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Protest Participation in Variable Communication Ecologies. Meanings, Modalities and Implications

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Working Paper:

NO-EXPO NETWORK: MULTIPLE SUBJECTIVITIES, IMAGINARIES AND RIGHT TO THE CITY

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Introduction

Year 2015 in Milan means Expo. Everything in the city seems to speak this language and be in some way related to the big event; concerts, exhibitions, conferences, university courses: public discourse and rhetoric in favor of Expo2015 seems to have created a veritable hegemony.

Beside this propaganda, some voices have been raised to express doubts and opposition, from different points of view. The purpose of this paper is to analyze some of these voices, emphasizing how they are trying to contrast Expo2015 hegemony, using even rhetorical strategies and alternative discourses to those proposed by the Universal Exposition. We are conscious that the few pages of this paper are not sufficient for a such big topic, firstly because No-Expo network is composed of a large number of individual and collective actors, and only some of them will find space in the following pages; secondly, because its practices and protest actions will be implemented also during next months.

The working paper is divided into three main sections: the first one briefly reminds the context in which Expo2015 emerged, and circumstances surrounding protest, the second one is devoted to theoretical contributions useful to our analysis, and the last one consists in our fieldwork: we first examined online communication of No-Expo network in its main strategies and cataloguing different actors, their centrality degree and their use of different media, and then we focused on a specific frame (big events, power and right to the city) emerged on the analysis of 5 main dossiers available on noexpo.org website.

1. Contextualization

On 2008 March 31, the Bureau International des Expositions (BIE) commissioned to Milan the 2015 Universal Exposition, with the theme "Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life": the organization was assigned to Expo 2015 S.p.a., a company established by Italian Government, Lombardy Region, Province of Milan, City of Milan and Chamber of Commerce of Milan in October 2008 and whose current CEO is Giuseppe Sala. The event takes place in an area next to Rho-Milan fair, in the North-West of the city; in order to acquire this area and make it available for Expo 2015 S.p.a., another company, Arexpo S.p.a., was created in June 2011. Universal Expositions are big events that, according to latest dispositions of the BIE, held every five years for a maximum of six months: the first one (of modern era) dates back to 1851 and was held in London; it's the second time that Milan hosts the event, after more than a century (1906). At the edition of 2015, 145 countries participate, together with three international organizations (UN, CERN, EU), big corporations (e.g.: Coca Cola, Joomoo, New Holland) and a number of NGOs gathered in the pavillon named Cascina Triulza.

Besides Expo2015 evolution, briefly outlined in previous lines, protests against the event have been raised since 2007 when No-Expo Committee was set up. There were several important steps (like critics against the PGT[1] of Milan or observations to the variant of PRG[2] in implementing the Program Agreement for Expo2015); however, while persisting in a constant tension between latency and visibility (Melucci 1996), mobilization focused especially around moments of collective aggregation: should be reported at least No-Expo Festival in May 2010, No-Expo Climate Camp in June 2012, the big demonstration in October 2014. Then, various mobilizations to which No-Expo network participated over the years must be added, from No-TAV and No-Canal to struggles for the right to housing, to name only few. Finally, it's worth

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[1]   Piano di Governo del Territorio (Territory Government Plan)

[2]   Piano Regolatore Generale (General Regulation Plan)

pointing out that, besides "central actors" which will be the focus of our analysis, many local realities, in various ways related, have developed and are continuously developing important initiatives such as public discussions, events and protests.

To analyze a counter-discourse constructed by collective actors, it's not possible to avoid the context in which this counter-discourse emerges (Kielbowicz, Scherer 1986; Tarrow 1989). At least two elements need to be remembered: the security-warning built around No-Expo's actions already during months preceding the event, in a stigmatizing climate of security paranoia; and scandals of various kind that characterized preparation's works. Starting with the latter, it's correct to point out that, despite dominant public discourse has been particularly favorable to the event, some voices, even including institutional one, contested mainstream propaganda. These objections, however, cannot be categorized as No-Expo, not placing themselves in terms of total opposition to the event's existence, but rather as "alter-Expo": in particular, focus of criticism were the costs of the event, and especially bribes paid with numerous arrests and judgments. In addition to these aspects, relatively perceptible even by public opinion, other anomalies, highlighted by No-Expo network, found a slight visibility even in public discourse: first, aspects related to city's "over-building" and repercussions, scarce at best, negative at worst, that the event would have on Milan; secondly, the inconsistency of main sponsors (among which Coca Cola and Nestlè) with the declared philosophy of the event. Finally, a point of strategic importance deserves the topic of "work": being a strong argument of Italian Premier Renzi in his first year of government, even for Expo the creation of 70,000 job positions was promised; in reality jobs created are less than 4000, to which must be added the veritable army of "volunteers-workers" (at the beginning 18500 individuals expected), figures so anomalous as potentially revolutionary within labor market (Bertuzzi, Borghi 2015).

Regarding the security warning, we just mention some significant episodes occurred during 2015. In recent years different protests with international visibility were raised in Italy: No-TAV movement, mass participation at the European Social Forum in Florence (2002) and especially protests against G8 summit in Genoa (2001). The latter, event entered in the "securitarian" subconscious of Italian people, was decided by Italian Secret Services as a reference to depict the danger level of No-Expo protest: as early as in January of this year, they spoke of Expo2015 as an event "ten times more dangerous than the G8 in Genoa". Even national newspapers, in reporting such statements, were totally aligned with the warning, so that on La Repubblica (2015 January 22), you could read: "May 1, with the opening of Expo, Milan will be the showcase of the world. But there is someone who is preparing to crush showcases", and on Secolo XIX (2015 January 22) directly the title was: "With Expo ultra-left will hit worse than in Genoa": it was therefore taken for granted and described as "true story" an event that will take place 5 months later. As a final example of this climate of "witch hunt", it seems important to remember the closing, again precautionary, of University of Milan on January 16, 17 and 18, to avoid the possibility of an occupation and prevent a No-Expo assembly: this closure, decided by Dean and Prefect, have also obstructed University's regular activities, raising many protests also from students and professors. Beyond the way in which it was closed and the actual "danger" of a possible occupation, it seemed strange that, few days after the attacks to Charlie Hebdo headquarters in Paris and in a general climate of outcry in favor of freedom of expression, a place like a University has been closed to prevent a public assembly.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1.Internet and social movements

New possibilities of participation supported by technological devices are favoring the convergence of individuals who in the past probably would never have shared common actions. These conditions redefine possibilities of confrontation based on organization, dialogue and agreement at distance (Kamel 2014), dynamics of adhesion to protest allowing multiple paths (Bennet, Segerberg 2011; Pleyers 2011) and ways of participation (McDonald 2002).

Working on websites and digital media more in general, is fundamental to understand the relationship between individual agency and structural dimension (della Porta, Mosca 2009; Bennett, Segerberg 2011). In "Network Society" (Castells 1997) where mediated public sphere (Van Dijk 2002) took a central position, studying political dimension of Internet becomes mandatory: however, as della Porta and Mosca stressed, "for many years the debate on the political effects of the Internet has been mainly focused on an abstract level, with scarce references to empirical data" (2009: 772), leading to underestimated (Bennett 2003) or contradictory results (Di Maggio et al. 2001). "Networks" acquired centrality in their empirical nature of "organization as ideology" (Bennett 2005), privileged places for reflexivity (della Porta, Mosca 2005), and opportunity of new "digital repertoir of contention" (Earl, Kimport 2011). If Internet has been treated as object of study, in other cases this has also been used as a tool of analysis (Mosca 2014), in particular studying links between different organizations (Caiani et al. 2012; Ackland, Gibson 2005) and their ability to mobilize resources (Caiani, Parenti 2013) and build imaginaries (Bennet, Segerberg 2011).

A turning point was the emergence of Global Justice Movement, whose global dimension stressed the importance of computer-mediated communications between activist, representing both a "movement of movements" (Andretta et al. 2002) and a "network of networks" (Van Aelst, Walgrave 2002), with flexible structure but connected enough to allow the coordination of disparate groups (Caiani 2014). If, for some scholars (Van Vaer, Van Aelst 2010; Olesen 2003), one of the first examples in this sense was related to Zapata movement and its process of contesting Mexican government's policies, Castells (1997) detected the "revolutionary" spirit of current social entrepreneurs within technological revolution of Silicon Valley in the Seventies. An even more explicit connection was made by Himanen (2001): hacker ethic would not be necessarily tied to computer use, but would be a "tout-court" ethic, manifested through strong criticism of constituted power (Raffini 2014), thus becoming "the manifesto of all social movements operating online" (Pignatti 2008: 46), but more generally, also of protest action occurring outside the web.

Several typologies were proposed about Internet function for social movements: a particular useful one is by Van Vaer and Van Aelst (2010), who distinguish online collective action according to different combinations of two main dimensions: Internet-supported Vs. Interned-based and Low thresholds Vs. High thresholds. If several scholars highlighted the potential of the Internet, from ability to create transnational networks (della Porta 2005) to its usefulness in terms of protest instrument (Jordan 2002; Van Vaer, Van Aelst 2010), from organizational advantages (O'Brien 1999) to its democratic value (Mosca 2007), on the other hand there is who emphasized limited effectiveness of the Internet, which at best could only strengthen existing offline relationships and identities (Diani 2001; della Porta, Mosca 2009), and whose democratic power is not so often applied (Rucht 2004; Margolis, Resnick 2000; Scheufele, Nisbet 2002). We don't think correct to opt for a partisan position, neither techno-optimistic (Shirky 2008) nor techno-pessimistic (Morozov 2011); we agree with Gerbaudo (2012: 9) in its cautionary proposal for a "cultural and phenomenological interpretation of the role of social media as means of mobilization".

2.2.Frame analysis and collective identity in Social Movement Studies

To understand the role of frame analysis in social movement studies, it's important to stress how approaches historically dominating this field -Resource Mobilization, Political Opportunity Structure, New Social Movements- function mainly as ideal types (Koensler 2012), often leaving space for contaminations and consolidations into a single scheme (Melucci 1984; McAdam, McCarthy, Zald 1996): specifically, the concept of "frame" (Bateson 1955; Goffman 1974) has been used in this way. Following the "linguistic turn" affecting social sciences in the Seventies, also Social Movement scholars started to give more space to the role of ideology, not just focusing on cost/benefit ratio and activities of "social movement entrepreneurs" (McCarthy, Zald 1973, 1977); this turn will later become central in New Social Movement theorists' analysis: thanks to the attention on frames and discourses these two approaches find a connection (Donati 1992; Lindekilde 2014). In the analysis of frames proposed by collective actors, it's not possible to forget even Political Opportunity Structure approach: in this regard, some authors have proposed the interesting concept of "discursive opportunity structure" (Koopmans, Olzak 2004; McCammon et al. 2007) to emphasize how the construction of alternative imaginaries needs to be analyzed in relation to dominant discursive practices and broader context (Fairclough 1992), in order to study the way movements build narratives and horizons, or how they use existing narratives to propose alternative scenarios (Snow, Byrd 2007), create new "codes" (Melucci 1984) and challenge dominant "doxa" (Bourdieu 1977).

The growth of the geographical base of social movements also implies an increase in issues to deal with, thus protest actions can see peace movements, women's rights movements, environmental movements, ethical finance movements, etc. involved contemporarily: such a variety is well suited to the definition of "master frame" (Montagna 2007), able to bridge, amplify, extend or transform (in a word: "aligne", Snow et a. 1986) different frames (Treymane 2014). So, if on a structural level we are in an era that was defined as post-democratic, namely where decisions are "shaped in private by interaction between elected governments and elites that overwhelmingly represent business interests" (Crouch 2000: 4), on an individual level is increasingly coming true a personalization of protest that several scholars (Giddens 1991; Inglehart 1977; Touraine 2000; McDonald 2002; Micheletti 2003) have already stressed by time, namely a growing "tendency to engage with multiple cause by filtering the cause through individual lifestyles" (Bennett, Segerberg 2011: 771). In such a situation the concept of "collective identity" need to be re-discussed: according to Melucci's analysis (1984; 2000), McDonald (2002) underlines the necessity to overstep the relation between contemporary social movements and political dimension, to better focus on personal participation, namely on the capacity of individuals to react against de-individualization processes (Touraine 2000), through reflexive and self-narrative paths (Dubar 2000), conducting to the emergence of more and more variegated networks of subjectivities, promoters of practices and alternative scenarios (Alteri, Raffini 2014). These new subjectivities are not "limited" to boycott, but construct veritable "new identity that redefines their position in society and, by so doing, seeks the transformation of overall social structure" (Castells 1997: 8). Obviously this becomes a central dimension in online protest, giving space to what Castells (2007; 2009) defines "self-mass communication".

3.Fieldwork analysis

3.1.Mapping organizations and their communication strategies

Considering the nature of No-Expo network (an heterogeneous aggregation of groups) and its antagonists (the management trust of Expo2015 and all investors, private and public, involved in), we can primarily recognize a multidimensional asymmetry. On one side No-Expo

network, composed by a huge number of grass-rooted organizations, most of them without a juridical status, with different purposes: the existence of each organization is strictly connected to its members' activism; moreover their goals and strategies are constantly shared and discussed. On the other side an aggregation of public institutions (transnational, national and local), corporations, enterprises and only a residual group of NGOs. Asymmetry emerge firstly in relation to different forms of organizations (informal and grass-rooted vs bureaucratized), secondly to economic resources invested in promoting/contesting the Exposition, thirdly to opportunities for media access: in this respect only the Web can be deemed as, theoretically, a neutral ground where the two coalitions can compete at the same starting level[3]. Finally, and in a more general frame, asymmetry can be detected in the contrast between constructive power of Expo message and deconstructive purpose of No-Expo network: the first perspective can be managed by a massive recourse to marketing communication addressed to an international distracted public to be informed, the second one requires an articulated set of arguments and a potential mass willing to evaluate them.

One of the attempt we've pursued since the beginning of this work is to map organizations belonging to No-Expo network. Till first months of 2015 some of them were linked in the homepage of noexpo.org, but in that period the website was renewed and the list disappeared: we asked the reasons to some activists involved in communication management, and it didn't seem the result of a strategic choice but only a consequence of website restyling. Anyway we reconstructed the list through our notes, journal articles and through information collected among activists, focusing on an incremental approach in order to include as much organizations as possible involved in coordination and organization activities. From the 18 organizations previously listed in the website, we increased the number of organizations till 55[4], most of them without a juridical status because of their grass-rooted nature; moreover some of them are specific coalitions (mainly focused on a single No-Expo campaign) composed by pre-existing organizations and/or new organizations created to contrast some specific Expo projects (e.g.: civic committees against construction of new water channels which converged in No-Canal coalition). These results, partial and with a certain degree of approximation, anyway could be useful as starting point for some general evaluations. The first important aspect to be considered is related to the variety of grass-rooted organizations: here below we will offer an overview of this variety built from their self-definition traced on their social profiles, blogs and websites.

No-Expo network is composed by the most important metropolitan and regional "Centri Sociali Occupati" (11 mapped); other important areas, in terms of groups and not in terms of members (quite difficult to be defined), are that of students, mainly university students but also high-school students (16 mapped), and that of movements against big infrastructure projects (4 mapped), such as TAV (High Speed Railways connecting Lyon and Turin), MUOS (Mobile User Objective System: a modern system of satellite telecommunications of the US Navy, consisting of five geostationary satellites and four ground stations, including one in Niscemi - Sicily), MOSE (MOdulo Sperimentale Elettromeccanico – an hydraulic infrastructure for defending the Venetian lagoon by high tide), and Concrete Water Channels whose path

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[3]   Nevertheless we are aware that also online communication promoted by Expo2015 is managed by professionals and we don't agree with an overly optimistic rhetoric describing Internet as a totally horizontal and democratic device.

[4]   We considered only organizations which participate to national coordination group, excluding those which organize only local activities and events without a strict and direct connection with national No-Expo coordination group. Nevertheless this criteria has been used with a certain flexibility degree in order to appraise the organizations' variety.

was planned, in the context of Expo event, through city parks and protected natural environments.

Network's variety is represented also by different groups and individuals supporting specific No-Expo campaigns (5 detected: Io non lavoro gratis per Expo, Liberati da Expo, NoExpoPride, We-Women Fuor d'EXPO, Io non studio gratis per Expo) and other pre-existing campaigns on commons (Acqua bene comune), initiatives on housing and right to the city (Ira-C, Abitare nella crisi, Off Topic), and events (e.g. : EuroMayDay). Moreover some Unions (e.g.: CUB, USB, Slai Cobas) are part of the network organizing some (part) of the events such as EuroMayDay.

After this synthetic presentation of mapping activity we would like to present our attempt to define organizations centrality level in respect to national coordination and participation to No-Expo network. Some premises are necessary: heterogeneity of organizations and complexity of participation dynamics during last years, implies a natural discontinuity degree; for this reason it's not useful to consider centrality level as an absolute homogeneous measure along the time; it can rather be considered as a trend indicator of organizations leadership attitude in the specific context of No-Expo network. How the centrality level has been defined? We crossed evaluations of some activists involved, asking them to assign a value from 1 to 3[5] to the organizations we mapped and on which they could express themselves with a significant certainty degree. According to this method emerged that there are 14 organizations at level 1[6] (Off Topic, Zam, Lambretta, Ri-make, Sos Fornace, Il Cantiere, No Canal, Studenti contro Expo, Torchiera, Paci Paciana, Autonomia diffusa, Collettivo Bicocca, Studenti per l'altra Europa, Casc Lambrate);12 organizations at level 2[7] (Macao, Boccaccio, CUB, USB, Movimento Studenti Rho, Eat the Rich, Collettivo Universitario The Take-CUT, Dillinger, Compost, Rete Studenti Milano, Link, CCS Coordinamento Collettivi Studenteschi); and 17 organizations at level 3[8] (La terra trema, Antispefa, No Tav, No Muos, No Mose, No Grandi Navi, Genuino Clandestino, Pantera, Unione degli studenti, Giovani Comunisti, Studenti bergamaschi, I transiti, Baraonda, Conchetta, Acqua bene commune, Ira-C, Slai – Cobas).

Let's briefly consider now some aspects of communication strategy of No-Expo network, in particular those expressed through noexpo.org website, and their communicative impact on websites, blogs and social networks of main groups belonging to No-Expo network. The first important aspect is related to the mimetic strategy that connotes No-Expo website: its logo is

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[5]   Value 1 is when the organization has actively participated to coordination of one or more national events/initiatives (campaigns, demonstrations, sit-ins, blockades of sites, etc) which were attended by more than one group.
        Value 2 when the organization has only organized initiatives without having to coordinate with other organizations).
        Value 3 when the organization has participated in initiatives promoted by other organizations but not actively contribute to the coordination and organization.
        Value 10 correspond to "no opinion".

[6]   Those resulting by the sum of three evaluation with a score of 3, 4 or 12 which correspond to the following possible evaluations: 1+1+1; 1+1+2; 1+1+10

[7]   Those resulting by the sum of three evaluation with a score of 5, 6, 7, 13, or 14 which correspond to the following possible evaluations: 1+2+2; 2+2+2; 2+2+3; 1+2+10; 1+3+10

[8]   Those resulting by the sum of three evaluation with a score of 8, 9, 15, 16, 21, 22 or 23 which correspond to the following possible sums: 2+3+3; 3+3+3; 3+2+10; 3+3+10; 10+10+1; 10+10+2; 10+10+3

built and implemented starting from Expo logo. Same colors, same lettering, but subverted through explicit explanation, in the payoff, of the three main effects which, according to opponents' viewpoint, will be produced by the event: debt, concrete, precariousness; No-Expo website logo is completed by the hashtag #noexpo. Main sections of the website are #NOEXPOMAYDAY, CHI SIAMO, DOCUMENTI, APPUNTAMENTI, MATERIALI, CONTATTI[9]; moreover, at the top of the website there are also two direct links to English and French version, translated in some of its static parts such as explanatory text of main events of the period (e.g. MayDay Parade), but in Italian in some other ones (e.g.: Contacts), and in all dynamic parts referring to Press Review, initiatives map[10], Twittter messages addressed to @noexpo2015[11], links to main documents elaborated.

Shifting to a relational perspective, we then explored if and how exists a sort of coordination, or better a coherent connection, between No-Expo website and websites or blogs of organizations belonging to No-Expo network. The heterogeneity of organizations is reflected also in their web-based communication channels: the most diffused web tools are social networks, used by almost all of the organizations mapped (42 of 55), then follow websites (19 of 55) and blogs (19 of 55). Of the 55 organizations mapped, 39 have a website and/or a blog and only 2 have a website, a blog and at least one social network profile.

	Level 1 (tot. 15	Level 2 (tot. 13)	Level 3 (tot. 18)	Campaigns, MayDay (tot. 7)	TOT. (53*)
Website	6	4	6	3	19
Blog	5	3	3	3	14
SN	15	11	13	4	42
Only Website+blog	0	0	0	0	0
Only Website+SN	0	2	4	2	8
Only Blog+SN	3	3	3	2	11
Website+blog+SN	2	0	0	0	2
Nothing	0	0	0	1	1

* In two cases (of the 55 organization detected) none of the activists interviewed expressed an opinion

After this first overview we checked the existence of a permanent link[12] to No-Expo website in the homepage of the 39 organizations which use the website and/or the blog as communication tool: only 8 of them have a permanent link to No-Expo website. Among them only 4 organizations with a permanent link, are strongly involved in the network participating to coordination table; this evidence is relevant if we consider that, according with our classification, 14 are the organizations participating actively to the coordination table of the movement. We assume that a permanent link is a multiplier of visibility in a comprehensive communication web strategy, and it plays an important role. Moreover we considered the visibility of No-Expo initiatives in the same websites and blogs: only 20 of the 41
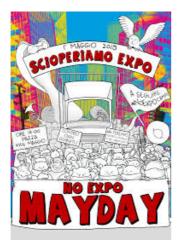
[9] Last view 20th May 2015. The website is continuously updated and in the last weeks has changed in some of its structural parts. For example, two months before in the webpage there was a direct link to websites or blogs of the main organizations belonging to the network. Now these links are not still visible.
[10] http://ribelli.net/
[11] Tweets in Italian are prevalent even if some of tweets, also referring to local protests, are in English.
[12] We considered existing links through permanent banner or writing, even in special sessions of the website such as the page "Friends" with a direct link in the homepage.

organizations considered[13] give visibility to some of the initiatives promoted by No-Expo network. These evidences allow us to introduce some considerations which can better pinpoint significance and role of No-Expo network website. A partial finding concerns the non-exploitation of the opportunities related to web-based communication. Why? A first, perhaps trivial, response was that the website, for the organizations studied, is not the first and strategic communication channel if we simply consider its diffusion in relation to social network profiles. The second evaluation brings us back to the asymmetry quoted above: although the mimetic strategy of No-Expo website, we can't consider it as a tile of a Corporate Communication Strategy; it's, despite all, the result of an agreement and a very different, if not opposite, decision-making process to those identifiable in organizational structure of Expo enterprise: assembly based versus a pyramidal structure, horizontality in decision making process instead of top-down approach, self-reflexivity as method instead of corporate pragmatism, plurality of subjectivities instead of a unique and coordinated image for marketing purposes, voluntary work of activists instead of a professional full-time contracted team with specific professional skills. In light of these remarks, we considered necessary to collect considerations of some activists in relation to No-Expo communication. Here below we refer to one of these interviews with some quotes and comments.

"When we created the website, in the group more involved in the organization team, we were discussing on what slogans we could use. Someone proposed "debt, concrete, precariousness". From that idea we recovered the old No-Expo logo with the man of Leonardo and we attached it to the graphics and colors of Expo. In some ways this choice [based on a mimetic approach] was very instinctive, very little strategically planned if we think to strategy as a result of a rational and "in cold blood" choice...some other more fine tuned communication tools, such as Expomapp[14] for Android an iOs, are not in No-Expo website but they're more complex examples of mimetic strategy".

It seems that communication richness outside No-Expo website (in other web-based channels of communication, and outside the web) can't be recollected and presented in it, for many different reasons: the first one is strictly related to (long-time) decision-making process behind contents publication on the website; secondly, the autonomy of each organization is respected and, in some ways, encouraged, because it's a guarantee of the potential viral effect of spontaneous and grass-rooted activities promoted by a multiplicity of subjects which can't be constricted in a coordinated communication strategy, such as a corporate one.

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13   In the period between 20th april – 15th May 2015.
14   It's a Smartphone Application that shows, according with the words of the activist interviewed, "the B side of Expo": territories invested by Expo, urban plans promised and the ones realized, exploitation and speculation around the infrastructures, actors involved and outsiders.

"communication, especially web communication, at the moment is extremely amateur; at the beginning we tried to propose and share a policy related to communication strategy, but extreme fluidity of collective self-organized aggregations, and more and more among civic committees, prevents to implement a real common communication policy [...] If we had to find an exception to this discourse, we must consider NO-Tav movement, but we can explain this exception considering that this movement has a long (twenty years) and strong grass-rooted history. That basic condition doesn't exist in No-Expo network."

The counter-information project of some groups of activist started in 2007, from Milan's candidature to the organization of Expo 2015; the first counter-dossier, promoted by Off Topic, showed "lies" contained in Milan's Expo proposal: European Library, navigable canals, three new Underground lines, planetary vegetable gardens, 60 public farms to be restructured[15].

"In 2012 No-Expo network is officially built and I think the best way to understand it, is not through the website but focusing attention on main initiatives which impressed rhythm and effective public visibility: the critical mass in Monza (7 July 2013)[16] which arrived just in front of Villa Reale, one of the official representative headquarter of Expo and officially within the perimeter of the red line; moreover we produced the game Expopolis [based on Monopoly game] and we performed it in many squares...each one can download, reproduce and personalize it [according to local struggles against land-grabbing] and the context where you want to play [at home or in a public square]. In addition we can consider also some important campaigns like No-Canal Campaign[17] [against the building of large concrete water channel] and Student's Campaign against voluntary work. All these events were the best communication actions of the network and the website can give you only a partial and reductive feedback of communicative activities".

The website, despite its communicative potentiality, is perceived as a bi-dimensional tool, a document container, an information instrument, but it can't return heterogeneity and social complexity of communicative actions promoted by No-Expo network, whose viral potentiality goes beyond the Web.

3.2.Frame analysis
Trying to connect online communication analysis proposed in previous pages and frame analysis on the main documents produced by No-Expo network, we could start with a simple consideration: in both online communication and dossiers, it seems to detect a deconstructive strategy. If we have already mentioned the mimetic approach used for the No-Expo website logo, in the same way we can say that the core strategy used in texts analyzed is to start from dominant assumptions of Expo propaganda deconstructing them in order to propose a specific counter-imaginary.
Regarding our frame analysis we proceeded as follows: we first identified main documents produced by No-Expo network, and specifically 5 dossiers founded on noexpo.org; in this sense, it's important to specify that we are not proposing a web content frame analysis, but a frame analysis about documents found on Internet but also available in printed version. Then we carefully examined these long dossiers and detected their main dimensions producing a schematic grid; after this, we integrated our grid by working on NVivo software and so completing our codebook. After having coded all texts, we started our analysis, extracting

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[15]   At the moment, one month after the Expo's inauguration, all these projects has been abandoned except one of the three Underground line, the violet ones, that is almost completed, and it is still working.
[16]   https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Sz8yJBR3BBU
[17]   https://it-it.facebook.com/difendiparcotrenno

single nodes and greater macro-frames: what emerged is a wide set of themes, from governance to risk, from development to debt, and so on. Trying to summarize and offer a picture as clear as possible in such a variegate archipelago (Diani 1995) of actors and themes, we singled out three macro-frames and a general master frame. The three macro-frames can be labeled as follows: 1) big events, power and right to the city; 2) biopolitics; 3) rhetoric and imaginaries construction. Due to limits of space, in next pages we will focus only on the first one; before this, only few considerations about other aspects. In "bio-politics" macro-frame we coded all those different aspects related to job insecurity, commodification, environment exploitation, LGBT community treatment, "occidentalism", anthropocentrism and serious risks for humankind health: what we want to emphasize is the great amount of questions characterizing No-Expo network, a great amount that on the one side represents its peculiarity and its potential strength, but on the other must confront with a veritable communication tank, facing the problem to hold together all the network areas. The other macro-frame we won't deepen in is the one we called "rhetoric and imaginaries construction", namely built around the identification of specific marketing devices used by Expo2015, in particular green-washing and pink-washing operation, aimed at presenting the event as a brand with an important message (feeding the planet, energy for life) and overshadowing its real critical aspects, in order to build a positive imaginary, around which all the population could identify.

Briefly mentioned these two macro-frames and before focusing on "big events, power and right to the city", we consider important to outline two typical aspects of frame analysis and Social Movement Studies literature: diagnosis/prognosis dialectic (Snow, Benford 1988) and identification of a master frame (Snow, Benford 1992). From the analysis of 5 main dossiers, a radical prevalence of diagnostic dimension emerged: if this is due to the nature of a dossier, specifically aimed at deconstruction, percentages of such asymmetry arouse a certain impression: space occupied by prognosis is just 12,49%, on the contrary diagnosis represents the remaining 87,51%[18]. Regarding master frame, we identified it in a general critic to capitalism in its various components: this is certainly not a novelty, and it rather represents the classic master frame of big coalitions from Seattle onward, being the typical example of what Chesters and Welsh called "plateau", namely the space where "anarchic, liberal, socialist, libertarian, feminist, anti-racial, anti-imperialistic critical perspectives co-exist in a creative tension around the definition and pursuing of immediate and long terms objectives" (2007: 143).

3.3. Big events, power and right to the city

In their diagnosis about this macro-frame, No-Expo dossiers showed the hegemonic discourse powered by Expo2015, simultaneously proposing a counter-discourse: under this macro-frame we collected the following nodes: over-building, big events, past/future, resources, public/private space, development, contracts, governance, services.

With a more qualitative insight, we now focus on main aspects detected, very often finding a punctual reference in urban sociology literature: so, criteria for assigning an event like Expo are described as strictly connected to what a city can offer as a capitalistic machine (Baumol 2003); in this sense, with an operation of frame bridging, it's for example underlined how offering a great amount of "volunteer workers" has been a strong point for Milan. In one of his seminal work, David Harvey (1982), pointed out that cities are nowadays the place of surplus production, and therefore become fundamental to contemporary capitalistic accumulation, to

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[18]   In our analysis we coded only these two dimensions, avoiding "motivation" exactly due to the specific nature of a dossier.

test its global strategies (Brenner, Theodore 2002; Veron 2008): in the same way, in dossiers examined we found numerous comparisons regarding governance of western cities and ethnocentric exploitation of poorest countries: as Bourdieu and Waquant (2001) proposed with the concept of "new planetary vulgate", this becomes particularly visible in an era where power language becomes more and more similar at different latitudes.

If urban spaces are the privileged target for capital investments, where interests and speculation activities can be planned through a wise coalition (and interests) building strategy, unfortunately it's not certain that there is always a positive repercussion on local territories and their inhabitants: this is precisely what No-Expo network tries to argue pointing out the profound process of gentrification, and more generally of distortion of urban landscape (especially in suburban areas), operated with a massive infrastructure building, involving public and private actors and characterized by several episodes of corruption. If certainly corruption is not the only element of criticism of the Universal Exposition (in No-Expo discourse criticized at its roots for the idea of development it proposes), however in the dossiers abundant space is dedicated to specific judicial investigations reporting the involvement of some of major constructors (CMC, Impregilo, Euromilano, etc). This aspect is then connected to local governance, in a diachronic analysis from the former administration (leaded by Letizia Moratti) to the current one (leaded by Giuliano Pisapia); the discourse about general management of urban policies (particularly about PGT), is then deepened with specific references to two specific issues: "right to housing" (an important area of No-Expo network, and whose protests characterized last months in Milan) and Expo-related infrastructures, such as Pedemontana, Bre.Be.Mi and TEM. Most of contemporary social movements, from Occupy Movements (e.g. Wall Street, Gezi, Hong Kong) to Arab Springs, ideally refer to a "right to the city" (Lefebvre 1968) that, according to Harvey (2008), must be at the same time "working slogan and political ideal": this claim, also strongly proposed by No-Expo network, not always finds fertile ground in mainstream public opinion, but certainly obliges academic community and policy makers to re-discuss traditional concepts of citizenship and representative democracy.

Strict connection between big events as one of main "dispositifs" (Foucault, 1976) to give shape (and feed) to post-industrial urban symbolic economy, and a broader strategy of urban regeneration, has been highlighted (Lash, Urry 1994; Zukin 1995): in our empirical materials we found in depth descriptions of previous Universal Expositions in order to describe how they were used to radically change cities conformation in a ultra-capitalistic-driven direction. From No-Expo diagnosis emerged how cultural production and consumption are becoming more and more strategic devices for both reshaping the city as the privileged place for leisure and tourism, and re-structuring economy and identity of big and medium urban areas which are involved in global economic competition: in this respect big events are rhetorically presented as an opportunity for a worldwide visibility that can "put in value" what local territories can offer to tourists, their cultural capital (Zukin 2004) in a middle term process characterized by a paradigmatic change, from urban managerialism to urban entrepreneurialism (Harvey 1989).

On the contrary, as claimed in the prognosis, urban spaces should acquire new significances, becoming sites for meetings and performances, sponsors for social and political new realities (Sassen 2011), instruments to re-build existences not colonized by economical and political power (Lefebvre 1996; Harvey 2012): being not possible to deepen the prognosis dimension for reasons of space, we only remember as a single example the experience of No-Expo Climate Camp, thoroughly described in dossiers and identified as alternative model of development and as a different approach to imagine the future of the city.

Last, but not least, what will happen after October 31? If most of No-Expo dossiers are referred to the past or eventually to the present, some references also address the problem of

the future of the site: as remembered in dossiers, at the moment there are no certainties. What is known is that public auction for the allocation of Expo area has been deserted; so each State will decide whether or not to leave its pavilion: it is estimated that only 20% of the existing structures will remain. In the end, exactly for its multi-faced composition and its specific nature of a network not only focused around the big event, but more in general interested in a specific idea of "right to the city", it's obvious that real goal and also real extent of No-Expo network won't end when Expo gates will be closed, but will continue as a laboratory for a different idea of social and urban development.

Conclusions

In previous pages we dealt with a complex network of (collective and individual) subjectivities, which contest the big-event Expo2015, criticizing its propaganda, both underlying general flaws of Universal Expositions, and specific ways in which this edition has been managed: in our working paper, we concentrated on organizations and frames, while aware of the equally (if not more) important role of everyday practices of struggle and resistance.

We first proposed a general overview of what the big event has been, remembering the construction of a media tank aimed at hiding problems, and proposing Expo2015 as a landmark not only ideal but also necessary for the construction of a better future for the planet: this process has been conducted by various agencies, public and private actors, with the construction of a media paranoia and a climate of veritable "witch-hunt" against those who proposed alternative scenarios. After this introductory framework and theoretical references, the second part of the paper was dedicated to fieldwork. This part consisted of two main sections: the first aimed at reconstructing the complex network of organizations, groups and campaigns gathering around No-Expo network, and at analyzing online communication strategies both of the reference site (www.noexpo.org), and of different online channels of single groups (websites, blogs, social networks). Summarizing what we've already highlighted more in depth in previous pages, we can say that it's not possible to consider No-Expo online communication as a real systematic strategy, but as a partial consequence of daily communication activities of the various organizations involved.

Then we analyzed five of the main documents produced by No-Expo network (or by specific affiliate groups), identifying 3 macro-frames (right the city; bio-politics; imaginary) and a master frame (critique to capitalism from different angles): we dedicated our focus to only one of these frames which concerns the right to the city, finding an extremely argumentative diagnosis of devices used to make the city a laboratory test for wider projects of contemporary capitalism. On the contrary, prognosis emerged with less effectiveness; anyway we are aware that different proposals have been expressed in numerous events and actions carried out in recent years by No-Expo network, and that their (almost total) absence on dossiers doesn't mean the inability to provide an alternative to capitalistic machine.

We now conclude with a more general reflection and an open question that we will try to answer in the next steps of this work. In these pages we spoke about a "network" and not about a "social movement": this assumption finds confirmation in the name chosen by No-Expo themselves (Rete No-Expo) and also in opinions expressed by single activists, and, incidentally, goes well with the centrality of the Internet in modern advocacy coalition both as a means of communication with the outside, and as a channel of dialogue between various actors composing the coalition itself. The multiplicity of subjectivities in this network fights an asymmetric struggle against dominant practices and discourses: their multiple identities and the complexity of their messages have got times and modes of penetration different from

those of a big-event's "machine". So, very often, these multiple subjects and subjectivities must run after initiatives and transformations whose negative effects are only scarcely scraped from their smart and complex deconstruction work. What are the effects of this situation? Subordination, or cultural change that will see its effects in the future?

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