

# Environmental Protest in Western Europe

edited by Christopher Rootes

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The rise of environmentalism has been one of the more remarkable developments in the politics of western societies in recent decades. However, as environmental awareness has become more generalized, the forms of expression of environmental concern have changed. Established environmental movement organizations have become embedded in policy networks, but, in some countries, there has been a resurgence of environmental radicalism. New groups, adopting innovative tactics, have mounted spectacular and disruptive protests.

These developments pose interesting questions for social scientists and policymakers. Has the institutionalization of established environmental organizations demobilized their supporters and reduced them to a passive, credit card-waving 'conscience' constituency? Has direct participation in environmental protest become the specialized activity of smaller numbers of people? Has there been a decline in the total volume of environmental protest, or is it merely that the forms of protest have changed? Have the protest repertoires of established groups moderated over time, or have they been stimulated by the emergence of more radical groups to adopt more challenging tactics? Has environmental protest become more confrontational? Do protests employ different repertoires of action according to the issues at stake? How does the incidence of protest vary over time and from one country to another? Is there evidence of a Europeanization of either the issues or the forms of environmental protest?

These are some of the questions this volume addresses. Based upon an analysis of the protest events reported in one quality newspaper in each of eight countries during the ten years from 1988 to 1997, this is the first systematically comparative study of environmental protest in a representative cross-section of EU member states. It breaks entirely new ground in the study of environmental politics in Europe and is a major contribution to the study of protest events.





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## OXFORD

UNIVERSITY PRESS

Great Clarendon Street, Oxford 0x2 6DP

Oxford University Press is a department of the University of Oxford. It furthers the University's objective of excellence in research, scholarship, and education by publishing worldwide in

Oxford New York

Auckland Bangkok Buenos Aires Cape Town Chennai Dar es Salaam Delhi Hong Kong Istanbul Karachi Kolkata Kuala Lumpur Madrid Melbourne Mexico City Mumbai Nairobi São Paulo Shanghai Taipei Tokyo Toronto

Oxford is a registered trade mark of Oxford University Press in the UK and in certain other countries

Published in the United States by Oxford University Press Inc., New York

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First published 2003

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British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
Data available

Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data
Data available
ISBN 0-19-925206-8

1 3 5 7 9 10 8 6 4 2

Typeset by Newgen Imaging Systems (P) Ltd., Chennai, India
Printed in Great Britain
on acid-free paper by
Biddles Ltd., King's Lynn, Norfolk

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in Britain. The increased number of respondents to the British Social Attitudes surveys since 2000 who report that they have participated in demonstrations may at least in part be a result of that surge.

- 43. This is well documented in the case of protests against the Newbury bypass ('The Battle of Rickety Bridge', Channel 4 TV, December 1996) and the Pollok antiroads protests (McNeish 2000a), but it was also apparent amongst the substantial audiences at public meetings organized by FoE during 1996–7 (cf. Fiddes 1997: 41).
- 44. See, for example, Seel (1997a). Wall (1999a,b) points to the central role played in these protests by activists identifying themselves with EF! (Seel 1997b; North 1998; cf. McNeish 2000a,b).

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## France

## Olivier Fillieule

Research into ecology and environmental movements in France developed as the movements themselves were appearing as a new force in politics at the time of the European and municipal elections of 1989. Yet, although the literature on political ecology is very rich, research dealing with the environmental movement is quite rare. Prevailing French literature bears on the question of the institutionalization of environmentalism within political parties, and on the particular modes of operation of those parties, and little has been written on environmental protest and militancy in environmental associations. This is true both of high-profile international organizations such as Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth (FoE) and of more modest organizations at the local or regional level.<sup>2</sup>

However, knowledge about environmental protest campaigns has greatly increased in recent years due to the general development of protest event analysis in social movement research. Duyvendak's (1994) analysis of the years 1975–89 and Fillieule's (1997) work on the 1980s give us an overview of the rise of environmental protest during the years 1968–80, and its decline after the Socialist Party won the general elections in 1981.

Research on the development of environmental associations at regional level<sup>3</sup> has highlighted three periods of organizational innovation from 1901 onward. The first, at the turn of the century, saw the constitution of learned societies<sup>4</sup> and the first naturalist and conservationist groupings. Then, in the 1960s, associations emerged which sought to oppose planning projects that were in full development (urban and coastal planning, ski resorts, transport projects). It was at the end of this period that branches and subsidiaries of the big international associations were created (FoE, Greenpeace France (GPF), and the World Wide Fund for Nature (WWF)), but it was from 1968 onwards that the rhythm of innovation became firmly sustained. After a dip in the rate of establishment of new associations, doubtless related to the passing euphoria of the left's accession to power in 1981, new associations continued to increase in number, peaking in 1989–90. The

I am indebted to Fabrice Ferrier for his assistance with reading and coding the data derived from Le Monde.

latter appears to have been a fruitful period, marked by the development of the subject in the media, and in official and international affairs, as well as by electoral success. These years saw the development especially of associations linked to education and heritage management, and marked a process of institutionalization that continued in the 1990s with the development of eco-civic associations.

This increasing institutionalization leads us to stress a central methodological question that relates to the definition of the object of analysis. With the growing institutionalization of environmental politics (Fillieule and Ferrier 2000), the frontiers between the associational sector, parties, trade unions, and the state are blurring. For that reason, to restrict analysis to a single form of organization would omit consideration of possible alliances of associations with state or parastate agencies, trade unions, or parties. To avoid that, one must begin instead with the observation of protest events themselves if one wants to reconstruct the networks that form around one mobilization or another. To that end, protest event analysis is the most efficient tool.<sup>5</sup>

Until now, apart from the books of Duyvendak (1994) and Fillieule (1997) on protest events in France which cover the period 1975–90, we have had no systematic analysis of environmental protest in France. In this chapter we make an initial contribution to knowledge about the ways in which green protest has developed in the 1990s.

The data on which our analysis is based are drawn from the printed editions of *Le Monde*.<sup>6</sup> Apart from the fact that press data on environmental protest events for the previous decade were drawn from that newspaper (Duyvendak 1994), *Le Monde* was chosen in preference to other national 'quality' newspapers after a preliminary comparison showed that its reporting of environmental events was more inclusive. Moreover, *Le Monde* was published continuously during the decade and has enjoyed relative continuity of editorial policy and of journalistic personnel throughout the period.<sup>7</sup> The discussion that follows is based on analysis of the 259 environmental protest events<sup>8</sup> that were reported by *Le Monde* during the 10 years, 1988–97.

The use of press sources to create a database on protest events is now one of the more established methods in the sociology of social movements. It is also a method that is the subject of a great deal of criticism that for the most part relates to the issue of bias inherent in media sources. Because Appendix A centrally addresses these questions, we shall not deal with them here. Suffice it to say that, in order to understand and reconstruct the rationale governing the selection of news items and the way they are reported in printed media, we have supplemented our data with other statistics (a limited sample of Agence France Presse (AFP) bulletins and data from police archives (Fillieule 1997)) and with qualitative data. In-depth interviews were conducted with six journalists specializing in environmental issues. Taking these two directions to implement protest event analysis, we have tried to refrain from what M. Stephen Weatherford (1992: 151), referring to empirical studies on legitimacy, calls 'measurement driven research', that is, the reiteration of 'conventional measures' which results in their being institutionalized without regard to their pertinence.<sup>9</sup>

In the first two sections of this chapter, we will demonstrate that the French environmental movement is above all characterized by great structural weakness in terms of protest actions. This weakness seems explicable by reference to a number of variables both political (the left's assumption of power and the cycle of alternation of government since 1986) and economic (the persistence of the economic crisis and the resonance of unemployment). In the last two sections, we look at the groups involved in organizing protests to show how, on the one hand, their morphological development has led to a profound process of fragmentation that is unlikely to be propitious for a resurgence of collective action, and how, on the other hand, they have been gradually co-opted by the state and so have been increasingly institutionalized.

#### THE DECLINE OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTESTS

The French environmental movement suffers from structural weakness in terms of political importance as well as mobilizing capacity. In quantitative terms, and according to our definition of a protest event, the incidence of reported environmental mobilizations remained quite consistently low throughout the 10 years, 1988–97. On average, only some 22 protest events a year were reported (Fig. 3.1). Whatever the year, ecologists' mobilizations never managed to attract the attention of *Le Monde* more than once a week.

Few campaigns managed to mobilize in a continuous and durable way on an environmental issue, except for Greenpeace International's protest against the resumption of nuclear tests in Mururoa in 1995. The pattern of consistently low levels of protest was disrupted only by a trough in 1993, and by a modest peak in 1997.

It was not, however, only the numbers of protest events that were low. The low number of reported participants per event confirms the impression of general

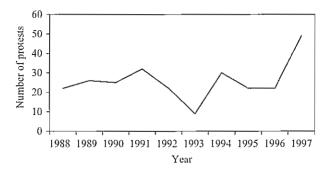


Fig. 3.1. Environmental protest events in France by year

weakness. <sup>10</sup> Eighty-three per cent of actions reportedly involved fewer than 2000 people and 40 per cent fewer than 200. One petition against the infamous Superphénix nuclear facility managed to aggregate 200,000 signatures in 1994, but the biggest demonstration of the decade—that against the Rhine-Rhône canal—gathered only 10,000 participants, a very feeble level of participation compared to the 1970s mobilization around nuclear problems. However, such fragmentation is not peculiar to environmental protest and must be considered in light of the overall trend in France towards an increased number of micro-mobilizations (especially of demonstrations of between 201 and 500 people) (Fillieule 1997: 94).

The weakness of the movement can also be observed in the difficulty it has experienced in its efforts to determine a clear political agenda in French politics. Whereas mobilizations of the 1970s were characterized by the prevalence of the anti-nuclear movement (Fessenheim and Bugey in 1971; Creys-Malville in 1977; Golfech and Chooz in 1979; Plogoff in 1980), existing claims are much more fragmented.

Claims related to nuclear power comprised less than 20 per cent of the total for the decade. This result is no surprise since the anti-nuclear movement had already vanished, even if it had not entirely died, by the end of the 1970s (Rucht 1994). As evidence of that, after the Chernobyl disaster of April 1986 only small demonstrations took place in France. Even with this dramatic opportunity to change sentiment in the French population, the movement was unable to mount a significant mobilization. The government and the mass media (including *Le Monde*) succeeded in playing down the accident and made it possible for the French to believe that the effects of the nuclear fall-out stopped at the Franco-German border.

Another important point is that the nature of claims related to nuclear power has changed over time. If, in the 1970s, the struggle was mainly over construction of nuclear plants, in the 1980s and 1990s the focus shifted to the problem of nuclear waste storage, which came to account for about half of all protests concerning nuclear energy.

The growing concern about nuclear waste in France is easily explained. After 1986–7, ANDRA (Agence Nationale pour la Gestion des Déchets Radioactifs)<sup>11</sup> began to look for new sites for nuclear waste depositories. In each of the four sites chosen, local populations proved very reluctant, and violent protests occurred in Gâtine, Bresse, and Aisne. As a result, the Prime Minister (Michel Rocard) decided to cancel the planning process for one year (February 1990). Some months later, ANDRA chose three new sites in Gard, Vienne, and the Haute-Marne districts. No real mobilization followed the beginning of the preliminary investigation of these sites, since ANDRA distributed more than 15 million Francs to the urban communities concerned. Even with the nomination of the Green, Dominique Voynet, as Environment Minister, the problem remained unsolved (Rivasi and Crié 1998).

Another reason for the growing mobilization around nuclear waste storage relates to the changing strategy of the anti-nuclear movement which, after years

of useless struggle against the EDF (Electricité de France) or COGEMA (Compagnie Générale des Matières Nucléaires), has more recently tried to mobilize around the more visible and obviously dangerous side-effects of nuclear power. As Rucht (1994: 149) explains:

the anti-nuclear movement could not really overcome its marginal status. As a consequence, rather than fighting against windmills, the focus of the anti-nuclear critique shifted to those problems which cannot even be denied by the pro-nuclear side: that is the issue of nuclear waste, the over-supply of electricity, the disaster of the fast breeder reactor, the rising costs of nuclear reprocessing and the risks of accidents similar to or even worse than Chernobyl.

Figure 3.2 and Table 3.1 also indicate that opposition to infrastructure construction was one of the most salient causes that mobilized protest in the period

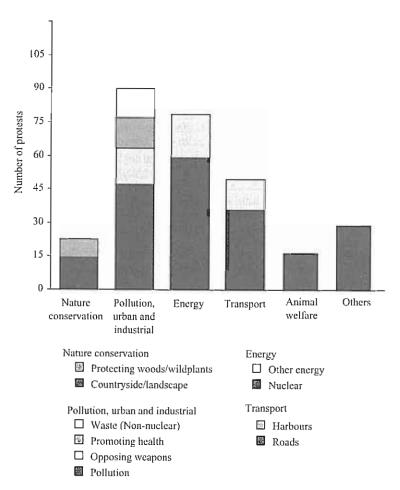


Fig. 3.2. Environmental issues raised in protests in France (1988–97)

TABLE 3.1. Environmental issues raised in protests in France by year (percentage of events in which issue is raised by year)

	1988	1989	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	Total N
Nature conservation	9.1	0	8.4	16	4.9	33.3	20	0	4.5	0	23
Protecting woods, wild flora	0	0	0.4	0.4	0.4	0	16.7	0	0	0	8
Countryside protection	9.1	0	8	15.6	4.5	33.3	3.3	0	4.5	0	15
Pollution, urban and industrial	31.8	7.6	52	34.4	13.5	44.4	16.6	63.6	68.2	36.7	91
Pollution	22,7	0	36	18.8	9	33.3	13.3	9	22.7	30.6	48
Waste (non-nuclear)	9.1	3.8	8	12.5	4.5	0	0	0	0	4.1	12
Promoting health	0	0	0	3.1	0	0	3.3	0	45.5	2	14
Opposing weapons	0	3.8	8	0	0	11.1	0	54.6	0	0	17
Energy	22.7	57.7	28	12.5	49.9	22.2	46.7	4.5	4.5	28.6	<i>78</i>
Nuclear	18.2	34.6	20	0	36.3	11.1	46.7	4.5	4.5	18.4	56
Animal welfare and launting	13.6	11.5	20	12.5	4.5	0	3.3	0	0	0	17
Hunting	9.1	3.8	20	12.5	4.5	0	0	0	0	0	13
Transport	9.1	15.4	4	18.7	22.7	44.4	16.7	22.7	13.6	30.6	50
Roads	9.1	15.4	4	15.6	22.7	22.2	16.7	22.7	0	12.2	35
Harbours	0	0	0	3.1	0	22.2	0	0	13.6	18.4	15
Other	4.5	7.7	12	18.8	9.1	22,2	3.3	9.1	9.1	16.3	29
Total N of events	22	26	25	32	22	9	30	22	22	49	

Note: Broad categories of issues in italic; subcategories in roman. Percentages do not sum to 100 as up to 2 issues could be recorded per event.

(29.3 per cent). This was mainly due to two campaigns: those around the Somport tunnel in the Aspe valley (Pyrénées) and the Rhine-Rhone canal. These two mobilizations should not, however, be considered as representative of contemporary environmental collective actions. They differed from most struggles in their duration, their capacity to mobilize different sectors of society (political parties, trade unions, local authorities), their use of a broad spectrum of modes of action (legal and disruptive), and the international dimension of the problems (Spain for the former campaign, Germany for the latter).

To disentangle what in our results is due to specific biases of Le Monde or of the media in general, we need to understand the rationale of media coverage of environmental protest events and of environmental issues in general. Such contextualization should enable us to understand why certain categories of protest might have been under- or over-represented in press reports. Here two previous analyses are useful: those of Pierre Lascoumes and others (1993) and the Professional Association of Environmental Journalists (JNE) (1998).<sup>12</sup>

From this earlier research, it seems that 'nature' was the environmental topic by far most commonly treated by all the daily newspapers, followed by the questions of water, transportation, waste, and air pollution. This hierarchy was found in the majority of the newspapers. Le Monde had good coverage of 'nature' and transportation issues, but it gave a relatively high proportion of space to very diverse subjects (the 'other' category at 18 per cent compares with the 20.5 per cent in our database). By contrast, nuclear energy and water issues were only relatively weakly covered, and articles dealing with the seas were totally absent at a time when AFP dispatches on this topic were numerous. Compared to Le Monde, Libération was distinguished by its more extensive coverage of nuclear energy, that subject being a personal interest of its leading environmental correspondent.<sup>13</sup> The great number of articles on hunting and fishing in L'Humanité undoubtedly reflects the fact that these are primarily leisure pursuits of the paper's predominantly working class readership.

France

In Lascoumes' research, 'nature' also led the field (34.5 per cent of reports), followed by pollution (26 per cent), environmental policies (18.8 per cent), energy (13.5 per cent), and questions of 'infrastructure' (7.2 per cent).

What conclusions can be drawn from this rapid overflight of the hierarchization of the topics in the French daily press? The extent of Le Monde's focus on 'nature' is striking and raises the possibility that 'naturalist' protest events are over-represented in its reports. By contrast, Le Monde is almost mute on the subject of hunting and, in common with other papers, about 'pollution of agricultural origin'. This suggests that certain questions may be 'forgotten' by a press that is more or less influenced by lobbies.<sup>14</sup>

### SOME EXPLANATIONS, MORE OUESTIONS

A comparison of the electoral results of green parties with the pattern of environmental protests suggests some explanation of the structural weakness of the environmental movement.

From the symbolic score of René Dumont in the presidential election of 1974 until the European elections of 1979, the ecologists' electoral performances increased continuously, culminating at 5 per cent in 1979. Then, after François Mitterrand's election as President, the progression stopped. In 1986, ecologists were brought together in a new party, Les Verts, that scored only 2.5 per cent in the general elections. It was only at the end of the 1980s, as elsewhere in Europe, that the greens began to gain good results, with 10.7 per cent in the 1989 European elections. At the 1992 regional elections, the combined scores of the two ecology parties, Les Verts and Génération écologie, reached almost 15 per cent, which, compared to the results of greens elsewhere in Europe at that time, was considerable.

However, this success also marked the beginning of the decline, and greens scored only 11 per cent in the general elections of 1993. Considered a poor result by the militants, this caused a serious internal crisis, both between and within the competing green organizations. The European elections of 1994 confirmed the decline, the combined vote of *Les Verts* and *Génération écologie* falling just short of 5 per cent, almost back to the level of 1979. The presidential election of 1995 etched the gloom yet deeper, the Green candidate scoring only 3 per cent.

Several lessons can be drawn from this electoral progress, lessons that may help us understand the weakness of environmental protests.

First, the rise of the environmental movement was contemporary with the political successes of the left. That is why after François Mitterrand's election, and at least provisional and/or symbolic satisfaction of a certain number of ecologists' demands, the movement lost influence and almost disappeared (Duyvendak 1994; Fillieule 1998).

It is, however, more difficult to explain why the movement did not grow again after some years of Socialist administration. The reason is to be found in the fact that, paradoxically, Socialist governments privileged economic questions because they were eager on the one hand to show their competence compared to the right and, on the other hand, because their priority was to reduce the effects of the economic crisis. Environmental problems were relegated to the second rank of the political agenda as well as of public opinion as the French became preoccupied with the erosion of their standard of living and the rise in unemployment.

The rise and fall of environmental protest can be explained in the same terms as the fortunes of political ecology. After Mitterrand's election in 1981, the development of an unfavourable pattern of political opportunities was correlated with a significant decline in the number of mobilizations initiated by new social movements of all kinds. In previous research based on police files dealing with demonstrations during the 1980s (Fillieule 1996, 1998), we have shown that the street was dominated, during the 1980s, by the traditional organizations, especially the trade unions. Nor did the issues of protest have much to do with the supposedly 'post-materialist' agenda of the new social movements; the greatest number of demonstrations revolved around the problem of employment and demands concerning earnings. In the police archives, environmental protests scarcely figured. Moreover, this pattern remained remarkably stable over time.

In the 1990s, the weakness of the new social movements, and particularly that of the ecologist movement, was all the more evident. In the archives of the Paris Police prefecture, from 1987 to 1993 the level of mobilization of the ecologist movement remained extremely low, despite some increase in activity between 1987 and 1991.

Interviews with specialist journalists at *Le Monde* suggest that the increased frequency of environmental coverage after 1989 was primarily due to the development of political ecology. From this point of view, the late 1980s and early 1990s were a kind of golden age. As Roger Cans, environment correspondent of

Le Monde from 1982 to 1995, put it:

The environment only started getting really interesting towards 1988, despite Bhopal (1984), Greenpeace (1985), Chernobyl (1986) and the rest. Because the ecologists scored heavily in the cantonal (1988) and municipal elections (1989), the Politics desk took over ecology politics. The economics supplement commissioned a monthly column at the same time. Everything intensified between 1989 and 1992 (Rio). Since the Rio summit and the disappointing results of 1993 for ecology politics, the environment has receded somewhat from front page coverage.

Perhaps, then, it is less the actual progress of environmental mobilizations that our data describe than the degree of sensitivity of a newspaper like *Le Monde* to the environmental question. When ecology becomes prominent from a political or an institutional point of view, it is likely that the number of protest events covered will increase. When the ecologists accepted a political alliance with the Socialist Party and the Communist Party, in the wake of the left's loss of the presidential elections in 1995, the newspaper began to increase its coverage of environmental affairs. The reason is that the Greens' leaders had announced in their programme a number of reforms such as, for example, the abandonment of the Rhine-Rhône canal. *Le Monde* was thus particularly attentive to mobilizations crystalizing around these conflicts which might have become politically central after a possible victory of the left. After Dominique Voynet was nominated as Minister of the Environment and made decisions concerning the abandonment of the Rhine-Rhône canal and Superphénix, coverage of environmental protests declined, for reasons that Hélène Crié, environmental journalist at *Libération*, explains very clearly:

I think that Voynet's arrival actually contributed to a small decline in the treatment of environmental issues, because Voynet herself does not play up environmental issues... When you have to cover an issue being handled by Voynet, whether it's to do with hunting or Roissy airport, you well understand that in the article you have to talk about her relations with Gayssot (Transport Minister), with Jospin (Prime Minister), in short, political politics rather than the environment...I think it's imperceptible, but there is a rejection/decline in the treatment of the environment and a fortiori of the work of the associations. Voynet herself, despite all her speeches, is dismissive of the associations.

# MUSHROOMING BY NUMBERS: THE FRAGMENTATION AND DECLINE OF THE ASSOCIATIONS

When we consider the frequency with which reported actions were associated with a particular organization, it appears that the environmental association sector has for years been prey to a double process of fragmentation and institutionalization that contributed to the increasing rarity of opportunities for mobilization.

In order to contextualize the transformation of environmental activism, we first need to consider the morphology of the environmental sector. 'It is estimated that, for the last fifteen years, approximately 40,000 associations, centered on the defence of environment, nature and cultural heritage, were created' (Lascoumes 1994: 227). Among these associations, 1500 were still active and involved 100,000 members, including 5000 activists. This proliferation of organizations is reflected in our data: eighty different environmental associations were reported as being involved in the ninety-five protest events coded in which the presence of an environmental group was mentioned.

This fragmentation of the movement reflects its extreme specialization. This specialization is on two dimensions. On the one hand, associations are specialized along a spatial dimension, from local to transnational: from Parisian neighbourhood level (la Bellevilleuse), to town (Comité de Défense de Vingrau), to district (Association Vivre en Maurienne), to region (FRAPNA, Fédération Rhône-Alpes de Protection de la Nature), as well as from the national level (France Nature Environnement) to a worldwide level (League for the Protection of Birds—LPO, WWF, Greenpeace, FoE). On the other hand, the causes defended are themselves fragmented. One can find, for example, specific organizations against the Rhine-Rhône canal (CLAC—Comité de Liaison Anti Canal), against asbestos (Association Nationale de Défense des Victimes de l'Amiante), against air pollution (Comité de Défense des Victimes de la Pollution de l'Air), against the construction of highways (Collectif de Défense des Régions Traversées par l'Autoroute), against hunting (Rassemblement des Opposants à la Chasse), and in favour of the protection of bears (Ours).

If this diversification is not peculiar to French society, its extreme fragmentation is nevertheless remarkable. This corresponds to what Maresca and Zentay (1997) noticed in their study of environmental associations in the Basse-Normandie region: an ecologist sector characterized by an acceleration in the rate of formation of environmental associations, highly correlated with the increase in the voluntary sector in general; a declining number of participants per association; a shorter life cycle; but a stable global number of adherents. Our results confirm this strong trend towards fragmentation of environmental associations.

This does not, however, imply an absence of structure. The most important federation, France Nature Environnement, <sup>15</sup> is an umbrella organization for many local, district, and regional associations. Nevertheless, its ties with associations are very weak. In fact, environmental networks seem to be more closely tied to prominent regional associations.

Pierre Lascoumes identified four prominent regional networks: FRAPNA (Fédération Rhône-Alpes de Protection de la Nature) for Rhône-Alpes, SEPBN (Société pour l'Étude et la Protection de la Nature en Bretagne) for Brittany, SEPANSO (Fédération des Sociétés pour l'Étude, la Protection et l'Aménagement de la Nature dans le Sud-Ouest) for Aquitaine, and the recent Fare-Sud for the Provence-Alpes-côte-d'Azur (created to campaign against the high speed train—TGV). Each organization was created more than 30 years ago and together they correspond to the so-called 'hard core' of the regional associative networks

(Lascournes 1994: 242). The distribution of events by regions reflects that structure. Thus, mobilizations should be understood in terms of a previous and strongly tied regional environmental network (Table 3.2).

Excepting the Paris region, which was over-represented, the four most mobilized regions in term of number of protests corresponded exactly to the four most important regional associations in the country as identified by Lascoumes. The geographical distribution of protests reported in *Le Monde* is thus wider than we might have expected. Even if the most important region is Paris (24.1 per cent of reported environmental protest events), the more active regions in the provinces are also over-represented, as much as if not more than the Paris region (Aquitaine contains only 4.8 per cent of the population but accounted for 11.6 per cent of reported protest). Thus, although the geographical distribution of reported protest

Table 3.2. The spatial distribution of environmental protests in France (1988–97) compared with population

	Percentage of protest events	Percentage of population <sup>a</sup>	Index of representation <sup>b</sup>
Paris region	24.1	18.20	1.32
Rhône-Alpes	12	10.88	1.11
Aquitaine	11.6	4.83	2.40
Provence-Alpes-Côte d'Azur	8.3	7.49	1.11
Bretagne	6.5	4,83	1.34
Languedoc-Roussillon	5.1	3.81	1.34
Midi-Pyrénées	4.6	4.24	1.09
Pays-de-la-Loire	4.2	5.35	0.78
Lorraine	3.2	3.84	0.84
Franche Comté	3.2	1,86	1.75
Auvergne	3.2	2.17	1.49
Basse-Normandie	2.3	2.36	0.98
Poitou-Charentes	1.9	2.72	0.68
Centre	1.9	4.05	0.46
Champagne-Ardennes	1.4	2.23	0.62
Alsace	1.4	2.88	0.48
Picardie	0.9	3.09	0.30
Nord	0.9	6.64	0.14
Limousin	0.9	1.18	0.78
Haute-Normandie	0.9	2.96	0.31
Bourgogne	0.9	2.68	0.35
Corse	0.5	0.43	1.07
Total N	216	60,186,184	

#### Notes:

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>a</sup> Population figures for 1999 from the general census (INSEE).

b 'Index of representation' is a figure obtained by dividing the number of protests by the number of protests expected from the ratio of the total number of events to total population; values above one indicate over-representation of an area in the data set, and values below one an under-representation.

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was certainly biased by the rationale of *Le Monde* (see Appendix A), the extent of that bias is not so great that it fails to offer a good picture of the probable distribution of actual protests.

Apart from the concentration of 52 per cent of the events in the five dominant regions, the spatial distribution of environmental protest events was very fragmented. However, that fragmentation does not mean absence of visibility. Transnational organizations clearly emerge from this environmental landscape: WWF, FoE, and Greenpeace between them account for almost one-quarter of the protests in which groups were mentioned. GPF, despite its weakness in terms of adherents and resources compared to Greenpeace in other European countries, largely dominated the field of nationally reported environmental protest. During the 10 years, Greenpeace was mentioned in every tenth protest covered by *Le Monde*, possibly a reflection of GPF's practice of strategies of 'media saturation' or 'regular drip-feeding' to environment writers in the press. <sup>16</sup> In interpreting our data, particularly when identifying organizing groups, it is thus essential to take into account that the professionalization of environmental groups' media relations is not homogenous across the organizational sector but favours those with sufficient financial resources. <sup>17</sup>

One should also note the relative absence of trade unions. This is striking compared to the historical role of the CFDT (Rucht 1994) in anti-nuclear mobilizations during the 1970s and even after Mitterrand's assumption of power (Table 3.3). A possible explanation of this lies in the high rate of unemployment (constantly more than 10 per cent during the 10 years) which made it difficult to interest trade unionists in environmental affairs.

If trade unions were noticeably absent, political parties were more involved, accounting for 23 per cent of the mentions of groups involved in environmental protests, mostly due to the greens (12.5 per cent) and left parties (mostly the Socialist Party—7.4 per cent). The absence of regionalist parties is also noticeable, whereas they were deeply involved in the movement during the 1970s (mainly with the anti-nuclear groups). This result is not in line with the general

Table 3.3. Types of organizations involved in environmental protest in France (1988–97)

Types of groups	Frequency	Percentage
Political parties	60	23.3
Unions	9	3.5
Formal associations	141	54.7
Informal associations	7	2.7
Networks	23	8.9
Other	18	7
Total	258	100

Key

PS: Partie socialiste

FRAPNA: Fédération Rhône-Alpes de Protection de la Nature

Robin: Robin des bois WWF: World Wild Fund Eau pure: Collectif eau pure

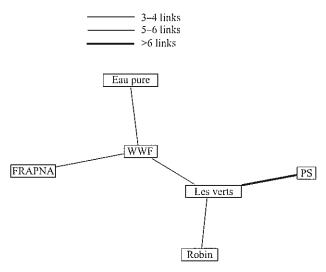


Fig. 3.3. The network of protests in France: environmental groups and others (1988–97) (only links reported 3 or more times are included)

withdrawal of political parties from demonstrations that we observed in the 1980s and 1990s (Fillieule 1997). This high degree of collaboration between environmental groups and green parties stresses that in the multi-organizational field of the environmental movement, *Les Verts* assumed a central position.

Network analysis<sup>18</sup> confirmed the centrality of *Les Verts* in the patterning of reports of protest in which groups were mentioned as being involved with others on three or more occasions (Fig. 3.3). Two factors help to explain this.

On the one hand, the commitment of environmental activists to green parties can be explained by the ecological parties' electoral success in the late 1980s. This drained the associational sector of its executive staff, and, as a result, the staffs of green parties are mainly composed of former activists who remain very sensitive to protest politics, for cultural as well as for tactical reasons (such as the need to maintain an image of an alternative conception of politics).

On the other hand, in the absence of direct relationships with elected representatives, environmental association activists are constrained to seek green parties' help since the latter possess most information and the required financial means.

TABLE 3.4. Groups mentioned in reports of environmental protest in France in Le Monde and in AFP reports (January and June 1988, March and September 1994, May and December 1997)

Group/organization	Le Monde	AFP
Robin des bois	1	1
Greenpeace	0	4
Les Verts	7	4
Génération Ecologie	0	1
Chiche	1	0
Socialist Party	7	0
Gaullist party (RPR)	1	0
National voluntary org.	3	2
Regional voluntary org.	0	2
District voluntary org.	0	5
Local voluntary org.	1	6
Not known	0	7
Total	21	32

That is all the more true if one considers modes of action such as mass demonstrations.

In order to have greater confidence that the results presented here were not too much biased by our source, we made a limited comparison between reports in *Le Monde* and AFP dispatches over 6 months distributed across the whole period: January and June 1988, March and September 1994, May and December 1997.<sup>19</sup>

Table 3.4 suggests that *Le Monde* is marked by an institutional bias. In its reports of protest, *Le Monde* mentioned the presence of political parties fourteen times (seven for the greens and seven for the Socialist party) whereas during the same months the AFP covered only five events that involved political parties. It appears that voluntary groups were less well covered by *Le Monde* than AFP. Our data almost certainly under-represent the actual participation of voluntary organizations, which are less often considered as valuable sources of articles. One reason for that is made clear if one considers the breakdown of events by territorial level of the groups involved. By comparison with the AFP, *Le Monde* had a tendency to neglect local, district, and regional associations.

#### INSTITUTIONALIZATION

As well as its fragmentation, the voluntary association sector is characterized by a process of relative institutionalization. Associations are increasingly called upon by local and regional authorities to participate in establishing projects, yet they are not offered means to influence the decisions taken. This phenomenon, which must be related to the implementation of decentralization and the transfer of certain responsibilities from central to regional authorities, contributes to

curbing the associations' vague attempts at protest and their increasing financial dependence on subsidies from officials and public administrations. It is therefore hardly surprising that legal and lobbying actions have increasingly taken precedence over recourse to protest. The relative pacification of the environmental movement can then be related to its co-optation by the state.

France

This 'instrumentalization' of the environmental sector by the state takes place not only at local and regional levels, but also at the national level.

The environmental associations in France have much less room to maneuver than their European counterparts...This is so because they are tied to the political powers, whether left or right: The statutes of France-Nature-Environnement reveal that its members do not themselves have the power to modify the association or even its statutes; any such decisions made during a general assembly have to be sent to the relevant Minister and are only valid subject to government approval. Ministerial authorities also vet the code of practice and all the association's official acts (e.g. registers, accounts, annual reports) as well as the way in which certain resources emanating from government administrations are used. These are good examples of statutes imposed upon associations which have received the government seal of approval (associations reconnues d'utilité publique). (Prendiville, quoted in Chibret 1991: 729).

At local level, this phenomenon is all the more strong since local institutions finance more and more expert reports, and try to obtain the associations' agreement to their public policy, the best way of doing so being the creation of *ad hoc* associations totally dependent for their resources upon the local government.

To understand that situation, one must consider the problematic history of the Ministry for the Environment. Historically, it is not possible to disassociate the constitution of the field of environmental associations from the slow and difficult birth of the administration of the Ministry for the Environment. The ministry 'of the impossible' instituted in 1971 never in fact received the administrative and financial means, nor acquired sufficient political legitimacy, to impose truly autonomous action on other ministerial sectors (Charvolin 1993). As a result, in the early 1970s, the state had recourse to associations as a counter-weight in conflicts, and this led to their confrontation with industrialists and locally elected officials. In this context, the Ministry of the Environment needed a powerful and representative associational movement on which to base its own legitimacy, given its iniquitous resources compared to other ministries (Agriculture, Economy and Finances, Industry; Maresca and Zentay 1997). Hence, the implementation of two major kinds of measures intended to ensure greater effectiveness of public policies. The decree of 7 July 1977 instituting an approval procedure to protect natural and urban environments, and the decree of 3 July 1985 dealing with classified installations, both made it possible for the associations to participate in the work of a large number of national, regional, and district consultative organizations (committees for specific sites, for urban issues, district public health and hygiene issues). Moreover, the associations were represented on the management boards of public establishments concerned with the environment, and those for the

national parks. The associations thus came to constitute veritable 'external services of a ministry which has none of its own' (Lascoumes 1994: 193).

It is possible to talk of exchanges of service between the state apparatus and the associations. In effect, on the one side associations were given official recognition and institutional legitimacy sustained by the granting of the right to take collective legal action, legal and financial support. On the other, they were expected to provide assistance to the democratic process, a diffusion-promotion of the policy initiated at the time of the creation of the Ministry for the Environment in 1971 as well as a support for the effective implementation of the law. This legally empowered and de facto alliance between the base and the summit was more or less explicitly conceived as a way to stimulate and control intermediary levels, regularly entangled in alliances and local power conflicts. That is why the associations are often perceived by the central authorities as precious auxiliaries to legality. (Joly-Sibuet and Lascoumes 1987: 4).

This policy, aimed at a neo-corporatist integration of the associational sector (Spanou 1991), contributed permanently to determine the strength of the associations. In effect, through the play of conditions for granting the *agrément* <sup>20</sup> and grants, the state encouraged a certain number of large associations in every region, which it legitimized as spokesmen, and required to toe the line as a result of their status, at the expense of a whole set of other groupings, generally more locally oriented and willing to use more contestatory strategies.<sup>21</sup>

All this explains how the current structuring of the associational landscape no longer relates only to a dichotomy between the naturalist associations concerned with protecting the landscape on the one hand, and the more politicized ecological associations more oriented to the protection of quality of life on the other. To this distinction must be added a split between protest associations (much less politically integrated, with little in the way of resources and public audience) and the big representative associations (subsidized and professionalized) associated with state agencies. In this context, the associations that wish to attain their self-defined objectives are faced with a radical choice. Either they accept a gradual integration into decision-making circuits at a local, regional, or national level—which requires professionalization, fund-raising, and the abandonment of direct opposition—or they keep their distance, at the risk of remaining impotent. In effect, in the context of state withdrawal and of decentralization of administrative responsibilities (Fillieule 2000), it becomes extremely dangerous, if not impossible, to resist developing working relations with the local authorities.

In view of all this, one should not be surprised that a central feature of the picture of environmental protest that emerges from newspaper reports (see Fig. 3.4) is its great moderation throughout the 10 years.<sup>22</sup>

If one accepts the well-established stereotype that French social movements, because of the high degree of closedness of the state, adopt confrontational tactics (e.g., see Kitschelt 1986), one might be surprised that contention over environmental issues seems to be very moderate. Violent actions and attacks on property together represented only 6 per cent of the protests reported in the

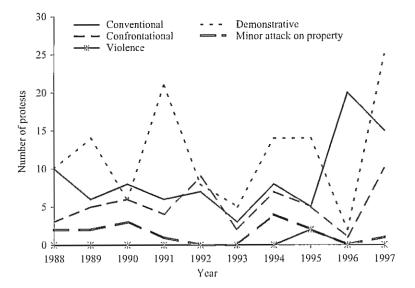


Fig. 3.4. Forms of environmental protest in France by year

decade, a result that is all the more remarkable since the media usually attribute particular newsworthiness to violent events.<sup>23</sup>

The dependence of associations upon the state and local institutions seems not only to limit the use of violence but also to have consequences for the whole repertoire of contention. Actions such as demonstrations, rallies, blockades, and occupations together account for only 50 per cent of the protest events reported during the decade. Demonstrations were only present in a third of the collective actions reported, a striking illustration of the weakness of the movement's mobilization in a country in which demonstrations are exceptionally common (Fillieule 1997).

'Moderate' forms of actions, such as petitions, cultural actions, press conferences, litigation, and procedural complaints account for some 30 per cent of protests. Such a result is all the more important since these forms of actions, because their newsworthiness is very low, do not attract systematic coverage by journalists. These results appear to confirm a deep-seated trend of environmental associations in France towards an 'expert-activist repertoire of contention' (Ollitrault 1996) that needs to be considered in light of both the co-optation and institutionalization of the movement and the transformation of the ecologist identity *vis-à-vis* the critique of their opponents. In response to criticisms of their lack of 'seriousness' and objective information, environmentalists and ecologists tended to change their strategies, writing scientific and expert reports rather than mobilizing public protests.

TABLE 3.5. Issues and the forms of environmental protest in France (percentage of events involving each issue that involves a form of action)

	Conventional	Demonstrative	Confrontational	Attack on property	Violence	N
Nature conservation	43.5	26.1	17.4	17.4	0.0	23
Pollution, urban and industrial	36.3	38.5	23.1	2.2	2.2	91
Energy	30.8	47.4	24.4	6.4	0.0	78
Animal welfare	35.3	41.2	11.8	11.8	0.0	17
Transport	28	64	14	6	0.0	50
Other	48.3	37.9	17.2	0.0	0.0	29
N	88	119	52	15	2	

Note: Percentages do not sum to 100 because for each protest up to 2 issues and 4 forms could be recorded.

Since the repertoire of actions used in environmental protests was mainly peaceful, one should not be surprised that there is no strong link between forms of action and kinds of issues (see Table 3.5). However, less than 30 per cent of protests regarding nature conservation issues were reported to have involved demonstrative forms of action, and 17.4 per cent employed confrontational tactics, <sup>24</sup> whereas protests on energy (mainly nuclear waste) and transport issues were rather more confrontational. Almost half of protests concerning energy issues involved demonstrative forms of action, and one-quarter involved confrontational tactics; almost two-thirds of transport protests involved demonstrative actions, but confrontational tactics were involved in only 14 per cent of events.

If we now consider the hypothesis of the impact of the centralization and the power of the state on social movements, our data confirm Duyvendak's results (1994). The 'power of politics' on social movements is confirmed: companies, private persons, and associations were the targets of only around 13 per cent of protests whereas government and public institutions at all levels represented 70 per cent of the targets. Nevertheless, one should read these results carefully since journalists at *Le Monde* usually prefer to focus on mobilizations related to the institutional political arena.

As Table 3.6 shows, the influence of centralization on social movements was confirmed. Although 60 per cent of mobilizations were at the regional, district, or local level, and even though the scope of the problem was in a majority (60 per cent) of cases subnational in that they were construed as local/regional issues by protesters, claims were directed to the national state in more than two-thirds of cases.

Despite the example of the anti-nuclear mobilization with continuing participation of German and Swiss activists, there was little evidence of a

Table 3.6. Levels of mobilization, scope of problems, and targets of environmental protest in France (percentages)

	Local/ district	Regional	National	EU	International	N
Level of mobilization	46.9	12.5	23.7	4.0	12.9	224
Scope of underlying problem	44.9	15.1	22.4	5.7	11.8	245
Level of target	23.2	9.4	67.9	1.8	4.9	240

Europeanization of environmental protest. Protests directed at European targets, including the European Union, were rare.

#### CONCLUSION

The data presented here seem to indicate a decline in the French environmental movement. The low numbers of people mobilized and protest resources mobilizable by the associations, alongside the rarity of protest events, all contribute to a picture of a stricken sector similar to that of most other so-called new social movements in France. It would be premature, given the current state of research, to be categoric about the reasons for such a debacle. We have suggested several here, without being able yet to say with any precision whether the characteristics brought to light should be interpreted as causes or consequences of a decline that has been long established. For the time being, it suffices to underline the points to be taken into account when responding to this question.

First, the decline of the environmental movement should be related to the development of political power relationships in the arena of institutional politics. On the one hand, the left's assumption of power, its continuance in power over several years, and the game of political alternation have contributed to a blurring of traditional political divisions, and have, as it were, snuffed out the dynamic of environmental mobilization, just as they have the ensemble of causes resulting from post-1968 turmoil. On the other hand, the emergence of green parties in the late 1970s and their sudden but ephemeral growth at the end of that decade also had a de-energizing effect on the associational movement. Activists in the associations, having become involved in political parties, left the protest scene for institutional politics which, from the late 1980s, appeared to be a surer means of furthering their aims. From this point of view, the alliance of the greens with the Socialist and Communist left in 1997 marked a climax, with the leader of the greens, Dominique Voynet, assuming the post of Minister of the Environment.

Second, the environmental association sector has for many years suffered both fragmentation and institutionalization, which have contributed to diminishing

opportunities for mobilization. Fragmentation took the form of the proliferation of localized associations, consisting of relatively small numbers of people, with insufficient resources to ensure their independence, and focused on demands that were themselves fragmented. Institutionalization took its toll because, whilst associations were increasingly called upon by local and regional authorities to participate in establishing projects, they were not offered the means to influence the decisions taken. This, which must be related to the implementation of decentralization and the transfer of certain responsibilities from central to regional authorities, contributed to curbing the associations' interest in protest, especially given their increasing financial dependence on subsidies from officials and public administrations. It is hardly surprising that, as a result, legal and lobbying actions took precedence over protest.

Third, it seems that in the social world, environmental issues became, paradoxically, victims of their own growing success. The need to protect the environment was unanimously accepted by public authorities, the media, and general opinion, even if there was no agreement over the measures to be implemented. This apparent unanimity was accompanied by a process of dissemination of ecological awareness, very visible in the way in which the media, including *Le Monde*, have come to cover environmental issues from a multiplicity of angles: science, techniques and technologies, political, consumer-oriented, daily life, and so on. Now, in a world where cars, yoghurts, and the mayor of Paris boast green labels, it is difficult for a protest movement to succeed in establishing 'frame alignment processes' to the extent necessary to mobilization.

### NOTES

- 1. See, for example, Pronier and Le Seigneur (1992), Sainteny (1992, 2000), Villalba (1995), Boy, Le Seigneur, and Roche (1995).
- Apart from Dieter Rucht's research, the main exceptions are Chibre (1991), Lascoumes (1994), and Ollitrault (1996).
- 3. For a synthetic review of the literature on this subject, see Fillieule and Ferrier (2000).
- The first being, in 1854, La Société Impériale Zoologique d'Acclimatation, a branch of which, founded in 1912, gave birth to the French League for the Protection of Birds (LPO).
- 5. See Appendix A for a more elaborated defence of this point.
- 6. There exists an electronic version of *Le Monde* but sample comparisons revealed that versions available on CD-ROM did not cover all the articles we were interested in; short reports, in particular, were often omitted.
- Three journalists have covered environmental issues in turn since 1974: Marc-Ambroise Rendu (1974–82), Roger Cans (1982–95), and Sylvia Zappi (1995–9). For more details on the selection of the newspaper and on biases linked to this choice, see Appendix A and Fillieule and Ferrier (1999).
- 8. See Appendix A for our definition of a protest event.
- 9. For a similar critique in terms of analysis of electoral behaviour, see Converse (1990).

- 10. One should be aware, when interpreting the trend, that variations in the total number of protesters are also, if not mainly, due to variations from year to year in the numbers of cases in which data on numbers of participants is missing.
- Agence Nationale pour la Gestion des Déchets Radioactifs (National Agency for Nuclear Waste).
- 12. See also Mattout and Metayer (1987), Alazard (1990), Lascoumes (1985) and Joly-Sibuet and Lascoumes (1987). The research of the JNE relates to two periods: October to December 1996 and June to July 1997. Lascoumes' research rests on a corpus of 7235 press articles drawn from more than 150 newspapers. They relate to 8 months of publication, 4 months in each of 1988 and 1989, and include articles of press agencies (27.5%), national daily newspapers (36%), regional newspapers (20%), weekly magazines and monthly magazines (8.5%), and specialized press (8%).
- Hélène Crié was long-time head of the environmental column in *Libération*. She has written many books on nuclear problems.
- 14. See Appendix A and Fillieule and Ferrier (1999).
- 15. Formerly FFSPN, created in 1968.
- 16. To use the expressions employed by Grégory Derville (1997) in his analysis of Greenpeace's media strategies over the recommencement of French nuclear testing. See also Baisnée (1998) on how the media sector operated during the GPF campaign around the reprocessing plant in La Hague, and Gallet (1999).
- 17. Compare, for example, Deacon (1996: 173) on the public relations practices of British voluntary sector organizations.
- 18. I am indebted to Manuel Jiménez for the completion of the network analysis.
- 19. For the examination of the AFP, we initially retained all the bulletins containing in the heading and/or the text the word 'environment'. Then, we isolated the dispatches treating only events that had taken place in France, to retain finally only those that corresponded to our definition of protest events.
- 20. An 'Agrément, au titre de l'Environnement or de l'Urbanisme' is an approved accreditation for an association recognized by the Préfet, via an official document which attests to their representativeness at the same time as it gives them the right to go to court (as a civil party, if there has been an illegal breach which threatens the environment) and the possibility of participating in consultative committees.
- 21. Which Lascoumes (1994: 211) summarizes, defining four types of possible relations between associations and public authorities: an attitude of exclusion (rejection for incompetence, activism, non-representativeness: refusal of official accreditation); an attitude of marginalization; an attitude of instrumentalization (pragmatic use by the state of associational resources); and an attitude of phagocytosis (direct production of rump and/or para-public associations).
- 22. We have classified the forms of protest as: conventional (comprising procedural claims such as demands for judicial review, actions such as collective representations to officials or elected politicians, public meetings, leafleting, and the collection of signatures on petitions); demonstrative actions (including street marches, rallies, and vigils); confrontational actions (including occupations and physical obstruction); minor attacks on property (that do not pose a threat to human life); and violence (attacks on persons that could cause injury).
- 23. See Appendix A on the question of biases concerning the forms of protest.
- 24. The number of minor attacks on property (fifteen cases) is too low to be interpreted here.

## Appendix A

# The Methodology of Protest Event Analysis and the Media Politics of Reporting Environmental Protest Events

## Olivier Fillieule and Manuel Jiménez

Protest event analysis (PEA) has become increasingly popular since the early 1980s. Indeed, it has almost become a sub-field within the sociology of social movements, with its own theoretical debates, epistemological issues, methods, and even vocabulary. The positive effects of this situation are several.

First, PEA has reinforced the tendency that began at a theoretical level in the 1980s to integrate different approaches. This integration has been consolidated by a degree of harmonization of methods and trends in empirical research. At the same time, because it enables the construction of a diachronic relationship between the development of movements and social contexts, PEA has contributed to the testing of key hypotheses. Especially significant improvements have been those related to the identification and functioning of action repertoires, cycles of mobilization, and the political opportunity structure. More precisely, by taking account of the temporal dimension, PEA highlights the facts that social movements cannot be reduced to the organizations involved in them and that movements do not exist in isolation from other contemporaneous movements at either the national or international levels. Hence, one must logically develop an analysis in terms of process, rather than thinking in terms of structural determinants. Discontinuities in the temporal series allow a reading of the impact of any particular factor on levels of mobilization and help to avoid the danger of a retrospectivity that would lead to the analysis of only the most visible mobilizations or, worse, only those that succeeded.

This last point highlights the extent to which PEA has been useful for invalidating a whole series of empirically ill-founded theoretical propositions. It is, for

We thank Mario Diani, Erik Neveu, Chris Rootes, and Dieter Rucht for their insightful comments on earlier drafts of this chapter. We also thank the other contributors to this volume for the information they have provided.

example, thanks to the work of Charles Tilly and others that the theories of relative deprivation and social disintegration have been invalidated (Rule and Tilly 1972; Snyder and Tilly 1972; Tilly, Tilly, and Tilly 1975). Applied to urban rioting, other studies, most notably those of Clark McPhail, contradict the notion that the most disadvantaged communities were also those most susceptible to social disintegration (Lieberson and Silverman 1965; Wanderer 1969; Eisinger 1973; Spilerman 1976; McPhail and Wohlstein 1983). PEA has also enabled the questioning of the common idea that there has been a radical transformation in the modalities of political engagement in France (Fillieule 1997, 1999). Finally, the relative simplicity and standardization of procedures have enabled enormous progress in the area of comparative analysis, allowing us to establish crossnational comparisons.

One might then conclude with an unreservedly glowing report, all the more justified since for more than a decade PEA has become increasingly profession-alized, with sustained attention to procedures and biases accruing to its methods.<sup>2</sup> However, several issues have received less attention: on the one hand, the issue of choice of sources and biases related thereto; on the other hand, the question of definition and hence construction of the object of study. It is these two issues in turn that interest us here as we explain the reasons for the choices we have made as well as the limitations and advantages imposed by these choices.

Research on social movements based on PEA has been massively reliant on the use of the press as its sole source. As Koopmans (1995: 253) points out, 'this popularity is mainly the result of a negative choice'. Several strategies have been used. Some research has analysed indexes of the national press (e.g. McAdam 1982, Spilerman 1970, and Etzioni 1970 who all used the *New York Times* index). Others increased their range of print sources, combining local and national press, or specialized national periodical and national press (e.g. Kriesi 1981; Rucht and Ohlemacher 1992; Kousis 1999). More recently, some researchers have adopted sampling strategies (Rucht and Ohlemacher 1992; Kriesi et al. 1995). In the late 1990s researchers have turned to CD-ROM versions of newspapers, and others have preferred to make use of data available from wire services and on electronic databases (Bond et al. 1997; Imig and Tarrow 1999). Finally, several researchers have turned to police archives (Fillieule 1997, 1999; Hocke 1999, 2000; McCarthy, McPhail, and Smith 1999; Wisler 1999).

### WHY NEWSPAPER SOURCES?

We opted for the printed press. This was justified in the context of comparative research covering seven countries and the Spanish Basque country. The accessibility of agency dispatches and police sources is variable and generally very limited in Europe, and we wanted to employ sources that were as comparable as possible. The growing globalization of news stories and the ways in which they are constructed

has, for several decades, subjected journalistic activity to increasingly universal pressures that lead to the erosion of national differences in professional rationales and practices.<sup>3</sup> By contrast, European police forces have retained strong cultural specificities that make their records comparatively idiosyncratic (della Porta and Reiter 1998; della Porta, Fillieule, and Reiter 1998).

In selecting the newspapers to be used as sources, we tried to combine objectives of quality and quantity. Newspapers should provide a reliable source of information about environmental protest events (EPEs) that have taken place in each country; they should, that is, be stable over time and uniform across territory. Hence, daily national quality newspapers published regularly during the decade 1988–97 were considered to meet these requirements best. Wherever possible, other things being equal, we favoured newspapers that had been more sensitive to environmental issues and social movements.

Taking into account these criteria, we confronted the reality of the daily press markets in the seven countries. While the choice was narrowed down to one candidate in the case of *El País* (Spain) or *La Repubblica* (Italy), the selection of *Le Monde* (France), *The Guardian* (Britain), *die tageszeitung* (Germany), *Elefiherotypia* (Greece), or *EGIN* (Basque Country) was made from among a few possible alternatives. The selection of *El País* was a negative choice. Although its limited interest in environmental information<sup>4</sup> is typical of the Spanish national press, the plausible alternatives did not meet our criteria in terms of quality, either because of lack of continuity or due to their clear regional focus, or because they were judged less sensitive to protest activities and environmental issues. Similarly, the fragmented Italian press market left *La Repubblica* as the best choice in terms of national coverage.

In the British case, *The Guardian* met the quality requirements and was the least selective in its reporting of environmental actions. Eleftherotypia's circulation is amongst the highest in Greece and, in contrast to other dailies, it consistently concentrates on political and social issues, is not affiliated with particular political parties, and hosts a wide range of political views from a liberal perspective, and it has covered environmental issues more closely than any of the other major quality newspapers (Kousis 1999). Comparative analysis of German newspapers has shown that the number of reported EPEs in various newspapers does not vary significantly (Eilders 2001). However, among other alternatives, die tageszeitung, a leftalternative national newspaper, was thought to provide more information, given its greater attention to social movements and environmental issues. The quality criterion was clearly not met in the case of EGIN, a partisan newspaper linked to the extreme nationalist Basque party, Batasuna, and its terrorist branch ETA. However, here the choice was justified by the research focus on the links between environmental protests and nationalism. The possible alternatives do not cover Navarra or the French Basque Country. In the case of France, the decision to use Le Monde was grounded on a comparison between different kinds of newspapers presented in analyses by Pierre Lascoumes (1994) and the Professionnal Association of Environmental Journalists (JNE) (Vadrot and Dejouet 1998). If L'Humanité and

Libération are the newspapers which devote most space to the environment, other circumstances point to Le Monde as a better choice: L'Humanité is close to the Communist Party and very hostile to ecologists on topics such as nuclear power; in the case of Libération, the creation, then the suppression a few years later, of the Cahier terre would have introduced too many disparities in the data collected over the 10 years.

Usually, the analysis of EPEs is based on the national editions of the chosen newspaper, but to reflect adequately the decentralized character of Italy, reports from local editions of *La Repubblica* were also analysed. In Sweden, a local newspaper was also scanned.<sup>5</sup> Table A.1 synthesises the main features of the selected newspapers.

#### **IDENTIFYING BIASES**

The proliferation of PEAs based on press sources has been accompanied by a noticeable increase in the attention given to bias due to journalistic sources. This is the result, in particular, of research based on police sources which for the first time offered an opportunity to measure bias by comparison with control databases (Fillieule 1996; Hocke 1996; Barranco and Wisler 1999; McCarthy, McPhail, and Smith 1999; Wisler 1999).

The issue revolves around three questions. First, what is *the degree of selectivity* of the sources used? In other words, what are the chances of any given event being reported in the press? This question contains two others: first, what proportion of protest events are actually covered by the press; next, what are the criteria governing the events that are covered? Second, are the events covered faithfully? It is *description biases* one is interested in here, generally based on a distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' news. Third, what is *the degree of systematicity* of these biases, or, to put it more clearly, do the rationales of media selection vary over time and in relation to contexts (the crucial question for comparative research) and if so, why and how?

## Selectivity and the Nature of Bias

The selectivity issue has received a lot of attention. We know that the press covers only a very small proportion of events (variously estimated at between 2 and 10 per cent) and that the rationales that govern this strong selectivity relate systematically to the size of the event, the degree of novelty of modes of action employed, the occurrence of violence, and geographical location (local and/or regional events being always less well covered than those taking place in the capitals or main towns) (Dantzger 1975; Snyder and Kelly 1977; Franzosi 1987; Olzack 1989; Rucht and Ohelmacher 1992; Koopmans 1995; Fillieule 1997; Mueller 1997; McCarthy, McPhail, and Smith 1999).

Newspaper

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Other bias (thematic, partisan bias) affecting coverage of environment/ transportation issues Bias toward PSOE (Socialist Party) Nationalist issues Energy issues Nature, protests (focus more on Athens) Territorial bias (in terms of resources across the MEDIUM (focus on Paris region) (focus on Berlin) social movements) LOW on northern Italy) national territory) MEDIUM (differences across regions) MEDIUM-LOW MEDIUM-LOW MEDIUM-LOW LOW LOW (environment section; attention to Selectivity (interest in environment, human/social issues versus political focus) section, institutional bias) social movement activity) (no environment section, political focus) MEDIUM (environment MEDIUM-HIGH (environment section) (environment section; human interest style) (environment section) HIGH (though through nationalist prism) section, attention to HIGH (environment MEDIUM-HIGH (although not in classical way), Nationalist/partisan newspapers National quality newspaper, National quality newspaper centre-left orientation National quality newspaper National quality newspaper National quality newspaper National quality newspaper left-alternative orientation left-liberal orientation centre-left orientation centre-left orientation Quality and political orientation finked to ETA National

Dagens Nyheter

Sweden

EGIN

Country

La Repubblica

Italy

El País

Spain

die tageszeitung

Germany

Le Monde

France

The Guardian

Britain

Eleftherotypia

Greece

Our research is the first of its kind to focus upon environmental protests. It was therefore important to verify that the generally established rules of selectivity apply in the same manner in this area, all the more so as the literature on relations between media and environmental groups is quite sparse.

The strategy adopted here was to compare data gathered from the national press with other, more exhaustive sources. Within the limits of available resources, we used comparisons with the local press, police sources, agency dispatches, and interviews with specialist journalists. It is not possible, in the limited space of this chapter, to cite these multiple comparisons. We confine ourselves here to illustrating our procedures based on the two strategies adopted: the multiplication of control sources mainly in the case of France, and a strategy centred on comparison between national and local sources in Germany, Sweden, Italy, and Spain.

## Multiple Control Sources

Given the availability of multiple sources in the case of France, we sought to establish the determinants of selectivity by means of a limited comparison of our data with police sources, Agence France Press (AFP) dispatches, and interviews with specialist journalists (Fillieule and Ferrier 1999).

First we compared our data with events that fitted our definition of an EPE and were reported in AFP bulletins over 6 months distributed over the decade. The comparison shows that AFP covered a greater number of events than Le Monde (about 50 per cent higher for the whole period) and that Le Monde strongly underrepresented local, district, and regional events. This result underlines the extent to which one of the biases of Le Monde is with respect to geographical location of events. Finally, another bias concerns Le Monde's institutional rationale since the events covered were three times more often organized or supported by political parties than those reported by AFP. It is thus clear that voluntary groups were less well treated by Le Monde than by AFP, partly as an effect of biases concerning geographical location. To get a more precise picture, we went on to compare the data from Le Monde with that from police sources at the Prefecture of Paris. <sup>6</sup> The results are eloquent. First, only 5 per cent of the events recorded by the police were covered by Le Monde. As previous research covering protests of all kinds showed that Le Monde reported only 2 per cent of the events recorded by the police (Fillieule 1996), it appears that environmental protests were about as badly covered as the ensemble of protest events. The comparison also shows that selectivity related to the number of demonstrators and, more interestingly, to the systematic exclusion of certain topics.

The interviews we conducted with environmental journalists in each country<sup>7</sup> allow us to extend the strategy of multiple control sources. These interviews allow us to be more precise about two common biases: the importance of 'something new' to the likelihood of an event getting coverage, and the difference in treatment relating to the geographic location of events.

The question of newness relates to the notion of *media or issue attention cycles*, introduced by Downs (1972: 59). According to this model, as protests become too repetitive, media attention swiftly moves on to other issues. This is a particularly crucial problem in research that aims to measure the extent of emergence of new modes of action. If one hypothesizes that the media gives good coverage to new forms of political activism, then it becomes all the more tricky to relate them to the number of more conventional events. The way the press functions precludes us from doing so and we might reasonably be reproached for relying on a source that, by its very nature, can only reinforce our initial hypotheses. As it happens, our results show a great stability in the modes of action used in environmental mobilizations during the 10 years. Acknowledgement of media biases thus does not undermine but, rather, strongly reinforces the credibility of our results.

However, one should also bear in mind that environmental movements are composed of reflexive actors who adapt their repertoire of action to the media's requirement of novelty. This is because most of them base their strategies on mobilizing public opinion through the media, continuously assessing their level of coverage, and procuring personal/direct contact with environmental journalists. Hence, at least in the case of forms of protest, we might expect that 'news' will not only reflect novel forms of action, ignoring old ones, but also a 'real' process of change in strategy and repertoire. According to a Spanish journalist:

the coverage of legal complaints made by environmental groups has decreased significantly in recent years, except for the informational pressure of Greenpeace. Most environmental groups have modified their role of denouncing incidents as catastrophic events. Hence, in some ways this decrease in their informative pressure is changing the informational land-scape and hence there is no longer the same sense of catastrophe. (Elcacho 1998: 61)

In this sense, the stability in the modes of action suggested by our results should also be interpreted as a mechanical effect due to the fact that we did not consider those forms of action through which protesters gain media attention and coverage (from the press conference to the boycott of international organizations' conferences) but instead coded other actions that were included in the same report (complaints, petitions, etc.), and that might not have been reported had not other actions first caught the attention of the media.

Concerning location bias, interviews with journalists are very useful since they highlight the role of local correspondents. Local correspondents are supposed to keep columnists or staff reporters informed about events that have happened or are about to happen in their locality/region. They are also journalists and, in many of the countries studied, write articles that they try to get published in the newspaper. Sometimes the columnist contacts them directly for more information about an event he has heard about and, occasionally, to commission an article. One might imagine then that bias linked to the geographic location of events is thereby avoided. In fact that is not always the case because local correspondents are generally freelance, so it is in their (economic) interest not to cover events that they

think will not appeal to the columnist and, a fortiori, the editorial department. One might also hypothesize that some of them are simply hostile to environmental associations, especially since most of their income comes from employment on local newspapers. <sup>11</sup>

## Local Newspapers and National Newspapers

In the absence of access to varied sources allowing one to approach the selectivity of data, one can still make a limited comparison with the local press, following the suggestions of Snyder and Kelly (1977: 118), Franzosi (1987), and the Prodat project. This type of comparison is all the more valuable in our case in that relatively few researchers have focused on the question of how environmental coverage by regional and national media differs. However, the little data that is available suggests that environmental groups tend to enjoy qualitatively greater access to local media, at least for some issues (Molotch and Lester 1975; Sandman et al. 1987; Spears, van der Plight, and Reiser 1987; Singh, Dubey, and Pandney 1989; Cottle 1993; Anderson 1997). A simple comparison of the frequencies of EPEs reported in national and local newspapers/pages in Germany, Sweden, Italy, and Spain allows us to identify some components of the nature of the selection bias of national newspapers.

First, the comparison confirms bias due to the number of participants. In Germany and Spain, the size of the mobilization increased the chances of an event being reported in national pages. Second, our results are congruent with the common finding that protests adopting non-conventional forms of action, and among them those that happen to be violent, are proportionately more often reported in national pages/newspapers. Table A.2 shows the distribution of EPEs according to the forms of action adopted. In each of the four selected countries, the first column shows the difference between the relative weight of a particular form in national and local media; the second column indicates the frequency with which each form of protest was reported, taking data from both local and national pages together.

The results clearly illustrate that national coverage of 'procedural complaints' and 'appeals' was proportionately less than that of unconventional forms of participation. This was especially true for *El Pais* and the Swedish newspapers. On the other hand, as the positive numbers in columns (1) indicate, confrontational and violent forms of protest were always relatively more frequently reported in national editions. The same was also true of demonstrative actions, except in Germany. The fact that demonstrative actions were, in relative terms, less frequent in the national pages of *die tageszeitung* than in their local sections might be explained by the highly unconventional repertoire of protest in Germany.

The nature of selection bias is not only influenced by the form of the protest but also by the type of claims put forward by the protesters. What is interesting here is that, even if Table A.3 shows some similarities among the four countries, national specificities seem to remain very important. If one takes industrial waste,

Table A.2. Protest repertoires reported in national and local pages in Germany, Sweden, Italy, and Spain (1988–97) (proportional distribution<sup>a</sup>)

	Germany		Sweden		Italy		Spain	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Procedural	0.1	10.0	-7.6	4.8	-8.0	11.5	-8.3	16.2
Appeals	-2.7	18.1	-13.0	34.7	-1.2	38.4	-0.7	31.8
Demonstrative	-14.5	36.0	9.1	29.3	4.2	34.1	6.0	25.8
Confrontational	10.7	22.1	5.3	1.11	3.0	11.4	5.8	16.7
Attacks on property	10.6	13.0	2.8	4.8	1.5	1.5	0.3	1.7
Violence	1.4	2.5	1.6	3.2	1.5	2.8	5.5	2.3
Other	0.4	4.4	1.6	12.1	-1.0	0.3	-0.1	5.6
Total		100		100		100		100

Note:

<sup>a</sup> More than one form of action could be recorded per protest (percentages refers to number of cases).

(1) National minus local (% EPFs in national minus % EPEs in local).

(2) Total (distribution).

Table A.3. Environmental claims in national and local pages in Germany, Sweden, Italy, and Spain (1988-97)

	Germany		Sweden		Italy		Spain	
	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)	(1)	(2)
Nuclear power	10.7	15.3	3.6	3.6	6.0	6.0	4.3	5.2
Nuclear waste	25.2	29.6	1.8	2.1	0.0	0.0	2.1	3.1
Non-nuclear waste	1.4	4.4	1.5	1.8	-2.9	3.7	-0.7	9.9
Domestic waste	-1.4	را 4.	-1.3	9.0	0.5	6.7	-1.8	S. Cj
Ocean pollution	2.2	2.5	4.4	4.7	-3.0	3.6	1.4	2.7
Lake/river pollution	-0.1	1.3	0.0	6.0	3.6	4.9	9.0-	2.1
Air pollution	-1.6	2.7	2.3	3.3	-1.3	9.01	8.0	2.4
Environmentally friendly R&T	5.4	5.4	1.6	1.5	0.1	0.1	0.0	0.0
Environmental effects weapon/military	9.0-	2.9	6.0	6.0	3.9	4.6	1.3	1.7
Roads	-11.1	3.5	-5.7	8.9	-0.8	0.7	3.5	6.3
Car traffic	-16.0	3.1	-5.2	3.3	4.2	7.5	-2.8	0.1
Countryside protection	-2.3	1.9	-6.5	4 5.3	-2.3	3.0	-5.2	16.7
Animal welfare	-3.4	1.6	10.7	8.6	4.3	7.3	-1.2	8.0
Protecting hunting animals	0.4	0.4	2.9	3.6	8.9	8.1	9.0	1,2
Environmental education	-0.1	0.1	1.3	9.6	0.4	1.1	0.0	0.0

(1) National minus local (% EPEs in national minus % EPEs in local). (2) Total (distribution).

for example, one can see that protests over that issue attracted more national media interest in Germany and Sweden, while tending to be relegated to local pages in Italy and Spain. National newspapers were more selective in the two southern countries, for numerous reasons including, in the case of Spain, the degree of waste policy development, the incapacity of protesters to generalize their claims and to transcend the local level of conflict, and their inability to retain media coverage and access when the problem of industrial waste was treated by the national press.

Also dissimilar was the coverage of transport issues. Protests against road construction in Spain and against traffic in Italy were more often reported nationally than were protests on such issues in Germany and Sweden. The greater relative weight of PEs concerning roads construction in the national edition of *El País* compared with the local pages can be attributed to the intervention of the terrorist organization ETA in one road conflict in Navarra in the early 1990s, a conflict that would otherwise have been ignored by *El País*. The national prominence in Italy of protests concerning car traffic reflects the increasing interest of the Environment Ministry in tackling the problem of urban pollution, as exemplified by the introduction of 'ecological weekends'. While urban pollution was a local issue in other countries, it became a national issue in Italy.

On the whole, thinking about the selectivity of our sources leads us to conclude that biases are of a similar nature in the several countries and that they are similar, too, to those already studied in the literature on relations between social movements and media. The patterns of claims demonstrate the importance of nationally contingent elements that influence the media to report environmental protests. We do not consider this an obstacle to crossnational comparison. On the contrary, recognition of the existence of nation-specific issues and their identification is a necessary condition for fruitful comparative work. But environmental claims, like other political claims, change over time; their visibility and relevance in political and informational agenda is far from guaranteed. The temporal instability of environmental issues highlights the problem of the unsystematic nature of the selection biases in our data.

### Systematicity

Systematicity refers to the persistence of biases over time, in relation to the variation in contexts. In the literature, the systematicity of bias remains problematic, both in terms of methodological problems (availability of control databases) and because of a certain naiveté in approaching the issue. <sup>12</sup> However, the stakes are considerable. It is no less than a matter of knowing whether variations in volume and characteristics of EPEs over time can be considered as a manifestation of the phenomenon itself or, on the contrary, whether they are artefacts of media practices. To date, the means used to explore the impact of media practices have relied on statistical comparison between different types of sources. The originality of

our approach is to have taken this further, by drawing on purely qualitative methods which alone enable understanding and reconstruction of the rules that govern the selection of news items and how they are reported. To achieve this, we have drawn on interviews with specialist journalists.

First, we know from the sociology of journalism that the way environmental issues are dealt with by the media must be related to the positions the journalists specializing in environmental matters occupy within media enterprises. We also know that public and political interest in environmental issues is relatively novel and has followed different rhythms in each European country. This raises questions about the implications of the changing status of environmental journalists since the beginning of the 1980s and, amongst other things, changes in their relationships with activist environmental associations and/or green parties.

Second, research on the decision-making process and organizational hierarchy of media enables us to understand how journalists work and how much effective scope for manoeuvre they have. Such observational work should be supplemented by consideration of financial and economic aspects of media. The changing structure of capital of media enterprises and, since the beginning of the 1980s, their frequently dependent links with big industrial groups might influence reporting of certain environmental subjects. Moreover, the developments in the journalism profession—increasing insecurity of employment, and the proliferation of freelancers who lack both the protection of employment rights and adequate resources fully to research their reports—inevitably play a role in how events were and are covered.

On the basis of interviews conducted in the several countries, we have identified three sets of factors that raise the issue of the systematicity of selection biases.

The first factor concerns the development of the political agenda in general. Some researchers have focused on that type of unsystematic bias (Fillieule 1997; Barranco and Wisler 1999). Fillieule (1997: 228-43), for example, has established that critical elections provoke a decrease in protest activity, and the British experience in 1997 appears to confirm this. At least in the cases of Spain and France, we know that protest groups from the left-among them environmental groups—switched their resources to the anti-war campaign, hence reducing the resources devoted to specifically environmental issues (Fillieule 1996; Jiménez 1999a). The peaceful revolution in East Germany and the subsequent German unification are thought to have had a broad impact on the nature of coverage of EPEs in Germany, but not necessarily or invariably simply by reducing their share of media space. Interest in environmental problems shifted to problems in the East and problems connected to the transition. In general, due to the defensive nature of many environmental protests, economic crises are associated with decreasing protest activity. However, it is difficult to know to what extent such declines are due to the media marginalizing environmental issues in favour of traditional economic issues or, alternatively, to a decrease in potential conflicts associated with the pressures of economic activity.

The second factor relates more specifically to the development, in each country, of environmentally relevant current events. Given that the space allocated to environmental issues in newspapers is not infinitely extendible, the occurrence of major events affects the coverage of protest activities. These may generate increased coverage of EPEs, or make them almost disappear. Events with international impact such as the Chernobyl accident (1986) or the Rio Summit (1992) had the effect of making ecological mobilizations unrelated to nuclear issues or climate change less newsworthy (cf. Anderson 1997). The fact that a major event has international impact does not guarantee that the variation in rates of coverage operates in the same manner in all countries. Indeed, as the previous chapters have shown, in western Europe in the 1990s it clearly did not. On the other hand, when current events in a given country focus attention on a particular problem, the decrease or increase in the rate of coverage only affects that country. In this sense, the relatively decreasing level of EPEs registered in El País in 1991-2 might well be explained as a consequence of a focusing of environmental agenda on forest fires and drought, two environmental issues that at the time had not provoked any EPEs. More systematically, it seems that in most cases the increase in environmental coverage followed the development of ecological politics. For example in Italy, interest in environmental issues became substantial for the first time in the mid-1980s due to the Chernobyl accident and, in 1987, to the three referenda won by anti-nuclear campaigners. But interest remained steady in subsequent years mainly due to the attention paid to political parties and institutional politics by Italian media aroused by the initial good electoral results of the greens and the prominence of green MPs.

The third set of factors relates to the turnover of journalists in charge of environmental issues, the organizational transformations of newspapers, and changes in the sources employed by journalists. Our interviews suggest that the field of environmental journalism has undergone a real generational change. In the 1970s, the environment did not constitute a special field and those who covered environmental issues were either journalists close to the movement or generalists who, having no particular interest in the environment, only rarely dealt with such issues, most often from an institutional perspective. In the 1980s, the 'pioneers' of the 1970s were replaced by journalists who clearly opted for professionalism over militant activism. 'This transformation (which is part of the more general development of specialized journalism e.g. health, education, lifestyle, etc.) contributed to the development of a stance of "critical expertise", a combination of rejection of committed journalism and claims to critical judgement in the name of their technical knowledge of the topics ... '(Neveu 1999: 124).

Another major change in the profession in the early 1980s is that environmental journalists for the most part moved from staff to freelance status. At the same time, their incomes improved in recognition of their specialization. These two points underline, on the one hand, the recognition of a hitherto marginalized specialization and, on the other, increasing job insecurity which is not specific to this particular

specialization but which reduces journalists' freedom and autonomy in relation to their employers. This economic aspect of the situation is crucial, particularly in a context of high unemployment among journalists and a drastic reduction in fixed costs in press enterprises. It seems that many of the newspapers from which we drew our data to a lesser or greater degree sacrificed the environment sector, considering it less important than others. Thus, for example, although in 1989 *Dagens Nyheter* employed a dozen permanent journalists working on the environment, by 1999 it had only one part-time environmental journalist on the payroll. That example is certainly extreme but it emphasizes why one must be attentive to such considerations when setting out to make international comparisons.

The departure of old or arrival of new journalists responsible for environmental coverage also constitutes a non-systematic bias that must be taken into account. In the cases of *Eleftherotypia* and *Le Monde*, the environment was left to the relative discretion of an officially designated journalist who, over several years, remained the undisputed specialist in his area. This specialization and relative scope for manoeuvre may have several consequences in terms of coverage. The relative freedom of judgement journalists enjoy can only reinforce the discretionary aspect of their work, and this relates back to the difficulty in establishing continuity in our data when those responsible for specific areas change in the course of time. We have been particularly attentive to these changes in the various newspapers analysed, knowing that, for several of them, stability in this respect has been considerable over the period under consideration.

In the same way, one must again relate the issue of systematicity to possible changes of format in the newspapers studied: increase or decrease in the number of pages, changes to the columns, and so on. Rates of coverage may be increased or decreased quite artificially by changes in the constraints of the column. At *Dagens Nyheter*, for example, a regular 'Environment, health and science' section was created in 1990, became more irregular from 1995 onwards, and then was finally dropped altogether. The environment section in *Eleftherotypia*, created in the mid-1980s, was dropped in the 1990s. At *Le Monde*, a regional page was created in 1995, designed to cover, amongst other topics, environmental issues, whereas a regional page in *Eleftherotypia* appeared and then disappeared during the decade.

In addition, the network of local correspondents has generally changed over time according to financial constraints, editorial policy, and the availability of interested journalists in the different regions. For example, in the case of *Le Monde*, coverage seems to have improved particularly in the regions after 1995, due to a major organizational reform. However, if a newspaper's territorial expansion involves decentralization in the form of new local editions/sections, as in the cases of *El País* or *La Repubblica* in the 1990s, it can lead to a reduction in the presence of events in the national news sections. So each time it was clearly identifiable, we have been careful to relate the variations in the trends of reported EPEs to organizational changes at the newspapers that are the sources of our data

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in order to avoid falsely interpreting variations that were artefacts of changes in the character of the newspapers.

Finally, the issue of the systematicity of bias must be raised from the perspective of sources used by journalists. According to our interviews, it seems that while in the 1970s journalists' sources were essentially located among militant activists, things began to change slowly during the 1980s, the institutionalization of the environment involving the proliferation of press offices belonging to both the public administration and the private sector. Because they are 'free' information and can be used directly, the documents supplied by regional authorities and businesses are an increasingly important source of information for journalists.

This loss of centrality of activist sources by comparison with official and/or expert sources must obviously be considered in relation to the 'despecification' of the environmental issue. As the environment has become a legitimate object in the eyes of the press, various newspaper sections have incorporated it, whether into political, science and health, daily life, or economics sections. As a result, demonstrations about the environment appear to have been of decreasing interest by comparison with other kinds of actors and other modes of public expression. This is a source of bias for anyone wanting to observe trends over the medium term, but it is not a major problem in terms of systematicity. In effect, once again, the discernible developments are broadly similar from one newspaper to another; the European press has undergone similar processes which tends to universalize the modes of news production and the ways in which narratives are constructed.

## DEFINITION AND CONSTRUCTION OF THE OBJECT

## Wide or Narrow Definition?

In their introduction to *Acts of Dissent*, Rucht, Koopmans, and Neidhart stress that 'from an analytical standpoint, we should not equate the study of protest with the study of social movements. Social movements tend to protest but not all protests are conducted by social movements' (1999: 9). However, by the same token, the repertoire of social movements, and in particular of environmental movements, does not consist exclusively of protest, and the question arises whether conventional actions such as presentation of reports and lobbying by social movement organizations should be included in our investigations.

Such a widening of the definition of protest might appear especially necessary in the case of the environmental sector, which, since the 1980s, has undergone processes of institutionalization and acquisition of expertise. Environmental movements are in this respect part of the class of citizen movements<sup>14</sup> that question the science and expert knowledge of the powerful by recourse to the very weapons of their adversaries, such as expert reports, press conferences and press releases, the taking of samples and measures, laboratory testing, and educational programmes. However, many of these activities are not carried out in public

and/or are not considered newsworthy, and so they are not often, reliably or regularly reported by newspapers. It is accordingly impossible for PEA to give an adequate account of such activities and their incidence over time. Accordingly, we have not attempted to enumerate these other less public or non-protest activities of environmentalists.

Protest event analysis relies on a particular conception of the place of the event in relation to structural phenomena, and this must be clarified. On the one hand, the choice made here not to focus attention on memorable events but on the ensemble of environmental actions happening in a given place and over a given period means that our corpus of data is largely composed of 'routine' actions. We distance ourselves then from the definition, sometimes encountered of the event as a rupture with habitual channels of causality, in other words, of structure. 15 We have thus made no discrimination among the types of events enumerated, each action being taken here as a concentrate of structure. On the other hand, since we intend to argue in terms of process, we must constitute continuous series, the concepts of repertoires of action and waves of mobilization suggesting that it is from the accumulation of routine events that possible structural modifications can be read. However, because we have not included an a priori definition of 'key events' does not mean that we always give the same weight to the events that comprise our series. Certainly, all events are not of equal weight, but it is only the observation of an entire class of events over a given period that allows one to say which protest actions effectively signal a change in the routine course of events. This point demonstrates the importance of thinking in terms of waves of mobilization and adaptation of repertoires.

Based on this ambition to cover all forms of protest beyond merely verbal and quasi-routinized forms of dissent, and including relatively small and unspectacular protests, the unit of analysis EPE can be defined as a collective, public action regarding issues in which explicit concerns about the environment are expressed as a central dimension, organized by non-state instigators with the explicit purpose of critique or dissent together with societal and/or political demands. <sup>16</sup>

Several criteria serve to define an EPE.

First, the protest must have the *character of an action* or, at least, of calling others to action (e.g. resolution, public letter). In most cases, purely verbal protests were excluded. Protest incidents that were primarily of a verbal nature but went beyond mere expressions of displeasure were coded when, because of the character of the activists or the particular forms of activism, they exceeded the ordinary repertoire of the participants.

Second, the activity must be or be able to be connected with *societal and/or political demands*. This occurred as a rule in a negative form (e.g. by the naming of a concrete dissatisfaction through criticism or protest) but it also occurred in a positive form (e.g. by the presentation of an alternative suggestion for action). Legal complaints were tested according to whether the plaintiff's concern was only resistance to individual disadvantages or the attainment of individual advantages

(in such cases, the event was not coded) or also, or primarily, a societal or political matter. Theatrical performances and other cultural events, as well as panel discussions and informational events, were not coded as EPEs as long as they were not linked with any political or societal matter, even when they took place within the framework of a broader protest campaign. If, however, the concrete event was characterized by a slogan (e.g. such as 'Ban whaling'), it was coded.

Third, the protest must have a *public character*, that is, it must either have occurred in public space or at least have been directed towards a public effect or a person or institution of public interest.

Fourth, the instigators of the incident must be *collective and non-state activists*. A collective group of instigators exists when the incident is carried out by a minimum of three persons.

Fifth, the protest event is determined by the association of place, time or period, form of the incident, demand, and instigating group. An EPE can link in one place or in one time period several interests/claims, several activists, and several forms of incidents. The duration of an EPE is variable and may last from a few minutes to several weeks (e.g. a hunger strike). Only in exceptional cases were protests in different places so linked together by a demonstrable symbolism that they counted as one EPE (e.g. a protest march into a big city with groups converging from different starting points or a long human chain linking two cities). Simultaneous protests with identical interests/claims but in different places and by different instigating groups constitute in each instance separate EPEs. Likewise, simultaneous actions by the same organization (e.g. a federal group) in different places constitute in each case separate EPEs. The classification as one EPE is dependent on the actual or at least symbolic continuity of the incident. Successive EPEs are separated from each other by intervals. An interval which ends an EPE is indicated when an EPE is implicitly or explicitly concluded (e.g. departure of the activists, conclusion by the organizers) or when the central concern of the protest changes. If the same form of incident for the sake of the same concern by the same activist at the same place is resumed after a temporary conclusion, 24 hours must have elapsed in order for two separate EPEs to be identified. Consequently, regularly recurring EPEs (e.g. on certain feast or seasonal days) were coded as separate EPEs.

## Making Sense of the Data

The research procedure used and the sources canvassed impose a number of constraints on the definition of the object. Not all questions can be posed, and only certain aspects of environmental protest activity can be covered (cf. Mueller 1997).

First, given the rationales of media selection, it is probable that some of the more conventional forms of action recorded do not make good copy. The bias raised here operates all the more subtly in that such forms of action are sometimes

covered, thus potentially giving the false impression of a balanced coverage of the repertoire effectively exploited by the groups.

Second, if one takes Schlesinger's critique (1990) of mediacentric analyses seriously, one must also bear in mind two phenomena. First, there is the 'professionalization of sources'. For example, Anderson (1997) points out the growth of social movement actors' savoir-faire in managing the media and anticipation of the criteria of newsworthiness. This phenomenon is especially patent in the environmental sector which, as we have seen, has long been undergoing a process of professionalization and growing expertise.<sup>17</sup> What is important here is the unevenness of this professionalization, which means that groups such as Greenpeace, for example, are capable of 'formatting' events and producing dossiers designed to draw journalists' attention, whereas many others do not have the means to do so. Under these conditions, PEA may sometimes offer not so much indicators of effective levels of activity as a barometer of the degree of professionalization of the groups' media strategies. Moreover, we know from Hilgartner and Bosk's work (1988) that the sufferers of social problems fight to get their claims for reform onto the political agenda. Now, this struggle may be located in different 'institutional arena' which include sites of mediatization (press, elections) or of the management (judiciary, administrative, legislative) of public problems. Each arena operates according to its own rationales and, depending on the resources at their disposal, movements may prefer to apply pressure to one or another. It follows then that not all movements necessarily seek to act in the public arena; indeed they sometimes try to avoid any media coverage. In other words, a rupture in the trends established using PEA may well also be the sign of a development in the activity of movements rather than of a change in their media strategy. Another implication of this assessment raises the question of the success or failure of movements. In effect, one must systematically avoid interpreting the intensity of media coverage as an indicator of success in so far as such visibility can also, if not primarily, be a sign of a co-option by the state or corporate elites.

Third, one must learn from the corroborating results of those who have set out to measure the selectivity of press sources. Events with relatively fewer participants are less likely to be the object of media coverage. As Mueller points out, 'the implications are considerable for the theoretical models of protest based on these data. Namely, theories based on this data will systematically fail to consider the role of protest events that are resource-poor in terms of participants' (Mueller 1997: 182). The arguments invoked in the literature to minimize the implications of this are not convincing. They rely on the notion that only events mentioned in the press would make an impact on public opinion and that, similarly, only those events would attract the attention of the authorities (e.g. see Rucht, Koopmans, and Neidhart 1998: 21).

These arguments are problematic in several respects. First, the authorities do not receive their information solely from reading the press. One of the contributions of the sociology of law and order has been to demonstrate the complexity of

the governing authorities' information channels (della Porta, Fillieule, and Reiter 1998). Moreover, it is quite paradoxical that practitioners of PEA should suggest that only demonstrations that arouse public opinion are of interest for analysis because we know that only a small (but nationally highly variable) proportion of Europeans read newspapers, and particularly the quality press used for PEA. Furthermore, despite decades of investigation into media effects, there is little consensus among researchers about the impact of, for example, televised violence upon real life aggression, or of political campaigns on voting behaviour (McQuail 1991: 251). Finally, and above all, the *de facto* exclusion of events of small impact obviously makes it problematic to work with precision on the issue of cycles and waves of mobilization given that the emergence and decline phases of those cycles and waves are largely absent from the published record.

### CONCLUSIONS

In the above discussion we have addressed the main methodological questions related to the construction of our object of study, and the selection of our sources. In explaining the rationale for our choices we have identified some of the problems and limitations imposed by these choices. There are limits to what PEA can do and to what we have been able to do with it, but we hope that by acknowledging these limitations we might encourage better understanding of our subject.

Concerning the selectivity of our sources we have concluded that the nature of the selection bias follows comparable patterns across countries, and presents a set of features similar to those identified by the media event analysis literature. In this sense, we consider that the issue of selectivity is not an insurmountable obstacle as far as international comparison is concerned, provided one bears in mind a number of important considerations:

- our data allow us to capture only a small proportion of the ensemble of protest events and overrepresents demonstrations involving larger numbers of demonstrators;
- our data places strong emphasis on non-routine demonstrations, whether they be violent demonstrations or demonstrations which are original in their modes of action (novelty is a context-related concept, a consideration that also affects the coverage given to different types of demand);
- in our data, some demands are less well covered than others. The rationales governing this selection may vary from country to country;
- generally, our data cover local and regional events less well. Local and regional events are more or less well covered depending on rationales which vary from one country to another.

Furthermore, we have considered the problem of the systematicity of this bias. Interviews with environmental journalists working on the selected newspapers

proved to be a useful source to address this issue qualitatively. While explaining temporal variations in our data, we have been attentive to alternative interpretations derived from four series of factors which lay behind the (un)systematicity of our sources:

- the evolution of national political agenda and major political events in general;
- · the evolution of environmental policy agenda and major environmental events;
- specific newspapers' organizational transformation, growth, personnel turnover, editorial, or style variations;
- the evolution of the environment as 'news', including changes in the notion of novelty, in the status of the environmental journalist, and in the range of sources.

In the course of three decades, PEA has slowly gained significance and recognition. If the first generations of research did not pay much attention to methodological questions and/or to establishing well-documented rules and procedures, things have changed dramatically with the development of critical studies dedicated to biases and the expansion of ambitious crossnationally comparative projects. The TEA project is one such project, and we have tried to show here how far a critical approach that addresses all the problems encountered can be fruitful and can enable us to take a new step forward in the field.

If protest event methodology must always be adapted to the case studied and can not simply be replicated without first thinking about the construction of the object, it nevertheless seems that some fundamental mechanisms are always at work. For example, our analysis of the definition of the event, of coding procedures and of selectivity bias is congruent with other results in the field. This is very encouraging for those of us who would make comparisons.

More importantly, our results speak loudly in favour of the necessity of turning to analyses mixing quantitative and qualitative methods, which alone enable understanding and reconstruction of the rationales which govern the selection of news items and how they are reported. To put it sharply, it is no longer possible to work seriously on systematicity biases without taking into account the now long and rich tradition of journalism studies.

The introduction of qualitative data into PEA has consequences that go further than a simple new refinement of methodological complexity. On the one hand, it intends to stop a tendency, after more than 30 years of empirically grounded case studies, towards armchair theorizing. Far from contenting ourselves with counting and cross-tabulating data, our methodological devices contribute to putting flesh on those statistical bones by linking data collection to the comprehension of data production by means of interviews with journalists. On the other hand, it shows that PEA is not only a useful tool for the construction of structural models but also for answering those new questions that have been put on agenda of social movement research by the cultural turn. In that respect, our analysis of systematicity biases in EPEs sheds empirical light on the way environmental issues are

dealt with in general, in particular through journalists' choice of which subjects to cover and the reporting formats preferred. The identification and measurement of biases over time not only aim at validating or invalidating our data; in themselves they tell us a very important story about public perceptions and, consequently, about the results of social movements' framing activities. It is not the least surprising result of our research that, by means of PEA, we contribute to a better understanding of framing by addressing the question of if and how messages are received.

Finally, it should be stressed that the PEA that has been presented in this book is only the first part of a wider research project. The most original trait of the TEA project, compared with other comparative projects in the field, is that the PEA is only the beginning.

### NOTES

- This growing institutionalization of PEA can be clearly seen in the two international colloquia organized by the Wissenschaftszentrum Berlin (WZB), each of which resulted in a publication: Rucht, Koopmans, and Neidhart (1999); Rucht and Koopmans (1999).
- 2. Proof of this can be clearly seen in the appearance and subsequent growth in volume of appendices in publications devoted to methods of data collection, but also the development of a critical literature, which it should be noted is most often produced by researchers who have themselves undertaken this type of analysis (Fillieule 1996, 1997; Hocke 1996; Mueller 1997; Simon and Wisler 1998; Barranco and Wisler 1999; McCarthy, McPhail, and Smith 1999; Wisler 1999).
- Space precludes further arguments to justify this assessment. One could, however, mention the increased importance of 'commercial pressures' and of 'journalistic deontology' in journalists' self-image, the general professionalization of the job particularly given the influence of the boom in journalism courses (see Neveu 1999).
- 4. Only around 2% of its stories deal with the environment,
- 5. A test conducted over a nine-month sample was carried out at an early stage of the coding process in order to estimate the number of EPEs as well as to identify those sections, where EPEs appear most regularly. When available, local pages were also analysed, making possible national—local comparisons, as well as helping to identify issue attention cycles at the national level. Besides the Italian case, reports have been analysed from the Berlin pages of die tageszeitung and several regional editions of El Pais.
- 6. Using *Parismanif*, a database that covers Parisian demonstrations between 1968 and 1998 (Fillieule 1996, 1997). For the purposes of this comparison, the years corresponding to the TEA database were extracted from *Parismanif* and only those events in the TEA database that met the criteria of definition of a protest event in *Parismanif* were retained.
- 7. In all, seventeen journalists were interviewed.
- 8. In the same vein, we know that protests may be under-reported at an early stage when journalists do not know much about the issue and its potential significance (critical mass effect), and that journalists' interest may decline even when, and precisely because, protests go on and on (ceiling effect) (Funkhouser 1973; Dantzger 1975: 582).

- See Downs (1972: 49) and Lacey and Longman (1993: 210-11) on coverage of environmental and development issues in the British print media.
- 10. The geographical bias depends on the structure of the newspaper (the level of decentralization in regional/local sections) and the distribution of resources (local correspondents). die tageszeitung and Le Monde appear to privilege protests taking place in Berlin and Paris, respectively. The Guardian is based in London but was originally from Manchester and now publishes in both cities, and is therefore more likely to give nationally balanced coverage than any of the other papers published in London. However, newspaper decentralization may also involve unequal territorial coverage. This seems to be the case of El Pais, where the quality of relations between the environmental editor in Madrid and regional editors varies.
- 11. In effect, depending on the particular circumstance, the links of dependency can be particularly strong *vis-à-vis* local economic or political interests in this area of the press (Neveu 2002).
- 12. Many researchers feel authorized to affirm that selection biases (and their respective weights) are stable over time, without really taking on board that by a kind of conjuring trick, they have, along the way, moved from synchronic account to diachronic speculation. More seriously, some researchers base their hopes on choosing a newspaper which is known to have had an editorial policy that has remained consistent over time (Rucht and Ohlemacher 1992; Koopmans 1995), adding that for crossnational studies, one should use 'similar', that is, for example, 'elite' newspapers. Even if this rule were necessary, it would still be quite inadequate, as we shall see in the rest of this section.
- For examples of research focused upon ownership and control of the media, see Halloran, Elliott, and Murdock (1970), Underwood (1993), McManus (1994), and Klinenberg (2000).
- Of which anti-AIDS campaigns are another example (see Epstein 1996; Fillieule and Duyvendak 1999).
- 15. See Tarrow (1999), who develops a rich critique of this conception of the event.
- 16. This definition and the codebook (Rucht 1999) we used draw to some extent on the Prodat project codebook (Rucht and Ohlemacher 1992). For a comprehensive approach to the question of media events, see Réseaux (1996).
- 17. Environmental activists are more than proportionately drawn from the upper middle classes and have been exposed, more often than the average, to the social sciences, to more or less academic forms of sociology of the media, or indeed have themselves worked professionally in media-related professions.

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