share the one and the same collective identity, conceived in this scheme as "a set of beliefs and preferences of the actor at the moment of the choice (*ibid.*: 67). Experia (exclusive) identity, in fact, is based on the refusal of delegation (autonomy) and hierarchy, but also on a radical version of Marxist ideology which stress the values of 'collectivity' (community), internal cohesion and social aggregation; Auro (inclusive) identity - a mix of ideologies - is also based on the refusal of delegation and hierarchy but, on the contrary, underline more the preferences for the 'culture of doing', pragmatism, and for the self-management of their spaces (internal autonomy)

As far as the 'outside' decision-making is concerned, the mechanism is the same, although ends pursued and means adopted change (not the beliefs/identity which are the same). Experia militants adopt strategic negotiation and preferences aggregation (means), because their ends are not the achievement of unanimity decisions, but pursuing exclusively pro-decisions within movement decisional arenas, that is choices favourable to their political positions, given their beliefs which also imply ideological rigid attitudes towards other groups (exclusive identity). On the contrary, Auro activists sometimes aggregate and sometimes transform their preference (means) because, participating mostly as individuals or representatives of internal groups, rarely as unitary actor within movement decisional settings, their ends are pro-decisions but not in any case, given their beliefs which also imply more pragmatic and flexible attitudes towards other SMOs (inclusive identity).

Nevertheless, in my opinion this explanation is not completely exhaustive, because if it is true and obvious that the (immediate) ends of decision-making are those of taking decisions (shared or not), it is also true that these choices are in their turn means to pursue other ends; thus we have to find the (long-term) ends followed by decisional processes, answering the question: Why social centres activists take collective decisions 'Inside' and participate to movement decisional arenas 'Outside'? Internally, they make choices because they want to establish rules, to take positions on certain issues but, above all, to make radical political collective actions which they

call ‘antagonist’, and social and countercultural activities, defined as ‘self-managed’; thus we have to find what kinds of collective action/activities are chosen as the outcome of decision-making (manifest ends). Experia militants prefer social aggregation activities and radical political initiatives, while Auro activists are more oriented towards countercultural and self-managed activities. Externally, all social centres members interact with other SMOs in order to promote and participate to politically shared movement initiatives, but while for Auro is important above all to take part to the movements, for Experia the goal is obtaining shared political choices

But there is another end pursued by participating to decisional processes, although not explicitly manifest (latent), that is keeping and strengthening of collective identity, which depends on the coherence of choices made during the time (Pizzorno 2007a: 27); therefore, activists have to make coherent decisions, not only regarding the content (ends) but also the way in which they are taken (means), in order to keep their identity. If identity is different, also ends and means will be different, of course. Nevertheless, if we conceive collective identity not only as a specific set of beliefs and preferences shared by a group, but also as a process by which social actors recognize themselves - and are recognized by others - as a part of this group (della Porta and Diani 2006: 91; Pizzorno 2007a: 23),<sup>14</sup> coherence of choices made will ensure recognition to identity.

Therefore, for Experia militants it is coherent adopting (Inside) the Deliberative model (consensus and preferences transformation) in order to make radical political actions and social aggregation activities, and (Outside) the Assembleary one (negotiation and preferences aggregation) to pursue politically shared movement initiatives, because given their beliefs, they recognize themselves and are recognized by others as a social aggregation place (Inside) and as a radical cohesive and unitary actor (Outside), thus keeping and strengthening their identity. In fact, concerning for instance the internal decision-making, majority decision would be too dangerous for the identity and cohesion of the group, because it could entail internal rifts too deep to be healed between majority and minority. The length of the process and the risk of the decisional stalemate are the eventual costs to pay in order to preserve their cohesion.

---

<sup>14</sup> Other social actors are those that Pizzorno call ‘Circles of Recognition’, which “are formed by people we know are able to judge, directly or indirectly, the choices of the actor, even if he does not have any intention to belong to their group” (2007a: 146).

On the contrary, Auro activists make coherent choices adopting the intermediate models in order to make countercultural and self-managed activities (Inside), and to participate to movement initiative (Outside), because given their beliefs, they recognize themselves and are recognized by others as an ‘open and neutral place’ to all SMOs (Outside), where people can autonomously manage internal spaces (Inside), thus keeping and strengthening their identity. The eventual formation of majorities and minorities in the internal decision-making, differently from Experia, does not jeopardise the low cohesion of the group nor their identity, because in their conception it is more important to be free to manage autonomously the internal spaces, than the feeling of belonging to a broader community (the social centre as a whole).

This connection between different models of decision-making processes and identities, varying from a SC to another, recalls the concept of “group style” elaborated by Paul Lichterman, that is “a recurrent pattern of interaction that arises from a group’s taken-for-granted understandings about how to be a good member in a group setting. Group style is how people coordinate themselves as a group; there are different ways to be together as a group, and thus different group styles” (2006: 539). In fact, decisional processes can be included in “recurrent patterns of interaction”, depending on collective identities, which in turn comprise “group’s taken-for-granted understandings”; so they vary according to different group styles, but always maintaining group bonds (internal cohesion) and drawing group boundaries (*ibidem*: 540).

Lastly, I am surely aware that these results are valid only for the empirical cases investigated, and they cannot abruptly be generalized to other social centres, although “comparative analysis can contribute to obtain valid inferential conclusions” (Isernia 2001: 149). At any rate, the models of internal and external decision-making proposed could be a useful analytical tool for future research, extending it to other empirical cases in other urban areas.