

# ITS12 – Social movements

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## 1. Social movements: definition, methods and research questions

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### A. Social movements as a sociological object

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- A field of sociology that developed in the context of the social movements of the 1960s (civil rights, women, students, environmental, LGBT)
  - 2 definitions of social movements
    - « organized efforts to promote or resist change in society that rely, at least in part, on noninstitutionalized forms of political action » (Marx and McAdam, 1994)
    - « a network of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in a political or cultural conflict, on the basis of a shared collective identity » (Diani, 2000)
- (quoted by Dobratz et al., 2012, p.270)
- key stakes =
- Social change
  - Organization
  - Politics
  - Institutional vs non-institutional (conventional/unconventional) modes of action
  - Conflict
  - Identity

### B. How do sociologists study social movements?

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- What do sociologists study when they study social movements?
  - Individuals
  - Organizations
  - Protest events
  - Modes of action
  - Ideologies
  - Themes of protest
  - Impact on public policy, institutions, culture and social relations
- How does one empirically grasp social movements?
  - Direct observation
  - Archive analysis
  - Semi-structured interviews with activists
  - Quantitative surveys
  - Press coverage

### C. Main research questions (Goodwin and Jasper, 2009)

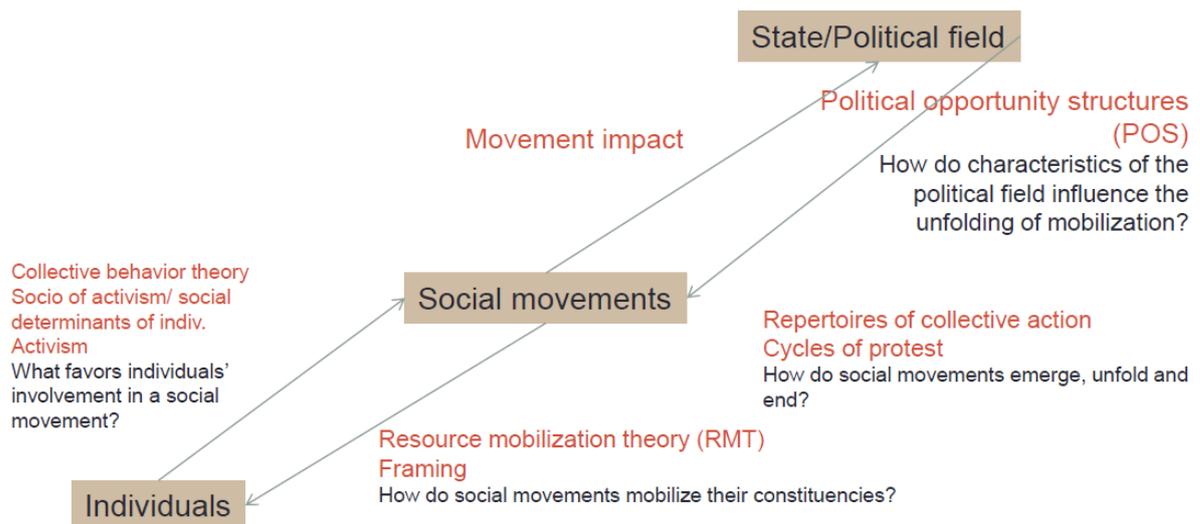
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- When and why do social movements occur?
- Who joins or supports movements?
- Who remains in movements, and who drops out?
- What do movement participants think and feel?

- How are movements organized?
- What do movements do?
- How do institutions influence movements?
- Why do movements decline?
- What changes do movements bring about?

## D. A map of questions and theoretical frames

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## 2. From cognition to organizations

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### A. Why men rebel? Collective action as a result of relative deprivation

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Early analyses of collective behavior as irrational: Le Bon's *Psychologie des foules* (*The Crowd: A Study of the Popular Mind* (1896)) → crowds drive individuals away from rational behavior

Vs Collective behavior theories (Gurr, 1970; Turner and Killian, 1972) :

- A focus on grievances and beliefs as a condition for collective action.
- These grievances and beliefs are explained by structural conditions

Ex. T.Gurr, *Why men rebel?* (1970) :

Collective action as a result of relative deprivation (discrepancy between what one can attain and what one thinks they are entitled to)

### B. Resource mobilization theory

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What is at stake?

- Showing the **rationality** of social movements, against a view of collective action as irrational, unpredictable behavior (such as in Le Bon's *Psychologie des foules*)
- Stressing the role of **organizations and resources** in the development of social movements, as opposed to grievances or relative deprivation (which were the focus of collective behavior theories : Gurr, 1970; Turner and Killian, 1972)

- Drawing on neoclassical economics to analyze individual involvement in collective action (Olson, 1965)
- Seeing social movements as an organizational reality (Zald and McCarthy, 1987, 1988)

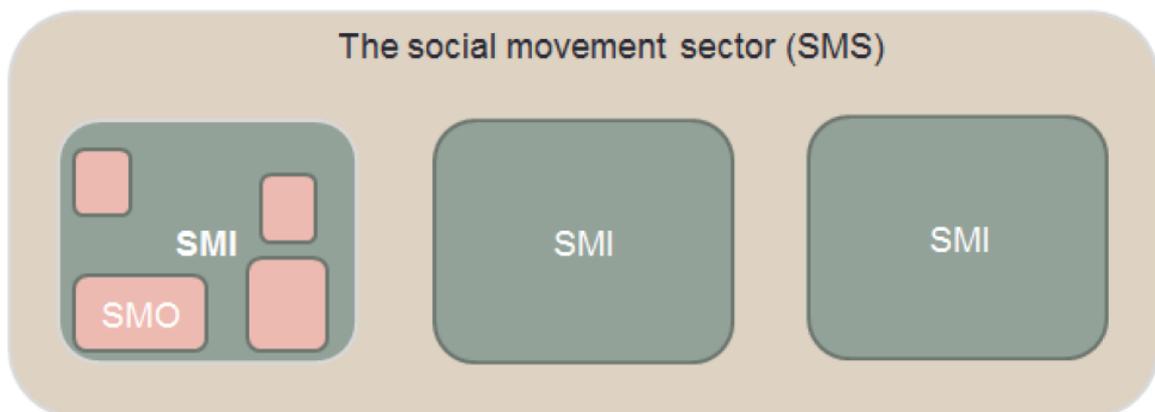
a) Why people shouldn't rebel: M. Olson, *The logic of collective action* (1965)

- Rational choice theory
- Collective *interest* does not necessarily lead to collective *action*
- Indeed, when one can benefit from the outcome of the collective action without taking part in it (*public good*), for each individual it is more rational *not* to take part in collective action (*free-rider*) → hence how is collective action possible?
- Constraints and incentives

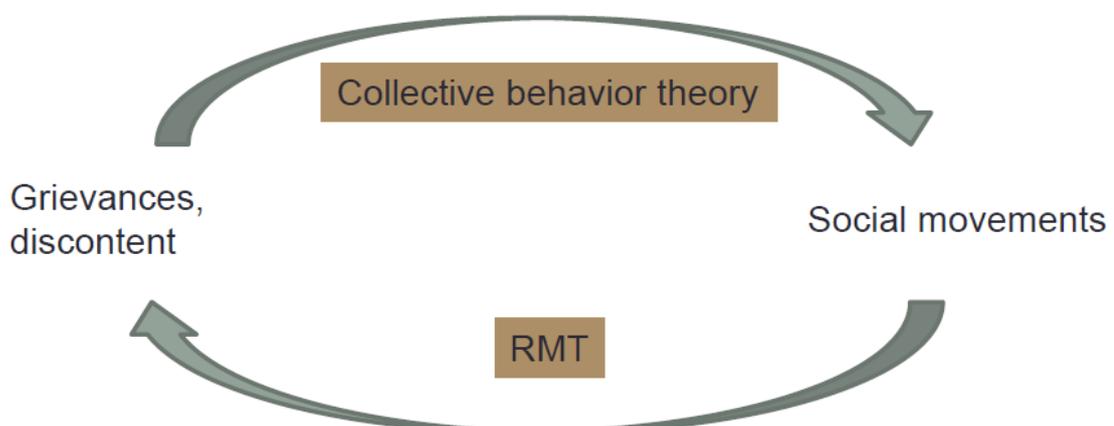
b) How organizations help explain why they do

J. McCarthy and M. Zald (1977): an organizational perspective on social movements

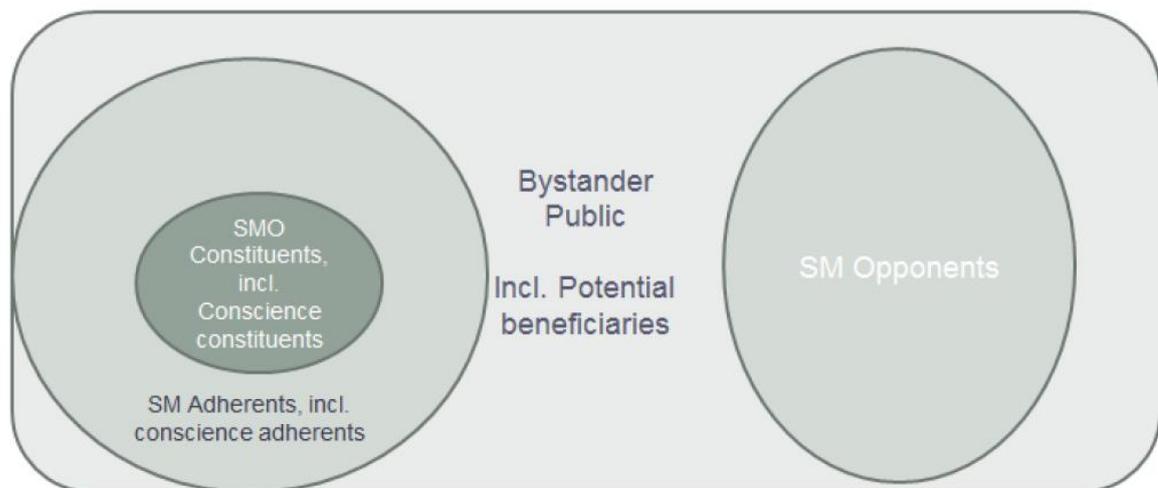
- Focus on «social movement organizations» (SMOs), that constitute a «social movement industry» (SMI). The «social movement sector» (SMS) is made of all social movements in a given society.
- A SMO is «a complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals» (McCarthy and Zald, 1977, p.1218)



« Grievances and discontent may be defined, created, and manipulated by issue entrepreneurs and organizations» (ibid, p.1215)



- Resources mobilized by SMOs: time, labor, money,
- Focus on the strategies and tactics of social movement organizations:
  - « [...] SMOs have a number of strategic tasks. These include mobilizing supporters, neutralizing and/or transforming mass and elite publics into sympathizers, achieving change in targets. Dilemmas occur in the choice of tactics, since what may achieve one aim may conflict with behavior aimed at achieving another. Moreover, tactics are influenced by interorganizational competition and cooperation » (McCarthy and Zald, 1977, p.1217).
- Categories of individuals and organizations as seen by SMOs:
  - Adherents: those « that believe in the goals of the movement » (as opposed to opponents and bystander public)
  - Constituents: those « providing resources for it »
  - « conscience » adherents and constituents : do not benefit directly from SMO goal accomplishment



### C. Beyond organizations: social movement communities

- Based on studies of the US women's movement (Buechler, 1990; Taylor and Whittier, 1992, Staggenborg, 1998)
  - Expanding the range of mobilizing structures beyond formal organizations (ex. informal networks of activists)
  - Extending the definition of social movements to organizations whose primary focus is not political action (ex. health center, bookshop, music festival...) → SMCs as « abbeyance structures » in between two waves of mobilization (Taylor, 1989)

### 3. From organizations to cognition: framing processes

- Drawing on E.Goffman's concept of frame (cognitive « schemata of interpretation »)
  - « By rendering events or occurrences meaningful, frames function to organize experience and guide action, whether individual or collective » (Snow et al., 1986, p.464).

**Frame alignment** = « the linkage of individual and SMO interpretive orientations, such that some sets of individual interests, values and beliefs and SMO activities, goals, and ideology are congruent and complementary. [...] So conceptualized, it follows that frame

alignment is a necessary condition for movement participation, whatever its nature or intensity » (ibid.).

- The interactive and communicative processes involved in the mobilization of a SMO's target groups by means of frame alignment: « micromobilization processes »

#### 4 types of frame alignment processes:

- Frame bridging
- Frame amplification (value amplification and belief amplification)
- Frame extension
- Frame transformation

Left : An example of frame extension in the promotion of universal access by a French disability rights organization

APF:

<http://www.apf.asso.fr/pdf/Documents%20sites%20APF/Campagneapf2013/Affiche%20A3%202%20Mo%20max.jpg>



VOTRE DON,  
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Right : An example of frame transformation, in the context of mobilizations in favor of same-sex marriage and parenthood in France

Source : <http://www.affichespourtous.fr/>

## 4. Social movements in their political context

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### A. Repertoires of collective action (Tilly, 1981)

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State formation and the transformation of the modes of collective action of protest groups

→ « [...] the notion of repertoire states a model in which the accumulated experience [...] of contenders interacts with the strategies of authorities to make a limited number of forms of

action more feasible, attractive, and frequent than many others which could, in principle, serve the same interests » (Tilly, 1981, p.9-10)

- XVIIth century repertoire: « parochial and patronized »: riots, invasions of forbidden fields and forrests, destruction of machines, expulsions of tax officials...
- XIXth century repertoire: « national and autonomous »: strikes, demonstrations, public meetings, petition marches

## B. Political opportunity structures

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- POS refers to the political constraints and opportunities that characterize the context in which social movements are embedded
- 4 dimensions (McAdam, 1996):
  - The relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system
  - The stability or instability of elite alignments
  - The presence or absence of elite allies
  - The state's capacity and propension for repression
- Historical vs comparative uses of the concept
  - Historical use: McAdam (1982) and Tarrow (1989) on the influence of changing political opportunities on the cycle of protest
  - Comparative : ex. Kitschelt (1986) on antinuclear movements in 4 countries

## C. Analyzing the impact of social movements

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W.Gamson, *The strategy of social protest* (1975):

movement « success » must be apraised based on 2 questions:

- Was the protest group accepted by political authorities as a « valid spokesman for the constituency that it was attempting to mobilize »? (procedural impact)
- Did the group gain the advantages it sought? (substantive impact)

		Acceptance	
		Full	None
New advantages	Many	<i>Full response</i>	<i>Preemption</i>
	None	<i>Co-optation</i>	<i>Collapse</i>

## D. Questioning the frontiers of social movements: new directions for research

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- From SMOs to SMCs: the role of social movement communities
- Movement politics as noninstitutional politics?

## 5. References

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