RESEARCH ARTICLE

ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS, INSTITUTIONS AND CIVIL SOCIETY
A new way to preserve common goods[*]

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ABSTRACT: This paper aims at studying environmental participative movements which have national/Euro-pean/international relevance and use digital media, as well as local connections and conventional net-works for interacting, socializing, mobilizing people and tackling civic and social issues. By using a compara-tive approach, this article focuses on Italian and European projects promoted by movements in order to support a culture of environmental security and a sustainable development for everybody. The analysis hi-ghlights significant differences among movements in terms of capability of interacting with institutions and other stakeholders, establishing partnerships and cooperating for local development and community em-powerment. The objective is to provide a first model of environmental socialization based on several pro-mising features: networks and innovative forms of partnership; level of activism and capability of planning participative initiatives; intensity of civic cohesion that is the ability of creating connections beyond their own movement, rooting inside the territorial community in a meaningful and enduring way.

KEYWORDS: Civic participation, Empowerment, Common goods, Environmental movements, Socialization processes

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1. Introduction

The recent increasing presence of civic movements, meant as forms of spontaneous mobilization (environmental, cultural, civic and social-collective), bears evidence of a stronger national and international importance. They take place and are created within the Web and are characterized by a significant participation on the territory. This phenomenon appears to be a clear example of a growing tension between mass individualism and continuous socialization (Sorrentino 2008). In fact, these movements express a constant tension between private and shared life, where the idea of citizenship becomes a practice to act in daily contexts, even through networks (D'Ambrosi and Massoli 2012, 535). Such subjectivity established within the movements, in a relational system between real and virtual, means sharing and comparing situations personally experienced, so that they can be enjoyed by groups of civic membership.

Such aspects of mass individualism especially characterize participation within post-modern society: a participation which is stimulated by private citizens and tends towards "self-promoting" as opposed to a certain disaffection or refusal of what concerns institutions and parties' malfunctioning politics (ibid). In fact, participants in these movements feel free to independently configure topics to develop and partners to co-operate with.

The paper focuses on environmental movements, whose characteristic is their significant integration between the ability to mobilize public opinion on environmental issues having an important position in the international agenda, such as urban sustainability and pollution, and the effective capacity to transpose such a sensitization into civic actions. As demonstrated by some studies, these are movements that citizens are more inclined to give their contribution to, even online, and actively participate within the territory (Gillham 2008; Botetzagias and Van Schuur 2012). [1]

The main aim of this research is to examine participation and engagement methods activated by citizens as far as environmental movements are concerned. We support the hypothesis that, for these movements, the ability to plan and organise projects in

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[1] The project whence this paper comes refers to a previous research (D'Ambrosi,Massoli 2012) focused on analyzing the concept of youth engagement as an expression of civic agency (Dahlgren, 2006), in order to verify its online activation forms and modalities and its effects on the social structure. Young people participation seems to increase and become more definite, especially when it is linked to the local territory and its activities. In this respect, the connections the youths are able to create online go beyond the web, also developing social interactions with local communities. Moreover, the study reveals strong connections among participants, both in terms of bridging and bonding links so that the movements may be considered as a promising opportunity to strengthen civicness and foster social capital.

collaboration with institutions and other stakeholders is related to their organisational nature and the level of openness to partnerships.

The paper is organized as follows: section II provides a theoretical framework to examine and contextualize the topic; section III offers an explanation of dimension of analysis and indicators; Sections IV and V present the results of analysis, also taking into consideration a comparative approach. Section VI ends by summarizing the main points of the survey and suggesting future possibilities for further research.

2. Theoretical section: environmental movements and participative networks

Environmental movements can be defined as those movements initiated by citizen groups/ organizations engaged in completely non compatible forms of action (informal or highly structured, frequent or infrequent, "insense" or "cursory") and having vastly different ideas regarding the need to protect or preserve the environment (Saundares 2013; Diani 1992). The network links between organizations (and individuals) present different spatial dimensions (national, regional and local) and ideological strands (conversationist, political ecologists/reformist and radical environmentalist) (Saundares 2013).

From the point of view of the democratic process there are two main models that characterize these movements: critical democracy and organized democracy. The former, already known in literature (Coleman and Blumer 2009; Faccioli 2013), points out spontaneous forms of civic activism and participation, which are not mediated by the institutions but are experienced as a collective process to achieve common purposes. Many of the initiatives often arise with a "resistance identity" (Castells 2004)[2] where citizens show "trenches of resistance" in opposition to the ruling norm. Furthermore, the strong relevance that some political parties have makes these participatory actions more complex and difficult to manage, either in terms of enforceability or sustainability of the project.

However, it is clear that some of these resistance identities can migrate towards more project identity forms "where a fundamentally defensive (or resistive) identity, framed largely in terms of a dominant system simply by virtue of its oppositional stance, becomes fundamentally productive of new values, new meanings". Recalling

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[2] Castells suggests three kinds and origins of identity building: Resistance identity, Project Identity and Legitimizing identity. Regarding the last one, identity is a set of logic and meaning introduced and propagated by the ruling powers, in order to rationalize, reproduce, and expand existing rules.

Castells' definition, these identities develop "when social actors, on the basis of which-ever cultural materials are available to them, build a new identity that redefines their position in society and, by so doing, seek the transformation of the overall social struc-ture" (2004, 8).

In this passage from resistance to project identity, the second model of democracy is determined: we define it as organized democracy. It refers to more structured partici-pative forms of aggregation. This is oriented towards network and safeguard common principles, demonstrating an excellent ability to strengthen new and more dynamic en-vironmental initiatives.

They were first created as a small group of citizens and associations and later be-came structured associations and organizations, having as a purpose to interact more firmly with the institutions, through a statute recognized and legitimized.[3]

Although the cases examined showed that the direction of participation is promoted by citizens, also in association, and tend to civic engagement and community develop-ment, the results, in forms and methods, do not always converge in the same way.

Using these concepts as a starting point, our investigation focuses on environmental movements which have a national/international relevance and which present both models of democracy (critical and organized democracy). These movements refer to three main clusters of environmental aggregations Guerrilla Gardening, Cleanup, Ville en Transition, which express different capabilities of creating networks and establishing institutional connections, as it will be further discussed in the following sections.

The cases examined are, furthermore, mainly related to the Web, and have strong participative consequences within the Italian and European territory. As we can see in the literature, the embeddedness of individuals in social networks has a direct positive effect on the level of participation and positively influences the intensity of this en-gagement (Giugni and Passy 2001). For this reason, members of these movements are not solely considered as an "attentive public" (Miller 2010) but rather networks of ac-tive people with pro environmental behaviours "that consciously seek to minimize the negative impact of one's actions on the natural and built world" (Kollmuss and Agye-man 2002, 240).

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[3] As reported by the Italian movement La Ville en Transition: "There isn't any form of association able to represent the operating and social model of Transition. It is in fact a systemic and inclusive kind of work, where professional positions such as President, Board of Directors etc. do not make much sense. However, being forced to operate within the current legislative framework, at some point, every Transition's initia-tive feels the necessity to assume a recognizable form. This is also necessary in order to interact with other actors and institutions "(Monteveglio Transition).

In this respect, the objectives are: to analyse the different approaches and behaviours among the three clusters of movements in order to highlight if there are emerging tendencies and peculiarities; to compare the levels of institutional engagement between Italian and European environmental projects. The focus is on the ability of these movements to network, both within and outside the Internet, and on their bi-directionality.

Regarding the first element, that is the capacity of doing network, we have identified two dimensions that relate to the level of interaction with institutions and other stakeholders, and the level of co-operation/initiation among movement participants. Such evidence also emerges from classical surveys on the issue which reveal how associative experience, social trust, and citizenship values are key elements to pursue a civic engagement (Virginia Performs 2013; Eurobarometer 2013) and develop models of participation, available to hold a dialogue with other social actors within the movement.

In particular, in addition to more general evidence, (Lin 2005) which considers the development of social capital to be embedded in social networks, and therefore more accessible to actors for actions. Recent surveys on the topic (Lee at al. 2011; ACGA 2009) confirm that forms of environmental activism are able to meaningfully influence the creation of communication networks with other groups for environmental safeguard and preservation.

The other element of the study concerns the intrinsic bi-directionality of these environmental movements in relation to the three main dimensions of analysis: the level of innovation, the level of civic cohesion, and the transparency of the activity. Such movements choose and suggest important transversal topics, which are often disputed and conflicting. For instance, the appropriation of public spaces and places to be assigned to civic and collective uses, is a purpose they aim at, by claiming modalities to promote and protect areas, ideas and requests about common goods. They develop and activate specific interventions on the territory, by connecting their own action to other local actors, and therefore create real opportunities to enhance local communities in order to promote the development of a social capital. It is, therefore, important to understand how design innovation made by these movements – both with or without the help of the institutions – can connect to the growth of civic cohesion and the demand for greater transparency in the activities carried out by the community.

3. Methodology and Research design

The selection focused on experiences and best practices which most responded to the aim of the research, in order to mobilize resources and promote networks and innovations to better define and develop the project initiative. As to the methodology, the survey follows two main steps:[4]

> 1. A background investigation, aiming at selecting and mapping different European Initiatives on environmental and social issues, promoted by citizens in cooperation with institutions and stakeholders. The selected practices develop on line and have a real impact on civic society;
> 2. A qualitative analysis based on a specific grid with indicators referable to the concept of social innovation and civic participation.

As far as the background investigation is concerned, three environmental movements were selected through direct (i.e. portals of interest, interviews to movements representatives) and indirect sources (such as press releases, statistical sources). They were defined as clusters of projects. They show quite similar practices of urban farming and environmental awareness, and also have specific ramifications and associations in various national and international contexts. In depth : "Cleanup"'s movement focuses on clean-up projects and environmental awareness; "Guerrilla Gardening" mainly aims at urban gardening in public lands; "Villes en transition" is involved in projects concerning urban gardens and in establishing a new relationship between man and nature. All three are fast-growing international movements, with hundreds of community affiliates in different countries. The projects they deal with are many, and vary in their organizational and collaborative approach with public institutions.

Project selection was conducted based on some essential criteria, taking into account not only the national contexts but also the international ones. That is why out of 14 selected projects, 3 refer to an international network ("Med Cleanup", "Parking Day", "Reconomy Project") [5] and were chosen because of their greater adherence to the aims of the national projects (see Table 1).

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[4] The analysis was made during the period June – December 2013.

[5] The three International cases represent the three different movements: Cleanup Med, which is an international movement of environmental awareness with branches in 1500 places within 14 different Mediterranean countries, stands for Cleanup. Parking Day, for Guerrilla Gardening movement, is an annual international meeting initially originated in the US and now disseminated all around the world; it promotes the transformation of parking areas into gardens and artistic public spaces in order to create public aware-

More specifically, the projects were selected focusing on three main characteristics. The first element is connected to the attention due to environmental issues and having a strong impact on the territory, such as resources and energy saving, use of renewable energy sources, searching for products with low environmental impact, etc. The second element is a unique characteristic of the movement and it concerns the sharing of an idea or project, to aggregate profiles of different subjects, and to start very positive relationships in terms of synergies and motivations. As directly reported by some movements, regarding the actual description of their associative mission, the sharing of an idea or a project is an essential peculiarity to network and diffuse good practices within the community.

The third important element concerns the participation: all movements selected were directly created by citizens (bottom up), although the level of connection with the institutions (national and local) and other stakeholders (associations, media, business, etc.) changes.

Table 1 - The movements and the projects examined

Movement	Territorial context	Project
Cleanup *Cleaning and environmental sensitization projects*	Italia _ CleaNap	BikeSharing
	Italy_ Retake Rome	Rock your school Alberti 2012
	Belgium_World Clenup	Let's do it Belgium
	U.K. _Cleanup	#Riotcleanup
	International Network	Clenup Med
Guerrilla Gardening *Urban gardening in public areas projects*	Italy_ Trame Urbane	RappOrti
	Germany_ Urban Gardening	Prinzessinnengärten
	Spain_ Community Gardening	Hort del Xino
	International Network	Parking Day
Villes en transition *Urban gardens/orchards and new relationship man-nature*	Italy_ Monteveglio Transition	Regalami un albero
	Belgium	Transition Belgique
	U.K.	EDAP
	Switzerland	EcoAttitude
	International Network	Reconomy project

ness and improve these common places. Finally, the Reconomy project, within the Ville en Transition movement, is a network which aims at building the capacity of Transition Initiatives, and other community organizations to grow a new kind of local economy.

The second phase focused on the planning and application of an interpretative scheme of analysis based on 5 macro – dimensions, in total 30 items. These mainly aimed at verifying on one hand the forms and modes of activation used by participants joining the program, and on the other its effects on the community. Each indicator was marked with a score (on a range from 0, 0.5, to 1 point) up to a total maximum of 6 points for each macro-dimension analyzed[6].

The first macro – dimension, called "interaction", refers to the level of interaction between the movement and institutions, and it is meant to study the relationships existing with the government in terms of sharing the initiative planned and achieving the objectives fixed. The second macro-dimension, defined "collaboration/activation", focuses on the level of activation among participants within the movements; its purpose is to determine extent and modalities of the relationships established inside the network and their aims. The third area, called "innovation", studies the level of planning interventions aimed at generating a change, considering the overall assessment and the identification of specific factors supporting the innovation capacity of the project examined. The fourth area, named "civic cohesion", aims at studying the level of strengthening civicness, meant as integration between civic sense and an active citizenship that facilitates cooperation among citizens to reach common purposes. The last area concerns "transparency" and studies the level of accessibility of information, both online and offline (see the table 2).

The rating system was defined on the basis of the presence or absence of the indicators. Within the specific dimensions of "Interaction" and "Collaboration/Activation", the presence of inclusive participatory experiences with institutions was evaluated, along with the significance that this has within the movement itself. To give some examples, the degree of connections with institutions was determined on the basis of a value system ranging from information (=0) to communication/listening (=0.5), and on to active involvement (1). Likewise, in the cases of the "Innovation" and "Civic cohesion" dimensions, they were assessed on the results each project produced, as well as its benefit to the district. For instance, during the *Regalami un albero* Ville en Transition project, the movement was involved in the search for public or private land in which to hold the initiative, and also in stipulating the terms of the management of the trees together with the major players involved. That is to say that, in addition to having developed innovation, it increased the level of civic cohesion within the community.

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[6] The score is calculated based on the presence or absence of the indicator. In detail, 0 indicates not present, 0.5 indicates partially present and 1 indicates present. If all the indicators of a dimension are present, the total number of points awarded is 6.

Table 2 Dimensions and Indicators of analysis

DIMENSIONS		INDICATORS
interaction	1.	presence of forms of organized democracy
	2.	level of connection with the institutions ranging from information, to communication and listening, up to collaboration and working together in a two-way approach
	3.	level of economic interaction regarding a joint participation in announcements or cooperation measures subject to public funding
	4.	presence of a joint responsibility meant as an explicit and legitimate allocation of roles according to the model of shared administration
	5.	presence of a common agenda on environmental issues in terms of actions and methods for a sustainable planning
	6.	presence of networking strictly linked to social actors (institutions, associations, stakeholders) aiming at specific purposes
collaboration / activation	1.	level of participation within activists in a range from lower levels of partnership, to close collaboration, up to the implementing participation, requiring that citizens are autonomous and responsible
	2.	activation of a dialogical structure where communication among participants is assumed explicitly and implies different types of relationship: conversation, sharing of ideas, interventions planning
	3.	presence of and organization and an assignment of roles and intervention profiles through an allocated distribution of resources where everyone can give a contribution
	4.	existence of online consultations among activists
	5.	conflict management or approach in cases of opposing views within the movement
	6.	creation of local and national networking within the international movement
innovation	1.	presence of experimentation through exploring actions
	2.	presence of experimentation through practical tests
	3.	presence of effective actions which have direct impact on environment and society
	4.	creation of new products and services having a positive impact on environment and citizens
	5.	use of new low-impact technologies and professional and cultural resources in order to increase public awareness on these issues
	6.	sustainability of interventions, considering not only their environmental aspects but also, more generally, a social and urban quality
civic cohesion	1.	presence of activities aiming at involving civic participation, other movements, social, economic and cultural entities
	2.	Implementation of these activities
	3.	pursuit of a common purpose in terms of environmental policies
	4.	overcoming of particularistic attitudes of a political kind, connecting instead individual points of view with the idea of the common good
	5.	examples of empowerment which have repercussions on different subjects from those involved
	6.	level of integration and inclusion within a social and economic context in order to cooperate with the institutions to reach the best life quality standards
transparency	1.	presence of mission statement and objectives project, as check tools to assure the accountability
	2.	presence of useful information to register and participate
	3.	existence of different kinds of contact
	4.	data and results of the action meant to share documents, knowledge and acquaintances between institutions and local communities
	5.	information published on funding (both public and private)
	6.	presence of forms of censorship

In the case of the dimensions of transparency, consideration was ultimately given for information supplied in a clear, comprehensible and transparent way during each and every phase of the participatory process, be it via the web portal, or any other conventional means of communication.

This analysis, carried out using the indicators described above, has allowed us to create a conceptual model which we simply defined as the "diamond of environmental socialization". Environmental socialization may possibly be described as a process of information, training and activation on issues concerning environment; it works through the integration or adaptation of individuals in different structures and stimulates their participation, either online and offline, by diffusing the idea of association and cooperation with the main actors on the territory.

The graphical representation of such a model, made more precise via a score system given to each single indicator, has allowed not only to examine the strongest and weakest elements of environmental socialization, but also to offer the scientific community a comparison and evaluation tool for processes of community empowerment, both on a national and international scale.

4. The "diamond of environmental socialization": main findings

The combination of the 5 dimensions in the model of the "diamond of environmental socialization" has been used in order to investigate the three different environmental movements – Cleanup, Guerrilla Gardening and Ville en Transition , defined as clusters of projects.

Cleanup, with its 5 projects, 2 from Italy – Rock your school Alberti and Bike Sharing - 1 from Belgium – Let's do it Belgium - 1 from UK - #riotcleanup - and the last one with an international dimension – Cleanup Med - is strongly focused on cleaning activities and raising environmental awareness.

The idea of disseminating and promoting environmental issues, as well as the urgency to activate citizens towards a common initiative, are extremely crucial in these projects which show a significant attention to the communication aspects and try to convey the "idea of change". For example, Bike Sharing, an Italian project launched by the Cleanup branch in Naples, presents itself as "a proposal of a social advantageous performance" and #riotcleanup from UK fully performs as an initiative aiming at positively changing society and its environmental habits.

In this respect, the dimension of transparency (see figure 1) is one of the most effective within the Cleanup movement (average score 4,6/6). Each project explains ac-

tivities and purposes of its initiative and they do it both online, via the website, or their social media and through brochures and leaflets. Furthermore, they provide different forms of contact (e-mails, online forms), information about contribution (such as donations and voluntary work) and how to join the group. The project Let's do it Belgium has a section on its website called "testimonials" to share experiences and another one, "spread the word", "to find different promotion materials to advertise its activities and call for help in translating different info materials to other languages".

Information on funding is also crucial, and the website is mostly used for this purpose: almost every project which receives some resources publishes the related data and details. The case of Bike –Sharing is quite emblematic. The project was partly granted with an EU fund. Data on this amount are available as well as information on the crowd funding which was launched in spring 2013 to collect the still needed resources.

The dimension of collaboration/activation within participants is significantly implemented in this movement (average score 4,5/6) and the coordination among volunteers is essential.

Figure 1 - The diamond of environmental socialization for the Cleanup movement
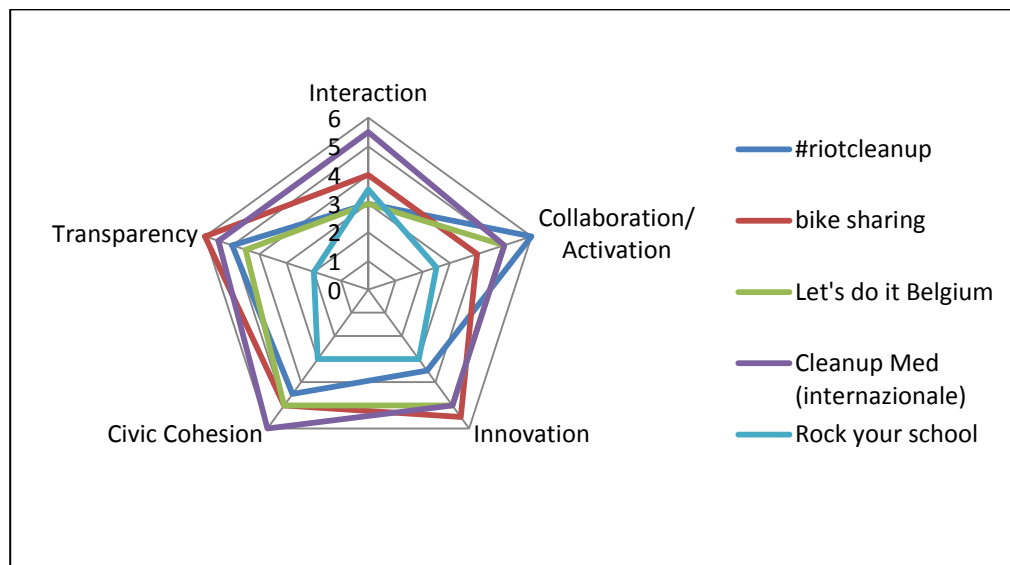
Of course in the case of international projects, such as Cleanup the world, which "engages an estimated 35 million volunteers in 130 countries each year", the role pla-

yed by online cooperation and coordination is much more strategic than face-to-face meetings which are mostly used in small scale projects. In this regard, one of the main features of the CleanUp movement is its ability to activate participants/volunteers, making them aware about environmental issues and trying to influence and possibly modify their behavior, from the specific "cleanup" experience onto a more general daily attitude towards a sustainable life.

Hence, the main target of this movement is internal and these projects are less effective in developing connections outside, with the local administrations or with other associations/projects. In fact, the dimension of interaction is the lowest (average 3,8/6), except for Cleanup Med which has international links and relationships, while the others are quite locally involved. However these projects show a growing awareness about the importance of working together with other partners (institutional or not). In fact, 2 of these projects – Bike Sharing and Let's do it Belgium – originated within initiatives which were initially very critical and resistant towards institutions, have changed more recently and further developed their approach, starting to handle activities in collaboration with local authorities.

Moving towards the Guerrilla Gardening movement[7] , the dimensions of the diamond which mostly emerge are those of innovation (average score 4,6/6), civic cohesion (average score 4,7/6) and collaboration (average score 4,6/6) (see figure 2). All these projects show a strong interest in supporting the local communities where the initiatives take place through real actions (urban gardening, laboratories, training) embedded in different territories.

In this respect, the concept of working with – and for – the neighborhood is essential in this movement, which deeply supports the development of social capital. In fact, The neighborhood provides "for people the opportunity to meet together, to share the burdens of daily life and to cooperate" (Gould 1964, 464).

This is highlighted clearly in Prinzessinnengarten's experience in Berlin. The project was started at Moritzplatz in Berlin Kreuzberg, a site which had been a wasteland for over half a century. It was initiated by neighborhood residents and this underlines how important citizens' initiatives, implemented with a bottom-up approach, can be for urban green areas . Along with friends, fans, activists and neighbors, the group cleared the rubbish away, built transportable organic vegetable plots and reaped the first fruits of its work.

Figure 2 - The diamond of environmental socialization for the Guerrilla movement

[7] This movement has been analyzed through 4 projects: 1 from Spain "Hort del Xino", 1 Italian "RappOrti", 1 from Germany "Prinzessinnengärten" and 1 international "Parking Day".

Figure 2 - The diamond of environmental socialization for the Guerrilla movement
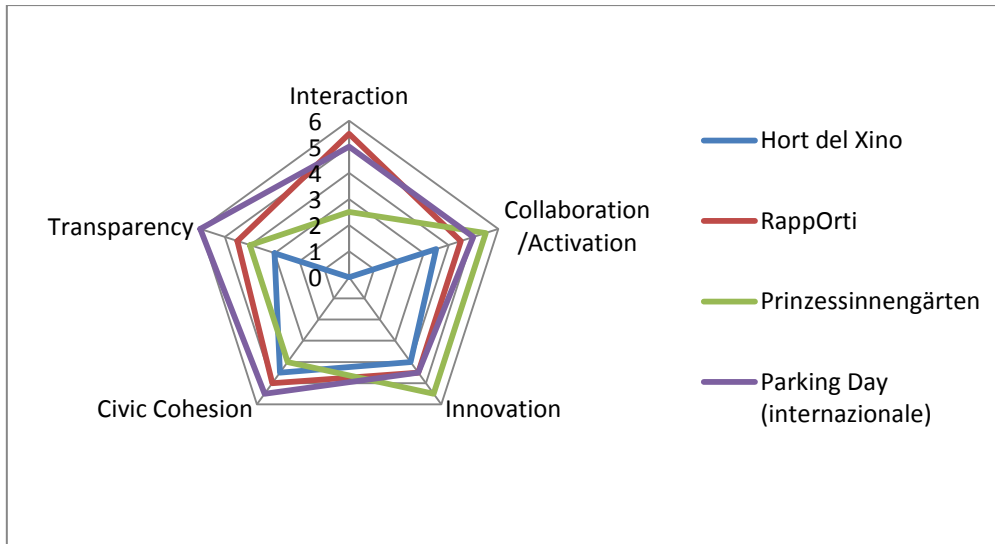
The social function of these actions to empower the neighborhood becomes the most considerable outcome in these projects:

"The garden at Prinzessinnengarten functions as a meeting point, a playground, a place to have a coffee or a beer. Urban gardening has the potential to get people together, who would otherwise have little in common". Such examples help in changing the paradigm of urban neighborhoods, as the gardens and the related local activities increase social bonds, friendships and the civicness lying within them.

These projects also have a good level of innovation outlined as the capacity to define interventions which produce changes in the affected territories: in addition to the case of Berlin, both Hort del Xino's green building workshops in Barcelona and the use of recycled materials to set up "market-laboratories" promoted by RappOrti in Bologna, are examples of innovative solutions offered to local communities to teach them new ways to deal with recycling and build up a more sustainable life.

However and not surprisingly, these projects are quite reluctant to build relationships with other associations and local institutions. In fact the dimension of "interaction" is the lowest for this movement (average score 3,25/6). They tend to plan and work autonomously and have quite a censorious approach towards public organizations. All 4 projects may be described as examples of critical democracy as they implement alternative actions and they do not want to cooperate with institutions.

The last movement Ville en Transition is featured by 5 projects of gardens development and promotion of new relationships with nature[8]. All dimensions of the diamond of environmental socialization regarding this movement are quite high (they all overpass the score of 4.7/6) highlighting that the 5 projects have reached a significant level of maturity. Nevertheless, the dimensions with the best score concern innovation (5,6/6), civic cohesion (5,1/6) and transparency (5/6) (see figure 3). In this respect, these projects are strongly involved in boosting local innovative initiatives, embedded in the community and aiming at a more sustainable an resilient life. These projects promote a well-defined idea of local self-governing (Jacobs 2001) which is based on a network of formal and informal relationships that also connect the projects and their participants with other stakeholders as well as institutions.

The innovative works within these projects range from increasing low impact affordable housing to sharing skills, from creating livelihoods to reducing energy costs and carbon emissions and growing local food economy. In order to do this, they obviously need to establish clear and durable relationships with institutions and work in partnership with other groups.

Figure 3 -The diamond of environmental socialization for the Ville en Transition movement

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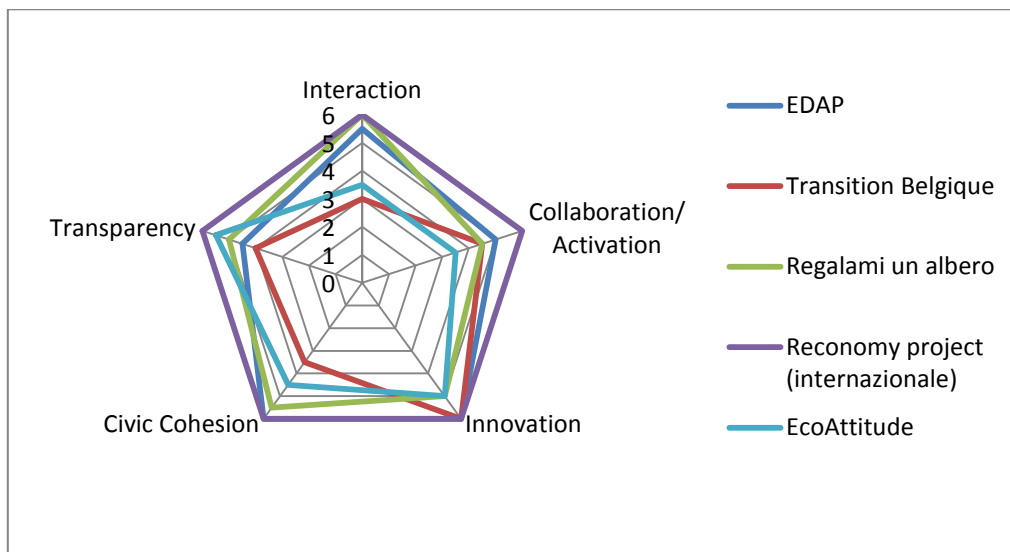
[8] The 5 projects within the Transition movement are: 1 from Italy "Regalami un albero", 1 from Belgium "Transition Belgique", 1 from UK "Energy Descent Action Plan-EDAP", 1 from Switzerland "EcoAttitude" and 1 with an international context "Reconomy".

The element of working together with local institutions (mostly municipalities) is shared by all Ville en Transition projects. They are unambiguous forms of organized democracy, fully aware that they need to engage with the local government if they want to succeed in implementing innovative actions to enhance the level of social capital. In this attempt, these projects express actively the transition to a more hands– on democracy, a "do-ocracy" (Ministry of the Interior, 2013, 2) a form of co-production that citizens engage in when they tackle societal problems themselves. Essentially, it is a form of participative decision-making that works through "doing" – by tackling issues in the public domain, alone as a citizen or a business, or in conjunction with public bodies.

Local communities, as it is for Ville en Transition's projects, are no longer waiting for political decisions and try to solve problems by themselves, such as the maintenance of playgrounds and greenery, the dissemination of local activities and laboratories to make people aware that a more sustainable way of living, concretely reducing the impact on the environment, is possible. Such attempts to have a direct control of the living environment of their own community are signifying a new kind of democracy that is unfolding alongside the traditional representative democracy of the polling booth and majority rule.

Moreover, this shared effort is strongly connected to a conscious effort to be transparent and accountable towards the same community they involve in their activities and even broader. In this respect these projects tend not only to publish information and details about their actions and results on websites, but also to organize conferences and workshops, making a synergic use of offline and online communication tools.

The investigation of the 3 movements has highlighted some significant features in terms of characteristics and trends. Guerrilla and Cleanup movements appear to be the ones with less capability of interacting with the institutions. On the other hand, they both express a high level of activation within their participants. This may mainly be connected with the origin of these movements as they tend to launch initiatives against their institutional context (that is, guerrilla initiatives) or alternatively to it (cleanup activities). So, these projects tend to be rather innovative in the territory they affect, but they fail in establishing relationships with local institutions. This creates significant weaknesses for the two movements, as they often build up single and isolated happenings/events and have difficulties in implementing medium-long term projects.

The duration of the involvement and its frequency (Giugni and Passy 2001) lets us distinguish between actions that imply irregular participation, such as sporadically taking part in campaigns, or being involved in some cleaning/guerrilla events and actions that require regular participation, such as developing an annual project and delivering

some form of support/assistance. A second element to be highlighted is that these movements (Guerrilla and Cleanup) require significant expenditure in getting involved, and high costs are a barrier to participation, making long term involvement more difficult.

As several studies have shown, in fact, participation depends also on the assessment of the risks of collective action. The reactions of power-holders and the police when faced with protest actions, have been shown to have a major impact on mobilization and participation in social movements (della Porta 1995; Kitschelt 1986; Kriesi et al. 1995; Tarrow 1994; Tilly 1978). In this respect, the perception of the risks implied by engaging in movement activities has a negative impact on participation.

On the other hand, the origin of Ville en Transition projects is well embedded in the local/national space they want to contribute to improve. They are used to interact and work together with the institutions which they don't see as antagonist but partners. This different approach has helped Ville en Transition projects to become more organized, structured and able to fulfill important social goals.

## 5. Comparison with international networks and European projects

The analysis of the Italian projects compared to the European cases as well as the international networks (see table 1) was carried out in order to better understand the positioning of the national experiences, considering all 5 dimensions of the diamond.

As far as the 5 dimensions are concerned, the highest score (for Italian cases) is related to "interaction" (average score 4,7/6) and "civic cohesion" (average score 4,6/6 – see figure 4). All Italian projects, with the exception of RappOrti, are developed in strong collaboration with local and national institutions. Specifically, 2 of them – Bike Sharing in Naples and RappOrti in Bologna - are also granted by EU funding, while Regalami un albero in Monteveglio is supported and implemented in cooperation with the local municipality. Finally, Rock your School is promoted and built up together with the national civic association Labsus.

Another element Italian cases have in common, which further outlines the dimension of "interaction", is the capability to profit from external knowledge and assets, both in terms of economic resources (the EU funds or the crowd funding for Bike Sharing), competences (the experts from Labsus association who help in carrying out the Rock your School project) and networks (the collaboration with institutions in Bike Sharing and Regalami un Albero).

Compared to the European cases (see table 1), Italian projects are much more oriented towards forms of organized democracy, and their actions tend to be strongly embedded within other general activities managed by local/national institutions. On the other hand, though, these cases lack a well-organized internal structure able to activate properly and mobilize participants in different situations. These projects are either based on a strong but quite individualistic coordination (Bike sharing has a very active coordinator who is, however, quite isolated) or mostly dependent on the financial/logistic support which comes from institutions (Regalami un albero) and other associations (Rock your school). In this respect, the initiatives point out a difficulty in the long term planning as well as in the sustainability of their actions and related results.

**Figure 4. The diamond of environmental socialization for the Italian cases**
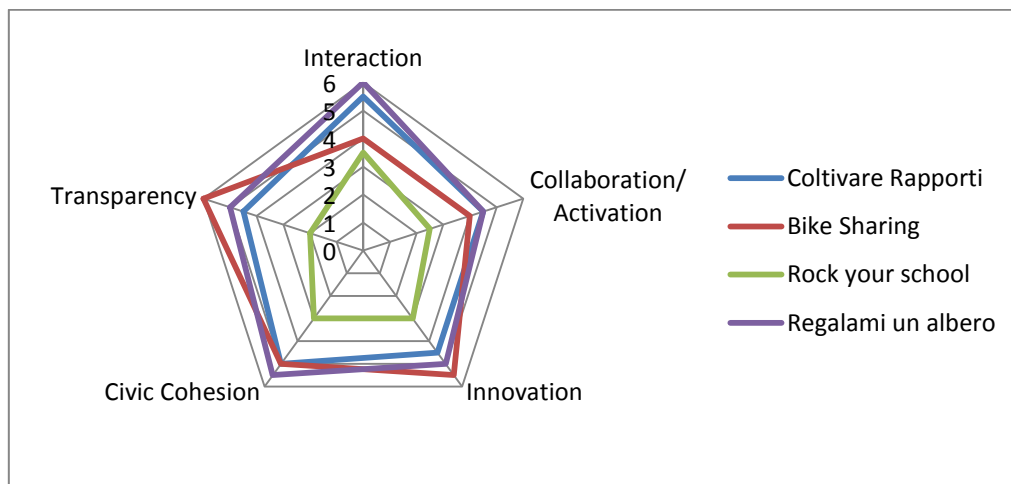
This is also quite evident if we consider the outputs that Italian projects plan to deliver. Although they put a big emphasis on the "announced results", there is no corresponding information in terms of concrete deliverables which should be met. Many of these projects are lacking in presenting their own tangible results and on their websites. It is not easy and common to find details and updated information on what they have effectively achieved .

Moreover, all Italian cases work quite locally and aim at strengthening civicness and increasing social capital at the community level. They are not very good at using social media, which may be considered dispersive. The only exception is represented by Bike Sharing; in fact the related association Cleanup Naples has quite a well-developed Facebook page with lots of fans, even if it is not properly updated.

In contrast, the dimension of activation/collaboration (average score 4,9/6) is strongly widespread among European cases altogether with that of innovation (average score 5/6, see figure 5). In fact, European cases, and especially #riotcleanup and Prinzessinengarten, make good use of different types of online channels (blogs, portals) and social media (Twitter and Facebook pages) in order to share information with participants about the activities and the different events.

Figure 5. The diamond of environmental socialization for the European Cases
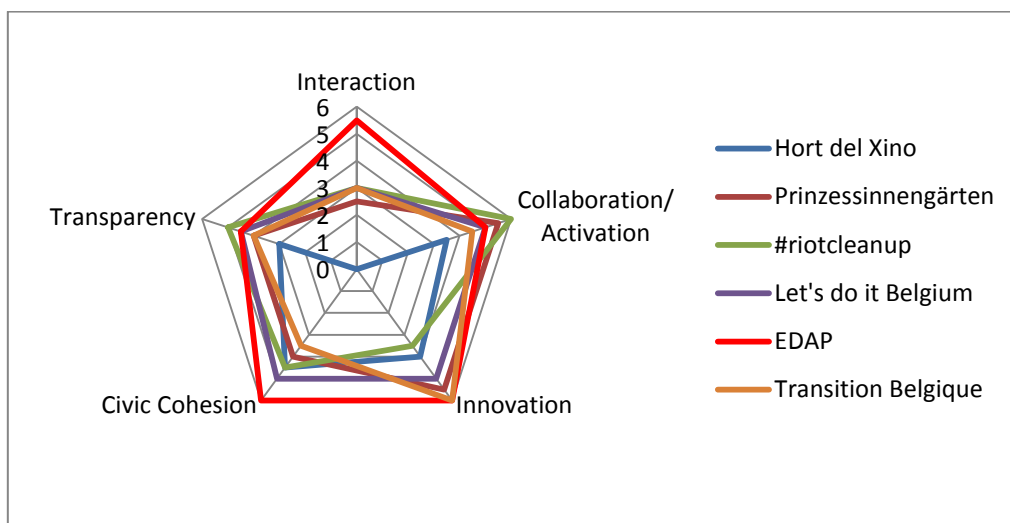
Thanks to online media, they also tried to promote the results of their actions: they post Youtube videos and pictures about their interventions, they share comments and details on blogs – both in order to reinforce the online community and further mobilize more and more activists and volunteers. They also try to disseminate their actions and results beyond the national borders: 5 out of 6 projects have website versions in more than one national language (English, French, Dutch).

These differences between Italian and European cases point out clearly two distinct approaches in terms of relationships with the institutions. This is mainly due to the traditional financial and structural weakness of associations and social movements in Italy. They tend to base their initiatives either on national/European funds, or on direct collaboration with institutions. They, in fact, lack often the capability of autonomously organizing forms of direct funding and need to build upon what local or national institutions may offer them.

This element marks Italian movements (also environmental ones) as more dependent on the institutional context they live in, and consequently more reluctant to act against these same institutions. In this respect the situation in other European countries (such as Belgium, Germany and UK) is quite different. In fact, in these States, movements can count on a more longstanding tradition of autonomy and a capability of collecting funds which put them in a very different situation. This also affects the overall existence and development of the movement/project in its medium-long term perspective: while The continuation of Italian projects may turn out to be more dependent on the financial and institutional context, European projects tend to be more resistant and able to count on their own efforts and assets even when the general context is less favorable.

Another difference between Italian and European movements is related to the diverse connections and links among participants/activists that is possible to identify. We refer to the distinction between formal and informal ties, whereas the former refer to membership in organizations, the latter are defined as interpersonal ties such as parenthood, friendship, and acquaintance.

Formal ties are more present and relevant in European movements as they can count on a well-structured internal organization. On the other hand informal connections play a stronger role in Italian experiences where the embeddedness in local and preexisting networks helps the development itself of the initiative.

As far as the 3 international network cases are concerned, the dimension of activation/collaboration is even higher (average score 5,4/6) so that they show, nevertheless, the most mature development for all dimensions of the diamond. Not only they do widely use different media concurrently (websites, social media, blogs, videos) – both to promote their actions and contact new potential volunteers – but they also have special strategies to attract new activists. All three web portals feature, in fact, a special section: "participate" for Parking Day and Cleanup Med and "what I can do" for Reconomy which specifically provides with information about possible forms of contribution and engagement. Similarly, the dimension of innovation is well developed within these projects which are effective in implementing innovative non-conventional actions. For example, Reconomy intends to collect and share different resources (case studies, videos, guides) to help raise awareness and build literacy about the problems with our current economy.

Moreover, and thanks to their international nodes, they are able to connect different people all around the world, and make them discuss and share opinions and actions on common platforms.

In this respect, international networks become very close to participative culture (Jenkins, Purushotma, Clinton, Weigel, Robison, 2009) and share with them the following features: artistic expression altogether with strong civic engagement, tendency to share content and symbols, form of mentorship towards newcomers; conviction that their own contribution is worthwhile ; presence of social connection among participants.

6. Toward a community-based approach: some concluding notes

The environmental socialization diamond allowed us to explore the concept of community empowerment through several widening glasses: networks and innovative forms of partnership with institutions to enhance local communities; levels of activism and planning of participative initiatives organized by citizens in preserving and bringing out common goods; the capability that such project experiences have to establish bridging bonds, able to create connections beyond their own groups, rooting inside the territorial community in a meaningful and enduring way.

First of all, the emphasis put on the increase of the capacity building for environmental regeneration interventions and urban improvement , finds its premises in a mature and intense cooperation with institutions and other stakeholders. As a general matter, local and national institutions play a strategic role as to a full maturation and awareness that citizens have about their own rights and responsibilities. Being enablers of interaction between different stakeholders, institutions should support the communities' proposing actions, and allow experiences of active citizenship to evolve into associative forms of organized democracy. This means, in real terms, enhancing the active citizens' abilities within a systematic perspective, i.e. in order to transform individual or collective skills into tangible results as to the environmental impact, through actions negotiated with the main public subjects.

In this respect, our analysis highlights quite different results, both in terms of interaction and cooperation with the institutions and in terms of development of forms of organized democracy. Most of the projects taken into consideration, transversally as regards the three movements – Cleanup, Guerrilla Gardening, Ville en Transition – reveal some forms of resistance towards local and national institutions. They express a model of critical democracy, even when, in a few contingent projects, they define some kinds of cooperation. In this respect, however, Ville en Transition's movements are an exception. In fact, they can uphold efficacious and productive interactions with the institutions, not only related to the mere use of public funds or the participation with lo-

cal projects, but because they also experience and carry out real models of co-management of common goods and social common acting, which are long lasting and tend to the development of the local community.

Common goods are also relevant in the development of these movements. In this respect, commons, and specifically environmental common goods are meant in a wide connotation: environmental zones to be preserved, urban areas to be improved and developed and also (new) social relationships activated in order to protect such goods. For these movements, the safeguard of environmental common goods appear specifically connected to the capability and effectiveness that the projects analyzed have to root locally, creating substantial connections with the areas involved (Ostrom 1990). According to our investigation, such capability appears not to depend on an existing positive non-conflictual interaction with the institutions: as a matter of fact, even initiatives of critical democracy, such as those related to Guerrilla Gardening, show a strong tendency in caring and safeguarding the common goods belonging to their local communities. Again, a significant role is played by Ville en Transition projects which, thanks to an organic and structured role with the institutions, seem to be able to operate not only for the development of common goods, but also for the capacitation through such effort spent in safeguarding the civic and institutional subjects involved.

This element, known as capacitation, appears to be the most crucial of all those considered in this survey, insofar as the community empowerment process is concerned.

A relevant number of projects (namely those pertinent to Cleanup and Guerrilla Gardening), in fact, highlight, despite an important care of the local development, an attitude tending to isolation of its participants, with a prevalence and predilection of connections of a bonding kind (Putnam 2000). This underlines, therefore, a trend towards exclusion of other subjects than themselves in their capacitation process, as well as in their community empowerment, and their network. As a consequence, the effects in terms of sustainability of interventions and positive contamination of such experiences are negative. In this context, the media plays an ambivalent role: on one hand, they support the volunteer's activation and the recruitment of new activists, amplifying the bonding and "closed club" effect, for the online tools used tend to underline the membership of a limited group having specific appointments, customs and habits. On the other, though, and particularly regarding international networks, the media is a major means to a window on the outside world. In introducing and promoting forms of environmental sensitization and new behaviors and sustainable life styles, such projects give way to moments of exchange and contamination which are functional not only to an acknowledgement of the issues suggested, but also to the definition of bridging bonds, such as more open and multi-directional connections (Lovari 2013).

This scenery suggests further research questions circa the concept of community empowerment, related to the ability that citizens have to cultivate motivations, resources and skills in realizing environmental projects and initiatives. Within the community empowerment process, people acting in participative initiatives acquire better competences concerning their own lives, change their social and political environment through actions that strengthen the collective ability of society and improve equity and quality of life (Wallerstein 2006). Quoting Skinner's definition, it can be affirmed that the community's capability to build is a strategic functional action "to define and achieve their objectives and to be involved in consultation and planning, manage community projects and take part in partnerships and community enterprises (1997, 2)".

In light of these considerations, it is crucial to ask: How much and how can the online and offline community's capability action be effective (in terms of mobilization, awareness process, stimulation) in order to make their own project initiatives more incisive? What kind of relationship exists between the development of a social capital and the sustainability of the project initiatives?

While making no claim to be exhaustive, this survey lays the bases for a definition of an analysis model of environmental participative movements as to their capability to mobilize society and local actors. A kind of action oriented towards a community-based approach which considers the territorial context as the barycenter of a complex and articulate system dedicated to promoting a culture of environmental security and a sustainable development for everybody.

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