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Italian Environmentalist Movement**

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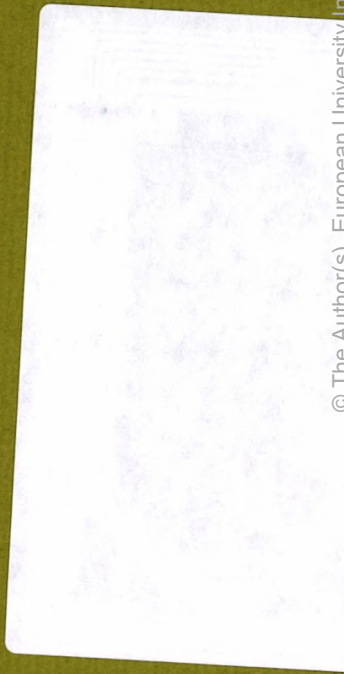
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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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MEDIA STRENGTH AND INFRASTRUCTURAL WEAKNESS: RECENT TRENDS IN THE ITALIAN ENVIRONMENTALIST MOVEMENT

Summary

The paper analyzes resource mobilization processes in the environmentalist movement in Italy, and their impact on organizational structure. The role of the media is examined as a main determinant in the process of institutionalization. Environmentalist SMOs gain in their ability to access media outlets, but in so doing they jeopardize their ability in controlling and mobilizing supporters' participation especially in local conflicts.

Introduction

Recent studies have called attention to the changing patterns of behavior of environmentalist social movement organizations (SMOs) in Italy, pointing to the development of frequent connections and alliances between previously autonomous factions, and to the increasing unity in goals and actions among them. In fact, environmentalism has seldom been celebrated for being a homogenous and univocal phenomenon (Van Liere and Dunlap 1980; Lowe and Goyder 1983; McCormick 1989; Rucht 1989; Jamison et al. 1990; Hansen 1991) and, until the early Eighties, Italy was no exception. Here, the existence of two rather distinct networks or "currents" of environmental action and participation - ie., traditional "conservationism" on one side, involving animal species, wildlife areas and landscape, and "political ecology" on the other side, focussing on air and water pollution, industrial risks, energy, etc. - was stressed both in earlier (Menichini 1983; Barone 1984) and more recent studies (Lodi 1988; Diani 1988;

Diani and Lodi 1988; Fiore 1991). Like in the rest of Europe, not only they had divergent strategies and value orientations, but their relationships were often openly non-cooperative, and hampered by clear organizational cleavages.

However, a shift towards unification across these two currents has characterized the behavior of environmentalist SMOs in Italy in the last ten years, and this seems to represent a remarkable phenomenon because, as Diani (1990) pointed out, it is rather unique among Western green movements. Previously divided conservation and political ecology SMOs have been moving closer to each other, increasing their alliances on campaigns and issues, and using similar strategies and repertoires of action.

The change has been explained above all with reference to the end of the political dualism based on class and the left-right dimension, and to the widening political opportunities for new issues to arise and find a distinctive and autonomous space within the political arena. Yet, while the convergence between the different components of the movement is undeniable, no analysis has been devoted to the mediating influence of the resource mobilization processes and the organizational structures through which shift could take place.

This paper tries to fill this gap. Focussing on the relationship between goals, means of action, and the availability of resources from societal sectors, it will argue that previous analyses have underestimated the importance of the organizational level of movement action, and the way it constrains strategic choices. The increasing unification and homogenization of the environmentalist movement does not only stem from the intentional convergence in organizers goals and strategies face to a changing socio-political landscape (a phenomenon of political re-orientation). It is also directed by the requirements of organizational maintenance that make goals match available infrastructures and resources from the social and institutional environment: A process of goal displacement and institutionalization. Drawing on a set of concepts developed

especially by Resource Mobilization theorists John McCarthy and Mayer Zald, and by other students of mobilization processes, and using data coming from an ongoing research project on the institutionalization of the environmental issues in Europe (France, Germany, Great Britain, Ireland and Italy) and on the role of public communication in it,¹ I shall try to show how especially the key role played by the growing interaction with the media as a main resource towards the satisfaction of organizational needs, has contributed to reshape daily routines, personal skills, organizational charts and, in the end, the goals of environmental activists and groups.

The Italian environmentalist movement from factionalism to unification

The beginnings of environmentalism in Italy² did not differ widely from those of other Western countries where environmentalist groups have openly pursued a policy of reciprocal autonomy and non-integration (Lowe and Goyder 1983), and have often displayed contentious tendencies to factionalism (Rucht 1989; Jamison et al 1990; Dalton 1993). Organizations fostering the culture and goals of nature conservation had been present in Italy since the early century, acting mainly through educational work and lobbying. Political ecology, instead, originated in the combination of the politically innovative new left and students' movements with the anti-nuclear issues of the second half of the Seventies

¹ The data are derived mainly from in-depth interviews with movement leaders and activists and with other key testimonials. Other data have been drawn by using documents and a sample of newspaper articles from 1987 to 1992.

² I shall only give a brief overview of this development here, as it has already been described in detail by a number of other works (De Meo and Giovannini 1985; Del Carria 1986; Biorcio and Lodi 1988; Diani 1988, 1990, forthcoming; Farro 1991; Fiore 1991). The reader may refer to them for a thorough historical analysis of the environmentalist movement in Italy.

(Barone 1984; Lodi 1988; Diani forthcoming). Except for sporadic but largely instrumental and temporarily limited coalitions, these two "currents" remained clearly separated and maintained a far from cooperative attitude until the beginning of the Eighties. Preservationist organizations concentrated on rather privatized forms of lobbying through elite networks and acquaintances, pressuring for legislative measures establishing natural parks, and protecting animal species and cultural endowments, and on voluntary direct action (e.g., managing wildlife sanctuaries, cleaning sites, etc.). However, they did not try to link their specific goals to larger issues of socio-economic and political reform: neither they were active on issues of productive technologies, economic development, and human health. Finally, they carefully avoided mass campaigns and demonstrations with the involvement of the larger public (except for rare educational campaigns), as well as the use of other conflictual or unconventional tactics (Diani forthcoming). On the contrary, political ecology groups combined a politically charged anti-industrialism with the ideas of scientific environmentalism (Barone 1984). They aimed mainly at mobilizing grass-roots participation around issues concerning the quality of life in urban areas, industrial pollution, health risks, and nuclear energy.

The two currents, in other words, were active on different sets of issues and used different means of action, mostly ignoring each other. Their lack of cooperation emerged clearly on occasion of the dioxin leak accident at Icmesa in Seveso in 1976, and even in the major anti-nuclear mobilizations of the late Seventies in which preservationist activists took part only occasionally and played almost no role (Diani 1990).

However, while in many countries cleavages among environmentalist factions tended to widen during the Eighties, the opposite seems to have happened in Italy. Some innovations occurred already in the late 1970s when new environmentalist SMOs sponsored by the Radical Party, such as *Amici della*

terra and *Lega Antivivisezione*, had begun to adopt new participatory but non-ideological styles and repertoires (sit-ins, referenda, petitions), typical of single-issue politics and lying somewhere in between the militant and revolutionary repertoires of "political ecologists" and the conservative and pragmatic styles of preservationists (Diani 1990). More concrete ground for unification, however, started to develop at the beginning of the 1980, when two national coordinating structures came into place. In 1980 *Lega Ambiente* (LA) was set up (initially thanks to the resources provided by ARCI, a cultural organization of the Socialist and Communist parties, but soon completely independent from it) as an umbrella organization with the task of affiliating and coordinating local grass-roots groups. In 1981, a coordinating committee, *Arcipelago Verde*, was established during a meeting in Bologna, in order to further and stabilize the connections among the different national and local groups in the movement. Both structures (although *Arcipelago Verde* was formally cancelled and transformed in the coordinating structure for the Green Lists in 1984) contributed to prepare the terrain for further integration between political ecology and preservationist organizations especially because they started to provide concrete organizational structures allowing the autonomization of environmentalist activism (and especially of its politically-oriented components) from other and more traditional political organizations (Lodi 1988; Diani 1990).

The process of unification gained momentum after the middle of the decade. In 1986, referenda against hunting and nuclear energy were launched jointly by the major organizations in both the political ecology and the preservationist sector: LA, WWF and *Italia Nostra*. Moreover, following the accident of Chernobyl, alliances among the above organizations developed both for the coordination of mass demonstrations and for the organization of the anti-nuclear referenda. Finally, after the success of these referenda in 1987, unified and coordinated action became a stable feature of environmentalist action. WWF

and LA, the largest associations in the two currents³, became the organizational backbone of the movement and started to cooperate more frequently (Diani 1990: 155). They allied to promote (although not without minor divergences) the large national referendary campaigns against hunting and pesticides held in 1989 and 1990. They jointly supported the main local struggles, which developed in the late Eighties and early Nineties against polluting industrial plants, the siting of infrastructures such as motorways and railroads, incinerators and landfills. They started to collaborate frequently in campaigns of denunciation and in legal actions against cases of environmental abuse, pollution, and depletion of natural resources. Finally, even in the legislative arena, they undertook more frequent joint lobbying for new environmental regulation. In sum, the change was remarkable; and the more so because, as Diani (1990) points out, such change did not take place in other Western countries - such as Germany or Great Britain - where a similar split between environmentalist currents was present.

³ In the preservationist current in Italy the main organizations are represented by WWF (about 200 local chapters and 240,000 members in 1991), and *Italia Nostra* (about 200 local chapters and 20,000 members). Also part of the preservationist area are the animal rights associations, with the main ones (LAC, LAV, LIPU) ranging between 15,000 and 25,000 members. A few other (but minor in terms of membership) associations in the area, like *Kronos 1991*, *Federnatura*, *Mountain Wilderness* also have national character, while a host of local and regional groups are present. The "political ecology" current is instead constituted by one major association: *Lega Ambiente* (more than 600 local chapters and 90,000 members with a headquarter in Rome and a second one in Milan), a number of other minor national groups (most of which with specific aims, such as *Geologia Democratica*, *Agrisalutis*, and others), and many local grass-roots citizen and neighborhood groups. Finally, a somewhat peculiar position, in between the two areas, is occupied by *GreenPeace* (about 35,000 supporting members), and *Amici della Terra*, the Italian branch of FoE (about 10,000 members); both these organizations are active in preservation issues (like the protection of dolphins and whales, of Antarctica, or of the Amazon forest), as well as in issues which belong in the political ecology area (most notably on nuclear armaments and energy, but also on hazardous waste, sea pollution, CO2 and the greenhouse effect, and others).

Movement strategies and the role of political opportunities: An explanation?

The process leading to increased cooperation and coordination has been defined as a converging one. On the first hand, political ecology moved away from its ideologically charged roots in the new left movements. On the other hand, preservationists were allowed to develop a specific political role. The encounter between political ecology and traditional protectionism is said to have fostered a distinctive identity and a distinctive set of goals and repertoires of action (Barone 1984; Lodi 1988). The process is also described by several students (Diani 1990, forthcoming; see also Biorcio 1988: 46-7; Lodi 1988: 23⁴) as entailing a passage "from radicalism to moderation". Its origins are found in the vanishing role of the class cleavage in Italian society, politics and culture, and in the resulting amplification of political opportunities.

Between the late Seventies and the middle Eighties Italy underwent a set of deep changes that heavily influenced the career of the environmentalist movement and its opportunities for action and success. In the first place, the class structure of Italian society changed markedly in those years, with a dramatic tertiarization and increase in white collar jobs, and with a substantial enlargement in the proportion of middle class strata (Sylos Labini 1986; Paci 1992). These strata have a key importance because, as Diani notices (1990: 161-2), they lie at the core of the post-materialist trend in attitudes and values that had already been detected in the other Western countries (Inglehart 1977), and that was shown to contribute to an expanded potential constituency for environmentalist groups (Inglehart 1990b), as well as to a new but quickly

⁴ Farro (1991) uses a partially different analytical framework, to describe the process of construction of the environmentalist movement as a distinctive actor.

growing phenomenon of "greening" of consumption habits (Sabani 1987). Secondly, related to the changes in social structure, the class cleavage lost importance in political culture as well, and there was a rapid decline in its centrality for political life. The old dualistic opposition between the communist and the catholic blocks was overcome as voters became more open to new forces (especially at the local level). Political competition and political culture underwent a process of de-ideologization and there was a decline in partisan styles of participation which allowed the move from "grand politics" to new issues and especially to single issue politics (Diani 1990, forthcoming). This paved the way for new political entities to enter the political arena: from the "green" and "civic" lists which spread rapidly, starting in 1980, especially at local administrative elections, to the more recent so-called "regionalist leagues" (Mannheimer 1991). Their successes witnessed the fact that people's attention and interests were available for other types of questions than the traditional, class- and labor-related, ones. The new political climate resulted rather soon in a relatively high degree of support in public opinion for environmentalist groups, in a rapid expansion in environmentalist SMOs' membership base⁵, and in a burgeoning grass-roots participation focussing on urban and industrial pollution, on health risks, and more in general on the quality of life in the natural and human environment. The attention to environmental problems was to increase especially in the late 1980s (as is shown for example by Eurobarometer surveys: Hofrichter and Reif 1990), and was "facilitated" (Diani 1990) by the disaster in Chernobyl.

⁵ All environmentalist organizations experienced an astonishing growth in membership during the 1980s, averaging over 200% (with the exception of *Italia Nostra*: Sabani 1987; Diani forthcoming). Among them, WWF had the highest rate of growth (from 30,000 to 190,000 members between 1983 and 1988) and *Lega Ambiente* also an above average one (from 15,000 to 40,000 members over the same period). Moreover, a parallel growth occurred in terms of local chapters, furthering the territorial presence of these environmentalist SMOs.

According to most analyses (Diani 1988, 1990; Biorcio and Lodi 1988; Fiore 1991) these changes also resulted in the widening of the so-called "political opportunity structure"⁶, thanks to the de-alignment of previous political coalitions, and to the development of new institutional fora for environmental policy, such as the debate on energy policy and the establishment of the new Ministry for the Environment in 1986, which granted environmentalist leaders the space to develop a specific and autonomous area for environmental policy, with a new (and expanding) terrain of action for a broader spectrum of groups and organizations. From this, a reformulation of environmentalists' strategies towards a set of goals characterized by higher specificity and pragmatism is said to have followed (Diani 1990), which favored the inclusion and allied participation of both political ecology and preservationist currents. Cultural factors of course contributed to the reformulation of strategies and goals. Diani (1990, forthcoming) and Lodi (1988) point out that the decline of class-based partisan politics allowed political ecology activists to find a specific role, and to develop an autonomous (from previous ideologies) project (see also Giovannini 1987). Political ecology organizations found themselves free from ideological links with leftist movements and could develop strategies and tactics more properly suited to the new, environment-specific, goals, and no longer charged by symbolic reference to politico-ideological antagonism or aimed at a real or symbolic disruption of the system (a change which was already pointed out by Melucci's work; see Melucci 1984). Strategies and tactics became more "moderate", including such forms as educational work, petitions, referenda and peaceful sit-ins, rather than more confrontational forms of action. The new goals and forms of action fostered movement's unity because they

⁶ A concept which includes such factors as the degree of openness and closure of the polity; the stability or instability of political alignments, as well as divisions within the elites (Tarrow 1988).

could be more easily accepted and seen as feasible by preservationist leaders, who had formerly preferred to keep away from politics and ideologized issues. Preservationists could now find a place within politics for environmental defense and for "non-politicized" environmental goals: the constitution of a specific field of environmental policy allowed them to undertake a more politically active role.

Interesting as it may be, one objection should nevertheless be advanced to this account; namely that it pays little attention to the specific role of the mobilization of resources for action: To the recruitment and activation of basic participation, and to the gathering of material and financial means for organized action. The above analyses have seen the increasing resource base as simply increasing generic action and pressure capacity. The choice of strategy has instead been seen as determined by the cultural changes and the opening of new political opportunities. The latter are assumed to have pushed environmentalist leaders and SMOs in the two currents to redefine their goals and means of action and to converge on moderate (if compared to those of the anti-nuclear wave of the 1970s) goals and on "acceptable" repertoires of action, and therefore to integration and alliance.

On the empirical level this interpretation overemphasizes the shift of the preservationist current towards political activism, supporting a picture of middle-ground encounter between the two currents. I think instead that the shift of preservationists in direction of movement activity has been a minor one compared to the impressive shift of political ecology "from radicalism to moderation". On the theoretical level, the above interpretation goes from macrolevel changes to microlevel choices without paying attention to the intermediate level at which these same choices are put into practice; that is, to the organizational structures and processes through which the resources made available from societal change are mobilized. What then of the resources and

organizational infrastructures that allow these strategies to be carried out in practice? If it is true that the above described changes have allowed political ecology organizations to "discover the mobilization potential of traditional conservationism." (Lodi 1988: 23), why not analyzing closely the structure of this mobilization potential? The above explanation implicitly suggests that new action repertoires follow from the re-orientation of goals at the macrolevel as if the intermediate level of resources and organizational structures does not exert its own constraints. I maintain that this is not the case, and that the resources that are available (coupled with one's organizational structure) do influence strategies because they cannot be used in just *any* way.

Focussing on the structure of political opportunities may help explaining why mobilizations occur at some point in history. However, the reverse causal process, going from resources and organizational structure, to action repertoires, and finally to strategies and goals, must not be overlooked: In the Italian case, it is of some importance in explaining the environmentalist movement's action. As Tarrow pointed out (1988: 429-30), the concept of political opportunity has been used in reference both to objective structural conditions affecting collective action, and to subjective decisions on strategies, tactics, goal orientations, etc. (see McAdam 1982; Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi *et al.* 1992 for some examples). However, if collective action is analyzed as strategic - as is the case in the works examined here - opportunities should be seen as subjective factors, and as coming up in strict dependence of the actors' perception of the viability of their plans for achieving valued goals: A "sense of efficacy" (Piven and Cloward 1979; McAdam 1988) which is not independent of the resources and organizational infrastructures that are available. In analyzing actions and strategies, the decision-making situation and its strict "internal" context - i.e., resources and the way the internal organization of movement actors can mobilize and manage them - should be seen as relevant variables as much as the

"external" opportunities.

In the next sections I shall first link the changing repertoires and strategies of action of the environmentalist SMOs to a description of the recent transformation in their organizational structure. Subsequently, I shall try to explain the evolution of the environmentalist movement, and especially of political ecology SMOs, by taking account of the resources that recent social changes in Italian society made available to the movement sector and by looking at the organizational strategies through which environmentalist SMOs have tried to mobilize them. What I would like to argue is that changes in environmentalist SMOs' strategies have been influenced by the pursuit of organizational priorities and by the attempt to exploit relevant changes in the available resource base. The key point here is similar to the dichotomization, introduced by Oliver and Marwell (1992; See also Oliver and Furman 1990), between resources of time and money; i.e., between resources of participation and financial resources. The distinction is in a sense already implicit in the work of McCarthy and Zald (McCarthy and Zald 1973; McCarthy 1987; Zald and McCarthy 1987) on the professionalization of movement organizations.

The demise of participatory strategies and tactics

As I said above, changes in environmentalist SMOs action include a trend toward *increased collaboration* among the main SMOs in the two currents, and a trend toward *moderation* on the side of political ecology groups. Recent examples of the former are the collaboration on national referenda, the joint support of local protest upsurges (eg., against chemical industrial plants and infrastructural constructions), joint lobbying efforts for new environmental regulation, both at national (eg., on the greenhouse effect and on ozone-depleting gases: Melandri and Conte 1991; on the constitution of the national

environmental agency) and at regional and local levels (eg. on regional wildlife parks); legal denunciation campaigns (eg., on traffic problems and urban planning in several major cities). Examples of the latter include the abandoning, by political ecology SMOs (and more specifically by LA who represents the core of the political ecology current), of protest mobilizations and boycotts in favor of referendary strategies, petitioning campaigns, the "green shareholding"⁷, voluntary action in defense of the environment (eg., site cleaning and amelioration), pollution monitoring (eg., on coasts, rivers, lakes), lobbying, scientific divulgation (eg., production of books, videotapes, etc., both for the media industry and for direct commercial purposes), educational campaigns in the schools, and even sponsorship of commercial products and brands (in which environmentalist SMOs "license" their logo as a sort of "eco-label" to commercial and industrial firms, in exchange for money or other forms of support on environmental initiatives).

However, one aspect which has not been stressed enough by previous analyses (but see Diani forthcoming) is the fact that the above described trend toward moderation is above all a trend - once again on the side of political ecology - *away from participatory forms of action*. Its SMOs, in other words, have not only shifted towards a lesser unconventional and disruptive tactics, as it may be assumed from the passage from protest mobilization and boycotts to petitioning and referenda. They have also shifted toward less participatory repertoires. Today, the environmentalist movement's (in Italy) most participation-oriented forms of political pressure are likely to be represented by petitioning and referendum campaigns (which however require a very limited active participation on the side of the potentially mobilizable public), and

⁷ The "green shareholding" - which consists in environmentalist SMOs buying shares in some major firms (in Italy, Fiat, Montedison and others), in order to sit in the shareholders' meeting and have some voice in planning, etc. - can be considered as a substitute of boycotts.

sometimes by voluntary action initiatives (such as site cleaning days, etc.). Most tactics in environmentalists' repertoire, then, basically require very little participation if one excludes that which is contributed through the sheer act of paying membership dues or making a donation. Pollution monitoring, scientific divulgation and educational programs, political lobbying and even the "green shareholding", not to mention licensing initiatives, sponsorship programs, and the commercialization of ecologic products and services, can all be carried out by a core of skilled full-time activists. Even in large thematic campaigns and efforts (eg., LA's campaign against plastics, or WWF's campaign on rivers), the relative weight of these new forms of pressure seems to prevail on that of more traditional and participatory ones. The collection of signatures, or some initiatives of voluntary intervention (eg. beach or site cleaning) are always accompanied by the preparation of educational programs and scientific divulgation material, by monitoring and denunciation initiatives, and even by the sponsorship of concerts of pop singers aimed at attracting more public and at facilitating fundraising.

Although Diani's conclusion is that "conservationists have increased somewhat their rate of movement participation, while political ecologists have correspondingly reduced theirs" (Diani forthcoming: ch.7), the actual increase in the use of movement tactics by conservationist SMOs has been quite limited (mainly in the campaigns for the national referenda, in the post-Chernobyl antinuclear demonstrations, and in the external support given to local mobilizations). The point is that there actually is an increasing similarity in the tactics used by the two currents. But this similarity did not come about as a result of halfway convergence in strategic political alliances. Rather it came about through the introduction of innovative tactics that have brought the SMOs in the two currents even to compete, rather than to cooperate, with each other. Allegedly, these tactics are part of a strategy aimed at spreading the

consciousness of environmental problems among the population; in Klandermans' terms (Klandermans 1988), at "mobilizing consensus". Yet, the strategy ends up being instrumental to the mobilization of material and financial resources, and to organizational maintenance. The forms of action, or tactics, it uses are: educational programs prepared for schools and teachers and "sold" to local school councils; scientific divulgation efforts directed to journalists and TV channels, as well as to the public; sponsorship activities. They also place great emphasis on the use of "mobilization technologies" (Oliver and Marwell 1992); i.e., of technologies aimed at mobilizing resources rather than at directly "producing" valued results (such as policy decisions, social change, and the like).

In fact, the development and perfection of this alleged strategy on the side of both currents has been accompanied by a process of organizational change which has brought the major SMOs (i.e., WWF, *GreenPeace*, and LA) to become increasingly similar. Rather than a process of strategic "moderation", therefore, the increasing similarity of the two currents is likely to represent the outcome of a process of organizational institutionalization.

Organizational change in environmentalist SMOs

Originally, the difference in strategies and goals between preservationism and political ecology was paralleled, as Rovelli (1988) has shown, by internal differences in the organizational models adopted in the two fields by the main SMOs. WWF and *Italia Nostra* (the main SMOs in the preservationist current) adopted a centralized organizational structure, developing it through a top-down mechanism of territorial "penetration". The same holds for *GreenPeace*. On the contrary, LA (the core of the political ecology current) adopted a more decentralized structure, which grew mainly through a mechanism of "diffusion"

of local groups and subsequent incorporation within a sort of federated structure.

Today, WWF and LA have increased their centrality within the environmentalist movement network in Italy both in sheer organizational terms (Diani forthcoming), and in terms of external representation. They have rapidly and steadily grown in terms of membership, affiliated chapters, and available resources.⁸ This growth, however has been accompanied by the development and consolidation of a model of organizational structure which may be described as "functional": Despite the fact that environmental issues tend to be territorially defined and located, the main organizational structures do not follow a territorial line, but one that appears to be shaped by the internal logic of the "technologies" that are adopted.

The new "functional" organization

WWF was the first to introduce this sort of structure (Rovelli 1988) by articulating its organization in a number of "sectors" and "sub-sectors", which in Italy are the following: Conservation, Territory, Camps, Education, Communication, Sponsorships and fundraising, Legal, Institutional relationships, Secretariat. Issues are then addressed in the form of "campaigns", or "projects" (such as for sanctuaries or species protection) with one of the sectors in charge of it (usually Conservation, Territory, Education, Camps or Institutional relationships) and the others (Communication, Sponsorships and fundraising, Legal, Secretariat) working in staff or "service" position and supporting the various aspects (media, legal, lobbying, etc.) of it. Each campaign, moreover,

⁸ Diani says: "Although the movement is surely polycephalous [...] there is nonetheless a unified core for the whole network. This core consists of the most influential organizations in the different traditions of environmental action. It performs largely as a unified movement leadership, and is recognized as such by public institutions and the media." (Diani forthcoming: ch.7).

represents a rather defined and well circumscribed plan. It has its own "line" structure and its own campaign manager⁹. Thus, while all campaigns use a number of staff resources, such as the press relations office, legal consultants, etc., that are provided by the organization, there is only a limited passage of people from one to the other, and each campaign rather constitutes a sort of unit in itself.

The above type of structure is common to another of the main SMOs doing nature conservation work: *GreenPeace*. Its structure works in much the same way, and it is organized with sectors covering: Energy and atmospheric pollution, Agriculture and pesticides, Nuclear arms, Fisheries, Antarctica, Whales, and Water resources. To these, a number of sectors offer staff support: Communication, Books, International, Secretariat.

More striking is instead the fact that LA, which was very different from WWF and the other preservationist organizations at its origins, has undergone a substantial change in the same direction, itself increasingly leaning towards the adoption of the "functional" structure. At LA the organizational line was still formally set up along territorial lines when the fieldwork of this research was conducted (ie., in 1991), although practical operations already followed the functional model. Today, the formal structure has been changed, and it now revolves around a number of separate roles of "campaign manager", to whom the communications office and the political secretariat relate in a sort of staff position.¹⁰ Issues are thus addressed in form of campaigns, and the campaign manager and his collaborators are given the task of coordinating the implementation of the different initiatives (eg., planning lobbying efforts, presentations to the press, contacts with the authorities, cycles of scientific

⁹ The organization is similar to that of "product-management" in business firms.

¹⁰ I owe this information to Marieva Favoino, a colleague at IUE.

conferences, petitioning or fundraising efforts, etc.).

Within the functional structure, the task of campaign managers is fairly standardized. They must coordinate the work of groups of "experts" who prepare the data and the informative and scientific support on the specific environmental problem that the campaign addresses. Subsequently, they must adapt this material to the actual communication needs of each campaign, and to the specific media or targets that are addressed (sometimes producing different versions of it). This work is done in collaboration with the staff of the communications department or office, who also help in planning the release of the communication and in keeping effective contacts with each outlet. Typically in campaigns that include educational programs or scientific divulgation, the campaign manager must manage and supervise the production of videotapes, booklets, books, etc.; For campaigns that include lobbying, inputs will be coordinated from legal experts and the legal office, but the communication office will take care of the presentation of proposals to the press, etc.. The campaign manager must then supervise the organizational and financial details, including funding and the campaign's budget, for which s/he can get help from the sponsorships or the fundraising departments. Finally, when campaign efforts include field tasks that have to be conducted on the territory (petitions, town feasts, concerts, fundraising), these are allocated to the territorial peripheral structure of the SMO (the local branches and affiliated groups). Here, the campaign manager is in charge of supplying ready-to-use material, documentation (street posters, informational tables, brochures, etc.), and instructions, which are prepared by the central staff. As to the leadership structure, the campaign manager has direct contacts with the Secretariat, from

which s/he takes orders¹¹: S/he also has responsibility for his/her immediate collaborators (usually no more than two or three people) but has no responsibility for the activists who carry out campaign tasks in the peripheral structure.

Centralization, professionalization, and mobilization technologies

The above "functional" structure employs paid professional activists and is located in one or two central headquarters, each of which is staffed by fifteen to thirty people, half of whom, including the campaign managers and the leaders, are usually full-time paid staff, while the other half is made of student part-timers or civil service draft recruits. WWF and LA have two such headquarters each, one in Milan and one in Rome. *GreenPeace* and *Amici della Terra* have one headquarter in Rome. Most of the campaign tasks that are carried out within the headquarters have to do either with the manipulation and transmission of information, or with the raising of funds. Specific technologies are therefore used, and professional skills have been developed in each of these directions.

First, a large proportion (certainly more than for any other traditional political organization) of these staff is now made of professionally trained press-relations and communication specialists whose task is that of preparing and delivering information at different levels of depth: They manage contacts with the media, prepare press conferences, releases, newsletters and bulletins, translate scientific results into educational programs, design booklets, posters, etc. Moreover, they work to keep a constant, almost daily, personal contact with

¹¹ In international organizations (WWF, *GreenPeace*) campaigns may also (this is always the case for *GreenPeace*) be decided at the supranational level.

media people, following up the releases, pressing journalists for publications, setting appointments for interviews with the leaders, responding to journalists' needs for informative material such as ad-hoc press-reviews, books, booklets, scientific data, etc.

Second, these SMOs raise funds both via professionalized technologies and via technologies that use volunteer labor (Oliver and Marwell 1992). However, fundraising and sponsorship departments at the headquarters carry out their work on a continued and professional basis (ie., outside specific campaigns) and tend to use the former: they use mail and telephone solicitation to raise funds from individual members and donors, and they seek grants, contracts and sponsorships through business-like contacts with both governmental institutions and private firms. On the contrary, technologies that use volunteer labor exploit local activists (although they are centrally planned by the campaign manager and his/her staff), require less professionalized skills and are used for campaign-specific fundraising efforts on the territory. They include fairs, benefit sales and concerts, fun runs, and other types of social events.

Aside from the professionalization of activists, the above division of labor gives a fairly clear picture of the degree of centralization of the main environmentalist SMOs. Indeed, campaign planning and implementation are under the strict control of the headquarters. Important campaigns are prepared, organized, and coordinated centrally, where press-relations departments or offices support them by studying detailed media strategies (what, when, where and to whom releases, press conferences, etc., have to be issued), and by keeping contact with the main media outlets. These are represented by the major national newspapers and TV networks, who are the ones that usually devote more space

to environmental issues and themes.¹² Efforts to develop continued relationships are therefore further concentrated on these national editorial boards and journalists rather than on regional or local media, which one has seldom contacts with. Because of this, press-relations departments (and for much the same reason, sponsorship offices) are also located in the central headquarters in Milan and/or Rome, where they can easily stay in touch with media networks and the sponsoring firms.

The headquarters maintain then close and stable links to their sources of knowledge and expertise. These sources form a "technical peripheral network" which in the political ecology current is usually made by small sympathizing consulting firms or laboratories (eg., firms who perform environmental impact assessments, emissions certifications, medical studies or analyses, and also law firms), which were set up by professionals, technical experts or scientists (eg., chemists, engineers) with previous links with the movement sector (see also Barone 1984; Lodi 1988; Farro 1991): They work for the market or as contractors for the public administrations but maintain close links to SMOs. In the preservationist current, the "technical" network is more often formed by professionals, researchers, scientists or professors working in public institutions such as hospitals, universities, or academic research centers. For the main preservationist SMOs (WWF and *GreenPeace*), this "technical network" may be an international one, encompassing the international headquarters. A good deal of attention is placed onto making the connections with the "technical network" as systematic and stable as possible, in order to improve the access to adequate sources of information on each campaign or issue. For example, main SMOs have provided themselves with international on-line databases and electronic

¹² Which can be explained by the type of public that national newspapers address when compared to the local ones: usually the more educated and well-off strata, who are also the ones who are most concerned by environmental degradation.

networks, which constantly link their activists with research labs, scientific and technical experts, and with consulting groups on legal and administrative problems.¹³

On the contrary, there are only weak connections between the headquarters and the territorial peripheral structure - ie., the local branches. During campaign efforts which require field work on the whole territory (which is not always the case), local branches and groups are "monopolized" by the specific campaign. Other than this, the local branches are hierarchically dependent on the center on campaign work, but in fact a territorially organized line structure exists only on paper: Formally, local chapters respond to regional offices and to the central headquarter. However, because central leaders are mostly busy in doing campaign work (presenting, lobbying, talking with the press, etc.), the coordination of local activists from the center takes place mainly on occasion of campaign work (each local chapter receives the global plan of campaigns each year). Apart from this, local branches have independent activities which seem on the other hand not to be of much interest to central leaders, and on which the latter seem to lack direct control.

The relative abandonment of local branches to themselves is a consequence of the fact that members, supporters and constituents are mainly contacted for the purpose of raising funds, rather than because their participation is needed (in some cases - and *GreenPeace* is a very clear example here - members of the SMO are explicitly not allowed to take part in the organization's

¹³ The first among such electronic networks was *EcoNet*, created by the Institute for Global Communications, San Francisco, USA. *GreenPeace* has a fixed space on this network with its *GpNews*, but it has also developed an exclusive international network called *GreenLink*. In Italy, LA has developed an open (to which all other groups can have access) network called *EcoRete*. The WWF has no such network in Italy, but it is experimenting one in some other countries, among which Switzerland, UK, Sweden. About these and other electronic networks see Piani and Pinchera (1992).

activity, which is entirely carried over by professional staff with the help of a small number of regular volunteers). Environmentalist SMOs use advanced communication systems to coordinate staff activities and the work of the technical and scientific consultants, but their membership base is contacted only through monthly newsletters or bulletins.

Membership recruitment, thus, comes to be coincidental with fundraising, and it is carried out through a set of specific "technologies" designed for mobilizing financial resources (McCarthy and Zald 1973; Oliver and Marwell 1992). As these studies have shown, unlike the mobilization of personal participation, that of money involves no necessary relationship to the goals or issues for which the resource is mobilized. Because money contributions need not be given in a coordinated way, the relevant information consists of lists of selected potential donors, rather than in control over the personal time schedule of potential participants. It therefore allows for more centralization both in the fundraising effort itself and, above all, in the planning of actual use of the resources for relevant actions.

Although preservationist SMOs have been using such mobilization technologies for quite some time, LA (especially since it has become autonomous from ARCI and the Communist Party) has recently turned to them too. In fact, in the whole Italian environmentalist movement, the weight of networks of acquaintances as a source of membership is a clearly minor one, and even typical field canvassing at the doorstep or in the streets is being replaced by more "mediated" (Snow, Zurcher and Ekland-Olson 1980) efforts activated via the mail, telephone, or even through media advertising. Mail and telephone solicitation imply that addresses of potential supporters are available from the most different sources, including previous campaigns (for example, people who have bought "ecological" or "green" products may be subsequently targeted to see if they are interested in furthering their contributions, either to

a specific issue or to the organization itself¹⁴). Media advertisements, on the other side, require the existence of professional contacts with journals or magazines that are willing to grant spaces for ads or coupons at lower cost rates or even for free, as an exchange for other favors (eg., supply of material for articles, documentaries, etc. on environmental themes).¹⁵ Once control over these sources is secured, however, there is no strict need for a network of activists carrying out canvassing or recruitment on the territory. When the network is present it is used in order to supplement centrally coordinated fundraising. However, as *GreenPeace* demonstrates, it can easily be dispensed with. On the other side, the membership "contract" does not usually ask for more than paying the yearly due and mostly, even when initiatives are organized, members are usually not specifically alerted other than via the internal bulletin.

The booming of nature

I have defined the above structure as "functional" in that it seems to be shaped above all by the need to achieve the best possible "marketing" of technical expertise and knowledge on each campaign or issue, rather than by the need of mobilizing individual or group participants. Indeed, the organizational form is very different from that which is traditionally adopted by political organizations

¹⁴ For example, WWF has recently used a sort of "accountability clause" in its fundraising campaigns: a letter is sent to people who had previously contributed with money to a campaign, explaining what has been done with "their" money, and asking them to contribute more on the same issue if they agree with how money has been used.

¹⁵ For example, WWF had a "coupon" inserted by the newsmagazine *L'Espresso* in a special report on the killing of dolphins, whose material was provided by WWF itself. The coupon was meant to be sent for more details with name and address of the reader, and the addresses derived from the returned coupons were then used for a fundraising mail campaign. This has the advantage of targeting the fundraising effort to selected segments of the population.

such as parties or trade unions, whose structure maintains a fundamentally territorial character¹⁶

Environmentalist SMOs, in a sense, exchange technical and scientific knowledge with financial support and media coverage. The "markets" for these resources are so shaped that a centralized and professionalized organization is likely to be the best structure for both. Following Stinchcombe's (1990) scheme based on the location of main task uncertainty, it is possible to say that the market of media coverage is centralized in the hands of few main networks, whilst the market of financial resources either allows the application of standardized procedural knowledge (eg., with individual member subscribers that are contacted via telephone or the mail), or is centralized in the hands of few large institutional donors (eg., sponsoring firms or governmental funding). What is interesting to notice is that centralization and professionalization tend to be seen by SMOs' leaders in both currents as technical requirements, rather than as a strategic choice. One interviewee at WWF told us: "WWF is such a structure today, that it has to be sectorialized; thus, there needs to be someone in charge of wildlife sanctuaries and not of waters, because the size is such that this is a necessity. Any type of company (*sic!*) becomes more and more specialized." But in order for such technical requirements to arise, changes have to come about first in the "markets" for SMOs' relevant resources. Therefore, the similarity between the two currents, in both internal organizational form and strategy of action, should be explained by examining the changes in the resource base that these same SMOs were able to use in the Eighties.

In fact, focussing on the mobilization of resources requires that one takes account of the social aspects of the changes that have affected Italy in the last

¹⁶ See the classic study of Duverger (1951); see also Panebianco (1982). On the Italian Communist Party, see Barbagli, Corbetta and Sechi (1979). On trade unions see Gasparini (1981) and Della Rocca (1979) on Italy.

ten years, and not only of those related to the political opportunity structure. In this and the following sections I shall try to show how the transformation of class structure in Italian society made available new resources for social and political action on non-traditional issues. It will be possible to see that although resources of action and participation were available, environmentalist SMOs in both currents did not try to organize them on an extensive national basis, and preferred to rely on the increasing availability of financial resources. I shall try to show that, as predicted by Oliver and Marwell say (1992: 259), the decision to rely on financial resources tends to bring movement activists into a world of professionalization and moderation. A key aspect of the changes that swept across Italian society from the late Seventies onward has been the process of "middle class-ization" and tertiarization of social structure. This phenomenon appears to be linked both to a change in cultural orientations and values, and to an increase in the amount of material resources available for discretionary spending. It is these changes that, together with the "infrastructure deficit" (McCarthy 1987) of environmentalist SMOs, have led the latter to adopt a uniform "functional structure" and similar "mobilization technologies", increasingly similar goals, and more frequent alliances, ending up in the above described turn "from radicalism to moderation".

In general, students have mainly pointed to the "cultural shift" produced by societal changes in the West. They have stressed the rise of post-materialist values and the consequent substitution of new political issues - among which the environmental one - for traditional cleavages and conflicts centering on material demands (Inglehart, 1977; 1990a); Or, they have stressed the moral and symbolic content of people's involvement in, and support for, these new issues (Eder 1985; Biorcio 1988). While this is certainly correct, my point needs to emphasize an aspect which has remained rather underthematized; that is, the fact that support for the so-called "new movements" originates in the increasing level

of absolute well-being and in the growing size and importance of the middle class strata in Western societies (Inglehart 1990b). One should always remember that the environmentalist movement has definitely been a middle class-based phenomenon (Diani forthcoming).

The improved economic conditions and the middle class-ization of important sectors of the Italian population during the Seventies and early Eighties have been well documented (Sylos Labini 1986). This aspect has little relevance when the structural and "class" bases of the environmentalist movement are examined, but it is of foremost importance when the organizational structure of support of the movement is questioned. If changing values bring about a "silent revolution" in lifestyles, it must be expected, as McCarthy and Zald (1973) say, that growing well-being grants people increased freedom in spending on these new values. A wealthier constituency, or sympathizers' base, may or may not find adequate organizational structures, or they may or may not have more time to participate, but they certainly have a larger capacity for discretionary spending and more money to support their values. This may offer a simple explanation for the fact that in Italy environmentalist SMOs' membership base has grown impressively during the Eighties, but that these same SMOs have not been able to increase the rate of actual participation by these members. For wealthier sympathizers, in other words, the ratio between the relative cost of giving money and the relative cost of dedicating time for participation lowers. And conversely, it becomes easier for movement leaders and organizations to tap potential donors rather than potential participants: the rate of return of the former increases when compared to the rate of return of the latter. Environmentalist SMOs, therefore, focus "on the mobilization of sympathizers' money and related resources rather than on the activation of their time and 'labor force'." (Diani forthcoming: ch.7)

But the flow of financial resources did not only originate from

membership contributions. In Italy, opinion surveys have shown that concern for environmental problems (along with sympathy for the environmentalist movement) was constantly expressed by more than 90% of the population during the whole 1980s decade (Biorcio 1988). And, like in most Western countries, consumption patterns started to reflect these concerns, producing the "green marketing" phenomenon (Ottman 1993; Sassoon and Rapisarda-Sassoon 1993)¹⁷. Broadly speaking, a sort of "demand for nature" started to characterize consumers' behaviors during the decade, encompassing both motives of symbolic consumption, and motives related to a more selfish preoccupation with one's health, well-being and quality of life. It included the "development of alternative tourism, especially in the countryside; increasing popularity of 'natural medicine', 'macrobiotics' and so on; the expansion of 'natural' sports such as cross-country skiing, canoeing, free-climbing." (Diani forthcoming ch.2). But it also included a growing attention for the quality of "normal" food products, toiletries, cosmetics, clothes, housing settlements, etc. These lifestyle changes are hardly a product of the environmentalist movement itself. Instead they may be seen, more safely, as simultaneous and parallel phenomena (Inglehart 1977, 1990a; Sabani 1987; Donati 1989). Indeed, the new lifestyles and patterns of consumption could be seen as a new field of action, in which the market, rather than the polity, was pivotal. People's lives could be seen as affected no longer only by political and legislative decisions, but also by individual and private consumer decisions on the purchase of goods and services: An entirely new field of intervention and influence was therefore available in which political and ideological stances were much less relevant than before, even for political ecology SMOs. The main environmentalist SMOs were

¹⁷ On the different facets of the relationship between ecologic consciousness and consumption patterns, see Sabbadin (1990).

therefore able to take advantage of the changing preferences of consumers in two forms: through the commercialization of "alternative" ecological products, and above all through the sponsorship of commercial products.

Taking advantage of the demand for "alternative" products is not new for social movements, and activists have always sold "alternative" goods. Despite this, the commercialization of militant-alternative products and services (such as macrobiotic and vegetarian food, homeopathic medicine, countryside tourism, etc.) achieved an unprecedented dimension in Italy with the environmentalist movement, and after the first attempts (Barone 1984), professionalization became a standard for these commercial activities (especially in the field of tourism and publishing). The highest expression has been reached by WWF with its *Panda Shops*. Today, the *Panda Shop* activity represents no secondary or marginal activity in WWF's economy. In 1987 its total turnover reached 1,400 million Lire (Fiore 1991), representing about 20% of the organizations' revenues.

But it is the second type of market activity that appears to be more innovative and profitable. Here, environmentalist SMOs have been able to exploit the growing market niches for "green" products through industrial producers themselves. The increasing demand for better quality, safer and healthier products in many market sectors (eg., washing powders, cosmetics, appliances, means of transportation), and the need of industry and firms for a new and "greener" image due also to political reasons (Lewanski 1992), have both conjured up to produce the sponsorship phenomenon. This may work in two ways. The first is when the name and/or logo of an environmentalist association are used as a sort of "eco-label" (in fact an official eco-label has not been present as such in Italy) to certify the eco-friendliness of some products, with the only difference that the use of the label is not here allowed because of specific well-defined improvements, but rather in exchange for contributions to

some of the environmentalists' activities. The second when firms sponsor some among environmentalist SMOs' initiatives in order to build a generic environment-friendly image.¹⁸

Sponsorships can be activated upon direct request of the firm, but more frequently they are explicitly looked for by the environmentalist organization through a sort of more or less stable marketing activity, trying to develop a range of "clients". They represent today an important source of income for environmentalist associations, and one which appears to be still growing (even if not many environmentalist organizations are able to activate it). Available data (Fiore 1991) show that in 1987 the revenue of WWF from sponsorship programs totalled 1,600 million Lire, and there are reasons to think that LA also comes close to these figures. Smaller organizations, instead, are more likely to obtain sponsorships for single initiatives, especially if they fit in well with the media or if they suit specific audiences or market niches (eg., *Mountain Wilderness* for outdoor sports).

Environmentalist activists justify their involvement in such marketing activities with the idea that besides providing financial resources, they also allow them to exploit the role of the public as individual consumers in order to hit polluting products and to promote market's supply of alternatives (such as in the case of CFCs, plastic bags, glass-bottled drinks, etc.), especially when a political strategy mobilizing people against the same polluting products would have

¹⁸ Examples of firms having used or using environmentalist's logos as an eco-label for their products or services, or sponsoring environmentalists' initiatives in the hope of image returns, include above all large national and multinationals firms such as Electrolux, Barilla, Henkel, Procter & Gamble, Duracell, FIAT. It is worth noticing that there have been cases in which the use of the environmentalist SMO's logo has been granted to the "wrong" product. WWF claims that, having been increasingly submerged by producers' demands, they are able to choose from a wide offer and to evaluate and check carefully what they define as the "environmental status" of the interested company. Despite this, ambiguous (to say the least) cases do exist.

proved much less effective (even if its eventual results could have been far more extensive and durable¹⁹). But the sponsorship phenomenon is interesting because it highlights the role of the media as a complement of the professionalized movement organization, and as a factor that brings it to its extreme point (see also McCarthy and Zald 1973).

Environmental SMOs and the media

That the media have had a key role in spreading the consciousness of environmental accidents and problems among the public has been pointed out by quite a number of students for all the advanced countries (Burgess 1990; Colombo and Ghiglione 1990; Mazur 1990; Anderson 1991; Burgess, Harrison and Maiteny 1991; Hansen 1991; Szerszynski 1991; Eder 1992; Statham 1992²⁰). Because of the interest of the media for environmental themes, and especially since the middle Eighties, environmentalist activists and leaders have devoted unprecedented attention to media work (Fiore 1991). But the behavior of the media is itself also not independent of the major social changes which took place in the last decades: In fact, it may be seen as related both to the spread of the new post-materialist lifestyles, and to the increase in size and

¹⁹ In fact, environmentalist SMOs have sometimes tried to involve these same sponsoring producers into joint lobbying for new environmental policies. However, these business actors seem to be less enthusiastic about an involvement into political efforts. For example, in a recent interview on *Sette* magazine, Mr. Belloni, CEO of P&G said that while he agrees to sponsor LA's beach cleaning initiatives, he is determined to oppose the new EC policy on packaging, according to which firms will have to recycle or reuse their own packages. This may be explained by the difference between the relatively safe involvement in short-term initiatives and the riskier involvement in changes altering the competitive environment. But it is also certainly true that managers and industrialists feel a cultural hiatus between the environmentalists and themselves, and therefore a lack of control on the long-term development of such alliances.

²⁰ Although some have also maintained that the media have mainly distorted the real environmental problems (Ravaioli and Tiezzi 1989).

spending capacity of the middle-classes. As it has been persuasively argued (Gitlin 1980; Ryan 1991) media enterprises are interested first of all in advertisers' money. And, when the strata (the middle classes) who represent the largest share of consumers' spending power become interested in new values and lifestyles, advertisers need that the media catch their attention by broadcasting topics and themes that are related to these new values. The media, in other words, follow the preferences of customers whose money is of interest for producers. And when more consumers become interested in nature, more media begin talking about ecology.²¹ As Molotch (1979) says, the media do not pay attention to social movements out of changes in the values of those who work for them. They pay attention to social movements if this can be useful to their business.

This mechanism can therefore be said to have produced a competition of newspapers, magazines, and even TV programs in dedicating space to nature and the environment in order to attract (or maintain the attention of) the desired public. In order to achieve this, however, in Italy the media were in a sense forced to grant space to environmentalist SMOs, as there were no other sources of acceptable information, and as in Italy public officials and political institutions were totally unprepared to deal with the issue. In Italy there were two waves of interest for the environment on the side of the media. The first was the rise of an interest in nature-related themes which took place starting from the second half of the Seventies. In this context, as the environmental issue was still a contested one, the space was granted especially to preservationist SMOs because they were deemed more "acceptable", and because some of them,

²¹ An interesting phenomenon, combining promotional and informational content, here, is for example represented by the increasing (especially in women's magazines) presence of articles in which traditional topics (eg., housekeeping, gardening, or fashion clothes) are given an environmental "twist", by presenting "the natural way to...", etc.

like WWF and *Italia Nostra* had already been able to establish a role of "problem owner" (Gusfield 1981). While *Italia Nostra* shied away from the media stage, WWF took up the challenge. Sanctuary work and the connections with scientific and intellectual elites, originally the cornerstones of WWF activity, became its main assets in front of the media. Media interest in fact focussed on the attempt at creating commercial products out of stories and images of nature in the form of TV documentaries (eg., Cousteau's ones on seas and oceans), photographic books, nature and popular science magazines. Preservationist organizations were at an advantage with respect to other possible suppliers, as no other organization could offer this sort of material (coming from work and projects on wildlife reserves and the like). The intellectual staff, moreover, was well endowed for the editorial and journalistic work that was needed to prepare media-suited material. Finally, science had a legitimating role in that publishers and journalists are interested in credible and socially acceptable sources, as this makes their products - ie., news and commentaries - more acceptable and credible in their own turn (Gans 1979; Gitlin 1980).²² The second wave of sustained attention for environmental problems on the side of the media took place after the Chernobyl accident (Colombo and Ghiglione 1990) as the environmental problems made their access into the public agenda in a more stable way. In this case, however, the media focussed above all on urban problems of quality of life, and on such questions as traffic, air pollution, waste management, infrastructural development, etc., in which it was above all the public administration to be put under accusation. In order to cover these problems, the media widened their range of sources, but the importance of

²² This is why for example mainstream newspapers are more willing to give credit to WWF than to *GreenPeace*, who is considered too extreme and unsuitable to the need of defining events in objective terms, although on the other side *GreenPeace* also appears to be able to guarantee a "good audience" and its material is therefore not always rejected.

environmentalist SMOs among the latter did not decrease; It rather increased, and it came to include the main organizations in the political ecology current. This time, besides WWF, with which the media already had an established relationship, LA was able to establish itself as the a qualified and credible source of data, especially thanks to the fact that it had already been active in monitoring pollution levels and environmental impacts through its network of scientists, technicians, and laboratories,²³ (and also because the public administration was completely unable to deal with the problem and tended, especially in the beginning, to conceal data, rather than to establish a dialogue with journalists). Also, the growing support that opinion pollsters were awarding to the environmental movement, coupled with environmentalist SMOs' success in terms of membership growth, worked as a sort of guarantee of both interest and legitimation for the media establishment.

Newsmakers were basically using nature to sell the news (rather than viceversa). However, extensive coverage of environmental themes, coupled with a forced reliance on movement sources, produced a wide circulation of environmentalist SMOs names. Even if the media are usually careful in avoiding to name the SMOs involved in protests and mobilizations, and they usually refer to them as "the environmentalists", or "the protesters" (as it turns out from our sample of newspaper articles.), it is hard for journalists to avoid it fully, especially when SMOs start to use aggressive public relations to be themselves the main actors in events such as the presentation of dossiers, statements of denunciation, or new initiatives. The media, thus, became a powerful substitute, or complement, for SMOs own publicity and public education work, both with

²³ The network of scientists linked to LA and the political ecology sector is different from that linked to preservationist organizations and the WWF. The former is made of technical and medical personnel (chemists, doctors) working in public institutions. The latter on the contrary is made of zoologists, botanists, and natural scientists, who work in universities and research centers. The latter has also a more international scope.

respect to environmental problems and with respect to the names of the organizations that were supposed to be doing something about them. This increased environmentalists' pressure capacities, but first of all it increased the flow of resources that the SMOs were able to gather from the public and from the market in direct and indirect ways.

Environmentalist SMOs were able to establish a continued relationship of mutual support with the media, exchanging knowledge and stories about nature and environment with increased opportunities for access and for circulation of their own name. This produced a number of consequences. First, the sheer circulation of SMOs' names and the increased awareness about their initiatives was a fundamental mechanism, as our interviewees often noted, to promote the adhesion of members, subscribers, and donors, and of course the sale of "green" products. Second, continued access (eg., campaigns such as *Goletta Verde*, or *Treno Verde*, or the permanent collaboration of environmentalist leaders such as Fulco Pratesi, president of WWF, with main national newspapers) ends up establishing SMOs' status (and that of their leaders) as the most legitimate and knowledgeable voices on environmental matters to the detriment of experts from other sources (public administrations or industry). This increases environmentalists' capacity of political pressure, but above all, third, the process of mediated circulation allows major environmentalist SMOs to become a symbol of nature and natural defense itself, in that the cause of nature came to be identified with their names and initiatives. In other words, the problems and solutions about which environmentalists talk come to be seen as *the* problems and solutions for nature and the environment. And the more this happens, the more the environmental-natural trend of lifestyles, consumption patterns and opinions becomes a sort of "property" of the environmentalist SMOs, in turn allowing the sponsorship strategy to take off, and granting a further increase in the flow of financial resources. Definitions of problems, symbols, catchphrases,

rhetorical arguments, etc. that environmentalists themselves developed, and which are nonetheless one specific way of talking about nature, start to circulate as the objective version of it. Thus, thanks to the media, environmentalists were able to "brand" the boom of nature with their own symbols and could then sell it to the public and to all those who were interested in selling items to this same public, which includes corporations, advertisers, the media, and even political institutions. In some cases, for example, the media themselves took on the sponsoring of pollution analyses of sea and vacation resorts to be offered then to readers as special reportages (which was done for sea resorts with *Goletta Verde*, now repeated every year; for the Northern lakes with *Goletta Laghi*, and for skiing resorts with *Aquila Verde*). This provided financial resources to a number of SMOs, and allowed LA to set up a sort of pollution-control industry equipped with "technical teams" and advanced communication structures and skills tailored to the production and publicization of pollution analyses.

But the interaction with the media is also the main cause of the process of organizational change that environmentalist SMOs have undergone, and of the advent of the "functional" organizational form. In fact, the main purpose around which such type of structure seems to be built is that of securing valuable technical information and subsequently granting its quick and effective transmission to the appropriate receivers, which are usually represented by journalists and other officers in the media establishment. Thanks to electronic networks and the scientific sources, environmentalist SMOs are able (besides having a constant and prompt update on all relevant events) to offer journalists a wide scope of information that may be used either as "news" or as material for commentaries, documentaries, story-lines, etc. But in order to ensure maximum quantity and quality of coverage (and that news are published in the way the environmentalist SMO needs), and in order to qualify the SMO itself as one major source of information on environmental affairs, its staff has to work as a

sort of service agency for journalists who ask for information, material, etc. (and may eventually feel obliged to return the favor), interacting with appropriately trained and skilled personnel. The task of SMOs' internal staff, then, becomes that of editing and delivering such information in a format that fits press requirements and is as ready as possible for publication. In sum, the functional structure is aimed at maximizing the probability of getting through the media channel and at maximizing the chances of impact and influence on public opinion and on the other audiences (commercial firms as well as policy-makers) through continued collaboration with the media establishment.

WWF already had a rather centralized structure. Even WWF however had to increase the professionalization and specialization of its staff. As the main request was that of supplying material on nature, scientific sources needed adaptation in order to be understandable by media publics, and possibly to fit the different tastes and interests of each newspaper's, magazine's, or TV channel's audience. Considerable manipulation and rhetorical reconstruction of contents and themes was therefore necessary: Nature had to be transformed into an aesthetic object responding to the new "cultural" demands of leisure consumption, which is what the media corporations who buy these material are mainly interested in.²⁴ Scientific experts on issues had to be put in strict connection with media experts: either editors or press relations experts able to maintain the proper interfacing with media organizations. The connection was found through the role of the "campaign manager". By modifying the organization and coordination of voluntary work and campaigns in a "functional"

²⁴ As media place a great deal of attention upon advertisers' needs, this consumption turns out to have also a double edge. On one side there is the consumption of the media product as such; on the other, the media product works as a promotional device for the subject, service, or good which is talked about. Thus, in watching a documentary on Kenya's national parks, the spectator can both enjoy the documentary, and decide to go to Kenya for her next vacations. The affinity with advertising language must therefore be not just a coincidence.

way, the SMO could maximize the chance of becoming media-worthy material and of keeping contact with media outlets. Unlike WWF, LA grew out of the so-called "left-libertarian" tradition (Kitschelt 1990) of the anti-nuclear struggle, and of its local mobilizations. Its strategy was that of calling attention to the local environmental conditions, trying to facilitate popular mobilizations. LA was since the beginning an organization of middle class intellectuals (Barone 1984; Donati 1984). It also had well developed connections to medical doctors and technicians capable of producing environmental analyses and estimates of health risks, but because environmental problems were territorially defined problems, it was built as a grass-roots organization capable of tapping emergencies and pollution cases where they were originating, with the center functioning as a coordinating structure. When media interest started to grow, this was seen positively as it meant above all an increased opportunity of access to newspapers and reporters on occasions of environmental alarms, accidents, and emergencies. But the interaction with the media produced a process of centralization in the structure. The problem became that of channelling relevant information to the media, rather than to local populations. Thus, an adaptation to improve organizational interfacing occurred. Despite the local character of media alarms, centralization was also fostered by the prevailing relationships with the national media. Media schedules required more and more careful planning and crafting of campaigns, as well as an adequate level of professionalization in the treatment and delivery of information. Moreover, the media were interested in "scientific" information from experts, rather than in hearing populations' grievances. Thus, the links between the headquarters and the experts had to be strengthened, rather than those between the headquarters and the territorial periphery, and the flow of information structured according to the specific subjects (i.e., by "campaign") through the adoption of a functional organizational structure.

The new organizational structure, then, allowed the development of new tactics. Scientific and editorial work done for the media, for example, is easily exploited for preparing and "selling" educational programs to school councils, another type of activity which has become quite frequent lately, and which sometimes is itself supported by sponsors. The same type of professionalized structure is then also functional to legal action and lobbying initiatives, both of which require a mixture of technical expertise and public relations skills. Finally, it works well for all types of monitoring initiatives, aimed at exposing adversaries (and especially public authorities) in front of public opinion and at creating "alarms" or "cases" (of pollution, toxic contamination, environmental hazard, illegal behaviors, etc.), which has in fact become one of the preferred strategies of the Italian greens.²⁵

In sum, interfacing with media organizations meant developing an efficient structure at SMOs' national headquarters, and this brought to the "functional" form. Environmentalist SMOs' priorities are largely oriented by the requirements of media work, and preferred tactics are determined by the need that the organization be able to attract continued interest from the media, and to maximize its potential as an instrument for securing a sustained flow of material and legitimation resources. However, the other side of the coin is that the functional form does not help better coordination of activities on the national territory. On the contrary, thanks to it the local branches are basically left in a marginal position, and (especially political ecology) SMOs' capacity of mobilizing constituents on a wide scale is heavily hampered. In fact, it is important to notice that the process of "moderation" of political ecology's strategies did not come about because of diminished participation resources

²⁵ As one MP of PDS complained to our interviewer. He stated: "In sum, I think environmentalist SMOs should carefully evaluate if this continued mobilization of public opinion can really help them."

during the Eighties. Rather it came about because mobilizing participation requires, as several recent studies have pointed out (McCarthy 1987; Oliver and Marwell 1992), organizational infrastructures that are different from those used by the professionalized environmentalist SMOs, and that they have failed to build.

Participation and social infrastructure

The 1980s have witnessed, in Italy, an increasing rate of citizen participation in various types of voluntary, associational and movement activities, in defense of both public and particularistic interests (IREF 1990; Manconi 1990; Diani 1992, forthcoming). Included are environmental problems as well. As Diani (forthcoming: ch.3) shows, about half of the groups that were active on environmental issue around the middle Eighties in Milan and its immediate surroundings were formed after 1982, witnessing a growing willingness on the side of citizens to take an active role in this area of politics.²⁶ In environmental problems, moreover, such participation has not only concerned voluntary work or "soft" types of collective participation. Especially during the second half of the decade, environmental problems at the local level have often become a terrain of harsh conflict and confrontation. Major campaigns were staged between 1984 and 1989 against chemical plants (four of which, those against Enichem in Manfredonia, Montedison's phosphorous sludge in Porto Marghera-Venice, Farmoplant's pesticides in Massa Carrara, and ACNA's paint solvents in Cengio, had broad resonance on the media), and between 1988 and 1990

²⁶ Also, this percentage increases when only small neighborhood groups (as opposed to city or regionally based associations) are considered, showing that it is above all the very basic availability of personal citizens' participation that increases, rather than the range of organizational resources, including material, professional and financial ones, that supports larger and more formalized organization-building.

against the so-called *Navi dei veleni* (toxic waste ships) in Ravenna and Livorno. But besides these campaigns, hundreds of other minor protest events, resembling the so-called "technology movements"²⁷, have appeared here and there on issues broadly concerning the quality of life of local communities. They have focussed on the management of traffic and urban development, on the siting of infrastructures such as motorways, railroads, parking lots, energy plants, and above all against waste incinerators and landfills (in 1991 and 1992 in Northern Italy). And most of them have used street demonstrations, sit-ins, blockades, occupations, and other highly participatory forms of active and passive resistance, with a high rate of success in achieving their immediate goal of stopping the opposed plants or construction works. In the late Eighties, such protest movements became so frequent²⁸ that, according to several of our interviewees (but see also Lewanski 1992; Leonard 1988), their rise has been among the main causes prompting firms' and business associations' environmental response.

These mobilizations were all locally circumscribed and most of them - although not the major ones - were short-lived. Yet, I think they are enough of a hint that not only a widespread "mobilization potential" for environmentalist action was present in Italy during the Eighties (linked for example to the growing dissatisfaction towards public institutions and governments), as many students have already signalled (Diani 1990, forthcoming; Biorcio 1988) but also - and despite the opposite claim made by some of them on the basis of attitude

²⁷ Defined as "an environmental threat that precipitates rapid mobilizations of local residents and their outside supporters against the industry in question" (Walsh, Warland and Smith 1993: 25).

²⁸ According to the XXV CENSIS report (CENSIS 1991), between August 1990 and October 1991 only, 92 such events have taken place in Italy, of which 45 against waste treatment plants, 23 against chemical firms, 14 against ground excavation sites, 10 against road, motorways or railroad construction sites.

data²⁹ - that a clear "willingness to participate" was indeed there. Why then environmentalist SMOs did hardly try to mobilize these constituencies on a national basis, and citizens' collective involvement in protest action was confined at the local level?

The difficulties in mobilizing a national environmental constituency are hardly a new finding. Students have already pointed out that, except for the anti-nuclear struggles of the late Seventies, the environmentalist movement in Italy has been characterized by the absence of large-scale mobilizations and mass participation (Barone 1984; Biorcio 1988; Diani 1990, forthcoming). The struggles have remained "largely the target of regional-based mobilizations" (Diani forthcoming: ch.2), and "the growth of mobilization potential for ecology action has not been followed by an equivalent capability of ecology organizations to convert such potential into actual support." (Diani 1990: 168) WWF and LA did not disregard the local protests. Their local branches have often jointly supported them, and in the major ones (eg., in Venice and Massa) WWF and LA also tried to launch national mobilization campaigns. However, these attempts always gave poor results and failed to develop the protests into sustained mobilization at the national level. For example, in 1986, during the issue of Montedison's sludge in Porto Marghera, WWF, LA and some other national environmentalist SMOs launched a nationwide boycott of *Standa*, a department-store chain owned by Montedison itself. But the effort met with low resonance and public interest outside Venice. In 1988, when protests against chemical plants in Massa Carrara, Cengio and Manfredonia were at their peak and the issue of toxic-waste ships broke out, the environmentalists tried to

²⁹ Biorcio (1988) justifies this by showing that between 1979 and 1986 in opinion polls taken in Italy, over 90% of respondents claim that they are worried for the state of the environment, but the same data show a much smaller percentage of people (about 11%) considering the environmental problem as a priority for political action.

transform the local protests into a generalized issue against chemical industry, by involving more than two hundred "hazardous plants" throughout Italy, and by putting pressures on the government for stricter regulation and control. However, while two out of three of the local campaigns succeeded in having the plants closed down (Massa and Cengio), there were only a few other local outbursts of protest, but no nation-wide movement. Only with the anti-nuclear demonstrations which were held in the wake of Chernobyl, in 1986, the allied effort of preservationist and political ecology SMOs was able to generate wide national participation in protest action.

Thus, a marked contrast developed in the 1980s between environmentalist action at the national and at the local level. But rather than being due to strategic decision of adopting less disruptive tactics, the movement's "moderation" at the national level can be understood by focussing on organizational processes. The way in which the mobilization of participants and resources has been carried out by different organizational structures (or "infrastructures" as McCarthy calls them) is a key for the explanation.

Networks of civic and social infrastructures are a fundamental resource for protest mobilization and for the activation of potential participants, as has been long since emphasized by movement students (Gerlach and Hine 1970; Oberschall 1973; Wilson and Orum 1976; Tilly 1978; Fireman and Gamson 1979; Snow, Zurcher and Ekland-Olson 1980; McAdam 1982; McCarthy 1987). Social infrastructural support is essential to the transformation of "preference structures [...] into direct movement activity" (McCarthy 1987: 53), and to the passage from "consensus" to active participation and involvement. As Resource Mobilization theorists have contended, no set of opinions or beliefs in the existence of whatever grievance or strain can develop into a collective mobilization without the presence of such infrastructural base. But the problem is that whilst such social infrastructures are frequently available at the strict local

level, as they are based on everyday associative life in a community or neighborhood, they do not "naturally" exist at wider territorial levels.

My point here is that the strength of traditional "old" political movements (such as the workers' movement) was based on a set of social and organizational infrastructures³⁰ which have not been replaced by a similar or parallel one on the side of the new environmentalist actors. And, the decline of old political affiliations left a vacuum that has hampered political action on the national territorial scale. The main national environmentalist SMOs have hardly made any effort to fill this vacuum. They have never tried to build such a social and organizational infrastructure. Nor they have ever tried to gain control of the existing local infrastructures by "coopting" (McCarthy and Wolfson 1992) them into pro-environmentalist action.

If one looks for a common pattern characterizing the behavior of WWF and LA in the above local issues, an important finding is that they have always contributed very little to the recruitment, activation and coordination of citizens' protest. In many instances a locally based opposition was mobilized by citizen and neighborhood groups or by local organized interests (Fareri 1992), sometimes coordinated by groups of new-left political activists (Falqui 1988) or even by church-related, parish-based organizations (like in Val Bormida: Bulsei 1990). The activation of protest and participation was thus always accomplished through pre-existing networks of acquaintances mobilizing into grass-roots neighborhood committees and the like. In most local struggles, it was the neighborhood committee that organized the picketing of the site, decided and allocated the "guards", contacted and recruited participants for sit-ins and other forms of action, alerted the residents when the police was expected to come, etc.

³⁰ On the territorial organization of the Italian Communist Party, and its role in socializing and mobilizing the base of participants, see the interesting study by Gori (1974).

When organizations of former political activists were able to coopt and coordinate the mobilization of the grass-roots committees, the issues developed into major ones and lasted for long periods of time, such as in Massa or Venice. Yet, they remained strictly local in scope.³¹ LA and WWF not only had hardly any role in recruiting and activating potential participants and aggrieved residents for demonstrations and other protest activities through their local chapters. Above all, they failed to coordinate the mobilization of local infrastructures and to coopt the different local networks into nationwide efforts, and they limited their role to the provision of external representation and support to local protest movements through technical and communicational skills, legal resources, etc.

Rather than offering organizational support, in most of the local technology movements, WWF and LA successfully and jointly advocated the role of "representatives" of the mobilizers in front of the national media and sometimes of the national politicians. Thanks to the control of sources of technical and scientific expertise they were able to produce counter-analyses documenting pollution levels (Falqui 1988; Fareri 1992), or to access the results of official bio-medical and chemical analyses that had been hidden. Also, their media skills and resources allowed them to get access to the main newspapers and TV channels, thus bringing the local issues to be covered by the news, something that local protesters, lacking broad recognition and relevant skills

³¹ Often (at least in Venice, Massa, Milan, and other cities) these pre-existing political organizations (such as previous new-left groups, or local chapters of parties like *Democrazia Proletaria* or the Radical Party) were the same who had created the Green Lists. Even the Green Lists, however, remained a locally based phenomenon. Moreover, the major environmentalist SMOs like WWF and LA were firm (especially in the early Eighties) in distancing themselves from the goals of electoral competition and in refusing to participate. They always contributed very little to the Green Lists, and the two sectors have represented in Italy two quite distinct realities (Diani 1988; Farro 1991). *Dulcis in fundo*, the Green Lists themselves have had the same problems in coordinating their action at the national level.

could never achieve by themselves. Finally, their resources of legal expertise often helped the local protesters in defining legitimate claims and accessing judicial, administrative and political authorities. All of this allowed protesters to frame and legitimize their grievances, to resist authorities and to put pressure on them, to single out a culprit and a goal for the protest. The role of environmentalist SMOs, from this point of view, has certainly been important. Claims based on scientific data can be used in legal suits and official requests to stop plants' operations, often proving difficult to disclaim by authorities and adversaries. Well specified and motivated definitions of culprits and grievances help protesters devising plans and strategies, effectively channeling and timing mobilization and action efforts (Walsh, Warland and Smith 1993). In Venice, for example, the issue of chemical sludge could be linked to the problem of algae, thus widening the range of interests involved; in Massa Carrara specific illnesses, or water conditions could be linked to well defined productions. In Milan, the local branches of WWF and LA intervened by providing documents discussing the pitfalls of the City's plans for re-planting the green and proposed better plans. They provided symbols and argumentation, supplied commentaries and press releases to the main newspapers and TV channels, directly questioned and pressured the local and regional authorities.

Yet, while such resources can greatly improve the chances of protesters' success, they do not help in mobilizing them; nor they contribute to sustain active mobilization efforts for prolonged periods. Participation (especially in protest and disruptive tactics) can be mobilized and maintained only through the ground-level work of militants who literally "organize" and coordinate networks of individual and group participants, constantly interacting with them to construct the positive relationship between costs and benefits of that make collective action viable (Donati 1984; McAdam 1988). It is precisely this ground-level work, which is the traditional political organizer's work, that the

major environmentalist SMOs have failed to implement in Italy. In fact, despite their territorial diffusion (especially for LA), the national SMOs have very little control of the local groups and have great difficulties in mobilizing (or even demobilizing) them in support of issues in other locales. Despite the growing environmental concern among the Italian population, and the favorable attitudes towards the movement, it has been very difficult for the leading environmentalist SMOs to build a solidarity on the side of populations not aggrieved by the specific hazards, and to mobilize them in support of the ones who were. Even in the most important local issues where WWF and LA were involved, moreover, control of the grass-roots groups remained difficult and the latter most often refused to join a wider movement on the issue, or to recognize a leadership role on the activation and the goals of the protest to the national SMOs (even when these were positively seen as a sort of generic representatives). Thus, while a lot of localized protests were there, they remained much like a sparse collection of NIMBY (Not In My BackYard) movements (Walsh, Warland and Smith 1993) in different locales.

The SMO leaders we interviewed justified this by accusing NIMBY activists of being "selfish ecologists". Disconfirming the validity of such charge, however, Hofrichter and Reif (1990) find that during the Eighties Eurobarometer data measured the dissatisfaction for the general environmental situation, in Italy as well as in the other countries, at a much higher level than that of specific complaints about personal and local environmental strains³²). This may well indicate that the mobilization potential for a national movement was at least as high as that for local collective action. A better explanation for the absence of the former is thus likely to lie in the absence of social infrastructures - an

³² Although Italy, among the European countries, had the highest rate of complaint for the local situation.

"infrastructure deficit" as McCarthy (1987) calls it - for mobilizing constituents and for activating their participation. If, despite favorable attitudes, it may well be that people have difficulties in figuring out the costs and benefits of wider protest action because they lack the organizational support to do this.

Environmentalism SMOs have hardly devoted resources to the development of an organizational structure of militants that could enable them to activate, coordinate and control collective participation successfully. What is missing at the national level, in other words, is a network of coordinated infrastructures devoted to environmentalist mobilization. More in general, in Italy, if the disaffection for the traditional parties, and the positive attitude towards the environment have represented a generalized phenomenon, organizational reasons have made the new "single issue politics", as Diani calls it, emerge as mainly (perhaps only) locally based. The decline of traditional subcultural loyalties did not mean the passage of organizational resources from one set of issues to another. Rather, it only made the most effective associational infrastructures crumble. In fact Diani himself (1992) recognizes that the decline of subcultures has rather impoverished the strength of the environmentalist movement (and in general of all the "new" movements)³³: The new movements have faced an organizationally weak environment. But they could also accept this weakness because other types of resources became available to environmentalist SMOs, to their leaders and core activists.

³³ It is because of this that the new issues and actors that have emerged in Italy in the recent years, taking advantage of the new opportunities, have not only been "transversal" to the left-right dimension (Biorcio and Lodi 1988; Mannheim 1991), but have also displayed a marked localistic character - which is true not only for the environmentalist movement and the so-called "Green Lists", but also for the general growth in citizens' associationism, as well as for the recent "regionalist" movements. Moreover, Diani also shows how the passage of old Unions' and Communist Party's activists and organizers from the old infrastructures to new ones has been rather limited. Very few of these people are presently members of environmentalist organizations at either the local or the national level (Diani forthcoming: ch.4).

Institutionalization, resource mobilization and political efficacy

In broad terms, the process of organizational transformation that I am describing might be seen as following the classic Weber-Michels model in which power shifts from the democratic process to the bureaucratic apparatus. In fact, the literature on resource mobilization maintains a close link with the traditional debate on organizational institutionalization (see eg., Lipset 1959; Messinger 1955; Chapin and Tsouderos 1956; Sills 1957), especially thanks to the work of Mayer Zald (Zald and Ash 1966; Zald 1970). In the case of environmentalist SMOs, however, the process shows also some traits - such as the fact that there is no built-in link with a territorial "game" like in electoral politics, and the complete organizational detachment of national SMOs' structures from the local grievances, which rarely happens in trade unions - that make it quite extreme and peculiar in its "de-territorialization". It is this last point, and its relationships with the adoption of specific "mobilization technologies, that I wanted to stress.

In Italy, political ecology's path of historical development went from the anti-nuclear struggles to today's "moderation". The path is coupled with a process of organizational change that started quite early: its salient points are the decline and marginalization of the original anti-nuclear leftist groups, and the birth and increasing centrality of LA (Barone 1984; Biorcio and Lodi 1988; Diani 1988). From this point of view, LA was since its birth part and expression of the shift within the movement from a professional political leadership to a leadership held by individuals skilled in culture-oriented activities and by "organizations able to ensure communication and symbolic diffusion" (Donati 1984: 845; see also Kaase 1990). The relevance of this process of organizational transformation and adaptation, subsequently encompassing LA's own change, is such that the progressive shift of political ecology to moderate tactics and

strategies cannot be seen only as a process of response to political opportunities. The process of organizational transformation is also to be seen as one of the causes (if not the main one). Its engine lies in the shape and functioning of resource mobilization mechanisms, and in their adaptation to the recent transformations of Italian society.

The bases of such transformation were already there in the large proportion of activists and sympathizers belonging to the so-called "new middle classes", endowed with technical and scientific knowledge rather than with political skills. This was one of the main differences between environmentalism and the previous movements, and it allowed the former to survive the crisis of militancy by turning to specialized, ad hoc work on "single issues" (Barone 1984; Melucci 1984). But the process of organizational transformation was boosted by the broad social and lifestyle changes of the Eighties, which quickly began to translate into increased sales of green products and services, heightened media attention and rising membership rates. Intellectual and cultural resources made the exploitation of the societal change easier. In this sense, the new opportunities came from the societal sector, rather than from the political system. And they could be perceived as opportunities, as I said in the beginning, because individual skills and organizational resources allowed environmentalists to foresee or experiment successful ways of exploiting them.

Intellectual and cultural resources made the turn to media work first, and to fundraising technologies later on, a sort of "natural" solution. It might be that this turn has produced more political influence. What it is certain however is that it has produced an increased flow of financial resources that were channelled toward increasing professionalized fundraising and media-centered work as a standing priority. Mail and telephone solicitation, marketing activities, editorial work and press relations became the main rationale for developing the "functional" organizational structure to the detriment of the capacity to mobilize

protest.

Klandermans (1984, 1988) distinguishes between two components of collective action mobilization: the "consensus mobilization" stage, in which the grievance is formulated and consensus is sought on it; and the "action mobilization" stage, in which people's "willingness to participate" is activated and participants are recruited into movement or protest activities. In terms of this scheme, national environmentalist SMOs such as WWF or LA in Italy can be said to have devoted most resources to the mobilization of consensus and to have paid very little attention to the mobilization of action.

The "moderation" of tactics is a result of these processes. But even the increasing pattern of alliances between preservationists and political ecology, between WWF and LA, is a result of the same process. Political ecology's increasing moderation is also accompanied by an often explicit change in goals. In fact, the media-centered strategy is often explicitly theorized by political ecology's leaders and staff as the most effective strategy. Interestingly, leaders and full-time staff at WWF turned out, from our interviews, to be quite conscious of the fact that the media should be used to facilitate political pressure and reform. On the contrary, activists in the same position at both LA and *GreenPeace* all maintained that the primary goal of their organization was that of spreading the consciousness of environmental problems, rather than that of producing social and political change. The stress on "public education" as the main strategy for social change, here, must be seen as indicative of a shift which, being coupled with other "technologies" that can be conducted by professional staff in central national offices (Oliver and Marwell 1992) such as lobbying or legal action, makes the preservationists and the political ecology currents increasingly similar, reciprocally acceptable, and therefore likely to become allied almost by definition. In conclusion, then, the increasing collaboration with newsmakers, which forced especially political ecology

activists and SMOs to adopt new sets of practices and to adapt their organizational structures accordingly, can be seen as the main factor causing the progressive alignment of the two currents and the increasing degree of collaboration between the organizations (WWF and LA) leading them.

Furthermore, if interview data can be generalized, the shift towards moderation in political ecology seems to be a substantial one, encompassing broadly defined political strategies, along with main tactics. It constitutes, in other words, a process of organizational institutionalization in which SMO's goals have come to adapt to, and absorb, the constraints posed by the practical functioning of the organization itself and the requirements for its survival in terms of resources (Selznick 1949). Like in institutionalized party or trade union organizations, membership growth is pursued as a tool for funds and for creating increasing pressure both on the media and on politicians. At the same time, however, it is also justified as a measure of organizational success: a direct consequence of the degree to which SMO's ideas and programs meet public acceptance and support. Without explicitly reducing the role of the public to that of a commodity to be exchanged with the media or to that of an exploitable source of funds, this organizational ideology clearly states a view of the SMO and of its (professionalized) staff as the main source of the (individual and collective) benefits that are produced, rather than as a representative of its constituents.

What remains to be seen is the actual political efficacy of a strategy that relies on professionalized media work, and purports to focus on consensus and awareness mobilization, rather than trying to build organizational facilities for mobilizing protest and direct participation. Three arguments seem to support the validity of the strategy. First, it may be argued that environmentalist SMOs' extensive media work has contributed to direct local protests upsurges and participation resources that surfaced in the second half of the Eighties through

environmental "media frames" (Gitlin 1980; Ryan 1991; Gamson 1992). In general, most of the "technology movements" have been directed against public authorities. Media work helped to channel the public dissatisfaction towards governmental and administrative authorities (Mannheimer 1991), as well as people's available attention to questions that were unrelated to traditional political ones (Manconi 1990; Diani 1992). In this sense, local environmental politics is likely to have been boosted by the main national SMOs' work with the media; and not so much because they sometimes helped the protests by granting access to the media, but rather because media work directed the local mobilization potential toward specific environmental problems, for example by creating an increase in the sheer number of local environmental alarms covered by the media. A process of exchange may also be seen at work here: On one side, local grass-roots participation was "focussed" and legitimated through the spread of environmentalist media frames provided by the work of national SMOs such as WWF and LA. On the other side, the latter could reinforce the importance of environmental problems and make them credible in front of the media, thanks to local communities' participation in protest action. More in general it may be said that the wide coverage that the media provided for environmental themes helped the environmentalist movement in putting the authorities under pressure. As the importance of issues in electoral terms relates to the number of people that appear to have an interest in them, media audiences are also taken by politicians, commentators and pollsters as consensus towards the environmentalist movement. Third, once access to the polity is granted (for example with the establishment of the Ministry for the environment and with the role of official consultants to the same Ministry granted to the main national SMOs) the availability of professional and technical expertise, as well as of larger financial and material resources, means an increased capacity for such pressure tactics as lobbying and legal action.

For all the above favorable arguments, however, there are also a number of unfavorable ones. First, as Edelman (1988) says, when the media become so relevant in determining the impact of public issues, there are reasons to argue that the response of political elites and decision makers is also bound to be a largely symbolic one. Regardless of whether using the media for supporting one's demands ends up "watering down" the antagonistic content of these demands, the media world may be said to promote spectacular policies in response to spectacular movements.

Second, even when the consensus of public opinion for environmental action has been taken seriously by (largely local) public authorities, environmentalist SMOs appear to have exchanged the consensus in return for organizational resources, rather than for more actual nature or better environmental policies for their constituents. A typical example here is represented by public funds devoted to subsidize school and educational programs developed by the SMOs themselves, or SMOs' own work on wildlife sanctuaries. On the side of the authorities, of course, this type of response is aimed at taming environmentalist SMOs' opposition, rather than at solving the problems.

Third, even admitting that mediated and "marketed" environmentalism has created both more sensitivity to the issues, and the belief of authorities and legislators in the existence of a pro-environmentalist "public opinion" movement, the role of such public opinion appears to be at least partly different from that of a pressure group. In fact, in the former case people's support is not mobilized collectively through an organizational apparatus, but above all mobilized individually under the form of consumers' preferences and purchases. Now, there certainly are connections between consumption and politics, but it is worth asking what is the real potential of mobilization of such "conscience" constituents in absence of an adequate organizational structure. Mediated alarms

and sponsored products can prompt people's behavior towards ready-made individual solutions, but they hardly induce these same people into the sort of strategic sustained action that it takes for positive policy proposals, and policy change, to be passed and implemented.

Fourth, the ability to use the media to "expose" public authorities has produced an increase in the number of local protest issues thanks to the activation of local infrastructures. Even here, however, the mechanisms of mediated environmentalism appear to have substantially impoverished the capacity of action of the periphery of the movement and of all SMOs other than the few large ones. The rather strict requirements of media organizations for professionalized service restrict the range of SMOs who can provide such service, and cause an indirect centralization of the movement. Movement organizations who lack the initial resources to specialize to such an extent are further marginalized. Local SMOs' chapters, grass-roots groups and minor SMOs can hardly afford to equip themselves for the "media game": Computerization and the connection to electronic networks, the constitution of communication units, the training of press relations specialists, the construction of archives, the purchase or constitution of mailing lists, the systematic production of information in media-suitable formats is not something that local activists can manage or afford. As Ryan (1991) argued, there are an upward and a downward multiplicative mechanisms at work here. On one side, mass mediated environmentalism produces a multiplicative effect on the flow of resources.³⁴ On the other side, smaller and local SMOs, as well as grass-roots

³⁴ That this "multiplicative" effect is no mere phantasy can be seen by comparing WWF to the case of *Italia Nostra*. The latter has traditionally tended to shy away from media publicity, in search for more "concrete" intervention. But, while WWF increased its membership by almost 500% during the Eighties (a rate well above average even in the generalized growth), *Italia Nostra* - a unique case in Italy - has had a steady membership in the same period, growing by a modest 7% (Sabani 1987; Diani forthcoming). As Sabani puts it: "The associations who have benefited most are those who have been able to free themselves from

groups cannot even reach the threshold at which the multiplicative mechanism starts: low membership levels attract no media interest³⁵, the lack of resources hinders professionalization and this in turn prevents the "symbolic circulation" of the organization's name, limits its visibility and impedes membership growth, which further increases its dependence on the center of the movement. Several interviewees among journalists, in fact, confirmed that over 80% of the environmental information reaching editorial boards from movement sources was originating from the three main SMOs: WWF, LA, and *GreenPeace*. The consequence is that the movement becomes increasingly centered around the main organizations (see also Diani forthcoming, for an empirical confirmation), as these end up attracting most of the resources. In some cases local chapters or groups are given some support from the center, but the decision is always subject to "campaign managers" or to the leaders of the large SMOs. In general, the paradox is that despite the local character of most environmental alarms, these alarms and events end up having a lesser importance with respect to campaign work. In some cases there may be attempts at using accidents or alarms as "media pegs" (Ryan 1991). In most instances however, "events" are prepared and planned together with the main campaign efforts, rather than waited for them to happen. They are planned as *ad-hoc* media events: from the staging of congresses or conferences with famous scientists or personalities discussing new discoveries or the presentation of research reports, to the staging

simple theoretical talk and to give priority to the diffusion of a type of environmental culture in which wide room is left to the possibility of fruition" (1987: 74).

³⁵ Moreover, environmentalists' advertisements, mail fundraising campaigns, or even "alternative" merchandise, are often studied and realized with the help of advertising agencies or professionals who offer their contributions on a free or cost-price basis. Because they do it for public image purposes, however, such collaboration is offered only to the main SMOs (Eg., the case of Saatchi & Saatchi, one of the largest agencies in the world in terms of controlled "billing", who has a tradition in "public interest" campaigns, and has worked both for WWF and *GreenPeace*).

of performances that can then be more or less "sold" to the media such as pop concerts or TV programs: from dramatic direct action "performances" such as those of *GreenPeace*, to very simple but also media-worthy voluntary interventions, such as clean-ups of specific sites. A more balanced conclusion on the effect of mediated campaigns, thus, would be that (local) environmentalist protest has been boosted by media frames but, at the same time, it has been hampered by the very organizational structure of the movement. Such a conclusion would be in line with Piven and Cloward's (1992) argument on the normalization of protest caused by the requirements of resource mobilization.

The above argument may even be seen from another point of view; that is, environmentalist SMOs have not really worked on giving organized substance to the synergy created by the combination of local protest mobilizations and media-framed environmental lifestyles. In fact, what will happen if, and when, the interest for nature as a consumption phenomenon will fade away? Nowadays, the interest of the media for environmental problems increases the probability that local issues arise and get framed along the environmental cleavage or issue. Should this interest decline, however, the risk is that local social infrastructures that have mobilized for the environment at the local level come to be coopted by other movements and by other goals competing for the same organizational resources. This already seems to be happening with the newly emerging ethno-regionalist organizations trying to build an anti-institutionalist protest also centered on community-defense and quality-of-life themes. Environmentalists have often been unaware of the mainly symbolic value of the environment as a frame for political demands. They have rather tended to think of constituents' interest for nature as of a substantial interest in "hard" goods, that could form the basis for the construction of political demands at whatever time and condition and, despite their media skills, they have failed to see the symbolic aspects related to nature. The distinction, as McCarthy and Zald (1973) say, is

especially important for professionalized SMOs and movements who thrive on "conscience" rather than "beneficiary" constituents. Environmentalist leaders tend to think of their base as one of beneficiary constituents rather than as one of conscience constituents. Yet, because this is not the case, the consequence is that the likelihood of cooptation rises quite substantially without the above leaders even realizing that this is happening. But at that point, will financial resources and mobilization technologies be enough for maintaining the momentum of environmental problems as public and political problems? And will financial resources still be there when media frames are changed?

Fifth, the situation is possibly even more disappointing at the national level, where the centralization of environmentalist SMOs's structure and their inability to transform local upheavals into nationwide mobilizations seems to have substantially lowered their pressure capacity. Only in a few cases, notably in the case of nuclear energy and in that of landscape protection (with the *Galasso* law of 1985), environmentalists' efforts have resulted in major policy changes. No changes in industrial policy, urban and land planning policies, chemical productions, etc. - all primary questions according to most environmentalist organizations - have been achieved. In a sense, it could be said that the political opportunities were there but the movement underexploited them in terms of political reform. And, even the anti-hunting and anti-pesticides referenda of 1990 have been lost as only 42% of the voters turned up at the polls. The media played here an important role in minimizing the event, which in a sense shows that when powerful interests (here those of industry) are at play, the media establishment cannot side with movement leaders, even if they are backed up by professionalized and skilled activists.

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