

Six movements in search of a social basis

Abstract

The literature on contemporary social movements represents a political reductionism within which the ascription of instrumental rationality to these movements appears both as premise and as conclusion. Hence it is unable to offer an adequate theory of the 'social bases' of movement action, despite the key status of this issue for instrumentalist theories of movements. Reorientation is, however, blocked by the political reductionism of the literature, for which the everyday social reality of the movements themselves is only of interest insofar as they represent a convenient vehicle for accounts of 'rationality' (individual or societal).

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Political reductionism and the circularity of 'rationality'

Political reductionism and the 'social movements' problematic

Contemporary challenges to the dominant order such as the women's, green and peace movements are conventionally treated as the subjects of a 'social movements' literature [1] which, despite internal divisions, is now widely seen as convergent by both critics and supporters (Diani 1992, Jones 1993) [2]. I will argue that this convergence derives from a common problematic (Althusser 1969, pp.253-4, 257) which ultimately reduces 'social movements' to essentially political phenomena on the basis of a flawed conception of rationality.

This effect can be found within both of the dominant approaches. Within the 'American political science' perspective, an economic focus on individual rationality, whether in the abstract as in 'resource mobilisation' approaches or in the context of a (national) 'political opportunity structure', is taken as the starting-point for the organisational analysis, or (as it is sometimes expressed) the 'how' of social movements. Here a particular version of rationality is explicitly taken as a methodological presupposition (see e.g. the critique in Cohen (1985, pp.674 - 676)) [3]. Within the 'European social theory' perspective, what we are offered is effectively a discourse of rationality at a societal level, which explains the 'why' of social movements, either in abstract accounts of the structure of contemporary society, or in the contexts of differing forms of class analysis (cf. the critique in Bagguley (1992, pp.26 - 38)). Here, in a sense, the emphasis is on constructing a plausible account of the rationality taken to be embodied in social movements.

The actual convergence of these two perspectives is then most evident in a shared assumption as to the existence of a rational link between the socially given 'interests' of the groups which make up the movements and the interaction of the movements with the polity. This, I will argue, ultimately translates into a series of variants of political reductionism, generated and held together by a limited concept of

rationality. The net result of this is that, as Alan Scott (1990, p.131) declares, citing Gramsci, 'all the essential questions of sociology are nothing other than the questions of political science' - or at least they are made to appear as such.

The problems with political reductionism

The difficulties which derive from this approach have to do with the circularity of the arguments that follow from it, where an author's definition of rationality appears both as a premise of the argument and as a conclusion. Alan Scott's recent work *Ideology and the new social movements* (1990) is a useful example here: like other recent authors (Eder 1985, Bagguley 1992) he effectively replaces one political reductionism by another and thus demonstrates the difficulty of escaping from the 'social movements' paradigm as currently constructed.

Thus his argument for an analysis of social movements in terms of social closure begins with the statement that 'Locating social movements in terms of social closure ... *assumes* [my emphasis] that the central theme / aim of these movements is integration'. It closes with the discovery that 'In sum, an analysis of social movements in terms of social closure and interest intermediation treats the integration of issues and groups into the policy as the criterion of social movement success.' (Scott 1990, p.136, p.152). However, no argument in support of this has been produced; rather, a methodological assumption has been transformed into a substantive conclusion.

Something similar happens in his institutional analysis: we are told in a programmatic way at the start that 'At the level of concrete political analysis new social movements ... can be viewed as a reaction to the failure of the institutions of interest intermediation: parliaments, the media and, especially, political parties.' At the end we find that 'It may be argued that social movements effect change largely through influencing existing institutions of political intermediation, particularly political parties.' (Scott 1990, pp.140, 152). In other words, a political reduction of the movements appears both as premise and as conclusion [4]. Scott's case is repeatedly presented in this way: as if an argument was to follow, or had already been presented, but without the argument itself.

Apart from the circularity of the theory, Scott's work also presents a good example of the effects of political reductionism on empirical research. Firstly, what is initially presented as an 'examination of [the] main ideological strands of "the new social movements" ' is reduced, on the next page and without explanation, to an examination of 'ecological ideology' (Scott 1990, pp. 80 - 81). Secondly, this is taken as effectively represented by the then West German Green Party, with no discussion of the notoriously thorny issue of the relationship between the party and the different 'new social movements' (Raschke 1991, pp.114 - 144). Thirdly, there is a reduction of 'ideology' to the writings of professional ideologists, but without any examination of this highly problematic assumption (see, for example, Eagleton 1991). Lastly, and most importantly, the issue of the representativity of these ideologists is left completely examined.

In fact, of the six figures whose views we are offered, only one (Joschka Fischer) has any claim to representativity, being both a regional party boss and a faction leader. Of the other five, only Petra Kelly was still a party member in 1990, but her reputation abroad was paralleled by a near-total lack of influence within the German party, shown by her failure to be reelected, her lack of factional affiliation, and the isolation which led to her recent death not being discovered for several days. Of the others, one (Otto Schily) had joined the SPD by the time Scott was writing; Rudolf Bahro had left the party five (!) years earlier, virtually without support (Raschke 1991, p.26); to the best of my knowledge Carl Amery has no political affiliations (cf. Schäfer 1983, p.127); and Herbert Gruhl had been running

splinter parties without electoral or other significance for almost a decade [5]. Thus, with the exception of Fischer, the actual ideologists and faction-leaders of the Green Party - people like Antje Vollmer, Jutta Ditfurth, Thomas Ebermann or Frieder-Otto Wolf - are ignored, as are the communication organs of the movement such as die Tageszeitung, Kommune or any of the purely internal magazines [6].

Once again, the argument is circular: we are told that 'Despite its grass-roots democratic principles the European ecology movement has indeed thrown up, and often centred around, political celebrities such as Petra Kelly, Otto Schily and Joschka Fischer' (1990, p.117). In other words, it is assumed that things centre around leaders, and we are presented with the conclusion that anyone Scott has heard of must be one of these leaders. As with the relationship between the 'movements' and the Green Party, the problem of the effectiveness or otherwise of 'grass-roots democracy' rules in strengthening ordinary members as against a leadership ?=élite has been the subject of intense discussion among academics and activists (Raschke 1991, pp.80 - 113); but none of this is reflected in Scott. It seems that political reductionism allows us to throw sociological problems of method overboard, but does not require the acquisition of the research skills appropriate to political science or to history [7].

Rationality and the disappearance of the object

This last example suggests something of what is wrong with this kind of reductionism. Not only does the apparent object of research - the phenomenological reality of social movements, the 'life-world' of West German Greens in 1990 - disappear from sight, but the issue of the relevance of the empirical material to this object is also ignored, so long as the material is relevant to the author's theoretical presuppositions. I take this to be another element of the idea of a 'problematic': that in effect the theory constitutes its own data. I am not convinced, however, that this is necessarily the case (Thompson 1977); rather, it is an effect of a particular approach to rationality. The world must be made to seem rational, in terms of the author's definition of rationality - there must, for example, be leaders - at any cost in terms of our attempts to understand (to explain rather than to explain away) that world [8].

In more formal terms, what is happening is, firstly, a confusion between methodology and ontology. Weber argued that social scientists construct 'ideal-typical' descriptions of processes in rational terms, but that these are heuristic devices, against which actual events must be measured (Weber (1984, pp.20 - 22), Sadri (1992, pp.11 - 22)). Much of the literature effectively identifies ideal types with reality *tout court*.

Secondly, there is a double short-circuiting of the concept of rationality which is used. On the one hand, no justification is given for a presupposition of instrumental rationality as the only available form of rational action, as opposed to, for example, value rationality (Weber 1984, pp.44 - 46) or communicative rationality (Habermas 1984, 1987) [9]. On the other hand, there is equally no justification for the assumption that the local contexts of rationality of social movement actors and social scientists coincide. Even instrumental rationality, in other words, cannot simply be abstracted from the lived contexts within which it may be used. Accounts in terms of 'substantive rationality' raise even more problems.

No account of rationality which is not grounded in an examination of the actual experiences and ways of thinking of social movement actors can be entirely credible. This is not simply an abstract criticism: the effect of the presupposition of rationality, as defined or (more commonly) taken for granted by the theorist, is to reproduce the well-known problems which derive from taking a similar approach to 'old' social movements and in particular the workers' movement. One of the

central problems in western Marxism (Jay 1984, Gottlieb 1989) over the past seventy years or so has been precisely to explain why actors have not behaved in the way that abstractly goal-rational accounts predicted.

The social basis at the end of the rainbow

I have argued, in effect, that the 'social movements' literature is based on the assumption of an abstract instrumental rationality which leads to a political reductionism. Within this framework, the different strands of the literature then converge in the attempt to discover a relationship of the appropriate kind between the socially given 'interests' of the groups which make up the movements and the action of the movements on the polity. The search for the 'social basis' of what is conceived of as political action, in other words, is a central one within the literature. In this next section, I will attempt to show that this search has been unsuccessful. More exactly, I will argue that an adequate resolution within the terms of the existing problematic has not been forthcoming, and that a resolution of the problem is in fact blocked off by these terms, in particular the political reductionism of the literature and the assumption of goal-rationality; and this despite the central status of the issue within the overall problematic: for any instrumentalist account, the failure to adequately explain the social sources of action is not a marginal one.

Universally present interests

The simplest accounts 'focus on the conditions which facilitate or constrain the occurrence of conflicts, taking the existence of potential grievances for granted', as Diani (1992, p.5) says of resource mobilisation and political process theories. A variant on this is found in much movement literature: here it is simply assumed that the rightness of the cause in question is a sufficient explanation for mobilisation [10]. Both approaches thus assume a very simple kind of rational interest, potentially shared by all members of society, in realising the stated aims of movement organisations, and necessarily pass to a discussion of organisation and action. Theories which argue that the issues are issues of 'species survival' or as related to universally present 'risks' clearly also fall within this category. In effect, these accounts deal with necessary conditions for movement mobilisation, but blunt the analysis by assuming these conditions to be universally given. The important question is then the identification of sufficient conditions which might explain why some individuals become involved but others do not [11].

More complex versions of this approach also assume that the relevant interests are universally given, but treat the social articulation of these interests as a process in which both the interest and the (collective) actor are formed in particular ways. This approach includes variants of collective behaviour theory which examine the formation of 'emergent norms' within collective actors (Diani 1992, p. 4; see also Brand's 'process model' of social movements (1982, pp.35 - 37)). There is then in a sense an increase in rationality from submerged interests to organised demands. However, given that a weak or contradictory specification of demands is often taken to be characteristic of contemporary movements (Raschke 1985, pp.105 - 116, Melucci 1989, pp.25 - 30, Tovey 1993), and that these movements are frequently seen as less dominated by formal organisations or organisational élites than earlier social movements (Diani 1992, pp.7 - 8), any strong version of this approach effectively takes its premises for its conclusion in the way we have seen earlier [12].

Socially specific interests

More substantive accounts take the social origin, and hence the social specificity, of interests as their starting point. The essential argument can be formulated as follows: Even if we granted that the interests represented by new movements or satisfied by participation had some value for everyone, this would still be outweighed for most people by other considerations and other interests. The important issue is then not the discovery of abstract, universal interests, but the analysis of the sufficient conditions under which such interests will become the foundation of action for specific individuals or groups. Simple structural determinisms assume a direct relationship between individual or group interest and movement formation. Constructivist accounts place the emphasis more on the self-formation of a collective actor from socially specific bases.

Straightforward structural determinisms

One kind of structural determinism is an analysis of contemporary movements as representing a 'petit bourgeois' ideology. Klaus Eder's (1985) account effectively falls into this category [13]. Thus we are offered sweeping, and ultimately a priori statements of the kind 'The petite bourgeoisie are predestined by their social situation to be protesting moralists' (1985, p.888). This account conflates small property-owners, managers and the public-sector 'new middle class' into a single category which appears ultimately to be defined by being neither bourgeois nor proletarian; it produces both a very peculiar account of new social movement issues, within which (for example) the peace movement and the women's movement are seen as 'collective moral protest[s]' which 'follow[] the logic of the ritual reversal of official reality' (Eder 1985, p.879). The difficulty here, since the new middle class has been collapsed back into the old middle class, is to explain the historical specificities of the movements; this is resolved in effect by denying that there are any. This approach also fails to offer any theorisation of the actual relations of production and reproduction experienced by the 'new petite bourgeoisie' which might explain the admitted differences from the old petite bourgeoisie in terms of social movement activity (Eder 1985, pp.877 - 878) [14].

Other accounts do just this and offer a reason for the differential participation of the 'old petite bourgeoisie' and the 'new' in terms of 'new class' analyses. Trivial versions of this argue that the interests of this class, specified as 'unemployed academics', involve forcing the state to create jobs for them (Bürklin 1987); it is then unclear why this should generate peace and ecology movements rather than movements in support of an extension of the welfare state. More credible accounts focus on different aspects of well-known changes in social structure, identifying this new class as a 'service class' (Lash and Urry 1987), as related to an increasingly differentiated cultural sphere (Alber 1989), or other variants on definition by occupational position or macrosocial 'function'.

A sophisticated version of this approach is found in Buttel, who sees an increasing differentiation of 'subordinate class groupings' in 'post-Fordist' society, leading to their inability to unite (1993, p.18). This account (and others which treat social or ideological heterogeneity as problematic), however, assumes an overly homogenous working class in 'Fordist' society: the creation of the working class as an effective social actor has always involved the negotiation of differences, the exertion of hegemony, the playing-down of gender, ethnic and religious divides, and so on (Thompson 1968, Gramsci 1971). This points to a more general difficulty in these accounts: while the role of 'historically-contingent factors' (Buttel 1993, p.17) or of class-for-itself (Lash and Urry 1987) is nominally recognised, in practice what is given with the left hand is taken away with the right, and we are left with an account of social-structural givens translating mechanically into predictable forms of action. [15] This means that accounts of the 'service class' such as Lash and Urry's

have no real way to explain differential participation within the class: not only are managers or planners fairly unlikely to participate in social movements, they are likely to be their immediate opponents.

A third version of this approach, best represented by Inglehart (1990), identifies structural givens on a non-class basis (effectively identified with economic security and changes in child-rearing practices): since these new conditions are related to income and culture, this tends to become a stratification equivalent to the 'new class' approach (although here it is assumed that everyone can ultimately become 'post-materialist'), and is vulnerable to the same criticisms. Simple structural determinisms, in other words, ought to be able to account for patterned differences in participation, but they can only do so partially [16].

Constructivist accounts

There is thus a move from simple structural determinisms to accounts which leave more space for the self-formation of movements and which can therefore afford a looser specification of social bases. Following by now traditional 'new left' critiques of determinist Marxism, these stress the creation of social movements as an active process, emphasise the need to deal with cultural questions of class consciousness, ideological hegemony and class culture, and query overly simplistic notions of social class as universally determining and equivalent to occupational position. What is put in place of these explanations is then a different matter.

The most thorough-going *Weberian* constructivism is that offered by Hradil (1987), who describes a multiplicity of 'life situations' based on the domination of individuals' experience by their positive or negative position on different axes of inequality (of income, power, risk, etc.), and the formation of different 'lifestyles' corresponding more or less closely to these first groups. This enables the identification of an 'alternative-left' milieu whose goals of 'integration, participation and self-realisation' can be related to participation in new social movements.

A more *marxisant* version of this approach, based on the same data, can be found in Hermann (1990), who follows Bourdieu in seeing only two central axes - economic and cultural capital - but identifies a rather looser relation between the groups identified in relation to these axes and the habitus associated with 'new social milieus'. This approach can generate something very close to empirically available descriptions of, for example, the Green vote in Germany (Kleining and Krotz 1986). However, it is again not an explanatory model: this is explicit in Hradil and implicit in Hermann, who refers explanation to Bourdieu's more general model. In particular, the link between social-structural location and milieu formation is not elucidated.

Lastly, a number of writers (Giddens (1987, 1990), Bagguley (1992), but see also Offe (1985) and Wilde (1990)) attempt to resolve a similar difficulty by offering such a link in the form of what is effectively substantive rationality. In other words, rather than proceeding 'upwards' from the social basis, the basis is specified 'downwards', in terms of the structural features it challenges.

For Giddens, social movements are related to the institutional dimensions of modernity; the relationship is not ultimately specified more closely than the statement that the created environment deriving from industrialism, for example, forms the 'site of struggle' for the ecological movement. The peace movement is similarly related to the industrialisation of war, free speech and democratic movements to the development of 'surveillance', and the labour movement to the development of capitalism (Giddens (1990, pp.158 - 161); cf. Giddens (1987, pp.22 - 28)). This is not in itself an explanation, however [17].

The implicit suggestion is a purely rational one: that movements are substantively rational responses to particular problems. This is then apparently divorced from any

notion of a social basis to movement challenges: movements are not simply formed, for example, by those who are disadvantaged by particular institutional developments, but rather 'realizing the goals [of emancipatory politics] often depends upon the realization of the agencies of the privileged' (Giddens 1990, p.162). Quite why the 'agencies of the privileged' should challenge the very institutions that their privilege is based on is not made clear, and we are left with a sort of Whiggery run riot, in which all actors, including not just social movements but also public opinion, government and corporation policy-makers, and 'international organisations' (Giddens 1990, pp.161 - 162), are seen as contributing, each in their own small way, towards substantive rationality on a global scale. Giddens' approach, in other words, tends, to the extent that it is coherent, to 'disappear' both movements and their social bases, leaving only general accounts of the difficulties of steering contemporary societies.

Bagguley (1992) perhaps goes furthest in his rejection of determinist analyses of contemporary movements, observing correctly that these accounts fail to show how the links they postulate between interests and movements in fact operate. Such accounts close off, he argues, 'the possibility of a structural approach to [new social movements] which delivers a causal analysis specifying the social relations outside of class relations in which [new social movements] may be grounded'. These relations are then identified as 'those social relations which [new social movements] seek to transform in some way' (1992, p.37). The approach is then similar to Giddens', but more coherent and more plausible insofar as agency is identified explicitly with struggles within these relations. Bagguley also offers a rethinking of the 'social basis' issue by identifying the 'new middle class', which figures so prominently in many accounts of contemporary movements, with Gramsci's 'traditional intellectuals', so that their participation does not of itself say anything about the class basis of the movements in question, which are essentially explained as substantively rational responses to structural problems. Lawrence Wilde's (1990) distinction between 'class for itself' and 'class for itself and for all', and Claus Offe's argument that new social movements represent the 'politics of a class, but not on behalf of a class' (1985, p.838) follow a similar strategy of identifying rationality, not at the level of the actor, but at a societal level or as substantive rationality. This is essentially a delaying tactic, however: if the problems are real and the movement challenge is rational, why is the challenge not universal? At this point, of course, we are back at the start [18].

A dead end

In other words, constructivist accounts tend to rely on societal or substantive rationality, but cannot account for the specifics of its social incarnation. Determinist accounts simply fail to offer a theoretically and empirically adequate account of the 'social basis'. In both cases, in the conflict between offering an adequate account of the 'social basis' and the authors' construction of rationality, the second always wins out; the phenomenology of contemporary movements is bracketed in favour of discussions of class structure, modernity, and so on - or, more exactly, it is deduced from them. This is a critical failure for the 'new social movements' literature, which sets out precisely to demonstrate that movement activity can be explained in instrumentalist terms.

Trying to break out: Alberto Melucci

Alberto Melucci's (1989) account of the meaning of social movements is simultaneously one of the most serious responses to the 'social movement'

problematic and a vivid demonstration of the need to transcend it. He argues that much of the contemporary literature is characterised by an a priori political reductionism which focuses only on the impact of the new movements on the political system, describing this as representing a 'myopia of the visible' which 'ignores the way in which the visible action of contemporary movements depends upon their production of new cultural codes within submerged networks' (1989, p.44) [19].

Melucci's analysis starts from the argument that the root of contemporary movement formation is a system-immanent contradiction deriving from the growth of macro-social reflexivity which counterposes a systemic logic of integration and control to the distribution of the information resources employed to operate this system, which then form a 'potential for individualisation' (1989, p.48). New middle-class and 'affluent marginal' groups are then seen as central to these contradictions, where their growing potential for the individual control of action is countered by the expropriation of this reflexivity and self-production: in other words, this approach examines both problem and response, or substantive and local rationality.

Melucci's analysis of movement formation sees collective action, proceeding initially from these groups, as ultimately creating its own bases: 'In complex societies collective action creates new spaces which function as a genuine sub-system. These social spaces are the products of different forms of behaviour which the system is unable to integrate, and include not only conflictual action but also deviant behaviour and cultural experimentation' (1989, p.56). There then seems to be a developmental aspect to this:

'In the 1980s, collective action came to be based on 'movement areas'. These take the form of networks composed of a multiplicity of groups that are dispersed, fragmented and submerged in everyday life, and which act as cultural laboratories. They require individual investments in the experimentation and practice of new cultural models, forms of relationships and alternative perceptions and meanings of the world. The various groups comprising these networks mobilize only periodically in response to specific issues. [My emphasis.] The submerged networks function as a system of exchanges, in which individuals and information circulate. Memberships are multiple and involvement is limited and temporary; personal involvement is a condition for participation. The latent movement areas create new cultural codes and enable individuals to put them into practice.' (Melucci 1989, p.60)

This development is seen as leading towards 'soft' and multiple organisations and a distinction between 'intense but temporary mobilisations and movement networks that produce information, self-reflection and symbolic resources'. These networks are absolutely fundamental for the movements: 'collective action is nourished by the daily production of alternative frameworks of meaning' (1989, p.70); and 'the potential for resistance ... is located in the molecular experience of the individuals or groups who practice the alternative meanings of everyday life.' (1989, p.71).

At this point it would surely seem natural to move from a focus on movements to a focus on these 'movement areas' or 'networks' (a shift which also seems to be indicated by accounts such as those of the Hannover group (Clemens 1990, Geiling 1990, Vester et al. 1993)). The networks are seen as (1) more continuous and stable than the movements; (2) forming the ultimate source of movement mobilisation; and (3) operating in everyday life. If we add the argument, made in Raschke (1985, pp.74-5) and elsewhere, that the 'new social movements' are to be seen as forming a single, albeit heterogenous, whole, then a reversal of the terms, in which the focus is on these 'movement areas' of which movements are a temporary outgrowth, seems to be called for. This is particularly true since Melucci pulls away from the traditional political reductionism to argue that collective conflicts are becoming increasingly personal, in the sense of a tension between public declaration of aims and direct innovatory practice in daily life, and that conflicts are increasingly about

meanings. Thus, Melucci argues, collective action is 'pre-political' (rooted in everyday life experience) and 'meta-political' (incapable of being fully represented by political forces) (Melucci 1989, p.72).

However, this distancing from goal-rational assumptions is not sustained. The option of shifting to an analysis of networks is apparently recognised, but rejected in a curious footnote which appears to be based on Melucci's assumption that representation prevents fragmentation: he argues that 'collective actors are prone to disperse, fragmented and atomized, into networks which quickly disappear into sects, emotional support circles and therapy groups' (1989, pp.71-2) [20]. This 'disappearance' of collective action would, however, surely be a matter for empirical investigation rather than a prior dismissal. What Melucci is saying seems to be rather that the networks 'disappear' from relevance because they no longer have a political output: we note that what is covered by the rather odd formula of 'sects, emotional support circles and therapy groups' is treated as a non-existence into which networks 'disappear'. They clearly do not disappear in phenomenological terms; the disappearance seems to be a political one. In other words, Melucci identifies the (immediate) social basis of contemporary movements correctly, notes its logically prior status to the movements themselves, but cannot accept that it has an independent existence.

This, I think, can only be explained in terms of a definition of relevance for which only (directly or indirectly) political events are real. The possibility of a cultural challenge is not considered: this despite the statement that movements include 'symbolic challenges' which lead to 'a molecular change which is cultural in the anthropological sense: an alteration of daily life, of ways of living and forms of social and personal relationships' (1989, p.75) [21]. Within the 'social movements' problematic as currently constructed, in other words, even the most 'culturalist' authors and the most challenging conceptions of the social origins of new movements are ultimately retained within an assumption of what we might call the 'last instance' priority of instrumental political rationality.

Beyond the 'social movements' problematic

What are the implications of this critique for research in this area? One obvious response is that attention needs to be shifted from 'social movements' and 'social bases' to those social formations which not only mediate between these two, but which are on the one hand more continuous and more firmly rooted in everyday life than social movements and on the other hand more directly connected to conflictual meanings and practices than a purely objectivist account of class as structural position allows for: in other words, what Melucci describes as 'networks' or 'movement areas'. These need to be examined in their own terms, as a prerequisite for any effective discussion of movements. This would mean a move away from a reductionism which is interested only in those networks whose impact is visibly political, and only in the political aspects of those networks: both cultural contestation and defensive strategies of withdrawal, a response to 'contestation' from above, are possible. This would then enable a more grounded account of social movements, which could bridge the gap between accounts of 'new social movements' and accounts of the labour movement which offer less reductionist accounts of class culture and organisation (Wilde 1990, Thompson 1968); it might also go some way towards bridging the gap towards some cultural studies perspectives (McRobbie 1994).

It would also make it possible to escape the definition of apparently isolated 'movements' in terms of 'issues'. In the 'social movements' literature this has been a natural effect of goal-rational accounts, but it is undercut by the recurring assumption in most, if not all, authors, that the social basis of the different 'new

social movements' is substantially the same. If the immediate 'social basis' consists of groups who 'mobilize only periodically in response to specific issues' (Melucci 1989, p.60), it becomes plausible to argue that the isolation of individual movements is more an effect of (activist or academic) rhetoric than it is a real feature of their operation; and I would certainly argue that in practice mobilisation 'in response to specific issues' tends to upset definitions of 'movements' which are based on overly reductionist concepts of 'the issues'.

Lastly, if the critique of the presupposition of instrumental rationality makes it possible to reconceptualise movement contexts, it also transforms the nature of the modes of rationality operative in these contexts into an open question for research, rather than an a priori theoretical issue. In other words, the meanings and practices created within these contexts become of interest in their own right.

I think it makes sense to argue, as a number of authors have done, that we cannot think in terms of a single, transcendentally justified but universally present mode of rationality. Authors such as Habermas (1984, 1987) and Offe (1985) argue for a distinction between logics of instrumental rationality and logics of communicative rationality, within which social movements are located or which they aim to defend or expand. Other authors, such as Melucci (1989) or Sulkunen (1992), argue for the presence of radicalised forms of reflexivity in these or related contexts, which undercut instrumental rationality by turning forms of organisation, for example, into an end in themselves rather than simply a means to an end. This should not be taken as an alternative a priori position, but as a starting point for research into the actual local modes of rationality of these contexts.

We may then find, for example, that the interaction between new ways of life and forms of subjectivity on the one hand, and new socio-political forces on the other - in present-day Ireland, for example, the interaction between "holistic healing", new spirituality, alternative lifestyles etc. and ecological and feminist activism on the other -, appears less as an illegitimate or irrelevant case of correlation or confusion of essentially distinct categories than as a natural intermingling of what we classify as 'political' or 'cultural' activity on the part of networks which are articulated around both, and where both flow naturally from the local modes of rationality which operate within the everyday world of these networks. In this spirit, it is possible that the concepts of 'skills' and 'knowledge' - or, in more Gramscian terms, 'directive' and 'theoretical' intellectual activity - could bridge the gap between an ideal-typical account of modes of rationality and an effective analysis of actual practices and meanings [22].

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Footnotes

1 The distinction between those authors who make use of the phrase 'new social movements' and those who prefer a different language is an increasingly artificial one, and is not employed here.

2 While Diani's attempt at a definition of the 'social movement' concept goes some distance in the direction that I am arguing for, it assumes a correspondence between the definition of the concept and its usage which is absent in practice.

3 Cohen notes that Touraine excludes 'strategic rationality' from his concept of social movements. However, Touraine's insistence that "social movements" are only those which represent a challenge to the control of "historicity" (societal self-production and reproduction) effectively replaces one political focus with another one (Touraine 1981, p.77).

4 In this curious procedure, the earlier concession that 'culturalist theories do have a partial explanation of social movements['] effects in terms of cultural innovation' (Scott 1990, p.134) seems to have sunk without trace.

5 See e.g. Jurtschitsch et al. (1988) for a snapshot of party debate in this period. (I spent the academic year 1990-91 as a participant observer within the Hamburg-Altona Greens and other 'alternative' contexts.)

6 Joachim Raschke's (1991) study of the party, by contrast with Scott's book, not

only makes the attempt to discover the actual interrelations of ideas and political organisation, but also has the merit of being based on a considerable amount of empirical research.

7 An equally sloppy approach is taken by Giddens (1987, p.31), who discusses the 'ecology movement' on the basis of an examination of the manifestoes of the European Green Parties, equally without considering the extent to which they represent the actual 'ideology' of the parties concerned, let alone the movement.

8 Alternatively we might say that an account of social movements is being constructed which corresponds, not even to those of their features which are directly available to research (see Wainwright (1994, pp.100 - 106) for a relevant discussion of 'critical realism' in this context), but to those aspects of movements which are readily available in the library. This is of course not true of authors such as Melucci or Touraine, who are attempting (unsuccessfully, as I shall argue below) to escape from this whole approach.

9 Claus Offe's (1985, p.852) argument on the lesser applicability of "the economic logic of efficiency" in social contexts marked by 'decommodification' has some parallels with Berger, Berger and Kellner's (1974) argument that "demodernising consciousness" is blocked by direct interaction with the socially central processes of economic and political reproduction.

10 While authors such as Offe and Bagguley also argue that movements are responding to real structural problems, they proceed to make the case that the social basis of the movements can be identified, in terms of the differential impact of these problems (Offe 1985, pp.842 - 848, 850 - 853; Bagguley 1992, pp.40 - 44).

11 Here, as in other accounts oriented towards economic discussions based on the assumption of purely instrumental action by individual actors, the 'free rider' problem becomes a paradox. This argues that it makes more sense for any given individual to sit back and let others act for them. In social movement contexts, of course, this is a paradox, since the issue is precisely the explanation of collective action (Cohen 1985, pp.676 - 677).

12 Weak versions simply present general claims as to supposedly inherent logics of organisation, but once again fail to specify sufficient conditions for the mobilisation of particular social groups.

13 Despite his critique of purely 'objective' or 'subjective' accounts of class, Eder's argument amounts to positing a single necessary relationship between class situation and class consciousness, and in practice appears as a very traditional determinism: 'The petit bourgeois consciousness corresponds with the objective position of that class' (1985, p.876), etc. Müller (1990) and Vester (1993) make significantly better use of the concept of habitus.

14 For Eder (as in effect for Touraine) a social movement has to be 'rational', by which he clearly means 'substantively rational', since the remainder of the argument is replete with discussion of the 'logic' of the social-structural position of the petite bourgeoisie. Hence, what might appear to be social movements fail to qualify because they aren't sufficiently rational.

15 This of course parallels Marx's argumentative strategy in the Communist Manifesto (Marx 1967, pp.89 - 91): on the one hand the distinction between class-in-itself and class-for-itself is accepted, but on the other hand it is predicted that the one will necessarily turn into the other.

16 One of the best descriptions of these differences is given by Raschke (1985, pp.416 - 417), who sees the social basis of the new movements as consisting of the 'human services intelligentsia', overlapping with marginalised groups and with a broader 'resonance group' including in particular those affected by particular developments. Claus Offe (1985, pp.833 - 834, 850 - 853) attaches what seems to me to be an extremely ad hoc explanation to a similar description of the social basis.

17 It is also worth noticing that Giddens is incapable of accounting for the women's movement in this context (Giddens 1990, pp.61 - 162).

18 Offe does offer a potential way out of this by arguing that 'The broad constituency of movements as well as their pool of activists are drawn from those social groups which are most likely to be affected by the negative consequences of these processes and / or those who have the easiest cognitive access to the working of these processes and their consequences'. Unfortunately, his explanation for the observation that 'levels of education (and possibly the recency of educational experience as indicated by age) plays the most important role as a contribution of new movements' activism' hinges on the claims that 'educated people would not only be more competent to form their own judgment but also less bound by rigid reliance on the judgment of others' (Offe 1985, pp.848-851). Offe is explicitly concerned to argue that new movements represent a further stage in modernity and that their values are modernist rather than anti-modernist.

19 Melucci is a strong proponent of what Cohen (1985) describes as the 'identity' paradigm within the social movements literature: he argues that identity, or the formulation of cognitive frameworks, the activation of relationships among actors, and the making of emotional investments, is a necessary feature of collective action and can thus never be entirely instrumental or negotiable. Movement action is also seen as partially cultural in operation: it 'transmits a message to the rest of society'; 'its goals are temporary and to a certain extent replaceable' (1989, p.56). There is thus a radical rejection of traditional goal-rational accounts. However, as I shall argue, the bottom line for Melucci remains the political thrust of the movements.

20 This may derive from one of Melucci's criteria for defining a 'social movement', as being something which 'breaks the limits of compatibility of a system' (Melucci 1989, p.29; Melucci's emphasis). Claus Offe has a similar argument, but explicitly states its dependence on political criteria (Offe 1985, pp.826-7).

21 It is worth noting that Raschke (1985:, pp.105 - 116) explicitly argues that orientations to power or to culture are equally possible for social movements.

22 Hilary Wainwright's (1994) attempt to rethink the cognitive foundation for a new left makes some important steps in this direction.
