THREE IN ONE:
CURRENTS IN THE MILAN ECOLOGY MOVEMENT

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I. INTRODUCTION

Many students of collective action have questioned the long-accepted belief that social movements consist of homogeneous collective actors (Touraine 1978; Melucci 1982; Tarrow 1983). Though starting from quite different theoretical viewpoints, these authors have stressed that each protest event involves many different actors, who attribute differing and frequently contradictory meanings to the same processes of mobilization.

The ecology movements that have arisen in Western societies in the last decade provide us with ample empirical evidence of such heterogeneity (see for instance Nelkin and Pollack 1981; Lowe and Goyder 1983; Papadakis 1984; Rudig 1986, 1987; Rucht 1987). Milan's ecology movement, the subject of this paper, is no exception. In our examination of this movement, we first analyze its composition, focusing on the most committed activists. We then draw a

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picture of the main political and cultural currents within the movement. Next (in Section III) we show how such currents differ according to the characteristics of their respective constituencies and (Section IV) also ask whether the persisting differences in approaches to ecology action have any effect on the processes of recruitment and patterns of participation. In the final section the paper's mainly descriptive perspective gives way to a more interpretive one, aimed at providing some suggestions for further analysis.

The empirical evidence for the analysis performed in Sections III and IV was gathered through semistructured questionnaires. Although we tried to interview all full members of the 55 groups and associations active in the Milan metropolitan area, we actually succeeded in contacting only 204 out of an estimated total of 400.

II. CURRENTS IN THE ECOLOGY MOVEMENT

Cooperation between the organizations concerned with the defense of the natural and urban environment in Italy has increased sharply in recent years, particularly among the most important groups, such as Italia Nostra, WWF (World Wildlife Fund), and Lega per l'Ambiente.[1] Indeed, one could even say that these three organizations today represent a permanent coordinating body for environmentalist action. Their influence was confirmed by the recent campaigns (Spring 1986) to promote two popular referendums against nuclear energy and hunting, conducted jointly with other ecology organizations and political groups such as the Radical Party or the Worker's Democracy Party (Democrazia Proletaria). Furthermore, a wider research project on the structure of the ecology movement in Milan, some of the results of which are presented in this paper, stresses the relevance of interorganizational links even at the local level (Diani 1987).

These interconnections should not however be taken as a sign of increasing social and cultural integration of the basic components within the ecology movement. On the contrary, the differences between them are still very deep. More specifically, we can identify at least three distinct cultural and political approaches to the ecology issues. The first, which we will describe as *conservationist,* represented until the 1960s the only active form of ecology action in Italy. Groups such as Italia Nostra, Pro Natura, and various animal rights leagues fall into this category. The main aim of the conservationist group is, as the term suggests, the defense of the environment understood largely in terms of natural heritage (parks, fauna, coasts, etc.). The conservationists' objectives often include protection of the nation's artistic and architectural heritage as well. In their view, the primary cause of environmental decay is the irrationality of human behavior in its broadest sense, our inability to free ourselves from short-sighted utilitarianism. What is necessary above all, they

argue, is to stimulate awareness of the environment through education of the public and by action to inform and put pressure on institutions.

Toward the mid-1970s, and especially after the accident at Seveso (1976), Italy also saw the development of *political ecology,* whose base largely coincided with that of the other social movements of the day. Unlike the conservationists, those in the political ecology movement blamed environmental degradation on the capitalist pattern of development and called for closer links between ecology action and other expressions of social protest. During this first phase political ecology mobilizations tended to coincide (not by chance) with actions against nuclear power plants, whose target was not so much the source of energy in itself as the social model it presupposed—the "nuclear society" (Nelkin and Pollack 1981). With respect to conservationism, attention tended to shift from the natural to the urban or social environment; and the orientation changed from one of integration in the political system to one of confrontation with the system.

We might summarize the differences between conservationism and political ecology in terms of the distinction between a basically "reactive" approach, adopted by the former, and a "proactive" approach, stressed by the latter (see Tilly 1978). In fact, the groups of the conservationist current are primarily concerned with the preservation of the natural and urban habitat. We can therefore consider their mobilizations as actions oriented toward defending "already established" rights, for example, the right to live in a nonpolluted environment. Such rights, which were never questioned in the past, have, with the increasing development of an industrial society, now become threatened.

Political ecology organizations, in contrast, desire wider social change. Thus they mobilize to impose new rights and claims, not only to defend already legitimate ones, and they stress the quest for grass-roots democracy and for direct control by the citizens over industrial production and over energy and economic policies.

A third component of the ecology movement, possibly less conspicuous in numerical terms but of considerable importance on the political level, again since the 1970s, is what we will call *environmentalism.* This approach differs from the other two principally in the eclecticism of its theoretical background and its willingness to draw from several and often very different traditions of ecologist thought and collective action. Borrowing widely from the strategies and tactics introduced for the first time in Italy by the Radical Party, organizations such as Friends of the Earth or LIPU (Italian League for the Protection of Birds) have on different occasions mobilized in defense of the natural environment or expressed strong criticism of industrial society through support of the antinuclear movement. Their mobilizations are therefore a mix of reactive (the defense of what still survives) and proactive action (the quest for a new pattern of social and economic development), and differ from those of the other currents in their essentially pragmatic nature. Currently the Italian

CONSERVATIONISM

Italia Nostra (Let's Save Our Italy)

Animal rights groups:
ENPA (Ente Nazionale Protezione Animali/National Association for the Protection of Animals); LeAL (Lega Antivivisezionista Lombarda/Lombardy Anti-vivisection Legaue); Lega Nazionale per la Difesa del Cane (National League for the Protection of Dogs); MondoGatto (Cats' World); LAN (Lega Antivisezionista Nazionale/National Anti-Vivisection League)

Moderate Citizens' Action Groups:
Trezzano, Opera, Fiera (Milan), San Siro (Milan), Sempione (Milan)

Other organizations:
Istituto Ecologico Internazionale (International Ecology Institute); Gruppo Naturalistico Brianza (Brianza Association for the Preservation of Nature)

ENVIRONMENTALISM

Local branches of the WWF (World Wildlife Fund):
Regional Office, Milan, Cinisello, San Donato, Rho

Animal Rights Leagues:
LIPU (Lega Italiana per la Protezione degli Uccelli/Italian League for the Protection of Birds); LAC (Lega per l'Abolizione della Caccia/League for the Abolition of Hunting); LAV (Lega Anti Vivisezione/Anti-vivisection League)

Associazione per il Parco Sud (Association for the Southern Milan Area Park)

Libertarian ecology grass-roots groups:
Associazione Citta' Verde (Green City Association); Liberta' Futura (Future Freedom); Studenti Verdi (Green Students)

POLITICAL ECOLOGY

Local branches of Lega per l'Ambiente (League for the Environment):
Milan, Novate, Bollate, Cinisello, Cologno

Local green parties:
Regional Party, Milan, Cologno, Rho, Sesto S. Giovanni

Autonomous grass-roots groups:
Sesto S. Giovanni, Ecology 15 (Milan), Ecology 10 (Milan), Cologno

Action on health organizations:
Medicina Democratica (Democratic Medicine); Gruppo Locale di Figino (Figino Health Action Group)

Technical/scientific action groups:
Geologia Democratica (Democratic Geology); Istituto Uomo/Ambiente (Man and Environment Institute)

Countercultural organizations:
Agrisalus (Alternative Food and Agriculture); AAM Terra Nuova (AAM New Land/Alternative Agriculture); Associazione Culturale Roccabrivio (Roccabrivio Cultural Association)

Figure 1. Currents in the ecology movement in Milan

section of the WWF would also seem to fall into this environmentalist category. Though the WWF was founded on strictly conservationist principles, its long history of single-issue mobilization and its willingness to commit itself to specific and not necessarily coherent objectives have brought together within the organization a variety of different approaches to the ecological problem. For instance, it is quite common in the WWF to find collaboration between rigidly conservationist, apolitical activists and militants critical of the dominant model of social relations.

In terms of its capacity for action and organization, if not of the size of its membership, the most important conservationist group in Milan is undoubtedly Italia Nostra. The majority of animal rights groups also share a conservationist approach, and so represent a significant and consolidated presence. A more recent phenomenon, however, is the emergence of rather conservative local committees and neighborhood organizations, usually active on specific issues. Altogether we placed sixteen groups in this category for a total of 51 activists—about 25% of the sample.

Under the environmentalist heading fall various local WWF groups; a few single-issue committees; some animal rights groups, such as LIPU, LAC, and LAV, originally close to the Radical Party; and libertarian ecology groups—11 groups in all, with 53 activists, thus making up 26% of the total.

The principal political ecology groups are, on the one hand, the different sections of the League for the Environment and, on the other, the various green lists formed at the time of the 1985 local administrative elections. Also represented in this current are autonomous leftist groups, health-action organizations, and technical/scientific action committees—altogether twenty-eight groups, 99 militants, for 49% of the total (see Figure 1).

III. THREE CONSTITUENCIES OF ECOLOGY ACTION

Socio-demographic Traits

Most studies of the ecology movement show that interest in environmental issues is highest among young people of medium-high education; the data thus support Inglehart's hypothesis (1977) about the spread of postmaterialist values (see among others, Papadakis 1984; Müller-Rommel 1985a). But other researchers find that concern for the environment cuts right across social distinctions, however these are defined (age, gender, occupation, education) (see Lowe and Rudig 1986 for an overview of this debate). There seems to be some agreement about the fact that active participation in ecology movements is essentially a middle-class phenomenon (Cotgrove and Duff 1981, 1982; Lowe and Goyder 1983). Our research does not contradict these findings: Table 1 shows that ecology activists in Milan tend to be young, with a higher than average education, and are involved primarily in intellectual activities

Table 1. Sociodemographic Profiles of Ecology Activists and General Population in the Province of Milan (in percentages)

	Ecology Activists	*Milan Population**
Gender:		
Men	73	48
Women	27	52
Age:		
Under 36	58	40
Over 36	42	60
Education Level:		
Compulsory	16	82
High School	48	14
Graduate	36	4
Occupation:		
Nonemployed	8	36
Students	18	9
Blue-collar	11	25
Shopkeepers	6	7
White-collar	27	18
Teachers	10	3
Professionals	20	2
Total	100%	100%
N	(204)	(2,976,000)

* These percentages are computed on the basis of the population in the Milan province falling into the same age range (18-78) as the ecology activists.

Source: ISTAT (National Institute for Statistics), *Dati del censimento nazionale 1981* (National Census, 1981). Rome, 1983.

(they are professionals, teachers, students, and office workers). Although the activists are for the most part male, the incidence of women is far from insignificant, given the traditionally low levels of women's political participation in Italy.[2]

Nonetheless, one common shortcoming of studies of ecology militancy is that they tend to underestimate the heterogeneity of the actors involved, neglecting the sometimes very significant differences in the social composition of the various currents. A more detailed analysis of the socio-demographic data will allow us to pinpoint such differences more accurately.

The first point to emphasize is that the more traditional approach to ecology action proves by far the most effective in mobilizing female activists. In fact, half the militants in the conservationist current are women, who are

Table 2. Gender by Ecological Current (in percentages)

	Conservationism	*Environmentalism*	*Political Ecology*	*All*
Men	49	79	82	73
Women	51	21	18	27
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	(51)	(53)	(99)	(203)

concentrated in particular in the various animal rights organizations. The proportion of women activists is much smaller in environmentalist and political ecology groups, in neither case exceeding one-fifth of the total number of members (Table 2).

Ages among members range from 18 to 78, with an overall average of 36; the analysis was conducted on five age groups: 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-60, and 61-78. In determining these ranges we took into account the probable life experience of each age group, in particular its relation to collective movements of the 1960s and 1970s. By "relation" we mean not direct participation in those movements but contact with specific cultural attitudes and worldviews. We can assume that the age groups most directly influenced by that cycle of mobilization are the middle ones (26-35 and 36-45 years); contact tends to decrease among younger members and falls off dramatically among the older activists. Further, our data clearly show that the conservationist current is much more successful among older activists, while younger activists are more attracted to the environmentalism and political ecology currents (Table 3).

We isolated seven groups by occupation: nonemployed (housewives and retired people), students, blue-collar workers, white-collar workers, teachers, shopkeepers and craftsmen, and professionals (Table 4). The relative weight of these categories is consistent with the picture of ecology activism (and participation in the "new" social movements in general) as an intellectual middle-class phenomenon. On the other hand, the various currents of ecology action do not appear to differ significantly in terms of their members' occupation. There is certainly an overwhelming presence of retired people and housewives within the conservationist groups; students are slightly over-represented in the environmentalist current; a political ecology approach is more likely than a traditional conservationist approach to attract activists from the working class. Yet the analysis of occupation reveals a far less heterogeneous movement than one might expect, given our initial assumptions in this chapter.

Table 3. Age by Ecological Current (in percentages)

	Conserva-tionism	*Environ-mentalism*	*Political Ecology*	*All*
18-25	6	28	27	22
26-35	22	42	41	36
36-45	20	13	21	19
46-60	42	13	8	18
61-78	10	4	3	5
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	(50)	(53)	(97)	(200)

Table 4. Occupation by Ecological Current (in percentages)

	Conserva-tionism	*Environ-mentalism*	*Political Ecology*	*All*
Nonemployed	26	6	0	8
Students	8	28	18	18
Blue-collar	4	8	17	11
Shopkeepers	10	2	5	6
White-collar	18	26	32	27
Teachers	8	9	11	10
Professionals	26	21	17	20
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	(50)	(53)	(99)	(202)

Finally a word about both the level of general education and the specialized technical enterprise among the activists, an aspect of particular relevance to environmental protection, where the scientific and cultural elements are especially important. We have already emphasized the overwhelming presence of well educated activists in the movement (Table 1). Furthermore, our research data show that 26% of the militants have some specific ecology-related expertise, either as a result of past studies (e.g., a university degree in scientific disciplines) or through their present occupation. On the other hand, our sample of activists reveals no differentiation among the various sectors in terms of education or these more specific skills.

Political Background

The three currents of the ecology movement differ much more clearly with respect to the past experience of their activists. Many studies have pointed out that past militancy provides individuals with political and organizational skills

Table 5. Political Participation in the Past by Ecological Current (in percentages)

	Conserva-tionism	*Environ-mentalism*	*Political Ecology*	*All*
No Participation	78	66	24	49
Political Parties	10	15	24	18
Other Political Organizations	6	11	43	25
Clubs, Circles	6	8	9	8
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	(51)	(53)	(96)	(200)

they can call upon afterward in new and different circumstances (McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977). At the same time, personal contacts and solidarity networks set up for one cause can always be reactivated later to produce new episodes of mobilization.[3] We would therefore have expected a high incidence of past commitment among our sample, ecological and otherwise. More particularly, we would have expected to find: first, a marked presence of political commitment among the political ecology militants; second, among the conservationists and environmentalists, a substantial number of people with experience of membership in other organizations such as cultural circles or voluntary groups.

The findings only partially confirmed our expectations. About half the sample proved to have been active in nonecology-oriented organizations. If we examine the different currents individually, however, we find that the incidence of former activists is especially high in the political ecology current, much lower among the environmentalists, and still lower among the conservationists. This conclusion remains valid irrespective of the type of past commitment involved, be it membership in political parties, other sociopolitical organizations (trade unions, SMOs, etc.), or clubs and circles (see Table 5).

It is worth noting that the low figure for conservationists and, to a lesser extent, for the environmentalists, cannot be attributed to their being involved in the ecology movement over a longer period. In effect, while the vast majority of conservationists and a significant proportion of the environmentalists were already active before 1982, only a quarter of the political ecology militants were active before that date (Table 6). Furthermore, figures for the period of active involvement in ecology militancy (not necessarily in the present group but also in previous ones) show a median value of six years for conservationists, against four for environmentalists and two for political ecology, the relation being wholly unaffected by the activists' age. Nevertheless, even introducing the length of ecology militancy as a control variable does not modify the original

Table 6. Adhesion Before/After 1982 by Ecological Current (in percentages)

	Conserva-tionism	*Environ-mentalism*	*Political Ecology*	*All*
Before 1982	69	42	27	42
After 1982	31	58	73	58
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	(48)	(50)	(95)	(193)

relation: the conservationists are still characterized by little experience with political activity; the political ecologists are the most experienced; and the environmentalists fall somewhere in between.

We can therefore conclude that the different interpretations of ecology action embodied in the various currents are capable of mobilizing constituencies that are quite distinct in terms of political background. The stronger an organization's effort to relate environmental issues to goals of radical social change, the greater its attraction for people with a past experience of political participation. The reverse follows for reactive patterns of action. This conclusion is largely consistent with findings of other authors (Walsh 1981, 1986; Walsh and Warland 1983). These authors have shown, in analyses of the campaigns following the Three Mile Island incident, how previous political experience is no longer a strictly necessary precondition for mobilization when individuals are faced with exceptionally serious events, when certain fundamental rights such as the right to life itself are placed in peril. We might suggest that any event *perceived* as threatening, even though of minor importance (e.g., a proposal to build a motorway, the use of public parkland for construction, etc.), affects people's willingness to participate in much the same way that previous activist experience does.

Frames

The final dimension in which we want to analyze the differences between the various constituencies is that of cultural orientation. In conducting this analysis we assumed from the outset that the choice of one current rather than another does not occur on the basis of a perfect congruence between the opinions of individuals and the group's official ideology. Various studies have in fact shown how choice many often precede a full socialization to the values upheld by the organization (Snow et al. 1980; Ferree and Miller 1983). However, the individual's own attitudes must be minimally congruent with certain central ideas or cores of the group and the individual's own attitudes (Snow et al. 1986). More specifically, we identified two such cores over which the various currents of the ecology movement have been divided in recent years. The first is the

Table 7. Preferred Solutions to Ecological Problems by Ecological Current (in percentages)

	Conserva-tionism	*Environ-mentalism*	*Political Ecology*	*All*
Radical Social Change	15	41	60	44
Conservation	70	42	20	38
Both Important	13	17	20	17
Both Unimportant	2	0	0	1
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	(47)	(53)	(98)	(198)

previously mentioned distinction between a conception of ecology as the mere preservation of the environment and as action to change the social causes underlying environmental degradation. The second criterion concerns the weight given to political as opposed to direct action (direct action intended here not in the sense of violence, but as personal responsibility for change, thus involving voluntary action, altering individual behavior, etc.). We assumed the conservationists would favor defense of the existing situation and direct action, and so would express characteristics typical of a movement of moderate orientation: priority given to reactive action and hostility toward the political system in general. Conversely, from the political ecologists we anticipated a clear preference for transformation of social relations and for political action. The pragmatic nature of environmentalists should, we assumed, result once again in greater eclecticism, not only in the choice of ends (defense vs. transformation) but in the choice of means as well (in fact, their collective action repertoire has included from the outset both direct action and political pressure).

Our findings fully bear out our assumptions as far as attitudes to transformation are concerned: even taking into account the opinions of those who consider both criteria of equal importance, the percentage of those who give priority to the transformation of social relations drops off rapidly when we pass from the political ecologists to environmentalists to the conservationists, while consensus in favor of defending the existing natural heritage decreases if we consider the currents in the opposite order (Table 7).

As regards the most suitable form of action there appears to be a general preference for direct action. Here again, however, the overall distribution of opinion relative to the various options bears out our expectations: support for political action decreases from political ecologists to environmentalists and to conservationists, even if there appears to be little difference between the last two. On the other hand, support for direct action decreases inversely (Table 8). Once again, from the point of view of attitudes and orientations, we have two relatively polarized sectors with a third less well-defined group in between.

Table 8. Patterns of Action by Ecological Current (in percentages)

	Conservationism	*Environmentalism*	*Political Ecology*	*All*
Political Action	10	21	29	22
Direct Action	70	68	36	53
Both Important	18	9	33	23
Both Unimportant	2	2	2	2
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	(49)	(53)	(97)	(199)

IV. PATTERNS OF RECRUITMENT AND PARTICIPATION

Ever since Gerlach and Hine's classic work (1970) introduced the concept of social network, this idea has been widely used to analyze social movement structure and mobilization processes. In this chapter we deal first with patterns of recruitment and then go on to analyze forms of participation and the contribution of overlapping membership to the circulation of resources within the movement and without.

Recruitment Networks

It has often been held that an individual's involvement in existing relational networks facilitates his decision to commit himself to collective action. There is some disagreement, however, about what kind of involvement to emphasize. "Solidarity" theorists (see Jenkins 1983 for an overview) have stressed the importance of participation in other generically communal activities, thus supporting the hypothesis that someone who is well integrated into a community is more likely to commit himself than is someone who is isolated. But this theory has been partly disputed by some scholars (Crenson 1978; Oliver 1984; Walsh 1986) who maintain that integration itself does not necessarily encourage mobilization. What counts in reality is membership in specific networks, that is to say direct contact with people who are already active, or who at least sympathize with the movement (see the essays of Opp and Kriesi, pp. 83-101 and 41-81 in this volume). In our analysis of recruitment patterns we have concentrated on the role of specific networks in an attempt to determine whether—and, if so why—the networks have greater influence in certain currents rather than in others, and if different types of networks prevail in different currents.

In general our findings (Table 9) confirm the importance of personal contacts with militants in encouraging the move to activism: the vast majority of

Table 9. Patterns of Recruitment by Ecological Current (in percentages)

	Conservationism	*Environmentalism*	*Political Ecology*	*All*
Associative Networks	12	25	39	28
Private Networks	51	36	29	37
Unspecified Networks	16	4	16	13
Other Channels	21	35	16	22
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	(51)	(52)	(99)	(202)

interviewees (78%) had in fact joined their group through these channels, while only a few (22%) joined via other routes (after participating in a specific initiative, after hearing of the group through the media, etc.). The role of networks does appear to have a different weight from one current to another, however. While there is little appreciable difference between the role of networks among conservationists and among political ecologists (79% in the first case, 84% in the second), the influence of networks among environmentalists is smaller, although still significant (65%).

To explain this imbalance we might relate the influence of networks to the presumed costs of mobilization. By "costs" we mean that the greater the resocialization the potential participant has to go through when he joins a specific group, the more costly his decision to participate will be. A number of studies that take a similar line (see among them McAdam's and della Porta's contributions to this volume) demonstrate the link between networks and costs by reference to certain high-risk kinds of mobilization, such as racial equality militancy in the USA in the 1950s and 1960s or Italian terrorism in the 1970s. In these cases the decision to join a group implies a fairly radical transformation of one's frames of reference, requiring specific relational contexts (in McAdam's terminology, micromobilization contexts). Obviously, in the case of ecology action the distinction between high-cost and low-cost action has to be redefined. Let us assume then that the decision to join is easier, and the role of networks less important, when the group in question (a) tries to contact potential participants through specific recruitment campaigns; (b) promotes activities open to nonmembers which make it easier for them to come into contact with the organization; (c) does not espouse particularly coherent cultural frames that the potential member must to some extent accept before joining. These three conditions are most frequently found in the environmentalist current. The WWF is certainly the only large-scale ecology organization in Italy to pay special attention to the question of recruitment, resorting, in a fashion similar to that of the American ecology lobbies, to

advertising and the media. Mobilization of "atomized" individuals is also made easier by the presence of short-term initiatives (week-long voluntary work programs or environmental education courses in schools) which sympathizers can participate in without feeling committed to a project whose costs and duration are difficult to calculate. Initiatives of this type are of course not exclusive to environmentalism (Italia Nostra has been running similar schemes for some time), but they do seem to play a special role in organizations such as the WWF or LIPU. A final factor is the greater ideological incoherence of the environmentalist current. Its more limited set of shared beliefs compared to the other currents suggest that its members have less need for a process of socialization by means of specific social networks.

A further distinction among the various currents concerns the different roles played by private and associative networks. By "associative networks" we mean relationships with other people formed on the occasion of mutual participation in other associative activities (which in the case of our sample tend, as we have seen, to involve political/social militancy). "Private networks," on the other hand, are contacts made through personal acquaintance in the activist's ordinary daily life: friends (besides those who are at the same time companions in militancy), colleagues at work, even in some cases, relatives. Overall, private networks have a slightly higher profile than associative ones. Their relative influence, however, varies sharply from current to current. The influence of associative networks declines as we move from political ecology to environmentalism and conservationism, while that of private networks tends to increase (see Table 9). Once again a connection emerges between the type of network (private or associative) and the type of collective action (reactive or proactive). In other words, the more an action concentrates on asserting new rights and values rather than merely defending what is currently threatened, the greater the role of associative networks in giving rise to that action.

Participation Networks

Although networks linking the organizations that are active within the movement to potential constituents are essential for recruitment, a network of interorganizational contacts (both within the movement itself and with the outside world) is important for encouraging the circulation of available resources and thus making the process of mobilization more effective (Gerlach and Hine 1970; Tilly 1978). Because of the often informal structure of the SMOs, such contacts are frequently made by individuals (Aveni 1978; Rosenthal et al. 1985). The analysis of overlapping membership thus assumes a special importance. In addition to examining overlapping membership in the strict sense, we also considered other less formalized ties in order to investigate the extent of persisting differences between the sectors in their forms of participation. In all we used six indicators.

Table 10. Patterns of Participation in the Ecology Movement by Ecological Current (in percentages)

	Conservationism	*Environmentalism*	*Political Ecology*	*All*
(A) Attendance at Other Groups' Activities, Meetings, etc.				
Yes	59	77	68	68
No	41	23	32	32
(B) Membership in Other Ecology Organizations				
No Membership	64	42	63	58
Passive Membership	24	16	8	14
Active Membership	12	42	29	28
(C) "Consistent" vs. "Eclectic" Membership				
"Consistent"	32	27	27	28
"Eclectic"	4	31	10	14
No Membership	64	42	63	58
(D) Friendship Ties with Activists in Other Groups				
No	89	58	77	75
Yes	11	42	23	25
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	(50)	(52)	(97)	(199)

The first indicator concerns the activist's level of information about the existence of other ecology groups. A list of 40 organizations active in Milan was submitted to the respondents. Members of the environmentalist sector scored highest, with a median value of recognition of 15 groups. Political ecology members had heard of 13 groups (the same as the overall population), while conservationists recognized 9.

The second indicator refers to individual participation in the activities of other ecology groups, for example meetings, lectures, and demonstrations. Among the total population, a large majority of activists take part, even occasionally, in such activities. This kind of participation increases when we move from the conservationist current to the political ecologists to the environmentalists (Table 10A).

The third variable relates to simultaneous support given to other ecology organizations, either by paying a membership fee or by active participation. Thirty-six percent of the conservationists and 37% of the political ecologists choose this type of support, compared to 58% of the environmentalists. These statistics suggest a similarity between the first 2 currents, both of which show

a more exclusive pattern of participation, while environmentalists show a stronger interest in multiple commitments. Nevertheless, a difference does exist between conservationists and political ecologists, as the former prefer the simple payment of a membership fee. This finding is hardly a surprise, for this form of commitment is typical of formally structured organizations acting largely as institutionalized pressure groups. Political ecologists, on the other hand, are more active in other groups than are conservationists, though multiple participation is most popular with environmentalists (Table 10B).

Another indicator concerns the distinction we drew between "consistent" and "eclectic" choices to support other organizations. By consistent choice we mean simultaneous support of different groups in the same current. Eclectic choice, on the other hand, is the choice to support groups in more than one current. If we apply these two categories, we see that the environmentalists are more "eclectic" than the other currents (Table 10C).

The fifth indicator is the existence of friendships between members of different organizations. This indicator reveals a trend similar to that shown by the other indicators, with a higher incidence of these relations among environmentalists (Table 10D).

It still remains for us to analyze active participation in nonecology groups, which involve 27% of the respondents.[4] Here again conservationism appears to be the least disposed toward overlapping membership, a phenomenon concerning only 12% of its activists. It is worth noting, however, how the gap between political ecologists and environmentalists, so marked when we analyzed previous experience, has now more or less closed: 33% of the former and 31% of the latter participate in other forms of action. If we now combine this figure with that for participation in other ecology groups, we see that the environmentalists have the highest proportion of activists involved in at least one other organization, whereas the conservationists have the lowest (73% vs. 42%: see Table 11).

Table 11. Present Participation by Ecological Current (in percentages)

	Conservationism	*Environmentalism*	*Political Ecology*	*All*
No participation	58	27	44	43
Sociopolitical Organizations	6	15	20	15
Other Ecology Organizations	30	42	23	30
Both	6	16	13	12
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
N	(50)	(52)	(96)	(198)

If we exclude the figures for participation by nominal membership, in any case involving very few individuals, all the evidence so far points to widely differing patterns of participation among the various currents. The environmentalists appear to be characterized by a strongly inclusive approach, in sharp contrast with the typical exclusiveness of the conservationists. In this respect, the political ecologists fall somewhere in between the two other currents.

It is interesting to ask whether these differences might be due to the personal characteristics of the individual activists or, rather, to implicit differences among the currents themselves. One possible hypothesis is that the propensity for multiple participation is related to the greater availability of free time: certain activists simply have more time than others. If, however, we analyze the principal data on participation together with that on age and occupation, the only correlation that emerges is one between age and friendships, friendship ties being more common among younger activists. There appears to be no real connection between age and participation in more than one organization. Nor does the fact that certain occupations afford a greater freedom to manage one's time seem to have any bearing on patterns of participation.

The differences between the various currents, then, appear to be attributable to their own specific characteristics. The reactive, and frequently parochial, nature of the conservationist current might perhaps explain the preference for single-group participation. A large number of its members mobilize because they are concerned about one specific problem, often circumscribed by the metropolitan quarter or the district in which they live. The aversion to politics and the absence of past commitment would provide a further explanation for the lack of interest in forms of collective action which go beyond the boundaries of the single group. But these characteristics are also reflected to some extent in the environmentalist current, which stands poles apart from the conservationists in terms of patterns of participation. Thus to us it seems more useful to return to the notion of mobilization costs, introduced above in our explanation of the role of networks in the processes of recruitment. Applying this notion, we found that environmentalist organizations seem to be somewhat easier to join than conservationist or political ecology organizations. There are various reasons for this phenomenon, but we would pinpoint the weaker ideological coherence within the environmental sector and the greater opportunity for short-term commitment. These factors also seem to us to explain the prevalence among environmentalists of an inclusive pattern of participation. In the first place, greater ideological incoherence may favor simultaneous membership in organizations expressing at least partly diverging positions. Second, because single-issue and short-term forms of participation are more frequent in the environmental sector than in the other sectors, its members have a greater flexibility of commitment. In other words, activists can commit themselves fully for a given period, then reduce their activity in

order to devote themselves to other organizations, and eventually return to full commitment should a new campaign arise.

V. CONCLUSIONS

In this chapter we began by asking whether the three distinct approaches to ecology action might vary in their appeal to different constituencies. Broadly speaking, we can say that this variation does indeed seem to occur, but our conclusion requires certain important qualifications.

The conservationist current is marked by the higher average age of its membership and by a sizable proportion of female activists. For the majority of its constituents, this involvement is their first and only experience of collective action; they share a preference for an approach aimed at defense of the threatened natural heritage and the transformation of individual behavior. At the other extreme, male and younger militants are overrepresented in the political ecology current. Strongly rooted in a tradition of sociopolitical commitment, these activists favor a more proactive interpretation. The environmentalist current proves the most representative of the movement as a whole: in fact, the distribution of data for this current reflects the values of the population more precisely than do the data for the other currents. Although similar to conservationism in terms of the activists' political background, the environmentalist sector stands out for the extreme heterogeneity of its members' orientations and for its larger proportion of young people and male participants.

The three currents do not seem to differ so much in terms of sociodemographic variables, with the partial exception of gender and age, as they do in terms of their activists' political background and cultural orientations.

It may prove worthwhile to ask whether, and how far, our findings are consistent with those analyses which stress the postmaterialism of contemporary social movements. Such approaches postulate that the mobilization potential of New Social Movements, and of the ecology movements as well, is constituted primarily of young and well-educated people, employed for the most part in the tertiary and professional sectors, and with some background of political activism. But, no one has yet tried—as far as we know—to discover how such characteristics are distributed among the different sectors of any social movement. This is hardly a secondary point, since it is difficult to see how all the various currents can be described as "postmaterialist." If we look at the ecology movement in Milan, for instance, political ecology and environmentalism (in part) are probably fairly close to a "postmaterialist" pattern of collective action; but we would hesitate to apply the term "postmaterialism" to the conservationists, who identify much more with traditional patterns of nonpolitical participation.

On the other hand, it is significant that the sociodemographic indicators of postmaterialism tend to be evenly distributed throughout all sectors. At least from this point of view then, the activists of the more traditional groups appear just as "postmaterialistic" as the members of the more recent groups.

To conclude: the use of social and demographic characteristics as the key to differentiating emerging patterns of collective action from those which are more traditional, and better established, is thrown increasingly into question. In fact, all these movements are largely heterogeneous phenomena, whose membership cannot reliably be analyzed in terms of "class (or social) constituency." On the contrary, greater emphasis must be placed on the concept of "conscience constituency," an element that cuts across traditional class boundaries.

Meanwhile we consider it essential to concentrate on the process by which such conscience constituencies are activated. Our analysis of recruitment patterns provided some useful, if only preliminary, insights. We described above how preexisting social networks play a crucial role in encouraging potential members to participate. Their somewhat diminished importance in the environmentalist current was accounted for in terms of this current's more eclectic and pragmatic nature, which makes it easier for potential activists to join some form of collective action without having to undergo a relatively thorough socialization process.

We also highlighted the different roles played in the various currents by private and associative networks. The latter became more important as we go from conservationism to political ecology; the reverse holds true for the former.

How can this difference be explained? In effect, the more proactive the collective action, the more radical the criticism of dominant values, and the greater the activists' need for socialization to alternative frames. Socialization is made easier if the potential participants have personal links with current activists who share the same beliefs and political background. In this case, therefore, bonds forged through common participation in specific activities are more likely than merely private ties to provide the preconditions for individual mobilization.

The role of networks changes somewhat when the action is reactive. In this case, the appeal to radical and antagonistic beliefs is quite weak, as the action is essentially designed to preserve widely established and accepted values and rights. Consequently, the role played by personal ties must also be viewed differently. These ties no longer serve to socialize potential members to alternative worldviews but to provide them with an opportunity to begin an activity (collective action) of which the majority have no previous experience. Whereas most members of proactive groups know quite well "how" to mobilize (they have already done so in the past) and basically need only some strong cultural frame to identify with, reactive-oriented militants are in the opposite position. Above all they lack specific expertise and skills in the field of

mobilization: for example, frequently they do not know who is already active on the same issues, how to call a meeting or a demonstration, or they doubt whether collective action may prove effective. Contact with other activists may help them overcome their lack of past experience, but it is relatively unimportant whether such contacts are made through previous political action or via private networks. Thus it is not difficult to see why bonds of personal acquaintance and friendship are more influential in promoting adhesion to reactive groups than to proactive groups.

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NOTES

1. Italia Nostra was formed in 1955 for the express purpose of protecting the artistic and architectural patrimony and limiting the damaging effects of unchecked urban development, which at that time was rapidly beginning to take off in Italy. It has gradually extended its area of concern to cover the countryside and natural heritage. It presently has around 15,000 members. The Italian branch of the WWF was set up in 1966 and has devoted most of its energies to the preservation of the natural environment. Since the 1970s it has also voiced a vigorous protest against the construction of nuclear power plants. Its membership topped 115,000 in 1987. The League for the Environment is a coordinating body linking hundreds of locally based ecological groups of leftist orientation. Founded in 1979, it initially relied on the organizational structure of ARCI, a cultural association run jointly by the Italian Communist and Socialist Parties, but it maintains a certain independence from these two, which has increased of late. The latest figures speak of around 40,000 members.

2. Recent findings confirm the persistent low levels of political participation among Italian women, though they also suggest changing trends for the younger generations (Barbagli and Maccelli 1985).

3. There is by now a wealth of literature on this subject. For a summary and further data see the essays by della Porta and McAdam in this volume.

4. The figures presented in this paragraph have been computed by adding the percentage of ecology militants who are also active in sociopolitical organizations, but not in other ecology groups (see Table 11, row 2) to the one of those who are active in both (Table 11, row 4).

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