friends and colleagues are not responsible for any shortcomings in our work may sound rather conventional, our gratitude to them is definitely not. We are also grateful to the publishing press *il Mulino* for granting permission to reproduce materials they originally published (Bianchi and Mormino 1984: 159–60). The Harry Frank Guggenheim Foundation, The Alex von Humboldt Stiftung and the Ministery of the University in Italy provided material support for Donatella della Porta's research activities. Finally, thanks to our translators: Johanna McPake for chapters 1 to 5, and John Donaldson for chapters 6 to 9.

We obviously accept full responsibility for the book as a whole. However, for the record, Mario Diani has written chapters 2 to 5, and Donatella della Porta chapters 6 to 9; the first chapter has been jointly written.

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1 The Study of Social Movements: Collective Behaviour, Rational Actions, Protests and New Conflicts

From the 1960s onwards, social movements, protest actions and, more generally, political organizations unaligned with major political parties or trade unions have become a permanent component of western democracies. There has been considerable fluctuation in the intensity of movement mobilization over this period, as there has been in its degree of radicalism, and in its capacity to influence the political process. However, forecasts that the wave of protest in 1968 would quickly subside, and that 'business as usual', as represented by interest-based politics, organized according to traditional political divisions, would return in its wake, have largely been proved wrong. In different ways, and with a wide range of goals and values, various forms of protest have continued to emerge in recent years (Kriesi et al. 1995). Describing these as 'unconventional' – as observers did originally – is increasingly inappropriate. On the contrary, the mention of a 'movement society', in some interpretations (Neidhardt and Rucht 1991), now seems a plausible, albeit controversial, hypothesis.

In this book we introduce the reader to some of the principal issues raised by the growth of social movements. Although we focus on some of the approaches which have been elaborated since the mid-1970s, the intellectual roots of recent debates (and not only those concerned with collective actors) can be traced to

the 1960s. In fact, the revival of interest in the study of movements, collective action and protest, dates back to that period, and has developed subsequently in the studies discussed in this volume. The movements of 1968 raised, first, questions of a practical nature, relating to the evaluation of emerging forms of social and political participation, and the response to them. These were, in fact, the most widespread mass mobilizations since the 1930s (and the earlier mobilizations were, in many cases, largely antidemocratic in nature). Furthermore, actors engaged in the new conflicts (youth, women, new professional groups and so on) could only partly be characterized in terms of the principal political cleavages of the industrial societies. It was even less appropriate to view these actors in terms of class conflicts, which certainly constituted the principal component of these cleavages.

Movements of that period revealed the difficulties experienced by the two principal theoretical models of interpretation of social conflict – the Marxist model and the structural–functionalist model – in explaining the revival of collective action. Different reactions to these theoretical lacunae developed on each side of the Atlantic. In America, the critique of structural–functionalism emerged within three main perspectives: collective behaviour (in its interactionist version),[1] resource mobilization and political process. From different starting points, each explored the mechanisms which translate various types of structural tension into collective action (the 'how' of collective action: Melucci 1982). In Europe, however, dissatisfaction with Marxism led to the development of the 'new social movements' perspective, concerned with transformations of the structural bases of conflict (the 'why' of action: Melucci 1982). What have conventionally come to be known as the 'American' and the 'European' approaches to the study of movements took shape in this way (Klandermans and Tarrow 1988).

The origins of these developments lie not only in the differences between American and European intellectual traditions – though these are marked. Another factor was the diversity of the objects of study.[2] Although they developed at the same time and were in close contact with each other, student movements at the end of the 1960s and those which followed on from them (from feminist to ecological movements) differed to a certain extent on the two continents. In the United States, organizations born during waves of protest rapidly became pragmatic, and were structured, in most cases, as interest groups (McCarthy and Zald 1987a; Gelb 1989); in contrast, movements which were antagonistic to the system had a strong countercultural character and were – in many cases – explicitly religious in nature (Gerlach and Hine 1970; Roszak 1976; Yinger 1982; Rochford 1985). In Europe, emerging social movements borrowed many characteristics from workers' movements, including a heavy emphasis on ideology (Tarrow 1989a; della Porta 1995).

In this chapter we present the principal analytical perspectives which have given rise to reflection and research into movements and non-institutional collective action since the 1960s. As will become clear from this presentation, these various perspectives are not mutually exclusive but, rather, approach the issue of social movements from different directions. Subsequently, we consider some elements which are useful in defining the concept of social movement in the way it has been employed in sociology and political science. These elements also constitute the basic framework of this book, which is presented at the end of this chapter.

1.1 Theoretical and Research Perspectives on Social Movements[3]

It is possible to identify four currently dominant perspectives in the analysis of collective movements: collective behaviour; resource mobilization; political process; and new social movements. Of course, any attempt to reduce the heterogeneity of positions adopted in a given field of study to a limited number of approaches is subject to a certain unavoidable arbitrariness. Our case is no different. Therefore, before moving on to the analysis of these approaches, three points need to be made. First, these are not homogeneous intellectual currents, and it is possible to distinguish within each a multiplicity of concerns which cannot altogether be assimilated.[4] Second, individual scholars have often borrowed concepts and insights from several theoretical perspectives.[5] Lastly, it is important to bear in mind transformations which have taken place over time in the course of the intellectual development of individual scholars.[6] When we speak of approaches we do not therefore intend to suggest the existence of real 'schools' but rather of a shared attention to a series of theoretical questions which have virtually dominated recent debate. The collective behaviour perspective has drawn the attention of analysts to collective action as an activity concerned with meaning.[7] Resource mobilization stressed the importance of the

rational and strategic components of seemingly irrational phenomena. Questions relating to the importance of the transformations which have occurred in industrial society, and their implications, can be explored through the new social movements approach. The political process approach has focused attention on social movements as new protagonists in the aggregation and representation of different interests.[8]

1.1.1 Collective behaviour as the producer of cultural change

In the 1960s, the structural-functionalist school – and in particular Neil Smelser (1962) who had dedicated considerable attention to collective behaviour – considered social movements to be the side-effects of over-rapid social transformation. According to Smelser, in a system made up of balanced sub-systems, collective behaviour reveals tensions which homoeostatic rebalancing mechanisms cannot, temporarily, absorb. At times of rapid, large-scale transformations, the emergence of collective behaviours – religious cults, secret societies, political sects, economic Utopias – had a double meaning: reflecting on the one hand the inability of institutions and social control mechanisms to reproduce social cohesion; and on the other attempts by society to react to crisis situations through the development of shared beliefs, on which to base new foundations for collective solidarity.

If Smelserian theory represented the most organic formulation of the structural-functionalist approach, other approaches shared his vision of collective action as crisis behaviour. Having reduced collective phenomena to the summary of individual behaviours, psychologically derived theories defined social movements as the manifestation of feelings of deprivation experienced by actors in relation to other social subjects, and of feelings of aggression resulting from a wide range of frustrated expectations. Phenomena such as the rise of Nazism, the American Civil War or the movement of black Americans, for example, were considered to be aggressive reactions resulting either from a rapid and unexpected end to periods of economic well-being and of increased expectations on a worldwide scale; or from status inconsistency mechanisms (Davies 1969; Gurr 1970). From a somewhat different but compatible point of view, the emergence of political extremism was associated with the spread of mass society in which social ties – the family, the community – tended to become fragmented (Kornhauser 1959; Gusfield 1963).

Isolation produced individuals with fewer intellectual, professional and/or political resources, who were particularly vulnerable to the appeal of antidemocractic movements of the right and the left.[9]

As James Coleman recalled (1990: 479), the hypothesis that situations of frustration, rootlessness, deprivation and social crisis automatically produce revolts reduces revolt to an agglomeration of individual behaviours. This perspective ignores the importance of the dynamics by which feelings experienced at the (micro) level of the individual give rise to (macro) phenomena such as social movements or revolutions. There have been numerous responses to these theoretical gaps. The first has developed by symbolic interactionists through the revitalization of the collective behaviour perspective, stating that collective phenomena are not simply the reflection of a social crisis but rather an activity aimed at producing new norms and new solidarities.

Attention to social movements as engines of change, primarily in relation to values systems, began with the work of some scholars of the so-called 'Chicago School', credited with having developed the analysis of collective behaviour as a specialist field within sociology, in the 1920s. The concept of collective *behaviour* – contrasted with that of collective psychology which was then in fashion – indicates the shift of attention from the motivation of individuals to their observable actions (Gallino 1978a). Leading figures in this approach to the study of social movements were Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess and, most importantly, Herbert Blumer. Subsequently, other students of collective behaviour, such as Ralph H. Turner, Lewis M. Killian (Turner and Killian 1987)[10] and Joseph Gusfield (1963), were to make reference to the tenets of the Chicago School, focusing their attention on situations of rapid change in social structures and prescriptions (Blumer 1951). Tendencies towards large-scale organizations, population mobility, technological innovation, mass communications, and the decline of traditional cultural forms were all considered to be emerging conditions pushing individuals to search for new patterns of social organization. Collective behaviour was in fact defined as behaviour concerned with *change* (for example, Blumer 1951: 199), and social movements as both an integral part of the normal functioning of society and the expression of a wider process of transformation.[11]

Rooted in symbolic interactionism, the contemporary school of collective behaviour sees particular relevance in the meaning actors attribute to social structures; and the less structured the

situations faced by the individual, the more relevant this aspect appears to be. When existing systems of meaning do not constitute a sufficient basis for social action, new norms emerge, defining the existing situation as unjust and providing a justification for action (Turner and Killian 1987: 259). As an activity born outside pre-established social definitions, collective behaviour is located beyond cultural norms and ordered social relations. The study of collective behaviour thus concentrates on the transformation of institutional behaviours through the action of emergent normative definitions. These definitions appear when the traditional normative structure comes into conflict with a continually evolving situation.[12] Change, in fact, is conceived of as part of the physiological functioning of the system: social movements are accompanied by the emergence of new rules and norms, and represent attempts to transform existing norms.[13]

The genesis of social movements is in the co-existence of contrasting values systems and of groups in conflict with each other. These are regarded as distinctive parts of social life (Killian 1964: 433). Changes in the social structure and in the normative order are interpreted within a process of cultural evolution through which new ideas emerge in the minds of individuals. When traditional norms no longer succeed in providing a satisfactory structure for behaviour, the individual is forced to challenge the social order through various forms of non-conformity. A social movement develops when a feeling of dissatisfaction spreads, and insufficiently flexible institutions are unable to respond.

The sociology of social movements owes many of its insights to students of the collective behaviour school. For the first time, collective movements are defined as meaningful acts, driving often necessary and beneficial social change. Observations of processes of interaction determined by collective action moreover constitute important foundations for those who, in more recent times, have taken on the task of understanding movement dynamics. The emphasis on empirical research has led to experimentation with new techniques, providing through the field observation method, a valid integration of archive data. Lastly and most significantly, the interactionist version of the theory of collective behaviour has stressed the processes of symbolic production and of construction of identity, both of which are essential components of collective behaviour.[14]

It is necessary to say, however, that especially in the 1950s and 1960s, students of collective behaviour tended to classify under the same heading phenomena as diverse as crowds, movements,

panic, manias, fashions and so on. Two problems arose from this. On the one hand, although many of them defined movements as purposeful phenomena, students of collective behaviour placed more attention on unexpected dynamics – such as circular reactions – rather than on deliberate organizational strategies or, more generally on strategies devised by actors. On the other hand, focusing on the empirical analysis of behaviour, they are often limited to a description – albeit detailed – of reality, without devoting much attention to the structural origins of conflicts which subsequently well up in particular movements. Analyses of collective action as rational conduct address the former problem; and the new social movements deal with the latter.

1.1.2 Collective mobilization as rational action

While the interactionist version of the collective behaviour school emphasized the role of social movements in the construction of new values and meaning, functionalist theories of collective behaviour also came under fire for regarding collective movements as irrational actors, and collective action as the exclusive product of malfunctions of the social system or, more specifically, of its integrative apparatus. Action thus came to be devalued as reactive behaviour, incapable of strategic rationality, isolated from the conflicts it sought to express. In deliberate contrast to this way of conceptualizing social movements, American sociologists initiated, in the 1970s, a current of research centred on the analysis of processes by which the resources necessary for collective action are mobilized. In their view, collective movements constitute an extension of the conventional forms of political action; the actors engage in this act in a rational way, following their interests; organizations and movement 'entrepreneurs' have an essential role in the mobilization of collective resources on which action is founded. Movements are therefore part of the normal political process. Stressing the external obstacles and incentives, numerous pieces of research have examined the variety of resources to be mobilized, the links which social movements have with their allies, the tactics used by society to control or incorporate collective action, and its results. The basic questions which they seek to answer relate to the evaluation of costs and benefits of participation in social movement organizations.

In early theories related to this issue, Mayer Zald (Zald and Ash 1966; McCarthy and Zald 1987a, 1987b), Anthony Oberschall

(1973; 1978) and Charles Tilly (1978) defined collective movement as a rational, purposeful and organized action. Protest actions derive, according to this perspective, from a calculation of the costs and benefits, influenced by the presence of resources – in particular by organization and by the strategic interactions necessary for the development of a social movement. In a historical situation in which feelings of unease, differences of opinion, conflicts of interest and opposing ideologies are always present, the emergence of collective action cannot be explained simply as having been caused by these elements. It is not enough to discover the existence of tensions and structural conflicts, but necessary also to study the conditions which enable discontent to be transformed into mobilization. The capacity for mobilization depends either on the material resources (work, money, concrete benefits, services) or on the non-material resources (authority, moral engagement, faith, friendship) available to the group. These resources are distributed across multiple objectives according to a rational calculation of costs and benefits. Beyond the existence of tensions, mobilization derives from the way in which social movements are able to organize discontent, reduce the costs of action, utilize and create solidarity networks, share incentives among members, and achieve external consensus. The type and nature of the resources available explain the tactical choices made by movements and the consequences of collective action on the social and political system. In the analysis of a group's internal resources, attention has focused above all on forms of organization and mobilization of material and symbolic resources, such as moral engagement (Tillock and Morrison 1979) and solidarity (Fireman and Gamson 1979).

The existence of solidarity networks calls once again into question the hypothesis which was, at the time, widespread, namely, that movement recruits are mainly isolated and rootless individuals who seek to immerse themselves in the mass as a surrogate for their social marginalization. According to rational approaches, mobilization can thus be explained as being more than the gratification of pursuing a collective good; it also promotes the existence of horizontal solidarity links, within the collective, and vertical links, integrating different collectives. On the basis of a wide range of empirical research, one can therefore foresee that 'participants in popular disturbances and activists in opposition organizations will be recruited primarily from previously active and relatively well-integrated individuals within the collectivity, whereas socially isolated, atomized, and uprooted individuals will be underrepresented, at least until the movement has become substantial' (Oberschall 1973: 135).

This leads us to concentrate our attention on the ways in which these collective actors operate, on the methods they adopt to acquire resources and mobilize support, both within and outwith their adherents' group. While viewing collective movements as agents of change, along the lines of the collective behaviour approach, scholars of resource mobilization consider them also to be protagonists in the normal workings of the system. The definition of social movements as conscious actors making *rational choices* is, therefore, among the most important innovations of the resource mobilization approach. This characterization of social movements has, however, been the target of several criticisms. It has been charged with indifference to the structural sources of conflict and the specific stakes for the control of which social actors mobilize (Melucci 1982; Piven and Cloward 1992). Its emphasis on the resources controlled by a few political entrepreneurs, at the cost of overlooking the self-organization potential by the most dispossessed social groups, has also been criticized (Piven and Cloward 1992). Finally, it has been noted that in its explanation of collective action this approach overdoes the rationality of collective action, not taking the role of emotions adequately into account (Marx Ferree 1992; Taylor and Whittier 1995).

1.1.3 Protest and political system

A rational view of collective action is also found in the perspective which we have defined as 'political process'. However, this approach pays more systematic attention to the political and institutional environment in which social movements operate. The central focus of 'political process' theories is the relationship between institutional political actors and protest. In challenging a given political order, social movements interact with actors who enjoy a consolidated position in such an order.[15] The concept which has had the greatest success in defining the properties of the external environment, relevant to the development of social movements is that of 'political opportunity structure'. Peter Eisinger (1973) used this concept in a comparison of the results of protest in different American cities, focusing on the degree of openness (or closedness) of the local political system. Other empirical research indicated important new variables, such as electoral instability (Piven and Cloward 1977), the availability

of influential allies (Gamson 1990 [1975]) and tolerance for protest among the elite (Jenkins and Perrow 1977). Sidney Tarrow integrated these empirical observations into a theoretical framework for his study of protest cycles in Italy, singling out the degree of openness or closure of formal political access, the degree of stability or instability of political alignments, the availability and strategic posture of potential allies (1983: 28) and political conflicts between and within elites (1989a: 35).

To these variables have been added others, relating to the institutional conditions which regulate agenda-setting and decision-making processes. Characteristics relating to the functional division of power and also to geographical decentralization have been analysed in order to understand the origins of protest and the forms it has taken. In general, the aim has been to observe which stable or 'mobile' characteristics of the political system influence the growth of less institutionalized political action in the course of what are defined as protest cycles (Tarrow 1989a), as well as the forms which these actions take in different historical contexts (Tilly 1978). The comparison between different political systems (Kitschelt 1986; della Porta 1995; Kriesi et al. 1995; Rucht 1994) has enabled the central theme of relationships between social movements and the institutional political system to be studied in depth.

The 'political process' approach succeeded in shifting attention towards interactions between new and traditional actors, and between less conventional forms of action and institutionalized systems of interest representation. In this way, it is no longer possible to define movements in a prejudicial sense as phenomena which are, of necessity, marginal and anti-institutional, expressions of disfunctions of the system. A more fruitful route towards the interpretation of the political dimension of contemporary movements has been established.

One should not ignore, however, some persisting areas of difficulty. On the one hand, supporters of this perspective continue to debate delicate problems such as the choice of the most appropriate indicators to measure complex institutional phenomena. On the other hand, this line of thinking has been criticized externally for its tendency to adopt a kind of 'political reductionism' (Melucci 1987, 1989). In effect, theorists of political process have paid little attention to the fact that many contemporary movements (of youth, women, homosexuals or minority ethnic groups) seem to have developed within a political context and in a climate of cultural innovation at the same time (Melucci 1984a; Rupp and Taylor 1987; Canciani and De La Pierre 1993). Lastly – as we have already noted when introducing resource mobilization theories – rationalist approaches to the study of collective action have tended to neglect the structural origins of protest. Other scholars, associated with the new movements approach, have explored this area.

1.1.4 New movements for new conflicts

The response of European social sciences to the rise of the movements of the 1960s and the 1970s was a critique of the Marxist models of interpretation of social conflict. Such models have encountered a number of problems in explaining recent developments. First, the social transformations which occurred after the end of the Second World War put the centrality of the capital–labour conflict into question. The widening of access to higher education or the entry *en masse* of women into the labour market had created new structural possibilities for conflict, and increased the relevance of social stratification criteria – such as gender – which were not based on control of economic resources. Problems posed by Marxist interpretations did not, however, relate only to doubts about the continued existence of the working class in post-industrial society: they concerned also the logic of the explanatory model. The deterministic element of the Marxist tradition – the conviction that the evolution of social and political conflicts was conditioned largely by the level of development of productive forces and by the dynamic of class relations – was rejected, as was the tendency, particularly strong among orthodox Marxists, to deny the multiplicity of concerns and conflicts within real movements, and to construct, in preference, outlandish images of movements as homogeneous actors with a high level of strategic ability (for a critique: Touraine 1977, 1981). Certainly, scholars of the new movements were not the only ones to be aware of these problems. The same difficulties had been raised by those who had studied class action from a non-economistic position, when considering an 'old' class actor such as the workers' movement (Thompson 1963). Nevertheless, scholars associated with the 'new social movements'[16] made a decisive contribution to the development of the discussion of these issues.

Scholars of new movements agreed that conflict among the industrial classes is of decreasing relevance, and similarly that representation of movements as largely homogeneous subjects

is no longer feasible. However, there were differences of emphasis in relation to the possibility of identifying the new central conflict which would characterise the model of the emerging society, defined at times as 'post-industrial', 'post-Fordist', 'technocratic' or 'programmed'. An influential exponent of this approach, Alain Touraine, was the most explicit in upholding this position: 'Social movements are not a marginal rejection of order, they are the central forces fighting one against the other to control the production of society by itself and the action of classes for the shaping of historicity' (Touraine 1981: 29). In the industrial society, the ruling class and the popular class oppose each other, as they did in the agrarian and the mercantile societies, and as they will do, according to Touraine, in the programmed society, where new social classes will replace capitalists and the working class as the central actors of the conflict.[17]

The break between movements of the industrial society and new movements was also stressed in the 1980s by the German sociologist Claus Offe (1985). In his view, movements develop a fundamental, metapolitical critique of the social order and of representative democracy, challenging institutional assumptions regarding conventional ways of 'doing politics', in the name of a radical democracy. Among the principal innovations of the new movements, in contrast with the workers' movement, are a critical ideology in relation to modernism and progress; decentralized and participatory organizational structures; defence of interpersonal solidarity against the great bureaucracies; and the reclamation of autonomous spaces, rather than material advantages. New social movements are characterized, in Offe's view, by an open, fluid organization, an inclusive and non-ideological participation, and greater attention to social than to economic transformations.

Another contribution to the definition of the characteristics of new movements in the programmed society has been made by Alberto Melucci (1982, 1989, 1996). Drawing upon the image proposed by Jürgen Habermas of a colonization of lifeworlds, Melucci described contemporary societies as highly differentiated systems, which invest increasingly in the creation of individual autonomous centres of action, at the same time as requiring closer integration, extending control over the motives for human action. In his view, new social movements try to oppose the intrusion of the state and the market into social life, reclaiming the individual's identity, and the right to determine his or her private and affective life, against the omnipresent and comprehensive manipulation of the system. Unlike the workers' movement, new social movements do not, in Melucci's view, limit themselves to seeking material gain, but challenge the diffuse notions of politics and of society themselves. New actors do not, therefore, ask for an increase in state intervention, to guarantee security and well-being, but resist the expansion of political-administrative intervention in daily life and defend personal autonomy.

This approach has several merits. First, it draws attention to the structural determinants of protest, re-evaluating the importance of conflict. Compared with Marxism, the theoreticians of new social movements have two specific advantages: they place importance once again on the actor; and they have the ability to capture the innovative characteristics of movements which no longer define themselves principally in relation to the system of production. Nor should the existence of the notable area of research largely inspired by their original hypotheses be ignored (Maheu 1995). The main problem which this approach leaves unresolved is the analysis of mechanisms which lead from conflict to action (with the exception of Melucci's work: 1984a, 1988, 1996). Furthermore, there is the risk of positing certain coincidental traits – in particular the illustration of novel elements among actors in new collective movements – as absolutes.[18] This has been a particularly strong element of the critique put forward by those who have studied social movements primarily as political processes (Rootes 1992; Rüdig 1990; Koopmans 1995; Tarrow 1994; della Porta 1996a: ch. 1).

1.2 What are Social Movements? Towards the Integration of the European and American Traditions[19]

Stimulated by empirical phenomena which were not homogeneous, the four perspectives discussed above have boosted research on social movements. If, at the end of the 1940s the 'crudely descriptive level of understanding and a relative lack of theory' (Strauss 1947: 352) was criticized, and, in the 1960s, the fact that 'in the study of social changes, social movements have received relatively little emphasis' (Killian 1964: 426) was a matter for complaint, by the mid-1970s, research into collective action was considered rather to be 'one of the most vigorous areas of sociology' (Marx and Wood 1975). At the end of the 1980s, commentators talked of 'an explosion, in the last ten years, of theoretical and empirical writings on social movements and collective

action', underlining the way in which 'these writings have stimulated debate, a new school of thought, defence of old schools of thought and a deepening theoretical awareness. Furthermore, important research into social movements has been carried out by various disciplines, including sociology, political science, history, economics and communication sciences' (Morris and Herring 1987: 138; see also Rucht 1991a).

The expansion of the field of study has corresponded with an intensification in contacts between American and European scholars. Opportunities to compare the merits and the limitations of the various paradigms have increased, and attempts to meld different theoretic perspectives into a new synthesis have multiplied (Klandermans et al. 1988; Eyerman and Jamison 1991; Tarrow 1994; Melucci 1996; for a sceptical view, Cohen 1985). If it is still premature to speak of an integrated theory of social movements, it is, however, possible to note that scholars from varying theoretical and territorial backgrounds, share a concern for at least four characteristic aspects of movements:

1 *Informal interaction networks.* Movements may be conceived of as informal interaction networks between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations. The characteristics of these networks may range from the very loose and dispersed links described by Gerlach and Hine (1970) in their seminal book, to the tightly clustered networks which facilitate adhesion to terrorist organizations (della Porta 1988). Such networks promote the circulation of essential resources for action (information, expertise, material resources) as well as of broader systems of meaning. Thus, networks contribute both to creating the preconditions for mobilization and to providing the proper setting for the elaboration of specific world views and lifestyles.

2 *Shared beliefs and solidarity.* To be considered a social movement, an interacting collectivity requires a shared set of beliefs and a sense of belonging. Indeed, social movements condition and help constitute both new orientations on existing issues and also the rise of new public issues, in so far as they contribute to 'the existence of a vocabulary and an opening of ideas and actions which in the past was either unknown or unthinkable' (Gusfield 1981: 325). The process of symbolic redefinition of what is real and what is possible is linked to the emergence of collective identities, as a shared definition of a collective actor. Because of the development of collective representation and shared feelings, it has become clear that 'elements which have all been present for some time, without, however, having been combined, suddenly become part of a well-integrated movement' (Kriesi 1988a: 367).[20] New collective identities and value systems may persist even when public activities, demonstrations and the like are not taking place, thus providing some continuity for the movement over time (Melucci 1989; Turner and Killian 1987).

3 *Collective action focusing on conflicts.* Social movement actors are engaged in political and/or cultural conflicts, meant to promote or oppose social change at either the systemic or non-systemic level. By conflict we mean an oppositional relationship between actors who seek control of the same stake. In order for social conflict to occur, it is necessary, first, that this is defined as a shared field, with actors who perceive each other as different, but who, at the same time, are linked by reference to interests and values which both sides see as important, or as high stakes desired by two or more adversaries (Touraine 1981: 80–4). Furthermore, it is necessary that interaction should lead, on the part of each of the actors involved, to negative claims, or demands which, if realized, would damage the interests of the other actors, not to mention threats of sanctions explicitly directed at the latter.

4 *Use of protest.* Until the early 1970s debates on social movements were dominated by considerable emphasis on the non-institutionalized nature of their behaviour (Alberoni 1984). Even now, the idea that social movements may be distinguished from other political actors because of their adoption of 'unusual' patterns of political behaviour is still very popular. Several scholars maintain that the fundamental distinction between movements and other social and political actors is to be found in the contrast between conventional styles of political participation (such as voting or lobbying political representatives) and public protest (Rucht 1990a). Although public protest plays only a marginal role in movements concerned with personal and cultural change, it is undoubtedly a distinctive feature of political movements, on which we shall largely focus in this book. It is more debatable, perhaps, whether protest can still be considered an 'unconventional' activity, rather than explicitly violent or 'confrontational'. Effectively, various forms of political protest have become, to an increasing degree, part of the consolidated repertoire of collective action, at least in western democracies. Nor does it seem possible to consider violence as a distinctive trait of movements taken as a whole. It seems more useful, rather, to look at the relevance of violent and radical tactics in order to differentiate between different types of movement or different phases in the life of one movement.

The categories which we have just reviewed can help us to define the field of phenomena which we intend to consider in this book. We will consider social movements – and, in particular, their political component – as (1) informal networks, based (2) on shared beliefs and solidarity, which mobilize about (3) conflictual issues, through (4) the frequent use of various forms of protest. These elements will enable us to distinguish social movements from various forms of collective action which are more structured and which take on the form of parties, interest groups or religious sects, as well as single protest events or ad hoc political coalitions.

1.2.1 Social movements versus political or religious organizations

Social movements, political parties and interest groups are often compared with each other, on the assumption that they all embody different styles of political organization (for example, Wilson 1973). At times, they are identified with religious sects and cults (for example, Robbins 1988). However, if the definition we propose here is correct, the difference between social movements and these and other organizations does not consist primarily of differences in organizational characteristics or patterns of behaviour, but of the fact that social movements are not organizations, not even of a peculiar kind (Tilly 1988 and Oliver 1989). They are networks of interaction between different actors which may either include formal organizations or not, depending on shifting circumstances. As a consequence, a single organization, whatever its dominant traits, is not a social movement. Of course it may be part of one, but the two are not identical, as they reflect different organizational principles.

Indeed, many influential scholars in the field continue to use the term 'social movement' to mean both networks of interaction and specific organizations: citizens' rights groups like Common Cause, environmental organizations like the Sierra Club, or even religious sects like Nichiren Shoshu (McAdam et al. 1988: 695). Yet, this overlap is a source of analytical confusion, in so far as it fosters the application to social movement analysis of concepts borrowed from organizational theory, concepts that only partially fit the looser structure of social movements. As Pamela Oliver puts it: 'all too often we speak of movement strategy, tactics, leadership, membership, recruitment, division of labor, success and failure – terms which strictly apply only to coherent decision-making entities (that is, organizations or groups), not to crowds, collectivities, or whole social movements' (1989: 4).

Talking of Common Cause or the Sierra Club or Nichiren Shoshu as 'social movements' leads one to formulate concepts like 'professional social movement' (McCarthy and Zald 1987a) or 'single-organization movements' (Turner and Killian 1987: 369–70) to emphasize the obvious differences between these cases and the nature of social movements as informal networks. But qualifying Common Cause as a 'professional social movement' does not add very much to the understanding of it, that cannot be provided by concepts like 'public interest group' (see, among others, Etzioni 1985). Similarly, a religious organization like Nichiren Shoshu or Hare Krishna may be conveniently analysed as a 'sect'. This concept takes into account the greater organizational rigidity and the more hierarchical structure that these organizations display by comparison with social movement networks (see Robbins 1988: 150–5). It also recognizes the higher degree of social control that is exerted over members. In contrast, what both 'public interest group' and 'sect' do not really capture are the interaction processes through which actors with different identities and orientations come to elaborate a shared system of beliefs and a sense of belonging, which exceeds by far the boundaries of any single group or organization, while maintaining at the same time their specificity and distinctive traits.

The instability of the relationship between organizational and movement identities means that movements are by definition fluid phenomena. In the formation and consolidation phases, a sense of collective belonging prevails on links of solidarity and loyalty which can exist between individuals and specific groups or associations. A movement tends to burn out when organizational identities come to dominate once more, or when 'feeling part of it' refers primarily to one's organization and its components, rather than to a broader collective with blurred boundaries.

To shift the emphasis from single organizations to informal networks allows us, furthermore, to appreciate more fully the space reserved for individuals within movements. Individual participation is essential for movements, and one of their characteristics is, indeed, the sense of being involved in a collective endeavour – without having automatically to belong to a specific organization. Strictly speaking, social movements do not have members, but participants.[21] The participation of the individual, detached from specific organizational allegiances is not necessarily limited to single protest events. It can also develop within

committees or working groups, or else in public meetings.[22] Alternatively (when the possibility arises) one may support a movement by promoting its ideas and its point of view among institutions, other political actors, or the media. However, the existence of a range of possible ways of becoming involved means that the membership of movements can never be reduced to a single act of adhesion. It consists, rather, of a series of differentiated acts, which, taken together, reinforce the feeling of belonging and of identity (see also Gusfield 1994: 62).

If we accept that social movements are analytically different from social movement organizations we have also to redefine our notion of what is part and what is not part of a movement. Indeed, any organization which fulfils the requirements we have indicated (interactions with other actors, conflict, collective identity, and recourse to protest) may be considered part of a given movement. This may also hold for bureaucratic interest groups, and even political parties. By saying that political parties may be part of social movements we do not mean to suggest that 'social movements' is a broader theoretical category in which several type of organizations (interest groups, community groups, political parties and so forth) are represented as many sub-types. Rather, we suggest that under certain and specific conditions some political party may feel itself to be part of a movement and be recognized as such both by other actors in the movement and by the general public. This is likely to be the exception rather than the rule, and to be largely restricted to parties whose origins lie in social movements, such as the green parties (Kitschelt 1989; Richardson and Rootes 1994).

One could reasonably object that no matter how strong their identification with a movement, political parties actually perform specific functions at the level of interest representation and in this sense are different from social movements. That differences exist at the functional level is beyond question. Yet, the main peculiarity of social movements does not consist of their specific way of performing the function of interest representation. Of course, their networks of interaction favour the formulation of demands, the promotion of mobilization campaigns and the elaboration and diffusion of beliefs and collective identities. These factors all, in turn, contribute to redefining the cultural and political setting in which the action of interest representation takes place. However, when we focus on the function of interest representation in strict terms, we do not look at the way 'the movement' performs this function. We look at the way different

specific social movement organizations do this. Whether or not they decide to include participation in elections within their repertoire of action is dependent upon several factors including external opportunities, tactical and/or ideological considerations and their links to other actors in the movement. The mere fact that they decide to do so, however, will not automatically exclude them from the movement. Rather, they will be part of two different systems of action (the party system and the social movement system), where they will play different roles. The way such roles are actually shaped will constitute a crucial area of investigation (Kitschelt 1989).

1.2.2 Social movements, protest events, coalitions

If social movements do not coincide with organizations, neither do they coincide with other types of informal interaction. In particular, social movements differ from both loosely structured protest events and political coalitions. Under what conditions may a protest against the construction of a motorway run by informal citizens' action groups, a 'wildcat' strike for higher wages in a firm or a demonstration for better nursing facilities in a neighbourhood be considered part of a social movement? And when are they merely simple, isolated 'protest events'?

The aspect which enables us to discriminate is the presence of a vision of the world and of a collective identity which permit participants in various protest events to place their action in a wider perspective. In order to be able to speak of social movements it is necessary that single episodes are perceived as components of a longer-lasting action, rather than discrete events; and that those who are engaged feel linked by ties of solidarity and of ideal communion with protagonists of other analogous mobilizations. The course of the movement for the control of toxic waste in the United States provides a good example of the importance of cultural and symbolic elaboration in the evolution of collective action. From a series of initiatives which developed from a local base and in relation to specific goals such as blocking the construction of waste disposal plants in particular areas, the movement gradually developed into a collective force with a national base, concerned with numerous aspects of the relationship between nature and society, and with a much more sophisticated cultural elaboration (Szasz 1994: 69–99).

The presence of identities also means that a sense of collective belonging can be maintained even after a specific initiative or a

particular campaign has come to an end. The persistence of these feelings will have at least two important consequences. First, it will make the revival of mobilization in relation to the same goals easier, whenever favourable conditions recur. Movements often oscillate between brief phases of intense public activity and long 'latent' periods (Melucci 1984b; Taylor 1989), in which activities involving inner reflection and intellectual development prevail. Ties of faith and solidarity activated in the European anti-nuclear movements during the mobilizations of the second half of the 1970s, for example, represented the base on which a new wave of protests gathered momentum in the wake of the Chernobyl incident in 1986 (Flam 1994d). Second, representations of the world and collective identities which developed in a certain period can also facilitate, through a gradual transformation, the development of new movements and new solidarities. For example, the close relationship existing in several countries between movements of the new left of the early 1970s and successive political ecology movements has been noted on a number of occasions (Diani 1988, 1995a; Dalton 1994).

Reference to other examples of informal networks of collective action, such as coalitions,[23] clarifies why collective identity is such a crucial feature of social movements. Coalitions share some features with social movements, in so far as they imply the existence of conflict and of collective activity. However, interaction and coordination between different actors occur mostly at an instrumental level, as actors try to maximize their outcomes by establishing alliances with other actors. In contrast to social movements,[24] interaction in coalitions does not result necessarily in the emergence of collective identities, nor does it imply necessarily any sort of continuity beyond the limits of the specific conflictual situation, let alone a global redefinition of the issues at stake. For these reasons, it is impossible to reduce movements to purely instrumental coalitions (Pakulski 1988).

Industrial action in countries like Italy, where there are several competing trade unions, illustrates the point well. The defence of workers' interests is usually undertaken by single organizations, which may or may not form alliances, but which, fundamentally, maintain unchanged their own identities. These identities have priority over identification with a broader workers' movement. For several years after 1968, however, the sense of belonging to the new workers' movement became more important than pre-existing loyalties to specific organizations (Pizzorno et al. 1978; Regalia et al. 1978).

1.3 The Structure of This Book

In this chapter we have, first of all, briefly presented the main issues explored in four theoretical perspectives which developed (or emerged) from the 1960s onwards in response to the deficiencies of the Marxist and functionalist traditions: the reformulation of the 'collective behaviour' approach in an interactionist perspective; the rationalist line, concentrating on a vision of collective action as strategic action; the perspective of the 'new social movements'; and the approach which focuses on political process. In these theoretical perspectives we have then tried to trace elements which are useful in defining the specificity of social movements in relation to other more or less structured forms of collective action. We have then identified four levels of analysis which we hold to be fundamental for the study of movements: the conflicts of which they are protagonists, and their structural bases; the production of shared beliefs and collective identities; organizations and social networks; and political opportunities for protest to develop. The structure of this book reflects our interest in these processes.

In speaking of the structural bases of contemporary movements we refer, on the one hand, to mechanisms by which new social groups and new interests take shape, while other groups and interests which previously held centre stage see their relevance declining; and on the other, to the impact which structural changes such as the growth of public welfare and the expansion of higher education have on forms of political participation and, in particular, on non-institutional participation. In the next chapter, we will discuss a few interpretations of recent changes in forms of social conflict.

There follow two chapters dedicated to symbolic production. Chapter 3 shows how cultural elaboration facilitates the definition of social problems as the product of asymmetries of power and conflicts of interest, and the identification of their causes in social and political factors which are subject to human intervention. In the fourth chapter, we show how the creation and reinforcement of symbols represents also the base for the development of feelings of identity and solidarity, without which collective action cannot take place.

A third important level of analysis consists of organizational factors which allow both the production of meaning and the mobilization of resources necessary for action. We take into consideration both informal networking and the more structured