

Appendix A

AU: Pl check
chapter Title

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.¹ 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 (Liebersohn 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 cross-national comparisons.

One might then conclude with an unreservedly glowing report, all the more justified since for more than a decade PEA has become increasingly professionalized, with sustained attention to procedures and biases accruing to its methods.² 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 1971, 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

Au.Q.
Is it 1970?
Please
check.

has, for several decades, subjected journalistic activity to increasingly universal pressures that lead to the erosion of national differences in professional rationales and practices.³ 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), *Eleftherotypia* (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 information⁴ 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 left-alternative 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.⁵ 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).

Au.Q.
Pls check
Olzack 1989
not in ref. list

TABLE A.1. *The main features of the selected newspapers*

Country	Newspaper	Quality and political orientation	Selectivity (interest in environment, human/social issues versus political focus)	Territorial bias (in terms of resources across the national territory)	Other bias (thematic, partisan bias) affecting coverage of environment/protests
France	<i>Le Monde</i>	National quality newspaper centre-left orientation	MEDIUM (environment section, institutional bias)	MEDIUM (focus on Paris region)	Nature, transportation issues
Germany	<i>Die Tageszeitung</i>	National quality newspaper (although not in classical way), left-alternative orientation	HIGH (environment section, attention to social movements)	MEDIUM-LOW (focus on Berlin)	Energy issues
Britain	<i>The Guardian</i>	National quality newspaper, left-liberal orientation	MEDIUM-HIGH (environment section; human interest style)	LOW	
Greece	<i>Eleftherotypia</i>	National quality newspaper centre-left orientation	MEDIUM-HIGH (environment section; attention to social movement activity)	MEDIUM-LOW (focus more on Athens)	
Italy	<i>La Repubblica</i>	National quality newspaper centre-left orientation	MEDIUM (environment section)	MEDIUM-LOW (focus on northern Italy)	
Spain	<i>El País</i>	National quality newspaper centre-left orientation	LOW (no environment section, political focus)	MEDIUM (differences across regions)	Bias toward PSOE (Socialist Party)
Sweden	<i>Dagens Nyheter</i>	National	MEDIUM-HIGH (environment section)	LOW	
Basque Country	<i>Egin</i>	Nationalist/partisan newspapers linked to ETA	HIGH (though through nationalist prism)	LOW	Nationalist issues

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 under-represented 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.⁶ 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 country⁷ 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).⁸ According to this model, as protests become too repetitive, media attention swiftly moves on to other issues.⁹ 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 landscape 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.¹⁰ 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.¹¹

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 Plicht, 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 País* 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^a)

	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	0.9	25.8
Confrontational	10.7	22.1	5.3	11.1	3.0	11.4	5.8	16.7
Attack 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	2.2	2.3
Other	0.4	4.4	1.6	12.1	-1.0	0.3	-0.1	5.6
Total		100.0		100		100		100

Note

^a 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	0.9	0.9	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	6.6
Domestic waste	-1.4	2.4	-1.3	0.6	0.5	9.7	-1.8	5.2
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	0.9	3.6	4.9	-0.6	2.1
Air pollution	-1.6	2.7	2.3	3.3	-1.3	10.6	0.8	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	-0.6	2.9	0.9	0.9	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	4.2	-2.3	3.0	-5.2	16.7
Animal welfare	-3.4	1.6	10.7	9.8	4.3	7.3	-1.2	0.8
Protecting hunting animals	0.4	0.4	2.9	3.6	6.8	8.1	0.6	1.2
Environmental education	-0.1	0.1	1.3	5.6	0.4	1.1	0.0	0.0

Note

- (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.¹² 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.¹³ 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 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

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 movements¹⁴ 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*.¹⁶

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 h 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.¹⁷ 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 and cf. Fillieule 1997; Reiter 1998). Moreover, it is quite paradoxical that practitioners of PEA should

Au.Q.
Pls check
Bosk's (1988)
not in ref. list

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

1. 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).
3. 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 months 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 País*.
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).
9. 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 País*, 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 1989; 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.
13. 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).
14. 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.

AQ:
Ref. not
in list
pls. check