



DOCTORAL THESIS

The governance of megaproject developments

lessons from the comparison of two contested infrastructure projects

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**The governance of megaproject developments:
Lessons from the comparison of two contested infrastructure
projects**

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I confirm that the word count of this thesis is less than 100,000 words excluding the title page, contents acknowledgements, abstract, abbreviations, footnotes, diagrams, maps, illustrations, tables, appendices, and references.

Table of Contents

Declaration.....	iv
Acknowledgements.....	v
Abstract.....	vi
List of Abbreviations.....	vii
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION.....	1
1.1. Background and research perspective.....	1
1.2. Research aims and contribution to knowledge.....	3
1.3. Research questions and design.....	6
1.4. Chapter Plan.....	8
CHAPTER 2. MEGAPROJECT DEVELOPMENTS: <i>PROBLEMATIQUE</i> AND POLITICS.....	11
2.1. Megaprojects: definitions, characteristics and paradigms.....	11
2.1.1. Definitions and categorical breakdown.....	11
2.1.2. The changing character of megaprojects.....	14
2.2. Issues of concern in the megaproject planning and developing process.....	18
2.3. Popular “failures”: the “megaproject paradox” and the “survival of the unfittest”.....	22
2.4. Megaproject developments: a contentious and political matter.....	24
2.4.1. Critical approaches to contention associated with megaproject developments.....	26
2.4.2. Focusing on the resilience of megaprojects plans.....	31
2.5. Summary.....	32
CHAPTER 3. THE POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE OF MEGAPROJECT DEVELOPMENTS: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS.....	34
CHAPTER 4. THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	62
4.1. The research purpose and key questions.....	62
4.2. Research approach.....	64
4.2.1. Inquiry perspective and reflexivity.....	65
4.2.2. Activist knowledge.....	67
4.3. Research Design.....	69
4.3.1. The comparative method and the case-oriented strategy.....	70
4.3.2. Documentary methods.....	77
4.3.3. Interviews.....	78
4.3.4. Participant observation.....	81
4.4. Analysis of findings.....	83
4.5. Ethical issues.....	85
4.6. Summary.....	86
CHAPTER 5. CASE STUDIES’ CONTEXTUALISATION.....	88
5.1. Supranational context. The TEN-T initiative.....	89
5.2. National contexts.....	95

5.2.1. Italy	95
5.2.2. Spain	97
5.3. Regional contexts	100
5.4. Megaproject characteristics, rationale and legal framework.....	103
5.4.1. New Railway connection Lyon-Turin (NLTL)	103
5.4.2. Basque Y	105
5.5. Summary	106
CHAPTER 6. ACTORS' COALITIONS AND CONFLICT DYNAMICS	109
6.1. Megaproject coalitions	110
6.1.1. NLTL	111
6.1.2. Basque Y coalition.....	115
6.2. Oppositions' frames and rationales	118
6.3. Anti-megaproject coalitions and conflict periodization.....	121
6.3.1. The No Tav movement	122
6.3.2. The anti-HSR movement in the Basque Autonomous Community.....	126
6.4. Summary	128
CHAPTER 7. OPERATIONALISING MEGAPROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES: OVERARCHING FRAMEWORKS OF GOVERNANCE	130
7.1. Adherence to the EU framework of TEN-T.....	131
7.2. High capacity (and speed) railways: aiming for competitiveness.....	135
7.3. New transport infrastructure to promote (economic) growth?.....	139
7.4. Management and procurement initiatives accompanying megaprojects.....	145
7.5. Consensus (politics) on megaproject decision-making.....	149
7.6. Conclusion.....	159
CHAPTER 8. ASSESSING THE MEGAPROJECT'S COALITION FUNCTIONING	162
8.1. Further characterisation of the NLTL coalition	163
8.1.1. Coalition's expansion	163
8.1.2. Additional discursive and practice elements	167
8.2. Further characterisation of the Basque Y-related coalition.....	170
8.2.1. Further insights on the Basque Y coalition.....	170
8.2.2. Further discursive components	177
8.3. Consolidation of the megaproject agenda	180
8.4. Conclusion.....	191
CHAPTER 9. SECURING MEGAPROJECT DEVELOPMENTS BY UNDERMINING OPPOSITION MOVEMENTS	194
9.1. Significance of the state for megaproject agendas.....	194
9.2. Physical coercion as a response to oppositional direct action.....	199
9.3. Undermining the opposition: organisational arrangements and repressive apparatus strategies.....	207

9.4. Administrative and legal actions	218
9.5. Further mechanisms of coercion and selectivity	223
9.6. Conclusion.....	226
CHAPTER 10. CONCLUSIONS	230
10.1. The Research Question.....	231
10.2 Contribution to knowledge.....	239
10.2.1. Empirical evidence	239
10.2.2. Theoretical contributions	241
10.2.3. Policy and practice.....	244
10.2.4. Future directions for research	245
10.3. Research assessment	245
APPENDIX 1. Interview Guide	247
APPENDIX 2. Permanent People’s Tribunal. Outline of the session and participants recorded	249
APPENDIX 3. Letter of approval from the Ethics Committee	252
APPENDIX 4. Information sheet given to participants.....	253
APPENDIX 5. Example of the Codebook.....	256
References.....	260

Declaration

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Abstract

The purpose of this thesis is to identify and understand the factors and mechanisms that underpin the resilience of megaproject developments. To interrogate the subject, the study draws tools from critical urban political theory which enable to analyse and conceptualise the multiple political and governance components making up the process.

The study consists of a qualitative design and adopts a comparative strategy. The comparison is conducted between two high-speed railway contested developments: the New Line Turin-Lyon (Italy) and the New Railway for the Basque Country (Spain). In terms of data collection, the study relies on semi-structured interviews, documents and complementary participant observations. Salient elements within the governance processes are inductively identified through the thematic analysis technique. The analysis is then supported by a contextualisation of the case studies that highlights a plethora of aspects with implications for the governance process.

The analysis notes the different interrelated mechanisms and governance arrangements that contribute to the buttressing of the megaproject development processes. In first instance it notes how the extant politico-economic configurations and structures constitute a relevant source of support through their discourses and techniques of government but also through the underlying consent. Additionally, from a agency-centred perspective, it outlines further manoeuvres and tactics that contribute to strengthen the megaproject plans, from coalitional practices to managerial arrangements. Lastly, it interrogates the ways in which the opposition is undermined to further secure the plans through the operating state selectivities in addition to coercive measures.

Accordingly, the thesis brings forward a unique contribution to the field of megaproject scholarly work emphasising on the political nature of their governance. It concludes noting that the factors and mechanisms underlying megaproject governance are multi-faceted. More specifically, their resilience derives from practices on the ground but also from the politico-economic and socio-spatial configurations in which, as political processes, they are inserted.

List of Abbreviations

ADIF	Administrador de Infraestructuras Ferroviarias (Spanish National Railway Infrastructure Company)
AHT	Abiadura Haundiko Trena (acronym for High Speed Rail in Basque)
AVE	Alta Velocidad Española (Spanish High Speed Train Service)
CBA	Cost Benefit Analysis
CCOO	Comisiones Obreras (Workers' Commissions trade union federation)
CGIL	Confederazione Generale Italiana del Lavoro (Italian General Confederation of Labour)
CIPE	Comitato Interministeriale per la Programmazione Economica (Inter-ministerial Committee for Economic Planning).
CISL	Confederazione Italiana Sindacati Lavoratori (Italian Confederation of Workers' Trade Unions)
CMC	Cooperativa Muratori e Cementisti (Italian trans-national construction company)
CSOA	Centro Sociale Occupato Autogestito (Self-managed Squatted Social Centre)
DIGOS	Divisione Investigazioni Generali e Operazioni Speciali (special division of the state police in Italy, General Investigations and Special Operations Division)
DS	Democratici di Sinistra (Democrats of the Left, left-wing party that preceded the Democratic Party in Italy)
EA	Eusko Alkartasuna (Basque Solidarity, left-wing split from the PNV, currently within the EH Bildu coalition)
EC	European Commission
ECU	European Currency Unit
EH Bildu	Euskal Herria Bildu (Basque Country Bildu, left-wing nationalist coalition)
EIA	Environmental Impact Assessment
EIB	European International Bank
EJOLT	Environmental Justice Organisations Liabilities and Trade
ELA	Euskal Langileen Elkartasuna (Solidarity of Basque Workers trade union)
ERT	European Round Table of Industrialists
ETA	Euskadi ta Askatasuna (Basque Country and Freedom)
ETS	Euskal Trenbide Sarea (Basque Railway Company)
EU	European Union
FIAT	Fabbrica Italiana Automobili Torino (Italian Automobile Factory of Turin)
HB	Herri Batasuna (Popular Unity, Basque nationalist left party)

HSR	High Speed Railway
IU	Izquierda Unida (United Left, Spanish left-wing party; also EB Ezker Batua for its Basque sister organisation)
LAB	Langile Abertzaleen Batzordeak (Patriotic Workers' Commissions trade union)
LTF	Lyon Turin Ferroviere
MDS	Most Different Systems Design
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NLTL	Nuova Linea Torino-Lione (New line Turin-Lyon)
PD	Partito Democratico (Democratic Party, centre-left party in Italy)
PEIT	Plan Estratégico de Infraestructuras y Transporte (Strategic Infrastructures and Transport Plan)
PGTL	Piano Generale di trasporto e Logistica (National Plan for Transport and Logistics)
PNV	Partido Nacionalista Vasco (Basque Nationalist Party, moderate Basque nationalist party)
PP	Partido Popular (People's Party, Spanish centre-right party)
PPP	Public-Private Partnership
PPT	Permanent People's Tribunal
PSOE	Partido Socialista Obrero Español (Spanish Socialist Workers' Party)
PTP	Promoció del Transport Public (NGO organised around the Public Transport Promotion)
RFI	Rete Ferroviarie Italiane (Italian Railway Networks)
SNCF	Société Nationale des Chemins de Fer français (National Society of French Railways)
SRA	Strategic Relational Approach
TAV	Treno ad Alta Velocita (acronym for High Speed Rail in Italian but also in Spanish)
TELT	Tunnel Euralpin Lyon Turin
TEN-T	Trans-European Networks of Transport
UIL	Unione Italiana del Lavoro (Italian Labour Union)
UIMP	Useless or Unnecessary Imposed Mega Projects
USA	United States of America
WWF	World Wide Fund

CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a concise lead-in account of the thesis contents. To this end, section 1.1 outlines the background of the research topic and the perspective adopted by the researcher. Section 1.2 notes the aims of this research project and highlights the expected contribution to knowledge. Section 1.3 presents the research questions that were formulated alongside the research design. Finally, the last section of this introductory chapter breaks down the structure of the thesis by outlining the chapter plan.

1.1. Background and research perspective

During recent decades there has been considerable expansion in the planning and construction of different types of large-scale infrastructure projects worldwide (Fainstein, 2008; Flyvbjerg et al., 2003; Kennedy, 2015; Merrow et al., 1988). Alongside with this expansion trend, an increasing number of publications have analysed a wide range of aspects (political, economic, socio-environmental and managerial) in relation to this phenomenon. With respect to the governance of megaprojects, the literature presents a split. On one hand, some publications tend to refer to the decision-making processes linked to the deliverance of these large-scale public works¹, through a technical perspective. On the other hand, a contrasting set of publications, endorses instead critical perspectives, by delving into what could be broadly referred as the politics of megaprojects². Without neglecting the first group, this thesis engages and builds upon the second group of the literature body which specifically focuses on “governance arrangements and patterns of influence, as well as the social and spatial implications of large-scale urban projects” (Kennedy, 2015: 163).

This body of literature has also contributed to the consolidation of the term “megaproject” although there are several definitions that have been put forward³. In

¹ See for instance Priemus and van Wee (eds.) (2013) and Priemus, Flyvbjerg and van Wee (eds.) (2008).

² See for instance Altshuler & Luberoff, (2003); Díaz Orueta & Fainstein, (2008); Flyvbjerg et al., (2003); Gellert and Lynch (2003) and Swyngedouw et al., (eds) (2003).

³ Some of the literature embarks on giving specific characteristics (such as the amount of money invested; see for instance Flyvbjerg, 2014: 3 –the author suggests that megaprojects “typically cost a billion dollars or more”) or using conceptualisations such as the six C’s (colossal, costly, captivating, controversial, complex and “laden with control issues”; Frick, 2008) to define them. Meanwhile, other authors include vaguer references such as that they entail the investment of “at least several hundred million euros” and embody the outcome of “complex decision-making processes” (Priemus and van Wee 2013: 1).

line with recent publications⁴, this thesis adopts a definition of megaproject which encompasses two of their critical dimensions: their multi-faceted, transformative character and its link with power mechanisms. It corresponds to the definition put forward by Gellert and Lynch (2003: 15–16) and defines megaproject developments as projects that “transform landscapes rapidly, intentionally, and profoundly in very visible ways, and require coordinated applications of capital and state power”. Significantly, it points to a crucial (political) aspect in megaproject developments as assumed in this research project: its conflictual dimension. The latter is, precisely, the focus of this thesis insofar as it is assumed that megaproject developments constitute, to a greater or lesser extent, a contested matter and therefore, inextricably political. The next paragraph further elaborates on the aspects that underlie and at the same time define the contested nature of megaproject undertakings.

In the first place, several shortcomings –the so-called “megaproject pathologies” (Lehtonen, 2014) – that repeatedly appear in the procurement process have been noted: underestimation of costs and (negative) socio-economic impacts, overestimation of beneficial aspects, under-performance and rent-seeking motivations by promoting agents (Altshuler and Luberoff, 2003; Flyvbjerg, 2005, 2008, 2009, 2014; Flyvbjerg et al., 2003). These elements by themselves have the potential to turn megaproject developments into complex and contested processes. Second, it is not uncommon that their planning and approval procedures have been questioned because of its exclusive character (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003; Lehrer and Laidley, 2008; Swyngedouw et al., 2002). Third, as a result of some of these described elements, they can turn into the cause of socio-environmental conflicts which can be characterised by long-term situations of contentious dynamics. In these situations, coalitions of opposing agents challenge the promoting group (normally the public authorities in potential alliance with other actors) through a wide range of action repertoires (Gellert and Lynch, 2003; Robert, 2014). Fourth, in spite of the associated contention and remarkable flaws and shortcomings in their management, megaproject developments seem to be well secured in the policy agendas as they are “being built in ever greater numbers at ever greater value” (Flyvbjerg, 2014: 5). Lastly, being aware that their implementation is likely to prompt contentious dynamics, the agents controlling the process proceed with a series of special or extraordinary measures so that the process is less likely to be disrupted

⁴ See for instance Ariemma and Burnside-Lawry (2014) and Kennedy (2013, 2015).

(Altshuler and Luberoff, 2003; Swyngedouw et al., 2002) and even when social opposition consolidate, the megaproject plans can remain unchallenged. Within the whole phenomena of megaprojects, this shall be the focus of this thesis.

Last of all, this paragraph turns to discuss the approach taken. It shall be noted that a great deal of the megaprojects (constructed or under planning phases) result from the implementation of city-centric policies. Accordingly, Kennedy (2011) suggests using urban governance as an entry point to study the politics of megaproject developments. To that end, the field of urban politics shall be considered. In particular, within this domain, there is a critical scholarship that has been consolidating in the last decades that is concerned with the power imbalances and the actor exclusion and marginalisation that often takes place as a result of specific urban policies. These, in turn, normally underlie also megaproject developments. From a myriad of disciplines (political economy, sociology, urban and political studies, critical geography and planning) several authors have pointed out multiple critical components in relation to large-scale infrastructure projects (these include existing practices and discourses and actor's alignments⁵). Also, they have discussed the relations between megaproject developments and overarching politico-economic and spatial processes (e.g. planetary urbanisation, reescalation of statehood and accumulation by dispossession) so that conceptual bonds with critical governance theorisations can be established (Brenner, 2004, 2013; Harvey, 2003; Swyngedouw et al., 2002). This set of critical urban literature to which megaproject developments are directly or indirectly related will guide the perspective adopted by this thesis.

As this section has summarised the research topic's background and the adopted perspective, the next section turns to present the research aims and the contribution to knowledge.

1.2. Research aims and contribution to knowledge

The focus of this thesis is on documenting and theorising the governance⁶ arrangements and power mechanisms operating in megaproject developments in the

⁵ See for example Novy and Peters (2012) and Flores Dewey and Davis (2013).

⁶ As noted by della Porta and Keating (2008) the term governance has been open to multiple interpretations in recent years. In this respect, the author notes that the way in which the concept is mobilised in this research follows the interpretation adopted by Healey (2011: 95) as applied to urban politics. The author outlines how the research prism has to "encompass the wider relations through which collective action is accomplished" going beyond the "narrow focus of what formal government does" so that the analysis takes into consideration that "the

face of oppositional movements. As the previous section has noted, megaproject development processes tend to be characterised by a series of common flaws and shortcomings. Sometimes these coexist with oppositional processes that build up as the megaproject plans unfold. In this context, it is observed that these large-scale public works are, not only seldom dismissed, but also they are often advanced through the use of exceptional or extraordinary procedures and/or mechanisms (Kennedy, 2015; Swyngedouw et al., 2002). Accordingly, it is presumed that megaproject agendas benefit from a series of elements that can range from pre-given structures to specific tactics and manoeuvres operationalized by public and private actors. Hence, a central aim of this project is to investigate the factors underlying the resilience⁷ of megaproject agendas and theorise upon the associated processes.

More specific aims of this thesis are addressed as follows including references to the lacunas that they address:

- Theorise on the politics of megaproject development governance from a perspective that takes into account the marginalised voices within this urban process
- Illuminate and theorise upon the mechanisms facilitate the bulwarking of megaproject agendas.
- Identify the factors that shape and can explain the trajectory of the governance process and how these relate to the extant politico-economic and spatial configurations.
- Examine to what extent a conceptual framework based on a broad notion of urban growth coalitions explains the nature of the agents supporting megaproject developments.
- Analyse and discuss the governance arrangements and tactics employed to deal with the opposition which further help to advance megaproject developments.

All in all, this thesis expects to make contributions at both empirical and theoretical levels. In first place, the thesis seeks to engage with the emergent body of critical literature analysing political dynamics and processes in relation to megaproject

spheres of the state, the economy and the daily life overlap and interact in complex ways in the construction of politics and policy, in the formation of policy agendas and practices.”

⁷ Resilience is used to define the ways in which this type of development projects tend to remain in the public agendas of governments despite multiple handicaps, the most relevant of which, social contestation.

developments through concrete research over specific case studies⁸. In this sense, the thesis verifies some of the previous research findings on megaproject developments but also brings forward further insights on the specific politics and modes of governance. More specifically, the remarkable contributions at the empirical level consist of the following: (i) elucidation of the factors and mechanisms influencing the overarching governance and implementation framework alongside with its functioning; (ii) highlighting of the specific manoeuvres and capacities of the megaproject coalitions; and (iii) verification of the role of coercion as a decisive input to the stability of megaproject plans.

In second place, as the thesis draws on theories of urban politics and governance and spatial relations, it will also attempt to make advancements in this respect through the following aspects: (i) the development of a framework of analysis stemming from urban theories concerned with politico-economic and spatial relations; (ii) the testing of the applicability of the urban coalitions framework to explain the nature and behaviour of the subjects banding behind megaproject plans; (iii) the elaboration and further development of state theory notions with respect to the observed selectivities; (iv) the incorporation of a neo-Gramscian component into the analysis of megaproject politics mirroring its application in urban politics and governance. These points, in particular the first two have relevant implications for the field of urban studies. On one hand, it is expected that the research findings will facilitate an engagement with the structure-agency debate in urban politics. In this sense, while some authors emphasise that in urban politics, agency and structure tend to appear as mutually constitutive (Jessop et al., 1999) other conceptualisations employed in the discipline of urban politics such as the growth coalitions, tend to be more agency-centred (Jonas and Wilson 1999). On the other hand, it shall be noted how the development of the growth coalitions conceptualisation normally refers to processes mostly located at the local scale, particularly in cities or city regions given its relevance as nodes of accumulation within globalisation. In contrast, when applied to transport megaproject plans, the concept has to be further problematised in relation to the different scales of governance involved, the spatial dimension and the weight of the different actors involved in the megaproject coalitions. This will also help clarifying the use of urban coalitions

⁸ See for instance Jou et al. (2012) and the special issue edited by Kennedy (2015) "Megaprojects, Settlement Dynamics and the Sustainability Challenge in Metropolitan Cities".

concepts such as growth machine when identifying the actors groups banding behind megaproject developments.

Now that the research aims and the contribution to knowledge have been presented, the next section turns to briefly present the research questions and design.

1.3. Research questions and design

The proposed research project will document and theorise the governance process and politics of megaproject developments in order to better understand their resilience within the public policy agendas. In particular, and by looking at two case studies of conflicts over megaproject developments (specifically high-speed rail [HSR] projects), this study will analyse and conceptualise the (political) processes and mechanisms through which megaproject plans are supported or reinforced. To that end, the research approach embraces a relational perspective, which entails conceiving the social opposition as part of the process and therefore investigating the way in which it is addressed so that potential disruption effects are minimised. The selected case studies correspond to the new Turin-Lyon Railway connection and the new railway network for the Basque Country.

In light of the above outlined considerations, a first research question was formulated alongside several subsidiary research questions to help guide the analysis of the data collected:

→ What factors and mechanisms explain and underlie the resilience of megaproject plans in the face of multi-faceted disruption? How do they operate?

Three further sets of questions were then formulated. They include:

- How can the alliances backing megaproject developments be characterised and what are the mechanisms and processes that enable the formation of these alliances/coalitions? To what extent can the urban coalition theories explain their nature and modus operandi?
- What are the structures, governance arrangements and power mechanisms that contribute to the consolidation of megaproject developments in the face of oppositional movements? How do these translate into discursive, performative and policy measures?
- How are these measures enacted and operationalized? What role do they play in relation to the opposition campaigning and resisting efforts?

In order to produce data that would offer answers to these questions, a comparative case study methodology was adopted. This strategy should facilitate a better comprehension of the processes and mechanisms that, underpin the resilience of megaproject plans. Accordingly, two analogous case studies from different geographic/national areas were selected to conduct the analysis. In addition, the analytical process follows a case-oriented approach so that the complex interactions between context and agents through long processes are better captured (della Porta, 2008; della Porta and Piazza, 2008). Even if with limited scope for generalisation given the case specificities, this exercise should constitute a valuable contribution to the body of megaproject literature in terms of explaining the factors that mediate in the politics of large-scale developments.

The selected cases correspond to two high speed railway developments –the new railway network for the Basque Country and the new railway connection between Turin and Lyon– resulting from a joint effort of EU (TEN-T initiative), national and regional infrastructure and economic policy. Aside from its promotion and support from these different scales it is worth noting its relevance as pieces within the ongoing accumulation strategies promoted by political and economic elites. In turn, the pro-megaproject push sponsored by these elites benefits from extant institutional bodies and structures in both countries, Italy and Spain. This constitutes the contextual landscape where the megaproject development processes occur and therefore has to be explored prior to the empirical analysis.

The subject was then approached following a qualitative methodological design on the basis of semi-structured interviews and document analysis as main data-gathering techniques while also observation methods were incorporated for a more robust reconstruction of the case studies. Accordingly, the researcher conducted a total of 44 semi-structured interviews using purposive and snowball sampling techniques. The sample included mainly activists from different backgrounds but also public officials, local representatives, members of trade unions, political parties, associations, scholars and journalists. In addition, document analysis was conducted taking into account sources that accounted for the diverging narratives involved in the megaproject related contentious dynamics. This resulted in the consideration of policy, governmental and journalist materials but also the consultation of activist produced materials. Finally, the participant observations were included to grasp the contentious dynamics in its natural

setting. These included mostly protest and cultural events organised by the opposition groups and platforms. Among them it stands out the participation in the Permanent People's Tribunal session on contention over megaproject developments. Prior to start the data gathering process, the researcher obtained ethical approval from the University Committee. The student application stated that the researcher would adhere at all times to the University ethical procedures.

Finally, the empirical analysis of the findings was carried out using the inductive technique of thematic analysis. The process was then supported by one specific computer software (NVivo 10/11) which facilitated the organisation and examination of a considerable amount of data. Accordingly, the research design is further described in chapter 4. Having briefly outlined the central aspects of the research design as well as the research questions that guided the data collection and analytical processes, the next section turns to present the thesis chapter structure.

1.4. Chapter Plan

This thesis is structured in ten chapters. Following from the introduction, chapter 2 presents an overview on the politics of megaproject development processes as well as critical considerations on the phenomenon as whole; it also outlines contemporary approaches to the issue of megaproject-related contention. Finally, it depicts the premises upon which it can be considered that megaproject developments are endowed with exceptional or extraordinary modes of governance.

Chapter 3 sets the phenomenon under investigation against critical perspectives on urban politics. It continues by laying out the theoretical underpinnings of the analytical perspective on the basis of three components. Firstly, implications of the neoliberalisation process for urban governance and policy agendas. Secondly, conceptualisations of agency based on the coalition theories that interrogate potential mechanisms and forms of organisation of actors in the urban realm. This adds up to the third component, the role of state-related structures in relation to the privileging of specific actors or endeavours. These theoretical notes seek to account for the factors that intersect urban governance in general and megaproject governance in particular, such as politico-economic and socio-spatial relations.

Chapter 4 presents an outline of the research design which includes specifications on the research questions, the inquiry perspective and the researcher's reflexivity. After explaining the comparative strategy adopted, it also specifies the details of the data

collection methods and analysis procedures as well as the ethical issues encountered and how they were dealt with.

The following chapters (5 and 6) provide a thorough account of the case studies contexts by examining several aspects of importance namely policy frameworks, politico-economic dynamics and rationales and nature of opposing coalitions. Chapter 5 includes notes on the EU planning and legal framework, the national (Italy, Spain) and regional (Piedmont, Basque Country) politico-economic and social dynamics and finally the rationales behind the megaproject development plans. On the other hand, chapter 6 starts the case study reconstruction by noting the type of coalitions banding behind megaproject developments as well as the features of the social opposition. Additionally, it accounts on the trajectory of the contentious dynamics shaping the politics and conflict over the selected case studies.

Chapter 7 examines the governing and discursive techniques characterising megaproject developments. It focuses, on the one hand, on the significance of megaproject discourses to create a common sense around them. These referred essentially, to the need of improving the competitiveness of the region and therefore promoting economic progress and development but also the importance of abiding by the EU policy frameworks and initiatives. On the other, it also teases out how megaproject plans benefit from both post-political planning settings and legal mechanisms which foreclose citizen participation. In fact, as noted towards the end, this is reinforced as well by a particular cosmovision that associates infrastructure development with progress, modernity and prosperity.

Chapter 8 deepens on the analysis of the identified megaproject coalitions theorising on the different cooperating partners and the detected mechanisms underlying the safeguard of the megaproject agenda. To do so, it focuses mainly on auxiliary partners that have the potential to increase the megaprojects legitimacy and also in further discourse and practice resources. Furthermore, evidence unveils other mechanisms such as the need of establishing and maintaining cross-party majorities in the relevant representative institutions, the grounds on which further resources are mobilised and also the role of specific individuals providing leadership to the procurement process.

Chapter 9 deals with the issue of opposition disruption. It is argued that, to the extent that not enough consent was reached, megaproject agents have to resort to coercion to undermine the opposition. Further than direct violence other coercive mechanisms are

identified. It is argued that in order to privilege the megaprojects plans, the social opposition is discriminated through a set of measures organised via state bodies. It is concluded that this reinforces in effect, megaproject plans.

The final chapter draws the conclusions in relation to the research findings presented in the preceding chapters. More specifically, it collates the research findings, set against the main research question, so as to comprehend the functioning of megaproject governance processes when marked by handicaps, and more important, by opposition and resistance. It is argued that the comparative strategy has enabled to identify the factors and mechanisms that underpin the resilience of megaproject developments. In this respect, caution is shown given the significance of the context. This is followed by a section on the knowledge contribution, the implications for policy and practice and the prospects for future research. The chapter concludes with an assessment of the research process.

CHAPTER 2. MEGAPROJECT DEVELOPMENTS: *PROBLEMATIQUE AND POLITICS*

As noted in the introductory chapter, the foci of this thesis are the political dynamics and processes associated with megaproject developments, especially –but not only– in the face of oppositional movements. Aspects of concern include the presumed resilience of megaproject agendas, the interactions between the agents involved and the wider politico-economic and social context. In order to set out a scholarly backdrop against which to understand these elements, this chapter examines the body of literature specialising in the phenomenon of megaprojects, as well as the critical literature that captures the conflictual dimension of megaproject developments and links it back to the wider politico-economic context. This involves accounting also for similar terms such as large-scale projects or (urban) developments.

This reviewing process shall be organised incrementally, from the literature examining general trends around megaproject procurement processes to the sets of literature outlining the specificities of the disputes that these can potentially generate. Accordingly, the first section presents the different definitions for megaprojects advanced by the specialised scholarship and also a description of the shifting paradigms that have informed megaproject development processes. Section 2.2 explores the problematic aspects of megaproject developments outlined in the literature, considering critical valuations of their managerial processes as well as considerations of their governance. Section 2.3 points to the contradictory essence identified in large-scale projects, and how this has been conceptualised in the literature. Section 2.4 examines the politics of megaprojects, and the way the associated contention has been approached in critical perspectives. Finally, a summary of the chapter is presented in section 2.5.

2.1. Megaprojects: definitions, characteristics and paradigms

The purpose of this section, which is divided in two subsections, is to examine the different definitions given to the term megaproject, or large-scale project, in the scholarly literature, noting also the changing paradigms under which their planning and completion has been organised.

2.1.1. Definitions and categorical breakdown

This subsection delves into several definitions of megaproject identified in the existing literature, presenting also the different categorical implications for studying

megaproject developments. Two works published in the early twenty-first century marked a revived interest for the subject of megaprojects: Flyvbjerg et al., (2003) and Altshuler and Luberoff (2003). While the latter does not narrowly define the term, the former signals several aspects that in their view would define a megaproject. In this sense, the second mentioned publication states that megaprojects are “physical, very expensive and public” (Altshuler and Luberoff, 2003:2). They further elaborate, suggesting that these can be described as “large-scale government investments in physical capital facilities” (Altshuler and Luberoff 2003: 1-2). Strong emphasis is placed on the public character of megaprojects, accounting for the fact that since the 1920s such developments have been characterised by intense interventionism by public authorities who had access to a series of mechanisms (publicly sponsored companies, land access, funding) that could guarantee the project’s final construction and implementation.

A more detailed definition is given by Frick (2005, 2008)⁹, who defines megaproject developments as being characterised by “the six C’s”:

- Colossal. This refers to the notorious visibility and size of the development, involving significant changes in the area where it is developed. This considers not only the size of the development, but also the scope.
- Captivating. Apart from the size aspect, megaprojects involve substantial “design and technical accomplishments” (Frick, 2008: 240). They may also entail and/or be presented as aesthetic gains.
- Costly. These projects require large sums of money; quite often, these sums are underestimated.
- Controversial. This feature responds to the impacts that the development generates or is seen to generate with respect to the local communities and the environment.
- Complex. Complexity is a seldom-acknowledged feature that contributes to the risk and uncertainty innate to megaprojects. This has implications in terms of its design, funding and construction process.
- Control. This characteristic refers to the significance of the decision-making process and the managerial aspect of the development. It accounts for the actors involved, those that can exercise leadership and/or those that have a voice in the whole process or in the different phases.

⁹ This definition is given for the specific category of infrastructure megaprojects. Yet it is understood that it is applicable for other types of megaprojects such as consumption megaprojects. Hence, it is incorporated.

These attributes capture the different dimensions that can explain the politics of megaproject developments. Firstly, the cost aspect is explicitly mentioned. Secondly, the transformative potential is incorporated in the notion of the ‘colossal’. In turn, concerns about power and potential consequences are taken into account, by considering aspects of complexity, controversy and control. These aspects are further explored in the following paragraphs on the basis of the definitions provided.

To start with, Gellert and Lynch (2003) highlight the transformative character of megaprojects, as well as the power required for their implementation. Thus, in their understanding, megaprojects can be defined as “projects which transform landscapes rapidly, intentionally, and profoundly in very visible ways, and require coordinated applications of capital and state power” (2003: 15-16). This definition notes two fundamental components of the megaproject development process that play a crucial role in the politics involved and in its –to a greater or lesser extent– contested nature: power dimensions and transformative consequences.

Meanwhile, Fainstein (2008) opts for a definition that does not specify the type of actor in charge of the development scheme – public or private – although it does reference already noted characteristics such as the transformative and expensive character of such schemes. From this perspective, a megaproject can be defined as “a costly scheme for development of a contiguous area, requiring new construction and/or substantial rehabilitation [...] [m]ega-projects always include a transformation of land uses” (Fainstein, 2008:768). Equally, the author admits that the megaproject may be organised as a shared responsibility between two or more actors, and points as well to their time complexity: “implementation may take a number of years and may be the responsibility of a single or multiple developers” (Fainstein, 2008: 768).

Incorporating the various elements of dimension, complexity, cost, long-lasting process, actor involvement and transformative and impact-relevant character, Flyvbjerg (2014:6) contends that megaprojects are “large-scale, complex ventures that typically cost a billion dollars or more, take many years to develop and build, involve multiple public and private stakeholders, are transformational, and impact millions of people”.

Finally, a rather shorter definition has been given by Staemmler (2013: 151), referring to large-scale projects as “process[es] of change that need[s] governance”. The author thus puts the focus on the dynamic (process) and transformative (change) character of

these endeavours, and also points to the fact that such a process requires collective action beyond government, as inferred from the use of the term governance. Again, these are two fundamental aspects, consistent with the previously stated definitions.

It is also relevant to identify the different types that exist within the broader category of the megaproject. Gellert and Lynch (2003) indicate the existence of four different typologies: infrastructure (e.g. railways, highways, ports, airports and urban and energy facilities); extraction (e.g. minerals and fossil fuels); production (e.g. industrial and logistic areas) and consumption (e.g. stadiums, theme parks, real estate developments, tourist attractions).

Through an exploration of these series of definitions, it is possible to infer a shift in the emphasis of actor involvement. The first definition outlined above, that put forth by Altshuler and Luberoff, puts particular emphasis on the public sector as the main actor pushing for megaproject development. In contrast, the other definitions either involve both public and private or do not include specific mention of the type of actors, assuming that this can vary or that actor involvement tends to be mixed. This resonates with the concept of governance, and suggests the need to widen the analytical perspective of how megaproject development processes are actually governed.

To summarise, the different definitions of megaprojects coincide in a series of elements that can be attributed to megaprojects: a transformative character, with the implications that this may have for the spatial context but also for the social and politico-economic aspects of the area; a high cost; and repercussions in terms of power dimensions concerning the range of actors involved. These attributes also constitute a departure point for exploring the problematic character of megaprojects, as identified in the literature (section 2.2). The next subsection outlines different paradigms of megaproject developments in relation to their politico-economic and institutional context.

2.1.2. The changing character of megaprojects

In the previous subsection, several definitions of the megaproject have been presented and discussed. This subsection turns now to examine how the literature has conceptually captured the changing nature of large-scale projects in the last century.

When thinking of the historical predecessors of modern megaprojects, typical references include the pyramids or the Great Wall of China (Brockmann, 2009; Jia et

al., 2011; Robert, 2014). However, since the term megaproject is to be considered a modern one, this brief overview will not go back to ancient times and emblematic constructions. In this sense, the first definition given in the previous subsection (Altshuler and Luberoff, 2003) is based on the historical background of megaprojects, with a departing point in the 1920s. This definition embodies what can be referred to as the old generation of megaprojects, those in which the state or public authorities had a predominant role in its undertaking, while endorsing an ideology based on societal progress, improvement and modernity (Lehrer and Laidley, 2008). It should be noted as well that this occurred within a context of global capitalism dominated by Keynesian policies, where the states would be the only possible borrowers able to access the amount of credit necessary for undertakings of such scale.

Under this paradigm, the development plans often lacked community and environmental sensibility, falling thus into a destructive mode (Lehrer and Laidley, 2008), which led to waves of opposition and resistance, peaking in the late 60s and 70s. These mobilisation processes triggered the approval of new laws that increased restrictions on development plans (Altshuler and Luberoff, 2003).

On the basis of the works of Altshuler and Luberoff (2003), Lehrer and Laidley (2008) and (Salet, 2008), the old model or first generation of megaprojects would adhere to the following characteristics:

- Single issue focus (e.g. transport, communication, housing, energy).
- Rhetoric based on the provision of public goods, underpinned by an ideology of modernisation and societal progress.
- Central role of the public sector (state or another administration) in line with the hegemonic Fordist-Keynesian model.
- Notable social and environmental impacts, often under-acknowledged, that from the late 60s onwards caused waves of protest and resistance that ultimately resulted in legislative improvements.

In recent times, a shift based on new policy frameworks and procedural approaches towards megaproject developments has started to unfold. According to Diaz Orueta and Fainstein (2008), Lehrer and Laidley (2008) and Priemus et al. (2008), this new approach facilitated the consolidation of a purported new generation of megaprojects, characterised by a series of distinctive elements including:

- public-private collaboration in their supervision and control and also in the associated funding mechanisms;
- the utilisation of a new discursive rhetoric that incorporates a diversity of elements considering the current developmental paradigms and the applying cultural contexts (e.g. competitiveness, environmental sustainability, supplying of public services);
- a flexible focus and conception (i.e. new megaprojects offer a wide range of possibilities, such as transport or energy, rather than one single use);
- their incorporation in wider urban renewal strategies whereby declining industrial areas undergo a process of restructuring.

The characteristics of the old generation are noticeably altered by the shift in global governance: this includes the abandonment of the Fordist-Keynesian model and the roll-back policies which enabled the implementation of market-oriented policies (this will be further elaborated in Chapter 3).

Moreover, a recently incorporated component of development corresponds to a more sophisticated financialisation of the infrastructure sector in comparison to the classic model of state bonds, and an increasing penetration of financial capital in infrastructure assets (Torrance, 2009). This growing financialisation has been consolidated through a series of funding instruments including “subsidies, fiscal incentives, capital markets, regulatory regimes and other support systems” (Hildyard, 2012: 3), all with the underlying strategy of transforming infrastructure into an asset class capable to “yield above average profits” (Hildyard, 2012: 3).

This financialisation trend can be observed in the developing countries due to their late push for infrastructure-building policies (Hildyard, 2012; Sol and Tricarico, 2015), but also in the global North through Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs) or Public Funding Initiatives (PFIs) in the UK (Dwarka and Feitelson, 2013) and European initiatives such as the Project Bond Initiative. Illustrative of financialisation, the latter consists of a new mechanism brought forward by the EU institutions with the goal of attracting private funding for infrastructure projects. The mechanism has proven of dubious nature in the case of an energy project (the underground gas storage facility named Castor, off the Mediterranean coast in Spain). The project had to be cancelled for safety and security reasons, prompting a debt of over €1 billion to be paid off with taxpayers’ money (Beizsley and Guiteras, 2014). This scheme, alongside similar ones that contribute to the growing financialisation of infrastructure construction and urban developments, embody a model where the private investor assumes little risks while

enjoying a privileged position in terms of the profit share (Beizsley and Guiteras, 2014; Flyvbjerg, et al., 2003; Gerebizza and Tricarico, 2013; Sol and Tricarico, 2015). Beyond particular initiatives, a growing influence of global financial capital in the ownership of urban infrastructure is resulting in a shift in governance of these infrastructure assets; the outcome is urban space becoming more privatised and delocalised (Torrance, 2009).

According to what has been examined so far, there are, indeed, grounds to assert that contemporary megaprojects are underpinned by new typologies of processes, mechanisms and discourses. However, is that enough to conclusively state the existence of a new megaproject model? Evidence found by researchers (Gerebizza and Tricarico, 2013; Hildyard, 2012) suggests that infrastructure –including megaprojects– in the classical sense of single-focus/issue orientation, continues to have its place in the global agenda, maintaining features of the old model (see the characteristics outlined above). Indeed, in the 21st century, large-scale projects can be utilised in a neo-Keynesian manner; that is, for instance, as counter-cyclical measures to offset periods of economic recession. For this reason, various authors question the very notion of a new model. For instance, Robert (2014) notes that the ‘old’ approach to megaprojects has not been totally abandoned, being particularly characteristic of post-crisis periods.

In a like manner, Robbins (2015) contends that actual megaproject strategies embody a hybrid model that focuses on the one hand on an instrumental approach –geared towards the satisfaction of certain needs, such as transport or housing– but on the other, responds to an agenda by repositioning itself within the frame of the global competitive environment. A few further considerations define the current nature of megaprojects. Firstly, while governmental institutions can take part in the development processes, these tend to subordinate their traditional role as guarantor of the public interest to the success of the specific developmental project (Flyvbjerg, 1998; Short and Kopp, 2005). Secondly, the influence of rent-seeking approaches and/or the scope for profit generation prevail as key factors for both urban-based projects (Fainstein, 2008) and infrastructure (Hildyard, 2012). Lastly, discursive or rhetorical practices may mask underlying ideologies or associated vested interests, while the outcome of the scheme in question can cause “urban disenfranchisement and the reproduction of urban inequality” (Lehrer and Laidley: 800).

In summary, it can be stated that new discourses, mechanisms and procedures apply to megaproject planning, funding and implementation in comparison to those applying before the 1980s. However, the resulting new generation of megaprojects does not represent a total break from the old paradigm. More specifically, on one hand, it has been observed that a more sophisticated and mixed rhetoric is advanced in contemporary megaproject developments in order to reinforce their legitimacy. On the other, in terms of management, megaproject development coexists with the growing involvement of the private sector and financial capital. In contrast, vestiges of the old model remain, seen in the fact that developments still can be planned with a central role of the public sector or the predominance of a single issue. Equally important, revamped modernising ideologies can still apply to the new model of megaprojects.

So, even if several features of a new generation of megaprojects can be distinguished, this is not a newly constituted type of megaproject, but rather a transition from the old model shaped by politico-economic changes. Having noted the different definitions and discussed the diverging conceptual approaches towards megaprojects and their limitations, the next section turns now to explore the main issues and controversies that accompany the planning and development processes, as set out in the scholarly literature.

2.2. Issues of concern in the megaproject planning and developing process

Having now identified the various definitions given of megaprojects, and their most notable characteristics, this section will focus on problematic aspects of large-scale development projects, highlighted in the literature, such as their organisation, management, control and decision-making. Over the last decade, a significant amount of evidence has been gathered outlining the main pitfalls and weaknesses within the procurement process of megaproject planning and development. In this vein, the next paragraphs will explore the findings of the specialised literature on these particular issues. It is understood that to examine the governance of megaprojects, it is necessary to be aware of the manifold elements that influence and affect these processes and also to determine whether these are connected to their politics.

To start with, there is the problem of cost overruns, or the underestimation of costs. According to Flyvbjerg et al. (2003: 86), it is not uncommon for decision-makers and the public to be dealing with figures that are “highly, systematically and significantly

deceptive”. Behind this problem there are a series of explanatory factors described in the following quote:

length and cost of delays are underestimated, contingencies are set too low, changes in [...] specifications and designs are not sufficiently taken into account, changes in exchange rates between currencies are underestimated or ignored, so is geological risk, and quantity and price changes are undervalued as are expropriation costs and safety and environmental demands (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003: 12).

Lehrer and Laidley (2008) point out that this is an issue more characteristic of the old version of megaprojects. However, Flyvbjerg (2014) problematises this view, asserting that 90% of megaprojects have cost overruns; he does not go into the distinctions between the new and old versions. Consequently, despite a few exceptional examples of good practice, initial cost estimations, regardless of who accounts for them, should be questioned (Flyvbjerg, 2008; Flyvbjerg et al., 2002; Flyvbjerg, et al., 2003).

A second aspect, crucial to the financial viability of projects, consists of the estimated demands that are presented as evidence to back up the realisation of projects. As suggested by Flyvbjerg et al. (2003), these estimated demands should be put into question due to a series of elements that influence the forecasting process, including: lack of rich data and methodology applied (despite the use of sophisticated methods some weaknesses apply, particularly for freight transport where global trends are hard to predict); changes in customer behaviour and impacts from changes in exogenous factors; lack of synch with political activity and policy implementation; and bias from the involved agents (e.g. promoter, consultant) also referred as the optimism bias (Frick, 2005). The issue is particularly salient for railway project estimations (Flyvbjerg, 2008).

The underestimation of costs and the overestimation of benefits go hand in hand in megaproject developments (Ozturk, 2006; Rothengatter, 2008; Short and Kopp, 2005). This condition has been identified in the literature through two explanatory terms: “optimism bias” or “appraisal optimism” and “strategic misrepresentation or behaviour” (Flyvbjerg, 2006; Flyvbjerg et al., 2002; van Wee and Tavasszy, 2008). The former is induced by specific psychological behaviours whereby individuals present “a cognitive predisposition [...] to judge future events in a more positive light than is warranted by actual experience” (Flyvbjerg, 2006: 4). In contrast, embodying a more political dimension, the latter refers to the manipulation of forecasts, in what has

become a widely generalised practice caused by intersecting issues of power and the competition of the agents involved (Flyvbjerg, 2005, 2006; Flyvbjerg, Bruzelius, et al., 2003). The agents involved (including contractors, elected representatives and bureaucrats) can eventually act in this very manner in those cases in which their particular interests (profit, prestige, career-building) prevail over the general interest with respect to the projected megaproject (van Wee and Tavasszy, 2008).

In some cases, agents' expectations of profit-making can be presented to the public through trickle-down economic discourses (Harvey, 2006) or growth-boosting projects. In such cases, it is assumed that the huge investment entailed by the large-scale project will automatically result in numerous benefits, but the matter is much more complex and equivocal than is presented. This is a common feature in transport infrastructure investments: public funds are committed uncritically to these types of projects with the belief that they will entail economic growth; the outcome, though, is not as straightforward (Albalade et al., 2014). Similarly, in the case of urban megaprojects, the focus is on profit maximization through the growth on the exchange value (Lehrer and Laidley, 2008) of mainly land and property, therefore benefiting primarily individuals or groups with such ownership. Even if it could be presumed that these developmental projects result in increased property tax revenues, this view can be challenged. Logan and Molotch (2010) stress that this increment has a limited effect insofar it is offset by the high cost of the local services demanded by the residents in case of housing, or the subsidies or tax abatements given to companies in case of industrial or commercial developments.

A fourth aspect consists of the underestimation of negative effects, mainly social and environmental impacts. As for environmental impacts assessments (EIA), a number of inherent flaws are identified by Flyvbjerg et al. (2003) including: the need to improve accuracy in the predictions of impacts *ex-ante*¹⁰; the need to extend the scope of impact and the time horizon; a better integration of the EIA procedure into the institutional framework and decision-making process; and especially, the definition of adequate environmental goals and the establishment of an "organisation that can [...] adapt and audit the project to achieve the goals" (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003: 57).

In terms of social impacts, some authors contend that the effects of megaproject developments (sometimes induced by mega events such as Olympic Games or

¹⁰ Expression equivalent to: "before the event".

International exhibitions, particularly in cities) contribute to worsened urban inequalities (Fainstein, 2008) and social polarization (Bornstein, 2010; Swyngedouw et al., 2002), generating disenfranchisement rather than tending towards a reduction of these problems (Lehrer and Laidley, 2008). Meanwhile, their undertaking generates a series of impacts: speculation and urban sprawl, change in employment patterns and an increase in environmental health risks, mostly in the global South (Kennedy et al., 2011). One of the most serious is the displacement of communities –both rural and urban– with the resulting negative social consequences rarely being incorporated into the valuations preceding implementation (Gellert and Lynch, 2003; Olds, 1998). Altogether, as put by Kennedy (2013: 4) megaproject development has profound implications for the socioeconomic and political context in the sense that these developments “retrace [...] the boundaries between private and public space, and redefine access to public goods and to mobility”.

Additionally, there is insufficient accountability and a lack of risk assessments conducted in the pertinent phases of the development process. Flyvbjerg et al. (2003) conclude that there is considerable scope for improving risk management, given the way planners and managers have failed to account for most of the risks involved in megaproject development. To address the risk component but also ensure further resilience in the face of complexities and uncertainties, innovative management frameworks of a flexible and adaptive nature should be adopted (Priemus et al., 2013). Together with risk assessment, accountability enforcement is regarded as another area for improvement. In this vein, Flyvbjerg et al. (2003) note that processes could be improved by firstly, clearly stating a set of objectives and secondly, incorporating ways of measuring those objectives and measures that produce rewards for good performance and penalties for poor performance. In turn, when analysing Scandinavian megaprojects, Aarsæther et al., (2009) remark that agents in charge of developing megaprojects –in this case identified as governance networks– do not often have the necessary incentives to facilitate interactive accountability between them and the larger citizenry, and instead tend to be more inclined towards approaching politicians in helpful positions or stakeholders with considerable access to resources.

To recap, this section has outlined a number of problematic aspects associated with megaproject development processes, as identified by the specialised literature, namely overestimation of positive effects; underestimation of costs and risks; insufficient

acknowledgment of potential environmental and social impacts; and lack of transparency and accountability. The presence of a combination of these flaws and shortcomings is not uncommon, and has resulted in the identification of a number of patterns in relation to megaproject developments. The next section will shed light on these identified patterns.

2.3. Popular “failures”: the “megaproject paradox” and the “survival of the unfittest”

The literature reviewed so far highlights a series of problematic aspects concerning megaproject development processes. Yet despite the pitfalls and weaknesses that characterise the megaproject development process and also regardless of associated contention, these projects remain politically popular (Flyvbjerg, 2014; Hodge and Greve 2013), and as a result do tend to go ahead or remain in the policy agenda, with a few exceptions¹¹.

Determining the causes of this popularity is a difficult task. However, within the literature it is possible to identify a threefold argument. Firstly, because of the direct or indirect gains that their development can yield to specific actors (profits or revenues for contractors and/or commissioners), it is likely that those actors will engage in consistent pro-megaproject advocacy and action. The literature often refers to this component as rent-seeking. Rent-seeking refers to the possibility, identified by agents, to profit from a proposed development since there are limited risks or costs for them (Flyvbjerg, 2008; Flyvbjerg, et al., 2003; Teglassi, 2012). Insofar as a profit-potential is identified, the latter will lobby with the objective of assisting a project approval. According to Flyvbjerg (2005: 20) this range of actors includes “engineers, contractors, bankers, landowners, construction workers, lawyers, developers”. This can prompt a trend whereby infrastructure investment “becomes increasing[ly] guided not by what is deemed through political debate and negotiation to constitute the public interest but by the opportunities for corporate rent seeking” (Hildyard, 2012: 43). As well, the previously mentioned issues of misinformation or biased estimations can be underpinned by this rent-seeking conduct (Flyvbjerg, 2008).

¹¹ Examples include a mining megaproject in the location of Rosia Montana (Romania) dismissed by the government after extraordinary grassroots mobilisation; a gambling resort project named *Eurovegas* planned near Madrid; and the collapsed project of new airport in Mexico city.

Secondly, motivations to support or promote megaprojects can be also rooted in the intentions to generate place branding or to boost the prestige or political careers of specific individuals; as Flyvbjerg (2005:20) notes, “politicians with a ‘monument’ complex gain satisfaction, administrators get larger budgets, and cities get investments and infrastructures that would otherwise go elsewhere”. Thirdly, taking into account the mobile, networked nature of the world as organised in the present time, large-scale infrastructure projects are considered an integral and necessary component (Banthien et al., 2013), meaning that no matter how poor the performance of such entities, they will continue to be planned and developed.

Within the megaproject literature, two explanatory expressions capture the dynamics and specificities of these situations in which the working framework fails to detect shortcomings or deliberately neglects them to facilitate a smooth progress: the “megaproject paradox” and the “survival of the unfittest”. The former indicates that there is an inherent paradox in megaprojects developments because “more and bigger megaprojects are built despite their poor performance record” (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003: 137). This is caused by the continuous negligence of risks along with the lack of transparency (Short and Kopp, 2005) and accountability of the decision-making processes; conditions which in turn generate frustration amongst the public (Schaible, 2013).

This supports the view that promoters and technicians put forward studies or evidence that purposefully underestimate costs and overestimate benefits of these projects in order to endow them with a “more attractive outlook”, while those projects that contain more honest figures do not look as attractive to decision-makers. Where these allegedly more attractive projects are the ones selected by decision-makers, this results in the above-mentioned “survival of the unfittest” (Flyvbjerg, 2009). Equally, such series of events are embedded in a framework of unbalanced power capacities where the agents with vested interests in the development of megaprojects are usually able to exert their influence, affecting the final outcome of the process. To put it simple, poor performance of the built megaprojects cannot be attributed (or not solely) to unintentional errors (Flyvbjerg, 2009). According to the exposed facts, this can be connected with issues of vested interests and policy agendas. Hence, in order to grasp the significance of the latter in relation to the megaproject development process, one

must be aware of the wider social and politico-economic context (del Cerro Santamaria, 2013b ; Kennedy, 2015; Priemus et al., 2013).

Overall, and despite the policy recommendations and measures specified in the relevant literature, the dynamics underlying the “megaproject paradox” and the “survival of the unfittest” seem difficult to uproot considering their degree of consolidation in the politico-institutional systems. This is coupled with decision-making processes that tend to be rather exclusive at the same time that channels for institutional opposition are characterised by substantial constraints for those groups disagreeing with the core values underpinning the questioned development. As a result, in many cases those seeking to counter megaproject developments have to resort to contentious politics. In this vein, the next subsection takes a look at the contention associated with megaproject developments and the relevant aspects of this particular phenomenon.

2.4. Megaproject developments: a contentious and political matter

The previous two sections have outlined multiple aspects, identified in the megaproject literature, that characterise contentious and controversial elements of development processes. These elements constitute a potential source of contention that, when combined with other factors from the wider social and politico-economic context, can turn into overt conflict. This section turns to explore the intricacies of, and approaches towards, this dimension of megaproject-related contention.

In several instances, large-scale development projects have become the target of significant criticisms and opposition campaigns. Subject to conflicting and opposing interests (del Cerro Santamaría, 2013a), megaprojects can give rise to a great deal of “blocking power”, that is, a robust opposition (Bruijn and Leijten, 2008a: 24). This opposition can turn into an overt dispute or conflict. This confirms the political dimension inherent to megaproject developments, which can be further verified through considerations of contested knowledge or contested information among the parties in the dispute. In this regard, Bruijn and Leijten (2008b) have adapted Douglas and Wildavsky’s work (1983) on the types of risks that can impact upon decision-making processes for megaproject developments. Bruijn and Leijten (2008b: 85-86) identify four different types of policy problems that can be associated with the knowledge and normative standards underpinning megaproject development decision-making processes. These problems range from ones that enjoy both consensus on their

normative standards and confidence in their knowledge (tamed problems), to problems where none of this exists (untamed political problems), that is, little consensus and confidence exist. Normally, this lack of shared views concerning crucial aspects for megaproject development precedes the socio-political confrontations of interest.

This places the focus on the contentious dynamics that can accompany megaproject developments, and the critical interpretations of this particular phenomenon. Prior to exploring these critical perspectives on megaproject-related contention, the following paragraphs will outline the elements that underlie megaproject politics and can potentially explain overt conflicts.

If attention is turned to the historical trajectory of megaproject developments, it shall be noted that contentious dynamics are not a new factor. In fact, the 60s and early 70s saw significant opposition and resistance to large-scale public works (Altshuler and Luberoff, 2003). This prompted the introduction of more restrictive legislation frameworks, leading into what the same authors name “do no harm” policy. However, other elements added new paths for conflict, as it is subsequently examined.

Firstly, the governance models that characterise this new wave of megaprojects have been influenced by the modes of policy-making and implementation adopted by public administrations, particularly in what is referred to as urban governance. Even if the patterns are not identical across countries, they are commonly characterised by a promotion of deregulation, privatisation, “marketization” and competition of urban areas and regions, following the consolidation of a neoliberalisation process (Sager, 2011). These elements have a marked class component, contributing to the discrimination and marginalisation of dominated classes while reinforcing the position of more well-positioned and affluent classes.

Secondly, the exclusiveness of the decision-making processes shall be re-emphasised. This is illustrated by the lack of democratic accountability in the decision-making processes behind megaproject approvals, which constitutes a fundamental piece of a strategy, one which facilitates unequal access to these processes (Swyngedouw et al., 2002) in order to hinder the possibility of oppositional practices (Lehrer and Laidley, 2008). The planning and delivery processes tend to be expert- and elite-oriented. This way, direct access is granted to a diverse range of elites and experts (technical, economic, political), privileged by a rationale that emphasises the primacy of

technical expertise while the role of the public is downgraded, especially that of organised groups representing civil society (Lehrer and Laidley, 2008).

Due to their complex and transformative nature, alongside with contested procurement processes, megaprojects can easily become sites of institutional and political disputes that can eventually derive into social conflicts. To avoid this happening, inclusive, transparent and open processes are required. Even in this situation there is no guarantee of a settlement, should untamed political problems prevail. Moreover, as megaprojects are likely to generate profits and also respond to the policy and political agendas of certain groups, these groups might make use of their leverage power to ensure that the megaproject proposal goes ahead.

The flip side to this can be the existence of well-structured communities and/or robust social networks capable of producing alternative knowledge that can subsequently crystallise in successful opposition campaigns. In certain contexts, this can turn into overt conflicts with impacts across the sociopolitical landscape. Taking these points into consideration, the following subsection moves on to explore the contentious processes that can unfold as a consequence of megaproject-related disputes, relying on varying critical approaches identified in the literature.

2.4.1. Critical approaches to contention associated with megaproject developments

The preceding introductory section has linked the critical aspects of megaprojects earlier explored, added new ones and noted the existence of an inherent political dimension. It has then noted that these elements, in combination, underlie the not unusual episodes of contentious politics associated with megaproject plans. This subsection goes a step further to examine critical approaches to this megaproject-related contention. It begins by questioning the very idea that modern megaprojects, in particular in the so-called ‘advanced’ nations, result in less significant episodes of contention.

On the whole, the aspects detailed above cast doubt over any assumption that the new generation of megaprojects is less prone to contention, or that advanced democracies have taken the necessary steps to avoid serious conflicts over megaproject developments, as stressed by Flores Dewey and Davis (2013). Even in the global north, megaproject development is re-emerging as a contentious issue (Sol and Tricarico, 2015; Temper, 2014). In this vein, conventional opposition platforms, supported as well by a new generation of activists pushing for what della Porta and

Tarrow (2005:2) define as “transnational collective action¹²”, have given shape to a recent wave of opposition, protest and resistance against megaprojects (Ariemma and Burnside-Lawry 2014; Martínez-Alier et al., 2014; Robert 2014).

Gellert and Lynch (2003) define ‘infrastructure megaprojects’ as a distinct category. A few European examples illustrating the issue of contested megaprojects include: a new airport development in Nantes (Pieper, 2013); a new train station in Stuttgart (Novy and Peters, 2012) and several high-speed railway (HSR) developments such as the HS2 in England. In response, the creation of a transnational resistance network of platforms against “Unnecessary and Imposed Mega-Projects” (UIMP network henceforth; Ariemma and Burnside-Lawry 2014; Martínez-Alier et al., 2014; Robert, 2014) illustrates attempts by current opposition groups to transcend the regional/local dimensions and overcome scalar limitations (Swyngedouw et al., 2002).

A range of critical approaches have been used to conceptualise these contentious episodes. The value of these critical approaches is that they provide a lens by which to examine the subject and also link episodes with on-going politico-economic dynamics, leading to better comprehension. These approaches can be mainly categorised into two overarching clusters; on one hand, the ones which focus on the politico-economic aspects; on the other, the ones that derive from a critique of the environmental degradation or lack of sustainability of these projects, adhering to political ecology and environmental justice perspectives. Within the first group, these resistances have been identified as struggles of resistance to neoliberal processes (Robert, 2014) and particularly accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003). Within the second group, these resistances are understood as part of the global environmental/spatial justice agenda (Martínez-Alier et al., 2014) given the assumed environmental degradation and spatial inequality caused by large-scale developments.

Following the first critical approach, Robert (2014: 84) stresses that the message and discourse conveyed by the oppositional movements transcends the mere issue of megaprojects by pointing at “the policies, sustaining logics and ideologies in which they [megaprojects] are incorporated”. In this vein, the same author points out that

¹² The authors call transnational collective action to the “coordinated international campaigns on the part of networks of activists against international actors, other states or international institutions” (della Porta and Tarrow, 2005: 2-3).

framing this contentious processes with the NIMBY¹³ conceptualisation falls short as an explanatory conceptual framework. Therefore the phenomenon of megaproject developments should be connected to the ongoing politico-economic dynamics and regulatory frameworks that operate in the production of urban agendas and futures.

From the perspective of Marxist geographer David Harvey, megaproject development can be defined as one of the numerous tools through which accumulation processes can be further advanced (Harvey, 2003). This accumulation process does not rely, however, on the traditional establishment of productive processes that hinge upon the extraction of value from labour, but instead in the obtaining of value through the enclosure of non-marketised resources. Hence the relevance of the above mentioned term “accumulation by dispossession”.

Harvey and Glassman (2006) agree that the process described by Marx as “primitive accumulation”¹⁴ has continued to the present day, deeply rooted in capitalism’s historical geography. Because it has become more refined, and encompasses a myriad of forms, Harvey (2003) readapts the concept, putting aside the terms “primitive” or “original” and turning to the expression “accumulation by dispossession”. The expression refers to a myriad of forms through which on-going capitalist dynamics operate to safeguard accumulation dynamics; this happens when unproductive and/or overaccumulated capital valorises itself, resorting to “parasitic” methods –they prey on already existing non-tradable products or services turning them into market commodities. In practice, these methods range from the speculation carried out by hedge funds and other financial institutions to the privatisation of public utilities or

¹³ The NIMBY (Not-In-My-Backyard) conceptualisation in its traditional sense characterises the opposition led by citizens as constituting an obstacle to the policies that would bring collective good. Such stance is described as “overly emotional, uninformed, and unscientific”, underpinned as well by selfish and narrow interests (McAvoy, 1998: 275). Further contributions to this concept have challenged these views, suggesting that citizens cannot always be described as unsophisticated and short-sighted, given that experts are not guided by value-free ideas in their choices and decision-making (Greyll et al., 2013). It should be noted as well that according to Martínez-Alier et al., (2013) the term NIMBY is often utilised to dismiss environmental conflicts, making them invisible to the majority of society.

¹⁴ Primitive accumulation can be defined as “the subsumption of resources previously not in the market necessary to create the preconditions of capitalism through the ‘historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production’, transforming ‘the social means of subsistence and of production into capital’ and ‘the immediate producers into wage labourers’” (Temper, 2014, cited in Marx, 1967). In contrast to capital accumulation that occurs through markets and the exploitation of the labour force, primitive accumulation occurs as a process based upon a series of mechanisms (predation, fraud, violence) articulated outside the capitalist circuit (Harvey, 2003).

common property resources, including elements such as biopiracy and the commodification of nature and culture. These are a few examples, but as Harvey notes, the process “can occur in a variety of ways and there is much that is both contingent and haphazard about its *modus operandi*” (Harvey, 2003: 149). Further examples include the acquisition of land and the privatisation of social housing; surpluses of capital can seize upon these once they are brought into the market circuit, adding up to pre-orchestrated cycles of asset de-valuation, low price purchase, revaluation and put into circulation by overaccumulated capital. Indeed, one of the most distinctive methods whereby accumulation by dispossession unfolds is through the privatisation of publicly owned assets or penetration through mixed schemes into the sphere of public services (transport, health and education). In the end, the basic goal is to facilitate capital expansion through the identification of new outlets of accumulation, either outside of formal capitalist circuits or locating them within the context of mature capitalism (Glassman 2006). According to Harvey, in countries that have undergone plans with ambitious privatising objectives –like Britain– “there has been a radical transformation in the dominant pattern of social relations and a redistribution of assets that increasingly favoured the upper rather than the lower classes” (Harvey, 2003: 159).

The explanatory potential of the term ‘accumulation through dispossession’ has prompted its application in both urban and socio-environmental conflicts. Temper (2014) contends that one of its crucial components consists of the expropriation of resources from one class to the detriment of another one, while following a particular agenda which is presented as part of the public interest. More specifically in the urban realm, the earlier mentioned neoliberal policies that facilitate the privatisation of social spaces and services constitute, also, forms of accumulation by dispossession (Jou et al., 2012). Yet this process is not always easy, as it is often met with resistance and popular struggles (Harvey 2003). On occasion, extra-economic means such as legal or political power are used to consolidate the contentious plans that concretise these accumulation by dispossession processes (Harvey, 2003; Temper, 2014). The insurgent movements organising these protests encompass a wide variety of actors and embrace themes ranging from the degradation of natural resources that sustain the livelihoods of communities in the global south, to the defence of women worker rights, indigenous rights, peasant access to land and opposition to austerity policies.

How does this process of accumulation by dispossession relate to megaproject development? Megaprojects constitute elements of the built environment where non-productive capital can be invested for profit-making, valorised, or as transport infrastructures can generate the conditions for real estate markets to expand (López and Rodríguez, 2010). Because of the socio-environmental impacts that they entail (displacements, urbanisation of rural lands, loss of natural heritage and agricultural lands, gentrification, misallocation of public funds), which are seldom accounted for in the project evaluations (or are given a relatively low negative impact value), these megaprojects constitute major instruments of cost-shifting or – linking to the terminology used above – dispossession. The link with anti-megaproject campaigns can be found in examples such as movements against transport infrastructure or dams (Harvey 2003), cases in which communities come together to oppose these processes of dispossession or cost-shifting (Temper 2014). From this perspective, protests against megaproject development constitute evidence of discontent against a form of accumulation by dispossession.

The second critical approach, not unrelated to accumulation by dispossession, is the one using the lens of environmental justice and political ecology. Generally speaking, when considering contentious episodes these theoretical frameworks categorise them as socio-environmental conflicts. According to these theorists, these conflicts occur as a result of “a reaction to the expansion of capitalist accumulation that deteriorates the social and environmental conditions for reproduction” (Temper, 2014: 12). The linkage between these frameworks and neo-Marxist terminology can be derived from the fact that the types of disputes that fall into this socio-environmental conflict category are also considered by Harvey (2003) as examples of struggles against accumulation by dispossession. Anguelovski and Martínez-Alier (2014) identify two primary causes of socio-environmental conflicts. On the one hand, conflicts stem from the so-called “social metabolism¹⁵” based on the process of population growth and the subsequently generated “cycles of unstopped production, extraction of material

¹⁵ The term metabolism, as used here, derives from the field of ecological economics. Already used by Marx its conceptualization in this field derives from a biophysical approach to the economy, that highlight that both biological and socio-economic systems depend on a “continuous throughput of energy and materials in order to maintain their internal structure” (Fischer-Kowalski and Haberl, 1993 cited by Haas et al., 2012). In political ecology it is used as an explanatory term to examine the environmental conflicts emphasising in the use and demand of materials and energy flows alongside the social power relations that can be observed in relation to these conflicts (Şorman, 2015).

resources, and waste accumulation” (Anguelovski and Martínez-Alier, 2014: 172); on the other hand, contentious processes not related to the social metabolism occur primarily in cities, as a result of the value-generation endeavours (e.g. urban redevelopments and tourist complexes) that produce “urban Environmental Justice struggles” (Anguelovski and Martínez-Alier, 2014: 172).

Contention emerging as a result of large-scale urban developments could also then be included in this category, given that they are normally connected to (at least) one of the above-mentioned conditions –social metabolism or value-generation agendas. These conceptualisations have been developed following the consolidation of social oppositions which came up with diverging understandings as a result of their alternative valuation languages (Anguelovski and Martínez-Alier, 2014; Martínez-Alier, 2012; Temper, 2014) or their approaches backed by post-normal science postulates (D’Alisa and Kallis, 2015). This indicates their relevance within the developmental politics around megaproject developments.

Even if these critical approaches do not deal specifically with the phenomenon of megaprojects, they provide critical perspectives to analyse contention associated with megaproject plans. Now that the critical approaches have been reviewed, the next subsection turns back to the specific politics of megaprojects linking it back to the specialised literature on the subject.

2.4.2. Focusing on the resilience of megaprojects plans

As mentioned above, megaproject plans remain popular despite the potential risks, uncertainties and setbacks. Even with the element of contestation, it is rare to see megaprojects being dismissed once they have obtained the first legal permits and approvals. It can be assumed that, in order to maintain the stability of megaproject plans, certain efforts, procedures or arrangements are required. This subsection briefly explores how the literature refers to these aspects of megaproject development.

Drawing on the work of Altshuler and Luberoff (2003), Kennedy (2013) contends that a relevant aspect of megaproject procurement processes is the implication and coordination of public and private actors. In addition, the same author (2015) hypothesises that there is something akin to an extraordinary setting by which the agents leading megaproject developments manage to address the challenges that come up during this process; the author defines this setting or managerial articulation as a “*special regime of accompaniment* [italics added]” (Kennedy, 2013: 164) for

megaprojects. In accordance with this, Williams (2016) contends that this notion of special regime indicates that megaproject developments are endowed with an exceptional character, granting them privilege in the context of the formal regulatory frameworks that apply. Nonetheless the possibility of plans collapsing or being defeated, can be small but it does exist (Flores and Davis, 2013).

This notion of special regime requires further empirical and theoretical elaboration. As understood, this regime or set of measures pursues a two-fold mission: addressing the challenges faced in the procurement process (legal instruments, funding, planning, promotion), and countering or disrupting the campaigns waged by opposition groups. Therein lies the knowledge gap that the researcher seeks to address: the factors and governance mechanisms or practices that engender the resilience of megaproject plans.

To recap, the aspects of contention explored thus far highlight a conflictive dimension of megaprojects that transcends technical and managerial issues. Noting this is essential in order to understand the critical rationales underlying opposition to megaproject developments, in particular in relation to the dominant narratives essentially based on modernising and developmental ideologies. Critical perspectives that discuss politico-economic and social elements provide a ground on which to approach the politics of megaprojects, beyond the specificities and technicalities of the procurement processes and their shortcomings. In turn, and in line with critical urban studies, they account for marginalised voices, so that the totality of the political dimension associated with megaproject developments is taken into account. These perspectives make it clear that megaprojects commonly require exceptional or extraordinary procedures in order to secure development plans, but it is yet to be clarified how these procedures operate.

2.5. Summary

Despite the diverse definitions put forward, the body of literature generally agrees on several problematic aspects influencing the governance of megaproject procurement processes, characterised by significant complexity and uncertainty of results. Megaprojects involve a multiplicity of actors and also different levels of public government, adding further complexity to these processes. It has been also noted that the development of large-scale projects remains highly contentious and problematic due to this complexity and uncertainty, and to the associated optimism bias that leads

to the dismissal of potential risks. This amounts to the rent-seeking component and the other vested interests of particular stakeholders that often underlie these developments.

Additionally, the potential existence of contested knowledge and/or a marked lack of consensus around the rationales underpinning large-scale developments constitutes another sources of potential dispute in relation to megaproject developments. In this sense, even given the precedent set in the 1960s and 1970s, a revamped megaproject agenda seems to be fuelling new conflicts. Accordingly, the chapter has also explored critical perspectives on this upsurge. These perspectives offer further insights, going beyond those elements directly linked with the procurement procedures to take into account the politico-economic and social dynamics into which megaproject developments are inserted.

Informed by the latter, this thesis intervenes in the analysis of the politics of contentious megaproject developments. This involves problematising and elaborating on the very idea of (exceptional) governance arrangements and regime of accompaniment for megaproject developments. To that end, the research will focus on the diverse performative elements of practice and discourse that contribute to bulwark megaproject plans in the face of potential hampering due to contingent setbacks and opposition campaigns. The next chapter will advance a theoretical framework to support the analysis of the governance dynamics.

CHAPTER 3. THE POLITICS AND GOVERNANCE OF MEGAPROJECT DEVELOPMENTS: A FRAMEWORK FOR ANALYSIS

Chapter 2 has outlined multiple aspects that underlie the complex nature of megaproject procurement and implementation processes, and drawn attention to an observed upsurge in the opposition against this type of development. When focusing on the governance component, one must be aware that the latter is intersected by a series of elements that are likely to impact upon the process. These elements include: politico-economic dynamics; institutional settings with their correspondent decision-making processes and regulatory frameworks; and interactions among the actors involved, sometimes through contentious processes. Taking into consideration these elements, this chapter will lay out the analytical framework proposed to study the subject.

In order to be able to conduct an inquiry on the governance process, it is necessary to identify a set of theoretical frameworks that can account for the following:

- The backdrop against which these governance processes are positioned; that is, urbanization processes alongside neoliberal policy agendas.
- The nature of the actors' alignments and the role they play within the processes.
- An approximation of the response given to the opposition and resistance campaigns so that their disruptive effect is minimised.

Prior to defining the analytical framework, the lines that follow will present the standpoint from which the politics of contentious megaproject developments are to be approached. To the extent that the phenomenon under study constitutes an urban feature, it shall be examined through the lens of urban studies and urban politics. This is in consonance with Kennedy et al. (2011: 12) who take urban governance as a “major entry point” for the examination of large-scale developments. Likewise, Brenner (2004) conceives megaproject developments as a state spatial strategy derived from certain urban locational policies. A third reference linking megaprojects to the field of urban studies can be found in Swyngedouw, et al., (2002: 551) as it states that “large-scale urban development projects have indeed become one of the most visible and ubiquitous urban revitalization strategies”.

Inserting megaproject developments into the field of critical urban studies involves taking into account its embeddedness into socio-spatial and politico-economic processes. In other words, urban politics, and by extension megaproject governance, operate against a backdrop of interwoven political, economic, social and spatial relations which therefore must be included in the analytical perspective. In fact, the proposed framework for the analysis of the governance of megaproject developments is fundamentally premised upon the understanding that economic and political processes –to which the phenomenon under study is married–, share ontological domains and therefore should not be taken separately, even if different spatial scales are considered (Jessop, 1990; Poulantzas, 1978).

Accordingly, the analytical framework consists of three complementary and overlapping components that will be dealt with subsequently in this chapter. The first component informing the framework is based on the impact of neoliberal capitalism in urban politics as a major source of change (Purcell, 2011; Rossi, 2017). This notes the extent to which urban processes are determined or influenced by the dominance of this form of capitalism, assuming as well the limitations of public government in consonance with the emergence of entrepreneurialist forms of governance (Harvey, 1989, 2001; Merrifield, 2014). The second component revolves around the subject of agency in the urban context. This has been conceptualised through the notion of urban growth coalitions, which confers the field of urban studies with new avenues of inquiry by incorporating elements of political economy –even if possibly underestimating the significance of extra-local inputs– with other theoretical perspectives (Davies, 2002; Lauria, 1997; Ward, 1996). Finally, the third component suggests the incorporation into the political equation of the state and its structures –which in turn must also be situated within the on-going socio-economic dynamics– as an aspect that also impacts on urban processes (Davies, 2010; Macleod and Goodwin, 1999a; MacLeod and Goodwin, 1999b) and that therefore is assumed to be intertwined with the other two identified components.

The theoretical framework shall also acknowledge the role of other schools of thought in binding together these elements within urban theory. This includes regulation theory, which has provided useful abstractions for the connection of changes in the economy to those in politics (Lauria, 1997; Painter, 2011). The question of scale is incorporated as well, given its influence on the shift in governance roles upward or

downward and on projects promoting new socio-spatial configurations (Brenner, 1998, 2003; Macleod and Goodwin, 1999a and 1999b); this is sometimes referred as the re-escalation of the politico-economic space.

On the other hand, these introductory notes shall briefly acknowledge the relevance of social movement theory, clarify the use of concepts in relation to the latter, and include also an explanation of why it has not been chosen as a pivotal component to guide the research analysis. Firstly, in order to get familiarized with the conflicts surrounding the development of megaprojects it is necessary to characterise the subjects that compound the opposition and contribute to generating the contentious dynamics that unfold. In this sense, Chapter 6 explores the nature of the social movements opposing the high speed infrastructure projects drawing on scholar work written from the social movement perspective (for instance della Porta and Piazza, 2008, for the NLT and Larrinaga, 2009, for the Basque Y). This also enables illustrating the essence of the contention around the selected megaprojects. Yet, as the focus of the research project remains on the governance of the whole process and in particular the elements that reinforce megaproject plans, the analysis does not opt to incorporate the social movement perspective as a central one. In short, the social movements that partake in the studied processes do not constitute the central focus of this research project.

Furthermore, a clarification of terms is needed in relation to the concept of mechanisms, common in social movement research. In this field, it is normally used to explain (causal) relations among variables and specified elements of the research subject (see for instance Campbell, 2005 and McAdam 2003). However, in the empirical analysis of this thesis it is used in the context of urban governance as commonly brought forward by scholarship on urban and spatial politics (see for instance Brenner, 2004, and MacLeod and Goodwin 1999a and 1999b). Thus, in these research areas -even if in a metaphorical manner- it resonates with conventional definitions of mechanism: “a part of a piece of equipment that does a particular job” (Cambridge Dictionary, 2018).

Turning back to the chosen theoretical strands and to summarise, the three different yet overlapping (theoretical) components provide the foundations to address the above bullet points through: (i) an overarching conceptualisation of the urban policy patterns and instruments employed in relation to megaprojects; (ii) conceptualising the agential elements operating in the procurement process; and (iii) discussing the tactics and

strategies used to undermine opposition campaigns. These correspond to the three different sections that follow. The chapter finishes with a summary of the fundamental aspects of the analytical framework that has been advanced.

3.1. Urban politics and governance in the context of neoliberalisation

The first fundamental theme considered here, in order to develop the theoretical framework for analytical exercise, shall explore how the process of neoliberalisation has shaped new forms of urban governance and policy agendas. This is of relevance because, as noted in Chapter 2, the politico-economic dynamics constitute fundamental aspects of the backdrop of megaproject associated contention.

With the emergence (in the late 1970s) and consolidation (in the 1980s) of neoliberalism as the “dominant political and ideological form of capitalist globalization” (Peck et al., 2009: 50), public policies experienced a substantial change. In this sense, urban policy and the associated regulatory frameworks and decision-making processes were not exceptions and they shifted to new paradigms. In fact, critical literature on urban politics and governance tends to agree on the significant impact of neoliberal policies in this domain (Baeten, 2012; Brenner, 2004; Cochrane, 2007; Leitner et al., 2007; Purcell, 2011; Rossi, 2017; Sager, 2011; Swyngedouw et al., 2002). Accordingly, this subsection will unpack the notion of neoliberalisation, its relation to the urban question and the presumed derivative impacts upon the politico-institutional landscape according to critical geography and urban theorisations.

It is necessary to understand the essential premises of neoliberalism, in order to discern its implications for urban governance. In this vein, neoliberalism is not an unequivocal term; that is, it can be multi-faceted or ambiguous. Harvey (2005a: 2) states that neoliberalism is a theory of political economy which proposes that: “human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade”. In other words, it is the ideology that, in principle, prioritises market and private interests over state intervention¹⁶. Additionally, its supporters advocate for it on the basis that “open and competitive markets not only produce the

¹⁶ Yet, as it will be underscored, in practice neoliberal policies require state intervention in areas such as competitiveness promotion and assistance to capital movement (see for instance Brenner and Theodore, 2002 and 2005; Eraydin, 2012; Hardt and Negri, 2004; and Jessop, 2002b) and/or countering the dissidence that opposes such policies or the groups that hamper them (see for instance Harvey 2003 and 2005 and Smith, 2007).

most efficient allocation of resources, but they also stimulate innovation and economic growth” (Purcell, 2011: 43).

In parallel, Duménil and Lévy (2005) note that apart from being an ideology, it functions as a process that has facilitated the settling of “a new social order in which the power and income of the upper fractions of the ruling classes [...] was re-established” (Duménil and Lévy, 2005: 9); which in Harvey’s (2005: 31) Marxist approach is portrayed as being “a vehicle for the restoration of class power”. Its success lies in the fact that it became “accepted by elites and mainstream political parties in varying forms almost everywhere around the world, and implemented at scales ranging from municipal to supranational authorities” (Leitner et al., 2007: 3); in other words, as a political philosophy and form of government, it became hegemonic (Rossi, 2017). Nonetheless, this is a highly context-dependent and an on-going but unfinished process, especially in relation to urban political economies, thus the term neoliberalisation appears more appropriate (Brenner and Theodore, 2002; Tickell and Peck, 2002).

As a process, it operates through what have been defined as destructive and creative moments, or roll-back and roll-out neoliberalism. The destructive moments comprised an incomplete rooting out of existing “institutional arrangements and political compromises” aimed at regulation and redistributive politics (Peck et al., 2009: 55). This process of uprooting was carried out through the mobilisation of state power in order to execute marketization and deregulation plans (Tickell and Peck, 2002) which in practice consisted of the dismantling of a number of redistributive and service provision mechanisms depending from the state; for example, democratic controls and welfare programs (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). In counterpart, the creative moments comprised the progressive establishment of “state forms, modes of governance, and regulatory relations” (Tickell and Peck, 2002: 384) attuned with the neoliberal project, which required “a new infrastructure for market-oriented economic growth, commodification, and capital-centric rule” (Peck et al., 2009: 55).

With regard specifically to the urban realm, Harvey (1989) characterises this shift as the replacement of managerialism –an approach concerned with “extending the provision of public services and decommodified components of welfare and ‘collective consumption’ to local city populations” (Saunders, 1980 cited in MacLeod, 2002) – with entrepreneurialism. Thus the constitution of (urban) entrepreneurial regimes

resulted in urban governance –under the weight of neoliberalisation– becoming mostly about recreating spaces that are attractive, in competitive terms, for capital investment, instead of prioritising the “amelioration of [public and social] conditions within a particular territory as its immediate [...] economic and political goal” (Harvey, 1989: 8). Even if the implementation of this governance paradigm can diverge depending on the context, some general trends –of interest for urban policies– can be noted. A set of institutional and governance arrangements normally uphold a framework that seeks to “sustain market shares, competitive assets, and continued accumulation” (Peck et al. 2009:64). This framework is operationalised through numerous policies implemented in the fields of: “urban economic development, infrastructure provision, management of commercial areas, and housing and neighbourhood renewal” (Sager, 2011: 17). Examples of these policies include public-private partnerships, city marketing, property-led urban regeneration and liberalisation of housing markets (Sager, 2011). As a matter of fact, it turns out that some of these policies, especially those that contribute to the incorporation of assets by the market system, can be linked back to the earlier mentioned processes of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003; Jou et al., 2012).

Where such newly established neoliberal urban frameworks became dominant, the spatial implications turn out to be far-reaching (Sager, 2011). More specifically, through renewed policy agendas, neoliberalism has mobilised urban space “as an arena for both market-oriented economic growth and elite consumption practices” (Brenner and Theodore, 2010: 413). Contemporary megaprojects are suited to these principles. In turn, these play a role in the deployment of urban political-economic infrastructures designed to facilitate neoliberalised forms of capital accumulation (Brenner and Theodore, 2010) as they seek to “attract corporate investment and reconfigure local land-use patterns” (Brenner and Theodore 2010: 415). This results in the creation of privatised spaces for elite consumption practices as well as an intensification of socio-spatial polarization.

Two final points shall be underlined prior to the exploration of the urban order resulting from the neoliberalisation process. Firstly, these neoliberal-induced transformations were not homogeneous, but rather context-embedded and path-dependent (Brenner and Theodore, 2010; Peck et al., 2009; Peck and Tickell, 2007; Sager, 2011). Secondly, the practices that accompany the neoliberal paradigm have to

be well-preserved and protected by an institutional framework whose guarantor is the state, which if necessary may resort to active coercion measures. The neoliberal rhetoric that calls for a diminished role of the state does not apply to all state domains (Davies, 2010; Harvey, 2005a and 2003; Tickell and Peck, 2002).

This second part of this section is concerned with the devaluation of democracy as a form of inclusive rule, and how this devaluation is mirrored in the domain of urban governance, given its relevance in terms of the decision-making processes that accompany megaproject developments. To untangle this question, a link with the consolidation of neoliberalism shall be considered as a start: “neoliberalisation produces a democratic deficit because it transfers power from democratic citizens to corporations” (Purcell, 2011: 45). The latter, can at times, ally with state bodies, forming a dual power structure dedicated to advancing specific policy agendas (Merrifield, 2014).

Repercussions of neoliberalisation are to be found as well in the democratic procedures under which urban governance operates. Designing and planning decision-making processes tend to become more exclusive –or less open to democratic debate– under regulatory frameworks in which the primacy is attributed to elite groups –technical, economic and political (Swyngedouw, Moulaert, and Rodriguez, 2002; Purcell, 2011). In a like manner, “political debates and decision-making have become quasi-privatised” under this trend (Mossner and del Romero Renau, 2015: 67). According to Purcell (2011), the “competitive discipline” associated with neoliberalisation acts as a major driver so that primacy to entrepreneurial and market-oriented policies is not challenged.

These on-going dynamics –that exclude considerable segments of the population from the public debate on urban governance– do not go without contestation. This is embodied by the already noted resistances against megaprojects, but also the emergence of the urban social movements. Castells (1983 cited by Mayer, 2009) identifies these movements as “capable of transforming urban meanings, and to produce a city organized on the basis of use values, autonomous local cultures and decentralized participatory democracy” (e.g. groups opposing the privatisation of local utilities or gentrification). There are, as well, those emerging as a result of what Smith calls “revanchist politics” on the part of the state. This includes, for instance, the anti-

globalisation movement and the anti-war movement of the late 1990s and early 2000s (Smith, 2007).

However, the potential for conflict does not always translate into visible contention, in particular after the implementation of an institutional set of practices and strategies mainly focused at consensus building. Consensus politics are a fundamental component of the urban configuration (Paddison, 2009), enabling the minimization of critical engagement and resistance, and generating a disciplining effect (Gualini, 2015; Mossner and del Romero Renau, 2015).

This idea of consensus-oriented politics in the urban arena has been elaborated by political theorists advancing conceptualisations through the notions of post-politics (MacLeod, 2011; Paddison 2009; Raco 2014) and post-democracy (Mossner and del Romero Renau, 2015). The term is used to define those situations in which the policy debate is barred from its political dimension in an exercise of depoliticising decision-making on urban policies (MacLeod, 2011). In other words, there is an absence of political space for disagreement or dissent in the public sphere (Swyngedouw, 2009), so that “different meanings, contrary opinions and societal dissensus” are disallowed (Mossner and del Romero Renau, 2015: 67). Depoliticisation has then the effect of reinforcing the consensual dynamics, in opposition to the presumed “political wrangling and vigorous debate” (Purcell, 2011: 47) that accompany democratic decision-making processes.

In the context of urban governance, this is prefigured by the replacement of the traditional political components such as debate, disagreement and dissent with technologies and mechanisms that fall into what is referred as a ‘techno-managerial approach’. It includes elements such as: “consensus, agreement, accountancy metrics and technocratic environmental management” (Swyngedouw, 2009: 604). Post-political settings, the way they are operationalized, can have different effects. This approach has the capacity to erode discourses that value participatory and egalitarian democratic processes, and to foster disconnection amongst the different segments of the institutional landscape, namely decision-making, accountability and state practices (Raco, 2014). It is inferred then that the more effectively these elements are put into practice, the more easily consent can be manufactured around specific and potentially controversial issues.

Yet the post-political settings can also operate through other arrangements that enable the incorporation of further actors. Swyngedouw (2005 cited by Swyngedouw, 2007: 61) puts forward the term ‘Governance-beyond-the State’, which refers to a particular governance arrangement whereby the “institutional or quasi-institutional organisation of governing [...] takes the form of horizontal associational networks of private (market), civil society [...] and state actors”. The actors that would form these governance systems share a “consensual view of objectives and problems and a high degree of trust despite internal conflict and oppositional agendas” and this consensual view can be articulated through “selectively inclusive participatory institutional or organizational associations” (Swyngedouw 2005 cited by Swyngedouw, 2007: 62).

A further component of this governance mechanism is the capacity to incorporate a wide range of actors in order to confer the decision-making process with a façade of openness. In this sense, it operates to push the participant actors away from their antagonistic perspectives –those that might have them– and instead subordinate them to the dogma of the societal consensus which eventually tends to unify and standardise approaches (Mossner and del Romero Renau, 2015). Should these governance mechanisms and arrangements fail to achieve consensus, those that posit themselves outside the consensus may be seen as extremists or terrorists (Swyngedouw, 2009, 2010). This facilitates their radical exclusion and, if convenient, their outlawing, through a ‘state of exception’ technique of government (Agamben, 2005; Belcher et al., 2008).

To summarise, current urban governance under neoliberalisation is comprised of regulatory frameworks and mechanisms which prompted new dynamics that pushed aside the preceding policies concerned with redistribution and welfare provision. In parallel, this shift has also become sophisticated in a way that has managed to partially remove the political dimension of the issues at stake, fostering technocratic and expert-based approaches that constitute what is referred to as a post-political condition. This has significant implications for the study of contentious megaproject developments insofar as they are inscribed into systems of governance highly determined by the ongoing politico-economic dynamics. Also, the described post-political condition is likely to have repercussions, given the fact that large-scale works are prone to generate contestation. In turn, this hypothetical contestation would indicate a lack of consent; the premises outlined above suggest that is not unlikely for the modes of governance to

incorporate coercion as a potential tactic. This shall be explored further in due course. Prior to that, the forthcoming section explores avenues to conceptualise political organisational forms pushing urban agendas. In other words, the focus shifts to theoretical approximations and conceptualisations of urban agency in the form of coalition-building processes.

3.2. Urban coalition theories. Exploring grounds for theorising a megaproject coalition

This section examines the theoretical conceptualisations that inform the analysis of the groups of actors banding behind megaproject developments and the procedures employed. As the last section has noted, urban governance is to a considerable extent subject to on-going politico-economic structural dynamics. Yet the urban politics literature is also concerned with the agential component existing in the urban domain, in particular given the entrepreneurial nature of its governance. Having assumed that megaproject developments constitute a major feature in the urban domain, it also appears relevant to grasp their underlying agential component so that its politics and governance can be better comprehended.

Accordingly, the section will draw on two specific conceptualisations coined by the urban political literature body –growth machines or coalitions, and urban regimes. These notions stand out in relation to the study of urban entrepreneurialism (MacLeod and Goodwin, 1999a and 1999b) and in particular urban political power and the modes of governance carried out (MacLeod, 2011). Besides, they have also been employed in the analysis of case studies of contested megaproject developments and to account for the power dimensions that apply in these development processes (Altshuler and Luberoff, 2003; della Porta and Piazza, 2008; Kennedy et al., 2011). On the other hand, the limitations that have been pointed out by a series of critiques will be taken into consideration.

Prior to the exploration of the above concepts and the grounds on which they can be hybridised, the following lines provide an introductory note and contextualise the use of the urban coalition theories. These conceptualisations emerged in the late 1970s and early 1980s, seeking to go beyond the contributions made by pluralist¹⁷ theory –which

¹⁷ Pluralists see politics as autonomous from the socioeconomic realm, and thus the power structure is defined by the bargaining of a diverse range of groups usually representing the electorate (Mollenkopf, 2010).

emerged as a critique of the elitist theory¹⁸– and urban Marxist¹⁹ theories. They constitute an “attempt to develop a political economy of place” (Harding, 1995: 41) and also try to address a series of questions, such as the implications of powerful interests as a vector in urban politics; the dominating forms of power in urban governance; and the role of democratic politics along with that of the disadvantaged groups (Stoker, 1995). The two following subsections turn to present the two main concepts stemming from this scholarship: the growth machine and the urban regime.

3.2.1. The growth machine

The growth machine thesis draws from both urban Marxist and elite theories, and seeks to comprehend urban power structures on the basis of two premises: the conflict between use values and exchange values, and the commodified nature of land (Domhoff, 2005). A central assumption is that the city then becomes a commoditized asset, where value –exchange value in this case– is to be created from the revalorization of property. For that to happen there is a push from a cluster of property owners (referred to as ‘rentiers’) that coalesces with other groups of actors to attract investment, arguing that the latter will generate economic growth which ultimately will be positive for the larger citizenry (Logan and Molotch, 1987).

The grounds for the city becoming a commoditised asset relate to the neoliberal shift explored in the previous section. Two fundamental elements of the growth machine are administrative decentralisation, whereby local administrations become an active party in the urban process, and the predominant position given to markets that facilitate an activation and acceleration of real estate markets (López and Rodríguez, 2010). Growth –with its alleged effects– becomes the central element that ideologically underpins the newly formed coalition, around the theme of ‘urban boosterism’²⁰. Purportedly, a key implication of this underlying ideology would be to “deemphasi[s]e the connection between growth and exchange values and to reinforce the link between growth goals and better lives for the majority” (Logan and Molotch, 2010: 394).

¹⁸ Elitists argue that a particular elite or a group of notables control a particular entity (e.g. the state) in an instrumental sense (Mollenkopf, 2010) for their own interest; this elite would be then at the top of a determined pyramidal structure following a hierarchical conception of social structures (Harding, 1995).

¹⁹ For urban Marxists, capital accumulation holds a central role in their analytical studies so that conflicts are approached from a perspective of class struggle (Pickvance, 1995) and they tend to fall into economic determinism (Mollenkopf, 2010).

²⁰ Approach to urban policy that actively encourages urban growth (promotion, investment, etc.) through the means considered necessary.

If it wasn't for this cementing component –growth ideology turned into consensus (Molotch, 1976) – it would be harder for the coalition to take shape, due to the dispersed nature of the pluralistic interests of a wide array of public and private actors (Rodgers, 2009). The coalition building process enables then the establishment of formal and informal networks, with (local/regional) elites –primarily business elites– in a dominant position (Rodgers, 2009), constituting the core of the coalition along with the rentier class. Nonetheless they also need the support of other relevant players such as public officials, with whom they interact and who they potentially support through campaign contributions (Logan and Molotch, 2010). In addition, there are secondary actor organisations. For instance, local media or the diverse constellation of public bodies and the individuals involved can also partake in the coalition (Harding, 2009; Rodgers, 2009). Further than that, the growth machine requires also the participation of auxiliary actors –instrumentally or symbolically– namely organised labour, cultural institutions, universities and sports teams. These actors may need or appreciate the support from the growth machine for their own activity, and in turn can add extra legitimacy and social consensus to the projects of the growth machine (Logan and Molotch, 2010). This support can be gained as well by directly endorsing institutions that connect community imaginaries and cultural motivations to local growth (Logan and Molotch, 2010). The incorporation of these auxiliary actors constitutes a crucial step in making urban boosterism hegemonic, and in weakening critics (MacLeod, 2011; Macleod and Goodwin, 1999a and 1999b).

A further dynamic accounted for by the concept is the competition among different elite groups that compound different growth coalitions (Logan and Molotch, 1987) to attract investments (which in the context of megaprojects can be public or private). This mirrors the competitive dynamics between cities in the context of the urban trends prompted by the neoliberalisation process, as previously noted. In this vein, the different local/regional growth machines compete to attract investment packs – regardless of what the investment is for (Molotch, 1988; Purcell, 2011) – so that they can be presented to the public as an effective source of growth.

Growth ideology contains in itself the assumptions that growth will involve a series of benefits: strengthening the local tax base; boosting employment; providing solutions to social problems; helping meeting the needs in housing; and letting the market provide good services for the community (Logan and Molotch, 2010). However, the

connection between these alleged benefits and the promoted growth-oriented policies often lacks the necessary evidence to be definitively established. Growth machine-related literature has explored how, on the contrary, the endeavours of these urban coalitions can result in hampering the fiscal health of municipalities; do not affect aggregate employment as local growth only contributes to distribute jobs; urban growth can further contribute to social inequality and spatial segregation; and finally, urban development negatively affects the environment (Logan and Molotch, 2010). This problematisation of the growth effects can be summarised in the following: “local growth under current arrangements is a transfer of wealth and life chances from the general public to the rentier groups and their associates” (Logan and Molotch, 2010: 399). In other words, the use values of a majority are sacrificed for the exchange values of a minority, in what could be considered another form of accumulation by dispossession.

Critiques to this thesis are grounded on a series of elements. Acknowledging that there’s always pressure for investment in land, Gottdiener et al., (2016) contend that the concept of growth machine represents an overly simplistic approach, mainly because there is a lot of fragmentation when it comes to investment in land and also in property ownership; a factor even more marked in the era of globalisation and multinational capitalists (Macleod and Goodwin, 1999b). It is therefore concluded that the term goes too far in attributing agency to the rentiers.

On the other hand, Harding (2009) points to the failure of existing critiques to account for the multiple facets of the state and decision-makers, and the impact they have in smoothing the path for growth policies because the central focus is placed on the local dimension. New arrangements have consolidated into the urban governance arena, arrangements that transcend the local scale, that is, “inter-organizational linkages, bargaining and coalition-building –both vertically, between levels of government, and horizontally, between statutory and non-statutory agencies and interests” (Harding, 2005:73). In the same line, Macleod and Goodwin (1999b: 509) emphasise as well the question of the scale of governance, as the definition given to the growth machine assumes that “the coalitions, and their policies, are urban, and cannot operate beyond this spatial scale”.

Following this observation, a link must be established here with section 3.1. The considerations included there –concerning the notion of the global urban fabric and the

way urban governance is operated– do have implications for this critique. That is, as the urban condition becomes global, it follows that the hypothetical growth machine would be capable of acting in the multiple scales of governance that influence this urbanisation process, and thus beyond the local scale. Nonetheless, the other two criticisms noted –simplicity and role of the state– should not be pushed aside. The next subsection turns now to explore the concept of urban regime, complementary to the growth machine.

3.2.2. *The urban regime*

While the growth machine concept begins with private agents acting in accordance with particular economic interests, urban regime theory starts with government or elected officials who seek coalition partners in the private sector to pursue a concrete (urban) agenda (Domhoff, 2005). Originally, urban political economy literature that mentioned urban regimes referred to the relatively stable political patterns identified in city politics, particularly in the USA (Imbroscio, 1997). Later works conferred upon the term a more specific understanding. According to Stone (1989), the term urban regime refers then to two key aspects:

- The governing coalition of a city working as an alliance that unites private interests and public officials through formal and informal procedures and networks.
- The particular policy agenda being sought by the mentioned coalition.

The potential strength of the concept can be found in the way it attempts to uncover who does wield power, in terms of the urban agenda, and which goals are then sought by those exerting power (Imbroscio, 1997). Moreover, the concept can also show “how local political economy is influenced by the specific nature of local governing coalitions [...] as well as by institutional forms defining intergovernmental relations” (Kennedy et al., 2011:10).

According to the prism applied by urban regime theorists, power is exerted in diverse forms. When considering urban politics, Stoker (1995) identifies four forms of power. The first one is systemic power, generally associated with the socioeconomic structure; that is, the position of a particular actor in this structure. If privileged, it can confer upon the latter a high level of influence in policy-making in a way that it may not need to act for its interests to be considered. Yet this is insufficient when considering

contemporary urban political economies with its degree of complexity (Davies, 2010). A second form of power is that of command, which consists of the active capacity to mobilise resources in order to acquire a dominant position over other interests. A third form is coalitional power, referring to the capacity for bargaining with other actors or interests when there is no possibility of domination or control. This one corresponds to a momentary and unstable form of power (Stoker, 1995). Finally, the fourth form, inherently distinctive to the regime notion, is the social production model of power.

This latter model of power occurs when there is no clear hierarchy among actors, which therefore enjoy certain amounts of autonomy (van Ostaaijen, 2013). The reasoning underlying the concept of urban regime is that, to achieve governing capacity and implement a certain agenda, actors need to overcome the existing fragmentation and set up a structure capable of exerting the necessary leadership to proceed (Mossberger and Stoker, 2001; Stoker, 1995); such operationalization is defined as urban regime. To be successful in such endeavours, the leading coalition needs to offer attractive incentives to potential partners and to be able to keep ensuring the commitment of the latter to shared goals (Stoker, 1995); in other words, cooperation and collaboration need to be generated and maintained (Stone, 1993). These incentives can vary from material inducements, such as contracts or side-payments, to small opportunities such as training programs or improvements to the local built environment or equipment (Mossberger, 2009). In sum, when analysing urban politics, even if one is the most common to urban regimes, one shall consider the above mentioned four possible dimensions.

The next paragraphs will try to identify other relevant features and specificities of the concept of the urban regime, bearing in mind its potential application to the governance of megaprojects. Firstly, one of the fundamental characteristics, as emphasised by the literature, is the informal basis that operates in the actor coordination process in the absence of an “all-encompassing structure of command” (Stoker, 1995: 59). In Stone terms (1989; 1993) the regime consists of an informal partnership between the local officials and the city business elite; it is thanks to the latter that governance in the city is effective, and not to the merely conventional operating forms of a government. This includes arrangements amongst the partners that transcend the formal mechanisms and tools utilised by governments.

Secondly, the formed coalition is labelled regime because it becomes a “relatively stable group” (despite its informal character) which has “access to institutional resources” and acquires “a sustained role in making governing decisions” (Stone, 1989: 4). As the regime agrees upon a particular agenda, stability at different levels (institutional, financial) must be maintained despite potential disputes among partners and power fragmentation. In this way, the coalition becomes a regime, as the relationship of cooperation forged is not a temporary but a long-term one, between public and private interests and/or between governmental and non-governmental actors, an essential characteristic of an urban regime (Mossberger, 2009, Mossberger and Stoker, 2001). Regime theorists sustain that the establishment of such a partnership would ensure the stability needed and thus facilitate the prevalence of a particular agenda. Additionally, for this to happen, the regime has to “survive personnel and leadership changes or political successions, reflecting a specific ideology or agreement over fundamental values” (Dowding, 2001: 14).

Thirdly, in such organisational framework, networks of actors play a fundamental role in organising social life, as they facilitate the flow of “cooperative efforts of different interests and organisations” with the main participants being businesses (seeking to increase profits) and elected officials (seeking to improve their electoral profile) (Elkin, 1987; Stoker, 1995). Furthermore, in his account of the urban or city regime Elkin (1987) points as well to a third relevant component of these networks, state bureaucracies interested in achieving more autonomy.

Given that is possible to organise opposition against certain policy agendas, a fourth relevant component of urban regimes is that they should be capable of disrupting these oppositional attempts. This can be done by bringing into the coalition some of the opposing small groups through, for example, material incentives (Stoker, 1995); or conversely by practising what is referred to as politics of exclusion, that is, barring access to decision-making processes (Stoker, 1995) in line with the new post-political forms of governance earlier suggested. Such a component chimes with one of the elements underpinning megaproject ideology, as suggested by Gellert and Lynch (2003): discrimination. This entails a marked disregard from megaproject supporters towards dissenting types of knowledge and values.

Elements of regime theory that have been subjected to criticisms include the understanding of power –already explored– along with the contextual framing and

explanations given in continuity and change (Stoker, 1995). With regard to the former, urban regimes cannot be understood as detached from the wider socio-political environment and thus are affected by dominant trends and policy ideas (Macleod and Goodwin, 1999b; Mossberger, 2009; Stoker, 1995). In respect to the latter, regimes cannot be understood as static articulations, but rather as shifting ones, due to a change of the conditions or dynamics –endogenous or exogenous– that enabled their establishment (Stoker, 1995).

Urban regime analysis is fundamentally a political economy approach geared towards apprehending the conditions under which a partnership of governmental and non-governmental actors –with a strong role for the elites and determined to accomplish a certain policy and governing agenda– is formed (rather than identifying the partnership itself). In a way, it is a framework that enables a conceptualisation of “[urban] governing arrangements and the efforts to create and sustain them” (Mossberger, 2009: 51). Given the resemblance between the notions of urban regime and the growth machine, the next subsection, as a corollary to section 3.3, explores potential scope for blending the two conceptualisations.

3.2.3. Urban coalition theories and megaproject governance

What is then the relevance of these two concepts for the governance of megaproject developments? Given their singular characteristics and complexities, the notion of urban regime chimes with megaproject governance to the extent that they seem to require extraordinary and exceptional forms of governance. Governance shall function to avoid potential risks that could jeopardise the megaproject agenda in areas considered sensitive (institutional stability, legal paths within the procurement process and financing). As noted by Altshuler and Luberoff (2003: 267), the urban regime approach constitutes a suitable conceptual framework to analyse the politics of megaprojects:

Megaprojects [...] require special authorising, funding, revenue, land acquisition, and regulatory actions by two or more models of governance [...] typically proceed so slowly that their political base must hold firm through electoral and business cycles. The stable and overwhelming support required to keep a megaproject on course for many years clearly involve public-private cooperation of the sort that regime theorists describe.

As earlier explored, the urban regime concept is concerned with understanding how a certain condition of stability is achieved through cooperation among different actors to

conform a long-term order of their interests. Moreover, Kennedy et al. (2011: 12) argue that as megaproject developments “give expression to a[n] [urban] growth agenda”, the coalition theories can be mobilised to deepen understandings of their governance.

To this shall be added the discursive and ideological components that help cement the coalitions and that are often noted in both conceptualisations. In this sense, the growth strategy advocated by these loose coalitions, also identified as competitiveness (Harding, 2005), operates also as an ideology with an apparently uncontested consensus, especially among elite groups (Logan and Molotch, 1987; MacLeod, 2011). But not only the elite groups: those who have no particular interest in local growth because they do not directly depend upon the performance of the local economy, also seem to respond to something akin to a pro-growth common sense (Molotch, 1976). This is to some extent, the framing used by megaprojects’ promoters and advocates (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003). The same ideology would also suggest that the gains of the coalition members constitute a collective good (Harding 1995); this is consistent with the fact that the development of megaprojects is usually portrayed as a public good for which individuals must sacrifice (Gellert and Lynch, 2003). And last but not least, another classic ideological component underpinning megaproject development is the idea of progress (Gellert and Lynch, 2003). This is understood as a gradual decoupling of humans from nature, a movement towards urban life; a common principle in the growth strategy endorsed by the urban coalitions.

The proposed framework shall take advantage of the shared elements between the two urban conceptualisations and employ it as a lens to examine megaproject development governance. This exercise is compatible with the efforts of urban politics theory to advance towards synthetic concepts that encapsulate different strands of thought, so that conceptualisations on a “dominant political coalition” can be put forward (Mollenkopf, 2010). Embracing both coalition concepts constitutes a step in this direction.

This involves, as well, noting the existing critiques and considering possible ways to address them. On the one hand, coalition theories have been subject to critiques that point to an excessive focus on the local dimension (Harding, 1995; Stoker, 1995). Placing the focus on the megaproject phenomenon helps to avoid a single local focus and thus takes into consideration this critique. The analytical process will acknowledge

that megaproject developments see a multiplicity of actors involved in the associated implementation process as several levels of governance come into play (supranational, national, regional and local), and also because sometimes the latter are not strictly local (for example, lineal infrastructures which affect more than one single place). On the other hand, it is common to identify the state as one of the main partners in megaproject developments, and an unequivocal source of power. In this respect, it is considered appropriate to complement the explored framework with notions from state theory (explored in the next section). The latter can provide further insights, offsetting the insufficient incorporation of this component by the coalition theories.

The theoretical principles explored in this section were identified on the basis of the need to comprehend agency in the urban context. In practical terms, this can be described as the operative mechanisms to which urban coalitions can resort in order to secure the conditions that guarantee the security of the agenda pursued. By examining coalition theories and the potential links with megaproject governance, the author has identified elements such as the need to achieve a certain degree of stability in a series of areas; the ability to mobilise resources; and the possibility to manoeuvre in order to incorporate popular actors that reinforce consensus and confer extra levels of legitimacy. The next section turns now to explore the grounds to theorise on state power, while considering disruptive actions against megaproject oppositional forces.

3.3. The state and neo-Gramscian approaches to urban governance

From the above explored frameworks, a number of elements suggest the need to consider state action when approaching urban governance. Besides, in the case of megaprojects, they frequently present significant state involvement, if not directly state-led. Beyond that, one specific element stands out for consideration: the fact that in many cases megaproject developments are confronted with opposition campaigns and resistance. From a Gramscian perspective, the contestation that large-scale projects undergo suggests that the consent-building attempt was insufficient to secure a smooth procurement process. The lack of consent has then to be remedied through coercive mechanisms if the megaproject agenda is to be maintained. This scenario resonates with the Gramscian elaboration on two forms of societal control: domination by force and coercion, and ideological control of the masses through hegemony (Gramsci, 1999), usually presented through the maxim “hegemony protected by the armour of coercion” (Gramsci, 1999: 532). This conceptualisation still applies in different ways,

and as confirmed by critical contemporary scholarship, a coercive role can be expected from the state when determined policies, plans or projects are put at risk by social opposition (Harvey, 2005a; Tickell and Peck, 2002), even in the context of neoliberalisation whereby (some) state capacities have been constrained (Brenner, 1998).

To start with, this section includes an introductory note exploring the interconnectedness of state action with urban governance. Subsequent sections will develop the conceptual toolkit for such an exploration. Looking at the question of state power in the context of urban governance, a number of authors have underlined the need to consider the biases under which state structures may operate. In this regard, Macleod and Goodwin (1999b: 509) suggest that the subject of urban governance should make an effort to “integrate the strategies of urban growth coalitions within national political projects or accumulation strategies”. On the question of power articulations, the same authors remark that “Regimes, partnerships, networks, coalitions [...] have to be constructed, managed and maintained –and at present a critical part in this is played by the national state” (Macleod and Goodwin, 1999b: 522).

Similarly, with respect to the opposition faced by megaprojects, Molotch (1988: 41) notes that opposition movements “are overwhelmingly subject to manipulation, co-optation, or simple destruction by development forces”. For such a task, pro-megaproject actors will count on state-mediated mechanisms insofar as they have the capacity to access state-power centres (Dowding, 2001) and by extension, make use of the coercive authority endowed in those bodies (Stone, 1993).

In order to try to make sense of these operating mechanisms in the context of urban governance, the next two subsections will explore the underpinnings of this particular field and the potential for empirical analysis that it encompasses. Accordingly, the first one discusses the fundamental theorisations that contend a potential bias of state bodies in given situations, while the second turns to the elaboration of the coercive component.

3.3.1. The state bias or selectivity

This subsection will present a framework by which to situate the role of the state (or state-related bodies) within the governance of contested megaproject developments. For such a task, it will draw on Marxist state theory. Developments in this field during

the 1970s by Poulantzas pushed forward the idea that the state should be understood as a social relation (Jessop, 1999, 2002b, 2007; Kelly, 1999) and thus, its performance should be assessed from a relational perspective. Put simply, the state is not to be conceived as a unified subject controlled by a particular class.

Drawing on this perspective, Kelly (1999) notes that state power has to be seen as relational but also selective. State power is relational because it sees the structures and policies implemented by the state as “historically contingent episodes in a process of dynamic evolution” (Kelly, 1999: 110). On the other hand, state power is selective because it prioritises certain class (or class fraction) interests over other interests (in multiple forms). This applies to the actions undertaken by specific state apparatuses (Jessop, 2014).

These theoretical propositions are further elaborated by Jessop (1990) through the concept of “Strategic Relational Approach” (henceforth SRA). Under this approach, the state is seen as a social relation whose power “comes from the particular political structures and strategies that both shape and which in turn are shaped by the state” (Kelly, 1999: 111). The concept derives from the above-mentioned relational perspective, based primarily on the work of Poulantzas. According to Poulantzas (cited by Jessop, 1999; 2003), the exercise of state power, or more precisely state powers or capacities, has to be understood in terms of the relation between socio-political forces (balance of forces), which finds a translation into the state structures being in turn mediated by those same (state) structures. The outcome of this is that the state is not only a reflection of this balance, but also contributes to its formation through the relationships that come into play in its own terrain (Jessop, 1999).

The practicalities of this approach are then clarified by Jessop (2007: 37) leaving aside the more abstract propositions:

The state is an ensemble of power centres that offer unequal chances to different forces within and outside the state to act for different political purposes [...] the state does exercise power: its powers [...] are activated through the agency of definite political forces in specific conjunctures. It is not the state that acts; it is always specific sets of politicians and state officials located in specific parts and levels of the state system. It is they who activate specific powers and state capacities in particular institutions and agencies.

The subsequent elaboration revolves around the existing selectivities (structural and strategic) within the state and their interaction with social forces. The definition of

structural selectivity (Jessop 1999:57-8) enables further understanding of the operationalization of state powers or capacities and sheds light on how this bias can take shape through the institutional ensemble of the state.

Structural selectivity of the state consists in a complex set of institutional mechanisms and political practices that serve to advance (*or obstruct* [italics added]) particular fractional or class interests. Included here are: selective filtering of information, systematic lack of action on certain issues, definition of mutually contradictory priorities and counter-priorities, the uneven implementation of measures originating elsewhere in the state system, and the pursuit of ad hoc and uncoordinated policies concerned with specific conjunctural problems affecting particular branches or sections of the state system.

Accordingly, strategic selectivity is defined as

the ways in which the state considered as a social ensemble has a specific, differential impact on the ability of various political forces to pursue particular interests and strategies in specific spatio-temporal contexts (Jessop, 2002b: 40).

Strategic selectivity thus underpins the understanding that a given state apparatus could act in a selective and strategic manner to privilege specific actors, identities, actions, horizons and so on (Jessop, 2014).

What follows is that the state shall be understood as a locus for strategies, but also a generator and a product of them (Jessop, 1990). This needs further explanation. As a locus for strategies, strategic selectivity means that particular forms of state will be more prone to some political strategies than others, depending on the strategies the different forces or groups adopt to implement their agenda and on the nature of state institutions. Over time, the dominant forces or power blocs can generate or shape state structures that, apart from potentially privileging their agendas, also impact on how class struggles or other disputes involving state bodies are played out (Molotch, 1988).

The state can also be understood, through SRA, as the product of strategies, in the sense that current strategic selectivity is determined to some extent by past patterns of this selectivity and the modifying strategies employed. The SRA conceptualisation suggests that powers and capacities of the state have to be considered in relation to the broader context, which is also strategic and relational. That is, bearing in mind the links between the different sets and clusters of actors such as state managers and political forces and in particular “the complex web of interdependencies and social networks linking the state and political system to its broader environment” (Jessop, 2007: 79).

Likewise, this strand of state theory also asserts the need to abandon the “search for guarantees that the state apparatus and its functions are necessarily capitalist in all aspects” (Jessop, 1990: 354). Instead, a more flexible view of the state is brought forward by asserting that state power may present contingent impacts on accumulation in specific conjunctures (Jessop, 1990). From this it can be inferred that, in the interests of ensuring the completion of specific plans or projects, some action can be organised. This shall include the safeguard of established accumulation strategies²¹ for which the state is assumed, in accordance to the mentioned perspective, to privilege certain class repertoire or to negatively discriminate against agents considered disruptive, via the state bodies or power centres that mirror the balance of socio-political forces.

At this stage a note shall be added to circumscribe megaproject developments into accumulation strategies. An underlying component of megaproject developments, as more widely in urban renewal projects and property development, consists of rent-seeking ambitions/ accumulation by dispossession processes. Indeed, a whole range of actors profit from this type of work –mainly construction companies and property developers and owners, along with capitalist financial allies– that channel money into the built environment (the secondary circuit of capitalism in Marxist terminology) while the public authorities project an image of secure economic development and prosperity. In that sense, the development of large-scale projects can be equated to an accumulation strategy –or at least seen as a ramification of such– due to the fact that operates in the framework of a particular growth model in a determined spatial context and is accompanied by preconditions external to the economic realm and strategies for its accomplishment²².

In sum, situating megaproject development processes and the associated contestation in relation to accumulation strategies confers a necessary complement to the analytical framework developed so far. This makes it possible to identify “the politically constructed ‘informal’ networks of association and/or governance –situated at various spatial scales– which help to mould the contemporary state” (MacLeod and Goodwin,

²¹ Accumulation strategies are defined by two conditions: a specific growth model in a given spatial context (ranging from the supranational to the local) together with its extra-economic preconditions and a plan of action for its accomplishment.

²² To determine whether or not a particular development can be associated with an accumulation strategy will require further analysis of the specific political and socioeconomic context where the latter is located (see Chapter 5).

1999b: 515) and therefore better capture the nature and *modi operandi* of the megaproject coalition. The section turns now to further develop the idea that the state can act with a bias, drawing on the SRA approach and in particular on the notion of strategic selectivity.

The selective character of the state, specifically for megaproject governance, is relevant as it has been verified that state strategic selectivities privilege a particular set of policies: reinforcing the position of private/ capitalist interests in the context of urban governance (MacLeod, 2011). This is confirmed by several authors that point to the strategic selectivity of the state for specific case studies, for instance in the conflict over the new Stuttgart 21 station (Germany) where the mediator influences the process through agenda-setting and defining a ‘discursive situation’ (Enrico Gualini, 2015: 192) or in the case of local participatory mechanisms where grass-roots initiatives or groups can be co-opted by the local state following its concrete interests (Garcia et al., 2007).

An example that demonstrates the strategic selectivity of the state is the management of transport infrastructure construction (López and Rodríguez, 2010). In this example, a framework is established whereby public institutions assume potential risks while private contractors are safeguarded (private contractors receive government funds to build a particular infrastructure, while the state assumes the ownership of the infrastructure and therefore has to bear with the long term cycles of rotation in the investment in fixed capital). This does not happen because the state as a subject deliberately acts in favour of the contractors, but because the balance of forces materialised in the state structures and bodies involves privileging this particular group’s interests. It will be the task of the analysis to find out whether the selective component operates in the governance of the analysed megaproject developments and how it does so.

3.3.2. The state and potential forms of coercion

Having verified that coercion is one of the possible mechanisms applied to secure specific endeavours, on which grounds can it be conceptualised? Drawing back on state theory, Gramsci (1999) suggested it was the function of coercion to protect a given situation of hegemony (he referred to the State, but this can be applied to urban politics (Jessop, 1997; Jessop, Peck, and Tickell, 1999). That is, coercion appears when hegemony is at risk or has not been fully achieved or, in another Gramscian

expression, in the context of a “crisis of authority” (Gramsci, 1971, 1999). With regard to the well-established opposition with significant mobilisation and influence capacities, such as those studied here, it is assumed that this constitutes a situation of crisis of authority (further explanation of the context is provided in Chapters 5 and 6).

Coercion suggests not only the use of force and possibly physical violence, but also other “softer” mechanisms of persuasion. In that sense, the first point to make is that as for modern states they are in the possession of the monopoly of violence as coded in the legal framework (Poulantzas, 1978) for what, in a sense, it is likely to appear as, according to Poulantzas, “state-monopolised physical violence permanently underlies techniques of power and mechanisms of consent” (1978: 81). The question that arises then is the legitimacy of such utilisation. Green and Ward (2009) suggest assessing the latter against well-established standards or conventions of social justice and human rights.

Considering situations in which such physical violence is used internally against civilians and for politico-economic goals, the next lines explore avenues for its conceptualisation. In these cases the support of government for “policies of violence, repression and intimidation” directed “against perceived enemies that the state has determined threaten its interests or security” (Martin, 2018: 66) can be referred to as state terrorism. This conceptualisation emphasises that violence is selectively applied to targets, expecting to inflict fear in their communities so that a deterrent effect is generated among those not subordinating to the government plans (Blakeley, 2010). Therein lies the value of the concept given it is assumed that a Western contemporary (democratic) state will not confront a grass-roots oppositional movement with direct violence. Yet it can apply selective violence in specific situations as part of a broader coercive strategy (with other mechanisms), seeking in a way that many individuals are discouraged from partaking in the opposition and thus give consent.

State terrorism includes a wide range of violent actions, from threat through intimidation to murder and illegal kidnapping, perpetrated by “actors on behalf of or in conjunction with the state [or state-related bodies]” (Blakeley, 2010: 15). Examples of perpetrator states include the dictatorships in Latin American countries in the 70s and 80s, but also established democracies such as the USA (Chomsky, 1999), the UK in the context of the “Troubles” in the north of Ireland (Green and Ward, 2004) and Spain with the death squads in the northern Basque Country (Encarnación, 2007). It is

significant that in many of these cases, these actions took place as a result of so-called counter-terrorist policies. These are examples that include extreme violence orchestrated by the state (directly or indirectly); yet other examples with a less extreme degree of violence can also be approached from this perspective, such as illegal detentions and degrading treatment (Balkeley, 2010).

Beyond the use of physical violence, and in relation to the notion of strategic selectivity, it is also significant to note the capacity of state-related agents to implement further coercive measures (e.g. prosecution, disqualification, fines). In fact, critical scholarship contends that within the framework of the neoliberal-state or the neoliberal order, it is not rare to put into practice a wide range of measures of this type that end up forging consent (Harvey, 2005b; Perkins, 2013; Tickell and Peck, 2002). The crucial contribution of these power mechanisms is the ability to disrupt forms of oppositional civil society (Sinha, 2005). How are these operated? Following recent scholarship on urban governance, a neo-Gramscian approach can be implemented to fully comprehend the contours of the coercion exercised to ultimately achieve consent (Jessop, 1997; Perkins, 2013). With regard to situations of hegemony, Gramsci (1971) did consider that they could require generalised coercive action. One can infer then that the nature and characteristics of that action will depend on multiple aspects (political, societal and cultural). With regard to modern states, it can be presumed that the legal-judicial apparatus constitutes an instrument for direct domination over those groups that do not consent (Gramsci, 2000), and therefore for the enforcement of disciplining action. On top of that, in the context of urban governance, coercion can take varied shapes and involve different actors across the realms of the state, civil society and the market, and can even operate through masked forms (Perkins, 2013). The analysis shall take into consideration those veiled mechanisms of coercion as well.

The corollary to that is an interpretation of coercion from the SRA perspective. In this sense, the coercive strategy is likely to be operated in two different directions. On one hand, the tactics employed to disrupt oppositional movements find favour across the ensemble of state bodies; they are given a certain primacy and endowed with the necessary means and resources. In sum, they are privileged. On the other hand, oppositional movements are discriminated against, thus facing multiple constraints while carrying out their opposing actions.

3.4. Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to advance a framework for the analysis of the governance of contested megaproject developments and the associated power relations and mechanisms. To that end, urban governance has been suggested as the central avenue to examine the phenomenon of megaproject governance. This involves considering the multiple aspects with which it intersects, primarily politico-economic and socio-spatial relations.

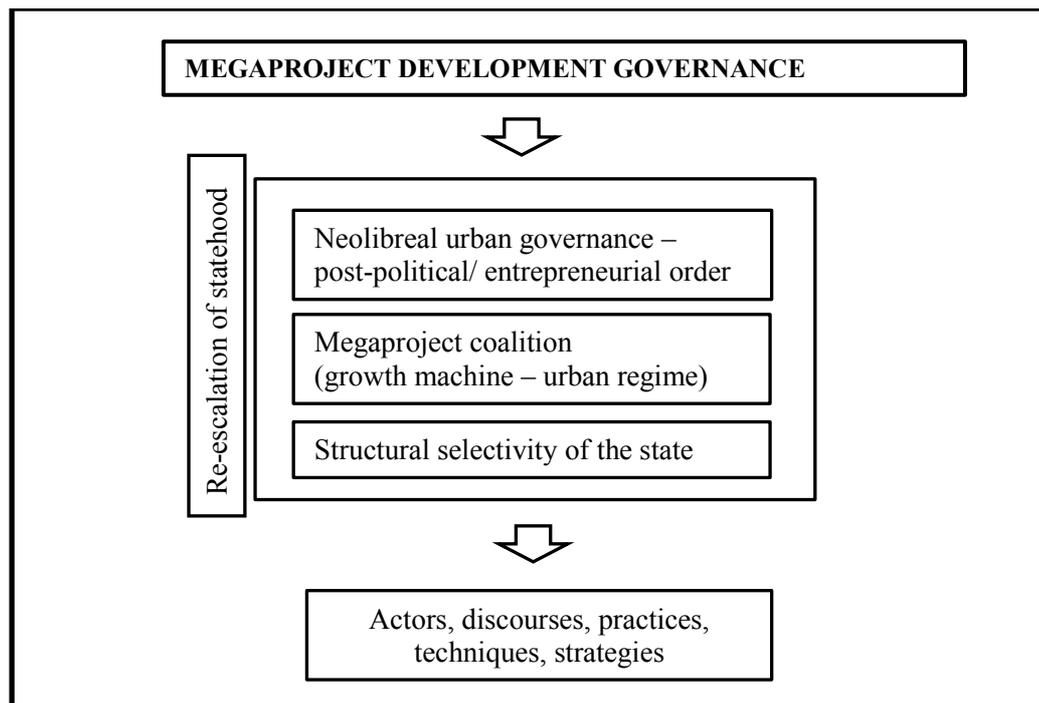


Figure 3.1. Visual explanation of the author's analytical framework advanced.

The framework (see figure 3.1) builds then upon what are believed to be fundamental constitutive elements of on-going urban processes and their politics. In this respect, three elements were identified. Firstly, as has been noted, urban governance shifted due to the impact generated by a process of neoliberalisation. This prompted a new political configuration characterised by an entrepreneurial ethos and by new instruments and practices of urban governance, which in turn resulted in more exclusive systems of decision-making (a depoliticised order). When considering the whole politico-institutional ensemble and its connection with neoliberalisation, it is also important to note the reescalation of statehood (the downgrading and upgrading of traditional state functions in recent decades where regions and supranational institutions have come to play a significant role) and its implications for megaproject governance. Secondly, the chapter has proposed blending two core urban coalition

conceptualisations that seek to capture agency within the urban realm in consideration of its political-economy. In this sense the urban regime and the growth machine account for the types of alliances that can be forged among the diverse actors; practices in terms of discourse and resource mobilisation; and the connection with state selectivities. Finally, the role of the state is taken into consideration as an ensemble of power centres from which to bolster specific policy agendas, from which coercive mechanisms are not excluded. In this vein, section 3.3 has presented state selectivity and the relational perspective as notions by which to observe processes mediated by state-related bodies. In a more empirical path, it has also underlined how coercive mechanisms can be conceptualised, and to what extent contemporary states are likely to use them while not being at odds with the neoliberal doctrine.

By combining the above outlined components, a comprehensive framework is established to fully encapsulate the complexities and intricacies of the politics involved in the governance of contested megaproject developments. Given the significance of the context, this cannot be done though without examining the politico-economic dynamics to which these processes are embedded, as this will enable a better understanding of the nature of the actors involved and the unfolding dynamics to which these have to respond. Now that the analytical framework has been presented, the next chapter will discuss the research methodology.

CHAPTER 4. THE RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter describes how the methodological framework of the thesis has been designed. It accounts for the processes and deliberations that shaped and led to the final methodological configuration. Section 4.1 opens with the presentation of the research purpose along with the questions that were formulated to guide the research design process.

Section 4.2 outlines the approach adopted and presents the stance taken by the researcher by reflecting prefiguring views that underlie assumptions and perspectives. Sections 4.3 and 4.4 describe the different components of the research design; from the data collection methods to the analysis and write-up of the data outlining the different paths and steps that the research process followed and the methodological instruments employed to collect the data and analyse it. The implemented design follows a qualitative approach. The chapter goes on in section 4.5 with a discussion of the ethical issues and considerations faced during the research process and ends with a concluding section.

4.1. The research purpose and key questions

This section presents the research purpose of the thesis along with the formulated research questions. Accordingly, the following paragraphs outline the overarching goal that guides the research project along with the explanation for the approach taken. In addition, they explain the link with the two previous chapters and how this led to the formulation of the research questions.

A crucial aim of this research project is to provide a critical account of the governance of megaproject developments in contexts marked by significant opposition. That is, situations in which, due to the disruptive techniques of an organised opposition, the normal progress of the project is hampered to the extent that the authorities have to give a response to the oppositional movement. In accordance with this aim, the main focus of interest consists of this phenomenon of contention over large-scale public-works. More specifically, the research is concerned with the measures and arrangements to consolidate the megaproject plans and the dynamics that follow these efforts including the interactions between the confronted parties. In these dynamics, a key component consists of the need by the proponents to disrupt and erode the opposition movements. It is understood that this encapsulates the multi-faceted

performance of the agents pushing the megaproject developments, along with the relation with pre-existing structures. After examining critical accounts of this phenomenon, as well as specific case studies, it emerged that the factors explaining the outcomes of these contentious processes were relatively under explored. This was particularly the case with regards to the consolidation of a megaproject agenda and the response to the opposition.

Previous works on the same phenomenon have focused on the nature and agency of social movements engaging in contentious politics with relatively little in-depth analysis on the coalitions banding behind megaprojects and how their performance impacts on the unfolding contentious dynamics. In contrast, this thesis intends to highlight the capacities and power mechanisms that megaproject promoters can resort to in order to maintain their agenda, regardless of the opposition campaigns and contested evidence on the suitability of proceeding with the undertaking. Differing from previous scholarly work on opposition movements, this thesis will take the term “megaproject” as a key concept so as to relate the contentious elements of the investigated phenomenon with the series of flaws appearing repeatedly in megaproject developments as described in chapter 2.

Grounds to conduct the exploration on megaproject governance in the form of themes were then developed considering the politics of megaprojects and the examined urban political theories and insights from state theory. These theoretical underpinnings supporting the empirical analysis were presented in chapter 3.

As this thesis is framed from a critical perspective it will focus significantly on the opposition and diverging voices. In that vein, attempting to locate the narratives and experiences of the different agents partaking in the megaproject governance process, which in essence is a political process, requires a qualitative approach. In this way and without neglecting mainstream narratives of the phenomenon under investigation, the researcher will draw notably on what in the literature is referred to as ‘activist knowledge’ (Escobar, 2008; Greyl et al., 2013).

The overall objective of the thesis is to theorise the power mechanisms used to consolidate megaproject plans –including those used to disrupt oppositional movements. This is a crucial undertaking in order to comprehend how the opposition and resistance organised by subaltern groups of actors –along with other barriers– is overcome. Such phenomenon, it is assumed, can be understood as part of an on-going

(urban) trend whereby varied types of infrastructure are “customized precisely to the needs of powerful users and spaces, whilst bypassing less powerful users and spaces” (Graham, 2000: 185).

The research process has been conducted with the goal of answering an overarching research question followed by a number of subsidiary questions that emerged out of the examination of specific literature dealing with this phenomenon. The overarching research question reads as follows:

→ What factors and mechanisms explain and underlie the resilience of megaproject plans in the face of multi-faceted disruption? How do they operate?

Three further sets of questions were then formulated. They include:

- How can the alliances backing megaproject developments be characterised and what are the mechanisms and processes that enable the formation of these alliances/coalitions? To what extent the urban coalition theories can explain their nature and *modi operandi*?
- What are the structures, governance arrangements and power mechanisms that contribute to the consolidation of megaproject developments in the face of oppositional movements? How do these translate into discursive, performative and policy measures?
- How are these measures enacted and operationalized? What role do they play in relation to the opposition campaigning and resisting efforts?

This set of questions enabled a thorough exploration of the main subject of inquiry – the governance of contested megaproject developments– through the experiences around two particular case studies that will be discussed in section 4.3.1. Prior to this however, the following section moves on to outline the approach taken while carrying out the empirical analysis.

4.2. Research approach

Following on from the outline of the thesis purpose and the research questions, this section will introduce the methodological approach taken to satisfactorily address the research objectives. While the introduction to chapter 3 situated the subject of megaproject governance as one lying at the intersection of several disciplines (the core one being urban studies), this section discusses the ontological and epistemological aspects of the research process which build upon the elements already outlined in the

previous section. In so doing, it will highlight the key elements of the researcher's standpoint in regard to what is considered 'relevant' knowledge and how this knowledge was approached, particularly given the significance of 'reflexivity' in the research process.

4.2.1. Inquiry perspective and reflexivity

To orientate the reader and in 'pursuit of honesty' the researcher must explain his assumptions in terms of the paradigms that capture the different possible understandings of reality or ontologies (Rossman and Rallis, 2003). Furthermore, a note on the researcher's reflexivity should illustrate the position taken with respect to the subject under research as well as the potential influences on the perspective taken (Rossman and Rallis, 2003). The following paragraphs shed some light on these aspects.

The departure point of the research is that, aside from technical and managerial perspectives, urban governance can be adopted as a central entry point for the examination of the political process underlying megaproject developments (Kennedy et al., 2011). This political dimension links back to a major element within urban politics that is power; and in particular, who the agents in possession of this power or authority are and how this is exercised (Short, 2006).

One of the key characteristics of the cases under examination is the manifestation of this political dimension through contentious dynamics prompted by the opposition to megaproject plans. From a relational perspective, these dynamics present a clear imbalance between the opposing parties: while one party is privileged in relation to the dominant political and socioeconomic structures and therefore can make use of its available resources, the other is located in a rather subordinate position. By emphasising concern with this power imbalance –along with an implicit will to change it– the researcher endorses a paradigm leaning towards critical theory. This tradition assumes that the inquiry process is value-mediated and therefore endowed with a subjective component that in turn will influence the outcomes of the enquiry exercise (Guba and Lincoln, 1998). In parallel, by assuming this paradigm, the inquiry shall appropriately consider the situatedness of the phenomena under research by providing a full account of the different contextual aspects (politico-economic, social and cultural) as well as aiming to stimulate transformation of the structures at play (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

Furthermore, the (re)incorporation of the notion of space –and by extension that of urban space– into several disciplines that engage with critical inquiry by noting the ideological and political components of its production (Soja, 1989), constitutes a referential element of guidance for the development of the research approach. Accordingly, this study will seek to engage with a newly advocated urban critical theory with the aim of nourishing “the institutional conditions required for an effervescence of critical knowledges about contemporary urbanization” (Brenner, 2009: 206) –insofar as megaproject development is a major component of this urbanisation process. In line with these postulates, the thesis will concede extra weight to the knowledge and experience of those in a marginal position contesting the accumulation by dispossession processes associated to the phenomena of megaproject development. In so doing, the expected contribution expects to become inserted into the body of knowledge that aims “to forge a radical alternative to the dismal, destructive status quo of worldwide capitalist urbanization” (Brenner et al., 2009: 182). However, this does not mean to uncritically accept all opposition views as absolute truths, which could lead to a mere reproduction of their discourse. The approach taken throughout the inquiry process considers legitimate the values upheld and interpretations put forward by the different parties involved in the dispute. Thus, the consideration of the conflicting narratives and perspectives incorporates a relational component into the interpretative process in order not to exclude any of the existing rationales, not only the pro- and anti- stances but also the different cosmovisions existing within the anti-megaproject side (reformist versus revolutionary). It is believed this constitutes a valuable approach in order to obtain a better grasp of what mechanisms, processes and relations bolster the above-mentioned status quo of capitalist urbanisation.

Given that a critical approach involves a push for transformation and critique whereby advocacy and activism play fundamental roles (Guba and Lincoln, 1998) the researcher can appear as standing close by the alternative narratives in contrast to the official narratives. In this sense, endorsing a critical perspective involves conceiving the status quo as unjust (Rossman and Rallis, 2003) and thus assuming the need to bring about change or transformation of this unjust status.

Yet it is still important to consider researcher ‘reflexivity’ given that in interpreting the empirical data obtained and through the process of meaning construction, the

researcher is influenced by their stance on the social world. In this regard it must be stated that in his recent past the researcher has voluntarily participated in an initiative investigating socio-environmental conflicts (atlas of ecological distribution conflicts, EJOLT²³ project, see Martínez-Alier et al., 2013) which seeks to gather data on this type of dispute as well as to give voice to the marginalised and/or ignored groups that challenge developmental and “extractivist” agendas. These oppositional groups organise against processes or projects that are believed to negatively influence their livelihoods and those of the future generations. Through participation in this research project, the researcher familiarised himself with the network against UIMP (Unnecessary and Imposed Mega-Projects) whereby mutual sympathies were generated. Some of the materials utilised and the events attended were organised by this network, for which the researcher has to assume a potential bias in converging with the views upheld by this activist platform.

To summarise, by including participants with opposing values and narratives the researcher acknowledges that there is no one single truth and therefore the diverse voices on the interrogated subject should be identified and considered. At the same time, the researcher must acknowledge potential biases that can underlie the approach taken due to their own lived experiences and ethical commitments. In this sense, the paradigm guiding the research process has been outlined noting that the researcher addresses the subject from a critical perspective which links emerging scholarship in the field of urban politics. This involves taking into account the power imbalances that underlie the governance of large-scale public works relying considerably on what is referred to as ‘activist-knowledge’. The relevance and role played by the latter is explored in the next sub-section.

4.2.2. Activist knowledge

As highlighted in the previous subsection, advocacy and activism are critical concepts when using a critical theory approach. The importance and relevance of activist knowledge has recently been emphasised by a body of work stemming from the fields of political ecology and environmental justice (Martínez-Alier et al., 2011, 2016). This subsection considers some of the essential contributions that deal with the need and implications of considering this type of knowledge, which is essential in the inquiry process of this thesis.

²³ Environmental Justice Organisations Liabilities and Trade.

One of the leading figures that has theorised on this subject is the anthropologist Arturo Escobar who is concerned with linking academic knowledge and the knowledge identified in opposition and resistance processes in order to better understand the complexities inherent to these contexts. According to the Escobar, social movements, apart from engaging in a political process through a specific repertoire of protest and cultural contestation, operate as generators of knowledge in what is referred to as ‘activist knowledge’ (Escobar, 2008). It consists in the fact that the activist groups produce autonomous knowledge which in situations of untamed political problems –as described in Chapter 2– led to diverging conclusions in the issues at stake with respect to what usually is referred to as ‘official knowledge’ (Greyl et al., 2013). In the broad category of activist knowledge different types of experience-based knowledge are to be included, with its responsible agents ranging from NGOs and community groups to women’s associations, trade unions and also peasant and indigenous communities (Greyl et al., 2013; Temper, 2014).

In a similar vein, the perspective of the ‘post-normal science’ calls for a more actor-inclusive approach when dealing with contested issues in which politics and science are intertwined; particularly in the field of environmental problems (Kallis et al., 2015). Such an approach advocates for an “extended peer community” including scientists and reputed experts but also legitimate participants, i.e. individuals or groups “with a stake in the issue” that will contribute and supervise the scientific input in a way that an offset to the power imbalance –favourable to the latter– is introduced (D’Alisa and Kallis, 2015).

Several scholars have endorsed this perspective and in so doing have started identifying and bolstering conceptualisations emerging from grass-root organisations pursuing activist campaigns. As a ‘go’ and ‘come-back’ process this same group of scholars have attempted to incorporate some of these conceptualisations into the academic theoretical frameworks with the result of making them richer through this engagement with activist knowledge (Martínez-Alier, 2015; Martínez-Alier et al., 2013, 2014). For instance, the notion coined by the activist groups contesting megaprojects of ‘unnecessary and imposed’ can be considered as a product of these activist led processes of knowledge production that can subsequently inform critical theoretical fields (Martínez-Alier, 2015).

In conclusion, this section has noted the relevance of activist-knowledge for scholar work while at the same time constituting a concept that underlines the legitimacy of rationales and logics challenging the ones underpinning public policies or mainstream views in specific subjects. The consideration of this type of knowledge contributes to the counterbalancing of power inequalities in terms of the attention and credit given to each type by prominent social actors. In the context of this study, activist knowledge provides the necessary insights to partially reconstruct the case studies and in particular, it constitutes a valid source of understanding and experience of the measures and techniques of government employed to protect the megaproject plans –in response to activist opposition but also taking into account how other handicaps were addressed. For that the researcher shall take into account the views of different segments of the oppositional movements considering the different categories of individuals involved in it (e.g. university, trade-union, grass-roots activism, environmental). In short, accounting for activist knowledge and experience has the potential to incorporate the more marginalised voices in relation to the contention around the phenomenon of megaprojects. This shall facilitate the unveiling of masked processes and events occurring as a result of the implementation procedures and/or the contentious dynamics. In other words, as in the tradition of critical social research, this may involve “revealing underlying social relations and showing how structural and ideological forms bear on them” (Harvey, 1990: 20).

However this has the potential risk of generating bias or directly reproducing activist views. In this respect, it shall be argued that the focus rests upon illuminating why megaprojects plans do not collapse –that is identifying explanatory structures and agency of these facts– as it has happened in other similar situations (see section 2.3); it is not about judging the validity of the for and against stances with respect to the megaproject plans. Additionally, the research does not neglect official narratives, as they constitute insightful material of how megaproject plans are promoted and also defended from activist campaigns.

Now that the research approach has been clarified, the following section turns to the outlining of the research design of the thesis.

4.3. Research Design

The research design is organised around the binary comparison of two case studies of HSR developments. This section details how the comparative approach is framed as

well as the criteria underpinning the case study selection. The full context for both case studies is examined in the next chapter. The section also describes the qualitative data collection methods most appropriate to capture the experiences and narratives of the parties involved. As Creswell (2007) remarks, researchers using qualitative methods as well as case study research should draw on multiple forms of data instead of relying on a single data source. In this manner, the use of multiple data collection methods (interviews, observations and documents) should enable a robust reconstruction of the selected case studies.

As an introductory note to the comparative approach and the case study selection, various elements can be brought to the fore. The two selected cases are located in two different countries –Italy and Spain. Despite being located in different national contexts, both cases share similar contextual aspects: they are industrial/post-industrial regions within countries of the European periphery. Besides, they are in the same northern location in this periphery; while also share previous situations of similar socio-environmental conflicts. In addition, both case studies share a similar timeline of events: design and planning during the 1990s; a first go-ahead was authorised in the mid-2000s while slow progress followed this authorisation. Furthermore, neither case will see the infrastructure coming into functioning in the near future. The forthcoming subsection now turns to the underpinnings of the comparative strategy.

4.3.1. The comparative method and the case-oriented strategy

The purpose of this subsection is to indicate the essentials of the comparative strategy, while also indicating the criteria for the case study selection. Additionally, notes on the contextual details surrounding the selected case studies are included, so the latter is not neglected while carrying out research on urban governance (Sidney, 2010). These considerations will be further elaborated upon in chapters 5 and 6.

In order to produce data that can potentially shed light on the processes under research, a comparative case study methodology was adopted. In this sense, the activist produced documents suggest that similar patterns can be identified in multiple cases of contestation over megaproject developments (such as the Charter of Hendaye and other declarations issued by the UIMP network). In the same manner, in chapter 2, it has been noted how megaproject procurement processes tend to reproduce similar flaws. Aiming to build upon this body of knowledge, this research project investigates the resilience of megaproject plans (that is, being able to maintain these plans in the long

term despite handicaps in terms of social opposition, funding problems and project modifications). In light of the intention of explaining this resilient element, which shall operate as a point of reference, a comparative approach is adopted (Pennings et al., 2006).

This strategy is considered appropriate when dealing with a small sample of cases. Even if the small sample could be considered as a handicap, it appears as a legitimate practice in political science on the basis that it is utilised to approach relatively infrequent phenomena (Collier, 1993). Besides, it can be argued that some (political) phenomena are better comprehended through in-depth examination rather than superficial statistical analysis (Collier, 1993; Lijphart, 1971). In this regard, the comparative method allows for partial generalisation, which can “be useful as a first step, and may be followed up by replications in different settings” (Lijphart, 1975: 172). Such replication seems feasible, as further examples of contested megaprojects could be employed to verify or refute the concluding remarks of this study.

It follows that the selected cases are single examples of a social unit in question corresponding to the particular phenomenon under study. This methodological approach should enable the researcher to develop systematic knowledge that transcends mere description and aims at theory guidance (Pennings et al., 2006). Yet it shall be re-emphasised that when using a small number of cases, the potential for generalisation is limited due to the specificities of the contexts to which the selected case studies belong (Goodrick, 2014). On the other hand, further concerns on the comparative strategy suggest caution in not making the comparative structure too rigid and not missing contextual insight (Bryman, 2012).

Furthermore, noting the strengths of comparative research highlighted by May (2001), the researcher considers two beneficial aspects of the approach as particularly relevant for the object of study: the development of theoretical guiding insights concerning urban governance, including the appropriateness of using the urban coalition theories in the context of megaproject developments (improvement in theoretical development); and on a more empirical ground, shed light on the processes and mechanisms that consolidate megaproject plans in terms of techniques of government, discourses and performative measures (suggest a shift in analytical focus²⁴).

²⁴ While some of the literature approaches the phenomenon of megaprojects through technical-managerial perspectives, this research emphasises on their politico-economic dimensions.

To do so, the research design turns to MDSD (Most Different Systems Design) given that the resilience of megaproject plans is assumed as a fixed variable, with no variation (Gerring, 2001). Then the most relevant outcomes derive from the identification of shared patterns despite differentiated contexts or intrinsic characteristics. In this regard employing this approach shall facilitate to determine whether similar mechanisms explain the process of consolidating megaproject plans (resilience) in different places and politico-institutional landscapes. This chimes with the approach used by McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001) when employing binary comparisons of most-different countries to find out whether a set of changes can be explained by resembling means and structures.

As the aim is to understand complex units, the comparison will be conducted using a case-oriented strategy (della Porta, 2008; della Porta and Piazza, 2008); that is, a strategy aimed at obtaining thick knowledge or description of the selected cases. The latter matches with the already stated limited capacity of generalising given that it is not centred on a series of variables (della Porta, 2008). One of the strengths of case study strategy is to incorporate multiple sources (and therefore perspectives), facilitating a better grasp of the detail and complexity of the phenomenon under study. Thus, when analysing the data, it must be borne in mind that the selected case studies are context dependent and therefore the learned elements cannot be generalised in a probabilistic sense. Nonetheless, through the logic of reasoning by analogy these can be applied to situations that are believed to reproduce similar conditions of the ones observed in the selected case studies.

Opting for a case-oriented strategy involves reconstructing each case through a process of case study research considered appropriate insofar as the object of study is bounded by space and time and can be examined as a single unit. In addition, as Lijphart (1971) notes, there is an intrinsic connection between the case study method and the comparative method. Thus, this methodological process should enable the researcher to explore and conduct intensive analysis and descriptions of the selected phenomenon (Hancock and Algozzine 2006). In addition, the object of study and the way this is set out do match with the three conditions suggested by Yin (2014) as for when to use a case study design: the focus of the inquiry is to answer “why” and “how” questions; there is no control over the events studied; and it focuses on contemporary events. More specifically, the type of case study research carried out in this thesis belongs to

the category of “instrumental” (Baxter and Jack, 2008) in the sense that beyond shedding light over the politics of contested megaprojects it seeks to refine theory studying this phenomenon and also contribute with insights on the field of urban governance.

The following subsection now turns to explain the case study selection and provide an account of various highlights of the selected case studies.

Case studies selection

Case study selection was informed by a number of features that conform to the key elements included in the main research question. On one hand, contentious politics (includes the use of disruptive techniques that hampers the normal functioning of the implementation process) around the implementation of megaproject developments were identified. In this respect, social opposition is the main element of the disruptive component but may they exist, research shall account for other contingent setbacks that further hamper the normal progress of the implementation works. On the other hand, the resilient element is embodied by two features: (i) a long span of the implementation and delivery process alongside with the contentious dynamics (that is, over 10 years); and (ii) the decision of going ahead with the project is maintained in spite of the on-going multi-faceted contestation.

It is believed that the extant contentious dynamics of the case studies shall allow the researcher to identify governance techniques and power mechanisms in its multi-faceted forms from a vantage point unlike with cases where contestation is absent. This includes both naturalised practices and more extraordinary arrangements, to consolidate megaproject plans in general, but also to address opposition and resistance in particular. On the other hand, the fact that the implementation and delivery process spans over time facilitates the potential identification of practices and tactics.

A first step on the narrowing of the selection follows from the previous knowledge on the phenomenon given the work carried out within the context of the EJOLT research project. More specifically, the researcher did desktop work mapping out disputes around infrastructure and other megaproject building in Europe and also attended two meetings of the UIMP international network. The geographical scope of research was mostly focused on Western Europe. As a result of this, apart from acquiring knowledge on the existing cases in this geographical area, the researcher also

established relations with potential gatekeepers. All in all, these elements provided the departing platform for the case study selection process.

Following the criteria above stated, the potential case studies to investigate were four (a part from the two HSR chosen, the *Grand Ouest* airport in France and the Stuttgart 21 station in Germany). The final decision on the selection, following the “most-different” strategy, was based on considering two cases with oppositional movements of distinctive nature as well as diverging institutional approaches adopted by the promoting authorities. This requires further explanation. In terms of the diverging nature of the movements, in the Basque Y, the opposition consisted of a broad coalition of organisations where the grass-roots component was not dominant, while in the other case, (NLTL) the opposition developed a mass movement with significant participation of local communities keeping the distance with big organisations. This was probably facilitated by the geographic/territorial component, as in the NLTL was mostly focused in one alpine valley whereas in the case on the Basque Y it lacked this particular focal point. In terms of institutional response, while in Italy authorities sought to incorporate new mechanisms within the process and several changes were introduced in Spain/Basque Country there was little consideration for the oppositions’ demands. Accordingly, it is considered that both cases fit into the framework of “most-different” strategy.

The two case studies of contention over a transport megaproject development (high speed railway, HSR henceforth) that have been selected are located in figure 4.1. and briefly described according to the aforementioned aspects as follows:

A. The Lyon-Turin new HSR connection (normally referred to with the acronym NLTL). It is to be noted that as in its original conception the term HSR is maintained, though its proponents now contend that it is not appropriate to define it as HSR since its expected speed will be below 250 km/h (Foietta and Rocca, 2013). It belongs to one of the priority infrastructure projects of the EU (Trans-European Networks of Transport, TEN-T henceforth) and has encountered significant opposition since the early 1990s in an alpine area, the Susa Valley (Piedmont, Italy). Proponents of the project include all institutional levels; the local, EU institutions, regional and province authorities, the Italian and French Railway companies along with less obvious supporters such as construction and engineering firms and the majority of national mass media (Greyl et al. 2013;

Greyl et al. 2012). In contrast, the opposition –the "No TAV" movement– is comprised of local municipalities, citizens' committees, leftist political parties, environmental associations, militant unions and social squatted centres (della Porta and Piazza 2008) along with a diverse range of individuals coming from different backgrounds (Greyl et al. 2013). Along the more than two decades that the dispute has lasted, serious episodes of confrontation on the ground have occurred having national and even international resonance. Two of them deserve particular mention: one in 2005, popularly known as the "Battle of Seghino" when a first attempt to start preliminary works was aborted by protestors resulting in a reconsideration of the project and the reframing of the approach towards local actors (Armano and Pittavino, 2013; Marincioni and Appiotti, 2009; Trocchia, 2009); the second one occurred in 2011 and became known as the "Free Republic of *la Maddalena*" when the movement turned the site located for the initial exploratory works in to a 'no go' area. This episode ended in a violent confrontation with the state security forces and the final eviction of the site prompting the militarisation of the area to avoid any attempts of comeback from the activists (Ariemma and Burnside-Lawry, 2014; Bangau, 2013; Bartolo, 2012, 2013). From this incident onwards, exploratory and tunneling works have been progressing under heavy security control measures.

B. The New Railway Network for the Basque Country (Spain) a HSR project also known as the 'Basque Y' due to its shape. Its main goal is to connect the three provincial capitals of the Autonomous Community of the Basque Country thus reducing the commuting times and subsequently integrating the area with connections beyond the French Border and the rest of Spain (Basque Government, 2006, 2012). The project involves the construction of 194 km of railway, which due to the irregular geography of the Basque Country, will be mostly using tunnels (60%) with another 10% using viaducts. The alignment of actors is similar to the previous case: public institutions with the exception of some local municipalities along with other actors such as powerful firms, the vast majority of media and main political parties on one side confronted by leftist political parties, the trade unions that can be ascribed to a nationalist and radical tradition, and a wide range of social and environmental organisations on the other (Barcena and Larrinaga, 2009). Construction works started in 2006 and were soon followed by a mobilising process that tried to target some of the work-sites through direct action.

As the progress of the works seemed not to be affected and activists were being targeted by police forces and the justice system, 2009 saw a decline in the confrontational actions. At the same time the political dynamics involving a violent conflict in the Basque Country intersected with the dispute over the HSR project. The armed group ETA carried out a total of five actions against the project, the most significant one being the assassination of the CEO of a construction company. At present, the level of organisation against the project has declined. Nevertheless, a series of initiatives tried to maintain the campaign, normally organised around one national mobilising event per year (such as a rally or a march) and the continuing production and diffusion of counter-knowledge to emphasise that the arguments to support the opposition to the project have not changed (see for instance, Antiguedad et al., 2016).



Figure 4.1. Location of the selected case studies. Own elaboration.

In conclusion, the two case studies apart from presenting similar timeline trajectories and construction statuses, respond to two key characteristics: firstly, the relevance of the opposition; secondly, the resilience of the plans in spite of the setbacks and especially the disruption caused by the opposition. On the other hand, the analytical comparison through the MDSD approach is justified on the basis of diverging nature of opposition movements and also the differentiated approaches adopted by the authorities. In addition, it is important to note that they are inserted in different national contexts which derive in diverging institutional architectures.

Now that the research strategy has been introduced, the subsections that follow examine the data collection methods employed by the researcher.

4.3.2. Documentary methods

A wide range of documentary sources informed the research study. Given the long span of the procurement processes of the two cases and the duration of the contentious dynamics, a significant amount of materials have been produced. In order to reconstruct the case studies and document the situations with implications for the governance project and the wider megaproject politics, it is considered an indispensable type of source for number of reasons as explained in the subsequent paragraphs.

Document materials, although not directly produced for the purpose of social research can provide indirect information about the social world of the actors that produced them (Payne and Payne, 2004) with the advantage that it consists of an unobtrusive method which can provide a “new and unfiltered perspective on the field and its processes” enabling also to go “beyond the perspectives of members in the field” (Flick, 2009: 261). They can also facilitate the production of authoritative studies insofar as the documents utilised are properly contextualised (such as situation, intentions of the author and cultural values) and taken with enough caution so they are not considered direct evidence and accurate portrayals of the social world under research (Atkinson and Coffey, 2004; Burnham et al., 2008).

Since a vast majority of documents belong to the public domain, they constitute a form of data which is reasonably easy to access, mainly through the different websites of interest (opposition groups, public institutions and agencies, media). Nonetheless, access to promoters and developers’ documentation might entail greater complexity. In this case the researcher accessed them through the specific procedures considered in the applicable regulatory laws²⁵ and also followed media and public appearances of individuals representing the contractors, who did not accept the invitation to participate in the study.

Due to their renowned character, specific literature exists for both case studies. This provides detail of several aspects of interest for the contentious dynamics: decision-making; media analysis; infrastructure policy documents; economic and CBA reports

²⁵ Italy: Legislative Decree N°.33 of March 14, 2013; Spain: Act 19 2013 on transparency access to public information and good governance.

on the projects; social and environmental impacts and the nature and characteristics of the social movements engaging in opposition. Such documents, alongside the governmental and promoters' publications on the projects (along with articles and broader policy documents), were used for a reconstruction of the case studies, while bearing in mind the implications of the conflicting narratives coming into play.

The literature on political economy, infrastructure policies and megaprojects in the EU and in particular in Italy and Spain also constituted a source for a full comprehension of the political and socio-economic context in which the studied phenomenon is embedded and therefore were utilised to inform the background to the study, in particular for chapters 5 and 6.

Participants were also asked of relevant documents that they were aware of or had produced by themselves or their organisations. This resulted in access to further publications but also unpublished documents. The typologies of documents corresponding to primary, secondary and tertiary sources that were used are listed in table 4.1. As a whole, they constituted a valuable tool to triangulate the interviewees' responses.

Table 4.1.: Types of documents that were considered for the documentary analysis.

Megaproject promoters' documents	Anti-megaproject coalition documents	Other
Policy documents and statements	Campaign materials	Inquiries/hearings
Consultation papers	Website texts	Public account reports
Newspaper and magazine articles	Communication statements/ press releases	Court rulings
Political speeches	Video recordings	
Governmental and pro-megaproject publications	Manifestos	
Project management documents	Charters	
Conference presentations	Reports	
Communication statements/ press releases	Newspaper and magazine articles	
	Other activist publications	
Memoirs		

4.3.3. Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were used as the core research method of this study, because, they allow to formulate non-fixed questions while it is possible to obtain an in-depth account of particular topics, especially when researching the social world (Payne and Payne, 2004). This facilitates a reconstruction of the case studies based on

the participants' knowledge and experience whereby the interviewer can establish the focus of inquiry.

As the research engages with a specific set of contingent of actors, a mix of purposive and snowball sampling was utilised to recruit relevant individuals. As an initial first step, relevant organisations, associations and institutions involved in the contentious dynamics were mapped out and contacts were made through previous research and by attending relevant events involving opposition campaigners.

Via semi-structured interviews, the respondent can be led from a general first question to more specific ones (Payne and Payne, 2004) that should enable a rapport to be created with the interviewee (Leech, 2002). While keeping a minimum of structure to avoid the conversation drifting away from the subjects of interest, space was allowed for interviewees to lead the conversation to issues relevant to their experience. Thus, an interview guide (see Appendix 1) was designed with slight modifications considering participants' background or their specific area of knowledge (grassroots activism, institutional matters, individual-specific experiences, megaproject discourse and management). In order to guarantee the reliability of participants' contributions, triangulation of data sources was employed (Goodrick, 2014); that is, participants' statements were verified by another participant response or a non-directly related documentary source or through the observations that were conducted.

The semi-structured interviews with representatives of both confronted parties should help answer the research questions to the extent that they will provide "detail, depth and an insider's perspective" (Leech, 2002: 665), crucial aspects in order to identify informal mechanisms and masked processes, not considered within the official narratives of these type of phenomena. On the other hand, they will also provide evidence on the framings assumed by each of the stakeholders as well as accounts on the individual's direct experience on the issue and their interpretation of reality (Blee and Taylor, 2002). Building on these accounts, the researcher will attempt to grasp the meaning attributed to the processes undergone in connection to the planning, design and implementation of the opposed megaproject. Furthermore, during the research process, the researcher has to assume some degree of flexibility with regard to the original research design by accepting new streams of inquiry, putting aside unproductive areas and fixing theoretical misrepresentations (Creswell, 2007).

A total of 44 interviews were conducted: 20 for case A and 24 for case B. A total of 42 were audiotaped and transcribed. In regards to the remaining two interviews, written notes were taken at the first one, while the second involved submitting a series of written questions as the participants did not want to be audiotaped or attend a one-to-one interview. The majority of interviews were one-to-one, with the exception of three occasions when the selected participants brought other participants, without prior notice. Interviews were conducted predominantly in Spanish and Italian but in two exceptional occasions, the languages used were English and Catalan for the comfort of the participant. Transcriptions were made in the original language of the interview and only the selected transcripts of the non-English interviews were translated into English. A qualified Italian-English translator revised translations from Italian to English. Each interview cited indicates also the stance taken by the interviewee (P for pro and A for anti, see table 4.2.) in an exercise of clarity as well as acknowledging the gap between the existing cosmovisions among the confronted parties.

Table 4.2. Characterisation of the interviewees that participated in the study. Own elaboration.

Basque Y		NLTL	
Participant	Code	Participant	Code
Activist (active)	IBA1	Scholar	IAA1
Activist - NGO (active)	IBA2	Activist	IAA2
Scholar - activist	IBA3	Activist - Social centre	IAA3
Scholar	IBA4	Activist - NGO	IAA4
Scholar	IBA5	Scholar	IAA5
Activist (inactive)	IBA6	Public Official	IAP1
Trade union member (LAB)	IBA7	Activist - Catholic group	IAA6
Local representative	IBA8	Local representative	IAA7
MP (Basque Parliament), EH Bildu	IBA9	Public Official	IAP2
Scholar	IBA10	Activist	IAA8
Public official (BG)	IBP1	Regional councillor - PD	IAP3
MP (Basque Parliament), PNV	IBP2	Local representative	IAA9
Trade union member (ELA)	IBA11	Activist	IAA10
Activist (inactive)	IBA12	Activist - NGO	IAA11
NGO officer	IBP3	Activist	IAA12
Political party delegate (IU-EA)	IBA13	Local representative	IAP4
Activist- pensioner (inactive)	IBA14	Regional councillor - M5S	IAA13
Civil Servant (ETS)	IBP4	Activist	IAA14
Trade union member (ENHE)	IBA15	Pro-megaproject activist	IAP5
Activist (active)	IBA16	Civil servant	IAP6
Journalist	IBA17		
Local representative	IBP5		
Trade union member (UGT)	IBP6		

Table 4.2 shows how the sample included public officials, elected representatives, members of opposition groups and civil society organisations (trade unions, environmental associations and other NGOs), scholars, politicians and a journalist. Attempts to recruit individuals working for construction and engineering companies were made via email and phone; in the majority of cases the researcher received no reply while the few replies obtained declined the invitation²⁶. Some of the roles overlapped; for instance, scholars participating in counter-knowledge production were also active members of the opposition grass-roots groups. This participant selection criterion follows a key informant approach given the need to reconstruct a specific phenomenon: the megaproject governance processes. In this sense, key informants are believed to be in the possession of valuable experience and knowledge given their special position or status (Lecompte and Preissle 1993) in regard to the object of study. A trade-off when using key informants is to be aware of their potential bias and selectiveness (Patton, 2002).

The interviews essentially revolved around personal or collective –as groups or organisations– experiences in the contentious dynamics and understandings of these dynamics and the contested project. Interviews lasted between twenty and one hundred and fifty minutes.

4.3.4. Participant observation

Despite this research not being of an ethnographic nature, spending time in Italy and Spain gave the researcher the possibility to attend events and witness situations connected to the phenomenon under investigation. This data collection method was incorporated because it is understood that observing the phenomenon object of study in its natural setting provides another angle for the appreciation of the contentious dynamics (Angrosino, 2005). This includes the collective component of the opposition groups, the meanings and understandings they convey in their actions and behaviour, as well as the response obtained by the authorities and the larger citizenry.

As Uldam and Mccurdy (2013: 942) point out, when focusing on issues such as “protest tactics, media strategies, articulations of visions, and collective identity

²⁶ It is the understanding of the researcher that given the number of corruption scandals linked to public works appeared in the recent years (especially in Spain) and the contentious nature of the cases made these potential participants reluctant to be involved.

formation”, participant observation can be helpful in in apprehending its relation with aspects such as “underlying assumptions, motivations and processes of social movements”. In terms of procedure, Spradley (1980) suggests that for a researcher undertaking observation for short periods of time –e.g. a protest event – it appears reasonable to keep a low profile. Hence, the researcher communicated to a small number of activists known and trusted by him (the researcher) about the observations that were being carried out and recorded in field notes. One remarkable limitation on the observation process is embodied by the fact that the researcher will be targeting not regular but sporadic events, meaning that observation was not conducted neither regularly nor during a prolonged period of time. This resulted in a role akin to what is referred as “observer as participant” (May, 2001) whereby the role of the observer is mostly passive even if some interaction with subjects occurs.

The events that the researcher attended do not all fit in the category of protest events, but they were all organised by the opposition groups. Prior connection of the researcher with these types of protest groups should not necessarily be taken as a source of bias. Instead, it can be seen as part of the researcher’s “cultural equipment” that will be “used reflexively to understand social action in context” (May, 2001: 155). Table 4.3 lists the events/situations attended and observed by the researcher and specifies the connection with the selected case studies.

Table 4.3. Outline of the events situations in which the researcher conducted participant observation.

Event/ situation	Case study related to	Date
2015 Forum against Mega-Projects organised by the network against UIMP	A and B	July 2015
People’s Permanent Tribunal session: “Fundamental Rights, Participation, of Local Communities and Mega projects. From the Lyon-Turin High-Speed Rail to the global reality”	Fundamentally A, but also references to B	November 2015
Street performance denouncing megaproject negative impacts	B	December 2015
3-day Bicycle march against HSR named “Txirrinka”	B	May 2016
2016 Forum against Mega-Projects network against UIMP	A and B	July 2016
Activist book launch	A	October 2016
No TAV coordination meeting	A	October 2016
Session at the European Parliament promoted by the network against UIMP	A	October 2016
Informative meeting for landholders potentially affected by expropriation	A	November 2016
Protest at the construction site	A	November 2016

Tour around several locations in the Susa valley	A	November 2016
Documentary screening on the impunity of the security forces in their aggressions against protestors	A	November 2016
Court session	A	November 2016
Rally at the court to protest for the court sentence following the “Maxi Processo”	A	November 2016

From the attended events, special mention must be given to the session of the People’s Permanent Tribunal from which a total of 18 participant contributions – belonging to the opposing agents– were audiotaped and transcribed aside from the field notes taken in the event. The data included from this event is referred with a W for witness followed by the corresponding initials in terms of case study (A) and stance (A for anti-megaproject stance; see Appendix 2). As the table indicates, the rest of the events/situations included several local and international meetings, marches, a street performance, a book launch, a guided tour for visitors, a session in the European Parliament, a documentary screening and several protest rallies.

During the events and situations extensive field notes were taken and once typed, reflective comments were added. The former contain recorded impressions and quotes, themes to relate with the research questions, contacts and elements to be further interrogated. As a complementary element for description and analysis, these notes, together with the ones taken before and after the interviews, have been utilised in the empirical chapters.

As the data collection methods have been presented, the next section focuses on the analytical procedure of the research process.

4.4. Analysis of findings

Qualitative research entails a process of description, analysis and interpretation of the empirical data collected. This does not happen in independent stages but instead occurs through an iterative process that involves moving back and forth in the different stages of the empirical analysis, especially when coding the data (Rossman and Rallis, 2003). The qualitative data gathered was analysed using thematic analysis. This type of approach is based on the identification of emerging themes in the data to subsequently turn them into analytical categories (Fereday and Muir-Cochrane, 2006). Although sometimes identified as a method lacking recognition (Vaismoradi et al., 2013), Braun and Clarke (2006) state its validity as a singular analytical approach.

The objective of the analytical process is to grasp participants' experiences and interpretations of organisation of megaproject developments in the context of opposition campaigns as well as considerations on the conflict dynamics. Consistent with thematic analysis, the process was conducted under an inductive approach whereby the coding themes emerge from the data gathered and through a gradual process are connected with the conceptual framework previously described (Curtis and Curtis, 2011). After completing the interview transcripts, and to enable initial familiarisation with the data and facilitate the process of theme identification, a memo was written for each interview.

Table 4.4 describes the different phases of the thematic analysis. It is mainly based on Braun and Clarke (2006) but also draws on Aronson (1995) and Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006).

Table 4.4. Description of the phases organising thematic analysis.

Phase	Description
1. Data collection and familiarisation	This phase consists of writing short memos for each interview transcript and listing identified patterns, using quotes or paraphrasing the content.
2. Code-generation	Initial codes will be generated directly from the data encompassing everything set in a systematic fashion. This phase implies associating codes with chunks of data.
3. Theme-identification	From the generated codes emerging themes should be identified with several codes collating into one potential theme.
4. Theme review and corroboration	By re-examining both the coded data and complete data set, the suitability of the themes generated is assessed, and if appropriate, modified. The make-up of thematic maps can facilitate the process.
5. Theme definition and refinement	This phase should help confirming the robustness of the selected themes that is, the essence of each one and how they fit into the whole narrative or 'story' that the thesis is telling.
6. Report write-up	The final phase involves telling the story of the data through the selection of extracts that represent the essence of the identified themes in conjunction with a narrative that goes beyond data description and engages in meaningful arguments with regard the research questions.

Given the amount of data collected, the researcher utilised Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software (CAQDAS) to facilitate organisation of data and analysis. NVivo 10 software was utilised as it can help the researcher in various ways (manage data, manage ideas, query data, visualise data and report from the data; Bazeley and Jackson 2013). Nonetheless, being aware of the limitations of using analysis software (e.g. linking the themes as a whole; Welsh 2002) it is suggested not to neglect manual work and try to pin down themes by reading the collected material

repeated times, for which the memos play an essential role (see example of codebook in Appendix 5).

Following the outline of the analytical procedure, the following section turns to examine the various ethical issues that the researcher has to take into account during the research process.

4.5. Ethical issues

Ethical considerations are a central issue in the design of research projects involving human beings as it ensures integrity and good conduct. They are required in order to protect, not only the research subjects, but also the researchers and the University. In this sense, the researcher obtained ethical approval from the Research Governance and Ethics Committee in Ulster University prior to the start of the fieldwork. Procedures and guidelines outlined by the mentioned Committee were adhered to at all times (approval document included in Appendix 3).

The selection of participants was designed on the basis of their involvement in organisations or campaigns, their roles in specific public bodies or their knowledge of the subject. No vulnerable participants were included. Apart from this, the main ethical issues when conducting research with human subjects include informed consent, confidentiality and risk of harm, for both participants and the researcher (Curtis and Curtis, 2011; Punch, 1998).

From the outset, when participants agreed to participate, they were made aware of their rights (including withdrawal from participation) through the information sheet provided by the researcher (see Appendix 4). This document, following guidance from the British Sociological Association (2002), included an accurate general explanation – in meaningful vocabulary for the participants – of the subject and the purpose of the research, the person undertaking it, the source of the funding and the dissemination plan and perhaps most importantly the risks associated with the research (i.e. disclosure of sensitive information with regard to activities that may have involved a breach of the law). To address the latter, participants were notified before taking part in the interview that this kind of disclosure may need to be made in accordance with the researcher's obligations.

In order to obtain informed consent, participants were provided with a letter of consent to sign before they engaged in the research. An oral explanation was also given before

the consent letter was signed. Both the letter of consent and the information sheet were written in one of the official languages of the country where the interviews were taking place, that is, Italian and/or Spanish.

Furthermore, as pointed out by Hesse-Biber and Leavy (2011), the letter should also include a clarification on how confidentiality (that is, their names cannot be used in written materials or discussions pertaining to the research project) will be ensured to the participant. This will be done by assigning the participant an ID number and by using only a functional or occupational category using a broad descriptive term (e.g. member of a local public body) and in addition, by breaking any link that may facilitate the identification of the individuals through the data (British Sociological Association 2002).

Interviews took place mostly in public places, offices or bars. However, on several occasions participants requested that the researcher visit them at their home place which was accepted by the researcher. In terms of risks for the researcher this was considered minimal on these occasions. Nonetheless, when undertaking participant observation, risk was considered slightly higher to the extent that activists could engage in contentious activity while participating in protests. The researcher stayed safe at all times, keeping a security distance from the frontlines of protests.

A final consideration involved data security. Under the terms of the Data Protection Act (1998), all data will be securely stored and kept free from disclosure. Two issues are significant in this regard. Firstly, raw data will be kept in a secure locked cabinet on premises at the Ulster University which is only accessible by the researcher. Secondly, processed data will be stored on the computer system provided by the Ulster University on a password protected computer with a hard copy saved to the Cloud and on a password protected pen drive. The collected data will be destroyed after the thesis is completed in accordance with the University regulations.

4.6. Summary

The purpose of this chapter has been to present the research design configuration that has been constructed to address the subject of megaproject governance in contexts marked by opposition. It has outlined the different components of the design, from the main objectives and research questions to the strategy and the data collection methods. The chapter has highlighted how the research design of this study is constructed on the basis of a comparative case-oriented research technique holding a qualitative approach.

As suggested by the literature on qualitative research, different methods will be employed (document analysis and semi-structured interviews primarily but also observations) to collect the data while the findings were examined using the thematic analysis technique. The research findings were arrived at inductively in a process informed by the theoretical frameworks presented in chapter 3. Having presented the research methodology and design, the next chapter turns to explore the context of the two selected case studies.

CHAPTER 5. CASE STUDIES' CONTEXTUALISATION

This chapter has a two-fold purpose. On the one hand provide a thorough understanding of the institutional, political and socioeconomic context in which the studied megaproject developments are embedded. On the other, provide a brief account on the trajectory of the megaproject development processes and their rationales. This, alongside with the mapping out of the relevant actors and the description of the contentious dynamics included in the next chapter, should advance a solid ground for the understanding of the forthcoming empirical analysis.

The approach to the case studies presented here derives from an assumption of consolidated multilevel governance in contemporary Western Europe that applies to several areas including the one of urban politics (Brenner, 2004). Such a type of governance came into being after the abandonment of Fordist-Keynesian capitalism and the crystallisation of a form of capitalism that privileges globalisation, neoliberalisation and urbanisation (Brenner, 1998; Brenner and Schmid, 2012; Brenner and Theodore, 2010; Leitner et al., 2007), under the influence of supranational entities such as the EU (Brenner, 2004; Miller, 2007; van Apeldoorn, 2014). In fact, the latter plays a role in the governance process of the analysed megaprojects.

To begin with, the chapter will examine the EU overarching policy context, with its correspondent initiatives, that constitute a framework for the member states. This involves analysing the TEN-T scheme, an EU initiative of spatial planning –mainly through infrastructure development– that promises the significant provisions of funding for member states as long as they develop plans for the implementation of such scheme. Further, sections two and three will explore the specific institutional and politico-economic contexts of the countries and regions where the selected megaprojects belong. This should contribute to grasp the impact of politico-economic dynamics in shaping or influencing the decision-making processes behind megaproject developments.

The fourth section describes the coming into being of the megaproject developments and how its procurement process was conducted. It also examines the official narratives put forward by the promoters alongside the relevant regulations. The chapter ends with a summary of the content of the three sections. All in all, it attempts to put forward a comprehensive contextualisation of the selected case studies.

5.1. Supranational context. The TEN-T initiative

As countries in possession of EU membership, Italy and Spain are subject to the various laws and rules that apply to member states. For the purposes of understanding the context of the two selected case studies, it is crucial to outline the framework established by the EU because both infrastructure projects fall into and benefit from a key EU transport policy initiative: the Trans-European Networks of Transport (henceforth TEN-T). It was adopted by the EU Parliament and Council in 1996²⁷ after a legal basis had been incorporated in the Maastricht Treaty (1992). While the fundamental legal underpinnings of the framework are outlined in Table 5.1, the next paragraphs are dedicated to exploring its process of establishment followed by the examination of basic critiques that have been made.

Table 5.1. Main features that underpin the TEN-T framework from the legal and policy perspective. Own elaboration.

Year	Policy document/Legislative object	Highlights/ implications
1992	Maastricht Treaty	Provides legal basis on commitment to establish "Trans-European networks in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructures" (article 129b)
1993	White Paper <i>Growth, Competitiveness, Employment: The Challenges and Ways Forward into the 21st Century</i>	Provides discursive support for the TEN-T initiative; consolidate the idea of a European network.
1995	Regulation 2236/95/EC (amended by Regulation 1655/99/EC)	Establishes "general rules for the granting of Community financial aid in the field of trans-European networks"
1996	Decision No 1692/96/EC (amended by Decision No 884/2004/EC)	Establishes "guidelines for the development of the trans-European transport network"
2004	Decision No 884/2004/EC	Priority projects are declared of European interest (Annex III lists 30 priority projects). Basque Y belongs to number 3 and NLTL to number 6.
2007	Regulation (EC) No 680/2007	Further regulations on financial aid.
2010	Lisbon Treaty	Re-states the commitment "to the establishment and development of trans-European networks in the areas of transport, telecommunications and energy infrastructures" (article 170)
2013	Regulations (EU) No 1315/2013 and No 1316/2013 on TEN-T and Connecting Europe Facility	Include guidelines for the development of TEN-T and rules for granting EU financial support to Priority Projects (including maximum of EU contribution)

The essence of this transport policy initiative derives from the logics of promoting and consolidating a common European market. As Ross (1998: 182) puts it, "it represents

²⁷ Decision No 1692/96/EC.

an effort to synthesise diverse EU goals”: territorial cohesion; making compatible economic growth and environmental protection; and safety and connectivity improvement –especially east-west (European Commission, 2013; Rosales and Vassallo, 2012). Discursively, it consolidated and benefited from the content of key works such as the European Commission White Paper *Growth, Competitiveness, Employment: The Challenges and Ways Forward into the 21st Century* which states: “the trans-European networks are an essential element for the competitiveness of the European economy and the smooth functioning of the single market” (Commission of the European Communities, 1993: 32).

After its adoption in 1996, the first guidelines were published enabling a series of instruments (e.g. financial mechanisms through budget EU lines) and specific schemes such as the recent “Connecting Europe Facility” (Rosales and Vassallo, 2012). As a program it started being project-oriented once the relevant authorities²⁸ came up with a list of priority projects, a total of fourteen initially, including the corridor where the NLTL is inserted (Ross, 1998). It came out under the influence of the lobby group European Roundtable of Industrialists²⁹ (Peters, 2003; van Apeldoorn, 2002). The list was then analysed at the Essen European Council summit (1994) followed by the 1996 disposition approval earlier noted.

In the process of implementation, the involvement of member states was critical insofar they had the power to approve the guidelines issued by the European Commission. It is worth mentioning that the latter included references to the need for public-private collaboration with regard to financial matters: “involvement of private capital funding trans-European networks should be increased and the partnership between the public and private sectors developed” (Council of the EU, 1995: 1). One of the instruments proposed to promote it were the PPPs while also underlining that

²⁸ An expert advisory panel entrusted by the EC identified and prioritised separate projects. The resulting list was approved by the heads of state and government (Ross, 1998).

²⁹ The European Round Table of Industrialists (ERT) has been defined as the “premier policy-planning body of the European transnational capitalist class”. It was established in 1983 and it is nowadays formed by “45 CEOs and chairmen of the boards of Europe’s largest Multi-National Corporations from across all major industrial sectors”. It seems that it has had and still has a major influence at European level since it “has played a key role in mobilizing European corporate capital politically in order to construct a common strategy”. Also, “it has often played an agenda-setting role for the institutions of the EU, as well as generally contributed to developing the key ideas behind European integration (such as regarding the internal market), and inserting them into the EU’s policy discourse” (van Apeldoorn, 2014: 190-191). For specific lobbying by the group see for example, Peters (2003).

EU funding should be used as ‘seed funding’ so it could potentially foster investment from other instances (national and regional authorities and private investors; Ross, 1998). In parallel, additional projects were studied to the extent that the funding estimation reached *ecu* 400 bn (Ross, 1998). Having noted that, the political importance of this policy shall be underlined. In this sense, with the mentioned amount of funds –mostly public– at stake, as Hanson (2000) states, politics cannot be dissociated from the question of transport policy, in particular, when considering that one of the main goals of the program was to entice private sector involvement in infrastructure building through PPPs.

In addition to the financial issue, there were other barriers early identified by the expert advisory panel, namely the size and cost of the projects, the administrative divergences existing across borders and the difficulties to obtain funding –elements that appear in effect in the selected case studies. This was early offset using the Cohesion Fund and conferring the EIB a pivotal role so that promoters (mainly national governments) could easily borrow considerable amounts of money (Ross, 1998). With the lapsing of time it became clear that by 2010 early TEN-T objectives were not going to be met but nonetheless some considered key infrastructures were completed (e.g. Channel Tunnel and Oresund Bridge). Despite the economic crisis of 2008, funding for transport infrastructure is foreseen to triple for the period 2014–2020 to €26 billion (European Commission, 2013)³⁰. This suggests that the EU authorities are keen to maintain a key role in infrastructure planning.

As the basic framework for consolidating an EU common infrastructure policy has been outlined, this section turns now to explore its fundamental goals and rationale together with its inherent contradictions. To start with, one of the recurrent issues that the latter is meant to address are the saturation problems occurring in some of the existing infrastructure (Commission of the European Communities, 2001). Secondly, orientate transport infrastructure towards a better integration with global trade and global markets, especially in the prospect –at that time– of EU extension towards the East. This is with the assumption that economic growth will generate a substantial increase in the transport demand of goods, services and passengers. Thirdly, by endorsing sustainable development principles, the policy should aim to revert the

³⁰ As in the studied cases, the states put forward their projects and the EU through their funding schemes contributes with a specific percentage depending on the importance and priority given to the project (Ross, 1998).

marginalisation of freight transport by rail (Commission of the European Communities, 2001). All in all, the basic aims of the policy towards infrastructure consist of modernisation and supply (accessibility), integration within globalisation dynamics –hence the interest in competitiveness– and coordination with sustainability objectives.

There are several critiques to this policy plan that have been advanced and are explained as follows. Firstly, Guasco (2014) points to the potential hazard of this policy backfiring in terms of connectivity i.e. the places in-between the production and consumption centres to be connected could eventually be left in a marginal position in contradiction with the pursued goal of cohesion. This is known as the “tunnel effect” and constitutes an overt clash with accessibility granting, one of the most emphasised objectives (Jensen and Richardson, 2003). A second contradiction that emerges from a critical analysis of EU documents is the dialectic between promoting accessibility and efficiency and making them compatible with environmental concerns. Hereby it is to be noted that both efficiency³¹ and, accessibility in particular, are likely to prompt an increase in the overall mobility (Jensen and Richardson, 2003) with its subsequent negative environmental consequences. In addition, a degrowth critique emphasises on the incompatibility of growth and sustainable development as it is not possible to perpetuate development without damaging the environment (Kallis et al., 2015) hence pointing at an inconsistency of the official EU discourse.

Following on with the critiques to the initiative, it should be noted that the goals and objectives usually go associated with a specific terminology. This includes, along with the earlier mentioned corridors and cohesion, notions such as bottlenecks, poly-centricity and missing links and networks. It is considered that the last two should be further commented insofar they are discursively integrated into the rationale of the analysed case studies.

Poli-centricity is a rather ambiguous term referring to the objective of reframing the spatial structure and its existing urban hierarchies with the aim of lessening the concentration of activity in core areas, in other words reduce divergences between centre and periphery areas. As such, it provides a basis for decision-makers to justify HSR connections amongst capital cities but also from secondary ones to capitals

³¹ Increasing efficiency does not necessarily mean a reduction in the consumption of resources as de Jevons Paradox or rebound effect maintains (Grey, Sara Vegni, et al., 2013).

(Peters, 2003). It is illustrative of that, how for the Basque Y, despite its regional character, the connections with Paris and Madrid are usually brought to the fore. On the other hand, missing links and missing networks refer to how the TEN-T seek to overcome barriers or dead ends identified in national networks such as borders, mountains and sea in order to ensure freer operability across the EU geography (Ross, 1998). The promoters of the selected megaprojects were well aware of these premises and incorporated into their narratives the potentialities in terms of improving connectivity. For example, for the NLTL case study, the missing link lays on the fact that both the border between France and Italy and the Alps limit the connectivity between the hinterlands of Turin and Lyon, while for the Basque Y a trans-border connection is also included to demonstrate the will of the promoters to overcome this missing link.

From a critical perspective, Peters (2003) concludes that this terminology is part of a tactic to support discursively the developmental agenda underlying the TEN-T initiative; it confers the policy initiative with a coherent and robust spatial narrative. Yet it must be underlined that the latter responds, in essence, to the interests of elite industrialists groups such as the ERT (European Roundtable of Industrialists). The group managed to form consensus with the EU decision-makers (Peters, 2003) or to say the least, effectively penetrate in the EU core ideology, as the 1993 White Paper earlier mentioned reflects (van Apeldoorn, 2002).

Another aspect to highlight from the above noted spatial narratives turned into policy discourse is how it was subsequently re-articulated following a conception based on a “frictionless trans-European mobility” (Jensen and Richardson, 2003: 14). This facilitated putting into practice policies that pursued the removal of “the physical and institutional barriers to free movement across Europe” (Jensen and Richardson, 2003: 15). Besides, they also paved the way for ambitious infrastructure plans which saw in high-speed infrastructure a valuable tool for the established objectives to the extent that in many cases was given priority within the TEN-T scheme (Vickerman, 2006).

However, in the view of some authors these plans are not commonly justified through careful economic expert analysis. On the contrary, they are often conceived after lobbying or political pressure on the basis of rent-seeking conducts (as noted in chapter 2) or specific policy agendas that seek to prioritise some regions over others or some types of transport over others (Albalade et al., 2014; Bel, 2011; Peters, 2003). HSR

projects, in particular, are unlikely to provide monetary returns unless they connect hugely populated areas (Albalade and Bel, 2010, 2015). Its significance is then two-sided: on the one hand it commits high amounts of investment in the transport and civil works sector while encouraging modern and advanced type of infrastructure.

Finally, it should also be noted that the TEN-T, as a policy initiative, exemplifies to some extent the neoliberalisation process that was gaining momentum in these years, especially in its spatial component. In this sense, key notions –market integration, growth, competitiveness– at the core of the TEN-T cannot be dissociated from the neoliberal ideology. This adds to the fact that neoliberal advocates succeeded in their attempts to make their postulates effective in the EU especially with regard to the openness of the EU market (Calvo, 2015; van Apeldoorn, 2002). In terms of results, as alerted by its critics (Peters, 2003) and illustrated by the empirical evidence found by Bellet (2010 cited in Valenzuela, 2016), the push for these new spatial configurations involved the generation of new patterns of uneven development³².

To summarise, the introductory analysis of EU transport policy as presented in this section provides a ground for critically understanding the essence of core policy infrastructure in the EU and its limitations and shortcomings. From the Maastricht Treaty onwards, a set of regulations and policy documents enabled the consolidation of an agenda grounded in the development of the TEN-T. As noted, this policy was forged out of the will of the continental corporate and political elites shaped in accordance with the context of growing neoliberalisation. This was carried out under discursive key terms such as growth, competitiveness, efficiency, cohesion and connectivity. This is a crucial aspect to underline when attempting to understand mega-infrastructure development in the EU member states, especially for HSR projects. On the other hand, the fact that the policy is not exempt of contradictions in aspects such as the respect for the environment, the accentuation of spatial polarisations and the non-stated or over-stated economic returns provides a fruitful ground for opposition to challenge this policy.

The next section turns to examine the specific national contexts for each case study in terms of political economy, institutional landscape and infrastructure policy factors.

³² According to the author the policy generates what is referred to as a ‘sucking effect’. This consists of the promoted key nodes attracting activity from areas relatively close, contributing therefore to uneven development in the form of spatial polarisation or metropolisation.

5.2. National contexts

Both megaproject developments saw early proposals being put forward for their inception in the late 1980s and early 1990s in conjunction with the development of the above-explored EU framework. Yet it was not until the 2000s that determined steps were taken to start the construction processes. These megaprojects belong to wider plans of infrastructure expansion and modernisation in both countries characterised by initial ambition, and current delays, as opposition and restrictions to public spending were implemented following the economic crisis and recession of the late 2000s. Prior to a detailed case study description, the following subsections provide an overview of the national and regional contexts focusing on the essentials of their political economy, institutional architecture and infrastructure policy.

In terms of the south-European economic context and dynamics, it could be argued that countries locate in this geographic area –characterised by multiple divergences in relation to central northern European countries– partially settled into globalisation dynamics through their integration into the EU framework. This prompted a loss of sovereignty insofar the usual strategy to compensate long term deficits and reanimating the economy of devaluating the exchange rates wouldn't be an option any more (Rossi, 2017); these countries would then have to resort to international bond markets with its implications in terms of public indebtedness. Furthermore, the integration entailed a partial dismantling of the countries' industry in exchange for European funds to promote social cohesion and territorial integration which in fact included provision for infrastructure development (López and Rodríguez, 2010; Milio, 2010). Yet, this cohesion and integration seems far from achieved at a time when austerity policies erode the welfare state and foster an increase in the inequalities as regression in the social conditions of wide majorities seem to be the dominant trend. In the subsections that follow, each national context is analysed separately.

5.2.1. Italy

The Italian economy in the last decades has been characterised by low growth rates, and the availability of limited resources, which have prompted a general relative decline (Iona et al., 2010). In parallel, the socio-economic conditions (employment, precariousness), worsened after the recession that followed the 2008 crash, do not appear to register signs of significant improvement after the reforms put forward by the last executives of Monti, but especially Renzi (Aruzza, 2017). In addition, the

above mentioned trend has been accompanied by other problems that have been affecting the country's political system and public life for long and still remain unresolved such as corruption, cronyism and inefficient bureaucracy (Carboni, 2010; Mammone and Veltri, 2010; Simonazzi, 2012). In line with the world socioeconomic restructuration processes of the late 1980s-early 1990s the political system of the first Republic collapsed giving way to the birth of the second Republic. This involved the emergence of new political forces (Forza Italia - People's Freedom Party, Left Democrats and later on the Democratic Party) and the disappearance of the main ones up until that time (Christian-Democrats, Communist Party and Socialist Party) (Anderson, 2009) but with an enduring instability to the extent that the political landscape underwent further mutations with the emergence of new political forces such as the Five Star Movement³³ (Bordignon and Ceccarini, 2013). Besides, the 2016 defeat of Renzi's "stabilizing" constitutional reform adds further uncertainty into the politico-institutional landscape of the country (Aruzza, 2017).

In terms of infrastructure development, although first steps for HSR expansion were taken in the early 90s with the creation of the HSR Company (Societa TAV, HSR Society in English) the main policy guidelines were established in 2001 by the PGTL (National Plan for Transport and Logistics). The plan assumed the need to pursue moderate action in the expansion of the transport network due to the limited resources available (Boitani and Ponti, 2006). Nonetheless, public infrastructure was identified as one of the key areas for investment, especially given the possibility to apply for EU funds (Milio, 2010) through initiatives such as the TEN-T. In this respect, the Objective Law (*Legge Obiettivo*, 443/2001) passed by the Berlusconi government, made the above mentioned plan redundant as it paved the way for more development-ambitious plans (Beria, 2007) becoming the new *de facto* infrastructure plan. In essence it embodies a power transfer from local governments to central authorities (Bobbio and Dansero, 2008) especially for the execution of infrastructure plans considered to be of national interest (Trochia, 2009). The law foresees then the mission of conceiving a

list of public and private investments, following some in-house criteria and guidelines (but not declared on a plan nor in law), like the filling of the infrastructural gap between the North and the South of the country or the increase of national competitiveness (Beria, 2007: 28).

³³ Note its outstanding result in 2013 with a 27% share of the vote.

The list contained hundreds of projects and interventions envisaging a budget of €126 billion subsequently raised to €173 billion (Boitani and Ponti, 2006) which included a considerable expansion of the HSR country network. In essence, it consists of a legal instrument designed to simplify and smooth the legal procedures that regulate infrastructure development. This is achieved through basically two pathways: (i) reducing the decision-making and planning role attributed to local and regional administrations; and (ii) reducing the hampering potential of the Environmental Assessment Impact procedures (Trocchia, 2009).

One of the outcomes of this policy endeavour has been the completion of the north-south HSR axis (Turin-Milan-Bologna-Florence-Rome-Naples) even if at a much higher cost than equivalent developments in neighbouring countries such as France and Spain (Greyl et al., 2013). Yet other undertakings have not reached the same level of progress due to, among other reasons, lack of resources and ill management of European funds (Greyl et al., 2013; Milio, 2010). In this vein, a remarkable example to point to is the deferment *sine die* of a controversial megaproject such as the bridge over the straits in Messina (Sicily). A parallel matter is how actually infrastructure projects are managed as corruption and embezzlement appear to be systemic problems in infrastructure management (Locatelli et al., 2016; Re:Common, 2015) prompting a certain distrust from different social sectors on these type of endeavours.

5.2.2. Spain

In terms of the economy, the situation in Spain diverged from the one in Italy and resembled more, in the last decades, to the one of the USA and UK presenting interrelated characteristics such as expanding financialisation, increasing public debt (consumers and households) and a formidable property bubble (Rossi, 2017) which facilitated notable growth of the GDP from the mid-90s until the financial crisis of 2007-08 (Palomera, 2015). This cycle was the outcome of the reforms made in the 80s and 90s when the country transited to a new mode of accumulation, from one of industrial production to the new one based on financial and real state and property strategies of accumulation (López and Rodríguez, 2010; Palomera, 2015).

Those reforms facilitated a property-development cycle that resulted in a huge boost for the country's economy. According to López and Rodríguez (2011) this situation should be understood borrowing Brenner's concept of 'asset-price Keynesianism' as orthodox economics theorisations appear limited to this end. This notion refers to the

situation in which an increase in the value of private assets (for Spain, households' financial and property assets) is linked with an increase in internal private consumption (López and Rodríguez, 2011) -situation that enables the earlier mentioned growth rates as long as there is a stable credit supply.

This period included an ambitious plan of infrastructure development. Earlier designed by the conservative government in the mid-1990s (Infrastructure Transport Plan 2000-07), it consolidated in the mid-2000s under the name of PEIT (Strategic Infrastructures and Transport Plan) when the Socialist Party took over. Its cornerstone, along with new motorways, was the investment in a countrywide new HSR network following a radial paradigm i.e. seeking to connect Madrid, the capital of the state, with all the province capitals (Aguilera, 2009; Albalate and Bel, 2010, 2011; Audikana, 2009). Even if the EU guidelines do not specifically oblige states to develop HSR networks or motorways, Spanish policy-makers used them as an umbrella policy to back up this particular infrastructure policy. For such a purpose they put forward a narrative based on the same key terms used by the EU guidelines namely growth, territorial cohesion and regional development that enabled justifying the allocation of public funds including those awarded by the EU programmes of Cohesion and Regional Development (Albalate and Bel, 2011; Public Works Ministry, 2005)³⁴.

In order to grasp the magnitude of the examined policy it should be underlined that the average of infrastructure investment of the EU-15 was significantly exceeded by Spain (Bermejo and Hoyos, 2006). In this sense, table 5.2. illustrates the oversupply of infrastructure –both motorway and HSR– in Spain in contrast to its European and more populated neighbouring countries.

³⁴ In a personal communication with the Ministry of Public Works, they confirmed that the EU funds received for infrastructure building for the period 2000-2013 amounted to a total of 21.400M€.

Table 5.2. Infrastructure supply in five European countries including Spain and Italy. Source: elaborated from Eurostat and Albalade and Bel (2015).

	Population (2015)	HSR network (km, 2014)	HSR Length (km)/millions of inhabitants	Motorway network (km, 2015)	Motorway Length (km)/millions of inhabitants
France	66,488,186	2,793	42	11,599	173
Germany	81,197,537	1,447	18	12,993	160
Italy	60,795,612	923	15	6,844 (2014)	112
Spain	46,449,565	3,739	80	15,336	326
UK	64,875,165	113	2	3,759	58

The two elements, the real estate boom and the massive infrastructure plan are not unconnected but quite the opposite. The ambitious expansion of public transport works enabled to seize new lands for urbanisation and thus contributed to reinforce the property development cycle through, for instance, the creation of (new) location rents (López and Rodríguez, 2010; Rodríguez and López, 2013). An illustrative example is the station in the town of Guadalajara for the HSR line Barcelona-Madrid which was constructed at a certain distance from the town in newly urbanised lands enabling the construction of new roads and the generation of land surplus values for a housing project worth €600 million (Naredo, 2009).

The financial crisis of 2007/8 and the bursting of the housing bubble seriously undermined the viability of this model. Among other severe impacts, the infrastructure plan suffered a major blow as public spending cuts were implemented leaving some of the initiated projects, for instance the Basque Y, in a very difficult situation (Morales, 2013). Yet it did not impede Spain registering an accumulated expenditure of around €50 billion in the new HSR network (Antiguedad et al., 2016). This way the country became the leader in HSR infrastructure in Europe and also in the world considering the ratio HSR km/inhabitant (Betancor and Llobet, 2015) although with lower demands than countries such as France or Japan (Segura, 2013).

At present there seems to be enough evidence to judge this policy as flawed and inappropriate, not only in terms of HSR but also for the rest of transport infrastructure (Bel, 2015). As a matter of fact, notwithstanding its relation with the increase of public debt, many of the built large public works present clear signs of underuse due to low demands –some have even been closed down– having prompted an infrastructure oversupply (Segura, 2012, 2013). The roots of such disproportionate policy endeavour are to be found in a series of aspects: the leverage power of the construction corporations (Fernández Durán, 2006; López and Rodríguez, 2010; Macias and

Aguilera, 2012; Recio, 2009; Rodriguez and López, 2013; Segura, 2013); pork barrel politics associated to regional elites and clientelistic networks, including corruption (Bel, 2015; Bel et al., 2014); and nation-building endeavours illustrated by the radial design of the HSR network (Bel, 2011).

5.3. Regional contexts

Apart from the supranational and national context, a note on the regional contexts, due to its political and socioeconomic specificities is also necessary. With respect to Italy, its political system after Second World War was organised under the influence of the tension of finding a balance between a unitary system and meaningful devolution for the regions (Koff and Koff, 2000). Although forces demanding the latter prevailed in the state construction process, the Italian state is far from being a federal state i.e. the power of the regions is derived from the centre in a way that their executives cannot be understood as original bodies since their legislative powers are rather limited, remaining subordinated to the sovereignty of the state (Koff and Koff, 2000). In other words and for the interest of the present research, this involves that powers on issues such as spatial planning identified as of “national interest” correspond to the central authority. Yet for other matters likely to be transferred to regions two categories of regions were established: special and ordinary. Piedmont, the region where the studied megaproject is located, belongs to the ordinary category. Even if this category involve no exceptional devolution powers, it is important to remark that some participatory functions and influence are conceded to the regions. This is done through institutional mechanisms that enable direct channels of relation with the nation’s executive (Koff and Koff, 2000). This alongside the specificities of the Objective Law has allowed some margin for regions to lobby at the national level in terms of, for example, demanding higher funding allocations for specific projects (Brambilla et al., 2003).

In terms of political forces, the landscape is relatively similar as the national one. Nonetheless, Piedmont and in particular the city of Turin due to its industrial character has been historically a stronghold of Italy’s labour movement and one of the epicentres of the workers’ mobilisations of the 1970s during the crisis of the Fordist accumulation model (Laganà et al., 1982; Vanolo, 2015). Currently, the centre-left PD (Democratic Party) is the dominant force in the region, although their support among the citizenry is declining as it is shown by the fact that in 2016 the party lost the mayoralty of Turin in favour of the 5 Star Movement.

In this vein, the context of the Susa valley as a fruitful ground for mobilisation and resistance has to be noted. The valley had been very connected to the subculture of resistance that developed during the 60s and 70s and after the defeat of the workers' protests two socio-environmental conflicts preceded the one of the HSR development: the construction of a motorway which in the end went ahead and the construction of a power line which was eventually dismissed and hence regarded as a victory by the environmentalists (della Porta and Piazza, 2008).

With respect to Spain, although the system established by the 1978 Constitution allowed for some degree of decentralisation and the establishment of autonomous regions (Moreno, 2002) it should not be understood as a federal state (Beramendi and Máiz, 2004). Yet, given the existence of asymmetries in the devolution of powers, the Basque Country autonomous community³⁵ along with the region of Navarre are in possession of exceptional competencies, being the most significant one a special fiscal status. This includes the capacity of these governments to raise taxes in their territories with the commitment to pay back to the state the services supplied by the latter through a mechanism known as "*foral* regime" (Claeys and Martire, 2015; Garcia-Milà, 2003).

The degree of devolution benefitting the Basque institutions is relevant in the case of the Basque Y because normally HSR projects are an exclusive area of competence of the central government; yet in this case, Basque institutions (the infrastructure department and the railway public company ETS) are taking part in the process in partnership with the central government, the entity with the ultimate decisional power (Basque Government, 2012). Furthermore, this has implications for the section controlled by the Basque Government because the latter has to contribute upfront with its budget and further on negotiate with the national authority (via *cupo* or quota, the fiscal mechanism, as it is known in the Basque Country; Azua, 2007).

This level of autonomy with regard the central government is the result of parallel political and socioeconomic historical dynamics characterised by an extraordinary industrialisation and the hegemony of Basque nationalism represented mainly by two political forces: the PNV (Basque Nationalist Party) and the Nationalist left currently

³⁵ This research will use the term Basque Country to refer to the autonomous region within named like this in the Spanish Constitutional order. Yet from a nationalist perspective Basque Country could refer to all the territories that compound the Basque nation including Navarre and Iparralde in the south of France.

articulated in the coalition EH Bildu³⁶ and historically linked with the armed struggle of ETA –which ended in 2011. On the other hand, the two main Spanish parties –PP and PSOE– although less powerful in this region, took to office between 2009 and 2012 (in the particular context of the illegalisation of the Nationalist left parties).

As in the case of the Susa valley other important socio-environmental conflicts preceded the contention over HSR development. The most significant ones included the opposition to a nuclear plant (Lemoiz) which was finally dismissed following mass mobilisation and assassinations committed by ETA (Diaz, 2012; Estebaranz, 2008); and the opposition to the motorway of Leitzarar which, after a similar process of contention, went ahead with the inclusion of a modification in the route, prior negotiation with the opposition (Estebaranz, 2008).

Table 5.3. Contextual factors of both case studies. Source: elaborated from della Porta and Piazza (2008) and Alonso et al. (2014).

CONTEXTUAL FACTORS		
Factor	Susa Valley	Basque Autonomous Community
Socioeconomic	Industrial/ post-industrial	Industrial/ post-industrial
Institutional governance	EU - Italian state (and French state) - Piedmont Authority - Province/metropolitan authority and City council and local councils	EU - Spanish state - Basque Autonomous Government (significant devolved powers) - Province and City and local councils
Cultural / Political ³⁷	Well-established leftist subculture and previous environmental campaigns (della Porta and Piazza 2008).	- Well-established protest and resistance subculture (Diaz, 2012) and antagonist movements connected to nation liberation struggles and previous environmental campaigns (Alonso et al. 2014). - Until 2011 active armed group (ETA) opposed to the megaproject.
Spatial	Valley: 1260 km ²	Region: 7230 km ²

All in all, the last two sections have provided a thorough account of the national and regional elements influencing the megaproject governance process (see Table 5.2). The fourth section of this chapter turns now to explore the specific territorial characteristics of these transport megaprojects, their rationales and their legal and policy framework.

³⁶ EH stands for *Euskal Herria* in Basque, meaning Basque Country but usually employed to refer to the greater region which also includes Navarre and the Northern Basque Country in France.

³⁷ In that sense also Rodriguez (2015) points at similar grounds between the Basque Country and the north of Italy considering the popular mobilizations occurred from the late 60s to the late 70s/ early 80s.

5.4. Megaproject characteristics, rationale and legal framework

Now that the overarching context has been examined, this section seeks to provide a more detailed account of the two case studies particularly the legal and policy specificities of each megaproject as well as the associated politics and the underlying rationales. The aim of this case study characterisation is not to be all-encompassing but to provide a general account that can ease the understanding of the forthcoming empirical analysis.

5.4.1. New Railway connection Lyon-Turin (NLTL)

The aim of this subsection is to explore the rationale behind the NLTL according to the official discourse supporting the project along with its articulation within the institutional and legal framework.

Firstly, the NLTL is a project involving a high capacity³⁸ railway seeking to connect the cities of Turin (Italy) and Lyon (France) through a tunnel of 57 km that will traverse the western Alps. In line with EU postulates of improving competitiveness, the core argument to discursively support it is that this new connection will turn the route more competitive for both passengers but especially for freight transport as the old one is deemed inappropriate for such purpose (Foietta and Rocca, 2013). This rationale has consolidated with the reformulation of the project at the same time that previous motivations that had been put forward, were acknowledged to be wrong (e.g. the immediate saturation of the line; Manfredi et al., 2015).

Secondly, it is believed that for an area in industrial decline, this megaproject infrastructure is crucial; not only in terms of job creation, but also as a pillar for economic development insofar it will facilitate further connectivity of the region and therefore consolidate the regional/national market integration within the EU zone and also with global flows (Senn, 2010). In fact, the NLTL is in total harmony with the policy initiatives promoted by the EU institutions, and as such it has been included since 1994 as a priority project within the TEN-T framework belonging to the Mediterranean Corridor (Ross, 1998).

The project has its origins in the 1990s while Italy was designing its policy to invest on a new national HSR network. Yet, little progress was made along the 1990s decade. Its consolidation in the agenda occurred in the following decade as in 2001 the Italian

³⁸ Although popularly is known as High Speed, the official discourse nowadays emphasises on the identification with the term high capacity (see (Foietta and Rocca, 2013)).

government included the project in the Objective Law. This law intended to foster an acceleration of the procurement process by altering the equilibrium of planning powers in favour of the national authority (Pucci, 2015; Saporito and Ciaffi, 2013) and also by skipping procedures such as the EIAs (Bobbio and Dansero, 2008)³⁹. The same 2001 and also in 2004 the Italian and French governments, with explicit support from the European institutions signed each agreement that supported the development of the new connection. Further agreements followed in 2011, 2012 and 2015. The cross-country cooperation requires also the establishment of a public developer in charge of the construction and implementation process. It was created with the participation of the Public Railway companies from both countries - SNCF and RFI. Initially (2001) called LTF (*Lyon Turin Ferroviere*) it was later (2015) renamed as TELT (Tunnel Euralpin Lyon Turin) being equally controlled by both state authorities while regional representatives are only authorised in it as observers as stated in the latest agreement (Italian Government and French Government, 2012).

The agreements include the subdivision of the project in three sections: the French, the Italian and the cross-border section, the one that includes the tunnel and is to be constructed in the Susa Valley. Precisely, this cross-border section falls under a shared framework of governance whereby both national authorities are involved and so are the EU authorities. In this sense, the preliminary project was completed in 2010 being approved by the relevant Italian authority (CIPE, Inter-ministerial committee for economic programming, resolution 57) in August 2011, a month after one of the main contentious episodes, the works-site eviction. It confirmed that the subdivision of the project in sections facilitated the prioritisation of the cross-border one and so in 2015 gave approval to the final project (CIPE resolution 20th of February 2015 n. 19) while the development of the Italian part of the project was to be postponed, even if it includes the segment with a higher degree of saturation (Maggiolini, 2012; Presidenza Consiglio di Ministri and Osservatorio Valle di Susa, 2008).

Further arrangements for the project included funding allocation by the EU (2008) along with changes and proposals to the original plan with the latest ones being the construction of a station in Susa and the redefinition of the project in line with what is referred as “low-cost” solution due to its subdivision in different phases (Esposito and

³⁹ These elements are further considered in the empirical analysis insofar they play a significant role in the governance of the NLTL.

Foietta, 2012). Yet the opposition interpreted that the essence of the project remained the same (Greyl et al., 2013).

5.4.2. *Basque Y*

As in the previous sub-section the aim is to describe the policy and legal framework shaping the development process as well as its rationale and politics without neglecting the basic characteristics of the megaproject.

The early courses of the project date back to the late 1980s with studies and protocols designed by the Basque administration. Then the state's Infrastructure Policy Plan (2000-07) considered it as one of its feasible undertakings. The final approval came in 2001, the same year that the legal basis in the Basque Country was given to the project with the approval of the Territorial Sectoral Plan of the railway network in the Basque Country. The latter had as its main goal: "the integration in the Land Planning of the new transport infrastructure [the Basque Y]" (Basque Government, 2001). The new Spanish government that took to office in 2004 renewed its commitment with the project by including it in its newly produced plan, the Strategic Infrastructures and Transport Plan (PEIT).

The works did not start until 2006 after an agreement between the Central and Basque governments was reached (Basque Government, 2012) following political bargaining between the Basque Nationalists (PNV) and the Socialist Party (Calvo, 2015; Juliana, 2009). This agreement divided the control over the construction works: while the Spanish government would be in charge in the provinces of Alava and Vizcaya, the Basque Government would control the province of Guipuzcoa.

As an infrastructure project, it has been labelled as "the most ambitious undertaking in the entire history of the Basque Country" (Alonso et al., 2014: 19). It involves the construction of 172 km of HSR line, which will cross the region to connect the Iberian network with the rest of Europe through the western edge of the Pyrenees. Due to the irregular geography of the Basque Country, most of its trajectory will require the excavation of tunnels (over 60% of the route) and the construction of several viaducts –10% of the route approximately (Alonso et al., 2014). Due to this complexity, the maximum speed that could be reached in it is below the usual for HSR (220 km/h vs. 250-300 km/h) (Basque Government, 2012). Unlike to what has been the norm in Spain for the HSR lines it is expected that the new line will be compatible for both passengers and freight transport.

The core argument behind the project is the modernisation of the railway network, much needed according to its proponents, as the current one is obsolete (Basque Government, 2012). In this vein, it is believed that the new network not only will have a positive economic impact in terms of regional competitiveness but also will provide an efficient alternative to the road transport, contributing to reduce greenhouse gas emissions generated by this type of transport (Echebarria, 2002). Its estimated cost was of €6 billion although official sources acknowledge some amount of cost-overrun (15%).

The above noted rationale noticeably echoes the postulates underpinning the TEN-T initiative promoted by the EU. In fact, the project is partly included in the TEN-T framework within the previously known as Priority Project 8 (Multimodal axis Portugal/Spain-rest of Europe) currently named Atlantic Corridor. The Basque Y is considered a key project within this corridor and of special interest, due to its trans-border character. This, in turn, justified the funding allocation by the EU institutions. The references made so far, convey that the project depends on the involvement of the Basque Government, the EU and the Spanish Government and indeed, the delay experienced suggests how it has not been a priority for the latter (even if the most recent infrastructure plan⁴⁰ identifies it as a priority).

Recent developments include an agreement between the Conservatives (PP) and the Basque Nationalists (PNV) for a new thrust to the megaproject agenda at a time where is believed to be around 50% completed. The new calendar for the megaproject development suggests its completion after 2023 (*El País*, 2017).

In sum, the above described suggests a notable degree of complexity in the governance process mainly due to the involvement of a wide range of actors and scalar levels. To these must be added the extraordinary component embodied by the opposition campaigns, the subject of analysis of next chapter. The next section turns now to summarise the contents of these four sections.

5.5. Summary

This chapter has explored the governance framework that applies to each case study by highlighting underlying elements of the policy, institutional, social and political economy contexts. Departing from the supranational level it has also advanced insights

⁴⁰ Infrastructure, Transport and Housing Plan, 2012-2024 (PITVI, Spanish acronym).

on the national and regional contexts. In terms of the case studies, it has presented further technical detail, the official narratives and the legal and policy frameworks that support them. Table 5.4 summarises the essentials of both infrastructure megaprojects in terms of the development process and the narratives advanced.

Table 5.4. Contextual aspects for the two selected case studies. Source: elaborated from Greyl et al. (2013), Giunti et al. (2012) and the TELT website, for the NLTL; and from Bermejo (2004); Hoyos (2008); Alonso et al. (2014) and the compilation of articles Antiguada et al. (2016), for the Basque Y.

Aspect	NLTL	Basque Y
Features	235 km (main feature: 57 km base tunnel)	172 km (60 % tunnels, 10 % viaducts)
Budget	- Total: €25,000-26,000 million - International/cross-border segment: €8,000 million.	€6,000 million (15% cost overrun)
Construction status	Exploratory excavation completed	50% approximately (13 year delay expected according to most recent prediction)
Policy – Legal framework	- Objective Law (2001) (temporary) - Decree Unlock Italy (2014) - Bilateral agreements Italy - France (2001, 2012, 2015)	Infrastructure of Transport Plan and Strategic Infrastructure and Transport Plan (State, 2000 and 2005; 2012) Territorial Sectoral Plan of the railway network in the Basque Country (Region, 2001) Bi-lateral agreements between Spanish and Basque governments (2006, 2016)
Rationale themes	- Competitiveness and economic development - Environmental sustainability	- Modernisation, competitiveness, economic development, territorial connectivity - Environmental sustainability

As observed from the elements exposed, both case studies share an overarching picture dominated by the European integration process, which in terms of infrastructure planning and development is embodied by the TEN-T framework. This policy initiative is interwoven with neoliberal expansionism to the extent that a fundamental objective of such policy is to further integrate EU areas into global flows and markets. This can be noted in the discourses of common market generation through an enhanced spatial connectivity that initiatives such the TEN-T are designed to encourage.

For Spain and Italy, EU integration meant, among other elements, availability of European funds to undertake an upgrade of the national infrastructure, and in particular, to encourage trans-border improvements of connectivity. Both megaprojects are indeed circumscribed to these developmental objectives and the EU contributes to them with funding allocation. Besides, even if the politico-economic context in both countries is to some extent divergent, common patterns can be identified in terms of

ambitious plans of infrastructure development (Objective law in Italy, and Strategic Infrastructures and Transport Plan in Spain).

In both cases, the processes are highly controlled by the national authority which has ultimate power in accelerating or slowing down the development plans. The divergence appears in the Basque Country as the regional government is endowed with devolution powers that allow it to control one segment of the megaproject. This prompts some degree of shared governance between both governments. This is mirrored in the NLTL by the fact that both the French and Italian national authorities manage the trans-border segment. This, along with the involvement of the EU in both cases, suggests the need of coordination between the different partners involved.

On the other hand, both regions present particular socio-political and cultural dynamics, which facilitated the emergence and consolidation of opposition movements. The nature of these opposition movements will be explored in the next chapter. In sum, it is expected that the contextual outline provided in this chapter will facilitate a better comprehension of the empirical analysis presented in the forthcoming chapters. Prior to the empirical analysis, the next chapter maps out the main actors coming into play alongside the conflict dynamics that unfolded.

CHAPTER 6. ACTORS' COALITIONS AND CONFLICT DYNAMICS

Having examined the multiple contextual aspects that impact on the governance of megaproject developments, this chapter turns now to examine the nature of the coalitions formed to promote them and, in turn, to shed light on the counter-coalitions formed to contest these processes. This intends to be an introduction to the rival forces while subsequent chapters will examine how the process is governed. Additionally, this chapter will delineate the contentious dynamics that unfold as a result of confrontation through a periodization of both conflictual processes. Accounting for these three elements of the studied phenomena should facilitate the forthcoming analysis and discussion of the governance process.

The chapter is divided in three main sections. The first one will examine the pro-megaproject coalition-building process. Critical perspectives from the field of urban politics will inform this exercise. Accordingly, it will draw on the notion of “urban entrepreneurialism” (Harvey, 1989, 2001) as the overarching perspective, which in essence, assumes that the decisional power of the urban life lies beyond the formal institutions of government – even if they still play a role. Following this premise, it is understood that analyses of power relations in the urban realm have to be carried out considering coalition politics; that is, accounting for the wide range of forces/actors participating in the urban political process (Magnusson, 2010). In this vein, the empirical analysis will utilise two specific conceptualisations that assume these premises on power: the “growth machine” (Logan and Molotch, 1987, 2010; Molotch, 1976) and “the urban regime” (Dowding, 2001; Stone, 1989, 1993)⁴¹ and its suggested derivations applied to the governance of megaproject developments (Altshuler and Luberoff, 2003; Kennedy et al., 2011).

⁴¹ Cautionary note on the use of the two distinct conceptualisations of urban coalitions: it should be stressed that even if both concepts –urban regimes and growth machines– provide a framework to explain urban alliances for the promotion of certain policies or projects they do it from different lenses: while the growth machine interrogates how pro-growth agents coalesce with governmental actors and civil society actors to put forward their projects, the urban regime examines how political forces in office attempt to gather support from private or civil society actors to maintain their position of power or bolster particular agendas or projects, that is to consolidate a determinate “urban regime” (Domhoff, 2005). In this sense, given the very specific nature of the two infrastructure megaprojects selected, the context for analysis cannot be taken as a conventional urban arena where these conceptualisations have been normally applied. Consequently, the idea is to employ a hybrid analytical framework that draws on both conceptualisations.

The second section will delve into the anti-megaproject coalitions that form to oppose these unwanted large-scale developments. Drawing on academic literature focused on these particular case studies and also activists and campaigning materials, the section will note the alternative rationales that they put forward in their campaigns. Using the same materials, the section will also attempt to grasp how they come into being. The third section will shed light on the contentious dynamics resulting from the campaigns organised by the opposing coalitions. This will be sketched through a periodization of the conflict, noting the essentials of the oppositions' performance in each period and the response given by the competent authorities and the public institutions. The chapter ends summarising the main points that have been put forward.

The contribution of this chapter is grounded on the existing literature that deals with these particular case studies (in particular in what refers to the involved agents and the contentious dynamics) and the data collected by the researcher in the form of documents, interviews and observations. Within the framework of the thesis, the role of this chapter is to complement the work on contextualisation with an account of the actors coming into play, alongside with the contentious dynamics that followed actor confrontation. Through this account, the intricacies of the procurement process can be better understood and the analysis more easily followed. While Chapter 5 has accounted for the different contextual aspects impacting on megaproject development governance, this one focuses on the socio-political and institutional specificities of the conflict, paving the ground for the empirical analysis to come.

6.1. Megaproject coalitions

This section takes on the exercise of characterising the megaproject coalitions, combining both the growth machine and urban regime conceptualisations as in the hybridised conceptualisations advanced by Altshuler and Luberoff (2003) and Kennedy, et al. (2011). It is worth mentioning that in some works doing case study research on the NLTL, both terms are used as quasi-synonyms (e.g. della Porta and Piazza, 2007). It can thus be inferred that, when applied to the study of megaproject developments the delimitation between the two terms is, to some extent, blurred, which further supports this exercise of hybridising. Consequently, the characterisation exercise will use both growth machine and urban regime concepts, considering them as distinctive and complementary but not synonymous (as explored in Chapter 3). This should enable a more robust comprehension of the coalitions' nature and characterise

them in the context of contemporary urban governance in Western Europe. In order to establish limits between the two case studies, the exercise is presented in two subsections, one for each case study.

6.1.1. NLTL

This subsection focuses on the NLTL. For this case study, the megaproject coalition is initially approached under the term growth machine, as in the works of della Porta and Piazza (2007, 2008). Their works bring insightful interpretations of the opposition movements and the contentious dynamics. In terms of the pro-megaproject forces, they use the terminology stemming from the urban coalitions framework, although without discussing its specific nature and *modus operandi*, despite not being a, strictly speaking, urban megaproject. This is what this section will attempt to achieve, drawing also on the urban regime concept. This will be carried out through the interrogation of the origins, composition and relations that enable the constitutions of a central node of the coalition which results in a first consolidation of the megaproject plans.

The first proposal of a new Turin-Lyon connection was laid out in the early 1990s through a promoting Committee originally named as the “Committee for the promotion of High Speed”. The latter was subsequently renamed as the “Promoter Committee for the Transpadana route” (in its English translation). It is constituted as a non-profit association formed by individuals representing both public and private bodies, currently occupied in the promotion and campaigning for the completion of the axis’ segment located in Italian territory (Promoter Committee for the Transpadana Route, 2015).

The Committee was constituted after a joint effort from both the economic elite, represented by U. Agnelli (president of FIAT), and the regional politico-institutional elite, represented by V. Beltrami (president of the Piedmont Council). As identified by Manfredi et al. (2015), on the one hand it counted on a number of private actors essentially representing the entrepreneurial arena of Piedmont, including chambers of commerce (Camera di Commercio di Torino, Unioncamere Piemonte), the main bank of the region (San Paolo IMI Bank), the main business associations (Confindustria Piemonte, Unione Industriale di Torino), a logistics company (S.I.To), and a civil society organisation (Tecnocity) linked with the economic elite (Agnelli Foundation). On the other, it represented public institutions through local and regional authorities: the Piedmont regional authority, the municipality of Turin and the (currently non-

existent) province of Turin (Greyl, Sara Vegni, et al., 2013). This confirms the public-private character of the coalition supporting the NLTL.

One of the essential characteristics of the growth machine is the support garnered from relevant societal sectors. MacLeod (2011: 2634) defines this manoeuvre as the exercise of “place entrepreneurs [to] enlist a range of influential agents”. It was a goal of the promoting committee to influence public opinion about the need for the project. As Ferlaino and Levi (2001:15-16) remark, the objective of the promoting Committee was to:

raise awareness with regard the public opinion and the competent Italian, French and EU authorities on the strategic importance of a fast rail link to the south of the EU territory, high capacity and potential transport, freight and passengers, linking Eastern Europe and the EU, Western Europe and the most industrialized regions of our country [Italy] with the ports of Genoa and Trieste and the new European rail network⁴².

In other words, the coalition would be attempting to lobby and campaign in various ways in favour of the project. The targets of these initiatives would be the general public, the national authorities of Italy and France and also the EU institutions. As Manfredi et al. (2015: 3-4) point out, the local and regional institutions supporting the project started:

an intense search of potential interlocutors and political supporters at national level. In a relatively short time, they were able to reach the interest of the Italian President of the Budget Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, P. C. Pomicino, and of the whole Italian Government that, from 1990 since today, has always been, regardless of which was the major party [...] in favour of the project.

This quote grounds the connection with the urban regime concept. Such conceptualisation suggests that in order to bolster a given project or agenda, it is key to achieve a stable political consensus over time (Stone, 1989) which results out of its shared character among the main electoral forces or coalitions; this renders irrelevant the party or coalition that takes office with respect to the project because presumably, the latter will participate in the consensus and therefore will not challenge the established urban agenda (Kennedy et al., 2011). In this sense, the previous quote precisely identified this component of securing a majority for a long period of time which in turn derives from the previously achieved consensus. Its significance can also

⁴² The same text can be read in the website of the promoting Committee (<http://www.transpadana.org/chi-siamo/la-storia.html>).

be identified in activist narratives as in the words of a local activist involved in an environmental association:

The project goes on because it is given as a political position and is given as a political initiative by all parties. That is, there has been a total line-up on this. With the exception of the extreme left and the Greens which count very little in Italy, all parties have always agreed. Initially there was the [Northern] League that was opposed, then we learned that there were changes of internal power, so we can say that we have against us, everyone, all parties (IAA4).

Confirming the importance of this aspect –project support from across the political spectrum– one militant activist uses the term “business cross-party” (IAA8) – consistent with the term “cross-party establishment” used by Anderson (2009: 348) – which suggests that a tacit agreement between the main parties exists on issues such as megaproject developments, regardless of the different policies that they may defend in principle. This is because such infrastructure projects constitute core pieces of the public policy agenda for the politico-economic elite and thus it would be unusual for the mainstream parties (centre-right and centre-left) to oppose it. In fact, in practical terms, the shared agenda is confirmed by how local pro-NLTL electoral coalitions were formed between the centre-left Democratic Party and the centre-right People’s Freedom Party in middle-size towns of the valley, as in the town of Avigliana. These alliances formed to counter civic lists⁴³ that included members of the opposition to the NLTL (Cicconi et al., 2015). This is further verified by noting that the position of vice-president, in a body of significance for the procurement process of the NLTL such as the Observatory, was given to a former MP for the centre-right: O. Napoli (Mondo, 2013). This exemplifies the shared consensus between the centre-right and centre-left.

The second leg of the ‘business cross-party’ is its corporate interests. In the megaproject literature, these interests appear often under the notion of “rent-seeking”⁴⁴ (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003). In this vein, it implicitly connects the links of the political sphere with the corporate sector as a driving factor of the push for the megaproject

⁴³ Civic List (*Lista Civica*) corresponds to the name given to a candidacy to an Italian local election in the form of party-list that has no official connection with national political parties and which normally campaigns on local issues.

⁴⁴ To grasp the role that rent-seeking component can play in megaproject development processes, Flyvbjerg et al. (2003: 137) note those agents with a potential interest in unbalanced project appraisals: “contractors and other project promoters who stand to gain from the mere construction of the projects, and who are often powerful movers in the early stages of project development”.

agenda. When asked about the cementing mechanisms that helped to push this agenda, one activist gave an illustrative reply:

Do you know what the mechanisms are? They are those of political alliances. So, the contract to what was supposed to be the Venaus maxi-sounding was given this way, was given to the CMC [construction company]. CMC was [connected to] Democratic Party. The president was ... and still is I believe Bersani's son, so there was the Democratic Party. When we talk about the cross party business, that's it here. Who assigned the contract to the CMC, it was assigned by Minister Lunardi who was the Minister of the Berlusconi government, so you have centre-left and on the other side, centre-right (IAA8).

What is the relevance of the connections between political parties and the business sector, including the main contractor, CMC? The Group CMC (Cooperativa Muratori e Cementisti) is one of the main contractors so far in the NLTL (considering the works on both sides of the border, the value of the contracts adds up to €513,541,000⁴⁵). As an entrepreneurial group, it is currently the fourth biggest construction company in Italy (CMC, 2017) possessing notable expertise in large public works, in particular railways, with long experience in bids for public contracts (D'Alessandro, 2004). It belongs to what in colloquial terms is referred as “red cooperatives” because it falls into the category of cooperatives historically linked with the left-leaning parties, be it the Communist Party decades ago or the Democratic Party nowadays (Beccaria and Marcucci, 2015).

This can be observed in leading political figures such as Bersani, a minister in three different centre-left governments and former general secretary of the Democratic Party (2009-13), but also former CMC manager. The connection is generally assumed by most of the opposition, as observed in the activist quote above (IAA8). Further, it has become clearer after scandals such as the one around the contracts obtained by the CMC for the Expo 2015 in Milan, where a member of the Democratic Party (Turin branch), P. Greganti, acted as a fixer between the Expo organisers and the CMC (*La Repubblica*, 2014).

The entrepreneurial group was awarded with the public contract for the NLTL preliminary works in 2005. Despite the delay in the works and the change of location, the group maintained the contract to the surprise of the opposition, which denounced that a new tendering process should have been facilitated by the competent authorities

⁴⁵ Source: CMC Group, projects (2016a; 2016b): “Maddalena exploratory tunnel” and “Design and construction of an exploration tunnel for the Turin-Lyon railway line (French side)”.

(Cicconi et al., 2015). In addition, the connections between the business arena and the political parties can be seen in the first contracts awarded by the promoting society (currently TELT but at the time LTF⁴⁶). A consortium (*Consorzio Valsusa Piemonte – Imprese per lo sviluppo*) formed of regional companies chaired by the former MP associated to the centre-left L. Massa, was awarded “the first out-of-tender works for the Maddalena tunnel” (Cicconi et al., 2015: 380).

All in all, the evidence confirms a public-private collaboration effort to bring forward the megaproject agenda. The private sectors supporting the project coalesced with the regional and local authorities in the Transpadana Committee, which acted as a managerial coalition with representatives of capital and the government. The latter effectively managed to set an agenda that included the NLTL plans as the national authority stated its support for the project, which from that moment on was incorporated as of the national interest, conferring the process with the necessary long-term political stability. What follows is that powerful actors within the construction sector – the CMC in this particular case – join the megaproject coalition insofar they have the opportunity to profit from the construction process. This component embodies how megaprojects constitute a fertile ground in which all parties can bind themselves to business through offering lucrative contracts, regardless of their political orientation.

In summary, the above paragraphs have basically analysed the trajectory of the NLTL coalition: from a growth machine akin to an elite group formed by politico-economic cadres (the promoting committee) to its assumption by the main institutional bodies and main political parties which coalesced with corporate agents, forming a power bloc that constitutes the central node of support for the NLTL agenda. Securing the megaproject development process requires further allies and strategies that will be examined in the forthcoming chapters.

6.1.2. Basque Y coalition

This subsection turns to examine the core actors banding behind the Basque Y. Unlike with the NLTL, urban coalition theories have not been used to examine the Basque Y case study, probably because, outside Basque and Spanish scholar and journalist circles, the case has attracted little attention (Alonso et al., 2014). Yet it is worth noting that according to Calvo (2015), the project represents a shared agenda of various

⁴⁶ Lyon Turin Ferroviare. Society in charge of the construction of the NLTL (2001-2015). In 2015 re-named as TELT.

parties, government and economic stakeholders, implying that a certain degree of public-private cooperation does exist. This suggests the possibility to apply the urban coalitions framework to the case of the Basque Y.

In principle, the main promoters of the Basque Y are the public institutions, both the national authority and the Basque Government through their correspondent departments (Ministry of Public Works and Department for Economic Development and Infrastructures) and the public railway agencies⁴⁷ (whereby the national authority holds the ultimate power of decision-making). As it has been noted in Chapter 5, the project falls into the national plans of high-speed railway development which were part of the early efforts of Basque authorities lobbying for a high-speed/capacity railway connection with European territory.

As a governmental publication maintains, the transport and mobility policies the project embodies facilitate obtaining “the support of practically the whole institutional system: European Community, Central Government, Basque Government, provincial councils and municipalities⁴⁸” (Basque Government, 2006: 15). Equally, support was given by the main Basque political party (PNV) and the main Spanish ones, the Socialist Party (PSOE) and the People’s Party (PP) which secured majorities in the regional and national parliaments. Unlike in the NLTL, no promoting committee is identified in this case consisting of an initiative springing from the plans of public institutions. This resonates with the urban regime conceptualisation provided by Domhoff (2005), in the sense that the object of analysis is mostly rooted in the policies promoted by public bodies.

The coalition is completed once the public bodies establish an alliance with actors from what the urban regime literature refers as “the larger urban community” (Imbroscio, 1997: 6), which should enable them to consolidate their growth agenda as it acquires a dominant position (Imbroscio, 1997). Among the private partners, the engineering and especially the construction sectors, stand out; this is due to their relevance in the national economy but also their leverage capacity, as outlined in Chapter 5. Indeed, when authorities convey the value of the investment that the project entails, they make explicit reference towards the main partner in the process, the

⁴⁷ ADIF for the state and ETS for the Basque Country.

⁴⁸ This statement lacks nuance as a number of municipal governments were not supportive of the project, to the extent that they even supported some of the opposition repertoire (e.g. land expropriation boycotts, local referendums).

construction business sector: “[the Basque Y] is the most important transport investment of all that have been carried out ever since in the Basque Country and will have a direct effect on the construction sector” (Basque Government, 2006: 21). The relevance of this private actor has been also noted in the critical literature on the Basque Y (see Iriarte, 2009, 2013) and by various participants connected to the opposition:

- “in the Spanish state no project is profitable [...] I guess it will be linked to SEOPAN [main construction business association] and the entire construction consortium. Infrastructures are constructed despite knowing in advance that are not profitable or going to be profitable, but what is really profitable is to carry out these works” (IBA6).
- “and then for a number of companies this has been big business, and it still is. Construction companies [constitute] a very important lobby in this country” (IBA9).
- “the only profit of this work is to construct it. And the one who takes the benefit is the company that carries out the work” (IBA13).

Apart from identifying the involvement of construction companies, these quotes denote the interest in the form of a rent-seeking component. As noted in the literature review (Chapter 2), rent-seeking is a commonly identified driver of support for megaprojects. It operates by generating a bias that favours its approval, undermining the implementation of objective assessment criteria (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003). These quotes also illustrate the existing relations between corporate power and political power (in the form of public institutions or political parties) and the implications for the management and supervision exerted by the public institutions.

For the Basque Y, the relationship of these points of the governance process can be illustrated with a series of examples. Firstly, the minister of Transports and Public Works (Basque Government) during the crucial period for the consolidation and start of the construction process (2005- 2009), N. Lopez de Guereñu, was later (2011) appointed as general secretary of *Confebask*, the main Basque business association. Basque construction companies are linked to this association that fully supports the completion and implementation of the project, which they define as “so important and so positive for the future, and welfare of everyone” (*Diario Vasco*, 2008). More visible links between the construction sector and the public bodies can be found in A.

Garitano, the individual recently nominated as new general director of the public company Basque Railway Network (ETS); as noted in the company's website (ETS, 2017) his experience in the corporate sector includes positions in three actual contractors of the megaproject works (*Dragados*, *Moyua*⁴⁹ and *Acciona*). The existence of these connections is usually assumed as well by the participants who point to the relation between the awarding of public contracts for construction works and the funding for political parties; as a member of the opposition recalls: “the big parties with these large works, they get funding, then this is another dimension” (IAB3)⁵⁰.

This project was initiated by a broad coalition of governmental actors, who shared a ‘common sense’ of the benefits of infrastructure development, and then they built a wider coalition through bonding to rent-seeking sectors, via the offer of large contracts – sectors which in return contribute with healthy party donations. This coalition-building process is done under the conditions outlined in Chapter 5: both the pre-given dynamics of accumulation and the specific relations between the construction corporate sector and the public administration and political parties.

As stated with regard to the NLTL, even if the above noted actors make up the central node of the Basque Y coalition, it does not correspond to its complete picture. The forthcoming chapters will interrogate the main discursive and governing practices and techniques around the case, as well as the attempts to attract further support, and to what extent these attempts were successful. Now that the essentials of the pro-megaproject coalitions have been analysed, the chapter turns to examine the anti-megaproject coalitions and their *raison d’être* prior to the forthcoming exploration of the contentious dynamics associated to the development process.

6.2. Oppositions’ frames and rationales

This section explores the frames applied by the groups organising the protest campaigns and their underlying logics. Previously, this thesis has explored the fundamental rationales that underpin megaproject development. Here, the exercise is mirrored for the oppositional forces. Such an exercise enables us to understand the

⁴⁹ Meltxor (2015) connects this construction enterprise to the political party of the Basque Nationalists (PNV), exemplified in episodes such as the one of the *Artxanda* tunnels (Bilbao) that resulted in a debt transfer from the contractors to the provincial council of Vizcaya as the latter agreed to take over the private and indebted managing company.

⁵⁰ The practice of asking for commissions in exchange for contracts tendered by public administrations is confirmed by the former Basque president X. Arzalluz as quoted in Meltxor (2015).

articulation of the anti-growth coalitions, an essential component of the phenomenon under investigation, the governance of contested megaproject developments. For such a task, the section explores each case study separately, starting with the NLTL and then exploring the Basque Y.

In terms of the NLTL, the arguments endorsing a contrary position embrace a diversity of approaches not focusing on one single aspect or line of thought (Greyl, Sara Vegni, et al., 2013). In this particular case, the relevance of knowledge construction by the opposition lies in the fact that it enabled the disarticulation of the official narratives (Greyl et al., 2012) and so bolstered the opposition, particularly in its local dimension (della Porta and Piazza, 2008). The next paragraphs describe the main pillars of this multifaceted approach.

The initial themes to shape the opposition campaign revolved around environmental and health concerns. These environmental concerns included noise pollution; negative hydrogeological impacts; increased energy consumption; deforestation; and generation of 'rock waste' (Giunti et al., 2012; Greyl, Sara Vegni, et al., 2013). On the other hand, the implications for health referred to the evidence that the mountainous geology of the area contains uranium and asbestos (Giunti et al., 2012).

A third dimension of the oppositional logic referred to a myriad of economic aspects associated to the megaproject development. The opposition argued that, given the existing infrastructure service, the NLTL is unnecessary. This line of reasoning is based on the fact that the existing line has enough capacity for a significant increase in the amount of passenger and freight traffic. Even if the new line would shorten the travel time between the cities of Lyon and Turin, the expenditure involved is seen as unjustified considering its cost of opportunity (Berta and Manghi, 2006) and from a cost-benefit analysis logic (Giunti et al., 2012; Rizzi, 2015). In the same vein, the priority given to the HSR model entails a progressive abandonment of the conventional public and affordable railway system with negative implications for the majority of the population that use this service instead of the high-speed one (Cicconi et al., 2015).

The consolidation of the campaign led as well to a critique of the decision-making process. Hence, a fourth component of the opposition argumentation was formulated around the nature of the procedure followed to design and sanction the infrastructure. This was seen as exclusive and therefore not abiding with the standards required in the EU legislation and the Aarhus Convention; it was therefore considered undemocratic

and authoritarian (Permanent People's Tribunal, 2015). The movement demands the right for self-governance, with priority for those communities being directly affected by the megaproject (della Porta and Piazza, 2008). Furthermore, those communities protesting and campaigning against the megaproject, insofar as their appeals and initiatives have been ignored or neglected by both the Italian and the European authorities, identified the decision-making process as one of an exclusive nature (Algotino, 2016; Burnside-Lawry and Ariemma, 2015). This corresponded with the disregard of the dissent expressed by local administrations (Pepino and Revelli, 2012; Permanent People's Tribunal, 2015).

Turning to the Basque Y, in general terms, the opposition approaches are similar to the ones of the NLTL. The essential critiques that have been made from different perspectives are detailed and described in a series of works: the so-called "Bermejo report" (2004); Hoyos (2008); the activist publication "*TAV. Las Razones del No*" (HSR. Reasons for the No, in Spanish, 2009) and the compilation of articles Antiguiedad et al., (2016). As counter-arguments, they present four distinct themes that are analysed in the paragraphs that follow.

The first one is from a cost-benefit perspective. As an investment, the megaproject entails high risks from the perspective of the financial sustainability: the infrastructure requires an extraordinary investment that has little prospects of getting recouped. Furthermore, once it is completed and starts functioning, it is likely to be loss-making which will involve extra pressure on the public accounts (Antiguiedad et al., 2016; Bermejo, 2004; Hoyos, 2008).

Secondly, due to its notable dimension, the infrastructure will cause a high environmental impact on the Basque territories in terms of land movements; noise; hydrological impacts, especially on the aquifers; barrier effect; greenhouse emissions; erosion; loss of biodiversity; and, land consumption (Antiguiedad et al., 2016; Groome, 2009; Guillamón, 2009; Ibarra, 2009). In the same line of environmental critique, it will not promote sustainability in transport, as it will increase the use of transport means (which can never be categorised as sustainability improvement) and will have limited success in shifting users from car and plane to the high-speed train (Bermejo, 2004; Hoyos, 2008).

Thirdly, it constitutes a socially unjust investment, as it will foster a form of wealth redistribution that favours the upper-class social segments. In other words, HSR is a

type of transport designed for well-off users who can afford high-ticket prices that nonetheless are still subsidised with taxpayers' money. This ends up benefitting the upper social strata of the spectrum (Hoyos, 2008).

Fourthly, this mega-infrastructure will have a negative effect in terms of territorial cohesion, as the urban areas of middle size located between the province capitals and the additional stations will become less accessible, suffering from what is known as 'tunnel effect' and the resulting metropolisation/spatial polarisation process earlier mentioned (Antiguedad et al., 2016; Ibarra, 2009).

In conclusion, even if not totally convergent, the opposition logics present a number of parallels that suggest a robust elaboration of the counter-megaproject postulates. Without this knowledge construction, the opposition movements would have been unlikely to achieve the degree of popular mobilisation that they did get, at least in particular periods. This mobilisation resulted in the contentious dynamics that the next section examines by focusing on the nature of the protest movements and the different phases of these dynamics.

6.3. Anti-megaproject coalitions and conflict periodization

For a thorough comprehension of the selected case studies, it is relevant to account for the nature of the opposing movements as well as the dynamics of the conflict prompted by the action of these groups. The subsections compounding this part will characterise the opposition movements and describe different phases of these evolving conflicts. For more exhaustive accounts of the contentious dynamics and the nature of the protest movements a wide range of scholar and activist literature is available⁵¹. The section is subdivided in two parts that deal separately with each case study opposition movement and conflict dynamics.

⁵¹ For a general account on the nature of the conflict based on the different territorial perspectives of the parties see Bobbio & Dansero (2008); for the sociology and the heterogeneity of the NO TAV movement, see della Porta & Piazza (2008); for a further account of the conflict dynamics and an analysis of both parties' discourses and rationales see Greyl et al., (2013); for theoretical examinations of the NO TAV protest movement see Armano & Pittavino (2013) and Leonardi (2013). In terms of the Basque Y, for the involved contention see Alonso et al., (2014) and Calvo (2015) for a more thorough account on the relevance of the project within the socio-economy and politics of the Basque Country.

6.3.1. *The No Tav movement*

The No Tav⁵² movement developed as a heterogeneous social movement of opposition, binding together different local and regional sensibilities that were reluctant to accept the NLTL. Its origins are to be found in the local environmental association, the Habitat committee founded in 1990-91. As a result of environmental concerns, a series of individuals that had been previously involved in the opposition to a motorway and an electricity duct started to organise the opposition to the new HSR connection (della Porta and Piazza, 2008). The group carried out the task of knowledge gathering and subsequently communicated that knowledge locally in assemblies and public meetings; as an outcome, the first protest demonstrations were organised in the mid-1990s (Trocchia, 2009).

As the megaproject agenda consolidated in the early 2000s, the emergence of the no-global movement had an impact on the Italian radical subcultures and social movements, especially after the events of Genoa in 2001⁵³. In that context, the No Tav movement became notably influenced by individuals coming from these social sectors, in particular the whole movement linked to the autonomous groups set up by left-wing radical activists, for instance the Askatasuna and other squatted social centres (della Porta and Piazza, 2008).

By this time, the movement was establishing deep roots within the community of the Susa Valley and by extension, the Piedmont. The first local No Tav committees were established and the conflict started to intensify as they demonstrated that were capable to mobilise thousands (Pepino and Revelli, 2012). The consistence and robustness of the movement can be understood in many ways. A feasible one is to note the strength emanating from its three commonly identified fundamental pillars: the team of experts – including university professors from the Turin Polytechnic– providing the necessary counter-knowledge and expertise; representatives of the local institutions siding with the opposition; and the popular base fundamentally organised through citizens' committees and social centres which criss-crosses the social spectrum in terms of age, class, gender and ideology (it is illustrative to mention here that anarchist and autonomy militants do share participation in the movement with members of a local

⁵² TAV stands for High Speed Train in Italian.

⁵³ The events in Genoa 2001, when anti-globalisations protests were met with heavy-handed action by police forces (including the killing of one protester) were a watershed moment in Italy (and probably Europe) for a generation of activists (Mayer, 2007).

Catholic group and members of the Democratic Party) (Armano and Pittavino, 2013; Bartolo, 2013; Esposito and Foietta, 2012).

Beyond its composition and organisational strengths, it is also relevant to note the significant identity component that the movement developed; in other words the construction of a ‘we’, the No Tav people, to be understood as an autonomous political subject (Bartolo, 2012; Leonardi, 2013). This is the result of a two-decade-long process, whereby a protest community was established in which the everyday practice appears as important as specific events with high symbolic attributions. This symbolism appears to be constantly evoked by members of the movement in protests and social events⁵⁴, as it also was during the PPT session (WAA13). These major actions played a significant role in generating intricate bonds among the members and also for the identity-formation process. The relevance of this identity component is that it transcends the issue of megaproject opposition and therefore adds complexity to the opposition movement.

The No Tav movement basically consists of a unique socio-environmental movement born from the grass-roots that became well established in the local and regional society and transmitted across generations. One of the key of its success was to encourage debate beyond the specificities of the megaproject, focusing on the characteristics of the current model of development and societal organisation. In this way, from the critique to the megaproject, a critique to the model could be generated. As a mass movement, it can be inferred that it is well connected to the regional social fabric (through social centres, environmental organisations, citizens’ committees and radical unions), and has a flexible structure (the different committees enjoy a significant autonomy), a heterogeneous composition (age, class, ideology and gender) and a well-established rationale to back the oppositional stance.

Its trajectory has been conditioned by some of the challenges faced (evictions and relation with the public institutions), as well as the circumstantial socio-political dynamics (rise of the anti-globalisation movement, financial crisis and wave of social unrest). Regarding the conflict dynamics, these are summarised in table 6.1 and

⁵⁴ At rallies, people would chant “long live to the 3rd of July and the 27th of June”. This refers to the days of the eviction of “La Maddalena works-site”. In terms of social events, there have been anniversaries organised to commemorate the “battle of Seghino” (2005) where protesters reclaimed the works-site at the village of Venaus where today is located the permanent ‘garrison’ (Presidio) of Venaus.

divided into six different phases on the basis of a series of works (Algotino, 2011; Bartolo, 2013; della Porta and Piazza, 2008; Leonardi, 2013) and the author's interpretation of the most recent events.

Table 6.1. Periodization of the contentious dynamics in relation to the NLTL. Source: elaborated from Bartolo (2013); della Porta and Piazza (2008); Leonardi (2013); (Maggiolini, 2012); and the activist websites notav.info and presidioeuropa.net.

Phase	General description	Institutional response and activity
First: 1990s decade	Early articulation of the opposition movement with activist oriented research, information tasks and first actions of protest. The dominating themes included: environment, health and appropriateness in terms of transport demand and cost of the project.	Limited attention to the activist's demands. Avoiding giving relevance to the opposition activity.
Second: 2000- 2004	Consolidation of the movement. As the project started to take shape at the institutional level, the No Tav campaign consolidated with the involvement of new actors coming from different backgrounds than the first activist groups. The campaign extended regionally and nationally. New themes are incorporated into the campaign as a frame bridging process occurs with elements such as work, alternative development models and anti-globalisation.	Opening the possibility for compensations in exchange for accepting the project as previously done with the motorway. Yet some of the local communities were not enthusiastic about these offers because of bad experiences with similar issues in the past.
Third: 2005- 2006	First escalation. Intensification of the campaign and participation by the organised networks of the opposition. First attempts to conduct preliminary works and calls to reclaim spaces by the opposition result in the emergence of the " <i>presidi</i> " or garrisons, that is, spontaneous occupations of the construction sites by the activists. Discursively, it resulted in an enlargement in the critique of the project engaging in issues such as the perceived predatory model of development and the limits of the existing democracy. To this phase belong the Seghino events, a pivotal moment in the movement narrative: according to the activist narratives a crucial episode of resistance.	Use of the security forces to take over the sites for construction. The term militarisation started to be used by activists in this period to define the use of security forces in the valley during the winter 2005/6.

Fourth: 2006- 2008	Attempted de-escalation. Period characterised by the establishment of the Observatory ⁵⁵ and the Institutional Forum whereby dialogue between the parties is to some extent allowed, as the alternatives to the project and rationale are discussed and re-framed. To this period belongs the so-called agreement of Pracatinat, presented to the public opinion as the product of the consensus reached with the local institutions, but dubbed illegitimate by No Tav campaigners.	Attempts of mediation with local agents through the Observatory and the Institutional Forum. These bodies included representatives from a wide spectrum of stakeholders but were not trusted by many in the opposition. Besides, attempts of co-opting local actors can be identified in this period.
Fifth: 2009- 2013	Second escalation. As the mediation mechanisms implemented failed to persuade the bulk of the sectors mobilising against the project, under the pressure from the EU – that is, threats to withdraw the funding – the government decides to proceed despite the lack of consensus amongst local communities and institutions. The response from the opposition is to mobilise against the drilling tests and the start of the exploratory works with sabotages and occupations. The peak of the confrontation was reached in 2011 in the eviction of the occupied site “ <i>la Maddalena</i> ” and in 2012 with the mobilisations following the episode of a well-known local activist falling from a high-voltage pylon after being chased by the police.	Countering the opposition campaign through several means. This included the eviction of the main occupied site followed with other measures of repression and criminalisation of the opposition. This is illustrated by numerous clashes and arrests but also media campaigns. The most famous trial against the opposition known as <i>Maxi-Trial</i> (whereby over 50 activists were prosecuted) dates back to this period.
Sixth: 2013 to present	Excavation works proceed as the security forces protect the site works from the opposition. Though failing to achieve significant disruption to the progress of the megaproject works, the movement persists in the opposition campaign. In this task, an important part is to express solidarity with those affected by arrests, court procedures and fines and also keep the pressure on the multiple public institutions.	Consolidate the progress of the construction process by keeping the level of security in the worksite and start promoting the project to gain a greater level of legitimacy through engagement with local communities (e.g. guided tours, art exhibitions). Nowadays, project advocates emphasise the priority of completing the tunnel and the whole of the trans-border segment, leaving the other sections for future plans.

⁵⁵ The proliferation and expansion of the opposition that culminated in the events of 2005 pressured the authorities to take a different approach, shifting to a position that, in appearance, seemed open to mediation with the opposing groups, in particular local institutions. This was conducted mainly through two ad hoc bodies: the TAV Turin-Lyon Observatory and the Institutional Forum. Due to the lack of trust from the majority of the opposition movement (Greyl, Sara Vegni, et al., 2013) and its relatively limited autonomy, although it lasted more than similar previous initiatives, the Observatory had little success in the achievement of its ambitious objectives (Manfredi et al., 2015).

6.3.2. *The anti-HSR movement in the Basque Autonomous Community*

The mobilization process against the HSR project in the Basque Autonomous Community cannot be understood without considering the precedents of mass mobilization in the Basque territories against other megaprojects, in particular the cases of the Lemoiz nuclear plant and the highway of Leizaran (Diaz, 2012; Larrinaga, 2009; Zubiaga, 2009). The other important factor to consider is the national conflict in the Basque Country. In fact, both cases influenced, and in turn were influenced by, the collective action of the Basque national liberation movement (Estebaranz, 2008; Zubiaga, 2009). In this sense, the origins of the opposition to the HSR are to be found in a group that split from the platform that coordinated the opposition against the highway of Leizaran and formed the Assembly against HSR. At the time, as the project lacked clarification, there was limited expansion of the opposition.

Once the project was finally sanctioned in 2001, a number of organisations joined forces and formed the coordinating platform AHT *Gelditu Elkarlana* (Stop HSR). In addition to the early creation of an assembly with an anarchist/anti-industrial orientation, the newly created platform gathered the support from a wide range of groups: trade unions, political organisations (progressive and left-leaning) and neighbours' and environmental associations. The support from all these actors guaranteed considerable potential for the platform, as was observed in the first years of the construction process with important initiatives such as the local resistance gatherings and the (often) self-organised local consultations (Barcena, 2009; Larrinaga, 2009).

Yet, in contrast to the No Tav movement, in the Basque Country the opposition movement did not experience a subjectification process, and therefore could not acquire its own identity or become a relatively autonomous subject. It remained quite dependent on the support that it could gain from other actors, in particular from the Nationalist left, the agent with a more numerous militant base in the Basque Country. This contrast could also be due to the difficulties of having to organise a whole region against a project, while in Italy it was a single valley whose geographic characteristics are very specific with most of the towns being located at short distances, especially in the lower valley, facilitating communication and networking among its communities.

In the same vein, in terms of identity, the Nationalist left, as a movement well-connected to the grass-roots, tends to capture the main political identity. Other

identities could emerge, such as the anti-HSR one, but tend to be subsidiaries of the national-liberation identity; hence the difficulty to consolidate an autonomous subject to the national liberation movement. Further handicaps for the movement can be found in the intervention of ETA, as its role could have had an effect in dividing and/or demoralising part of the opposition movement (Barcena and Larrinaga, 2009a); or on the other hand, the fact that existing discourses within the opposition such as the anti-industrial one could hardly be assumed by a vast majority of Basque society (Barcena and Larrinaga, 2009b).

All in all, the movement formed around the Stop-HSR platform, although constituting a relevant force of opposition and mobilisation, and a significant exception in the Spanish context, remained highly dependent on activist sectors without transcending significantly to a larger fraction of citizenry as the No Tav movement in the Susa Valley did. Out of the existing literature on the conflict dynamics, a periodization of the latter can be established – with a relational perspective – noting four distinguished phases. This periodization considers both the trajectory of the movement and the institutional response as presented in table 6.2.

Table 6.2. Periodization of the contentious dynamics associated to the development of the Basque Y. Source: elaborated from Barcena and Larrinaga (eds.)(2009) and the activist platforms websites ahtgelditu.org and the website of the Assembly against HSR (sindominio.net/ahtez), currently not available.

Phase	General description	Institutional response and activity
First: 1990- 2000	This phase was characterised by the early articulation of the opposition with the creation of the first group against the Basque Y, the Assembly against HSR and the first elaboration of the rationale and argumentation for the opposition highly influenced by anti-industrial a deep ecology postulates.	No interest in engaging with the opposition. Attempts to progress with the planning, design and administrative process.
Second: 2001- 2005	As the project is finally approved, a unitary platform promoted by several social organisations and associations is created, AHT Gelditu (Stop HSR). The Bermejo Report (2004), a thorough critique of the rationale of the project and cornerstone of inspiration for the opposition, in particular the institutional one, belongs to this period. Attempts to discuss alternatives to the project by some parties, trade unions and a new platform demanding a socially profitable train.	Expression of contempt towards the opposition and also subtle measures to try to discourage engagement with the opposition. Mobilisation of civil society actors and public campaign to support the project.

Third: 2006- 2010	Escalation and intensification. As the works started, so did the mobilisation to stop them through a range of actions: street protests, site occupations, sabotage, road blockades and other type of civil disobedience actions along with other more symbolic initiatives such as local consultations on the project to foster participation. In the years of 2007 and 2008, ETA conducted five actions against HSR-related interests, contributing to an increase in the tensions. A lot of pressure was put on the activist platform. During this period, further elaboration of the anti-HSR argumentation was developed.	Response to the mobilisation through different means. Organisation of the opposition policing and also a criminalisation campaign against the opposition through the media; this was done in the context of ETA's actions, which enabled a certain legitimization of the repressive methods.
Fourth: 2011 to present day	Hints of exhaustion of the opposition campaign. As the activists and mobilised citizens were met with the repression from the state and observed the fast progress of the works, the level of mobilisation started to decline. Nonetheless, while the project is not completed, the opposition has been re-activating the campaign once a year, has produced new reports on the inappropriateness of completing the infrastructure and has tried to forge new alliances with other environmental grass-root groups and campaigns.	Monitoring the opposition with no need of serious intervention, but ensuring that the megaproject agenda is not challenged or disrupted through a series of mechanisms (e.g. blocking institutional initiatives seeking more transparency in the megaproject management; lobbying European institutions to gain extra funding given Spain's problems after the crisis).

6.4. Summary

The present chapter has explored three essential elements for a thorough comprehension of the governance process of contested megaprojects, namely the pro-megaproject coalition; the nature of the opposing movements and their rationales; and the conflictual dynamics that result. The central node of the coalitions formed in support of megaprojects, could be identified with the notion of regional alliance (Harvey, 2001) or territorial alliance (Brenner, 2004), which, in the selected cases consists basically of regional political and economic elites. Subsequently, in one way or another, these forge bonds with the national authorities and relevant entrepreneurial sectors such as the construction sector. This constitutes the basic pattern of action of the megaproject coalitions, identified in both case studies. Such power blocs must then advance and secure the construction process. This aspect will be analysed in the forthcoming chapters.

It is understood that part of the megaproject development process will consist in addressing their counterparts, i.e., the oppositional movements. On the fundamental aspects of these, this chapter has noted how they rely on the elaboration of a counter-argumentation. Criticisms of the two megaprojects developments are multifaceted and although not identical, they present similarities: issues such as the environment, the cost of opportunity and the usefulness of the development dominate the oppositions' discourses. They present a shared focus on aspects ranging from social and environmental impacts to the model of development and from spatial polarisation to the decision-making model that constrains local participation.

Due to the specificities of each case study, the nature and evolution of the oppositional movements is rather divergent. The common aspect lies in the challenge they posed to the developmental process. The unfolding contentious dynamics jeopardised the megaproject agenda and required a specific governance of the development process (e.g., bodies created ad hoc). Herein lies the interest of these case studies, identifying extraordinary patterns of governance for megaproject developments.

The contentious dynamics present patterns of convergence (the period of megaproject design and planning with incipient organisational groups and escalation) and divergence (for example, the period of relative calm when the Observatory is created, which has no equivalent in the Basque Y). In this sense and for the purposes of this research project, it should be noted that the fundamental shared element is the fact that the megaproject agenda is maintained in both cases and indeed shows hints of progression towards megaproject completion or partial completion. This constitutes an essential element of this thesis as it interrogates the power relations and mechanisms identified in governance processes of megaproject developments in contexts (partially) marked by considerable levels of opposition. In this vein, the forthcoming chapters present an interpretative analysis of how these power relations come into play in different dimensions of the governance processes to privilege the consolidation of the megaproject agenda.

CHAPTER 7. OPERATIONALISING MEGAPROJECT DEVELOPMENT PROCESSES: OVERARCHING FRAMEWORKS OF GOVERNANCE

The two previous chapters have practically illustrated multiple contextual factors with implications for megaproject development politics, and noted how the studied megaproject developments depend on different scalar levels of governance. In turn, the theoretical framework provided in Chapter 3 has set a platform for the analysis of the megaproject governance process under the current neoliberal hegemony (Munck, 2005; Rossi, 2017; Tickell and Peck, 2002) and the politico-economic and urban-spatial dynamics and practices that the latter produces. Accordingly, this chapter will attempt to analyse multiple arenas – legal, institutional, political, and ideological – in order to comprehend and identify the significance of the overarching frameworks of governance for megaproject developments. Interrogating this subject advances the thesis objective of documenting and theorising the governance arrangements that buttress megaproject developments.

For such a purpose, the present analysis will focus on teasing out the ways in which neoliberal discourses are embedded in the policy frameworks that advance megaproject developments. Discourses constitute one of the fundamental underpinning components of contemporary urban governance and policy (Brenner, 2004; Leitner and Sheppard, 2002; Peck et al., 2009; Sager, 2011). A second focus of the chapter aims at pinning down the type of practices that derive from this governance and policy overarching framework, given that neoliberalism extends to the urban governance arena “through explicit forms of political management and intervention and new modes of institution-building” (Tickell and Peck, 2002: 396). In sum, the analysis will try to account for its three most common manifestations: ideology, mode of governance and policy package (Steger and Roy, 2010).

To do so, the thesis examines how these are essentially oriented towards building social consensus and enhancing the legal and administrative framework to speed up the megaproject procurement process. In line with the theoretical premises explored in section 3.1, the undertaken analysis will draw on the critiques of urban policies under the influence of neoliberalism to comprehend these elements in the context of megaproject development governance. The analysis of the discerned discursive and governing techniques that give form to megaproject procurement processes assumes

the lens of urban critical research. Such a perspective, while examining the relation between capitalism and the associated processes that produce new spatial configurations (e.g. megaproject developments), takes into account situations of exclusion and marginalisation (Brenner et al., 2009) that exist within these processes. This involves incorporating critical narratives through what is defined as “activist knowledge” (Greyl et al., 2013; see also Chapter 4).

The findings of this chapter have been analysed in relation to the overarching governance frameworks, as contextualised in Chapters 5 and 6 that concern supranational, national and regional scales and also the ad hoc bodies operating in the procurement process. Following this, five key themes have been identified and subsequently used to structure the chapter. These themes include: the discursive and ideological input from the EU institutions; the promotion of competitive territories; the mobilisation of space to foster economic growth; new management policies along with a restructuration of the regulatory frameworks; and the role of what is defined as politics of consensus or post-politics.

In the initial paragraphs of each section, the themes are presented in relation to the theoretical premises and the context explored in Chapter 5 so as to pave the way for the empirical analysis. The first three sections are based on the official narratives (repeatedly alluded to by the opposition) emerging from the data relative to governmental reports, policy documents and publications produced by megaproject supporters, as well as from the interviews conducted with participants holding a pro-megaproject stance. These delineate the key discursive resources of the pro-megaproject agents. On the other hand, in the last two sections the official narrative is combined with the opposition one insofar as this contains practical references to their experiences on the procurement process. The chapter ends with a conclusion that reflects on the principal insights brought forward by each section.

7.1. Adherence to the EU framework of TEN-T

This section presents findings that highlight the discursive techniques supporting the selected projects in relation to the policies and ideology advanced by the EU. Chapter 5 has explored the roots and the rationale of the TEN-T initiative and the relation with the neoliberal paradigm behind marketization and commodification policies. In terms of transport policy, this involved promoting the integration of infrastructure networks

into the flows of global markets. Consistent with this goal, the European Commission promoted the TEN-T (Trans-European Networks of Transport⁵⁶) scheme for transport policy. Taking this into account, this section examines how, in both case studies, this scheme became one of the fundamental discursive references of the advocates of infrastructure development.

In the case of the NLTL, the importance of the EU support and the direct links with the ideology promoted by the EU institutions can be identified in both documents and interviews. Its ideological support has come mostly from public officials through technical volumes praising the worthiness of the NLTL such as the one with the title *HSR Yes. Data, numbers and motives for the construction of a fundamental project for Italy and Europe*⁵⁷. In one passage, it states: “[c]ross-border interconnections are the central strategic element of the EU, which has repeatedly reaffirmed, along with France and Italy, the importance of the East-West corridor and the Turin-Lyon crossing” (Esposito and Foietta, 2012:19). As earlier underlined, the inclusion of the project in one of the European corridors is one of the elements normally highlighted by its advocates. The point is reinforced in a second pro-NLTL volume which notes that even in a period of crisis, the EU institutions have not wavered in support for the infrastructure: “the Core Network Europe program [...] reiterated, in a period of economic crisis and global competition, the need for this design and the priority of the NLTL, identified as a key element within the ten priority European corridors” (Foietta and Rocca, 2013:15).

In addition to this, one of the public officials interviewed (P. Foietta⁵⁸) refers to the authority of the EU as a reputable power, underlining not only the relevance of the scheme but also the fact that the EU support for the project has been restated in recent times:

these assumptions [referring to the basic arguments that identify the project as necessary] have been repeatedly confirmed to say that the EU has chosen to finance, with 40% of the NLTL in 2013, with Connect ... Europe ... Network

⁵⁶ Policy initiative put forward by the EU in the mid-1990s to stimulate further connectivity between the existing transport networks in the EU territory.

⁵⁷ Translated from Italian.

⁵⁸ Government Extraordinary Commissioner (for the NLTL): government official designated (by the Parliament or the Cabinet) for urgent or extraordinary matters according the regulations stipulated in the law of the 23rd of August 1988/400. In this situation, those matters include the coordination of the tasks related to the realization of the NLTL.

Europe [refers to Connect Europe Facility scheme⁵⁹] ... and this was done in 2013. And the Connecting Europe Facility's choice to finance this over the period 2014-19 was made in 2015. So, they are not old choices, they are recent choices, some very recent ones (IAP2).

A last aspect to be noted with regard to the NLTL is the emphasis on particular notions, as explored in section 5.1, such as ‘corridor’, seen in the previous quotes but also a more symbolic one: ‘strategic’. This is the case with a government-produced communication document titled *HSR Turin-Lyon. Questions and Answers*:

“Cross-border interconnections are the central strategic element of the EU which has repeatedly reaffirmed, along with France and Italy, the importance of the East Corridor and the "Turin-Lyon" crossing section” (Office of the Premiership, 2012:1).

In these passages from governmental or governmental related sources, it emerges that the TEN-T initiative operates as an unavoidable frame of reference for national policy-making and as a consequence, constitutes a fundamental discursive instrument for those advocating megaproject development.

The same pattern can be identified in the Basque Y. The TEN-T initiative was early identified as a frame of reference for transport development in Europe and as such, regional Governments such as the Basque emphasised the need to follow its path, as in the words of J.V. Erauskin⁶⁰:

[o]ur commitment to participate in the Trans-European Networks of Transport is clear, it is a great opportunity to continue in the transport market, through the conversion of Basque Country-Aquitaine into a large multimodal logistics platform (Erauskin, 2001: 76).

This further consolidated as the project was taking shape. One of the earliest technical volumes to describe the project notes “the project belongs to one of the 14 infrastructure projects defined as priorities by the EU [in reference to the Essen summit of 1994]” (Basque Government, 2006). Likewise, N. Lopez de Guereñu⁶¹ emphasises how the project is inserted into a European overarching endeavour of continental construction:

⁵⁹ EU funding instrument to “promote growth, jobs and competitiveness through targeted infrastructure investment at European level” in the areas of energy, telecom and transport (<https://ec.europa.eu/inea/en/connecting-europe-facility>).

⁶⁰ Infrastructure transports director (Basque Government, 1999-2001).

⁶¹ Infrastructure and Public Works councillor (Basque Government, 2005-2009).

[t]his railway project has to do directly with the construction of Europe. The [Basque] "Y" is a link, the one with the highest added value, [...] of the projected high-speed rail axis of south-western Europe (Lopez de Guereñu, 2007: 21).

In this vein, a second technical volume published by the government restates the point that the development is a priority project for the EU, adding that: "its strategic position in the Corridor, converts it into a fundamental element in the 'key trans-border link' Vitoria-Dax" (Basque Government, 2012:38). In an interview with the researcher, A. Aiz⁶² stresses the importance of the TEN-T as a beacon for transport policy and highlights how the Basque Government appropriately identified this in its earlier stages:

with great success from my point of view and knowing that the projects of the trans-European networks were being backed, the Basque Government [took] the initiative [...] to start studies to examine the connection with Europe. And that's when the [Basque] Y appears [...]. We were already thinking about Europe; and those governments of the late 1980s, early 1990s, thought of Europe and took to Europe with the project of the [Basque] Y (IBP1).

In his view, the response from the EU was positive, as the project was included in the already mentioned corridor. In the words of the Transport Deputy Minister: "Europe [referring to the EU institutions] understands it perfectly [...] [t]he reality is that this project is translated into project number 3: Atlantic connection Madrid-Valladolid-Vitoria-Dax" (IBP1).

These findings highlight how the EU framework of the TEN-T is embedded in the proponents' narrative. What is more, they use it as a discursive imaginary, in which the significant Europe is used to represent the EU and a specific set of policies to follow if countries and regions are to achieve prosperity and not lag behind other territories. Through a Gramscian lens, it can be seen that the ideological stance with respect to infrastructure policy-making (enhance connectivity between territories and therefore market exchange of goods) is presented as common sense so that it can be internalised by the larger citizenry, prompting enough consent on the issue (Gramsci, 1999; Ledwith, 2011). Simply put, the national infrastructure policy conforms to the EU policy and offers a platform for economic growth, where references to the EU perform the role of giving further strength to the argument. These continuous references verify the reescalation of political power experienced by the EU state members (Leitner and

⁶² Basque Government's Transport Deputy Minister.

Sheppard, 2002). In turn, the use of strategic significance within the discourse chimes with a recurring *modus operandi* by developers when explaining urban developments to the general public so as to shape a common sense. It is not unusual to present development projects using health terminology (e.g. revitalise the city centre), preventing a discussion on the potential alternatives, to the extent that they are perceived as the voice of common sense (Short, 1999).

According to the findings examined in this section, this noted common sense grounds consent on the basis of the EU guidelines on transport policy. On the other hand, it is associated with specific terms such as “strategic”, “competitiveness” and “economic growth” that reinforce this consent-manufacturing process as they are linked to a shared social aspiration for economic development and progress. In these two cases, the key element embodying this common sense is the TEN-T initiative, to which member states must adhere if they intend to encourage these shared aspirations – putting potential opposition discourses in a difficult position.

Furthering on the examination of discursive techniques, the two following sections will analyse findings focusing on these themes configuring the pro-megaproject common sense and its relation to principles of the neoliberal ideology. The first theme selected is competitiveness.

7.2. High capacity (and speed) railways: aiming for competitiveness

This section will focus on the notion of competitiveness as this has been identified as a central theme in the megaproject proponents’ narratives, following the adherence of the proponents to the EU policy framework. To begin with, the following paragraph sets the linkages of the term in accordance with the thesis’ theoretical elaboration and the context and politics of megaprojects as explored in the previous chapters. The section goes on to present the findings from the collected data that illustrate the centrality of competitiveness within this particular type of endeavour.

As outlined in Chapter 2, competitiveness is one of the fundamental underpinning motives of the megaproject development rationale, in particular for transport infrastructure (Flyvbjerg, 2014). Likewise, the quest for competitiveness by cities and territories is a major facet of the urban policies implemented in line with the neoliberal paradigm (Brenner 2003; Brenner and Theodore, 2002; see also Chapter 3); this encompasses a number of policy-making areas, among them the plans for new

infrastructure developments. In turn, Chapter 5 has explored how the emergence of the overarching EU infrastructure policy framework (the TEN-T) went hand in hand with the adoption and promotion of neoliberal policies by the EU in the 1990s (Milios, 2005).

With reference to the EU policy framework, it is necessary to illustrate the importance of this notion for policy-making and how it is then intertwined with infrastructure planning. As a matter of fact, competitiveness appears as one of the strategic goals in EU policy according to the 1993 White Paper *Growth, competitiveness, employment – The challenges and ways forward into the 21st century*. As the title indicates, it is connected with two other identified key goals: growth and employment. The paper states that: “competitiveness, growth and employment are closely interrelated and have been for some time” (Commission of the European Communities, 1993: 9).

The same paper then connects the goal of competitiveness with the construction of the appropriate infrastructure when it says that: “[c]reating the major European infrastructure networks” is one of the priorities that “hold[s] the key to enhanced competitiveness and will enable us to exploit technical progress in the interests of employment and an improvement in living conditions” (Commission of the European Communities, 1993:21). Here, the relationship between the elite-promoted policies in search of growth and competitiveness and the developmental strategies embodied by urban megaprojects (Swyngedouw et al., 2002) can be identified, as well as the connection with neoliberal discourses that put an emphasis on these terms (Brenner, 2004).

The question of competitiveness, for the NLTL case study, appears as an overarching goal in connection to growth and economic development, one which can be partially achieved by upgrading infrastructures in line with EU policies. On this point, a governmental document reads:

[g]rowth and economic development are also achieved through the creation of a favourable environment for the competitiveness of businesses and therefore require the provision of adequate material infrastructures [...].The east-west corridor, of which the Turin-Lyon section is a key component, is therefore a strategic investment for the future of our country in terms of greater competitiveness (Office of the Premiership, 2012: 1).

Furthermore, it also emerges in relation to the old railway that the opposition claims to be sufficient for the current and foreseen traffic. According to the Extraordinary Commissioner⁶³ (Foietta, 2016:1), the new railway development is necessary because the old line is no longer compatible with the market requirements:

Frejus' old line has been almost completely abandoned by traffic and railway operators over the last few years due to 'performance' problems on the line, which make it currently incompatible with market demands.

In an interview with the researcher, he further emphasises this aspect: “the historic line is a dead line; but a dead line because it is now outdated by the standards and demands of freight traffic and passengers” (IAP2).

In the same vein of emphasising enhanced competitiveness, the former president of the Lyon-Turin Observatory and current CEO of *Tunnel Euroalpin Lyon Turin*⁶⁴ observes that the construction of a new station in the valley, and its subsequent integration into the European network, will entail a boost for the competitiveness of the area:

with its international station, [the valley] will be located on the European primary network, thus gaining a significant competitive advantage not only for its tourism, but [...] for investment opportunities in the area (Virano, 2013: 8).

As with the NLTL project, competitiveness is one of the flagship themes compounding the narratives that defend the worthiness of the Basque Y. A government-sponsored book contains references to the target of competitiveness:

it seems clear that the revitalisation of railway and maritime transport as modes forming a structural axis for the traffic of goods, seems an inescapable challenge for the whole of Europe if we really want to create a more sustainable and competitive transport mode (Basque Government, 2012: 15).

This recalls the notion of the corridor, also linked to competitiveness: “[t]he creation of an authentic Atlantic corridor which hinges on railways and ports and that offers a competitive alternative to road transport for medium and long journeys is particularly necessary for the Basque Country” (Basque Government, 2012:15). Furthermore, the link between EU policy and the quest for competitiveness can be clearly identified:

⁶³ See footnote 57.

⁶⁴ The public society participated by Italian and French public railway agencies in charge of the construction process.

[t]he plan for the new network falls within the framework of the European Transport Policy, which gives a major boost to the railway system in order to increase its competitiveness in comparison with the other modes of transport (Basque Government, 2012: 38).

Similar elaborations can be found in statements from public officials where the business-friendly nature of the infrastructure, due to its insertion in the EU framework, is also highlighted:

[r]emaining outside of the European train axes would have been a failure for our businesses and for our economic growth. That's why we have worked so intensely for Europe to recognise us as a territory of primary importance, something, which this Basque Government, along with its friends in the Aquitaine Government, have achieved. This is about an unequivocal commitment to competitiveness (E. Gasco⁶⁵ quoted in Basque Government, 2012: 9).

Finally, in an interview with the researcher, a Member of the Basque Parliament brings to the fore the urgency of not falling behind in the competition with other territories and the problems that the delay in the project is causing in terms of competitiveness loss. He makes these remarks when commenting on the studies that question the economic viability of the project:

You have to do those studies, they are fine, but you have to see the value they have; [...] or if you want to go to multi-criteria analysis, that is to say economically this is so but then there are other values, territorial cohesion, and so on ... and not lose the track of competition with other territories [...] which would mean, the cost of not intervening, if we do nothing, if we do not do the HS line, what will this entail for our companies? (IBP2).

The findings presented in this subsection show how competitiveness, in line with the neoliberal doctrine, is one of the fundamental themes utilised by the megaproject advocates as a discursive resource. Given the post-1980s urban governance context, competitiveness appears in the form of what Brenner (2004) calls 'territorial competitiveness' which is essentially put into practice through location policies. These aim to enhance the potential for competition of a given territorial unit "in relation to broader, supranational circuits of capital accumulation" (Brenner 2003: 203). In this case, the vehicle to ensure this envisaged competitiveness is the TEN-T to which both megaprojects are circumscribed in accordance to the EU framework.

⁶⁵ Former Vice-Councillor of Public Works and Transport for the Basque Government (2009-12).

To further the argument, competition is here presented as being in the interests of both capital and workers –it will stimulate employment and economic development while it will connect the region and the country with global circuits of accumulation. The underlying win-win component can be traced to a fundamental premise of neoliberalism which contends that the “role of government was to create a good business climate” (Harvey, 2005a: 48). Once enterprises set in, wealth will automatically spread through a “trickle down” effect (Johnston, 2005); in the selected cases, a good business climate could be achieved by upgrading the existing infrastructure through the envisaged megaprojects. Thus the neoliberal ideology is inserted into the pro-megaproject common sense. Following on the theme of economic development, the next subsection turns to the question of growth in relation to infrastructure building, insofar as it also emerges from the EU discourse on infrastructure policy as it was framed in the 1990s.

7.3. New transport infrastructure to promote (economic) growth?

As previously stated, growth is another of the key components in the EU White Paper on policy. Economic growth or development, probably to a lesser extent than competitiveness, is another of the cornerstones used by transport megaproject advocates to justify the high sums of funding required. On the contrary, oppositional networks argue that these types of megaprojects tend to be anything but economically profitable (see the reasoning for each case study in Chapter 6). This section will examine to what extent the pro-megaproject narrative is underpinned by a rhetoric of economic growth despite the warnings from non-partisan actors on its loss-making potential (for HSR see Betancor and Llobet, 2015), or the associated uncertainties around wider economic impacts (Vickerman, 2013). In fact, some go as far as to state that any HSR investment should be based on the impact of the future project as a mode of transport (e.g. airplane substitution), and not on the basis of economic growth and development expectations, because these are uncertain effects (Givoni, 2006). Yet when these projects are brought to the fore, it is done in the pursuit of development and economic growth. Thus it shall be noted how this premise contributes to reinforce the pro-megaproject discourse, and the way it reverberates with the hegemonic neoliberal project (as a theme emerging from the analytical process). To start with, discussions on the cost-benefit evaluations are presented, while a second part of the section analyses the overarching economic discourse associated with megaprojects.

For the Basque Y, transport economists G. Bel and D. Hoyos state in a recent report that:

taking into account the specific characteristics of the Basque Y project (that is higher construction costs and low demand), we can say that this investment will not be socially or financially profitable and will also be loss-making in its commercial exploitation (Antiguedad et al., 2016: 17).

In that respect, megaproject advocates acknowledge that they are not in the position to present evidence on the profit-making character of the planned megaproject. In contrast, they rely on the assessments made by the EU to give credibility to the investment:

[t]here has never been a cost-benefit analysis (CBA henceforth) in relation to an infrastructure whose life cycle is greater than a century. This is the CBA that would have to be done for the [Basque] Y. It has not been done; it will be done some day. But all the analyses that have been done by the EU give ratios of sufficient socioeconomic profitability according to [their] criteria, because if not, we would not be obtaining the European funds (IBP)⁶⁶.

The same question is also reflected in the refusal by the Basque Parliament to elaborate a CBA, as proposed by *EH Bildu*. The document presented by the Basque Nationalists (PNV) in response, apart from emphasising the importance of completing the project and rejecting the possibility of carrying out a CBA, asks for the studies elaborated by the EU to be handed to the Basque Parliament:

[t]he Basque Parliament requests to the DG of Mobility of the European Commission to forward to this Basque Parliament a copy of the CBAs and other economic and / or financial studies relating to the new trans-European rail network Madrid-Vitoria-Dax (Motion for the rejection of the Non Law Proposition about the elaboration of a CBA for the HSR project, 2015).

In sum, with respect to the Basque Y, the evidence shows how national authorities did not elaborate a CBA to assess the potential profitability of the project, instead relying on the criteria of the EU authorities to allocate funding (even if on the whole the direct EU contribution is considerably low).

⁶⁶ On this matter it should be said that, considering the different predictions in terms of the final cost (6 billion to 10 billion), the funding of the EU only represents a range between 5.8% and 9.6% of the total cost of the project. Thus, the responsibility for proper economic assessment should be attributed to the Basque and Spanish authorities, the main funders of the project.

Unlike in the Basque Y, for the NLTL, a CBA was effectively produced by the governmental mediation-oriented body, the Lyon Turin Observatory⁶⁷ (2011: 29) which states that “the final result for the NLTL is positive”. Nonetheless, in an interview with the researcher, an expert from the Turin Polytechnic questions the interpretation of the results⁶⁸ presented, given that a private investor would have never opted for a go-ahead:

They still made a formal CBA during the second phase of the Observatory because it was a criticism we were making ‘there is no CBA, there is none ... you have to do it before deciding, not after deciding’. It took a while for them to release it as the numbers did not add up. Then they published it, the one that has been published suggests a marginal convenience, that is, one of those situations that in entrepreneurship or in the book of investment finances, etc., is considered such as not to invest. You have to have a convenience that has reasonable chance to happen to invest [...]. They managed to make sure that it was not red [negative] in anticipation but marginally active. Yet if one uses private money, the private does not make the investment in these conditions (IAA5).

These findings suggest that it is unlikely that under conventional CBA assessment this type of megaproject development could be supported (and yet they obtain the go-ahead); most likely because they are linked to political decisions that transcend this logic (Peters, 2003). In contrast, they turn out to be justified following other rationales that go beyond the profitability issue, such as connectivity and spatial integration, an alleged positive regional economic effect and/or suitability of this mode of transport for environmental reasons. Nonetheless, beyond the specific profitability of the projects as a single entity, a component of their legitimation comes also from the alleged wider economic effects. Given this and having earlier analysed the theme of competitiveness, how do the promoters address the aspect of growth and economic development with regard to these two projects?

For the NLTL, the question of growth emerges in several contexts. Firstly, is used to counter the degrowth argument with which the opposition is associated. The advocates of the megaproject maintain that without growth it is not possible to redistribute wealth; therefore, jeopardising the possibility of economic growth (that is, opposing infrastructures such as the NLTL) will have negative consequences in the future for the

⁶⁷ See also Chapter 5.

⁶⁸ Coinciding with the arguments put forward by the institutional opposition (Comunità Montana Valle Susa e Val Sangone, 2012)

general interest and welfare (Foietta and Rocca, 2013). The same authors go on to say that “it is not about how to eliminate or reduce growth, but on what basis to build it and with what criteria to use it and redistribute it” (Foietta and Rocca, 2013: 21). So, even if it not directly stated that the infrastructure will generate growth, what can be inferred from these contributions is that it will help to generate the conditions from which economic growth is to occur, while dismissing it will create barriers to such growth.

Secondly, the proponents’ view is that economic growth as such appears inextricably associated to the elements of competitiveness and job creation with reference to the same EU White Paper (1993). The advanced narrative seems to assume that caring for competitiveness and employment (through the construction works) should automatically result in economic growth. This can be seen in the first pro-HSR volume, written by two prominent political figures supporting the project: “[g]rowth and economic development are also realized through the creation of a favourable environment for the competitiveness of businesses and therefore require the realization of adequate material infrastructures” (Esposito and Foietta, 2012: 118). Furthermore, its supporters resort also to the argument of the amplifying effect over the regional area, as noted in the comment of one interviewee linked to the group TAV SI (HSR YES): “[the NLTL] could be an opportunity to relaunch the economy [...] thanks to the infrastructure investments and the benefits that these new infrastructures will bring” (IAP5). Thus the support from the European Commission (2011) as they assert that aside from the connectivity aspect, the project will be: “contributing to Europe's economic growth”.

To complement this relatively vague view of its effects, the pro-megaproject narratives take then to the short-term, using the issue of employment. They argue that the megaproject will have a positive effect in this regard at a moment when job creation is much needed in the area:

[t]he situation in the valley is worrying [...] an unstoppable local industrial crisis that involves a whole range of productive sectors as well as services [...] the works-site [...] today employs more than a hundred people every day (Foietta and Rocca, 2013: 21-22).

This type of reasoning appeared also in the previous book that praised the megaproject TAV SI:

“[the construction works] mean another 1,500 jobs in a Susa Valley experiencing a deep economic and employment crisis. The works will constitute a great opportunity for [...] the economic activity of these territories” (Esposito and Foietta, 2012: 57).

The next paragraphs turn now to examine the same question for the Basque Y. References to economic growth appear in the form of pre-given assumptions in addition to the short-term argument of job creation, in particular given the context of economic crisis. The words of the former Basque president Patxi Lopez (quoted in *Diario Vasco*, 2010: 2) epitomise this two-fold discourse of job creation in the short term and economic development for the mid/long-term:

[The project] contributes to the generation of wealth through the creation of direct and indirect employment. This is the most important investment [...] capable of generating thousands of direct and indirect jobs during its construction.

He then adds:

“[i]n short, we are convinced that the new network will have positive effects on the economy by improving connections in the interior [of the Basque Country] and with the rest of Spain and Europe” (quoted in *Diario Vasco*, 2010: 2).

In the same vein, former Basque Government vice-president Jon Azua contends that: “[t]he Basque Y offers an extraordinary opportunity for economic growth and well-being. Beyond the capital endowment it entails, it makes it possible to trigger and/or accelerate new [economic] activities (Azua, 2007: 11). The same view is advanced by other governmental figures that emphasise job creation. A former transport vice-councillor of the Basque Government states that the Basque Y investment will “generate jobs, economic wealth and higher fiscal revenues” (quoted in *Diario Vasco*, 2010: 9), two years later adding that the megaproject “is already the engine of the Basque economy since only during its construction has been able to generate 5,000 jobs” (quoted in ETS, 2012).

Beyond the governmental actors, other agents adhere to the discourse of economic progress while defending its realisation. This is illustrated, for instance, by a scholar analysing the political economy around the project, who contends that the Basque Y “offers new types of connectivity [...] and could be a profitable business” (Calvo, 2015:18). Likewise, a representative of the Basque chambers of commerce underlines the crucial importance of the project as being an “infrastructure around which the

economy and growth in our near future will revolve" (quoted in Europa Press, 2012). Finally, in a dossier published by the media, the only positive economic effect outlined in one page (Diario Vasco, 2010: 8) that summarises the positive impacts of the project states: "Economic development advantages: HSR [project] will generate 7,000 jobs during the construction works".

In terms of justifying and legitimising the project, the narrative promoted through the different available means on the positive-economic-effect assumption, has the potential to create a common sense. It therefore strengthens the outlook of the megaproject developments, facilitating a consensus, the manifestations of which will be subsequently explored (see e.g., surveys where the broad majority believe the Basque Y will have positive effects on the economy⁶⁹ or the ones for the NLTTL carried out in locations outside the Susa Valley where the project was supported⁷⁰).

On the other hand, the evidence denotes a contradiction in the pro-megaproject narrative: while the profit-making character of megaprojects remains contested as it lacks conclusive evidence, their advocates align with optimistic views on its contribution to economic development. If, as previously stated, the neoliberal logic contends the need to stick to an econometric approach, meaning that running entities should be profit-making (MacEwan, 2005; Sinha, 2005), a contradiction emerges from this perspective because of this lack of conclusive evidence. A further interpretive component should be added to comprehend the match between neoliberalisation and these particular megaprojects.

Following the previous analysis, it can be claimed that the pro-megaproject discursive techniques endorse neoliberal ideology through the elements of business opportunity and market connectivity, but also job creation. The latter can exert a disciplining effect (Benjamin, 2010; Tickell and Peck, 2002) on factions of the organised workforce, especially in post-industrial and crisis contexts (note the acceptance of the project by some trade unions in contrast to the oppositional stance taken by more radical ones). Meanwhile, the former resonate with the dominant accumulation strategies in the respective regions (infrastructure development, access to new markets, mobility/tourism and real estate development with the new stations). This is not

⁶⁹ See Gabinete de Prospección Sociológica (2013), section "Effects on the Basque Economy".

⁷⁰ See Bobbio & Dansero (2008).

inconsistent with neoliberal policies insofar as state intervention is actually welcomed provided that aims at creating a good business climate and market expansion (Harvey, 2005a; Munck, 2005) or at improving “the infrastructure and policy environment for international as well as local capital” (Jessop, 2002a: 467).

To conclude, this section has examined the neoliberal component of the economic discourses legitimising these megaproject developments. It has been noted how, despite the contradiction with regard to the non-strict econometric approach, the discourse seeks complicities with the potential workforce in a disciplining move, and at the same time provides a new horizon for the consolidation of on-going accumulation strategies. After examining the neoliberal-related components of the pro-megaproject narrative, the next section moves on to the subject of governance techniques. This involves examining the regulatory frameworks arranged in connection to the procurement processes of the selected megaproject developments and teasing out whether these relate back to the neoliberal doctrine.

7.4. Management and procurement initiatives accompanying megaprojects

Chapter 3 has explored how the neoliberalisation process has potentially influenced urban governance and consequently spatial dynamics. One of the elements brought to the fore was the existence of creative moments whereby new regulatory frameworks are incorporated in to the institutional body, which tends to translate, in practice, into less inclusive and participative decision-making processes. As highlighted in Chapter 5, a recurrent claim made by the opposition movements is the lack of participation in those supposedly democratic processes of decision-making. This section will explore how this aspect is manifested in the examined case studies, focusing on applicable legal instruments and approval procedures.

In the NLTL case study, a paramount legal instrument utilised by the authorities was the Objective Law (443/2001) which contemplates the proceedings to follow and the funding modalities for a series of infrastructure projects (Pucci, 2015; Saporito and Ciaffi, 2013). The essence of this law was to ease the administrative processes for identified key projects and infrastructures, with the ultimate objective of removing obstacles for economic activity. One of its fundamental characteristics was to concede more power to the national authority and withdraw it from regions and local councils, thus reducing opportunities for debate (Schepis, 2013). This law was passed in 2001, a

crucial year in the timeline of the project, given that it is the year when the first treaty between France and Italy for the realisation of the NLTL was signed. One of its passages states:

Assignment to the CIPE⁷¹, supplemented by the presidents of the regions concerned, the task of evaluating promoters' proposals, approving the preliminary and final project (art. 2c).

The central role in the procurement process is consequently assigned to this inter-ministerial committee that depends upon the national authority. This is a move toward placing certain affairs into the control of a reduced technocratic elite body, leaving aside broader sectors of the larger citizenry, a common trend observed in neoliberal restructuring processes (MacEwan, 2005). All in all, not only was the planning and designing process not participative, but it also relied on a legal instrument that foreclosed the participation and objection of local and regional institutions.

The opposition that built up in the area forced the government to reconsider its approach to the issue (Armano and Pittavino, 2013; Marincioni and Appiotti, 2009; see also Chapter 6). Had this opposition not succeeded in the mobilisation process – supported to some extent by the local institutions– the project would have gone ahead according to the provisions made by the Objective Law (that is, excluding local and regional authorities and accommodating the process through a less demanding environmental impact assessment). However, as a result of the opposition mobilisation, the project was then withdrawn from the framework of the law. This resulted in the establishment of mediating bodies such as the already mentioned Observatory (Marincioni and Appiotti, 2009). In other words, the procurement procedures established by the Objective Law were *de facto* not applicable in the NLTL project after 2005.

Yet, it seems that the authorities were not satisfied with the way the newly established procedure was progressing and so the NLTL was re-inserted into the Objective Law framework (Cicconi et al., 2015) and also in a new piece of legislation elaborated by the government –a decree with the force of law, 133/2014, also known as ‘Unblock Italy’– as one of the strategic projects to be supported. This support basically consisted of the availability of extra funding and the acceleration of administrative processes,

⁷¹ Comitato Interministeriale per la Programmazione Economica (Inter-ministerial Committee for Economic Planning in English).

mirroring to some extent the purposes of the Objective Law. This fact is stressed by a former magistrate and member of the Counter-Observatory⁷²:

[t]hen a decree was approved 3 years ago, the Decree called Unblock Italy which has a general scope but also concerns the subject matter of large works and assumes all the methodologies of the Objective Law (IAA10).

The observed outcome is that, since the authorities failed to generate a new consensus of general acceptance of the HSR infrastructure, even with the mediation body and the modifications to the initial project, there was a return to exclusive procedures. These exclusive procedures constitute the type of regulatory frameworks that neoliberal urban governance requires to thrive, entailing a limitation of democratic power (MacEwan, 2005), in this case avoiding not only the direct participation of citizens, but also excluding local and regional units of power⁷³.

The Basque Y, unlike the NLTL, did not fall into the exceptional procedures established by a specific law. According to critical approaches, an exceptional law was not necessary because the ordinary procurement process for large public-works is established in such a way that the objections presented in the legal procedure will hardly ever constitute a significant challenge. To illustrate this, the analysis draws on accounts on the participation potential given the established framework, and also on an initiative taken by the government with respect to citizen participation.

To start with, the foundational manifesto of the platform opposing to the Basque Y mentions how the objections presented were ignored:

[m]any groups and organizations have shown their disagreement and criticism of the project through the narrow and meagre means of the public objections process, specifically amounting for a total of 1600, but all were rejected without proper justification (AHT Gelditu Elkarlana, 2001).

In the same vein, the individual in charge of the objections procedures in the political party of the United Left explains how a project can seldom be affected by the objections presented by the public:

⁷² Susa Valley Counter-Observatory: civil society organisation formed in 2013 after an appeal from social groups and individuals against the coercion over the NLTL opposition with the aim of countering this trend and open “new windows of democracy” (<http://www.controsservatoriovalsusa.org/chi-siamo>).

⁷³ As Saporito & Ciaffi (2013) note, this exclusion of powers had also been reinforced through several modifications of the law (1990/241) that regulates the so-called Service Conferences (Conferenze di Servizi, in Italian) entities whereby the different levels of administration can discuss the advisability of projects. These modifications enable a speeding up of the procurement process.

So, has there been participation? You could present objections. But another thing is that the objections you make to the projects end where they end. Because to see, I have made objections to different projects and some have not answered me [...] There are different projects to which you present objections and then they make a general reply saying ‘this does not apply, full stop’. I believe that there is not enough will to listen [...] I have only seen once that some objections have been useful [he explains a particular case whereby a report received over 3000 objections and had to be rewritten] (IBA13).

Beyond the limited scope for objection in the formal legal procedures, the Basque Government was aware of the existing critique around lack of participation (Alonso et al., 2014). As a consequence, they decided to launch a website (euskalyvasca.com) which could furnish the process with “active participation”, according to the Basque premier at the time, J.J. Ibarretxe (quoted in Garcia, 2006). As a scholar in communication recalls:

When Ibarretxe [former Basque president] presented that informative website about the HSR, it was done in the Euskalduna [congress centre] turning into something of marketing and performance politics. Why? Because I think he was realizing that there was no information about it and this was generating what was generating [meaning contestation] (IBA5).

As inferred from these observations, the website can be understood as a self-serving instrument to legitimate the project rather than a forum for discussion or participation. At the time, it indeed offered a series of options –including the opportunity to ask questions of the authority– and governmental elaborated information provided details of the project. To the present date, there are three questions uploaded; these refer to issues such as the exact route of the project, the number of stations or the administrative process with regard expropriation. The perception, as expressed by the mayor of one small town, is that the decision is predetermined and then the government has to find the means to justify and/or legitimise it, and the website is one of these means:

when the Basque Government decides to make a super-port, or decides to set up a thermal power plant or decides, I do not know what, it has already been decided, it has already been discussed where they had to discuss it, then [what the government does] it tries to justify it a posteriori; then that justification could be well formulated or they can go and put web pages like that which is rubbish (IBA8).

While in the NLTL, authorities set up the Observatory, the Basque Y saw the arrangement of the website. Despite the differences, in both cases the initiatives were presented as important accompanying measures to encourage the dissemination of

further knowledge on the projects, as well as to foster participation. It could be argued that this falls into what is referred to as “the neoliberal rhetoric for participation” (Munck, 2005: 68), as it has been verified that none of the entities were eager to accept framings that challenged the project as a whole, nor would they have compromised with fundamental changes. Instead, these instruments could have conferred the project with a more participative appearance as a form of legitimation.

To sum up the findings of this section, the processes and regulatory frameworks governing the two megaprojects differ in the sense that for the NLTL, new mechanisms and pieces of relevant legislation were passed while this is not the case for the Basque Y, which appeared not to require any extraordinary regulation to facilitate the project beyond the formally established frameworks and the approval of the project. Despite the diverging conditions, the results converge: the megaproject plans cannot be challenged through the established institutional means and the scope for objection is significantly constrained, corroborating that democratic procedures are “increasingly squeezed into irrelevance by the competitive discipline of neoliberalisation” (Purcell, 2011: 47).

The findings show that the megaproject procurement process is organised in a way that can react to opposition claims: not to incorporate relevant demands to the process, but to shape it in such a way that further legitimacy can be claimed. The legitimised character of the megaproject is a key component for the whole process. It turns out that this is not only generated through dubious participatory measures, but also prefigured through the consolidation of a consensus politics society. It is to this consensus politics that the next section turns.

7.5. Consensus (politics) on megaproject decision-making

A further component of neoliberal urban governance, as identified in Chapter 3, is the prevention of meaningful debates. The allowed spaces for debate are constrained to what can be referred as official knowledge and/or expertise. Discourses revolve around “consensus, agreement, accountancy metrics and technocratic environmental management” (Swyngedouw, 2009: 604) barely allowing the penetration of dissenting approaches. On the other hand, this foreclosure on the penetration of alternative views eases the ground for powerful or elite groups to take “control over the consensus-seeking/ideological discourse” so that they are able to devise “hegemonic development strategies” (Lauria, 1999: 138).

With regard to large public works, these strategies can be enacted in different ways. On the one hand, the existing social consensus can be linked with a particular (quasi-hegemonic) notion of progress, embodied in a developmental ideology (Peet and Watts, 1996) or value-free growth ideology (Troutman, 2004), which would essentially maintain, simply put, that every single new infrastructure (or urban developmental project) is positive because it contributes to social and economic development. On the other hand, consensus politics would be shaped by excluding ‘outsider’ views from official debates and deliberative organisms or, if it is not possible to directly exclude them, trying to limit their influence. Common modus operandi in these cases would be to avoid an overt confrontation of ideas and rationales, expressing contempt for dissidence or questioning the legitimacy of the postulates defended by the “outsiders”. The analysis carried out in this section will explore how these different forms of consensus can be distinguished in regard to both case studies. The following paragraphs examine firstly, the potential grounds to argue for a pre-existing consensus, and secondly, the foreclosure of debate.

In order to grasp the potential consensus for the Basque Y, and following the contextual notes contained in Chapter 5, it should be understood that Spain, and therefore also the Basque Country, was immersed from the late 1990s in a housing and infrastructure boom. More importantly, one of the main state-sponsored projects of the time was the expansion of the HSR network (Audikana, 2009). From that perspective, and considering that the infrastructure boom was to some extent presented as economic development, the wide majority of the population – and to some extent the decision-makers – would have internalised this strategy, one that fosters modernisation in addition to the assumed positive effects for the economy. This type of logic is well characterised in one activist publication discussing infrastructure policies in Spain:

There is also a general consensus that [the construction of] transport infrastructure generates wealth, jobs and great benefits to society. According to this prevailing political and social agreement, better and faster means of transport entail better access to markets and, therefore, more business opportunities. The time saved in travel translates into money saved for economic activity, better conditions for companies and more employment.

The construction of infrastructures is presented, then, as the engine of the economy that everyone demands in order not to be left behind in the process of modernization and economic development. This association is so unquestionable that the information studies of the different infrastructures often do not bother to justify their need, or they do it without rigor, nor do they analyse possible

alternatives to the expansion or construction of new infrastructures (*Ecologistas en Acción*, 2011: 11).

In this context, the dominant discourse had emphasised the country's "historical deficit of infrastructure capacity". According to several works, this is one of the key discursive constructions used to support this particular development strategy (Bermejo et al., 2005; *Ecologistas en Acción*, 2011; Sanz, 2001; Segura, 2012, 2013). Two of these works include quotes to illustrate this claim. Sanz (2001: 105) reports that the former Spanish president Aznar stated in 1999 that the infrastructure plan that was going to be presented and approved had as its main goals: "to overcome Spain's chronic infrastructure deficit and achieve the convergence with Europe and full employment". The second set of quotes belongs to the Budget law of 2003: "[infrastructure] investments are aimed at completing basic infrastructure projects in order to eliminate the existing infrastructure deficit with respect to Europe" and the presentation of the new infrastructure plan in 2005 which justified the high figures of investment on the basis of overcoming: "the [infrastructure] shortage in relation to the surrounding European countries" (quoted in Segura, 2013: 84-5).

Consequently, and in line with what Segura (2013: 84) asserts, it can be inferred that the state's political elite managed to construct a hegemonic development strategy that facilitated the formation of a consensus:

One of the most widespread myths for decades is that "Spain suffers a serious historical deficit of transport infrastructures in relation to the surrounding countries". The population seems to have internalized this message, which is considered all right without a critical questioning. No wonder this happened. It is an idea that has been tirelessly repeated to us, even when this situation ceased to be true since the mid-nineties.

The significance of this dominant discourse can be illustrated through a few examples of civil society groups from different middle-sized towns, who campaigned to have their towns included in the HSR network. The examples are described in the work of Macias and Aguilera (2012) for Villanueva de Cordoba (Province of Cordoba) and in the journalist report in *El País* (Galan, 2006) titled "Everybody wants the HSR" about the towns of El Tomelloso (province of Ciudad Real) and Teruel. These examples illustrate how the association of HSR to progress and economic development became, to some extent, common sense and thus these middle-sized towns campaigned for their inclusion in the HSR construction plans. These examples illustrate the robustness of the megaproject narratives and how communities adhere to it.

In such a context, building an opposition force against the megaproject development could be considered a difficult task, and the popularity and wide acceptance of this type of transport appeared a major handicap for the civil society groups endorsing critical perspectives. These difficulties are expressed by the activists; they emphasise the existing perception among the larger citizenry that it would have been difficult to conceive of the Basque Country (the area with the second highest GDP per capita in Spain⁷⁴) being left out of HSR network expansion process.

As an example, one of them recalls a general perception identified within the Basque society: “it is true that within the Basque society there are many people who believe that this is good socially speaking, that this is good for the country” (IBA3). The degree of acceptance is further verified by the data on public opinion, according to research done by the Basque Government. In a report from 2013, data from 2010 and 2012 suggested that 68% and 55% of the surveyed individuals, respectively, held a favourable view on the project (Gabinete de Prospección Sociológica, 2013).

In the past, one of the political forces that supports the opposition to the project – the Nationalist Left – was to some extent aligned with this line of thought: in a personal conversation with a mayor belonging to that force, he recalled how some of his fellows suggested that the HSR in the end would not be that bad because it would work well for those families having to visit (political) prisoners held in prisons at long distances from the Basque Country. Likewise, a member of the Basque Nationalists (PNV) stresses how in 1989, a party representing the Nationalist Left (at the time called *Herri Batasuna*, Popular Unity in Basque) presented a motion “asking that the HSR be taken to Irún (Province of *Guipuzcoa*)” (IBP2). He goes on to remark that some of the forces that now appear to be against the development, at the time made suggestions for the route, while noting that “in essence, no one discussed the need to build a railway infrastructure, let's say a proper railway infrastructure” (IBP2).

These findings suggest, indeed, the existence of a substantial social consensus on the question of a HSR development, even within the ranks of actors that later aligned with the opposition. From a Gramscian perspective, it is contended that the infrastructure plans designed by the government, given its degree of acceptance and demand, were bearers of the common sense that prevailed as in the form of “diffuse, uncoordinated

⁷⁴ According to Eurostat, 2016.

features of a generic form of thought common to a particular period and a particular popular environment” (Gramsci, 1999: 637).

Furthermore, when the organised opposition expresses dissent with this consensus, the attitude of the authorities is not to engage in the debate, but to express contempt or project a hypothetical lack of legitimacy onto the dissenters. This can be illustrated in the episode of the so-called *Bermejo* report (2004), the main report questioning the government version on the project. The transport councillor (Basque Government) stated that the report was “bad” and “wrong” and that Professor Bermejo and his academic team were only trying to “attack” the project (quoted in Uriona, 2004). Furthermore, the university vice-chancellor sided with the government, delegitimising the work done by Bermejo and his team. As said by another activist and scholar, “Bermejo and Hoyos carried out a study and the vice-chancellor of the university publicly decried them on the radio” (IBA3).

Even if the proponents did participate in small-scale debates organised by the opposition, they were seen to act with contempt towards the renowned figures differing from the official narrative. The proponents tried to transmit a message that undervalued the quality and legitimacy of the counter-arguments. This emerges thus as a reaction against the challenge to the consolidated common sense projected by the hegemonic development strategy.

To recap, applying a Gramscian perspective, it has been noted how, on the one hand, the elite common sense is internalised to a great extent by the majority of the population. This is embodied in the fact that not only were large-scale works not significantly opposed, but in fact, civil society groups were organising campaigns to demand their towns to be included in the developmental plans. This denotes the existence of a significant consensus on the issue. On the other hand, in the specific context of the Basque Y, it has been noted how those contesting the common sense and pushing for good sense are met with a discourse that delegitimises their stance. As noted in previous critical analyses of neoliberal-dominated environments, the delegitimation of alternative scenarios is a common discursive technique by those holding power (MacGregor, 2005).

For the NLTL, the first hint of the consensus on the issue lies in the ambitious plans for the expansion of the HSR network, bringing forward plans for the construction of a total of 12 new HSR lines (Locatelli et al., 2016) and an investment that was estimated

at about €60 billion (WWF – World Wide Fund, 2005). Such plans were criticised by civil society groups but none of the projects underwent significant contestation as they enjoyed support from the corporate elite, the main institutions and the main political parties (Bartolo, 2013). This consensus can also be identified when examining the perception of the larger citizenry when confronted with the opposition. In this vein, a member of a Catholic group supporting the opposition told how individuals visiting the area, especially if they came from the South, were perplexed that local communities could be against such an investment; their own problem in the south of Italy was a lack of investment in infrastructure⁷⁵.

As in the Spanish case, such consensus could have its root in the discursive strategy employed by the proponents, contending that there is an urgent need for Italy to upgrade its infrastructure capacity so as to meet the requirements of the European and global markets. As Foietta and Rocca (2013: 29) remark:

The capacity to have infrastructure networks and logistics platforms in support of relations with European and extra European markets is one of the conditions for survival of our ‘country system’; Italy can no longer deny the urgency of addressing the problem of serious infrastructure deficits.

The essence of the message echoes that heard in Spain: the country has a need for new infrastructure in order to integrate itself with European and global markets and thus secure economic development.

These are not, though, the only existing discursive framings. A more nuanced vision is embodied by the logic upholding that an upgrade in the infrastructure capacity is necessary, but it has to be well managed and planned due to, among other things, the limited available resources. This is the technocratic line of argument of the expert L. Senn, who emphasises that the approved infrastructures must ensure economic return, stressing that the endorsed policy should avoid opting for risky –in financial terms– undertakings:

[t]he North [of Italy] and the country cannot afford – if not for a reasoned motivation to promote development in the most marginal areas of their territory – to make ‘unnecessary’ or generically only ‘potentially useful’ infrastructures (Senn, 2010: 240).

⁷⁵ Conversation with a local activist group while doing participant observation.

Yet he stresses that the sections falling into the corridor established by the TEN-T initiative, such as the NLTL, should be considered a priority (Senn, 2010), adhering then to the megaproject consensus.

The above sheds some light on the grounds of the discourse backing the NLTL. As observed, even though some non-partisan experts incorporate nuances in regard to infrastructure development, the dominant narrative insists that the NLTL constitutes a priority, given that the region must be connected to global flows and dynamics. In this sense, the noted considerations suggest a significant consensus on the advisability of the NLTL.

Apart from the grounds of a pre-given consensus, this section also points to a second component of this consensus manufacturing process through the lens of the post-politics notion. This component consists of the active limitation of the public debate, in this case on the advisability of such infrastructures. This element operates in conjunction with the exclusiveness of the decision-making processes as identified earlier in this chapter. These are the multiple constraints to the public debate within the institutional bodies where this could take place. This preclusion is expressed by different actors that were involved in the process at some stage, as examined in the following paragraphs.

To begin with the Basque Y case, it should be stated that the lack of participation and debate constituted one of the core claims in the counter-argumentation of the opposition. The non-binding referendums organised in several municipalities were accompanied by debates open to the local communities, institutional actors and civil society organisations (Barcena, 2009). However, a manifesto promoted by scholars from the Basque University claims that the debate alluded to by governmental sources had actually the form of a “ritual debate” where “the Basque Government essentially presented the project ignoring critical accounts” (quoted in Barcena and Larrinaga, 2009: 251).

Accordingly, the following paragraphs explore the views of political and social actors that were active while the plans for the Basque Y were being drawn. Firstly, a Member of the Basque Parliament for the Bildu coalition (Nationalist Left) refers how the plan to which the megaproject is associated was passed without a relevant debate in the Basque Parliament:

[T]here has not been any social debate [...] there has not been a political act that brings the issue to parliament, promotes a debate and [then] approves [it]. It ever occurred. The HSR here was approved through a PTS⁷⁶, which is a planning instrument for territorial organization but was approved by the government, was not made according to a law or was not taken, as a monographic debate to parliament, never; was approved through a decree of government. And now we're told: 'this debate is over', f***! there has never been such debate (IBA9).

Similar claims are made by 4 trade unions – including ELA and LAB⁷⁷ which account for the majority of trade union membership in the Basque Autonomous Community – that had the opportunity to participate in a meeting with the transports councillor back in 2003. Prior to the meeting, they had already signed a document, together with other organisations, stating that:

The Basque Government has not promoted the social debate necessary to carry out a project of the magnitude of the Basque Y, and has opted for a policy of no transparency [...] a policy that in our opinion has been intentional and whose objective has not been another than the attempt to make the project go as unnoticed as possible so that it encounters the least possible opposition (Solidarity of Basque Workers – ELA, 2003).

In a statement given following the meeting, the unions suggest that given the existence of an opposition, the consensus should be wider and therefore the authorities should work towards this direction. However, they regret that the meeting did not serve this purpose:

We once again saw the lack of willingness of the Basque Government Department of Transport to make the necessary effort to achieve the social consensus that a project of this magnitude should have (Solidarity of Basque Workers – ELA, 2003).

The account from the trade union-government summit confirms the impossibility of discussing the project with stakeholders upholding dissenting positions.

For the NLTL, the accounts with regard to the significance of the public debate echo the situation identified for the Basque Y. To assess the detail of those accounts, the next paragraphs examine the contribution of a scholar active in the municipalities' commission, monitoring the development plans and subsequently displacing the focus on the ad hoc body created with the aim of encouraging debate and participation of the different stakeholders.

⁷⁶ Plan Territorial Sectorial.

⁷⁷ The main trade unions aligned with the nationalist political tradition in the Basque Country.

The mentioned scholar (Turin Polytechnic) underlines how one of the most interesting parts of the debate – namely the suitability of undertaking the work – has not transferred to the public sphere through the media:

what is being reported on most newspapers is not a discussion on the suitability, but chronicles of particular facts. Road blocking, object launch, court processes ... [themes such as] worthiness, data, you hardly ever see them (IAA5).

Then he adds a reference to the preclusion of debate, observed not only as an ideological question but also from the perspective of technical aspects: “[w]e [the No Tav movement] have got technicians; their technicians have never been brought to a direct confrontation with us, [...]. Never, in spite of all the demands (IAA5).

A central element in the debate concerning the NLTL is the Lyon Turin Observatory. It was created as a body for discussion and mediation, following the need to engage with local communities through preliminary debate when developing large public works, and emulating widely established procedures in Europe (Bobbio and Dansero, 2008). The particularity here is that the Observatory never had the goal to conduct a preliminary debate about whether the megaproject should be constructed or not. Even if in the early stages it was open for data discussion, at some point the philosophy changed and became oriented towards how to proceed with the construction process. This situation is explained by one of the union of municipalities’ advisors who was opposed to the project:

[T]he second phase of the Observatory when the government, among other things, decided that there was a condition for the municipalities that could participate as representatives in that place and the condition was to accept ... anyway the project. That is to be able to discuss how to do it, minimize impacts but not to question the essence. This fact excluded the union of municipalities⁷⁸ which was dissenting, and practically all the municipalities of the Susa Valley (IAA5).

A mayor from a municipality participating in the Observatory contends that this was a misguided approach: “[t]he Observatory was wrong because it stated that whoever sits in the Observatory must agree with the HSR project” (IAP4).

It could be inferred that many of the stakeholders to some extent assumed that the Observatory had the mission of promoting debate and discussion on the issue of the worthiness of the questioned infrastructure. Contrary to these assumptions, the earlier mentioned government Commissioner stresses how it was wrong to conceive the

⁷⁸ In Italian this is referred to as the “*Comunità Montana*” that is, the association of the municipalities of the Susa Valley.

Observatory as a body for debate, given that, according to him, this debate could only take place in the institutions representing the electorate such as the Parliament:

[t]he Observatory, is the venue where you discuss practical issues and try to solve them. Not an ideological venue where the zero option [that is, dismissing the project] is discussed. We never got the mandate; the choice of whether or not to do the project is a competence of the Italian Parliament (IAP2).

With respect to the Observatory, and following up from the words of the Commissioner, a former magistrate, member of the Counter-Observatory, summarises the whole situation. He identifies the main tensions displayed in the moment it emerged that the Observatory as such could not question the go-ahead of the project, despite the phase of data collection and discussion:

[w]hen it was time to take a decision it turned out that the decision was already taken [...] it was envisaged with the Government's suggestion that only the municipalities that supported the project could stay in the Observatory. The others were ousted from the Observatory. So, there have been changes, obviously the protest has been useful to make those changes. But what was missed before and was missing even after 2006 even if we were told that it would be done, was a real discussion encompassing all the problems, because it is not a discussion to say let's talk but we are already determined. This is not a discussion. This is another thing [laughs]; this is an attempt to dress-up a non-democratic decision-making process with democratic forms (IAA10).

To recap, findings show limited scope for meaningful and open debates between stakeholders on the advisability of the selected megaprojects, even where critical and dissenting voices were allowed. The established procurement processes seemed to incorporate mechanisms to deal with specific problems (the Observatory in the NLTL) or open discussion with certain actors (meeting with the trade unions for the Basque Y), but the opportunity to debate the core rationale of the contested infrastructures was not provided. In this sense, the meaningful debates advanced by the oppositional forces involve entering into the politics of each megaproject; on the contrary, a post-political configuration tends to sideline real politics (Paddison, 2009). In consequence, it is argued that the procurement processes of the selected megaprojects fell into the category of consensus politics that characterises post-political configurations.

This section has illustrated how megaproject development processes can benefit from the existence of a pre-existing social consensus whereby hegemonic strategies of development prevail and, as in the form of common sense, are generally accepted by a significant fraction of the population. The analysis also revealed situations wherein, as

alternative narratives in opposition to the established consensus gather momentum, the mechanisms of a post-political configuration operate to exclude those actors outside the consensus (Swyngedouw, 2007): these mechanisms are observed in the expulsion of the mayors from the Observatory or in the delegitimation of the dissenting voices on the Basque Y, coming from the university in its most visible forms but also in the lack of projection of political debates on the megaprojects. Finally, linking this component to the neoliberal hegemony, it should be stressed that, as Paddison (2009) notes, neoliberal urban governance prompts the post-political configuration; megaproject development processes are not isolated from this (politico-economic) dynamic.

7.6. Conclusion

This chapter has attempted to situate the governance of the selected megaproject developments within the parameters that define urban neoliberal governance in its discourse and practice. The chapter has sought to situate the development process within the structural dynamics that impact on it. To that end, the discursive and governing techniques surrounding the processes have been identified, and their relation to the urban neoliberal logic and dynamics have been discussed.

In terms of the discursive devices utilised by the pro-megaproject agents, the key points include the need to adopt a particular spatial strategy (promotion and adherence to the TEN-T framework) and also the need to increase the locational competitiveness which is subsequently associated with the commonly used terms of growth and economic development. This is all wrapped up with the short-term job creation effect that megaproject developments can deliver and which is repeatedly emphasised. These discursive elements present a direct relationship with the policies promoted by EU, as earlier noted. It can be argued, then, that the modes of governance, and in particular the discursive techniques, are in direct relation with the re-escalation of the politico-economic space, whereby supranational institutions come to play a crucial role (Brenner, 2004) and states act as subsidiaries. As in a cascade effect, the rationale and ideology underlying the EU policies are then automatically incorporated into the discourses justifying the completion of the contentious megaprojects. This connection with the EU confers the megaproject coalition with further leverage, making it more difficult for the opposition to disrupt the process. The significance of such components shall be further noted in the following chapter.

It could be argued, then, that these three components, the TEN-T initiative, competitiveness and growth, constitute the basic pillars of the common sense to which the discursive techniques are associated. In fact, they reflect in different ways how the neoliberal ideology has impregnated urban governance and become institutionalised. On the one hand, the emphasis on the need to provide the appropriate infrastructure, so that national enterprises are granted access to the global circuits of freight, echoes the mantra of guaranteeing a “good business climate” (Harvey, 2001: 359) as well as ensuring “locational competitiveness” (Brenner, 2004). On the other, the development seeks to overcome its dubious profit-making character and the implications for the public accounts, with an emphasis on the competitiveness-promotion, and especially job supply discourses, whereby the outcome is a certain disciplining effect on the workforce, thus facilitating additional consent. In this way, the discursive technique enables pro-megaproject narratives to transcend an orthodox understanding of neoliberal discourse (Painter, 2011) –in the sense of being less concerned with full employment– insofar as it includes a more appealing message for those in need of employment.

The remaining two sections have stemmed from themes referring to the practical governing techniques that facilitate a ground for megaproject development and obstruct the campaigning efforts of the opposition. The fourth section has shed light on legal mechanisms and procurement initiatives promoted for such a purpose. The findings have suggested that these are more significant for the NLTL given that the national authority passed new legislation –Objective Law and the Unlock Italy decree– to this end. In contrast, the already existing framework in Spain and the Basque Country has been identified as beneficial enough for the proponents. Furthermore, the techniques of government include the incorporation of mechanisms, under a rhetoric of participation, which do not allow significant modifications of the plans and therefore offer no real decisional power.

Similarly, the final section, has, on the one hand, noted the existence of a pro-megaproject common sense across the social spectrum, and on the other, has underlined how political debates on the core aspects of the projects are severely limited – to the extent that dissenting voices are expelled from so-called participatory bodies or their discourses delegitimised. These practices and situations further contribute to reinforce the social consensus on the projected megaprojects while they reduce the

democratic avenues to channel opposition, as already observed in other situations and contexts (Swyngedouw et al., 2002). In turn, it can be argued that they reflect a series of elements which echo governance under neoliberalism designed to privilege the dominant classes and facilitate processes of accumulation by dispossession (Harvey, 2003). These include: exclusiveness in decision-making processes and depoliticisation of the subject of debate (Munck, 2005) in addition to the delegitimation of oppositional forces (Sinha, 2005). As a whole, these contribute to buttress the megaproject plans in the social and institutional arenas.

In conclusion, the analytical process has illustrated to what extent neoliberal influenced discursive and governing techniques come into play in megaproject development processes as a component of structural dynamics. This included the construction of an official narrative on the basis of a few principles and key terms linked to the EU and the neoliberal doctrine, while also building upon a pre-existing common sense inclined to welcome infrastructure development. In addition, the attempt to manufacture a consensus through a plethora of tools has been noted: legal instruments and/or ad hoc bodies presented to the public opinion under the category of participation. This culminates with the exclusion of the dissenting voices from the official debate tribunes. As a whole, these discourses and practices give shape to the megaproject development processes. Such configuration attempts to pave the ground for a successful delivery process, given that infrastructure megaproject developments constitute a piece within the functioning accumulation strategies (construction and urbanisation) and also embody potentialities of interest for these strategies (exports and tourism). The next chapter turns to analyse the agential component within this process by focusing on the actors' coalitions that operate in these contexts to reinforce the megaproject plans.

CHAPTER 8. ASSESSING THE MEGAPROJECT'S COALITION FUNCTIONING

The purpose of this chapter is to further examine the functioning of the coalitions forming behind megaproject developments. In particular, the idea is to focus on the connections with auxiliary players, tease out additional elements of their discursive and ideological rationales, and shed light on mechanisms that enable to secure their agenda(s) and that in turn further explain their practice. In short, this chapter takes a more agency-centred perspective – in line with the coalition theories – to unveil aspects of the *modi operandi* of megaproject coalitions.

As in the previous chapters, the analytical approach will be informed by critical perspectives on urban politics, earlier introduced in this thesis (the notion of urban entrepreneurialism and the coalition theories; see Chapter 3). Moreover, as previously noted, the conceptualisation advanced stems from the hybridization of both urban coalition concepts: growth machine and urban regime. With this in consideration, this analysis will attempt to deepen the understanding of the megaproject coalition in terms of mechanisms for the securing and consolidating of the megaproject agenda.

Accordingly, the chapter identifies a series of elements that have the potential to bring about further understanding of the megaproject governance process: the coalitions' efforts to engage with diverse actors and increase the consensus on the project; the identification of further coalition partners; additional discursive and ideological components of the pro-megaproject narrative that strengthen its legitimacy (beyond the already noted of competitiveness and growth/job creation); and finally, situated practices that bolster the pro-megaproject position within the procurement process (resource mobilisation, institutional stability). The discursive components highlighted in this chapter take some distance from the more structural articulations noted in Chapter 7 and therefore have been interpreted as part of the agential component of the coalition and included in this chapter.

In this exercise, the analysis will draw on scholarly literature specific to the NLTL and Basque Y; governmental, institutional, civil society and journalist articles, documents and reports produced for the procurement process and as a result of the contentious dynamics; and activist materials that counter the official narratives on the issues at stake. These sources have been triangulated with the interviews carried out by the researcher, in which the participants point to the coalition partners and the dynamics of

contention. By considering the narratives resulting from the activist approaches, in line with the critical perspective assumed by this research project of considering marginalised voices, the analytical process will benefit from an enhanced grasp of the power relations operating in the megaproject governance process.

The chapter is organised in three main sections. Sections 8.1 and 8.2 discuss the auxiliary players and the additional discursive and practice components for each case study. In turn, section 8.3 pinpoints common patterns identified in the practices of the coalitions while trying to secure the megaproject agenda. The final section puts forward additional concluding remarks that discuss the validity of the urban coalitions conceptualisations applied to the formation and functioning of pro-megaproject coalitions in the corresponding contexts. Such an exercise should advance further insights on the nature of the coalition-building processes and the functioning of these alliances in the contexts of megaproject development processes. Additionally, the chapter will further discuss the suitability of conceptualising the politics of the megaproject governance process through the lens of the coalitions theories oriented in a hybrid manner.

8.1. Further characterisation of the NLTL coalition

This section examines the additional support enjoyed by the NLTL coalition and further salient components identified in its discourse and practice. To comprehend the magnitude and capacities of the coalition, one must consider, on the one hand, its actions and manoeuvres to gather further support as well as the acquiescence received from other relevant social groups. On the other hand, one must bear in mind further discursive components that can contribute to strengthen the legitimacy of the megaproject plans. To this end, the section is divided in two subsections: the first focuses on the subject of expanding the coalition, while the second delves into tactical aspects of the discourse and practices of the coalition.

8.1.1. Coalition's expansion

Chapter 6 has paved the ground to apply the urban coalition theories to the megaproject question. In this sense, a number of key actors, constituting the core of the megaproject coalitions, have been identified. Another point to consider, according to the coalition theories, is the capacity to coalesce with auxiliary players to bolster the actors' position. In this respect, one of the most common allies is the media (Boyle, 1999; Logan and Molotch, 1987), which, depending on the scale-reach of the

promoters, could be local, regional and/or national. The fact that the promoters counted on the sympathy and support of the mainstream media has already been pointed out in different works (see Bartolo, 2013; Greyl, et al., 2012; Greyl et al., 2013).

In terms of the mainstream media, activist narratives tend to emphasise its biased characterisation of the opposition within the contentious dynamics⁷⁹. In many respects, the issue is presented as a problem of public order (Presidio Europa No TAV, 2014). However, this is not the focus of the following paragraphs. Instead, this subsection will examine the role of the media in providing ideological and/or discursive coverage to the project, as stressed in the growth machine framework, and the extent of support for the megaproject coalition.

This view of the media is expressed in the comment by a professor from the Polytechnic of Turin recalling the media's support for the society in charge of the project (LTF):

[w]e are faced with an attitude of LTF that wants to impose, with the emphatically supportive media, that wants to impose a predetermined solution. That is, it intends to prove, not even prove, it intends to anyway push for the construction ... of the new tunnel (WAA17).

Another way in which the support for the project takes shape in the media is described by the scholars Lana and Mannarini (2008), who carried out a content analysis study using the main Italian journals – *La Stampa*, *Il Corriere della Sera* and *La Repubblica*. With regard to how the NLTL project is treated and how it is presented to the public, they contend that (2008: 675):

there do not appear to be arguments on the worthiness of the project, which discuss concrete elements such as alternatives to the HSR project, real costs of the project, benefits, impact on the environment and economic development. All of these aspects are, as a whole, apart from some exceptions, scarcely treated.

Moreover, the same authors add that while:

references to real problems and the needs of the valley inhabitants are largely absent, the dominant linguistic register with which the press deals with the facts/events related to the HSR is somewhat abstract (Lana and Mannarini, 2008: 675).

This point is further strengthened by noting the effort of the opposition in creating their communicative means with the aim of countering official information on the NLTL

⁷⁹ For instance, see the activist publication *Comitato NO TAV Spinta dal Bass – Spazio Sociale VisRabbia*, eds. (2013).

(Armano and Pittavino, 2013). The words of an activist illustrate how they identified the need to counter the existing information on the issue, recalling the perceived bias from mainstream media but also from the institutions:

So at some point we realized that the kind of information that was given, above all in Turin both from politics and from the local media, was absolutely inadequate information. Then we thought to set up this Counter-Observatory, that is, a place that could counter information about these issues. That is, to give the information that the press organs, local television and politics did not give or deformed (IAA10).

Thus, evidence shows, in line with the growth machine conceptualisation (Logan and Molotch, 1987), that the media, in particular mainstream and conventional media, tends to reproduce the pro-megaproject discourse and thus helps the manufacturing of consent, in line with the common sense noted in Chapter 6 that in essence assumes the positive relationship between developmental plans – such as megaprojects – and progress and modernity; in other words, the value-free ideology (discussed in the next subsection). In turn, this generates a vacuum that explains the efforts of the opposition to generate and disseminate a counter-narrative on the subject (Greyl et al., 2012).

In terms of civil society partners, in line with the growth machine theory, a relevant one consists of organised labour organisations, an actor usually enthusiastic about job creation opportunities in the construction sector (Logan and Molotch, 2010). For the NLTL, the main trade union confederations (Italian General Confederation of Labour – CGIL; Italian Confederation of Workers' Trade Unions – CISL and Italian Labour Union – UIL) did play this role. These, except for the radical wing of CGIL, prioritise the aspect of job creation (della Porta and Piazza, 2008) and so did not align with the opposition, to the extent that members of the CGIL and UIL were spotted in the pro-HSR open meeting celebrated in Turin in 2010 (Pepino and Revelli, 2012). This observation suggests that their acquiescence – or at least the acquiescence of the trade union leadership – averted further destabilisation of the megaproject plans, given the relevance of the main trade union confederations within the civil society domain.

Trade union confederations aside, the amount of support for the project from cultural or civil society organisations appears very limited. One activist explained attempts by the promoters to increase the popular support enjoyed by the project:

these were always top-down attempts, from the Turin administration or the Democratic Party, they never succeeded ... at some point they organised a meeting here in a congress-centre but were only bigwigs of the economy, politics, normal

people there were none. A Yes-HSR committee that attempted to form, the comrades had gone to checkout, the DIGOS [General Investigations and Special Operations Division] itself said, ‘do not go in, you’ll give numbers to them’. There were 5 people, 10, something insignificant (IAA3).

Likewise, the reasoning which suggests that the project responds more to the agenda of the economic and political regional elite is subscribed to by the former magistrate L. Pepino and the scholar M. Revelli (Pepino and Revelli, 2012). In their work, the authors give an account of another meeting to reinforce the support for the NLTL project. They state that the participants formed a group that could be described as structured “on the interface between the administrative class and the ‘system of interests’⁸⁰” being composed of:

professional politicians, trade associations, professional groups, lobbies, local officials, board members and presidents, party branch secretaries, consultants, mixed with left-wing [referring to the centre-left] deputies and some councillors and mayors of the metropolitan towns (Pepino and Revelli, 2012: 79).

They go on to remark on the lack of attendance of representatives of other institutions or social strata: “The Turin bourgeoisie was absent [...]. [was] Almost absent [too] the area of liberal professions and the one of the university” (Pepino and Revelli, 2012: 81). They include as well a reference to the impossibility to identify ‘common’ citizens:

I might be wrong, but it does not seem to me that there were many in that room, of so-called citizens, in the proper sense of the term, that is, those who had attended there in an individual initiative, to inquire and take position as "inhabitants" of a territory and individuals with a sense of belonging to a 'community' of citizens (Pepino and Revelli, 2012: 81).

Thus, beyond the support received from the established partners, it is also relevant to identify the attempts –even if they were of limited success– to expand the coalition as an established practice.

To sum up, evidence shows that the megaproject plans could count on support from the majority of the media in addition to the acquiescence of relevant civil society groups such as the main trade union confederations. Moreover, being aware that at local and regional level these plans still lacked support from the civil society and the larger citizenry, attempts to gather this support have been identified. This confirms the

⁸⁰ Expression to refer to the ensemble of “stable active groups, systematically recognized as relevant by public actors, political parties, the media and public opinion, due to their importance in certain policy areas and, in some cases, their involvement in the political decision-making process” (Lizzi and Pritoni, 2014: 290).

need for the central node of the megaproject coalition to bring in additional partners to secure the plans, especially in a context marked by opposition campaigning.

8.1.2. Additional discursive and practice elements

This subsection focuses on additional aspects underpinning the megaproject coalition's discourse. Linking back to the discourse findings advanced in Chapter 7, the following paragraphs emphasise two other significant aspects: the local growth and the "green" dimensions. Prior to the analysis, an introductory note on the significance of ideology for growth machines is included.

Apart from the additional support that the coalition gathers, another of its crucial components corresponds to the underlying ideology. Generally speaking, the latter consists of what is generally referred as "value-free development/growth" ideology (Logan and Molotch, 1987, 2010); that is, the belief that development constitutes a good thing per se, a universal good (Troutman, 2004). The relevance of ideology in growth machines lies in the fact that, articulated through a particular discourse, it can bolster the consensus on the projected development plans via general considerations of "collective good" for local residents (Molotch, 1976) or society (Mohai et al., 2009). There is therefore, a strong association between the effects of growth and the local dimension.

For the NLTL, the theme of growth appears in the pro-megaproject discourse as an implicit consequence of promoting competitiveness and creating employment. In this context, the job creation theme is central. The significance of these themes in the megaproject coalition's general discourse has already been examined in Chapter 7. This subsection intends to note the relevance of the local dimension, given that the jobs and contracts associated to a particular project can be used as a tool to manage conflict or weaken the opposition (Stone, 1993). In other words, this section examines how the megaproject coalition puts into practice the principles projected by the growth ideology and how this plays a role in strengthening the megaproject agenda.

It emerges, for instance, that the project advocates emphasise the on-going industrial crisis and the need for jobs, as well as the positive impact for the local economy that derives from the accommodation used by some of the workers. A mayor of a town in the valley underlines the expectations in this sense:

[b]ecause then in this period of crisis, [...] it is clear that then people expect the HSR project to bring jobs. [...] there are so many unemployed who hope that it will materialise, to say ‘it brings us jobs’ (IAP4).

Beyond the discursive component, because the tunnelling works have already started, this appears as a practice adopted. Technical publications putting forward the proponents’ view emphasise job creation and the connection with the local business community as an important aspect for the local economy (Foietta and Rocca, 2013: 22):

The Maddalena works-site [...] employs today more than a hundred people each day, of which 50% comes from the Valley. Here you are experiencing the absence of directly supplied accommodation, so workers are housed for food and accommodation in the local facilities. It is a breath of oxygen for the area that outside of the seasonal tourism does not see significant inflows.

This attempt to liaise with the local business community in order to further legitimise the project as growth machine practice is confirmed by the data obtained from the Monitoring Dossier (No Tav, 2014): over 50% (29 out of 55) of the companies involved in the construction process or getting work from it (e.g., food supply enterprises) have their headquarters in the region of Piedmont. In fact, as a public official asserts, this is part of a new approach⁸¹ aiming to secure local support:

with this law here, DL 2016/50 it has been foreseen the possibility to make small, let’s call them packs [of works], [...] whereby the territory⁸² can get involved. So, even local business can intervene, right? In this way the realization of the project was favoured [...] the territory begins to actively participate in this process and this helps ... it helps because then people, obviously, if they have the chance to earn something from this, it is unlikely that they will oppose it (IAP1).

This evidence confirms the importance of the local dimension in the situated practices of the coalition.

A second substantive element is the incorporation of green motives into the official discourse. This resonates with the notion of “green growth machines” (Dilworth and Stokes, 2012; Jocoy, 2017). The basic strategy of such discursive articulations would be to present the growth project in question as a project beneficial for the environment (or at least with no major negative externalities for the environment). According to Dilworth and Stokes (2012: 39), this approach is usually prompted by the need “to

⁸¹ As the public official confirms, this contrasts with the traditional mechanism that consisted in the awarding of one big contract of works to a large company with little consideration for local businesses.

⁸² Refers to local/regional enterprises.

maintain the ideology of value free development”, notwithstanding the fact that it can be helpful in neutralising the opponents’ discourse (Jocoy, 2017). How does this green component appear in the NLTL coalitions’ discourse?

To begin with, its supporters maintain, against the oppositions’ arguments, that the NLTL constitutes “[a] modern and ecologically sustainable project that will contribute to pollution reduction” (IAP5). Secondly it should be highlighted that two of the participants connected to the megaproject coalition partners present themselves as having an “environmentalist” (IAP2 and IAP3) identity and find it totally coherent to advocate for the completion of the project on the grounds that it will contribute to an enhancement of the environmental conditions. To illustrate this point, is worthwhile quoting a public official (IAP2) who states that the environmentalist postulates totally match with the rationale of the project. According to him, the NLTL pursues the “realization of a model in which less CO₂ is produced tendentially with regard to [road] traffic”. This is emphasised as well in a publication supportive of the project, highlighting that the latter will contribute to “an annual reduction of greenhouse gas emissions of approximately three million of tonnes of CO₂ equivalent” (Foietta and Rocca, 2013: 94) and for that it constitutes an “environmentalist choice” (Foietta and Rocca, 2013:91). This green component enables proponents to present the project as benefiting society as a whole due to the decrease in the pollution figures. It embodies another discursive front of the project striving for further legitimation.

This section has noted the attempts by the core of the coalition to expand its influence in order to further legitimise the project, and to signal mainstream media as a major ally. In addition, the more or less explicit support from the main trade union confederations constitutes another source of support, specifically in terms of containing a potential growth of the opposition. Additional components of the coalition’s discourse and practice include, on the one hand, the promotion of the local dimension to gather further support, in particular from the local business community, and on the other, the incorporation of green motives to further legitimise the large public works. The evidence thus far deepens the understanding of the discourse and situated practices of a megaproject coalition type. Further discussion is included in the next section after the findings for both case studies have been presented.

8.2. Further characterisation of the Basque Y-related coalition

This section, emulating the previous one, intends to shed further light onto the nature of the Basque Y coalition in terms of its practice and discourse. In the same fashion as in the previous section, it is divided into two subsections which examine separately the support received from auxiliary players, and the additional discursive and practice elements that enable to manufacture further consent on the megaproject plans.

8.2.1. Further insights on the Basque Y coalition

This subsection considers the nature of the Basque Y coalition, identifying further allies beyond the central node previously outlined. For this purpose, the participation of a number of actors is analysed along with the practices carried out in order to gain further support. In terms of the range of actors involved, different roles are identified, as will be explained in the analysis.

The Basque government presents the view that there is broad support for the Basque Y. A governmental publication points out that a series of agents⁸³ from the civil society manifested support to the project including: the chambers of commerce of the three provinces; the port authorities of Bilbao and Pasaia; the deans of the three Basque public universities, the engineering and architecture professional bodies and the scientific-cultural society *Eusko Ikaskuntza* (Basque Government, 2006). In addition, in 2009, a big sponsoring effort was undertaken, signing annual contracts with a total of six sports teams from basketball and handball top leagues (ETS, 2010 and Europa Press, 2009). The agreement involved the inclusion of HSR publicity messages into the sports teams' outfits as well as in some parts of the pitches such as the baskets and the scoreboards. Table 8.1 indicates the teams and the amounts paid to these sponsored teams.

⁸³ See also Calvo (2015).

Table 8.1. Outline of the sports teams benefitting from Basque Y sponsorships. Own elaboration.

Sports team	Sport type - gender	Amount paid (€/season)
<i>Lagun Aro Guipuzcoa Basket</i>	Basketball - male	250,000(Europa Press, 2009)
<i>Caja Laboral Baskonia</i>	Basketball - male	<300,000 (de Arrilucea, 2009)
<i>Bizkaia Bilbao Basket</i>	Basketball - male	<300,000 (de Arrilucea, 2009)
<i>Txingudi Saskibaloia (Hondarribia – Irun)</i>	Basketball - female	100,000(Prodep Management, 2010)
<i>Juventud Deportiva Arrate (Eibar)</i>	Handball - male	200,000 (Department of Economic Development and Infrastructure, 2010)
<i>Akaba Bera Bera</i>	Handball - female	100,000(Diario Vasco, 2009)

On the basis of this penetration into the social and cultural lives of the Basque Country, the government's narrative projects a view of a rather consistent social consent on the Basque Y plans. These actors nonetheless, do not appear to play a significant role in the whole process. They are essentially mobilised to confer further legitimacy to the Basque Y through its popularization in areas such as culture, sport and the entrepreneurial sectors. How is this carried out?

In terms of the sports teams, the authorities deliberately used sponsoring agreements, a common practice. The importance of linking popular sports with the infrastructure project can be understood from this quote from the minister then in charge of the issue:

For us it is very important that a club with as much social roots as the Hondarribia-Irun, which has reached the highest level of sports but also cares about the reserve of young players, aligns its name to the High Speed Train and helps us to give a modern image of this country (quoted in Prodep Management, 2010).

The significance of using sponsorship in areas such as sport in order to boost the consent-manufacturing endeavour is noted by experts; “activities that constitute the leisure time of people, increase the receptivity and credibility of the consumer” (Nogales González, 2006: 42). In other words, authorities sought to further legitimise the Basque Y through sports sponsorship.

In terms of the cultural association and the Universities, there is no abundant data, but they could operate under what is referred as “concessional clientelism” (Cazorla Perez, 1995: 48). This derives from the fact that a significant part of clientelism is to be found where public funds are located (Cazorla Perez, 1995). To the extent that these organisations receive public funds, in certain occasions their autonomy with respect to

contentious issues can be limited. Spain is a country with a long tradition in clientelar networks and the situation has found little improvement (Tahull Fort, 2017). It seems this case is no exception, as can be illustrated by the observation that while over one hundred academics of the Basque Country University signed a petition denouncing the flaws of the Basque Y and demanding its reconsideration, the top figures were publicly supportive of the project (see also in section 7.5 the reference to the vice-chancellor of the University of the Basque Country).

Following on the coalition-building process, the next paragraphs will discuss the participation in the contentious process of other actors with a more active role. As in the case of the NLTL, media is identified as a strategic ally for the megaproject coalition. In this particular case, in many respects, the latter acted as a platform to voice the pro-megaproject narrative. An example of this support is the publication of an eleven-page dossier praising the Basque Y, which was included with the Sunday edition of the newspaper *Diario Vasco* (17/10/2010)⁸⁴. The dossier contained interviews and articles written by the main political figures in the Basque Government, the Port Authority and those leading the procurement process, in addition to accounts of the project with headlines such as “the future of the Basque Country travels in high speed” or “Basque Y: nothing but advantages”.

On top of that, the following comments from different individuals that had been active in the opposition illustrate the stance taken by the majority of the mass media in Spain in general but in particular in the Basque Country:

- And unfortunately, they [mega-project promoters] have then had the support of the major media, or the great media group here that is the *Vocento* Group⁸⁵ for whom the HSR is the apple of their eyes (IBA9);
- “All the media belong to them [pro-megaproject side]” (IBA7);
- “You would not be given a single line to explain yourself [anti-HSR side] in the media” (IBA6);
- “*El Correo* [newspaper] and other people were saying [with reference to the opposition reasoning] it was a science of wishful thinkers, people who were totally biased” (IBA3).

⁸⁴ Second newspaper in number of readers in the Basque Country (PRISA Brand Solutions, 2016).

⁸⁵ This media group owns the two most read Basque regional newspapers *Diario Vasco* and *El Correo* (PRISA Brand Solutions, 2016).

These perceptions suggest a significant bias in terms of support towards the Basque Y from the mainstream media, confirmed by the study carried out by Gorostidi and Barcena (2009) which in essence highlights a partisan approach towards the issue across the media spectrum. Consequently, because the outlets siding with a pro-megaproject narrative outnumber those with a contrary stance, the support to the project from this perspective seems clear-cut.

With respect to the activist opinions noted above, nuance has to be added in the sense that some of the media did also account for the opposing views. In terms of media pluralism (see the second comment), it should be added that the two Basque newspapers leaning more towards progressive Basque nationalism (*Gara* and *Berria*) would sustain critical positions with the project (Gorostidi and Barcena, 2009), especially *Gara*, traditionally aligned with the Basque nationalist left, or more broadly speaking, with the various expressions of the national liberation movement (Mata, 2005). On the other hand, with reference to the third quote, it must be said that mainstream media would normally refer to the existing criticisms on the project only to subsequently present the views that counter these criticisms in such a way that they could be pushed aside or discredited. On a few occasions the mainstream media would give the opposition the opportunity to express their views on the issue as, for instance, in the case of the article published in *El País* (Barcena et al., 2007) titled “*The Basque Y and the Catalan PTP* [association for the Promotion of Public Transport]”, consisting of a response to the mentioned association which had stated its full support for the Basque Y. To conclude on the role of the media, evidence shows that, even if some dissenting views were allowed, a consensus in support of the Basque Y dominated the projected message and therefore contributed to some degree to a further legitimization of the plans.

A second relevant aspect to point out in this respect is the coming into play of the above-mentioned transport-specialised NGO named PTP⁸⁶. The latter issued a letter

⁸⁶ The stance taken by this NGO was received with surprise by the opposition to the Basque Y in particular because it belongs to the same European federation (Transport and Environment) of environmental organisations as *Ekologistak Martxan* a Basque environmental group opposed to the Basque Y to the extent that a letter in response criticising the PTP position was written. In their website they claim to be the “only public transport NGO with neither political nor corporate interference” (<https://transportpublic.org/actua/>). The interpretation of their stance could be made on the basis of two lines of reasoning. Firstly, their strong position in support of railway promotion would have probably operated detracting them from a critical approach (also because it was the case of a railway of mixed character –freight and passengers-

expressing support for the project, mainly because it constitutes “a transport project that assists the progress of sustainable mobility” (PTP, 2007: 1), unlike, according to the NGO, the new railway projects that had been developed to date in the rest of Spain. In an interview with the researcher, a member of the NGO confirmed that the NGO stance on the question “worked well for the Basque Government” (IBP3) and thus for the megaproject coalition.

The account of this association’s support illustrates to some extent the role of the media, immediately highlighting how an independent actor from civil society had publicly manifested being supportive of the project. Examples can be identified in national newspapers such as *El País* (Ormazabal, 2007): “A Catalan NGO praises the 'Basque Y' project”, including in the body of the article sentences such as “This organization [...] makes a very complimentary defence of the HSR that will unite the three Basque capitals” remarking also the “social and environmental” character of the NGO that is making these points. A second example could be found in the regional newspaper *Diario Vasco* (11/06/07): “A Catalan collective states that the 'Basque Y' is ‘a model to follow’”. A third one appeared in the newspaper of the province of Guipuzcoa, *Noticias de Guipuzcoa*, in which the president of the NGO was interviewed and the headline read (17/06/07): “The ‘Basque Y' is a model to follow for Spanish HSR because it is efficient, competitive and sustainable”. The full interview can be found as well in the website of the Basque Nationalists (PNV), showing how the position expressed by the NGO is used to reinforce the position of the agents supporting the megaproject agenda.

Furthermore, other regional journals would use the NGO’s view to bring forward arguments in favour of the megaproject. That is the case of *El Correo* (“The [Basque] 'Y' aspires to capture 11,600 passengers a day and take 6000 cars off the road”, 06/01/08) whereby the letter issued by the NGO is quoted to counter the opposition arguments around the irrelevance of the figures of road vehicle reduction involved. In the same vein, the journal *Deia* (“A locomotive for the Basque Country”, 2008) published an article explicitly referring to the view expressed by the NGO to remark that:

unlike the majority of HSR developments in Spain). Secondly, because they are based in another region of Spain, Catalonia, and hence detached from local and regional civil society campaigns that could have influenced their views on the issue.

The HSR model proposed for the Basque Country is the "only one well structured" that has been designed in the Spanish State, because it respects the conventional network, unlike what has happened in Catalonia or Galicia, because it will be used for passengers and goods, and because the territorial impact is "minimized".

A final point on the question of the NGO has to be made in regard to the further collaboration between the NGO and the project promoters, specifically the Basque authorities. The trust and cooperation built between the partners can be observed in the fact that the NGO was invited by the Basque Government to participate in a promotional event (November 2012) under the title: "The High Speed train in Guipuzcoa [province]. Opportunities and economic development" (ETS, 2013).

So, all in all, in terms of the role played by the NGO, even if the support offered to the project was only a communicative one, as specified in the growth machine theorisation, these type of partners play a significant role in terms of conferring legitimacy to the development plans and thus helping secure a hegemonic position for the megaproject coalition. Because of this, unlike with the opposing platforms, the mainstream media accounts for their views with plenty of coverage.

To continue with the identification of coalition members, a third element is presented as follows. Some activists have pointed out how the lack of criticism expressed by the main Spanish trade union confederations – in contrast with the Basque ones that became involved in the opposition campaign – could be interpreted as an act of passive support, mutually beneficial as the promoters do not see the opposition fuelled by important social organisations and these trade unions can get their share. An activist and scholar recalls:

the [two major Spanish] trade unions: CC.OO. [Union Confederation of Worker's Commissions] and UGT [General Workers Union] have always been silent on this issue; the UGT has been more or less quiet and the Confederation of Commissions has been totally in favour of this ... and I think they do it because this gives them some kind of possibility to participate, right? Their share in the pie... (IBA3).

In the same vein, a pensioner and former activist points to the complicit attitude of the main Spanish trade unions:

Nevertheless in the specific case of CCOO, of UGT, which are the two unions at the state level, they were quiet, to put it mildly, they behaved quietly, because somehow, they maintained that the project involved the creation of employment which, as I said, had no impact on local employment (IBA14).

As with the NLTL, it would be an overstatement to claim that these confederations partnered with the megaproject forces, but by not endorsing a critical position towards the project, that is, by preserving some degree of acquiescence, they prevented the opposition from becoming larger or more significant given their capacity to mobilise, or not to mobilise, individuals.

A final insight on the coalition's attempts to gather further support has been identified. When utilising the growth machine conceptualisation, the role of land as a market asset (Molotch, 1976) in the whole process should be considered insofar as it constitutes a factor of potential profit for certain agents. That does not appear as relevant as in the conventional growth machine conceptualisation where the increase of property and real estate exchange value plays a significant role. Yet it shouldn't be neglected as a potential source of further support for the megaproject coalition, considering how infrastructure policy has previously been used to push for urban real estate developments in Spain (López and Rodríguez, 2010). It is worth mentioning that a press release of the Ministry of Public Works and ADIF (28/02/2017) –following an agreement between the Spanish and Basque governments– points to the land surface that will be 'freed up' as a result of the underground relocation of the tracks in the major Basque city, Bilbao:

In the case of Bilbao, the agreement contemplates the writing of the Informative Study for the railway connection and the new Abando station. The project foresees the construction of a buried station with tracks in two levels. The disappearance of the existing railway infrastructures will make available more than 90,000 square meters making possible a new urban development of this environment.

This statement can be interpreted as an attempt to bring in or gather support from those agents to whom the generation of land surplus values in Bilbao as a result of this "new urban development" could be of interest. While it remains to be seen if this will have any impact in terms of attracting more support for the megaproject plans, this appears to be a clear attempt in this direction.

To summarise, this subsection has presented further insights on the Basque Y coalition. It has noted how the government sought to present the project as one characterised by a broad social endorsement; the nature of this endorsement has been identified as instrumental and the product of manoeuvres of a clientelistic nature. It has also noted the relevance of three further actors from which the megaproject coalition benefitted in one way or another: media and its role in disseminating the official

narrative on the project; a transport NGO which expressed a positive view on the project and therefore operated as a valuable ally for the pro-megaproject forces; and finally the passivity or acquiescence of the Spanish trade union confederations on the subject. Additionally, a final note has presented evidence on potential sources for further support, such as a re-development announcement, provided that the construction works make progress. It can be argued that the megaproject coalition exercises considerable efforts to manufacture consent among citizenry, as well as to establish bonds with strategic partners who can confer further legitimacy to the project.

8.2.2. Further discursive components

In line with the interrogation exercise carried out for the NLTL, this section intends to tease out further discursive elements that enable a legitimation of the megaproject plans. For the specific case of the Basque Y the themes that complement those already identified in chapter 7 include the value-free development rhetoric, a nation-building component and finally, the environmental element.

As noted in Chapter 7, the themes of competitiveness, growth and job-creation dominated the pro-megaproject discourse. It should be stressed that in some respects this intertwines with the growth-oriented and value-free development ideology characteristic of the conventional rationales in urban coalitions (Imbroscio, 1997; Logan and Molotch, 1987, 2010; Molotch, 1976), as also noted for the NLTL. Many references to the project seek to highlight its positive economic and growth effects, projecting also a certain social consensus around the issue, as illustrated by the following examples. As a former senior government figure stated, “the Basque Y offers an extraordinary opportunity for economic growth and welfare” (Azua, 2007: 11). Equally, the transport vice-councillor of the Basque Government stated that the Basque Y investment will “generate jobs, economic wealth and higher fiscal revenues” (quoted in *Diario Vasco*, 2010: 9), two years later adding that the megaproject “is already the engine of the Basque economy since only during its construction has been able to generate 5,000 jobs” (quoted from ETS, 2012). The essence of the official narrative associated to the project is encompassed in one general description referring to the importance of the project: the Basque Y “enables the economic development of the whole country” (Basque Government, 2006: 14).

Beyond the reference to development, a second relevant theme emerges from the last quote, the reference to the “country”, understood as the Basque Country, the nation. In

this sense it is not uncommon to find a discursive component that relates nation-building and the Basque Y. A former transport councillor for the Basque government states that “becoming an active agent in favour of the project” involves being “[i]n favour of the construction of the Basque Country and Europe” (Lopez de Guereñu, 2007: 28). In parallel to this, the PNV candidate to the Spanish parliament for the province of Guipuzcoa stated during the 2015 election campaign that: “The HSR is the strategic axis of the Basque national project” (PNV press statement, 2015). It is not new that large-scale projects or the provision of infrastructure is used as nation-building (Kennedy, 2013; Veltmeyer and Petras, 2005). This nation-building dimension of the Basque Y is also underlined by Calvo (2015: 22):

in the Basque Country the HS[R] became much more closely linked to Basque nation-building projects. The different imaginings of a Basque state and nation are well articulated around debates surrounding the building, potential route and expectations related to the HS[R].

To what extent does this discursive articulation advance a further legitimization of the megaproject plans? It seems an element difficult to measure. What can be said is that the project has become a cornerstone for the hegemonic political force in the Basque Country, the PNV, as the latter has used it to project its view of a modern nation fully integrated in the European territory (Calvo, 2015)⁸⁷. In parallel, because of this nation-building attribution, some sectors of the nationalist left that would usually sympathise with environmental and activist campaigns would have been reluctant to advocate for an opposition to the project (Barcena and Larrinaga, 2009b). This suggests, that in contrast to the NLTL where the local (material) dimension was emphasised to further legitimise the project, in the case of the Basque Y, the component incorporated to further legitimise the project is the one of nation-building.

Last but not least, in consonance with the NLTL, the third additional discursive element is the “greening” of the narrative. This includes a myriad of ideas that seek to make compatible the megaproject plans and environmental enhancements via road traffic reduction which results in the reduction of the energy consumption, CO2 emissions and noise. The following quotes illustrate this argument:

⁸⁷ The obsession with the project can be tracked back to 2008 when the party took the project as a central piece for the political bargaining with the central power (see for instance the chronicles by Juliana, 2008; 2016).

- [The Basque Y constitutes] “a network [...] that favours inter-territorial balance, improving the safety and quality of life of citizens and with the least harm to our environment” (Basque Government, 2006: 26).
- “The plan for the new network [...] contribute[s] to establish[ing] sustainable mobility” (Basque Government, 2012: 38).
- “With the [Basque] Y we will [...] transfer road traffic that emits CO₂, with a very negative impact on the environment, [...] to the railway with a less negative impact on the environment” (IAP1).

The wide range of “green” claims associated with the Basque Y plans incorporated in the pro-megaproject discourse can be summarised with the statement of the former Basque minister N. Lopez de Gerenu: “The biggest aggression we can commit against the environment is not to build the [Basque] 'Y'”. Green growth machines are characterised by the incorporation of environmentalist discourses and/or practices to reinforce their position in a push for developmental plans (Jocoy, 2017). This is on top of the –much emphasised– support received from an environmental NGO. Here, evidence shows that the green narratives are part of the strategy to further legitimise the megaproject plans.

This second subsection has identified in the megaproject coalition the characteristic value-free ideology of the urban coalitions, which operates as a cementing component for the coalition (Molotch, 1976). This component is then complemented by the nation-building and green components that reinforce the coalition’s position in the push to manufacture citizen consent on the megaproject plans. In sum, a measure of the impact caused by these tactics cannot be offered, but it should be remembered that a public survey showed wide acceptance of the project by the Basque population (Gabinete de Prospección Sociológica, 2013)⁸⁸.

The following lines discuss possible conclusions to draw from a joint examination of both case studies. Within the strategic alliances and additional practice and discursive techniques of both coalitions, a number of patterns can be detected. These lead to a number of conclusions, which further theorise on the specific mechanisms that characterise megaproject development processes in terms of practice and discourse.

⁸⁸ The results of the survey with regard to the stance on the Basque Y show a favourable but declining majority: 68% in 2010 and 55% in 2012. As one activist contended, “One may wonder why there is no data for the subsequent years” (IBP2).

Firstly, mainstream media appears as a central ally of the megaproject coalition. To the extent that it tends to reproduce the official narratives subscribed by the promoters or to avoid substantial debates on the subject, and regardless of the scale of impact of the project, mainstream media is “structurally positioned to promote [local] ideologies consistent with growth goals” (Boyle, 1999: 66). Secondly, the job creation effect is used as a source of legitimation (Molotch, 1999) that in turn has the capacity to ensure acquiescence on the issue from major labour organisations. Thirdly, further multifaceted attempts to increase the support for the project and/or its legitimacy have been observed, operating according to the specificities of each social and cultural context. Their effect appears difficult to measure, but it does not seem particularly relevant for the NLTL. Finally, further discursive articulations are incorporated to the official narrative to confer extra-legitimacy beyond the commonly embedded values denoting the value-free growth/development ideology. The green component constitutes a salient element for both megaprojects; this tends to emphasise the improvement that the new project will deliver with regard to environmental conditions. This is then complemented with additional dimensions that for both cases diverge: the nation-building one for the Basque Y and the local dimension for the NLTL. Despite diverging, both seek to confer an extra degree of legitimacy by associating the projects with powerful meanings and/or outcomes (job creation, the nation).

These two sections have unveiled a number of mechanisms that contribute to bulwark the megaproject development process from the perspective of manufacturing consent. The next step of this chapter is to identify mechanisms and practices that further secure the megaproject agenda in spite of the numerous obstacles and complexities associated to the development process, as noted in Chapter 2.

8.3. Consolidation of the megaproject agenda

Informed by the urban coalition theories, the two previous sections have identified further insights into the megaproject coalitions, including situated practices and additional discursive dimensions. This section interrogates the functioning mechanisms of the megaproject coalitions that enable them to secure –to a certain extent– the megaproject agenda. Accordingly, the analytical process will be informed by urban regime theory insofar as it provides a framework to explore the mechanisms of public-private cooperation that mediate the coalition’s capacity to carry on with its (developmental) agenda. In this section, the analyses of both case studies are combined

in the manner of Chapter 7; that is, identifying the functioning components, and exploring them simultaneously for both case studies. In regard to techniques specifically designed or thought to address the opposition's campaigning activity, these will be examined in the following chapter.

To start with, the findings suggest that one of the key characteristics of megaproject coalition, in line with urban regime theory, is the capacity to form stable alliances with several agents for long periods of time. That is, for urban regimes to succeed, they should be able to uphold a long-lived agenda that survives changes in governmental offices (Dowding, 2001) and is able to surmount obstacles or institutional challenges. This aspect can be observed in manifold ways as the following paragraphs will examine.

An essential component of these alliances is the fact observed in both cases of a total alignment –except for local party cadres– between the main political forces (centre-right and centre-left, and adding the Basque Nationalists in the case of the Basque Country). A basic timeline examination shows that the government coalitions that sustained the megaproject agenda include a number of forces. In Spain, both the Socialist Party and the People's Party have been supporters of HSR. In the Basque Country, the pattern is mirrored with the addition of the most important political force, the Basque Nationalist Party (PNV). The Basque Y agenda survived six different governments during the period 1999-2017. Five of these governments were ruled by the PNV, mostly in coalition with other forces, except for the period 2009-12 when the Socialist Party ruled. The PNV were supported in different times by two other parties, Basque Solidarity (EA) and the United Left (IU/EB), while the Socialists were supported by the People's Party (PP). Under each of these, the Basque Y was rarely questioned and instead the cabinets tended to state that it was a priority for the government in office, for instance, as the Socialist Party did (see *Diario Vasco*, 2010) or lately the PNV (the project has been one of the priorities in the negotiations with the main Spanish party, PP). Similarly, the NLTL agenda has survived, having survived seven different executives (two centre-right, four centre-left and also the so-called “technocratic cabinet” led by M. Monti) during the period from 2001-17.

The tacit and implicit agreement over the megaproject agenda confers it a significant stability in terms of ensuring majorities in the different representative chambers in the event of confidence votes, or other type of votes demanding a reconsideration of the

project or more transparency over the procurement procedures. This can be illustrated with the examples that follow.

For the NLTL, this tacit agreement has emerged as an essential component in terms of, for instance, votes in the national chambers to ratify the international agreement with France and the EU institutions to complete the project. In the last ratification votes in late 2016, 80% (187 out of 234 that were present) of the senators voted in favour and 73% of the MPs did so (285 out of the 391 that were present). This was of crucial importance for the project, as can be seen in a press statement released by the TELT society once the results were announced: “TELT expresses the utmost satisfaction for the approval in the Chamber of the Deputies of the bi-national treaty ratification bill for the start of final works of the NLTL” (Communication Department of TELT, 2016).

Likewise, regional level votes also played a role in consolidating the megaproject agenda. In 2006, the regional Council of Piedmont held a vote to pass a motion of support for the NLTL. Even though some members of the centre-left party (Democrats of the Left - DS, at the time) voted against it, the motion was passed. For the regional authorities the motion was of serious importance, expressing “the will of a political action that aims in a concrete and inevitable way for the realization of the NLTL” (Regional Council of Piedmont, 2006). Furthermore, in 2003 a vote took place in the Turin Council; a broad majority opted to support the NLTL (personal memoir written by the regional councillor A. Ferrentino, 2013). As noted from these examples, the pattern persists over time and applies to local, regional and national institutions alike.

For the Basque Y, there are also a number of parliamentary votes in which to observe the cross-party alliance, mainly in the Basque Parliament. In the previous chapter, it was explained how a vote in the Basque Parliament averted the initiative proposed by the nationalist left to carry out a cost-benefit analysis of the project. In 2010, another vote was held after a request by the nationalist left (at the time represented by the party Aralar) for the constitution of an “inter-institutional commission to study the damages caused by the works of the HSR”. A majority refused the proposal. This came after rural communities reported serious damage in their areas as a result of the works, such as the collapse of a road near the town of Aramaio (Basque Parliament, 2010). The proposal was rejected on the basis of not generating more bureaucratic bodies; as the spokesperson of the social-democrats (PSOE) remarked:

we do not want to make any mastodon [uses this term to suggest it would be a large public body with limited effectiveness due to its lack of flexibility and agility] that is complicated to move and so that the bureaucracy of the mastodon prevents to deal with problems with diligence (Basque Parliament, 2010: 103).

The remarks go on to suggest that the affected town councils or private individuals should address concerns directly to the department's telephone number: "therefore, [let's use] the telephone of the department, the department of the Basque councillor Mr. Arriola [...] and from there the problems will start solving" (Basque Parliament, 2010: 104). Although this time the PNV did not oppose the initiative, a majority of socialist and conservative Basque MPs ensured that a tool for the control and monitoring of the megaproject works was not created⁸⁹.

The cross-party alliance works as well to prevent further transparency through internal votes in the parliamentary commissions. As a Basque nationalist left MP (Basque Parliament) explains, when his party asked for a hearing in Parliament with the technical engineers in charge of the project, the bid was refused by the chairs (members of other parties) of the environmental commission:

Our request was vetoed because [...] we went to the weakest part; we went to those who had signed, engineers from ETS [Basque public railway company], the site managers. Our petition was vetoed. They say that we can make petitions of politicians but not technicians for the hearings [...] the bureau is composed by Nationalist Left president, secretaries Conservatives and Basque Nationalists; we asked for it, the presidency accepted but the two secretaries denied us this appearance. It is in the minutes. And you say ... but why not? 'Because you cannot request technicians'. 'If you have nothing to hide ... why won't they appear?' 'The minister has to appear'. The minister comes, states that everything is fine, there is nothing to hide; 'if you have any problems refer to the courts'. The courts are where this issue will end up some day; I think the issue of cost overruns will have to end up there (IBA9).

The patterns outlined confirm that the securing of the megaproject agenda requires of a significant degree of institutional support that cuts across political lines, so that the necessary stability in this arena is achieved and the long-lived agenda that the megaproject development requires remains unchallenged.

A second component that underpins urban regimes, according to its theorists, is the existence of exceptional leadership even if, in principle, the basis of each regime is to survive personnel changes, let alone political successions (Dowding, 2001). Yet, this is

⁸⁹ The initiative was rejected with a vote outcome of 35 in favour, 37 against and 1 abstention.

not inconsistent with the potential existence of a “strong or exceptional leadership” (Dowding et al., 1999: 516) with which the coalition or regime could be associated. For the analysed contested megaproject developments, evidence of this exceptional leadership has been detected, notwithstanding on-going political successions and personnel changes. The following paragraphs shall analyse this evidence and argue that an essential component of megaproject coalitions is the preservation of key figures who can contribute with their specific skills to the success of the megaproject development process.

For the Basque Y, one of the governmental figures that stands out is the current Transport Vice-Councillor of the Basque Government, A. Aiz. As a member of the PNV, he started as vice-councillor of transports and public works (1998) when the project was approved and the works were about to start, holding this position until 2005. Subsequently, he was transferred to the Basque public railway company (ETS) – in charge of managing the “Basque Y” construction and implementation for the province of Guipuzcoa– where he became general secretary (2005-2013). This period includes the time in which the Socialist Party (PSOE) took over the Basque Government (2009-2012); it is of relevance that he was kept as the general secretary despite being affiliated to the PNV. In 2012, when the Basque Nationalists took over again, he was appointed as Vice-Councillor of Transports, notwithstanding the fact that he currently keeps a seat on the executive board of the public railway company.

In short, this is the case of an individual that, while party leaderships changed over time and so did Basque governments, nevertheless has remained for almost twenty years in different key positions directly related to the organisation and supervision of the Basque Y development process. It appears that the megaproject coalition could not manage without “the Basque politician who best knows the project of the ‘Basque Y’” (Izarra, 2016). Besides the accumulated knowledge, expertise and networking capacity of this individual, he also stands out for his strategy to pressure the Spanish government to take action on the delayed segments of the project under their management. He emphasised in two recent interviews that accumulating a significant delay in the construction process could result in the EU cancelling the allocated funds for the project:

- They [the Spanish government] had to make decisions without further delay [...]. One of the latest follow-up reports on the Euskadi-Europe high-speed

project already warned that if the ‘Bergara knot’ was still delayed, it could lead to the loss of European funding for that segment (quoted in Chico, 2017).

- Madrid [the Spanish government] has become aware that if it does not make progress with the works and projects it will even put European funding at risk, which is very important (quoted in Cueto, 2017).

These statements can be interpreted as a strategy to pressure the Spanish government, the agent controlling most of the funding to be allocated to the project as the Basque Government finds itself deprived of the necessary autonomy to complete the project. Additionally a second interpretation of the politicians’ comments would suggest that the central government is to be blamed for the registered delays. This resonates with the previous made petition of a full transfer of powers to the Basque Government that had also been supported by members of other parties such as the Socialist Party (see for instance, Uriona, 2013).

For the NLTL, one of the key individuals involved in the procurement process is the professional architect and entrepreneur M. Virano. As explained in the conflict periodization, after 2005 a new phase for the megaproject started with the creation of the Observatory⁹⁰; Mr Virano was appointed as chairman of this body following his nomination as extraordinary government commissioner for the NLTL by direct decision of the minister Lunardi (centre-right government, period 2001-6), just before the election of 2006 which would result in the formation of a new centre-left government led by Prodi.

This meant no change with respect to the NLTL agenda, as Mr Virano remained in charge until 2015 when he became president of TELT, the newly formed society for the execution and management of the construction process. As a local representative with experience in the Observatory noted, this body enabled Mr Virano to perform a leadership role beyond its discussion purposes, given his remarkable skills:

[the Observatory] has become very political, not very technical in the end, has given a lot of space to a character like Virano that is powerful [...]; but powerful because he is very cultured, and one who knows a lot, and a very good speaker, very intelligent, very sharp (IAP4).

In turn, the role of Mr Virano was also acknowledged by the European Commission: “Without the unflinching efforts of the Observatory under the leadership of Mario

⁹⁰ See Chapter 5.

Virano the entire project would not have reached the current momentum of support” (Brinkhorst, 2012: 4–5).

It should be noted that this eleven-year period (2006–2017) comprises four different legislatures. In just the last two, there have been five different governments (Berlusconi and Monti: 2008–13; Letta, Renzi and Gentiloni: 2013–2017) with no significant implication for the bodies governing the megaproject process in terms of leadership change. Furthermore, an anti-trust body, following action from a 5 Star Movement regional councillor, stated that Virano, after becoming CEO of TELT, fell into a situation of incompatibility. Virano appealed the statement on the basis that TELT accomplishes a public function. The appeal was useful in terms of delaying the dispute: after 12 months the situation of incompatibility expired. As the councillor that put forward the complaint explains:

he has appealed and for now everything is still. I am taking part in the appeal and therefore I am counterpart [...]. It takes time. In the meantime, he came out of the incompatibility situation and went on (IAA13).

In sum, Virano, as a government appointed figure, survived five different executive governments, an alleged situation of incompatibility and jumped from chairing “the technical body of discussion incorporating all the instances involved in the realization of the NLTL” to general manager of the society in charge of leading the construction process, TELT. What is then, the relevance of such a figure for the leadership of the megaproject development process?

The data collected suggests that one of Virano’s fundamental contributions was to design a strategy to deal with the opposition campaign. This can be traced back to crucial moments such as the so-called *Pracatinat* Agreement⁹¹ –promoted by the Observatory under his supervision– which was presented to the public essentially as the “end of the conflict phase” (Griseri, 2008) resulting in the “victory of the dialogue” as the Public Works Minister Matteoli observed (quoted in *Il Corriere della Sera*, 2008). As earlier explained, the opposition distanced from this perspective, stating that the agreement had only been signed by Virano himself (Burnside-Lawry and Ariemma, 2015). Following the official narrative, he was being portrayed as a mediating figure that established an “inclusive process after a period of fierce confrontation” (Brinkhorst, 2012: 9) and when reporting to the French and European

⁹¹ See also Chapter 5.

partners at the Inter-Governmental Commission he “explained that of the 14 municipalities affected by the project, at present only four were opposed and ten were in favour of the project” (Brinkhorst, 2012: 9). This contrasts with the accounts that highlight that a total of twenty-five municipalities passed motions against the megaproject (Comunità Montana Valle Susa e Val Sangone, 2012). All in all, his was a two-fold job: on the one hand, to come up with a method to address the opposition; on the other, to design a communicative strategy for reporting on the conflict to media and external partners. This is inferred from the above noted elements and the comments of an activist involved in the opposition campaign:

Therein [the whole range of megaproject supporters] I think a figure like Virano has played a significant role [...] surely he is the one who has built little by little a kind of rationality to address the movement [the opposition]: not overstating, minimizing the victories, also not exaggerating in the caricaturisation and criminalization (that is left more to the media mainstream: TV news and big press) (Interview with G. Pittavino; CSOA Askatasuna, 2013⁹²).

Thus, in both cases and depending on the specific contextual intricacies of each process, an exceptional and lasting leadership that focuses on concrete aspects of each case can be identified. It should also be highlighted that the ground for their emergence and consolidation was paved by the cross-party consensus earlier outlined, which facilitates their survival as key figures in the process. It is argued then that maintaining key figures within the procurement process appears to be a fundamental element for stability.

A third component of the regime would be the capacity to network in order to guarantee access to a myriad of resources, so that the megaproject agenda is not jeopardised. Regime analysts highlight the importance of identifying networks so that the “effective action as flowing from the cooperative efforts of different interests and different organisations” (Stoker, 1995: 59). Aside from the networks of patronage that emerge from the connections of construction companies and political parties, this network component of collaborative effort among parties can be identified in the practices of overcoming situations of impasse or risk for the safety of the developmental agenda, especially in terms of lack of financial resources.

⁹² The interview is available online at: <http://www.saradura.it/INTERVISTE/24-Gianluca%20Pittavino.pdf>. The fragment quoted is in p.4 of the interview.

For the Basque Y, the capacity to network stands out, in particular at the level of supranational institutions. In order to offset the lack of available funding as a result of spending cuts and austerity policies, in particular in the amount of funding dependent on the Spanish Government, the promoters managed to obtain a €1,000 million loan from the European Investment Bank at “very favourable conditions” as the Basque president F.J. Lopez pointed out (quoted in Ormazabal, 2012). The networking effort this time came from the political elite, in particular, the Socialist Party (PSOE): it turned out that EIB’s vice-president signing the loan on behalf of the institution was the former Spanish Minister of Public Works M. Alvarez (2004-2009) and a member of the Socialist Party herself.

The connections with the EIB were confirmed as key for the project to the extent that another loan valued in €600m was granted in 2017 (to be extended to €1.03bn) to the Spanish public railway administrator ADIF. In this respect, the resignation of M. Alvarez did not imply a change in the EIB policy on the allocation of funding, which suggests that the collaboration with the EIB is well established beyond the tasks of particular individuals. This further verifies the capacity to stabilise megaproject plans as they “survive personnel [...] changes” (Dowding, 2001: 14)

The concession of both loans was justified by the EIB essentially on the basis of improving rail connections, with explicit reference to the priority given to the Trans-European Networks of Transport (TEN-T). Following the rationale of this scheme, aside from connectivity improvements, the themes that appear in the core argumentation are job creation and sustainability (European Investment Bank, 2017). The significance of the EIB as a strategic partner, key to mobilising economic resources, can be identified in an EIB report on financing the TEN-T: “[t]he EIB is expected to contribute with its long-term loans to bridge the financial gap and accelerate the completion of the network, which is scheduled for 2020” (European Investment Bank, 2009: 1). Beyond the possibility of using network building capacities, the inclusion of the project within the TEN-T initiative facilitates resource mobilisation.

For the NLTL, resource mobilisation, funding in particular, was as essential as in the case of the Basque Y, given the post-recession context and the caps to public spending. It is worth mentioning that the EU, through its Connecting Europe Facility programme, awarded the project the maximum percentage of funding that it could according to EU

regulation 1316/2013, 40% of the total; that is, an amount worth €1,915 million (to be added to the previous awarded funding). Two possible interpretations follow: on the one hand, this could be seen as a lobbying effort by Italian and French authorities; on the other, a special determination by the EU institutions in ensuring the realisation of this project. When asked about this, participants claimed that it basically responded to a joint effort between the three parties: while the two national authorities were determined to lobby and campaign for it (Italy in particular), the EU institutions stated and re-stated the priority character of the infrastructure and its commitment to it.

A Regional councillor recalls this three-party shared agenda:

“The EU had already identified European strategic links in ~~1994~~ [1994, correct year] at the Summit in Essen; Italy and France have worked to get the highest possible economic coverage” (IAP3).

Such an accomplishment by the national authorities involved a “very intense [task], with several bilateral meetings and pronouncements of the respective elected assemblies; co-financing was definitely crucial to overcoming the series of uncertainties emerging over the years” (IAP3). In fact, the EU institutions, in particular the European Commission (EC henceforth), can be identified as a committed supporter, as illustrated by a memo issued by the EC under the title: “[t]he Lyon-Turin new railway link – The Commission reiterates its full support for the project”. The text not only added further emphasis on the same point: “the Commission remains committed to support France and Italy in the completion of the Lyon–Turin railway axis”, but also compelled the states to take further steps in order to accelerate its implementation process: “[t]he Commission encourages Italy to accelerate the approval process of the "preliminary project" and Italy and France to adopt a modified bilateral treaty” (European Commission, 2011). These findings are of particular significance as they constitute a precedent to the forthcoming awarding of the 40% of the funding – the maximum according to the legal framework – to the NLTL by the EC.

Additionally, this networking effort not only had implications in securing a significant amount of funding but also in safeguarding the agenda from potential undermining factors. Beyond the opposition movement in Italy, it should be noted that, in France, potential elements of disruption could be found in deliberations from institutional

bodies (the Accounts Tribunal and the Mobility 21 Commission)⁹³. The evidence brought up by those bodies influenced the plans to complete the line in French territory. Yet the so-called trans-border segment, and by extent the base tunnel, was excluded from these considerations insofar as it was a joint venture between the two states and the EU institutions. Undoubtedly, this shared management helped maintain the agenda.

The third section of this chapter has delineated patterns of functioning of the megaproject coalition. For such task, it has drawn on notions stemming from the urban regime conceptualisation, fundamentally echoing the need to secure stability. Three components have been identified in both case studies, confirming similarities in the governance patterns of both megaprojects. The techniques identified operate as a result of the collaborative efforts made by different actors. Their identification sheds further light on a central concern of urban regime research: the consolidation of the growth coalition and its developmental plans (Lauria, 1997). The identified elements that fortified the megaproject agenda include, firstly, the securing of a pro-megaproject consensus that cuts across political lines and scales in such a way that institutional decision-making is widely operated in support of the megaproject agenda. Secondly, this consolidation was also reinforced through the establishment of leadership that can operate at the margins of the politico-institutional realm and thus remain relatively unaffected by the dynamics that derive from the latter. And thirdly, the umbrella given by the European institutions to the megaproject plans is not only ideological and discursive, but also material in the sense that, through effective networking, resources to support the megaproject plans can also be mobilised. In fact, it is illustrative of the benefits of politico-economic reescalation for megaprojects plans, whereby so-called trans-border segments play crucial roles and therefore receive special treatment. Taking this into consideration, the final section summarises and discusses the fundamental points emerging from this chapter's analysis.

⁹³ The French Court of Audits published a report in 2012 outlining a number of flaws in the project namely being a "too ambitious project" (p.1) and also the fact that it poses a number of financial risks as the traffic volumes have been "revised downwards" (Cour des Comptes, 2012: 4). Similarly, a transport policy report has categorised the completion of the French segment of the Lyon-Turin as a "second priority" (Duron, 2013).

8.4. Conclusion

This chapter has sought to further analyse the actors' configurations and their functioning mechanisms in support of the megaproject agendas, building on the evidence presented in Chapters 6 and 7. Such an exercise has been informed by the urban coalition theories, in particular with notions deriving from the urban regime and growth machine conceptualisations which, as it turns out, constitute a valuable theoretical tool to examine megaproject governance under the umbrella of urban politics (Kennedy et al., 2011). The deeper examination on the nature of the operating coalitions in each case study has been defined through two separated sections that have located the additional support for the plans along with further insights on discursive techniques and situated practices. The latter were further examined in the third section which delved into power mechanisms in accordance with the urban regime premises of stability, extraordinary leadership and networking efforts (Mossberger and Stoker, 2001; Stone, 1989).

It has been noted that, beyond the central node that supports the megaproject agenda, auxiliary players coalesce, taking a more or less active role. Mainstream media on the one hand, and fractions of the main trade union confederations on the other, coincide in both case studies. In their attempts to become hegemonic, that is, to maintain the megaproject agenda by generating a broad consensus, the growth coalitions either take help from other partners (Basque Y, the transport NGO, sports teams and other civil society actors) or attempt to attract further support: through open meetings sponsored by the regional elites or by announcing plans of future urban redevelopments.

Furthermore, it can be argued that in this quest to culminate a hegemonic project (Jessop, 1997), the coalition carries on in the manufacture of consent through a number of mechanisms that seek to socialise the value-free development ideology. In this sense, situated practices and discursive insights have been uncovered. Both case studies share the emphasis on job creation as well as the green growth machine component. Other dimensions identified that enable the socialisation of the pro-megaproject discourse include its connection to a nation-building project (Basque Y) and the incorporation of a significant local component into the discursive and practice dimensions, so that a considerable segment of the local business community is brought in.

The analytical process has identified for both case studies a number of mechanisms that enable the securing of the megaproject agenda. These mechanisms rely, firstly, on establishing a wide consensus, over fundamental values or objectives (i.e. megaproject implementation) among the institutional political community, materialised mainly through a cross-party alliance which operates in the public institutions, ensuring that the megaproject plans are not significantly altered or interrupted. This pattern also spans time and is not disrupted by changes in government offices resulting from different electoral cycles, demonstrating the consolidation of the policy agenda and imitating well-established urban regimes (Dowding, 2001). These mechanisms also rely on, secondly, the roles played by specific individuals in managing the procurement process, who despite being political nominees, survive changes in the institutional and political landscape. This results in the consolidations of exceptional and stable leaderships in the procurement process that further contribute to the securing of the long-lived megaproject agenda. This mechanism is epitomised by the figures of Virano in the NLTL and Aiz in the Basque Y, who have also been demonstrated to be skilful when dealing with other agents with stake in the process. And thirdly, mechanisms rely on the establishment of networks and the capacity to mobilise resources to further ensure the megaproject agenda; this is visualised in the access to extraordinary funding such as in the loans from the EIB to the Basque Y and on the 40% granted by the Connecting Europe Facility scheme to the NLTL.

To conclude, it can be argued that a hybrid of both concepts – urban regime and growth machine – best captures some aspects of the functioning nature of the megaproject coalitions, their situated practices and discursive techniques. Approaching the megaproject coalitions as urban growth coalitions, it is understood that their objective is to become hegemonic (Lauria, 1997) and therefore to achieve the final consolidation of their plans. For this to happen, it is argued, they organise in a way that essentially seeks to gather further support from social actors so that the manufacture of consent is easily achieved. They also put into place a number of mechanisms that, as a start, will diminish potential obstacles and also facilitate the mobilisation of extra resources for the completion of the plans. As a whole, this has to be understood from a perspective of a multi-scalar governance with implications for the procurement process as the local, regional, national and supra-national dimensions interact, generating both difficulties and opportunities for the process. The practices, mechanisms, and discursive elements mediate in the procurement process in an exceptional manner,

confirming the need by megaproject developments to equip themselves with extraordinary instruments of governance (Altshuler and Luberoff, 2003), especially if this are to become 'hegemonic (urban) projects' (Jessop, 1997).

However, in the selected case studies, the hegemonic status is not fully obtained due to the capacities of counter-hegemonic groups. In fact, the pro-megaproject forces require further tools to deliver their agenda. In this regard, the terrain of the state is utilised by these forces to undertake a further push to secure the megaproject agenda. Precisely, megaproject forces resort to means of coercion as the consent-manufacturing attempts prove insufficient. It is to this subject of analysis that the next chapter turns.

CHAPTER 9. SECURING MEGAPROJECT DEVELOPMENTS BY UNDERMINING OPPOSITION MOVEMENTS

Chapters 7 and 8 have interrogated the nature of the megaproject coalitions and their *modi operandi* to set and consolidate the megaproject agenda. The analyses have uncovered patterns that show how the main promoters of megaprojects count on a series of power means and governance arrangements that enable them to dominate the governance process. Yet, in the analysed cases this is still insufficient and the megaproject coalition has to draw on other sources of power due to the opposition movement's capacities and level of organisation.

These sources of power are those of the modern state. As noted by the literature, despite the roll-back prompted by neoliberal policies, the state still constitutes a relevant source of power (Harvey, 2001; Jessop, 2002a, 2002b; Tickell and Peck, 2002), in particular when the neoliberal order has to be defended; the state can then turn to persuasion or the direct use of force (Harvey, 2005a). In this sense, interrogating the role of the state becomes crucial to capture the ways in which the overcoming of opposition and resistance efforts was organised and operated in order to safeguard the megaproject agenda. This will shed further light on the nature of the governance of megaproject developments marked by significant opposition and resistance. Additionally, it should confirm whether this governance is characterised by exceptional mechanisms and procedures, as theorised by some of the megaproject literature (Altshuler and Luberoff, 2003; Kennedy, 2015) in line with the thesis objectives. The chapter is divided into six sections. Section 9.1 elaborates on the state's pivotal role in the governance of the selected megaprojects. Section 9.2 examines the use of physical violence against the oppositional forces. Section 9.3 points out additional practices emanating from the core state structures. Section 9.4 highlights "softer" mechanisms that operate in the same line of opposition disruption, while 9.5 lists additional tactics. The chapter finishes drawing several conclusions from the presented research findings.

9.1. Significance of the state for megaproject agendas

The point of departure for this chapter's analysis lies in the assumption that the state-related structures constitute a crucial component in phenomena such as that under investigation. Thereby, the state –in its narrow sense, that is, government and its apparatuses, or in Gramscian terminology the "political society" (Gramsci, 1971,

1999) – is understood to be a central terrain of struggle for the pursuit and consolidation of specific agendas (McGuirk, 2004). This assumption derives from the understanding of the state as a social relation, as explained in Chapter 3.

In this sense the power attributions of the state constitute a valuable terrain for the pro-megaproject forces to advance their agenda – beyond the mere governmental action of completing the job – in particular in the context of significant opposition. In fact, the oppositional forces managed to challenge the attempts of their opponents to secure social consent on the megaproject developments, resulting in a situation of disputed hegemony, particularly at a local and regional level. It is understood then that as sufficient consent was not achieved, in order not to renounce their plans, the megaproject promoters resorted to coercion (operationalised through state bodies). Following these considerations and using a Gramscian lens that considers the significance of both consent and coercion (Gramsci, 2000), this chapter examines the forms in which state-related bodies contributed to the securing of megaproject development agendas.

The analysis of the opposition-disruption actions through state bodies will be informed by Marxist state theory. Accordingly, it will draw on the works of Gramsci, Poulantzas, and more recent elaborations by Jessop. Firstly, the role of constitutionalised violence as a necessary component of underlying political power (Poulantzas, 1978) should be noted; it has been identified as an instrument of the pro-megaproject forces exercised through state bodies.

Beyond evident forms of coercion such as the use of direct force, there is a whole set of practices organised through the state machinery constitutive of the megaproject political process. These involve the exercise of authority and power (Magnusson, 2010) –crucial to erode and disrupt the opposition– that become integrated into the applying urban governance. To understand how these power mechanisms operate, Marxist theory contends that the state should be understood not as a unitary subject, but instead as a social relation, an idea earlier developed by Poulantzas (Jessop, 1990, 2002b, 2007; Kelly, 1999). Thus, applying the strategic relational approach that derives from this consideration involves approaching the state as a terrain where strategies can be operated, elaborated and also received from the past (Jessop, 1990). At the same time, there is a need to recognise “how a specific state apparatus can

privilege [or discriminate] some actors, some identities, some strategies some spatio-temporal horizons and some actions over others” (Jessop, 2014: 32).

The strategic selectivity of the state is the central notion that derives from this approach and will inform this chapter’s analysis. This notion, Jessop notes, should be understood as

the ways in which the state considered as a social ensemble has a specific, differential impact on the ability of various political forces to pursue particular interests and strategies in specific spatio-temporal contexts through their access to and/or control over given state capacities - capacities that always depend for their effectiveness on links to forces and powers that exist and operate beyond the state's formal boundaries (Jessop, 2002b: 40).

In essence, the notion provides a framework for the analysis of “the role of political strategies in forging the state’s institutional structures and modes of socioeconomic intervention” (Brenner, 2004: 87). These resulting ensembles and forms of intervention, insofar they are selective, will tend to privilege hegemonic classes, so that they benefit their projects and accumulation strategies as well as the enterprises that derive from them, such as megaproject developments.

This has implications for the megaproject governance process, not only in terms of influencing the procurement process (Chapters 7 and 8) but also with respect to the opposition campaign. If it is understood that the selected infrastructure developments constitute crucial pieces of the on-going hegemonic projects and accumulation strategies, then it follows that state structures and mechanisms will be mobilised to privilege them. In other words, because the existing balance of forces in society is to some extent reified in the state edifice, this should have a translation in the way the state apparatuses and bodies address specific issues, one being the governance of megaproject developments that face opposition campaigns. This would result then in the operationalisation of strategies and mechanisms to counter the opposition resistance and campaigning efforts. This is how the strategic relational approach informs this analytical process.

As noted in Chapter 7, several modes of intervention and governing techniques tend to privilege these developments. Yet, given the significance of the opposition, further intervention is required to secure the megaproject agenda. Accordingly, this chapter sets to explore how the terrain of the state institutions can also be mobilised by pro-megaproject forces to disrupt selectively the activity of opposition movements. This

involves noting the reverse side of state selectivity; while the common use of the term is to comprehend how state forms privilege certain repertoire forms or plans –in particular the ones that privilege the dominant classes– this chapter proposes a selectivity type that disadvantages the social opposition. In this sense, it will apply the term to comprehend negative discrimination towards actors pursuing anti-megaproject action: in other words, an attempt to grasp how selective state mechanisms operate when they coerce social groups challenging crucial endeavours for the established accumulation strategies.

The central argument will stress that the state constitutes a crucial entity in securing megaproject development processes through which an effective disruption of the opposition efforts can be organised. State structures and apparatuses selectively operated in various ways and in different areas to counter the opposition or make it more difficult for the opposition to challenge the megaproject agenda. The findings emerge from accounts of different participants as well as from observations and the wide range of documents analysed (see Chapter 4), primarily activist opposition-produced materials that reflect situations in which state-linked structures actively mediate in the governance process.

Prior to the analysis of the findings, the significance of overcoming opposition and resistance in these specific contexts shall be noted. To that end, the following paragraphs will illustrate to what extent the selected megaprojects embody cornerstone projects for the dominant classes (aside from its politico-economic relevance as noted in Chapter 5).

For the Basque Y, Calvo (2015) notes the significance of the project, which ought not to be regarded as a mere infrastructure, but instead as a symbolic entity in a potential state or nation-building process for the Basque Country; in other words, it is a project embodying the urban and territorial future as imagined by the (regional) elites in a perfect match with the policies promoted by EU institutions. In their view, the completion of the project would result in the improved integration of the Basque Country into the EU territory, not only for passenger exchange but also for market accessibility (Calvo, 2015). In parallel, it should be re-stated that infrastructure development has been a key component of the extant national accumulation strategy (López and Rodríguez, 2010; Rodríguez and López, 2013) that facilitated its inclusion on the development agenda. This also suggests that such a project cannot be easily

opposed. In sum, both economic and political interests from different sources converge in this large-scale infrastructure work, which should be understood as a key enterprise for the mobilised hegemonic projects and accumulation strategies.

In terms of the NLTL, the significance of the popular opposition for the political and economic elites can be grasped through the campaign led by relevant political figures and the mainstream media. In fact the contentious process was seen as a matter of national importance to the extent that, beyond the rent-seeking interests of certain groups and a national strategy of HSR development (Locatelli et al., 2016), it was putting at risk the prestige of the state, as its authority had been challenged. Similarly to the Basque Y, this constituted a convergence of material and political interests.

Two illustrative examples that epitomise the significance of the project and the impact of the opposition are presented as follows. Firstly, journalist M. Castellani wrote an article entitled, “The Susa Valley brings Italy to its knees” (Castellani, 2012) where she points out that despite the protests and the impacts that the project will generate “there is no way back”, adding how catastrophic it would be to abandon the project:

This [the completion of the NLTL] is an emergency that Italy must face immediately. The EU has already fined the *Bel Paese* [Italy] for the delay in the work and considering the current state of Italian debt, other taxes can only represent the beginning of a catastrophe in the long run, together with the complete isolation of the peninsula from the rest of Europe on financial and communication level if the line is not completed.

This quote shows media alarm over Italian prestige being threatened by local opposition in the eyes of the EU. Secondly, the emphasis on the relevance of the opposition and resistance to the megaproject infrastructure can be seen in this sentence from Interior Minister A. M. Cancellieri when asked about the NLTL and Piedmont: “the HSR is the mother of all concerns” (*La Repubblica*, 2012) which she later clarified as the “concerns about the works to be carried out for NLTL, the needs of local communities and the problems of public order [veiled reference to the opposition]” (*La Repubblica*, 2012). Consequently, it appears that for projects carrying such symbolism beyond their alleged practical functions and material interests, their diverse advocates and promoters will seek to mobilise resources in order to protect the development processes from significant disruptions and when those occur, will try to organise an appropriate response to minimise the impact.

As noted earlier, the terrain whereby this response is organised comprises the state and its associated bodies which can deploy a number of strategies effectively articulating its force or coercion potential. In this respect, figure 9.1 and table 9.1 provide a quantitative account of the occasions in which the state, through one of its bodies (police or judiciary), intervened overtly against the opposition.

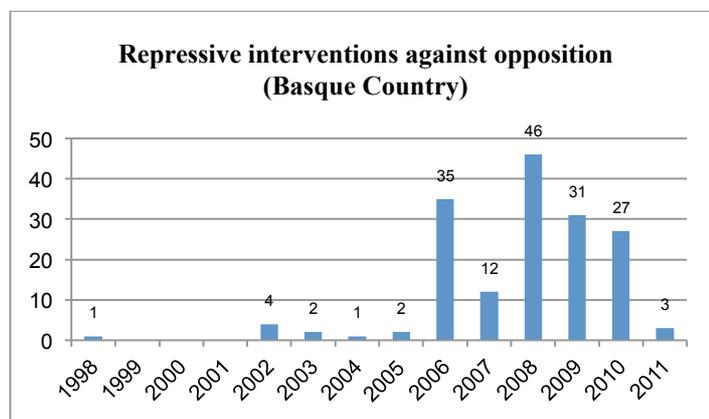


Figure 9.1. Number of contentious episodes (including arrests and subsequent prosecution, stop and search, fines, charges with batons) with state involvement in the Basque Country. Source: own elaboration from kAHTeak Txikitu (2011).

Table 9.1. State involvement in the NLTL-related contentious dynamics.

State interventions against opposition (Italy)	
Repressive action/ highlight	Figure
Investigated/indicted	1500 (Pepino, 2016)
Sentences in first degree	>200 (NOTAV.info, 2016) (ranging from four- year prison sentence to €250 fine)
Cautionary measures (normally house arrest or mandatory residence but includes also cautionary prison)	100 (Pepino, 2016)
Security contingent	129,952 agents (Santopadre, 2012; quoting governmental source)

The following four sections constitute an attempt to comprehend the multi-faceted state selectivities operating in response to the opposition. Where appropriate, a link is established with pre-existing political strategies in line with Jessop’s approach to viewing the state as “site, generator and product of strategies” (Jessop, 1990: 246). The data presented takes into consideration situations from both case studies simultaneously. To start with, section 9.2 analyses the use of physical coercion in the context of direct opposition action against the megaproject developments.

9.2. Physical coercion as a response to oppositional direct action

The first mechanism of opposition disruption to be analysed and to which this section is dedicated is the use of explicit coercion –that is, physical violence or direct use of

force (in comparison to other more subtle threatening modes of acting) – by state-related bodies. Within a multi-faceted range of practices, this stands out due to its visibility and impact. This use of direct force has often occurred following attempts – successful or not– by activists groups to peacefully occupy –permanently or temporarily– worksites. In addition, it has also been identified in other situations whereby individual activists experienced abuse of force by members of the security forces. In the situations presented, coercion appears in the form of “constitutionalised violence” to stop or respond to attempts to disrupt the construction process.

As mentioned, the most obvious cases of use of force were responses to occupations or occupation attempts. For the NLTL, this was the case in 2005 and 2011. Since this analysis is predominantly focusing on the period after 2005, these considerations will leave aside the 2005 events. The flagship episode of this component is the eviction from land that was to be utilised as a worksite (see figures 9.2 and 9.3), named by anti-HSR activists the “Free Republic of *La Maddalena*” (Armano and Pittavino, 2013).



Figure 9.2. Upper Susa Valley (on the border with France). Worksite indicated is near the town of Chiomonte. Source: own elaboration from Google Maps.

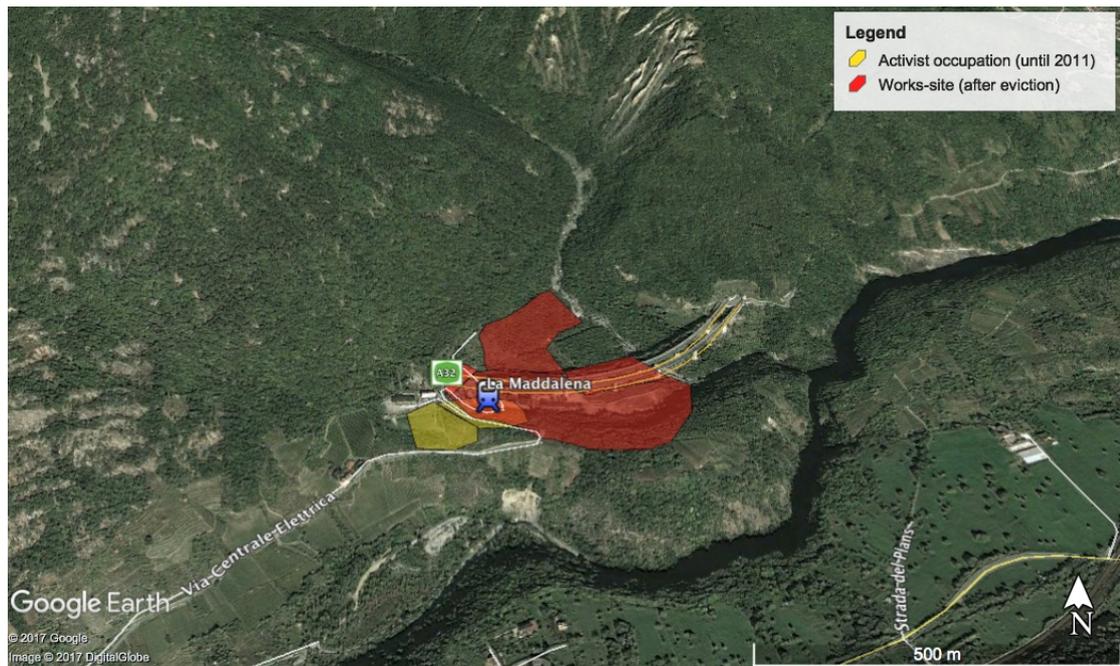


Figure 9.3. Works-site where the base tunnel is to be excavated, including the area occupied by activists in 2011. Source: own elaboration from Google Earth.

This situation of occupation posed two major challenges for the authorities. On the one hand, it was preventing the onset of the works; on the other, as noted by a high-ranking public official, it was an unacceptable situation for state authorities, as an area in the national territory had been taken away from their control:

I do not understand the last phase of the [anti-HSR] movement, the one of the ideological drift. The one which is not driven by the local community, by the local governments, [...] instead, there is an autonomous movement that takes the lead and claims to drive the mayors and the local communities as well. The Republic of La Maddalena is a good example, if you know what I mean. It can be a useful experiment of Anarchist Republic or something similar, but it seems unacceptable or difficult to handle in an established state that has its own constitution and its own logic (IAP2).

The use of state force did not come without warnings from the top authorities. In fact, Italian Premier Berlusconi had warned (Nicolò Channel, 2008): “The state will guarantee the possibility to re-start the works of the alpine perforations for the corridor 5, precisely through the use of force”. The time for such a move was triggered by two factors: firstly, by pressure from the EU and the risk of losing the project funds; secondly, by the slow progress or stalemate in response to the compromise formula embodied by the Observatory (Schepis, 2013) which did not lead to a significant increase in local consent.

The eviction order was executed in June 2011. For it to be completed, the security forces had to make use of measures such as tear gas. The authorities also had to

organise also a defence, because a few days later protestors tried to march back onto the site. As a result, the worksite was fenced, access was totally restricted, and the area became a “site of national interest”⁹⁴, with the attendant judicial implications for unauthorised trespassers. G. Fissore, a local councillor opposing the NLTL, provided a witness account of those events at the PPT Session:

The use of construction equipment [bulldozer and digger] proved not so effective as we did not move, so then they started a continuous CS gas launch that forced us to retreat. The launch of CS was almost immediately addressed to the square, obviously, to prevent us from reaching it and staying there. During the two to three hours of clash, about 400 CS projectiles were launched. The 700 resisting individuals that were there, young, old, men and women were forced to retreat through the only accessible escape route, the mountain trails [...]. In the following days, the nearby area was fenced and militarily occupied for a surface that is much larger than that earlier foreseen (WAA13).

The use of CS gas was not an exceptional episode and instead persisted as a recurrent tool, embodying the force used against oppositional forces. It is repeatedly emphasised by opposition activists:

- [talking about the grievances associated to the authorities] “the deliberate use that the police make of CS gas, [...] and that continues to do when it is known that these substances are harmful to health” (IAA6).
- “Protesters opposed to the opening of the worksite repeatedly suffer from the launch of sticks containing CS gas, banned since 1997 with the entry into force of the Paris Chemical Weapons Convention” (Cicconi et al., 2015: 340).
- An activist report written by a scholar from the Turin Polytechnic stated that the CS gas, had been so “repeatedly used in the Susa Valley in 2011 and in the following years” (Zucchetti, 2014: 1) that “the Susa Valley, aside from the Vietnam war, could be considered the first case of prolonged exposure to humans” (Zucchetti, 2014: 10).
- Zucchetti, in *Il Fatto Quotidiano* (2012) also noted: “For Susa Valley protesters, there may be the same [referring to the police officers that manipulate the CS gas] scenario of repeated exposure. It is now one year from its first use, and the exposures have been tens and dozens, with thousands of tear gas canisters”.

⁹⁴ As a special legal measure it is explained in section 9.3.

- During the participant observation process, the researcher could also verify from a distance the use of CS gas when some fireworks were thrown into the worksite by protestors.

It appears that force has been a highly visible component of coercion. Not only did this act against the mobilised protestors, but it was also a discouraging factor for potential individuals willing to join protests, as informal conversations with activists revealed (research observations).

As for the Basque Y, similar situations took place in rallies and occupations, in particular during the period 2006-09. To start with, it is possible to identify an overall tense atmosphere and pressure against anti-HSR mobilisation:

the villages around [the works] have been totally militarized and condemned to live under a great pressure: controls, searches ... Certain opponents have undergone genuine persecution and personalized harassment. Virtually there has been no protest or mountain march in which there have not been installed pressing police controls (kAHTeak Txikitu, 2011: 5).

Moreover, a situation that embodies the use of force as coercion was the heavy-handed policing of a “resistance camp”⁹⁵ organised by the opposition and subsequently terminated as pressure mounted substantially:

[in] the resistance camp in January 2007 after the T4 [ETA bombing in Madrid airport] [the atmosphere] became oppressive, the repression was, I mean ... we had a march to the mountain, we were 20 people and the Basque Police arrived... [with] low helicopter flights over us, with machine gun in their hands interrupting our way, we could not walk to the mountain, it was a stinging, a hardening towards us that... made it quite oppressive... everything was very intimidating, it was a hardening that, since the resistance camp was not very strong, I mean, there were not big numbers, it made quite difficult to hold [the mobilisation] there, right? (IBA1).

This first element noted represents, rather than the direct use of force, a strategy of a show of extreme force, generating fatigue and exhaustion among the activists. On the other hand, it is significant to underline the policing of one of the last big rallies organised by the opposition. Epithets given to this episode describe a “punishment

⁹⁵ Similar to the experiences at *La Maddalena* and the improvised garrisons organised by the NLTl opposition movement, this resistance camp (*Erresistenzia Gunea* in Basque) was established as a result of the occupation of lands near the first construction sites of the Basque Y. It was located in the province of Alaba and lasted for about two months (November 2006 to January 2007). It was used as a self-organised living space for protestors and also as a base camp to coordinate protest actions against the construction of the Basque Y, using direct action and civil disobedience.

operation” that could “teach a lesson”. This hardening change in strategy, with police adopting a more aggressive approach, should be understood in the context of escalated tensions. The rally took place one month after the assassination by ETA of an entrepreneur whose company was a contractor in the HSR works. The idea of punishment emerges from the fact that the opposition to the HSR was being associated with the political violence of ETA so as to criminalise the protest movement (Alonso et al., 2014). The accounts of different individuals that participated in the rally point to the excess of force deployed by the security forces:

- when many people are beginning to withdraw [...] riot Basque police arrived and made a strike from behind, an operation of brutal punishment. [...] [we] had to pass through a very narrow passage, so there they ambushed us with blows of [rubber] balls at a very short distance to the people, there were dozens of wounded, it was very hard and they arrested eight people (IBA1).
- “anyway we were given the thrashing of a lifetime; they [riot police] hit left and right” (IBA8).
- when the demonstration ended, hundreds and hundreds of people tried to get into the worksite and some groups managed to reach them. Immediately the savage police response began. [...] Those who reached the site sat on the ground with the intention of making a peaceful protest. The police instead acted from the outset with violence [...]: ball and baton blows, vans at full speed among the people who were in the works (activist witness quoted in kAHTeak Txikitu, 2011: 39).

In both case studies, activists have pointed out how they suffered intimidations, harassment or even aggression by the security forces, suggesting that they resorted to coercion of individuals as well. For the Basque Y, an activist underlines how sometimes specific individuals could be targeted by police forces: “In Goierri for example, a young man [to be understood as an activist or someone active at the moment in the opposition] was beaten by the Basque police, just after some [local] festivities” (IBA1). It has been also documented how on the 10th of October 2008 in the town of Basauri, a youth that was painting anti-HSR graffiti on the streets was mistreated before being arrested and released on charges of public disorder: “[a] witness indicated that the young man was brutally assaulted and detailed that he was kicked in the face, in the middle of the street” (kAHTeak Txikitu, 2011: 36). In

Italy, activists from the No Tav movement or individuals participating in the organised mobilisations experienced similar power abuse or excess of force with the Italian police, as in the following examples:

- M. Camposana, a protestor arrested during a rally at the worksite, said he was mistreated, as did the rest of the arrested protestors, who reported “injuries and claim[ed] to have been beaten by agents, even inside the works-site where they had been taken” (archiviato.blog.wordpress.com/documenti/); the protestor explained: “Since they stopped me until they brought me inside the works-site, it was ten minutes of madness. I got a baton blow in my face, they touched me in the intimate parts and insulted me” (M. Camposana, quoted in *Il Fatto Quotidiano*, 2013).
- Incidents reported in a station in Turin just after a protest rally in the Susa Valley (February 2012) which were presented by the mainstream media as a necessary intervention of the police to require ticket acquisition (see for instance Argentieri and Serafini, 2012). However, other more contrasted versions, maintain that the violence came from the police forces (for instance, Contropiano, 2012). It is illustrative the witness of an activist that had attended the rally and was at the station commented: “I was on the train of 19.50 for Milan and witnessed the absolutely unjustified and unjustifiable actions of the police force who at one point seemed to have completely lost their minds as not only people were getting baton blows, also the windows of the train” (quoted in *Pero Torino*, 2012 and *La Privata Repubblica*, 2012⁹⁶). In addition, linked with this episode, the inherited strategies of the state (Jessop, 1990) emerge: the individual in charge of this operation, S. Mortola, was a DIGOS director at the time of the police aggression at the Diaz school during the G8 in Genoa (2001).

There were other episodes in which the oppositions’ actions were met with the use of force (see kAHTeak Txikitu, 2011 for the Basque Y and the cases identified in the documentary *Archiviato*⁹⁷ for the NLTL). Even if these incidents were occasional and at times random, they effectively constituted a component of the strategy to disrupt the opposition. They seemed to be operated more overtly in situations where the construction process was directly threatened (site occupation, sabotage, disobedience).

⁹⁶ This blog entry also outlines the witness of other individuals that further verify the inappropriate conduct of the police contingent.

⁹⁷ The website of the documentary lists these cases: archiviato.blog.wordpress.com/documenti/.

Given the specificity of violence within this coercive component, the following lines seek to theoretically elaborate on it. In this respect the notion of state terrorism stands out. This is understood to mean the “state’s politically motivated application of force inside its own borders” (Martin, 2018: 72). Even in democratic states, where a certain degree of restraint is expected (Martin, 2018), the use of authoritarian security measures is not uncommon when those democratically constituted states are confronted with specific challenges (see for instance the USA, Chomsky, 1999). To some extent, in the researched contexts, this restraint is underprivileged in favour of active coercive actions⁹⁸, which includes, as early underscored, a significant degree of violence and intimidation against activists and protestors. Classic examples cited in the state terrorism literature, such as the dirty war in the Southern Cone of Latin America, include extreme and systematic forms of violence not detected in the present research: kidnappings, torture and forced disappearances. Hence categorising the identified violence as state terrorism would involve stretching the concept considerably. Which are the grounds on which state terror operates? Blakeley asserts that state terrorism involves:

a deliberate threat or act of violence against a victim by state representatives, or a threat of such when a climate of fear already exists through prior acts of state terrorism, which is intended to induce fear in some target observers who identify with the victim, so that the target audience is forced to consider changing their behaviour in some way (2010: 25).

From this perspective, the state would have committed acts of terror against the citizens that it is duty-bound to protect. The targeted audience were citizens whom could have potentially joined the protest movements or already had. In terms of complicity, limited or no legal prosecution followed the acts of violence. For further precision in this conceptualisation a comment on the creation of fear shall be added. Blakeley (2010: 25) commonly refers to the will by the state to create “extreme fear”. In the context of the researched case studies, the qualification of extreme fear could appear rather excessive even if it cannot be denied that the will to create fear among the activist community existed and would have been effective to some extent.

To further grasp the significance of state-organised violence, it is possible to link the question back to state theory. In this sense, evidence suggests that in the moments

⁹⁸ In the particular context of the Basque Country, the state registered the accumulated experience of decades resorting to policies against the Basque Liberation Movement which included state terror (Ciocchini and Khoury, 2012)

when the construction process is put at risk, it is possible to identify the emergence of the exceptional state (Jessop, 1985). This manifests itself through the use of constitutionalised violence in order to address a “crisis of hegemony” (occupations –or attempts at occupation– of the construction sites by the protest movements but also the contested legitimacy of carrying out the works). Thus, violence, as an element that “permanently underlies the techniques of power and mechanisms of consent” (Poulantzas, 1978: 81) employed by states, is reclaimed by the state to avoid any attempts at questioning its authority (constitution of the *Free Republic of La Maddalena*). In the researched cases, a component of this authority is the effective capacity of securing megaproject construction.

This section has shed light on one of the strategies put in practice by megaproject forces through the state apparatuses. This strategy corresponds to the employment of violent acts in specific situations within the contentious process in order to erode the capacities of social opposition. The next section turns to examine other coercive strategies to undermine mega-infrastructure opposition employed through the judiciary and policing bodies.

9.3. Undermining the opposition: organisational arrangements and repressive apparatus strategies

The previous section has explored situations in which the state used violence against the organised anti-megaproject dissidence to impede or to counter attempts to disrupt the megaproject agenda. As earlier suggested, for a complete securing of the megaproject agenda, other strategies of coercion are utilised to overcome resistance and opposition. As the findings show, strategies to counter the megaproject oppositions were further operated through prosecuting and policing bodies by different means than violence, but still making use of coercion methods. The two following subsections will explore, on the one hand, manoeuvres organised through state departments or bodies and, on the other, different strategies emerging from the judiciary and policing bodies to prosecute individuals connected to the opposition.

9.3.1. State body arrangements

On the particular theme of state body organisational arrangements, the two case studies present specific situations. The actions implemented intend to make more efficient the policing and/or investigation of the oppositions’ activity. In the Basque Country this situation is embodied by the ad hoc organism created within the Interior Department to

police the opposition and in Italy in the regional judiciary with the creation of a so-called “pool of magistrates” – to use the activist terminology – exclusively dedicated to prosecute cases related to the No Tav movement. The next paragraphs analyse situations with regard to these state articulations.

For the Basque Y, in the initial period of the construction process, a tipping point for the whole situation was the intervention of the Basque armed organisation ETA. In a statement released in October 2007, the organisation announced that high-ranking personnel involved in the construction process, that is, engineers and superior technicians as well as the management personnel of the companies involved, including their property “would become a target of ETA” as long as “this destruction and this macro-project [imposed] by decree go on” (quoted in a presentation authored by a Basque police inspector and handed to the researcher). The immediate response from the authorities was to organise a new department named the “Preventive Action Department”. This was organised through collaboration between the Interior Department of the Basque Government and the public railway agency ETS. It followed that the Interior Department “assigned as seconded staff to the ETS entity, specialised personnel from the Basque police” (IBP4). Even if this force was set up as a result of the ETA activity, it is worth noting that the department was used to police the citizen opposition to the HSR. This resonates with evidence suggesting a use of aggressive methods such as counter-terrorist tactics against different types of dissent (Davenport, 2007; White, 2012). This matter will be discussed in the next subsection on prosecution and policing actions against the megaproject opposition.

Not only did this constitute a state strategy, it also connected to ways the state acted in the past. In this sense, the establishment of a specific internal department to deal with the campaign against the Basque Y was informed by the experience of securing the development of another megaproject infrastructure in the Basque Country, the motorway of Leizaran in the mid-80s and early 90s. Similarly to the situation generated with the Basque Y, the government had to deal with activist opposition and the armed actions of ETA (Estebaranz, 2008). This episode presents continuity with the Basque Y in the sense that one of the earliest opposition platforms (The Assembly against HSR) came from the opposition movement to this motorway. The inspector in charge of policing these two opposition movements was the same individual; as a participant in this study, he noted:

in the year 2007 when [...] starts this whole problem, because I had previously led [the security management in] Leitzaràn, which was another work [...] that also had [similar] problems and I was proposed as police profile to be in charge... and I think this gave value to my profile when the whole situation with the HSR started and they saw the problem [...] so that they proposed me to be in charge and coordinate security (IBP4).

Thus an inherited type of strategy (Jessop, 1990) has been identified, in the sense that the individual put in charge of security is the same who directed the operations for a similar case two decades before and was therefore inclined to apply similar considerations and tactics, as inferred from his remarks.

Turning to the NLTL, a marked specificity identified within state departments and mechanisms is the constitution of a pool of magistrates within the judiciary exclusively dedicated to cases related to the megaproject opposition. This enabled, in the words of one of the solicitors defending the prosecuted activists, a “high-speed procedural circuit” (WAA15). Further detail reveals the mechanism designed to counter the opposition:

The prosecutor office in Turin, has built as part of this process a box where they wrote HSR. So this box HSR will incorporate all processes that affect Susa Valley events. The articulation of this HSR-box, allows in some way to prioritize these [legal] processes, which are assigned to a pool of specialized judges consisting of 4-5 judges who must send out these processes with extraordinary quickness involving very high investment, a strong drainage of resources (WAA15).

The emphasis identified in other comments suggests that its existence responds to a planned strategy designed to come up with effective action against the opposition, as this subject was being privileged over other public matters:

- they had created a pool of magistrates to deal with the cases of the No Tav. Not cases of terrorism, not cases of mafia, but the crimes of the No Tav; there is therefore acknowledgement to the No Tav (IAA14).

- this repressive activity started to have an absolutely abnormal surplus [...] for example, for the constitution of a pool of magistrates within the Prosecutor of the Republic [office] of Turin which is, or was, in charge of, if not exclusively, predominantly of this kind of offense. As if the [main] problem of justice in Piedmont was the opposition to HSR (IAA10).

The next subsection turns to examine specific actions undertaken by police and judiciary bodies against the opposition.

9.3.2. Prosecution and policing strategies

This subsection focuses on a set of practices that exerted direct coercion through judiciary powers against specific individuals with reputations among the opposition, or against activists participating in direct actions. The significance of this category lies in the fact that the majority of those procedures or attempts, in later instances, got dismissed or become less ambitious in their punitive prospects. In order to explore such aspect, the next paragraphs analyse a set of practices that fall into this category, from attempts to sue activists for “false alarming” to prosecutions with serious criminal charges such as terrorism, which subsequently did not prevail.

In the case of the Basque Y a number of examples can be identified wherein a component of the state apparatus attempts to undermine the opposition. In essence, these respond to a disproportionate zeal in their prosecuting actions, but also constitute visible attempts to delegitimise and constrain the opposition’s range of action. The noted examples belong to different realms, namely the university, the local administration and the grass-roots activism. The first one is the attempt to discredit the scholar that authored the main report (Bermejo, 2004) criticising the project, in particular once some municipalities started using it to object to the Basque Y. A figure close to the professor explains the attempt of a state attorney to discredit him so that the court would not consider him a reliable scholar:

Then a big outcry emerged [after the report being made public], he was in the eye of the hurricane, and the National Court⁹⁹ automatically sends a state solicitor ‘against him’. In the introduction, he had included some notes on potential contexts. And one of the contexts was the problem of finite resources and in particular oil; but it was a 20 line note. No more. The issue is that he is summoned to the Basque Superior Courts [...]. What did the state attorney do? He had no idea of infrastructures, but took the 15-20 lines dealing with [peak] oil and took on him, with huge documentation. And he was asking, "Do you know who Repsol [Spanish oil company] is?" [...]. “It says there is oil for 40 years” [...] he had no idea, so the whole debate focused on that. The judge told him that it was not appropriate, that the document spoke of infrastructures and that was a very marginal thing (IAA10)¹⁰⁰.

⁹⁹ The National Court (*Audiencia Nacional* in Spanish) is a court with jurisdiction all over Spain that “falls outside the basic court structure” (Newton, 1997: 296). It deals with serious crimes such as monetary fraud, drug trafficking, crimes against the high institutions of the state and more importantly, all cases identified as terrorism (Sunderland, 2005).

¹⁰⁰ Professor Bermejo was appointed by the National Court as an expert to issue a report on the appropriateness of developing the Basque Y. His appointment came as a result of the objection against the project put forward by some municipalities. The objection was dismissed.

He then went on to clarify: “the solicitor of the National Court was trying by all means to discredit him because he said nonsense about oil [in the solicitor’s opinion]” (IAA10). In other words, the strategy of the state lawyer was to discredit the author of the report, rather than to debating the appropriateness of his claims.¹⁰¹ To that end, even though the report would not be enough to persuade the courts to stop the project, the attempt to delegitimise the professor as a reported expert –as a senior figure of the Basque Government had previously attempted (*El País*, 2004) – or to make him reconsider his stance was brought forward as a mechanism to further defend the megaproject agenda.

A second case in this category is the one of the mayor of a town called Aramaio. As explained earlier, one of the common actions within the opposition repertoire had been to organise local referendums to consult local communities on the HSR project. The town of Aramaio decided to organise a referendum too, and a lawsuit action against the mayor followed; the state’s attorney accused the mayor of dereliction of duty and disobedience. As a result of the lawsuit, the mayor was found guilty of “a crime of prevarication for holding a referendum on the HSR that was suspended by a [provincial] court [...] and that finally was carried out” (Miranda, 2010), resulting in seven years of disqualification. However, some months later after an appeal by the mayor, the disqualifying sentence was revoked and therefore left without sanction as a provincial court found “relevant doubts” about the mayor’s role in the consultation (quoted in *El País*, 2011): he had underlined when presenting the appeal: “it was not a consultation but a survey, in whose organization the town council did not participate” (quoted in Oliden, 2010).

This second example sheds further light on this eroding or intimidating strategy with initiatives that can have an impact on the opposition in the short term; not only on the targeted individuals but also on others willing to do the same.

Another type of practice –within the same strategy of opposition erosion– that has been identified in the same case study consists of the use of terrorist charges against members of the opposition engaging in actions of civil disobedience or sabotage. This practice has been identified by a number of activists but also noted by a public official.

¹⁰¹ Section 9.4 presents another situation in which a researcher was intimidated for his resolute stance against the megaproject, although through a different mechanism.

Indeed, activists remark how this was part of a pre-designed strategy organised within the police apparatus:

- because even before the killing of Uria [the entrepreneur assassinated by ETA], there already was a repressive climate of sending to the National Court¹⁰² all the questions that had to do with the HSR, as it had been normalized through a circular of the Basque Police (IBA6).
- [the practice] became known as the trade union ELA made it public, that there is an internal circular of the Basque Police, to send to Madrid [National Court], under an article of the antiterrorist law [...] any action related with the HSR, whether it is peaceful or not. And all the cases have passed through Madrid [National Court]: sitting, placing posters, all kinds of actions, until the same year 2010 or so, all through Madrid, through the National Court. The National Court saw no cause of terrorism, so returned the files to the court of origin... yet always the Basque Police systematically applied [an] this] article [...] according to the internal circular of their own [which meant to face terrorist charges] (IBA1).

The important thing to note in this situation is that while those acts were not treated as ordinary crimes, but as acts of terrorism, this had serious implications for the activists accused: they could be retained longer in police headquarters and had to travel to Madrid for their cases. Evidence shows that dealing with the cases in this way was effective, generating fear of the consequences of participating in the actions organised by the opposition (soon after the period of major confrontation, mobilisation declined and the recent approach by activists is to carry out only non-contentious actions). In this regard, it is important to note how the strategy took advantage of the general context of political violence and state repression resulting from the conflict in the Basque Country to hit on the most active factions of the opposition, as is reflected in the account of an activist:

There was a degree of acceptance of the violence of the conflict in many of its expressions that seen in hindsight [...] we did not have that ability to abstract from it, that is to say: it is not normal to get slapped on the face in a demonstration, it is not normal to send us to the National Court for no reason, it is not normal to be arrested and spend several days in a police station because they will send you to the National Court (IBA6).

¹⁰² The special court where crimes related to terrorism are judged.

It can be inferred thus that the exceptional measures that state forces deployed to counter armed and violent activity were also used against the groups organising the mobilisation against the Basque Y. The fact that the National Court declined to take those cases reflects the policing bias applied by the Basque security forces against the anti-HSR activists, a strategic action to discipline and intimidate the oppositional forces and those likely to participate.

In addition, the specificity of the policing strategy is also observed in the prevention of contact between activists and construction workers, pursuing isolation so that campaigning potential is limited. On the occasions on which activists organised rallies near worksites so as to engage with the workers and communicate their concerns on the project, the authorities reacted by improvising an earlier ending of the shifts so the contact between the two parties did not occur. An activist that participated in those rallies recalls it in this way:

when the works started [...] we began to organise rallies in the afternoon in the works-site and well, our intention was to coincide with the hours of the works and above all with the end-shift time in order to give some informative pamphlets to the workers. We kept advancing the time of the rallies and the workers were leaving before [laughs]. It was funny how the police told them what time we had the rally and when we got there, there was absolutely nobody (IBA2).

This evidence shows how not only the promoters try to intimidate the opposition and deter them from acting, but also to undermine their attempts to gather support from crucial social groups such as the construction workers employed in the sites.

As for the NLTL, similar strategies of intimidation have been identified. To start with, it has to be noted how the opposition task of monitoring the progress of the works and reporting on flaws or misconducts is countered whenever possible, in ways that can end up in opposition members being prosecuted. That is the case of the environmental associations *Pro Natura* and *Legambiente*, who reported a situation to the justice authority, warning of “possible serious risks to the safety of workers, in charge of the worksite and of its supervision” (Cavargna and Dovana, 2013). Yet, the individuals that ended up being prosecuted were the ones presenting the complaint, as a member of *Legambiente* recalls:

as a response we were... first cited to an interrogation, then we were under investigation and then we went to trial as a result of false report to the authority (IAA11).

Here, it is possible to identify another action against the opposition stemming from the ‘selective’ pool of magistrates. This shows that they were not only concerned with direct action against the worksite, but also legal petitions that could jeopardise the project. A member of *Pro Natura* underlines the bias of the judiciary on the basis of this example:

the protection of the judiciary [towards the megaproject] is utterly strong and it has been heavily criticised by the Superior Judicial Council; in fact when I was indicted, I appealed to the Superior Council of the Judiciary [...] and they said I was right (IAA4).

Indeed, this case against the environmentalists did not succeed but it took three years to come to an end. More importantly, the manoeuvre was not an isolated act but as part of a bigger strategy to discredit any offensive on which other pro-HSR actors converged:

then, of course, the wave was roamed by those who were pro-HSR to project environmentalists as those who do not know what they are saying and shoot senseless alarms. [...] the next day of the interrogation there were two articles on *La Stampa* and *La Repubblica* that are the two main newspapers following this story. In sum, even before I knew the reason why I was about to be prosecuted, it was already in the papers. So there was probably a will to carry out propaganda on the basis of this issue.

A second element in this category, regarding the same case study, comprises what has been described by opposition-linked law experts as “hefty (and at times indiscriminate) use of cautionary measures [mainly house arrest or mandatory residence]” (Pepino, 2014: 17), measures which were transformed “as an alternative to preliminary detention” (Pepino, 2016). In fact, to link this to the previous element, this also revolves around the bias of the judiciary, which as earlier mentioned could count on this pool of magistrates exclusively dedicated to issues related to the HSR opposition. The use of this type of tactic is reflected in the activist and solicitor accounts:

- from then on [since the first big operation against anti-HSR activists] a phase in which they pursued facts of a very minimal criminal relevance started. But giving to it an extremely serious projection, demanding serious precautionary measures for facts... I mean essentially disproportionate to the facts, and practically flooding the No Tav activists, with charges and precautionary measures. Because that was the game in the last two or three years... basically, filling you up with charges,

filling you up with precautionary measures to give the impression that you are a dangerous person, in front of, perhaps, judges (IAA14).

- the use of cautionary measures is somehow a mechanism of personalization of criminal responsibility. There is a prosecutor's office, that of Turin, which continually, constantly in our processes calls for the most disturbing cautionary measures. Though there is now a substantial jurisprudence of the European court's legitimacy, there is a recommendation from the Council of Ministers to Europe saying that the approach for the precautionary matter, in principle, should be guided on the basis of causing the least sacrifice for the personal freedom of the suspects, the prosecutor in all our processes always requests the custody of the prosecuted in prison (WAA15).

This is a practice that can be attributed to the period of higher tension. In contrast, in many of these cases, these type of measures, when applied, were revoked "in a lapse of seven to ten days" (NOTAV.info, 2013¹⁰³) on the ground of being disproportionate. This suggests that in those many cases, the grounds for the application of the selected measures were rather weak, but nonetheless it was effective to actively erode the most active sectors of the opposition¹⁰⁴ as well as delegitimising them in front of the public opinion (as violent people).

Finally, a third element identified in the experiences of opposition activists is the specific targeting of the underage participants in the mobilisation. This not only affected them, but also their families, normally active members of the opposition. In the following quote, an activist describes two situations in which minors were targeted by the security forces:

The fact that we have our children involved has been part of one of the tools to psychologically threaten people because for example... I guess it happened a couple of years ago... some high school students were putting up posters for a NO TAV event and the police called social services. So once you call social services you have to go through the process [...] even if you know it is intimidation, as a social service agent, you have to go through the process so... these parents and the social services who have real problems to worry about were angry because they had to waste their time on this, but that's an example of how the cross-generational

¹⁰³ *Procura senza freni: due indagati per procurato allarme per il rischio frana/* Public prosecutor unbridled: two under investigation for false report on landslide risk

¹⁰⁴ These was verified by the researcher as a number of the activists encountered were under the cautionary measure of mandatory residence or were under house arrest; in other moments it was observed how activists were visiting others that were under house arrest.

thing has been used against us. Another example is the son of a guy who is very active [...] on the highway, his son was walking with a journalist when it was being occupied, the journalist was left alone but the kid [...] was charged with occupying... you know illegal occupation or something like that... [...] because he was on the highway that was being occupied, you know blocking traffic, right. And he was a minor, so this is an intimidation to his parents, who are active activists and so on (IAA2).

This suggests that police forces came with the strategy of targeting more vulnerable subjects such as underage in order to undermine the participation of their families in the opposition (as noted in the observations, in the local families it is easy to identify different generations participating in the opposition movement).

Further, it can be argued that the strategies that were put together operate as well in the opposite sense; that is, privileging those individuals working on behalf of the state apparatuses, so that they are given more resources or autonomy when it comes to targeting the social opposition, or protection in the face of potential prosecution. In this regard, individuals from various backgrounds linked to the opposition have also emphasised the way in which all the attempts –with one exception– to bring cases against the police force on the grounds of abuse of authority were finally dismissed. This aspect is described in the opposition-produced documentary named *Archiviato* (Dismissed). The film explores a total of six cases in which police forces committed abuse against protestors. As mentioned, the majority were dismissed because the perpetrators could not be identified, with the exception of one case in which a policeman was identified through a tattoo. As noted by one of the solicitors that had participated in these processes, the contrast between the treatment of activists and members of the security forces was clear-cut: while for the former the justice administration was acting with significant diligence, for the latter proceedings could be portrayed as “tending towards a delay and dismiss prone attitude” (researcher observations).

To recap, this section has analysed strategies devised to counter the opposition through state-body arrangements and prosecuting actions. The findings suggest the capacity to utilise elements within the state apparatuses for such a task, basically through the security forces or the judiciary, thus confirming the possibility to privilege actions against opposition-related agents. This would constitute another component of this selective approach to secure the megaproject agenda through the undermining of the

opposition movements. How can these capacities and selective approach be interpreted?

As previously stated, megaproject developments not only constitute an essential piece of a certain accumulation strategy, but are also important components of a symbolic order essential to state legitimacy. In this sense, megaproject developments in the researched context epitomise the state power to create jobs, infrastructure and order, while their completion appears essential to domestic and international credibility. What follows is that opposition to a megaproject development becomes a form of opposition to this symbolic order, essential to state legitimacy. An assumed consequence is that it will get treated similarly to other forms defying this symbolic order. One of these forms is terrorism; a qualification that has sometimes been used to define the oppositions' activity, as seen with the inappropriate terrorist charges or the attempts of criminalisation (Alonso et al., 2014; Bangau, 2013). As far as putting megaproject opposition on a similar level to terrorism, the state is able to articulate a response that incorporates the observed mechanisms of ad hoc prosecution and policing. Thus, destroying terror cells, the state reinforces this order. The same effect is expected from repressing activists. As noted in the two last subsections, the *modus operandi* is characterised by a set of practices that enable a more effective organisation through selective apparatus arrangements, on the one hand; and on the other, a disciplining, intimidating or isolating push through specific prosecuting and policing strategies that erode the resistance and opposition efforts while security forces enjoy certain protection. This approach towards the management of the situation is carried out with implicit attributions of exceptionality to the subject, underlying the sometimes terrorist-oriented projection of the opposition. Here, the hints of the state of exception as identified by Agamben (2005) manifest themselves not through “a preformed category but a dynamic set of techniques of power” (Belcher et al., 2008: 499) – militarisation, use of force, terrorist charges, cautionary measures – with the material effects of protecting the megaproject plans by undermining the opposition.

In addition to the strategies delineated in this section in connection with core state apparatuses, other more subtle mechanisms organised through the administrative and legal instruments of the state, have been identified in the governance process. The next section addresses these mechanisms.

9.4. Administrative and legal actions

This section explores a further dimension of the tactics employed in megaproject governances. This includes legal interventions to ease some of the involved procedures. This is particularly important for aspects such as land use and land expropriation in terms of its regulation through local administrations as well as for the rest of competences of these institutions.

Taking a closer look at the case studies, for the Basque Y, Calvo (2015) highlights the importance of the agreement between the national and regional administrations (2005) which effectively conferred the Basque Government “extended powers to override decisions reached on the local level concerning land use” (Calvo, 2015: 224) since the regional authority “was allowed to treat the construction of the HST as a public interest project” (Calvo, 2015: 225). In practice that meant, for instance, that the regional authorities would monitor that the new local urban plans would make the necessary provision of land to be used for the megaproject, otherwise the new norm could be rejected: “[b]ut if the council does not include land for [HST] infrastructure . . . the provincial government might not approve the norm” (local councillor in the town of Itsasondo, quoted in Calvo, 2015: 225).

Following on the question of land-use and its legal implications, this paragraph turns to the expropriation process, a crucial stage in the megaproject procurement process. As the agreement between governments (2006) established, the Basque Government was allowed to take part in the process but the ultimate decision powers would still be administered by the national authority. In this sense, even if consisting of a forced expropriation exercise, the process has to follow legal paths with guarantees and possibility of objection for the landholders.

As the latter could significantly slow down the process, the authorities came out with three different strategies: first offering an above-market price for the land so it could be presented as a good deal for the owner: “I am aware that the prices paid for the expropriations have been generous[ly], a little higher than what is paid by the administration itself in similar infrastructures” (MP for the Basque nationalists, IAP2).

Second, present the process as inexorable, so as to exert pressure on the landholders not keen on accepting the deal:

civil servants who were undertaking that job [dealing with expropriations] know how to negotiate with the owners and say ‘look, your land objectively is worth

5,000 but they have given me a lot of money and I'll pay 10,000 if you sign now this agreement' [...] And people [landholders] [...] took the money, because if they didn't, what was going to happen to them? The civil servant would warn them: 'if you do not sign this now for 10,000 we are going to expropriate you anyway, a few weeks later and then you'll have to go to a provincial expropriations jury where you have to bring a report signed by an agronomist who you will have to pay and that jury will determine that your land is worth 5,000 instead of 10,000'. Therefore, you will see. Of course, 90% of landholders took the money and signed what they were told to and forgot about it (IBA8).

And third, putting a limit to collective bargaining attempts by landholders; that is, in negotiations over land price, allow solely for meetings with individual landholders in order to avoid any possibility of a collective push around the expropriated lands (personal communication with activist).

Further powers were then required to overcome the boycott exerted to the land expropriation process. The local authorities, aided by the anti-HSR activists, refused to sign the verifying documents. One activist recalls:

They did not know what to do and in [January] 2007, Madrid [national authority] passed a resolution to establish that the second time that the town council does not collaborate in the process of expropriation [...] the mayor is replaced by the national government delegate in the autonomous community (IBA1).

Indeed, the resolution reads: "I have resolved: First. To delegate to the [national] Government sub-delegates in the [Basque] provinces [...] the exercise of the powers that correspond to the General Director of Railways in matters of forced expropriation" (Railways Department, 2007). In terms of its significance and impact, the same activist underlines: "and that was it ... because after Legutio, this began to be done in more places"¹⁰⁵.

For the NLTL, the same way in which the Basque Y was declared a project of 'public interest', the worksite in which the preliminary and exploratory works were projected (the municipality of Chiomonte), was declared, through an ad hoc piece of legislation, a "site of national strategic interest" in order to "ensure the realization of the Torino-Lyon railway line and to ensure [...] the regular running of the La Maddalena exploratory tunnel" (art.19 law 12th November 2011, n.183). Putting the worksite and the surrounding areas under this denomination facilitated the conversion of these lands

¹⁰⁵ The boycott to the land expropriation procedures was a relevant component within the opposition repertoire. Its significance laid in the fact that it required coordination from both the activist platform and the councils, as it combined popular mobilisation and institutional opposition.

into a restricted area: only individuals with permission would be able to access it and trespassing without permission would constitute a serious crime as typified in article 682¹⁰⁶ of the Italian penal code. Equally, any attempt to block access to the site by authorised individuals would be treated as a serious crime under the same 682 article (Algotino, 2014). It is worth mentioning that the legislation was passed after it was recommended by representatives of a police union in a meeting with the ruling Democratic Party (*Torino Today*, 2011). The union emphasised: “[w]e have become human targets, we need more tools, hence the need to declare the works-site in Chiomonte a site of strategic interest” (quoted in FSP Polizia di Stato, 2011).

This specific qualification of the worksite enabled as well the possibility to establish physical defence mechanisms to minimise the contact of the workers with the opposition. In practice, this meant fencing off the accessible areas with attack-probe structures such as jersey barriers and barbed wire (researcher observations). The opposition could still make verbal contact with workers (as observed), but an action such as leaflet-handing would not be possible due to the installation of the jersey barriers and the on-going policing of the worksite.

These situations illustrate another strategy operated through state bodies. This consists of depriving local government of its powers –because they are more prone to be influenced by the opposition– and allocating these power attributions to national or regional authorities where the dominant power centres lie.

In addition, another strategic approach can be detected in the intricacies of the administrative process that accompanies megaproject development. This includes crucial aspects such as the forced expropriation of lands or the impossibility for the citizenry to put forward objections. As previously explored, it is not uncommon to identify in megaproject development processes exclusive procedures and a significant lack of citizen participation. In fact, this constitutes one of the core arguments of the oppositional movements organised against megaprojects in general (see Chapter 2) and the ones analysed here in particular (see Chapter 5). One of the elements that demonstrates the exclusivity of the procurement process is the limited scope for objection in the whole series of administrative procedures. Adding to this point, authorities manipulate the objection process around specific periods of the year in such

¹⁰⁶ Article 682 regulates punishment for trespassing an area of restricted access under military interests of the State.

a way that fewer objections are received. This basically refers to those periods in which less working activity is to be expected such as summer time or other holiday periods. In both case studies, participants have identified this *modus operandi* in the public administrations.

For example, an MP for the nationalist left coalition Bildu explains how, in his local experience in the municipality of Durango, this was a common praxis:

many projects were published in August ... that is, in the town council I saw it, even with post-it notes [...] in [the document of the] project when the period of public objections arrived: ‘to expose to the public in August’. In the town council of Durango came in like this. And with all the expropriatory files and all that, were like this (IBA9).

Equally, in one of the points of the objection presented by the council of Elorrio (17/08/2007)¹⁰⁷, emphasis is placed on the same issue:

From our point of view we cannot but question or doubt the coincidence of a process as essential as the beginning of the expropriatory process (which entails the opening of a meagre 15-day public information process) with its conduct within the month of August; [a] clearly non-appropriate [month] so that the affected can require, and have the technical means, suitable to know in detail the implications for the mentioned process and be able to exercise our legitimate right to defence and the formulation of the objections and alternatives that [...] we consider appropriate.

This suggests that another strategy to constrain the anti-megaproject efforts is to ensure that invited spaces or procedures open for citizen objection are not easily accessed or functional for the opposition goals.

For the NLTL, members of the commission supporting the Valley’s Council organisation, in dealing with the procurement process at the local level, brought to the fore similar questions, all revolving around a series of elements of administrative procedures obstructing the efforts of those organising the opposition. These include, beyond a limited and selective provision of data (Permanent People’s Tribunal, 2015), control over the periods of public objection –when local administrations can raise their voices. The following paragraphs analyse these situations.

The first element corresponds to the volume of work –considering the availability of time and personnel– that the town councils had to handle in relation to the review of

¹⁰⁷ File 012ADIF0708. HSR. Section Arrasate/Mondragón-Elorrio. Public Information Property and Rights Forced Expropriation [translated from Spanish].

project-related documents; spokespersons for these administrations underlined in the PPT session that the amount of review work exceeded their limited capacities (researcher's observations in the PPT session) but also had to be done in the same inconvenient periods as reported for the Basque Y. Two contributions from a technician participating in the PPT session depict this situation:

- Along the years, town councils saw themselves having to carry out observations in very short times: meaning the period of a month, sometimes ... that is in 30 days, 60 days at most, they had to prepare themselves in assessing 40-50 boxes that arrived in all councils, to be able to analyse these observations, these studies that were made by the promoters (WAA6).
- 30 days is the time that entities such as the town councils are entitled to go through the materials and make objections. We're talking about municipalities of 1,000-3,000-5,000 which have 3-4 people working in the [council's] technical offices... and when do these arrive [documents to review]? They arrive the 31st of July or the 15th of December (Marina Clerico, PPT session Q&A, 2nd part).

As in the Basque Y, the difficulties associated with the established participatory mechanisms re-emerge.

To recap, the elements identified in this section suggest the possibility for the state bureaucracies to selectively promote institutional and administrative practices in order to handicap the efforts of local governments sensible to the oppositions' arguments throughout two strategies: depriving them from some of their powers in relation to the procurement process and secondly limiting their possibility to interfere in the process with their contributions in the form of objections.

By analysing both case studies, the significance of acquiring exceptional powers in terms of access and control over the lands to be used for megaproject purposes stands out as the legal guaranteed protection of private property risks in delaying the process. Those powers are exerted through specific qualifications awarded to the projects (or the worksites), or legal instruments generated ad hoc that add new obstacles to the opposition campaign. In this sense, evidence shows the possibility to generate legal tools to further undermine the opposition, even if the latter is using pre-established bureaucratic mechanisms or other state power centres such as the local governments. The state appears then to be used as a site to generate and operate (legal) strategies

(Jessop, 1990) to further secure the megaproject agenda while it remains hostile to those willing to use its legal terrain to oppose megaprojects.

In order to conclude with the analysis of coercion mechanisms to support the megaproject agenda, the last section shifts the focus to actions targeting individuals and organisations using more subtle methods.

9.5. Further mechanisms of coercion and selectivity

This subsection will concentrate on uncovering other operating mechanisms of coercion, part of the set of practices that aim to undermine the opposition efforts. Since these primarily operate through different state-connected institutions, this subsection continues to shed light on the different strategies in operation that mediate in the megaproject governance process. The type of techniques identified in this section is varied and could be perceived as unconnected. Yet they show a constant thread whereby the strategic selectivity is manifested through the isolation of individuals or groups undermining the development process and reward to those supporting it. On the other hand, it also helps to further devise the range of action and capacities of the pro-megaproject development agents.

As previously stated, the university is one of the public-related bodies that was mobilised to support and legitimise the project of the Basque Y. Nonetheless, this does not mean that a consensus existed within the Basque academic community, as two elements indicate: first, a manifesto against the Basque Y that was promoted by a number of academics and gathered the support of over 120 scholars (Diario Vasco 18/05/2007); and second, the main technical report (2004) criticising the project that was elaborated by a few scholars working in the field of transport economics.

Precisely on the issue of this 2004 critical report (Bermejo, 2004), a scholar that was well aware of the situation, explains the implications of authoring a report critical of such an emblematic governmental project: “I did another [report] with some researchers, [...] well, in any case, because those researchers, they could not put their names because otherwise there was repression” (IBA10). In the same vein, another explains how he himself didn’t put his name on any of the critical pieces, given the potential risk that this entailed in terms of being made redundant from his university position:

see how conflicting the project would be, I have not been able to put my name on anything until 2010 and I started working in 2002. And why could not I put my

name on anything? Because of course, this was controversial [...] your job is in jeopardy, especially if you are a university researcher (IBA4).

Another source of alarm identified by the proponents was that of social organisations sympathising with the opposition; specifically, the stance taken by the main Basque trade unions –ELA and LAB– of being openly critical with the project and in some respects joining efforts with the opposition. Even if no action was taken against them, a government-related document suggesting their illegalisation was leaked. Out of this many inferred that they were under threat because of their position and campaigning efforts on issues such as the Basque Y. Consequently, individuals belonging to these organisations explained:

- The Basque employers' association, has called for the outlawing of the trade unions ELA and LAB because of putting issues like this [HSR question] on the table; because of not limiting ourselves to what they call trade union work... in the papers that have come into our hands, that's what it says, that the ELA and LAB unions support, for example struggles against the HSR (IBA7).
- They [the main Basque employers' association] tried to remove us from the list of unions on the basis that we did not only do trade union work but we also promote social mobilization in different ways –in bad ways according to their views– therefore we were not a conventional trade union, so we had to be removed from the [legal] register of trade unions (IBA11).

In this sense, even if the measure has not been put into practice, it could operate as a warning or intimidating move towards the unions getting involved in political activity such as the opposition to the Basque Y. The situation corresponds to another potential mechanism to limit the permissible tactics of the opposition.

For the NLTL, the pressure over dissenting voices emerged from other circumstances. To start with, this could come from ordinary local institutions that would reject cooperating with local initiatives emerging from individuals connected to the opposition. This is the case, for example, with the attempt to promote a local library in the town of Meana de Susa:

[w]e opened a library and the town council was not collaborating. And a... about a library, free library, you would think that there would be all the collaboration in the world, but there wasn't. And a... one of the members who was in the office in the town hall was approached by somebody from the governing team of the town council [saying] that if we calmed down on the HSR issue, they will make it easier

for us to the library. So... of course, there are no witnesses, it was a phone call between me and my friend but it made me sick, you know (IAA2).

A more sophisticated technique is the co-optation of local actors. An example commonly noted by the opposition community is the former president of the Montaneous Community (the organisation gathering all the councils in the valley), A. Ferrentino. Until 2005, he was to some extent supportive of the opposition from the institutional side. Yet with the new approach taken by the authorities from 2006 onwards, he drifted away from the opposition views and began to argue the need to work together with the NLTL promoters within organisms such as the Observatory, so that the local communities could be taken into account in the developmental plans.

Several participants expressed the belief that he was promoted within the ranks of the Democratic Party as a result of his support for the project. Amongst the opposition activists and others, there is a perception that in exchange for his involvement he could have got a number of favours or privileges. In fact, at a book launch regarding the opposition against the NLTL, when the period around 2005 was evoked, the person bringing up the issue noted how he [Ferrentino] appeared as a kind of “self-proclaimed leader of the opposition” but how soon enough after a meeting held in Rome between the national authorities and the mayors’ of the valley, he became a supporter of the NLTL after “what he was told” in that meeting or “what he was given” according to a woman in the audience (researcher observations). Others, such as civil servants, would refer to his progress in terms of climbing the ladder:

If you go see the subjects that counter the works, some of the individuals contesting the works [...] have developed a career [...]. So if you see Ferrentino, current councillor, that ... first became provincial councillor, then regional councillor, then [may] become senator deputy (IAP1).

Finally, another individual linked to local institutions and the opposition mentioned other favours that he could have obtained, and expresses a sense of betrayal:

everyone supposed him [Ferrentino] to be a person ... balanced, a person who still kept being loyal to the Valley and instead found that he was minding much more about [institutional] politics and finding a place for the whole family in [institutional] politics, because then his son became the assistant [...] to someone in the PD. And he [Ferrentino] was the one who pulled the strings across the system. We administrators trusted a lot this person so we relied on what he was saying to us and ... some day we receive a message, or at least I receive it, on a

Friday night, stating a meet-up, with not even a phone call, just a message that we are going to meet in *Pracatinat*¹⁰⁸ to discuss some points (IAA9).

This subsection has explored what could be referred as “subtle” measures of coercion over the opposition activity. These are organised through bodies such as universities and business associations, but also through state bodies such as the different levels of the local and regional administrations which, mediated by political parties, can effectively co-opt valued individuals while rewarding them. Thus it is possible to verify the operationalisation of strategies through state bodies and also through other bodies well connected with the state ensemble, following a double bias that privileges figures that offer support, while pressuring or discriminating those jeopardising the plans. Hence, this observed double selectivity should be understood as a reinforcing component of the megaproject plans to the extent that rewards those being collaborative and isolates those willing to oppose.

Now that the different types of coercion aiming to safeguard the megaproject agenda have been categorised, the final section turns to a conclusive summary of the analysis carried out in the five sections.

9.6. Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter has been to identify the various strategies by which megaproject proponents attempt to undermine the opposition against megaproject developments, given the need to bolster these developmental plans. Such an interrogation process corresponds to one of the main questions posed by this research project. The previous chapter noted how the pro-megaproject forces establish as regional alliances/power blocs with leverage at the national and supranational level (Chapter 8). Following from this, as examined in this chapter, the final advance of their agendas is carried out through state power, using the coercion mechanisms and strategies presented above (summarised in table 9.2). These mechanisms are required as the promoters did not achieve enough consent on the respective megaproject developments. These mechanisms embody the selectivity of the state in privileging megaproject developments as an essential component of the consolidated hegemonic

¹⁰⁸ This refers to the episode referred as the “agreement of *Pracatinat*” whereby promoters would communicate to the public that an agreement had been reached with representatives from the local towns to proceed with the NLTL. The opposition would refer to this explanation as far-fetched on the basis that none of the mayors signed the agreement.

projects and accumulation strategies. To accomplish this, strategies are put into practice to erode oppositions' action.

Table 9.2. Summary of mechanisms and strategies utilised to undermine opposition movements and to secure the megaproject agenda.

Countering opposition campaigns - Securing the megaproject agenda			
Use of physical force (state-organised violence)	Other operational categories		
	Department arrangements/ criminal justice measures	Administrative and legal measures	Coercion of critical individuals and groups vs. reward to the supportive ones
Mechanisms - strategies			
- Evictions - Intimidation through aggression and “stop and search” tactics - Use of CS gas	- Creation of ad hoc policing departments- Pool of magistrates dedicated to opposition prosecution - Disproportionate cautionary measures Judiciary/prosecuting actions	- Limiting the possibilities of participation - Easing land expropriation procedures - Depriving local governments from their powers.	- Threat to blacklist/ punish resolute groups or individuals - Promotion of supportive actors - Targeting more vulnerable factions such as the minors

To the extent that megaproject promoters are linked to a fraction of the dominant classes, their domination reverberates within the terrain of the state apparatus assuming that the latter is, in effect, a social relation. This results in the possibility of undermining opposition movements through state bodies and institutions so that the megaproject agenda is not jeopardised. This action has been identified in the manifold forms of coercion and mechanisms and strategies to counter opposition movements' activity.

It turns out that the strategies and coercion forms identified are interpreted, not as casual or normative proceeding of the state-related bodies and institutions, but as a selective orientation which privileges this subject over other subjects (e.g. gender violence, tax fraud, social housing which are not a priority for the dominant classes), so that a number of tactics can be implemented. This confers to the megaproject governance process a rather exceptional character in comparison to the government and administration of other subjects of public interest.

As for the studied cases, the coercion is operated in manifold ways, from physical violence to the isolation/ostracisation of organisations and individuals taking an opposing stance or being resolute in their values. The application of force has been the first strategy identified. For this specific aspect, the explanatory value of the domestic

terrorism notion has been discussed. It has been noted that, while distant from classic examples that included extreme violence by state agents, in specific situations the exceptional state emerges with violence and a projection of threat towards other individuals sympathetic with the opposition. It has been argued that, on these grounds, a form of domestic terrorism operates in the megaproject governance.

Moreover, it has been contended that the state terrain offers fruitful ground to implement strategies of erosion such as prosecutorial actions –even if in the long-term these have little success– or disproportionate measures while prosecuting the actions against megaproject property using the qualification of terrorism or the house arrest and the mandatory residence as a punishment. As a whole, this plethora of measures prefigures an exceptional regime/spatiality linked to the development of megaprojects.

On the other hand, the state is confirmed, as Jessop (1990) notes, as a site for creating strategies (department creation, prosecution office re-arrangements, administrative and legal manoeuvres); a generator of strategies (police apparatuses suggesting a legal qualification for the worksite for the NLTL and the reported circular to accuse of terrorism the anti-Basque Y activists); and a product of past strategies (the impact of anti-terrorist policies: in the Basque Country for ETA and in Italy for anarchist and autonomous groups). These strategies as a whole configure the strategic orientation of state bodies in securing the megaproject agenda. The relevance of the megaproject is that it embodies a symbolic order for which the state is ultimately responsible; in some respects questioning the legitimacy of this order could be seen as equivalent to questioning the legitimacy of the state –an element that is treated as major threat, as evidenced by the terrorist allegations to which the opposition is often connected.

A final consideration that follows is that, when it comes to the constructive use of state power, to liberate, to support or to secure endeavours designed under present hegemonic projects and accumulations strategies, the megaproject coalitions find notable privileges, to the extent that institutions are selective to their tactics and arguments. The flip side to this is that, when it comes to the repressive and stigmatising use of state power, those fighting from the bottom strata of society find that the tactics at their disposal are met with multiple mechanisms of coercion, from violence to delegitimation in the court of public opinion. Parallels can be drawn between the two case studies to argue that megaproject promoters make use or benefit from the leverage power provided by state structures to disrupt the opposition efforts.

This occurs insofar as the dominant social position of pro-megaproject forces is mirrored relationally in the terrain of the state. In this sense, even if these tactics are not pre-given or totally symmetric, but rather contingent and path-dependent for each specific national/regional context, they capture a salient aspect of the resilience of megaproject plans. In practical terms, the whole set of measures and tactics confirms the political nature of megaprojects while reaffirming that their realisation requires of extraordinary forms of governance (Altshuler and Luberoff, 2003; Kennedy, 2015), specifically tactics that enable the articulation of an effective response to the opposition campaign. This adds up to the techniques and mechanisms highlighted in Chapters 7 and 8.

Now that Chapters 7, 8 and 9 have completed the analytical process, the next chapter turns to outline the conclusions drawn from this research project.

CHAPTER 10. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this thesis has been to research and theorise upon the power mechanisms and governance arrangements that shape megaproject development processes and in particular, reinforce them. The research process departed from the assumption –taken from Kennedy (2015) and Altshuler and Luberoff (2003) arguments– that megaproject developments require “special” or exceptional instruments and governance arrangements, given their complexity and transformative impact. Accordingly, the research process has sought to shed light on these characteristic elements of megaproject politics. In parallel, the analysis has been informed by the discipline of (critical) urban studies. The outcome was to unveil the role of a series of components and factors upon the governance process: a neoliberal-oriented mode of urban governance adopted by political institutions; the discourse and practice underpinning pro-megaproject articulations at different scalar levels; and the role of state-related bodies and structures when dealing with the oppositional movements.

The design has approached the subject following a comparative strategy. As previously noted, the selected case studies –the NLTL and the Basque Y– have been notorious for their contentious dynamics, prompted by the social opposition that formed against the megaproject plans. It has been stressed as well that these megaproject developments are characterised by significant resilience as governmental plans, in particular given the fact that they have remained in the public agenda despite the opposition and the multiple handicaps faced. While the opposition represents one of the elements of interest (the resilience of megaproject plans is notable primarily because the plans remain unaltered) it also facilitates the availability of data, given its public interest. This explains the orientation towards contested large-scale public works.

Likewise, the analysis incorporated the views and narratives of individuals upholding different stances with respect to the megaproject plans, but all with experience in the process and the contentious dynamics. In this sense, valuing the activist contribution prevented the marginalisation of voices, not uncommon in megaproject decision-making processes. In terms of the data collection methods, the case studies were reconstructed through semi-structured interviews, documentary methods and observations. This has been carried out prior to consideration of the case studies’ contexts.

This contextualisation for the two case studies has been untangled in two different chapters. Apart from presenting the confronted rationales on the megaproject developments, it has also delved into the multi-scalar policy and institutional contexts as well as into the national and regional politico-economic dynamics. In addition, connections between the on-going politico-economic dynamics and the megaproject plans have been highlighted. This has paved the ground to note the imbrication of megaproject developments with the operating accumulation and spatial strategies. A thematic analysis has followed with the aim of highlighting and conceptualising the ensemble of mechanisms, techniques, tactics and arrangements making up the governance process and reinforcing the megaproject plans.

This final chapter collates the research findings of the thesis. Accordingly, it starts by sketching out a synthesis of the findings set against the main research question. It then notes the multi-faceted contributions to knowledge, including the areas of empirical evidence, theory, policy and practice and future research. It finishes with an assessment of the research project.

10.1. The Research Question

The research question detailed below (in italics), along with other formulated sub-questions, guided the research process from the data collection to the analysis and discussion of findings. A series of conclusions emerged from the findings and these are presented below.

What factors and mechanisms explain and underlie the resilience of megaproject plans in the face of multi-faceted disruption? How do they operate?

The question was formulated following the contributions on megaproject politics noting that they required exceptional measures (Altshuler and Luberoff, 2003) or “special regime[s] that accompan[iey] their implementation” (Kennedy, 2015: 164). The objective was, then, to shed further light on these premises, in particular for those situations in which megaproject developments encounter social opposition. Accordingly, this thesis has comparatively reconstructed two case studies in order to capture the nature of the governance processes of megaproject developments using the lens of critical urban studies. The thematic analysis enabled the researcher to identify a plethora of discursive and practical mechanisms that reinforce megaproject plans. In turn, these are connected to the politico-economic and spatial configurations within which the governance processes are inserted.

The following paragraphs break down the interpretation of the research findings so that a comprehensive answer to the research question is presented. In particular, these describe the three differentiated sets of factors and mechanisms that contribute to facilitate and bolster megaproject agendas, correspondingly linked to urban governance theories.

The first set of factors and mechanisms identified has been teased out from the analytical lens of neoliberalism and its impact upon urban governance. In turn, this has been linked to the different scalar levels of political economy, in particular to the frameworks stemming from the EU institutions. This has resulted in observing how the pro-megaproject rhetoric hinges upon an EU policy initiative such as the TEN-T, while also endorsing the main tenets of the neoliberal discourse (emphasis on competitiveness and economic growth). In this regard, the infrastructure policies, alongside the (neoliberal) ideological and policy substrate stemming from the EU institutions (Peters 2003; van Apeldoorn, 2014), constitute a determinant organisational and supportive platform for the megaproject agenda. One might argue that it would be inappropriate to understand this type of megaprojects from the perspective of neoliberalism, given their dubious potential to generate a positive economic balance. However, this matches with neoliberalisation on the basis of governance re-escalation and acceptance of market openness as noted by Jessop (2002a: 467): “the developmental state is allowed to remain proactive, provided that it is rescaled and becomes more open to world-market forces”. The analysed megaproject plans meet these criteria. Specifically, the relevance of politico-economic rescaling (or statehood re-escalation) is embodied by the role of the EU in terms of policy-making. This applies in the dimensions of discourse on one hand, and practice on the other. In terms of discourse, the EU policy documents endow transport megaproject plans with a solid narrative (competitiveness, economic development and job creation in addition to all the spatial jargon, e.g., missing links and especially corridors) that enables the consolidation of a common sense around the idea of a modernising transport project. In terms of practice, it has a fundamental role with respect to infrastructure planning (policy initiatives from state members adapt to the EU ones) alongside with the potential for resource mobilisation (funding). This constitutes another source of stability for the megaproject plans.

On the other hand, in terms of the decision-making process, its approximation to a post-political setting has been established. The latter is characterised by the generalised marginalisation of the dissenting voices, something already noted by existing scholarship focusing on megaproject developments and infrastructure-building (Flyvbjerg et al., 2003; Graham, 2000; Leitner and Sheppard, 2002; Swyngedouw et al., 2002). On top of that, this research has noted how this setting is also characterised by a push to narrow the debate on megaprojects, so that the consensus is not challenged (e.g., the Turin-Lyon Observatory or the decrying of opposing voices in the Basque Country) while also benefitting from a pre-existing common sense, uncritical of infrastructure development. This arrangement embodies a post-political articulation of governance insofar as it “forestalls the articulation of divergent, conflicting and alternative trajectories of future urban possibilities and assemblages” (Swyngedouw, 2007: 66).

Overall, these findings have noted the relevance of political structures and policy schemes (the EU and the TEN-T), ideology and discourse (neoliberalism and its associated terms but also growth as value-free ideology) and techniques of government (specific legislation and exclusive decision-making procedures).

Beyond the more technical aspects highlighted by the megaproject specific literature (see Chapter 2), the above-listed elements explain the overarching politico-ideological framework that operates in the selected megaproject developments. In other words, the noted factors confer a solid basis from which to launch the megaproject plans and also manufacture consent. This would facilitate and secure a stable procurement process operating in the interests of pro-megaproject forces. Meanwhile, this structural framework poses multiple obstacles to those agents willing to challenge the megaproject agendas. It is corroborated then, as critical urban studies note, that despite considering contingent factors, the structural forces that shape urban governance of localities and regions ought to be interrogated for an enhanced comprehension of the researched phenomena (Jou et al., 2012).

The second set of mechanisms has interrogated the agential component of the actors supporting megaproject plans. After describing the core part of the megaproject coalitions and noting that the governmental institutions constitute its fundamental component, it has been argued that they engage in similar functioning mechanisms. These can be understood as additional governance arrangements that, insofar as they

resemble each other, can be used to explain an organisational pattern behind these projects and therefore help further capture the resilience of megaproject plans. These mechanisms, grasped through the lens of the urban coalitions, would explain the agency that lies in these processes. The following paragraphs further elaborate on this second set of mechanisms.

When depicting the existing coalitions, it has been argued that even if the public authorities (national and regional governments) are the primary agents supporting the megaproject plans, they need support from other social segments to further legitimise the project plans –especially when oppositional campaigns have been organised. From the perspective of the urban coalition theories, this would correspond to a move whereby the core coalition expands its influence through auxiliary players, which are expected to contribute in the goal of achieving further legitimation. When the arena of analysis is solely the local, these allies can easily be singled out, while for a multi-level scale project this is a more complex task. Yet the findings have identified several actors contributing, directly or indirectly, to the legitimation of megaproject plans. An important actor in this regard is the mainstream media, which tends to present the megaproject plans through the above-mentioned value-free developmental ideology, while references to the opposition tend to be derogatory so that somehow they are delegitimised. The opposition is left outside the “common sense” embodied by this ideology so that additional consent can be achieved. The influence expansion targets also civic and social organisations. While the NLTL coalition had limited success in gaining support from civil society groups –despite their attempts– the Basque Y supporters managed to engage with regional sport teams, one NGO and also university representatives, which facilitated the projection of an image of broad support towards the project. Both megaproject plans benefitted also from the position taken by important trade union confederations, which did not question the plans.

In terms of discursive articulations, the “green growth machine” term was used to explain how pro-megaproject discourses employ arguments suggesting that their completion will result in positive environmental effects such as the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions (prompted by a reduction in road traffic). Also, more specific discursive and practical articulations that further legitimate the projects were noted. On one hand, an emphasis on the local dimension and the positive impacts that would follow the completion of the project; this was observed through specific

references to the employment situation of the Susa Valley and concrete measures to offer contractual possibilities to local entrepreneurs. On the other hand, the megaproject Basque Y is repeatedly associated with a nation-building component in order to mobilise support or acceptance from the nationalist community in the Basque Country.

These elements show the extent to which it is important for megaproject promoters to expand their influence through auxiliary actors, so that pursued urban agendas are further legitimised in line with what has been theorised by the urban coalition theories (see, for instance, Logan and Molotch, 1987 and 2010). These elements also show how, in order to bulwark the stability of the growth/megaproject machine or its plans, it is necessary to “rely on consensus-seeking para-apparati concerned with economic development [directly or indirectly] to gain political strength” (Lauria, 1997:138). In addition, this connects with neoliberal forms of governance, insofar as civil society agents are endowed with “participatory” roles as long as they contribute to the legitimisation of specific urban agendas.

Beyond these coalitional practices, other common mechanisms help explain the resilience of megaproject plans. These were classified in three different typologies that were coined following urban regime theoretical tenets that emphasise the need to secure stability for urban agendas. The first component referred to the establishment of long-lasting pro-megaproject majorities in the democratic representative institutions, so that stability is guaranteed from this front. In this sense, multiple changes in the cabinets in office did not modify the governmental stance on the megaproject plans. The second component stressed the designation of a stable leading figure that supervises and monitors the procurement process. Despite being a figure connected to the political dynamics, this figure is endowed with relative autonomy so that it transcends the exclusive party politics dimension. This facilitates their retention regardless of cabinet changes. It emerges then that these figures, apart from the accumulated knowledge and experience of the megaproject plans, put into practice tactics to overcome obstacles for the megaproject plans. The third component showed the capacity to mobilise resources. In this respect, the access and convenience found at the supranational level, as well as the networking capacity of megaproject forces, constitutes a source of further stability. This establishment of networks can also

operate at the local/regional level through the co-optation of specific individuals with a particular value for the megaproject agenda.

This set of mechanisms embodies, to some extent, the agential capacities of the megaproject coalitions. Yet it transcends this dimension because, in some respects, the elements identified are not independent of the prevailing structures given; for instance, consider the role of the EU and state institutions in terms of providing resources and support, or the main political parties which have the capacity to control the institutional front and also mobilise key individuals for the megaproject plans. Thus, these elements corroborate, to some extent, “the mutual constitution of structure and agency across different levels” (Jessop et al., 1999: 142) in urban governance and how this resonates as well for megaproject developments. In this sense, the coalition theories facilitate capturing some of the governance arrangements although further theoretical insights are required.

This leads to the third set of mechanisms, the one dedicated to countering the opposition activity. This occurs in the context of anti-megaproject campaigns mobilising significant social support so that the megaproject plans are put at risk. In Gramscian terminology, this is understood as a crisis of hegemony insofar as there is not enough consent operating (the opposition managed to build and somehow consolidate a counter-hegemonic framing). It has been argued then that in order to offset the lack of consent, to secure the megaproject agenda the growth coalitions resort to coercion and other immediate tactics epitomising the strategic selectivity of the state. It follows that coercive mechanisms get operationalized through the existing state structures. The capacity to put them into practice through state bodies and apparatuses has been explained through the notion of strategic-relational approach, which contends that the state, as a relational entity, can function to selectively support or discriminate certain projects or actors. In these cases, it operates by discriminating against the actors opposing the megaproject plans, given the need by fractions of the dominant class forces to secure plans that constitute strategic components of their accumulation strategies, let alone the association of the megaproject plans’ survival to the prestige and reputation of national authorities.

Furthermore, it has been argued that this is done in multiple and varied –coercive– ways. A first tactic is the use of violence. That tactic is not totally constant and systematic along the years, but neither is it unusual, as on multiple occasions violence

has been directed against citizen mobilisation. In this sense, state violence acts against some of the individuals mobilised against the governmental plans but does also operate by discouraging potential individuals that may join the opposition. This explicit violent component has been examined through the lens of (domestic) state terrorism insofar as the perpetrated acts of violence sought to inflict fear upon other members of the communities or the larger citizenry to stop their participation in the mobilisation process. A second tactic is the specific articulation or manoeuvring of state bodies and the introduction of special measures to counter the opposition's activity more effectively. The strategic selectivity of the state emerges in this sense when one notes the multiple manoeuvres within these bodies. These included the constitution of a specific policing department within the Basque Interior Ministry and the establishment of a group of magistrates within the Turin Prosecutor office, exclusively dedicated to NLTL opposition cases. Another tactic uncovered during the research process has been that of an excess of zeal within the criminal justice system when applied to opposition activists. This was manifested through examples in which terrorist accusations were subsequently dismissed within the judicial procedures; the disproportionate use of cautionary measures such as prison and house arrest; and the suing or prosecution of prominent figures within the opposition (with accusations eventually dismissed). A fourth tactic that emerged embodying the state selectivity was that of interfering or shaping the procurement process in regard to the municipalities' capacity of objection, whereby the periods for objection were orchestrated to make it more difficult for the opposition. Likewise, the municipalities' attributions in terms of crucial steps such as the expropriation process were bypassed through an ad hoc legal arrangement. Finally, other coercive actions were identified against individuals or groups that had expressed sympathies with the opposition with the aim of marginalising them from public life or simply attempting to diminish their resolute stance against the project. At this stage it should be mentioned that even if coercion might be considered exceptional or extraordinary, given that in contemporary western states consent tends to dominate the political landscape, resorting to the use coercive tactics is not at odds with the neoliberal functioning of the state: "if necessary, [...] the neoliberal state will resort to coercive legislation and policing tactics [...] to disperse or repress collective forms of opposition" (Harvey, 2005a: 77).

In effect, this third set of mechanisms, based on coercive action and related governance arrangements embodying the strategic selectivity of the state, constitutes the corollary

to the explanation of the mechanisms and factors that underlie contested megaproject developments. It shows how a response to the opposition can be articulated through state apparatuses and bureaucracies so that the megaproject plans are further secured.

What are the concluding remarks to put forward in regard to the resilience of megaproject plans? In light of what has been noted above, it shall be argued that, in first instance, the advancement of megaprojects developments such as the ones investigated benefits from a type of governance framework compounded of re-escalated politico-economic configurations, neoliberalisation patterns, and the post-political settings that have gradually permeated into the terrain of public institutions and decision-making processes. This confirms how urban governance processes –and by extent megaproject development processes– are “systematically structured by wider economic and regulatory relations” (Jessop et al., 1999: 159), which in fact lay at the root of megaproject politics and governance.

The support and stability conferred to the process by these components is then complemented by the coalition capacities and the state selectivities. The former have showed themselves capable of forging more or less fruitful alliances within the area of civil society –or at least attempting to do so– to further legitimise megaproject plans (e.g., mainstream media, NGOs), while also incorporating a series of mechanisms that add further stability to the process (consensus amongst different political parties, leadership, networking). The latter come into play to erode the potential of the social opposition through multiple coercive mechanisms (police and judiciary) and governance arrangements encouraged by the state selectivities (apparatus manoeuvres, ad hoc tactics).

The strategic selectivity of the state emerges also as a theoretical tool to conceptualise the active discrimination of specific segments of the population; in this case, oppositional movements against megaproject developments. In practical terms, this means that, because of their favorable position in terms of the balance of forces; that is, as the one of the elites supporting megaproject undertakings; from a relational perspective their position of advantage is mirrored within the ensemble of state bodies. This constitutes the core explanation for the series of arrangements that contribute to undermine oppositions’ action. To this shall be added a nuance in regard to the contextual specificities of each national/regional context: the political conflict in the

Basque Country impacts as well on the type of policing applied to the social opposition. This suggests additional caution when attempting to make generalisations.

Given these contextual particularities, it would seem far-fetched to affirm the unequivocal existence of “a [well-defined] special regime of accompaniment” for megaproject developments. Yet the research has shown a series of elements that privilege the plans to complete megaprojects. On the one hand, the governance process is endowed with an extraordinary platform facilitated by the politico-economic configuration; on the other, a series of specific mechanisms and arrangements get articulated in order to provide further stability to the plans while contributing to undermine the social opposition. Thus there are grounds to assert that the advancement of megaproject undertakings benefits from its insertion in particular politico-economic and spatial configurations. In the investigated cases, this goes hand in hand with a plethora of agential capacities and state selectivities which further strengthen them. These, even if contingent and context-dependent, help to explain the resilience of megaproject agendas.

10.2 Contribution to knowledge

This thesis makes a valuable contribution to different areas of knowledge, including empirical, theoretical and policy and practice domains. Each area is discussed in a different subsection. Additionally, a final subsection discusses potential future directions of research.

10.2.1. Empirical evidence

The primary empirical contribution of this thesis has been to reconstruct two case studies involving contentious dynamics around a megaproject development with a critical reading of the mechanisms and arrangements that operate in their governance. While accounting for the contextual factors of each case study, the thesis has produced data on the different agents, discourses, practices and techniques and strategies that configure and influence the megaproject governance process. This contributes to further expand the knowledge on the procurement and implementation procedures of large-scale developments. In this sense, the research:

- has noted the relevance of supranational modes of governance in the policy framework, the discourse and the resource mobilisation capacity in megaproject development processes. This has been illustrated through the role of the EU and

EU-linked institutions in assisting the megaproject plans with financial and discursive resources (TEN-T initiative) and by adding a legitimising component.

- has highlighted how the already known exclusive nature of the decision-making processes that precede megaproject developments implementations is complemented with ad hoc mechanisms of participation with limited powers and a proactive restriction of the public debate. This was explained focusing on the role of bodies such as the Observatory for the NLTL and the marginalisation of symbolic figures among the opposition, especially in the case of the Basque Y, as noted for dissenting scholars.

- has suggested the existence of a common sense among the larger citizenry prone to accept megaproject developments, and examined how pro-megaproject forces hinge upon it. This was shown noting the prominence of the value-free ideology and the fact that in some cases communities not only welcome but also demand developmental projects such as the ones opposed.

- has identified the different agents that somehow partake in the process and contribute to the manufacture of consensus around the megaproject plans. The findings have shown how not only mainstream media but also, NGOs, local platforms, trade unions, sports clubs, business associations converge in the rhetorical defence of the megaproject plans projecting a discourse that cuts across many layers of society.

- has underlined the local and regional dimension of further discourses and practices employed to reinforce the megaproject plans. As in the selected cases the megaproject discourse had to be reinforced, further motives that were identified were based on discursive constructions highlighting the urgency of surmounting local contexts of crisis to be offset by the creation of jobs as a result megaproject implementation. For the Basque Country this also included references to nationhood.

- has found governance arrangements and practices sought to confer further stability to the megaproject plans in the form of: (i) political stability (in terms of shared views among the main political parties and long-lasting support for the plans); (ii) enduring leading figures; and (iii) networking and resource-mobilisation capacities.

- has revealed the use of diverse coercion tactics to undermine the social opposition and secure the megaproject agendas, and how these are at times organised through state bodies or structures. Coercion was identified with the use of force in episodes of mobilisation but also through the justice system via specific forms of selective punishment or threat to punish.
- has identified ad hoc governance arrangements operationalized selectively to further strengthen megaproject agendas to the detriment of the social opposition. These arrangements operated across several structures and bodies of the state in the form of the creation of departments and groups of prosecutors with exclusive dedication, but also in the form of manipulating the public objection procedure to make it more difficult for the opposition.

This empirical work makes remarkable contributions to the body of megaproject literature. It has been carried out bearing in mind the importance of emphasising the different political dimensions embedded in megaproject undertakings, in particular, looking beyond the more technical examinations common in the discipline. This underscores the methodological and theoretical value of approaching megaproject governance from the perspective of urban studies and urban governance so that the influence of the multiple politico-economic, social and spatial components involved can be captured.

10.2.2. Theoretical contributions

The theoretical approach employed in this thesis enabled the researcher to encapsulate the multiple factors that cut across megaproject politics by pointing to politico-economic, structural and agential components. Within the megaproject body of literature, these factors are sometimes overlooked while primacy is given to more technical, immediate or contingent decision-making elements that compound the governance process. Herein lay the valuable theoretical contributions.

In this sense, a major lesson to be drawn from the analysis is the relevance of identifying the spatial and politico-economic configurations that shelter megaproject developments. This exercise enables the researcher to elucidate several structural elements with significant implications. In this way, the research process revealed the importance of the EU framework, an element that corroborates the need to consider the “forces from above” (Strauch et al., 2015: 183) in conjunction with the re-escalation of the politico-economic space, given the implications for urban futures. In fact the EU

policy along with its associated resources, embodied a solid partner for the pro-megaproject regional and national actors. This, in turn, constituted a difficult sphere to address by the opposition even if efforts were made (protest event at the EU Parliament, visits of the European MPs).

In the second instance, the research showed also how the neoliberal lens could inform the governance analysis of megaprojects. Indeed, this helped to explain the discourses and techniques of government for megaproject developments within the scope of what is referred as “neoliberal urban governance” (Mayer, 2007: 98 and 110). The research noted the subsumption of the member states to the policies of the EU, which in itself has been a major sponsor of neoliberal policies (van Apeldoorn, 2014). Specifically, in regard to spatial strategy, this prompts the attempt to consolidate a single European market through enhanced connectivity (TEN-T initiative), while a discursive rhetoric based on competitiveness and economic growth accompanies the implementation process. Secondly, it re-asserts the role of the state in urban governance in this case through transport and infrastructure policies. With respect to the neoliberal lens, and regardless of the profitability of the specific endeavour, its proactivity (use of public funding as in the old megaproject paradigm) is tolerated provided that the policy agenda (in this case megaproject advancement) couples with the EU envisaged policy and spatial configuration. And thirdly, megaproject plans benefit from the neoliberalisation of public institutions given that these prefigure a post-political setting with mechanisms of participation of limited powers and the activation of coercive resorts against the groups not consenting (Harvey, 2005). In short, megaproject processes are intertwined with a series of neoliberal elements (narrative, adopted infrastructure policies and government techniques) that ease its consolidation in front of social opposition.

Another relevant contribution has been to test the applicability of the coalition theories for the researched type of megaprojects. Even if limited in terms of uncovering the operating structures, it has proved valuable for its potential to identify coalitional components within the process as well as identifying the governance arrangements and techniques used to reinforce the advancement of megaproject developments. Constituting a more agency-based perspective it cannot illuminate the whole governance process but it does provide a framework to explain the actor’s configurations and practices. Even in the studied cases where the central role is played

by regional and national authorities it helped identifying auxiliary players that helped adding extra legitimacy to the megaproject plans. Furthermore, emphasising on the need to transcend the local dimension, the analysis has advanced avenues whereby a hybridised use of two of the major concepts in urban studies –urban regimes and growth machines– can be mobilised to illuminate certain aspects of the governance process (auxiliary players’ contributions, consensus across the political landscape, the need for a stable and committed leadership and the capacity to incorporate new individuals or mobilise support to the coalition). Furthermore, this exercise enables further clarification of the application of these concepts to the study of megaprojects that escape the local/ city dimension (see the examples mentioned in Chapter 6).

In addition, the thesis has also extended the notion of strategic selectivity of the state by noting how the opposition to megaprojects is discriminated through the action of state bodies. In this way, the strategic relational approach could be used as a lens to capture not only when certain actors or projects are privileged by state mechanisms, but also when actors that jeopardise certain agendas –for instance, those connected to on-going accumulation strategies– are discriminated against. This would explain the conduct in not prosecuting abuse against activists or promoting individuals that show support to the plans as well as the bias embodied by the creation of specific departments or groups within the state apparatus to carry out a more effective task against the opposition. This viewpoint of the state complements the one taken from the neoliberal perspective (the state being proactive to defend certain interests and promoting policies). In this case the relational perspective facilitates seeing how the correlation of social forces permeates into the bodies and structures of the state architecture, which finds a material translation in the privileging of megaproject plans. This double-sided act of privileging occurs by actively discriminating the opposition as well as by rewarding those committed with the developmental plans.

Finally, the neo-Gramscian approach further helps explain the politics of these processes: on the one hand, how megaproject undertakings benefit from a pre-existing common sense that reduces the potential of the opposition ranks, and on the other hand, how coercion is employed when not enough consent on the megaproject plans is achieved. Equally, the research process has suggested the application of the term “state terrorism” to enlighten the specific conducts of violence against activists in order to highlight the implicit will to discourage further participation in activist mobilisation

against megaproject plans. Even if far from the usual use of the term (abduction and assassination, for instance) there can be specific moments where strategically the state tolerates a considerable use of force and additional coercive measures. This would seek to generate a sense of discouragement across the opposition ranks that may be reluctant to enter a situation of open confrontation against the state.

As a whole, these contributions provide a framework for a more comprehensive understanding of the evolution and dynamics of megaproject governance processes. This is not necessarily applicable to all megaproject development processes, but it gives valuable hints about how to theoretically analyse the phenomenon and which dimensions ought to be considered if one seeks to grasp the intricacies of megaproject governance. It is understood that these can be captured through a critical and theoretically combined approach as the one advanced. The primary lesson is thus, that when analyzing megaproject governance processes, the framework should account for the politico-economic configurations and spatial scales in conjunction with the coalitional practices and capacities intertwined with pre-existing structures.

10.2.3. Policy and practice

This thesis further contributes to critical contemplation of the contention around megaproject developments. It stands aside, with an academic perspective, of the activist contributions made by the platforms and movements opposing megaprojects; not only the ones acting in the selected case studies such as the No Tav movement and AHT Gelditu Elkarlana, but also across the world and in particular, Europe. In this sense, the research emphasises how activist and practitioners that may seek to rationalise and/or rethink infrastructure policy might need to take into consideration politico-economic configurations, spatial and accumulation strategies and correlations of forces as these may affect the domains in which they will interact. In particular, the thesis builds upon the UIMP elaborated documents (e.g., the charters of Hendaye and Tunis) and also the PPT judgement on “Fundamental Rights, Participation of Local Communities and Megaprojects” (2015).

As for public institutions, it reiterates the need to design inclusive and transparent decision-making and participatory processes so that the existing multiple framings and valuation languages are not being neglected. Consequently, this shall avoid or minimise the gestation of contentious dynamics that negatively impact on communities in terms of disruption and also repression. In addition, it can minimise considerable

spending on policing policies and the expansion of negative perceptions on the role of security forces.

10.2.4. Future directions for research

To further test the validity of the arguments, other case studies could be interrogated following the premises outlined in this study. Potential case studies that stand out in relation to the subject of this thesis include, for instance, a new airport in Nantes (France), whose plans have been recently abandoned, and the Stuttgart 21 station (Germany) whose plans are going ahead. Given that they present diverging final outcomes, there is an inherent potential in terms of expanding the knowledge on megaproject development processes, not only in terms of what consolidates them, but also in terms of what elements underlie its collapse, as with the case of the new airport in Nantes. This research could also uncover other structural or contextual elements that influenced the outcome of the conflict, as well as the capacities and limitations and characteristics of the coalitions promoting megaprojects. In addition, it might assess the role of referendums in the whole process.

Another line of inquiry could be the role played by coercion in urban conflict. This research could enquire further into the role of coercive measures in advancing urban agendas, and how those roles can be conceptualised. Further, with the aim of encompassing case studies lacking relevant contentious dynamics, research could focus on the ways consent is forged to avoid conflict, contributing thus to the conceptualisations advanced by Mossner and del Romero Renau (2015) dedicated to analyse what elements and factors avoid urban conflict to happen. This could also delve into the role of corruption in the delivery of megaproject developments.

10.3. Research assessment

This research project sought to assess the factors and mechanisms behind the resilience of megaproject plans, or, in other words, the way in which megaproject undertakings are advanced despite multiple handicaps, the most relevant one being opposition campaigns. The research utilised a framework of analysis and conceptualisation based on several strands of urban theory with a research design advancing a comparative perspective. Further, two case studies were reconstructed through semi-structured interviews, document analysis and observations. The interviews and the observations, which enabled the researcher to get direct inputs on the past and on-going dynamics, formed a valuable dataset which was then further complemented with the document

analysis. The latter proved useful in terms of providing details on technical aspects of the procurement processes and the narratives adopted by the pro-megaproject forces. They also facilitated the access to accounts on remarkable episodes within the whole conflictual trajectory of the cases investigated.

As for methodological choices, incorporating the sample representatives of the European institutions could have further enriched the dataset. This option was not considered in the appropriate stages of the research process because the transnational dimension of the selected cases was not appropriately understood. However, the documents cited in the research constitute an attempt to fill this gap.

In addition, it is believed that the contentious nature of the case studies operates to make the task of data collection more difficult, especially in terms of the sectors supporting the completion of megaprojects. Two elements can contribute to illustrate this statement. On one hand, access to a document dealing with the funding to be allocated to the NLTL by the EC was denied on the basis that its disclosure

would undermine the protection of the public as regards the financial, monetary or economic policy of Italy. The file of the application for EU financial support contains a number of strategic information on the conduct of national policies, including economic and international relations (EC, 2017)¹⁰⁹.

On the other hand, the denial of contractors to participate in the research implies a will to avoid disclosing information with regard to the governance process (even if they are ensured confidentiality). In this respect, it is worth mentioning again the multiplicity of corruption scandals in which many Spanish construction companies have been involved in the first decade of the 21st century, the evidence of which only started emerging in the last few years (at least eight different contractors had been involved in illegal activity, mainly on the basis of payment of commissions, improper award of contracts and anticompetitive practices).

¹⁰⁹ Reply to the request by the author of the dossier submitted by the Italian Government in the application for funding for the NLTL.

APPENDIX 1. Interview Guide

QUESTIONS ORIENTED TO ANTI-MEGAPROJECT PARTICIPANTS

1. What is your view (or the one of your organisation) on the HSR project? A general comment on the whole planning and development process in addition to the current situation
2. Can you explain the role of the organization/institution you represent with regard to the opposition to the High Speed Rail project?
3. Do you think the whole planning process of megaproject development was an inclusive one? Why? Was there any dialogue at all with the institutions and promoters of the megaproject?
4. What have been the main instruments to mobilize citizens against the megaproject? Did you employ any institutional mechanisms (lawsuits, etc.) in your struggle?
5. Overall, what is your account on the struggle waged against the HSR? What procedures actions were effective/successful? Was there any particular weakness that crucially affected the opposition?
6. Focusing on the project promoters, what were the main factors that impeded better results of the opposition campaign?
7. How did the opposition in general influence the planning and development process?
8. Do you think contention on this development may enable an improvement of the delivery process for future megaprojects?

QUESTIONS ORIENTED TO PRO-MEGAPROJECT PARTICIPANTS

1. Can you explain which is your position and which tasks does it involve?
2. What is your view (the one of the body or entity you represent) on the HSR project?
3. Are you aware of the externalities and social costs of the project? Have they been considered in the assessments?
4. What is your perception of the actual opposition? How would you qualify them? Do you think the opposition and its tactical repertoire are legitimate?
5. Do you think the whole planning process of MP development was an inclusive one? Why?
6. What was your reaction (or your organization's reaction) after seeing the level of opposition?
7. Did you try to engage with other actors to further support the development process? If so, how?
8. What are the outcomes or lessons to be drawn from the whole governance process?

+ Further comments that the participant may want to add.

APPENDIX 2. Permanent People's Tribunal. Outline of the session and participants recorded

Public session dedicate to:

Fundamental Rights, Participation of Local Communities and Megaprojects. From the Lyon-Turin HSR to the global reality.

5-8 novembre 2015

Torino - Fabbrica delle "E", corso Trapani 91

Almese - Teatro Magnetto, via Avigliana 17

giovedì 5 novembre 9:00-19:00, Torino - Fabbrica delle "E"

ore 9.00 **apertura della Sessione** - Gianni Tognoni (segretario generale del Tribunale)

ore 9.15 **esposizione atto d'accusa** - Livio Pepino (Controsservatorio Valsusa)

ore 9.30 - 19.00 **IL TAV IN VAL SUSA E LA PARTECIPAZIONE NEGATA**

1. La situazione della Valsusa in generale - *rapporteur* Ezio Bertok (Controsservatorio Valsusa) assunzione testimoni e proiezione filmati
2. La partecipazione negata: manipolazione dei dati e delle previsioni - *rapporteur* Angelo Tartaglia (professore Politecnico di Torino, componente Commissione tecnica Comunità montana Val Susa e Val Sangone)
assunzione testimoni e consulenti
3. L'esclusione dei cittadini e delle istituzioni dai processi decisionali - *rapporteur* Luca Giunti (naturalista, componente Commissione tecnica Comunità montana Val Susa e Val Sangone) assunzione testimoni
4. La sostituzione del confronto con la repressione - *rapporteur* Paolo Mattone (Controsservatorio Valsusa)

assunzione testimoni e proiezione filmati

(pausa pranzo 13.15-14.30)

venerdì 6 novembre 9:00-19:00, Torino - Fabbrica delle "E"

ore 9.00 - 19.00 **GRANDI OPERE E LESIONI DEI DIRITTI FONDAMENTALI NEL MONDO**

1. **La situazione italiana** (in particolare: passante e stazione ferroviaria di Firenze, autostrada Orte-Mestre, trivellazioni nel mare Adriatico e in terraferma, ponte di Messina)

rapporteur Tiziano Cardosi (Forum contro le grandi opere inutili e imposte)

obiettivo su: Mose a Venezia (Armando Danella), Muos a Niscemi (Sebastiano Papandrea)

2. **La situazione europea** (in particolare: linea ferroviaria HS2 nel Regno Unito, linea ferroviaria AV nei Paesi Baschi, stazione di Stuttgart 21 in Germania, miniera d'oro di Rosia Montana in Romania) *rapporteuse* Sabine Bräutigam (Forum contro le grandi opere inutili e imposte)

obiettivo su: Aeroporto di Notre dame de Landes (Geneviève Coiffard-Grosdoy, Françoise Verchère, Thomas Dubreuil), La procedura del débat public in Francia (Daniel Ibanez)

3. **La situazione dell'America Latina**

rapporteur Andrés Barreda (Facoltà di economia, Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México)

(pausa pranzo 13.15-14.30)

sabato 7 novembre 9:00-12:30, Torino - Fabbrica delle "E"

ore 9.00 - 11.00 **spazio per deduzioni e difese dei destinatari dell'atto di accusa** ore 11.00 - 12.30 **REQUISITORIE FINALI** Livio Pepino (Controsservatorio Valsusa)

ore 12.30 **conclusione della sessione pubblica** e ritiro del Tribunale camera di consiglio per la decisione

domenica 8 novembre Almese

- Teatro Magnetto ore 16.00 **LETTURA DEL DISPOSITIVO DELLA SENTENZA**

List of Participants audiotaped in the PPT session (2015)

Code	Witness	Type	Role/ description
WAA1	Claudio Giorno	Activist	Founder of the "Comitato Habitat"
WAA2	Gianfranco Chiocchia	Scholar	Politecnico Torino
WAA3	Sandro Plano	Local representative	President Comunità montana Val Susa e Val Sangone
WAA4	Alberto Perino	Activist	NO TAV coordinator
WAA5	Marco Ponti	Scholar	Politecnico di Milano
WAA6	Marina Clerico	Scholar	Politecnico Torino
WAA7	Marco Tomalino	Doctor	Currently employed in Val Susa
WAA8	Mario Cavargna	Activist	President of Pro Natura Piemonte
WAA9	Stefano Lenzi	Activist	WWF Italia
WAA10	Massimo Buongiovanni	Solicitor	Legal Team NO TAV
WAA11	Loredana Bellone	Local representative	Mayor of San Didero
WAA12	Paolo Prieri	Activist	Presidio NO TAV Europa
WAA13	Guido Fissore	Activist	NO TAV movement/ local official
WAA14	Alessandra Algostino	Scholar	Universita degli Studi di Torino
WAA15	Claudio Novaro	Solicitor	Legal Team NO TAV
WAA16	Vittorio Agnoletto	Politician	Former MEP and member of Rifondazione Comunista
WAA17	Claudio Cancelli	Scholar	Politecnico Torino
WAA18	Simone Franchino	Activist	Comitato No Tav Spinta dal Bass

APPENDIX 3. Letter of approval from the Ethics Committee



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Our Ref: NC:GOV

02 December 2015

Dr K Lasslett
Room 03C11
School of Criminology, Politics & Social Policy
Ulster University
Jordanstown Campus

Dear Dr Lasslett

Research Ethics Committee Application Number: REC/15/0110

Study Title: Infrastructure megaproject conflicts: A comparative analysis of confronted coalitions and the impacts on the development process

Thank you for your recent response to matters raised by the committee. This has been considered and the decision of the committee is that the research should proceed.

Please also note the additional documentation relating to research governance and indemnity matters, including the requirements placed upon you as Chief Investigator.

The committee's decision is valid for a period of three years from today's date (this means that the study should be completed by that date). If you require this period to be extended, please contact the Research Governance section.

- 1. Please complete and return the Chief Investigator Statement of Compliance prior to commencing the study and keep a copy for your file.**
- 2. Please retain all other documents.**

Further details of the University's policy along with guidance notes, procedures, terms of reference and forms are available at the following web address:

<http://research.ulster.ac.uk/office/rofficeeg.html>

If you need any further information or clarification of any points, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely

Nick Curry
Senior Administrative Officer
Research Governance
028 9036 6629
n.curry@ulster.ac.uk

APPENDIX 4. Information sheet given to participants

Research Project Title: *Infrastructure megaproject conflicts: A comparative analysis of confronted coalitions and the impacts on the development process.*

You are being requested to take part in a PhD research study that once completed will signify the attainment by the researcher of a Doctor of Philosophy degree. It is important that you take the time to learn what the research is about and what is going to be your role in it. Please read the following paragraphs and do not hesitate to ask any questions about anything that might not be clear to you. Make sure that you are comfortable signing the consent form. Thank you for considering your participation in this research.

Research project background

This project has been proposed and developed after the identification of an emerging trend of social contention around megaproject (large project) developments in Europe. Thus, the basic aim of this study is to examine the conflictual dynamics following megaproject development processes. The study analyses, in particular, the nature of the coalitions clustering behind the development of megaprojects and how they prosecute their objectives when facing a significant and well organised opposition. In so doing, the study will determine the social process through which the development megaprojects are secured and challenged. It will also weigh the impact of regionally specific factors (cultural, political, and spatial) on project outcomes and the implications for policy and civil society.

Employing a range of frameworks drawn from urban geography, public administration and sociology, the study shall theorise the governance dynamics of megaproject development and how they are shaped by opposition groups.

Your participation in this project will contribute to a growing body of knowledge on megaproject development and urban conflict.

The research design employed to answer the research question will be based on a comparative case study inquiry-type. In that sense, two case-studies presenting similar characteristics have been selected:

- A. The Lyon-Turin high speed railway line, notably opposed in one particular area, the Susa Valley (Italy).
- B. The high speed railway network known as the Y Basque notably opposed by some sectors of the civil society.

Why you were chosen

You have been chosen as a potential participant because the researcher values your knowledge about the subject under research and in particular due to your direct experience in one of the case studies selected.

Information on participation

Your contact details have been obtained online via Google search, from organisational websites or through third parties. The total number of participants is currently unknown and it will change as the research progresses (we expect approximately 60 participants). If you consent to take part in the study you will be

interviewed by the researcher and where permission is granted you will be audiotaped on a voice recording device.

Participation in this study is entirely voluntary; it is your responsibility to decide whether or not to take part. If you decide to do so, you will be asked to sign a consent form. Then, you will be given a copy of the consent form and this information sheet to hold on to. You can withdraw consent at any time, and withdraw from the study without giving any reason. If you do decide to opt out from the study all your personal information and your testimony will be destroyed.

Project results

The information from interviews will be published in a PhD Thesis by the researcher at Ulster University, at the end of the research project in 2017 and probably in scientific journals or scholarly books. It is expected that this project will provide new theoretical and methodological foundations for further research on the subject of megaproject developments. The project also anticipates extending academic knowledge that can support civil society organisations and policy-makers which seek to improve the processes that control and rule the development of megaprojects.

Confidentiality and disclosure

All data will be held securely and in confidence as required by Data Protection legislation. Nobody, but the researcher, will have access to your personal information or your testimony. However, under the Freedom of Information legislation access to some non-personal or generalised data is allowed. You may choose to remain anonymous, in which case any information you give will be attributed using an ID number and by citing in the findings a functional or occupational category using a broad term (e.g. member of a local public body). In addition, any link that may facilitate your identification through the data will be excluded.

Legal implications of testimonies featuring information on illegal conduct

It is important to note that researchers are obliged under law to disclose any information relating to unprosecuted offences to the police. For example, if you discuss your involvement, or the involvement of a colleague, in a public order offence or a criminal damage of property, researchers are obliged to report this to the police, unless the offender has already been convicted. Accordingly to avoid any risk of self-incrimination you are advised not to disclose such information to the researcher. If you are uncertain please ask the researcher for further advice.

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APPENDIX 5. Example of the Codebook

First cycle coding	Definition of the code	Indicators on how to flag the theme	Examples
Megaproject discourse – communication strategy	This node addresses the diverse topics or issues around which the pro-megaproject discourse is constructed and presented to the public opinion. Elements that define the rationale underpinning the megaproject plans.	Mentioning of aspects that, in the understanding of the stakeholders involved, justify the maintenance and continuation of the megaproject plans (European importance, economic competitiveness, etc).	<i>these assumptions have been repeatedly confirmed to say that the EU has chosen to finance, with 40% of the NTL in 2013, with Connect ... Europe ... Network Europe ... and this was done in 2013. And the Connecting Europe Facility's choice to finance this over the period 2014- 19 was made in 2015. So, they are not old choices, they are recent choices, some very recent ones (IAP4)</i>
(megaproject) Planning and implementation techniques	This node refers to the material techniques employed to ease and advance the implementation process mainly affecting the sphere of the public administration	Referencing to the legal or administrative procedures that come into play. Note that reference may imply the exceptional character of the instruments or tools employed.	<i>t]hen a decree was approved 3 years ago, the Decree called Unblock Italy which has a general scope but also concerns the subject matter of large works and assumes all the methodologies of the Objective Law (IAA10).</i>
Megaproject coalition allies (theory driven)	This node concerns auxiliary players to which the stakeholders refer. These are assumed to collaborate in the consolidation of the megaproject agenda	References to media influence, campaigns through other stakeholders (e.g. sport clubs), private agents in relation to the megaproject plans and its facilitation	<i>[w]e are faced with an attitude of LTF that wants to impose, with the emphatically supportive media, that wants to impose a</i>

First cycle coding	Definition of the code	Indicators on how to flag the theme	Examples
	as an urban agenda (stemming from the urban coalition theories: growth machine and urban regime).		<i>predetermined solution. That is, it intends to prove, not even prove, it intends to anyway push for the construction ... of the new tunnel (WAA17)</i>
(Additional) Mechanisms to consolidate the megaproject agenda (theory drive)	Further components or techniques that facilitate the consolidation of the megaproject agenda especially within the functioning of the administration that has to lead the implementation process.	Administrative measures set to bypass the bureaucratic/ institutional obstacles that emerge along the process or that can improve generally speaking the management of the implementation process	<i>Our request was vetoed because [...] we went to the weakest part; we went to those who had signed, engineers from ETS [Basque public railway company], the site managers. Our petition was vetoed. They say that we can make petitions of politicians but not technicians for the hearings [...] the bureau is composed by Nationalist Left president, secretaries Conservatives and Basque Nationalists; we asked for it, the presidency accepted but the two secretaries denied us this appearance. It is in the minutes. And you say ... but why not? 'Because you cannot request technicians'. 'If you have nothing to hide ... why won't they</i>

First cycle coding	Definition of the code	Indicators on how to flag the theme	Examples
			<i>appear?’ ‘The minister has to appear’. The minister comes, states that everything is fine, there is nothing to hide; ‘if you have any problems refer to the courts’. The courts are where this issue will end up some day; I think the issue of cost overruns will have to end up there (IBA9)</i>
Techniques to disrupt or erode opposition	It describes the more direct techniques to erode, disrupt or delegitimise the opposition work in countering the megaproject plans.	Themes will include the ways in which the various forms of resistance or opposition are met. From fines to crime/terrorist allegations from the prosecution office to the police interventions.	<i>when many people are beginning to withdraw [...] riot Basque police arrived and made a strike from behind, an operation of brutal punishment. [...] [we] had to pass through a very narrow passage, so there they ambushed us with blows of [rubber] balls at a very short distance to the people, there were dozens of wounded, it was very hard and they arrested eight people (IBA1)</i>
Political – institutional architecture to address the opposition campaign and resistance	This code identifies different pathways through which different state bodies and entities operate to articulate a more effective response to	Mentioning of specific and extraordinary elements within the state structure set to function against the megaproject opposition.	<i>The prosecutor office in Turin, has built as part of this process a box where they wrote HSR. So this box HSR will</i>

First cycle coding	Definition of the code	Indicators on how to flag the theme	Examples
	the opposition.		<p><i>incorporate all processes that affect Susa Valley events. The articulation of this HSR-box, allows in some way to prioritize these [legal] processes, which are assigned to a pool of specialized judges consisting of 4-5 judges who must send out these processes with extraordinary quickness involving very high investment, a strong drainage of resources (WAA15).</i></p>

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