Beyond protest: Community changes as outcomes of mobilization

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Abstract—**Social and community psychologists have recently begun to investigate systematically the psycho-social variables underlying the emergence of social movements and the impact of protest on the larger community. If changes produced by collective action both at the individual level, such as increased social skills, self-efficacy or social identity, and at the collective level, such as increased political influence, collective efficacy, and collective identity, have been thoroughly investigated, less research has been conducted on the identification of the by-products of participation, the effects of citizen mobilization on the larger community, and potentially negative changes associated to protest. Based on a case study, the paper argues that protest can bring about remarkable changes in the local community in terms of empowerment and community development, but can also generate new conflicts and subtle forms of conformism.**

Index Terms—**Protest, Social Movements, Empowerment, Community Development**

I. Introduction

Social movements are a widespread phenomenon. Social and community psychologists have been studying them not only because of their increasing appearance in a variety of contexts and issues: In fact social movements display interesting processes regarding the psychosocial variables classically connected to participation – such as collective identity, sense of injustice, and shared grievances [1] – but also some unexpected outcomes or, to use Boudon's [2] definition, *wicked effects*.

Although Le Bon's [3] studies based on the assumption that crowd behaviour was irrational and potentially dangerous for the larger society framed a pessimistic view of collective action, recent studies showed that citizen participation can lead to change, development and empowerment of both participants and the larger community [4] [5] [6] [7]. Changes can concern: a) individuals (micro-level); b) relationships between community groups (inter-systemic level); c) community (macro-level); and d) the connections between these three different levels.

The most relevant changes concerning both the individual and the inter-systemic levels were highlighted by the

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Elaborated Social Identity Model (ESIM), according to which the major psychological changes in collective identity result from the unexpected consequences of action, whose effects reverberate through identity [8] [9]. In a psychosocial perspective, it seems to be particularly interesting to focus on the changes at the community level, which have not been fully explored. At this level of analysis questions that should be addressed concern the type of changes that can occur in the larger community as consequences of protest, the actors who can define and recognize these changes, and the meaning that they have for each of them. The outcomes of protest we are focusing on are based on participants' perceptions; from this point of view, changes undergone by community are such to the extent individuals involved in collective action identify them, and present shared representations of the impact of protest on community. A basic distinction—even if it is a debatable one—can be traced between positive and negative changes.

II. Empowerment, community development and participation

According to the literature, empowerment and community development can be considered as positively related to citizen participation. In accounts of social movements, empowerment refers to a narrative of self-transformation [10] [11], or a set of skills (communicative, technical, political) that participants acquire through their involvement in protest. In both cases, empowerment in collective action seems to rely on perceived changes of the self [6]. A further connection between changes in the self and empowerment is offered by the efficacy theory [12]. Though this theory was initially based on the individual level, Bandura [13] recently applied it to collective action, defining collective efficacy as an emergent property rather than the sum of single members' self-efficacy. Tightly connected to collective efficacy is agency, which characterizes politicized collective identities [14].

Collective empowerment mainly refers to collective skills and resources, to the possibility of contributing to political decision, and to common aims [15]. It is definable both as a process and as an outcome, so that empowerment can be considered as a pre-condition but also as a result of mobilization. In terms of process, for instance, consciousness raising [14] [16] and increased awareness that people obtain through involvement in protest can be regarded as empowering. Nonetheless, empowerment can also constitute an effect of participation: Researchers suggested that mobilization increases cohesion and mutual support over time and

irrespective of the obtained results [7] [17]. What is more, mobilization affects the process of social in-group and out-group categorization [7] [9], and makes protesters perceive a *collective self objectification*. Built in open contrast with "the enemy", collective self objectification provides protesters with a self-representation through which they perceive themselves as "able to make a difference" [6] [18].

Despite multiple overlaps with empowerment, community development (CD) emphasizes the possibility of creating social and economical development through the active participation of the whole community, the adoption of democratic procedures and cooperative behaviours, the offset of power, and the reduction of the gap separating institutions from citizens [19].

CD's main objective is to sustain the community as a collective actor, and to develop competent communities. Communities can develop specific skills which are derived from citizen participation: Involvement in action can make people reach deeper knowledge of issue at stake; mobilization can bring different individuals and groups together, thereby facilitating acquaintances and—according to contact hypothesis [20] [21] [22]—reducing or at least modifying the target and contents of pre-existing prejudices and stereotypes; people mobilizing for the same cause can share emotions and develop a sense of we-ness, and in turn collective identity can strengthen solidarity, and facilitate the exchange of support and resources.

Finally, people involved in a social movement can achieve a higher level of political skills, that is collective political efficacy, definable as the feeling of being able to affect the political debate through collective action [23]. Collective political efficacy includes influence on decision makers and achievement of desired goals, but also fulfilment of intra-group and broader societal needs. As Hornsey and colleagues [24] noticed, beyond instrumental motives, collective action can be successful in increasing cohesiveness among protesters, building opinion movement, and also expressing values. For these reasons, collective efficacy has been regarded, along with sense of injustice and collective identity, as one of the key factors of the psychology of protest [1].

It is reasonable to suppose that if individuals and groups in a community increase their skills and resources, this process is to influence the entire community: Even though the competence of a community is not reducible to the sum of the skills of its members, collective development is not unrelated to individual development. The two processes are linked, but their relationship cannot be summarized in a linear cause-effect pattern. A developed community has more resources not only because members are more skilled, but also because these skills combine in a virtuous pattern; moreover, a competent community is more able to tap resources and skills through which to cope with needs and problems.

Social influence, conflict and participation

Mobilization can also involve risky or negative changes for the community. As a general trend, research in collective action has not drawn much attention to the negative effects of participation. Indeed, seminal studies that addressed this issue mostly took into account the individual level, focusing on the rational computation of costs and benefits related to protest [2] [25]. Nevertheless, if we regard community as a complex unity made up of subgroups in a dynamic balance, it is reasonable to expect that, when a conflict involving a large part of the community emerges, this conflict is able to modify the boundaries, the alliances, and the relationships between the subgroups, and also to affect the criteria that groups use to define who and what it is "good" or not.

When a serious conflict occurs in a community between two or more groups, it is unlikely that those who are members of the larger community, but not of the groups that are fighting each other, remain neutral. On the contrary, it is likely that they will take a stand, and define their position. This tendency results in *community polarization*: Activists and protesters try to recruit new members and press them to make a decision about the issue at stake, forcing them to manifest whether they are in favour or against. This mechanism contributes to the escalation of conflict, in that it adds new strength to the parties involved; at the same time, it makes the cleavage between the parties deeper and deeper [26].

The dynamics we have been describing can be traced back to social influence. The impact of conformity on collective beliefs has been studied for a long period [20] [27] [28] [29] [30], but the tendency to conformity has not been taken into account as a factor favouring mobilization. In the case study we are investigating, social influence processes are relevant to the understanding of the cognitive, normative, and affective dynamics they highlight: Groups, networks, and communities are not only valuable sources of information, but they also provide members with self-confidence and support. According to this property of groups, individuals are more prone to be involved in collective action if significant others think that they should [31]. Indeed, behaving according to the others' expectations implies receiving social approval, and avoiding the risk of social exclusion. Membership can press individuals to adopt desirable behaviours, and to discard undesirable ones. Through this device, social influence maintains and reinforces social control, which constitutes the basis of "the ethic of obedience" [32].

As social movements express values, norms, and vision that are not shared by the society at large, they are supposed to represent a minority view [33]. Due to the minority status, protest behaviours are generally perceived by the vast majority of individuals as socially undesirable, and undesirability is one of the costs to be borne by people who decide to become involved in collective action. Nevertheless, social networks (and groups, and communities) can turn protest into a desirable behaviour, to the extent informal relationships are able to overcome the psychological resistance individuals meet, and to appeal to their need of inclusion and approval. Social networks have proved effective in urging members to define their attitude (in favour or against) even when they do not have direct interests in the issue at stake. To put it in different terms, networks put pressure on individuals to take a stand, and in doing so they push people to adopt the opinion which is shared by the network's majority members. As emphasized by the

spiral of silence theory [30] fear of social rejection is the essential motive driving individuals towards conformity. Persons are unwilling to publicly express their opinion and to undertake overt behaviours if they believe they are part of a minority, whereas they are more vocal if they believe they are part of a majority. In the final analysis, despite the generally acknowledged anti-conformist nature of social movements, conformity processes cannot be excluded. Indeed, as will be discussed throughout the article, under certain circumstances the tendency to conformity can be one of the key factors motivating people to join protest movements, or at least to sympathize with their cause.

III. CASE STUDY

The specific form of collective action analysed in our paper falls within the label of Locally Unwanted Land Uses (LULU) conflicts [34]. LULU conflicts typically arise in restricted geographical areas to oppose the siting of both installations such as nuclear stations, incinerators, or transport infrastructures, and services for stigmatized groups such as Hiv or mentally ill patients. Our study analysed a protest movement against the construction of high speed railroad (henceforth HSR) in Susa Valley, near Turin, North-Western Italy. A brief description of the circumstances in which the movement arose follows.

HSR is a major public work funded by the European Commission, intended to link the Western with the Eastern, and the Northern with the Southern parts of the continent. Some of the railroad works have already been completed, while others are under construction or are still to be started, as in Susa Valley, which is supposed to be crossed by the line connecting Turin to Lyon, in France. In this geographical area, which includes 37 villages for a total population of 75,000 residents, a protest movement against HSR developed since the early 1990s, but it gained momentum in the last two months 2005, when the Italian government let the works begin: Local residents tried successfully to prevent the digging, and clashes with the police occurred. Protest involved ordinary citizens, experts, community groups (environmental, cultural and political groups and associations), and also local administration representatives (such as mayors, and staff).

Reasons for protesting can be traced back to three main points: a) environmental concern (fear of territorial ravage, water layers and atmosphere pollution); b) health concern (dangerous amount of asbestos and uranium in the mountains that should be tunnelled through); and c) democracy concern (no involvement of local communities in decision making) [35]. According to the results of a survey conducted by the Observatory of the North West [36], at the end of 2006, 62.7% of Susa Valley residents were against the construction of the new high-speed railroad, and 48.0% had taken part in protest activities in the previous 12 months.

IV. GOALS

The main aim of our study was to investigate the perceived impact that the mobilization occurring in Susa Valley had on the larger community. In other words, we were interested in investigating the perceptions of the main changes that, according to the residents' perspectives, had affected the life of the Valley community because of the mobilization. Therefore, the focus of our investigation were the changes that individuals reported they had experienced about themselves, their social networks, the local groups they were part of, and their community at large. Based on an exploratory qualitative approach, our study pursued the objective of identifying the expected and unexpected results of the protest at a community level.

V. METHOD

A. Instruments

Because of our interest in the *perceptions* of *social change*, we tried to link individual perceptions to community changes. In order to collect a co-built description of events we decided to conduct focus groups: Due to the interaction occurred among participants in focus group sessions, we were therefore able to capture the emerging collective frame, different from the mere sum of individual perspectives. Nevertheless, because individual perceptions of changes in the Valley also deserved attention, we also conducted individual face-to-face interviews.

The focus group discussions were planned by the research team and explored the following topics: a) motivations to get involved in the movement; b) representations of the different actors involved (the anti-HSR movement, the identified out-groups, the Valley community); c) perceived costs and benefits of participation; d) perceptions of the outcomes of the protest; and e) forecasts of the future of the HSR, of the anti-HSR movement and of the Susa Valley as a whole. Background information on the participants was collected including name, age, occupation and past experiences of participation. The focus group discussions were conducted by two members of the research group, who took turns acting as moderator and note-taker.

Regarding the individual interviews, participants were interviewed by one member of the group research at their home or in public places. On the average, interviews took one hour each. The interview plan aimed at exploring the same topics of the focus groups discussions. Questions were intentionally phrased in general terms, so that respondents were able to work out their own narratives about their involvement or lack of it.

B. Participants

We recruited 18 anti HSR activists (7 men and 11 women) aged 19-63 (average age 41 years) during episodes of mobilization. They took part in 3 focus groups we conducted in April-May 2006 in a meeting room in Bussoleno (Susa Valley, Piedmont).

Following to the focus groups, in the period between June and December 2006, we conducted qualitative interviews with twenty-four residents in Susa Valley (14 men, 10 women; aged 19-66, average age 46 years). Twelve were active members of the anti-HSR movement. Among them, seven had been

previously involved in political groups (such as parties, radical movements, and feminist groups), environmental associations, and civic or religious organizations. Five of them had their first mobilization experience taking part to the anti-HSR protest. The remaining twelve interviewees had not taken part in anti-HSR mobilization. Fifteen of the interviewees were personally contacted during different rallies, nine were selected through a snow-ball sampling procedure.

C. Analyses

Group discussions and individual interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewees and transcribed, successively merged into a single text, which underwent a three-step content analysis. Initially, members of the research team read and codified it separately, labelling segments of text according to a data-driven approach, and providing definitions of each of the codes assigned. Successively, the different lists of codes were compared and discussed, and a new, definitive list was elaborated (see Table 1). This list was used to code the discussions and the interviews by means of the Atlas.Ti software [37]. Through a retrieving procedure, we were able to group, for each code, all the matching texts.

VI. RESULTS

The analyses of participants' discourse highlighted both positive and negative outcomes of the mobilization. In order to facilitate the presentation of the results, we will discuss the changes perceived as positive first, and the changes perceived as negative successively.

A. Positive changes: Collective empowerment and community development

The theme of changes that respondents experienced as a result of their participation to protest clearly emerged from the analysis of their discourse. Some affirmed that by virtue of protest the Valley's residents became visible social actors, able to voice their needs, but also their criticisms and complaints: "Now people perceive that their vote, their opinion, their presence are very important. Now they are able to say their 'no' and to make someone hear them!" (11, F, A, P) (Insert | Footnote)[1]. Other respondents reported that in their opinion the mobilization against HSR brought about a reawakening of the individual and collective conscience: "HSR has a positive facet: The Valley has reawakened and is back to action" (10, M, A, P).

Moreover, interviewees suggested that through actively taking part in the protest, their level of efficacy increased; some of them stated: "If we don't want, they can't do it!" (FG1). Interestingly, a non member of the movement affirmed: "If they

want to build, they'll do it […]. However people are the winner, they are staying together even if, unlike the police, they do not have the force of weapons" (22, M, Y, NP). The fight between David and Goliath's was often mentioned as an appropriate metaphor capturing the essence of the mobilization of the Valley's population against the government.

Mobilization, respondents affirmed, also enabled people to rediscover forgotten values and to become fully aware of the community's needs and assets, as reported in the excerpts below: "Mobilization has been an opportunity to get back some kind of values" (14, F, A, P). Specifically, some of the local government officials involved as participants in our study emphasized that they had become aware that collaboration between citizens and political institutions is a valuable instrument for influencing events and shaping policies: "Now we have a common identity and a reciprocal knowledge non existent before, bringing about an extraordinary growth. Now, as a common practice, we argue together about political problems" (9, M, A, P). Overall, on a political level, a new meaning and practice of citizenship seemed to be claimed, with people asking for participatory democracy, as the same political leader of the movement stated: "There is a widespread willingness to participate and to not delegate, a strong wish to be involved" (9, M, A, P).

Respondents also reported that becoming social activists enabled them to acquire new skills, or at least to increase the ones they already had: (a) cognitive skills such as self-confidence, and critical awareness; (b) social skills brought to surface by the formation of new, and sometimes unexpected, relationships, and by the deconstruction of social stereotypes; (c) political skills, such as the ability to take part in public debates, and spread information; and finally (d) technical knowledge on the issue at stake, which seemed to increase dramatically, transforming ordinary citizens in experts. Signs that the mentioned skills were strengthened emerge, for example, from the following quotations about the increased cognitive skills: "The gain is a form of consciousness […]; now we know that we can do it, this is the gain, even if we still haven't won" (FG2); or "This movement gave me the opportunity to meet people who share the same ideas: I realised that I'm not crazy! It has been an extraordinary opportunity to meet and know other people" (FG2). The following quotation points out the development of social skills: "It was incredible to see anarchic youths fighting against the police along with elderly people… It really happened, they were fighting together on the barricades" (3, F, A, P). As far as the political skills are concerned, our interviewees stated that "Now there are lot of people attending many political meetings, they are well informed and able to confute every argument" (9, M, A, P), and also that "This story tells us the importance to sit around a table and debate decisions with citizens. If you don't do that, you can't get anywhere" (17, M, A, P). Finally, increased technical skills were reported from interviewees: "I couldn't ever dream of using some kind of words, or knowing how things work about HSR… From this standpoint it was a sort of self-improvement" (18, M, S, P).

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[1] Each quotation is followed by initials referring to the main characteristics of interviewees: gender (M = male; F = female), age (Y = young—18-30 years; A = adult—31-65 years; S = senior—over 65 years), and being or not being a member of the protest movement (P = participant in the anti-HSR movement; NP = non participant in the movement). Quotations from focus group sessions are specified with the starting letters (FG = focus group) and the progressive number (1, 2, 3).

These two last skills—political and technical—resulted from a massive investment made by the protest movement in an information campaign throughout the Valley. An interviewee referred to this activity as "a basic work, building a counterculture… as it was in 1968 in universities, we have it now here, in the streets, like a great collective university" (10, M, A, P).

As far as feelings are concerned, positive connotations were associated with being part of the protest movement. Not only negative emotions such as anger, fear, and sometimes resignation were mentioned, but also joy, energy, willingness, enthusiasm, pride. As an activist put it, protest was a "joyful and creative fight" (10, M, A, P). Respondents often referred to sense of belonging and solidarity, mutual support, and interdependence to describe how they felt about being involved in the mobilization: "There are a lot of components in the solidarity we built… Being together, fighting together, thinking together, suffering together as well as having a good time together…" (18, M, S, P). Even people uninvolved in the protest acknowledged that the mobilization "strengthened the sense of belonging to the local community, the groupness" (21, F, Y, NP).

Moreover, events such as the fights with the police in Venaus (one of the villages most directly affected by the HSR project), or the so-called "battle of Seghino" had a role in setting up the movement. A participant summarized the feelings raised by those episodes as follows: "I was there. It was something magical, you couldn't go away from there, there was an attractive power, an energy that all the people who were there cannot forget!" (3, F, A, P).

Beyond these specific events, sharing a common aim enabled people to experience a "deep horizontal brotherhood" (10, M, A, P), and at the same time to appreciate the pleasure of spending time with other people, increasing their social bonds, and expanding ties beyond the established boundaries: "After the protest people changed. They rediscovered the pleasure of being together and meeting […]. This kind of social awareness had ceased to exist" (12, M, A, NP); "We need participation, what is happening here, in Susa Valley, is wonderful! I believe many people take part in these movements because of the pleasure of being together, rediscovering the taste for struggle […] we don't fight anymore!" (24, F, S, NP).

The positive connotation of being a member of the protest movement is effectively summarized in the following quotation: "It's a pity not to take part [in the mobilization]! I think everyone should live an experience like this, non-participants are loosing something. You must try, you must come into play, and then you have new ideas, new information… It is something that involves you more and more!" (FG2).

B.   Negative changes: Conflict and social control

Besides perceived positive effects, negative changes were mentioned by respondents. Specifically, they reported that the mobilization against the construction of the new railroad generated a new community conflict: A new cleavage emerged, dividing residents against the HSR project from those in favour

of it. Participants in our study were likely to use attitudes towards HSR as a criteria to judge people, and to identify what is fair or unfair, also creating new stereotypes: "People who have favourable attitudes toward HSR are those who wear fashionable clothes […], they are superficial people who only care about appearance, they all dress themselves in the same way" (FG3). People who support the construction of the railroad were labelled as ignorant or selfish: "With the exception of those who act in bad faith […] people favourable to HSR are those who are less informed, they're ignorant" (7, M, A, P). Along the same line, protesters were attributed positive characteristics: "If you are an honest and well informed person, you can't be in favour of it [HSR]!" (FG3). On the other side, also some peculiar components of the anti-HSR movement were labelled and became the target of new stereotypes: Environmentalists were perceived as "over the top" (22, M, Y, NP), and young anarchists were considered as "extremists" and "violent" (23, F, Y, NP).

Interviewees also perceived that the protest modified the boundaries and the relationships between community subgroups, creating new in-groups and out-groups. For example, people running the tourism business were considered suspicious, because one of the arguments the proponents provided for building the railroad was that it would boost tourism in the area: "There has been a cleavage […] About tourism for example, people of the upper Valley live on tourism and someone said: 'Now we have lost tourists because you are all revolutionaries'. We are all stigmatised!" (5, M, A, P).

A further outcomes of the protest highlighted by our respondents was a general tendency to conformity and an increased social control characterising the behaviours of the majority of the Valley's residents. Participants showed that they perceived that a vast majority, or even the whole population, was against the HSR project: "Here in Susa Valley there is one-sided thought, favourable attitudes toward HSR don't exist!" (10, M, A, P). Although this was not true—since more than a third of the valley population was at least moderately in favour of the construction of the railroad [36]—they seemed to be hardly aware of the existence of community stakeholders with different positions, and interests.

Social control emerged in some narratives. Respondents acknowledged that psychological pressure was put on individuals who were not willing to support the protest, and that community members who expressed different views were likely to be stigmatised and isolated: "There are people favourable to HSR, but they are silent because they are scared by the majority […]. They wouldn't dare to say their opinion or raise a flag […] in small villages they would be reproved in the blink of an eye" (11, F, A, P); "Pro-HSR people here in the Valley can't be serene" (FG3). Persuasion strategies were used to convince outsiders: They were unlikely to receive information, and social support was likely to be withdrawn, resulting in social exclusion. "It is my opinion that besides positives aspects related to identity there are negative ones like the exclusion of people who are not part of the movement, I see they are isolated" (19, M, A, NP). In different terms, people pro-HSR were perceived as enemies, and people who did not

take a stand were viewed as dangerous free riders. As an activist paradoxically put it, "Not to be involved in protest is more tiring, and awkward, than protesting!" (2, F, A, P).

VII. DISCUSSION

As far as the positive by-products of protest are concerned, most of the perceived changes our interviewees referred seemed to depict an empowered, well developed community. More analytically, we can describe a developed community through processes tightly connected to empowerment. One of the outstanding outcomes resulting from the protest appeared to be a *consciousness raising* process [14] [16], connected to the activists' ability to process complex information in depth, which in turn led to an increased awareness of socio-political factors underlying the issue at stake. In the analysis of our case study we were definitely able to recognize the emergence of a *competent community*. During the protest peak period the anti-HSR movement organized activities aimed at informing the Valley's population on a regular basis: conferences, public debates, and exhibitions on the issues of high-speed transportation services, globalization, pollution, as well documents, books, letters, and flyers. As a matter of fact the most part of public communication on HSR was spread by the movement's members, supported by experts from the University of Turin and by ordinary citizens living in the Valley who became "counter experts" themselves [38]. Therefore at the community level the general knowledge about the HSR issue increased and at the same time deepened.

Besides the "technical" competence, two more skills increased among participants, which played an important role in empowering the protest movement: The first one consisted in the acquisition of a specific knowledge of the Valley, both at the geographical and the cultural level. An example of the increased familiarity with the physical morphology of the Valley was the ability activists showed in orienting themselves in the Valley; for instance, they were able to prevent the arrival of the police walking through mountain passes which were unknown to non residents. At the cultural level, the knowledge of local history (e.g. the recall of partisans' resistance) helped protesters to predict or elicit other residents' reactions, and to make them sympathize with the protest's cause. The second competence which was developed concerned the socio-political skills, meant as the ability to take part in public debates, and crafting and spreading information, thereby creating a counterculture in the villages of the valley. Another component of the emergence of a competent community was the increased amount of civic and political participation among the Valley's residents. If at the very beginning of the anti-HSR protest few organized actors were actively involved, as the protest went on the civic engagement of citizens increased. More and more individuals who had never been involved in social or political activities and had never taken a stand in the public arena joined the movement, so that at present civic engagement, with its associated skills, can be regarded as a common good of the Valley. In addition, a new meaning and practice of citizenship and democracy emerged, with people claiming for participatory democracy and direct involvement in decision making

processes. It seems that people moved from representative to participatory democracy, and not just because they were dissatisfied and frustrated by the former, but because they considered the latter more valuable.

Due to the skills developed in interacting with institutions and the rising of a wider socio-political awareness, taking part in the mobilization represented for some community members a way to be socialized to politics [39]: The demand for new politics was strengthened by the political practice activists were experiencing, and by the disappointment towards politicians, who had revealed their technical ignorance [40].

Looking at the processes implied in community development from a different point of view, the *emotional dimension*, along with human relationships and cooperation, is also to be mentioned as a relevant aspect. If the perception of an external menace can increase the sense of community and we-ness [9], shared positive events and emotions underlying social ties are not less important in making people feeling part of a community. Our interviewees clearly reported that they had gone through the experience of we-ness, and that specific events occurred in the peak period of protest—such as the so called "battle of Seghino" or the "reconquest" of Venaus—contributed to increase their mutual emotional connection and shared common values.

The emergence of collective values occurred along with the "rediscovery" of social relationships. Indeed, related to the emotional dimension, *socialization and solidarity* emerged as essential components of a community. Spending time together gave people the possibility of knowing each other and, in some cases—as the contact hypothesis states—modifying or weakening out-groups' stereotypes. This process could take place because—and in spite—of the heterogeneous composition of the protest movement: For the first time during the mobilization different community subgroups happened to be in touch with one another. Fighting against a common enemy enabled activists to re-categorize themselves and other members of the movement as part of a more inclusive category [9], thereby achieving an empowering state of *collective self objectification* [6] [7] [17]. This state is almost unrelated to the objective results attained by protesters, it is rather based on the increased cohesion and perception of social support.

Furthermore, the re-categorization process produced a shift in the contents of identity [6], leading to the creation of new social identities. In our case study the boundaries of collective identity emerging from protest were larger than the movement identity boundaries; as a result of the mobilization, indeed, a new community identity was shaped. We were able to identify two main roots of this emerging community identity: The first one was the juxtaposition to the out-group (as suggested by the *collective self objectification* process), which contributed to the creation of the movement (collective) identity; the second source of identity was the relationship with the place (both in terms of place attachment, [41] [42], and of place identity, [43]), which promoted the creation of a territorial identity.

From the community point of view one more result is worth mentioning among the outcomes of protest. Not only was the movement able to reach people who were not familiar with

protest or civic engagement experiences, but it seemed to stand out as an empowering community setting, distinctively defined in its potential to simultaneously contribute to individual development, community betterment and positive social change [44].

As far as the external impact of empowering community settings is concerned, Maton [44] identifies three pathways of influence: a) increased number of empowered citizens; b) empowered member radiating influence; and c) external organizational activities. Our results showed that an increasing number of Susa Valley's residents were empowered through taking part in protest, and exerted their influence through community groups and networks. Data also underlined that great importance was given by the movement to members' recruitment, public education, community actions, resource mobilization, and policy advocacy [45] [46] [47], all these activities resulting in the creation of a "counterculture".

Regarding negative changes, literature on social movements refers to them in term of individual costs [2] [25]. The perspective we used to analyze our data tried to go beyond the individual level, looking for indicators of negative social changes. At the collective level, two main undesired effects of protest were identified: the arising of new community conflicts, and an increasing pressure to conformity, which suffocated the emergence of deviant opinions.

With respect to the first by-product, anti-HSR mobilization created a new cleavage in the community, opposing residents against the HSR project to those in favour of it. New in-groups and out-groups emerged, and new tensions arose in the community. Whereas, on the one hand, the mobilization against an external enemy strengthened the members' cohesion, on the other hand it triggered new internal fights, which were under control in the peak phase of the mobilization, but came to surface as soon as the external conflict decreased.

Diffuse pressure to take a stand against the HSR project was the second by-product of protest. This pressure was so high that it resulted in inhibiting the expression of different positions: After enduring efforts for *consensus mobilization* [1], the movement's beliefs and concerns were likely to be considered as the beliefs and concerns of all the citizens. The perception of being surrounded by a psychological majority fighting against the construction of the new railroad, and the explicit and implicit sanctions imposed by community members on individuals who did not align themselves with the so called public opinion, resulted in a "spiral of silence" [30]. As the power and the influence of the protest movement increased, individuals holding deviant positions felt less and less willing to express their opinion in public or to undertake action to voice their needs, because of the fear of rejection. By virtue of this process, those citizens who did not sympathize with the movement's cause remained silent; the non-emergence of a public position able to offset the movement's claims increased the perception of being part of an insignificant minority, which in turn increased the fear of social isolation, and lead to silence.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The interest and the difficulty of examining the unintended consequences of movements' actions [48] [49] clearly appear from this case study, which has some limitations. First of all, as only one protest case was taken into consideration, findings cannot be generalized across contexts and conflicts. Moreover, due to the qualitative nature of the investigation, few participants were involved. It is also important to emphasize that our study was aimed at identifying the changes undergone by the community *according to the perceptions* of some community members, and therefore none of the by-products of protest discussed in our paper can be mistaken for an objective community change.

In general terms, protest confirms its potential for psychological and social transformation [9] [50] [51] [52], both at the individual and the community level, and raises one of the most fascinating challenges of our time: social change. Contemporarily, mobilization shows its complexity "because of the fast-moving and unpredictable nature of the event and the difficulty of contacting participants afterwards" [50, p. 205]. If collective action has the potentiality to create and develop new social meanings [9], analyzing its effects is a challenging task. Specifically, as community psychologists interested in citizens involvement and community changes, there are at least three critical issues that are to be addressed. Firstly, scholars should acknowledge that it is difficult to identify linear cause-effect relationships in social movement studies, because of the complexity of the unit of analysis, and the dynamic nature of the processes investigated. Secondly, though for the benefit of clarity we distinguished between positive and negative changes which occurred as a consequence of mobilization, it seems a debatable topic whether effects are to be regarded as positive or negative. Finally, in order to achieve a valuable understanding of the impact of protest on the larger community, it would be necessary to follow up the process, and test the stability of effects over time.

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TABLE I
LIST OF CODES

Code	Description
Crucial events	Protest events serving as "turning points" in the cycle of protest. Events perceived as particularly impressive. Symbolic events.
Emotions	Emotions associated to protest, both positive or negative.
Relational conflict between proponents and opponents	Arguments for opposing HSR that concern the relationships between proponents and opponents (e.g. lack of community involvement, no dialogue with HSR proponents, reactions of the counterpart, etc.).
Relationships with place	Feelings of attachment/detachment to the Valley. Feeling of belonging. Identification processes. Images and stereotypes related to places. Local past events.
Benefits derived from participation	At the individual level: e.g. skills, relationships, resources, and opportunities. At the community level: empowerment, perception of control over the events, self and collective efficacy, learned hopefulness, citizen participation, collective critical awareness, social capital, solidarity and social support. Community development.
Costs derived from participation	At the individual level: e.g. energy, and safety. At the community level: cleavages, stereotypes, and conflicts.
Interpersonal relationships	Quality and nature of interpersonal relationships among community members. Positive (e.g. solidarity, social support, etc.) and negative (e.g. selfishness, narrow-mindedness, etc.) feelings.
Representation of out-group members	Definition and characteristics of out-group members. Attitudes and behaviours related to out-group. Differences between activists' and non activists' views.
Organizational and sociological characteristics of anti-HSR movement	Internal organization. Leadership. Identikit of activists (e.g. experts, ordinary people, politicized leaders, etc.).
Historical analogies	Historical events used to emphasize analogies with protest (e.g. resistance to fascism).
Knowledge and information	Distribution of knowledge and expertise among the movement members. Information flows. Counter experts. Relationships with media.
Attitudes towards anti-HSR movement	Attitudes, feelings, judgements, and stereotypes expressed by both outsiders and activists about the movement.
Outcomes	Objective and subjective results of protest. Desired and undesired effects. Perceived impact on individuals, groups, and community.
Participatory experiences	Past involvement in social action. Comparison between past and current experience of civic engagement.
Politics	Representations of politics, and politicians. Representations of local and national political issues. Relationships with elected representatives, at the local and national level. Practices of politics. Benefits of democracy.
Social influence processes	Pressure to conformity. Community homogeneity. Behaviours discouraging the expression of minority positions, or dissent. Social control.