# Pipelines, Flows and Roots
## Power Struggles Over the Trans Adriatic Pipeline in Southern Italy

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### 1.1. Situating the case study

The Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) is one of three pipelines – together with the South Caucasus Pipeline (SCP) and the Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline (TANAP) – that make up the Southern Gas Corridor (SGC), a European Union (EU) initiative aimed at connecting the Azeri gas fields in the Caspian Sea to the European gas network. The SGC is one of the nine priority corridors of the Trans-European Networks for Energy (TEN-E), the EU policy framework for linking infrastructures of member states. Listed among the Projects of Common Interest (PCIs), the TAP has received institutional and financial support from the EU. Starting from the Greek-Turkish border, the TAP runs through Greece, Albania, the Adriatic Sea and Italy for a total length of 878 km. The TAP ends in the municipality of Melendugno, a small town in southern Italy, where the Pipeline Receiving Terminal (PRT) is located. A further 55 km pipeline connects the PRT to the national gas grid, running across the historical region known as Salento. Only 3.7% of the whole TAP runs through Italian territory: 33 km, of which 8 onshore. The transnational pipeline was built by the Swiss-based company TAP AG, while the interconnector pipeline is being built by Snam, the Italian company that manages the national gas grid and holds a 20% stake in TAP AG.

This chapter examines the transnational energy infrastructure from the standpoint of its final destination in Italy, targeted by several pipeline projects aimed at making the peninsula the southern European gas hub. This goal was set in the 2013 National Energy Strategy, approved by the government chaired by Mario Monti, and consistently pursued by all the following governments. Besides the TAP, other pipeline projects would connect to the national gas grid on the outskirts of Brindisi, an industrial city along the Adriatic coast[1]. The position of the city in the overall reorganization of energy

[1] The other projects are: IGI-Poseidon, an interconnector pipeline that will connect to TurkStream, planned to transport natural gas from the Russian gas field across the Black Sea, and to the Eastmed, designed to transport natural gas from Cyprus and Israeli gas fields; and Eagle LNG, which aims to connect an offshore regasification terminal in Albania (the construction of which is part of the

infrastructure makes it a potentially significant national gas hub. At the end of the ancient Roman Appian Way, Brindisi is nowadays the final destination of the Southern Gas Corridor. The relocation of the Brindisi area within the transnational infrastructural gas network does not remain unquestioned, as it adds to a troubled history of heavy industrialization, marked by the noxious legacy of environmental degradation and the overwhelming influence of corporate powers.

Home to oil- and coal-based industries for chemical and energy production, Brindisi reveals the many contradictions and complexities of European energy politics, which aim to sustain the "decarbonization" of the economy, while supporting the long-term construction of new energy mega-infrastructures for fossil fuel transport (Ferguson 2020)[2]. Such politics remain strongly dependent on fossil fuel production, embedded in the wider networks of power and technology that unevenly connect finance, states and geographies. This chapter addresses the frictions that this paradigm generates in specific locations, unwillingly designated as local hubs within much larger and more complex transnational power infrastructures.

This chapter is a preliminary analysis of an ongoing research project about energy transition, popular ecologies and socio-economic restructuring in southern Europe. Prior to this project, I carried out fieldwork in Brindisi for 15 months between 2015 and 2016[3]. Further fieldwork was scheduled for 2020, but due to the Covid-19 pandemic it had to be postponed. This chapter draws also on policy documents, corporate materials and statements from social movements. Given the relevance of this case nationwide, online research could provide plenty of materials, including public debates, media coverage and reports from various stakeholders.

### 1.2. Energopolitics, energy transition and mega-infrastructures

The TAP project was announced in 2003, following the discovery of the Shah Deniz natural gas field in the Caspian Sea in 1999. At the time, the TAP was one among other competing pipeline projects that met the EU policy demands to diversify and secure natural gas supplies through the creation of four main gas corridors. The EU policy also aimed to reduce energy dependency on Russia, especially after the 2006 crisis following the Russia-Ukraine gas dispute (Collier and Kemoklidze 2014; Kandiyoti 2015)[4]. This policy framework was shaped by the sensitive post-1989 geopolitics and the reshuffling

project) to the Brindisi area (Clemente 2013).

[2] See also the Europe gas tracker map (Global Energy Monitor) available at: https://globalenergymonitor.org/projects/europe-gas-tracker/tracker-map/ (accessed 4 October 2021).

[3] The research was conducted in the framework of the project "Grassroots economics: Meaning, project and practice in the pursuit of livelihood" (GRECO), European Research Council Advanced Grant, IDEAS-ERC FP7, Project Number: 323743 (P.I. Susana Narotzky). The ongoing research is funded by the Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, reference contract: CEECIND/01894/2018/CP1533/CT0001, within the CRIA (Centro em Rede de Investigação em Antropologia) strategic program UIDB/04038/2020. This chapter draws from and expands the paper "Sovereignties and infrastructures in contention: Popular opposition to the Trans Adriatic Pipeline (TAP) in Southern Italy", presented at the *26th International Conference of Europeanists*, Council for European Studies, Madrid, 20–22 June 2019.

[4] In 2006, the dispute over gas payments between Russia and Ukraine interrupted the gas flow to EU countries. The more recent and ongoing war in Ukraine, started with the Russian invasion on February 2022, has dramatically intensified concerns over energy dependency and security in ways that may deeply change the energy geopolitics in Europe.

of regional alliances and spheres of influence in the Caspian area (Kandiyoti 2015). The Shah Deniz gas field was discovered by a BP-led consortium. After the early 1990s, the post-Soviet Azerbaijan entered privileged relations with BP and US oil companies for the operation of the Baku oilfields, now connected to Europe through the oil road running across Azerbaijan, Georgia, Turkey (the Baku-Tbilisi-Ceyhan (BTC) pipeline) and the sea route from the Turkish harbour Ceyhan to the Italian harbour Trieste (Marriott and Minio-Paluello 2013).

EU energy security and high estimates of an increase in gas demand, in parallel with the decline of natural gas production in Europe, underlie the main arguments in support of the great expansion of pipeline infrastructures, along the lines of the well-established "infrastructural Europeanism" (Schipper and Schot 2011). However, two factors are today contributing to redesigning this scenario. First, gas demand overestimates; after the steady growth of the 1990s, gas consumption reached its peak in 2010, only to decrease in 2014 to the lowest point since 1995 (Jones, Dufour and Gaventa 2015). Second, in 2019 the European Commission launched the broad policy framework European Green Deal, with the aim of reaching "climate neutrality" by 2050. This is expected to entail a further reduction in fossil fuel consumption, thus revising previous energy strategies to make them coherent with the climate goals. In light of this changing scenario, the critics of EU sustained expansion of fossil energy infrastructures argue that this runs the risk of supporting infrastructures that will not repay their cost, revealing – ultimately – that they are not built to meet actual energy demands, but serve the scope of corporate powers and financial capital reproduction (Flyvbjerg 2005; Re:Common 2014a).

The above observations suggest that the relationships between energy and infrastructure are undergoing potentially significant changes, which might (or might not) contribute to redesigning social relations and power structures, as well as the uneven geographies of the "fuel economy" (Mitchell 2013). Energy infrastructures do represent, in this respect, important sites for exploring these transformations, paying attention to frictions and struggles over contentious energy futures (Boyer 2017; Franquesa 2018). They also provide fruitful ground for the intersection of the anthropology of energy with anthropological engagements with infrastructures. While the latter are relatively recent (Dalakoglou and Harvey 2015; Harvey et al. 2017; Venkatesan et al. 2018), spanning over the last three decades (Ribeiro 1994), the anthropology of energy, which has also gained momentum in recent years, retrieved an old concern of the discipline (Boyer 2014; Love and Isenhour 2016; Smith and High 2017).

Larkin (2013: 328–329) provides a broad definition of infrastructures as "built networks that facilitate the flow of goods, people, or ideas and allow for their exchange over space", pointing out that the "peculiar ontology" of infrastructures "lies in the fact that they are things and also the relation between things". Drawing on this general relational framework, I look at the pipeline through three main interrogatives: first, "what" flows through it; second, "where" the pipeline flows, which places it connects; and third, "how" this flowing is made possible, not just through engineering and technology, but through agreements, consent, persuasion, authority, force and repression – in a word, through power and legitimacy. The "what" pertains to the peculiar resource-making process (Ferry and Limbert 2008; Franquesa 2019) that managed to replace fossil fuel (oil) with another fossil fuel (natural gas) as a socially accepted resource in the face of widespread climate concerns. The "where" refers to the different

spatial scales of transnational infrastructures, from the geopolitical dimensions of energy politics to the territorial relations within single states. The "how" captures the complexities that make the pipeline construction possible, the "energopolitics" (Boyer 2014; 2019) of infrastructure that unfolds at different levels and has a critical point in the role of the state in regulating, facilitating, repressing and imposing all the necessary guarantees for pipeline construction – a role that is not devoid of effects on the ways authority and power converge with corporate interests and diverge from citizenship's claims, thus triggering controversial and contested "infrastructural imaginaries" (Dalakoglou and Kallianos 2018). The relational approach to infrastructure as the "relation between things" highlights the peculiar connectivity that shapes the multi-scalar relations around the pipeline and the relevance of power and finance in organizing the world around the energy infrastructure (Rogers 2012: 291), as well as the forms of its contestation. Situating the case in the debate on the enchantment of infrastructures (Harvey and Knox 2012), I focus on the reversal of development infrastructure into "disenchantment" as an effect of the socio-environmental contradiction generated by capital-intensive oil- and coal-based industrialization.

Finally, Boyer's observation that the scale and ubiquity of infrastructures suggest "a temporality of perdurance" (2014: 174) draws our attention to the relevance of the temporal existence of the pipeline and the social perception of the infrastructure in relation to imagined and desired energy futures. In the current changing scenario, the daunting perspective of the mega-infrastructures of the fossil economy as "stranded assets" has become an integral part of the critique that informs the discourse against gas infrastructures such as the TAP (Re:Common 2014b).

## Part 1: Historical, environmental, ethnographic and political context

### 2. Terra d'Otranto

Conventionally represented as the "heel" of the boot-shaped Italian peninsula, Salento is the southern part of the Apulia (Puglia) administrative region. The Salento peninsula includes the province of Lecce and part of the provinces of Brindisi and Taranto. The latter were established in 1927, acknowledging the growing importance of the two port cities, fully integrated into the South-North railway network in the aftermath of the Italian political unification (1861). Until the 1920s, Salento was enclosed within the boundaries of a single administrative entity, named Terra d'Otranto, of which the historical capital was Lecce. Before the political unification of the peninsula, Terra d'Otranto was an administrative unit of the Kingdom of Naples and later of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies. Therefore, with the gradual redefinition of regional boundaries in the newly created Italian state, Salento survived as a culturally recognizable entity within the emergent administrative structure of Apulia, built upon the backbone of communication and industrial infrastructures.

The history of Terra d'Otranto was marked by its strategic position within the communication networks of ancient Roman domination and the Eastern Roman Empire. Later on, it became a frontier region of the European periphery, intimately connected to the Ottoman lands overseas. The Eastward-looking orientation of Terra d'Otranto, again, made it a suitable destination for the TAP. To a certain extent, the current energy infrastructure effervescence along the SGC adds to a longer history of infrastructure

building, related to movement, trade and power. In the case of Turkey, evoking the ancient Silk Road appealed to the past glories of the Anatolian trade hub along East-West networks (Firat 2016: 85). Likewise, though on a different scale, the Belt and Road Initiative is a massive investment in infrastructure development, which incorporates the ancient Silk Road imaginary into the contemporary Chinese global development strategy. The SGC runs along this ancient artery, while the TAP follows the ancient path of the Roman Via Egnatia, from Dyrrachium (nowadays Dürres, Albania) to Byzantium. It was from Brundisium (Brindisi), at the end of the Roman Appian Way, that ships sailed to Dyrrachium. This fundamental artery of the Roman Empire provided the crucial integration into the wider trade routes from/to Asia, across the Anatolian cities of Sebaste (Ankara) and Theodosiopolis (Erzurum). This latter ancient trade post is now a gas hub in the pipeline networks along the SGC, part of the TANAP (Firat 2016) and BTC pipeline.

The route fell into decay with the gradual shifting of the main trade routes towards the Atlantic. Brindisi and its inland suffered decline most notably exemplified by the obstruction of its port in the 15th century, which was recovered only in the mid-19th century. The Italian political unification created the condition for the integration of the region into the broader commercial infrastructure of the peninsula, together with the Suez Canal construction (1869) that opened new prospects for Adriatic ports. For nearly four decades Brindisi was the intermodal connection of the London-Bombay route. Further developments followed shortly, with the creation of a seaplane base and the operation of the first Italian international flight Brindisi-Athens-Istanbul. The renovated Eastern projection of the area had been in the making since the late decades of the 19th century, seen as a fundamental stepping stone for Italian imperialist aspirations in the Eastern Mediterranean. This was further enhanced by the Fascist regime, which devoted particular attention to recovering the Imperial legacy of ancient Rome in Brindisi, claiming continuities between past and future glories.

## 3. Infrastructural regionalism

Salento holds a distinctive regional identity, not least conveyed through local languages, which include *griko* – a Greek dialect. In 1948, Salento became part of a new administrative entity, Apulia, created with the new Republican constitution, but made effective only in 1970, with the implementation of regional institutions. Until then, the plural form *le Puglie* was commonly used to refer to what was the sum of three different historical regions: Capitanata, Terra di Bari and Terra d'Otranto. These regions underwent a gradual process of regional integration, in which a relevant role was played by infrastructures. The "infrastructural regionalism" (Glass et al. 2019) started with the construction of the railway connecting Bari, Brindisi and Taranto, and culminated in the state-sponsored industrialization process in the late 1950s and 1960s, through the creation of the industrial triangle Bari-Brindisi-Taranto (Pasimeni 2003; Pirro 1983). This was the outcome of a longer historical process aimed at creating the basis for a new regional organization, which entailed the disruption of older territorial hierarchies (Masella 1989). In the case of Salento, the ancient capital Lecce, the centre of land gentry, was gradually marginalized, as it was the southern part of the peninsula, which relied on emigration and the poorly competitive agriculture, mostly based on olive groves, vineyards and tobacco. The subordinate position of this area was also

exemplified by the development of labour-intensive sectors (e.g. garments, shoe factories) as subcontractors of northern Italian firms.

The industrial triangle was organized around the idea of the growth pole strategy, which aimed to trigger the socio-economic transformation of southern regions by localizing industrial complexes in strategic areas. Brindisi and Taranto were targeted by major investments for the construction of the largest Italian petrochemical plant (Brindisi) and the fourth national steel complex (Taranto). The industrialization programme was part of the broader state initiative to "modernize" southern regions, enhancing their integration in the industrial capitalist structure of the country. The 'extraordinary intervention' for the development of the South started in the early 1950s in response to post-war social unrest, initially with the agrarian reform and infrastructure projects, and continued in the 1960s with the direct industrialization programme (Ginsborg 1990; Graziani 1998; Pirro 1983).

Italian economist Augusto Graziani stressed how structural unemployment – "the ancient problem of the Italian economy" (Graziani 1998: 10) – and its potentially disruptive social consequences played a central role in shaping the national political economy. In southern Italy, thus, state-sponsored industrialization was mainly conceived as a coping strategy for mass unemployment. Therefore, the preservation of jobs represented a major issue in the face of deindustrialization, especially in the aftermath of the 1970s oil crisis. In Brindisi, restructuring and downsizing of the petrochemical industry were facilitated by the explosion of the core plant in December 1977, in which three workers died. In the early 1980s, more than 2000 workers were laid off, while the downsizing and restructuring of production lines, through labour-saving technologies, severely reduced job prospects in the sector. To tackle the situation, the central government proposed the localization of two new power plants in the area, as part of the National Energy Plan (1981), a coal-fired power station on the rural outskirts of Brindisi and a nuclear power plant in the province. Only the former was eventually constructed and operated in the early 1990s, while the nuclear power plant was halted by the 1987 national referendum that put an end to the national nuclear energy programme. The choice of Brindisi was also deliberately made on the basis that local populations would have been willing to accept the plant because of the jobs it could bring (Ravenda 2018). The plant construction was carefully planned to mobilize local firms and provide jobs to local workers. However, once the labour-intensive construction phase ended in the early 1990s, unemployment rose again[5].

The power plant marked the shift of the Brindisi industrial economy towards the energy sector. The contentious construction of the power station was followed, in the next decade, by a new industrial project. In 2002, a subsidiary of British Gas (Brindisi LNG Ltd) obtained authorization for the construction of a regasification terminal in the port of Brindisi. The project was opposed by the mobilization of civic and environmental associations, supported by the local government. Interrupted by a corruption scandal in 2007, the project was eventually abandoned in 2012. The making of Brindisi as a gas hub had been drafted for more than a decade in several pipeline projects. However, it was not until the national electricity company Enel announced, in 2017, the power plant conversion to gas that the gas hub project was identified in the

[5] According to the national census, in 1991 unemployment rates reached 30.1% in the province of Brindisi and 32.6% in the province of Lecce, with employment rates at, respectively, 35.4% and 33.6%. According to the 2011 national census, employment rates in both provinces (38.2% and 36.6%, respectively) were still lower than the national rate (45%). Source: ISTAT.

local arena. Consequently, environmentalist struggles against coal burning emissions started to shift towards the gas pipelines.

## 4. The rural background

The contestation of the LNG terminal project made more explicit the LULU framework (locally unwanted land uses) that later extended to the contestation of the gas pipeline (Della Porta et al. 2019). To a certain extent, the conflict around land uses covered a longer time frame starting from farmers' opposition to the construction of the coal-fuelled power plant in the 1980s. The decision to build the power plant in the agricultural areas south of the city was opposed by the farmers, who reacted to the loss (via expropriation) of an extended area of arable land and to the risk of devaluation of the surrounding cultivated land (mostly orchards and vineyards) once the plant started operating. By then, farmers were not only concerned about the power plant but also about a 12 km uncovered conveyor belt built to transport coal from the docks to the energy facility. Frictions between farmers and the electricity company never eased. The conflict escalated with a lawsuit in 2012 against company executives and technicians for the soiling of crops along the conveyor belt (Ravenda 2018: 101–146). The conflict that later erupted around the gas pipeline entailed similar motivations for fear that it would endanger the rural and cultural landscape along the southern coastline. As a matter of fact, attempts to shift the pipeline to the Brindisi industrial area, as proposed by the regional governor and mayors of the province of Lecce, rested on the assumption that Brindisi was "already damaged territory" (Pusceddu 2020: 850), hence preserving the wider area from exposure to new industrial projects.

The overall pipeline infrastructure, running along the Adriatic coast from the TAP PRT in Melendugno to the Snam station on the outskirts of Brindisi, involves several municipalities in the provinces of Lecce (Melendugno, Vernole, Castri di Lecce, Lizzanello, Cavallino, Lecce and Surbo) and Brindisi (Brindisi, San Pietro Vernotico and Torchiarolo)[6], with a total population of around 250,000 inhabitants. This coastal region can be described as a rural-urban continuum, from the industrialized pole of the Brindisi area to the more service- and rural-oriented economies of Lower Salento, characterized by the thick network of towns, villages and hamlets that sprawl around the densely urbanized area of Lecce. Along this continuum, capital-intensive industries coexist with small family farms and the tourist economy along the coast, which has started to boom over the last few decades. The prominent feature of the landscape is the pervasive presence of olive trees, which accounts for around 66% of cultivated land (see Table 1). In some municipalities, olive trees occupy up to 82% of all cultivated land (Melendugno). With the exception of Brindisi, more than 90% of farms in the area are involved in olive oil production. Olive trees are also widely distributed on the highly fragmented model of agriculture and land ownership, largely consisting of small family farms that cultivate privately owned land (see Table 2).

The marking presence of olive groves defines a meaningful feature of the ways in which the local landscape is socially and culturally constructed and experienced. In Salento, as early as the 15th century, olive oil production held a central place in the local economy, especially as an export product for the cotton and wool industry, and it has

[6] See map available at: http://sinva.minambiente.it/mapviewer/index.html?collection=http://sinva.minambiente.it/WMC/Collection/VA/6AE73AA4-E412-43C2-9E57-98C30CDA3664&l=en (accessed 4 October 2021).

increased since then. Despite the pervasive presence of olive groves, the economy revolving around olive oil production has remained mostly artisanal, with few highly industrialized productions. This is also due to the fact that small-scale olive groves have supplemented the basis of diversified household economies. Even the ownership of a few olive trees, fundamental for supplementing the family income and self-provisioning, can explain the kind of affective link to the land that they provide. In addition, olive trees materialize ideas of rootedness and legacy, conjured up by the idea of "the land" (*la terra*), made powerfully present by the analogies of inheritance (of trees) and heritage, which resume the mutual entanglement of livelihood and culture.

**Table 1: Cultivated land and olive trees**

| | Cultivated land (hectares) | Olive trees (%) | Farms with olive trees (%) |
|---|---|---|---|
| Melendugno | 6003.65 | 82.00 | 98.11 |
| Vernole | 3488.05 | 75.00 | 97.51 |
| Cavallino | 1103.59 | 53.91 | 90.32 |
| Lizzanello | 1439.71 | 68.35 | 95.66 |
| Lecce | 10616.63 | 52.00 | 91.71 |
| Surbo | 1199.65 | 64.21 | 93.85 |
| Castri di Lecce | 858.23 | 86.12 | 99.00 |
| Torchiarolo | 1774.93 | 76.16 | 96.55 |
| San Pietro Vernotico | 2795.94 | 41.96 | 91.29 |
| Brindisi | 18162.82 | 20.11 | 58.66 |

Source: ISTAT 2010 (elaboration of the author).

**Table 2: Population and family farms**

| | Population* | Family farms (%) | Cultivating own land (%) | Farms with less than 5 ha (%) | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| | | | | <1 | <2 | <5 |
| Melendugno | 9932 | 98.79 | 79.00 | 45.23 | 72.77 | 91.58 |
| Vernole | 6941 | 98.26 | 86.93 | 39.28 | 64.68 | 87.51 |
| Cavallino | 12586 | 91.39 | 87.36 | 40.32 | 69.08 | 88.97 |
| Lizzanello | 11686 | 96.79 | 90.37 | 96.79 | 71.13 | 90.37 |
| Lecce | 93865 | 96.48 | 84.24 | 96.48 | 58.68 | 84.01 |
| Surbo | 14597 | 97.08 | 85.76 | 97.08 | 60.60 | 86.08 |
| Castri di Lecce | 2805 | 96.71 | 85.91 | 96.71 | 51.50 | 96.53 |
| Torchiarolo | 5258 | 96.98 | 79.11 | 96.98 | 66.57 | 89.23 |
| San Pietro Vernotico | 13295 | 96.39 | 80.18 | 96.39 | 62.01 | 84.68 |
| Brindisi | 84465 | 94.57 | 85.12 | 94.57 | 43.68 | 75.53 |

Source: ISTAT 2010 (elaboration of the author).
* Population recorded at the end of 2019. Source: ISTAT

## 5. A southern European gas hub?

Italy is the third biggest gas consumer in Europe, after Germany and the UK. These three countries consume more than half of the total European gas demand (Jones, Dufour, Gaventa 2015). Italy has also been a gas producer, with appreciable gas fields in the Po valley – where the first Italian extractive industry developed – and in the

southern region of Basilicata. However, nowadays almost all the gas consumed is imported (80%), mostly from Algeria and Russia (60%), but also from Libya, Norway and the Netherlands. For the most part, gas is transported via pipelines, which play a fundamental role in guaranteeing gas provisions but are also becoming highly relevant in influencing energy politics in Europe, as was oil in the aftermath of WWII (Mitchell 2013).

Following the 1973 oil crisis, Italy drafted its first National Energy Plan (PEN – Piano Energetico Nazionale; 1975), intending to gradually replace oil among its energy sources. This plan and others that followed foresaw the expansion of the national nuclear energy programme as the main scenario for the future. In 1987, however, following the Chernobyl nuclear disaster (1986) and the successful campaigning of anti-nuclear movements, a national referendum halted the nuclear energy programme, banning energy production from this source. In 2008, the government, led by Silvio Berlusconi, tried to relaunch the national nuclear energy programme. This attempt was halted by a new referendum in June 2011, which took place a few months after the Fukushima nuclear disaster. Consequently, the government that followed oriented energy politics towards the increase of hydrocarbon explorations and the expansion of gas import infrastructures.

A more focused strategy on gas infrastructure was outlined in the 2013 National Energy Strategy (SEN – Strategia Energetica Nazionale). The SEN 2013 was aimed at tackling the depressive effect of the 2007–08 economic and financial crisis, by foreseeing a central role of the peninsula as a continental entry point for natural gas supplies. The southern European gas hub was one of the seven priorities of the SEN 2013, which had to be attained through full integration into the European grid and market and through the support of new strategic infrastructures that would make the country a fundamental high-added-value service provider and natural gas exporter (Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico 2013: 52–70). This was based on the growth estimate of natural gas demands in Europe, as well as on the EU strategy aiming at diversifying gas supplies, making Italy a potential strategic transit point from North Africa (Algeria and Libya), the Caucasus and the Middle East.

Although the TAP was not mentioned in the SEN 2013, in the same year Italy, Albania and Greece signed the intergovernmental agreement on the TAP. Two years later (20 May 2015), the Minister of Economic Development signed the Decree of Environmental Compatibility and the Single Authorization (a unified permit that includes various permits and authorizations covering all the aspects of the construction and any other consent), thus licensing the beginning of the construction works in May 2016. The SEN 2017, approved by the government led by Filippo Gentiloni, pointed to the TAP as a strategic project, along with the two interconnected pipeline projects IGI Poseidon and Eastmed (Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico and Ministero dell'Ambiente e della Tutela del Territorio e del Mare 2017). The SEN 2017 also reveals the open possibilities that oriented the government strategy. The imperative of diversifying gas supplies, which was less a matter of avoiding Russia than limiting dependence from the northern German gas hub (in fact, supplied by Russia), led the government to pursue IGI Poseidon (Italian-Greece Interconnector), to reach the TurkStream pipeline that will supply gas directly from Russia, across the Black Sea. In early 2020, the government chaired by Giuseppe Conte approved a new document (Ministero dello Sviluppo Economico at al. 2019), which does not substantially alter the previous gas strategy, considered necessary to sustain the coal phase-out, in

combination with the increase of renewable energy productions. Although less explicit about the project of making Italy a southern European gas hub (which is not mentioned at all), this latest policy document does not question the TAP's strategic relevance, hence prolonging the conflict between regional and local authorities opposing the project, and the central national governments.

Despite the high level of administrative decentralization in Italy, which started in the 1990s with the transfer of competencies in various fields to regional institutions, strategic energy issues have firmly remained the central state's prerogative, while regional governments are asked to prove their advisory opinion. The TAP is a telling example of the institutional frictions that energy infrastructures generate (Navach 2016). In 2012, the Apulia regional government issued a first negative opinion on the Environmental Impact Assessment Study, which TAP AG had just submitted to the Ministry of Environment. Early in 2014, the regional government issued a second (and final) negative opinion, at the end of a participatory round of discussions between municipal institutions, local populations, technical experts and company representatives. Notwithstanding the negative opinion of local institutions and populations[7], in September 2014 the Ministry of Environment approved the Environmental Impact Assessment (Valutazione di Impatto Ambientale).

## Part 2: The Mega Project

### 6.1. The Southern Gas Corridor

The SGC is one of the nine priority energy corridors identified by the TEN-E, and one of the four gas corridors[8]. The overall aim of the SGC initiative is to secure natural gas supplies from Caspian and Middle Eastern sources. The changing geopolitics in the post-1989 Caucasus, with the fast penetration of Western corporate powers, can be seen as crucial in setting the premises for the SGC. The Shah Deniz gas field was discovered in 1999 after an agreement on exploration, development and production between the Azeri company Socar and BP. The latter played a significant role in the post-Soviet geopolitical reconfiguration of the area, bringing the Caucasian states into the Western sphere of influence, hence curbing Russian control over the region (Marriott and Minio-Paluello 2013). Historically, the Caspian region has been an area of friction and competition between rival powers such as the Ottoman Empire and Tsarist Russia. Since the late 19th century, the importance of Caspian oilfields has attracted the oil companies of the Nobel brothers and the Rothschilds. British interests in the area were closely related to the strategic relevance of the Caspian oilfields, the "world's most prolific oil region at the start of the [20th] century" (Mitchell 2013: 47), as the great empires started to collapse during and following WWI. Western interests were curtailed by the rise of the Soviet Union as the new regional power. When Azerbaijan and Georgia (ruled by long-standing figures of the Soviet power elite – Heydar Aliyev and Eduard

[7] In 2013, Melendugno town council submitted a counter-report to the Ministry of Environment, expressing a negative assessment of the project. The counter-report was prepared by an interdisciplinary group of experts (Borri and Petrarchi 2013).

[8] The other three are the North–South Interconnection in Western Europe (NSI West Gas), the North-South Interconnection in Central-Eastern and South-Eastern Europe (NSI East Gas), and the Baltic Energy Market Interconnection Plan (BEMIP).

Shevardnadze, respectively) declared independence in 1991, they sought to establish connection with Western powers, on the grounds of their fossil resources potential. This quickly translated into agreements with BP and US corporations for the construction and operation of oil rigs and pipelines.

This is the main framework that opened up the way to natural gas exploration and the subsequent materialization of the SGC pipeline network, along the track of the BTC oil pipeline. The Sangachal Terminal, on the shore of the Caspian Sea, where the gas extracted is pumped into the pipeline, is a telling example of the entanglements of geopolitics, finance and resource politics in the area. The oil and gas processing industrial complex was constructed in 1996–97 as a receiving terminal of the Azeri-Chirag-Guneshili oilfield and, later, of the Shah Deniz gas field. Operated by a BP-led consortium, it plays a crucial role in the geopolitics of the area, being the starting point of both oil and gas corridors supplying Europe (Barry 2013; Marriott and Minio-Paluello 2013). Three pipelines provide the transnational connection of the Caspian gas field to Europe: the SCP (692 km) connects the Sangachal Terminal to the Turkish border station of Türkgözü, via Tbilisi; the TANAP (1,841 km) runs from Türgozü across the Anatolian peninsula to the Greek-Turkish border. In the Greek border town of Kipoi is located the compressor station that connects the TANAP to the TAP.

### 6.2. Trans Adriatic Pipeline

The Greek section of the TAP is the longest (550 km), running from Thrace across the Greek-Macedonian regions to the mountains of the Kastoria area. In south-eastern Albania, where the metering station is located, the pipeline route continues across the mountains to the coastal plains north of Fier, where a compressor station is located 400 m inland from the sea. The Albanian section of the pipeline is 215 km in length plus 37 km offshore in the Adriatic Sea. The total length of the offshore pipeline across the Adriatic Sea is 105 km.

The Italian section is the shortest: 25 km offshore plus 8 km onshore. The offshore pipeline is connected to the final onshore section through a micro-tunnel (1,500 metres, at a depth of 25 m), which starts 800 metres offshore and ends 700 metres onshore. The connection is made near the coastal village of San Foca; from there the pipeline runs 1.5 metres underground to the PRT in Melendugno, where the TAP officially ends. The PRT is connected to the Italian gas grid through a new 55 km interconnector pipeline to the Snam station located in Contrada Matagiola, on the outskirts of Brindisi[9]. The interconnector pipeline is not the only infrastructure under construction that connects to the TAP. The Rete Adriatica (Adriatic Network) pipeline is being built by Snam. Initially planned as a pipeline all along the Adriatic coastline, its route was later changed to pass across the mountain areas of central Italy, infamously known for their seismic activity. Starting from Brindisi, this new pipeline will connect to the compressor station near Sulmona, then to the storage site in Minerbio, near Bologna, and from here to the main storage sites in Lombardy, which will serve as the hub for natural gas export to the rest of continental Europe.

The TAP project was launched in 2003 by the Swiss energy utility EGL (Elektrizitäts-Gesellschaft Laufenburg; then acquired by Axpo, with which it merged in

[9] See: https://va.minambiente.it/en-GB/Oggetti/Info/1579 (accessed 4 October 2021).

2012). In March 2007, TAP AG was officially registered as a company, based in the Swiss town of Baar. In the next two years, a joint venture was formed with the Norwegian oil company Stateoil (Equinor since 2018) and the German E.On. In 2012, the Shah Deniz Consortium chose the TAP project as a priority route to Italy, and later, in June 2013, the consortium chose the TAP as the preferred pipeline project from the Caspian to Europe, hence excluding the main competitor Nabuco. This step contributed to reshaping the shareholding structure of TAP AG. Following up a previous agreement, the Shah Deniz Consortium partners BP, Socar and Total took up equity stakes in TAP AG. Finally, in 2015, Stateoil sold its shares to the Italian Snam, giving to the company its current shareholding profile: BP (20%), Socar (20%), Snam (20%), Fluxys (19%), Enagas (16%) and Axpo (5%). The overall financing of the project (2017) was estimated at 4.5 billion euro, of which 1.5 billion were contributed by the European Investment Bank and 500 million by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development[10].

Construction works officially started in May 2016, with the inauguration ceremony held in Thessaloniki, Greece. In Albania, where infrastructure works had already been set to get underway in July 2015 in order to improve the road network to the construction sites, the inauguration ceremony was held in Fier, in September 2016. No such ceremony took place in Italy, where the construction site was hastily set up in May 2016, to keep up with the official deadlines and authorizations. However, actual works did not start until March 2017, with the uprooting and transfer of 211 olive trees along the pipeline route. Works did not proceed smoothly, as protesters hampered the transfer of olive trees with road blockades and surrounding the fenced areas. This was eventually made possible only by the intervention of police riot squads and the militarization of the area. In November 2017, the prefect of Lecce, in compliance with the government's order, set up a temporary Red Zone (a strictly forbidden area), where the uprooting and transfer of olive trees could take place under the protection of police forces.

In February 2018, TAP AG announced that two-thirds of the pipeline construction had been completed. The announcement came after months of protests in Salento and after several years of repeated administrative actions by the Melendugno town council, which slowed down the construction process, along with the intervention of the judiciary over alleged irregularities in the construction works. In 2012, the attorney of Lecce inquired about the impact of the offshore prospecting operations on the seabed. Earlier on, the Comitato No TAP filed a lawsuit for damages to fishers' nets. In May 2014, the Melendugno town council issued an order to suspend explorative drillings, due to the lack of the necessary authorizations. Invariably, these repeated administrative actions were superseded by superior governmental decisions. A few days after the suspension order was issued by the Melendugno town council, the Ministry of Economic Development signed the Single Authorization. During the same month, the regional government of Apulia lodged a complaint to the Constitutional Court, arguing that the national government had superseded the competences of regional authorities. In

[10] In 2019, TAP AG published the list of commercial banks that finance the project (Gerebizza 2019): Bank of China Limited; BNP Paribas; CaixaBank, S.A.; Crédit Agricole Corporate and Investment Bank; Landesbank Hessen-Thüringen Girozentrale; ING Bank, a branch of ING-DiBa AG; Intesa Sanpaolo S.p.A.; Mizuho Bank, Ltd; MUFG Bank, Ltd; Natixis, London Branch; Siemens Bank GmbH; Société Générale; Standard Chartered Bank; Sumitomo Mitsui Banking Corporation; The Korea Development Bank; UBI Banca S.p.A; UniCredit Bank AG.

all these cases that marked the troubled beginning of the construction phase, the complaints lodged by the municipal and regional authorities were rejected. One of the contentious issues that was raised twice by local town councils regarded the fact that the TAP had not being subjected to Seveso Directive III (which sets the security standards for industrial plants and facilities)[11]. Eventually, the complaint was rejected since Seveso Directive III does not apply to transportation infrastructures, while the gas exhalation of the RTP facility is expected to remain below the law limits.

In January 2020, the last section of the offshore pipeline across the Adriatic Sea started to be placed off the Italian coast. In the meantime, the protests against the pipeline did not cease, extending to the Snam interconnection pipeline between Melendugno and Brindisi. Once more, the uprooting of olive trees along the pipeline route triggered the mobilization of farmers, ordinary citizens and environmental activists. Moreover, along the same route is located the Enel coal-fired power plant, which will be converted to natural gas by 2025 – an undesired conversion for local environmental activists, who demand complete plant dismantling and large-scale investments in renewable energy projects. The conflict around coal, which animated a decade of intense environmental conflict in the region, now shifted to natural gas and its transport infrastructure.

## 7. Contestation and corporate social technologies

The Italian section of the TAP appeared rather problematic, as it was planned in a densely populated area, characterized by a thick historical thread of towns and villages in the province of Lecce and by the industrial area of Brindisi. Consequently, until the final project submitted obtained the positive Environmental Impact Assessment in 2014, the pipeline route underwent various changes. At first, four options in the Brindisi area were taken into consideration. At the very beginning, the pipeline was supposed to land in the coastline platform initially created for the Brindisi LNG terminal, but the tense political climate around this project made TAP AG desist from going ahead. The other options were discarded after technical and environmental assessments. Southward, the pipeline would have affected the *posidonia oceanica* (a seagrass endemic in the Mediterranean Sea), which is a threatened species under special conservation status. The option to lay the pipeline along the industrial area raised safety issues concerning the high industrial risk of petrochemical plants. Finally, northward, the pipeline connection was at odds with the municipal urban development plans and with the presence of the airport (Romano and Zitelli 2017).

In May 2011, TAP AG announced that the pipeline was to be located in the province of Lecce. However, before reaching a final agreement with national authorities, three different projects were submitted in 2012 and 2013. One was rejected by the Ministry of Cultural Heritage, because of the proximity of the PRT to an archaeological site. Eventually, the pipeline project was entirely located in the municipality of Melendugno, including the PRT on a 12-hectare surface area a few

[11] The first Seveso Directive (1982) on industrial hazards was issued by the (then) European Economic Community and named after the Seveso disaster. In July 1976, a chemical manufacturing plant near Seveso (northern Italy) released tons of noxious chemical substances into the air over a large area. In Italy, Seveso III (Directive 2012/18/EU) was absorbed by Legislative Decree N° 105 on 26 June 2015.

kilometres from the town. According to the project, around 1,900 olive trees had to be temporarily uprooted along the pipeline route, to be later replanted, except for a 14-metre-wide stretch of land above the pipeline track. The Ministry of Environment considered this option "the best alternative under every technical, environmental and landscape respect" (Ministero dell'Ambiente 2014).

Contestation around the TAP started as early as 2012. On 16th February, TAP AG organized a public presentation of the project in Melendugno, with the aim of easing the doubts and concerns of the local population. However, instead of earning the population's consent, the pipeline project sparked even more concern. The Melendugno town council issued a resolution that denied any concession and authorization to the TAP, on the basis that the pipeline could harm the "natural resources" – the sea, the landscape, etc. – upon which the local tourist economy was being organized[12]. In April 2012, the Comitato No TAP was officially founded. Earlier, in 2011, as soon as the pipeline project started to be discussed in relation to the Salento coastline, environmental activists, farmers, fishers and other citizens started meeting and inquiring about the project. Later, in 2017, the transfer of 211 olive trees was met by the intense mobilization that led to the birth of the No TAP Movement, which included, besides the Comitato, a broad and heterogeneous network of activists, citizens and spontaneous groups (see Movimento No TAP n.d.; Imperatore 2019). When the uprooting of the trees started, the protesters began undertaking more concrete actions "in place" in order to prevent the operations, which eventually led to the full militarization of the area, clashes with the police and detentions (Papadia 2018; Spagnolo 2017)[13].

In Italy, the TAP, presented as a way to tackle the consequences of the 2008 economic and financial crisis, was the subject of heated debates, making the gas pipeline one of the highly contested mega-infrastructures (*grandi opere*). LULU movements have acquired increasing visibility against "the growth machine" fuelled by public spending cuts and growing territorial competition for the attraction of private investments pursued by the political and entrepreneurial elites (Della Porta et al., 2019: 480–481). The Movimento No TAP considered the pipeline infrastructure damaging (*dannoso*), useless (*inutile*), without benefits and an imposition (*imposto*) on local communities[14]. On top of this, the pipeline construction adds to environmental conflicts in Salento, related to the long-lasting exposure of local populations to air pollution and soil contamination from heavy industries in Brindisi, Taranto and Galatina[15].

In early June 2015, environmental activists from Salento staged a demonstration during the opening ceremony of the Trans-Adriatic Regatta Brindisi-Corfu in Brindisi. The ceremony took place in the most symbolic place in town: at the footsteps of the

[12] The resolution was issued on 29 February 2012. Available at: https://www.comune.melendugno.le.it/media/k2/attachments/8908_5_2012_CC.pdf. (accessed 4 October 2021). Another three town councils (Vernole, Castrì and Caprarica) issued similar resolutions in 2012. Shortly after, TAP AG lodged an appeal to the administrative court, which decided in favour of the company. Later, in 2017, 94 mayors of the Salento area (out of 97) underwrote a document against the TAP, appealing directly to the President of the Republic Sergio Mattarella.

[13] The actions continued in the following months, eventually leading to a large investigation, led by the Public Prosecutor of Lecce, against 46 activists in June 2019.

[14] These three points are summed up a flyer available at: https://www.notap.it/wp-content/uploads/2018/07/3-ragioni-no-tap-per-simone.pdf (accessed 4 October 2021). For a broader illustration of the protest see Movimento No TAP n.d.

[15] The main conflicts are over the coal-fired power station and petrochemical pole in Brindisi, the steel factory in Taranto, nowadays the largest and deadliest in Europe, and the cement factory in Galantina, province of Lecce.

surviving Roman column that marked the end of the ancient Appian Way, overlooking the historical harbour from the top of a monumental staircase. The activists contested the Regatta sponsorship by TAP AG and Enel with the slogan "No dirty sponsors". The local leading group, No al Carbone (No to coal), made its name by staging protests against the Enel power station from 2009, following a long-standing environmentalist tradition that opposed the construction of the power plant in the 1980s (Ravenda 2018). The No al Carbone group denounced the sponsorship of the Regatta as greenwashing over the fossil fuels' damaging effects. Other movements staged demonstrations, including the Comitato No TAP and movements from Taranto.

The episode of the Regatta provides a good illustration of the conflict over corporate attempts to mobilize symbols and meanings to create consent around them. Enel and TAP AG's sponsorship of the Regatta resembles what Douglas Rogers called the "corporate social technologies" (CSTs), which captures "the full range of corporations' direct and planned efforts to shape social and cultural life" (Rogers 2012: 294). The CSTs provide an example of the "mechanisms by which oil and gas participate in the reshaping of political, social and cultural orders" (Rogers 2012: 284). Enel had built its own consensus in the city by sponsoring numerous activities, mostly in sports —from the basketball team playing in the top league to the smallest amateur team. While the sponsoring of the Regatta was nothing but one among many other actions of cultural politics in the city, it also conveyed the idea of Enel's commitment to "clean" energy (the wind). For TAP AG it was a good opportunity to link its name not only to the idea of clean energy but also to that of "connectivity", which lays at the core of the Regatta connecting the Italian and Greek shores of the Adriatic Sea. By entering the sponsorship, TAP AG was trying to play with the positive meanings of the Regatta by building resemblances with the "trans-Adriatic" connectivity of the pipeline.

The composition of the movements protesting against the "dirty sponsors" reflected the territorial scale of the conflicts in which the "local populations" (or the groups that metonymically tended to think of themselves as such) opposed the concentration of heavy industrial plants in this relatively small region. The TAP project was then seen as a further deterioration of this situation and another top-down "imposition" of infrastructure development. Making the Salento area the connecting hub of different gas pipeline projects intensified the industrial hazard related to oil and coal industries, thus triggering the frustration of being a "sacrifice zone" to far distant and dubious interests. The struggle against the TAP, in this respect, is part of a long history of "power struggles" (Franquesa 2018) against large-scale energy production and corporate interests (Pusceddu 2020). The turning point in the struggle against the TAP, conceived as the defence of the land, was the protests against the uprooting of the olive trees.

## 8. Flows of power, roots of resistance

The conflict over mega-infrastructure materializes the power and presence of otherwise abstract concepts like the state, the financial capital and the multinational corporation, thus making visible the tight but hazy connections between global financial flows, geopolitics and energy (Mitchell 2013; Smith-Nonini 2016). If one looks at the pipeline through the eyes of the protesters (Armiero 2008), the TAP conjures up dubious

financial flows[16], suspicious links with organized crime[17] and the extractivist exploitation of the region (Acosta 2019). Before active resistance against the pipeline construction started, the practice and meaning of "defending the land" had already taken the shape of resistance against the uprooting and cutting down of "sick" olive trees during the *Xylella* emergency.

In 2015, environmental activists, farmers and ordinary citizens – the so-called "Popolo degli ulivi" (People of the olive trees) – staged a number of roadblocks between Brindisi and Lecce. They protested against the order of cutting down olive trees within a broad area, which did not spare centuries-old monumental olive trees. The plan was ordered by the special commission appointed for dealing with the *Xylella* emergency. *Xylella fastidiosa* is a bacterium that attacks olive trees causing their quick dieback so that they can no longer produce olives. Moreover, it is transmitted via insects, thus spreading on potentially considerable surfaces. Allegedly, *xylella* reached the Salento olive groves years earlier. As the *xylella* spread, in February 2015 the national government declared a state of emergency. The disease was tackled by combining different measures, from the use of specific plant protection products to the cutting down of trees. The problem is still alarming, according to competent authorities, since there is a risk of affecting the whole of Apulia. To get an idea of the scale of the problem, one should bear in mind that 40% of Italian olive groves are concentrated in Apulia.

The order to cut down all olive trees, including non-infected trees, was therefore met with anger by farmers and local people, developing into a controversial judicial case (Papadia 2018: 6–8). Conspiracy theories about the cutting down of non-infected trees started to appear. Someone suspected that the *xylella* did not exist and had been fabricated to damage the Apulian olive groves, so as to eliminate a powerful competitor in the olive oil market[18]. One of these conspiracy theories had to do with the TAP project[19]. It argued that the areas for which had been ordered the cutting down of trees corresponded to the pipeline route. The cutting down of trees would have saved a lot of work and money for the company, being exempted from the replanting of the uprooted olive trees. Likewise, the uprooting of infected olive trees along the Snam interconnector pipeline construction site remained a contentious issue.

The *Xylella* case has strongly contributed to enhancing the impact of the uprooting of olive trees, turning the defence of the latter into a broader act of defence of "the land" (Di Ronco, Allen-Robertson and South 2019). Against the background of a broader polarization between industrialism and ruralism, the olive trees provided the affective link between the past and the present, between the people and "the land". The material and symbolic place of olive trees in the local history and economy, therefore, makes them a unifying symbol across various environmental struggles – against coal-burning emissions, agrobusiness and energy infrastructures. The practice of hampering the uprooting of olive trees has therefore emerged as a practice of cultural commoning,

[16] See the report of the European Network of Corporate Observatories (ENCO 2019). According to the "Global Laundromat" investigation (Gowland 2017), the SGC was involved in a vast money-laundering scheme.

[17] The expression *mafiodotto* (literally "mafia pipeline") was first used in a report published by the weekly journal *L'Espresso* (Biondani and Sisti 2017).

[18] This was also claimed by Beppe Grillo, founder and leader of the Five Star Movement. See (Scalari 2018), which tracks several conspiracy theories around the *Xylella* emergency.

[19] Conspiracy theories related to the SGC pipeline network were widely reported in Greece during the austerity crisis (Dalakoglou and Kallianos 2018: 80).

transcending land properties and constructing the olive tree as a common social and cultural idiom.

## 9. Rootedness and care

The TAP AG's CSTs were implemented through the "social and environmental investment programme", with the aim of contrasting the critiques about the damaging impact of the project. Several initiatives were financed to enhance the local tourist economy, such as the creation of the TAP Academy to finance free job training courses in the tourist industry (e.g. hotel receptionist or tourist guide)[20]. These initiatives, along with other environmentally friendly programmes such as the reduction of marine litter, tackled the main critique moved to the infrastructure, that it would harm the environment and landscape, thus damaging the developing tourist industry. By doing so, and within the corporate social responsibility paradigm, these CSTs tried to shape the "silence" of gas flows by purporting its compatibility and complementarity with local life and economy. This strategy of minimizing the impact of the infrastructure also relied on the emphasis on its "invisibility", which insisted on the fact that, once completed, the pipeline would remain invisible. The alteration of the landscape caused by the construction works, that is, the excavations and all the necessary operations to lay down the pipes, was claimed as a temporary alteration, which would be quickly recovered at the end of the infrastructure construction. TAP AG made use of every possible means to show that life could flow as ever, along with the silent gas flow from the Caspian Sea.

A contentious issue related to TAP AG's CSTs was the treatment of olive trees, which became the material and symbolic site of resistance against the pipeline. As previously mentioned, the uprooting of olive trees was already a sensitive issue when the pipeline works started, due to the *Xylella* emergency. Later on, the uprooting of olive trees for laying down the pipes created the space for articulating the protesters' counter-discourse that insisted on the "transient qualities of pipeline gas" (Rogers 2020: 290). This discourse is underpinned by the opposition between the transient quality of gas (and the associated speculative movement of financial capital) and the rootedness of olive trees, which conveys a powerful spatial and temporal metaphor of local culture. This general opposition turned the very "invisibility" of the pipeline against TAP AG, thus bringing the silence of the gas flows into a more ambiguous and suspicious light.

Understandably, TAP AG organized a careful campaign for "taking care" of the olive trees, which included the construction of a canopy for protecting the trees from *xylella*, and any other measure in accordance with the competent authorities[21]. Members of the No TAP Movement, on the contrary, reported the complaints by farmers and olive tree owners about the mistreatment, such as excessive pruning that would reduce the productive capacity of the trees. On a more general level, the opposition mentioned above pointed to the fact that the TAP AG's campaign about "taking care of the olive trees" was a way of taking care of local consent around the infrastructure. This triggered other types of polarization between the labour of caring for the trees as a constitutive relation *with* the land and caring for the trees as a transient and opportunistic relation

[20] The three main axes of TAP AG's "social and environmental investment programme" can be found here: https://www.tap-ag.com/sustainability/social-and-environmental-investments/social-and-environmental-investments-in-italy (accessed 4 October 2021).

[21] See the related content on the company website: https://www.tap-ag.com.

*through* the land[22]. In this respect, while the former relation is seen as fertile, in the sense that it gives crops, livelihoods and culture, the latter is seen as a sterile one. The olive trees have become the material and symbolic site of conflict around the persistent socio-environmental crisis of the region, first caused by the oil- and coal-based industrialization, of which the transition to gas is perceived as a metamorphosis. Half a century earlier, in 1960, 20,000 olive trees were uprooted from an area of 600 hectares where the Taranto steel complex was about to rise (Romeo 2019: 89–98).

## 10. Conclusions

This chapter examined the contentious construction of transnational energy infrastructure from the standpoint of its final destination in Italy. Situating the case study in the broader energy politics of the Italian state and the EU, the chapter highlighted the contradictions of European energy policies that aim at the "decarbonization" of the economy, while supporting the long-term construction of new energy mega-infrastructures for fossil fuel transport. The analysis of the TAP shows how such politics are embedded in wider networks of power and technology that unevenly connect finance, states and geographies. This uneven connection is generative of frictions in specific locations unwillingly designated as hubs of transnational power infrastructures. Such frictions also reveal how current energy-driven pro-growth policies exacerbate the historical consequences of top-down industrial development projects and the lasting socio-environmental crisis they have produced. The historically minded analysis of current energy infrastructure construction can help to situate the debate on the enchantment of infrastructures (Harvey and Knox 2012), shedding light on its reversal into "disenchantment" as an effect of the socio-environmental contradiction generated by capital-intensive oil- and coal-based industrialization. Moreover, the analysis illuminates an important aspect of the current energy development in Europe and the above-mentioned contradiction between the climate goal of decarbonization and the heavy reliance on long-term projects of fossil fuel energy supply.

While natural gas provided an important energy resource together with coal and – increasingly – oil in the last century, its political saliency has grown larger over the last few decades, fulfilling the important, and yet gradual, substitutive role in the outlining of the future energy mix. The rise of natural gas as the main resource making up for the decreasing use of coal and oil has been taking place among growing concerns over the environmental impact of fossil fuel use. Nonetheless, natural gas is described as necessary to lead the phasing out of coal and oil and to sustain the expansion and growth of renewable systems of energy production. This peculiar and somewhat redeeming mission of natural gas is shaped by an apparent paradox: on the one hand, the expansion of natural gas supply is aimed at securing and enhancing the political and financial operation of fossil fuel economies (Mitchell 2013); on the other hand, it is reconfigured as a "clean" alternative to coal and oil, through a controversial (and deceitful) resource-making process of "defossilfuelization" – in fact, a massive "greenwashing" operation[23]. The fast-growing investments in natural gas infrastructures,

[22] I thank Susana Narotzky for drawing my attention to this aspect.

[23] On 9 March 2022, the European Commission approved the Complementary Climate Delegated Act, which includes "specific nuclear and gas energy activities" in the EU Taxonomy of environmentally

while driven by complex financial arrangements and investment schemes, rest upon the public claim that natural gas will contribute to building more "clean" energy futures. As such, gas pipeline construction is aimed at fulfilling the promise of prosperity of the fossil fuel economy, while exorcizing its harmful environmental impacts. In the situated context examined in this chapter, the construction of the TAP enshrined the growth discourse of socio-economic prosperity, thereby aiming to reshape past patterns of development enchantment. As I have shown in the previous sections, the ruins of past development projects have fuelled radical disenchantment with large-scale industrial infrastructures, paving the way to open contestation. Materializing the power and presence of otherwise abstract concepts like the state, the financial capital and the multinational corporation, to the eyes of the protesters (Armiero 2008) the pipeline exposes the tight but hazy connections between global financial flows, energy politics and power inequalities (Mitchell 2013; Smith-Nonini 2016).

The social and political relevance of the contestation of the gas pipeline appears to exceed the very material existence and presence of the latter, thus overturning corporate discourses that pledged the peaceful coexistence of ordinary activities – from farming to the growing tourist service industry – with the silent gas flow beneath paradisiac beaches and centuries-old olive groves. As a matter of fact, once the laying down of the pipeline was complete and the replanting of olive trees had started, a relatively narrow security land strip remained to track the existence of the pipeline, albeit with rigorous safety protocols for land users being put in place. Aside from the PRT, built in densely populated areas, the real impact on local properties and land uses appears distant from previous infrastructure projects (e.g. power plants, the petrochemical complex). And yet, throughout the overall process of construction, intense conflicts escalated involving a broad alliance of ordinary citizens, farmers, environmental associations, grass-roots movements and local government. The repressive mechanisms through which state authorities have been tackling popular opposition to the pipeline testify to how the conflict around the infrastructure exposes the uneven connections between energy, power, justice and democracy. In May 2020, two concomitant trials started in the court of Lecce. One trial involved TAP executives and contracting construction firms, with the accusation of environmental crimes committed between 2016 and 2019. These were the construction of the pipeline in protected areas without necessary authorizations and the pollution of water-bearing strata during the construction process. In the other trial, 92 people that organized and participated in the demonstrations against the pipeline were charged with around 70 accusations, referring to protests that took place in 2017 and 2018. In March 2021, the court issued 67 convictions to the protesters, with sentences ranging from six months to more than three years of imprisonment. At the same time, the accused in the other trial benefited from repeated adjournments. It has been noticed how the two trials followed two different paths, one that was unusually fast for the Italian judicial system, the other that is proceeding according to a more relaxed and favourable schedule. The "uneven" timing of the two trials has been understood as the result of different judicial treatment, exacerbating the sense of injustice in the face of the unwanted pipeline construction and the right to oppose it.

sustainable economic activities. See: https://ec.europa.eu/info/publications/220202-sustainable-finance-taxonomy-complementary-climate-delegated-act_en (accessed 30 July 2022).

Pipelines are a landmark of energy modernity and power. Timothy Mitchell (2013) has drawn attention to the importance of pipelines in shaping political and economic relations across vast distances, but also within specific locations and nation states. The reactions to the TAP in Salento provide a prism through which to examine how the legacy of past energy infrastructures in the region interacted with the pipeline construction, and how this interaction shapes the dispute about the future, be it the "preservation of the land" or the expectation of more just and sustainable energy futures (Boyer 2017; Franquesa 2018).

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Re:Common (https://www.recommon.org/)
Trans Adriatic Pipeline (https://www.tap-ag.com/)

**List of abbreviations**

PRT: Pipeline Receiving Terminal
SCP: South Caucasus Pipeline
SGC: Southern Gas Corridor
TAP: Trans Adriatic Pipeline
TANAP: Trans-Anatolian Natural Gas Pipeline
TEN-E: Trans-European Networks for Energy