Changing Forms of Environmentalism in Italy: 
the Protest Campaign on the High Speed Railway System.∗

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Paper prepared for presentation at the ECPR Joint Sessions
Session 21 “Environmental Protest in Comparative Perspective”
Mannheim, March 26-31, 1999

1. Protest campaigns and political opportunities: an introduction

The paper focuses on the changing forms of environmental action during a long wave of protest against the governmental decision to build a high speed railway system (so-called Alta Velocità). Although we focus on one region in which the conflict was particularly widespread and long-lasting (Tuscany), we take a comparative perspective in at least three ways. First, we analyse environmental protest during the decision making process cross-time, dealing with three different phases during the period from 1991 to 1997. Second, we compare the different environmental movement organisations (EMOs) active during the protest wave. Third, we compare EMOs strategies in their interactions with different political actors (parties, unions, interest groups, administrators and so on) that took part in the policy making process.

If the environmental movement is our empirical field of investigation, our theoretical

∗ The research for this paper is part of the project on “The Transformation of Environmental Activism”, sponsored by the European Union. We are grateful to Massimo Morisi and the other members of the research group on “The policy of Alta Velocità in Tuscany” for permission to consult their materials. We also learned a lot from the BA theses in Political Science (University of Florence) of Matteo Calamassi, Lorenzo Grana and Cristina Mattesini, that are in fact often quoted in our paper.
concern addresses the theory of social movements in at least two ways. First of all, we want to stress the advantages of focusing on protest campaigns. Second, we want to work with the concept of political opportunities, suggesting some ways of overcoming its (often stressed) shortcomings, without losing its (generally acknowledged) heuristic potential.

Research on social movement has generally focused on actors—a social movement, a social movement family, a social movement sector—investigating their organisational forms, ideological elaboration, repertoire of action. Research on action—protest, non-institutional forms of political participation, repertoires of action—has suggested the concept of protest cycle to analyse those periods in which protest intensifies and spread to different political and social actors (Tarrow 1983). With our analysis of protest campaigns we start from the observation that cycles of protest are often made of the interactions of various aggregates of protest activities going on with different specific aims. The protest events that focus on a specific issue—in particular, on demands for changes in a specific policy decision—form protest campaigns, with their own specific forms and dynamics. Many of these protest campaigns played a pivotal role in the rise of several “new” social movements: the campaign on the abortion law for the women’s movement and the campaign against the deployment of the Cruise and Pershing II for the peace movement are two good illustration. Other, less well known, campaigns developed at the local level: for instance, campaigns against an airport or a dangerous-waste disposal mobilised, or re-mobilised, environmental groups.

We think that it is worthwhile to parallel the analysis of protest cycle with that of protest campaign, looking for specific internal dynamics and external influences. For instance, do cyclical dynamics, in particular in terms of number of events, apply also to campaigns? And is the evolution of protest repertoires similar for campaigns and cycles? This focus of analysis seems to be more and more important for movements that developed into a phase of “latency” (Melucci 1982), or institutionalisation, and are therefore less likely to produce large cycles of protest, and more likely instead to structure their mobilisation around protest campaigns.
If our dependent variable is therefore a protest campaign, particular attention will be paid to the different actors that intervene in the policy making process opposing the institutional decisions, to their strategies and stakes. Our protest campaign involved formal environmental movement organisations (FEMOs), as well as parties and local institutional actors, that often organised protest actions. The main actor of the protest were however the local environmental movement organisations (LEMOs) that formed in most of the areas directly menaced by the AV project. Some students have framed this kind of groups as “NIMBY” (Not In My Back Yard), associating them with a conservative behaviour and selfish, materialistic activists that resist to the social change. Others labelled the LEMOs as “grass roots” considering them as essentially democratic. Gould et al recently proposed to refer to “citizen-worker” activity since, in their perspective, “these groups are attempting to exercise their right as citizens. They seek to have some say in the local development of their communities, in order to ensure that the quality of their lives will be protected” (1996, 4). Agreeing somehow with them, we will refer to these groups as “citizen-committees” (citizens them-selves called their spontaneous organisations Comitati, “committees”). Citizens-committees can act as NIMBY, in a conservative way, or as “grass roots”, democratic and progressive actors: this is more an empirical question than a conceptual and terminological definition--and empirical questions can be solved only in an empirical way.

In order to explain the dynamic of the campaign, we shall focus on the political opportunities (POs) available. The political scientists who investigated protest and social movements have stressed the role of the political opportunities. The central focus of “political process” theories is the relationship between institutional actors and protest. In challenging a given political order, social movements interact with actors who enjoy a consolidated position in such an order.¹ In the study of social movements, the concept which has had the greatest

¹ Charles Tilly (1978: 53) has spoken, in this context, of movements as 'challengers', contrasting
success in defining the properties of the external environment, relevant to the development of social movements is that of “political opportunity structure”. Peter Eisinger (1973) used this concept in a comparison of the results of protest in different American cities, focusing on the degree of openness (or closedness) of the local political system. Other empirical research indicated the influence of variables such as electoral instability (Piven and Cloward 1977), the availability of influential allies (Gamson 1990 [1975]), and tolerance for protest in the elite (Jenkins and Perrow 1977). Sidney Tarrow integrated these empirical observations into a theoretical framework for his study of protest cycles in Italy, singling out the degree of openness, the closure of formal political access, the degree of stability or instability of political alignments, the availability and strategic posture of potential allies (1983: 28) and political conflicts between and within elite (1989: 35).

To these variables others have been added, relating to the institutional conditions which regulate agenda-setting and decision-making processes. The functional division of power and geographical (de)centralisation have been analysed in order to understand the origins of protest and the forms it takes. In general, the aim has been to observe which stable or 'mobile' characteristics of the political system influence the growth of protest cycles (Tarrow 1989), as well as the forms which these actions take in different historical contexts (Tilly 1978). The comparison between different political systems (della Porta 1995; Kriesi et al. 1995; Rucht 1994) has enabled the central theme of relationships between social movements and the institutional political system to be studied in depth.

The “political process” approach succeeded in shifting attention towards interactions between new and traditional actors, and between less conventional forms of action and institutionalised systems of mediation of interests. There are, however, some persisting areas of difficulty (della Porta and Diani 1999). A first problem is related with the delicate problem of the appropriate indicators for the description of complex institutional phenomena. In our paper,
we will try to address this problem by singling out the specific types of opportunities that influenced the dynamics of the protest campaign. The focus on a more limited “space” may help to investigate the causal relationship between protest campaigns and (specific) political opportunities. In particular, we suggest that the focus on a campaign brings the specific dynamics of policy-making arenas into the fore. Until now, the political process model has privileged politics over policy: political parties have been singled out as potential allies, the electoral arena as the one that potentially affect social movements, representative institutions as the main potential channel for protest. In our analysis we want to investigate the relevance of policy, the policy-making arena, and the policy making networks as target and channel for protestors. We will not assume that “policy determines politics”, but more humbly suggest that it is worthwhile to bring policy into the picture.

A second problem in the POs literature refer to the role of culture as a filter between structure and action. Political opportunities needs to be perceived in order to become relevant. The movement culture is therefore important for the *social construction* (Berger and Luckman 1966) of political opportunities, and the institutional culture contribute to define state reactions to challengers. Some changes in the political opportunity structure do not affect a social movement unless they are perceived as of importance by the movement itself. Structural availability must be filtered through a process of "cognitive liberation" in order to unleash turmoil (McAdam 1982). For protest to emerge activists must believe that an opportunity exists, that they have the power to bring about change and they must blame the system for the problem. Looking at structural opportunities without considering the cognitive processes which intervene between structure and action can be very misleading (Gamson and Meyer 1996). It is important, therefore, to analyse activists' understandings of available opportunities, the lenses through which they view potential opportunities for their movements (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996). In our analysis, we will try to single out which kind of political opportunities were relevant according to the perceptions of the participants in their multiple games.
Methodologically, we tried to combine the case study approach with protest event analysis. First of all, we tried to reconstruct the policy making process by a secondary analysis of documents written by the various actors involved as well as interviews with representatives of the movements and the institution. Afterward, we built a data-base of protest events using six daily newspapers and a chronology written by the citizens’ committees.\(^2\)

In the next paragraph we will describe how the building of a new railway system (high speed) was decided and how the conflict changed when the decision making moved from the national to the local level.

In the third paragraph we will analyse our dependent variables: the forms of collective action, the organisational structures and the frames used during the protest campaign. We will stress, in particular, the changes during the policy making process, singling out the differences between institutional actors (such as parties and local governments), the more formally structured, already existing environmental movement organisations (FEMOs) and the spontaneous citizens’ committees that emerged in order to contrast the new railway system at the local level. This will allow us to distinguish between three phases. In the first one, the established FEMOs and political parties contrasted the plan and supported the LEMOs. The conflict was not very visible however: the LEMOs were still gathering resources for the mobilisation and the FEMOs were contrasting the plan by institutional means. In the second phase, the LEMOs and the established FEMOs organised the first public demonstrations against the plan while the relationships between the entire environmental movement and the local institutional actors became more conflictual. In the third phase the movement splits as the FEMOs and the local committees chose different strategies: the institutional repertoire prevailed in the FEMOs while the LEMOs became more “movimentist”.

\(^2\) The six dailies are the local, conservative “La Nazione”, the national conservative “Il Corriere della Sera”, the national, liberal-bourgeois “La Repubblica”, the main financial daily “Il Sole 24 ore”, the PDS-near “L’Unità”, and the left-wing “Il Manifesto”. Not only “La Nazione”, but also “La Repubblica” and “L’Unità” have local sections for Florence and its province.
In the fourth paragraph we will describe the changes in the POs both at national level and at the local level. In particular, we will stress the role of the main left-wing party, in power at the local level, as a powerful ally of the protest in the first phase, and as a “broker” of a local consensus in the following phases. Moreover, we will stress the role of the competition between left-wing political parties in the alliance structure of the movement. As for the “cultural opportunities” we will show how some aspects of the “red” culture in Tuscany (i.e. a complex mix of radicalism and localism, as well as the accent on economic development for contrasting unemployment) are used in different combinations by FEMOs and LEMOs in order to define environmentalism. We shall indicate that these differences could be explained from the different resources available for FEMOs and LEMOs in the different phases of the policy making process.


In the mid eighties, the Italian railroad (FS) decided, in their Programma Generale dei Trasporti (General Transport Plan), the realisation of a new railway high speed system (Alta velocità - AV). The plan started to be implemented in the beginning of the nineties. The purpose of this plan is to quadruplicate the lines of the north-south and east-west axes of the Italian railway system and introduce high-speed trains. The Fs, Ministero dei Trasporti (Office of the Transports) and the railway sector of the Fiat (the largest domestic industrial group) are strongly involved in the realisation of the plan. The weakness of FS infrastructures—especially in Southern Italy and especially if we compare them with the other European railway infrastructures—as well as the bad financial situation of the FS persuaded the Italian policy makers to renew the railway sector along the lines set by the European institutions.

3 The AV system involves the Naples-Rome, Florence-Bologna, Bologna-Milan, Venezia - Milan,
In its genetic phase, the AV policy did not change the traditional decisional configuration of this sector. In fact, the core actor of the decisional network is the Ministero dei Trasporti, a public actor that, however, because of its low degree of technological knowledge, is highly permeable by the private interests. The result is a decisional configuration dominated by private and public oligopolies at national level (Mattesini 1996/97). It is important to notice that, since 1992, Italian politics has been characterised by a deep crisis that brought about the restructuration of the party system and the so-called “end of the First Republic”. Thus, from 1992 to 1994 this crisis determined an emptiness of political power, testified to by two “technical” national governments. This deep political crisis could have accentuated the mentioned dominant position of private and public oligopolies.

As the policy making spread from the national to the local level, however, other actors entered the picture: the configuration of power became therefore more pluralistic (Mattesini 1996/97). The shifts in the decision making level is due to the procedural rules of the policy’s implementation phase: in order to be implemented, any public work has to obtain the consensus of the involved Regioni (Regional governments) and Enti locali (Provinces and Communes). The (recently established) administrative tools for “building” this consensus are the VIA procedure by which the Regioni have to express their opinion on the environmental impact of the policy, and the Conferenza dei servizi, an arena in which all involved administrative and public actors, at the various levels, are called to participate.

When the VIA procedure started, in 1992, the Tuscany Region was criticised by the Enti locali (in particular, the Communes involved by the projected trajectory) because of the technical information about environmental impact. Both Region and Communes were complaining against FS and Ministero dei Trasporti for having been left out of the planning phase of the AV policy. During the conclusion of the VIA procedure Tuscany Region expressed for the first time its negative opinion on the AV plan environmental impact.
In the same periods, many citizens got involved in collective action against the AV Plan: their protest took different forms. The map of the environmental activism is in fact an heterogeneous one, showing different types of environmentalism, with different repertoires, different frames and different organisational logic. Besides the traditional Italian FEMOs (especially Legambiente, WWF and Italia Nostra), many LEMOs emerged to coordinate the spontaneous protest against the AV Plan.

The VIA procedure ended in 1992. A year later, in 1993, there was the first convocation of the Conferenza dei Servizi and the Enti locali immediately linked the AV plan to the realisation of other infrastructures: the remodelling and the completion of an old railway line, the Faentina, which goes through the Mugello - a rural area around Florence; the railway junction of Florence; and the Variante di Valico, a double motorway that had to cut the Appennine Mountains. Besides, many Communes expressed a strong criticism of the AV plan because of its environmental impact—an exception being the Commune of Florence, that signed an agreement with the FS. The Conferenza dei servizi lasted for quite a long time (from 1993 to 1995). In this arena, the conflict intensified—not only the open conflicts between institutional and environmental actors, but also the strains inside the environmental movement between its different components. In particular, there was a quite explicit split between the traditional sectors of the movement and the citizens involved in the local committees. In fact, the AV policy-arena provided the traditional FEMOs with a possibility to institutionalise themselves both in national and local system in order to influence the future environmental policies. For the citizens involved in the local protest, instead, the AV Plan represented an immediate threat to their environmental quality of life.

In this phase, the institutional actors at different levels changed their aims, their roles and their stakes. The Region became more informed about the plan, and the Province of Florence supplied technological knowledge by elaborating an autonomous project for the high speed railway. Then, the proponents (FS) and the General Contractor of the FS elaborated a variante,
i.e. a change in the trajectory of the new railways. The variante moved the planned work for the first part of the railways from the Valle del Mugello to the Valle del Terzolle, another rural area around Florence. Instead of appeasing the citizens claims against the AV, the new plans spread the protest to the new Communes and citizens of the Terzolle that also organised in the new citizens’ committees.

At the end of the Conferenza dei servizi (in July 1995), however, the Communes accepted the AV projects in exchange for other provisions, and the Region and Province signed the agreement of the plan. This change in the stake and aim of the institutional actor is related not only to the policy making phase, but also to other political factors and events both at national and at local level. We can say in fact that some aspects of the policy making could be explained by politics—in this case, by the electoral arena. In 1994, the first national political elections with a reformed electoral law took place. Two newly formed coalitions contested the elections: a centre-right coalition led by the media tycoon Silvio Berlusconi, founder and uncontested leader of the “party-firm” Forza Italia, and a centre-left coalition led by Achille Occhetto, under whose leadership the old Italian Communist party (PCI) had completed its transformation into a new European socialist party, the Democratic Party of the Left (Partito Democratico della Sinistra, PDS). In April 1994, Silvio Berlusconi won the elections and, in May, formed a Government with the support of both the post-fascist Alleanza Nazionale and the regionalist Lega. With the open sponsorship of the new Government, that AV plan, born as a technical decision came to be politically “thematised”. In December, however, the withdrawal of Lega form the coalition brought to the demise of the Berlusconi government, substituted for by another technical government led by Lamberto Dini, former Minister of the Centre-Right government, now supported by the Centre-Left coalition and the Lega. In the financial law, approved by the Parliament, perplexities were expressed on the management of the AV plan and its financing.

In April 1995, local elections took place in Tuscany. The Florence government changed:
from a coalition of five Centre-Right parties led by the Socialist Giorgio Morales to a Centre-Left coalition led by Mario Primicerio, supported by the PDS. All Mugello communes confirmed their left-wing governments, and even Firenzuola, until then led by a centre-right coalition, aligned with other Communes of the Mugello. In Florence, the new Florence Government immediately broke the agreement the preceding mayor had signed with the FS. According to this agreement, stated in the so called Master-Plan, Florence AV station had to be built near to a secondary train station; the new Government asked that the AV train enter in the main railways station, Santa Maria Novella, though a subterranean passage. If the Master-Plan testified for a close cooperation between the former Florentine government and the Italian Railway as far as the AV plan was concerned, the shift in the government brought about a redefinition in the relations between the Commune of Florence, the Tuscany Region and the others Communes of the province of Florence. The political alignment of the all Communes dealing with the AV plan with the Tuscany Region and the Florentine Province, and the new power configuration of the national Government (now supported by the centre-left parties with the Lega) helps explaining their availability to accept the AV plan. On July 1995, in fact, after long negotiations, the actors involved in the Conferenza dei servizi accepted the AV plan without the contextual realisation of the other infrastructures they had asked for. However, many Communes as well as the Region obtained conspicuous financing for other infrastructures.

In 1996, the national political elections brought the centre-left coalition (the Ulivo, oliv tree), led by Romano Prodi, with an electoral agreement with Rifondazione Comunista (Communist Refoundation, RC), the Communist Party rebuilt after the transformation of the PCI, in the national government. This important shift in national politics (for the first time since the born of Italian Republic the left guides the Government) obviously changed the relationships centre-periphery with Tuscany, traditional stronghold of the Italian Communist
In 1997, the first works of the AV in the Mugello began: the policy process passed from the decisional phase to the implementation phase, notwithstanding the ongoing opposition of the local environmental groups.

This brief account indicates that, paraphrasing Lowi (1972), “policy determines conflict”. The analysis of the AV policy seems therefore a promiseful strategy for the analysis of the environmental movements “in action”. The AV policy shapes an arena of interactions which involves conflictual values, strategies, ideologies, organisations and interests. In this arena, the environmental movement is an important actor of the struggle against the “anti-environmental” forces. There is however also a conflict developing inside the environmental movement, a conflict that concerns the very definition of environmentalism. Thus, we are going to consider environmental movement both as an individual actor into the policy arena with its own (material and symbolic) resources and its own (organisational, ideological and action) strategies, and an arena itself in which different groups interact in order to “make” a “movement”.

3. Forms of action and organisational interactions: the analysis of a protest campaign

As we mentioned, the AV policy entered in its decisional phase at the beginning of nineties, but until 1992 no protest event was reported in newspapers. This is no surprise since, until then, citizens had no information on the AV policy. As the leader of a Citizens Committee explains, “We new nothing… Only that this train had to pass here… The people was afraid of what could happen… The Committee rises in a spontaneous way, from citizens that are angry for this Medieval situation in which you have to suffer what is decided above you…. There was anger around, and some of us tried to rationalise this feeling” (Cca12, in 4

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4 The new national configuration of power seems to have effected the relationship between the proponents of the AV plan and the Florence Commune, when it had to face the question of the Florence’s junction of the AV. Another Conferenza dei Servizi was called and it closed this year (1999). This period is however not (yet) included in our case-study.
As soon as information spread, bringing about the feeling of an incumbent menace to the local environment, the protest erupted in the Mugello. In 1992 one of the first groups to mobilise was the Confagricoltura of the Mugello: the agricultural interest group of the rural area around Florence where the policy makers had decided to build the new AV railway. In few days, the protest spread to many citizens of the Communes of Mugello, especially in Borgo S. Lorenzo whose major was the first to express a strong criticism against the AV plan. According to the leader of a Committee: “It was easy enough to mobilise the citizens of the Mugello against the first project…” (Cca12, in Calamassi 1996: 215).

Nineteen-ninety-two, with 14 protest events focusing on AV policy in Tuscany, saw the beginning of a “single issue protest campaign” which reached its peak between the second semester of 1994 and the first semester of 1995 (see fig. 1). In that phase, we counted 49 protest events. In the second semester of 1995 the protest began to diminish, although it did not fade away. This protest campaign involved formal environmental movement organisations (FEMOs), parties and local institutional actors, such as majors. But above all it was the result of the informal activism of the citizens’ committees which spontaneously emerged where the menace of environmental impact was more concrete.

FIG. 1

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5. A national demonstration was held in Florence on March 11, 1995
Before starting with our analysis of their activities, we have to mention that citizens’ committees emerged in different places and in different time. At the beginning of the policy campaign every communes of the Mugello, with the exception of Firenzuola, had a committee against AV plan. When in 1994 the policy makers changed the trajectory of the AV, other committees were formed in the Terzolle, Mugnone, Monte Morello, Florence—i.e. all the areas which became involved in the new projects—while the activity of the former committees became less visible. Thus when we refer to the citizens-committees activity we are not talking about to the same “empirical” actors, but about the same type of actor.

3.1 Organisational field and forms of action: a synchronic view.

Table 1 shows the citizens’ committees as the real protagonists of the campaign (with 68,9% of the responses). Formal environmental organisations (such as WWF, Italia Nostra and Legambiente) mobilised in protest events just 25 times in 7 years, and parties 23 times. Other institutional organisations such as the unions and other economic interest groups did not mobilise around AV plan--at least not with the use of public forms of protest.

These kinds of organisation interacted in the “protest interorganisational field” of the AV
policy making. Some students of policy making pointed out that in the policy making process a plurality of private and public organisations, with their concurrent aims and interests, get involved, shaping the “organisational field” of the policy (Hanf and Scharpf 1978). We can add that the policy making shapes another organisational field, in which actors--each one with its own interests, aims and resources--interact through protest. Different mix of these factors (interests, aims and resources) determines a different frequency of the protest. In fact, according to Lipsky (1965), protest is a resource. And sometimes it is useful to combine protest with other resources: if sometimes protest is the only possible strategy to achieve an aim, in other cases, especially if the actor have institutional access to the policy making, protest may become useless.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Types of Organisation</th>
<th>Organisational Actors</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Pct of Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INSTITUTIONAL</td>
<td>Party</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>13.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Union</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Business/Industry</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMOs</td>
<td>Formal Environmental Movement Organisation</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEMOs</td>
<td>Local Environmental Movement Organisations</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>68.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the organisational field of the AV policy in Tuscany we found, in fact, different (types of) actors, with different (types of) aims. Some actors like parties, especially the dominant leftist party of the “red” Tuscany (the PDS), mobilised within a centre/periphery conflict: in fact, the left-wing local administrators acted as representatives of the local interests of the community as opposed to the interests of the central government and central bureaucracies.
such as the FS and the Ministry of Transports. The local administrators—the majors, the president of the province, the president of the regional government, the president of the *Comunità Montana* (an institution formed by various Communes in mountain areas)—used the potential withdrawal of consensus as a menace to exchange with the central government against more material resources and more legitimation (i.e., weight in the decisional process). Moreover, parties protested, it is still the case of the dominant leftist party, because they did not want to lose the consent of the citizens merely accepting, without contrasting, the construction of a big infrastructure with high environmental impact on their electoral constituency, and advantages only at the national level. Finally parties protested, for instance in the case of RC (the party born from the leftist branch of PCI, which opposed the transformation of the Italian Communist party into an European socialist party) and the *Verdi* (the Italian environmental party), because protest allow to profile themselves in the competition with the leftist dominant party which hold most public offices at the local level. In all the different games, parties could use many different resources (organisation, consent, institutionalisation) besides protest.

Formal environmental organisations mobilised against the negative environmental impact of the AV project. However, their institutional relationship with parties (above all with *Verdi* but also with the PDS and RC) or with bureaucracies such as environmental central office and their technical knowledge often made protest redundant.

The informal citizens’ committees had few resources to mobilise in order to defend the quality of life of the areas in which they formed. Their organisation was too weak, their relationships with institutional actors were informal, and their interests were hardly negotiable—if we consider their primary aim: contrasting public work in their life’s environment. Protest was therefore the main—if not the only-- resource at their disposal.

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6 The responses are more then the cases because of the participation of several organisational actors at the same protest event.
If protest was therefore used with different aims, and with different emphasis, from different organisational actors, it is important to analyse if and how these differences are reflected in the forms of action the different types of actors used. As we can see in Tab. 1, the most used form of action during the campaign is the inside assembly/teach in (26.3% of the responses). Inside assemblies are used by LEMOs more than by other groups because of the need of the former to co-ordinate members which are working together for the first time. New organisations need to build solidarity for action and need to organise actions in order to produce organisational identity. Inside assemblies are a main instrument to reach both aims.

Petitions and public letters (20.4% of the responses) are the typical means to get access to the press and, mobilising the public opinion, trying to push institutional actors to change their plans or their behaviour on the issue the “challengers” are addressing. Especially public letters in the local press are easy to use, since they do not involve much organisational efforts or resources. Petitions involve a larger organisational effort, but have the advantage of being very well accepted by the public opinion.

The most diffused forms of action in social movements in order to show the “power of number” (DeNardo 1985) are the marches and public protest assemblies: in our case study, the “challengers” of AV plan used them 27 times in 7 years (16.2% of responses).7

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tab. 2 Types and Forms of Action.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Types of Action</td>
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<tr>
<td>1) APPEAL</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

7 Unfortunately no systematic figures are provided by newspapers about the number of the participants.

8 The responses are more than the cases (167 against 120) because of the presence of different forms of action in the same protest event.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Form of Action</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Leaflet</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inside Assembly/Teach In</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>26.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting/Delegation</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>13.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural Performance</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Procedural Complaint</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demonstration March</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>6.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Protest Assembly</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>9.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Disturbance/Hindrance</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Defamation</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>167</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Often “challengers” do not express their grievance in a public form of action but they directly ask the “authorities” for an informal access--this is the case of the meetings/delegations (13.2%)--or they ask the judicial power to intervene in the policy making process—as it is the case with procedural complaints (5.4%).

It is worth noticing that confrontational forms such as disturbance, occupation, defamation and so on are strongly under-used in the protest campaign we are focusing on.

In general, the “repertoire of actions” (Tilly 1978) used in the campaign against the AV project is very moderate. This is even more evident if we aggregate the modalities of the variable “forms of action” ( “petition”, “demonstration march” and so on) in broader categorisations. We distinguished therefore appeal activities (from petition to cultural performance in our tab. 2), procedural activities (procedural complaint and litigation), demonstrative activities (public protest assembly, demonstration march), confrontational activities (occupation, disruption of events, hindrance etc.), light violence (theft/burglary, minor attack on property, aggressive bodily contact), heavy violence (sever attack on property, personal injuries, homicide/murder). If we go back to table 2, we can observe that in our protest campaign only protest forms belonging to the first four categories are present, and the appeal activities (the most moderate form of action) are by far the more widespread.

As Charles Tilly (1978) indicated, the repertoire of action is related to the actors
(ideology, interest, organisation) which act with it. The existence of such relationship may be controlled by a cross-tabulation between the re-coded variable forms of action and the types of organisational actor (tab .3).

Tab. 3 Organisational Actors per Forms of action (number of responses and row pct).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Appeal</th>
<th>Procedural</th>
<th>Demonstrative</th>
<th>Confrontational</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>actors</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>83.3%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>15.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMOs</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>72.7%</td>
<td>18.2%</td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>14.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEMOs</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>73.3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>17.6%</td>
<td>6.1%</td>
<td>70.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>175</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>74.8%</td>
<td>4.7%</td>
<td>16.2%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All types of organisations used to a similar degree appeal activities, which are indeed their most frequently used forms of actions. Procedural action are used by FEMOs and LEMOs, but not by parties. It is quite surprising that FEMOs did not use demonstrative forms of action as did parties and LEMOs. It may confirms the hypothesis of a strong instrumental orientation of the environmental movement, with a lower attention to expressive actions.\(^9\) In fact, confrontational actions, that have an high degree of symbolic impact as they often draw a line between friends and foes, are used only by the LEMOs.

Summarising this first part of the analysis, we can say that in the campaign related to the decisional process of the AV plan, policy shaped a protest organisational field in which different actors interacted using protest in order to change public decisions, or anyhow to play a role in the policy making. Different organisations used protest for different aims and in a

\(^9\) On the role of expressive action, Pizzorno 1966; Melucci 1982 and 1984. On instrumentality in the
different way, according to their aims and their capacity to mobilise other resources. The repertoire of the campaign was altogether very moderate, but the different organisational actors used often different forms of action.

3.2. Framing Protest Campaign.

If the differences in the aims and stakes of the organisational actors involved in the campaign can explain their different use of the protest, they can also help us to understand the different ways in which the actors framed (Snow and Benford 1988 and 1992) their protest. Effectively the framing is part of the protest event as much as the forms of action: both forms and frames shape the “protest culture” of a group, of a campaign and more generally of a society (Swidler 1986; Rucht 1998).

Scholars who studied the framing of social movements often analysed the documents of the SMOs. This source is however better fit to study the organisational ideology rather than its framing. The ideology is in fact the cultural structured representation of the world (politics) which each group defines in its genetic phase; the framing refers instead to specific protest events, campaigns or cycles. If Marxism, for instance, is an ideology of the workers movement, “power to workers” is instead a frame. Framing is then a process in which actors manipulate symbols or slogans for capturing the consent of the public, ideology is the “bag” from which they take words, symbols and ideas.

In order to analyse the framing of the AV protest campaign we chose to classify the slogans used in protest events. Thus, we constructed two different variables: “degree of disagreement with AV plan” and “types of frames”. In the first one, we classified every statement in three categorisations “generally against AV”, “alternative solutions for the AV project” and “generally pro AV plan”. In the second variable, we classified the statements in four categorisations which capture the reasons the actors used for convincing public opinion to
join their campaign against the AV project: “environmentalism” (the stress is on the environmental damages of the AV), “Nimby” (the stress on the local disadvantages for the local citizens), “waste of public resource-corruption” (the stress is on the material resources misused in the AV plan), and, finally, “centralised and non-democratic procedures of the decisional process” (the stress is on the need for decentralisation of institutional decisions).

While the first two frames focus on environment, the last two have a more political content.

For what concerns the “degree of disagreement with AV plan”, we can see in tab. 4 that the institutional statements were generally formulated as critique of the actual project, and not of the AV in general. This was not the case of citizens’ committees which stressed their substantial disagreement with the whole AV plan, even more than the FEMOs did.

Tab 4. Degree of disagreement of the AV policy per organisational actors (Row Pct).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Against AV</th>
<th>Other Solutions</th>
<th>Pro AV</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional actors</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>9.1%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>54.5%</td>
<td>24.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMOs</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEMOs</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>41.7%</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
<td>53.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
<td>44.4%</td>
<td>26.7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For what concerns the “degree of disagreement with AV plan”, we can see in tab. 4 that the institutional statements were generally formulated as critique of the actual project, and not of the AV in general. This was not the case of citizens’ committees which stressed their substantial disagreement with the whole AV plan, even more than the FEMOs did.

Tab 5. Types of Frame per Organisational Actors.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Environmentalism</th>
<th>Nimby</th>
<th>Waste-Corruption</th>
<th>NonDemocratic</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Institutional actors</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>23.8%</td>
<td>28.6%</td>
<td>9.5%</td>
<td>38.1%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FEMOs</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>57.9%</td>
<td>10.5%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>15.8%</td>
<td>14.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LEMOs</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Looking at the Tab. 5, we can state that all frames were used by all types of actors but with a different mix of them. Not surprisingly, the FEMOs used the environmentalist frame more than the other actors did, and the institutional actors did not use the frame of waste-corruption but rather the non-democratic one. LEMOs, finally, employed environmentalism, but there was a strong reference to the NIMBY frame, as well as a large use of the waste-corruption frame and a low use of non-democratic one.

As a way of summarising, we can organise our empirical results on the AV protest campaign framing in a typology formed by different dimensions of framing (see fig. 2). Parties and Committees were more localist (Nimby) than FEMOs, while FEMOs were more environmentalist-generalist. Along the second dimension we can single out those who stressed the centralised and non-democratic decisional process (local parties and local institutions which were in fact the most directly involved in the centre-periphery conflict) and those who did not (the citizens’ committees, that seemed less interested in postmaterialistic values and democratic participation than we expected). Moreover, we singled out those who underlined the waste of resource, especially referring to the possibility of corruption (the LEMOs) from who did not use it (parties, that obviously have no interest in de-legitimating themselves). Finally in the third dimension we can distinguish the actors who strongly expressed their criticism against the AV (the LEMOs) and those who, instead, had a bargaining attitude (especially parties but also the FEMOs).

FIG. 2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>33.0%</th>
<th>28.4%</th>
<th>26.1%</th>
<th>12.5%</th>
<th>68.8%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>32.5%</td>
<td>25.8%</td>
<td>21.9%</td>
<td>17.2%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3.3. Changing forms of action and organisational interactions: a diachronic view.

We have also noticed that the protest campaign had a cyclical dynamic, with an ascending phase, a peak and a declining phase. In this part, we will focus on the diachronic analysis of the changing forms of action and the interactions between the actors involved in the protest organisational field. Which are the concrete interactions between the mentioned actors along the campaign? Which are the relationships between the environmentalists and the institutional actors? And, finally, what about the relations between the FEMOs and the LEMOs during the campaign—or, to put it differently, were the traditional environmental organisations able to aggregate and represent the environmental interests? And, as far as the forms of action are concerned, how did they change from a diachronic point of view? Has the campaign dynamic influenced the forms of action within the organisational field of the protest?

In order to answer these questions, we divided the long protest campaign into three phases: the ascending phase [1992-1994 (I semester)], the phase of the peak [1994 (II semester)-1995 (I semester)] and the declining phase [1995 (II semester)-1997 (II semester)].
This division should help us understand which are the main factors (organisational strategies, interactions between the different actors) that determined the dynamic of the campaign.

Let us focus first on the forms of action. The fig. 3 shows the aggregate frequencies of the four types of action (appeal, procedural, demonstration and confrontational) and fig. 4 the frequencies for each phase of the campaign. We can point out that procedural actions increased in the declining phase, and so did demonstration actions, while there were more confrontational forms in the ascending phase of the campaign. What visibly increased in the peak of the campaign has been the appeal, i.e. the most moderate of the forms of action.

FIG. 3

![Forms of action graph](image-url)
The campaign against the AV has many interesting features. Even if it is no surprise that there was no radicalisation in a region of a democratic country with an high degree of institutionalisation of the protest, the complete absence of violence is a surprising result. It is also puzzling there have been so few demonstrative forms of action, so few confrontational forms and so many appeal forms.

Moreover, if we look at the diachronic trend of the (low) level of perturbation, we can see that there has been more perturbation in both the ascending phase and the declining phase than during the peak (see fig. 5). This could be explained by the will of the “challengers” to sensitise the public opinion to the issue they were struggling on, and their need to “build up” by mobilisation resources (identity, relationships, access to the authorities) for next mobilisations.

Perturbation in the declining phase is, as we will see, likely related to the dynamic of interactions within the organisational field of the protest. But such an high moderation in the peak of the could be explained only by external factors, such as the POs. In our opinion the perturbation in the ascending phase is instrumental to the moderation of the peak, as in the first phase “challengers” were gathering, as we already said, by mobilisation resources (in this case public consensus) that, in the second phase, they tried to invest in less perturbative actions

\[ \text{We operationalised the “level of perturbation” allotting a different weight to each type of action (1 to appeal forms; 2 to procedural, 3 to demonstrative and 4 to confrontational). After we summed up the weight of each type of action per protest event and, then, we calculated the average of the sum per each phases of the campaign. For a similar operationalisation of the level of perturbation, see Tarrow 1989 and Kriesi et al. 1996. In addition we did not count inside assemblies that were not reported in the newspapers because one additional source we used mentions only the inside assemblies of the citizens’ committees, therefore their inclusion could have determined a distortion in the comparative analysis of the perturbation.} \]
which could directly influence the policy makers (such as delegations, petitions and meeting).

Let us move to analyse the organisational field of the protest. As we have seen before, the informal groups are the key actor of the protest against the AV project. But what is the contribution of different types of organisation in each phase of the campaign? The fig. 6 shows that the contribution of the institutional actors decreased going from the ascending to the declining phase, and so did FEMOs contribution while the LEMOs protest increased during the whole of the protest campaign.

How can we interpret these figures? First, in each phases the LEMOs are the most representative actor of the organisational field of the AV protest. This confirms the importance of the protest resource for that kind of actor.

Second, in the ascending phase the institutional actors and the FEMOs, even if for different reasons, have helped informal groups to organise protest events and in this way to gather resources for their mobilisation (identity, frames, channels of access and public opinion consent) that later allow them to continue to act, increasing the number of protest events when the support of other more organised actors was decreasing. At the beginning, institutional actors like the majors and their parties helped citizens to mobilise in organised committees and generally seemed to embrace the environmental movement’s aims. They needed local protest in order to increase their power in the decisional process of AV project and reducing both the environmental impact and the consent’s cost of the policy. Since the beginning of the peak, the relationships between parties and environmental movement changed, becoming more conflictual--especially with PDS that was accused of ambiguity on the AV issue.

![FIG. 5 Perturbation](image)

![FIG. 6](image)
organisational field, protesting themselves but also helping the citizens’ committees with their organisational and technical expertise. On October 1994, citizens’ committees and environmental associations formed a *coordinamento*, an organisational form in which LEMOs and FEMOs acted together, organising common assemblies, petitions and delegations against the AV plan. In 1995, however, the co-operation ended, and relationship between the FEMOs and the LEMOs became more tense, if not conflictual. The *coordinamento* asked WWF, Legambiente, Italia Nostra, Lipu and Greenpeace to mobilise in a national campaign (“at least one”), and devote more energies to the protest against AV plan. On December of the same year, FEMOs organised a rally in front of the national Parliament but the *coordinamento*, that now was acting like a normal committee, refused to participate accusing FEMOs of acting without coordination with the citizens’ committees (Grana 1998). With the end of the cooperation between FEMOs and LEMOs, the protest campaign came into its declining phase: the citizens’ committees went on to protest without the help of both the institutional actors (that now became the main targets of the protest) and the FEMOs. The competition between FEMOs and LEMOs, although it was responsible for a decline in the number of the protest events, determined the highest level of perturbation of the campaign (see fig. 5)

Summarising the diachronic aspects of the protest campaign we can say that, first of all, the campaign is characterised by very high level of moderation. So high that we can speak of a “radical moderation” which characterised the peak of the campaign when, however, there was a great deal of protest events. Second, in each phase of the campaign the informal citizens’ committees were more active in the protest organisational field than other more organised groups. Interactions between the institutional actors and the environmental movement changed during the three phases, with co-operation in the ascending phase, and conflict (or indifference) since the peak. Also the interactions within the environmental movement between FEMOs and LEMOs shifted from cooperative (until the peak) to conflictual (in the declining phase). The transformations in the relationships between the protest actors can be certainly explained by the
dynamic of cooperation-competition that often appears in a protest cycle, but we think the conflict was already implicit in the actors different framing of the campaign. In fact, as we saw (fig.2), citizens’ committees were more sensitive to local question (Nimby) while FEMOs were more interested to institutionalise themselves as members of the “polity” in order to better defend environmental issues. Parties and local institutions, finally, acted mainly within a centre-periphery conflict, criticising especially the procedural aspects of the decisional process.

4. Local “green” protest in a “red” territorial culture

The explanations for the radical moderation of the campaign, the strong presence of informal groups, and the dynamic interactions both between institutional actors and environmental movement and within the environmental movement itself are to be found in the external factors such as political opportunity structure and the policy making process.

First of all, we have observed that different actors entered the protest organisational field, with various and shifting aims. Different games interacted during the policy making process, with the use of different languages. The citizens’ committees tried to bridge the different discourses present in the protest within a localistic frame: the defence of the environment, the rights of the community to decide on its own destiny, the economic interest of the community.

The protection of the environment is one of the main frames of the mobilisation. The project to build an AV railways in the beautiful, but vulnerable area of the Mugello is perceived by the citizens’ committees as “outrageous”: “An area of great value, that needed restaurative intervention, was interested by a project that involved a complete distress of that area… it immediately appears as an offence against people’s intelligence to locate there a disruptive railways that was not accepted by the people” (intervention at a conference organised by the coordinamento, June 1995, in Grana 1998: 12-13).

The environmental associations aim at more general solutions. The FEMOs—in particular, Italia Nostra, Legambiente and WWF, that are part of a national Osservatorio sulle
trasformazioni urbane e del sistema dei trasporti--frame the struggle against the AV project in a larger discourse on an alternative philosophy for the urban life and an articulated reorganisation of the transport system.

Also the citizens’ committees are however open to bargaining. For instance, the Coordinamento calls for “a solution of ‘quadruplicamento’ (the building of four parallel tracks) that is intelligent, integrated and compatible with the needs of the community and the environment, that satisfies the needs of the peoples of the Florentine area, the Mugello and the entire regions” (letter to the press, December 11, 1995, in Grana 1998: 93). A reduction of the speed limits from the 300 of the FS project to 250 would make this solution—with a lower environmental impact—technically possible.

Another main stake of the conflict is the decentralisation of decisional power in the continuous struggle between centre and periphery. Orienting the protest against the specific project of the FS, a document of the Florentine section of the PDS criticise “the attitude of the FS aiming at systematically overcome the role and the power of the institutions (the Regions and the local governments) that should be the programmers and coordinators of the project” (in Calamassi 1996: 230). Democracy is a catchword often used, by the local institutions as well as by the environmental groups. The frame of the decentralisation of decision to the periphery plays in fact a pivotal role in the alliances between the local institutions and the environmental groups. For instance, after the end of the Conferenza dei servizi, in September 1995, the Coordinamento sent a letter to the mayors of Borgo San Lorenzo, Firenzuola, Scarperia, San Piero a Sieve, Vaglia and to the President of the Comunità Montana Alto Mugello, Mugello and Val di Sieve lamenting a defeat “for the local autonomies, forced to suffer a pressure and an economic blackmail by the strong powers that in their various articulations—institutional and non-institutional—imposed not only a railways program, but a model of development” (Coordinamento, Letter of September 28, 1995, in Grana 1998: 115). As we mentioned, however, the decentralisation frame is marginal in the discourse of the LEMOs.
An additional stake for the local administrators is the recognition of their own role inside the local institutional arena. For instance, the new left-wing government in Florence states that “it is urgent that the commune of Florence sets in motion again, or starts anew, contacts with the Communes of the metropolitan area, those of the Mugello, and those of the trajectory towards Prato, to face, within a strong agreement with the Toscana Region and the Province of Florence, the issue of the re-examination of the section project…” (Communal Council, June 19, 1995).

Another main stake is material resources. For the local governments, an important resource is their capacity to drain material resources from the centre. The agreement supported by the regional government is based on the acceptance of the AV project in exchange for 45 billions liras for the construction of a large dam to the North of Florence (the diga di Bilancino) and the improvement of the railways system that links Florence with the communes in the Faentina Valley. Moreover, the national government, run at that time by the “technician” Dini, distributes billions of liras to the Mugello’s communes, for roads and other infrastructures.

Eventually, especially for political parties, what is at stake is consensus. In fact, the fear of loosing consensus pushed the local politicians—in particular, those of the Mugello—to interact with the citizens’ committees, and to recognise their positive role. Moreover, the AV issue is used in the competition internal to the Left, dominant in the area: if the anti-AV plan battle is a logical choice for the Verdi, the Green list, also the Communist RC tries to extend its influence on the citizens’ committees, framing the AV campaign within the “egalitarian” frame more familiar to its constituency—High Speed railways system is defined as a means of transportation for the “rich few”, and it will produce the worsening of public transports for the workers of the Mugello.

Their need to aggregate interests beyond the local level and restricted sectors of the population is however reflected in a very low propensity by the parties to take a definite,
leaving alone definitive, stance on the AV project. Parties play in fact a marginal role in the policy arena, where, at least at the local level, the important positions are in fact occupied by party politicians only as members of representative institutions. A general tendency in Italy (della Porta 1999; Cotta 1996), these “low profile” of the parties on the AV project may have been accentuated by the strong delegitimation of political parties that followed the dramatic wave of scandals related with the discovering of a deep-rooted system of corrupt exchanges (della Porta 1992).

An additional frame in the AV campaign is in fact an anti-partitocratic one. In July 1996, Lorenzo Necci, the managing director of the FS, is charged of having received bribes from the firms involved in the AV project, and arrested. The “clean hands investigations”—as the investigations on political corruption that started in 1992 came to be known—had already demonstrated the presence of large bribes from the firms involved in the AV work to the main parties (both in government and in the opposition), and the Parliamentary Committee against the Mafia had denounced that many AV contracts were going to the Camorra, the Neapolitan organised crime. The LEMOs played in fact with a “dirty hands” frame, in a moment in which the political class was largely delegitimised in the public opinion. Even the secretary of Legambiente wrote on the left-wing daily “Il Manifesto”: “The TAV is, according to the environmentalists, useless, costly, and it brings about a new corrupt market” (in Grana 1998: 23).

The conflict between the “institutions” and the civic society is however framed also in a less negative way. The citizens’ committees are presented as a link between the citizens and the institution: “For the first time after decades in which there was an empty space between the Palace and the citizens, the committees were formed in order to get near to the palace, to make their voices heard, to discuss and to bargain. … When the parties are not able to pass the information to their sections, or to the press, then the machine is blocked…. But thanks to the committee there was a large information” (Cca12, in Calamassi 1996: 215). Although resisting
against “those who wanted to put their hut on the Committees”, the citizens’ committees had contacts with all political parties.

The interactions between these different actors is facilitated by the characteristics of the local territorial culture. Research on this area defined it as part of a “red” culture. The presence in Italy of strong regional cultures have attracted the attention of historians, sociologists, and political scientists. In particular, the North-East of the country has been characterised by a catholic, “white” culture; the regions of the Centre (Tuscany among them) by a socialist, “red” culture. In both areas, “a particular local political system developed, characterised by a high degree of consensus for a certain political force, and a high capacity of aggregation and mediation of the different interests at the local level. This presupposes the presence of a dense institutional network (parties, church, interest groups, voluntary associations in the social, cultural and recreational spheres) co-ordinated by the dominant force, that also controls the local government and keeps the relationship with the central political power. Through this network, not only a particular political identity is reproduced, but also a local agreement between the different interests is reached” (Trigilia 1986: 48). Traditionally, the subcultures had rooted themselves into regions that had been excluded by the interest coalitions that constructed the nation state. Based upon an agreement between the latifundia in the South and the industrial interests of the North, the development of the nation state had excluded the areas of the Center and the North-East, based on small, but often efficient firms. In these areas, the dissatisfaction with the centre had been channelled by two forces that had been, for different reasons, hostile to the creation of the nation state: the Catholic Church, that had to leave much most of the territory of the Vatican State to the newly born state, and the socialists, opposed to a “bourgeois” state. In these areas, local identities became intertwined with a Catholic identity in the “white” local culture, and a “socialist”— after the second world war, communist—identity in the “red” one. The deep-rootedness of the two subcultures was expressed by the strong electoral support for, respectively, the DC and the PCI, and by high participation in the
associations linked, respectively, to the Church or to the PCI (Caciagli 1988). Besides the ideological differences, both areas were characterised by a particular role played by the “large” family, a strong ethic of work, and a strong defence of the local community. The rich associational life had economic and political effects. From the economic point of views, the localistic mediations allowed for the development of the rich and competitive economy of the so-called “Third Italy”. In fact, the survival of the territorial cultures—at least, of the “red” one—well into the pragmatic eighties and the nineties, has been related to their capacity to produce consensus by a local mediation of the interests involved in a specific type of economic development characterised by the presence of small, dynamic firms (Trigilia 1986). From the political point of view, it improved the performances of the local governments, and increased the satisfaction of the citizens towards them (Putnam 1993). In fact, the local authorities have dense interaction with the local interest, and represents these interests at the national level: “The local administrators and the MPs elected in these areas support the traditional institutions and these forms of development, and the actors involved in them. They protect the local interests in a contractual, and sometimes conflictual relationship with the centre, facilitating the demands and pressures of the economic and social actors. They support the enterprises and the market, as well as the family, the associations…” (Diamanti 1996: 32). In particular in the “red” regions, “at the very centre of the entire architecture of the associational world there is the party and the local government. The unions, the recreational societies, the co-operatives, the artisans’ associations, the youth circles, etc., act side by side and in harmony with the party, that is more and more identified with the local government” (Diamanti 1996: 33).

The capacity of the local governments to build consensus is often recognised by the environmental groups that in fact address them several appeals. The popular petition to save the Monte Morello includes an “urgent appeal to the democratic, technical and cultural sensitivity of the local administration involved” (in Grana 1998: 68). Popular petitions are addressed to the mayors of Florence, Sesto Fiorentino and Vaglia, to the Province of Florence, and the Toscana
Region. In Florence, the coordinamento suggests a Patto di informazione e consultazione con le associazioni e i comitati—that is a formal agreement to make the documentation available, call formal and informal consultation, and try to reach consensus. On November 22, 1994 the government of the Florence province deliberate a “Pact of information and consultation with the Committees and environmental associations interested by the high speed project”, and ask the Tuscany Region to open a Conference between the local institutions, environmental associations and Committee “in order to grant an updated information and transparency of the FS project”. In December 1994, the FEMOs Legambiente, Italia Nostra, WWF, Firenze Viva, Ambiente e Lavoro Toscana signed with the regional government a “Protocollo Ambiente” for the “valorization of the environmental, historical, cultural and scientific resources of the Toscana”. Before the administrative election of April 23, 1995, the Coordinamento calls a public assembly asking the party candidates to sign a “Patto di Garanzia”, i.e. a “Guaranty Pact” by which the candidate promise, among other things, “to constitute a Consulta permanente (permanent Consultation Body) of the local institutions, the citizens’ committees and Associations; to facilitate the participation, with a consultative role, of the committee and associations to the Conferenza dei servizi” (cited in Grana 1998: 113-14).

The “localistic mediation of consensus” does not avoid conflicts, however, although it moderates it. In fact, the very moderation is intertwined with the expression of conflicts, and their mediation, at the local level. This is particularly true for those issues that are not at the “centre” of the localistic mediation but may even become conflictual with the traditional aim of the localistic mediation: the economic growth of the community. At the periphery, the main economic interests found in fact an agreement among them and with the local institutions on the common goal of economic growth. The AV issue is a case in point. Both the business interest groups and the unions framed the issue in terms of economic growth and the “occupational dimension” of the problem. The first proposal of the FS is criticised by the unions because it does not take into account the Piano Regolatore Generale (the general
urbanistic plan) that had been negotiated between the local institutions and the economic interest groups. In particular, a 1988 Agreement between the FS and the local governments foresaw the creation of a *Polo tecnologico ferroviario*, in support of which the unions of the railways mobilised. In the early nineties, the unions allied on this issue with the “red” regional and provincial government against the Florentine city council, that expressed a centrist majority. The main concern of the unions is the “potential for jobs” of the AV project and the large infrastructures in general—in fact, the general secretary of the Filt-CGIL calls for “speeding up” the procedures for the AV project. The “potential for jobs” is also the concern expressed by the business interest group, the *Confindustria* that also ask for a “fast decision” (see, for instance, the 1994 document “Guardando al futuro”, quoted in Calamassi 1996: 210).

The interest groups related with the agriculture, concerned with the damage of the fields linked with the AV projects, ask for “economic compensations” (see Coldiretti and *Confederazione italiana agricoltori*, in Calamassi 1996: 211). Environmental concern are perceived as dangerous for a coalition traditionally stabilised on economic growth. In fact, an opinion poll in the region indicated that 47.5% thought of the AV project as a possibility for economic development and job opportunities (Eurispes, in Calamassi 1996: 237).

The focus of the local institutions and the interests’ organisation on economic growth could have produced a polarisation and radicalisation of environmental concern. As we saw, this is not the case. The “tradition for bargaining” that characterise the localistic interest mediation spread in fact to other types of conflicts, and the local institutions often negotiated with the FEMOs and the Citizens Committee. In particular in the ascending phase of the conflict, the environmental associations—Italia Nostra, WWF and Legambiente—played an important role by providing the local administration with technical expertise to be used against

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11 Also the environmentalist refer to job opportunities. In particular, the fear that FS workers will be fired because of the restructuration linked to the AV project mobilises the Ferrovieri delegati della stazione Campo di Marte and the Federazione Lavoratori Trasporti Uniti (that joined the coordinamento). And the Citizens Committees denounce the “economic interests located far away”
the FS project. The Green members of the local councils represented the environmental concern in the local institutions—but also representatives of other parties, in particular of the institutional Left, had contacts with the environmental associations. Even the local committees were not totally deprived of channels of access to the authorities. For instance, the Comitato dell’Area Pettini-Burresi, created on other local issues in the seventies, is delegated by the local government to manage the local park. The leaders of many committees have previous party links, and one of the MPs of the Mugello areas has strong links with the citizens’ committees and the coordinamento, that often expressed him the sense of their gratitude. Several local administrators of the Mugello also recognised the “technical contributions” of the citizens’ committees (Calamassi 1996: 218).

This bargaining attitudes may be explained by the characteristic of the Italian institutional Left, and its main party: the PCI first, and then the PDS. Traditionally, there was an opening of the PCI towards the social movements that can be explained by its being at the same time a mass party and a party in the opposition. Sensitivity to change derived from the internal dynamics of a mass party which found itself profoundly altered (perhaps against its own will) by the waves of collective mobilisation of the 1960s and the 1970s. As Steve Hellman observed: "the PCI's increasing openness to new issues in the 1970s cannot be understood as merely a political calculation by the national party leadership. There were calculations to be sure. But change also occurred because of the internal dynamics of the PCI's grassroots interaction with a society in flux" (Hellman 1987: 133). Moreover, officials joined the party who were both highly educated and had had previous experience in social movements (Hellman 1987: 143). As an opposition party at the national level, moreover, the PCI was favourable to broadening the front of alliances to other extra-institutional actors.

If we look at our protest campaign, protest increased when the arena for the conflict moved at the local level. In Tab. 6, we present in fact the protest target in the different period. (the Fiat among them).
We can notice that the protest against national targets, dominant in the ascending phase, declined in the following phase when most protest addressed the local institutions, i.e. those who mediated the interest at the periphery.

Tab. 6 Level of protest target per campaign phases.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Ascending</th>
<th>Peak</th>
<th>Declining</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>13.5%</td>
<td>36.4%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
<td>28.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provincial</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>5.4%</td>
<td>16.4%</td>
<td>16.7%</td>
<td>13.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.6%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>22.2%</td>
<td>22.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56.8%</td>
<td>23.6%</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EU-Focus</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2.7%</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>2.8%</td>
<td>1.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This explains at the same time high level of protest, and the moderation of the repertoires. The POs at the local level appears in fact as permeable from the external pressures—and for this reason favourable to moderate forms of mobilisation. The openness of the local POs may be analysed by looking at the local and the national configuration of power (see fig. 6). When the opponents are in government both at the local and at the national level, the local POs may be defined as congruently closed, and this will discourage protest. This was the case of Fiorenzuola and Florence until 1995, when protest was in fact low (Firenzuola was the only one of the Mugello communes involved in the AV plans where no citizens’ committee was built). When allies are in power at both level, we have a local POS which appear as “congruently open”—maybe “too open” for protest. This was in fact the case after 1996, when the protest campaign was in the declining phase. An intermediate situation—characterised by an incongruency between the national and the local governments—seems be the most favourable
for the protest: the local institutions in fact have an interest in facilitating protest as a mean for putting pressure upon the national level. This was in fact the case of the Communes of the Mugello (with the exception of Firenzuola) up to 1995.

*Fig. 6. A typology of local configuration of power*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>National configuration of power</th>
<th>Open</th>
<th>Closed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Congruent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incongruent</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Within this general trend, the dynamics of the cycle—the intensification and decline of protest events—may be explained by the interactions between the protest arena and other two political arenas: the electoral arena, and the policy making arena.

The different actors are influenced in a different way by the development of the policy process. In the phases in which the policy making process is open to negotiations, the local institutions—coordinated thanks to the common leadership of the PDS—built with the environmental groups a “united front” against the FS. In this phase, the PDS lead in fact the coalition against the FS project. In a press agency of the national direction of the party, on March 1994, we read: “The PDS has strongly criticised the project ‘High Speed Train’ of the FS… The action of the Regions, the local governments, the pressure of the citizens organised into associations and committees has already produced important changes” (in Calamassi 1996: 231).

During the negotiations, then, the local administrations succeed in getting some
transformation in the trajectory, legitimation as partners in public decisions, and, above all, material compensations. The decisional arena became more and more centralised, and less and less permeable from outside the institutional actors. For those with more general stakes beyond the AV project, in particular the FEMOs, the decision taken by the Conferenza dei Servizi is a sign that they have to consider this front as closed, and move ahead on other issues. The policy process presents different challenges for the LEMOs, whose stake is mainly related to the specific decisions affecting the local community. This is clear from the dynamic of new entry and new exit from the protest organisational field according to the adjustment made on the trajectory of the AV railways. As we can see in the fig. 5, the committees are created in the areas that are directly involved by the project: the committee of Borgo San Lorenzo, Caldine, Fiesole, Cure, Mugello and of the area Pettini-Burrese along the first trajectory; those of Paterno-Vaglia, Cercina, Serpiolle, Terzolle, Careggi, Via Vittorio Emanuele along the second trajectory; Quinto and Sesto Fiorentino along the third one. When the trajectory of the railways moves away from an area, the related committee demobilises (this was the case for instance of the Committee of Cercina, or of that of the area Pettini-Burrese). As stigmatised by the mayor of Vaglia, “Those who are strongly against are those who see their properties directly involved—the train that passes in the garden of the house. The Committees that are active today are those emerged after the presentation of the second project; those who were against the first project disappeared, once they have reached the results they wanted” (in Calamassi 1996: 218).

The electoral arena also plays an important role. In particular, the national election of 1994 focalized the attention of the political parties, in particular of the Left, that after the victory of the Center Rights coalition had an interest in joining the anti-AV coalition against a project sponsored by their opponents. And the administrative election of April 1995 focused the attention of the citizens’ committees, that hoped in the victory of those who were against the FS project (Calamassi 1996: 220).
5. Conclusive remarks: some general hypotheses from a case study

A case study cannot prove (or disprove) hypotheses, but—especially in times of transition—it may be very useful in the exercise of hypotheses building. This exercise we want to focus on in this conclusive remarks, trying to suggest some hypotheses on both the characteristics of the new forms of environmentalism, and the interactions with their environment.

As for the changing forms of environmentalism, our analysis suggests the presence of new internal cleavages. In the seventies and the eighties, different contributions had singled out an “ideological” cleavage between, mainly, a conservationist approach, where “the relationship between the humankind and nature is mainly framed in ethical and aesthetical terms, with low attention to its social implications” (Diani 1988: 47), and an “ecological approach”, where “the main aim shifts from defence to the transformation of the structural element responsible for the environmental decay”, and the enemy is the capitalistic world of production (Diani 1988: 58). In the nineties, these differences seems to be less relevant. In fact, in the protest campaign on the AV project, conservationists (as Italia Nostra) and ecological associations (as Legambiente) acted mainly together, and were perceived as an unique block. As also another study on environmental policies confirms, “The positions of those organisations that originated inside the Marxist tradition became more and more pragmatic and ideologically less rigid; at the same time the more traditional associations assumed more conflictual positions towards the institutions and started to be interested also in different issues that the protection of nature” (Lewinsky 1997: 147). The main cleavage emerged instead between the formal associations and the local committees: the formal associations were bureaucratised and rich in institutional channels of access, while the citizens committees stressed participation and where nearer to a “powerless” actor. The locus of intervention was different: not only the environmental organisations focused at the national level while the citizens committee at the local level, but the former perceived the AV campaign as a move of a larger game in which the stakes were
institutional recognition and a different model of development. Both types of environmental actors gave much importance to the bargaining with the policy makers; both had moderate repertoires of action; and both used information as a main resource. The actions of the citizens’ committees were however more visible than those of the formal associations, the former aiming at mobilising public opinion, the latter using their channels of access to lobby the policy makers. Another cleavage was present inside the citizens committee themselves, between those moved especially by the defence of menaced material interests, and those with a broader environmental concern.

Another characteristic of new environmentalism seems to be a degree of “institutionalisation” that, although with different shades, seems to involve not only the formal associations, but also the citizens’ committees. In general, the channels of access to the authorities, as well as the organisational resources for protest have increased in comparison with the first wave of environmentalism. Protest became at the same time a more accessible repertoire—more and more people know how to use it; less and less people stigmatise non-institutional forms of political participation—but at the same time a less needed one. Even the spontaneous committees had other resources they could use; for the formal associations, due to their direct channels of access to policy makers, protest was often redundant.

Linked to this type of institutionalisation is the increasing difficulties to distinguish between “movements” and “allies”. Environmental campaigns involve different types of actors, that play different games at different tables. The traditional image of the “truly” movement actors as more radical in their forms of action and more “pure” in their ideology is difficult to apply to the complex and dynamic image of a campaigns, where more radical actions are used often by those with a more localistic (“selfish”) aim, while the organisations that try to present the environmental issue as a general problem are the most moderate in their forms of action.

It seems moreover that even the borders between those who protest and the institutions they protest against are often blurred. In the AV campaigns the local institutions were in
different moments part of the protest front, brokers or targets. Movements organisations often entered the institutions. Environmental associations were part of the protest organisational field, but also often of the policy field.

Our study also indicated the importance of dynamics internal to the single campaigns. Usually, the analysis of the political opportunities for protest stressed the role of the parties as allies. In this line, signs for the opening or the closing of the opportunity structure were looked for in the representative institutions, in particular in the electoral arena. The AV campaigns suggests that, together with the electoral arena and the circuit of democratic representation, another arena is important for protest: the policy arenas, with its circuits and rules that go beyond democratic representation. Relationships, of cooperation or conflict, do not develop mainly with the parties, but with their representatives in the local governments. In particular, the dynamics of a campaign are influenced by the opening and closing of access opportunities to policy makers, according to the different phases of the policy making as well as the policy making styles predominant in a policy areas or in a national or subnational system.

This takes us to our last remark. We noticed that the presence of the Left in government favours protest, but at the same time moderates it. More open to bargain with interests that are traditionally perceived as “near” to Left, part of a “progressive front”, the Left in government facilitates the emergence of movement demands, but at the same time it channel them directly into the institutions. Not “powerless” anymore, the movement organisations have other resources than protest to make themselves heard.

It is difficult however to say if this situation make success easier. In the case of the AV campaign, we noticed that the left-wing governments had developed a localistic type of interest mediation based on an agreement among the “productive forces”—labour and business—for economic development. Some social movements, such as the environmental one, are often a nuisance for this long-lasting network. In the Tuscany case, it seems that the long experience with the opposition at the national level, together with its rootedness in the society pushed the
main party of the Left towards a bargaining attitudes. We do not know to which extent this observation may be generalised to other left-wing parties and traditions. The new Europe governed by many left-wing coalitions will offer however a good opportunity to investigate the understudied issue of the relationship between movements and the Left in government.

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