

Final report France

Introduction : The state of the art

With regard to the attraction of "ecology politics", the associational movement linked to protecting nature and the environment remains little studied. The reasons for this situation are located as much in the rationales pertaining to the scientific field as to the "the irruption of real history" (Althusser, 1967, p. 80), i.e. the transformations of forms of political engagement for over fifteen years.

In terms of the development of the social sciences, we have shown elsewhere the extent to which in France, due to the domination of political sciences by their origination in legal studies, and of social history by the history of the worker's movement, the sociology of social movements was a persistent absence until the start of the 70s (Fillieule et Pechu, 1993). That is when a new perspective began developing around Alain Touraine and his school (Touraine, 1973), largely responsible for instigating subsequent work on the new social movements in Europe and within whose framework research was conducted on the environmental movement (Touraine et alii, 1980). However, the school's influence remained limited because "of the peculiarities of its theory and methodology, and therefore, (his work) is not acceptable for many researchers, both in France and other countries " (Neidhart and Rucht, 1991, p. 435). The decline of Tourainian sociology even in France in the 80s marked an eclipse of interest in social movements and more generally in the voluntary association movement. It was only at the end of the decade that political science appropriated the subject and the first research projects started to appear, which led to the constitution of a real sub-discipline within the social sciences in the 90s¹.

However, within this proliferation of work on mobilisation, the environment seemed to be the poor relation. Generally, there was little literature on the environmental sector and, that which did exist was mainly confined to theses (Guyomar, 1981; Bonin-Luquot, 1983; Chibret, 1991; Charvolin, 1993; Ollitrault, 1996) and research reports (Barthelemy and Weber, 1987; Regazzola, 1994; Agostini et alii, 1995; Dziedzicki et alii, 1995; Maresca et alii, 1996; Roch, 1996; Maresca and Zentay, 1997; Mallard and Remy, 1998; Micoud, 1998), published work being the exception (Spanou, 1991; Lascoumes, 1994). It is clear that this was first of all due to the quasi disappearance of major protests, notably around nuclear issues, after the left's rise to power in 1981, (Duyvendak, 1994; Fillieule, 1997); but also, more insidiously, to researchers' negative perception of the struggles which developed in the 80s, which however began to develop around various town and country planning issues. Because they were characterised as NIMBY, these battles were denied to have any political dimension, (which essentially means promoting a vision of the common interest) and therefore any interest in terms of the sociology of mobilisation. Finally, the weakness of research is explained by the ecological parties' electoral success in the late 80s. This development of ecology politics, at the same time as it was contributing to draining the associational sector of its executive staff, in effect created a focus for research on the Green parties (Pronier et alii, 1992; sainteny, 1992; Villalba, 1995; Boy et alii, 1995; Faucher, 1999), at the very moment when, paradoxically, the understanding of partisan successes called for better knowledge of the associational substratum.

In the 90s, however, things started changing and one can now refer to a degree of scientific remobilisation around the issue of environmental associations. This change is essentially due

¹ Marked, among other signs, by the publication of review books dedicated to social movement theory (Mann, 1991, Fillieule and Pechu, 1993, Neveu, 1997)

to two series of factors: on the one hand, the growing concern of State agencies (and mainly at the Ministry for the Environment) in the face of increased opposition to planning projects: the TGV, high voltage lines, etc. hence the proliferation of research reports, financed by the State and major public enterprises such as the EDF, on the issue of environmental associative dynamics. Even more generally, this movement is in line with the context of decentralisation legislation (Guyomar, 1983) and the development of social capital theories which tend to allocate to the associational sector responsibilities from which the welfare state is withdrawing; on the other hand, it is within a general context of a growing influence of the analysis of public policies that work developed on the role of the associational sector in devising and implementing public planning policies. More precisely, the increasing interest relates to the issue of expertise in the analysis of public policy and the issue of risk (influenced by the work of Giddens, Beck and, in France, Bruno Latour) which contributed to moving environmental issues further up the agenda.

Overall, then, our knowledge about environmental associations and their actions remains fragmentary and rather cursory to date. This is mainly due to a lack of data and methodological shortcomings. In this respect, the multivariate research protocol adopted within the TEA project offers a rich material organised along three dimensions which aim at a better phenomenological understanding of the French environmental movement sector: the study of environmental protest, using 'protest event analysis'; the mapping of the environmental associational sector, using a national survey, case studies and interviews; Lastly, a qualitative analysis of 2 protest campaigns at the local level as well as a locality study.

I- Sources, data and methods

A/ Protest event analysis

Knowledge about environmental protest campaigns has dramatically increased in recent years due to the general development of protest events analysis in the field of social movement research. Duyvendak's analysis of the years 1975-1989 (1994) and Fillieule's work on the 80s (1997) give us an idea of the rise (from 1968 to 1980) and decline (after the socialist party won the general elections) of environmental protest. However, we have had no systematic analysis of environmental protest in France. In this research we have made an initial contribution to knowledge about how green protest has developed in the 90s.

One should note that protest event analysis is particularly useful in a context of an increasing institutionalisation of the environmental movement: since the frontiers between associational sector, parties, trade unions and the State are blurring, one must refrain to restrict oneself to analysis of a given type of organisation since possible alliances of associations with state or para-state agencies, trade unions or parties in any particular context would be left aside. One must begin, rather with the *observation of protest events themselves* if one wants to reconstruct the networks which form around one mobilisation or another. To date, protest event analysis has proved to be the more efficient tool to fulfill that methodological requirement.

The data of our analysis are drawn from the printed editions of *Le Monde*². Apart the fact that existing press data on environmental protest events for the decade were drawn from that newspaper (Duyvendak, 1994), *Le Monde* was chosen in preference to other national 'quality'

² There exists an electronic version of *le Monde* but sample comparisons revealed that versions available on CD ROM did not cover all the article we were interested in.

newspapers after a preliminary comparison which showed that its reporting of environmental events was one of the more inclusive. Besides, *Le Monde* was published continuously during these years and has enjoyed a certain continuity of editorial policy and of journalistic personnel throughout the period³. Our results based on the analysis of the reading and coding of 259 articles on environmental protest events⁴ that were reported by *Le Monde* during the ten years 1988 to 1997.

Using press sources to create a database on protest events is now one of the most frequently used methods in the sociology of social movements. It is also a method which is the subject of a great deal of criticism which for the most part relate to the issue of bias inherent in media sources. That is the reason why we have tried to supplement our data on the one hand with other statistics (i. e. a limited sample of AFP bulletins and police archives we had worked on for a previous research (Fillieule, 1997) and on the other hand with qualitative data, in order to understand and reconstruct the rationale which governs the selection of news items and the way they are reported in printed media. Semi-structured interviews with six journalists specialised in environmental issues were conducted, the analysis of which permitted us to understand the way press organs, from whom the cuttings are taken, actually operate. Taking these two directions to implement protest event analysis procedures, we have tried to refrain from what M. Stephen Weatherford, referring to empirical studies on legitimacy, calls "measurement driven research", i.e. the reiteration of "conventional measures" which results in their being institutionalised without regard to their pertinence⁵.

B/ National survey and monographs on environmental organisations

The approach adopted in this research involves asking associations themselves to fill out a semi-directive questionnaire. This method has the advantage of offering the possibility of extending the survey to national level i.e. not to be restricted to the purely district/regional context, as with the two preceding approaches. Another advantage is that it relies on associations' self-definitions in terms of their chosen causes, as well as the scope of their intervention (local, national), thus avoiding over-reliance on official descriptions. However, this method also has several problems. First, it must be pointed out that this method limits one to a synchronic approach to the associational sector since it is only the most significant associations - and in all cases those still active - which will be asked and have the opportunity to respond. Next, two types of bias intervene: first, at the level of the constitution of mailing lists (similar problem to that of the preceding methods) and second, at the level of the response rate, the associations having the most resources and the most to gain from publicity being likely to respond in greater numbers. Finally, one cannot neglect the fact, in France, that association members tend to be highly suspicious of the work of sociological objectification, often seen as an exercise in delegitimation or espionage for the State or big business. Moreover, one cannot but acknowledge that most surveys are conducted as a result of commissions from public bodies whose objective is greater knowledge in order to better circumvent and/or instrumentalise the associational sector.

Our ambition here, after making an inventory of environmental protest events, was to arrive at the most complete picture possible of the associational sector. To do this, we proceeded in

³ Three journalists have covered environmental issues in turn since 1974†: Marc-Ambroise Rendu (1974-1982), Roger Cans ((1982-1995), and Sylvia Zappi (1995-1999). For more details on the selection of the newspaper and on biases linked to that choice, see Fillieule and Jimenez in that volume and Fillieule and Ferrier 1999.

⁴ See Fillieule and Jimenez in that volume for our definition of a protest event.

⁵ Weatherford (1992, p. 151). For a similar critique in terms of analysis of electoral behaviour, see Converse (1990).

two ways: first, we sent a questionnaire to the largest possible number of associations at national and regional level who were asked to respond only if they devoted more than 50% of their activities to the environment; then we made secondary use of responses to a questionnaire devised by a researcher at the IFEN who is at the same time an activist from *Friends of the Earth* which was sent in 1996 to all types of associations, national, regional and local, and including groups with naturalist interests, those who were active in protecting the environments or residential sites, big generalist associations, associations of nature lovers, nature education groups and the structures created at the initiative of public institutions to respond to the need to manage the natural heritage (Roch, 1996)⁶.

We first re-used the data gathered by Jerome Roch in his survey (1996). The latter, based on a cross-index of various association directories published by Friends of the Earth (570 associations), the directory of associations approved by the Ministry of the Environment (561 associations), mentions under the heading " in the *départements*" (French political administrative unit, henceforth referred to as "district") in the monthly publication *Combat Nature* (583 associations) and research by minitel (480 associations) provided a total of 1939 associations to whom he sent his questionnaire in April 1996. 540 responses were collected, of which 522 were finally included, a response rate of 27%.

Our own questionnaire was initially sent to 71 organisations in metropolitan France whose area of intervention (political, legal, media) seemed to us to be national or international. This initial despatch of questionnaires was done on the basis of the directory of associations in relation with the Ministry for Planning and the Environment, associations we had come across when we analysed *Le Monde* over the period 1988-1997, and addresses on the Internet.

In counting the organisations considered the most important, which were chased up by telephone or directly in person, we received a total of 19 responses, and were aware that 10 organisations could not be contacted, and one association told us they had dissolved. Three other associations wrote to us without however answering the questionnaire, two said they were interested but claimed they did not have enough time to do so, the third claimed to be "weary of this kind of investigation which teaches us nothing, neither about ourselves nor about others (...)". When we persisted, the president of this association reproached us in a meeting for wanting to get people on file and analyse them like frogs. Overall, the rate of response to this first mail out was 32%.

Dissatisfied with this first response, we resent the questionnaire in order to improve the representativeness of our very small sample. We decided to include associations whose area of operation was regional and supra-regional. This criterion was justified for several reasons, sociological and practical. On the one hand, it seemed to us that the environmental sector in France was, above all, regionally structured. Besides the big transnational organisations such as Greenpeace, WWF, Friends of the Earth, few organisations seem to operate on a real national level. The most important of them, France Nature Environment (ex Federation Française des Sociétés Protectrices de la Nature) proved to be an especially flexible structure whose decision-making centres seemed to be located at regional level. Associations such as the FRAPNA (Federation Rhone-Alpes de Protection de la Nature), the SEPNB (Société pour l'Etude et la Protection de la Nature en Bretagne), the SEPANSO (Société pour l'Etude, la Protection et l'Amenagement de la Nature en Sud-Ouest), FARE Sud (Federation d'Action Regionale pour la protection de l'Environnement) also groups other district and local associations but seems to have greater autonomy and capacity for action and rely for the most part on a relatively dense and sometimes long-established regional associational network. On the other hand, for this second mailout, we had the benefit of a directory of environmental associations and a brief analysis of Jerome Roch's results for the association *Friends of the*

⁶ We would like here to thank Jerome Roch for having kindly given us all his data. This very rare example of cooperation in academic world worth being noted.

Earth. In his questionnaire, the associations were meant to respond to the question: "At what level does your association intervene: local/communal, district, regional, national, European, international"? Although the question is ambiguous, the approach is useful in that, instead of basing ourselves on a reductive nominalism (Earth First! France should be considered as a transnational organisation whilst its area of intervention is mainly to do with the Fontainebleau forest and the Parisian region and the Committee for the Protection of Vingrau as a local association when it has received international activist support and national media coverage), enables us to find out about what makes sense for the actors and the evolution of the area of action of the association questioned via self-evaluation which, however biased it might be, (it is highly likely that an association will tend to over-evaluate its geographic area of intervention to acquire a degree of recognition and visibility in a directory aimed at other environmental protection associations), offers an interesting selection criterion.

Thus, all the international, national and regional associations in the *Friends of the Earth* directory and on the list of associations with a regional and national vocation in relation with the Ministry for Planning and the Environment were contacted apart from associations which we knew had a purely institutional vocation. Thus we eliminated, a priori, from our panel those para-public structures with association status in terms of the 1901 legislation such as the Agence Environnement Développement, the Agency for the study and management of the environment, the Centre de la Mer et des Eaux de l'Institut océanographique, and the Conservatories.

In order to continue Jerome Roch's work into a more recent period, we took one aspect of his method, that of contacting organisations featured in the Ministry's directory (mentioned above), aggregating the associations featured in the quarterly *Combat Nature's* "Dans les départements" section from 1996 to May 1999 (and also, for our purposes, the "National Associations and Actions" pages). Associations were included only if their actions seemed to have a regional or national dimension (through the construction of the problem and/or the authority accused).

347 addresses were collected. This second wave was fruitful in regards to associations to be targeted even though the rate of response falls proportionately. Thus our sample comprises 107 associations, which cannot be claimed to be representative in statistical terms. Nonetheless, as long as we are aware of bias inherent in our own research, our associations can be considered in some respects as illustrative of the eco-environmental field in France, particularly since the initial sample is based on the register of actions actually carried out by these associations in the period which concerns (through *Le Monde* or *Combat Nature*) and not only those on official lists.

C- Environmental mobilisations at the local level

To complete the work on national organisations, four monographs were conducted, based on interviews and archives reading. Les amis de la terre, LPO, WWF-France, Confederation paysanne and GPF.

We chose to ascertain the characteristics of environmental conflict at the local level through an analysis of the Toulouse region.

Three research strategies were used: We first built a database from a tally of protest events (PE) mentioned in *La Depeche du Midi* (a regional newspaper). The initial idea was to code the year 1988-1997 but because of the lack of time and resources, the final database only covers the years 1988-1993. We plan to complete the database in the year to come in order to assure the same time span as for the national database.

Two case studies which occurred in the Toulouse region: A conflict that unfolded in the Hautes Pyrénées from 1984-1996, a project of an EHV line between France and Spain that

was to go through the Louron Valley. That case study was chosen for being exemplary of a kind of local conflict that develop without any mass mobilisation ; The Aspe Somport conflict that, on the contrary, was essentially based on direct confrontational tacticts.

Resume

Workpackage I

- Protest events database on environmental protest that were reported by Le Monde in the period 1988-1997.
- Limited sample of AFP bulletins (six months) on environmental protest
- Police archives we had worked out for a previous research
- Semi-structured interviews with six environmental journalists

Workpackage II

- National and mail survey on environmental organisations (107 organisations).
- Re-use of the data gathered in Jérôme Roch survey (1996) (540 organisations).
- Monographs on 5 environmental organizations : Greenpeace France, Les amis de la terre, LPO, Confederation paysanne, WWF.

Workpackage III

- database from a tally of protest events (PE) mentioned in *La Dépêche du Midi* 1988-1993
- monograph on the Louron valley conflict
- monograph on the Aspe-Somport valley conflict

II- Main results

The three directions taken in that research –PE-analysis, organisations survey and local/case studies- all confirm the hypothesis of a deep and lasting transformation of the French environmental sector. The overall dominant trait of that change refers to the great structural weakness of environmental movements, in terms of protest actions as well as of organisational structure. In that section, we summarize the main results of the research and try to give some explanations.

1- Structural weakness, fragmentation and decline

A/The rarefaction of environmental protest events

French environmental movement characterizes itself by a structural weakness in terms of political importance as well as in terms of mobilizing capacity. In quantitative terms, reported environmental mobilizations remain particularly low for the years 88-97. Whatever the year, ecologist mobilizations never managed to attract the attention of a national media like *Le Monde* more than once a week. Few campaigns managed to mobilize in a continuous and durable way on an environmental issue, if one excepts Greenpeace International's protest against the resumption of nuclear tests in Murruroa in 1995.

The low number of participants per event confirms the impression of a general weakness. 83% of the reported actions involved less than 2.000 people and 40% less than 200. The biggest demonstration march of the decade, against the Rhine-Rhone canal, gathered only 10.000 participants, a very weak participation compared to the seventies' mobilization around nuclear problems.

All in all, the same picture emerges from the locality study. The rarity of protest events in the Toulouse region is all the more striking that the source used to track them –the local newspaper- does usually cover environmental protests.

The weakness of the movement can also be pointed out regarding its difficulty to determine a clear political agenda in French politics. Whereas mobilizations of the Seventies were characterized by the prevalence of the antinuclear movement (Fessenheim and Bugey in 71, Creys-Malville in 77, Golfech and Chooz in 79, Plogoff in 80), one observes at the present time a fragmentation of claims.

Claims related to nuclear power count only for less than 20% in our corpus. This result is no surprise since the anti-nuclear movement had already vanished, if not died, by the end of the seventies Rucht (1994). Besides, the nature of claims related to nuclear power have changed across time. If in the seventies the fight was mainly orientated towards construction of nuclear plants, in the eighties and nineties, the focus has shifted: if one breaks down the nuclear energy category, one notes that the problem of nuclear waste storage has gained a great importance compared to traditional anti nuclear.

Protest events analysis also indicate that opposition to infrastructures construction is one of the most salient cause that mobilize in the period (29.3%). This situation is mainly due to two mobilization campaigns around the tunnel of Somport 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 differ from average struggles regarding their duration in time, their capacity to mobilize different social sectors in

society (political parties, trade unions, local authorities), the use of a large spectrum of modes of action (legal and disruptive) and the international dimension of the problem (Spain for the former campaign and Germany for the latter).

B/The fragmentation of the associational sector

If one turns now to the frequency with which reported actions are associated with a particular organisation, one is struck by the fact that the environmental association sector has for many years been prey to a process of fragmentation which contributed to the rarefaction of opportunities for mobilisation.

As Pierre Lascoumes writes in *L'Eco-pouvoir*, "it is estimated that, for the last fifteen years, approximately 40000 associations, centered on the defense of environment, nature and cultural heritage, were created" (Lascoumes, 1994, p. 227). Among these associations, 1500 would still be in activity and would involve 100.000 members, including 5000 activists. This proliferation of organisations can be observed thanks to our database : 80 environmental associations can be counted for 95 protest events coded !

If this diversification is not particular to the French society, its extreme fragmentation seems remarkable. This result corresponds to what Bruno Maresca and Oliver Zentay noticed (1997) in their study of environmental associations in the Basse-Normandie region: According to them, the ecologist sectors is characterized by: an acceleration in the number of creations 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 regular global number of adherents. These results confirm this strong trend towards fragmentation of environmental associations.

This last statement does not mean absence of structuration. The most important federation, France Nature Environnement⁷, 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 under the direction of some prominent regional associations.

Pierre Lascoumes identified four prominent regional networks : the FRAPNA for Rhône-Alpes, the SEPBN for Brittany, (Société pour l'étude et la protection de la nature en Bretagne), the SEPANSO for Aquitaine, and the recent Fare-Sud for the Provence-Alpes-côte-d'Azur (created against the high speed train – TGV). Each organization has been created more than 30 years ago and corresponds to the so-called "hard core" of the associative regional networks" (Lascoumes, 1994, p. 242). The breakdown of events held in the database by regions seems to reproduce that structuration. Thus, mobilizations should be understood in term of a previous and strongly tied environmental regional network.

If one excepts the importance of protest events in the Paris region which is over represented, the four first mobilized regions in term of number of protests correspond exactly to the four most important regional associations in the country as identified by Lascoumes. As a preliminary result, it means that the geographical distribution of protests reported in *Le Monde* is wider than we might have expected. Even if the most important region is the Paris region (24.1% of reported environmental protest events), it remains that the more active

⁷ Ex FFSPN, created in 1968.

regions in the provinces are over-represented, if not more than the Paris region (only 4.83% of the population in Aquitaine for 11.6% of reported protest events). Thus, although the geographical distribution of reported protest revealed is certainly biased by the rationale of *Le Monde*, the extent of that bias is not so great that it offers a good picture of the probable distribution of actual protests.

Apart from the concentration of 52% of the events in the five dominant region, the spatial distribution of environmental protest events is very fragmented. However, that fragmentation does not mean any absence of visibility. Transnational organizations clearly manage to emerge from this environmental landscape. WWF, Friends of the Earth and Greenpeace represent almost one quarter of our corpus. Greenpeace-France, whatever its weakness compared to other European countries in term of adherents and resources, largely dominates the market of environmental protests : for the ten last years, Greenpeace is quoted every ten mobilizations covered by *Le Monde* ! Greenpeace-France practices strategies of "media saturation" or "regular drip-feeding" to environment writers in the press⁸. In interpreting the data from the database, particularly in terms of identifying organising groups, it is thus essential to take into account that the professionalisation of PR departments is not homogenous across the board in all the organisations and is only advantageous to those with sufficient financial resources⁹.

Our results also show to what extent environmental associations are connected with other type of organizations when organizing protest. One notices first a relative absence of support in favor of environmental claims by trade-unions, which is striking compared to the historical role of the CFDT (Rucht, 1994) in antinuclear mobilizations during the seventies and even after Mitterrand assumption to power. Contrary to the withdrawal of trade-unions, political parties seem to be involved in the movement's mobilizations. They represent 23% of the groups involved according to our database. Such a rate is mostly due to the parts shared by the Greens (12,5%) and by left parties (mostly the Socialist Party, 7,4%). One should also notice the absence of regionalist parties whereas they were deeply involved in the movement during the seventies (mainly with the anti nuclear groups). This result is not in line with the general withdrawal of political parties we observed in the case of French demonstrations in the Eighties and Nineties (Fillieule, 1997). This high degree of collaboration between environmental groups and green parties stresses that in the environmental multi organizational field (Curtis and Zurcher, 1973), *Les Verts* assumes a central position.

The network analysis¹⁰ confirms the centrality of *Les Verts* in the patterning of reports of action in which two or more groups were mentioned as organisers of a protest event. Two explanations seem relevant to understand the importance of such a political support of the greens in the movement:

On the one hand, the commitment of environmental activists in green parties, which can be explained by the ecological parties' electoral success in the late 80s. This development of ecology politics highly contributed to draining the associational sector of its executive staff. As a result, the staff of green parties is mainly composed of former activists who remain very

⁸ To use the expressions employed by Grégory Derville (1997) in his analysis of Greenpeace's media strategies over the recommencement of French nuclear testing. Also see Olivier Baisnée's work (1998) on how the media sector operated during the Greenpeace-France campaign around the reprocessing plant in the Hague and Gallet (1999).

⁹ Cf, for example, Deacon (1996, p.173) on the PR practices of British voluntary sector organisations.

¹⁰ Due to the very small number of events considered here, the analysis take into account all links between each pair of actors with value 1 or more. I am indebted to Manue IJimenez for the completion of the network analysis.

sensitive to protest politics, for cultural as well for tactical reasons (i.e. the necessity to maintain an image of an alternative conception of politics, etc.). On the other hand, in the absence of direct relationships with elected people, associative activists are constrained to seek green parties help since most information and required financial means are in their possession. That is all the more true if one consider certain modes of action like mass demonstrations.

If one turns now at the local level, that is the Toulouse region, one can observe first that the formal associations dominate (74%), especially if the association collectives formed to last or formed for a single-issue fight, as in the case of Louron, are included. The ecologist parties (Génération Ecologie and Les Verts), nevertheless, are also very involved in environmental mobilization: they are present in 13% of the events and Les Verts are in the second place as organizers of protest events (they are present in 29% of the events). This is unlike Friends of the Earth whose national influence has considerably weakened but which is still a main actor regionally in the volunteer network, since it is present in one third of the mobilizations. Likewise, the regional data base shows the weight of animal rights groups locally (Animal Rights Toulouse group and SPA, 20% of the total claims), a phenomenon that the national press almost never reports.

The level of protest groups' intervention is clearly very local. 30% of the groups involved in the mobilizations are associations that defend the environment in a neighborhood (14%) or city (16%), here, principally Toulouse. If one adds to that the departmental and regional associations (21%), the result is a majority of the organizations involved in the environmental cause. Moreover the database shows that the territorial scope of the underlying problems addressed by the protest events is mainly local.

This point emphasizes the relatively weak proportion of NGOs and national associations in local fights, indicating a certain break, already noted at the national level, between national structures and the networks of local volunteer associations. This is one more illustration of the distrust of national associations towards local groups, a mistrust fueled by the idea that local fights often rhyme with NIMBY. As a whole, one could say that environmental fights on the local level don't usually get the support of the national structures and even less that of the NGOs. This provides an indication of the level of available resources and also poses the question of how and why certain causes manage to mobilize this type of actor.

The national and regional survey we have conducted allows us to go further in the description and analysis of the diachronic and synchronic development of the environmental associational sector.

The only way to approach the historical development of the establishment of environmental associations is to rely on inventories. Given the immensity of the task, nothing has been done at a national level. We will confine ourselves here to making a few comments which are useful in terms of interpreting the synchronic results collected from our questionnaires.

In his approach to establishing a list which shows the rate of establishment in Basse-Normandie, Olivier Zentay (1997) highlights three periods from 1901 to 1993. The first period corresponds to the establishment of learned societies,¹¹ and conservationist associations, which was happening all over Europe. Then, in the 60s, associations emerged which sought to oppose planning projects which were in full development (urban and coastal planning, ski resorts, transport). It was at the end of this period that antennae and subsidiaries of the big international associations were created (Friends of the Earth, GPF and the WWF).

¹¹ The first being, in 1854, la Société impériale zoologique d'acclimatation, a branch of which, founded in 1912, gave birth to the LPO.

But it was from 1968 onwards that the rate of establishment became firmly sustained, following a cycle which shows peaks in 68-75 ; 77-82 ; 83-86 and 88-93. In fact, two generations can be distinguished: the 'young' associations born after 1990 and the 'old', existing prior to the 80s, which essentially group supra local groupings.

The first period, at the turn of the century, saw the constitution of the first naturalist and conservationist groupings and was followed by a period of slow expansion in the late 60s to the early 80s, with the concomitant development of associations for the protection of quality of life and protection of nature. After a dip in the rate of establishment, which doubtless relates to the passing euphoria of the left's accession to power in 1981 and the decline in environmental mobilisations (Duyvendak, 1994; Fillieule, 1997), new associations continued to increase in number culminating in 89-90, which according to various sources thus appears a fruitful period, concomitant with the development of the subject in the media, official and international affairs, at the same time as in terms of electoral success. This period, if one trusts Veitl's analyses (1998) saw the development of associations especially linked to education and heritage management, and marks a process of institutionalisation which continued, in the 90s, with a development of eco-civics. Yet after the peak of 1989-1990, one notes a general decline in the rate of establishment which, strikingly, followed the same curve, until 1993, as the development of the number of protest events and the electoral results (Fillieule and Ferrier, 1999a).

The diachronic approach we have reported here obviously poses an endless series of problems of interpretation. First of all, the sense of continuous growth in the number of associations established since the late 60s must be interpreted with prudence. In the context of a general growth of voluntary associational activity in France, the environmental sector was in fact tending to become poorer - in terms of membership numbers whilst at the same time associationism in general maintained a slight growth curve.

Next, if it is indeed possible to get an idea of the dynamism of the association sector over time it does not follow that it is possible to know how many, amongst all these associations, remained existent in the late 90s or even active. For example, Zentay (1997), based on a complementary survey conducted via town halls, states that of the 882 associations he listed, 57% were still existent at the time of the survey. Of these, 10% were dormant.

Moreover, he states that the degree of activity is clearly correlated to longevity which suggests that the lifetime of associations is limited in time. Lascoumes (1994, p. 229-230) makes a similar observation and adds that the average lifespan of associations is around 7-8 years. In other words, associational turn over, in the environmental area, is quite strong and one can hypothesise that only the strongest stay the distance.

If one turns now to the establishment dates of associations which were active in 1996-1997 and which replied to our questionnaire and that of Roch, one can make the following observations:

Comparison of the two databases indicates that the trend of establishment dates is fairly similar in the two surveys, which is quite reassuring in terms of the illustrative character of our responses. Next, one can see that in general the trends are similar, with a continued growth in the number of associations from the early 60s until a certain stagnation in the first part of the 80s, then a resurgence until 88-89. These similarities lead one, interestingly, to think that the mortality rates of environmental associations has not varied significantly over the last 50 years, even though, as we shall see, a particular kind of grouping corresponds to each period.

If one goes no further than the characteristics of associations by period, one sees a certain number of correlations also evident in the two questionnaires.

On the one hand, as one might expect, the oldest associations are the learned societies, naturalist and conservationist groupings. But the most recent, which are the most numerous, are oriented more towards 'defence/quality of life', 'management of the heritage and education', echoing Veil's findings (1998) on the Grenoble region.

On the other hand, one sees that, generally, the level of resources available to associations is positively correlated to their longevity. This is true of the number of members (the more recent the groups are, the more likely they are to have a membership of under 400), of the number of full time employees, budgets (although the biggest budgets are not necessarily the prerogative of the longest established associations, the most recent have the smallest budgets, in overwhelming proportions). Within this general trend, one sees however, in terms of budget and the number of full time workers/employees, that the associations created after 1988 are generally better endowed than those established between 1978-1987, which would reinforce the hypothesis, mentioned above, of a professionalisation of the associational sector in recent years.

Having or not having an agrément¹² is likewise correlated to the groups' longevity. For example, in Roch's listing (1996), although 86% of associations existing pre-1967 have the agrément, this is only the case for 55% of those founded in 1978-1987 and for 23% of those founded after 1988.

Finally, if one adds that the longer established the associations, the more likely they are able to coordinate a network or simply be a member of one, one concludes there is a relatively marked distinction between three groups of associations: groups founded before 1967 which are the most powerful, those founded between 1968 and 1987 which are less well endowed with resources and those founded after 1988 which are distinguished from the other two by a relatively high level of financial resources and full time workers /employees.

2- An institutionnalisation process

Apart a process of fragmentation, the voluntary association sector is characterized by a process of relative institutionalisation. Associations are increasingly called upon by local and regional authorities to participate in establishing projects, yet they are not offered a means of influencing the decisions taken. This phenomenon, which must be related to the implementation of decentralisation and the transfer of certain responsibilities from central to regional authorities contributes to curbing the associations' vague attempts at protest, and given their increasing financial dependence on subsidies from officials and public administrations. So it is hardly surprising that the legal and lobbying actions were henceforth to take precedence over recourse to direct protest action. From that point of view, the relative pacification of the environmental movement is to be related to its cooptation by the State.

A/ Cooperation with and cooptation by the State

The environmental associations in France have very little room to maneuver. This is so because they are tied to the political powers, whether left or right: For example, 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

¹² An agrément, au titre de l'environnement or de l'urbanisme is an approved accreditation for an associatoin recognised by the Préfet, via an official document which attests to their representativity 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.

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 a good example of statutes imposed upon associations which have received the government seal of approval [associations reconnues d'utilite publique].

At local levels, this phenomenon is all the more strong since local institutions finance more and more expert's reports, and try to obtain the associations' agreement on their public policy (the best way of doing it being the creation of ad hoc associations totally dependant for their resources from the local government). The study of the Toulouse region shows that perfectly as well as the case study of the Louron valley affair.

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), to the extent that in the early 70s, the State had recourse to associations as a counter-power in the conflicts which led to their confrontation with industrialists and locally elected officials. In this context, the administration 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, 1995), hence the implementation of two major kinds of measures intended to ensure greater effectiveness of public policies: On the one hand, the decree of 7 July 1977 instituting an approval procedure to protect nature and urbanism and on the other hand the decree of 3 July 1985 dealing with classified installations. These arrangements involved a participatory dimension which made it possible for the associations to participate in the work of a large number of national, regional and district consultative organisations, (committees for specific sites, for urban issues, district public health and hygiene issues). Also, the associations were represented on the management boards of public establishments concerned with the environment, and those for the national parks. As Lascoumes suggests, the associations in a way constitute veritable "external services of a ministry which has none of its own" (Lascoumes, 1994, p. 193).

This policy which aimed at a neo-corporatist integration of the associational sector (Spanou, 1991) contributed permanently to determine the state of associational strength. In effect, through the play of conditions for granting the agrément and grants, the State on the one hand encouraged a certain number of large associations, in every region, which it legitimised as spokesmen, 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 strategies¹³.

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 and the more politicised ecological associations more oriented to the protection of quality of life. To this distinction must be added a split between protest associations, much less politically integrated, with little in the way of resources and the big representative associations, subsidised and professionalised, associated with state agencies. In this context,

¹³ Which Lascoumes (1994, p. 211) summarises, 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 marginalisation; an attitude of instrumentalisation (pragmatic use by the State of asocational resources); an attitude of phagocytosis: (direct production of rump and/or para-public associations).

the associations who wish to attain their self-defined objectives are faced with a radical choice: either accepting a gradual integration into decision-making circuits, at a local, regional or national level, which required professionalisation, fund-raising and abandoning strategies of direct opposition, or maintaining their distance, at the risk of remaining impotent. In effect, in the context of State withdrawal and the decentralisation of administrative responsibilities described above, it becomes extremely dangerous, not to say impossible, to resist developing working relations with the local authorities. The two case studies we have conducted do illustrate perfectly that state of affair.

B/ From protest to acquiescence

Considering all these results, one should not be surprised that in our data, the picture of environmental protest that emerges from newspaper reports as well as from the national and regional survey is its high moderation throughout the ten years.

If one think about the over-dominant idea in social movement research that French social movements, because of the high degree of closeness of the State, adopt confrontative tactics (see Kitschelt for such an interpretation, for example), one will conclude that, for what concerns environmental sector, these confrontations seem to be very moderate. Violent actions represent only 6% of our corpus; this result being all the more valuable that the media usually favor violent events for their newsworthiness.

The dependance of associations upon the State and local institutions seems not only to limit the use of violence but also to have consequences on the choice of the whole repertoire of contention. Confrontative actions like demonstration marches, rallies, blockades and occupations represent only 50% of our corpus. Demonstrations are only present in a third of covered collective actions ! This result must be compared to the importance of this repertoire in France (Fillieule, 1997) to be properly correlated with the weakness of the movement's mobilisation.

Keeping these remarks in mind, one can interpret the importance of “ moderate ” forms of actions like petitions, cultural actions, press conferences, litigations and procedural complaints which represent around 30% of our database. Such a result is all the more important that these forms of actions do not benefit of a systematic coverage by journalists since their newsworthiness is very low. These results seem to confirm a deep trend of environmental associations in France toward an “ expert-activist repertoire of contention ” (ollitrault, 1996). On the one hand, this trend must be analysed with the cooptation and instiutionalisation of the movement. On the other hand, one can understand the transformation of the ecologist identity vis-à-vis the critique of their opponents. To put it briefly, because environmentalists and ecologists were criticized because of their lack of “ seriousness ” and objective informations, they tend to change their strategies, writing scientific and expertise reports.

Since the repertoire of actions used in environmental protests is mainly peaceful, one should not be surprised that there is no particular links between certain forms of action and different kinds of issues. However, one should note that less than 30 per cent of protest regarding nature conservation issues were reported to have involved demonstrative forms of action, and 17.4 per cent employed confrontational tactics¹⁴, contrary to protests on energy issues (mainly nuclear waste) and transport issues which were rather more confrontational : One the one

¹⁴ The number of minor attacks on property (15 cases) is too low to be interpreted here.

hand, more than 47 per cent of protests concerning energy issues involved demonstrative forms of action, 24.4 per cent using confrontational tactics ; on the other hand, 64 per cent of transport protests in our database involved demonstrative actions, confrontational tactics being involved in only 14% of events.

If one turns now at the local level, the picture that emerge is quite the same. The repertoires of action used in the Toulouse region give a clear indication of the relative institutionalization of the volunteer sector locally. Associations are increasingly called upon by local and regional authorities to participate in establishing projects. This phenomenon, which is to 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 given their increasing financial dependence on subsidies from officials and public administrations. As a result, the majority of activities tries to mobilize public opinion by many informative means, which shows to what extent, on the local level, the public opinion resource is essential, in particular because the public's support generally brings about, for electoral reasons, the rallying of local officials and thus the extension of support to the local political sphere. This point must not be forgotten when considering the place of elected officials in the Louron conflict.

As for recourse to protest action itself, it only concerns 32% of the events covered by *La Dépêche*. The fact that recourse to expertise and legality concerns 14% of the events recorded also goes in this direction by stressing the development these last 15 years of the institutionalization of environmental fights and the emergence of an "expert-activist repertoire of contention" (Ollitrault, 1997).

III- Conclusions and scientific interest

At the end, the main conclusions that we obtain can be summarized as follow:

1) Dilution of environmental associations in green politics; 2) reinforcement of the polarisation between associations linked to the State and contestatory associations; 3) development of the sector's educational vocation; 4) reinforcement of a entrepreneurial sub-sector :

1) Changes in the associational landscape

A- Dilution of environmental associations in green politics.

Since the symbolic score of René Dumont to the presidential election of 1974 until the European elections of 1979, the ecologists' electoral performances increase continuously, culminating at 5% in 1979. Then, after François Mitterrand's election as President, the progression is stopped: In 1986, the ecologists brought together within a new party (*Les Verts*, founded in 1984), are at their lower level with a score of 2.5% at the general elections. It is only at the end of the Eighties, like elsewhere in Europe, that the Greens begin to gain good scores, with a result of 10,7% in 1989 (European elections). At the 1992 regional elections, the cumulated scores of the two rival tendencies of ecology (*Les Verts* and *Génération écologie*) reach almost 15% of the electorate, which, compared to the results of the Greens elsewhere in Europe at that time, is considerable.

However, this success marks also the beginning of the decline, with a score of 11% at the general elections of 1993. Considered as a bad result by the militants, this score causes a serious internal crisis, at the same time between concurrent organizations and within each group. With the European elections of 1994, the decrease is confirmed with approximately 3% for *Les Verts* and 2% for *Génération écologie*. The influence of political ecology is again as low as in 1979 (4,5%). Lastly, with presidential election of 1995, the fall is confirmed with a score rating at 3%.

Several lessons can be drawn from this electoral development, lessons that can be directly useful for the comprehension of the weakness of environmental protests:

Firstly, the rise of the environmental movement is contemporary with the political successes of the left, following the 1968 uprising. That is why after François Mitterrand's election and –at least provisional and/or symbolic- satisfaction of a certain number of ecologist' demands, the movement loses his influence and almost disappears (Duyvendak, 1994 ; Fillieule, 1998).

It is on the other hand more difficult to explain why the movement did not grow again after some years of Socialist administration, in term of political power as well as in term of mobilization. Undoubtedly, the reason for such a situation 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. By this fact, environmental problems were put at the second rank of the nation political agenda. And the same is true if one considers the French, at first anxious to resist the erosion of their standard of living and the rise of unemployment.

As a consequence, it appears necessary to revise Kitschelt's theory saying that when the left is in power for a long time, ecological parties emerge. According Kitschelt, when in the

opposition, the left is the best defensor of post-materialists claims, leaving no political space for the ecologists to rise. When on the other hand the left governs for a certain time, it gives up these claims which are then taken in charge by ecologist parties (Kitschelt, 1989). The case of France contradicts this hypothesis since socialist governments (1981-1986) correspond with the disappearance of political ecology. and it is only after the right returned to power (1986-1988) that the Greens emerge as a political force. The explanation for this phenomenon is to be related to the motivations of the Green electorate. As a matter of fact, those who in France vote for Green parties do not vote at first on behalf of an ecologist sensitivity. More precisely, different researches conducted on French green voters show that the ecologist electorate is mainly motivated by a protesting vote. Because of the relative desaffection in France for traditional political parties (especially after an alternance which showed so many similarities in terms of economic policies), dissatisfied citizens defer more easily their votes on the new parties, that is the Greens or the National Front. It is then not surprising that the rise of political ecology is positively correlated with a decline in traditional parties influence.

If one turns now to environmental protests, it appears that the rise and fall of protest can be explained with the same arguments as for political ecology. More generally, it seems that, after Mitterrand's election in 1981, the development of an unfavourable political opportunity structure is correlated with a serious decrease in the number of mobilisations initiated by all sorts of New Social Movements. In a former research based on police files dealing with demonstrations during the Eighties (Fillieule, 1996, 1998), we have shown that in the case of France, the common notion suggested by theories about New Social Movements according to which protest action witnessed over the last decade a profound mutation, with the disappearance of traditional activities in favor of new actors – 'New Social Movements', was completely misleading. Furthermore, the idea that the nature of demands have been strongly influenced by the defense of post-materialist values is contradicted by the fact that the 1980s were marked by a great stability of actors in demonstrations and their claims. Police data leaves no doubt that the street was dominated, during the eighties, by the traditional organizations: the organizations that most often have recourse to strategies of unconventional action are the unions. If one turns to the claims, one sees that the greatest number of demonstrations revolve around the problem of job. Equally important is the considerable importance of demands linked to earnings.

B- the development of the sector's educational vocation

In Roch's survey (1996), the heading education comes first (67.4% of the organisations are involved in environmental education and 42.3% in education and training), a good illustration of the specificity of French associations which consider themselves as one of the privileged vectors for raising consciousness amongst the population, where the public authorities do not seem to be fulfilling their role. As Lascoumes comments (1994): "(the associations) transversally provide a cultural training function which no other institution achieves".

This prevalence of "éducation populaire" is certainly not a new phenomena and fits the rationale of complementarity in relation to the State¹⁵. However, since the very early 90s, this educational vocation seems to have been growing. From this perspective, a revealing example is the LPO, which tends to keep its strictly scientific/naturalist activities in the background whilst foregrounding its educational activities. The organisation of exhibitions, of all kinds of activities, with bird houses, training and induction courses constitutes most of its activities

¹⁵ This is one of the central points to which Chibret (1991) draws attention in his comparison of German and French associations.

(Maresca, 1995). In Vienne, Matagne (1998) shows how a part of the associational sector is structuring itself around GRAINE (Group regional animation initiation à la nature et à l'environnement in Poitou-Charentes)¹⁶ which is largely directed at educational activities relating to nature and the environment. The network, explains Matagne, functions above all “with and for teachers (natural sciences, physical education and sports, literature), animateurs. (...) It produces dossiers and ‘teaching packs’ distributed by the regional centre for educational material (..) and aims to provide a training complement to environmental education in schools” (Matagne, 1998, p.69).

Such an educational orientation involves a change both in the ideology of associations, and in the skills and knowledge required since the groups need, above all, managers, trainers and animateurs. This echoes one of Ollitrault’s most fertile analyses (1996) in his thesis on the development of expertise in educational and scientific subjects. Ollitrault relates this phenomena to the fact that the majority of ecologists belong to the educative and scientific professions, to the extent that one can talk of a “making profitable” of the professional ethos in activism. The author stresses however that the educational activities are also a means of filling associations’ coffers to continue the activist project, indeed to finance costly operations (legal costs, counter-expertise): “in order to combine the quest for new funding and the assertion of technical competence associations take on research studies financed by the Ministry of the Environment and increasingly by local authorities.”, (Ollitrault, 1997, p. 259).

C - reinforcement of a entrepreneurial sub-sector¹⁷.

In the Roch survey (1996), it is primarily the biggest associations who are producing surveys and research projects, as they increasingly seek external funding via service fees, most of the time moreover at the request of State services and particularly local authorities (Le Seigneur, 1996). Associations such as the LPO, the WWF, Espaces Naturels de France (Fédération de conservatoires de la nature regional) are for example strongly implicated as shown by (Dziedzicki, 1995). More precisely, this model affects two kinds of supra local associations: on the one side, the big, mainly long-established generalist associations, with an activist base and from a naturalist background and, on the other, associations around a specialised project without mobilisation of its members (Chibret, 1998).

What is noteworthy here is that this type of orientation tends to introduce a permanent imbalance in the structure of associations’ budgets. In effect, financial resources are increasingly supplied through contracts, missions and studies and it seems less and less necessary to have recourse to activist membership dues, individual donations, in short to all the financial sources which oblige associations to maintain an activist base. Also, one of the effects of the development of entrepreneurial activities is that ‘amateurs’ are sidelined in favour of professionals, and experts¹⁸. Given these conditions, it is not surprising that protest activities relying on numbers (such as demonstrations) are increasingly abandoned in favour of legal and lobbying activities.

¹⁶ Created in 1989, GRAINE had 120 individual members in 1997 (Matagne, 1998).

¹⁷ One can group under this term all service activities, the remunerated making of lucrative products, in the socio-educational field, and in organised cultural activities, leisure activities linked to nature, even promotion of employment for young people and social inclusion..

¹⁸ Although expert advice given by associations for environmental protection is not a new thing, one notices however it is decreasingly used for scientific purposes and increasingly tending towards saleable use. (Chibret, 1998).

2 - Social movements and the state : cooperation, cooptation and repertoires of action

A - reinforcement of the polarisation between associations linked to the State and contestatory associations.

From the point of view of the split between activists and institutionalised groupings, the gap seems to have widened for some years now due to the effect of a double phenomena:

first of all, in the context of a militant renaissance of social movements to the left of the left, the most contestatory ecologist associations spread their networks of alliance and their battle themes to other movements and other causes, be it those without official documents, the unemployed, movements for public transport, or aiming at the rehabilitation of old districts. The recent emergence of anti-GM movements, coupled with opposition to the world trade conference is a perfect illustration - ecologist associations allying themselves with an agricultural trade union (José Bové's *Confédération paysanne*). This is the case for example with the CEP (*Collectif Eaux Pures*) federation of associations founded in 1992 which groups consumer organisations, family associations, the Human Rights movement, environmental protection organisations and the *Confédération paysanne* (Mallard and Remy, 1998).

Next, from associations for the protection of nature and the eco-system, to those of more naturalist or environmental vocation, concerned with the protection of a biotope, landscape, heritage, the land, one sees an increase in power of para-public structures which ends up constituting an intermediary level between the local authorities and the associations. That is how the conservatories, observatories, parks, the CPIE (*Centres permanents d'initiation à l'environnement*), the reserves, the LIFE programme, resource and information centres, etc developed. In the Grenoble region, Veitl (1998) thus notes the appearance of the *Maison de la nature et de l'environnement de l'Isère* (MNEI), *l'Association pour la valorisation des espaces naturels remarquables* (AVENIR), the CPIE. For example, AVENIR is a collective of associations founded as result of an agreement between the FRAPNA and institutions charged with managing and protecting natural sites, planning, and educational projects. "The group's board comprises several colleges: local authorities, associations and federations, professional educationalists, qualified individuals. This structure serves as a de facto public agency: the A from the acronym AVENIR also applies to the word Agency and no longer Association in 1991" (Veitl, 1998, p. 12). These para-public structures, explains Regazzola in relation to his analysis of the Auvergne region:

"enjoy a more or less official status and often play a mediating role and serve as interface between institutions and associations: they constitute a sort of fringe, where one observes an intensification of forms of direct inter-associative co-operation, as well as the appearance of functional relations, inconceivable just a few years before, not only with the politico-administrative structures, but also with authorities such as the FNSEA, the ONF, the EDF. (...) These pools of associations are simultaneously becoming research bureaux charged with environmental diagnostics, co-ordinators, scientific operatives charged with evaluating and developing contract specifications, in liaison with professional agricultural organisations, parks, respective ministries, they work on the implementation of land management, in line with concepts suggested by *Natura 2000*". (Regazzola, 1998, p. 218-219).

Further, one notes that area of activity has extended to the point of taking responsibility, with others, for areas from which the welfare state is tending to withdraw, and particularly as relates to the battle against unemployment and the policy for social reintegration. Regazzola (1998) convincingly illustrates this point when discussing river cleaning activities which, after a long time of being carried out within the limited context of a civic educational approach to nature, has since tended to develop considerably thanks to the proliferation of short term contracts aimed at reintegrating the unemployed (TUC, SIVP, etc...). As a result states Regazzola, river cleaning is now less an objective for these para-public associations than a

means of social policy and, for the associations involved, a possible means of obtaining subsidies. Similarly, but in another direction, mention must be made of the quite spectacular rise of activities linked to local development which aims to fight the flight from the countryside, by offering products for tourists themed around a region, a locality¹⁹.

All things considered, we are witnessing a *double movement of despecification* of the environmental associational sector, with on the one side radical groupings opening up to other struggles in a process of frame extension and, on the other, the transformation of associations linked to state authorities as service providers as much for environmental policy as for social policy ends in general.

B – State-groups relations : A changing pattern

The case studies, and mostly the Louron affair, provides a paradigmatic example of the way in which development conflicts contribute to challenging common perceptions of French polity but more generally also of the investigative value of concepts or of recognized and traditional ways of the sociology of social movements. The development conflicts of the last 15 years centrally question the common but unrealistic distinction between State and protest organizations, and particularly in the case of France about which it is frequent to stick to the vision of an all powerful central State to which civil society is opposed (see Hayes, 1999 for an exception). Since the mid 1980s and the effective implementation of decentralization legislation, since the effective transfer of a certain number of central State prerogatives to local authorities and finally since the consolidation of the welfare state's withdrawal, it is no longer possible to present things so simplistically. Beyond the case of France, moreover, the conflict analyzed here illustrates the extent to which "traditional conceptual tools are increasingly inadequate to deal with a number of transformations which have in recent years affected the relation between State and society: as Kennis and Schneider point out (1991), "the growth in number of "organized local authorities", the growth in number of political actors implicated in the process of public policies, the intensification of sectorization and differentiation of policies and administrations, the proliferation of forms of "private government", the "transnationalization" of national policy - all these contribute to a profound change in the way in which we can think through the issue of collective action and contestation".

The Louron case helps to questioning the classic split between insiders and outsiders, challengers and the State, and showing how, influenced by the development of protest to big projects, the public development policies have changed, contributing to a lasting modification of political opportunities for environmental movements.

In the Louron affair, first certain parts of the administration got organized, followed by the local officials, and then by the environmental associations, either pre-existing or created for the occasion. This situation is one of the common characteristics of all the development conflicts of the last 15 years. There is an astonishing blurring of frontiers with conflicts that join at several levels and transversally at the State/civil society cleavage. Conflicts between the ministry of the environment and the ministry of industry; conflicts between the central government and regions, departments and towns, through the mobilization of regional, general and municipal councils; conflicts among administrations whether deconcentrated or decentralized, that replicate the first two conflict axes. There are three observations that can be made:

¹⁹ Phénoménon which should doubtless be related to the ever increasing proportion of neo-ruralists. In local associations rooted in rural areas whose sense of the heritage, whether it be cultural, agricultural paysager, contributes to changing the perception of problems and thus of action lines.

- 1) on one hand, there is great heterogeneity of the actors in the fields of alliance and conflict: elected officials, associations, administrations, public or private companies can find themselves united. In most cases, the coalitions formed around territorialized conflicts take the privileged form of networks around the ministry of environment/officials/associations;
- 2) the coalitions thus formed transcend partisan cleavages. In the Luron affair, it is worth noting that the Midi-Pyrénées Regional Council and the Hautes- Pyrénées General Council, as well as the mayors of the valleys, were unanimous in their protest of the EHV line;
- 3) Lastly, the heterogeneity of the actors must be balanced by the existence of complex forms of multipositionality. The officials are simple members or leaders of environmental associations and sometimes inhabitants directly hit in their personal interests by the development projects. The civil servants of the administrations of the ministry of industry generally come from the same bodies as the decision makers at EDF or SNCF (networks of the Ecoles des Mines and of the *Ponts et chaussées*).

In all, it's the cognitive approaches to public policies that provide conceptual instruments that can go beyond the cut-and-dried definitions of social movements as groups of actors opposed to the government. The notion of advocacy coalitions, first, coined by Sabatier (1987) to designate the coalitions in public policies and to highlight contextual factors that influence the alliances is highly useful in that it leads to thinking of the protest fields of alliances as patterns structured in social-political networks oriented by a defined action for a given period of time ending with the accomplishment of the collective objectives. Likewise, the policy network concept (Kenis and Schneider, 1991) enables us to see the relations in the State/civil society frontier by pointing out the diversity of the actors involved in the defense of a cause and the relatively fluid character of the thus-constituted groups.

McCarthy, Britt and Wolfson (1991), through the observation of a strong tendency toward structural uniformity among American SMO's, stress the importance of channeling mechanisms in determining the emergence, forms, action repertoires and the chances of success of collective action. They thus show how legal dispositions can contribute to defining a field of strategic and tactical possibilities for movements. This attention to the indirect ways of government control is an indispensable complement to the numerous works that have analyzed the direct ways of control.²⁰ We argue that this dependence of movements on institutional means should be considered in a dynamic way in terms of interdependence. Under certain conditions, movements can contribute to a lasting modification of the rules of the game and then the set of channeling mechanisms, that is the mixed facilitations and constraints defined by the state. The field of territorialized environmental mobilizations provides a paradigmatic illustration. The considerable increase of development conflicts in the last twenty years in Europe²¹ and in the USA²² has clearly contributed to a thorough redefinition of the ways in which the representatives of the State and the planners undertake the major development projects.

²⁰ i.e. mainly repression. See Marx (1974, 1978); Fillieule, 1997, Della Porta and Reiter, 1998

²¹ For example, the deep changes in Great Britain in transportation policy analyzed by Dudley and Richardson (1998) who analyzed the misappropriation of the official procedure of highway inquiries that was supposed to insure the interests involved in arenas without rules by protesting groups.

²² Gordon and Jasper write about America that "in poor neighborhoods as well as rich, in rural areas as well as urban, local opponents ... are standing up to developers, large corporations and federal, state and local governments. They have been remarkably successful, for example blocking virtually all proposals for new hazardous waste facilities during the 1980s (Mitchell and Carson, 1986). These groups are changing, among other things, the shape of environmental politics", (1996, p. 160).

In the case of France, many public policy analyses have convincingly showed how, influenced by the growing power of the mobilizations around highway constructions, TGV routes, airports and EHV lines, the paradigm defining the implementation of public policies has been transformed (Jobert, 1992; Muller, 1992, Fourniau, 1996; Ollivro, 1997; Jobert, 1998; Leborgne, 1999, Blatrix, 2000). The authors agree on the distinction among the three main models of public action in infrastructure construction: the system of commands, the system of planning and the system of participation.

In the first period (1945-1970), public action featured the centrality of the State marked by the monopoly of professional expertise and an implementation of policies decided in a sovereign manner at the highest level with the planners (EDF, SNCF, ADP, etc.). This system of commands is based on a social consensus around the necessity of modernization and technical progress. The policy of highway construction is the paradigmatic illustration. In this framework, technical expertise doesn't worry about dialogue with local officials or consultation with the people concerned. The State alone, through its great institutional bodies, is able to define what the general interest is.

In the 1970s, faced with new middle classes and new social movements (in particular the anti-nuclear), questions of quality of life and environmental problems brought about by new equipment were beginning to be taken into account by the decision-makers. The emergence of projects like the high speed train (TGV), and in particular the construction of the TGV south-east (between 1969 and 1977), provide a paradigmatic example through the broadening of public inquiries prior to starting the projects up. This new regime of action took into account the fact that divergent points of view could co-exist, which meant that the monopoly of expertise and the definition of the general interest were put into question. Moreover, the delimitation of the groups legitimately concerned by development projects grew from the owners threatened by expropriation to a set of actors including suitable environmental associations and local officials. The associations thus rose to the status of authorized actors of public development and environment policies (Lascoumes, 1994). This is the context in which the law on the protection of nature (1976) called for impact studies for any new infrastructure project and that the law on the democratization of public inquiries widened the functions of prior consultation. Nevertheless, technical-economic legitimacy, which makes the developers the holders of the definition of the general interest, still obtains.

As of the 1980s, the development of the territory finally "really became political" (Jobert, 1998) with the empowerment of protest movements, and local officials, soon to be invested with new powers but also new responsibilities by the decentralization laws. There was also a new possibility for opponents to lodge protests with European bodies (Fillieule and Ferrier, 2000). In the late 1980s to counter accusations of a democratic deficit and the development of protests, a series of legislative and reglementary dispositions were taken in an attempt to respond to this new situation. Two important steps should be mentioned: the Bianco paper of December 15, 1992, the result of a mission on transport infrastructure based on the challenge to the general interest and the issue of citizen participation in decisions in the highly problematic context of the blocked situations of the Mediterranean TGV (Ollivro, 1997, Blatrix, 2000). The procedure set up a public debate at the beginning of the planned route studies both on the feasibility and the social-economic stakes of major transportation projects. And a continuous consultation process was also set up with the public. The paper spoke of dialogue as a modern form of consultation. Then on February 2, 1995, the Barnier law was voted, "concerning the reinforcement of the protection of the environment." Its aim was to correlate all the previous measures. It brought the public into the development decisions earlier by creating a National Commission of Public Debate (CNDP). The commission wasn't set up to reach a consensus but to provide a forum: "It encouraged the expression of all the arguments so as to go through them and thus provide the decision-makers with a sharp photo

not of public opinion (because the arguments would have to be weighed) but of the 'argument landscape' itself."²³ The first debate was organized around the Port 2000 project in Le Havre and the second around the Boutre Carros EHV line on the Côte d'Azur in France (Leborgne, 1999). As for EHV lines, it is important to mention the unprecedented signature of the State and EDF for "the installation of electric lines in the environment" (1992). Updated in 1997 in (Lascoumes and Valluy, 1996), this new, voluntary, agreement sets two important principles: the indemnization of local bodies by funding underground medium tension lines for EHV structures but also by credits to finance local activities; the indemnization of inhabitants of new electrical structures for "visual harm". The right to indemnities was extended from property owners only to a less limited set of individuals who could claim harm. This shows where the system of compensation (Jobert, 1998) results in that it contributes to a redefinition of the hinge between individual interests and the general interest. Invoking the general interest is thus no longer enough to demand the sacrifice of individual interests.

This is then the context of the deep changes in the ways of development and territorial conflict management by the State and of political occasions in which environmental conflicts are now developing in France. It is thus easier to understand the interest the government shows, after a long period of resistance without concessions, in "patching up" the democratic deficit in the installation decision by putting off the decisions to be taken and by organizing large concertion procedures.

²³ Porcell, report of the public debate, October 1998, p. 43. In Leborgne, 1999, p. 159.