

Is Representative Democracy in Crisis?
Research Review and Research Perspectives in France and Italy

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**Trust in representative democracy between technocracy
and claim for direct participation.**
A cross-border comparison on High Speed Railways

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1. Introduction: environmental conflicts as conflicts about representation?

An often discussed question in environmental field is that of so-called NIMBY (Not-in-my-backyard) movements, local groups linked together in opposition to choices thought to be a threat for local life quality. This phenomenon is often seen as a conflict having its roots in the selfish localism of the interested populations, but in the opinion of many scholars [Bobbio 1999; 2002c; 2004c; Trom 1999; Latour 1999] this would be only the half part of the question, considering that, even if “Nimbysm” is a syndrome, it could be a consequence of another pathology: DAD (decision-announcement-defence) model of policy-making [Susskind 1985]. In such a model, central power makes its choices in complete insulation from civil society, and only then it announces them to the public. At this point, it can only defend them, without any possibilities of change even if protests arise. Participative democracy supporters underline it could be better not to trust too much in legal compulsion and technical reliability, following the “let sleeping dogs lie” principle referred to local communities, but on the contrary to involve all the potential stakeholders and to take protests into account before it is too late, avoiding to make them break out with already started works [Bobbio, Zeppetella 1999]. Some scholars think about 80% of environmental conflicts would be due not to an actual opposition, but to influence lack perception of local communities over question they are concerned [Ecosfera 2001, 155]. Exclusive approach can produce technically founded decisions in short times, but being based on a take or leave form, it could be too little flexible in case of oppositions. Inclusive approach, on the other hand, is thought to be the only way to solve protests before they break out, spending a little more time but avoiding work block. By a correct communication avoiding imposition it could originate, this is the idea, a more collaborative citizens’ behaviour.

The underlying idea is based on the evidence it is no more possible to create negative outcomes for a group without acknowledging group's right to express its point of view, according to the guiding principle of "no impact without representation" [Bobbio 2002b]. But what kind of representation? The simple fact we talk about need for representation seems to suggest that normal representative relations are by no means representative enough [Le Galès 2006], in the case of policies concerning irreversible localization of large infrastructure for which could be not only limitative, but most of all belated, to follow Schumpeterian logic and wait for the next election to reward or punish elected representatives. Indeed this is a policy sector in which representative institution are often crushed between the tendency to use a technocratic style of decision-making by the side of promoters, and the request for a deeper inclusion in more participatory processes by the side of impacted local populations.

We can find a paradigmatic example of such a tendency in the notorious case of the Lyon-Turin TGV-TAV project. Thus this paper is based on my PhD thesis¹, concerning a comparative analysis between Italy and France about the influence of decision-making models (through the mediation of involved actors' framing) on the outbreak of local conflicts related to high-speed railways localization. The research, which uses textual analysis of the claims produced by the actors involved on both sides of the border around the TGV project Lyon-Turin, is developed through the qualitative and quantitative techniques of political claims analysis, frame analysis and protest event analysis. Findings offer many cues about differences between the two sides of the border regarding the concept of representative democracy, its relationship with participatory forms of decision on the one hand and technocratic ones on the other, trust in representative institutions, social movements' willingness to delegate, clashes between local and supra-local representation. Indeed, with situations quite similar in other respects, Italian and French cases of Turin-Lyon project seem to differ precisely on issues related to representation, which appear to influence both framing of the actors and emergence of social movements, and therefore the outbreak of conflicts.

2. Local conflicts as challenges to decision-making procedure

In particular, the main difference in the Italian case, with respect to the French one, is the role assumed by simple citizens within grassroots committees. These are defined by della Porta [2004b, 7] as weakly structured groups, consisting of individuals who gather on a territorial basis mainly to oppose interventions which they consider would damage their local life quality. Similar groups are in a continuing and quick rise since the '90s, and their main difference with respect to movements of the 70s is being carriers of requests unfiltered in any way by mainstream politics, institutional or not, at least partly because of the weakening of political parties occurred in the same years. In fact, these latter would have lost their abilities to build collective identities and to collect and mediate demands from civil society, activity now carried out by movements which then address their claims directly to

¹ Title: "Processi decisionali e movimenti di protesta tra scienza e politica. Una comparazione tra Italia e Francia sul caso Alta Velocità" (Decision-making and protest movements between science and politics. A comparison between Italy and France on the case of High Speed Railways). Dissertation: 11th June 2012; PhD in Sociology; Graduate School in Social and Political Sciences, University of Milan. Available here: <http://hdl.handle.net/2434/174183> (for a summary of findings about representation, see in particular § 11.2.2 – pp. 445-451– and the Conclusion – pp. 504-507).

institutions, skipping parties mediation and, generally, in a conflictual way. According to Beck [1994, 69] it would not be an exaggeration to say that social groups have already «thematically taken the initiative. They were the ones to put on the agenda the issues of a threatened world, against the resistance of parties» seen as more sensitive to the pressure from strong economic powers than to the request from their own base, whereas even institutions are thought to have lost their ability to listen, so that the only way to be heard would reside in protest [della Porta 2004c, 118-119]. Andretta [2004] shows how committees evolve over time, trying to overcome the Nimby label, building public identity entitled to speak of collective goods and to participate in policy-making, while it is generally confirmed their initiative in the first person bypassing parties mediation.

Participation processes at a local scale, which Sabel [2001] calls “democratic experimentalism”, seem to fit in the framework of uneasiness that both the post-democratic paradigm and the technocratic one would induce in a part, albeit a minority, of the population. The variety of experiences grouped under this definition would be due to the common belief that democracy is nurtured through active participation in collective problem-solving, and that it may prosper, as stated by Crouch [2003],

when there is an increasing of opportunities for the masses to actively participate, not only by voting but by discussion and independent organizations, to the definition of public life, when the masses actively benefit from these opportunities, and when elites are not able to control and belittle the way by which these things are discussed.

A similar emphasis on responses from below may sound as a paradox considering the continuous statements about the crisis of politics, which found how the problem of apathy and privatism [de Leonardis 1997] is highlighted by a general trend of declining voter turnout and the collapse of political parties, namely the main agents brokering political questions. But, as Beck says [2000, 258], one can speak about crisis of politics only by considering it in a traditional way, that is as an instrument of classical representative democracy. «The impression of political stasis is deceiving. It occurs only because the political is limited to what is labeled as political, to the activities of the political system. If it is more extensively conceived, then we see that society is in a whirlwind of changes which, quite apart from how one evaluates it, certainly deserves the title of “revolutionary”». Where there is a growing gap between citizens and consolidated democratic institutions, there is also a strong growth of alternative and spontaneous forms of participation (associations, civic groups, social movements). More than just a generic problem of participation, this therefore suggests a specific problem of reconstruction of the relationship between citizens and institutions, attributable to the lack of trust in actors and institutional forms which have traditionally conveyed and directed participation by mediating bottom-up political questions [Torcal, Montero 2006; Dalton 2004, Pharr, Putnam 2000; Nye, Zelikow, King 1997], which would in turn mainly due to the difficulties encountered by representative structures to adapt to society changes [Inglehart 1999].

However, an important role may be also that of the growing demand from below for citizens' heritage of experience and expertise to be acknowledged, combined with the desire to play a more active role even between an electoral turn and the other, due to the availability of civic engagement resources which are spread and without effective channels within traditional representative structures [Dalton 2000; Dalton, Scarrow, Cain 2006; Freschi 2004b]. Le Galès [2006, 224] believes representative democracy is now called into question by the idea that representative government is not synonymous of

democracy, as Urbinati [2010] argues, nor is the best among the various possible forms of it, since it «involves [...] democratic elements. But its oligarchic dimension is by no means contestable». It, according to Crosta [2000, 40-41], reduces society to social demand, excluding that it could take steps to deal with its own problems. Distrust in representation should therefore be read, in many cases, as a claim for self-guiding society [Donolo 1992, 121].

Hence, distrust may not be addressed towards democracy as a whole, but rather towards classic representative institutions in order to overcome them². New forms of participation, even conflictual [Pellizzoni 2008, 93], would therefore be in many cases forms of active citizenship [Di Bella 2011, 6], or, better, critical citizenship [Norris 1999]. It would be not so much the mobilization in itself, as rather the critical and reflective thrust, the cognitive mobilization, to better characterize those forms of conflict taking it upon themselves to deconstruct the framework within which both official institutions and science operate, bringing challenges to both, and in an attempt to invalidate the “linear model of technocracy” [Beck 1996, 35]. Thus such new conflicts would put in crisis the technocratic model destabilizing it on both its focal nodes: scientific and political, cognitive and democratic [Jasanoff 2005, 1-2]. In the technocratic model scientific and political authorities would go hand in hand, so that the questioning of one of them would also drag along with it the problematization of the other [Pinson 2009, 137].

And this is precisely what new socio-technical controversies may do, being related to problems that are simply too complex, contested and uncertain to allow schematic and centralized control [Hajer, Wagenaar 2003, 7], making

the relationship among three of the most important actors in our society (public, science and politics) more complex and less outlined. Such a relationship among citizens, scientific institutions and traditional democratic institutions is increasingly a subject of discussion [...] In the absence of adequate responses, uncertainty echoes a widespread feeling that, in our society, strong factors of inequality are present. Decision making seems more and more a privilege of a small group which includes politicians (elected by the mechanisms of representative democracy) and experts (carriers of knowledge that the others, the “non-experts” do not have), whereas the effects of these decisions fall, often violently, on the whole community [Lenzi, 2004, 1].

Therefore such conflicts would work as “hybrid forums” [Callon, Lascoumes, Barthe 2009], discussion arenas within which participants play a dual role. On the one hand, as “profanes”, they are bearers of knowledge, albeit not of an expert kind, able to upset the naturalized character of the information bases, which in turn, far from being objective and merely technical, would be only the expression of a particular frame: the economic one that, behind cost-benefit analysis, would hide powerholders’ interests. On the other hand, as citizens, they claim for taking an ever more active role, enlarging policy-makers’ cohort traditionally formed by elected representatives imposing the economic frame above, thus for combining representative democracy mechanisms with instances of participatory or deliberative democracy.

Behind territorial conflicts would therefore be a thrust to reform the basis of politics, not just at local level, eroded by the crisis of the traditional representative democracy. The request for the acknowledgment of the contribution by new social forces, asking to interact directly with policy-

² This theory finds supporters in Dalton [1999, 2000, 2004]; Dalton, Scarrow, Cain [2006]; Inglehart [1999] and in general Norris [1999]; Nye, Zelikow, King [1997]; Pharr, Putnam [2000]; Sabel [2001]. For the opposite interpretation of the phenomenon see instead Hibbing, Theiss-Morse [2002]; Segatti [2008]; Torcal, Montero [2006]; Mutz [2006]; Sunstein [2003]; Gaus [1997].

makers, would often arise from the need to overcome the legitimation crisis of old representation systems, based on a self-referential model of governance allowing only for the elected an active role in policy-making, on decision-makers' tendency to interact only with vested interests, and on the lack of knowledge tools designed to manage complex and conflicting situations.

Distrust in representative institutions appears even to widen since such a thrust encounter strong resistance by them. The justification is the need not to have the political program dictated by protest, trying to keep decision-making process as much as possible out of the public sphere and assuming, for that reason, that every recipients' capability of voice is to be feared as a possible source of irrationality, populism, demagoguery. On the contrary, behind a conflict outbreak there would often be a claim for legitimacy to raise issues, propose alternative solutions and take action on the agenda. It is for this reason that it would be possible to link the evidence of "democracy without people", growing electoral abstention and lack of public confidence in politics, to phenomena seeming to go in the opposite direction, by claiming, even in a conflictual way, a greater power of choice. Conflict in this sense is seen as a vindication of the principle that choices can, and should, be taken outside the places traditionally responsible for political decision. In this case, the essential reference, both in social practices and (indeed especially) in academic analysis, is that of deliberation tools, particular decision strategy based on the idea that normal citizens are more or less able to argue, reason and change their minds.

3. The Italian case

3.1 The Val Susa Participative Laboratory

Contrary to what usually happens in the case of territorial conflicts, in Val Susa the first reaction against infrastructure localization choice came exactly from local representative institutions: Municipalities and Mountain Communities. In large part, these are represented by mayors who in a short time agree, regardless of their political colour and generally supported by all their Town (or Community) Council beyond political alignment cleavages, on saying no to the new railway line with a really exceptional unanimity. They lead their struggle to find a place at the table of those who must decide on the future of the areas they administrate, which they think to represent in a more direct and authentic way against top-down and centre-periphery impositions.

In the first stage (1990-2001), therefore, the policy is countered by such an institutional opposition. It will be a new form of collective actor, citizens' committees, to organize the transition to protest, refusing to keep on waiting a democratic inclusion of representatives they believe will never be granted, and, while supporting mayors, they choose to take the challenge on a different plan. A multitude of committees is established, acting jointly through the Committees Coordination (CC). These take up the protest, and support mayors in turn gathered in the Conference of Mayors. So a series of alternative decision-making arenas are created, which come together in the Coordination Committee of the movement, aggregating institutional, associative and civic instances in what has often been called a veritable laboratory of participatory democracy at a local level. Is thus completed the often mentioned

“three-legged stool”: population and committees, numerous experts who since the early 90’s had denounced the project risks, mayors and administrators of municipalities and Mountain Communities.

Committees support mayors in their attempts to have a voice in decisions affecting the territory they administer, but, as compared to environmental groups more active in the early years, they develop, on the basis of what happened in the first phase, a quite evident disillusion in the fact that official decision-making may one day be truly inclusive and transparent in a field like the infrastructural one where “powerful interests” are so strong. Such a support, however, changes its nature in the course of the years. In 2002 *Democratici di Sinistra* Party national secretariat sends Val Susa DS (the great majority³) mayors a letter, essentially ordering them to give up No-Tav position. The reaction of the valley population is a letter to the mayors to express a (completely representative) “solidarity, respect and to invite to continue on the road so far followed”, signed by 460 people. Mayors, enhanced by such a popular legitimacy, continue the struggle also against their party. The same thing is repeated in September 2005, and this time DS party openly accuses mayors to be controlled from the protest and threaten to crush the political career of those who dissent⁴.

For a long time the link between mayors and movement has in fact been close, constant, positive and especially fruitful. In a time when popular opposition was labelled as selfish and unworthy of any attention, subjected to cross criticism from centre-right and centre-left political wings, employers and unions, to find an institutional ally represented for the movement an important help in terms of resources mobilized, primarily symbolic ones (political legitimacy). Similarly, for local authorities excluded from any decision-making centre and outclassed in what they saw as a right/duty, the government of their territory, the support of such a broad citizen movement undoubtedly represented an important weapon to pressure both on policy-makers and their party membership, bearer of huge political resources especially in terms of consent. Probably, however, the awareness of mutual need and an urgent common goal are not enough to fully explain the birth of a so close collaboration. Also using action repertoires completely unrelated to the institutional role they played and sometimes on the limit of legality, mayors have been able not only to be accepted and recognized by the movement, but also to be invested with a role as a kind of “local vanguard” or *primus inter pares*, so that Mountain Community president Ferrentino was then recognized as a leader not only by administrators, but by the whole movement.

In 2005 regional elections are won by the centre-left coalition, but the movement makes it clear that there are no friendly governments for it. To have prevented the works start in late 2005 is only the first step in the struggle realized with the creation of permanent garrisons, which become venues of meetings and discussions as much of public life, becoming the emblem of “Susa Valley way to participatory democracy”. Harmony with administrators is broken, however, with their “selective co-optation” in the policy-making [della Porta, Piazza 2008, 23]. After the riots of autumn-winter 2005 and the concession by the Government of two discussion boards, *Osservatorio tecnico* and *Tavolo Politico*, committees cannot hide their perplexity towards mayors’ enthusiasm, given that “political power will

³ In particular, all 23 Lower Valley municipalities and their Mountain Community, the most militant and most affected by the hypothesis of the line, were at that time administered by the centre-left coalition hegemonized by DS (as well as Piedmont Region and Turin Province, on the opposite among the most strongest supporters of the project).

⁴ la Repubblica, 09/20/05 - pag. V - Cronaca di Torino

never accept a result contrary to its expectations”(12/12/05). Mayors, in turn, make the commitment to report to the movement everything happens within decision-making arenas, and not to take binding decisions in that arenas without first having heard its opinion. The 2006 elections are won by the centre-left coalition, and committees consider positive not to deal longer with Berlusconi’s “government of the blackjacks”, but they regard as even more insidious the possibility that with the start of consultations local administrators could undergo friendly governments weight, yielding to party logic. Beyond the appreciation for the method change, from mere repression to dialogue, committees renew confidence in local representatives, but at the only condition of strictly representing what local communities want, that is the No-Tav position.

In 2007 Government mandates the Observatory to develop a project to be presented in order to get EU funds. Committees ask mayors «to convene Town Councils open to citizens, as the main way towards participatory democracy» (19/06/07), but in the meantime they endeavour firsthand to witness, to Europe and to mayors themselves, popular opposition. When EU grants requested funding, Mountain Community president (and so far leader of the whole movement), as well as the few parties supporting the struggle up to the national level (*Verdi*, *Rifondazione Comunista* and *Comunisti Italiani*), minimize arguing that the only important thing is that dialogue goes on. No-Tav committees begin to demand accountability for the actions carried on by their representatives, by sending Mountain Community, *Verdi* and *Rifondazione Comunista* parties a letter expressing «the belief that any delegation to any table must always keep in mind what support it can have from their base» (CC, 10/22/07).

Fig. 1 **Categorisation of actors’ positions towards policy-making⁵**

		Perception to be able to participate	
		Yes	No
Decision model acceptance	Yes	Unions (Inclusion)	Mayors (Revitalization)
	No	Environmental associations (Turin No-Tav committees) (Realignment)	Val Susa No-Tav committees Social centres (Anti-system critique)

The different attitude towards adopted decision-making (fig. 1) would therefore be the basis of the split between popular and institutional movement parts. Committees argue that the primary purpose of opening up decision-making was just to *divide et impera*, to separate mayors from the movement, fact that in promoters’ and government opinion is an important step towards democracy and removal of violent protesters imposing their position to the silent majority, whereas in movement vision marks the end of the local participatory laboratory which was considered the true form of democracy as opposed to authoritarianism of both technocracy and central representative institutions. Local administrators

⁵ Such categorization takes only partial cue from those of Diani [1996, 1057-1066], della Porta and Diani [1997, 96-97] and Tarrow [1998], which, however, use quite different dimensions for quite different purposes.

translate this into accusations towards committees of intransigent political ingenuousness and inability to accept that collective choices necessarily pass through mediation and mutual adjustment, hinting to leave politics to those who know what to do and are institutionally responsible to do it. Considerations like this have the effect of strengthening claims for direct or participatory democracy, which were already characteristics of the “Val Susa laboratory” in the first stage, when nevertheless they were not in contrast with administrators’ representation.

3.2 The end of the laboratory and the rematch of representation (?)

From that point on, committees and other actors of the movement begin to doubt of mayors, to explicitly ask them to report what is being discussed in the arenas they are included in, and in any case not to take any decision without first discussing it with population, claiming for a form of democracy more participative than the representative one. In doing so they complain with administrators for the end of Coordinating Committee experience, replaced by autonomous administrative choices or, worse, by Conference of Mayors closed-door meetings.

Mayors, in turn, claim the right/duty to act this way, and begin to do what would have seemed impossible previously: invoking the separate and prominent role of local representation on popular demands. It is a very recurrent phenomenon in many participatory experiments, for which even administrations creating and fostering inclusive arenas, at the time of definitive choices, reserve for themselves the exclusive mandate, institutionally enshrined, to decide in representation and with full autonomy from civil society pressures, giving rise in those who had participated the feeling of being made fun of, or being used merely for electoral marketing purpose [DeMicheli, Lastrico, Tebaldi 2010]. Val Susa situation, however, is quite different. It was not a deliberative experiment created by a local authority on matters of everyday administration, but an independent and informal mobilization of a whole valley, of all political and social actors in reaction to what was perceived as an attack on their existence, which for many years had been found to work assiduously side by side against the external threat, on a quasi equal footing. Thus it is easy to understand committees reaction to the words of mayors they shared a battle with in favour of an open and transparent decision-making process, and who, as they enter decision-makers selected group, seem to deny that experienced by invoking exclusive rights. Committees condemn what they feel as a betrayal by mayors who prefer dialogue with vested interests rather than with the public which elected them.

They call for transparency, and reaffirm that the representatives should take a firm line against the infrastructure because they were elected on the basis of this electoral program. Yet mayors’ response is not what movement expected: in the words of Mountain Community President «behind closed doors does not mean secret, but everyone has to do his own job»⁶.

We are open to any confrontation, as always, in scheduled meetings, in meetings of the Coordination Committee, in public meetings. The Conference reaffirms administrators have different roles and responsibilities of committees and associations. When we recognize the need, debates and information will be organized. (Conference of Mayors, 06/04/2007, announcement)

In light of this, committees wonder what sense could have to refer to the democratic legitimacy of representation against the dubious representativeness of participatory meetings.

⁶ La Stampa, 06/08/2007

Among the mayors is argued that the meeting of 700 people in Bussoleno cannot democratically represent the territory. All right. But can Conference of Mayors decision-making system do this? (CC, 01/15/2008, announcement)

Osservatorio, Tavolo Politico and *Conferenza dei Servizi* going on, a more and more wider distance separates local representatives and movement, since committees keep on asking mayors to remain faithful to their mandate of representation of the will of people they administer. There is, however, who retrospectively think that actually by institutional representatives there might not have expected something different, and probably on the wave of enthusiasm for the rediscovery of active participation, expectations on them had instead been too strong even when relationship worked (CC, 03/20/2008, events reconstruction). On the other hand, mayors do not miss a chance to use the broad popular mobilization argument in order to justify their position in face of institutions of higher order and promoters when they wish to reiterate their opposition to the project, while they seem to put this kind of argument in the background, in order to appear reliable partners, when consultation seems to be going in the direction they desire. Hence, for representatives, popular protest would appear as a resource to be mobilized, in addition to their own resources, when things go wrong, but as a second-best solution they do without when Government is like to recognize legitimacy to local authorities and their demands.

THE TOWN COUNCIL [...] REAFFIRMS the high democratic value of citizens' participation and involvement in support of local institutions with determined, continuous and responsible effort. (Conference of Mayors, 07/17/2007, resolution adopted by the various Councils against demand for European funding)

The Administration of Avigliana asked that any solution must be supported by broad consensus of the involved population (Avigliana Town Council resolution, 11/28/2007, against the conclusions of Observatory third book)

Apart from the betrayal of the participatory democracy laboratory, committees accuses mayors to have had little respect even for the basic rules of representative democracy, taking on a role of personalism by-passing, through the Conference of Mayors, the supervision of Town Councils themselves, not tolerating dissent and acting, in short, just as the project promoters. After the release of the document of 87 dissident local administrators, demanding the exit from the Observatory, committees noted as "mayors' arrogance" goes so far as to keep away also councillors and even local government members, turning Mayors' Conference in a sort of closed circle restricted to mayors supporting dialogue with project promoters and faithful to the line of Mountain Community President. This latter from now on, after being the leader of the whole movement, will be the subject of heavy criticism from committees. The evolution of such a situation raises a new support by movement towards local representatives, although this time only towards the dissidents ones who since 2007 complained about the attitude of a great part of their mayors.

... continuous democracy adjustments, for the use of the majority. The Conference of Mayors realizes that it cannot continue indefinitely to meet behind closed doors and not to communicate, then decides that it... okay... will continue to do so, but in the aftermath of the most significant meetings will convene an open session only, mind you, to communicate the results to public and press. In exchange for this, sessions will be closed from now on strictly for the mayors, whereas even to listen will be forbidden to councillors (Turin No-TAV Committee, 3/7/08, announcement)

Meanwhile, the Conference of Mayors proves to be anything but transparent . This organization has assumed the role of single territories representation in front of Government and the EU, and only in very rare cases, when it considers useful to give this way more power to one of its documents in front of these interlocutors,

ask Town Councils approval. [...] but in the long run such a subordinate use to the real expressions of representative democracy, fortunately, will not last. In the month of December 87 administrators [...] call for an assembly of elected representatives of the valley in which to discuss and vote on the option of abandoning the work of the Observatory against mayors' will. (CC, 08/28/2008, letter to *Carta*)

This seems to be the prelude for a new agreement between the movement and a part of representatives, even if the 87 dissident administrators themselves put clear limit to the creation of a new front. This way they explicitly reaffirm that most of them lies still on positions, and moves by logics, which in their program must necessarily be reconcilable, but must, however, remain different compared to those of the committees, and in a representative rather than participatory perspective: "Representatives and movement, two distinct and dialoguing roles" (councillor of St. Ambrogio, 04/03/2008, letter to *Luna Nuova*).

This leads to 2008 agreement of Pra Catinat: protest is now directly addressed against administrators (CC, 07/18/2008, open letter to representatives). A few months later also dissident representatives begin to consider the opportunity to tag along to demonstrations organized by committees, to which, however, they are not invited. Indeed committees look with disdain at the "disconcerting path of mayors". Indeed, all the predictions and criticisms movement has addressed to representatives' strategy proved to be correct, and there is a growing temptation to act autonomously even in official politics. From that point on, a part of the mayors regains the more credit in the eyes of the movement the more walk away from Mountain Community president's concertative line, which collects more and more defections raising the question of what legitimacy he can still have to speak on behalf of who (CC, 04/02/2009, announcement). This reconciliation lead to an alliance, for the first time of a really political kind, between committees and local politicians. New civic lists direct expression of No-Tav committees are created for 2009 local election, on the basis of a program having participatory democracy among basic principles. These lists are allied with the traditional local centre-left, despite the ban and the threat of excommunication from the parties of reference, first of all the *Partito Democratico* (PD, former DS). This will mark a turning point in relations between mayors and movement, which, entering in first person in the institutional arena, can now affirm an equal level of legitimacy with respect to the elected representatives of the traditional centre-left parties.

Since this moment, roles are reversed and committees dictate political line. Elections for the new Mountain Community are won by local centre-left, back on No-Tav positions and forced to ally with No-Tav civic lists on a program written by the latter. Berlusconi's Government, however, does not like new Mountain Community majority, thus depriving it of authority by decree⁷ for the role of representation in discussion arenas. Committees then wonder if, in democracy, to take a position contrary to that of financial lobbies can be considered enough to be accused «not to be characterized with a profile of political-institutional sensitivity suitable to represent local communities pluralism»:

... a milestone in the realization of the concept of "nodding democracy", a revolutionary implementation of tram slogan: "Do not disturb the manipulator". Do they want to export and impose "their" democracy? They will have to deal with our zero kilometre democracy. (CC 01/09/10)

⁷ http://www.governo.it/GovernoInforma/Comunicati/testo_int.asp?d=54313; 8/1/10

4. The French case

Compared to the Italian case, on the French border side the situation is characterized, as known, by a much greater degree of consensus towards the project, and by a consensus even more high towards adopted decision-making process, both in its technocratic and representative connotation. What is very common on the French side is that even the little criticisms about involvement lack in decision-making, where they exist⁸, are often addressed directly to the Railways (SNCF and RFF for the national section, LTF for the international one), and not, as in Italy, primarily to supra-local democratic institutions in favour of project (Province, Region, Government, Parliament, EU, parties). In the end, the Railways are to be entrusted with planning, this latter seen indeed, confirming the French technocratic cliché, more as a technical process rather than as a political battleground as in the case of Italy, where yet, equally, planning is entrusted to LTF and RFI. The blaming is not therefore (eventually) addressed to representative institutions, but to technicians, and claims directed to representatives are intended to be confidently looking for reassurance from one's representatives with regard to technical planning.

On the side of representative democracy, a very particular case is that of political parties and supra-local representative institutions (all lined up in a compact way in favour of the infrastructure construction), as compared to the attitude held by individual representatives. As far as political parties are concerned, we can find a transversality in favour of the line even greater than that recorded in Italy. Not only there is a convergence among major centre-right and centre-left parties, first of all UMP and PS, as in Italy, but this is also extended to those political areas that on the Italian side openly support (and in some cases tried to represent) dissent, namely radical left and environmentalist parties. Thus in France a complete unanimity is found, covering the whole parliamentary ground (perhaps with the partial exception of the only FN). French *Verts*, in particular, have been among the strongest project advocates.

Nevertheless, while paradoxically this latter party remains steadfast on its favourable position at both organizational as well as individual and local level, attracting charges of “ecotech” by the most radical movement sector, the same can not be said of the other parties. This does not happen on the basis closely related to the residence, such as in the Italian *Democratici di Sinistra* (then *Partito Democratico*) case (among the strongest project supporters at all supra-local levels but leading many of the opposing organizations at the valley level), but more on accountability bases linked to a sort of a binding mandate, narrower than it is in Italy, between who has been elected on a specific territory and the electoral constituency of their designation territory. Apart from their party line, individual elected evidently feel the need to locally respond for their actions, individually and personally, and to have to represent, in front of supra-local institutions, instances that come from the territory which elected them. Individual members of national, regional and departmental councils, from all political parties, elected in territories concerned by the project, are the privileged interlocutor for all those civil society sectors which, regardless if for or against the infrastructure, generally accept to grant their confidence in official policy-making and representative mechanisms. In turn, these representatives seem almost

⁸ Especially referred to a possible application of *débat public* procedure also for the Lyon-Turin project, instead of the *enquête publique* one, given planning delay (Coordination des associations Ain Dauphiné Savoie, 06/17/2008, dossier).

always to take seriously such appeals, promising to put their commitment in order to mediate between local demands and the programs of their parties and institutions in which they operate. For example, if in Italy it is possible to clearly distinguish the position of Regional and Provincial Governments and Councils from that of certain political groups within the Councils (for long periods part of their majority), those of leftist and environmentalists parties opposing the project at all levels, likewise in France there is an even unconditional favour by Region and Departments at an institutional level, but the positions of their respective Councils would seem not to be directly attributable to determinants of a political nature (since all parties support the infrastructure), but rather of an individual and local nature. Individual representatives linked to the territory, regardless of political colour and position of their party colleagues, become the spokespersons of local requests, as the normal condition of representation functions, in a cooperative (even if to tell the truth very little effective) way, without prejudicing in any way intra-party relations⁹.

Consent widespread among all elected linked to the territory (in favour of the project, but against specific paths or features considered detrimental to local life quality), with no other bond than that of a local reference, is a crucial feature in the whole Lyon-Turin French case. A fortiori, supra-local elected attitude is shared by local administrators. This behaviour closely resembles what has been described as the real syndrome in the field of undesired infrastructure, namely NIMEY: Not In My Electoral Yard [Lascoumes 1994]. According to this model, local authorities are often involved, although in favour of concerned policy but fearing a loss of consensus, in a work of public bad dislocation [della Porta 2004], in order to discharge elsewhere, on other elected institutions, the weight of supporting choices unwelcome for the local electoral base [Fillieule 2003]. In doing so they seem to more often use justifications [Boltanski, Thévenot 2006] other than those by which Lafaye and Thévenot [1993] classify local administrators, namely technical, legal or economic arguments, preferring political or even more often (paradoxically for institutional actors but of course for political actors looking for consent) social argumentations referring to everyday life quality of concerned populations.

On the other hand, on the side of civil society, the great confidence in local government and representatives elected on the territory is the hallmark of the large part of involved collective actors, in particular the ones with scarce autonomous resources, such as the neighbourhood committees in Bourgoin-Jallieu area. For them, decision-making is not good or bad in itself, nor much less they aim to participate in it in first person. Without claiming changes in policy-making, they put pressure on local authorities so that, within it as it is now, they take a position contrary to new railways crossing their territory, or at least they ask adequate information. Both local authorities and deputies elected in the area, regardless of political colour, are required to act as a guarantor of local instances in front of promoters and regional and central Governments, to act as a broker between social demands and policy-making procedures. Also acting as an intermediary between the two so different languages, without actors from civil society striving to adopt themselves policy-making language and cognitive references as in the Italian case. Even when local committees activate in first person, taking personal contacts or writing letters to politicians elected in higher level institutions, such as regional councillors

⁹ A quite different situation if compared to constant threats of expulsion from the party carried out by PD-DS against No-Tav mayors.

or national deputies, they most of times act this way only to point out that local authorities are by their side in the request that local demands should be taken into greater account in decision-making, essentially asking that municipalities representative functions are respected. For example, the *Association de Quartier des Coteaux de la Rivoire*, in a letter to a PS Regional Councillor (12/17/2003), urges him to work in the direction indicated by a resolution of the *Syndicat Mixte* for the SCOT North-Isère, remembering how it reflects all the neighbourhood inhabitants' worries.

We appeal to all local elected representatives and in particular the Conseil Général de l'Isère, so that they promote towards RFF an action in order to clarify the situation of line plans, avoiding that the work is started without a proper public debate and populations consultation. (APSAB¹⁰, 10/02/2003, Audit comment)

The commitment to match supervision and dialogue, with the creation of a monitoring committee inside Syndicat Mixte, specially responsible for railway issues, reassures us about Syndicat Mixte support. (APSAB, 09/11/2003, meeting with the Syndicat Mixte for SCOT Nord Isère)

Similar confident appeal to local elected representatives is also found in Acac (Association anti Contournement Autoroutier de Chambéry), so that they will make a spokesperson of local worries (even if in this case worries due to new line planning delay, rather than for its possible construction), in front of central Government and Europe.

The Prime Minister did not ask the European subsidies provided for the French part of the Turin-Lyon [...] The elected of Savoy got a meeting with the Prime Minister on Monday, July 30th. We hope that they speak with one voice defending the imperative need to seek European funding as initially promised, in order not to delay the project once again. (Acac, 07/27/2007, announcement)

The association also puts confidence in local institutions of the central government, and in the policy-making itself, even when the facts would suggest that involvement instruments are no more than a strategy of consensus domestication which actually does not take into account what emerged from the consultations. A strong criticism, which Acac, however, does not renounce to express to peripheral unit of the national government, not in order to ask for radical changes, but rather so that decision rules already existing, and considered valid, are enforced.

Clarifications seem necessary, and only the Prefect, representing the State, can give us them. We urge the Prefect to organize a meeting with all the local elected representatives and municipalities. (Acac, 03/24/2008, letter to Prefect)

5. Different attitudes to confidence in representative delegation

It is therefore important to note the use by citizens (as well as by elected representatives) of motivations and action strategies completely different in the two countries concerning traditional representative structures. In the municipalities of Bourgoin-Jallieu and Ruy, neighbourhood committees, in this regard, use in particular contacts with politicians at various levels, elected on their own territory, regardless of party affiliation: a *Conseiller Général du Canton de Bourgoin-Jallieu* (UMP), national deputies elected in that constituency (both PS and UMP, as well as Verts), regional councillors (PS), and so on. These elected agree in full with neighbourhood committees and mayors of those areas, whose instances are accepted without hesitation by almost all the elected, once again regardless of their role or political colour. They militate in parties which support the policy both at the national and local

¹⁰ Association pour la Protection du Sillon Saint André Le Gaz Saint Béron concernant le projet ferroviaire du ferroutage Lyon Turin.

level, as very often they themselves do at the personal level, but they take it upon themselves to truly represent their constituency with the goal of preserving it from not strictly necessary harmfulness. Hence this seems to reveal a sort of binding mandate for elected officials.

Such neighbourhood committees therefore, rather than acting in first person, act as localist lobby, or better as committees in the strict sense (whereas Italian committees, although with great differences, would be better defined as proper associations), behaving at most as consensual coalitions but certainly not as social movements under Diani's definition [2008, 56-58]: they put pressure on local elected at all levels, from municipal councillors up to national deputy, for they take in charge of their instances in a classical representative form, as intermediaries in front of promoters [Iaccarino 2007; Lastrico 2011a].

On the Italian side, by contrast, associations, and (especially) committees do not rely on politicians, but rather underline whenever they can their independence of actions and visions. There is virtually no mediating function, and when mayors are called to take representative functions within the various discussion boards gradually conceded, such delegation is largely rejected by committees, although a difference can be found between Val Susa committees, more radical in this regard and ready to break with mayors as soon as they suspect these latter could bargain, and Turin and its hinterland committees, available to give more credit to mayors for a longer period. All this on the one hand because they reject the idea that there is anything to negotiate (TAV must not be realized for mayors has been elected on the base of such a program), but also because they refuse the idea that administrators can assume the role of representing instances which are widespread and affect society as a whole.

Depending on the actors and the contingent moment, ideas of democracy have been proposed from time to time variously ascribed to direct, associative, assembly, participatory, deliberative, or even neo-corporatist forms of democracy, but only in very rare cases representative ones (and especially nearer Turin). Beyond the rhetoric about "participatory laboratory", then, movement seems to have repeatedly crossed the boundary between "participation with the government" and "participation against the government" [Hendriks 2006]. The known ability of the representative system to absorb into its own logic participative instruments, in order to neutralize their potentially disruptive effects [Blatrix 2009], in this case seems to be jammed. Movement do not want to negotiate, but to present their own reasons and technical studies to counter what they think to be the ideological positions of the infrastructure promoters, and they want to do it in first person, possibly accompanied by mayors, but not represented by them (all the many forms of consultation, granted as a result of the protests, concern ironically only mayors or their designated technicians).

Apart from the more radical positions within the movement, mayors are seen as welcome in the struggle, this being facilitated by the fact that in many cases we are talking about small municipalities where mayors and councillors are fully part of local communities and of restricted relational networks, so as to be called by name in movement announcements. But this does not constitute any form of delegation at all. When the mayors finally take part of discussion boards, and sometimes, with their most charismatic figures such as the Mountain Community President draw committees attention on representation role, asking them to trust their choices, saying that this is basically the reason why they were elected and then referring to the more traditional canons of representative democracy, committees simply withdraw their support.

Then there are those who deride fellow who did not understand that anyone but themselves could represent them, whereas in most cases there is disappointment and, in the rhetoric of Beppe Grillo's (so-called) anti-political movement (which took strong hold within No-Tav movement), the sensation of a betrayal by representatives conceived as "people employees", elected to stand by their population side. Similar argument are taken against radical left and environmentalist parties, welcome among their ranks, but as long as they did not wish to pose as representatives of the movement seeking electoral support [Piazza 2008]. The idea that left and right are not different arises [Caruso 2008a; cfr. Morisi, Paci 2008], and that in fact there is a single party sharing the same dominant logic (what they call disparagingly PUTA - Partito Unico Trasversale degli Affaristi¹¹), that there are only subtle differences linked to decision-making model (from centre-right repression to centre-left circumvention, or using their words "from blackjack to vaseline"), whereas the constant would be the pro-Tav propaganda not supported by valid arguments. In particular among committees, the idea that if one wants to have voice it should be done in first person begins to spread (6/2/07, announcement). That also applies to radical left parties, whose help they say not to need.

"The protest of Val Susa," said xxxxxxxx "is exploited by Rifondazione Comunista, Verdi and Comunisti Italiani political radicalism, a proof that these statements are true came from the demonstration against the bridge over the Strait of Messina to which No-Tav participated. To move hundreds of people requires organization that spontaneous protest is unlikely capable of finding". Did you understand Val Susa? xxxxxxxx makes you the compliments for the management of demonstrations. He would like to think that no-party people do not know what to do or how to organize themselves. We know, and we have shown, it is not so! (CC, 3/19/06, leaflet)

No one can speak in our name. The only interlocutor is No-Tav movement. Any action or decision of parties, groups, or people should not be taken on behalf of No-Tav. If they share our battle, they can give us all their support, but the protest is ours. (12/6/05, announcement)

The relationship with these parties cracks then with the birth of openly pro-Tav 2nd Prodi's Government, supported also by these parties. Committees felt betrayed, and in many militants comes the belief that has not been sufficient to have moved votes from DS to radical left parties, because it is all representative politics to be based on interest, one more reason not to compromise with it and to establish democracy on a participative base (2/22/07, announcement). A disillusionment with representation procedures arises, and the result is not only the protest, but also the proposal for more participative democracy at the level of local bottom-up self-government, indicated as the only way to get out a kind of politics seen as colluding with major economic interests, and to move towards new forms of politics sensitive to territory and environment needs, that is towards an alternative model of decentralized and bottom-up development e (04/29/07, announcement).

So it is not only the normal problems of representation retrievable in local mobilizations [Cella 2002; Vitale 2007b; Mosca 2007]: No-Tav committees are more and more developing a cognitive framework independent from all institutions, parties and associations for various reasons claiming their representation, rejected in view of the path of self-definition and action. In this case, the refusal to delegate is increasingly due to a different, more comprehensive diagnosis made by committees with respect to their potential representatives: the problem is not so much or just the Turin-Lyon, but the logic that allows works such as the Turin-Lyon to be considered inevitable. Contrary to conventional wisdom that says if a spontaneous movement wants to be effective must be able to count on the

¹¹ Speculators' transversal on-party.

support of structured organizations [Touraine 1993, 329], No-Tav groups seem to be successful in their own collective actions because of the autonomy of a path built from the bottom [Lastrico 2011b]. Autonomy that comes from the outset, from the problem diagnosis transcending (at least as a will) the logic in which also potential representatives would be immersed, and that, at least for some sectors of the movement, seems to encompass representative democracy itself. The movement would reject this logic, and in doing so also reject the traditional mediation of those actors which, even in a conflictual form, act from within this logic, thus leaving unchanged the diagnosed problem.

Therefore a very different situation with respect to the French case, in particular the case of Isère, where an intermediary role is found. Not so much that of the parties in their traditional role, but rather in general that of the elected regardless of political colour, almost a binding mandate. Mayors, and Departmental and Regional Councillors, act as intermediaries in front their respective parties and to Region and national institutions, as well as national deputies elected in the territory in front of the government, and all these representatives in front of the Railways (Association de Quartier des Coteaux de la Rivoire, 02/22/2005). In Italy only radical left parties exponents act this way, although not on local but on political basis, whereas at supra-local levels (outside leftist parties) this is impossible because of the strong indisputable consent towards the project.

Fig. 2 Form of interactions between social groups and administrators [in part from della Porta, Diani 1997, 145].

		Cooperation	
		Yes	No
Competition	No	Non competitive cooperation	Neutrality
	Yes	Competitive cooperation	Factionalism

Referring to the typology (fig. 2) developed by della Porta and Diani [1997, 142-145] for completely different purposes, one could say that French associations and neighbourhood committees do not ever move, throughout these years, from a relationship of non-competitive cooperation with the administrators, but also with democratic institutions in general. Italians committees, on the contrary, change this relationship over time depending on mayors collocation in relation to policy-making. The interaction thus pass from a non-competitive cooperation established during common battles, to a competitive cooperation when administrators become part of the official arenas. In this case cooperation on the objectives that remain common continues, but the two sectors start competing for local representation. Not a competition for the same base, as usually happens between movement organizations, but for the idea of representation itself: administrators continue to present themselves as the legitimate representatives of the entire community, whereas at least a minority but increasingly large part of the committees propose direct action without delegation. The relationship evolves again close to the quasi-agreement between mayors and Government, towards the position of factionalism. At this time common objectives themselves seem to be lost, and with them the last confidence in representative institutions. Committees reproach mayors they were elected on the base of a No-Tav electoral program, so that they have broken the covenant with voters, and under the pressure of a growing rejection of representation also cooperation is lost. Finally, things change again with the

administrators' exit from official arenas, returning to a position of competitive cooperation. Not on a position of non-competitive cooperation, however, since confidence in representation seems to have been compromised. The interactions follow therefore, as expected, protest cycle trend: in the ascending phase the situation of collective effervescence enhances solidarity feelings within the movement, whereas in the descending phase internal differences come back to be felt, to the detriment of cooperation [ivi, 157]. In addition to this, however, something deeper seems to be seen, going to undermine the very foundations of trust in institutions.

The main difference between administrators and movement seems to be exactly the trust in institutions: when mayors trust too much, thus trusting even discussion arenas, committees accuse them of having fallen into the trap of those institutions that are not neutral and seek to manipulate them, whereas when they exit spaces for sharing re-open, although on the basis of a "we told you so" that is difficult to reconcile with a full return in the flow of representative delegation. Confidence in institutions does not mean uncritical faith, but also a critical position not deconstructing the foundations of the institutions themselves. Taking the case of France, trust seems something deeply rooted in all the actors in their variety. None of them, apart from social centres, call seriously into question the basis on which decision-making is founded. Even the few actors who come to problematize it, in fact, do so in most cases only by denouncing the lack of adherence of real decision-making practices to established rules, thought to be valid and sufficient. They criticize the lack of adherence to the rules, not the rules themselves.

The same happens in Val Susa, where mayors do not call into question representative democracy institutions, such as from a certain point forward the movement seems to make more and more, but rather denounce their violation perpetrated by authoritarian methods, illegality of choices, bypassing of local representatives, non-compliance with rules and Constitution viewed as neutral and objective assurance over the parties. It has been said that the "Val Susa laboratory" is an example of participatory hybrid forum in the sense of Callon, Lascoumes and Barthe [2009], but quite clearly administrators and committees gave different definitions of it, approximated in some way to the respective conceptualizations of Habermas and Foucault [Flyvbjerg 1998, 223-235]. Val Susa administrators, as most of the actors on the French side, take for granted, as Habermas [1997; 1986], the procedural universalism, for which, if the procedure is valid, even the result will be valid. The most radical critique of Italian committees seems closer to Foucault's thought [1981]: procedure and regulatory control are not neutral, but are part of a hegemonic system taken for granted, thus, not problematizing procedure, power relations inherent in them are kept alive.

According to Negri [2012] No-Tav movement major strength would be in two of its features:

The first is the democratic embeddedness of political initiative. This territorial embeddedness, the horizontal plurality of singular forces flowing into the movement, the consensual definition of a common interest that is the basis of the duration of the project of resistance, a never denied opening to dialogue and discussion, these behaviors constitute a formidable force of the movement. [...] The second characteristic is the refusal of political representation. This rejection follows directly from the above, the intensity and quality of the processes of democratic participation. There are elected representatives in the valley that have regained legitimacy through participation. Participation in the movement is the foundation of the legitimacy for any institution of the municipality. Now, this refusal is, of course, deconstructive of political representation as holder of knowledge (expertise), power (decision-making) and sovereignty (legitimate monopoly of violence). But this rejection is also constituent, as a producer of [...] a new model of decision (not only participated but virtuously constructive, jointly responsible), a new resistance practice.

Considering local representatives, legitimated in themselves by public authority [Gelli 2005], who instead receive their main legitimation through participation in protests, reversing the normal relationship between public opinion and political representation [Barisione 2010b; Urbinati 2010], is emblematic of cultural and institutional distance separating the two sides of the planned line. Also knowing that disaffection in traditional institutions could take the form of a proactive push to get more democratic and participatory institutions, and not to close in privatism, the fact remains that such a disaffection in Val Susa is not only indisputable, but well above the physiological measures even for Italy [Segatti 2006; Facello 2010], whilst it seems entirely absent or just superficial on the French side of border, even among those who question the choice and even among those who criticize the decision-making. Indeed even the most critical associations never call into question the institutional system (nor technical expertise) within which all stakeholders move, whereas on the Italian side the deconstruction in this regard made by some movement sections is radical.

Policy-making problematization, then, does not seem to be sufficient in itself to undermine also confidence in representative institutions, so that also determining factors of a cultural kind, related to the political culture of the two countries in which the two cases are immersed, seem to be called into cause. This, in turn, has an effect on the choice of collective action repertoires used by social actors in relation to their representatives. So in Italy, where policy-making problematization is more widespread and involves a greater number of subjects, collective action repertoires most frequently used (tab. 1, my data from involved actors' texts and the press) are the informative ones, whilst contacts with representatives is only a residual category (6.7% of total actions). In France, on the opposite, where who does not problematize policy-making significantly outweighs who does, contacts with representatives alone represent more than a half of collective actions strategies (53.3%). Such repertoires are in line with a positive vision not only of the specific process of choice, but also of democratic institutions in general, and representative in particular, as something one can rely on to ensure that one's demands are taken into account, and from which one feels generally guaranteed.

Tab. 1 **Kinds of used collective action**

	France	Italy
Contacts with representatives	(177) 53.3%	(77) 6.7%
Contacts with media	(5) 1.5%	(70) 6.1%
Direct actions	(26) 7.8%	(265) 23.0%
Legal actions	(75) 22.6%	(162) 14.1%
Information	(49) 14.8%	(579) 50.2%
Total	(332) 100%	(1153) 100%

6. Conclusions and remarks

In summary, we said that the field of infrastructure policies lends itself to two orders of challenges to representative democracy: on the one hand technocratic pressures from the promoters, on the other participative claims from impacted populations. On both sides, however, the answers given by the two sides of the border in the Lyon-Turin case appear to be quite different. On the first side, there are more and more thrusts towards simplified decision-making procedures, which, appealing sometimes to the objectivity of technique, sometimes to the urgency of decisions deemed essential for economic development, attempt to bypass representative institutions control, considered too long, complicated or even irrational in its lack of technical preparation. In the Italian case this has resulted in the launch of the *Legge Obiettivo*, imposing a rigidly centralized and top-down procedure which effectively bypasses local representatives' role. This thing has led to strong reactions from both local administrators and populations, which in the first instance claim for the role of democratic politics against attacks from technocracy on the one hand, and from authoritarian impositions from the center and from the top on the other. In France, by contrast, there has historically been a rigidly codified procedure with regard to planning, which despite being technical in its very essence, provides (beyond *enquête publique*) various involvement opportunities for local representatives. This in turn results in widespread trust in technique, which is not perceived as contrary to democratic principles, but as a necessary condition for good policies on which democratic institutions have the task of monitoring.

As far as representation is more concerned, in Italy there has long been a close cooperation between No-Tav social movement and mayors against supra-local institutions and national parties, the so called "Val Susa participatory laboratory", in order to block the project. However, such a relationship was based neither on a full delegation, nor on a binding mandate of a representative kind, but on an almost equal partnership, conditional on compliance with certain behaviours from the mayors [Saward 2005], or at least on the exertion of a "democracy of control" over local political institutions [Caruso 2010]. So when they started accepting some compromises in the course of concertation with policy-makers, the movement withdrew its support, passing from participation *with* to participation *against* local representative institutions [Hendriks 2006]. So local representatives receive even their primary legitimacy through participation in protests instead through elections, reversing normal relationship between public opinion and political representation and rejecting the idea that mayors could assume the role of representing instances that are widespread and affect local community as a whole. Mayors are seen only as welcome companions in the common struggle against supra-local institutions, with a role of *primus inter pares*, or at least as the vanguard of their claims or an institutional help [Saward 2000]. No-Tav movement is increasingly developing a framing which is independent from that of elected, parties or associations trying to put themselves as its representative. This refusal to delegate seems to come from the very beginning, from the cognitive diagnosis of the problem transcending that of potential representatives and at times including representative democracy itself. By rejecting their diagnosis, movement also rejects the intermediation of such traditional actors [Lastrico forthcoming].

Completely different the situation by the French side, where other kinds of frames and strategies of action can be found with respect to traditional representative structures. Especially neighbourhood associations primarily use contacts with politicians at various levels elected on their own territory.

Irrespective of their own party stance, individual elected feel they have to be locally responsible for their actions, and to represent instances coming from the territory that elected them in front of the supra-local institutions. Individual members of national, regional or departmental councils (regardless of their political parties) elected on territories impacted by the intervention, are the main contact for all those sectors of civil society that, regardless of support or opposition toward the infrastructure, decide to trust in official decision-making and representative mechanisms. In turn, such elected often seem to take these pleas seriously, promising to put their commitment in trying to mediate between local demands and the stance of parties and institutions in which they operate. Local associations do not generally strive for participating themselves; without claiming changes in policy-making, they put pressure on local authorities for they take charge of local instances in a classic representative form, with a role of intermediaries in respect of promoters, of brokers between local demands and the policy-making. This could come from greater social trust in institutions and elected officials' accountability and responsiveness, or from greater confidence at the local level towards central institutions. In both cases, it may depend in France on a greater bond for the representatives with their constituency, and the lack of a centre-periphery conflict would depend not only on French centralism, but also on cumulating elective offices, for which very often national elites' interests coincide with the local ones', since the ruling class, the level of confidence in which is quite high especially if compared with the Italian case, is the same.

The matter of trust in institutions refers to the explanation most commonly used in describing the different Italian and French attitude towards infrastructure localization. Certainly in France there is a really incomparable consent, with respect to what is happening on the Italian side of the border, in terms of both the technical and the state institutions. If this can in fact be read on the French side as an endowment having its roots in the history and culture of the country, it remains to be seen how this explanation is suitable to describe also the situation from the Italian side. This is particularly evident with regard to the institutional conditions of the decision-making process, that is the conditions considered legitimate to structure and filter social demands and needs with the goal of their acceptance in public choice situations. In the French case, as we have seen, there are established mechanisms of intermediation between local populations and decision-makers at the national scale, passing through the entire chain of command of the system of political representation from the mayor, to supra-municipal bodies, to departments, and so on coming up to national deputies elected in the territory, without forgetting the increasingly important role of regional institutions.

In this regard, there is a strong social legitimacy towards representative intermediation held by elected (in their role of institutional representatives rather than as party leaders, as evidenced by appeals and contacts regardless of political affiliation), based on a really important confidence in traditional democratic institutions. What is farther when compared with what is happening on the Italian side, however, is that there is also a strong reverse legitimacy, of the elected representatives towards civil society demands. This does not mean to subscribe an apology of French representative system as composed only of selfless and committed elected embodiment of the general will, as indeed large overlap between local and national elites characterizing France seems to have more influence on the question. Nevertheless, this does not change the substance: elected politicians, including national

deputies, meet the concerns of citizens (first of all responding promptly to the very numerous letters addressed to them, which in itself can not be taken for granted), are present at the meetings organized by citizens' associations, they take charged to report local demands to hierarchically higher levels of decision, almost conceiving a tight binding mandate. As far all this will translate then into an effective implementation of these promises remains very often to be demonstrated, but it can even take second place with respect to the cognitive reassurance that this mode of interaction between institutions and citizens seems to have on voters who, as we have seen, in many cases willingly accept their role as mere voters. In the sense that, although activists by the very fact of developing public claims within collective actors, they intend their participation more as vigilance on the issues concerning themselves, pressure on elected representatives to act in the desired direction, and direct activation only close to the moments of consultation formally planned, but do not aspire to obtain a decision-making power on their own, choosing to trust in the representative delegation and not to problematize it. Maybe in this sense can be read the reference to cognitive frames of a social kind (so distant from the technical and political ones used by the Italian movement), freely usable since it is assumed that it is the task of the representatives (and that they will do their best and in the interests of represented) to filter, mediate, reinterpret and then translate such social instances in instances politically usable and technically justified. Only if strongly denied by the proceeding of the real decision-making (as in rare cases like that of Villarodin-Bourget and Lanslesbourg-Mont-Cenis), these strong expectations are, but never pushing this to its extreme consequences, called into question, both with the use of a technical claims and the recourse to protest, regardless of position towards the project.

Now, if all this certainly can not be said either for Italy in general, or for the Susa Valley in particular, it appears not to be able to rely solely on such a kind of considerations in the explanation of the phenomenon. The core of the story lies in the Italian Susa Lower Valley, an area historically characterized by a strong political connotation, a "red zone" it could be defined, which recorded well before No-Tav movement a high degree of associationism and a widespread existence of spontaneous social initiatives collateral to the structures, or at least close to the ideals, of the parties that led to the transition from PCI to PD¹². This leads to two kinds of considerations: on the one hand there is a much higher rate of bottom-up activation and social self-organization than in the corresponding French areas; on the other hand it does not seem to be able to so easily use interpretation linked to the loss of the intermediation role operated by political parties.

Pds-Ds-Pd's is the inherently most ambiguous position, not only because over the years and at all levels of government it has been almost always allied with the few openly No-Tav parties. For the most part of the events and especially in the heat ones, this party governed Region, Province and Turin Municipality, ie the three major Turin-Lyon public promoters, besides having always been one of the most avid (and, according to the protesters, uncritical) supporters at the national and European level. However, many of the rebel municipality were led in moments of bitter opposition by centre-left coalitions hegemonized by that party. In particular, all 23 municipalities in the Lower Valley, the most militant and most affected by project hypothesis, but also the great part of those around Turin and 6

¹² That is, from *Partito Comunista Italiano* (PCI), to *Partito Democratico della Sinistra* (PdS), to *Democratici di Sinistra* (DS), to *Partito Democratico* (PD). Throughout such a transition, the party has always unconditionally supported (at a supra-local level) the construction of the infrastructure, which was first proposed in 1990.

out of 14 among those in the Higher Valley, in addition of being the party of who has long been the leader of the whole No-Tav movement and President of the Mountain Community, and having allied with No-Tav civic lists in 2009 local elections against the wishes of the regional party secretariat. The party has therefore mobilized at the local level according to the logic of centre-periphery conflict and as representative of the local interests of the community as opposed to those of national government and bureaucracies (primarily Transport Ministry and Railways). In this case, however, considering the role of strong advocate of the choice at the national level, this has led to serious misunderstandings between the local and supra-local levels of the party, which has explicitly and repeatedly threatened with expulsion rebels local administrators, “guilty” of having complied with the covenant of representation with their own constituency.

Apart from the emphasis continuously reproduced by at least some committees sectors about the need to simply put aside representative delegation in favour of autonomous participation and territorial self-organization, these pressures would seem more expression of a disillusionment due to how concretely decision-making took place, and to how representatives worked in practice (badly, in their opinion) during local administrators’ inclusion in discussion arenas. These are not only reactive and negative stimuli, but rather productive of lasting cognitive and institutional changes. They, however, seem to be partly returned from their disruptive force as a result of the rapprochement between administrative and movement fronts, in view of a local representation balanced by spontaneous participation, rather than of *tout court* representation overcoming as ideas circulating in the period when the gap between administrators and movement was greater seemed to indicate. If this is the case, conflict would actually turn into an opportunity for institution building in a more participatory direction, in which local representation would welcome inside the experiences of shared decision gained in the course of struggle rather than bend them, as often happens, to its logic [Blatrix 2009]. In short, participation, which had become *against* the administration, returns in large part to be participation *with* the administration [Hendriks 2006b], rediscovering, albeit reduced, the typically representative character of democracy [Urbinati 2010].

And, with it, the basic consent towards a party which, however, was characterized throughout the events and without any concession as one of the staunchest supporters not only of the Turin-Lyon, but also of the view that valsusine reactions is no more than expressions of conservative violent selfishness. PD is in fact, to this day, party reference in the areas affected by the protests. The shift of votes towards leftist and environmentalist parties, the success of Beppe Grillo’s anti-politics movement among No-Tav protesters, and even the creation of No-Tav civic lists alternative to the traditional left, seem to be important phenomena, but at the same time contingent and most related to the temporary acceptance by centre-left mayors of the decision-making process proposed by promoters, and considered manipulative by the movement, and not surprisingly largely promptly returned as soon as the local PD (in direct contrast with its national and regional secretaries) has moved again its positions closer to those of the movement, allying with No-Tav lists in 2009 elections. The fact that discontent against the parties has been largely driven by discontent with the decision-making process and the management of the latter by the mayors, more than by strictly partisan issues, is clear if you look at the concrete and broad support enjoyed by the new No-Tav president of Mountain Community, Plano,

elected in the ranks of PD (political party fiercely pro-Tav), and at the much lesser support enjoyed by the former president of the Mountain Community Ferrentino, identified as seen as the creator of representative betrayal, in the meantime passed to SEL (*Sinistra Ecologia Libertà*, political party essentially No-Tav).

Currently almost all Lower Susa Valley municipalities, back on No-Tav positions, are administered, also because of their alliance with No-Tav civic lists, by centre-left coalitions hegemonized, just as it was before, by PD. Insofar as all this could seem openly contradicted by the situation of Avigliana municipality, where in 2012 local elections No-Tav civic lists won hands down against the unusual pro-Tav coalition between PD and Berlusconi's centre-right PDL, the above leaves glimpse, if anything, a push towards a new kind of shared and more participative administration, but by no means a real overcoming of representative administration based on party competition. Parties that, if anything, are strengthened by the conflict between local and supra-local party structures. This is evident reflecting on the fact that the path, as tortuous and full of participative and deliberative inspirations, led however to the creation of electoral lists, namely the most classic instruments of representative democracy.

Thus the problem would not be the lack of confidence in the party itself, but in the particular national party. And this not so much with regard to the position towards the project, since PD has not certainly changed its mind, but to the decision-making process as declined by local leaders. Basically there would be distrust in the party especially because it supported or implemented firsthand an idea of decision-making in which, at the exact opposite of what happens in France, the continuous scientific conferences and meetings organized by local authorities, movement and experts on critical positions towards the work were constantly deserted by the heads of institutions, political parties, railways, unions. The accusation against them not only by the movement, but also by institutions, party members and union representatives at the local level, is that they were locked in their palaces with their snobbish elitism and contempt towards civil society. And, once again contrary to what happens in France, not even troubling to hide for the sake of consensus the total delegitimization against instances daring to put into question status quo or national interest. To have in short rejected the comparison with ideas other than the mainstream one, which, according to the prevailing view in the valley would permeate all the supra-local representatives at all levels and regardless of political color, denying in this way, according to the movement, not only deliberative requirements, but even representative ones and, from a certain point on perhaps considered the most serious fault, the ones that should be subject to free scientific debate.

Indeed what No-Tav criticize is not even so much the fact that parties support the project, as the way by which they have chosen to support it. That is rejecting not only the political debate, but also the scientific comparison with positions other than the official (and therefore undisputable) one, not entering into the merits of the issues, and continuing to repeat the same rhetorical concepts of development and progress without answering the precise and technically based questions from social groups. The main accusation is therefore to have aligned to top-down authoritarian imposition, even if disguised as involvement especially by a centre-left "friendly government", and to have continually threatened to excommunicate anyone, starting from the mayors and the local leaders of that party, had not aligned to the unquestionable revealed pro-Tav faith.

7. References

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