9

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND DEMOCRACY

In 1988 the city government of Porto Alegre, a Brazilian metropolis with 1,360,000 inhabitants, initiated a project of participatory decision-making on the city budget, with the aim of strengthening participation through the creation of a public space for the expression of citizens' demands (Gret and Sintomer 2002: 26). Participatory budgeting has been defined as the most significant Latin American innovation for increasing citizen participation and local government accountability: an experiment in which citizen assemblies in each city district determine priorities for the use of a part of the city's revenues (Souza 2000). It is a system of governance where "regular citizens" make binding decisions on several areas of governmental action, most notably those affecting the city's new capital investments (Baiocchi 2002a). Every year, between March and June, there are widespread interactions between citizens and the administration. Large city assemblies as well as decentralized neighborhood ones discuss and vote on spending priorities, electing delegates to the Council of the Participatory Budgeting as well as to thematic committees. Each thematic committee then elects representatives to the Council of the Participatory Budgeting, in which representatives of unions, neighborhood associations, and the government also take part. In July and August, city experts, together with the assemblies' delegates, help in translating the demands into projects. Between September and December, the delegates meet and prepare a General Proposal on the Budget and a draft of the Investment Plan that will be discussed with the City Council and then approved (Allegretti 2003: 116–17). The decision procedures involve both direct and delegate democracy, with mandatory delegation in neighborhood forums. The election of the delegates stimulates participation, being proportional to the number of people taking part in the assemblies (one delegate to 10 participants). There is also a delegation of power to representative institutions, both the

city council and the thematic participatory budgeting committees (on transport, health and social security, culture, education and leisure, economic development, and urban development).

In a trial-and-error process, participatory budgeting acquired a complex structure in order to achieve two different but complementary aims: more social justice, but also more participation. The enterprise is focused on the goal of reducing social inequalities, and allocation takes into account both the priority established by the citizens, and the relative levels of deprivation in the various neighborhoods. The precise timing of the process aims at reducing the acknowledged limitations of assemblyism, especially in terms of decision blocks, without giving up the advantages of direct democracy, especially in terms of citizens' empowerment.

Although far from involving the whole population, the experiments had some success in terms of participation. Involvement in the participatory budgeting process in fact increased from less than 1,000 people in 1990 to more than 30,000 in 2002 (Allegretti 2004: 204). Moreover, it allowed formerly excluded groups to decide on investment priorities in their communities and to monitor government responses (Souza 2000). Although education and social class are relevant in acquiring leading positions as delegates, the poorest groups are overrepresented in the rank-and-file assemblies. But participation is especially facilitated by previous involvement in associations and social movement organizations. Districts' participation is in fact proportional to the richness of associational life (Baiocchi 2001); individual participation increases with associational membership (although the number of participants with no associational affiliation grew from one-quarter of the participants in 1995 to less than one-third in 2002) (Allegretti 2003: 206). To minimize inequalities resulting from differences in speaking ability, the discursive setting (for instance, by allowing for very short intervention) discourages formal speech-making, which privileges the better educated (Baiocchi 2001). Authority within meetings does not come from education or class, but involves other sorts of social status such as respect within the community, often linked with membership (or even leadership) in various local groups (Baiocchi 2002). In terms of the concrete effects of the experiments, it might be worth noting that Porto Alegre seems to have gained in terms of standards of social justice, as it now ranks sixth of 5,507 towns in Brazil ranged on a scale of social exclusion (a rank of one being the least exclusive) and seventh in terms of quality of life (Allegretti 2003: 74–5). The UN has recognized participatory budgeting as one of the world's 40 "best practices" (Allegretti 2003: 173).

Various conditions facilitate the Porto Alegre experiment. First, the new Brazilian constitution of 1988 decentralized tax collection to the city level, providing resources for the financing of the participatory budget. The new city statutes, following the new constitution, also opened a window of opportunity for participation at the local level (Allegretti 2003: 110). Moreover, Porto Alegre has long been governed by the Workers' Party, a socialist party in search of a support base to address the country's democratization process and its extreme poverty. Even more important, Porto Alegre has a long tradition of associationism, especially at the community level. The neighborhood associations, which survived the country's authoritarian periods, represent an example of participatory democracy in the world's South which has deeper roots than Western representative models of democracy (Sen 2003). Although some of these associations were part of clientelistic networks of power, negotiating votes with powerful patrons, a protest tradition nevertheless survived alongside the clientelistic one. At the end of the 1980s, a wave of occupations of public buildings strengthened the associative networks (Allegretti 2003: 107). According to several observers, in contrast to a previous period of "tutelage" in which neighborhood associations vacillated between acquiescence and conflict with municipal government, the participatory reforms have fostered new institutions in civil society, a greater interconnectedness between local organizations, and a "scaling up" of activism away from solely neighborhood to citywide concerns (Baiocchi 2002).

Participatory budgeting therefore represents an empowerment of individual participation, but also an arena for the development of social movements. Not by chance, Porto Alegre has also played a central role in the global justice movement, hosting its first transnational assemblies. The World Social Forums (WSF) (Schönleitner 2003) which took place there also represent an experiment with "another democracy" – this time internal to the movement actors. Here, too, participation grew from the 16,400 participants at the first meeting in January 2001 to 52,000 in 2002 and about 100,000 in 2003. In thousands of seminars and meetings, more or less realistic and original proposals were hammered out for a bottom-up globalization; alternative politics and policies were debated and some of them tested (including the "participatory budget" that was actively sponsored by the Chart of the New Municipalities, formed during the second WSF). Since 2002, in particular, the experience of the Social Forums as a place to meet and engage in debate has been extended to the local and macro-regional levels. In particular, in the autumn of that year, Florence hosted the first European Social Forum, with three days of seminars attended by

60,000 participants. During the same period, debates on alternative development models – building "sustainable societies" – were held in Bamako at the African Social Forum, in Beirut at the Middle East Social Forum, in Belem at the pan-Amazon version, and in Hyderabad, India, at the Asian Social Forum. In November 2003, a second European Social Forum was held in Paris; the third was held in London in October 2004.

In what follows we will use the democratic experiments in Porto Alegre to illustrate the potential and limitations of research on the outcomes produced by social movements. An analysis of their effects is an integral part of the study of social movements as agents of social change. Different movements have achieved different degrees of success, and discussion concerning what determines the outcomes they achieve has been central to the debate on social movements. A number of social movement characteristics have been frequently cited as particularly influential in this respect. In general, research has concentrated on such questions as: are movements that propose radical change more successful than those that propose moderate change or vice versa? Does violence work? Is a centralized and bureaucratic organization a help or a hindrance for social movements?

First, we consider the difficulties movements (and analysts) face in identifying victorious strategies (9.1). Changes in policies (9.2) and in politics (9.3) will then be discussed. Section 9.4 will then address the specific attempts of (some) social movements to change the conception of democracy, discussing the interactions between normative theory of democracy and protest, while the actual interactions between broad processes of democratization and social movements are discussed in section 9.5.

9.1 Social Movement Strategies and Their Effects

In one of the first and most influential studies on the effects produced by the strategies social movements adopt, William Gamson (1990) identified the factors contributing to success as a minimalist strategy ("thinking small"), the adoption of direct action, and a centralized and bureaucratic organization. Other scholars of collective action have not unanimously accepted this, however. As already noted in relation to forms of action, violence has appeared a promising strategic choice at certain historical moments. Gamson himself has admitted (1990) that wider objectives reinforce internal solidarity and favor the creation of

alliances. Finally, it has been pointed out that when organizations, including social movement organizations, become bureaucratized, the desire for organizational survival comes to prevail over declared collective objectives. According to Francis Fox Piven and Richard Cloward (1977: xxi–xxii), the effort to build organizations is not only futile but also damaging: "by endeavoring to do what they cannot do, organizers fail to do what they can do. During those brief periods in which people are roused to indignation, when they are prepared to defy the authorities to whom they ordinarily defer . . . those who call themselves leaders do not usually escalate the momentum of the people's protest." The search for material resources to ensure organizational survival leads inexorably towards the elites, who are happy to offer such resources precisely because they know it will serve to reduce the potential threat to the social order represented by its weaker members. However, it has been remarked that no particular strategic element can be evaluated in isolation and without taking into account the conditions within which social movements must operate (Burstein et al. 1995) and the presence of alliances or opponents in power (Cress and Snow 2000).

Indeed, the identification of a "strategy for success" is an arduous task for both activists and scholars. The World Social Forum in Porto Alegre provides several examples of debates about the articulation of general demands for "another possible world" in specific proposals for reforms, and the degree of acceptable compromise. The range of organizational models chosen (and defended) varies from highly structured associations (such as ATTAC) to informal affinity groups, including several examples of transnational alliances (such as, for instance, Via Campesina, networking peasant protest groups from 50 countries). Although the movement is characterized by nonviolent strategies, the use of specific forms of direct action such as the dismantling of McDonald's restaurants, the management of the land occupation by the Sem Terra, and the local democracy practiced by the Zapatistas in the Sierra Lacandona are much-debated issues. The very decision-making procedures of the WSF have been the target of criticism, which has accused it of privileging effectiveness over equality and transparency.

The attribution of credit for obtaining substantive successes also faces a series of obstacles (Tarrow 1994; Rucht 1992; Giugni 2004; Diani 1997; McVeigh, Welch, and Bjarnason 2003). A principal problem is one well known to social scientists: the existence of such close relationships between a set of variables that it becomes impossible to identify cause and effect. Urbanization and industrialization, for example, have facilitated organization by intensifying physical contacts. They have weakened certain sources of socialization and solidarity and favored the development of others (for an overview, see Sztompka 1993; also chapter 2above). Better educational provision has increased awareness of grievances and made defending one's own interests appear legitimate. An increasingly effective communications system spreads information on mass mobilizations

throughout the world. Movements are born in the course of these transformations and contribute to them. Socioeconomic, cultural, and political instances of globalization are the product of at the same time reactions to previous movements and adaptation to movement pressures, settling new resources and constraints for protest.

Third, the presence of a plurality of actors makes it more difficult to attribute success or failure to one particular strategy (Diani 1997). Social movements are themselves complex actors, composed of many organizations pursuing profoundly different strategies. In particular, recent movements proceed via campaigns in which various organizations contribute with the repertories they are most skilled in using: environmental NGOs lobby IGOs; trade unions call strikes against free-trade agreements; Sem Terra Brazilian peasants occupy unused lands; hackers jam big corporations' websites. It is difficult to single out each group's specific contribution to the final outcome.

Most importantly, movements are never the sole actors to intervene on an issue. Rather, they do so in alliance with political parties and, not infrequently, with public agencies. The policy choices of other social and political actors, for instance, are important in explaining the development of the participatory experience in Porto Alegre, where the socialist party in government invested symbolic and material resources in the project. Thus, "the outcome of bargaining is not the result of the characteristics of either party, but rather is the function of their resources relative to each other, their relationships with third parties, and other factors in the environment" (Burstein, Einwohner, and Hollander 1995: 280). As we have mentioned (see chapter 8), the results obtained by social movements (or their failure to obtain them) have often been explained by environmental conditions, particularly the openness of political opportunities and the availability of allies. It is difficult nonetheless to identify which of the many actors involved in a given policy area are responsible for one reaction or another. If, as suggested earlier, a large number of interactions characterizes a protest cycle, the results obtained will be the effect of that large number of interactions. Thus, it is always difficult to establish whether a given policy would have been enacted through other institutional actors anyway.

Fourth, the difficulties created by a plurality of actors are added to by the difficulty of reconstructing the causal dynamics underlying particular public decisions. On the one hand, events are so intertwined that it is difficult to say which came first, particularly in moments of high mobilization. On the other, social movements demand long-term changes, but the protest cycle stimulates immediate "incremental" reforms. When social movements successfully place particular issues on the public agenda this "does not happen directly or even in a linear fashion. In fact, as their ideas are vulgarized and domesticated, the early risers in a protest cycle often disappear from the scene. But a portion of their message is distilled into common frameworks of public or private culture while the rest is

ignored" (Tarrow 1994: 185). This evolution is characterized by steps forward and steps back, moments in which public policy approaches the demands made by social movements and others in which the situation deteriorates.

Whether the results of protest should be judged in the short or in the long term represents a further problem. Social movements frequently obtain successes in the early phases of mobilization, but this triggers opposing interests and often a backlash in public opinion. Thus, while it is true that there is a broad consensus on many of the issues raised by social movements (peace, the defense of nature, improvements in the education system, equality), mobilization can nevertheless result in the polarization of public opinion. This normally produces a growth in movement support, but very often also a growth in opposition. Furthermore, as noted in the preceding chapter, movement success on specific demands frequently leads to the creation of countermovements: the development of neoliberalism as an ideology of the capitalist class has been explained as a reaction to the labor movement victories in terms of social rights (Sklair 1995).

Particularly when one is comparing different movements or countries, the problems outlined above hinder an evaluation of the relative effectiveness of particular movement strategies. There is also a problem, naturally, with the attribution of particular results to more institutionalized actors such as political parties and pressure groups.[1] Factors particular to social movements such as their distance from the levers of power, heterogeneous definition of their objectives, and organizational instability further complicate matters. In what follows, therefore, we will not attempt to identify winning strategies but rather to consider some of the consequences of interaction between social movements and their environment.

9.2 Changes in Public Policy

A first area for measuring the effects produced by social movements is that of actual policy, as the example with which the chapter opens showed. Generally, social movements are formed to express dissatisfaction with existing policy in a given area. Environmentalist groups have demanded intervention to protect the environment; pacifists have opposed the culture of war; students have criticized selection and authoritarianism in education; the feminist movement has fought discrimination against women; the world social forums criticized neoliberal globalization. Although it is usual to make a distinction between political and cultural movements, the first following a more instrumental logic, the second more symbolic, all movements tend to make demands on the political system.

A particular demand frequently becomes nonnegotiable, being the basis for a movement's identity. For example, in many countries the feminist movement has

been constructed around the nonnegotiable right of women to "choose" concerning childbirth; the halting of the installation of NATO nuclear missiles fulfilled a similar role for the peace movement. In the first case mobilization was pro-active, seeking to gain something new, the right to free abortion; in the second it was reactive, seeking to block a decision (to install cruise missiles) which had already been taken. One of the founding organizations of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, ATTAC, emerged around the demands of a tax on transnational transactions; also present in Porto Alegre, the debt relief campaign asked for the foreign debt of poor countries to be totally written off. In all cases, considerable changes in public policy were being demanded. Characteristic of these nonnegotiable objectives is their role in the social movements' definitions of themselves and of the external world (Pizzorno 1978). Demands whose symbolic value is very high, such as the Equal Rights Amendment in the case of the American feminist movement, remain central for a movement even when their potential effectiveness is questionable (Mansbridge 1986). The importance of such nonnegotiable objectives is confirmed by the fact that although activists may be willing to negotiate on other demands, even partial victories on these issues, such as a woman's right to voluntarily interrupt pregnancy, are considered as defeats. Although the campaign Jubilee 2000 has been defined as "strategically challenging, politically complex, relatively successful," having "effectively pressured creditor governments to make significant moves to write off unplayable third world debt," and having "focused unprecedented public scrutiny on official macroeconomic policies" (Collins, Gariyo, and Burdon 2001: 135), many activists have been unsatisfied with the institutional responses to their claims.

While nonnegotiable demands are particularly important in the construction of collective identities, social movements rarely limit themselves to just these. In the case of the global justice movement, the general aim of "building another possible world" has been articulated in specific requests, from the opposition to privatization of public services and public good (i.e., the campaign for free access to water) to the rights of national governments to organize the low-cost production of medicines in emergency cases; from the opposition to specific projects of dam construction to a democratic reform of the United Nations. Cooperating in global protest campaigns, the ecological associations stressed the environmental unsustainability of neoliberal capitalism, trade unions the negative consequences of free trade on labor rights and levels of employment, feminist groups the suffering of women under cuts to the welfare state.

From the public-policy point of view, the changes brought about by social movements may be evaluated by looking at the various phases of the decision-making process: the emergence of new issues; writing and applying new legislation; and analysis of the effects of public policies in alleviating the conditions of those mobilized by collective action. Five levels of responsiveness to collective demands within the political system can be distinguished:

> The notion of "access responsiveness" indicates the extent to which authorities are willing to hear the concerns of such a group . . . If the demand . . . is made into an issue and placed on the agenda of the political system, there has occurred a second type of responsiveness which can here be labeled "agenda responsiveness" . . . As the proposal . . . is passed into law, a third type of responsiveness is attained; the notion of "policy responsiveness" indicates the degree to which those in the political system adopt legislation or policy congruent with the manifest demands of protest groups . . . If measures are taken to ensure that the legislation is fully enforced, then a fourth type of responsiveness is attained: "output responsiveness" . . . Only if the underlying grievance is alleviated would a fifth type of responsiveness be attained: "impact responsiveness.
>
> ***(Schumaker 1975: 494–5)***

Research on social movements has concentrated on the production of legislation. As a recent review of the literature noted, most "studies focus on policy responsiveness, fewer on access responsiveness, and very few on the political agenda, outputs, policy impact, or structural change" (Burstein et al. 1995: 285). Having identified a series of areas in which movements intervene, quantitative and qualitative analyses attempt to measure the response of parliaments and governments. Returning to the example of the human rights movement, transnational norms emerged for the protection of indigenous people against torture and advocating their democratic freedoms (Risse and Sikkink 1999). These norms helped democratization by giving resonance in supranational forums to national movements from authoritarian countries (Keck and Sikkink 1998).

An analysis of the concrete effects of social movements can begin, therefore, from the production of legislation. This is not enough, however. As noted in discussion of social movements and political opportunities, different states have different capacities for implementing legislation, and it is precisely from the implementation of legislation that concrete gains are achieved. Even more relevant, transnational norms set in international agreements require laws to be enacted at the national level. As the cases of agreements on arms proliferation and land mines, or the Kyoto Agreement to control climate changes, indicate, very often superpowers (first of all, the United States) refuse to sign or implement international agreements. In order to evaluate the results produced by a social movement, therefore, it is also necessary to analyze how the laws or agreements they helped bring about are actually applied.

Real change, the effects produced by legislation however implemented, is even more difficult to judge. Laws which seek to meet certain of the demands of social movements may be limited in effect or even counterproductive, no matter how well implemented. The Porto Alegre experiment, with its premium for more participatory districts, risked producing imbalances in spending. During the participatory budgeting, the initial investment in road construction, oriented to

improving the condition of the poorest and most marginal areas, had negative side-effects in terms of environmental sustainability (Allegretti 2003: 226). Only later did an urbanization program based on the creation of open spaces that could facilitate sociability fully develop (ibid.: 281).

Talking about norms already implies considering that, alongside structural changes in the condition of those categories or social groups mobilized by collective action, cultural transformation is a further important element in achieving and consolidating new gains. Although it is true that all movements tend to want legislative change, this is neither their only, nor even perhaps their primary, objective. Movements are in fact carriers of symbolic messages (Gamson 2004: 247): they aim to influence bystanders, spreading their own conception of the world, and they struggle to have new identities recognized. The effects of social movements are also connected with diffuse cultural change, the elaboration of "new codes" (Melucci 1982, 1984a). Typically, new ideas emerge within critical communities, and are then spread via social movements – as Rochon (1998: 179) observes, "The task of translating the chronic problem as described by the critical community into an acute problem that will attract media attention is the province of social and political movements."

While the capacity of social movements for the realization of their general aims has been considered low, they are seen as more effective in the importation of new issues into public debate, or thematization. For instance, after Seattle, the global justice movement seems to have been successful in placing on the public agenda the topics of social inequalities and the opacity of transnational decision-making. In June 2001, a short time before the G8 summit at Genoa, a national poll (run by CIRM) revealed that as many as 45 percent of Italians sympathized with the movement's arguments, 28 percent did not, and 27 percent had no opinion (*La Repubblica* 17/6/01). A later survey by Simulation Intelligence Research showed a large majority of the Italian citizens in favor of movements' goals, such as canceling third world debt (81 percent), establishing "equality of economic and working conditions for workers worldwide" (80 percent), unconditional opposition to the war (74 percent), doing away with tax havens (70 percent), prohibiting genetically modified foods (70 percent), introducing a Tobin Tax (64 percent), and freedom of movement for emigrants (55 percent). Overall, 19 percent of those surveyed replied that the "no-global" movement was "very positive" and 50.9 percent "quite positive." Only 16.1 percent felt it was quite or very negative (for more details, see della Porta, Andretta, Mosca, and Reiter 2005, ch. 7).

It is useful, therefore, to look at a movement's sensitizing impact, i.e. the "possibility that a movement will provoke a sensitizing of some social actor in the political arena or the public arena, which goes in the direction of the goals of the movement" (Kriesi et al. 1995: 211). Furthermore, social movements are more aware than some better-resourced actors of their need for public support. Since protest mobilization is short lived, social movements cannot content themselves with legislative reforms that can always be reversed later. They must ensure that

support for their cause is so widely disseminated as to discourage any attempt to roll reforms back.

It should be added that social movements do not aim only to change public opinion. They also seek to win support among those responsible for implementing public policy, and change the values of political elites as well as those of the public. Although mass mobilization may temporarily convince political parties to pass a law, that law must also be implemented. In this case, too, social movements do not always have sufficient means of access to the less visible areas of policy implementation, and their chances of success therefore depend on influencing the public agencies responsible for implementing the laws which concern them. For instance, via direct contacts or brokers, experts within or near movements have been able to infiltrate the international advocacy community, and help spread dissent concerning neoliberal strategies within the political and nonpolitical elite. In the mid-1990s, leaders of many Western states were moving away from the pure liberalism of the Thatcher and Reagan years. In the international arena, opinions, sometimes from unexpected quarters, are making themselves heard, calling attention to the issues of social services and market reregulation (O' Brian, Goetz, Scholte, and Williams 2000: 9).

9.3 Social Movements and Procedural Changes

Social movements do not limit their interventions to single policies. They frequently influence the way in which the political system as a whole functions: its institutional and formal procedures, elite recruitment, the informal configuration of power (Kitschelt 1986; Rucht 1992). Movements demand, and often obtain, decentralization of political power, consultation of interested citizens on particular decisions or appeals procedures against decisions of the public administration. They increasingly interact with the public administration, presenting themselves as institutions of "democracy from below" (Roth 1994): they ask to be allowed to testify before representative institutions and the judiciary, to be listened to as counterexperts, to receive legal recognition and material incentives.

Protest, only a small part of overall social movement activity, is undoubtedly considered important, but also ineffectual unless accompanied by more traditional lobbying activities. Although contacts with government ministries and the public bureaucracy may not be seen on their own as particularly effective in influencing policy, they are considered useful for information-gathering and for countering the influence of pressure groups: for instance, the environmental movement has been able to counter anti-environmentalists by building alliances within the European Commission bureaucracy (Ruzza 2004). As we shall see in what follows, social movements increase the possibilities of access to the

political system, both through *ad hoc* channels relating to certain issues and through institutions that are open to all noninstitutional actors.

In the late twentieth century, social movements were indeed been able to introduce changes that tend towards greater grassroots control over public institutions. In many European countries, administrative decentralization has taken place since the 1970s, with the creation of new channels of access to decision-makers. Various forms of participation in decision-making have been tried within social movement organizations. If the rise of mass political parties has been defined as a "contagion from the left" and the democracy of the mass media as a "contagion from the right," the new social movements have been acclaimed as a "contagion from below" (Rohrschneider 1993a). Social movements have brought about a pluralization of the ways in which political decisions are taken, pushed by cyclical dissatisfaction with centralized and bureaucratic representative democracy (see below). In this sense, social movements have produced a change in political culture, in the whole set of norms and reference schemes which define the issues and means of action that are politically legitimate. Repertoires of collective action, which were once condemned and dealt with simply as public order problems, have slowly become acceptable (della Porta 1998b).

In many countries direct democracy acts as a supplementary channel of access to those opened within representative democracy. On issues such as divorce, abortion, or gender discrimination, for example, the women's movement was in many cases able to appeal directly to the people using either popularly initiated legislation or referenda for the abrogation of existing laws or the implementation of transnational treaties. Referenda have become an increasingly important instrument of direct expression for ordinary citizens, particularly on issues that are not directly related to the social cleavages around which political parties have formed. Referendum campaigns present social movements with an opportunity to publicize the issues that concern them, as well as the hope of being able to bypass the obstacle represented by governments hostile to their demands.

Social movements also contribute to the creation of new arenas for the development of public policy. These new loci of decision-making vary in terms of their openness, duration, and extent of power. They have two things in common, however: their legitimation is not based on the principles of representative democracy and they have greater visibility than institutional spheres of decision-making. Several new arenas of decision-making can be identified.

Expert commissions are frequently formed on issues raised by protest, and social movement representatives may be allowed to take part, possibly as observers. The "President's Commission on Campus Unrest" which William Scranton presided over in the United States (in 1970) is one example. Others are the commission led by Lord Scarman into rioting in the United Kingdom in the 1980s and the commission of inquiry set up on "Youth Protest in the Democratic State" in Germany (Willelms et al. 1993). After Seattle, commissions of inde-

pendent experts have been set to investigate the social effects of globalization (such as the Parliamentary Commission in Germany) as well as the police behavior during transnational protest events (see the Seattle City Council Commission on the Seattle events). Common to them all is the recognition that the problems they address are in some way extraordinary, and require extraordinary solutions. Although such expert commissions usually have a limited mandate and consultative power only, they enter a dialogue with public opinion through press contact and the publication of reports.

Besides commissions of enquiry, other channels of access are opened by the creation of consultative institutions on issues related to social movement demands. State ministries, local government bureaus, and other similar bodies now exist on women's or ecological issues in many countries, but also in IGOs. Such institutions, which are frequently set up on a permanent basis, have their own budgets and power to implement policies. Some regulatory administrative bodies have been established under the pressure of movement mobilizations, and see movement activists as potential allies (Amenta 1998); movement activists have been co-opted by specific public bodies as member of their staff (or vice versa). New opportunities for a "conflictual cooperation" develop within regulatory agencies that are set to implement goals that are also supported by movement activists (Giugni and Passy 1998: 85). The public administrators working in these institutions mediate particular social movement demands through both formal and informal channels and frequently ally themselves with movement representatives in order to increase the amount of public resources available in the policy areas over which they have authority. They tend to have frequent contacts with representatives of the social movements involved in their areas, the movement organizations taking on a consultancy role in many instances, and they sometimes develop common interests. Collaboration can take various forms: from consultation, to incorporation in committees, to delegation of power (ibid.: 86).

Informal negotiation has enabled some international governmental organizations to co-opt social movement associations that agree to work through discreet channels. Nongovernmental organizations have thus been accorded the status of actors, and on occasion important ones, in world governance, acknowledged as participants in the development of international norms (such as those on human rights) and on their implementation (Pagnucco 1996: 14). "International public institutions are modifying in response to pressure from social movements, NGOs and business actors, but this varies across institutions depending upon institutional culture, structure, role of the executive head and vulnerability to civil society pressure" (O' Brien, Goetz, Scholte, and Williams 2000: 6). As early as 1948, the nongovernmental Conference of NGOs with consultative status (CONGOS) was set up in the United Nations, and by the 1990s it had reached as many as 1,500 members (Rucht 1996: 33). In the European Union, the parliament in particular but other bodies as well have held informal exchanges of

information with various types of associations (e.g. Marks and McAdam 1999; Mazey and Richardson 1993; della Porta 2004b; Ruzza 2004; Lahusen 2004). Social movements have been recognized with regard to processual input on the World Bank, with more emphasis on participation and the recruitment of some progressive staff (Chiriboga 2001: 81). Besides a certain degree of institutional recognition, NGOs specializing in development assistance have received funding for the development programs they have presented, or for joining in projects already presented by national or international governments (O'Brien, Goetz, Scholte, and Williams 2000: 120). Many are also involved in managing funds earmarked for emergencies and humanitarian aid, which now make up more than half the projects of the World Bank (Brecher, Costello, and Smith 2000: 114). What is more, social movements have participated in institution-building at the international level (in particular, on human rights as well as environmental protection), using their "soft power" in the form of knowledge and information (Purdue 2000; Smith 2004b: 317).

In particular, social movement activists maintain direct contacts with decision-makers, participating in epistemic communities made up of representatives of governments, parties, and interest groups of various types and persuasions. In particular, NGOs critical of neoliberalist globalization have resorted to pressure both at the national and international levels, cultivating specific expertise. From human rights groups to environmentalists, epistemic communities – composed of activists and bureaucrats belonging to international organizations, as well as politicians from many countries – have won significant gains in a number of areas: for example, decontamination of radioactive waste, the establishment of an international tribunal on human rights violations, and a ban on antipersonnel mines (Khagram, Riker, and Sikkink 2002; Klotz 1995; Risse and Sikkink 1999; Thomas 2001). Some NGOs have not only increased in size, but also strengthened their influence on various stages of international policymaking (Sikkink and Smith 2002; Boli 1999). Their assets include an increasing credibility in public opinion and the consequent availability of private funding,[2] as well their rootedness at the local level. Their specific knowledge, combined with useful contacts in the press, make many NGOs seem particularly reliable sources. With a professional staff on hand, they are also able to maintain a fair level of activity even when protest mobilization is low. Independence from governments, combined with a reputation built upon solid work at the local level, enables some NGOs to perform an important role in mediating interethnic conflict (Friberg and Hettne 1998). Finally, they enhance pluralism within international institutions by representing groups who would otherwise be excluded (Riddel-Dixon 1995) and by turning the spotlight on transnational processes, making governance more transparent (Schmidt and Take 1997).

Most important, so-called deliberative arenas have developed in the last two decades, especially at the local level. These are based on the principle of partici-

pation of "normal citizens" in public arenas for debate, empowered by information and rules for high-quality communication. There are several examples throughout Europe: Citizens' Juries in Great Britain and Spain, Planungzelle in Germany, the Consensus Conference in Denmark, Conférences de Citoyens in France, as well as Agenda 21 and various experiments in strategic urban planning. At the supranational level, nongovernmental organizations have received recognition as informal partners in consultation on policy decisions and participation in policy implementation. Among others, the White Paper on European Governance (2001) advocates the principle of participation by means of open consultation with citizens and their associations as one of the fundamental pillars of governance in the European Union. Actors associated with social movements have intervened in the development of some of these experiments, sometimes as critical participants, sometimes as external opponents.

In addition to participatory budgeting, diverse experiments are presented as part of an empowered participatory democracy model centered on participation, quality of discourse, and citizens' empowerment (Fung and Wright 2001). Examples include the inner-city Chicago neighborhood governance councils for policing and public schools, joint labor–management efforts to manage industrial labor markets, stakeholder development of ecosystem governance arrangements under the US Endangered Species Act, and village governance in West Bengal, India. The focus of these experiments is the solving of specific problems through the involvement of ordinary, affected people. It implies the creation of new institutions and devolution of decision-making power, but also includes coordination with representative institutions. The objectives of these institutions include effective problem-solving and equitable solutions as well as broad, deep, and sustained participation. In particular, the participatory budget has been credited with creating a positive context for association, fostering greater activism, networking associations, and working from a citywide orientation (Baiocchi 2002a).

But what exactly do these new arenas offer social movements? According to some authors, the presence of such channels of access presents more risks than advantages. In the first place, movements are induced to accept the shifting of conflict from the streets to less congenial arenas, where resources in which they are lacking, such as technical or scientific expertise, are particularly important. The organization of a commission may be nothing more than a symbolic, elite gesture to constituencies and a means of delaying a decision until quieter times prevail (Lipsky 1965). Indeed, the creation of new procedures and institutional arenas can be seen as a means of co-opting movement elites and demobilizing the grassroots (if they are naive enough not to notice the deception) (Piven and Cloward 1977: 53). Mistrust in the real independence of NGOs is indicated by the proliferation of such acronyms as GONGOs (Government-Organized NGOs), BONGOs (Business-Organized NGOs), and GRINGOs (Government-Run/Initiated NGOs). NGOs are predominantly based in the North of the world

(two-thirds of UN-registered NGOs have their headquarters in Europe and North America) (Sikkink 2002); and major associations, in particular, are organized hierarchically with limited transparency in the way they work (Schmidt and Take 1997; Sikkink 2002). Intergovernmental organizations have, furthermore, preferred dealing with larger, more top-heavy NGOs, that are less monitored by their base of support (Chandhoke 2002; Guiraudon 2002). While some NGOs were the first to mobilize against international financial institutions (in particular the World Bank, IMF, and WTO), protests developed due to skepticism regarding the efficacy of lobbying, coupled with a perception that large NGOs' reformist approach had failed (Brand and Wissen 2002). In a time of cutbacks in public spending, NGOs run the risk of being exploited to supplant an increasingly failing public service (Chandhoke 2002: 43). Moreover, adroitly manipulated experts can be used to legitimate as most "scientifically appropriate" those solutions which suit governments. Referenda address limited questions and mobilize public opinion only for very short periods; they also carry the risk that decisions will be made by the "silent majority," uninterested in (and uninformed about) the issues and problems raised by social movements, and therefore easily influenced by those with the most resources to devote to manipulating consensus. Some studies conclude that citizen participation in policymaking increases efficiency, but others express doubts about its capacity to solve free-rider problems and produce optimal decisions or facilitate the achievement of the public good (Renn et al. 1996; Petts 1997; Hajer and Kesselring 1999; Grant, Perl, and Knoepfel 1999).

In addition, alternative participatory models of democracy are difficult to implement. The levels of effective participation, plurality, and efficacy of new arenas of decision-making are varied and far from satisfactory. As for the pluralism of the new participatory arenas, since resources for collective mobilization are unequally distributed among social groups, poorer areas and groups risk being excluded by the new institutions of policymaking. Their effective capacity for decision-making is often minimal: for various reasons, new channels of participation have usually been limited to "consultation" of citizens. If increasing participation allows for more visibility – and accountability – of policymaking, parallel (and more effective) decision-making seems to bypass public arenas.

On the other hand, social movements have frequently been able to profit (partly through alliances with experts and policymakers) from the switching of decision-making to *ad hoc* commissions, certainly more open to public scrutiny than the normal arenas of policy implementation. New issues have been brought onto the public agenda through the work of such commissions: "Commissions were themselves part of the process during which the problems were defined and the agenda set . . . Their very creation indicated that the normal praxis of the political system to make decisions was insufficient, and that it was therefore necessary to appeal to the experts belonging to the scientific institutions"

(Willelms et al. 1993). Although social movements have not always been on the winning side in referenda, the latter have nonetheless contributed to putting new issues on the public agenda and to creating public sympathy for emergent actors. The ability to transform the rules of the political game, then, is a precondition for influencing public policy. In other words, procedural victories come (at least in part) before, and are indispensable for, successes on a more substantive level (Rochon and Mazmanian 1993). Enlarging policymaking to encompass citizen participation – in the forms of auditing, people's juries, etc. – has often helped in solving problems created by local opposition to locally unwanted land use (LULU) (Bobbio and Zeppetella 1999; Sintomer 2005). As we have mentioned, the participatory emphasis on good governance, as well as its confidence in popular education (Baiocchi 2001), seems to have produced positive results in terms of empowerment of citizens as well as improvement of their quality of life.

9.4 Social Movements and Democratic Theory

Leaving aside the results obtained on particular demands, it must be added that the spread of new policy arenas has contributed to the realization of what has been considered one of the principal aims, if not the principal aim, of many (if not all: see below) social movements: the development of a new conception of democracy. In fact, it has been claimed that social movements do not limit themselves to developing special channels of access for themselves but that, more or less explicitly, they expound a fundamental critique of conventional politics, thus shifting their endeavors from politics itself to metapolitics (Offe 1985). From this point of view, social movements affirm the legitimacy (if not the primacy) of alternatives to parliamentary democracy, criticizing both liberal democracy and the "organized democracy" of the political parties: "The stakes and the struggle of the left and libertarian social movements thus invoke an ancient element of democratic theory that calls for an organization of collective decision making referred to in varying ways as classical, populist, communitarian, strong, grassroots, or direct democracy against a democratic practice in contemporary democracies labeled as realist, liberal, elite, republican, or representative democracy" (Kitschelt 1993: 15).

According to this interpretation, social movements assert that a system of direct democracy is closer to the interests of the people than liberal democracy, which is based on delegation to representatives who can be controlled only at the moment of election and who have total authority to decide between one election and another. Moreover, as bearers of a neocommunitarian conception of democracy, social movements criticize the "organized" democratic model, based on the mediation by mass political parties and the structuring of "strong"

interests, and seek to switch decision-making to more transparent and controllable sites. In the social movement conception of democracy the people themselves (who are naturally interested in politics) must assume direct responsibility for intervening in the political decision-making process.

It is certainly the case that the idea of democracy developed by social movements since the 1960s is founded on bases at least partly different to representative democracy. According to the representative democracy model, citizens elect their representatives and exercise control through the threat of their not being reelected at subsequent elections. The direct democracy favored by social movements rejects the principle of delegation, viewed as an instrument of oligarchic power, and asserts that representatives should be subject to recall at all times. Moreover, delegation is comprehensive in a representative democracy, where representatives decide on a whole range matters for citizens. In comparison, in a system of direct democracy, authority is delegated on an issue-by-issue basis. Whereas representative democracy envisages the creation of a specialized body of representatives, direct democracy opts for continual turnover. Representative democracy is based on formal equality (one person, one vote); direct democracy is participatory, the right to decide being recognized only in the case of those who demonstrate their commitment to the public cause. While representative democracy is often bureaucratic, with decision-making concentrated at the top, direct democracy is decentralized and emphasizes that decisions should be taken as near as possible to ordinary people's lives.

The global justice movement criticizes the functioning of advanced democracies. It addresses in particular the oligarchic functioning of political parties, the exclusionary implications of majority rule, the monopolization of public spheres of communication, and the exclusion of marginal groups and issues from their practice of democracy. Public decision-making processes have a low degree of transparency; the extreme simplification of the political messages induced by mass media formats is also criticized. However, movement organizations do not usually aim at abolishing the existing political parties, nor do they seek to found new ones; they demand the democratization of the old politics and institutions, parties, and trade unions, and they propose the constitution of alternative, open public spheres where different positions can be developed, analyzed, and compared on an openly-stated ethical basis (such as social justice, in the case of the participatory budget in Porto Alegre). An effective, pluralist media contest would be a minimum requirement for the development of this type of public sphere. In this sense, social movements are also a response to problems which have emerged in the system of interest representation, "compensating" for the tendency of political parties to favor interests which pay off in electoral terms, and of interest groups to favor those social strata better endowed with resources while marginalizing the rest (see chapter 8 above).

The principle of an empowered participatory democracy, mentioned above, links the traditional conception of participatory and direct democracy with political theorists' emerging interest in deliberative democracy – in particular, the quality of communication.[3] Deliberative theories have developed from concerns with the functioning of representative institutions; however, scholars of deliberative democracy disagree on the locus of deliberative discussion, some being concerned with the development of liberal institutions, others with alternative public spheres free from state intervention (della Porta 2005b). The analysis of the communicative quality of democracy is central to the work of Jürgen Habermas (1996), who postulates a double-track process, with "informal" deliberation taking place outside institutions and then, as it becomes public opinion, affecting institutional deliberation. According to other authors, however, deliberations take place in voluntary groups especially (Cohen 1989). A strong supporter of the latter position and an expert in movement politics, John Dryzek (2000), has argued that social movements are best placed to build deliberative spaces that can keep a critical eye upon public institutions. Jane Mansbridge (1996) has also argued that deliberation should take place in a number of enclaves, free from institutional power – including that of social movements themselves. If social movements nurture committed, critical attitudes towards public institutions, deliberative democracy requires citizens "embedded" in associative networks able to build democratic skills among their adherents (Offe 1997: 102–3). As the experiment of Porto Alegre indicates, in the movements for globalization from below, deliberative practices have indeed attracted a more or less explicit interest.

Trying to summarize various and not always coherent definitions, we suggest that participatory democracy is empowered when, under conditions of equality, inclusiveness, and transparency, a communicative process based on reason (the strength of a good argument) is able to transform individual preferences and reach decisions oriented to the public good (della Porta 2005d). Some of the dimensions of this definition (such as inclusiveness, equality, and visibility) echo those included in the participatory models we have described as typical of new social movements, while others (above all, the attention to the quality of communication) emerge as new concerns.

First, as in the movement tradition, empowered participatory democracy is inclusive: it requires that all citizens with a stake in the decisions to be taken be included in the process and able to express their voice. This means that the deliberative process takes place under conditions of a plurality of values, where people have different perspectives on their common problems. Taking the participatory budget as an example, assemblies are held in all districts and are open to all citizens; the choice of the time and place aim at facilitating participation of all interested people (even kindergartens are organized in order to help mothers and fathers to participate).

Additionally, all participants are equals: deliberation takes place among free and equal citizens (as "free deliberation among equals," Cohen 1989: 20). In fact, "all citizens must be able to develop those capacities that give them effective access to the public sphere," and "once in public, they must be given sufficient respect and recognition so as to be able to influence decisions that affect them in a favourable direction" (Bohman 1997: 523–4). Deliberation must exclude power deriving from coercion, but also from an unequal weighting of participants as representatives of organizations of different size or influence. In this sense, deliberative democracy opposes hierarchies and stresses direct rank-and-file participation. In the participatory budget, rules such as the limited time for each intervention or the presence of facilitators are designed to allow equal opportunities for all citizens to participate.

Moreover, the concept of transparency resonates with direct, participatory democracy. In Joshua Cohen's definition, a deliberative democracy is "an association whose affairs are governed by the *public* deliberation of its members" (1989: 17, emphasis added). In deliberative democratic theory, public debate strives to "replace the language of interest with the language of reason" (Elster 1998: 111): having to justify a position before a public forces one to look for justifications linked to common values and principles.

What is new in the conception of deliberative democracy, and in some of the contemporary movements' practices, is the emphasis on preference (trans)formation, with an orientation to the definition of the public good. In fact, "deliberative democracy requires the transformation of preferences in interaction" (Dryzek 2000: 79). It is "a process through which initial preferences are transformed in order to take into account the points of view of the others" (Miller 1993: 75). In this sense, deliberative democracy differs from conceptions of democracy as an aggregation of (exogenously generated) preferences. Some reflections on participatory democracy have also included practices of consensus: decisions must be approvable by all participants (unanimous) – in contrast with majoritarian democracy, where decisions are legitimated by votes. Deliberation (or even communication) is based on the belief that, while not giving up my perspective, I might learn if I listen to another (Young 1996).

Consensus is, however, possible only in the presence of shared values and a common commitment to the construction of a public good (such as the common value of social justice in the participatory schema). In a deliberative model of democracy, "the political debate is organized around alternative conceptions of the public good," and above all, it "draws on identities and citizens' interests in ways that contribute to public building of public good" (Cohen 1989: 18–19). A deliberative setting facilitates the search for a common end or good (Elster 1998).

Above all, deliberative democracy stresses reason: people are convinced by the force of the better argument. In particular, deliberation is based on horizontal

flows of communication, multiple producers of content, wide opportunities for interactivity, confrontation on the basis of rational argumentation, and attitude to reciprocal listening (Habermas 1981, 1996). In this sense, deliberative democracy is discursive. According to Young, however, discourse does not exclude protest: "processes of engaged and responsible democratic participation include street demonstrations and sit-ins, musical works and cartoons, as much as parliamentary speeches and letters to the editor" (2003: 119).

Empowered participatory democracy has in fact been discussed as an alternative to top-down imposition of public decisions, which is increasingly seen as lacking legitimacy and becoming more difficult to manage, given both the increasing complexity of problems and the increasing ability of uninstitutionalized actors to make their voices heard. Deliberative processes should in fact allow the acquisition of better information and produce more efficient decisions, as well as fostering the participation and trust in institutions that representative models are less and less able to provide. Indeed, scholars highlight a "moralizing effect of the public discussion" (Miller 1993: 83) that "encourages people not to merely express political opinions (through surveys or referendums) but to form those opinions through a public debate" (ibid.: 89). Deliberation as a "dispassionate, reasoned, logical" type of communication promises to increase citizens' trust in political institutions (Dryzek 2000: 64).

As the Porto Alegre examples of both World Social Forums and participatory budgeting illustrate, movements experiment with participatory, discursive models of democracy both in their internal decision-making and in their interactions with political institutions. Internally, social movements have – with varying degrees of success – attempted to develop an organizational structure based on participation (rather than delegation), consensus-building (rather than majority vote), and horizontal networks (rather than centralized hierarchies). The search for a participatory model of internal democracy assumes an even more central role for the "global movement" that has mobilized transnationally, with regard to the governance of the process of market liberalization, with demands for a "globalization from below."

Internal democracy also represents a challenge for social movements, posing the always vivid dilemma of balancing participation and representation, strengthening the commitments of activists and including new members, identity-building and efficacy. Social movement organizations, traditionally poor in material resources, have to rely upon the voluntary work of their members – thus developing a "membership logic." Participatory models are adopted in order to enhance the distribution of identity incentives; in particular, the assembly represents the ideal opportunity for an open and (in principle) egalitarian space, while the small "affinity" groups stimulate the development of solidarity among equals. As with other forms of "applied" democracy, however, the practical functioning of these organizational structures is much less than perfect. Unstructured

assemblies tend to be dominated by small minorities that often strategically exploit the weaknesses of direct democracy with open manipulation; "speech" resources are far from equally distributed; the most committed, or better organized, control the floor; solidarity links tend to exclude newcomers. Consensual models developed to contrast the "tyranny" of organized minorities have their own problems, mainly bound up with extremely long (and sometimes "blocked") decision processes.

When protest declines (and with it, resources of militancy), movement organizations tend to survive by institutionalizing their structure: they look for money, either by building a mass paper membership, selling products to a sympathetic public, or looking for public monies, in particular in the third-sector economy. Movement organizations – as recent research has indicated – tend therefore to become more and more similar to lobbying groups, with a paid, professional staff; commercial enterprise, with a focus on efficacy on the market; and voluntary associations, providing services, often contracted out by public institutions (della Porta 2003b). These changes have usually been interpreted as institutionalization of movement organizations, with ideological moderation, specialized identities, and the fading away of disruptive protest. This evolution produces critical effects: bureaucratization, while increasing efficiency, discourages participation from below; interactions with the state and public institutions raise the question of the "representativity" of these new lobbyists.

As far as the social movement critique of existing democracy is concerned, their search for an alternative cannot be considered to have concluded. Not all students of social movement organizations agree that they have overcome the risks of producing oligarchies and charismatic leaderships, the very problems at the center of their critique of traditional politics. Although it maximizes responsiveness, the direct democracy model has weaknesses as far as representation and efficiency are concerned (Kitschelt 1993). Problems of efficiency affect the success of movement organizations themselves; problems of representation concern the legitimation of new forms of democracy. The refusal by social movements to accept the principles of representative democracy can undermine their image as democratic actors, particularly when they begin to take on official and semi-official functions within representative institutions, assuming the form of parties or public interest groups. Social forums, bringing together heterogeneous actors, pay great attention to the quality of internal communication, but with unequal results.

These limitations notwithstanding, it should be recognized that social movements have helped to open new channels of access to the political system, contributing to the identification, if not the solution, of a number of representative democracy's problems. More generally, recent research has stressed the role social movements can play in helping to address two related challenges to dem-

ocratic governance. On the input side, contemporary democracy faces a problem of declining political participation, at least in its conventional forms. The reduced capacity of political parties to bridge society and the state adds to this problem, while the commercialization of the mass media reduces their capacity to act as an arena for debating public decisions. On the other hand, the effectiveness of democracies in producing a just and efficient output is jeopardized, in part by the increasing risks in complex (and global) societies. The two problems are related, since the weakening in the ability of institutional actors to intervene in the formation of collective identities reduces their capacity to satisfy (more and more fragmented) demands. As Fung and Wright (2001) have stressed, "transformative democratic strategies" are needed to combat the increasing inadequacy of liberal democracy to realize its goals of political involvement of the people, consensus through dialogue, and public policies aimed at providing a society in which all citizens benefit from the nation's wealth.

9.5 Social Movements and Democratization

Can it be said, then, that social movements have contributed to the evolution of democracy? Charles Tilly (2004a: 125) stresses the existence of

> a broad correspondence between democratization and social movements. Social movements originated in the partial democratization that set British subjects and North-American colonists against their rulers during the eighteenth century. Across the nineteenth century, social movements generally flourished and spread where further democratization was occurring and receded when authoritarian regimes curtailed democracy. The pattern continued during the first and twenty-first century: the maps of full-fledged institutions and social movements overlap greatly.

If democratization promotes democracy via the broadening of citizens' rights and the public accountability of ruling elites, most, but not all, social movements support democracy. In fact, in pushing for suffrage enlargement or the recognition of associational rights, social movements contribute to democratization – "Gains in the democratization of state processes are perhaps the most important that social movements can influence and have the greatest systemic impacts" (Amenta and Caren 2004: 265). This was not always the case: some movements – e.g., fascist and neofascist ones – denied democracy altogether, while others – e.g., some New Left movements in Latin America – had the unwanted effect of producing a backlash in democratic rights (Tilly 2004b). Identity politics, such as those driving ethnic conflicts, often ended up in religious war and racial violence (Eder 2003).

Two different conceptions of the role played by social movements in the process of democratization have been singled out (Tilly 1993–4: 1). According to a "populist approach to democracy," emphasizing participation from below, "social movements contribute to the creation of a public space – social settings, separate both from governing institutions and from organizations devoted to production or reproduction, in which consequential deliberation over public affairs takes place – as well as sometimes contributing to transfers of power over states. Public space and transfers of power then supposedly promote democracy, at least under some conditions. To the "populist" approach is counterpoised an "elitist" approach according to which democratization must be a top-down process, while an excess of mobilization leads to new forms of authoritarianism, since the elites feel afraid of too many and too rapid changes.

We can agree that social movements contribute to democratization only under certain conditions. In particular, only those movements that explicitly demand increased equality and protection for minorities promote democratic development. In fact, looking at the process of democratization it can be observed that collective mobilization has frequently created the conditions for a destabilization of authoritarian regimes, but it can also lead to an intensification of repression or the collapse of weak democratic regimes, particularly when social movements do not stick to democratic conceptions. While labor, student, and ethnic movements brought about a crisis in the Franco regime in Spain in the 1960s and 1970s, the worker and peasant movements and the fascist countermovements contributed to the failure of the process of democratization in Italy in the 1920s and 1930s (Tarrow 1995).

However, social movements often openly mobilized for democracy. They formed transnational alliances in order to overthrow authoritarian regimes. In Latin America as well as in Eastern Europe, although in different forms, social movements asked for democratization, producing a final breakdown of neofascism as well as socialist authoritarian governments. Research in various regions has stressed that the first steps of democratization include a demobilization of civil society and the developments of more institutionalized political actors, following the opening up of institutional opportunities. In recent democratization processes, the availability of public and private funds in the third sector contributed to an early institutionalization of movement organizations (Flam 2001). However, this does not necessarily seem to be the fate of movements in phases of democratic consolidation (Hipsher 1998). Presence of a tradition of mobilization, as well as movements that are independent from political parties, can facilitate the maintenance of a high level of protest – as illustrated by the shantytown dwellers' movement in Chile (Hipsher 1998); the urban movement in Brazil (Sandoval 1998); or the environmental movements in Eastern Europe (Flam 2001).

Although with breaks and irregularities, democracy has brought about decreasing inequalities and protection from arbitrary government interventions

(Tilly 2004a: 127). Can we say that, in struggling for democracy, social movements have succeeded in radically changing the power distribution in society? Many signs discourage one from excessive optimism. Protest goes in cycles, and what is won during peaks of mobilization is once again jeopardized during moments of latency. The labor movement contributed to creating many social and political rights, but the neoliberal turn at the end of the twentieth century called into question the welfare state that had appeared to be an institutionalized achievement from the 1970s. Social inequalities are again on the rise. If protest is more and more accepted as "normal politics," some forms of contentious politics are more and more stigmatized as uncivilized in public opinion and are repressed by the police.

On a more optimistic note, we want to stress that a condition that is considered to limit social movement potential, at least as far as instrumental action is concerned, is in the process of changing: weak organizational structures. In fact, mobilization would appear to be a resource replenished by use. Analyses of the evolution of left-libertarian movements has concluded that different movements have developed in a similar direction, from the formation of a collective identity to its utilization in the political system (see, for example, della Porta 1996a). New movement organizations have emerged during this process and have, on occasions, survived the decline in mobilization. While public interest groups exploit the opportunity offered by the creation of new channels of access, small counterculture nuclei keep alive and reelaborate movement values within a structure of networks. This process has important effects on social movements.

Most social movements survive the decline of mobilization, oscillating between visibility and latency (Melucci 1989: 70–3), continuing within a larger family of movements, the organizational infrastructures and mobilization potential of which they help to increase. The "force" of collective identities can vary, some stronger (the women's movement), others weaker (the youth movement); some relatively visible (the environmentalist movement), others less so (the peace movement); some have a stronger presence at the national level (the antinuclear movement), others at local level (the urban movements); some are more political (federalist movements), others cultural (punks and skinheads). It rarely happens that a movement disappears leaving no cultural or organizational trace whatsoever. Instead, movements tend to reproduce themselves in sorts of virtuous (or vicious) circles. As mentioned, during cycles of protest early-riser movements set the examples for activating other movements either in support, imitation, or opposition to themselves. Some movements depart from others, in order to pursue more specific or otherwise related aims, with a spillover effect; other rise from internal splits, as spin-offs (Whittier 2004: 534).

Social movement resources increase over time, therefore, and movements become institutionalized, construct subcultural networks, create channels of

access to policymakers, and form alliances. This organizational continuity means that the experiences of "early-riser" movements are both resources and constraints for those that follow (Tarrow 1994; McAdam 1995). Processes of imitation and differentiation, enforced repetition and learning, take place contemporaneously. Movement activists inherit structures and models from their predecessors. At the same time, however, they learn from the errors of movements that have preceded them and seek to go beyond them. The greater the success achieved by early-riser movements and the greater the participation of ex-activists in subsequent mobilizations, the greater will be the continuity with the past.

The tendency towards the institutionalization of social movements and their diffusion as a form of organizing and mediating interests can be explained by the diffusion, with each wave of mobilization, of the capacities required for collective action. In fact, mobilization is facilitated by the presence of networks of activists willing to mobilize around new issues – where these are "compatible" with their original identities, naturally. Moreover, the substantive gains made by one movement can have beneficial consequences for the demands of other movements, and their success encourages further mobilizations. It can be concluded, therefore, that the importance of social movements tends to grow inasmuch as there is an ever-increasing amount of resources (both technical and structural) available for collective action. This surely contributed to the spread of participatory conceptions of democracy.

9.6 Summary

Social movement mobilization has been followed by change in a variety of areas. As far as public policy is concerned, a great deal of legislation has been produced on issues raised during protest campaigns. Any evaluation of the significance of the changes introduced by these laws requires analysis of their implementation as well as of transformations in the value system and in the behavior of both ordinary citizens and elites. Changes in public policy and public opinion have been accompanied by procedural changes, with the creation of new decision-making arenas no longer legitimated by the model of representative democracy. *Ad hoc* commissions, new government ministries, and local government committees constitute channels of access to the decision-making process frequently used by social movement organizations. Empowered participatory experiments have developed from the participatory agenda in Porto Alegre, characterized by attention to participation, good communication, and decisional power. Emphasis on participation over representation thus enriches the concept of democracy. In fact, with various degrees of success, social movements have recently paid attention to inclusive and equal participation, as well as consensus-building and good communication.

Although the variety of objectives, strategies, and actors involved in this process renders it difficult to identify winning strategies for new collective actors, it can, nevertheless, be said that in recent decades the structure of power in liberal democracies appears to have been transformed in the direction of greater recognition for new actors. Social movements have helped democratization in authoritarian regimes, but also contributed to more participatory approaches in representative democracies.