
Narratives of violence in the making of an oppositional public space.
A material socio-history of the Susa Valley

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Abstract

A central element of the Italian public space, the No TAV movement has been widely studied already. Considering it as a socio-ecological conflict, marked by discourses on State violence against individual subjects and the “militarization” of the territory, this social struggle has shed new light on the concept of oppositional public space as developed by critic theoretician of the Frankfurt School Oskar Negt, in contrast with the bourgeois public sphere conceived by Jürgen Habermas. This resolutely proletarian perspective considers social class-based conflicts, marked by violence and marginality, as the motor of social change. Even if the socioeconomic dimension appears as secondary in the No TAV movement, the State violence it suffers, its marginality in the national public space, and its creative and emancipatory dimension nourish an extended definition of the oppositional public space.

Keywords

No TAV - Social Movement - Oppositional Public Space - Political Ecology

Since the creation of the Trans-European Transportation Network (TEN-T) in the early 90s', Lyon-Turin has been one of the leading projects of the EU transportation policy. The Turin-Lyon section is part of the Mediterranean Core Network Corridor (Sutton 2011). The project should contribute to sustainable development, the second principle of the European Union (Simonetti 2007). Beyond its European institutional grounds, the project benefits from significant national political and financial support. By contrast, the project induced a massive social movement. The No TAV – *No al treno ad alta velocità*¹ – is a grassroots movement, located in the Susa Valley, on the French-Italian border (Torsello 2013). It started as a local claim based on the opposition of activists to the Turin-Lyon railway line and can be considered as the most important “movement against mega projects” both in the Italian public space (Della Porta and Piazza 2008) and at the European scale (Della Porta and Caiani 2014).

¹«No to the high speed train».

In this perspective, the notion of public space should be specified. In fact, the conflictive dimension of the No TAV movement requires looking at a critical conception of the public space, distanced from Habermas' work. In its recent work, the independent sociologist Alessandro Senaldi has described the hostility of most national and regional media toward the No TAV movement, and the relegation of its stakeholders to "barbarism" and "irrationality", made clear through the use of the terms "*cattivi*" and "*primitivi*"² (Senaldi 2016). Based on the critical socio-historical work of Oskar Negt within the intellectual framework of the Frankfurt school, the concept of "oppositional public space" results from analyzing the class conflicts that once structured the French Revolution. This analysis highlights the ways in which violence and conflicts that oppose popular social classes to the State contribute to social change³ (Negt 2007 [1986]).

As a matter of fact, the activists of the Italian No TAV movement I conducted research with from 2012 to 2016 always focus, in their discourse, on the question of the movements' violent repression that can be summed up in the notion of "State violence" as defined by Max Weber (1919). Regardless of their age and social category, all the activists insist on the issue of violence. Their narratives evoke, differently, the memory of violence in contemporary Italy; violent acts against individuals or groups (inhabitants of the Susa valley, demonstrators, squatters, intellectuals) and the everyday militarization of the territory.

Defined as a "popular movement" by the movement stakeholders, No TAV has been described in the literature as a "social movement" (Della Porta and Piazza 2008). Cast out of a multiplicity of political streams and forces, several groups, collectives and associations play different roles in the No TAV structure, at a local, national or supranational scale (Grisoni 2017). This includes for example, a degrowth group in Torino, *La Decrescita*; a "centro sociale"⁴ in Naples; the No TAV group of Paris. Despite their differences, all the interviews reveal a strong attachment to the Susa Valley as a territorial entity that can suggest the representation of a continuity between the movement and its habitat. This strong subjective individual commitment (Grisoni 2011, Leonardi 2013), particularly perceived and expressed within violent contexts (Peluso and Watts 2011), characterizes numerous grassroots movements. Beyond this "popular" dimension, this article examines whether this "socio-ecological conflict" (Gerson and Paulson 2004), as long as it concerns both social and ecological topics gathered within the opposition to a mega project, can be considered as a structural

² *Nasty and primitive.*

³ This conception supposes a Simmelian comprehension of conflict as a social change factor (Simmel 2003).

⁴ The notion of *centro sociale* can be translated by the English term of Community center. It is peculiar, however, to the history of contemporary Italy and of the autonomous movement (Toscano 2012).

element of the “oppositional public space”. In fact, the social class-based definition of this concept interrogates the compatibility of the No TAV movement with the framework it suggests. First, acting in what is primarily a territorial struggle, this movement gives more visibility to the defense of the Susa Valley than to socio-economic issues or to the unity of a social class or group. Second, the political ecology perspective (Martinez Alier 1991) supposes an alternative “political ontology to the territory” (Escobar 2015) where the territory is not distanced but integrated, which requires conceiving its existence in the struggle. Within this perspective, can the “oppositional public space” concept be extended to the No TAV movement?

To answer this question, this article will focus on the issue of violence within the No TAV movement, as it is related by social stakeholders. The work of Stefania Barca, “Telling the Right Story: Environmental Violence and Liberation Narratives”, constitutes a general framework to conceive the historical and contemporary link between socio-ecological movements and State violence. Worldwide, from the attack of the Rainbow Warrior by the French army to the frequent murders of environmental activists in South American countries, State violence appears as a regular component of socio-ecological struggles. In the No TAV movement, the conflict starts with the very definition of what can be considered as ecological or not. In his work *Ce que parler veut dire*, Pierre Bourdieu observes the emergence of domination relationships through the control of terms and language by different social agents (Bourdieu 1991). In the case of Turin-Lyon railway line, the discussion is about what can be defined as sustainable and/or ecological, as long as the definition criteria of the European Union, the national State and the No TAV movement are completely opposed to one another, according to their ideologies (Grey and al. 2012). While political institutions preach the benefits of train infrastructures on road transportation, the No TAV stakeholders’ claims and ways of living converge toward an alternative conception of progress (Grisoni 2015). The relationship between the No TAV movement and the national State are not only negotiated under the form of discussion, polemic or controversies (Chateauraynaud and Torny 2003). As many other socio-ecological conflicts, the forms they take on are considered as «civil disobedience» demonstrations that lead to judicial and material repression forms from the central State.

Among the many interrogations this field addresses to sociology, this paper focuses on the following research question: how do the memory and the narratives of exceptional and common violence, as they are embodied and related by social stakeholders, highlight the making of an oppositional public space in the Susa Valley? This analysis pays as much attention to the subjectivity of social stakeholders, than to the materiality of violence. The first part of this paper presents the paradoxical role of violence in the No TAV movement; the second will evocate the memory of violence as

a fundamental element in the movement's social cohesion; the third will focus on the "militarization" of life and territory.

Methodology

Since the 1990s, many Italian researchers have produced numerous and excellent works on several aspects of the No TAV movement. My research considers specific issues, all linked to the ecological and environmental dimension of the No TAV movement. Actually, this so-called "territorial struggle" or "popular movement" started as an ecological struggle, through the creation of the Habitat collective in 1991. In this perspective, I observe several dimensions: the influences of different political movements and parties (*Lotta continua*, *I Verdi*) on the constitution of the movement; the role of environmental associations and NGOs as counter-expertise powers; the definition of "environmental ethics" through "everyday resistance" patterns and so-called ecological life styles in the Susa Valley; the representations of the territory conceived as a world view which leads to an alternative; the circulation of environmental categories within a European struggle space.

As a social movement sociologist, my approach is clear: I am not part of the No TAV movement, and my procedure is transparent when I introduce myself to social stakeholders. I visited the Susa Valley for the first time on Saturday, 26th of July, 2013. One week before, a demonstration degenerated into chaos and a young woman was sexually molested by some policemen. The atmosphere was extremely tense. In the successive months and years, the situation has evolved: some activists have been under house arrest; intellectuals have been convicted; municipal elections have been won by No TAV movement lists; and, recently, the city of Torino has chosen a *Cinque Stelle* Mayor, opposed to the project.

Over the past four years, I've spent a lot of time in the Susa Valley, and more generally in Northern Italy, in order to meet activists in Torino's and Milano's "*centri sociali*". I actively participated in several marches, demonstrations and camps in the mountain. With the No TAV stakeholders, I feared the police attacks, slept in camps that were dismantled the next day, and walked kilometers under the sun to avoid roadblocks, and because I don't have a driving license. Whatever their age and the category in which I had placed them, the respondents evoked or insisted on the topic of violence.

The methodology was the following: semi-structured interviews were conducted during the year with three categories of social stakeholders, defined according to age group criteria (1st group: 18 to 30 year olds: 7 individuals; 2nd group: 30 to 45 year olds: 6 individuals; 3rd group: 45 to 80 year olds: 7 individuals). Beyond those generational elements, the categories were outlined after several months of

observation, in reference to social class and a typology of forms of commitment to the No TAV movement. Moreover, a focus group was conducted with the third category (45 to 80 year olds), characterized by its commitment within the counter-experts group, the “scientific committee” born out of Habitat. Numerous materials were collected: the No TAV mailing list that relays information from Presidio Europas’ website and blog; official data, produced by formal institutions; counter-experts documents from the movements’ counter-observatory; flyers, posters, presentations material; self-produced or edited books.

1. The paradoxical role of violence within the No TAV movement

Telling the socio-history of the related violence toward No TAV requires clarifying some elements regarding the movement’s political composition. This so-called “territorial movement” is characterized by a large factual and discursive political heterogeneity. The people interviewed insist critically or with amusement on this diversity. Most of them mention the participation of depoliticized inhabitants, retired Catholics (*I cattolici per la valle*⁵), urban squatters and even former *Lega Nord* members. In fact this diversity is even larger. Living or written biographies of the movement highlight its anarchist, pacifist, ecologist, far leftist and No global political roots. Similarly, the No TAV movement has been modified all along its history by the emergence of new political factions, such as the Degrowth or the *Cinque Stelle* movement and the significant decline in influence of others.

This evolution, intrinsically connected to the contemporary political history of Italy, also concerns individual trajectories. If younger stakeholders are unanimously linked to the *centri sociali* autonomous movement, the second and the third categories’ members’ political positions reveal multiple belongings: radical ecology and social discourse for the 30-45 year olds; and a far left past and strong commitment within the heart of the movement nowadays for the 45-80 year olds.

This political heterogeneity and the gathering around a specific territory – the Susa Valley – allow one to get beyond the question of ideology and a social class-based struggle. As a matter of fact, the burgeoning far left movement in the 70s in Italy had a huge influence on the No TAV movement. Beyond protectionist environmentalist movements, the history of Italian ecology was born and partly started with a scission from the far left student movement⁶. Alexander Langer, founder of the Italian party /

⁵ *Catholics for the valley.*

⁶ Beyond the violence issue, other factors explain the growing interest for ecological topics in the 80s Italy. According to Emilio, vice-president of Pronatura and one of the oldest members of the No TAV, *I Verdi “could have probably never developed themselves without Chernobyl”*.

Verdi (created in 1981) and federalist Euro-deputy, started his career as a journalist for the communist party *Lotta Continua*. According to his biography author Giorgio Grimaldi, his rejection of armed struggle partly explains his break with this faction and the creation of the *Verdi* that gathered, in a first period, the beginnings of the No TAV movement within the summit *Il futuro delle Alpi*⁷, that took place in Trento in 1989 (Grimaldi 2001).

In particular, the *Anni di piombo* as a historical event seems to mark a crucial turning point within the dissension of actual No TAV stakeholders with the student and labor movement. Some of the oldest stakeholders interviewed refer explicitly to this period. 80-year-old Gaetano, a former member of *Lotta Continua*, a Turinese bookseller and a very active member of the Pronatura NGO, tells us more about the political background of those years. He first mentions what he calls a “migration”, and the foundation of an ecologist movement after the rejection of radical violence:

G.: In fact, the Italian green party was born in the 80s ... an important part of them [the founders] are the «migrants» of Lotta Continua’s movement, going toward ... toward ecology. Not only Langer, but also Boato and many others ... and that, that is obviously due to the violence ... the violence, during those years was, was terrible.

Then he explains more precisely the reasons for this scission:

G.: It was due to the crisis of a political experience, the end of a political experience, a political crisis, that’s it, the crisis of the working-class movement, and ... the story of the Red Brigades, terrorism, so ... the Anni di piombo ... isn’t that right?

The next excerpt reveals a comprehensive but hesitating attitude toward the Red Brigades’ “armed struggle turn”:

A.: “Terrorism” ... is that your word? What did you feel in this moment? A shock? Like the end of something, like a crisis?

G.: It was the end of a political cycle, which probably did not find other ways for existing. At that time, left wing parties and what had been the student movement, so Lotta Continua, was suddenly excluded, in some way. Probably, the lack of political change for this generation ended with ... what I call terrorism in a generic way; it is just in order to understand each other, in order to use a term, a conventional term because, well, discovering or using armed struggle ... is not the only solution, right? So a marginal part of them slipped down to the armed struggle ideology.

This interview is particularly illustrative, in that it reveals a very common position toward violence in the third group of No TAV activists. In any case, the emergence of

⁷«The Alps’ future».

terrorism is considered as a turning point in the Italian political history.⁸ Past and present violence of anarchist or leftist groups or individuals are not directly condemned, but they are not recognized as an efficient struggle solution. As shown in the following excerpt, alternative ways are always preferred:

A.: And what happened with all those who wanted to act differently?

G.: Well, for me, they have been, altogether, out of place and out of time ... excluded, excluded from the political class changes. Except a very few of them.

Not only older activists but also younger generations mention this rupture with armed struggle. Here, Romeo, one of the most charismatic leaders of a Milanese *centro sociale* tells his interpretation of the story of the Student movement in the 60s:

It has been the most important student movement in Italy; it was very strong in 1968 ... It has always been problematic because of order issues. I mean, that this movement had a very nasty security team that is why [the stakeholders] have always been considered as Stalinian. They were opposed to the Autonomous movement; they did not agree at all with Autonomous. For them, Autonomous stakeholders are guilty of the ruin of the student movement ... this, this huge participation ... what had been the armed struggle. They formed this group, called the Katanga, the one of the security team, well-known for its extreme violence, for anything, the repression was extremely violent without any discrimination. That's why the people did not think much of them.

Other stakeholders from the second group demonstrate a clearly non-violent posture. 45-year-old jobless scientist Elena does not declare a political affiliation, but her narrative shows a pacifist stance: *"I can't conceive violence ... under any circumstance. I think that the human species has evolved enough to settle conflicts in another way. Or, at least, it should be the case, because they are many ways to settle conflicts in a pacific way. Pacific and at the same time non-violent"*. For her, the No TAV movement constitutes a non-violent "means of expression", based on an *"engaging participation, cordiality, warmth"*. She believes that the Susa Valley represents a particular place, where there is a smaller number of violent acts on children and women. She highlights with a strong focus on individual subjectivity woman's condition in this territory, thanks to the strength of the No TAV movement and says: *"here, everybody is fully respected here ... everybody is in action, for what can be done, from children to grandparents ... women are absolutely, totally respected ... there is no problem of discrimination, in any way. Yes, that is what it is; it is a school of humanity"*.

⁸ While he evokes his far leftist past and his happiness for participating to the worker movement in Turin in the 70s, No TAV stakeholder Rocco directly gives his opinion about terrorism: *"terrorism's spark reduced to ashes all this phenomenon in just a few years"*.

Among other elements, like the influence of pacifism or anarchism, both heterogeneity of the movement and rejection of the armed struggle mark the distance of the No TAV movement from the labor movement. In that respect, can the No TAV movement be considered as a driving force of social change? The concept of oppositional public space as it is described by Oskar Negt is structured upon a strictly Marxist and proletarian approach. Nevertheless, Alexander Neumann, translator and exegete of the Frankfurt School theoretician, extends this definition:

The oppositional public space of Negt and Kluge describes the democratic overflowing of this representative deliberation, starting from the proletarian experience of public speaking, shaped by many people that represent nothing for the bourgeois society: women, youth, foreigners, migrants, outsiders, homosexuals, intellectuals, German Jews, anarchists and other stakeholders who escape the established norm. This overflowing is not built up on the name of the industrial, statistically evaluated labor class; it's based on the lived experience of contempt, expropriation and violence (Neumann 2009, 186).

The end of the seventies corresponds to the end of the hegemonic and classical form of the labor movement. From the "new social movements" framework (Touraine 1981) to the macro-theories that aim to demonstrate the end of "great ideologies", the confrontation between different approaches of social movements in political sociology illustrates a theoretical change in the place and composition of contemporary mobilizations. Far from claiming for the one or another, this article aims to interrogate the possible use of a class-based concept for a territorial struggle.

In this perspective, the heterogeneity of the No TAV movement can be considered as a whole, faced to the "disdain, expropriation and violence" expressed by the bourgeois society as described first by Negt and then Neumann. This unity in front of the common enemy generates group consciousness and solidarity. Not all No TAV stakeholders have such a categorical rejection of disobedience actions generally considered as violent, as for example stone-throwing or sabotage. However, there is a consensus about the rejection of armed violence, as we can observe in Romeo's excerpt: *"It's crazy, nobody wants to kill policemen in the construction site ... we want to fight against the project, with all the available means, except with weapons, with terrorism, with subversion"*.

Despite the multiple heterogeneity factors, the general discourse of the No TAV movement aims to protect all the members of the struggle as a whole. The 80-year-old vice-president of *Pronatura* takes the defense of younger participants: *"The centri sociali are demonized; they call them violent, but I know them very well; they are very intelligent, so I would say that if all Turinesi people were like Askatasunas' guys, we*

would have less problems". For Romeo, this message of unity is fundamental to resist the divisions operated by the State: "*They want to divide, the violent ones, the ones who attack, and that is not acceptable; they want to divide one movement from another*".

While it claims its rejection of armed struggle, the No TAV movement is made a target of State violence to a considerable degree. Therefore, it interferes with a smooth conception of the public space as described by Jürgen Habermas:

Habermas designed the model of an ideal public space that can be the place of publicity for ideas and knowledge, the ideal place for deliberation and consensus between citizens. In fact, the bourgeois historically used the public space in order to settle their differences, some of their problems and defend their interests, denying or neutralizing whole sectors of society. Under their control, the public space is an "illusory social synthesis". Those social groups, whose access to public deliberation is denied, act and speak during revolutions and various movements, within places and frameworks as clubs, committees, coordination groups or councils they invent and animate outside of the bourgeois public space that pretend to represent the whole society (Neumann 2009, 186).

Despite the large range of rational-scientific and political grammar of actions (counter-expertise group, building up of local association, participation to local elections), the No TAV movement is mostly limited to its so-called "disobedient actions" and manifestations in the regional and national media sphere, and can be, for this reason, considered as excluded from the bourgeois public space as defined by Negt and Neumann. In this perspective, it evolves on another space, characterized by marginality and violence toward the movement.

2. Memories of violence: being part of an oppositional socio-history

If the No TAV movement constructs its identity on a rupture with armed struggle and the *Anni di Piombo*, most of their narratives refer to a selected national history. The recourse to the *Partigiani's* action during the Second World War, or to the Constitution of 1948, relates to a specific leftist conception of the Italian Republic and the relationship between the State, the people and political unions. In this perspective, the No TAV movement is placed within a resistant memory continuity. A young Milanese *centro sociale* member synthesizes perfectly this continuity between resistant movements within the Italian history: "*What we do have in common? Resistance. The Partigiani's resistance, yes, by resistance, I mean the Second World War resistance*". Brunella, a 40 years old medical secretary living in Torino, compares German

occupation to the Susa Valley's situation: "so, it's a strong symbol ... what was considered a normal situation, the military occupation during the Second World War, became fortunately, 60 or 70 years after, a strong symbol. The references change, for sure but there are still common features". In this excerpt, the territory occupation can be interpreted as a State violence form both against the land and against the inhabitants. For Elena, those comparisons are the subject of a collective construction of the memory:

You know, we wondered many times, speaking with other persons that you know, I mean, friends, we are friends in this adventures and companions in a good way. We make analogies between the No TAV movement and the Partigiani's resistance, or, I don't know, between the No TAV women and the 1968 feminists ... there are common features. In the first instance, participation. People facing a problem that can be ideological or, like in our case, very pragmatic, who decide to organize themselves and suggest an alternative. Beyond objective differences that make you face history, the period in which you live and you act. For sure, there are analogies, there is a deep analogy ... Resisters had an imperative, they had to liberate an occupied territory, which is also the case for us, on a smaller territorial scale.

Once again, despite ideological differences the comparison is founded first on ways of acting and second on the territory occupation (Graeber 2013, Armano and al. 2013). In this perspective, the never defined notion of territory takes the value of a subject. In the same way, the Social forum of Genoa and its specific State repression that caused the death of a young boy and thousands of injured No global stakeholders in 2001 constitutes, in the No TAV activists discourses, a major turning point. First in the convergence of several political movements – leftist, ecologists, No Global – and second in the crossroad history of State violence toward social movements in Italy. The already quoted activist Brunella describes this event as the start of a new period:

After what happened in Genoa, people who wanted to understand understood that in Genoa, the State was in action, the State was not a democracy anymore. Since Genoa, we have the keys to understand how much the State lies ... All the stories about the death of Carlo Giuliani, the murder of Carlo Giuliani, it was all a construction.

Romeo describes what he calls a "lack of democracy" within the State repression through the intermission of Police in public order management and also gives the example of Genoa:

Italian history is violent ... I mean, the police is more violent than in many countries ... The problem is that in Italy, Police often takes over police affairs. When its will is very strong, as you can see in Genoa, it means that the bomb is about to explode. In this way the management of the public order becomes a political affair. In this moment, if Police

wants somebody to die or to be massacred in the Diaz⁹, well I tell you the real problem of Italy is the political will.

If only a few of the activists actually participated to the movement, most of them refer to this episode spontaneously in the interviews. For some of the younger No TAV stakeholders, experiencing Genoa represented a rite of passage, and not doing it a real disappointment.

More specifically, the Susa Valley history is characterized by an intrinsic history of violence. The first episode of this confrontation that clearly appears in the stakeholder's discourses is the suicide of Sole and Baleno related here by Brunella:

Sole and Baleno had been accused as members of the Lupi Grigi, a terrorist cell ... and they had been put in jail, that's it, during one of the numerous manipulations of the Turin tribunal. Both of them had been in jail, the girl was so young, she was not even, I can't remember but she was not even twenty years old, she was not even Italian, she has been in Italy only for a few months. The boy, Baleno, had already been condemned, so when he was put in jail again, he lost control, he lost all his confidence and killed himself. Fifteen days later, she killed herself too. She was his girlfriend, she was accused for certain acts she couldn't even have done, because she was not in Italy in that period.

The suicide of this young couple in jail is described as the consequence of an "unfair" judicial measure. Both "injustice" and "illegitimacy" are, too, central accusation of No TAV stakeholders toward governmental and judicial decisions.

On the same way, the repression of demonstrations by the police and the army is described as particularly strong, violent and inappropriate. Physical violence, accusations of terrorism and heavy jail sentences are always associated in the discourses where legitimate defense and State violence are systematically undertone, as we can read in this excerpt of Romeo's interview telling both demonstrations of June, 25th and July, 3rd 2013:

In the morning they conducted searches and arrested them [11 activists] for terrorism. That is why we have been at the Presidio yesterday night. The strength of the dismantling this day, the 3rd of July, is based on the huge demonstration...it was risky, they [the Susa Valley inhabitants] all were committed even if they were a bit afraid, they knew that they were risking 8 years in jail. Because they threw stones on the building site.

In this perspective, the accusation of violence is backfired against the State and the legal apparatus. In a climate of violence, people and land are considered by social

⁹ Diaz is the name of a school in Genoa where several hundreds of No Global young activists were attacked during the night by the Italian police in 2001.

stakeholders to be under control, which leads social stakeholders to speak about the militarization of the territory.

3. From violence toward subjects to the militarization of the territory: the constitution of an oppositional public space

Beyond past and present material repression of social stakeholders, interviews of No TAV activists focus on the violence against the Susa valley. It is important here to specify that, within the numerous justifications for the opposition to the Turin-Lyon railway line, there is no distinction or hierarchy between ecological, economic and financial motivations (Cavargna 2006). Violence against the land and the people is conceived as a whole, no matter if it concerns every-day or exceptional threat. In this perspective, the constitution of an oppositional public space, based on the use, the perception, the telling of violence on the individual and collective subjectivity can be extended not only to the group of activists, but also to the territory, marking the continuity between an individual, human and a land material embodiment. Thus, the construction site is perceived as dangerous, first because it could generate the drying up of the aquifers and air pollution of the Susa Valley; second because workers are considered to work without regulatory conditions. Brunella's 44-year-old husband – a transportation engineer – attended the first interview with Pronatura's vice-president. He summarizes in a few words a major judicial case:

Wait, I can tell you this one, because I'm not part of Pronatura ... among other things, within the Chiomonte's tunnel project, it has been observed that they are constructing the gallery in dangerous conditions, even for the workers. Marco Cavargna, Pronatura's president, made a statement concerning this fact and he has been denounced for launching a false alarm.

Second, because stakeholders' discourses mark a continuity between an individual, human and a land material embodiment of the violence, as shown by 23-year-old Furio's interview. After describing a particularly repressive episode of the movement's confrontation with the police force, he adds:

It has been one of the most repressive moments in Italian history, in the Susa Valley ... the 27th of June [2013], the troops came to destroy everything. They sent 2500 units to control 1000 persons, maybe, in the mountain! They went to the construction sites, where we had constructed barricades, or such things, with helmets, and they started to throw tear gas, CS, war weapons! I was there, I saw the police arriving and suddenly starting to gas us ... this gas has devastating effects! This is supposed to be a strong and repressive strategy ... and this strategy was followed by continuous provocations, on another construction site, continuous provocations from the police. The camp has been gassed very often, children have been gassed; I saw 6-year-old children with gasmasks

on their eyes against tear gas. Expulsion acts, activists' cars on fire, this kind of actions, escalation on every front, really, on every front.

He concludes that the Susa Valley can be characterized by a “militarization”, almost a “war situation”:

The third level is the militarization of mega projects territories, with military forces. In the Susa Valley, at any moment of the year, if you arrive at the first barrage, you can be stopped by the police, almost systematically, when you turn your head, you see the troops, yes, because they sent the special troops, the so-called «hunters» from Calabria and Sardinia, so the ones who are supposed to search for the mafia members in the mountains. They sent the hunters; they sent the army; they sent them all.

The term “militarization” is not only used by this interviewed young boy, member of a famous Milanese *centro sociale*. This land and people governing strategy is taken up by 32 years old Francesco, social worker in a NGO and Susa Valley local inhabitant. For him, the “*valley militarization*”, characterized by “*controls everywhere, during those protest hot times*” is the symbol of strength-using State.

Beyond the Susa Valley, evoked as a global entity, some struggle nerve points are considered with a special attention. For instance, the case of the Credenza¹⁰ hostel is quoted by Turinese 25-years-old Margarita. She calls this place “a historical hostel of the movement”, “a No TAV hostel where the first mountain community meetings have been led”. She concludes with bitterness: “*They also touched this symbol, which is the basis... not the action logistic basis but the basis of thinking*”. On the same way, Venaus campsites numerous dismantling and reconstructions are at the center of concern for all activists.

Despite its rupture with the labor movement, the No TAV movement, as a multiple, media-marginal and violently repressed struggle, can be considered as an important force of social change in the Italian oppositional public space. If the social class-based aspects are presented as secondary – even if still important – the re-composition of social, economic, environmental categories and the continuity between discourses on violence against individuals and the militarization of the Valley, the No TAV movement can be considered as a social change modality that is not limited to the use of rational discourses but integrates violent confrontations. This perspective makes illustrate the extension of the oppositional public space definition, suggested by Alexander Neumann:

¹⁰La Credenza is the name of a lodge located in the village of Bussoleno that represents one of the historically central positions of the No TAV movement.

The struggle is made proletarian by the direct and carnal experience of its non-recognition. For Negt as for Marx, being proletarian is a social experience category. The proletarian dimension always draws upon singular experiences of dominated people, which means that the proletarian concept absorbs material social processes that concern oppression and its possible overtaking at the same time (Neumann 2009, 186).

For Neumann, the subject experience is central in this definition of conflictive and creative public space that would be a space for the public speaking, where the creative resistance to oppression makes emerge new kinds of deliberation.

Conclusion

Beyond the historical centrality of the labor class, the continuity between the violence toward individuals and the militarization of the valley can be considered as a creative illustration of the oppositional public space. In another way, reflecting on the Susa valley struggle in terms of creative conflict is a way to renew the theoretical frames of political ecology. Trying to highlight the continuity established by No TAV stakeholders between the land and the people of the Susa Valley through denouncing of the State violence is a way to focus on the conflict about two conceptions of nature. The one, liberal and development-based, is inherited from the ecological modernization (Buttel 2000), recommends resources exploitation and technical solutions; the other one, that admits a political continuity between socio-ecosystems as a whole and human groups. If the social class and ideology issues are not at the center of this struggle (although far from being indifferent), the No TAV can be defined a popular movement referring to its opposition to technocratic and dominant enemies. Therefore, within this perspective, the movement relationship to the territory is not mystical or symbolical, but material and political. In this context, the concept of oppositional public space can be considered beyond its primary acceptation and integrate new issues as the degradation of the living environment, the rural territories' subjugation to metropolis, the growing social inequalities toward health (Grisoni 2017b), and middle class precarization (Grisoni 2017a).

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