Supporters of the EU argue that it has delivered half a century of stability, peace and prosperity. It has helped to raise living standards, built a single Europe-wide market, launched the single European currency, the euro, and strengthened Europe's voice in the world. The EU fosters cooperation among the peoples of Europe, promoting unity while preserving diversity and ensuring that decisions are taken as close as possible to the citizens. In the increasingly interdependent world of the twenty-first century, it will be even more necessary for every European citizen to cooperate with people from other countries in a spirit of curiosity, tolerance and solidarity.

Sources: European Union 2005; The Economist 2005b

Former Secretary-General of the UN, Kofi Annan, has been highly influential in international politics, for example. Held also argues that non-governmental organizations, such as Oxfam and Amnesty International, as well as social movements can also play an important role in the creation of global social democracy. Below, we look in more detail at the increasing significance of social movements in society and how sociologists have understood their emergence and growth.

Social movements and social change

Political life, as our discussion above shows, is by no means carried on only within the orthodox framework of political parties, voting systems and representation in legislative and governmental bodies. It often happens that groups find that their objectives or ideals cannot be achieved within, or are actively blocked by, this framework. Despite the spread of democracy we explored earlier, the persistence of authoritarian regimes in many countries – such as China, Turkmenistan and Cuba – reminds us that effecting change within existing political structures is not always possible. Sometimes political and social change can only be brought about through recourse to non-orthodox forms of political action such as revolutions or social movements.

What are social movements?

The most dramatic and far-reaching example of non-orthodox political action is revolution – the overthrow of an existing political order by means of a mass movement, using violence. Revolutions are tense, exciting and fascinating events; understandably, they attract great attention. Yet for all of their high drama, revolutions occur relatively infrequently.

The most common type of non-orthodox political activity takes place through social movements – collective attempts to further a common interest or secure a common goal through action outside the sphere of established institutions. A wide variety of social movements besides those leading to revolution have existed in modern societies, some enduring and some transient. Social movements come in all shapes and sizes. Some are very small, numbering no more than a few dozen members; others may include thousands or even millions of people. While some social movements carry on their activities within the laws of the society in which they exist, others operate as illegal or underground groups. It is characteristic of protest movements, however, that they operate near the

margins of what is defined as legally permissible by governments at any particular time or place.

Social movements often arise with the aim of bringing about change on a public issue, such as expanding civil rights for a segment of the population. In response to social movements, counter-movements sometimes arise in defence of the status quo. The campaign for women's right to abortion, for example, has been vociferously challenged by anti-abortion ('pro-life') activists, who argue that abortion should be illegal.

Often, laws or policies are altered as a result of the action of social movements. These changes in legislation can have far-reaching effects. For example, it used to be illegal for groups of workers to call their members out on strike, and striking was punished with varying degrees of severity in different countries. Eventually, however, the laws were amended, making the strike a permissible tactic of industrial conflict. Similarly, lesbian and gay movements have been largely successful in raising the issue of equal rights and many countries around the world have equalized their laws on the legal age of sexual activity for heterosexuals and homosexuals.

Social movements are among the most powerful forms of collective action. Well-organized, persistent campaigns can bring about dramatic results. The American civil rights movement, for example, succeeded in pushing through important pieces of legislation outlawing racial segregation in schools and public places. The feminist movement scored important gains for women in terms of economic and political equality. In recent years, environmental movements have campaigned in highly unconventional ways to promote sustainable forms of development and change attitudes towards the natural environment.

Social movements are as evident a feature of the contemporary world as are the formal, bureaucratic organizations they often oppose, and some scholars suggest that we may be moving towards a global 'social movement society', which provides fertile ground for this type of collective action. For this reason, we need to explore sociological theories of social movements.

Theories of social movements

For most of the twentieth century, social movements were seen as rather unusual phenomena by sociologists. As with other forms of collective behaviour, such as the study of riots, crowds and revolutions, they seemed to be marginal to the practice of mainstream sociology (Tarrow 1998). This began to change with the emergence of a new wave of movements from the 1960s, which attracted a fresh generation of sociologists looking to understand and explain them. When they did so, they found the existing theories of social movements to be inadequate for the task. To see why, we must take a brief tour through some of the earlier social movement theories.

Collective behaviour and social unrest

The Chicago School of Sociology is often seen as the first to systematically chart forms of collective behaviour and to turn these into a specialist field of inquiry in sociology from the 1920s (Della Porta and Diani 2006). Scholars in the Chicago tradition, including Robert E. Park, Ernest W. Burgess and Herbert Blumer, saw social movements as *agents* of social change, not merely as *products* of it. In this sense, they began to theorize social movements in more productive ways.

Herbert Blumer (1969) was the foremost social movement analyst in the Chicago tradition of symbolic interactionism. He devised a theory of social unrest to account for the unconventional protest activities of social movements outside the sphere of formal party politics and interest

Classic Studies 22.2   Neil Smelser on understanding social movements

The research problem

Social movements have become very common and you yourself may well be part of one, if not more than one. They often appear unannounced, taking sociologists by surprise. But they can also collapse in much the same way. Does this mean that their emergence is entirely random, the product of chance and unpredictable circumstances? How might they be linked to wider social changes? Can we develop a general theory of movement emergence and development that would help us to understand the process better? Sociologist, Neil J. Smelser, worked with Talcott Parsons and studied collective behaviour from a structural functionalist perspective, aiming for just such a theory of social movements.

Smelser's explanation

Smelser (1962) devised a theory of *structural strain* to account for the emergence of social movements, though one thing that marks out his perspective is that it amounts to a 'value-added model' of movement emergence. This idea is taken from economic theory and suggests that social movements emerge through a process with identifiable stages, with each successive stage 'adding value' to the emerging movement. In the case of social movements, this model sees each stage making an addition to the probability that collective behaviour or a social movement will be created. In this sense, Smelser's argument is multi-causal, rejecting all notions of a single cause of social movements. This was a very important moment in the study of social movements.

Smelser argued that six 'value-added' elements are necessary for a social movement to develop:

1 *Structural conduciveness.* All social movements take place within a wider social context and this structural context has to be conducive to movement formation. For example, in authoritarian societies there may be very little scope for people to gather together in large groups or to demonstrate legally against things they oppose. Therefore, opponents of the regime may have to find other, less open, ways to pursue change. The situation is not structurally conducive to social movement activity. In recent years, social movement scholars have used the concept of 'political opportunity structure' to describe the ways in which political systems create or deny opportunities for movements to develop (Tarrow 1998) and this concept clearly owes much to Smelser's earlier idea (Crossley 2002).

2 *Structural strain.* If the social structure is conducive to collective behaviour, then there needs to be a strain between people's expectations and social reality. When people expect or have been led to expect certain things from society and these expectations are not met, frustrations arise and people look for other ways to meet them. Robert Merton made use of strain theory in his account of high levels of working-class acquisitive crime, which, he argued, was the product of a mismatch between the cultural goal of material success and the limited means to achieve this legitimately (see chapter 21, 'Crime and Deviance').

3 *Generalized beliefs.* Smelser argues that if the first two conditions are met, then it is necessary for generalized beliefs about the causes of strain to develop and spread in order to convince people of the need to join or form a social movement. He sees such generalized beliefs as often quite primitive and based on wish fulfilment, rather than rationally thought through.

4 *Precipitating factors.* These are essentially events that act as sparks to ignite the flame of protest action. A good example of this would be the removal of Rosa Parks from a racially segregated bus in the USA in 1955, which triggered protests and became a key event in the black civil rights movement. Precipitating factors help to make social strains more immediately visible for potential supporters. Without them, the process of movement formation may be stalled for a long period.

5 *Mobilization for action.* Having witnessed a precipitating event, the next 'value-added'

---

representation. Essentially, Blumer saw social movements of all kinds as motivated by dissatisfaction with some aspects of current society, which they sought to rectify. In doing so, they were trying to build a 'new order of life'. Blumer argued:

> Social movements can be viewed as collective enterprises to establish a new order of life. They have their inception in a condition of unrest, and derive their motive power on the one hand from dissatisfaction with the current form of life, and on the other hand, from wishes and hopes for a new scheme of living. The career of a social movement depicts the emergence of a new order of life. In its beginning, a social movement is amorphous, poorly organized, and without form; the collective behavior is on the primitive level. . . . As a social movement develops, it takes on the character of a society. It acquires organization and form, a body of customs and traditions, established leadership, an enduring division of labor, social rules and social values – in short, a culture, a social organization, and a new scheme of life. (1969: 8)

Blumer's theory of social movements as social unrest makes some important points. For example, he saw that movements can be 'active' or outwardly directed, aiming to transform society, or they can be 'expressive' or inwardly directed, trying to change the people who become involved. An example of the former would be the labour movement, which aimed to radically change capitalist societies in egalitarian ways, while the latter would include 'New Age' movements, which encourage people to transform their inner selves. In practice, most social movements involve both active and expressive elements as movement activists and supporters undergo changes in their self-identity as a result of campaigns to change society. Many environmental campaigns, for example, are explicitly aimed at preventing environmental damage, but in the process they often generate an increasing self-identification with the natural world, thereby transforming people's perception of self.

Blumer also argued that social movements have a 'life-cycle', many of which involve four consecutive stages. First. there is 'social ferment', when people are agitated about some issue but this is relatively unfocused and disorganized. This develops into a stage of 'popular excitement' during which the sources of people's dissatisfaction are more clearly defined and understood. In the third stage, formal organizations are normally created which are able to bring about a higher level of coordination to the emerging movement and a more effective campaigning structure is put in place. Finally comes 'institutionalization', in which the movement, which was originally outside mainstream politics, comes to be accepted as part of the wider society and political life. Of course, some movements partly succeed, while others completely fail. Some endure over quite long periods of time, while others simply run out of finances or enthusiasm, thus ending their life-cycle. This idea of a life-cycle has proved to be extremely productive and has been central to many more recent studies, particularly in the USA, which shows that Blumer's work continues to have an influence in social movement studies (Goodwin and Jasper 2002).

One problem with this interactionist approach is that, although it treats movements as meaningful phenomena – which was a clear breakthrough at the time – its studies tended not to explore the rational decisions and strategies of movement activists. This aspect was left for later scholars to pursue. Second, although the approach produced some very detailed case studies of particular movements, critics argued that these were largely descriptive accounts that did not really pay enough attention to explanations that were able to connect social movement activity to changes in the social structure (Della Porta and Diani 2006).

Resource mobilization

Traditions of social movement research in the USA and Europe have tended to be quite

The response of governments and authorities to social movement protests can be instrumental in encouraging or discouraging further activism.

element is effective communication via the formation of an active social network which allows activists to perform some of the functions necessary for successful protest and organization-building; writing and distributing pamphlets, organizing demonstrations, taking membership fees and so on. All of this activity requires a higher level of networking and social networking.

6 *Failure of social control.* The final causal factor in Smelser's model is the response of the forces of social control. The response of authorities can be crucial in closing down an emergent social movement or creating opportunities for it to develop. Sometimes an over-reaction by authorities can encourage others to support the movement, especially in our media-dominated age. For example, the widespread media reports of heavy-handed treatment of Greenpeace activists aboard the *Greenpeace III* in 1972, served to create the impression of a David and Goliath

confrontation that attracted many onto the side of the underdog. However, severe repressive measures can sometimes bring emergent social networking to a halt if people perceive the risks of continuing to be too great.

Critical points

Smelser's theory was subjected to critical attacks. In focusing attention on generalized beliefs, Smelser's model implied that individuals are motivated to start social movements for irrational reasons, rooted in misleading ideas about their situation. This fell back into an older tradition that saw movements as unusual or marginal phenomena. Social movement studies since Smelser have moved towards seeing activists as rational actors who weigh the costs and benefits of their actions (see Olson 1965) and social movements are seen as part and parcel of social life rather than marginal to it. Smelser's theory was also structural functionalist in orientation, setting social movements in the

context of their adaptive function during periods of rapid social change. Movements reassure people that something is being done to deal with their concerns. But the theory suffered indirectly from attacks on Parsonian functionalism and, probably unfairly, was not built on until quite recently.

Contemporary significance

Smelser's work on social movements has deservedly received more attention in recent years and is undergoing something of a

resurgence. It still offers a multi-causal model of movement formation and even critics have extracted elements from it – such as ideas within resource mobilization theory, political opportunity structures and frame analysis – which have proved very productive (Crossley 2002). Similarly, his model connects movement activism to social structures and may provide insights into the rise of new social movements. Revisiting these stimulating ideas is long overdue.

different. In the USA, social movements have been studied using some form of rational choice theory, which assumes that individuals make rational decisions, based on weighing up the choices facing them at any particular time. In Europe, though, as we will see later, the focus has tended to be much more on the connections between social movements and social classes within theories of broad social change. It has been suggested that American approaches mainly (though by no means exclusively) focus on the question of *how* movements become organized, while European approaches focus on *why* social movements emerge when they do (Melucci 1989).

One of the most influential American perspectives in social movement studies is resource mobilization theory (RMT). RMT developed in the late 1960s and 1970s, partly as a reaction to social unrest theories, which appeared to portray social movements as 'irrational' phenomena. Against this view, advocates of RMT argued that movement participants behaved in rational ways and movements themselves were purposeful, not chaotic (Oberschall 1973; Tilly 1978; Zald and McCarthy 1987). RMT theorists argued that capitalist societies produce chronic discontent amongst sections of the public, which renders social unrest theories problematic. Social unrest is

always present and movements therefore cannot be explained by reference to it. What turns this chronic discontent into effective mobilizations and social movements, they argue, is the availability of the necessary *resources* to mount effective campaigns that challenge the established order. This point is nicely illustrated by Merl Storr:

The central insight of resource mobilization theory is actually very basic: social movements need resources. Suppose you and I are members of a social movement. If we want to call a meeting, we need to have somewhere to hold it. If we want to publicize a protest action such as a demonstration, we need to be able to make leaflets, posters or fliers and to reproduce large numbers of them, and to distribute them widely. If we want to book our meeting space or contact our printer, we are probably going to need a telephone – and some money to pay for it all. As well as these material resources, we are more likely to be successful if we can call on other, less tangible resources – an address book full of useful contacts, practical know-how in poster design or web-site construction, and even just the time and energy to devote to our activism. According to resource mobilization theory, the more of these resources we can mobilize, the more likely we are to be successful in our pursuit of social change. (2002: 182)

In RMT, political dissatisfaction is not enough, in itself, to bring about social change. Without resources, such dissatisfaction does not become an active force in society. RMT does have something of an economistic feel, drawing similarities between social movements and the competitive market economy. That is, the theory pictures social movements as operating within a competitive field of movements – a 'social movement industry' (SMI) – within which they compete for scarce resources, not least members and activists. Social movement organizations (SMOs) therefore find themselves in competition with other SMOs, some of which may appear to share their aims.

Although RMT has helped to fill the gap left by social unrest theories, by producing very detailed studies of how movements and movement organizations acquire resources and mobilize their campaigns, critics still see these as partial accounts. In particular, RMT underplays the effects on social movements of broad social changes such as the trend towards post-industrialism or globalization processes. These may change the context of movement struggles. For example, the increasingly global political context has meant that traditional UK conservation organizations such as the National Trust have come under pressure from the new international environmental organizations such as Greenpeace, whose ideology and campaigns seem to fit the changing context more closely.

It may also be objected that RMT has little explanation for social movements that achieve success with very limited access to resources. Piven and Cloward (1977) analysed 'poor people's movements' in the USA, such as unemployed workers in the 1930s, black civil rights in the 1950s and welfare movements of the late 1960s and '70s. Surprisingly, they found that the main successes of these movements were achieved during their formative stage, before they became properly organized. This was because activists in the early stages were very enthusiastic and took part in many direct actions such as strikes and sit-ins. But once they became more effectively organized, direct actions became fewer and the 'dead hand of bureaucracy', as described by Max Weber and Robert Michels, took over as the movements lost momentum and impact. This is quite the reverse of what we would expect according to RMT and shows that, sometimes, a lack of resources can be turned to a movement's advantage.

See chapter 18, 'Organizations and Networks', for discussions about Weber's and Michels's work on bureaucracy.

THINKING CRITICALLY

Choose a social movement from the ones discussed so far in the chapter and research its history, development and successes. Analyse this material using RMT, showing what the theory can tell us about *how* the movement became organized and *why* it succeeded or failed in its aims. What aspects of the movement, if any, does RMT *not* address?

New social movements

Since the late 1960s there has been an explosion of social movements in many countries around the globe. These new movements include student movements in the 1960s, civil rights and feminist movements of the 1960s and '70s, anti-nuclear and ecological movements of the 1980s, gay rights campaigns of the 1990s – and many more. Collectively, this group of movements is often referred to by European scholars as new social movements (NSMs). This is because the late 1960s is seen as ushering in a new *type* of social movement that diverges from previous forms (Touraine 1971, 1981). Sociological theories of NSMs try to address the question of why this has happened when it did and, in some ways, this approach complements the general focus of RMT on how movements garner resources and make use of them.

However, 'new' in this context means more than just 'contemporary'. There are four main ways in which NSMs are said to differ from 'old' movements, which we will now outline.

New issues

NSMs have introduced some new issues into political systems, many of which are relatively unrelated to simple material self-interests. Instead, these issues are concerned with the 'quality of life', including the state of the global environment, animal welfare and animal rights, peaceful (non-nuclear) energy production and the 'identity politics' associated with gay rights and disabled people's movements.

For NSM theorists, these movements reflect a very broad social transformation from an industrial to a post-industrial society. While industrial politics centred on wealth creation and its distribution, post-industrial politics centres on postmaterial issues. Ronald Inglehart (1977, 1990) conducted surveys of social values in more than 25 industrialized countries and found that younger generations exhibited postmaterial values. That is, they took for granted a certain material standard of well-being and were more likely to be concerned with the quality rather than the quantity of life. This 'glacial', generational shift in values, Inglehart argued, could be explained by several factors. The post-1945 generation did not experience the depression and hardship of their parents' generation, nor did they have personal experience of war. Rather, they became used to post-war peace and affluence, being raised in the context of a 'post-scarcity socialization', in which the historic obstacle of food scarcity at least appeared to have been solved for good. This generation also had a different experience of work as a growing service sector took over from the old industrial workplaces. These enormous social changes led to the demise of an 'old' politics, which was rapidly giving way to a 'new', post-industrial form of politics.

New organizational forms

NSMs also appeared to be different in the way they organized. Many of them adopted a loose organizational form that rejected the formal organization that earlier social movement theorists argued was necessary for success. NSMs looked much more like loose networks of people. In addition, they seemed to have no single centre or headquarters, preferring a polycephalous, or 'many-headed', structure. This meant that should one local group break the law and face prosecution, the rest of the network could carry on, but this structure also suited the emotional needs of activists, who tended to be younger and imbued with postmaterial values and identities.

Alberto Melucci (1989) saw that this organizational form itself carried a message, namely the symbolic rejection of the aggressively masculine, bureaucratic power politics of the industrial age, typified by some trade unions and party politics. The first President of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Havel (1988) described this as a form of anti-hierarchical and 'anti-political politics', insofar as it opposed mainstream party politics, but was itself a new type of cultural politics rooted in social movements. What marked out this new form of politics was a self-imposed limitation. NSMs did not seek to take over the state and use the levers of state power to change society; instead, they looked to appeal directly to the public by working at the cultural level. This strategy has been described as a 'self-limiting radicalism' that contrasts sharply with the state-centred politics of socialism and the labour movement (Papadakis 1988).

New action repertoires

Like all other social movements, NSMs use a range of protest actions, from political lobbying, to sit-ins and alternative festivals, but one thing that characterizes their action repertoire' is non-violent, symbolic direct

POLITICS, GOVERNMENT AND SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

actions. Like the rejection of bureaucratic organization, the adoption of non-violence is an attempt by NSMs to practise in the present the changes they would like to see within society in the future. In this way, non-violent protest allows NSMs to take a high moral stance in relation to the forces of the state, such as the military and police. Many NSM actions aim to present aspects of society to the public that were previously unseen and unknown. For example, campaigns against nuclear and toxic waste dumping in the UK, the culling of seal pups in Newfoundland, animal cruelty, the destruction of woodlands for road-building or the presence of disabling environments all showed people things of which they may not previously have been aware. Of course, these issues are presented in ways that support the campaigners. We always know whose side we should be on: the plucky, defenceless underdog against the violence of big business and the state.

NSMs tend to make extensive use of the mass media to generate support – filming their own protests, showing videos on the Internet, organizing campaigns using text messaging and email and creating a perspective on politics that encourages ordinary people to become empowered to participate. Such efforts illustrate well the point made by Melucci (1985) that NSMs are forms of communication: 'messages' to society which present symbolic challenges to the existing political system.

New social constituencies

Finally, many studies of NSM activists have shown a predominance of the 'new' middle class that works in the post-1945 welfare state bureaucracies, creative and artistic fields and education (including many students). This finding led some to describe NSM activism as a form of 'middle-class radicalism' (Cotgrove and Duff 1980). Many of the large demonstrations – against nuclear weapons, or in favour of animal welfare, and so on – attract a 'rainbow coalition' of retired people, students, first-time protesters, feminists, anarchists, socialists,

traditional conservatives and many more. However, it seems that the working classes are not involved in significant numbers in NSM politics. Again, this marks a significant change from the industrial period with its working-class-based movements.

Some have argued that the postmaterial politics of the NSMs is not a self-interested politics on behalf of middle-class interests, but seeks to improve the quality of life for everyone (Eckersley 1989).

> ### THINKING CRITICALLY
> What evidence is there in Peter Tatchell's account (opposite) of his experiences with the UK Gay Liberation Front, which suggests that this organization was part of a NSM? How did the GLF learn from and adapt some of the tactics and campaigning methods of other social movements? Thinking back to Blumer's distinction between 'active' and expressive movements, how would you characterize the gay and lesbian movement?

As should be clear from this characterization, many observers argue that NSMs are a unique product of late modern society and are profoundly different in their methods, motivations and orientations from forms of collective action in earlier times. We can view new social movements in terms of a 'paradox of democracy'. While faith in traditional politics seems to be waning, the growth of NSMs is evidence that citizens in late modern societies are not apathetic or uninterested in politics, as is sometimes claimed. Rather, there is a belief that direct action and participation is more useful than reliance on politicians and political systems. More than ever before, people are supporting social movements as a way of highlighting complex moral issues and putting them at the centre of social life. In this respect, NSMs are helping to revitalize democracy in many countries. They are at the heart of a strong civic culture or civil society – the sphere between the state and

22.3   The birth of gay liberation

The formation of the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) in London in 1970 was the defining watershed moment in queer history. For the first time ever, thousands of lesbians and gays stopped hiding in the closet and suffering in silence. We came out and marched in the streets, proclaiming that we were proud to be gay and demanding nothing less than total equality.

That had never happened before. Lots of gay people in 1970 were ashamed of their homosexuality and kept it hidden. They wished they were straight. Some went to quack doctors to get 'cured'. Many accepted the bigot's view that being 'queer' was second rate.

Until the 1970s, the state branded gay sex as 'unnatural, indecent and criminal', the Church condemned homosexuality as 'immoral and sinful' and the medical profession classified us as 'sick' and in need of 'treatment'. Queers were routinely sacked from their jobs, arrested for kissing in the street, denied custody of their children, portrayed in films and plays as limp-wristed figures of ridicule, and only ever appeared in the news as murderers, traitors and child molesters.

Straights vilified, scapegoated and invisibilised us – with impunity. And very few gay people dared question heterosexual supremacy.

Indeed, prior to GLF, most gay rights campaigners masqueraded as straight, and pleaded for 'tolerance' rather than acceptance. Some argued that we needed 'help', not criminalisation. They urged heterosexuals to show 'compassion' for those 'afflicted' by the 'homosexual condition'.

This apologetic, defensive mentality was shot to pieces by GLF. It transformed attitudes towards homosexuality – among both gay and straight people.

Inspired by the Black Power slogan 'Black is Beautiful', GLF came up with a little slogan of its own, which also had a huge impact: 'Gay Is Good!'. Back

MISS TRIAL COMPETITION 1971

MAN IS WOMAN IS PEOPLE COME TOGETHER

GAY LIBERATION FRONT   HOMOSEXUALS SUPPORT   WOMENS LIBERATION.   HOMOSEXUALS

GLF

then, it was absolutely outrageous to suggest there was anything good about being gay.

Even liberal-minded heterosexuals mostly supported us out of 'sympathy' and 'pity'. Many reacted with revulsion and horror when GLF proclaimed: '2–4–6–8! Gay is just as good as straight.' Those words – which were so empowering to queers everywhere – frightened the life out of smug, arrogant straight people who had always assumed they were superior.

This challenge to heterosexual supremacism kick-started a still ongoing revolution in cultural values. GLF overturned the conventional wisdom on matters of sex and human rights. Its joyous celebration of gayness contradicted the straight morality that had ruled the world for centuries. The common-sense, unquestioned assumption had always been that queers were bad, mad and sad.

All that prejudiced nonsense was turned upside down in 1970. While politicians, doctors, priests and journalists saw homosexuality as a social problem, GLF said the real problem was society's homophobia. Instead of us having to justify our existence, we forced the gay-haters to justify their bigotry.

Like many others of my generation, GLF changed me for the better – and forever. When I heard about the formation of the Gay Liberation Front, I could not wait to get involved.

Within five days of my arrival in London from Australia, I was at my first GLF meeting. A month later I was helping organise many of its witty, irreverent, defiant protests. Being part of GLF was a profound personal liberation – arguably the most exciting, influential period of my life.

GLF's unique style of 'protest as performance' was not only incredibly effective, but also a lot of fun. We had a fabulous collection of zany props and costumes, including a whole wardrobe of police uniforms and bishop's cassocks and mitres.

Imaginative, daring, humorous, stylish and provocative, our demonstrations were both educative and entertaining. We mocked and ridiculed homophobes with wicked satire, which made even the most hard-faced straight people realise the stupidity of bigotry.

A 12 foot papier-mache cucumber was delivered to the offices of Pan Books in protest at the publication of Dr David Reuben's homophobic sex manual, *Everything You Always Wanted To Know About Sex*, which implied that gay men were obsessed with shoving vegetables up their arses.

Christian morality campaigner Mary Whitehouse had her Festival of Light rally in Central Hall Westminster invaded by a posse of gay nuns, who proceeded to kiss each other when one of the speakers, Malcolm Muggeridge, disparaged homosexuals, saying 'I just don't like them' (the feeling was mutual).

On the night of the Miss World contest at the Royal Albert Hall, GLF's legendary street theatre group staged an alternative pageant on the pavement outside, starring 'Miss Used', 'Miss Conceived' and 'Miss Represented', plus a starving 'Miss Bangladesh' and a bloody bandaged 'Miss Ulster'.

There were also more serious acts of civil disobedience to confront the perpetrators of discrimination. We organised freedom rides and sit-ins at pubs that refused to serve 'poofs' and 'dykes'. A lecture by the psychiatrist, Professor Hans Eysenck, was disrupted after he advocated electric-shock aversion therapy to 'cure' homosexuality.

As well as its feisty protests, GLF pioneered many of the gay community institutions that we now take for granted. It set up the first help-line run by and for gay people (which later became Gay Switchboard); the first pro-gay psychiatric counselling service (Icebreakers), and the first gay newspaper (Gay News). These and many other trail-blazing institutions helped shape the gay community as we know it today, making a huge positive difference to the lives of lesbians and gay men.

Thirty years on, we've come a long way baby! As we look back at the giant strides for freedom that lesbian and gay people have made since 1970, let us also remember with pride that GLF was where it all started.

Source: Peter Tatchell, QX Mardi Gras Day Guide, 1 July 2000; www.petertatchell.net/

now operate in a very different set of historical circumstances from those of earlier movements. In particular, processes of globalization mean that systematic and much more immediate connections across national boundaries become possible and, with this, the possibility of genuinely global social movements.

The rise of NSMs also reflects some of the changing risks now facing human societies. The conditions are ripe for social movements, as increasingly traditional political institutions find it harder to cope with the challenges before them. They find it impossible to respond creatively to the negative risks facing the natural environment from nuclear energy, the burning of fossil fuels or experimentation in bio- or nanotechnology. These new problems and challenges are ones that existing democratic political institutions cannot hope to fix, and as a result they are frequently ignored or avoided until it is too late and a full-blown crisis is at hand.

The cumulative effect of these new challenges and risks may be a growing sense that people are 'losing control' of their lives in the midst of rapid change. Individuals feel less secure and more isolated – a combination that leads to a sense of powerlessness. By contrast, corporations, governments and the media appear to be dominating more and more aspects of people's lives, heightening the sensation of a runaway world (Giddens 2002). There is a growing sense that, left to its own logic, globalization will present ever greater risks to citizens' lives.

In our current information age, social movements around the globe are able to join together in huge regional and international networks comprising non-governmental organizations, religious and humanitarian groups, human rights associations, environmental activists and others who campaign in the public interest. These electronic networks now have the unprecedented ability to respond immediately to events as they occur, to access and share sources of

the marketplace occupied by family, community associations and other non-economic institutions (Habermas 1981).

However, NSM theory has come in for some sharp criticism. All the supposedly 'new' features identified above have been found in 'old' social movements. For example, postmaterial values were evident in some small-scale communes in the nineteenth century (D'Anieri et al. 1990). A focus on identity creation was also a crucial, perhaps defining, aspect of all nationalist movements and early women's movements. Such historical evidence led Craig Calhoun (1993) to describe these old movements, ironically, as 'new social movements of the early nineteenth century'.

Others saw NSM theorists as too quick to draw radical conclusions from little empirical evidence. Over time, some NSMs have developed formal organizations and these have become more bureaucratic than the theory allows for. Greenpeace is the most notable example. Originally a loose network of like-minded individuals involved in numerous direct actions, over time Greenpeace has become a very large business-like organization with a mass membership and huge financial resources. Indeed, it seems to conform much more to the long-term process of change identified by Blumer and RM theorists which Claus Offe called, 'the institutional self-transformation' of the NSMs. Finally, even some of the apparently 'new' issues have been seen as rather older. Environmental politics, for instance, can be traced back to the European and North American nature defence organizations of the mid-nineteenth century and is perhaps best understood as an enduring social movement which has passed through various stages of growth and decay (Lowe and Goyder 1983; Paehlke 1989).

Globalization and the 'social movement society'

Despite the critical barrage aimed at NSM theory, it is apparent that social movements

information, and to put pressure on corporations, governments and international bodies as part of their campaigning strategies. The enormous protests against the war in Iraq in cities around the world in February 2003, for example, were organized in large part through Internet-based networks, as were the protests outside the meeting of world leaders in Genoa in 2001, and the protests that took place in Seattle in 1999 against the World Trade Organization. Similarly, the emergence of the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil in 2001 was one element of an 'even newer social movement' (Crossley 2003) that aims to provide a global space for debates on what progressive politics really means and can offer in the twenty-first century (see 'Global Society 22.2').

The Internet has been at the forefront of these changes, although mobile phones, fax machines and satellite broadcasting have also hastened their evolution. With the press of a button, local stories are disseminated internationally. Grass-roots activists from Japan to Bolivia can meet online to share informational resources, exchange experiences and coordinate joint action.

While rejecting some of the claims to novelty of the NSMs, Sidney Tarrow argues: 'What is new is that they have greater discretionary resources, enjoy easier access to the media, have cheaper and faster geographic mobility and cultural interaction, and can call upon the collaboration of different types of movement-linked organizations for rapidly organized issue campaigns' (1998: 207–8). Acknowledging these changes raises the possibility that we may be moving towards a 'social movement society' (Meyer and Tarrow 1997) in which the nationally bounded social movements of the past give way to movements without borders. The World Social Forums with their democratic principles (see 'Global Society 22.2') give us one example of such a prospect, though it is important to recognize that the global networks of al-Qaeda – a social movement terrorist organization – give us another

(Sutton and Vertigans 2006). There is no certainty that an emerging movement society will see the widespread adoption of the non-violence that characterized the wave of NSMs in the 1960s and '70s in the industrialized world. Indeed, the more ready access to weapons and the information needed to build them holds out the more terrifying prospect of a more violent social movement society.

See chapter 23, 'Nations, War and Terrorism', for a wider discussion of violence in human affairs.

THINKING CRITICALLY

In 'Global Society 22.2', the World Social Forums (WSFs) are said to have been more successful in protesting and networking than proposing solutions. Why should this be the case? What obstacles do such global forums face when trying to bring new voices into democratic debates? What evidence is there that WSFs may be early harbingers of a more global form of democracy beyond national state systems?

The last dimension discussed above – the ability to coordinate international political campaigns – is the one that is the most worrying for governments and the most inspiring to participants in social movements. In the last two decades, the number of 'international social movements' has grown steadily with the spread of the Internet. From global protests in favour of cancelling Third World debt to the international campaign to ban landmines (which culminated in a Nobel Peace Prize), the Internet has proved its ability to unite campaigners across national and cultural borders. Some observers argue that the information age is witnessing a 'migration' of power away from nation-states into new non-governmental alliances and coalitions.

Global Society 22.2   The three faces of the World Social Forum

The World Social Forum (WSF) is about three things, a young Frenchman told me. We were coming back from Kenya together. He had been to most of them since they first began in Porto Alegre in Brazil in January 2001. They are, he said, about protesting, networking and proposing.

Protesting power
When they began, before 9/11, the protest was against the World Economic Forum (WEF) at Davos, which appeared to celebrate the end of government and the triumph of market-driven, 'neoliberal' capitalism and its rampant inequality. It was in the wake of the battle of Seattle in November 1999 that disrupted the world trade talks. The creation of the WSF as anti-Davos ensured that the new century began with a multinational stand in the name of the peoples of the world against the presumptions of the world economic order.

Since 2001, until this year [2007], the WSFs have grown and, undoubtedly, shifted the agenda, making sure that the big battalions have not had it all their own way. It has been a remarkable achievement. In 2004 the WSF was held in Mumbai with an enormous mobilisation of Indian organisations. In 2005 it returned to Porto Alegre. In 2006 it went regional or 'polycentric': to Caracas in Venezuela, Karachi in Pakistan and Bamako in Mali. One reason for this was that the decision had been taken to hold the next full world forum in Kenya, giving the organisers plenty of time to prepare against the backdrop of poor infrastructure.

Thus, this year, global civil society and Africa were planned to come together for the seventh World Social Forum in Nairobi (20–25 January 2007), close to the great rift valley from which the human species first emerged in triumph on its own two legs. The hope was that in 2007 the social movements of the world would inspire African civil society to stand up and show its strength, wisdom and the music of its needs.

For, unlike the mere protest mobilisations such as Seattle in 1999 (or the one being planned for the G8 meeting in June 2007 in Germany's remote Baltic resort of Heiligendamm), WSFs are designed as a form of positive protest, exemplary sites of solidarity with the struggles of the poor, to give voice to the 'have-nots'.

Networking Africa
In its second role, as an event for networking, I was impressed. In his account of this disappointment with what he felt was a lack of politics, Firoze Manji in Pambazuka News considers whether Nairobi's WSF was 'just another NGO fair'. But where else can the far-flung universe of all those who are working for a better world come together? In advance, the organisers boasted that 150,000 would attend. When it opened, they claimed 50,000. I doubt if more than 20,000 participated, including Kenyans (but not including the water-vendors).

But still, to get 20,000 people from around the world to equatorial Africa is an achievement. A wonderful, friendly variety of views, arguments, dress, interests, beliefs and backgrounds came together in many conversations – such as Susan Richards and Solana Larsen described in their openDemocracy reports and blogs from previous WSFs.

Below the radar of the public platforms, from the Habitat International Coalition to the network on water resources, and women's rights to human rights, new connections were being made and a younger generation was assessing the intercontinental scene. Patricia Daniel in her blog described this energy and intensity among the women's networks that were a large part of the forum.

Thinking beyond
This brings us to the third role of the WSF. After the protests and the networking, what does it propose? Thomas Ponniah (who gave an interview to openDemocracy on the nature of the WSF in February 2003) put this question to a small session on the future of politics: 'For seven years we have built a global consciousness. The question is, what next?'

The last meeting I attended was a gathering of all the social movements, organised by Christophe Aguiton of Attac. Trevor Ngwane of the South African anti-privatisation forum led the proceedings. About a thousand people initially thronged the spacious double tent. Being of the greying dreadlocks generation, I enjoyed chanting 'Down with Bush' (but drew the line at 'Viva Chávez'). There was much condemnation of the

participants. On the other hand, social movements are thriving, bringing new issues and campaigning methods into the mainstream. The conventional left-right political division now looks much less clear-cut. Is opposing road-building on environmental grounds a right-wing or left-wing position? Are those who propose that animals have rights that should be protected on the political left or right? Such issues seem to cut across the old political distinctions, but, particularly in the case of environmentalism, they are becoming more relevant to younger generations than the older materialist politics rooted in the workplace.

For political sociologists, understanding political systems now means getting to grips with social movements, which increasingly organize internationally, can mount large protests anywhere in the world and link the central issues of the industrialized nations with those that exercise activism in developing countries. In this century, sociologists may have to work across disciplinary boundaries and specialist subjects if they are to better understand where the 'new' politics is taking us.

international support groups had emerged online to promote the cause of the rebels and to condemn the Mexican government's brutal repression of the rebellion. The Zapatistas used telecommunications, videos and media interviews to voice their objections to trade policies, such as the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which further exclude impoverished Indians of the Oaxaca and Chiapas areas from the benefits of globalization. Because their cause was thrust to the forefront of the online networks of social campaigners, the Zapatistas were able to force negotiations with the Mexican government and to draw international attention to the harmful effects of free trade on indigenous populations.

Conclusion

Political life has clearly been undergoing some major changes in recent decades. Democracy has become much more widespread around the world, but in many of the established representative democracies voters seem to be less than enthusiastic

Summary points

1. The term 'government' refers to a political apparatus in which officials enact policies and make decisions. 'Politics' is the means by which power is used and contested to affect the scope and content of government activities.
2. A state exists where there is a political apparatus, ruling over a given territory, whose authority is backed by a legal system and by the ability to use force to implement its policies. Modern states are nation-states, characterized by the idea of citizenship, a recognition that people have common rights and duties and belong to a broader, unifying political community.
3. Power, according to Max Weber, is the capacity to achieve one's aims even against the resistance of others, and often involves the use of force. Steven Lukes devised a three-dimensional view of power which sees power as residing in non-decisions and agenda-setting as well as meeting self-interests against others. A government is said to have authority when its use of power is legitimate; legitimacy derives from the consent of those being governed. The most common form of legitimate government is democratic, but other legitimate forms are also possible.
4. In authoritarian states, popular participation is denied or severely curtailed. The needs and interests of the state are prioritized over those of average citizens and there are no

commercialisation of the forum, about which a Brazilian speaker said: '[It] is not enough that our cause be pure and just, purity and justice must also be within us'.

But an answer to Ponniah's question came there none. In the different specialist areas there was strategic thinking. In smaller sessions there were arguments for engagement. Emira Woods of the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, DC insisted that 'grassroots campaigns, national campaigns and global campaigns can influence government'. In a dedicated session on implementing United Nations resolution 1325 to enhance the role of women (which I blogged), Cora Weiss called for 'participation, critical thinking and a holistic approach that engages with the issues'.

There was participation in Nairobi. The holistic approach was often just knee-jerk, 'oppose all forms of exploitation'. At that overall, movement level, there was little if any strategic thinking.

As a result, this year Davos won. Since that first WSF in 2001 China has doubled its wealth and output; India, and Turkey, have grown theirs by more than half. Then, Google had only recently got its initial funding. Today, the argument on climate change is over. For all the glitz and its versions of hot air, these huge changes are being seriously mapped and assessed at Davos. In Nairobi they were addressed only peripherally, if at all.

Larry Elliot, the economics editor of the Guardian, sensed at Davos 'more than a hint of a return to the future: a scramble for Africa, a sidelining of civil society, and geopolitical concerns trumping human rights'. If so, there needs to be a World Social Forum that continues to set out its different claim on the global future in a way the world notices. Its international committee should be very concerned that this is slipping away.

Source: Anthony Barnett, 30 January 2007; www.opendemocracy.net/globalization-protest/wsf_faces_4297.jsp

Policy advisers in think-tanks such as the RAND Corporation (in the United States) have spoken of 'netwars' – large-scale international conflicts in which it is information and public opinion that are the stakes in the contest, rather than resources or territory. Participants in netwars use the media and online resources to shape what certain populations know about the social world. These online movements are often aimed at spreading information about corporations, government policies or the effects of international agreements to audiences who may otherwise be unaware of them. For many governments – even democratic ones – netwars are a frightening and elusive threat. As a US Army report has warned: 'A new generation of revolutionaries, radicals and activists are beginning to create information age ideologies in which identities and loyalties may shift from the nation state to the transnational level of global civic society' (quoted in the Guardian, 19 January 2000).

Are such fears misplaced? There are reasons to think that social movements have indeed been radically transformed in recent years. In The Power of Identity (1997), Manuel Castells examined the cases of three social movements which, while completely dissimilar in their concerns and objectives, all attracted international attention to their cause through the effective use of information technology. The Mexican Zapatista rebels, the American 'militia' movement and the Japanese Aum Shinrikyo cult have all used media skills in order to spread their message of opposition to the effects of globalization and to express their anger at losing control over their own destinies.

According to Castells, each of these movements relies on information technologies as its organizational infrastructure. Without the Internet, for example, the Zapatista rebels would have remained an isolated guerrilla movement in southern Mexico. Instead, within hours of their armed uprising in January 1994, local, national and

Further reading

A good introductory text which should give a feel for political sociology is Kate Nash's *Contemporary Political Sociology: Globalization, Politics and Power* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1999). Keith Faulks's *Political Sociology: A Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999) is also a useful book which provides exactly what it says.

For up-to-date coverage of political ideologies including environmentalism, Andrew Heywood's *Political Ideologies: An Introduction*, 4th edn (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007) is a tried and trusted work.

For those interested in democratization, Bernard Crick's *Democracy: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002) is a good place to begin your reading, and David Held's *Models of Democracy*, 3rd edn (Cambridge: Polity, 2006) is a much more involved book, looking at the history of the concept and its reality.

Donatella Della Porta and Mario Diani's *Social Movements: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2006) covers a lot of ground and includes reference to many social movements. An excellent book dealing with theories of social movements is Nick Crossley's *Social Movements: An Introduction* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 2002), which carefully dissects older as well as recent theories for useful insights. Jeff Goodwin and James M. Jasper's *The Social Movements Reader: Cases and Concepts* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2003) is an edited collection covering a range of movements that is engagingly organized according to the process of a movement life-cycle.

Finally, another edited collection by Thomas Janoski, Robert Alford, Alexander Hicks and Mildred Schwartz, *The Handbook of Political Sociology: States, Civil Societies, and Globalization* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), is a useful resource with a broad coverage.

Internet links

Foreign Policy – Washington, DC, US-based site with lots of political articles and comment: www.foreignpolicy.com/

International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance – based in Stockholm, Sweden, provides information and analysis in support of democratization: www.idea.int/

Intute: Social Sciences, Politics – UK-based gateway for political sociology resources: www.intute.ac.uk/socialsciences/politics/

World Politics Review – 'a daily foreign policy, national security and international affairs Web publication': www.worldpoliticsreview.com/

openDemocracy – London, UK-based site which 'aims to ensure that marginalized views and voices are heard' on issues of global importance: www.opendemocracy.net/

The World Social Forum – 'another world is possible': www.wsf2008.net/

United Nations Research Institute for Social Development – some good materials on 'Democracy, Governance and Well Being' and 'Civil Society and Social Movements': www.unrisd.org/

---

legal mechanisms in place for opposing government or for removing a leader from power.

5. Democracy is a political system in which the people rule. In participatory democracy (or direct democracy), decisions are made by those affected by them. A liberal democracy is a representative democracy where all citizens have the vote and can choose between at least two parties.

6. The number of countries with democratic governments has rapidly increased in recent years, due in large part to the effects of globalization, mass communications and the collapse of communist regimes. But democracy is not without its problems: people everywhere have begun to lose faith in the capacity of politicians and governments to solve problems and to manage economies, and political participation in established electoral systems is decreasing.

7. Party politics has been changed in many industrialized countries, away from an older class-based system to a multi-party system in which political parties have become less class-oriented. Socialist parties, such as the UK Labour Party, have undergone major changes in the wake of the demise of communism, dropping their commitments to socialist notions, including nationalization and planned economies. This new brand of centre-left politics is often referred to as 'third way' politics.

8. Social movements involve collective attempts to further common interests through collaborative action outside the sphere of established political institutions. Social movements are many and varied, from old labour and trades union movements to feminism, lesbian and gay movements and environmentalism.

9. Sociological theories of social movements have focused on how movements form as a result of periods of social unrest or frustrations associated with the social strain between expectations and reality. Movements are seen as having 'life-cycles' from emergence and development to eventual institutionalization. In the USA, theories of resource mobilization explore how movements garner the resources needed for effective organization.

10. The term 'new social movements' is applied to a set of social movements that have arisen in Western countries since the 1960s. They bring new issues into the political domain, tend to be more loosely organized, involve the new middle class and adopt symbolic direct actions as their main campaigning tactic. Some scholars suggest that globalization and information technologies are facilitating the move towards a global 'movement society' in which social movements increasingly organize across national boundaries.