

Université de Montréal

**Social Movements and Environmentalism, a Luhmannian view**

par

Andreea Roxana Penescu

Département de sociologie

Faculté des arts et des sciences

Thèse présentée à la Faculté des études supérieures et postdoctorales

en vue de l'obtention du grade de Philosophiae doctor (Ph.D)

en sociologie

Septembre 2014

© Andreea Roxana Penescu, 2014

Université de Montréal

Faculté des études supérieures et postdoctorales

Cette thèse intitulée :

**Social Movements and Environmentalism, a Luhmannian view**

Présentée par :

Andreea Roxana Penescu

A été évaluée par un jury composé des personnes suivantes :

Arnaud Sales, président-rapporteur

Pierre Hamel, directeur de recherche

Louis Guay, membre du jury

Florence Rudolf, examinatrice externe

Dominique Caouette, représentant du doyen de la FES

# Résumé

Depuis les années cinquante la sociologie a été concernée par le phénomène des mouvements sociaux. Diverses théories ont essayé de les expliquer. Du *collective behaviour* à la *mobilisation des ressources*, par l'entremise de *processus politiques*, et de la perspective de *framing* jusqu'à la *théorie des nouveaux mouvements sociaux*, la sociologie a trouvé certains moyens pour expliquer ces phénomènes. Bien que toutes ces perspectives couvrent et saisissent des facettes importantes des angles de l'action collective, ils le font de manière disparate, en regardant un côté et en omettant l'autre. Les différences entre les points de vue proviennent, d'une part, d'un changement dans les contextes sociaux, historiques et scientifiques, et d'autre part du fait que les différentes approches ne posent pas les mêmes questions, même si certaines questions se chevauchent. Poser des questions différentes amène à considérer des aspects différents. En conséquence, ce n'est pas seulement une question de donner une réponse différente à la même question, mais aussi une question de regarder le même objet d'étude, à partir d'un angle différent.

Cette situation réside à la base de la première partie de ma thèse principale: le champ de la théorie des mouvements sociaux n'est pas suffisant, ni suffisamment intégré pour expliquer l'action collective et nous avons besoin d'une théorie plus complète afin d'obtenir une meilleure compréhension des mouvements et la façon dont ils remplissent leur rôle de précurseurs de changement dans la société. Par conséquent, je considère que nous avons besoin d'une théorie qui est en mesure

d'examiner tous les aspects des mouvements en même temps et, en outre, est capable de regarder au-delà de la forme de l'objet d'étude afin de se concentrer sur l'objet lui-même. Cela m'amène à la deuxième partie de l'argument, qui est l'affirmation selon laquelle la théorie générale des systèmes telle que formulée par Niklas Luhmann peut contribuer à une meilleure compréhension de l'action collective. Il s'agit d'une théorie intégrale qui peut compléter le domaine de la théorie de l'action collective en nous fournissant les outils nécessaires pour rechercher dynamiquement les mouvements sociaux et de les comprendre dans le contexte social en perpétuel changement.

Une analyse du mouvement environnementaliste sera utilisée pour montrer comment les outils fournis par cette théorie nous permettent de mieux comprendre non seulement les mouvements sociaux, mais également le contexte dans lequel ils fonctionnent, comment ils remplissent leur rôle, comment ils évoluent et comment ils changent aussi la société.

**Mots-clés:** mouvements sociaux, environnementalisme, Niklas Luhmann

# Abstract

Since the fifties sociology has been concerned with the phenomenon of social movements. Various theories tried to explain them. From collective behaviour to resource mobilization, through political processes and framing perspective all the way to the theory of new social movements, sociology found ways to explain these phenomena. Although all these perspectives cover and capture important facets and angles of collective action, they do so in disparate ways, looking at one side and neglecting the other. The differences between the perspectives come, on the one hand, from a change in the social, historical and scientific contexts, and on the other hand from the fact that the various approaches don't ask the same questions, even though some questions overlap. Asking different questions leads to looking at different things. Thus, it is not only a matter of giving a different answer to the same question, but also a matter of looking at the same object of study from a different angle.

This situation resides at the root of the first part of my main thesis: the field of social movement theory is not sufficient nor integrated enough to explain collective action and we need a more comprehensive theory in order to obtain a better understanding of movements and the way in which they fulfill their role of promoters of change in society. Hence, I consider that we need a theory that is able to look at all facets of the movements at the same time and furthermore, is able to look beyond the form of the object in order to focus on the object itself. This brings me to the second

part of the argument, which is the claim that the general systems theory as formulated by Niklas Luhmann can contribute to a better understanding of collective action. It is a comprehensive theory that can supplement the field of social movement theory by providing us with the necessary tools to look dynamically at social movements and understand them within the shifting social context.

An analysis of environmentalism will be used to show how the tools provided by this communication theory help us to better understand not only social movements but also the context in which they function, how they fulfill their role, how they are changed and in turn change society as well.

**Keywords:** social movements, environmentalism, Niklas Luhmann

# Table of contents

Résumé .....	ii
Abstract.....	iv
Table of contents .....	vi
Acknowledgements .....	vii
Introduction .....	1
Chapter 1: Introductory Notes: Developing the argument .....	12
1.1 The Field of Social Movement Theory .....	17
1.2 Society and social movements in a Luhmannian view.....	23
1.3 Environmental Thought and Movement .....	27
1.4 By way of conclusions .....	39
Chapter 2: Luhmann’s Systems Theory: Society and Social Movements as Systems.....	41
2.1 Main concepts used in systems theoretical analysis .....	44
2.2 Society as a social system .....	66
2.3 Social Movements in Systemic Terms.....	78
2.4 Conclusion.....	101
Chapter 3: Perspectives on Social Movements .....	103
3.1 Collective Behavior Perspective.....	106
3.2 Resource Mobilization Theory .....	120
3.3 Political process approach .....	130
3.4 Framing perspective .....	137
3.5 New Social Movements Theory .....	142
3.6 Unifying approaches .....	152
3.7 Conclusion.....	161
Chapter 4: Environmental Thought and Movement.....	165
4.1 Finding a topic for protest .....	170
4.2 Bringing the form and the topic together.....	180
4.3 Differentiation, relations with other systems and role .....	200
4.4 Conclusions .....	218
Conclusion.....	224
Bibliography .....	232

# Acknowledgements

I would like to thank Professor Pierre Hamel for his invaluable help all throughout this endeavor. Without him my thoughts on the matters presented here would have remained indefinitely unorganized. His insightful comments, patience and dedication were always what I needed in order to bring everything together. I would also like to thank Professors Greg Nielsen and Mike Gasher for their constant, unrelenting support throughout the years. Working with both was always stimulating, inspiring and never just a job.

Many thanks to my family for their support and encouragements and especially to my husband, Mircea Mandache, for having more trust in me than I do.



# Introduction

A day in the news:

*“Michael Brown shooting: Police fire tear gas, stun grenades”*, CBC News August 19 2014;

*“Premier Couillard slams protester’s actions, calls for calm”* The Montreal Gazette August 19 2014;

*“Plenty of room at the top of Ukraine’s fading rebellion”*, New York Times, August 19 2014;

*“Gaza Strip: Oakland activists block Israeli ship for third day”*, Aljazeera News August 19 2014;

*“Pakistan: Imran Khan supporters gather in Islamabad to protest against government”*; The Guardian August 19 2014;

These are just a few of the world news headlines for one single day of August. Close to home or far away, in local press or on international TV news stations, there is one theme that can be seen every day: people protest. Peaceful or violent, in the form of street march or gatherings, sabotage, against the status quo, for economic security, freedom or simply for the sake of peace in a part of the world where they don’t even live, people protest. There is one common denominator in all this however: people come together to protest for change or to resist change. Protest is an already

established form of trying to bring about change in the world we live in. As sociologists, we are trying to understand this world and I believe that if we are to truly understand it, we need to understand change, and thus protest as an attempt to bring it.

Human history is full of rebellions and revolutions that brought important transformations. The French Revolution in 1789, the 1848 European revolutions, the Bolshevik revolution in 1917 and the anti-communism revolutions in Eastern Europe in 1989 are all examples of large scale protests that brought change on a large scale. But are large scale protests always enough to produce long lasting transformations in society? The civil rights movements are a testament to the fact that this is not the case. Sometimes, in order to bring change, there is a need for more than spontaneous gatherings of people. Black Power, the gender equality movement, the gay and lesbian rights movement all show that many times you need organization, endurance and the employment of other means besides street protest in order to achieve social transformation. That is why I also think that if we want to understand the world we live in, and thus change, and therefore protest, we need to understand these, if not permanent, then at least long lasting forms of collective action.

Change the world..., understand the world..., these are misleading phrases as the world is more than human society. Nevertheless they are not as misleading as they may seem. Yes, sociology has as its main object of study the human society. And yes, all the forms of collective action that I mentioned so far have attempted to change this human society and nothing more. While understanding human society in

itself, as well as the mechanisms through which it changes is paramount, we can't ignore the fact that this society is placed in, depends on, and impacts a larger world, the natural world, its physical environment.

The same day in the news that I referred to previously, also voiced the following concerns:

*"If you think the water crisis cannot get any worse, wait until the aquifers are drained"*, National Geographic August 19 2014;

*"Global Warming didn't divorce us, it's just on a break"*, Science 2.0 August 19 2014;

*"Fracking impact on water"*, Campbell River Mirror August 19 2014;

*"Poachers killed more than 100,000 elephants in 3 years"*, Fox News August 19 2014;

*"When forests aren't really forests: the high cost of Chile's tree plantations"*, [www.mongabay.com](http://www.mongabay.com) August 19 2014;

These are just a few of the science news headlines for one single day of August. And once again, close to home or far away, in local press, on international TV news stations or independent news websites, there is one theme that can be seen every day. This time the theme regards the fact that society impacts its environment and it is impacted back by it. The way in which society relates to its environment has long lasting effects on both. The way in which this relationship unfolds is also subject to transformations and to calls for change coming from collective action. And as with the civil rights movements, the environmental movement needed more than sudden aggregations in order to bring about change and to attract attention to the fact that human society is not as separated as it seems from the rest of the world.

Therefore, I believe that if we are to understand society, we need to understand the long-term mechanisms through which it changes and the way it relates to its environment. Moving from the general to the specific, in not so many words, the interest of this dissertation is social movements as promoters of change in society with a focus on the environmental movement as an example of, on one hand, how these instances of collective action perform their role and, on the other hand, an observation of how society relates to its environment. It should be noted from the start that I am interested in these matters from a purely theoretical perspective. From my point of view we are unable to understand the empirical reality without relying on a strong theory.

This interest naturally leads to the field of social movement theory. The literature within this domain is extensive and very different paths were taken within it in order to understand collective action. By studying it we learn that collective action can go beyond the emotions of the moment to become a meaningful and coherent force that drives change in society. We also learn that social movements are structured organizations involved in political processes. They use sets of beliefs and meanings to inspire and legitimate their activities and they are connected to a larger historical and cultural context. Social movement theory shows us the importance of this mechanism of social change and thus it provides us with a better understanding of society. However, due exactly to the fact that very different paths were chosen in order to understand collective action, the field of social movement theory only offers us a fragmented view of social movements.

There is a great variety of perspectives and approaches within this domain, and although they all cover and capture important facets and angles of collective action, they do so in disparate ways, looking at one side and ignoring the other. The differences between the perspectives come, on the one hand, from a change in the social, historical and scientific contexts, and on the other hand from the fact that the various approaches don't all ask the same questions, even though some questions overlap. Asking different questions leads to looking at different things. Thus, it is not only a matter of giving a different answer to the same question, but also a matter of looking at the object of study from a different angle.

This situation resides at the root of the first part of my main thesis: social movement theory is not sufficient nor integrated enough to explain collective action and we need a more comprehensive theory in order to obtain a better understanding of movements and the way in which they fulfill their role of promoters of change in society. Hence, I consider that we need a theory that is able to look at all facets of the movements at the same time and furthermore, is able to look beyond the form of the object in order to focus on the object itself. This brings me to the second part of the argument, which is the claim that the general systems theory as formulated by Niklas Luhmann can contribute to a better understanding of collective action. It is a comprehensive theory that can supplement the field of social movement theory by providing us with the necessary tools to look dynamically at social movements and understand them within the shifting social context.

Why do I choose this specific theory? First, in my estimation, we need a general sociological theory in order to understand any occurrence in society. If we want to understand social movements as agents of change in and of society, we need to understand all the links between the two and only a general theory can provide that kind of understanding. The theory that Niklas Luhmann formulates is such a general sociological theory. Secondly, following a long line of sociologists such as Auguste Comte, Karl Marx, Emile Durkheim, Georg Simmel, Max Weber and Talcott Parsons, Luhmann is among the last theorists to formulate a comprehensive theory. The great significance that is given in the field of sociological theory to the debate between him and Jurgen Habermas on their different views of society is a testament of the great importance and impact this theory has had and still has on the field. Third, while most, if not all approaches to social movements come from a theory of action, Luhmann's theory is a theory of communication, which is much closer to my own view of society. Thus, in a way, I could say that this is also a personal preference and inclination<sup>1</sup>. Any action is performed in a context that gives it meaning. I believe that it is important that we try to understand the meaning and not the action. Both the Jazz Festival and the summer of 2012 student protests represent great gatherings of people in Montreal. However, the fact that many people came together is not what is significant if we try to understand what happens, but the reasons for which they decided to do so are. Action always communicates something and it is that communication that makes its way in society, not the action itself.

---

<sup>1</sup> While Habermas also formulates a communication theory the difference between his theory and the one formulated by Luhmann can be summarized by Kenneth Allen's (2013) dichotomy of social vs. sociological theory. Habermas formulates a social theory, which is critical and normative while Luhmann formulates a sociological theory which aims for objectivity and avoids normative claims.

An analysis of environmentalism will be used to show how the tools provided by this communication theory help us better understand not only social movements but also the context in which they function, how they fulfill their role, how they are changed and in turn change society as well. The short list of science news headlines for a single day offers only a small glimpse of the variety and importance of the environmental issues confronting society today. The relation between society and its environment seems to gain increasing significance as ever more influences between the two become more visible. However, due to the theoretical interest of this study the focus will not be on how society and environment are related, but on how this relation is viewed from inside society by environmentalism and, as it was mentioned above, on how the environmental movement can be better understood from the general systems theoretical perspective formulated by Niklas Luhmann as opposed to from one of the perspectives formulated within the field of social movement theory.

Thus, the research question for this investigation can be formulated as follows: if the field of social movement theory is not sufficient to explain collective action, how is the general theory developed by Luhmann better suited for investigating, analyzing and explaining social movements? Three main steps will be taken in order to answer this question. First, the general systems theory formulated by Luhmann will be presented. Second, an overview of the field of social movement theory will be introduced in order to support the argument that it is not sufficient nor integrated enough to offer a clear understanding of collective action. Third, the environmental movement will be analyzed through the lens of Luhmann's theory in order to see if we do obtain a better understanding of social movements by using it.

The dissertation is structured in four chapters. The first chapter details more explicitly why the thesis focuses on the field of social movement theory, Luhmann's theory and environmentalism. Its purpose is mainly to introduce the reader to the problematic surrounding the main argument by discussing and presenting more in-depth the particulars around it. Therefore, the issues posed by the social movement theory field as an area of expertise are highlighted here. This sheds more light on why an argument is made that the perspectives within this field are not sufficient to explain collective action. The chapter also offers a few notes on the theory proposed by Luhmann so as to emphasize why and how I consider that it can be used as an alternative or enhancement to the way social movements have been studied so far. A short overview of environmentalism is also introduced here with the intention of showing the issues surrounding it and the way it is generally approached. Finally, several observations on methodology indicate the specifics of the steps taken in supporting the main thesis.

The second chapter is an in-depth presentation of the general systems theory as proposed by Niklas Luhmann. I consider that such a meticulous analysis is important due to the fact that part of my main thesis claims that this theory is better suited for investigating and explaining social movements. This argument cannot be supported without a thorough understanding of the theory. Thus, on the one hand, the role of the chapter is to familiarize the reader with the theory. On the other hand, the purpose is to introduce the concepts that will be used later on in the dissertation in order to perform the analysis of a specific social movement, namely the environmental movement. The detailed explanation of Luhmann's theory is carried out



by starting from the most simple (or basic) notions and going towards the more complex and provides a clarification of the main concepts used throughout the dissertation in support of the main thesis.

Chapter three presents the main perspectives and approaches to social movements in an in-depth overview of the field. This review shows how social movements are generally analyzed, how the focus changes from one perspective to another and how different facets of the social movement are analyzed separately instead of together. This is seen as the major shortcoming of the field of collective action research. In my view, a thorough analysis of the field of social movement theory is needed in order to support the first part of the main thesis. Hence, the role of this chapter is to show that indeed, the field of social movement theory is not sufficient nor integrated enough to explain collective action and that we need a more comprehensive theory in order to obtain a better understanding of movements and the way in which they fulfill their role of promoters of change in society.

In chapter four an analysis of environmentalism will be used as an illustration of how the general systems theory formulated by Luhmann can be employed to improve our knowledge of social movements. Consequently, the environmental movement will be overviewed, in an outline of its history and the way it changed overtime in relation to the social context. Luhmann's theory will be used throughout this overview in order to interpret and analyze these changes. The objective here is to show how we can better understand the environmental movement through the use of a specific theory, not to present the history of environmentalism. Thus, at the same

time as presenting its history and evolution, the chapter will also discuss the conditions that led to the emergence of environmentalism as a protest movement, how it is organized and how it relates to society, as well as what functions and roles it fulfills within it.

Due to the fact that this dissertation represents an entirely theoretical approach, it of course relies on a variety of texts and on a thorough literature review of three different subjects: social movement theory, Luhmann's theory, and environmentalism. In order to perform an as comprehensive as possible review of the literature, a variety of research tools were used. First, the library offers access to a few different databases (such as ProQuest, EBSCO and Erudit) that can be searched for quickly finding articles and bibliographical information on any topic of interest. These databases were searched by using keywords like social movements, collective action, systemic theory, functionalism, Luhmann, environmentalism, environmental movement, green movement or even more specific terms such as collective behavior, framing, second order cybernetics and neo-functionalism. These keywords were used both alone and in combination (i.e. framing and social movements) in order to refine the results. The library itself was searched using the same kind of keywords for finding books on these subjects.

Secondly, I searched for publications about the field of social movement theory, Luhmann's theory and environmental thought (or green theory) in order to find more information about the specific theoretical perspectives for each subject (or area of expertise) and the most representative and prominent texts and authors in order to

refine the results more. In other words, I went from the general (i.e. an article about the collective behavior perspective) to the specific within each field (the actual theories belonging to the collective behavior perspective). Third, the bibliographical listings for most of the texts read were perused, especially if I came across quotes or ideas of a special interest, and the publications of authors that were recognized in the field as representative for the subject were examined as close to their entirety as possible. Also, periodicals such as Mobilization, Social Movement Studies, Sociology Compass, Social Science Quarterly, and Environmental Politics were searched directly.

Knowing how society sees its relation with the environment and how it is trying to change it is important in understanding society itself. Do we have a better knowledge of the environmental movement in particular, social movements in general, and of society once we looked at them from within the general systems theory developed by Niklas Luhmann? Answering this question is the purpose of this dissertation.

# Chapter 1: Introductory Notes: Developing the argument

Ask a room full of physicists what is gravity and they will all give you the same answer. The wording might be different but they will all agree that it is a force which makes all physical bodies attract each other. Even in simpler terms, it is what gives us weight and it is keeping us here. Ask a room full of sociologists what is society and you will get a variety of answers. Some might say it is a network, others an imagined community; some might define it as a system of interactions, actions or communication. If sociology were like physics we would have one answer too. We would find the laws regulating society and we would precisely calculate where it is going. But sociology is not like physics. There is a very simple reason for that. Society is more than just the physical world. It doesn't follow the same rules, it doesn't have the same types of laws and it incorporates subjective aspects.

If it is one thing we can all agree on however, I think that thing is that society is changing over time. Therefore, to better understand society we need to understand social change and the mechanisms through which it takes place. Moreover, if we look either at history or at the news headlines for today, or if we look at both history and current events around the world, there is one other thing that becomes clear: one of

the mechanisms via which social change takes place (or at the very least it is often attempted) is collective action. Consequently, I believe that understanding collective action better will help us improve our knowledge of society. Hence questions like “what is collective action?”, or “what is a social movement or a protest movement”? naturally come to mind.

While perusing the extensive academic literature on social movements it becomes apparent that both social movements and the way they were approached theoretically are influenced by shifts in the social, cultural, historical and scientific context. As this context changes so do the movements and, with the movements, the theory transforms as well (Garner 1997; Tarrow 1998, Tilly 1998). Due to this situation another question comes to mind: is the theory adequate to explain collective action if it needs to keep changing to fit its object of study? I believe that it is not. Therefore, my main thesis is that social movement theory is not sufficient or integrated enough to explain collective action and that we need a more comprehensive theory in order to obtain a better understanding of movements and the way in which they fulfill their role of promoters of change in society. I furthermore claim that Niklas Luhmann’s general theory is that comprehensive theory that can supplement the theory of social movements by providing us with the necessary tools to look dynamically at social movements and understand them within the shifting social context. An analysis of environmentalism will be used to show how these tools help us better understand not only social movements but also the context in which they function, how they fulfill their role, how they are changed and in turn how they change society as well.

In this context the research question becomes: if the field of social movement theory is not sufficient to explain collective action, how is the general theory developed by Luhmann better suited for investigating, analyzing and explaining social movements? In what follows the particulars around the main thesis and the research question will be discussed in more details. After an explanation of why the field of social movement theory, Niklas Luhmann's theory and environmentalism were chosen for this work, three main sections follow. The first section will be a very short overview of the social movement theory field that will indicate the issues it presents as an area of expertise. The second section will present how and why Luhmann's theory can be used as a better alternative to the way collective action has been studied so far and the third section will be an overview of the issues surrounding environmentalism and the way it was approached. The chapter will end with a few notes on methodology.

Social movement theory was chosen because, as it was mentioned earlier, I believe that a better comprehension of collective action is important for improving our knowledge about society in general. If society is in constant flux then understanding one of the mechanisms through which this change takes place is paramount for understanding society itself. In fact, although there are many varied definitions and analyses of social movements, they all converge on one important point: one of the goals of social movements is change. Why then choose a different theory to look at collective action? I believe that even though the varied perspectives and approaches within the theory of social movements all cover and capture important facets and angles of collective action, they do so in disparate ways, looking at one side and

ignoring the other. That is why I consider Luhmann's theory more appropriate for analyzing social movements; it provides us with one integrated view of society and with the necessary tools to analyze all facets of movements at the same time in a cohesive manner.

Luhmann's general theory was also chosen due to the fact that it enables us to understand not only social movements and society but also the way in which they interact and change each other. Due to the fact that society evolves and changes, social movements need to adjust to these changes and alter the way they interact with other systems and evolve themselves. Through the use of the concepts developed by Luhmann we can understand social movements as social systems that differentiate when an irregularity or a contradiction is observed in society. Through their interaction with other subsystems they try to change that irregularity or to resolve the contradiction. In this way, their function is double folded. On the one side they signal the irregularity or contradiction and on the other they try to change the system to deal with it. Through this they provoke tensions that maintain the system's functionality and complexity. Social movements are thus social self-observations and society's self-description. This means that social movements observe society or different dimensions of society and designate them, creating the possibility for self-reference and contingency. Thus, I think that from this perspective, we can claim that society knows itself through social movements (the self-reference), identifies alternatives of action (contingency), adjusts and changes (evolution).

Lastly, the reasons for which I chose the environmental movement as an example are: 1) Looking at the major topics of discussion in today's society one cannot but notice an abundance of debates regarding issues like global warming and climate change, the ozone layer, resource consumption, biodiversity, pollution, protection and preservation of wildlife. An increased awareness of nature and environment seems to have made its way into the main discourses of society for at least three decades. The protection of the environment and the preservation of nature, sustainable development, renewable resources are paramount issues in present day's debates. 2) Luhmann's theory is a theory of distinction between system and environment<sup>2</sup>. In fact, this distinction stays at the center of the entire theory. What better choice then, than a movement dealing exactly with the relation between society and its environment?

3) Luhmann (1989) maintains that the environmental movement refers to the environment instead of society and, at a first glance, environmentalism seems to fit this description. Thus, using environmentalism as an illustration of how his theory can help us better understand it is a challenge (because the example turns into a critique at the same time) but one worth taking on because, in my view, on the one hand, this process will provide us with a clearer image and a more profound knowledge of the movement and, on the other, it will highlight the strengths as well as the limits of the theory itself.

---

<sup>2</sup> Environment here is used in very abstract terms and simply denotes the outside of the system. For society, in systemic terms, environment represents everything that is not communication and thus it is both nature and context (Luhmann 1995)



If we go back to the research question, “if the field of social movement theory is not sufficient to explain collective action, how is the general theory developed by Luhmann better suited for investigating, analyzing and explaining social movements?”, an argument could be made that, considering how extensive the literature within this field is, that “if” can be very controversial. Are the many perspectives within the field really not enough? And aren’t already attempts made to provide a more integrated view? Therefore, an overview of the field is necessary in order to show why it is considered insufficient.

### *1.1 The Field of Social Movement Theory*

There are many definitions of social movements: collective behavior, resource mobilization theory, political process perspective, new social movement theory and others. All present different views on what is a social movement. There are not only varied perspectives on social movements but there are also varied ways in which these perspectives themselves were classified and described. As we will see, some of these classifications are based on a periodization in time, some on geographical location while others are based on conceptual differences. A short outline of some of these classifications is provided in order to show the variety of perspectives, the various ways in which they themselves are interpreted and to highlight one of the facts that was argued earlier, argument that resides at the root of the main thesis, namely, that as the social and historical context changes, so does the

theory of social movement. As Roberta Garner suggests, "the story of social movement theory can be told only together with the story of social movements themselves" (Garner, 1997, p.1).

An example of a classification based on a temporal periodization is provided by Garner (1997). Three chronological periods in the development of social movement theory are identified in this taxonomy. The first period, between the 1940's and 1950's, is characterized as having a negative view on social movements, describing them in terms of irrational behavior and making reference to social psychology to explain them. The second period, between the 1960's and the 1970's took a more positive outlook on social movements and had a tendency to explain them in terms of organization, rationality and goals. The third and final period, between the 1980's and 1990's is characterized by an ambivalence towards social movements "as right wing counter-movements displaced progressive movements and intellectual shifts towards postmodernism undermined the privileged role of movements in a narrative of historical progress" (Buechler 2000, p. 20).

Charles Tilly (1998) contributes with another example of a classification based on a temporal periodization. Three main phases in the history of social movement theory are distinguished here as well, starting with the 1960s. The first phase, prompted by the rise of movement activity in North America and Western Europe, drew on two different perspectives: "1) treatments of collective behavior as un-institutionalized action driven by mass psychology, which had acquired a psychoanalytic edge in analyses of fascism; 2) natural history conceptions of social

movements modeled especially on the history of organized labor but, extended to other emancipatory movements such as suffrage and feminism" (Tilly 1998, p. 454). These perspectives however could not explain the next wave of movement activity (i.e. civil rights activism, student protests) and new approaches (such as political process, rational-action and resource mobilization) emerged. Although different in many respects, these approaches agreed on one thing that the previous perspectives ignored: actors could act collectively in coherent ways and ground their actions in stable social organizations (Tilly 1998, p. 454).

With the rise of yet again new collective actors (such as "mobilizations oriented towards environment, peace, sexual preference, communitarianism") these perspectives proved insufficient as well and the New Social Movements approach emerged for providing meaning to the social protest defined by these new actors. Even further, with the fall of the Berlin Wall and the collapse of the communist Eastern Bloc and with the rise of nationalist undercurrents in countries that used to be part of Yugoslavia or the Soviet Union "interest in the discursive side of collective action" rose, and so did analyses based on concepts like frames, narratives, and political opportunity structure (Tilly 1998, p. 454-455).

The understanding of collective action varies not only in time but also geographically (although an argument can be made that the differences do not come from the geographical positioning but from a different cultural positioning). North American scholars, after observing with distress European mass movements like Fascism and Stalinism, place emphasis on social problems. European scholars

formulated approaches under the influence of the general sociological theories of Marx and Weber and, differing from their North American counterparts, they place emphasis on social classes (Jenkins 1983; Eyerman and Jamison 1991; Tarrow 1998). On both continents however, the scientific (sociological) interest in social movements is rooted in the various “waves of protest activities” that western countries started to experience from the mid-sixties (Rucht 1991, p.1). Collective behavior theory (which was actually developed in the 1920s by the Chicago School) was first used to explain these phenomena but it is soon replaced, primarily in the US, by resource mobilization theory. While in North America studies are focused within this paradigm of resource mobilization, in Europe a different approach is developed, called new social movement theory, putting emphasis on the identity paradigm (Cohen and Arato 1994). Conceptual differences between these approaches are clearly outlined by Bert Klandermans and Sidney Tarrow:

“European scholars tend to focus on larger structural issues – the structural causes of social movements, their ideologies, and their relation to the culture of advanced capitalist society – whereas Americans developed their research mainly at the group and individual level, looking systematically at the groups that organized mass protest, at their forms of action, and at the motivations of individuals who joined them” (Klandermans and Tarrow 1988, p. 2-3).

Mario Diani (1992) and Alberto Melucci (1988), although similar in their analysis to Tarrow, draw the conceptual differences between these two approaches in different terms. According to them, while resource mobilization theory is more concerned with the “how” of social movements, with the actual process of mobilization, the new social movements approach is more concerned with the “why” and with the causes of mobilization.

This short overview of perspectives and taxonomies shows that, as David Snow, Sarah Soule and Hanspeter Kriesi hold:

“Definitions of social movements are not hard to come by. They are readily provided in most textlike treatments of the topic (e.g. Turner and Killian 1987; Tarrow 1998; della Porta and Diani 1999), in edited volumes of conference proceedings and previously published articles and scholarly papers (e.g. McAdam and Snow 1997, Meyer and Tarrow 1998, Goodwin and Jasper 2003), and in summary, encyclopedia-like essays (e.g. McAdam et al. 1988, Benford et al. 2000). Although the various definitions of movements may differ in terms of what is emphasized or accented, most are based on three or more of the following axes: collective or joint action; change oriented goals or claims; some extra- or non-institutional collective action; some degree of organization; and some degree of temporal continuity” (Snow et al. 2004, p.6).

This overview also shows that as the socio-historical context changed so did movements and as movements changed so did the theoretical assessment of social movements. Sociology (or at least a part of it) has been concerned with the phenomenon of social movements since the nineteen fifties. Various theories tried to explain them. From collective behavior to resource mobilization, through political processes and framing perspective all the way to the theory of new social movements, sociology found ways to explain these phenomena. These various perspectives overlap or follow each other both chronologically and conceptually. As times changed, the movements changed and as the movements changed the theory needed to adapt as well to be able to explain the new phenomena (or is it the new form of an old phenomenon?). And therein lays the problem. How comprehensive is a theory if it needs to change to fit its object of study?

Society is not static, it is fluid, in constant flux and it logically follows that everything in it is fluid too, going through different shapes and forms, organizing and reorganizing with society itself. Thus when looking at collective action (or anything in society for that matter) we need a theory that takes this fluidity into consideration. This is not to say that nothing is permanent in society, on the contrary. The structures, objects, institutions, the building blocks, systems or sub-systems of society (the term changes depending on the theory that is used) stay the same but their shape or form changes in order to accommodate the historical, social and cultural context. To put it differently, a shelf is a shelf, was a shelf and will be a shelf, no matter the shape, form, material or how it was/is/will be constructed. It might be made of wood, plastic or metal, screws or nails might be used to keep it together, and it might be built manually or by a machine but no matter if it is square, or it fits into a corner it is still a shelf and its purpose is to shelf things. That is why I consider that the varied theories on social movements are not sufficient to explain them. We need a theory that enables us to look beyond the form of an object, to the object itself and its different shapes and forms. We also need a theory that looks not only at the social and historical context but also looks at these contexts as in a constant state of flux and accounts for this flux in its explanations. As it was mentioned before, I consider that Niklas Luhmann's general system theory does that. I argue that we can use his theory to better understand and explain both society and social movements. The environmental movement or environmentalism will be used as an example for this. Therefore an analysis of Luhmann's theory needs to be introduced.

## 1.2 Society and social movements in a Luhmannian view

In Luhmann's view (1993), social movements are very general phenomena for which is hard to find a describing or defining concept. They correspond nonetheless to a modern phenomenon which means that they exclude peasant, slave and nobility uprisings and revolts. The discussion on social movements starts with the rise of the socialist movement in the nineteenth century (Luhmann 1993). However, more current phenomena cannot be described in the same terms as the socialist movement. Thus the concept of new social movement starts to be utilized in the academic field to describe and define them. Nevertheless, Luhmann prefers to use the concept of protest movements due to the fact that, in his view, "it covers broad areas of the phenomenon of the social movement, but can more easily be delimited" (Luhmann, 1993, p. 125). Protest is defined as an expression of dissatisfaction and as a communication addressed to others in order to resolve the situation that causes this dissatisfaction (Luhmann, 1993, p. 125-126). The existence of protest (in any form) is not enough however to form a protest movement:

"We will speak of protest *movements* only if the protest serves as a catalyst of a system of its own. (...) Protest movements can be described as autopoietic systems. The protest is the form, the topic is the content, and the two of them together set off a process of reproducing related communication, thus permitting the system to distinguish between relevant and irrelevant activities (Luhmann, 1993, p. 126-127).

According to Luhmann, "a permanent source of potential protest is the fact that any determination of a specific future has an effect of social discrimination; that is to say, it does not benefit or advantages everyone to the same degree" (Luhmann,

1993, p. 129). However, the emergence of protest movements cannot be explained only through such a general statement. For a better understanding of how social movements emerge, Luhmann performs an analysis of historical situations that contributed or acted as triggers in such emergences. This analysis leads to the differentiation between: uprisings, revolts and resistance movements in traditional societies, the socialist movement and the new protest movements. Also, in this view, social movements are one of the procedures through which contradictions can be connected to conflicts that are consequential for society. In other words, social movements are a way of selecting significant conflicts within society. Thus, the concept of social or protest movement is intertwined with that of society which is understood as:

“the all-encompassing social system that includes everything that is social and therefore does not admit a social environment. If something social emerges, if new kinds of communicative partners or themes appear, society grows along with them. They enrich society. They cannot be externalized or treated as an environment, for everything that is communication is society” (Luhmann 1995, p. 408).

Society thus refers to “the encompassing social system that includes all communications, and constitutes meaningful horizons for further communications” (Luhmann, 1990, p.176) This means that society makes communication between other social systems possible but it cannot communicate itself due to the fact that it includes all communication. All communication being internal to society, external communication is excluded. Society still has an environment with which it has relations, but these relations are not carried through communication. According to



Luhmann, this all-encompassing society “uses the bodies and minds of the human beings for interaction with its environment”. (Luhmann, 1990, p.178).

Much like the concept of social movement however, the concept of society is greatly debated in sociology and it has been defined in many different ways. There are even theorists who claim that “society” is not a relevant concept in sociological analysis anymore. For example, John Urry writes:

“I argue that the concept of society has been central to sociological discourse. I then argue that if there is any agreement on the concept of society this is embedded within notions of nation-state, citizenship and national society, working through a ‘banal nationalism’. But then I show that it is this sense of ‘nation-state-society that contemporary mobilities call into question and which suggests that maybe Thatcher was right when she said there is no such thing as society” (Urry, 2000, p5-6).

Urry contends that sociology is losing its fundamental concept, (that of society) and that the new mobilities (of people, images, information) and their social consequences need to be studied. However, while Urry considers society grounded in the nation state, Luhmann’s definition of society looks above the borders of nation states. From his perspective, society is a system that has different subsystems which are at the same time dependent and independent on one another. There is no “national society” in this approach. Society is split into nation states only for the political system. As the all-encompassing social system, society is a “world society”. One of the things that distinguishes Luhmann’s view of society as a world system from other systemic theories is the fact that he looks at society as “world society” from the start. He begins with the concept of “world society” and explains it, instead of explaining how society became a “world society”. This definition does not exclude the

new “mobilities” that Urry talks about. On the contrary, these can be studied as occurrences within the system, or as relations between different subsystems within the larger system.

As well as being a theory of distinction between system and environment, Luhmann’s theory is also one of differentiation, which is defined as:

“the emergence of a particular subsystem of society by which the characteristics of system formation, especially autopoietic self-reproduction, self-organization, structural determination and along all these, operational closure itself are realized. In such a case, we are not simply dealing with a phenomenon which a determined observer can distinguish. Rather, the system distinguishes itself. (...) On the basis of its own differentiation, the system can assume itself, its own function, its own practice as a point of reference for the specification of its own operations” (Luhmann 2000a, p23)

According to Luhmann there are four different forms of differentiation in the history of society: segmentary, center/periphery, stratificatory and functional differentiation. Modern society is characterized by functional differentiation which is based simply on the function subsystems fulfill in society (Luhmann 2013a, p.12-16). The emphasis here is on the fact that these are not different types of societies, but different ways in which society was organized throughout history. When he talks of different types of movements or different ways of connecting contradictions with conflict throughout history, Luhmann takes into consideration the form of differentiation within which these movements function. Using such an approach allows for the explanation of movements within their socio-historical context and for taking into consideration the fluidity of this context in the explanation.

Moeller (2006) discusses the fact that Luhmann intended to explore social movements further but sickness stopped him. This is where I can contribute by proposing a more developed understanding of social movements through the use of his theory of society. Social movement theory will be critiqued for its lack of integration, or in different words, for its fragmented view of social movements or its inability to reconcile the different perspectives within. Luhmann's general theory will be used to point out these inadequacies, thus as an external critique. On the other hand, this general theory will be the subject of a sort of immanent or internal critique in the sense of: this is the theory, this is where it stops, let's see what happens when we use it and try to take it further. Does it still stand and does it further our sociological knowledge? Does it help us understand phenomena (for lack of a better word) like social movements better? This immanent critique is done through the interpretation of (or the attempt to interpret) the environmental movement through this theory or some of its concepts. As in the case of social movements in general, environmentalism and the environmental movement were also extensively studied, reviewed and analyzed. To begin with, an explanation of what is understood through environmentalism and/or the environmental movement is in order.

### *1.3 Environmental Thought and Movement*

The explanation mentioned above has two parts. One is comprised of answering questions such as: are the "environmental" and the "green" movement one

and the same? What about the ecologist, animal protection, anti-nuclear or anti-deforestation movements? As Hay puts it:

“It is difficult to plot the boundaries and contours of the environmental movement with precision. Is the environmental movement to be equated with the green movement? Are ‘environmentalism’ ‘ecologist’ and ‘green’ synonymous? Are these - all or any of them - political philosophies, ethical systems or model-of-living designations? These shades of difference are mightily disputed.” (Hay 2002, p. 1)

Accordingly, there are at least two reasons to use these terms interchangeably. First, the members of such movements do not worry about those "shades of difference" and use the terms interchangeably because they are seen as having the same meaning. Second, the movement itself is as diversified as the terms used to describe it. In Hay's words:

“Commentators have been at a loss to define the precise boundaries of the environment (or ‘green’ movement); to declaim authoritatively that this group (a bird watching society for example) is within, whilst this other group (a save-our-playground action group, for example) is not. The ‘real thing’, in other words, wavers at the edges” (Hay 2002, p.2).

Eder seems to agree with the fact that these terms can be used interchangeably because, according to him, “environmentalism, ecological movement, life politics movements” (...) all denote the same problem: the nature – society relationship.” (Eder 1993, p. 118). Thus, throughout this thesis, when talking about the environmental movement or environmentalism, any movement that addresses issues related to the environment or its relations to society is included and terms such as

environmental movement, green movement or environmental group will be seen as designating the same thing.<sup>3</sup>

The-second part of explaining what is meant through environmentalism and/or the environmental movement is comprised of answering questions such as: where do you place environmental thought and philosophy? Is green theory part of the environmental movement or environmentalism? In other words, can you separate between activism and theory?

Although “not all the values and theoretical preoccupations that are much debated within green thought have a commensurate currency within green activism, just as dilemmas that occupy activists are not necessarily given the same attention within the literature” both theory and activism are components of the green/environmental movement (Hay 2002, p. 2). Hence, even if some green theories never find their way in the main discourse of activists, and even though some issues that activists care about are not much debated theoretically, the two still have a lot of points of convergence and are part of the same movement.

Andrew Jamison, Ron Eyerman, Jacqueline Cramer and Læssøe Jeppe (1990) frame the issue in different terms but hold similarly that there is a need for integration of theory and the empirical. They talk about a “split” or a differentiation in the way social movements are studied/described/talked about and understood. On one side of this divide are placed "identity theorists" (such as Alain Touraine and Jürgen

---

<sup>3</sup> The term (concept) environment is used both in abstract systemic terms, as the outside of the system – which is different for each system – and to denote nature.

Habermas) “who conceptualize social movements in abstract terms and judge empirical conflicts as potential sources of new collective identity and as forces for fundamental social change” (Jamison et al. 1990, p.1). On the other side of this divide we find “resource mobilization theorists who define social movements empirically as organizations and groups and concern themselves with their tactical successes and failures” (Jamison et al.1990, p.1).

For the study of environmentalism, this translates into a distinction between those authors that look only at theory (at environmental thought, ideology, green thinking) and those who look exclusively at “environmental groups and organizations”. A reintegration of the two sides is needed. This integration can and will lead to a better understanding, not only of the movement itself but also of “its actual historical project” which is both “projecting a new set of ideas” and “mobilizing support for new forms of political activity”, and not only one or the other (Jamison et al. 1990, p. 1-2).

Thus, environmentalism is seen as having two components, an “intellectual” one and an “activist” one (Hay 2002, p.2). To use different terms, and maybe more appropriate terms, environmentalism or the environmental movement includes both theory (environmental thought, eco-philosophy or green ideology) and organizational or mobilizing forms (environmental groups and organizations). The two cannot be separated because the theory, or “green thinking” can give birth to organizations and protest groups or vice versa, environmental organizations can promote new ideas, ideologies and knowledge.

Similarly to social movement theory, when it comes to environmentalism, there is also a variety of taxonomies and chronologies. The works done by Donald Worster in 1977, John Rodman in 1983, Warwick Fox in 1990 and, Andrew Jamison in 1990 and again in 2001 are just a few examples. Presenting two of them should suffice to show how, not only environmentalism but also the way it is interpreted has changed over time.

In one of these taxonomies (Rodman 1983), environmentalism is organized into four categories that can also be considered as being four phases because environmental thought moves from one to the other progressively towards what Hay calls a “satisfactory maturity” (2002, p. 31). The first category is characterized by Resource Conservation. This position is associated with the American forester Gifford Pinchot and stands for responsible use of resources. The second type of environmentalism is associated with Pinchot’s friend turned adversary, John Muir (the founder of the Sierra Club) and his position of Wilderness Preservation. The third kind of environmentalism is Moral Extensionism which is “the view that humans have duties directly to (some) non-human natural entities, and that these rights are grounded in the possession by the natural entities of an intrinsically valuable quality such as intelligence, sentience or consciousness” (Rodman 1983, p. 86).

The last phase of environmentalism is called Ecological Sensibility and it is a complex set of not only values and perceptions but also attitudes and judgments. This type of environmentalism has three components: 1) a theory that recognizes the intrinsic value of nature; 2) a metaphysics that considers the importance of both

systems and individuals; and 3) an ethics that “includes such duties as noninterference with natural processes”, policies that deal with the violation of the noninterference principle and “a style of cohabitation that involves the knowledgeable, respectful, and restrained use of nature” (Rodman 1983, p. 88).

A second typology, developed in the works of Fox (1990) is derived from the one presented above. The first category is called “Unrestrained Exploitation and Expansionism” (Fox (1990)) and refers to the view that the non-human realm has value only when and if it is or it can be transformed by humans for economic interests and human consumption. Another characteristic of this type of view of environment is the idea that resources are unlimited, or what Fox (1990) calls the myth of superabundance. The second category, “Resource Conservation and Development” is similar to the first one in its view of the natural world as valuable only insofar as it can be used by and for humans but differs through the fact that it recognizes that resources are not infinite and thus they need to be managed responsibly (Hay 2002, p. 33).

The third category in this taxonomy is “Resource Preservation” and, while still anthropocentric at its core, is the most satisfactory out of the three instrumental views of nature: “This is a stance which does seek grounds for preservation of the non-human world (as distinct from its husbanded use) but which stays within the framework of assumption that is adopted in the two previous positions: right and appropriate action is deemed to be right and appropriate from the stand-point of human interest” (Hay 2002, p. 33).



After these three anthropocentric types of environmental thought, Fox identifies ecocentric forms of environmentalism. These views give intrinsic value to the non-human world, meaning that nature is considered as having value in itself, independent of human use. There are three grounds on which axiological claims are made: “sentience (a capacity to feel sensations); having cell-based life; and autopoiesis (a capacity for self-renewal)” (Fox 1990, p. 8-11). Beyond these intrinsic value schools of thought there is one more category, deep ecology which “involves widening out one’s biological or bodily sense of self into a larger, perhaps even cosmological field of identification. Deep ecologists denote this extended sense of self as a capital S Self” (Fox 1990, p. 11).

These classifications refer mostly to environmentalism as theory. Although all or most of these positions find a place in different environmental groups and organizations, the focus is on ideas, not organizations or groups that promote them. Environmentalism in terms of organization is also variously defined. This is why Christopher Rootes underlines that “conceptions of the environmental movement are as various as those of social movements in general” (Rootes 2004, p. 608). When looking at the literature on the environmental movement it becomes evident that environmentalism, as a specific movement is often defined or analyzed from one of the general perspectives present within social movement theory. For example, the cognitive praxis theory (Eyerman and Jamison 2001) is used to define it as follows:

“For us, a social movement exists when a distinct set of knowledge interests is present in the consciousness of activists and reflected in organization, when these knowledge interests form the basis not only for collective identity but also co-ordination and co-operation between

these organizations which identify themselves on their basis. Thus we conceive of modern environmentalism first as a potential social movement, as constituted in the interplay between the deep structure of knowledge interests and the practical world of political strategy, worked in actual historical settings” (Jamison et al. 1990, p.3).

In another example, collective behavior theory is used and, from this perspective, environmental social movements are defined as loose networks of people and organizations that engage in collective action with the purpose of gaining environmental benefits; these organizations vary from “highly informal” to “highly organized” and even institutionalized, their “spatial scope” varies from local to global and their interest vary from single issues to a “full panoply of global environmental concern” (Rootes 1999, p. 2). Attempts are also made to combine two or more perspectives in order to obtain a clearer image of environmentalism. In one such attempt Mario Diani and Paolo Donati study the environmental movement from the perspective of resource mobilization theory and the political processes approach. A framework of analysis of environmental groups using concepts from both perspectives is built. Environmental social movements are seen as social movement organizations, which in turn are political organizations.

“Most political organizations are shaped by their response to two basic functional requirements, resource mobilization and political efficacy: on one hand, they must secure through variable combinations of money and human power (that is, voluntary action) the resources essential to organizational survival and expansion; on the other hand, in order to perform effectively in the political process, political organizations may select varying combinations of tactics disrupting – or at least threatening to disrupt – routinized political procedures, and tactics reflecting in contrast their integration in institutional politics, and their compliance with the rules of the game” (Diani and Donati, 1999, p. 15).

Of course, using the general theory to explain the specific is natural, but due to the variety of perspectives and the lack of integration of the field, environmentalism is studied in a fragmented way, and even though some attempts have been made to combine two or more perspectives, some aspects are invariably ignored. Additionally, as it was discussed earlier, even more fragmentation results from the split between studies that focus on theory and studies which focus on organizations. I believe that using the general theory developed by Luhmann enables us to take a deeper and more comprehensive look at both environmental groups and environmental theory, bringing them together. Also, the use of such a theory would provide us with a cohesive assessment of the movement instead of only fragmented glimpses of its various features.

Consequently, I consider that by using Luhmann's theory we can reconcile the split between theoretical and empirical studies, or, in other words, bring the analysis of environmental groups together with the analysis of green thought in a more comprehensive outlook on the movement as a whole, while also taking into consideration the larger changing social context in which the movement exists. Moreover, as it was stated previously, environmentalism will be used not only to illustrate how Luhmann's theory can help us better understand social movements but also to see what happens when we use it to analyze something outside the theoretical field. Does it still stand and does it further our sociological knowledge? This investigation is thus, in part, an internal critique to Luhmann's general theory. Moreover, if we recall the research question, "if the field of social movement theory is not sufficient to explain collective action, how is the general theory developed by

Luhmann better suited for investigating, analyzing and explaining social movements??” it also becomes obvious that an external critique to the field of social movement theory is intrinsic to this study.

Therefore, this dissertation uses both external and internal critiques to support the main thesis, which is: social movement theory is not sufficient or integrated enough to explain collective action and we need a more comprehensive theory in order to obtain a better understanding of movements and the way in which they fulfill their role of promoters of change in society. I am aware of the fact that other attempts have been made to create a more integrated field for the study of collective action. The general theory of strategic action fields (Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam 2011) is an example of such an attempt. A strategic action field is defined by them as:

“a meso-level social order where actors (who can be individual or collective) interact with knowledge of one another under a set of common understandings about the purposes of the field, the relationships in the field (including who has power and why), and the field’s rules” (Fligstein & McAdam 2011, p. 2).

Collective action is embedded within these strategic action fields (SAFs). Collective actors are also themselves made up of SAFs while SAFs also contain SAFs within SAFs. For example, an environmental group can form a SAF by itself which can be integrated within another SAF if it joins in a network of such groups; when this network interacts with governmental bodies, another SAF is formed and so on. The boundaries of SAFs are thus not static and they keep fluctuating depending on the context. SAFs have three main components, incumbents, challengers and governance units and are characterized by a constant tension between the three or

by “dynamics of both conflict/change and stability/order” (Fligstein & McAdam 2011, p. 4). Moreover, SAFs are interdependent, and when changes or instabilities take place within one SAF, other SAFs will be affected as well. Episodes of contention arise within SAFs due to the interaction between incumbents and challengers. This is a very brief summary but sufficient I believe to draw the conclusion that within this perspective all collective action takes place within strategic action fields. These fields are organized the same, are related to one another and can be understood only if we look at them in relation to one another and not only individually.

While my intention is more or less the same with that of Fligstein and McAdam, to find a comprehensive, integrated theory to explain social change I am choosing a different path. Whereas they build a theory around strategic action fields, I consider that a communication theory is better at explaining the social, change and social movements as promoters of this change, because, as Luhmann does, I hold that society is a communication system, not an action one.

As it was mentioned earlier, the dissertation will make use of both external and internal critique, one type for the field of social movement theory and another for the general systems theory proposed by Luhmann. An external critique uses different theories or views from an outside position to assess the validity and value of a theory, field of study or approach. The analysis of different theories is used to justify the choice of one theory over the others in this case. The advantage of using this type of critique is the fact that in addition to emphasizing the limits of a theory, it also points to a solution for overcoming those limits, and it shows what can be used instead. In an

internal critique, the theory is criticized through itself and thus the use of other theories is not necessary. An in-depth analysis of the theory is needed in this type of critique to see if its logic holds. The advantage of using internal critique rests with the fact that it can ascertain the core logic of a theory, it can show if it has contradictory points and if it has internal coherence.

Three objectives will be met through the use of these two types of critique. The first objective of this study is to show how Luhmann's theory can fill the gaps in social movement theory and help us better understand social movements. An in-depth analysis of Luhmann's general theory and an explanation of the main concepts and the relations between them are needed in order to accomplish this objective. The purpose of this analysis is not only to familiarize the reader with the theory, but also to show the way it brings all elements of the social together in a comprehensive view of society. Second, the shortfalls of the theory of social movements will be shown. To accomplish this, what are considered the main perspectives and approaches to social movements are presented in a detailed overview of the field in order to show how social movements are generally analyzed. This review will also show how the focus changes from one theory to another and how different facets of social movements are analyzed separately instead of together. Where possible, concepts developed in Luhmann's general theory will be used as a critique to the theory of social movements. This is where the critique becomes external. On one hand the various perspectives will be compared to each other and on the other hand, a theory outside the field of social movement theory is used to show how we can better understand social movements.

The third objective is the use of environmentalism as an illustration of how this general theory can be used to better explain and analyze a specific movement. Environmentalism will also be overviewed, in an attempt to outline its history and the way it changed overtime in relation to the social context. Throughout this overview the general theory developed by Luhmann will be used to interpret and analyze these changes. The already existing academic literature on the subject will be used not only because it is extensive and wide-ranging but also because the interest of this study is purely theoretical. This is how and where the critique becomes internal. Luhmann's theory will not be critiqued through the use of other theories or concepts that are on its outside, it will be critiqued through its own use. The study of the movement through this theory will outline not only how society is changed and how social movements change with society, it will also show how much of the theory can be applied, where it has limitations and how it can be improved upon to better understand the social.

#### *1.4 By way of conclusions*

As we have seen, the field of social movement theory is comprised by many different paradigms and approaches that are also categorized in different ways. The varied classifications highlight the fact that the manner in which social movements are analyzed changes depending on the socio-historical and scientific context. The multiplicity of perspectives on social movements leads, as it has been noted, to a range of different definitions for the environmental movement. In addition, there is also a variety of ways in which the evolution of environmentalism is seen. The thesis that the general systems theory developed by Luhmann can solve the problems

posed by all this diversity has been proposed and a very brief outline of how this theory looks at society and social movements has been provided as a first step in supporting this thesis. However, in order to support the argument further, a detailed overview of this general theory is needed.



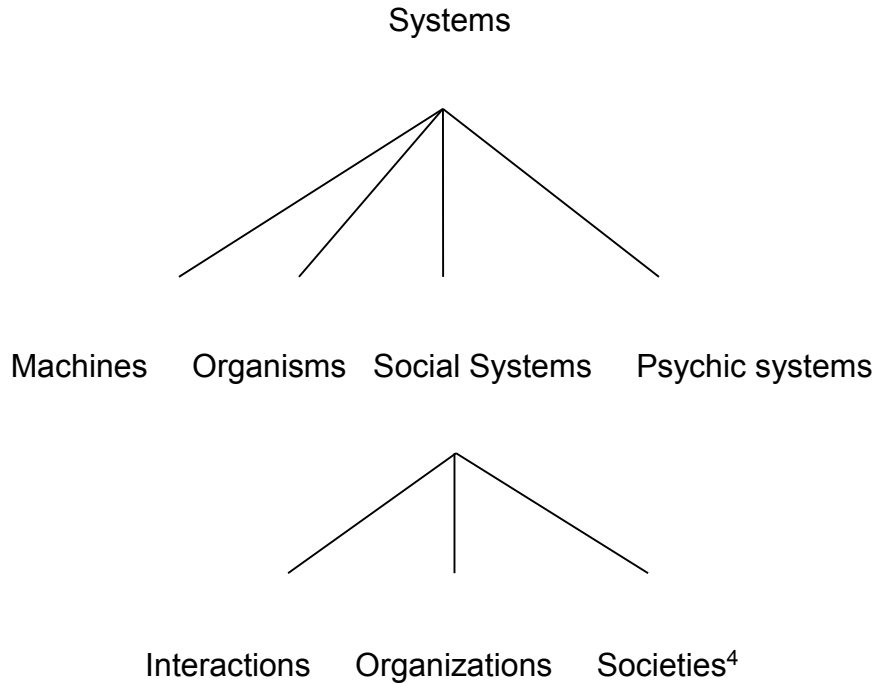
# Chapter 2: Luhmann's Systems Theory: Society and Social Movements as Systems

As it was stated in the previous chapter, one of the main arguments of this thesis is that the general systems theory developed by Niklas Luhmann provides us with the necessary tools to look dynamically at social movements and understand them within the shifting social context. This theory is also going to be used as an external critique to the field of social movement theory, which is seen as lacking integration and offering a fragmented view of social movements as promoters of change in society. In order to support these arguments an in-depth analysis of Luhmann's general theory is needed.

Therefore, this chapter will be a detailed presentation of the general systems theory developed by Niklas Luhmann and structured in three main sections. The first section will explain the main concepts of the theory, the second section will discuss the concept of society as a system and the third will examine the notion of social movement from a Luhmannian perspective. This is done for three reasons. First, the main or basic concepts of the theory need to be presented because they are used to explain other, more complex concepts. From my point of view, concepts within concepts in Luhmann's theory create a web that needs to be untangled.

Second, answering the question “what is society?” is important, not only because society is the context in which social movements function, but because the relationship between social movements and society is a very important one if we want to understand social change. Third, providing a clarification of the main concepts, an explanation of what is understood by society and social movement, and an account of how society and social movements are related are all necessary in answering the research question. How can we decide if Luhmann’s theory is capable of explaining social movements better than the collective action research field if we do not know the theory?

To know the theory however we first need to know what a system is. After all, Luhmann’s theory is a general systems theory. So what is a system? Niklas Luhmann applies the concept of system to an object of research that has certain (and well defined) features that allow us to make the distinction between that object and a different one. In his view, there are three levels of system formation and analysis: at the first level he places systems, at the second level he places machines, organisms, social systems and psychic systems and at the third level he places interactions, organizations and societies. The three levels are related to one another as it is shown in the following diagram:



“(Luhmann, 1995, p.2)

Systems can be compared only with systems that are situated at the same level. In other words, one can compare machines with organisms, but not organisms with organizations. What should also be mentioned is that this schema is a conceptual abstraction, which is different from the “self-abstraction of the object”. The conceptual abstraction allows comparison while the self-abstraction allows us, as well as the system, to apply the same structures within the system itself (Luhmann 1995, p. 2-3).

Luhmann identifies a number of main themes and concepts used in systems theoretical analysis: the difference between system and environment, system differentiation, causality, the difference between element and relation, conditioning,

---

<sup>4</sup> Notwithstanding this schema Society is seen as the all-encompassing system. This is better understood once the main concepts have been presented.

complexity, system boundaries, ecology, self-reference, multiple constitution, system processes, information and time. I add one more concept to this list, autopoiesis, due to the fact that Luhmann's theory is a theory of autopoietic systems. In what follows these concepts will be presented because they are all used in describing and explaining society and social movements as social systems.

## *2.1 Main concepts used in systems theoretical analysis*

### *2.1.1 Autopoiesis*

The word autopoiesis combines two different ancient Greek words, "auto", which means "self" and "poiesis", which means "production" (or creation). Luhmann borrowed the term from the Chilean biologist Humberto Maturana who used it to explain how cells are "a product of their own production" (Moeller 2006, p. 12). Autopoiesis means exactly that, self-production. Autopoietic systems, either biological or social, produce themselves without any input from the outside. In Luhmann's words autopoietic systems are:

"systems that are defined as unities as networks of production of components that recursively, through their interactions, generate and realize the network that produces them and constitute, in the space in which they exist, the boundaries of the network as components that participate in the realization of the network". (Luhmann, 1990, p.3)

Thus, autopoietic systems produce their own components and the relations between them. They also set their own boundaries. In turn, these components, the relations between them and the boundaries of the system produce the system that

produced them. It is a closed circular relationship. Social systems, like organic ones are autopoietic systems. One last thing on this topic for now: autopoiesis presupposes operational closure. This means two things: one, the system can never operate outside its own boundaries and two, the system can produce and reproduce its elements/components and operations *only and only* using *its own* elements/components and operations. Nothing from outside the system can be used. Thus, the system must make the difference between itself and the environment.

### *2.1.2 The difference between system and environment.*

According to Luhmann, this is the very basis of system theory and it replaces the “traditional difference between the whole and its parts”. He explains this distinction through George Spencer-Brown’s conceptualization of form. In this view forms are “not shapes, but boundaries, markings of differences that oblige us to make clear which side we are indicating, and thus which side of the form we are on, our point of departure for further operations” (Luhmann, 2012, p. 29)<sup>5</sup>. If we think of the distinction between system and environment from this perspective, we understand that the system and the environment are different sides of the same form. This means three things: they exist simultaneously, they depend on each other and they cannot exist one without the other:

“Systems are oriented by their environment not just occasionally and adaptively, but structurally, and they cannot exist without an environment. They constitute and maintain themselves by creating and maintaining a difference from their environment, and they use their boundaries to regulate this difference” (Luhmann, 1995, p.17).

---

<sup>5</sup> This conceptualization of “form” is very important and should be kept in mind because it is used throughout Luhmann’s theory to explain various concepts, for example differentiation and re-entry.

This is not only a repetition of what was said above, it also adds a new dimension to the distinction. The differentiation from environment is an integral part in system formation and maintenance. Systems exist insofar as they make the distinction between themselves and the environment and maintain this difference. In other words, systems themselves make this distinction, which means that they are not only one side of a form, they are themselves forms.

Furthermore,

“the environment receives its unity through the system and only in relation to the system. It is delimited by open horizons, not by boundaries that cannot be crossed; thus it is not itself a system. It is different for every system, because every system excludes only itself from the environment“ (Luhmann, 1995, p.17).

In other words, the environment becomes significant only in relation to the system. Its characteristics, features and effects are marked and designated by the system and the system's relations with it. The environment is what is outside the system as the system sees it or places it and thus the environment of each system is unique.

“One of the most important consequences of the system/environment paradigm is that one must distinguish between the environment of a system and a system in the environment of this system” (Luhmann, 1995, p.17). This is important due to the fact that the dependence relations between a system and its environment need to be set apart from the relations between different systems. We will come back to this after we discuss boundaries, relations and structural coupling.

The system/environment distinction also explains partly why Luhmann 'places' the human being outside the social system of society. He considers that, if we accept this distinction, we need to place the human being (in its entirety) either in the system or in the environment. It cannot be in both because we cannot split it in different parts that we can place in either one or the other. If we do place it within the system, then we are forced to build a theory of society as "a theory of the distribution of human beings" and that would be in contrast with the concepts of human rights and equality. The only choice left in this case is to regard human beings as part of the environment of society (Luhmann 2012, p.9). It must be reiterated though that this is a theoretical choice. The concepts of communication and of society as a system of communication further explain this choice. However, the explanation of these concepts follows later in the chapter because other concepts which are used to explain them need to be discussed first, such as another distinction, the one between relation and element.

### *2.1.3 The difference between element and relation*

This notion of difference between element and relation is related to the fact that there are two different ways in which the fragmentation of a system can take place: "One aims to form subsystems (or more precisely, internal system/environment relations) within the system. The other decomposes systems in elements and relations" (Luhmann, 1995, p.21). The formation of subsystems is a theory of system differentiation while the decomposition in elements is a theory of system complexity. Elements are what constitute a system, just from a different perspective than that of sub-systems. To illustrate this, Luhmann uses the example of a house. If the

subsystems are the rooms of a house, the elements are the bricks, windows or doors (Luhmann, 1995, p.21). However, elements become important only if they are seen in relation to one another and when they refer to one another (to use the house example further, a door in the hardware store is just a door, it becomes a part of my house when I put it in and use it to access my house or a room in my house). Thus, element and relation are as dependent on one another as system and environment are.

In Luhmann's theoretical approach, just as there are no environments without systems (and vice-versa), there are no elements without relations or relations without elements within a system. Thus, elements exist only insofar as they are related to one another within the system, and relations exist only between elements (or through the use of elements). In the house example, I need a switch to turn on the lamp; without the switch I cannot use the lamp or if I do not have a lamp, the switch is useless. Also, the lamp needs to be plugged in for the switch to turn it on; if lamp and switch are not somehow connected, none of them is of any use. Moreover, "the element is constituted as a unity only by the system that enlists it as an element to use it in relations" (Luhmann, 1995, p.22). Elements are the smallest units of a system (they cannot be decomposed further) and they are defined as such (as elements) only by the system that employs them as units. In addition to relations between elements there are also relations between system and environment as well as system-system relations. Those, however, can be better understood after the concepts of boundary and self/other reference are explained. Boundary will be explained next while self/other reference will need to be explained further in the chapter, after more basic concepts, such as observation, are presented.



#### 2.1.4 Boundaries

“Systems have boundaries. This is what distinguishes the concept of system from that of structure. Boundaries cannot be conceived without something beyond; thus they presuppose the reality of a beyond and the possibility of transcendence. In common understanding they have the double function of separating and connecting system and environment” (Luhmann, 1995, p.28).

Boundaries’ double function is explained by Luhmann through both the difference between element and relation and that between system and environment. Boundaries separate elements but not relations. Once boundaries have been determined (or defined) elements have to be attributed to the system or the environment. Relations however are still maintained between the two. Thus boundaries separate the system from the environment through the designation of elements as internal or external to the system and, they are the point of connection between them through the maintenance of relations. Systems (or system and environment) are connected to each other through boundaries.

Different types of systems (remember the diagram at the beginning of the chapter), however, have different types of boundaries. Living systems (i.e. organisms) are limited in space and have organs that act as boundaries and mediators of relations with the environment. These organs are spatial boundaries; they live in the system and can be seen only from the outside. Social systems, which are meaning systems, aren’t limited in space, their boundaries are “purely internal” and they are produced by the system through the distinction between self-reference and other-reference. (Luhmann 2012, p.38-39).

Boundaries are therefore mechanisms of selection as well as mechanisms of connection. They select elements and create relations. Through the use of boundaries, systems can close and open at the same time. They close through the separation of elements (as belonging to the system or belonging to the environment) and open through the creation of relations. Relations are also selected but by the internal organization of the system. The system decides which relations are significant and which are not (Luhmann, 1995, p.28-30). Relations, both within the system and with the environment are also regulated by the conditioning principle.

### *2.1.5 Conditioning*

As we have seen, systems are a network of relations between their elements. These relations need to be somehow regulated and this regulation takes the form of conditioning. That means that something happens only under certain conditions, or in other words, a relation “occurs only when the other also occurs”. The same applies when it comes to the “the availability of specific elements” (Luhmann, 1995, p.23). In Luhmann’s words:

“As systems theory knows, conditionings are among the most general requirements of all system formation. They establish non-arbitrary relationships in the sense that determining certain characteristics limits the scope for determining others. In other terms, considering how we obtain information about a system, we speak of redundancies limiting the variety of the system: where a certain characteristic occurs, others are either more or less probable” (Luhmann 2012, p. 138).

### *2.1.6 System differentiation*

It was mentioned earlier that there are two different ways in which the fragmentation of a system can be understood: through a theory of system differentiation (the formation of subsystems) or a theory of complexity (the decomposition of a system in elements and relations). System differentiation is:

“the repetition of system formation within systems. Further system/environment differences can be differentiated within systems. The entire system then acquires the function of internal environment for these subsystems, indeed for each subsystem in its own specific way. The system/environment difference is therefore duplicated; the entire system multiplies itself as a multiplicity of system/environment differences” (Luhmann, 1995, p.18).

Thus system differentiation is the formation of systems through the differentiation between system and environment within the system itself. Through this process, subsystems are produced within the system, the system becomes environment and complexity is created. System differentiation allows for further explanation of how and why system theory is different from the whole/parts paradigm.

Luhmann holds that differentiation doesn't mean that the system breaks down into subsystems that work like its parts, the system being basically reduced to relations between these parts. If subsystems would be “parts” of the system as a “whole”, then the system would just distribute its operations to the subsystems and it itself would operate only through these subsystems. Instead, in system differentiation, the subsystems are the ones making the distinction between system and environment, not the system within which they are forming; subsystems contribute to forming the system, true, but they use their own distinctions and operations. The

system is reproduced or multiplied through these new system environment distinctions but it is not the one coordinating the formation or further operation of its subsystems as it would be within a whole/parts paradigm. To further understand system differentiation we need to understand the notions of operations and observations.

### *2.1.7 Observation, self-observation and second order observations (System processes)*

Although observations are operations, the two should not be confused with one another. While operations are simply “the factual happening of events whose reproduction carries out the autopoiesis of the system (...) observations use distinctions to describe something (and nothing else)” (Luhmann 2000a, p. 95). Thus operations are what a system does or what is formed of, while observations are complex operations and also forms, which designate two separate sides, one that is observed and one that isn’t observed. In autopoietic systems theory, this means that observations mark the difference between system and environment. When this difference is introduced in the system we can talk of self-observation. Thus, for general systems theory:

“observation means nothing more than handling distinctions. Only in psychic systems does the concept presupposes consciousness (...). Other systems must acquire their own possibilities of observation. Accordingly, self-observation is the introduction of the system/environment distinction within the system, which constitutes itself with the help of that distinction; self-observation is thus the operative factor in autopoiesis, because for elements to be reproduced, it must be guaranteed that they are reproduced as

elements of the system and not as anything else” (Luhmann 1995, p. 37).

Thus self-observation is a crucial component of autopoietic reproduction. To put it differently, Luhmann defines observation “as any kind of operation that makes a distinction so as to designate one (but not the other) side” (Luhmann 1998, p. 47). Through this distinction, the operation of observation not only makes the distinction between the system and its environment possible, it also introduces this distinction within the system, thus participating in system differentiation. As a result, through observation, autopoietic reproduction is insured and subsystems are formed. When this happens, the system has to choose what to observe: the overall system to which it belongs, other subsystems (systems in its environment) or itself (self-observation).

Observations through which the observer (or an observing system) designates something, going from “unmarked space” to “marked space” without saying that things can be different are first order observations. However, an observing system (or an observer) can also observe that these are only its own observations and that there are other observations; and thus the question “Who is the observer?” arises. This is the level where second order cybernetics comes into play. At this level we can speak of second order observations, which are observations of observations of the first order (or other observations of the second order) (Luhmann 1998, p. 47).

For example, this dissertation can be seen as a second order observation because I chose to look at perspectives on social movements instead of at social movements directly. Looking at a movement and defining its attributes, thus making a difference between movements and other systems in society, would have been first

order observation. Instead, I choose to look at how others defined movements; these others performed the first order observation and I am looking only at their observations.

Second order observations make contingency possible. In this type of observation an observer can choose to observe a different observer, the same fact that was already observed but at a different time, or any observation. Everything becomes contingent because there is the possibility of choosing what to observe. Furthermore, observation of the second order reduces complexity by increasing it. It increases complexity by offering a choice but at the same time it reduces it because only observations are observed (Luhmann 1998, p. 48). But what are contingency and complexity?

#### *2.1.8 Contingency and double contingency*

According to Luhmann, “anything is contingent that is neither necessary nor impossible. The concept is therefore defined by the negation of necessity and impossibility” (Luhmann 1998, p. 45). This means that things are the way they are although they could be different. Objects or systems are placed in the realm of possibility; it is not necessary for them to be the way they are now and it is not impossible for them to be different. When the fact that there are other possibilities becomes known however, we run into the problem of double contingency.

The concept of double contingency was introduced by Talcott Parsons to describe the circular situation in which action or interaction become uncertain due to

the fact that alter wants to base its actions on the actions of ego, and ego in turn wants to base its actions on the actions of alter. Luhmann solves this dilemma by defining double contingency as:

“describing something given (something experienced, expected, remembered, fantasized) in the light of its possibility of being otherwise; it describes objects within the horizon of possible variations. It presupposes the world as it is given, yet it does not describe the possible in general, but what is otherwise possible from the view point of reality” (Luhmann 1995, p.106).

Thus we speak of double contingency when we describe something the way it is in the context of it possibly being different. In this case not only other possibilities exist, but the fact that they do is known. Alter and ego make decisions based on what is, knowing that it could be different and do not remain stuck in calculating possibilities. As we will see, for systems, this has the effect of forcing a selection and thus creating complexity.

### *2.1.9 Complexity*

Complexity is explained by Luhmann with the aid of a distinction in the form of a paradox: “complexity is the unity of a manifold. A state of affairs is expressed in two versions, as unity and as manifold, and the concept denies that we are dealing with different matters” (Luhmann 2012, p. 78). Thus the distinction is between unity and manifold, between the one and the many. In other words a complex system is the union of the many. This is better explained with the aid of two further distinctions.

The first such distinction is one we discussed earlier, the difference between element and relation. The complexity of a unity is given by the volume of elements

and interconnections between these elements. As the number of elements increases, so does the number of connections and so does the complexity of the unity. Hence, the complexity of a system can be “mapped” by counting the number of elements but also by taking into consideration their qualitative characteristics and differences, as well as by introducing the notion of time and thus seeing how stable these elements and relations actually are.

The second distinction takes the first one for a fact but

“stresses that possible relations between elements multiply in geometrical progression with the rise in the number of elements and thus the growth of the system. Since there are drastic limits to the real connectivity of elements, this mathematical law imposes the selective interconnection of elements even at very low magnitudes” (Luhmann 2012, p. 79).

This means that elements can be directly connected to one another only up to a point and once that point has been reached, the system is forced to make a selection. The distinction in this case is that limit (or boundary) up to which any element can be connected to any other element in the system. Anything beyond that boundary is connected selectively, fact which creates complexity. At this point contingency also takes effect.

Put differently:

“We will call an interconnected collection of elements complex when, because of immanent constraints in the elements’ connective capacity, it is no longer possible at any moment to connect every element with every other element. The concept of immanent constraint refers to the internal complexity of the elements, which is not at the system’s disposal, yet which makes possible their capacity for unity” (Luhmann, 1995, p.24).



Thus, complexity is creating conditioning for itself: the fact that the relations between elements have to be complex to attain unity for higher levels of system formation limits the connective capacity of the elements and thus complexity is reproduced as a condition that cannot be avoided at higher levels of system formation. Complexity from this perspective means being forced to select. To maintain itself, a complex system is forced to select a certain number of relations from a multitude of relations. This also leads to contingency (Luhmann, 1995, p.24-25).

For example, to show how Luhmann's theory can explain social movements better than the field of social movement theory, I first need to show how this field explains them. There is a multitude of authors within the field, and their works are all related to each other (i.e.: through: the field, the perspective, the approach, method of study, the concepts used). It is however impossible for me to present all their works so I am forced to choose between them. I am forced to choose not only between perspectives, but also between authors within each perspective and between works from each of these authors. I also have to make my choice based on relations in the field but even those require a selection. Do I choose one or the other based on the fact that they use the same method of study or because they are part of the same perspective? Thus if I choose the works of a certain author because those works (and not others) are a good example for other works to which they are related through being part of the same perspective I make that choice based on certain relations while ignoring others. Therefore, the complexity of the field limits my capacity to present the entire field and forces me to make choices based on certain relations. Relations,

elements and complexity are also talked about in the context of self-referential systems.

#### *2.1.10 Self-reference and other reference*

“The concept of self-reference designates the unity that an element, a process, or a system is for itself. For itself means independent of the cut of observation by others. (...) One can call a system self-referential if it itself constitutes the elements that compose it as functional unities and runs reference to this self-constitution through all the relations among these elements, continuously reproducing its self-constitution in this way. In this case, self-referential systems necessarily operate by self-contact; they possess no other form of environmental contact than this self-contact (Luhmann, 1995, p.33).

There are at least three significant statements in the quote above. First, it states that a unity is produced, it doesn't exist a priori and it needs a “relational operation” to exist. Second, it states that for a system to be self-referential it needs to create its own elements, connect them and maintain itself by always referring back to itself. At the level of system formation (or constitution), self-reference is therefore another term for autopoiesis. The third statement is that self-referential systems are operationally closed systems. Not being able to operate outside their boundaries doesn't mean though that systems have no contact with the environment:

“The concept of self-referentially closed systems does not contradict the system's openness to the environment. Instead, in the self-referential mode of operation, closure is a form of broadening possible environmental contacts; closure increases, by constituting elements more capable of being determined, the complexity of the environment that is possible for the system” (Luhmann, 1995, p.37).

Self-referential systems are thus systems that have the ability to establish relations within themselves and to differentiate these relations from relations with the environment. They are also capable of creating ways of dealing with the environment

through their own means. There is also a distinction to be made between system-environment relations and system-system relations. “In the relationship between system and environment, the system operates *universalistically*, in the form of a cross-section of the world. In relations between systems, it operates *specifically*, in certain, contingent modes of observation” (Luhmann 2013a, p. 10). In other words, in the relation with the environment the system is looking at an “unmarked” space that can’t be clearly indicated. The system only sees itself as separate from the rest. In the relation with other systems though, the system sees that there are other units in the environment and can observe them and indicate which are relevant for it.

The discussion about the system-environment distinction and system-environment or system-system relations is important because it partly explains another crucial distinction: that between self-reference and other-reference. As we have seen, a fundamental step (the first step) in system formation is making the distinction between system and environment. Reintroducing this distinction within the system leads to further differentiation. The operation of copying the distinction and then using it is called “re-entry”. Luhmann explains re-entry as follows:

“Paying attention to this condition of the capacity of observing, we can see that the system makes the difference between system and the environment and copies that difference in the system to be able to use it as a distinction. This operation of reinventing the difference as a distinction can be conceived as a re-entry of a form into the form, or the distinction into the distinguished” (Luhmann 2000b, p. 37).

The operation of re-entry is both possible and necessary because systems are operationally closed. The boundaries of the system are set by operations and thus

operationally produced (remember that operations are what the system does). “By happening, they [the operations] determine what belongs to the system and what belongs to the environment” (Luhmann 2013a, p. 94). However, because the system is autopoietic, and therefore can use only what is already in the system, they need to observe the system using the system – environment distinction (Luhmann 2013a, p. 94).

The distinction between self-reference and other-reference is such a re-entry. This distinction is the way in which the operationally produced boundaries (in other words the difference between system and environment) are copied into the system. By copying this distinction, the system is able to distinguish itself from what it is observing (Luhmann 2000a, p. 10).

The system uses its boundaries not only to distinguish itself from the environment, but also to relate to the environment and other systems, to communicate about itself and to observe other systems as well. So self-reference is nothing more than looking in while other-reference is nothing else than looking out. This capacity to look both in and out also makes it possible for the system to see that some events that take place within itself can take place in other systems at the same time (and are thus operations within a multitude of systems simultaneously). It is crucial though that the system makes the difference between these two types of references.

An example of self/other reference distinction and re-entry would be writing a sociological dissertation about the economic system. In this case sociology is a sub-

system (or a part of the scientific system. Doing a literature review of sociological theories about the economic functional system would be self-reference because the reviewed theories are within the scientific system. Referring directly to the economy would be other-reference because the economic system is outside the system of science. If I then talk, during the defense for example, about the impact of my dissertation I need to make the difference between the impact on the sociological field, thus on the scientific system, and the impact on the economic system. And finally, by talking about these two types of impact (or two possible impacts) as two different things in two different systems, I reintroduce the distinction between the two systems and thus use the operation of re-entry. However, this type of distinction could be complemented by another perspective, defining knowledge as a capacity for action (see Sales, 2012).

Self and other reference explain the fact that there is a variety of “descriptions of the world”. These (descriptions) are always other-reference formulations of specific systems. The other-reference always depends on self-reference of course, so each system will describe the world differently, as in, the way it sees it (Luhmann 2013a, p. 94). In the example of the sociological dissertation, the way I describe the economy is specific to the field of sociology. The economic system would probably describe itself very differently. In other words, each system uses its own schema of elements and relations to describe not only itself but also the environment or other systems in the environment. Schema here is used in the Kantian understanding, meaning a set of rules for the repetition of operations (Kant 1999).

### 2.1.11 *Causality*

This is another concept that depends on understanding system-environment relations, boundaries, operations as well as contingency. Luhmann holds that:

“Operations, as classical concepts such as poiesis or production indicate, control and vary only part of the causes necessary to reproduce the system. The environment is always involved. Moreover, causal determinations always require specific performance by an observer. Certain causes have to be attributed to certain effects, choosing from an infinity of causal factors. Depending on the interests concerned, attribution can vary considerably. (...) If we wish to know what causal relations are assumed (selected), we therefore have to observe observers, and we must know that every attribution is contingent (which does not mean arbitrary or purely fictitious” (Luhmann 2012, p. 74).

Thus, system operations depend on causal conditions from the environment and vice versa. Boundaries do not “block causalities” in either direction. Furthermore, it is impossible to see all causes and all effects and thus observers are the ones who make the causal connection (attribute causes to effects). These attributions vary depending on the position of the observer and thus observers need to be observed to know how the attribution was made. The entire situation is contingent because causes are selected to be linked to effects. This doesn’t mean that the causal relation is in fact untrue, the selection is not arbitrary; it is just based on the schema of the system to which the observer belongs.

### 2.1.12 *Ecology*

According to Luhmann, the original sense of the term ecology was that of “establishing a livable world”, but mass media merged it with the term “environment” thus creating confusion in speech. For system theory, ecology is of interest because

“ecological circumstances” have an effect on society. These ecological circumstances are the environment of society and as a theory of distinction between system and environment, systems theory cannot ignore the environment of the system society. Furthermore, Luhmann argues that sociology cannot “limit its attention to an intrasocial perspective. Its subject matter is society and everything else that is environment from the stand point of society” (Luhmann 2012, p.73-74). Another thing that cannot be ignored is the temporal dimension of society.

### *2.1.13 Time*

For Luhmann

“time symbolizes the fact that whenever anything determinate occurs, something else also happens, so that no single operation can ever gain control over its circumstances. Furthermore, selection itself is a temporal concept: it is imminent, is required, is performed, and finally is passed” (Luhmann 1995, p. 42).

Thus time puts pressure on the system to select and imposes conditioning and complexity. Time is also seen as being irreversible, fact which leads to it being understood as a distinction: the present is ongoing between the past and the future. Systems and environments are never at the same level of complexity, which means that they are never perfectly synchronized in time. There is thus a need for constant adjustments and corrections in relations between the two. These however cannot be instantaneous “but take time”. The system has a few mechanisms at its disposal to deal with these desynchronizations and to “gain time” to make the necessary adjustments. It can “prepare reactions and store them for when they are needed”, it can “increase the tempo of its own processes vis-à-vis relevant environmental

processes” or it can even “defer reaction without breaking down in the meantime” (Luhmann 1995, p. 43-46). One important concept in Luhmann’s theory that depends on the notion of time is that of information.

### *2.1.14 Information*

As with other concepts, understanding information presupposes understanding other concepts (besides time as mentioned above), such as complexity, causality and elements. This is how Luhmann explains information:

“Information occurs whenever a selective event (of an external or internal kind) works selectively within the system, namely, can select the system’s states. This presupposes a capacity for being oriented to (simultaneous or successive) differences that appear to be bound to a self-referential operational mode of the system. ‘A bit of information’, as Bateson says, ‘is definable as a difference which makes a difference’. This means that the difference as such begins to work if and insofar as can be treated as information in the self-referential systems” (Luhmann 1995, p. 40).

Therefore, information is an event that makes a selection within a self-referential system. It is an event that makes a distinction which is itself a distinction. This distinction also forces a selection. It thus presupposes complexity and temporality. Events are elements in a system that are “fixed points in time”; they are “identified by this temporal appearance and cannot be repeated” (Luhmann 1995, p. 67). The house example can be used again to explain this.

If I am inside and someone knocks at the door, I receive an audible signal – which is also an information - that someone is outside my door and wants something



from within (to come in or to talk to me). It is not the knock in itself or the audible signal that matters here, but the message it transmits. Once this happens it cannot be changed, it took place and I have to act based on the information I received. Even if a second knock comes, it doesn't change anything in respect to what information I already have and the situation is the same as before: I am inside and I know that someone is outside and wants something from within. The knock on the door stopped being information; it was information only the first time it took place, when it introduced something new. This is what is meant by information as an event identified by temporal appearance and impossible to repeat.

The knock on the door is also a distinction, knocking versus not knocking, that introduced a difference in the situation: now there is someone at the door who wants something from within, whereas before nobody was there (if someone was there and he/she didn't knock then they didn't want anything from within and I didn't have any knowledge about them being there). This is what is meant by distinction which makes a distinction.

Moreover, now that I know someone is there, I am forced to choose a course of action: ignore the knock and the person outside, go open the door, ask through the door who is there. This is how the situation becomes contingent and complex. I have to select one of many possibilities. I also need to think of causal relations into a self-referential, operational mode, meaning: I ask myself how the chosen course of action will affect me (what happens when I open the door?).

Information is also a component of the process of communication which will be discussed in the context of society as a system of communication.

## *2.2 Society as a social system*

The three following quotes all explain society as a social system, each one adding a new dimension to the concept:

“Society is the autopoietic social system par excellence. Society carries on communication and whatever carries on communication is society. Society constitutes the elemental units (communications) out of which it is composed and whatever is constituted in this way is society, is an aspect of the constitutive process itself” (Luhmann 1995, p. 408-409).

Society is thus an autopoietic communication social system. Also:

“A particularity of social systems is that they orient themselves to complexity in the form of meaning. This means that the difference between system and environment is mediated exclusively by meaning-constituted boundaries” (Luhmann 1995, p. 194).

Society is thus an autopoietic communication system with meaning constituted boundaries and:

“Sociology must have a concept for the unity of the totality of what is social – whether one calls this (depending on the theoretical preferences) the totality of social relations, processes, actions, or communications. We will use the concept of society for this purpose. Accordingly, society is the all-encompassing social system that includes everything that is social and therefore does not admit a social environment. If something social emerges, if new kinds of communicative partners or themes appear, society grows along with them. They enrich society. They cannot be externalized or treated as an environment, for everything that is communication is society” (Luhmann 1995, p. 408).

Society is thus an autopoietic communication comprehensive social system with meaning constituted boundaries. Therefore to understand the concept of society we have to understand the concepts of autopoiesis, communication and meaning. We have seen that an autopoietic system is one that produces its own elements in a recursive operationally closed network of these same elements. In the case of society as a social system elements are communications. Communication is also the operation that “carries out” the autopoiesis of the system and differentiates it from the environment. If society has meaning-constituted boundaries, and as we have seen, boundaries make the distinction system-environment possible, it goes without saying that communication and meaning are strongly related. In fact, Luhmann explains the concept of communication by taking meaning as the starting point (Luhmann 2012). So what is meaning?

### *2.2.1 Meaning*

Meaning is the result of the fact that two types of systems evolved together: psychic systems and social systems. These two kinds of systems can form and exist only together because they are each other’s environment. “Persons cannot emerge and continue to exist without social systems, nor can social systems without persons” (Luhmann 1995, p. 59). This doesn’t mean that human beings are part of society, just that they cannot exist without it, as any other system that cannot exist without its environment. Meaning is the result of this co-evolution and “both kinds of systems are ordered according to it, and for both it is binding as the indispensable, undeniable form of their complexity and self-reference” (Luhmann 1995, p. 59).

Therefore, as a form, meaning must make a distinction; as a form of complexity, it must force a selection and, as self-reference it must produce and relate the elements of the system making it possible for the system to refer back to itself.

Luhmann doesn't define meaning, but he describes it phenomenologically:

“Meaning can be described phenomenologically as surplus reference accessible from actually given meaning. Meaning is accordingly an infinite and hence indeterminable referential complex that can be made accessible and reproduced in a determined manner – and I attach great importance to the paradoxical formulation. We can describe the form of meaning as the difference between actuality and potentiality, and can therefore also assert that this and no other distinction constitutes meaning” (Luhmann 2012, p. 21).

There are at least four conclusions to be drawn from this quote. One is that, due to the fact that meaning is “a surplus reference accessible from actual given meaning”, only meaning can give or constitute meaning. Thus, meaning doesn't exist a priori. It is produced by operations that use meaning and it exists as meaning only for operations that use it as such. The second conclusion, drawn from the paradoxical formulation of meaning as an indeterminable complex that can be reproduced in a determined manner, is that meaning operates like complexity, as the unity of a manifold (remember the paradox of complexity: a complex system is the union of the many). This is better explained by the distinction between medium and form. Luhmann explains this distinction through the use of language as an example.

The language is the medium while words in sentences are forms. Words in sentences are thus temporary forms of the medium language. They are forms because they can be connected in various ways and when you connect them one way you make the distinction from all the other ways in which they can be connected.

They are temporary because they won't stay connected like that forever, they will eventually be connected in other ways, taking different forms. Thus the elements are the same, words, but the medium language takes the form of the words in sentences. In other words (or in a different form), medium is formed by loosely connected elements (in the case of language: words) and it takes forms when these elements are more specifically or tightly related (words in a sentence). As a communication system, society uses meaning as both medium and form (Luhmann 2012, p. 116-118).

The third conclusion to be drawn about meaning, given the fact that it is produced by operations that use it and that relations between elements as well as distinctions are made through the use of meaning, is that systems that use meaning as their medium are autopoietic, self-referential, operationally closed systems. The fourth conclusion, drawn from the statement that meaning is an infinite referential context, is that meaning systems are necessarily complex systems; a selection has to be made, *always*. And we came back almost full circle, because, as we have seen at the beginning of this section, psychic and social systems are the ones that use meaning and are ordered and bound in complexity by it. Now that meaning is explained, the concept of communication should also become clear.

### *2.2.2 Communication*

As it was mentioned earlier, Luhmann takes meaning as the starting point to explain it. This is because he doesn't agree with the "transmission metaphor" that is generally used in sender/receiver models of communication. According to him, this

metaphor implies three conditions that render it “unusable”. First, it (the metaphor) “suggests that the sender gives up something that the receiver then acquires”, when in fact nothing is lost in the process of communication. Second, it “locates what is essential about communication in the act of transmission”, when in fact communication doesn’t take place if it is not “received” or processed. And third, it “exaggerates the identity of what is transmitted” when nothing guarantees that the information transmitted is the same for both sender and receiver (Luhmann 1995, p. 139). On the other hand, if one uses the notion of meaning to explain communication it becomes evident that it (communication) implies selection because “meaning allows no other choice but to choose” (Luhmann 1995, p.140)

Therefore, communication is a process of selection. This is in fact a three-part selection process, or better said, communication incorporates three selections, each related to one component of communication. The three components are: information, utterance and understanding (or misunderstanding). Information was discussed earlier, and now that meaning is explained, we can see that information is that through which meaning is produced and reproduced. Utterance is the behavior that conveys the information and understanding is the expectation that the conveyed information is accepted as such. Communication is a three-part selection process because, as we have seen already, information is a selection “from a repertoire of possibilities” (repertoire offered by meaning). Utterance is a selection of the behavior that will express the information and the third selection is between understanding and not understanding, or maybe clearer, a selection of “what” is understood (Luhmann 1995, p. 140-142).

The process of communication is the unity of these three components. Communication cannot take place without all three, none of the three can appear on its own, and, as with any other process in the general theory of autopoietic systems, the process of communication is based on a distinction. The distinction between information and its utterance is crucial for communication and it is the basis of the third selection, that of understanding. In fact, understanding presupposes “grasping” the difference between information and the reason for its utterance (Luhmann 2002, p. 157). To use the knock on the door example again, the person outside my door selects to let me know he/she is outside (versus not letting me know) because he/she wants something from within (otherwise they would not knock). Then he/she selects to knock on the door (versus yelling or banging on the door) to convey the information that someone is outside and wants something from within. He/she also has the expectation that I understand that information as it was intended. The process of communication is complete when I understand that someone knocked on my door to let me know that he/she is outside for the reason that he/she wants something from within. Without me selecting this understanding the process of communication doesn’t take place because the information is not conveyed (I could select to believe that a tree branch hit my door or that someone knocked just to let me know that he/she is taking a walk in my courtyard – as exaggerated as this may sound it is nevertheless a possibility).

These three components also bind communication to a fixed point in time: information is identified by its temporal appearance, utterance is also an event or “an

act” tied to a point in time and understanding “cannot be repeated, but at best recalled” (Luhmann 2012, p. 36).

According to Luhmann “the general theory of autopoietic systems requires precise identification of the operation that carries out the autopoiesis of the system and thus demarcates the system from its environment. In the case of social systems, this is done through communication” (Luhmann 2012, p. 42). Communication is THE operation of the social system because, not only it has all the necessary qualities, it is also inherently social or you could say, it is an innately social operation. It is social because it presupposes the implication of a multitude (or at least two) conscious or psychic systems and thus it cannot be attributed to one individual. It is also considered “genuinely social” by Luhmann because, according to him, it stands in place of a “common collective consciousness” that cannot be produced in any way (Luhmann 2012, p. 42)

The autopoiesis of the social system is insured through communication because communication is a self-referential process, it can be produced only through other communications and only through its own elements. As the comprehensive (all encompassing) social system, society includes all communication. This also means that society is a communicatively closed system, it produces communication through communication and it is hence a system that is determined solely by itself. As a consequence:

"society can communicate only within itself, neither with itself nor with its environment. It produces its unity through the operational performance of communications in recursion to and anticipation of



other communications. Operating on the basis of the observation schema 'system and environment', it can then communicate within itself, about itself, or about its environment, but never with itself and never with its environment" (Luhmann 2012, p. 52).

The fact that this system has meaning constituted boundaries and that it uses meaning as both medium and form means these boundaries are forms; they have both an inside and an outside. The system is aware of the outside, and this outside has a "meaning" for it. This is in fact a repetition or a reinforcement of the thesis that the boundaries of the system are constituted by the difference between self and other reference and the distinction between system and environment and that these distinctions are re-introduced in the system through the operation of re-entry. In other words, as the comprehensive meaning communication system, society makes communication between other social systems possible but it cannot communicate itself due to the fact that it includes all communication. All communication being internal to society, external communication is excluded. Society still has an environment with which it has relations, but these relations are not carried through communication.

According to Luhmann, this all-encompassing society "uses the bodies and minds of the human beings for interaction with its environment" (Luhmann, 1990, p.178). This interaction takes place through what Luhmann calls structural coupling. This denotes nothing more than a connection between the system and environment or the system and another system. It can also be seen as a channel of reciprocal irritation. Society however is not connected directly to its physical environment. This connection takes place through a series of structural couplings:

“The entire physical world, including the physical basis of communication itself can affect communication only via *operationally closed* brains, and these brains only through *operationally closed* consciousness systems, and thus only through individuals. (...) Consciousness is hence in a privileged position under all the external conditions of autopoiesis. It controls the access of the outside world to communication” (Luhmann 2012, p. 63).

Therefore society is connected to consciousness, which is connected to the brain, which is connected to sensory organs. Only through this series of connections can society receive information or be irritated by the environment because society is a communication systems and understands only communication. Thus what I see with my eyes needs to be interpreted by the brain and translated into language so it can become communication in society.

In Luhmann’s view, social systems are communication systems and not action systems due to the fact that action in itself implies communication or at least the communication of a meaning. Furthermore, action systems imply the centrality of the actor. However, the understanding of an action does not rest with the actor but with those who receive the message of the action. Through an action, the actor communicates information that is received and understood. Nevertheless, action is not completely excluded because social systems require the attribution of actions in order to:

“move on their own autopoiesis. Not psychological motivation and not reasoning or capacity of argumentation constitutes action but the attribution as such, that is, the linking of selection and responsibility for the narrowing of choice. Only by attributing the responsibility for selecting the communication can the process of further communication be directed”. (Luhmann, 1990, p.6)

Such a view of society allows us, in Luhmann's view, to make a distinction between different types of societal systems. This distinction is based on different modes of differentiation, not on historical conditions and their long term consequences.

### *2.2.3 Forms of differentiation of society*

According to Luhmann there are four different forms of differentiation in the history of society (it must be mentioned that 'form' here is used in the same sense as earlier, not as type but as distinction). These forms are based on a further distinction, similar/dissimilar, applied to system relations. The first form is the segmentary differentiation, from the viewpoint of the similarity of subsystems. This means that society was divided into subsystems that were similar (such as families or clans). The second form is differentiation in terms of center and periphery. This form is based on dissimilarity, and it actually includes segmentary differentiation. The distinction between center and periphery appeared when the center differentiated itself from the rest of society (urban center and rural periphery). While the center was dependent on this distinction, the periphery was still segmentary differentiated and could have lived without the center.

Third is "stratificatory differentiation" from the viewpoint of "dissimilarity in rank". These are the stratified societies with strata like aristocracy or nobility as the "upper class" and "the people" (laborers, working classes) as the "lower class". The fourth form of differentiation is functional differentiation from the viewpoint of both similarity and dissimilarity of subsystems. Modern society is characterized by this form

of differentiation which is based simply on the function subsystems fulfill in society (Luhmann 1982, 2013a).

These forms of differentiation lead to two different types of societal systems: traditional and modern. Traditional societies are seen as stratified societies. Luhmann argues that all societies that developed a high culture attained a level of differentiation that allowed them to build hierarchical systems. These societies evolved in different regions and based themselves on land or cities. Thus, we can say that there were different societies that were aware of each other and used the notion of frontier (however unclear) to make the difference between themselves and others. Modern society on the other hand, realized a different kind of system differentiation, based on specific functions:

“Starting from special conditions in medieval Europe, where there existed a relatively high degree of differentiation of religion, politics, and economy, European society has evolved into a functionally differentiated system. This means that function, not rank, is the principle of system building”. (Luhmann, 1990, p.177)

In other words, modern society is differentiated in the political, economic, scientific, educational (and so on) functional systems and their environments. All these systems have a primary function and each of them belongs to the environment of the others. Through this differentiation, modern society became a new type of system that brought with it a high level of complexity. These functional systems are connected to each other and interact through structural couplings. Thus they are able to “irritate” each other and sent communications towards one another.

In Luhmann's view, territorial frontiers cannot integrate or limit these subsystems. He argues that the only subsystem that still uses these frontiers is the political system but for the simple reason that using them optimizes its own function. Science, economy, culture, are spread all over the world (Luhmann, 1990, p.178). As a consequence of this type of differentiation (functional differentiation) modern society became a global system:

“Under modern conditions, and as a consequence of functional differentiation, only one societal system can exist. Its communicative network spreads over the globe. It includes all human (i.e. meaningful) communication. Modern society is, therefore, a world society in a double sense. It provides one world for one system; and it integrates all world horizons as horizons of one communicative system”. (Luhmann, 1990, p.178)

Therefore, local societies are subsystems of the global society which integrates everything. The integration does not mean the leveling of standards but “the limitation of the degrees of freedoms of subsystems” (Luhmann, 2000c, p. 220). There is a difference between positive and negative integration. Positive integration means there is a relationship between the subsystems, a “loose coupling” that limits the freedoms of both subsystems. The negative integration means that there are some “loose couplings” that prevent the functional differentiation in some parts of the world (subsystems of the world society) or there are couplings that function one way, they limit the freedoms of only one subsystem but they do not limit the freedoms of the other subsystem involved in the relationship (Luhmann, 2000c, p. 221).

As we have seen so far society is an autopoietic communication and meaning system that includes all other social systems and all communication. It is a complex

system that functions based on the rules (for a lack of a better word) of double contingency, this (double contingency) being guaranteed by the use of meaning. According to Luhmann an autopoietic system also needs an immune system in order to maintain its autopoiesis on the basis of unstable elements. This immune system is activated by contradictions. Society's immune system is the legal system. The role of the legal system is to offer non-violent resolutions to conflicts, to keep communication open. All this is important for the explanation of the concept of social movements.

### *2.3 Social Movements in Systemic Terms*

In Luhmann's theory, social movements, or as we will see, protest movements, are one of the ways in which society selects significant or consequential contradictions in society and connects them to conflicts. Conflicts appear when there is a contradiction in communication or when a contradiction is communicated; contradictions serve the function of activating society's immune system and, social movements connect contradictions to conflicts. Therefore, before explaining the concept of social movement a discussion of the concepts contradiction, immune system and conflict is needed.

#### *2.3.1 Contradiction*

“Contradictions are commonly thought of as logical mistakes, as offenses against rules of logic, and as something to be avoided. Knowledge must be reformulated until it no longer contains any contradictions. Logic was intended to control this process, was differentiated for this function, and could then be refined as a system

of methods for control. This occurred in the working context of science. Science promoted the idea that reality as it can be known must be assumed to be free of contradiction. If the world of objects was contradictory in the logical sense, then any random statement and no knowledge about it could be possible. Correspondingly, there are no problems in reality. Problems are unclarified relations between knowledge and ignorance, and they can be solved, if at all, only by changing these relations” (Luhmann, 1995, p.357-358).

This “logic” however can be applied to the world of objects only, because the social is not and cannot be free of contradictions. If it would be, we would not have drunken driving, different political systems or wars. Logic thus excludes the social from the “environment of science”. If the social contains contradictions, then a theory of it has to account for them. So what are contradictions in this situation? Obviously we cannot use the “logical” definition because we would only try to find what is wrong with our knowledge that it doesn’t fit reality, thus a different definition is needed.

From the perspective of the theory of social systems, and more precisely when considering society an autopoietic communication and meaning system, contradictions can be explained through autopoiesis, observation, meaning, and communication. First, as Luhmann maintains, the difference between autopoiesis and observation must be pointed out because contradictions function differently depending at which level (that of autopoiesis or that of observation) they occur:

“In the context of autopoietic operations (which must always carry on if observation is to be possible at all), contradictions shape a specific form, which selects connective operations. One reacts to a contradiction differently from something that is not experienced as a contradiction but one reacts. (...) The situation presents itself all together differently to an observer. For him, and only for him, contradiction means undecidability. He cannot continue the observation because he cannot furnish the distinction with mutually exclusive designations. Contradiction puts a stop to observation, and

this is even more true of observing observation. But precisely this can be sufficient grounds for doing something” (Luhmann 1995, p. 359-360).

Consequently, contradictions have two functions, or as Luhmann puts it, a double function in autopoietic systems. On the one hand they block the operation of observation and on the other, they trigger connective operations. When speaking of autopoiesis here, Luhmann refers to the system’s capacity to reproduce itself and its elements as an operation different from observation which deals with designations. However, the two operations do not cancel each other; rather they work together in autopoietic systems. The double function of contradiction refers to the fact that on one hand the contradiction is observed and, on the other, it forces a decision and a reaction on the part of the observer. Thus, on one side it triggers the observation and on the other it forces the observer to decide on a type of reaction (or on a direction). Through this, or more clearly through the reaction of the observer in the face of contradiction new operations are produced, thus creating more elements in the system and ensuring the reproduction of the system’s elements and of relations between them, thus assuring autopoiesis itself.

Secondly, if we think of meaning, and remember that it is an infinite referential context (in the sense that it refers to everything possible) we can draw the conclusion that contradiction always exists as a possibility in society. According to Luhmann “every meaning is capable of contradiction or of being developed into one. (...) Contradiction is an aspect of the self-reference of meaning because every meaning includes its own negation as a possibility” (Luhmann 1995, p. 362).



And third, because society is a communication system, contradictions can only be communications. There are two types of “communicative contradictions”; one refers to the communication of rejection and one to the “utterer’s communicative intentions”. In the first case the contradiction appears between two communications and it is situated in the difference or distinction between “alter” and “ego”. In the second case communication contradicts itself (Luhmann 1995, p. 367). Because contradictions are communications they are not “an intrusion from the outside”, they are within the social system of society and an aspect of its self-reference.

### *2.3.2 Society’s immune system*

Due to the fact that social systems are communication systems their unity is created through communication. Contradictions surface through being communicated and destabilize the system, provoke movement in a system and through this movement they create instability. However, this is not an issue because complex systems need a high level of instability “to enable on-going reaction to themselves and their environment” (Luhmann 1995, p. 367). Also, as we know, autopoiesis (and all systems, including the social systems are autopoietic) insures the self-reproduction of the system. This self-reproduction is based on unstable elements and is a precondition of evolution (and without it the system will cease to exist). Thus contradictions are needed by social systems (and consequently by society) because they insure “self-reproduction under difficult circumstances” (Luhmann 1995, p. 385). They do this by activating society’s immune system:

“Because contradictions enable but do not compel the elimination of deviation, they have qualities that promote the development of an *immune system*. An immune system must be compatible with self-reproduction under changing conditions. It is not simply a mechanism for correcting deviations and re-establishing the *status quo ante*; it must manage this function selectively, namely, must be able also to accept useful changes. It does not serve to preserve unconditionally the structures under attack, but also presupposes structures and limits of possibility for its own functioning and especially for recognizing contradictions” (Luhmann 1995, p. 369).

This immune system functions based on the system’s capacity to learn which is in turn based on memory. When something happens the system knows how to react if the same thing happened once before. It doesn’t need to re-analyze everything and thus can act quickly and efficiently. If it is a first time occurrence then it can be committed to memory so the system knows what it is and how to react to it if it happens again (Luhmann 1995, p. 369-370). Contradictions function like an alarm system within the system. This means not only that they activate the immune system but they are also a way, “the only way” in fact, in which “society (meaning the totality of social systems) can warn itself of its effects” (Luhmann 1995, p. 388).

As it was remarked earlier in this this chapter, the immune system of society is the legal system and its role is to offer non-violent resolutions to conflict and to keep communication open (Luhmann 1995, p. 375). But how does conflict emerge in the social system of society?

### 2.3.3 Conflict

According to Luhmann we can

“speak of conflict when a communication is contradicted, or when a contradiction is communicated. A conflict is the operative

autonomization of a contradiction through communication. Thus a conflict exists when expectations are communicated and the nonacceptance of the communication is communicated in return” (Luhmann 1995, p. 388).

Thus conflict in social systems is based on contradictions. For a conflict to appear, the communication of a different view, image or demand is not enough. These have to be rejected. There are always two poles (alter and ego) that communicate to each other and answer to each other. Conflict is not a failure of communication between the two. On the contrary, it helps continue communication by saying no. Conflict is also a meaning form because it presupposes two contradictory communications, hence two sides, and it is also a system in itself that functions according to the model of double contingency.

In Luhmann’s view, conflicts are social systems “formed out of occasions that are given in other systems but that do not assume the status of subsystems and instead exist parasitically” (Luhmann, 1995, p. 389). As a system, conflict contains double contingency on both sides, or as Luhmann calls it, a negative version of double contingency which is implied by and which also implies the statement: “I will not do what you want if you do not do what I want” (Luhmann, 1995, p. 389). This has two effects or consequences: one is that what happens next is completely open and the second is that the system acquires self-reference because “ego sees that what hurts alter benefits ego because ego assumes that alter sees that what hurts ego benefits alter. The same holds for alter” (Luhmann 1995, p. 389-390).

As a communication system conflict is also a social system and therefore autopoietic, which indicates that it is reproducing itself. This signifies that once it is

formed it will continue to exist. Such a system can end only with intervention from outside the system, from its environment. Luhmann uses the example of one party in the conflict being killed (and thus becoming unable to continue the conflict) to illustrate this. Also,

“If one imagines conflict as a system, two different forms of conditioning, which simultaneously increase the system’s internal complexity and make behavior difficult present themselves. The first is the prohibition of specific means; the second amounts to increasing insecurity within the system” (Luhmann 1995, p. 395).

“Restricting means” is used mainly to defend against damage in the system but it also has the effect of making the system more complex and prolongs its existence. The use of force is used as an example for this. While barring its use will avoid significant physical damage, not restricting its use can lead to a quick end to the conflict or only the fear of its possible use could deter the conflict from appearing (Luhmann 1995, p. 395). “Increasing insecurity” occurs when third parties are included in the system. While one knows that only disadvantage can be expected from an opponent, the third party and its intentions are unknown. This third party can influence the conflict and so its resolution becomes unsure and the situation more complex: “reintroducing insecurity concerning expectations into the conflict provides the system with special possibilities for forming structure, new contingencies, and new chances to make selections” (Luhmann 1995, p. 369).

Both ways of conditioning help in continuing communication and lower the chance of open violent conflict. “Saying no in the process of communication, rejecting demands and proposing innovations that will probably be rejected are all made

easier” (Luhmann 1995, p.396). This benefits the immune system and society overall.

One can say that contradictions are essential to understanding conflict:

“Conflicts are operationalized contradictions that have become communication. They enable the conditioning of the immunizing events. They draw attention to problems and thus allow adequate sensitivity to the future as early as possible, while temporally extending the synthesis of contradictions” (Luhmann 1995, p. 394).

Luhmann argues that there are two main ways in which contradictions can be connected to conflicts or two procedures through which significant or consequential conflicts for society are selected. The first procedure, the traditional one, is linked to somewhat stable domains of conflict and the second one, the modern procedure, is linked to more unstable domains of conflict (Luhmann 1995, p.397). The traditional procedure is characteristic to stratified societies that did not noticeably differentiate between economy, politics, and law. In this type<sup>6</sup> of society the immune system, meaning the legal system or the law, was used to reinforce positions of power and to concentrate the power to change in the hands of those at the top. This system started to change in the transition to modern society and to functional differentiation, making room for the modern procedure of selecting conflicts, namely the social movement.

Although there were some forms of “movements” in the early history of society, social movements as such, in systemic terms, as self-observations of the social system of society, appeared only in the late eighteenth century. Luhmann finds that the term social movement doesn’t convey enough from a theoretical point of view so he chooses to explain this phenomenon through three other different concepts, more

---

<sup>6</sup> One should remember that the four forms of differentiation of society lead to two different types of societal systems: traditional and modern. Traditional societies are seen as stratified societies and modern society is functionally differentiated.

specifically: “the loosening of internal bindings”, “the specification of contributions” and, “the accumulation of effects” (Luhmann 1995, p. 398).

The first thing to note about the loosening of internal bindings is that binding means “something that gives duration to relatively chance events (formerly birth, today one’s choice) and is retained as a premise of one’s behavior” (Luhmann 1995, p. 399). Thus a loosening of these binding means that an individual is free to choose his/her own way of living. Bindings still exist of course, but more and more and also more of them are chosen, not ascribed. Statuses also change from being “ascribed” to being “acquired” and a shift that allows for a more rigorous “specification of contributions” takes place in the sense that “qualities that enable performances are replaced by performances that presuppose qualities” (Luhmann 1995, p. 399) (i.e. you do not obtain a profession because you were born in a family that gives you access to that profession, but the profession requires someone with “this and that” qualification).

Both loosening of internal bindings and the specification of individual contributions lead to more insecurity and greater complexity of society through a greater involvement of individuals in “social adjustment”. Nevertheless, these two processes alone are not enough to provoke a significant change in society and this is where the accumulation of effects enters the discussion: “unexpected aggregations emerge which, beyond specified thresholds, trigger their own effects: mood swings, changes in what one calls collective mentality, and possibly social movements capable of recruiting action” (Luhmann 1995, p. 399).

These accumulations of effects fluctuate, they appear and disappear suddenly and quickly. Some of them however, do become prominent and reach the level of self-reference. When that happens society describes them as movements or processes. It does this through the operations of self-observation and self-reference because these manifestations are part of it, are within it and they need to be differentiated somehow from other occurrences. This description is then reintroduced within the occurrence (remember the operation of re-entry) and thus becomes part of its self-reference. That is when one can talk of a:

“revolutionary movement, a nationalist movement, a women’s movement, a youth movement, an emancipatory movement, a religious revival – left, right, red, black, green or whatever – and this is clearly more than, above all, more significant than, the mere accumulation of effects on the basis of a coincidence of key events, identical interpretations, resistance, public incitement, meetings, conventions, and so forth” (Luhmann 1995, p. 400).

In other words, as society becomes more complex it creates and also reacts to effects of this complexity that are not controlled by the “existing structures of expectation but emerge fully and of themselves” (Luhmann 1995, p. 398). Such a phenomenon becomes a social movement if it has a theory rich enough to help it overcome this initial “unexpected aggregation”. “A theory of the movement makes it possible to distinguish the context of action that describes itself in this way from mere unrest, upheaval, and random violent episodes” (Luhmann 1995, p. 401). Thus, a social movement needs to describe itself as a movement, in other words it needs self-observation and self-reference. This enables it to identify correctly its goals, the resistance and its adversaries in the present, to provide direction for collective action and also to refer to past events as history and use them to increase meaning. This will

be elaborated further but first a few more clarifications are needed, such as why Luhmann prefers the designation of protest movement instead of social movement and how he differentiates these modern ways of connecting contradiction to conflict from the traditional ones.

#### *2.3.4 Protest Movements*

In Luhmann's view social movements are very general phenomena for which it is hard to find a describing or defining concept. He argues that they are a modern phenomenon which means that they exclude peasant, slave and nobility uprisings and revolts. For him the discussion on social movements starts with the socialist movement in the nineteenth century and he holds that more current phenomena cannot be described in the same terms as the socialist movement. Thus the concept of new social movements starts to be utilized in the academic field to describe and define them. However, Luhmann prefers to use the concept of protest movements due to the fact that, in his view, "it covers broad areas of the phenomenon of the social movement, but can more easily be delimited" (Luhmann, 1993, p. 125).

"A permanent source of potential protest is [the fact] that any determination of a specific future has an effect of social discrimination; that is to say, it does not benefit or advantages everyone to the same degree" (Luhmann, 1993, p. 129). The emergence of protest movements cannot be explained only through such a general statement though. For a better understanding of how protest movements emerge,



Luhmann makes an analysis of historical situations that contributed or acted as triggers in their appearance. This analysis leads to the differentiation between: 1) uprisings, revolts and resistance movements in traditional societies which were related to normative expectations; 2) the socialist movement which was related to the unequal distribution of goods and 3) the new protest movements which are related to the risky behavior of others.

In the first phase, in traditional societies “many uprisings, revolts, and resistance movements can be traced back to conflicts that are kindled by normative expectations. Without a clear distinction between law and morality, the question is one of right and wrong”. (Luhmann, 1993, p.130) Thus conflicts are a matter of what is the right thing to do (as opposed to what is legal/illegal or conforming to the rules or against the rules). There are two different sides to this kind of conflict. On one side, the two parties involved in conflict have different views on what is right and wrong while on the other side only one of these two conflicting parties actually has the right of making the distinction between right and wrong.

In an example of one type of conflict in traditional societies, on the first side of conflict the parties involved belong to two different social “strata”: one party is represented by the agricultural laborers (and small farmers) while the other party is represented by the nobility, landowners, and office holders from which the dominant strata was comprised. The stratum of agricultural laborers and small farmers expect the landowners to secure their living at a “traditional determined” level. “Changes very rapidly develop into a threat to subsistence. Claims to protection and assistance are

then self-evident, regardless of the concrete causes for the problem becoming acute – such as bad harvests, wars or the advance of the money economy” (Luhmann 1993, p. 130).

The other side of the conflict is constituted by the fact that the dominant strata reserved for themselves the right to decide questions of right and wrong. They also reserved only for themselves the right to resistance. Thus if a ruler was perceived as doing something “wrong” the dominant strata had a right to act and react, to change the ruler, but only they had this right. This was possible not only due to the fact that only the dominant strata could decide what is right and wrong but also due to the fact that the law had a religious and moral basis, it was founded on notions such as divine right and natural law. Nevertheless, exactly this basis led to the development of a concept of law “attuned not to the making of the law, not to will and consent, but to the possibility of recognition and error” (Luhmann, 1993, p 131).

During the sixteen and seventeen centuries, after “the explosive advent of printing” and the religious wars, the notions of divine right and natural law were replaced by concepts such as “loix fondamentales”. These are positive legal notions that confer authority to the law itself, not to the dominant strata or the sovereign and are “compatible with prohibition of all resistance against established law” (Luhmann, 1993, p 132). However resistance is still triggered and made possible through the shift from concepts like “unlawfulness” to “unconstitutionality”. According to Luhmann the last large-scale movement triggered by legal questions and the notion of law was the American independence movement.

Once law becomes purely positive a shift in the occasion for conflict takes place and the basis for claims and protest becomes a “general postulate for equality”. This in fact only meant that inequality could not be justified by morals and the divine but it needed a lawful legitimization. It is in this context that the socialist movement emerges. Thus, one can argue that a change in the historical conditions leads to a change in the nature of movements. As the historical context changes, the grounds for protest also change:

“In the case of a conflict of norms, the infringement and thus the initiative for protest depends on who imposes his expectations in the form of law. In the case of unequal distribution it is a matter of who is successful in accumulating scarce goods or services and who has must as a result go without” (Luhmann 1993, p 133).

Protest cannot be described in terms of struggle for law in this case due to the fact that the distribution of goods takes place through contract and thus in compliance with the law. It must also be added that, according to Luhmann, at the end of the eighteenth century and the beginning of the nineteenth there were two important shifts, the two being obviously connected and emerging together. One, that was already mentioned, was the shift in the occasion and object of protest and the second was a shift in the concept of society itself:

“society was no longer a civil society – a legal institution of those participating in it as citizens – and it was certainly no longer a contract. It was now more of an economic order that grounded privilege and discrimination in the satisfaction of needs, to be exact in the attainment of maximum economic well-being” (Luhmann, 1993, p 134).

However, Luhmann claims, this description was exaggerated and unrealistic due to the fact that it completely disregarded the political domain and it was soon

replaced by the distinction between the state and society. The distinction gained authority at the middle of the nineteenth century and provided the grounds on which the socialist protest movement developed. In Luhmann's view, although forms of protest against norms or the utilization of scarce goods still exist, they lost their central significance. Mainly two factors led to this loss of importance: the development of the welfare state and the abolition of the free labor market.

“The really new aspect of protest movements today is, however, not to be found in the scattered remnants of a once powerful call for legality and economic solidarity, but in a new type of protest: in the rejection of situations in which one could become the victim of the risky behavior of others” (Luhmann, 1993, p 136).

In order to understand “protest movements today” we need to go back to a more theoretical explanation of protest movements in the context of systems theory. First of all, the question “what is protest?” should be answered. Luhmann defines protests as:

“communications addressed *to others* calling on *their* sense of responsibility. They criticize practices or states of affairs without offering to take the place of those whose job is to ensure order. (...) It is rather an expression of dissatisfaction; a demonstration of hurts and disadvantages suffered, not infrequently of wishful thinking” (Luhmann, 1993, p. 125-126).

A few general characteristics of protest are outlined in this definition. First and foremost, protest is communication. It is thus part of society. It presupposes two participants, or two sides: one that protests and one that has to react to the protest. These participants never switch sides because that is not the purpose of the protest. Those that protest announce to others that things need to be changed, and those others need to make that change, not those who protest. Consequently the protest

will collapse if there aren't two participants or if the one who protests moves on the other side. Hence another crucial characteristic is outlined: protest is a form. Protest as a form for protest movements can be better understood through the use of the notion of "code" which can be defined as:

"a guiding distinction by which a system identifies itself and its own relationship to the world. (...) code is to be understood as a strictly binary schematism that knows only two positions or 'values', excluding everything else in the sense of a tertium non datur. (...) Binary codes are distinctions of a special type. They are not merely significations that distinguish themselves by isolating something they have defined against the unmarked state. Nonetheless they are not qualitative pairs – like heaven and earth, man and woman, or city and country – which hold out a prospect of equivalent possibilities of specification (=possibilities of connection) on both sides. They instead fix the system in an asymmetry that is commonly presented as a distinction between a positive and a negative value (such as good/bad, true/false, correct/incorrect, having/not having property)" (Luhmann 2013b, p. 45).

In short, each system has its own code, its own way of determining what elements belong to it and what elements are outside of it, in the environment. One has to restrict himself/herself to the code of the system he/she is part of. This is called the "value of neutrality". Also, the code of each system has positive and negative values (true/false, payment/nonpayment, legal/illegal). Thus the code is a double sided form. It imposes two boundaries, one on the outside, separating the system from the environment, and one on the inside, making the distinction between positive and negative values.

For the protest movement, protest as a form, functions (at least partly) in the same way a code functions for a functional system. It sets an inside, those who protest, and an outside, those who they protest against. The protest movement is thus

one side of the form protest, and it is trying to convince the outside side to act the way, or do what the inside wants. It does this through different tactics, such as employing “alarming communications” or the “deployment of bodies” (Luhmann 2013a, p. 158). The issue with this is, as Luhmann sees it, that the protest movement itself doesn’t assume any responsibility for the wanted change. It presupposes that the outside will act and initiate the change, in other words, it will do what is demanded. We already saw that the two sides can never change places. In theoretical terms this means that the protest movement is incapable of re-entry; it cannot incorporate the distinction between inside and outside within itself:

“The protest movement – as becomes apparent when it is the subject of second-order observation – is bound to the form of protest. It presupposes another side against which it can protest, and cannot itself be or become this other side without the protest and with it this specific form of societal self-observation being snuffed out. Like a watchdog it has an urgent need to restore order or at least to prevent deterioration. And like a watchdog it has a choice only between barking and biting” (Luhmann 1993, p. 143).

The new protest movements, Luhmann holds, appeared due to the fact that protest has become an established form in modern society and can easily move from topic to topic. Through the study of general forms in society (i.e. inequality, stability, danger) “an infinite reservoir of topics” is created and this guarantees that society has “the permanent possibility of being able to describe itself by means of protest against itself” (Luhmann, 1993, p 137). Form here is used as always by Luhmann, in the sense of distinction, not type. So when he talks about stability, inequality, danger as forms he refers to the fact that there is also a different side to them, that of equality, instability and safety. From this reservoir of topics, the new protest movements adopt

topics that are related to their own interests, which seem to always be the rejection of the risky behavior of others.

Topics, similarly to protest as a form, also function as “programs of a code” for protest movements:

“They make clear why one finds oneself as protester on the one side of the form. They serve for self-placement in the form. They must therefore be controversial; they must be protests that allow protesters to show sufficiently drastically what should change and why” (Luhmann 2013a, p. 160).

Protest movements as observers of society live by choosing topics for protest. They however, Luhmann holds, observe society on the basis of its consequences. The socialist movement for example observed society based on the consequences of industrialization. That is in fact the first movement to observe society this way. As long as it was the only one to do so, it was also capable of offering a theory that could explain both society and the grounds for protest (Luhmann 2013a, p. 161). Nevertheless, functionally differentiated society offers a multitude of topics for protest that are “heterogeneous and remain so when grouped under broad headings such as environment, war, women’s issues, regional particularities, Third World, excessive immigration” (Luhmann 2013a, p 160). Due to the fact that more consequences of modern society became visible, this multitude of topics for protest also became visible and this in turn led to the emergence of a multitude of protest movements. It thus became impossible to theorize society on the same grounds the socialist movement did. In that respect, Luhmann considers that:

“Society has become the background topic of topics, the medium of ever-new occasions for protest. An appropriate theory of society

would now have to describe society as a functionally differentiated system with innumerable (and in detail no longer attractive) grounds for protest” (Luhmann 2013, p. 161).

Although there are many grounds for protest, the mere existence of protest and of a topic is not enough to form a protest movement:

“We will speak of protest movements only if the protest serves as catalyst in the formation of a system of its own. Protest then, as it were, recruits its own supporters. How it all really started is difficult to establish afterwards, but the system can if necessary recount a founding myth, preserve the memory of the heroes of the founding years, commemorate the occasion, and then frequently deplore the present comparative loss of commitment and lack of willingness to make sacrifices” (Luhmann 1993, p. 126).

Looked at from this perspective, protest movements are autopoietic systems. They produce and reproduce their own elements and the connections between them. The form of this system is the protest and its content is the topic (i.e. women’s issues, equality, justice). The fact that the system is autopoietic also means that it is formed and structured on the basis of internal and not external factors. Therefore it is closed in regards to its form, the protest, but it is also open with regards to its topic. The form, the protest, makes the distinction between the system and its environment but the topic regards both sides and it is henceforth part of what relates the system to the environment, making both self and other reference possible for the system. Hence, both the form of protest and the topic for protest insure autopoiesis for the protest movement.

Autopoiesis is also insured through the fact that protest based on a topic is the creation of the protest movement. How does this happen? Society either disregards a topic, either doesn’t even know about it and through this ignorance provides the



protest movement with the grounds for protest. The movement builds (or constructs) the topic, looks for a “matching background” in society and creates a controversy (contradiction) where none existed before (Luhmann 2013, p. 161-162).

There are however a few more conditions that need to be fulfilled before the protest becomes a movement and an autopoietic system. A protest needs to lead to a goal-oriented mobilization if it is to become an autopoietic system; choosing a topic and building a controversy (and thus a contradiction) on it is not enough. According to Luhmann, choosing a goal or fixing on one will radicalize the movement but this radicalization is a condition for its continued existence. Another condition for protest to become a movement is that it needs to lead to action. Actions are observable elements in the system that can be ascribed to communications of the movement. Self-description as a movement is another condition for the movement to become an autopoietic system.

Therefore, protest movements as autopoietic systems take on the form of protest, choose a topic for protest and create a controversy around it, set a goal and describe themselves as movements. All of the above make it possible for the movement to observe itself and consequently to organize and grow:

“As a movement the occurrence has lateral support; by being directed to a goal, it can determine what can connect onto this goal and what must be abandoned. Furthermore, self-description as a movement make it possible to read earlier events as history and to use this to increase meaning, be that as success or as failure. All this together makes possible self-referential systems of a special type that, equipped with greater capacity for contradiction and conflict, can assume functions with society’s immune system” (Luhmann 1995, p.401-402).

A key remark is present in the quote above: protest movements are a special type of self-referential systems. They are social systems because they are communication systems. Nevertheless, as it was pointed out in the schema introduced at the beginning of the chapter, there are three types of social systems: interactions, organizations and societies. The fact that protest movements are not included in this schema does not mean that these elements are not important. In fact they are “a special sort” of social systems. Both interactions and organizations are ways of dealing with double contingency. A very short explanation for each should suffice.

Interactions form when “face to face” communication, or the presence of people are needed to solve the problem of double contingency. In the context of interactions “communication itself is satisfied with the assumption that perceivable participants perceive that they are perceived” (Luhmann 2013a, p. 133). Thus protest movements presuppose interactions, incorporate them but are more than that.

Organizations presuppose a higher level of systemic development than interactions and deal with double contingency by inferring that everyone can act as they wish “*but not as a member of an organization*”. Upon entering an organization, one’s hands are tied, and one runs the risk of losing membership in it if one is persistently awkward” (Luhmann 2013a, p. 142). And once again, protest movements presuppose organization, just as they presuppose interactions, but are more than that. When talking of protest movement:

“We are dealing with a sort of autopoietic system that operates neither on the principle of presence (interaction) nor on that of membership (organization). And the internal differentiation of protest movements can also not assume the undifferentiated nature or the simple role asymmetry of interaction systems, because such movements are too large; nor can they behave as position hierarchies like organizations, for the personnel situation is too unstable” (Luhmann 2013a, p. 164)

Unlike interactions and organizations, social movements are differentiated internally into center and periphery. The center is represented by a committed core and by followers that can be mobilized for various actions and the periphery, while it probably includes some of the followers, is comprised by presumed “sympathizers” (also presumably in large numbers), fact which lets the movement assume that it represents “general societal interests”. This type of organization is compatible with the fluctuations in personnel, followers and sympathizers characterizing protest movements (Luhmann 2013a, p. 164).

The same center/periphery differentiation can be observed when looking at the external situation of protest movements. The periphery protests against the center which is expected not only to listen to the protest but also to take it into consideration when it takes decisions. However, because modern society doesn’t have a center, or a “macrosocietal” center anymore, protest movements can take place only in relation with or within functional systems that do have centers, such as the political system (and to a lesser extent within some religions) (Luhmann 2013a, p. 157-158).

According to Luhmann protest movements constitute a paradox that takes the form of protest by society against society (Luhmann 2013a, p. 154-155). The form of protest gives the protest movement unity as a system but this form also shows that

the protest movement and its participants pursue political influence but “they do not do so in normal ways”. The way in which they do pursue this influence shows that the issue at hand is considered to be urgent and profound and thus it cannot be dealt with using the normal ways. Furthermore, “although protest communication takes place within society –otherwise it would not be communication – it proceeds as if it were from without. (...) It expresses itself from a sense of responsibility for society but against it” (Luhmann 2013a, p. 157). And there it is, the same paradox again – protest by society against society. This paradox is not necessarily a bad thing though because it can be used by society as a way of observing itself, as a way of constructing another reality or another representation of itself:

“Society, like every system (and we could even say like the world) needs an internal boundary to be able to think about itself. It cannot be observed and described from without. The only possibility is that of an imaginary projection with which a self-description can claim for itself a fictitious external standpoint. In so doing it has to accept the paradox of the unity of inside and outside, and find a form that annuls this paradox, that is to say, replaces it and thus conceals it by drawing a distinction. This is precisely what is achieved by the form of protest against something that others ought to do better” (Luhmann 1993, p. 140).

This means that by being the all-encompassing communication system that includes *all communication*, society can never experience “reality as resistance of the environment” and it can only know it as “resistance of communication to communication”. Although social movements do not know the environment better than other systems in society (or at least there is no evidence that they do) they create the illusion that they do and thus the illusion of resistance from the outside, which then is translated into resistance of communication to communication. Thus protest

movements “provide society with a reality that it could not otherwise construct” (Luhmann 2013a, p. 165) and society needs this “reality” to complete the operation of self-observation.

## *2.4 Conclusion*

We have seen so far that within the general systems theory developed by Luhmann, social systems are autopoietic systems that use communication as their mode of autopoietic reproduction. The elements of social systems are communications that are created and recreated by a network of communications and they exist only within such a network. Social systems are also observing systems that make the distinction between themselves and the environment, also perceiving and observing other systems within their environment. They also reintroduce this distinction back into themselves, fact which leads to system differentiation.

We also saw that Luhmann makes a difference between different social systems: societies, organizations and interactions. However, notwithstanding this schema, Luhmann sees society as *the* comprehensive social system which includes all communication. Furthermore, also in noncompliance with the initial schema, protest movements can be seen as another social system, in addition to the three already mentioned. The role of this additional social system is to alert society's immune system to contradictions in society, to link these contradictions to significant conflicts. They also function as self-observations of society.

The purpose of this chapter was to offer a detailed presentation of Luhmann's theory in order to support the second part of my main argument, which claims that this general systems theory can supplement the field of social movements theory by providing us with the necessary tools to look dynamically at social movements and understand them within the shifting social context. I think that this in-depth presentation showed that by looking at social movements from within the communication systems theory proposed by Luhmann we can understand how and why movements form, how they are organized, what their role is in society and through what processes they fulfil this role. I also believe that through the lens of this theory we can also see not only how social movements change society, but also how they are in turn changed by it, and we can follow the dynamic relations between the two.

The concepts presented here are used in the following chapters as an integral part of this argument. This was a needed first step towards answering the research question: if the field of social movement theory is not sufficient to explain collective action, how is the general theory developed by Luhmann better suited for investigating, analyzing and explaining social movements? Without knowledge of the theory the question cannot be answered.

# Chapter 3: Perspectives on Social Movements

What is a social movement? How and why does it come to be? Why do people join social movements? Who are the people that join? What is a social movement's role in society? How does it accomplish that role? What are its relations with society? These are just a few of the questions sociology tried and still tries to answer when it comes to social movements. As the taxonomies presented in chapter one showed, ever since the 1950's and the 1960's a multitude of theories have been formulated and tried to answer some of these questions. Collective behavior, resource mobilization, framing and new social movements are merely a few examples of perspectives within the field of social movement theory. These varied approaches and perspectives are not necessarily competing theories. They are complementary in many ways. In some regards they follow each other chronologically (although some of them overlap in time) as well as ideologically as an advancement of knowledge. This of course doesn't mean that they followed each other smoothly, that there aren't sources of contention or important differences.

These diverse approaches offer many different definitions and analyses of social movements. However, they also all converge on one important point: one of the

goals, and in my view the most important goal, of social movements is social change. This is what brings these perspectives together within one field, they all have the same object of study, and no matter how they name it (i.e. social movement, social movement organization, collective action or protest movement) it all represents one thing: a mechanism via which social change takes place.

Despite this, I consider that the field of social movement theory is giving us only a fragmented picture of this mechanism. In my view there are at least two main reasons for which this happens. One of these reasons rests in the fact that the theory changes its concepts when the form of its object of study changes. This refers both to a literal change of the concepts and to a change in what is understood through the concepts. As we have seen in the first chapter, it is largely believed (Garner 1997; Tarrow 1998, Tilly 1998, Buechler 2000) that social movements have changed over time and as they changed, the theories had to change as well to account for these changes. This is why I consider that we need a theory capable of providing us with the necessary tools to look dynamically at social movements and understand them within the shifting social context, thus a theory that looks at social movements *in their time* instead of at the movements *of its time* (in other words, a theory that looks at movements within their historical context and not only at movements that are contemporary to the theory).

The other reason for which we have a fragmented view of social movements rests in the field's inability to reconcile the different perspectives within. These differences come, on the one hand, as it was mentioned above, from a change in the



historical context, and on the other hand from the fact that the various approaches don't all ask the same questions, even though some questions overlap. Asking different questions leads to looking at different things. Thus it is not only a matter of giving a different answer to the same question, but also a matter of looking at the object of study from a different angle. Therefore, all these varied perspectives and approaches within the theory of social movements cover and capture important facets and angles of collective action. However, they do so in disparate ways, looking at one side and ignoring the other. We thus need a theory that is able to look at all facets of movements at the same time and additionally, is able to look beyond the form of the object at the object itself.

To support the reasoning voiced in the previous two paragraphs, in this chapter, the main perspectives and approaches to social movements are presented in a detailed overview of the field. The perspectives that will be presented are: collective behavior, resource mobilization, political processes, framing and new social movement theory. These approaches were chosen due to the fact that it is generally considered that they represent the main perspectives within the field (Rucht 1991, Diani 1992, Garner 1997, Tarrow 1998, Tilly 1998, Buechler 2000, Hamel et al. 2012). In addition to these, two more approaches will be analyzed, social movements as cognitive praxis and the functional analysis formulated by Klaus Eder. These last two were chosen due to the fact that I see them as unifying approaches, trying to bridge some of the gaps present in the field, and thus close to the objective of this dissertation.

The review will show how social movements are generally analyzed, how the focus changes from one theory to another and how different facets of the social movement are analyzed separately instead of together. A thorough analysis of the field of social movement theory is needed in my view in order to answer the research question, if this field is not sufficient to explain collective action, how is the general theory developed by Luhmann better suited for investigating, analyzing and explaining social movements? Hence, the purpose of this chapter is to show that indeed, the field of social movement theory is not sufficient or integrated enough to explain collective action and we need a more comprehensive theory in order to obtain a better understanding of movements and the way in which they fulfill their role of promoters of change in society. As presented in the short outline above, this enquiry starts with the collective behavior approach.

### *3.1 Collective Behavior Perspective*

According to Ralph Turner collective behavior is not a theory but a perspective that offers a framework in which theories can be applied to questions (Turner 1981, p.8). This perspective contains six main themes. First, theorizing social movements as sociological phenomena and forms of collective behavior means looking for the collaboration features shared by all movements, or at least by several of them, no matter the realms of their action. This means that a "student of collective behavior" will look at specific movements (such as political reform movements, revolutionary

movements, religious or secular self-help movements) searching for what they have in common. Second, social movements are "instances of intentional collaboration to promote or resist change, when the collaborators find established institutional direction and mechanisms inappropriate or insufficient for their purposes" (Turner 1981, p. 4). Third, social movements aren't stable phenomena; their capacity to change is high due to the fact that they are not restricted by institutional structure and their leadership is not formally defined, depending more on action and public views. (Turner 1981, p. 3-4).

Fourth, social movements are shaped by their interactions with the established social structure ("institutional regime"), counter movements, communities and interest groups, interactions which are mediated by the publics. Fifth, "collective behaviorists assume that human beings both in and out of movements are a heterogeneous lot of human beings. A movement grows in numbers because it attracts and holds adherents with diverse motives, goals and conceptions of the movement" (Turner 1981, p.6). Sixth and lastly, social movements construct and reconstruct both collective and individual views of reality; in fact this is seen as one of the most important "products" of social movements, these alternate ways of seeing both "self and larger systems of social relationships" (Turner 1981, p. 6).

Thus, any theory or conceptualization of social movements from the collective behavior perspective makes these basic assumptions: social movements, no matter their realm of action, share features of collaboration, their members are intentionally collaborating to reach their purposes (which are always related to social change), they

are unpredictable, their character is shaped by their interaction with their environment, they have a heterogeneous membership and they change the way people see reality. As an example of an approach to social movements that makes these assumptions we can use the theory formulated by Turner and Killian. From this approach social movements are defined as:

"a collectivity acting with some continuity to promote or resist a change in the society or group of which it is a part. As a collectivity a movement is a group with indefinite and shifting membership and with leadership whose position is determined more by the informal response of the members than by formal procedures for legitimizing authority" (Turner and Killian, 1987, p. 246).

As it can be noticed, most, if not all basic assumptions mentioned above are present in this definition. According to this approach, once it established what a social movement is, a study of collective action from the collective behavior perspective needs to ask three questions: when do social movements occur, when are they deemed successful and when will they act one way as opposed to another? "Crowd behaviors" or informal groups are not to be considered social movements. To be a movement a crowd or a group needs to promote or resist change, to have a sustained activity, a strategy and group identity. Thus, a social movement emerges when a crowd meets these conditions. We can also say that a social movement is "incipient" when individuals in a crowd or an informal group supplement their informal meetings with "some organization to promote their convictions more effectively and to insure a more sustained activity" (Turner and Killian, 1987, p. 246).

Most social movements go through a phase of crowd behavior, and just like a crowd, they do depend on the contributions of many types of people who act

differently for different reasons and, again like a crowd, movements need a “central norm” that can justify action for this diversity. One of the main conditions for the emergence of a social movement is the existence of such a norm, and according to Turner and Killian, one common element for most, if not all movements is the specification within this norm that things as they are “are unjust”.

Other conditions for the emergence of a social movement are: membership in a self-conscious group (like class awareness), pride and autonomy, external legitimation and support, intellectuals and a definition of injustice, selection of a comparison group and “righteous indignation”. (Turner and Killian, 1987, p. 261-268). All these conditions are related to the sense of injustice.

There are four main emphases in Turner and Killian’s approach to social movements:

“movements are in a state of flux, their character changing from day to day, and conditions strengthening a movement at one time having an opposite effect at another time. Second, the course and character of a movement are shaped by the constant dynamic of value orientations, power orientations and participation orientations within the movement. Third, the course and character are shaped by external relations, including the way it is defined by external publics and the kinds of support and opposition it encounters. Fourth, social movements mean normative transformations” (Turner and Killian, 1987, p. 252).

Keeping in mind the six main themes of the collective behavior perspective identified at the beginning of this section, we notice that, at least in part, these emphases relate to them. These themes and emphases can also be found in what are considered some of the necessary aspects of a movement, which are: “a program

for the reform of society” (corresponds with resisting or promoting change), “establishment of power relations favorable to the movement” (corresponds with interactions with the established social structure, counter movements, communities and interest groups) and third, the promotion of membership gratification (Turner and Killian 1987, p. 256). This last aspect is related to the success of a social movement and measuring success is not a simple matter considering that “success” can be defined in various ways. A social movement can be successful if: it gathered a large number of adherents, or if it achieved its goals and purposes, or if it achieved one or two goals out of many, or if some of its values were “borrowed” by a stronger movement or party.

In respect to value, power and participation orientations, they are present within all social movements and they represent tendencies which are in constant tension. Depending on what orientation is prevalent, a movement can be one of three types: value oriented, power oriented or participation oriented movement. These are of course ideal types. Value orientation is related to the values a movement wants to promote (this being the goal) but also to the ideology of a movement:

“A value is any category of objects that is felt to have worth, which ought to be protected and promoted rather than treated with indifference [and], (...) for intellectual adherents, the ideology supplies a foundation from which to evaluate goals and, in part, select strategies and tactics for promoting the movement goals. For most adherents, ideology supplies a vague but comfortable assurance of the rightness and effectiveness of the movement and a set of resources to employ in promoting the movement among the unpersuaded and in defending the movement from its enemies” (Turner and Killian 1987, p.269-270).

Power orientations refer to a movement's ability to influence society and promote its values. Without the power to bring about changes a movement's values and ideologies remain "daydreams of a small band of devotees" (Turner and Killian 1987, p. 290). There are a few main power objectives such as: influencing the authorities to make the desired changes in a society/community, seeking/taking control of that society/community to implement the desired changes and seeking separation from that society to live without their interference. Turner and Killian call these objectives concessions, control and separation (Turner and Killian 1987, p. 290).

Participation orientations have to do with member satisfaction or gratification. While the reason for the very existence of a social movement resides in its value orientation and the means of protecting or promoting these values reside in its power orientation, the movement itself is formed by people and thus the only way to stay alive is to have member participation. According to Turner and Killian, while there are members who derive gratification from movement participation because they believe in the values of the movement, participation for the sake of participation gratifies certain types of people ("the participation prone") and "every movement is shaped in part by the demand for gratification unrelated to the movement's stated objectives" (Turner and Killian 1987, p. 361).

These various orientations (value, power, and participation) define, shape and change the nature of social movements from within. Movements are shaped however not only by internal factors but by external factors as well. They are in constant

interaction with society and communities. Movement activity sparks reactions in their surrounding world and these reactions in turn have an effect on the movement itself. Movements constantly reassess their goals, strategies and activities depending on the types of reactions they receive.

There are two ends of a spectrum on which a social movement can be placed and they are given by the distinction between reform and revolutionary movements:

“The revolutionary movement is said to challenge the fundamental values of a society, whereas the reform movement seeks modifications within the existing value scheme. The reform movement advocates a change that will implement the existing value scheme more adequately than present conditions but the revolutionary movement urges replacement of the existing value scheme” (Turner and Killian 1987, p. 257).

Of course, most, if not all movements fall somewhere in between, the distinction being useful more in terms of consequences, types of opposition and means of action available to the movement, based on the reactions it solicits from the public. Combining the way social movements are seen from the exterior, their characteristics, their means of action (legitimate or illegitimate) and adding this combination to a “classic distinction between reform and revolutionary movements” (1987, p. 257) leads Turner and Killian to formulating another typology of social movements. They contend that there are four types of movements: 1) respectable-nonfactional (they use legitimate means, they don't spark any interest or opposition), 2) respectable-factional (also use legitimate means but they have opposition from competing movements), 3) peculiar (they have limited access to legitimate means and



they spark ridicule) and 4) revolutionary (mostly use illegitimate means and spark violent suppression).

As it can be seen, the approach formulated by Turner and Killian follows exactly the themes identified at the beginning of this section as staying at the base of the collective behavior perspective. It assumes that social movements from various realms of action share features of collaboration and that the members of movements are intentionally collaborating to pursue common objectives. It also considers movements unpredictable and shaped by their interaction with their environment. It sees their membership as heterogeneous and assumes that movements change the way people see reality.

The questions asked here are mainly: what are social movements and for what reasons do they emerge? It is clear that social movements are seen as forms of collective behavior that emerge in order to bring about or stop social change. Accordingly, any form of collective action with loose organization can be a social movement as long as it promotes some kind of change in society. A revolution or a revolt, a sustained gathering or organized meetings for an election can all be seen as social movements from this perspective. Social strain theory, also referred to as value added theory (Neil Smelser 1971), likewise a theory that makes use of the framework supplied by the collective behavior perspective, attempts to give a more structured response than that to the questions of what are social movements and how do they emerge.

Within this approach the notion of collective behavior is used to denote “classes of events” such as collective outbursts and collective movements and is defined broadly as “mobilization on the basis of a belief which redefines social action” (Smelser, 1971, p. 8). A behavior reveals however being a “collective behavior” only if it meets three other conditions: 1) the beliefs that lead to mobilization need to be concerned with “the existence of extraordinary forces which are at work in the universe” (Smelser, 1971, p. 8) such as threats and conspiracies; 2) an assessment of the consequences of a successful redefinition of social action is needed and, 3) collective behavior is not institutionalized behavior. Thus, this theory, unlike the one formulated by Turner and Killian links social movements, or collective behavior to ‘social action’ that is relying on four basic components:

“(1) the generalized ends, or values, which provide the broadest guides to purposive social behavior; (2) the regulatory rules governing the pursuit of these goals, rules which are to be found in norms; (3) the mobilization of individual energy to achieve the defined ends within the normative framework (...); (4) the available situational facilities which the actor utilizes as means” (Smelser, 1971, p. 24 - 25).

Values are very general elements and act as a guide for human behavior. Norms are more specific and involve “regulatory principles” for the fulfilment of values. Both values and norms only give general rules for social action. The third component is what dictates all of the following: the form or organization of action, who is responsible for ensuring that the “valued ends” will be reached, the concrete roles and organizations of those responsible with pursuing those ends and the rewards for successfully reaching those ends. This third component includes families, churches, government agencies, political parties, associations, businesses, or, as Smelser puts

it, “what sociologists call social organization or social structure” (1971, p. 27-28). The fourth and final component, the situational facilities, includes tools and skills, knowledge of the environment and the opportunities and limitations it puts on the attainment of goals (Smelser, 1971, p. 27-28).

These components of social action are related to collective behavior in two ways. First, the emergence of collective behavior and its type are determined by a set of factors. There are different “determinants” for collective behavior but in general “episodes of collective behavior” appear because something is wrong. For example, people panic because they feel in extreme danger or they join a revolutionary movement because they feel injustice under the current social organization. These determinants are grouped under one heading: structural strain. Structural strain is defined as “impairment of the relations among and consequently inadequate functioning of the components of action” (Smelser, 1971, p. 48). Collective behavior cannot occur without structural strain. There are of course different types of strain, depending on the affected component of action or, differently put, there can be strain on different components of action:

“Value strain poses the issue of commitment, normative strain concerns the integration of human interaction, strain on mobilization concerns the balance between motivated activity and its rewards; strain on facilities concerns the adequacy of knowledge and skills” (Smelser, 1971, p. 64-65).

Smelser uses the “logic of value added process” to organize the determinants of collective behavior. This logic is borrowed from the field of economics and it means that any product (and in this case any form of collective behavior) goes through a

series of stages until it reaches its final finished form. Each of these stages adds value to the end product but more than that, each and every stage needs to happen and they also need to happen in a certain order (Smelser, 1971, p. 13-14) (i.e. the icing on a cake adds value to it but also the icing cannot be added to the cake until all the layers have been assembled; moreover, the cake cannot be sold without the icing). The important determinants for collective behavior (organized according to the value added logic) are: (1) structural conduciveness, (2) structural strain, (3) growth and spread of a generalized belief, (4) precipitating factors, (5) mobilization of participants for action and (6) the operation of social control (Smelser, 1971, p. 15-17)

The second way in which collective behavior is related to the components of action concerns the fact that collective behavior must try to redefine social action and it does that by targeting one of the four components (values, norms, social structures and situational facilities). Depending on the component it targets, collective behavior can take different forms. These forms are presented by Smelser in the form of a typology and they are: a) the value-oriented movement, b) the norm-oriented movement, c) the hostile outburst and d) the craze and the panic (Smelser, 1971, p. 9).

The panic is defined as a mobilization based on “hysterical beliefs”. During a panic people try to preserve their life, property, power from what they perceive as a serious threat and by renouncing “established patterns of social interaction” (Smelser, 1971, p. 131). The craze is mobilization based on a “positive wish fulfillment belief” and it ranges from the superficial (a fad, fashion items) to serious (elections) as well

as from close proximity to large distances (Smelser, 1971, p. 171). The hostile outburst is mobilization based on a hostile belief. To fit the definition “participants in an outburst must be bent on attacking someone considered responsible for a disturbing state of affairs” (Smelser, 1971, p. 226).

The norm oriented movement is mobilization based on the generalized belief that a certain norm needs to be protected, restored, changed or created. Participants in such a movement can try to change the norm by themselves or they can try to persuade authorities to do so. This type of collective behavior can target any type of norm in order to try to change it (i.e. economic, political, and religious) and these types of movements can be varied (i.e. conservative, progressive, revolutionary or reactionary). However, a distinction is made between movements that target a very specific norm and movements with more general programs. The latter are considered to be general social movements, not crystallized enough to lead to mobilization but specific norm oriented movements “emanate from them” (Smelser, 1971, p.273). Examples of such general movements include: the labor movement, the peace movement, the humanitarian movement, and feminism. (Smelser, 1971, p.270-274).

Lastly, value oriented movements are mobilizations based on the generalized belief that a value needs to be restored, protected, changed or created. “Such a belief necessarily involves all the components of action, that is, it envisions a reconstitution of values, a redefinition of norms, a reorganization of the motivation of individuals, and a redefinition of situational facilities” (Smelser, 1971, p. 313).

This is a more structured analysis of collective behavior (in comparison with the perspective formulated by Turner and Killian 1972), in the sense that the emergence of collective action is connected to broader social structures. In this view collective behavior is seen as the result of strain on the components of action and appearing under strict conditions. Also, although value-oriented and norm-oriented movements, hostile outbursts, crazes and panics are all placed under the heading of 'collective behavior' the difference between them is marked and analyzed. Similarly with the approach formulated by Turner and Killian however, it is primarily concerned with defining collective behavior and explaining how "strain" or grievances lead to collective action. It is not concerned with how it is organized and how it goes about fulfilling its purpose.

Therefore, the collective behavior perspective as a whole provides only a fraction of the information needed to understand social movements and their relation with the social because it disregards other important questions that need to be asked (i.e. how are they organized?). I believe that this is the case due to the fact that the focus is on the collective behavior (as the name of the perspective evidently suggests) and on action, making mobilization the starting point for analysis. To put it in systemic terms, the perspective focuses on conflict mainly. Yes, it looks for the cause of the conflict, the contradiction that is connected to it, and thus looks for the topic of the movement (the reason for which it emerges) but it doesn't go further. It doesn't explain the steps taken so that the protest becomes a system and its relations to other systems in society.

As other critics point out however, as a perspective, collective behavior has the merit that it interpreted collective action as meaningful action for the first time and indicated the fact that actors could act collectively in coherent ways and form social organizations that are stable. This perspective also revealed that these social organizations can be a driving force for beneficial change in society. (Tilly 1998; della Porta and Diani 1999). On the other hand, critics underline the fact that the collective behavior paradigm puts under the “umbrella” of social movements very different social phenomena (Jenkins 1983; della Porta and Diani 1999; Tarrow 1998). For example, Craig Jenkins reveals that any form of collective action with a bare minimum organization and geared towards social change (or resistance to change) including religious sects or cults as well as movements seeking political change can be called a social movement from this perspective (Jenkins 1983).

According to McCarthy and Zald, although different in many respects, the theories within this perspective have in common the fact that they assume that “shared grievances and generalized beliefs (loose ideologies) about the causes and possible means of reducing grievances are important preconditions for the emergence of a social movement in a collectivity” (McCarthy and Zald 1977, p. 1214). Collective behaviorists are seen as concentrating heavily on the psychology of the “mass of potential movement supporters within a collectivity” to the detriment of analysis of processes through which people and organizations from outside that collectivity become involved (McCarthy and Zald, 1977).

In addition to that, McCarthy and Zald consider that sociologists, through their “emphasis upon structural strain, generalized belief, and deprivation, largely have ignored the ongoing problems and strategic dilemmas of social movements” (1977, p. 1212). In order to correct these issues within the field of social movement theory, they advance a perspective that puts emphasis on both social support and constraint. This approach, often referred to as resource mobilization theory, examines resources that need to be mobilized by social movements, their relations with other groups, dependences and tactics utilized for their control or incorporation in society (McCarthy and Zald, 1977, p. 1212-1213).

### *3.2 Resource Mobilization Theory*

Thus, resource mobilization perspective developed as a response to what was perceived as a lack of proper analysis of collective action. Like Turner and Killian did for collective behavior theory, McCarthy and Zald introduced a central hypothesis for explaining the emergence and development of collective action:

“We are willing to assume (Turner and Killian [1972] call the assumption extreme) ‘...that there is always enough discontent in any society to supply the grass-roots support for a movement if the movement is effectively organized and has at its disposal the power and resources of some established elite group’ (p. 251). For some purposes we go even further: grievances and discontent may be defined, created and manipulated by issue entrepreneurs and organizations. (...) The resource mobilization perspective adopts as one of its underlying problems Olson’s (1965) challenge: since social movements deliver collective goods, few individuals will ‘on their own’ bear the cost of working to obtain them. Explaining collective behavior requires detailed attention to the selection of incentives,



cost-reducing mechanisms and structures, and career benefits that lead to collective behavior” (McCarthy and Zald, 1977, p. 1215-1216).

It is assumed thus that there are always issues in society able to give birth to collective behavior but organization, resources and the use of these resources by entrepreneurs should stay at the heart of analysis when it comes to social movements. The theory developed by McCarthy and Zald gives a very broad definition to social movements per se which is complemented by a series of other definitions for various analytical concepts that are employed in the study of movements. In this view a social movement is nothing more than a set of beliefs in a population that shows an intention/preference to change certain things in society. A countermovement is a set of beliefs in a population that is opposing a social movement:

“A social movement organization is a complex, or formal, organization which identifies its goals with the preferences of a social movement or a countermovement and attempts to implement those goals (...) All social movement organizations that have as their main goal the attainment of the broadest preferences of a social movement constitute a social movement industry” (McCarthy and Zald, 1977, p. 1218-1219).

There is also a social movement sector that includes all social movement industries in a society. Therefore a social movement is simply a set of beliefs oriented towards social change; a social movement organization whose goals are aligned with those beliefs is responsible for gathering the resources needed for bringing about that change. A multitude of social movement organizations can have their goals aligned with the beliefs of a social movement and if that is the case then these form a social

movement industry. Finally, these industries function/operate within the social movement sector.

To be effective in their task of gathering resources, social movement organizations need to make a few distinctions when it comes to the individuals, organizations and institutions of society. One of these distinctions is between adherents and constituents. Adherents are those who agree with the goals or beliefs of a social movement and constituents are those who are providing resources to the social movement organization. Resource mobilization has two tasks when it comes to adherents and constituents. One is to transform adherents into constituents (and keep constituents involved) and the second is to transform non-adherents into adherents. In addition to these two categories, there are also bystander publics (those who are not adherents but also do not oppose the social movement or its organizations and could become adherents or vice versa) and adversaries or challengers.

Another distinction is made based on the pool of resources these individuals or organizations have at their disposal. Thus, there are mass adherents and constituents (those who do not control many resources - time and labor mostly) and elites (those whose resource pool is larger). The last distinction is made between potential beneficiaries (those who although are not adherents or constituents can benefit from the attainment of the goals of a social movement organization) and conscience adherents or conscience constituents (those who adhere to or support a social movement or social movement organization without having any benefit from the attainment of their goals). All these categories of actors can have an influence on the

type and style of resource mobilization strategies employed by social movement organizations.

Over time, the resource mobilization paradigm was refined and its knowledge of collective action was deepened. One of the core concepts that benefited from this deeper understanding is the concept of resources. In 2004 McCarthy and Bob Edwards summarize the various types of resources and hold that there are: moral, cultural, social-organizational, human, and material resources. Among the moral resources we can count legitimacy, celebrity, sympathetic support and solidarity (Edwards & McCarthy, p. 125). Cultural resources are mostly knowledge about things such as: how to organize a protest or hold a meeting or news conference, how to form an organization, or even basic things like surfing the web.

Social-organizational resources are a bit more complex and “include both intentional and appropriable organizations” (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004, p. 127). An intentional organization is formed specifically to advance a social movement’s goals while “appropriable social organizations” already exist for other purposes but can be used by social movements to access other types of resources. There are also three different forms of social organizational resources: infrastructures (which are non-proprietary resources, anyone can access them), social networks and formal organizations (access to both and to the resources they can provide can be controlled) (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004, p. 127). Human resources include labor, experience, skills, expertise and leadership while material resources “combine what

economists would call financial and physical capital, including monetary resources, property, office space, equipment and supplies” (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004, p. 128).

Resources, no matter their type, can be fully fungible, fully idiosyncratic or anywhere in between (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004, p. 128). This means that they can be used in any context and situation or they are dependent on the context. Money are the most fungible resource due to the fact that, no matter the context, it can be transformed in almost any resource that might be needed. Expertise is an example of a context dependable resource (what would you do with an accountant when you need a community organizer?).

Social movements can access resources mainly through four mechanisms: aggregation from constituents, self-production, appropriation/co-optation, and patronage. Aggregation refers to collecting resources held by individuals and transforming them into “collective” resources that can be used by movement’s actors. Self-production include mechanisms through which social movement organizations add value to resources that they have at their disposal. Appropriation refers to the use of resources aggregated or produced by other groups while co-optation refers to the borrowing of such resources. Patronage refers to mechanism through which other individuals, groups or organizations provide resources to social movements (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004, p. 134-135).

Resources are distributed (or redistributed) to social movements by both state and non-state actors. State agencies provide social movement organizations with resources such as monetary, technical assistance, legitimacy and tax-exempt status

and even access to decision making processes. However, social movement organizations need to meet specific criteria and follow certain guidelines to gain access to such resources. Foundations are non-state (usually philanthropic) actors that can provide resources to social movements, generally in the form of grants. Obtaining such a grant can also give legitimacy and prestige to a social movement. Religious organizations can offer moral, cultural and social-organizational resources. Although mostly seen as self-interest, corporations and businesses also sometimes provide resources to social movements. Social movement organizations themselves help each other, through offering/providing mostly cultural resources (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004, p. 120-121).

Edwards and McCarthy consider that “putting resources at the center of the analysis of social movement processes re-emphasizes the inextricable links between broader social stratification processes and the ability of social groups to mobilize effectively for ongoing collective action” (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004, p. 142). Also, social mobilization theory is, according to them, aiming to understand better how groups can overcome the unequal distribution of resources considering that “core areas” (both within and between states) benefit from more resources than the periphery (Edwards & McCarthy, 2004, p.118-119).

This approach doesn't only put resources at the center of analysis, it looks at everything through a language of resources in the same way in which the previous approach, formulated by Turner and Killian, uses the language of organization. Not all approaches within resource mobilization theory regard movements solely through the

lens of resources or entrepreneurial organizations however. Craig Jenkins summarizes different approaches to social movements within this perspective along a few lines: social movement formation, processes of mobilization, social movement organization and politics.

In terms of social movement formation, resource mobilization presents a couple of approaches. On one side, conflicts of interest present into social institutions are seen as giving birth to constant grievances; movements however do not form necessarily due to these grievances but because of changes in group access to resources, organization and opportunities for collective action (Jenkins, 1983, p.530). On the other side it is contended that significant in social movement formation are grievances generated by “major threats to the interest of cohesive and moderately resourceful groups”. (Jenkins, 1983, p. 531).

Thus, even though it remains true that grievances can lead to the formation of social movements, the emergence of such movements is strongly based on the preexistence of groups sufficiently organized that have both the interest and the resources to act on these grievances (Jenkins, 1983, p. 531). The emergence of civil rights movements due to the urbanization of the southern black populations, and the rise of ethnic separatist movements in Western Europe due to the declining status inequalities are used by Jenkins as examples of collective action born out of grievances. Furthermore, the formation of movements is linked to improvement in the status of aggrieved groups, not because of grievances created by the “revolution of

rising expectations” but because these changes reduce the costs of mobilization and improve the likelihood of success (Jenkins, 1983, p. 532).

From the resource mobilization perspective, mobilization can be defined as:

“the process by which a group secures collective control over the resources needed for collective action. The major issues, therefore, are the resources controlled by the group prior to mobilization efforts, the processes by which the group pools resources and directs these towards social change, and the extent to which outsiders increase the pool of resources” (Jenkins, 1983, p. 532-533).

In regard to the organization of social movements, Jenkins mentions two opposite poles within the perspective: the centralized bureaucratic model (Gamson 1975, McCarthy and Zald 1973, 1977) and the decentralized informal model (Gerlach and Hine 1970) and that most movements are placed on a continuum between the two forms of organization. The centralized bureaucratic model holds that a formalized structure with a clear role and labor division maximizes mobilization by formulating clear goals and minimizes internal conflicts and strengthens “combat readiness” by centralizing the decision making process. The opposite pole, the decentralized informal model, holds that

“decentralized movements with a minimum division of labor and integrated by informal networks and an overarching ideology are more effective. A segmented, decentralized structure maximizes mobilization by providing extensive interpersonal bonds that generate solidarity and reinforce ideological commitments”. (Jenkins, 1983, p. 539).

Finally, in regards to the politics of social movements, according to resource mobilization theory, collective action is influenced and “shaped by the larger political environment” and depends not only on internal strategies but also on the support or

opposition coming from political elites, interest groups and other social movement organizations. Some differences in views here come from how success is measured or defined. For Gamson (1980), for example, success is measured through two different dimensions: first, the attainment of goals proposed by the social movement organization and second the acceptance of the social movement organization as a “valid representative of a legitimate set of interests” by its main opponents (Jenkins, 1983, p. 543). Others, such as Piven and Cloward (1977) argue that success for “poor people’s movements” comes simply from mass defiance.

Resource mobilization theory, according to Tarrow, came about in the 1960s from a growing conviction that grievances are not enough to explain mobilization and its proponents were influenced by the trend in academy during that period to look at economics as the “master of social sciences” (Tarrow 1998, p. 15). In fact, McCarthy and Zald were criticized mainly for their use of the “language of economics”, for ignoring ideology, commitment, values and for defining social movement organizations in such a way that it is difficult to distinguish them from interest groups. However, resource mobilization perspective is also responsible for showing the need for a “multi factored approach” to the study of social movements and their formation (Jenkins 1983, p. 532). It also points out that collective action is “the outcome of complex processes of interaction mediated by certain networks of belonging” (Melucci 1996, p. 18) and not that of irrational behavior.

This approach focuses on social movement organizations and the way in which they gather resources in order to attain their goals. It doesn’t look at social



movements per se, which are defined within it simply as sets of beliefs. Although it recognizes that grievances exist and that they are related to social movement organizations, it sees the organization in itself more important than grievances in the process of mobilization and resources more important in the process of formation of such organizations. Also, by focusing on resource gathering and on how the movement is organized, the perspective ignores the exact processes through which the movement is trying to achieve its goals. Having resources or being able to gather resources doesn't automatically mean that change will be enforced. Thus, similarly with collective behavior perspective, resource mobilization focuses on one facet of social movements while neglecting others.

In different terms, according to this approach, there are always contradictions in society and the possibility of conflicts. What leads to the emergence of social movement organizations is not the presence of these contradictions but the existence of a system already in place and ready to connect the contradictions to conflicts. This system is the movement and the resources (in their different forms and variedly connected) are its elements. The issue with this is the fact that it is assumed that the system exists a priori. By focusing on how the system is organized and on how its elements are related to one another the exact way the system is formed and achieves its goals, the way the system functions within society and how it is connected to other systems are all overlooked.

Thus while collective behavior perspective assumes that grievances alone are enough to explain collective mobilization and views collective action or mobilization as

outside of the realm of normal “everyday life” (Tarrow 1998), resource mobilization theory focuses on organization and, exactly what the name suggests, resource mobilization. Consequently, both mostly overlook how social movements relate with other systems of society or the view on these relations is one sided. The political processes approach attempts to solve this issue.

### *3.3 Political process approach*

From this perspective, social movements are interactions between different parties; they are a conversation between power holders and claim makers in a public space and thus with an audience:

“a sustained series of interactions between power holders and persons successfully claiming to speak on behalf of a constituency lacking formal representation, in the course of which those persons make publicly visible demands for change in the distribution or exercise of power and back those demands with public demonstrations of support” (Tilly, 1984, p. 306).

There are two mistaken ideas that are promulgated by movement activists “more or less deliberately”, Tilly argues. First, it is believed (or held) that social movements are “solidaristic, coherent groups” when in fact they are “clusters of performance”. The second mistaken idea is the belief that social movements have life histories similar to the life histories of individuals. In fact, Tilly says, social movements didn’t always exist and they develop together with two other clusters of performance, namely electoral campaigns and interest-group politics. (Tilly, 1999, p. 256).

Social movements are compared in this instance to electoral campaigns. One of the differences between the two is the fact that a movement “demands the righting of a wrong” that affects a specified population while an electoral campaign demands votes. The population specified by the social movement can be as small as an individual or as big as the whole of humanity or even all life on Earth. Another difference is the fact that an electoral campaign “pays off chiefly in votes that finally result from it, [while] a social movement pays off in effective transmission of the message that its program’s supporters are WUNC: 1) worthy, 2) unified, 3) numerous, and 4) committed“ (2002, p. 88). These characteristics can compensate for each other (i.e. respectability can offset small numbers). However, this goes both ways and “a public demonstration of unworthiness” can discredit the entire movement (Tilly, 2002, p. 88).

If we look at social movements as “means-end actions”, Tilly suggests, one single action will not achieve the completion of a movement’s goals by itself. However, a combination of different actions, which are mostly symbolic, indirect and cumulative, will have a result. The strength of a movement resides in its capacity to threaten with actions like withdrawal of support for public authorities, direct action such as open rebellion, or offers of support to opposing parties. Furthermore, “social movements take place as conversations: not as solo performances, but as interactions among parties” (Tilly, 2002, p. 88). These parties embody the multitude of populations that constitute a social movement. Thus a social movement is a sustained interaction between:

“the power holders who are the objects of claims, the minimum claim being to tolerate the movement’s existence; participants, who range from minor contributors to leaders and are often connected by social movement organizations; and a subject population on whose behalf participants are making or supporting claims” (Tilly 1999, p. 257).

These populations can overlap or they can be distinct. There are also many other third-parties that can interfere with movement interactions, actors such as allies or enemies, authorities (and their response to claims) and multiple audiences.

From a political processes perspective, a social movement’s success depends on two types of “mystification” (which correspond with the two mistaken ideas mentioned earlier). First, WUNC (the notion that its members/supporters are worthy, unified, numerous, and committed) is the image that the social movement wants to create but this image does not necessarily correspond to reality; people participating are not always worthy, unified, numerous and committed. For this reason the coordinators of such movements have to make coalitions, to negotiate which of the many agendas present in their numbers will be given a voice in their collective action and to hide these negotiations and struggles from the public.

Second, the movement needs to present itself as a unified group with a history outside the claim-making process. This is the reason why, in Tilly’s view, feminists identify with “women’s age-old” struggles for rights and environmentalists talk about humankind as their community. These types of mystification address a variety of audiences (such as supporters, adversaries, authorities or publics) and they are used by social movements to “prove” their worthiness not only as adversaries but as

organizations that need and deserve to be taken seriously as well as claimants with a right to be heard. (Tilly 2002, p. 89-90).

As the perspective evolves further, social movements are placed within the context of “contentious politics” that are defined as:

“interactions in which actors make claims that bear on someone else’s interests, leading to coordinating efforts on behalf of shared interests or programs, in which governments are as targets, the objects of claims, or third parties” (Tilly & Tarrow 2007, p. 202).

Within this context, social movements are defined as “sustained campaigns of claim making, using repeated performances that advertise that claim, based on organizations, networks, traditions, and solidarities that sustain these activities” (Tilly & Tarrow 2007, p. 202). Therefore, a social movement is divided into two distinctive elements: social movement campaigns and social movement bases. Tilly’s earlier works contained both elements but they were not delineated as well and separated as precisely. A social movement campaign is a:

“sustained challenge to power holders in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of these power holders by means of concerted public displays of worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment, using such means as public meetings, demonstrations, petitions, and press releases” [and a social movement base] “consists of movement organizations, networks, participants, and the accumulated cultural artifacts, memories, and traditions that contribute to social movement campaigns” (Tilly and Tarrow 2007, p.114).

Thus this perspective evolves even further, to a broader outlook on collective action within the field of contentious politics, utilizing different approaches, for instance resource mobilization and framing perspective in order to explain social movements. The focus nevertheless continues to be on contentious politics, social

movements being a form of this, or a “crystallization” of contention (Tilly 2008).

Consequently, it is argued that:

“people engage in contentious politics when patterns of political opportunities and constraints change and then, by strategically employing a repertoire of collective action, create new opportunities, which are used by others in widening cycles of contention” (Tarrow 1998, p.19).

When he speaks of political opportunities here, Tarrow refers to characteristics of the political structures (i.e. institutions, regimes), that enable or encourage people to engage in political struggle and, when he speaks of constraints, he refers to the capacity of the authorities to discourage political struggle. Social movements are formed when political struggles take place around “broad cleavages in society” and when they form stable networks capable of “sustained interactions” (Tarrow 1998, p.23, Tarrow 2005). More precisely, according to Tarrow:

“Contention crystallizes into social movement when it taps embedded social networks and connective structures and produces collective action frames and supportive identities able to sustain contention with powerful opponents. By mounting familiar forms of contention, movements become focal points that transform external opportunities into resources. Repertoires of contention, social networks, and the cultural frames lower the cost of bringing people into collective action, induce confidence that they are not alone, and give broader meaning to their claims” (Tarrow 1998, p.23).

Therefore social movements have a few tools at their disposal to bring about political change; these tools are enumerated at the end of the above quote: contentious repertoires, social networks and frames. Contentious repertoires are sets of known ways in which political actors make claims on other political actors (Tilly & Tarrow 2007, Tarrow 2012) – i.e. protests, petitions, press releases. By framing

specific issues, social movements generalize grievances and also provide grounds for identity construction, for defining “us” and “them”.

Movements are certainly not the only ones engaging in framing processes. Namely, they have to compete with media and the state, who also frame issues to their advantage. When it comes to framing, social movements and the state (which is seen as the adversary) engage in a struggle over meaning. The coordination of collective action, and here both triggering and maintaining or sustaining collective action are included, depends on this struggle over meaning because collective action frames “justify, dignify and animate” it (Tarrow 1998, p. 21).

As it can be observed the political processes approach focuses on the strategies employed by movements and their actors in the relations with their opponents in order to pursue their goals. Compared to the previous attempts, this perspective offers a more complex image of social movements on account of its analysis of both the movement itself and its relations to the outside. To put this in systemic terms, similarly to collective behavior it recognizes the fact that there are contradictions in society that are linked to conflicts and thus lead to social movement formation. Furthermore, comparable to resource mobilization theory, it assumes that these contradictions always exist in society, that resources are needed to sustain the movement and that already existing systems are activated with the opportunity to connect contradictions to conflicts. It however goes further than resource mobilization and collective behavior through the fact that it analyzes the operations of the system,

all those processes used by the movement to promote its goals. Even more, it analyzes the structural couplings between systems, the way they interact.

However, even though this analysis of movements is more intricate than the previous ones, it still disregards certain aspects of the movement, and, to use an already commonplace expression when it comes to the theory of social movements, it focuses on the how of social movements and it neglects the why. In different words, it studies what the movement does but it doesn't analyze why it does it. If the role of a social movement is to alert the immune system of society, as Luhmann holds (and I agree with him), and to activate its memory, then answering "the why" is just as important as "the how" and "the what".

Nevertheless, this perspective also starts to point out to the complexity of the situations in which social movements function and to the fact that they are involved in struggles over meaning. Showing that their members are WUNC (worthy, unified, numerous, and committed) is an example of how the situation is complex because it shows that movements need to choose what elements to put forward and what connections to make in order to promote the image that they are indeed WUNC. The framing processes are a clear example of struggle over meaning. These framing processes are studied in more depth by the framing perspective on social movements.



### *3.4 Framing perspective*

According to Robert Benford and David Snow this perspective has at its core “the struggle over the production of mobilizing and counter mobilizing ideas and meanings” (Benford & Snow 2000, p. 613). Movements are not seen simply as carries of ideas and meanings that already existed in some form in society or that are produced by other events, but as producers of such ideas themselves.

The concept of frame is borrowed from Ervin Goffman (1974) for whom it signified “schema of interpretation” that are used by individuals to place and label events in their lives or in the world in general (Benford & Snow 2000, p. 614). Social movement theory uses a more specific concept of collective action frames:

“Frames help to render events or occurrences meaningful and thereby function to organize experience and guide action. Collective action frames also perform this interpretative function by simplifying and condensing aspects of the ‘world out there’, but in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists. Thus, collective action frames are action-oriented sets of beliefs and meanings that inspire and legitimate the activities and campaigns of social movement organizations” (Benford & Snow 2000, p. 614).

Social movement organizations, as producers of meanings and ideas, have three “core framing tasks”: diagnostic framing, prognostic framing and motivational framing. Diagnostic framing refers to two processes. One is the process through which social movements adherents identify and negotiate a “shared understanding” of a specific situation which they find problematic and in need to be changed. The second process is that of attribution of blame or fault for this problematic condition or situation. Prognostic framing refers to the process through which social movements

formulate solutions to the problem or “alternate sets of arrangements” as well as to the process of formulating strategies for the application of these solutions. Motivational framing refers to social movements “urging others to act in concert to affect change”, to offering a “call to arms” to apply the alternate sets of arrangements that the movement proposes (Benford & Snow 2000, p.615-617).

In their overview of the framing perspective, Benford and Snow also identify a set of “variable features” of collective action frames: problem identification, flexibility and rigidity, inclusivity and exclusivity, interpretative scope and influence, and degree of resonance. Problem identification and locus of attribution is “the most obvious way in which collective frames vary” and it refers to “the issues addressed and the corresponding direction of attribution” (Benford & Snow 2000, p. 618). Flexibility and rigidity refers to variations “in the degree to which they [collective action frames] are relatively exclusive, rigid, inelastic and restricted or relatively inclusive, open, elastic and elaborate in terms of the number of themes or ideas they incorporate and articulate” (Benford & Snow 2000, p. 618). The variation in interpretative scope and influence refers to the fact that collective action frames can represent the interests of a small or particular group, can cover a small set of problems or they can be broad enough to cover the activities of a multitude of various social movements.

The fourth way in which collective action frames vary, namely resonance, combines two factors: credibility of the frame and its salience. To be credible, a frame needs to meet three criteria: it needs to be consistent (are there differences between what a social movement organization says and what it does?), it needs to be

empirically verifiable (not only in terms of “is it true?” but also in terms of “does it mean what they say it does?”, in other words is the diagnostic correct?) and the “frame articulators” need to be themselves credible (i.e. have a certain status or expertise). The salience of the collective action frame refers to how important the values and beliefs of the social movement organization are to the “targets of mobilization” (Benford & Snow 2000, p. 620-621).

The processes involved in “frame development, generation and elaboration” by social movement organizations can borrow diverse forms (discursive, strategic and contested). Some of these processes refer to how frames are developed while others refer to how they are diffused:

“Discursive processes refer to the talks and conversations – the speech acts – and written communications of movement members that occur primarily in the context of, or in relation to, movement activities. Collective action frames are generated by two basic, interactive discursive processes: frame articulation and frame amplification or punctuation” (Benford & Snow 2000, p. 623).

Frame articulation refers to how events, information or experiences are “put together” to create a certain image, to provide a new point of view of reality. Frame amplification processes refer to how some issues, values or beliefs are accentuated or highlighted to seem more pressing or important than others. These in turn can be used to symbolize the entire frame or the movement itself.

Strategic processes are goal oriented and are used for specific purposes, i.e. member recruitment and resource mobilization. There are at least four such processes, called “basic alignment processes”: frame bridging, frame amplification,

frame extension and frame transformation (Benford & Snow 2000, p. 624). Frame bridging refers to linking previously unconnected but related frames that regard the same issue. It can take place between movements and individuals but also between diverse movements. Frame amplification regards the “idealization, embellishment, clarification or invigoration of existing values or beliefs” (Benford & Snow 2000, p. 624). Frame extension occurs when a social movement organization presents its frames and values as going beyond its own interests to include concerns of possible new members or adherents; and finally, frame transformation “refers to changing old understanding and meanings and/or generating new ones” (Benford & Snow 2000, p. 625).

Contested processes refers to the fact that the development of frames itself is a contested process. There is a multitude of actors in the “collective arena” and they all try to present their own “version of reality” and their own frames. Thus frames and those who construct them are always challenged. There are at least three types of challenges: “[first], counter-framing by movement opponents, bystanders and the media; [second], frame disputes within the movements and [third], the dialectic between frames and events” (Benford & Snow 2000, p. 625).

Frame diffusion processes are those processes through which frames spread from one movement to another, or from one culture to another. Benford and Snow identify two such processes as strategic selection or adaptation and strategic fitting or accommodation:

“Strategic selection encompasses situations in which there is intentional cross-cultural borrowing, with the adopter or importer assuming the role of an active agent in the process, strategically selecting and adapting the borrowed item to the new host context or culture. Strategic fitting encompasses situations in which there is intentional cross-cultural promotion, with the transmitter actively engaged in tailoring and fitting the objects or practices of diffusion to the host culture” (Benford & Snow 2000, p. 627).

And so, “framing is a dynamic, ongoing process” that is affected by the social and cultural contexts in which it takes place. There are a number of factors, for example political and cultural opportunities and constraints or the openness of the targeted audiences that affect deeply how frames are constructed (Benford & Snow 2000, Benford 1997).

It is apparent that this approach is a continuation of the resource mobilization theory and the political processes approach. Nevertheless it also adds a new dimension to social movements by seeing them as producers of ideas that use sets of beliefs and meanings to inspire and legitimate their activities. While political processes approach identified framing processes as important operations performed by movements as well, it didn’t go as deep in analyzing them and it didn’t place them at the center of collective action as the framing perspective does.

If we interpret movements as presented by this perspective in luhmannian terms we can take an additional step in understanding their role in society. Again, as for the political processes approach, the focus is on operations but this time we can go further and say that movements perform the operation of observation. Remember that one of the core framing tasks is diagnostic, which includes two processes: the identification of a problem and the attribution of blame or fault for this problem (to

social, economic or political factors or to someone). Thus viewed this way, social movements observe society and notice a contradiction. They do not stop only at marking this contradiction however, they also mark who is responsible for it, thus placing themselves on one side of a form. Engaging in further framing processes, hence creating different images of situations and various meanings for events – and thus descriptions of society – movements continue the process of communication in society, create complexity and conditions for contingency but most of all provide society with that other reality that it needs to complete the operation of self-reference.

Nonetheless, by placing so much emphasis on framing and the struggles for meaning, other aspects of the movement are hidden from view. Aspects like organization and relations with other systems of society are ignored and once more we have a truncated understanding of social movements. The focus is again on what movements do and the question why do movements form remains unanswered. This is what the new social movement perspective tries to answer.

### *3.5 New Social Movements Theory*

This designation refers both to a perspective and to types of social movements that emerge, as Claus Offe (1997) believes, with a new political paradigm. By political paradigm he means a model of addressing the political that answers questions like: what are the main values and themes of collective action, who are the actors and how do they become collective actors and what are the procedures, strategies and

institutional forms through which the conflict takes place? (Offe 1997, p. 100). The old paradigm, which took effect after the Second World War and was prevalent until the nineteen seventies organized social life based on a binary code, private and public. The main political questions revolved around three themes: economic growth, resource distribution and security (which referred to economic security offered by the welfare state, military security and social control). The main values were, correspondingly “liberté et sécurité de la consommation privée et du progrès matériel” (Offe 1997, p. 106). In this context:

“Le postulat sociologique implicite qui sous-tendait les accords constitutionnels de l’État-providence libéral était que les modèles de vie « privés », centrés sur la famille, le travail et la consommation, absorberaient les énergies et les aspirations de la plupart des gens, et que la participation à la vie publique ainsi que les conflits concernant celle-ci n’auraient en conséquence qu’une importance marginale dans la vie de la grande majorité des citoyens” (Offe 1997, p. 101).

The new social movements however bring about a new political paradigm that puts into question the public/private binary code by bringing forth issues that are neither public nor private. The “action world” is divided into three spheres: private, institutionalized politics and non-institutionalized politics (Offe 1997, p. 105). Questions in this new paradigm revolved around themes like the human body and human rights, peace, environment while values such as autonomy and personal identity become central for the new social movements. The values in themselves are not new but they are given more importance and a sense of urgency.

In terms of collective action characteristic to each paradigm, while in the old paradigm the actors were socio-economic groups acting as groups according to their

group interests and the struggles in which they were engaged revolved around resource distribution, the new social movements are also formed by socio-economic groups but they don't act in the interests of this group but as and in the interests of collectivities concerned with values that go beyond the group interests (Offe 1997, p. 6).

According to Bob Edwards and John McCarthy (2004), and in line with Offe's assessment, these new social movements and the sociological theory that carries the same name emerged together with the rise of a new middle class in Europe. Having distinctive social and cultural commitments as well as enough economic resources, this new social class was the driving force behind the new social movements. New social movements theory studies the "social change preference" of this progressively important population (Edwards and McCarthy 2004, p.119-120). In contrast with resource mobilization theory and the political process perspective, which focus on how social movements are formed and the factors that lead to their appearance, the new social movements approach focuses on why they are formed and tries to relate them to structural and cultural changes (Diani, 1992, p. 7).

As with the other perspectives, there are various approaches to social movements within the new social movement theory. One of these approaches, formulated by Alain Touraine incorporates social movements into a sociology of action, tries to go as close as possible to the actor itself and wants to "avoid analysis of the transformation of the world that are too general" (Touraine 2002, p. 90). Three main themes stay at the heart of this viewpoint.



First, “society is a hierarchized set of systems of action, i.e. of social relations between actors who may have conflicting interests but who belong to the same social sphere and therefore share certain cultural orientations” (Touraine 1981, p. 25). As such, society has two central elements: its historicity, that is, a capacity to produce and reproduce its own models of functioning, and relations between classes through which these models become practices.

Second, social movements are “the collective action of actors at the highest level – the class actors – fighting for the social control of historicity, i.e. control of the great cultural orientations by which a society’s environmental relationships are normatively organized” (Touraine 1981, p. 26). Thus social movements fight for control over the models by which society functions. And third,

“the functioning of a society is dominated by its historicity and by its class relations, and therefore by its social movements. But its change, in particular its transition from one societal type to another, requires another order of analysis, in which the state occupies central place” (Touraine 1981, p. 26).

Therefore, social movements struggle for changes on how society functions but they cannot affect the change of society from one form/type to another. They are defined as “the organized collective behavior of a class actor struggling against his class adversary for the social control of historicity in a concrete community” (Touraine 1981, p. 77). This definition encompasses three dimensions. First, it presents social movements not only as conflictual behaviors but also “culturally oriented” behaviors; second, fighting for control over historicity shows that social movements do not fight

the state and thus they are not political actors and third, they do not create a “more modern or advanced society” (Touraine 1981, p. 80).

In later writings, social movements are defined by Touraine as:

“organized conflicts or as conflicts between organized actors over the social use of common cultural values. For example, both the working class and the entrepreneurs accept industrial progress and rationalization but conceive it in different social terms. They share the same values but disagree about the social use of these resources and cultural orientations. The point is to concentrate the study onto social conflict and social initiatives within a given social situation, such as industrial society or, today, information society” (Touraine, p. 90, 2002).

Looked at from this point of view, social movements are not conflicts that arise necessarily from one side defending its interests (although that can be part of it) but conflicts that arise from different views of the same social value. The conflict does not arise over the social value in itself, it arises over the use of that value. Social movements are therefore differentiated from historical movements. While social movements are collective actions that appear and take place within a societal type, historical movements are “forms of actions or reactions as parts of a process of historical change” (Touraine, p. 91, 2002).

Moreover, while social movements are limited to a type of society, historical movements are part of the process of transition from one type of society to another (i.e. social movements within industrial society versus reactions and actions in a process of industrialization). Also, social movements can be understood only when placed in their historical context due to the fact that they depend on how society

describes itself at the moment the movement is formed and during the movement's existence. Thus, different social movements exist in different types of society.

In even later writings (although not that much later), Touraine recommends we no longer use the notion of social movements unless it refers to phenomena that have been studied already, have a long historical tradition and have been named social movements already. Although it seems very much different from his previous views, it really is not that far away, considering that he continues his argument by stating that the idea of social movement should be saved for "a collective action that challenges a mode of generalized domination" (Touraine 2004, p. 718). What matters when looking at movements is the central conflict within a society and as we live in what many call the information society, the central conflict in today's world is the "social use of information" (Touraine 2004, p. 721). And here lies the difficulty in continuing to use the notion of social movements.

In all types of societies the central conflict was around the dominant use of resources created by that society, be they material or cultural/symbolic. In the information society it is hard, if not impossible to find "forms of organization or production that directly convey social domination" (Touraine 2004, p. 721). This is why, Touraine claims, the notion of social movement should be replaced by that of cultural movement; this would show the shift in conflicts towards the symbolic field. According to him, the only social movements per se at the beginning of the twenty first century are those questioning the use of knowledge/information in education, health and other areas of social life (Touraine 2004, p. 721-724).

As it can be noticed, from this point of view collective action is strictly linked to the type of society in which it takes place. Furthermore, each type of society is considered to have one central conflict and movements are strictly attached to that conflict. The difference between historical movements and social movements marks the difference between movements that act within a certain type of society and movements that attempt to change that type of society. What seems to be crucial in this approach is knowing the type of society a movement acts in and the central conflict to which it can be linked. This is not however central for all approaches within the new social movements paradigm. The theory formulated by Alberto Melucci for example, puts collective identity at the center of collective action. The analysis of social movements is placed here within a general theory of society.

Society is seen as a world system, in which cultures and local societies are just subsystems, or “internal dimensions” of the same very complex system in which non-institutional forms of action became increasingly autonomous. In that respect, social movements revealed to be special discrete elements of reality in the sense they may or may not be connected to other movements. In addition, one should not forget, as Melucci underlined: “a social movement refers to just one specific form of collective action among many others that combine orientations and fields of different kinds” (Melucci 1996, p.30). In this respect “social movements can be distinguished according to the field of their action” (Melucci 1996, p. 34) and they should be studied as analytical categories instead of empirical generalizations. In this view, social movements are systems of action (because “every form of collective action is a system of action”, Melucci 1996, p. 39) that have three dimensions: they “invoke

solidarity, make manifest a conflict and entail a breach of the limits of compatibility of the system within which the action takes place” (Melucci 1996, p.28).

They also have a number of common features: heterogeneity and little negotiability of the goals, indifference in obtaining power, they challenge the separation between the public and the private spheres, “solidarity as an objective” and “the quest for participation and direct action” (Melucci 1996, p.103). These features are characteristic for the forms of contemporary social movements. In regard to their content, Melucci identifies “regressive Utopianism (...), primacy given to nature, (...) [and] the role of the individual” (Melucci 1996 p. 104-105) as the common features of the contemporary social movements.

The regressive utopianism refers to the fact that the contemporary social movements speak of their identity in a quasi-religious manner. Also, their goals and their moral commitment to causes such as making the social better, show the belief in an all-encompassing principle that transcends the social. The primacy given to nature refers to the fact that the contemporary social movements define the concept of nature as “needs” or as “raw material” and use it to resist control. Nature is seen as a thing that belongs to the individual but that is not completely separated from the social and thus, it can be used to manipulate the social (or the power apparatuses). “The role of the individual” refers to the fact that contemporary social movements perceive the individual, his needs and his experiences as having collective importance:

“The problems of the individual have become collective problems precisely because they involve, on the one hand, the manipulation of individual identity by the power structure, and the cultural

representation of needs as an individual concern on the others” (Melucci 1996 p. 105).

According to Melucci, movements claim (through their actions) that the individual aspect of social life needs to be addressed as the level at which social action originates as well as the level at which new forms of control are exercised. In the contemporary modern society, marked by complexity, social movements create a space in which the “dilemmas” of complex systems arise. These dilemmas concern three different aspects. The first one refers to the fact that the system needs to change constantly but at the same time it needs a “stable normative and prescriptive nucleus” (Melucci 1996, p. 217). The second aspect refers to the fact that complex systems show a high degree of fragmentation while at the same time they have an inclination towards concentration. The third aspect has to do with the fact that there is a tendency toward the extension of citizenship and participation at the same time with an increased necessity for bureaucratic planning of social life (Melucci 1996 p. 217). Social movements bring to light all these contradictions.

There are three important factors related to the actor’s participation in social movements. First, actors need a network of affiliation on which collective identity is based (participation in collective action does not take place through isolated individuals). Second, an adversary needs to be identified. Without this identification participation and mobilization are impossible. Third, the initial networks of affiliation are combined creating a new identity. All these factors work together building a new social group or a new action system in which relations are reconfigured and elements gain new meanings. In this context the mobilizing factors behind social movements

are: “a collective identity, the identification of the adversary, the definition of a purpose, an object at stake in the conflict” (Melucci, 1996, p. 292).

According to Melucci,

“movements in complex societies are disenchanting prophets. The charmed universe of the heroes has definitively dissolved under the impact of an era taking cognizance of itself as a planetary system riven by molecular change, as a system which constantly generates tensions and then in turn adapts to them by striving to control them. (...) Contemporary movements are prophets of the present. (...) They announce the commencement of change: not, however a change in the distant future but one that is already a presence” (Melucci 1996: p.1).

Through this, social movements “permettent à la société de prendre en charge ses propres actions” (Melucci 1997, p. 13). In this sense, social movements are not only an illustration of complexity, and an announcer of change but also participants in this change.

Thus, this approach, as the previous one, formulated by Touraine, draws strong links between collective action and change. Also, both approaches look at collective behavior through the lens of a theory of action and both place movements in their historical and cultural context. This connection between context and movements is characteristic for the new social movement paradigm. In fact, as we saw, this perspective studies movements at a macro level, looking at how society provides the context for the development of social movements.

Therefore the new social movement approach provides us with an understanding of collective action within the fluid, changing historical and cultural context. However, by focusing on why movements are formed and on the connections

at a macro level, the approach ignores the other facets of collective action, facets already discussed when the other perspectives were presented. It can be argued that the angle of approach here is the complete opposite to the one used by collective behavior, resource mobilization, political processes and framing perspectives. While new social movement theory looks at how society generates collective action and is changed by it, the other perspectives look at what collective action does to fulfill its goals of social change. To put it differently, it is a top to bottom or bottom to top kind of difference between these approaches. I believe that we need to look at movements from both angles if we want to understand them better. Ron Eyerman and Andrew Jamison (1991) formulate an approach that attempts to bring together both these angles by looking at social movements through the lens of a theory of knowledge.

### *3.6 Unifying approaches*

In order to understand social movements from this perspective, a definition of knowledge is needed. “By knowledge, [Eyerman and Jamison] mean both the worldview assumptions, the ideas about the world that are shared by participants in social movements, as well as the specific topics or issues that movements are created around” (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, p. 3).

Hence, the knowledge talked about here is not the “formalized knowledge” of the academia or of scientific knowledge, but the “the broader cognitive praxis that informs all social activity” (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, p. 49). This is a broad



definition of knowledge, and intentionally so because social movements are also seen as mediators between these types of knowledge (everyday knowledge and academic/scientific or “professional knowledge”). One of the roles of social movements is transforming everyday knowledge into professional knowledge or providing different contexts for the interpretation of professional knowledge (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, p. 52). Furthermore, not only they transform knowledge but they also create, combine and recombine different types of knowledge. In fact, Jamison and Eyerman think that:

“much, if not all new knowledge emanates from the cognitive praxis of social movements, new ideas both in and out of science are the often unconscious results of new knowledge interests of social movements” (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, p. 59).

Studying social movements as cognitive praxis presupposes accepting two assumptions. On one hand, as we have seen above, it is assumed that social movements are producers of knowledge and, on the other hand, that knowledge is produced through collective processes. Accordingly, studying social movements from this perspective means trying to understand the “symbolic, or expressive, significance of social movements” (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, p. 43). This cognitive praxis of social movements is considered to be “the social action from where new knowledge originates” (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, p. 43-48). Knowledge, according to Eyerman and Jamison, is not produced by “individual genius” or within the confines of a structured system of “Research and Development”. Knowledge is produced through social interactions that take place at three different levels: within movements, between movements and, between movements and their opponents.

Interactions within movements are the discussions between activists on strategies, tactics, slogans, thus the debates on “planning the future” but also on “reflecting on past actions”. Interactions between movements take place on two levels themselves; on one level there are the direct interactions between “new” and “old” movements, where they compete against each other *for* and *in* the same time and space; on another level they compete over traditions, values and interests that are constantly recombined, reinvented and reformulated. The third type of interactions, between movements and their opponents, takes place in various arenas in the form of debates, confrontations and dialogs. What is a social movement in this perspective then? A social movement

“is not one organization or one particular special interest group. It is more like a cognitive territory, a new conceptual space that is filled by a dynamic interaction between different groups and organizations. It is through tensions between different organizations over defining and acting in that conceptual space that the (temporary) identity of a social movement is formed” (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, p. 55).

At least three characteristics of social movements can be drawn from this interpretation. First, a social movement does not simply equate an organization/group but it is a collection of ideas, concepts or beliefs that are debated or contested by various organizations or groups. Second, a movement’s identity is built through these debates and tensions between groups and third, social movements are transitory.

There are also three conditions that need to be satisfied before a social movement can emerge: political opportunity, an articulated theme and the transformation of individual issues into public issues. Therefore, the existence of a social issue is not enough for a social movement to emerge. There also needs to be

an opportunity to express that issue, to discuss it and to disseminate knowledge about it. Also, this problem or social tension needs to be clearly formulated within a conceptual space and individuals need to be willing to get involved. This doesn't mean that any social issue can bring about the birth of a social movement; only those movements that "conceptualize fundamental contradictions or tensions in society", that bring about historical change or even "redefine history" are considered to be social movements (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, p.56).

The longevity and success of a social movement are strongly interconnected. How long a movement lasts depends on how long it is taken seriously by society, on how committed are its members, on the response of other political institutions and on, and maybe this is the most important point, "the willingness and capacity of the entire social formation to absorb, incorporate, or reject the message of the movement" (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, p. 57). A movement doesn't live forever though, it is temporary by its nature. Once its message has been incorporated or discarded by society, the movement doesn't have a role or a goal anymore so it dissipates, or "withers away".

Therefore, the success of a movement depends on two things: one, the way its message is received and second, having enough time to articulate this message. In Eyerman and Jamison's terms:

"the success of a social movement depends on the effective diffusion of its knowledge production; but diffusion depends upon being sufficient time and space for a movement identity to be articulated. Some movements are successful in one way while being failures in the other" (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, p. 64).

Social movements have three main roles. The first role has to do with “translating scientific ideas into social and political beliefs, [the second is a] historical function as social laboratories [and third, they have] provided societal, or cultural critiques of dominant techno-economic paradigms, and in their critiques new paradigms have found sources of inspiration” (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, p. 92-93). Consequently, to understand these roles and collective action itself, Eyerman and Jamison consider that we need to look at social movements through a “dialectical theory of history” meaning that we need to acknowledge the fact that the historical context in which movements emerge conditions them but at the same time it is itself affected by the cognitive praxis of movements (Eyerman and Jamison 1991, p. 62).

As it was mentioned at the beginning of the chapter, this approach is seen as close to the object of this dissertation due to the fact that it tries to offer a more integrated view of social movements and to place them in the shifting cultural and historical context. It does indeed look at social movements from various angles by taking into consideration in its analysis both their internal and external struggles. It looks at how and why movements form and how they impact society as well as how they are impacted in turn.

Looked at from within a communication theory of society it is very intriguing because it places movements at the center of communication. Their interactions or struggles can be placed within the distinctions between information, utterance and understanding and communication as a three part selection process could be used to explain these interactions and struggles. Social movements in this context would be

seen as producers of meaning that choose what information to transmit, how to transmit it and how it should be understood. The interactions and struggles would be around how this information and its utterance are understood and taken as well as around meaning as an infinite pool of possibilities. Nonetheless, the fact that this analysis is done through the lens of a theory of knowledge and not a theory of society narrows its scope and social movements appear to be the only producers of meaning and the sole partners in communication.

Similarly to this approach, Klaus Eder (1993) attempts to formulate a theory which is broader in scope in order to alleviate some of the issues encountered so far within the field of social movement theory (namely the lack of integration, looking at movements only from one angle, studying one facet instead of the many, facts which lead to a fragmented view of social movements).

This perspective differentiates between paradigms within the theory of social movements, talking about micro and macro analysis. Social movement research in this view is not linked to macro-sociological theory anymore, for mainly two reasons. On one side, Eder claims, scholars focus on micro-sociology and overemphasize the role of activists or movement supporters, thus reducing movements to “their manifestations” and on the other side “social movement analysis has become part of organizational analysis, treating social movements like a business enterprise” (Eder 1993, p. 4). One result of these tendencies is the fact that movement analysis is focused on either the emergence of social movements or, on the “inner dynamic of

the production and reproduction of social movements” while their role in the socio-historical and cultural context is mostly ignored (Eder 1993, p. 4).

He proposes that we use functional analysis to explain social movements at a macro-level, or more precisely, when looking at social movements to take into account the macro-cultural context within which they function. This doesn't mean completely giving up the micro-analysis of how they emerge and reproduce, but instead use it as a tool in explaining this macro-context that he calls the public space, context in which movements are constructed and in which they perform the function of constructing collective actors. Looking at social movements from this perspective permits us to understand resources and attitudes as “means available to stabilize these social constructions” (Eder 1993, p. 4). The proposal is thus to build on the “two dominating traditions” while adding a new venue of research that looks at the dependence of collective actors on the institutional context of their time (Eder 1993, p. 4-5).

From this perspective, social movements have the role of accelerating the communication of issues in society, this function transcending their existence as mobilizations. There are two fundamental dimensions to social movements: a cultural one and normative/moral one, meaning that “social movements move society by providing an alternative cultural model and a moral order that contributes to institutionalizing it, in that sequence” (Eder 1993, p. 114).

According to Eder, social movements are a modern phenomenon that came into existence in the seventeenth century. “Pre-modern societies” knew only social

protest which was directed by domination processes and that was institutionally bound, meaning that the cultural context was a given and disputes could take place only at a “social level”. Social movements differ from such social protests through the fact that they challenge cultural orientations and they provide alternative cultural models. Social movements are only those forms of protest “directly and intentionally related to modernization from the seventeenth century on” (Eder 1993, p. 107-108). Consequently, not any type of mobilization can be classified as a social movement; to be one, a collective mobilization has to have as a goal the modernization of society; change cannot be accidental, it needs to be intentional. From this point of view only two social movements existed so far: the movement for political emancipation and the labor movement. Both of these

“challenged cultural traditions and provided a normative direction to social development. Both sought to redirect social evolution and have created a new society although they have not succeeded in transforming state structures” (Eder 1993, p. 108).

The question is then, is there a movement now that is trying to change society? Are new social movements capable of becoming historical actors and play an important role in modernizing society? According to Eder, the new social movements fall within one of two types: cultural or political movements. Cultural movements “oppose present social life”, include movements such as feminist or anti-industrial movements and look for a different relation with nature. Political movements challenge “modern state domination” and include movements such as the anti-bureaucratic and housing movements (Eder 1993, p. 101). The movements of the past had an “extra-social reference”, the movement for political emancipation

provided “a moral order based on a legal order” and the labor movement a “moral order based on negative liberties” but for the new social movements the moral order is grounded in “collective needs and wants” (Eder 1993, p. 115):

“A new society emerges within which social movements develop who try to oppose those who administer needs and wants, while defending ‘their’ needs. These movements are characterized by a different cultural orientation of social development; by a new type of antagonistic social relations between technocracy and its clients and by a new collective identity that cuts across traditional lines and is ultimately based on the equal consideration of every particularity” (Eder 1993, p. 115-116).

Are these movements crystalizing into “the new social movement”? Eder thinks that yes, a new social movement is emerging to replace the labor movement, and this movement has at its core our relationship to nature. This movement has the potential of unifying under one theme demands as varied as gender, animal protection, environment and even the non-organic world:

“Therefore, instead of continuing to talk of new social movements, the time has come to give these new social movements a name. Any term from environmentalism, ecological movement, life politics movements might serve as a possible candidate for name giving. They all denote the same problem: the nature-society relationship, or the question of nature” (Eder 1993, p. 118).

Although this approach attempts to bring together the micro and the macro studies of social movements, I believe that it doesn’t really step out of the new social movement perspective. This is not in itself a problem of course, however, while it discusses movements within their historical and cultural context, I consider that it has the same limits as the approach formulated by Touraine. By identifying one single central movement for a type of society, it disregards all other grounds for conflict that are present within that context.



### *3.7 Conclusion*

As we have seen throughout this chapter, there are many approaches to social movements. These diverse approaches offer many different definitions and analyses of social movements but, as we have also seen, they also all come together around a few points. They all see social movements as instances of collective action, as more or less organized mobilizations and invariably, they all agree that collective action has as a main goal social change. Therefore, no matter how they name their object of study, social movement, social movement organization, cultural or historical movement, collective action or collective behavior, protest movement, all these perspectives have the same object of study: a mechanism via which social change takes place. As it was mentioned in the first chapter, this is the main reason for which the field of social movement theory was chosen for study in this thesis. I believe that a better comprehension of collective action is important for improving our knowledge about society in general. If society is in constant change then understanding one of the mechanisms through which this change takes place is paramount for understanding society itself.

Although different paths were taken within the field, I believe that social movement theory shows us the importance of this mechanism of social change and thus it provides us with a better understanding of society. For example, the collective behavior perspective was among the first instances in which collective action was interpreted and studied as meaningful action and it pointed to the fact that actors could act collectively in coherent ways. It also revealed that these social organizations

can be a driving force for beneficial change in society. On the other hand, resource mobilization shows that a more structured study of these meaningful actions is needed in order to understand them and the way they function.

Further down the path, political processes approach offers a more intricate image of social movements on account of its analysis of both the movement itself and its relations to society while the framing perspective adds a new dimension to our understanding of social movements by showing us how they function as producers of ideas and how they use sets of beliefs and meanings to inspire and legitimate their activities. The new social movements approach puts light on the reasons for which movements form and on how they are connected to the larger historical and cultural context. And, as we have seen with the approaches formulated by Eyerman and Jamison and Eder, there are also perspectives that try to bring together previous paradigms in order to improve our knowledge of social movements exactly by trying to look at more facets of the movements at the same time.

Notwithstanding all this, I consider that the field of social movement theory is giving us only a fragmented depiction of social movements and a reason for this is the lack of integration of the various perspectives within. All these varied perspectives and approaches cover and capture important facets and angles of collective action. However, they do so in disparate ways, looking at one side and ignoring the other. I believe that the review of these perspectives throughout this chapter illustrated this point. We have seen that in the instance of collective behavior the definition of a social movement is so general that any form of collective mobilization can fit within

and by focusing on action and mobilization, the organization of the movement is ignored. On the other hand, we noticed that resource mobilization theory focuses on social movement organizations and on the way in which they gather resources in order to attain their goals but it ignores the exact reasons for which movements emerge.

We have also seen that the political processes approach focuses on the strategies employed by movements in their relations with their opponents in order to pursue their goals, but similarly to resource mobilization, it studies what the movement does but it doesn't analyze why it does it. The review also showed that by placing so much emphasis on framing and the struggles for meaning, the framing perspective disregards other aspects of the movement, aspects like organization and relations and connections with other parts of society. As it was noticed, pointing out to these connections between context and movements is characteristic for the new social movement paradigm but again, the view we receive is only partial, because while focusing on these connections, the approach ignores the other facets of collective action that regard the ways in which the movement fulfils its goals. The unifying approaches presented also use a narrow scope to look at social movements, the theory of knowledge in one case, and the new social movements approach in the other.

The main objective of this chapter was to support the first part of the main thesis, namely, that that social movement theory is not sufficient or integrated enough to explain collective action and that we need a more comprehensive theory in order to

obtain a better understanding of movements and the way in which they fulfill their role of promoters of change in society. I believe that the review of the field of the theory of social movements showed how the focus of the analysis changes from one theory to another and how different facets of the social movement are analyzed separately instead of together.

# Chapter 4: Environmental Thought and Movement

*“Doubt as to the moral progress of humanity has always had good grounds. Today the strongest bastion of faith in progress – namely, the superiority of human kind over nature, its increasing dominance and control of nature – has begun to falter. The current ecological crisis is not just a contingent event that befalls the world from time to time. It is no longer just misfortune. Instead it calls the superiority model into question, and this expands the ecological crisis into a crisis of society itself (Eder 1996, p.33-34).*

As I think it is evident by now, social movements are multifaceted phenomena. The multitude of definitions for social movements presented in the previous chapter is pointing towards that. Although they disagree at times, these are not conflicting theories, definitions and explanations. Each approach is an illustration of the social movements of its time or of the form social movements took at that time. And therein lays one problem. How comprehensive is a theory if it needs to change itself to fit the form of its object of study? Another problem lays in the fact that these theories also focus on different aspects of movements: some look at how they organize, what resources they need and use or how they “act” while others look at why social movements emerge, what is their role or why people join. If we are to understand social movements, these are all aspects that need to be studied together. As it was

mentioned in the previous chapters, I believe that a better comprehension of collective action is important for improving our knowledge about society in general.

If society is in constant change then understanding one of the mechanisms through which this change takes place is paramount for understanding society itself. As we have seen, although there are many varied definitions and analyses of social movements, they all converge on one important point: social movements bring or at the very least attempt to bring social change. So how do you define something that is changing without becoming so abstract that anything can and will fit your definition? If a concept is too abstract there is a risk of becoming too general and of ignoring the particular. The answer to this problem may lay in the analysis of those changes and the context that triggers them (or in which they are taking place). I think that an approach based on Niklas Luhmann's system theory can help us with such an analysis. In my view we can use his general theory (or at least parts of it) to better understand and explain both society and social movements.

In what follows, an analysis of environmentalism will be used as an illustration of how this general theory can be employed to better explain and analyze a specific movement. Consequently, environmentalism will be overviewed, in an attempt to outline its history and the way it changed overtime in relation to the social context. The already existing academic literature on the subject will be used not only because it is extensive and wide-ranging but also because the interest of this study is purely theoretical. The general theory developed by Luhmann will be used throughout this

overview in order to interpret and analyze these changes and to show how, by using it as an analytical tool, we can obtain an integrated perspective of social movements.

Even though the interest is theoretical, I think that this endeavor has value beyond the academic discussion by contributing to a better understanding of the world we live in today. As Florence Rudolf asserts, a number of occurrences in the natural world (i.e. storms of unseen strength, inundations where there weren't any before) emphasize the fact that disruptions in the environment intensify. These disruptions in the natural world have an impact on the social world (Rudolf 2003). If one looks at the current major topics of discussion one cannot but notice an abundance of debates regarding issues like global warming and climate change, the ozone layer, resource consumption, biodiversity, pollution, protection and preservation of wildlife. The protection of the environment and the preservation of nature, sustainable development, renewable resources are paramount issues in present day's public debates. Some of these issues have been present in the public sphere for at least three decades. All these concerns have to do with society's relation to its environment. Knowing how society sees this relation and how it is trying to change it is important in understanding society itself. A crucial point is expressed here. This enquiry is not about the society-environment relation itself, but about how a specific social phenomenon, namely the environmental movement, sees this relation and how it uses its vision to change society.

As it was mentioned in chapter one, when talking about the environmental movement or environmentalism, any movement that addresses issues related to the

environment or its relations to society is included. Terms such as environmental organization, green movement or environmental group will be considered synonyms. Also, environmentalism is seen as having two components, theory (environmental thought, eco-philosophy or green ideology) and organizational or mobilizing forms (environmental groups and organizations). Although often studied separately, as we have seen in chapter one, I consider that the two should be studied together due to the fact that the theory can give birth to organizations and protest groups or vice versa, environmental organizations can promote new ideas, ideologies and knowledge.

Similarly to social movement theory, when it comes to environmentalism, there is also a variety of taxonomies and chronologies. Two of them were presented in the first chapter (Rodman 1983 and Fox 1990). Other examples include Eder (1996), Jamison (2001), and Worster (2013). This chapter will draw on these chronologies (and others such as Van Der Heijden 1999, Rootes 2004 and 2013) for the history of environmentalism and on the general systems theory developed by Luhmann for its analysis. Although many authors present this history as going through different and/or separate phases, I choose to present it as a seamless evolution through time for two reasons. First, although there are many overlaps and similarities, it doesn't seem to be a complete consensus in the literature on how many phases there are, on when one phase ends and another begins, nor on what is characteristic for each phase. Secondly, these chronologies are utilized in order to structure the presentation of environmentalism according to a specific way of interpreting it (and I believe that is



why the differences in periodization and characterization appear). As I am taking a different approach, my chapter will be structured differently.

The objective here is showing how we can better understand the environmental movement through the use of a specific theory, not presenting the history of environmentalism. As a result the structure will be dictated by the theory. If we follow this theory, certain conditions need to be met in order for a protest movement to emerge. The general social conditions for such an emergence are: a loosening of internal bindings and the specification of contributions as results of functional differentiation, effects accumulation, their unexpected aggregation and the emergence of a theory able to describe phenomena as social movements. These general conditions will not be discussed here but they will be taken as a given and as a starting point. Consequently, I consider that the emergence of environmentalism as a movement was made possible by those general social conditions brought on by functional differentiation, namely: increased freedom in choosing how to live and what to do, a move from ascribed to acquired statuses and the possibility of sudden changes in collective mindsets.

What will be discussed are the more specific conditions for the emergence of a protest movement, namely: finding a topic for protest and creating a controversy around it (thus pointing to a contradiction in society), bringing the form protest and the topic together in forming an autopoietic system that is capable of goal oriented mobilization and action (which finds its way in society by its ascribed meaning) and self-description as a movement. Such a system is differentiated both internally and

externally, can assume functions within the immune system of society and provide society with a type of self-description that no other system can provide by observing society as if it is on the outside. In other words, this chapter will analyze how and why environmentalism emerged/formed as a protest movement, how it is organized, what role it fulfills and how it interacts with society, all by using the general systems theory as proposed by Luhmann as an analytical tool.

Do we have a better knowledge of the environmental movement once we looked at it through the lens of this theory? Answering this question is the purpose of this chapter. As the specific conditions are consecutive steps in the formation of a movement they will also guide the structure of the chapter. Thus the interrogation starts with the question: does the environmental movement meet these specific conditions, followed by a discussion of its organization, functioning and role in society. The first condition for the formation of a protest movement is having a topic for protest.

#### *4.1 Finding a topic for protest*

While at a first glance it might seem that environmentalism finds its topic for protest in the environment and not within society, an in-depth look at the theory and thought behind it, reveals that the topic is in fact within. We can reason, from inside the systems general theory formulated by Luhmann, that for a theme to become a topic for protest it needs to be linked to a contradiction. As society is a communication

system, the contradiction can only be inside society in the form of communication. Thus, I believe that environmentalism points out the contradiction between how this relation is seen as being and how it is considered that it should be. Environmental thought underlines this contradiction well and it starts to call attention to it at the end of the eighteenth century with the rise of romanticism (Hay 2002).

The first "ecological impulse" as Peter Hay (2002) calls it, starts to be articulated as a result of the impact of industrialization on nature. The main factor that led to this articulation was the way in which the industrial revolution created a differentiation between humankind and other nature:

"As the full force of the political, economic and social consequences of the Enlightenment became apparent in the crude, dislocative early years of the industrial revolution, romanticisms came into being as appalled reaction. It reached back to an earlier, pre-industrial time that was not beset with the social and physical disruptions the romantics found so disturbing into their own day, and which allowed for human sensitivity and individual spiritual fulfillment in a way in which the new hurly-burly world of industrial and political ferment did not" (Hay 2002, p.5).

Romanticism is generally criticized for two reasons. One is the fact that it is a reaction, that instead of standing for something, it is against something else. The second critique comes from the fact that Enlightenment was/is seen as the era when science and reason (as well as their application) came into their own; when viewed from this perspective romanticism's reaction was seen as against Enlightenment and therefore against modern science. This reaction was not against all science however, and Romanticisms did end up standing for something.

The romantics didn't criticize science per se; what they criticized was science's technological application in nature under the impressions or view that the human being was outside and above nature and that it can dominate and manipulate the environment for its own interests. What it ended up standing for, was the view that science and technology can be developed and used in harmony with nature and that the human being is part of "the unity which is nature, it doesn't stand apart and above it (Hay 2002, p. 5-9).

This view seems to be very distant from Luhmann who places the distinction between system and environment at the heart of his theory and sees them as separated by very clear boundaries. Society is a communication system and everything that is not communication, thus nature as well, is in the environment of society. I would argue however that in fact the two positions are not as distant as it seems at a first look. It must be recalled that for Luhmann the human being is not in society but in its environment and that the existence of human beings is the condition for the continuous existence of society as a communication system. He also never places system above the environment in a hierarchical or domination type of scheme. Thus the view that society and its environment need to have harmonious relations and that the human being is part of nature fits within Luhmann's theory.

The romantics weren't the first or the only ones to react to industrialization and its perceived negative effects. In 1810s England had to deal with the Luddite revolts in which, in the name of the folk character Ned Ludd, textile craftsmen attacked the machines that were perceived as making them redundant. In the 1820s, also in

England, farm workers revolted (again under the leadership of a fabled character, Captain Swing) against threshing machines that were seen as posing a danger for their livelihood (Jamison 2001, location 800). These revolts didn't have an environmental topic but they did question the new modes of production that were also new ways of interacting with nature. Although these revolts and romanticism were both reactions to industrialization there is an important difference between them. While romanticism reacted to and criticized the impact that industrialization had on nature, and thus on the environment, the revolts were a reaction to the way industrialization impacted the livelihood of craftsmen and farmers, and thus society. Accordingly, these revolts were closer in topic to the socialist movement than to romanticism because they both look within, to the impact of society on society while romanticism looks also without, to the impact of society on the environment. Thus these reactions to industrialization can be seen as both self-observation and other-observation.

Romanticism was an extensive socio-cultural movement with varied forms, reactions and manifestations; when it comes to its view on nature or the environment, probably the most representative view (and the closest to present-day environmentalism) is the one presented by Henry David Thoreau (Worster 2013, Nash 1982, Hay 2002, Jamison 2001). Thoreau lived self-sufficiently for two years in a hut he built himself on the edge of Walden Pond. He then wrote about his experiences and the human/nature relation. His writings are interpreted differently by different theorists. On the one hand Thoreau is seen as an "Arcadian" and an "Ecocentrist" which means, in short, that he sees nature as a "vast community of

equals” and in need to be accommodated, not dominated (Worster 2013). On the other hand, it is said that nature for Thoreau is a source of strength and inspiration for humans and immersion in wilderness had a “beneficial effect on thought” (Nash 1982, p.89).

The observations in writing or the revolts of the nineteenth’s century are not sufficient to form a protest movement however, or at least not yet. These are important to mention however because they represent the beginning in the rise of environmentalism. To put it differently, and using Luhmann’s theory as an analytical tool, society started to notice a contradiction between how it relates to its environment and how it should relate to it. This represents the first sign that a topic for protest starts to emerge and thus helps us understand, at least partly for now, why and how environmentalist forms as a social movement.

Furthermore, concepts that are still used today, such as food chains and equilibrium were fashioned at that time. Additionally, views present in contemporary debates on how this relationship between society and its environment should be can be traced to even earlier times. According to Donald Worster the science of ecology was one of the innovations of the eighteenth century's Age of Reason and two main environmental traditions were developed during the Enlightenment: the Arcadian stance and the Imperialist view. The first tradition can be traced to the writings of Gilbert White, “the parson-naturalist of Selborne. This Arcadian view advocated a simple, humble life for man with the aim of restoring him to a peaceful coexistence with other organisms” (Worster 2013, location 162).

The Imperial position found its inspiration in the writings of Francis Bacon, who saw science as capable of transforming the world into a paradise where man dominates over everything else, and where through an “Active Science” humans remake nature for their own benefit (Worster 2013, location 620-627). Some of the most influential scientists of this tradition were Carl Linnaeus in Sweden and Georges Buffon in France. Under their influence, in this tradition:

“Nature became a system of component parts to be tended, or operated, like a machine so that its productive utilization for human benefit could be made more effective and extensive. Motivated by a deeply felt Christian theology, as well as by an inordinate interest in non-human beings, Linnaeus elaborated an economy of nature in which man was to exploit God's creations as efficiently as possible” (Jamison 2001, location 1102).

The Arcadians, although likewise interested in the pursuit of scientific progress and modernization, understood nature differently; they had a more holistic view of science (Jamison 2001, location 1122). For them, every creature had a freedom of will and all nature had to be studied as “a single integrated unity” (Worster 2013, location 428).

According to Worster and Jamison these two traditions had a very strong impact on how environmentalism developed all the way to today. However, Jamison considers that, although capable of capturing controversies and contradictions present even today in environmentalism, Worster's split of environmental thought into the two traditions, Arcadian and Imperial, is incomplete. As any dualism, this dichotomy fails to capture all the in-between positions, and, most importantly, it ignores a third “source of inspiration” for the environmental movement, found in the

identification of new social problems such as “industrial waste and pollution, automobility, energy use, and, perhaps most importantly, occupational health and safety, the environmental hazards of work. [In Jamison's terminology,] “what was at work was the mobilization of a third tradition – a tradition of human ecology – that had come with the development of the social sciences at the end of the nineteenth century” (Jamison 2001, location 1144-1149).

These three traditions (Arcadian, Imperialist and Human Ecology) represent three different ways of interpreting both how the relation between society and its environment is and how it should be. The Arcadian view, present in romanticism (the two often being linked to one another) considers the human-being part of nature and advocates for harmonious relations between the two; the Imperial view sees a relation of domination between society and the environment, and the human ecology looks at how the effects of society on its environment reflect back to society. From a Luhmannian perspective, the different traditions represent different self and other-observations of society. Their existence increases complexity for the system and creates conditions for contingency. The society-environment relation is placed in the realm of various possibilities, several options for its unfolding becoming available. They also reinforce the fact that this relation marks a contradiction in the system. Thus looking at environmentalism from within this perspective we also start to understand not only why it emerges but also some of the roles it fulfills in society (pointing out a contradiction, providing a type of self-observation and increasing complexity).



Once these views were crystalized, observing society and the society-environment relation from within these traditions is continued through the conservationist movement of the late nineteenth century. The influences of two of the traditions (Arcadian and Imperial) on the society-environment relation and the manner in which it is observed can be clearly seen in the two different “streams of thought” present within the movement. On one side we find John Muir who follows in the footsteps of the romantics and the Arcadian tradition, while on the other side we find Gifford Pinchot, a professional forester and politician who follows the Imperial tradition.

Muir and Pinchot actually started as friends but had a “falling out” while preparing a Forestry Commission Survey on woodland that needed protection. “For Muir, this meant preservation, in perpetuity from commercial exploitation [while for Pinchot, it meant] wise management” (Hay 2002, p. 14). Muir believed that man was only a part of “one unit of creation” and has the same value as everything else; nature for him was “an organic whole held together by ‘an essential love, overlying, underlying, pervading all things” (Worster 2013, location 425). He thus considered that nature needs to be preserved for itself, not for further human use.

Pinchot on the other hand, believed in resource “use in perpetuity” and pioneered concepts such as “sustainable yield” (Hay 2002, p. 14). For him, conservation meant “the fundamental material policy in human civilization” and “the development and use of the Earth and all its resources for the enduring good of men” (Pinchot in Worster 2013, location 4352). Thus Pinchot's position was very utilitarian;

although he believed in conservation, he saw it as a rational use and development of resources so that the future wellbeing of humankind is insured. The differences between the two mark the differences between two types of conservationism, one being focused on preserving “particularly valuable, or striking, landscapes from further exploitation” while the other focused on resource management and efficient use of resources (Jamison 2001, location 1212).

These two different ways of looking at the relation between society and nature (preservationism and conservationism) are important in the history of the environmental movement because they represent the prevalent environmental positions until around the 1930s-1940s, when the third paradigm, the human ecology (as Jamison names it) starts to crystalize as a natural continuation of the Arcadian and Imperial traditions. This new ecological stance differed from the old not only through the issues it focused on but also through the way it approached the interaction between nature and society (Jamison 2001, location 1216). While close to the Arcadian view in the sense that it saw man as part of a greater unity, this new form of environmentalism went further by talking about and developing new ethical principles.

Maybe the most prominent and influential author to embrace this new consciousness was Aldo Leopold, a forester who was more interested in wildlife than in forests. Leopold was at first a disciple of Pinchot. His book, “Game Management”, published in 1933 outlined how wild animals, such as deer or quail, can be managed like crops, “cultivated” and “harvested” responsibly. According to Worster however:

“Midway through the third decade of the century, an ecological stance toward wildlife began to emerge in America. Leopold was rather slow to switch to this new attitude; but when he did, he came over with an eloquence and credibility that quickly made him one of the leaders of the new ecological element” (Worster 2013, location 4486).

In Leopold’s writings ethics are based on the idea that the individual is part of a community of “interdependent parts” and what is needed is to expand the boundaries of this community to include “the land” (meaning everything from soils and waters to plants and animals). This is how a much needed land ethic that deals with the human – land interactions is created. This new ethic would change the prevailing relation which is “strictly economic, entailing privileges but not obligations” (Leopold 1993, p. 96).

Probably the most important point made by the new environmental paradigm, and what separates it the most from conservationism is the admission of the fact that the changes that man makes to the environment are different from the “natural evolutionary changes” and their effects cannot be foreseen. Leopold captures this view well:

“By and large our present problem is one of attitudes and implements. We are remodeling the Alhambra with a steam shovel and we are proud of our yardage. We shall hardly relinquish the shovel, which after all has many good points, but we are in need of a gentler and more objective criteria for its successful use” (Leopold 1993, p. 109).

I believe that with the extension of the three traditions, Arcadian, Imperialist and human ecology, into conservationism and the formulation of a land ethic we begin to see further how the theme of environmentalism, the society-environment relation, starts to develop into a topic and how it begins to be linked to the form protest. John

Muir founded the Sierra Club, a conservation group that still exists today (although much changed), Gifford Pinchot used his position as a politician to influence forest management at state level and to promote planned use and renewal of resources while Aldo Leopold's writings led to the development of a new environmental ethic. Therefore, in addition to the fact that these viewpoints represent different ways of seeing how the interaction between society and its environment should take place, they are observations that had an actual impact on society. These paradigms represent communications of the fact that the relation between society and its environment could be different and that there is a contradiction between how this relation is and the way it should be. Furthermore, by pointing to a contradiction in society, by creating a controversy and by linking this to the form protest they play a crucial role in the formation of the environmental movement. Thus, using a Luhmannian perspective helps us understand the reasons for and the mechanisms through which the environmental movement starts to emerge. However, the topic needs to be brought together with the form protest more strongly in order to form a movement.

#### *4.2 Bringing the form and the topic together*

According to Hay, the history of the environmental thought and movement marks a discontinuity between the 1940s and late 1960s. He holds that the romantics and writings such as those put forward by Aldo Leopold were forgotten only to be

rediscovered much later by “an action focused movement belatedly seeking a theory” (Hay 2002, p. 16). Jamison (2001) also holds that the environmental movement sees an awakening moment in the 1960s, when all three traditions were mobilized in making the so called *new environmental social movement*.

However, views like these ignore the fact that, for example the Sierra Club wasn't idle during this time and organized various campaigns either for the formation of natural parks either for opposing the constructions of damns. Other nature groups such as Defenders of Wildlife (1947) were also founded. Conservationism and wilderness protection weren't the only concerns during this time either as the effects of human intervention on the environment were starting to be felt. Although limited in scope, campaigns were conducted for clean water, safe disposal of waste and general better public health (Rootes 2004). Yes, these do not have the same scope as the movements of the 1960s but I believe that, as the rise of the new left in the 1960s, these campaigns and nature clubs were the result of the conditions of their time and represent a continuation of environmentalism. Moreover, these also represent instances of definite dissent, so this reinforces the idea that the topic of environmentalism starts to be linked to the form of protest.

There is no denying nevertheless that while the romantics, conservationists and the campaigns for public health mentioned above represent forms of protest that had an environmental topic, they never really went further than that initial accumulation of effects and weren't able to sustain the movement beyond a point of aggregation. So it is true that the environmental movement changes during the 1960s

taking on a new breadth and scope. The Arcadian, Imperial and human ecology (Rootes 2004 prefers to use the notion of reform environmentalism for this third tradition) are all mobilized in transforming environmentalism. Jamison underlines that the human ecology tradition continues to bring to public attention new environmental problems, such as waste disposal and chemical pollution. The imperialist tradition was continued in transnational networks like the World Wildlife Fund and in the “cybernetic language of ecosystems ecology [while] “Rachel Carson continues the Arcadian tradition and her book *Silent Spring* (1962) announced a new kind of Arcadian ecology that was to have a major influence on the cognitive praxis of the emerging environmental movement” (Jamison 2001, location 1177-1191).

What led to this re-birth of environmentalism and to its gains in scope? One reason is the fact that the effects of industrialization were becoming more and more visible, not only through disasters such as the nuclear meltdown in Idaho in 1961, the Vajont Reservoir disaster near Venice in 1963 or the Santa Barbara oil spill in 1969, but also through general degradation of the environment like air pollution that had a direct impact on the lives of people. Also, a better scientific understanding of the impacts of technology and industrialization on the environment coupled with an increase in the level of education of the general population led to a greater environmental awareness. The expansion of the movement was also assisted by the growth of the mass media that made the spread of information and images much faster and easier. All these factors led to the establishment of critical views on the dominant socio-economical doctrines and to questions regarding science and technology development and policy making (Rootes 2004, p.613).

I believe that what we are witnessing at this point in time is the definite linking of the topic with the form protest and the formation of the environmental movement in luhmannian terms. More contradictions in regards to the environment-society relation are becoming visible and communicated and thus they start to be linked to conflict. As a result, more and more varied activist groups start to emerge in the 1960s and in the 1970s. For example, The World Wildlife Fund (currently World Wide Fund for Nature) that was founded in 1961 focuses on conservation of wildlife while Greenpeace which was formed in 1971 focuses on protest against nuclear testing and The Land Institute founded in 1976 focuses on sustainable agriculture. In addition to the differences in the specific issues, there is also a difference in the tactics and the type of protest that these various groups employ. Some organizations such as the World Wildlife Fund use funds for political lobbying or the construction of sanctuaries for endangered species. Greenpeace becomes known for its media stunt strategies and women of the Chikpo movement in India surround trees in order to fight deforestation and protect their livelihoods.

By using Luhmann's theory as an analytical tool we are able to understand these groups as part of the same movement and analyze them together. Although there are differences in the specific concerns that each group brings to the fore, all these concerns represent issues related to the interaction between society and the environment, or even more specifically, related to the impact of human technology and lifestyle on nature. Thus the topic is the same for all these organizations, the society-environment relation. The difference comes from the fact that they point towards different issues in this relation and therefore towards different contradictions.

The fact that there is a variety of types of protest shows that environmentalism is capable of using various types of “utterances” of information (both utterance and information are used here as components of communication) and also that it starts to differentiate as a system. In fact, the distinctions, both in the specific topic and in the type of protest, point out to the fact that the environmental movement becomes a differentiated system marked by complexity. Thus looking at environmentalism through this lens allows us to see how it forms as a movement and how it deals with the variety of contradictions and topics for protest in regards the society-environment relation.

Alongside these environmental groups, a process of policy reform and institution-building starts to take place. Most of the industrialized countries begin to create state agencies to deal with environmental concerns and vote on and enact comprehensive environmental legislation. Also, environmental research and development bloomed both in the private and the public sectors. In 1972 the protection of the environment was recognized as an area of international concern at the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment. The book that set the tone and the agenda of the conference, *Only One Earth*, written by biologist Rene Dubos and economist Barbara Ward, is an example of an imperialist and anthropocentric point of view as it discusses the need for a new form of environmentalism, combining “efficient management of resources with empathetic understanding”. Their view is captured in the following quote:

“Now that mankind is in the process of completing the colonization of the planet, learning to manage it intelligently is an urgent imperative,



Man must accept responsibility for the stewardship of the earth”  
(Ward and Dubos 1972, p. 25).

Besides a political willingness (at both national and international levels) to deal with environmental issues, as part of the new environmental movement, a series of grass-roots initiatives in engineering took place in the early 1970s. In the United States, a group of “alchemists”, as they called themselves, moved from the university out to the country to experiment with ecological agriculture and energy technology. In Europe, many countries established research centers and projects in alternative technology. Some hippie communes and production collectives experimented with organic and biodynamic agriculture and showed an interest in renewable energy. Thus, environmentalism starts to present an interest in alternative ecological forms of energy, agriculture, living and engineering in general (Jamison 2001).

Environmentalism goes through more changes in the 1970s when the first oil crisis sparks many political debates around energy, and especially nuclear energy. These energy debates had profound effects on how the environmental movement will develop. According to Jamison, one of the effects is the specialization and institutionalization of knowledge production. New disciplines and fields of research are developed while some already existing fields of research become fragmented or institutionalized. For example, energy-systems analysis emerges as a new discipline (dealing with cost-benefit analyses for varied energy sources), human ecology becomes an academic field and environmental studies and environmental science become separate fields. How did this influence the environmental movement? In his explanation, Jamison brings to the fore the fact that:

“As a result of these developments, many of the academic ecologists and other environmental scientists who were active in the formation of new groups and organizations eventually drifted away from activism and the more activist organizations, as opportunities for research careers emerged at the universities” (Jamison 2001, location 1288).

There were however also efforts to create “new institutions” in order to link universities with environmental groups and also scientists that stayed, for lack of a better word, on the outside or on the fringes of professionalization. An example for this are the science workshops organized by science students in the Netherlands in which they offered their knowledge and expertise to citizen groups that needed them. Another example are the radical scientists (this is how they called themselves) that started to publish journals such as *Science for the People* in the U.S, *Radical Science* in Britain or *Naturkampen* in Germany. There were also “environmentally minded” engineers and technicians that built things such as the world’s largest wind power plant in Denmark (at the Tvind schools) or the Geodesic Dome, at the New Alchemy Institute in Massachusetts, which contains a self-sufficient ecosystem (Jamison 2001, location 1288-1292). Also,

“environmental activists turned increasingly during this phase towards coercive and power strategies (the attempt to influence and coerce behavior) and away from the participation strategies (the attempt to change attitudes and induce voluntary compliance) that had been dominant in earlier phases” (Jamison et al 1990, p. 10-11).

Jamison (2001) considers that the main characteristic of the environmental movement during the 1970s was its unity and coherence. In fighting nuclear power, different ecological traditions came together to create a new world-view and the movement combined theory and practice “in the pursuit of a common collective

struggle”. This unity however did not last long precisely because it was formed around fighting against something. It was natural then for the different groups, with different interests to separate once the issue was resolved or “taken off the political agenda”. And yes, the late 1970s were marked by a differentiation in interests within environmentalism. While activists in Europe were mostly concerned with nuclear power, in the United States genetic engineering and toxic waste became of great interest (after the discovery of such waste buried in a residential area in Buffalo). In India and the developing countries hydroelectric dams and deforestation were the main concerns.

From a functional point of view, all these changes and developments in environmentalism, the policy reforms, the emergence of groups that experiment with alternative ways of interacting with the environment, the emergence of new academic disciplines and the spreading out of specialists in different directions (academia, businesses, think tanks or activist groups) show three things. One, these developments indicate how the environmental movement affects society. By addressing communications towards other systems, the environmental movement manages to *irritate* them enough to cause them to consider the society-environment relation in their operations (for example the political system implements policy reforms and the scientific system studies this relation from different angles). Two, they indicate how environmentalism is influenced in turn by changes in its environment, which is society. We see how the energy debates first unify the movement, by providing a cohesive topic for protest, and then how they differentiate it further, through the emergence of new institutions and new research fields. The environment

becomes more complex for the movement and thus new relations need to be considered. Three, these changes and developments further show how the environmental movement becomes more differentiated and complex in order to incorporate more elements, more views on the society-environment relation and more forms of communication. It also becomes evident that the movement shows a differentiation in the specific topic depending on local interests (environmental groups in the U.S, Europe and Asia point out different contradictions, depending on what is visible locally). Using this Luhmannian view we can start to understand the patterns of differentiation of the environmental movement in relation to its topic for protest, its form of protest, its interaction with society and its geographical location.

Environmentalism is marked by even further differentiation in the 1970s. Although environmental groups such as Greenpeace or Friends of the Earth (which emerge during the 1960s and the 1970s) seem revolutionary compared to conservation groups such as Sierra Club and the World Wildlife Fund and even though they appeared precisely because it was considered that the conservation groups weren't doing enough, they weren't that revolutionary in theory. Although they were critical in regards to social and political procedures they weren't that critical in regards to the worldviews that led to those procedures (Rootes 2004, p. 615). A dissatisfaction with the lack of such criticism led to the formation of more radical environmental groups and organizations (like Earth First!) and to the development of eco-philosophy.

Environmental philosophy can be divided into three major fields: radical Ecophilosophy, environmental ethics and anthropocentric reformism. Of course, these are general designations and each of these fields is comprised of varied approaches. Deep ecology, ecofeminism and social ecology for example, are all part of or associated with radical Ecophilosophy. There are two main reasons for which these philosophers see themselves as radical. For one, they consider that, through their investigations, they are able to point the social, conceptual and attitudinal causes of the ecological crisis. Second, they argue that the only way to avoid further damaging the planet is to have a revolutionary cultural paradigm shift. Practices such as recycling, regulating and imposing limits on industrial pollution help only in the short run because they don't address the root problems that led to the ecological crisis in the first place, they address only the symptoms (Zimmerman 1993, p.vi-vii).

Although radical philosophers agree on the fact that simple reform is not enough, they disagree on what the roots of the ecological crisis really are. Deep ecologists believe that the problem lies in anthropocentrism, meaning, in the view that Man, to paraphrase Holmes Rolston III, is not only the measurer of all things but also their measure. Ecofeminists regard patriarchy as the root because it considers both women and nature inferior to men while social ecologists see the roots in the authoritarian social structures because they enable people to dominate not only people but also nature (Zimmerman 1993, p. vii).

Deep ecology as a philosophical approach is rooted in the “ecological concerns of the 1960s”. The term as such entered the discourse of environmental thought when

Arne Naess published his paper “The Shallow and the Deep, long-Range Ecology Movement: A Summary” (1973). The shallow movement is described as concerned only with resource depletion and pollution and the “health and affluence of people in developed countries” and with short term solutions for long term problems. Deep long range ecology on the other hand, proposes a new ecological perspective that presupposes a new philosophical view of the world and a reconsideration of culture and lifestyles that would challenge the “industrial paradigm of reality” (Naess 1973, p. 95). The paper also lists seven basic principles of deep ecology: “rejection of the man-in-the-environment image in favor of relational, total-field image; biospherical egalitarianism-in principle; principles of diversity and symbiosis; anti-class posture; fight against pollution and resource depletion; complexity not complication and local autonomy and decentralization” (Naess, 1973, p. 95-98). In 1984 these principles are replaced by an “eight point platform” written by Naess and Sessions. As these are the main principles of the deep ecology school of thought and they are stated so clearly by Naess, I will list them all:

- (1) The well-being of nonhuman life on Earth has value in itself. This value is independent of any instrumental usefulness for limited human purposes.
- (2) Richness and diversity in life forms contribute to this value and is a further value in itself.
- (3) Humans have no right to interfere destructively with nonhuman life except for purposes of satisfying vital needs.
- (4) Present interference is excessive and detrimental.
- (5) Present policies must therefore be changed.
- (6) The necessary policy changes affect basic economic and ideological structures and will be the more drastic the longer it takes before significant change is started.
- (7) The ideological change is mainly that of appreciating life quality (focusing on situations involving inherent value) rather than enjoying a high standard of life (measured in terms of available means).
- (8) Those who subscribe to the foregoing points have an obligation directly or indirectly to try to implement the necessary changes” (Naess 1984, p. 266).

As mentioned above, ecofeminism is also part of radical Ecophilosophy. One of the differences between deep ecology and ecofeminism comes from the fact that the latter is a theory of power, and in fact, criticizes deep ecology for not taking into account social structure and political power. Ecofeminism also incorporates different views and perspectives. However, even if there are different theoretical positions in ecofeminism, they all agree on the fact that “there are important connections between the domination of women and the domination of nature, an understanding of which is crucial to feminism, environmentalism, and environmental philosophy” (Warren 1993, p. 256).

According to John Clark, social ecology, the third radical philosophy approach:

“a form of dialectical naturalism, is the most extensively developed Ecophilosophy to appear. It is dialectical because it sees all of reality as being in a continual process of self-development and self-transformation, and because it interprets phenomena in terms of their mutual determination as inseparable part of larger wholes. It is naturalism because it takes reality to be nature, and sees all beings as natural beings” (Clark 1993, p. 345).

Thus the main tenet of social ecology is the fact that humans are part of nature and that our interactions are interactions not only within nature but also with nature. Thus while human to human and human-nature are different realms of interaction they are inseparable and “ecological consciousness and practice requires that humanity think and act as ‘nature rendered self-conscious’” (Clark 1993, p. 346). The solution to the ecological issues of the current age is to be found in a profound change not only in lifestyles but also in values and commitments. The “techno-bureaucratic state power and capitalist economic power”, social ecologists argue,

need to be replaced by an organic community “regulated through common ecological values and commitment to a common life” (Clark 1993, p. 347).

The beginning of environmental ethics be traced to Richard Sylvan’s call to fellow philosophers in 1973 to pick up where Leopold left off and develop a new ethic that includes the non-human world. The main argument of this approach is that ecological issues stem from not granting “moral considerability” to non-human beings”. In this view, there is a need of change in the ethics, attitudes and values toward the environment, which has to be regarded less as an object and more like a being. In other words, this change in ethic would suppose a change in morality, to include nature along humans in our system of values. In a less radical position of this perspective, it is argued that while the human-being is superior to nature, nature and non-human-beings still have their own value and they should be protected and respected for that (Zimmerman 1993, p. vii).

As any other approach, environmental ethics include different views, some *stronger* and some *weaker*, in the sense that some verge on being radical while some on becoming anthropocentric. The *strong* positions criticize Western society intensely for its nature-human beings dualism while the *weak positions* consider human beings above nature but accept that at least some parts of nature have value in themselves (Hay 2002, p. 48-57).

Anthropocentric reformism, the third major field of eco-philosophy supports the idea that environmental problems arise from ignorance and greed. In this view:



“such factors can be addressed by enacting legislation, changing public policy, increasing education, altering tax laws, returning public lands to private ownership, emphasizing moral obligations to future generations of humans, promoting wise stewardship of nature, and otherwise encouraging more prudent use and more equitable allocations of natural resources.” (Zimmerman, 1993, p. viii).

As it can be observed, this view differs in focus from the ones presented above. While deep ecology and environmental ethics focus on what are the roots of the environmental problems, this view stresses what has to be done empirically to solve and avoid them in the future. While holding that nature has only instrumental value for humans, this value ranges from food and resources to the “aesthetic pleasures” provided by scenic landscapes. Also, philosophically, some anthropocentrists, such as John Passmore, consider that humans have moral obligations only towards humans. Strictly ecologically, humans, plants, animals and soils are part of the same community because they are the subjects of the same life-cycle. However, if one defining attribute of a community is having the same interests, human and non-human interests definitely do not coincide (Passmore 1974, p. 116).

Thus, to summarize, from the point of view of deep ecology, the root of the ecological crisis is the “view that humans are the origin and measure of all value. Such a view breeds an arrogance that leads people to treat nature as nothing but raw material for satisfying human desires” (Zimmerman 1993, p. VII). Environmental ethics hold that the ecological crisis stems from a lack of an ethic that includes the non-human world while anthropocentric reformism argues that the roots of the ecological problems are “ignorance, greed and shortsightedness” (Zimmerman 1993, p. VIII).

Why is environmental philosophy important? Because not only had it inspired the formation of various environmental groups (i.e. Earth First!, Deep Green Resistance, Gaia Mater) and the views that it expresses on the society-environment relation found their way in the discourse of the movement, I believe it is in itself a part of the environmental movement. It reformulates in part the three environmental traditions that we talked about in the previous section, Arcadian, Imperial and human ecology, and it develops them further. Like those traditions, environmental philosophy places the environment-society relation in the realm of possibility, it gives it new meanings and creates more conditions for contingency. Furthermore, it plays one more very important role: it looks for causal determinants. By looking for and pointing towards the causes of the ecological crisis, it fulfills the role of the observer in linking causes in the environment to effects in the system and vice versa<sup>7</sup>. We thus now have more knowledge of the roles fulfilled by the environmental movement. Eco-philosophy also address the issue of what changes need to be made in society when it comes to the environment in light of these causal relations. The fact that there are many different views on what these changes should be and on how they should be implemented illustrates even further how differentiated and complex the environmental movement has become. Some historical conditions also had a role in leading to this process.

The 1980s marked an ideological shift to neo-liberalism, fact which changed environmentalism dramatically:

---

<sup>7</sup> See the concept of causality in chapter 2

“In the world of science, technology, and the environment, neo-liberalism led to a change from a social emphasis or policy agenda to a more explicitly economic and commercial orientation. A language of deregulation and strategic research – and new programs that stressed the importance of university-industry collaboration and academic entrepreneurship – came to replace the notions of societal relevance and technology assessment” (Jamison 2001, location 1324).

As this language (and neo-liberal ideology) spread through the broader society, more “patterns of differentiation” within the environmental movement emerged. First, two types of professionalization took place. On one side, within the business milieu, a variety of commercial activities, such as firms offering environmental impact assessments or consultation on energy conservation started to develop and corporations started to create environmental departments. Also, companies commercializing alternative forms of energy or technologies began to emerge. The second form of professionalization was the effect of the emergence of think-tanks, independent from both the private and public sectors and operated on a non-profit base. These think-tanks combined scientific expertise with publishing skills, as well as scientific research with investigative journalism, in order to provide information to the media, the public at large, and not least, to environmental groups (Jamison 2001, location 1324-1344). These types of professionalization led to more differentiation in the movement, as environmentalists went in varied directions.

Second, environmentalism entered the political arena in an official or formal way, in the form of green parties. Inspired by the success of the green party in West Germany, green parties were created throughout Western Europe, North America and Asia. The formation of these parties was controversial, many activists believing that

the environmental movement cannot function as a formal political party. This controversy led to further splits within the movement, many activists having to choose one or the other. This formalization however, was complemented by a revival of old conservationist groups and by an increase in popularity and membership for activist groups like Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth.

Another differentiation took place through specialization of interests. At this point, environmentalism was already split into various groups (research units within universities, think-tanks, political parties or action groups) Each such group had a special/separate interest, an expertise or a way of dealing with environmental concern and thus the environmental movement became “divided into distinct branches, or wings, and in most places the branches themselves were subdivided along sectorial lines” (Jamison 2001, location 1349). The type of activism also saw a change:

“a process of deradicalization, oligarchisation, institutionalization and professionalization began, manifesting itself in a tremendous growth of membership numbers in organizations at national level, as well as in change from active participation to ‘chequebook activism’” (van der Heijden 1999, p. 201).

Furthermore, neo-liberal ideology changed environmental politics and policy-making by “shifting responsibility over decision-making directly into the hands of corporations” (Jamison 2001, location 1365). What was regulated before became deregulated (especially in the US and UK under Ronald Regan and Margaret Thatcher) and the new doctrine of sustainable development started to spread. The continued neo-liberal ideology leads to the process of globalization and an internationalization of environmentalism.

A few things happen in this context. First, local environmental issues and concerns are replaced by global issues such as climate change, ozone depletion or biodiversity decline. Second, the internationalization of the movement follows the internationalization of an environmental agenda with emphasis on trade, development and technological assistance, emphasis stressed by organizations like the WTO or IMF. The environmental movement starts to act at local, regional and international levels, contesting the dominating economic cultures (Farro and Vaillacourt 2001). There is also an opening towards new “actors and political constituencies” that lead to cooperation between different groups. The Brundtland Commission for example, was composed of scientists, governmental officials, non-governmental and business officials (Jamison 2001). Third, environmental problems start to be linked with other issues such as income and resource distribution. The greatest impulse towards internationalization though, was given by the discourse of sustainable development:

“The quest for sustainable development was thus a mission that challenged the sectorial ‘autonomy’ of the environmental movement. In calling for the integration of economics and ecology and for the linking of environmental problems to other issues of income and resource distribution, poverty alleviation, armed conflict, and gender equality, the Brundtland Commission reframed the ecological problematic. Finally, the quest for sustainable development opened up environmentalism to social sciences. In order to provide a knowledge base for the comprehensive program of global recovery that was outlined in the report, there was a call for contributions from many areas of expertise and not only from natural science, which had previously occupied that role (Jamison 2001, location 1369-1374).

The discourse of sustainable development managed to combine the different ecological traditions for a while but this success was short lived as varied dichotomies re-emerge when the discourse becomes practice. Sustainable development is an

inclusive, general concept that drew in various kinds of environmentalists and thus various interpretations:

“the professionals within business and government, as well as within the ‘mainstream’ environmental-movement organizations, transformed the quest into more instrumental terms while, for many local activists and so-called deep ecologists, sustainable development took on rather ethical and moral connotations” (Jamison 2001, location 1379).

Similarly to Jamison, van der Heijden thinks that the focus of the environmental movement in the west shifted from local pollution issues to global problems. Initially, in the west at least, the focus was on visible local issues that also had a visible result, from cleaner water or closing down of a polluting factory to implementing legislation and regulatory acts. However,

“From the 1980s onward, important parts of the environmental movement increasingly shifted their focus to less visible, trans-boundary or even global environmental problems like the extinction of species, the greenhouse effect and the depletion of the ozone layer. The platform on which these issues were articulated increasingly shifted from the individual nation-state to the international political arena. This reduced the visibility of the environmental movement at the national level” (van der Heijden 1999, p. 202).

In Eastern Europe and the Former Soviet Union, van der Heijden holds, the environmental movement flourished in the 1980s due to the fact that environmental issues and demands were linked and expressed together with demands for freedom of speech and social transformations. In Bulgaria for example, ninety local groups formed a network called Ecoglasnost that used the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1989 to broadcast their demands. Their platform included not only environmental issues but also freedom of information and social change. Another example is Hungary, where, in the mid-1980s people started to protest

against the building of two hydroelectric dams. Various groups, with various political beliefs managed to come together in 1988 and organize a march in Budapest that saw forty thousand people in the streets. This anti-dam movement helped in undermining the legitimacy of the regime (van der Heijden 1999, p. 204-205).

The main focus of the environmental movement in this region during the 1980s was on water, air and soil pollution and its consequences on public health. These environmental issues were linked or seen as the direct effect of various features of the communist regimes, like centralization lack of information and growth-oriented planning systems. After the revolutions in 1989 and throughout early 1990s most environmental movements in Eastern Europe collapsed. While the distinctions between state-sanctioned and founded groups and independent NGOs evaporated, green political parties were formed in countries of the Eastern Block but their success was minimal. This collapse is the result of a lack of resources and political and economic instability (van der Heijden 1999).

So the environmental movement becomes differentiated in different ways. As we have seen, environmental concern is incorporated in at least two types of professionalization (business and think tanks), green parties begin to form, the popularity of various activist groups rises and while local issues are still articulated, global environmental concerns are also expressed by the movement at an international level. Not only there are different specific topics that are addressed, and not only are they addressed in different ways but they also start to be addressed from within very different organizations. Are all these organizations part of the

environmental movement? Are “green” or “greening” businesses or green parties part of the green movement? I think that although all these various groups deal with the environment-society relation, they are not all part of the environmental movement but a response to it and they show how movement and society interact. If we look at this through the lens of Luhmanns theory, this becomes a discussion about system differentiation and complexity as well as about system relations and the role of the movement. Such a discussion can help us better understand the movement and its evolution, its relation with society and its role.

#### *4.3 Differentiation, relations with other systems and role*

If one recalls that the difference between element and relation is a theory of complexity and that the distinction between system and environment is a theory of differentiation, as well as that system and environment are linked through structural couplings (which are channels of reciprocal irritation) we can look at the environmental movement as a functionally differentiated system. The various strands of green thought and philosophy which provide the topic for the movement can be seen as the elements of the system. They are all connected and related through the general theme of society-environment relation.

As it becomes more complex, or as more and more issues in the relation between society and environment become visible, as more contradictions are communicated or as more causal relations are pointed out, the system differentiates



into subsystems, each dealing with such an issue or contradiction. This explains the difference in the specific topic (i.e. nuclear energy, animal protection, or water and air pollution). These systems can accommodate protest in different ways, thus creating even more complexity and differentiation. A variety of options exist in the system: face to face interaction in street protests, sabotage, petition signing campaigns or providing alternative ways of harnessing energy, using resources or even for living.<sup>8</sup>

The differentiation of the movement both in terms of topics for and types of protest can be seen in the great variety of environmental groups. These groups differ from one another not only through the specific topic and the form of protest they adopt, but also through their organization. Greenpeace for example has a governance structure, a management structure and a financial structure. It has a board of directors and regional directors, communication and program directors and so on. Earth First! on the other hand doesn't have any central organization or leadership, anyone can create an Earth First! group only by following certain guidelines. Both groups are part of the environmental movement. Also, there is a variety of other groups like think tanks such as the Earth Watch Institute or Pembina Institute that could also be considered part of the environmental movement and because they choose different tactics or types of protest they are organized differently from an "activist" group (for a lack of a better word). As it can be seen however, these different forms of organization are related to the type of protest the group chooses as its form. Greenpeace needs a different organizational structure for its media campaigns as

---

<sup>8</sup> Yes, we can argue that there is an infinity of possibilities or we can say that the possible number of subsystems is limited only by the possible number of communicated contradictions or pointed out causal relations. That is why this is discussed in the context of both the theory of differentiation and the theory of complexity.

opposed to Earth First! who focuses on civil disobedience or Earth Watch Institute which focuses on research.

To go back now to the question of green and greening businesses and green parties as part of the environmental movement or not, it was mentioned earlier that I think that although they deal with the environment-society relation, they are not part of the environmental movement but a response to it. The various functional systems, like the economy and the political system, are “alerted” by the environmental movement that there are contradictions in regards to how they see the environment-society relation and how this relation should be and that there is a need to deal with them. Thus, the various systems react to this information and form subsystems which deal with these contradictions and interpret the society-environment relation according to the system’s code. For example, the economic system formulates an interpretation of these contradictions in the form of the *natural capitalism* view, which holds that capitalism in general didn’t deal properly with environmental problems because it isn’t “capitalist enough”. Society has to use its resources in a more productive way and derive “four, ten, or even a hundred times as much benefit from each unit of energy, water, material, or anything else borrowed from the planet and consumed” (Hawken et al 1999, p.8). This is obviously an environmental view that comes from within the economic system that observes the relation between society and its environment based on its own code and can understand it only through that code. Thus looking for ways to make a profit or to increase the economic benefits from this relation is natural for this system.

The natural capitalism view and the “green business” model are criticized from within the environmental movement. The capitalist mode of production is seen as taking place without any regard to ecological principles, and even more than that, as leading to exclusion of more and more people from the “productive activity” through resource expropriation, all in the name of free trade, globalization and transnational corporations’ interests. In addition, there are those who argue that although there is talk of “greening the industry” and resource use becomes more efficient, the growing waste and the exploitation of human resources are showing that the problem lies within the “very operating procedures of the capitalist system itself” (Jamison 2001, location 1441). This critique to the capitalist mode of production led to a new kind of integration within environmentalism: “an integration between environmentalism and various struggles for justice and dignity, equity and tolerance, and the pursuit of sustainable livelihoods” (Jamison 2001, location 1414). Thus, while differentiating within, the environmental movement also starts to go through a process of “integration” without by linking its topic with other issues such as justice and poverty. This integration is accompanied by a process of institutionalization.

The linking of the topic of the environmental movement to these other topics led to the emergence of what is called the environmental justice movement (Rootes 2004). I would argue however that this is not a new movement and only a new name for the same movement. The topic is in fact the same, the society-environment relation and it is an observation on how the way society impacts the environment impacts back on society. This type of environmentalism is most visible in the Global South.

According to van der Heijden, environmentalism in countries belonging to that classification presents four main trends. First, environmental groups articulate environmental demands together with developmental demands. Third World groups are mainly concerned with social justice and they emphasize “the need to pursue such objectives via mechanisms of environmental conservation. Social Justice and equity is attained by ensuring that the poor gain access to local environmental resources (that is, timber, fuel, clean water)” (van der Heijden 1999, p. 207).

Secondly, there is a strong emphasis on forests and trees in Asia, on urban pollution in Latin America and on desertification in Africa. These different emphasis are of course due to the different issues each area is dealing with. In many countries in Asia for example, the environmental movement actually started with marginalized communities whose livelihood depended on natural resources like timber. In Latin America the situation is similar to the western one, the movement being formed out of a multitude of various different groups that address local issues (Escobar 2008) while in Africa controlling desertification is strongly linked to decreasing poverty (van der Heijden 1999, p. 208).

The third trend is seen in the fact that although many environmental actions have a local character, local groups cooperated under national umbrella organizations. van der Heijden thinks that although most environmental groups in third world countries are community based and organized around local issues, a lot of advocacy groups and organizations that link these groups together start to emerge.

The fourth and final trend in environmentalism in the third world is the radical tendency of its discourse:

“Despite the inclusion of many ENGOs in governmental consultation structures, important parts of the Third World environmental movement do not accept the hegemonic global discourse of capitalism, neo-liberalism, modernism, scientism and anthropocentrism. All over the Third World, environmental groups remain to articulate their struggle against environmental degradation with the struggle against capitalist economic structures and western political and cultural imperialism” (van der Heijden 1999, p. 209).

Is the environmental movement today the same as it was described by van der Heijden and by Jamison? Jamison was talking of an emerging ecological culture which was seen as “an ongoing set of social and cultural processes that contain elements of both thought and action, and which are both ideational and material” (Jamison 2001, location 630-635). This culture is characterized by a collection of environmental critiques and contains several varieties of ecological resistance that sometimes are contradictory and sometimes only a little different; most of the times however, they compete to one another for public attention, funds, or “official favor”. Jamison considers that if there is to be hope for the sustainable development quest then these different types of ecological resistance need to come together and find a way to formulate and articulate a common agenda (Jamison 2001, location 2117).

A decade later, Lynne Worehrle writes that the greening of society is a strong cultural wave as we enter the second decade of the century. This green culture presupposes “living by values and norms that view society as part of the larger ecological system while rejecting what is thought to bring harm to that system” (Woehrle 2010, p. 936). Different calls for reform are made, such as calls to the

reform of capitalism so “we can have our earth and perhaps consume it too” or calls to investing in research and using materials that can be recycled again and again or calls to a shift in production entirely. This green culture however can be best found in three applications of ecology: environmental justice, sustainable societies and global-local patterns of environmental change (Woehrle 2010, p. 936).

According to Christopher Rootes new media links environmental campaigners more effectively compared to the past and the rise of a global justice movement brings together, globally, very different groups around issues of climate change (Rootes 2013, p.95). Nevertheless, even when global and transnational issues are at the heart of protest, environmental politics still has a national characteristic. The local, national and transnational are more interrelated than ever, but the heart of the movement stays local:

“Environmental protests and campaigns are mostly mobilized on local and national rather than transnational bases, and are focused primarily upon national targets. Even where the objects of contestation are transnational, local concerns are rarely directly translated into global issues; the routes from local contention to transnational decision-making usually lie through national institutions” (Rootes 2013, p. 96).

This doesn't mean that the environmental movement is only to be found in local campaigns of course. On the contrary, local groups and national organizations do reach out to international NGOs for help. All these levels are interconnected, and Rootes underlines the fact that local campaigns are more successful if they can link their issues to global issues (use frames such as “climate change” for example) because then they can attract the support of national and international environmental

groups with access to more resources. When talking of environmentalism at the global level, Rootes points out that it has grown in parallel with the "ever tighter economic integration" and the push towards "free trade" sustained by organizations such as the World Trade Organization. Environmentalism, according to Rootes took very efficient advantage of the new international organizations but in doing that it also participated in making these institutions more relevant.

In these global conditions a new movement, the Global Justice Movement, started to rise and to become stronger and environmentalism has to contend with it:

"For many constituents of the environmental movement, the embrace of the campaign to alleviate the poverty of the world's poorest peoples is a logical extension of their environmentalist agenda. Thus the World Wide Fund for Nature has recognized that improving the lives of people is a necessary condition for the preservation of the habitats those people share with endangered species. Friends of the Earth had come by a different route to the conclusion that the equitable distribution of Earth's resources is essential if the environment is to be protected, and sustainable development is to be achieved" (Rootes, 2005, p. 692-693).

Environmental groups thus start working together with global justice movement groups. Is the environmentalist movement becoming a part of the global justice movement? Maybe not at all levels, but the links between the two movements are reinforcing the view expressed by Jamison and van der Heijden, that a characteristic of the contemporary environmental movement is the fact that it links environmental issues with other issues such as poverty, resource distribution and democracy. And, as it was mentioned already, environmentalism today takes the form of the environmental justice movement. According to Scholsberg (2013), in this form, the movement articulates a variety of concerns from local food and energy to sustainable

materialism and climate change. Thus the environmental movement of today, like that of yesterday is formed of a variety of groups, acting at different levels, in different ways, articulating different concerns and linking various issues into one: human society's relation with its environment.

I consider that the environmentalism overview performed thus far and its interpretation and analysis through the lens of Luhmann's general theory showed that by using this theory as an analytical tool we can understand why and how the movement emerged, formed and firmly established, how it evolved and changed, what roles it performs in society and how it accomplishes them, how it interacts with society, changes it and is changed by it as well. For a clearer image of how all these questions are answered, in what follows, I will shortly bring together all the elements of the analysis performed throughout the chapter.

We have seen how the origins of environmentalism can be found in the Enlightenment and how environmental concern starts to make its way in society through both writings and revolts against industrialization in the nineteenth century. These are among the first instances when society starts to notice that there is a contradiction between how it relates to its environment and how it should relate to it. Different views on how this relation should be are developed during this time. The Arcadian and the Imperialist traditions are identified as such views, and the Human Ecology, which emerges later, is another stance regarding the same issue. These reflections on the society-environment relation are later reformulated and developed



further in environmental philosophy and what we could call *green literature* or environmental thought.

This environmental theory thus, doesn't represent one integrated theory or view and it contains many observations on how the society-environment relation should be. Furthermore, green theory evolves in time, as we have seen, to do more than just point to this contradiction between how the environment-society relation is and how it should be and it starts to look for causal determinants in the society-environment interaction. This means that as more and more effects of the way in which this relationship unfolds start to be felt in society, environmental thought starts to look at and point out how the way society impacts the environment impacts back on society.

Looking at all this from a Luhmannian perspective helps us understand why the environmental movement emerges and why it is so diversified. All these views on the society-environment relation represent self and other-observations of society. They place this relation in the realm of possibility, give it new meanings and create the conditions for contingency. The fact that society knows of the existence of so many possibilities for interacting with the environment increases complexity for the system and several options for the unfolding of the system-environment relation become available. But more importantly, as it was mentioned, these views also reinforce the fact that this relation marks a contradiction and by pointing towards it they provide a topic for protest. Thus green thought participates in the formation of the environmental movement by providing the reasons for which it emerges and it is sustained.

We have seen that starting from the earliest traditions, the different strands of environmental thought have taken a more distinct form in society as goal oriented groups and organizations formed in order to protest over the society-environment relation. These organizations link the topic (the contradiction between how the relation between society and environment is seen as being and how it is seen that it should be) and the form of protest in forming the environmental movement. As more contradictions in regards to the environment-society relation become visible and are communicated they start to be linked to conflict. As a result, more and more varied activist groups start to emerge. We saw that these groups differ from each other through the specific topic of protest, the tactics and the type of protest that they employ and through the way in which they are organized. By using Luhmann's theory as an analytical tool we are able to understand that these groups do not represent different movements and concerns, they are in fact part of the same movement and can be analyzed together. These differences can be explained through both the theory of complexity (element/relation) and the theory of differentiation (system formation). Before going into that explanation however, there are a couple of things that need to be mentioned because the differentiation of the environmental movement takes place due to external causes as much as due to internal factors.

We have seen that (at least part of) the external factors that environmentalism had to contend with are: policy regulations and deregulations, the emergence of new academic disciplines, research fields and different types of professionalization, public debates regarding the way society uses the resources from its environment, the emergence of green parties, globalization and a process of internationalization, a

diversification of interests based on geographical location. All these factors lead to even more diversification within the environmental movement, in terms of topic, type of protest and organization due to the fact that the environment becomes more complex for the movement and thus new relations need to be considered.

If we go back now to the discussion about the differences from within the movement, we can understand them through the theory of complexity of the system. Recall that environmental theory is not an integrated field. Various views on how the society-environment relation should be are present within. These various views provide the topic for the movement and can be seen as the elements of the system. They are all connected and related through the general theme of society-environment relation. Therefore, protest groups have a variety of specific topics to choose from. However, the general topic is the same for all these organizations, the society-environment relation. Each element of the system points towards one contradiction regarding this relation and each group links its form protest to one of these contradictions (or to a few). Thus the difference between the various groups comes from the fact that they point towards different issues in this relation and therefore towards different contradictions but they are still part of the same movement.

Also, as the environment of the movement becomes more complex, more and more issues become visible in regards to how the relation between society and environment is seen, and thus more topics for protest linked to the same theme emerge. As more contradictions are communicated or as more causal relations are pointed out, the system differentiates into subsystems, each dealing with such an

issue or contradiction. This further explains the difference in the specific topic but this time through a theory of differentiation. These systems take the form of protest in different ways, thus creating even more complexity and differentiation. The differences in the type of protest come from the fact that a variety of options exist in the system (for example face to face interaction in street protests, sabotage, petition signing campaigns or providing alternative ways of harnessing energy).

The different types of protest represent in fact different ways in which the environmental movement communicates to society that there are contradictions in regards to the way it interacts with its environment. Looking at protest this way, thus from a communication perspective and not an action one, allows us to focus on what the protest transmits and why, instead of the protest itself. We have seen that the type of protest is related to the type of organization a group chooses, to the contradiction that is linked to it and to the socio-historical context. As its environment became more complex, the environmental movement also became more differentiated and complex in order to incorporate more elements, more views on the society-environment relation and more forms of communication. So the environmental movement becomes differentiated in different ways.

Although it was mentioned all throughout the chapter that environmentalism is differentiated it was never mentioned what form of differentiation it takes. That is because I think that all forms of differentiation described by Luhmann can be seen in the movement. A type of segmentary differentiation can be seen in the fact that many very similar groups, with the same goals and adopting the same type of protest as

form can be found within environmentalism. Differentiation between center and periphery can be observed on two different levels. First, as Luhmann holds, the movement itself can be seen as the periphery protesting against the center which is expected to listen to the protest and to take it into consideration in its decisions. Second, the organization of the movement can also be seen in the same terms. The center is represented by a committed core and by followers that can be mobilized for various actions and the periphery, while it probably includes some of the followers, is comprised by presumed sympathizers, fact which lets the movement assume that it represents *general societal interests*.

Stratificatory differentiation can also be seen not only in the organization of some of the environmental groups but also in the interactions between these groups within the movement. We have seen how often times, small local groups and campaigns need the help of bigger national or international organizations with access to more resources and knowledge. Finally, functional differentiation can be seen in the diversification of specific topics and types of protest due to the variety of concerns and contradictions that make their way in society and takes place at the same time as the increase in complexity of the system and of the environment (society). I think that using Luhmann's theory and the concept of differentiation we saw, not only how and why the movement emerged, but also how it evolved and changed and why it took the form that it has today.

The analysis of environmentalism through the lens of this theory also showed how it impacted society and the kind of roles it fulfils. We saw that by addressing

communications towards other systems, the environmental movement managed to cause them to consider the society-environment relation in their operations. As a result the political system implemented regulations, the scientific system started to study this relation from different angles, the economic system also implements reforms. Also, various organizations that deal with the environment-society relation appear within various functional systems as a response to the environmental movement or to the contradictions that it highlights. All these impacts point towards the role of the movement in society. This role has three components: 1) pointing out to contradictions and thus activating society's immune system, 2) observing causal relations and causal determinants between society and its environment and 3) providing society with a form of self-observation that it could not obtain otherwise.

It was mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that I think that environmentalism points out the contradiction between how the relation between society and its environment is seen as being and how it is considered that it should be. Environmental thought and environmental philosophy outline this contradiction well and also point out the causal relations between environment and society. The environmental movement thus observes society through the lens of this relation and makes the connections between causes in society and effects in the environment and vice-versa. This contradiction is communicated to society through the form of protest and society needs to act to remove the contradiction. The first system to have to deal with this removal is the immune system, which for society is the legal system. The formulation of laws and regulations that regard pollution, waste disposal or animal

protection are examples of reactions of this immune system after the contradiction made its way in society.

By observing this relation between society and environment in order to see the contradictions between what is and what should be, the environmental movement also grants society with the possibility of self-observation from another perspective as opposed to the functional systems which observe the relation through their own code. The functional systems have no other choice but to be biased, and although this is true for the environmental movement as well, society needs a system that will point out contradictions and effects as much as it needs a system that points out material or economic uses.

In addition, there is one more important contradiction that is making its way into society thanks to the environmental movement. According to Luhmann, autopoietic systems have as a primary goal the continuation of autopoiesis and they do not concern themselves with the environment for this reason. They are more interested in the next step of the autopoietic process than with the future. I believe that the environmental movement is able to point out this contradiction between autopoiesis and the indifference towards the environment. It points out that if the disregard for the environment continues, autopoiesis does not (i.e. overfishing will lead to the extinction of fish and thus fishing will also disappear).

Although, as we have seen, there are numerous advantages in using Luhmann's general theory in order to understand social movements and their interaction with society, I believe that the theory also has a few shortcomings that

were brought to light by the analysis of the environmental movement. To start, Luhmann holds that the socialist movement (which is different from the new protest movements and the environmental movement) observed society based on the consequences of industrialization. It was the only one to do so and “it was also capable of offering a theory that could explain both society and the grounds for protest” (Luhmann 2013a, p. 161). As we have seen however, starting from romanticism and until today, environmentalism always included a critique to industrialization in one form or another. Thus the socialist movement wasn’t the only one to observe society based on the consequences of industrialization. There is a difference though. While socialism observed society based on the consequences of industrialization on *society*, environmentalism, as we saw, at least to start with, observed it based on the consequences of industrialization on the *environment*. It later evolved to observe also how these consequences reflect back to society.

Another point of critique, comes from the fact that Luhmann sees the topic for protest of the environmental movement as being in the environment. In “Ecological Communication” (1989), Luhmann asserts that the theme of the new social movements and intrinsically of the environmental movement is the environment. This is a first point where I diverge from him because I consider that the theme of the environmental movement is in society. As it was claimed at the beginning of this chapter, at a first glance it might seem that environmentalism finds its topic for protest in the environment and not within society, but if we look at environmental theory we can clearly see that the topic is in fact within. We know that from a luhmannian perspective, a theme becomes a topic for protest if it is linked to a contradiction. I



believe that environmentalism points out the contradiction between how the society-environment relation is seen as being and how it is considered that it should be and environmental theory outlines this well.

Although Luhmann would probably argue that some, if not most of the views present in eco-philosophy/environmental thought are not valid because they look towards the environment and not society I would argue that they do not refer only to the environment but also, even more so, to how society needs to change so its impact on the environment is not destructive. Thus, they talk about how the deterioration of the environment influences society as well as about how society has an influence on the environment. They do not talk about what changes need to be done to the environment; on the contrary they talk about what changes need to be made in society when it comes to the environment.

If we formulate the topic of the environmental movement in these terms, we solve another issue of the theory that I think the analysis brought to light, namely the assertion that protest movements never offer solutions and are incapable of reentry. We saw that environmentalism presents an interest in alternative ecological forms of energy, agriculture, living and engineering in general (Jamison 2001). We also saw that some environmental groups took the form of think-tanks or alternative ways of living communities. If we accept Luhmann's writings without a critical eye we cannot consider these experiments as part of the environmental movement because, for him, the protest movement never offers solutions, never takes responsibility for the wanted change and is incapable of re-entry. However, I would argue that exactly the

existence of these initiatives shows that on the contrary, as any autopoietic social system, a protest movement is capable of re-entry exactly through offering solutions. The protest is against views on the environment- society relation that enable modes of production that have a negative impact on the environment. The contradiction is between how things are and how they should be. By offering a solution, in other words by showing how things should be, this distinction is reintroduced in the system and leads to system differentiation. Thus, the difference between inside and outside is maintained not only through the form protest but also through this distinction which is now not only between how things are and how they should be but also between how things are within the system and how things are in its environment: society.

#### *4.4 Conclusions*

We could say, as Luhmann does, that, at least in part, the environmental movement finds its topics in the environment, not in society. Nevertheless, I believe that this overview shows that while yes, there are environmental views that look “outside” so to speak, in the environment, the theory finds its grounding in society as well. The focus is on how our attitudes towards the environment impact society, and thus on how society impacts society. As we have seen, environmental thought is not an integrated theory. It incorporates different views on the human-environment or society-environment connection. Conservation or protection, domination or interdependence are all different ways of reflecting on how society should treat its

environment. However, even if different, they see society and environment interconnected and they all hold that society, its rules, attitudes and actions have a profound impact on the environment. I say “or”, as in “either or” but in fact these views coexist, and not only as abstract philosophies detached from reality but also as attitudes and programs for various environmental groups. These views provide a theory for the environmental social movement, which, we have also seen is comprised of organizations and groups as varied as environmental and social movement theory.

Thus, I consider environmental thought and philosophy as being the theory for the protest movement. We have seen that, according to Luhmann, in a complex society, when there is instability, unexpected aggregations of effects emerge. Such phenomena become social movements only if they have a theory rich enough to sustain them beyond the initial moment of emergence. As we have seen throughout this chapter, environmental thought is capable of offering that rich theory to sustain the movement. Through its multiple observations on the society-environment relation it offers a multitude of topics for protest, such as stability (the sustainable development discourse), inequality (eco-feminism), danger (the energy debates around nuclear power), to choose some of Luhmann’s examples. This variety is also what confers greater complexity to both movement and society.

In addition to the topic for protest, a protest movement needs a goal-oriented mobilization. We have also seen, a variety of “mobilizations” with various goals took place throughout the history of environmentalism. Local protest against pollution,

public energy debates, the construction of alternative technologies, all represent different “mobilizations” with different goals. One wants the neighborhood’s water supply clean, one wants its country free of the risks posed by nuclear plants, another wants to show alternative technologies should be considered while others want to change resource use. Mobilization here however is not used only to represent an event, a street protest or a petition signing event. A protest movement needs to incorporate elements of both organizations and interactions so mobilization refers to how groups or organizations such as Greenpeace, Earth First! or a community group form and organize as well as to the face-to-face interaction of street protests. Various organizations were formed throughout the history of environmentalism: conservation groups such as Sierra Club who focus, obviously, on conservation, groups focused on sabotage such as Earth Liberation Front, or think tanks that address environmental concerns through research.

We can therefore see that environmentalism incorporates both organization and interaction, and even a variety of both. We can argue that this shows that, as any autopoietic system, environmentalism, is functionally differentiated. Professionals go to think tanks where they use their skills for research (or businesses where they can help in “greening” the industry), community organizers do what they do best too, and even “professional activists” (such as Greenpeace activists) focus on pointing out environmental issues to the rest of society.

So if the field of social movement theory is not sufficient to explain collective action, is the general theory developed by Luhmann better suited for investigating,

analyzing and explaining social movements? I believe that the analysis of the environmental movement showed that yes, it is. Although there are a few points where I diverge from Luhmann's view (the topic of the environmental movement and the capability and willingness of protest movements to offer solutions and to accomplish the operation of re-entry and thus to differentiate functionally), I think that his theory offers us the tools necessary to analyze and understand social movements better compared to the theories presented in chapter two. While all those perspectives analyze important facets of social movements they do not do so in an integrated manner and thus we remain with a fragmented view of movements.

Looking at environmentalism from a Luhmannian perspective enables us to understand all its facets and forms. This approach gives us the possibility to understand the overall movement, to include in our analysis not only the theory, or the practice, or the organization, but all of them. From this point of view, a group that focuses on protest against pesticides for example, is part of the same movement with Rachel Carson who showed her view on pesticides by writing poetry and with the scientist working to find a way to minimize their negative environmental impacts. It also lets us look at environmentalism as one "movement" over time, a movement that went through different phases and forms, included different ideas and discourses and had various impacts on society.

We can also use this approach to analyze some of the events related to the environmental movement. For example, Jamison talks about how as a result of the environmental protests during the 1970s legislation and acts regulating pollution were

implemented in a lot of the industrialized states. Remember that for Luhmann law functions as the immune system and memory of society and that protest movements trigger the alarm for this immune system. From this perspective then we can see that the legislation introduced back then to regulate pollution was implemented as a result of the fact that the environmental movement triggered the alarm on what said pollution is doing to the environment.

Things get complicated however, when a few years later, during the 1980s the same legislation and regulations (at least in part) are withdrawn. So if you explain regulation in these terms how do you explain de-regulation? An argument can be made however that the initial legislation was introduced as a response to the protest movement, not to environmental factors. The movement was signaling what will happen in the future if we continue on the same course. It was not reflecting on the present conditions. Thus deregulation was nothing other than redressing the situation as the system saw it at the time. It needs to be said, this is an illustration of how and why things happened, not of how they should happen. The theory is not normative in any way or form.

No matter if we talk of ethics or utilitarianism, there seems to be a profound disconnect between Luhmann and environmentalism due to Luhmann's focus on the distinction between system and environment. Environmentalism places us in nature in a way (directly or indirectly), while Luhmann seems to separate us from it. Can the two positions be reconciled? I hold that we can use Luhmann's theory in such a way that we can bring the two positions closer together in order to better understand the

links between society and environment. The way I understand it (and I do not say that Luhmann would agree) is that Luhmann never places the system above its environment. He also places the human being in the environment, not in the system of society. So yes, a sort of reconciliation is possible because, it can be argued, in fact Luhmann doesn't separate the human-being from the environment; he separates only society from it. So the two positions are not as dissimilar as they seem. Where they differ though is on how we should go about addressing environmental issues.

# Conclusion

The argument that the field of social movement theory is not sufficient enough nor integrated enough to offer a clear image or understanding of its own object of study has been repeated throughout this thesis. It was also repeated that the general systems theory developed by Niklas Luhmann can supplement the collective action research field and offer us the tools needed in obtaining an integrated, coherent and comprehensive knowledge of social movements. The environmental movement was analyzed through the lens of this general systems theory as an example of how we can employ it in order to obtain this coherent understanding. It was also pointed out that the interest in finding the answer to the research question (if the field of social movement theory is not sufficient to explain collective action, how is the general theory developed by Luhmann better suited for investigating, analyzing and explaining social movements?) comes from the view that to know society we have to know the mechanisms of social change and movements are one of these mechanisms.

The detailed overview of the theory proposed by Luhmann showed us that this perspective provides us with one integrated view of society that enables us to understand movements into the larger shifting social and historical context. For instance, the links drawn between the forms of differentiation of society and the kinds of mechanisms used to connect conflicts and contradictions specific to each type of



society, enable us to see how the social context affects collective action. This overview also presented concepts from within the theory that can be used as tools in analyzing all facets of movements at the same time in a cohesive manner. The concept of differentiation comes to mind once again but this time in regards to the organization of the movement, the notion of protest in regards to the form, and contingency in regards to the role of a movement are just a few examples of such concepts.

The examination of the field of social movement theory indicated that if there is one thing on which all the perspectives within it can agree on, that thing is the fact that the main goal of social movements is to bring change. It also pointed out that this field offers us only a fragmented view of social movements due to the fact that each approach within looks at them from a certain angle or analyses a different facet, neglecting the other dimensions. It was thus emphasized that collective behavior perspective focuses on mobilization while resource mobilization highlights organization and resources. At the same time the political processes approach concentrates on strategies for outside interactions, the framing perspective centers its research on meaning construction, while the new social movement theory focuses on identity.

The analysis of the environmental movement displayed how, by using Luhmann's theory or concepts developed within, we can incorporate all facets of the movement into one comprehensive view. Looking at social movements from within the communication systems theory proposed by Luhmann we can understand how

and why movements form, how they are organized, what their role is in society and through what processes they fulfil this role. How movements form can be explained through the processes of finding a topic for protest and creating a controversy around it and of bringing the form protest and the topic together in forming an autopoietic system. Such a system becomes a protest movement only if is capable of goal oriented mobilization and action (which finds its way in society by its ascribed meaning) and self-description as a movement. The organization of the movement can be clarified through the way the system is differentiated, functionally or otherwise, and through the theory of complexity represented through the difference between element and relation. The roles fulfilled by social movements in society can be explained through, on one side, the functions that such systems assume within the immune system of society and, on the other side, through the operation of observation that they perform in order to provide society with a type of self-description that no other system can deliver.

I also think that through the lens of this theory we can see not only how social movements change society, but also how they are in turn changed by it, and we can follow the dynamic relations between the two. For instance, we saw in chapter four how the efforts of organizations like the Sierra Club led to the creation and maintenance of natural parks or how protests against waste disposal and pollution led to regularizations in this domain. However, we also saw how, as more effects of the society-environment interaction became visible, the movement had to change in order to be able to cover all the possible topics for protest present in society.

This approach also gives us the possibility to understand the overall movement, to include in our analysis not only the theory, or the practice, or the organization, but all of them. It lets us look at a movement as one “movement” over time, a movement that went through different phases and forms, included different ideas and discourses and had various impacts on society. The last chapter of the dissertation illustrated this by showing how both environmental thought and environmental organizations evolved over time and how they support each other, green thought giving birth to environmental organizations and vice versa (i.e. deep ecology is the foundation for Earth First!, and the conservation societies were the wellspring of conservationism).

There are many advantages in using the systems theory as proposed by Luhmann to understand social movements. Nevertheless, the analysis of environmentalism brought to light the fact that the theory also presents a number of limits. I think that it showed that although Luhmann considers that the topic of the environmental movement is in the environment, the topic is actually in society. By placing this topic in society we also solve the problem of the form protest blocking the movement from offering solutions for resolving contradictions. Pointing out that the topic of the environmental movement is the contradiction between how the society-environment relation is seen as being and how it is seen that it should be, is exactly what opens up the possibility for the movement to offer solutions and frees it from at least one side of the paradox of the form protest. Being partially free of this paradox is also what enables the movement to perform the operation of re-entry and thus it also makes it capable of self-description and differentiation. This analysis thus showed

some of the limits of the theory but also how they can be overcome and how the theory can be improved and built upon.

I realize that, as Maheu (2005) says, social movements are both a theoretical concept and a reality on the ground and that there cannot be a perfect fit between the two, but a constant tension. However, I consider that if abstract enough, social movements, as a concept, will be able to explain the reality on the ground. Where the tension comes from, in my view, is from maintaining a balance between being able to explain this reality and not becoming so abstract that anything will fit the concept.

Even though the interest of this dissertation is theoretical, I think that this endeavor has value beyond the purely theoretical discussion by contributing to a better understanding of society today. If one looks at the current major topics of discussion one cannot but notice an abundance of debates regarding issues like global warming and climate change, the ozone layer, resource consumption, biodiversity, pollution, protection and preservation of wildlife. The protection of the environment and the preservation of nature, sustainable development, renewable resources are paramount issues in present day's debates. Some of these issues have been present in the public discourse for at least three decades. All these concerns have to do with society's relation to its environment. Knowing how society sees this relation and how it is trying to change it is important in understanding society itself. Thus understanding social movements in general and the environmental movement in particular leads to a better understanding of society.

There are however also limits to this project. These limits suggest the perspectives, questions and interest for future research and therefore they can be presented together. First, the one limit that cannot be connected to a future research perspective is the fact that I do not speak or read German. I thus lack access to a large corpus of Luhmann's works. More and more of these works are translated in English or French however so this can be overcome. The other limits have both a practical and a theoretical component. Second, I would say (and probably this is a shortcoming that I share with Luhmann) that this is a deeply western perspective. Although I speak a little about the environmental movement in Asia or Latin America the main body of the thesis draws not only on empirical examples from the West but also on Western theories and the evolution of environmentalism in the West. Therefore, studying theories with different origins and the environmental movement in other parts of the world, as well as other environmental worldviews is a future research perspective.

Third, this dissertation focuses on one particular social movement in order to illustrate how the general theory can be used to explain this social phenomenon in a comprehensive way. Using this theory and the concepts developed within in order to analyze other social movements would lend more thoroughness to the effort or it might point out more limits. A fourth limit rests with the fact that other Luhmann scholars are not incorporated. This links with a future research interest in seeing how others read and interpret the theory and how they apply it as an analytical tool, and beyond a better understanding, this can lead to an enhancement of the theory.

What is of a particular interest for me however, is to study in more depth how this specific movement, the environmental movement, impacted some of the functional systems of society. Some of these impacts were mentioned briefly, for example regulations coming from the legal system or the discourse of green businesses from the economic system. A more in-depth analysis of how various systems were influenced by the environmental movement, and not only those mentioned but also systems like education and art, would lead to an even better understanding of the movement and society.

Such an analysis would provide us with a better knowledge of the relations between social movements and society, of the way in which structural couplings function and of how systems use their code to interpret irritations from the environment. It would also draw the links between the environmental movement and functional differentiation more clearly than it is done in this endeavor. Are functional systems reacting to irritants in society, for instance the environmental movement, or are they reacting to irritants from the environment of society itself, meaning nature? When I say environment here I think of it in a double sense. Society is the environment of the functional systems but it is clear that these are impacted by the environment of society as well, by the natural world. I think this relation deserves further study.

If I look at my own work from within Luhmann's general systems theory I would say that this thesis is in fact an observation, or at least an attempt to observe sociology. The review of the social movement theory can be interpreted two ways,

depending on the level at which it is placed. On one side, if it is considered an observation on social movements, it is a second order observation because I am looking at other observations on social movements, not at the movements themselves. On the other side, if it is considered an observation of the field of social movement theory, it is a first order observation because (with very few exceptions) I look at the perspectives themselves, not at other observations on them. The environmental movement overview however can be considered entirely second order observation as I am using solely other observations on it.

From this point of view I could argue that the main thesis here is that the field of social movement theory is a system, its elements are the various perspectives and approaches within but for this system to be able to fulfill its function fully, its complexity needs to be increased. In other words, the field needs second order observations in order to create the relations between the elements. This is an observing system, it observes social movements and thus produces other reference. It nevertheless needs self-reference as well if it is to maintain its autopoiesis. This thesis represents an attempt at a second order observation and self-reference.

# Bibliography

Allen, Kenneth. (2013) *Contemporary Social and Sociological Theory: Visualizing Social Worlds*, Sage, Los Angeles

Benford, Robert. D. (1997) An Insider critique of the Social Movement Framing Perspective, *Sociological Inquiry*, 67 (4), pp. 409-30

Benford, Robert D. and Snow David A. (2000) Framing Processes and Social Movements; An Overview and Assessment, *Annual review of sociology*, 26, pp.611-39

Buechler, Steven M. (2000) *Social Movements in Advanced Capitalism; The Political Economy and Cultural Construction of Social Activism*; Oxford University Press, New York

Callicot J. Baird (1993) Introduction to Environmental Ethics -p.3-11 in Zimmerman Michael E. (ed. [et al.]) (1993) *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey

Clark John (1993) Introduction to Social Ecology p.345-353 in Zimmerman Michael E. (ed. [et al.]) (1993) *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey

Cohen Jean L. Andrew Arato (1994) *Civil Society and Political Theory*, The MIT Press, Cambridge, Massachusetts, and London

della Porta, D and Diani Mario (1999) *Social Movements: An Introduction*, Oxford, Blackwell

Diani, Mario. (1992) The Concept of Social Movement; *The Sociological Review*, vol. 40, No1, pp. 1-25

Diani Mario and Donati R. Paolo. (1999) Organizational Change in Western European Environmental Groups: A Framework for Analysis p. 13- 34 in Rootes, Christopher (1999) (ed.) *Environmental Movements: Local, National and Global*, Frank Cass Publishers, London



Eder, Klaus. (1993) *The New Politics of Class: Social Movements and Cultural Dynamics in Advanced Societies*, London, Sage

Eder, Klaus. (1995) Does Social Class Matter in the Study of Social Movements? A Theory of the Middle Class Radicalism in Maheu, L. (ed.), *Social Movements and Social Classes*, London, Sage, p. 21-54

Eder, Klaus. (1996) *The Social Construction of Nature; A Sociology of Ecological Enlightenment*, Sage, London

Edwards Bob and McCarthy John D. (2004) Resources and Social Movement Mobilization in Snow David A., Soule Sarah A., Kriesi Hanspeter. (eds.) (2004) *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, Blackwell Publishing LTD, Oxford UK

Escobar, Arturo. (2008) *Territories of Difference: place, movements, life, redes*, Duke University Press, Durham

Eyerman, Ron, Andrew Jamison. (1991) *Social Movements; A Cognitive Approach*, Cambridge, Polity Press

Eyerman Ron and Andrew Jamison (1998) *Music and social movements: mobilizing traditions in the twentieth century*, Cambridge University Press, N.Y

Farro, Antimo and Jean-Guy, Vaillancourt. (2001) Collective Movements and Globalization in Hamel, Pierre, Henri Lusitinger-Thaler, Jan Nederveen Pieterse, Sasha Roseneil (Eds.) (2001) *Globalization and Social Movements*, Pelgrave, New York

Fligstein Neil and McAdam Doug. (2011) Toward a General Theory of Strategic Action Fields, *Sociological Theory* 29:1 March 2011

Fox Warwick (1990) *Toward a Transpersonal Ecology: Developing New Foundations for Environmentalism*, Sunny Press

Garner, Roberta. (1997) *Social Movement Theory and Research: An annotated Bibliographical Guide*. Magill Bibliographies, Salem/Scarecrow Press

Giugni, Marco, Doug McAdam, and Charles Tilly (eds.) (1999) *How social movements matter*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota

Goffman, Erving. (1974) *Frame Analysis: An Essay on the Organization of experience*, Harper & Row, New York

Guay, Louis, Pierre Hamel, Dominique Masson et Jean-Guy Vaillancourt (Eds.). (2005) *Mouvements sociaux et changements institutionnels; L'action collective à l'ère de la mondialisation*, Presses de l'Université du Québec, Sainte-Foy

Hamel, Pierre, Henri Lusitinger-Thaler, Jan Nederveen Pieterse, Sasha Roseneil (Eds.) (2001) *Globalization and Social Movements*, Pelgrave, New York

Hamel Pierre, Henry Lustinger-Thaler, Louis Maheu. (2012) Global Social Movements: Politics, Subjectivity and Human Rights in Sales Arnaud (Ed.) *Sociology Today: Social Transformations in a Globalizing World*, Sage, London

Hay, Peter. (2002) *Main currents in western environmental thought*, Indiana University Press, Bloomington

Hawken, Paul, Amory Lovins and Hunter Lovins. (1999) *Natural Capitalism: Creating the Next Industrial Revolution*, Little, Brown and Co., Boston

Jamison Andrew, Eyerman Ron, and Cramer Jacqueline with Jeppe Læssøe (1990) *The making of the new environmental consciousness: a comparative study of the environmental movements in Sweden, Denmark, and the Netherlands*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press

Jamison, Andrew (2000) On the Ambiguities of Greening, *Innovation*, Vol. 13, No. 3

Jamison Andrew (2001) *The making of green knowledge: environmental politics and cultural transformation*, Cambridge University Press, N.Y, [Kindle edition]

Jenkins, Craig J. (1983) Resource Mobilization Theory and the Study of Social Movements, *Annual Review of Sociology*, 9, pp. 527-553

Kant, Immanuel. (1999) *Critique of Pure Reason*, 1<sup>st</sup> paperback edition, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge

Kitschelt Herbert (1991) Resource Mobilization Theory: A Critique in Rucht Dieter (ed.) (1991) *Research on Social Movements; The State of the Art in Western Europe and the USA*; Westview Press, Boulder Colorado

Klandermans, Bert; Tarrow Sidney (1988) Mobilization into Social Movements: Synthesizing European and American Approaches in Klandermans Bert; Kriesi Hanspeter; Tarrow Sidney (eds.) (1988) *From Structure to Action: Comparing Social Movement Research Across Cultures* (International Social Movement Research 1), Greenwich, JAI Press; p. 1-38

Klandermans Bert; Kriesi Hanspeter; Tarrow Sidney (eds.) (1988) *From Structure to Action: Comparing Social Movement Research Across Cultures* (International Social Movement Research 1), Greenwich, JAI Press

Leopold, Aldo. (1993) *The Land ethic* in Zimmerman, Michael. (ed) (1993) *Environmental Philosophy; From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*; Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey

Luhmann, Niklas. (1982) *The Differentiation of Society*, Columbia University Press, New York

Luhmann, Niklas. (1989) *Ecological Communication*, University of Chicago Press

Luhmann, Niklas. (1990) *Essays on Self-Reference*, Columbia University Press, New York

Luhmann, Niklas. (1993) *Risk: A Sociological Theory*, Aldeine De Gruyter, New York

Luhmann, Niklas. (1995) *Social Systems*, Stanford University Press, Stanford California

Luhmann, Niklas. (1998) *Observations on Modernity*, Stanford University Press, Stanford California

Luhmann, Niklas. (2000a) *The Reality of the Mass Media*, Stanford University Press, Stanford California

Luhmann, Niklas. (2000b) *Why Does Society Describe Itself as Postmodern?* In Rasch William, Wolfe Cary (Editors) (2000). *Observing Complexity, Systems Theory and Postmodernity*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis

Luhmann, Niklas. (2000c) *Answering the question: What is modernity? An interview with Niklas Luhmann* in Rasch William (2000). *Niklas Luhmann's Modernity, The Paradoxes of Differentiation*, Stanford University Press, Stanford California

Luhmann, Niklas. (2002) *Theories of Distinction. Redescribing the Descriptions of Modernity*, Stanford University Press, Stanford California

Luhmann, Niklas. (2012) *Theory of Society Volume 1*, Stanford University Press, Stanford California

Luhmann, Niklas. (2013a) *Theory of Society Volume 2*, Stanford University Press, Stanford California

Luhmann, Niklas. (2013b) *A systems theory of religion*, Stanford University Press, Stanford California

Maheu, Louis. (2005) Mouvements sociaux et modernité avancée: le retour oblige à l'ambivalence de l'action in Guay, Louis, Pierre Hamel, Dominique Masson et Jean-Guy Vaillancourt (Eds.). (2005) *Mouvements sociaux et changements institutionnels; L'action collective a l'ère de la mondialisation*, Presses de l'Université du Québec, Sainte-Foy

McCarthy, J.D. and Zalad M.N. (1977) Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory, *American Journal of Sociology*, vol. 82, p. 1212-41

Melucci, Alberto. (1988) Getting Involved: Identity and Mobilization in Social Movements in *International Social Movement Research* 1: 329–48

Melucci, Alberto. (1989) *Nomads of the present; Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*, London, Hutchinson Radius

Melucci, Alberto. (1996) *Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press

Melucci Alberto. (1997) "Identite et changement: le defi planetaire de l'action collective" dans Klein, J.L.; Trembley, P.A. et Dionne H (eds). *Au-dela du neoliberalisme. Quel role pour les mouvements sociaux?*, Sainte-Foy, P.U.Q, p. 9-20

Moeller, Hans-Georg. (2006) *Luhmann Explained; From Souls to Systems*, Open Court, Chicago and La Salle, Illinois

Naess, Arne (1973) The shallow and the deep, long-range ecology movement. A summary, *Inquiry: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Philosophy*, 16:1-4, 95-100

Nash R. (1982) *Wilderness and the American Mind*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ed., Yale University Press, New Haven (Conn.)

Neidhardt Friedhelm and Rucht Dieter (1991) The Analysis of Social Movements: The State of the Art and Some Perspectives for Further Research in Rucht Dieter (ed.) (1991) *Research on Social Movements; The State of the Art in Western Europe and the USA*; Westview Press, Boulder Colorado

Offe, Claus (1997) *Les démocraties modernes à l'épreuve*, Paris, L'Harmattan

Passmore, John (1974) *Man's Responsibility for Nature: Ecological Problems and Western Traditions*. Charles Scribner's Sons, New York

Rasch William, Wolfe Cary. (Editors) (2000) *Observing Complexity, Systems Theory and Postmodernity*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis

Rasch William. (2000) *Niklas Luhmann's Modernity, The Paradoxes of Differentiation*, Stanford University Press, Stanford California

Rodman John. (1983) Four Forms of Ecological Consciousness Reconsidered in Scherer Donald and Attig Thomas (eds.) (1983) *Ethics and the Environment*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs N.J, p. 82-92

Rootes, Christopher. (1999) (ed.) *Environmental Movements: Local, National and Global*, Frank Cass Publishers, London

Rootes, Christopher. (2004) Environmental Movements in Snow David A., Soule Sarah A., Kriesi Hanspeter. (Eds.) (2004) *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, Blackwell Publishing LTD, Oxford UK

Rootes, Christopher. (2005) Globalization, Environmentalism and the Global Justice Movement, *Environmental Politics*, Vol. 14, No. 5, November

Rootes, Christopher. (2013) From Local Conflict to National Issues: when and how environmental campaigns succeed in transcending the local, *Environmental Politics*, 22:1, p. 95-114

Rucht, Dieter. (ed.) (1991) *Research on Social Movements; The State of the Art in Western Europe and the USA*; Westview Press, Boulder Colorado

Rudolf, Florence. (2003) Deux conceptions divergentes de l'expertise dans l'école de la modernité réflexive, *Cahiers internationaux de sociologie*, no 114, p. 35-54

Sales, Arnaud. (2012) A Reappraisal of Agency-Structure Theories to Understand Social Change in Sales, A. (ed.) *Sociology Today. Social Transformations in a Globalizing World*, Los Angeles and London, Sage, p. 49-94

Scherer Donald and Attig Thomas (eds.) (1983) *Ethics and the Environment*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs N.J

Schlosberg David (2013) Theorizing environmental justice: the expanding sphere of a discourse, *Environmental Politics*, 22:1, 37-55

Sessions George (1993) Introduction to Deep Ecology p. 161-170 in Zimmerman Michael E. (ed. [et al.]) (1993) *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey

- Smelser Neil (1971) *Theory of Collective Behavior*, The Free Press, New York
- Snow David A., Soule Sarah A., Kriesi Hanspeter. (eds.) (2004) *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, Blackwell Publishing LTD, Oxford UK
- Soule Sarah A., Snow David A., Kriesi Hanspeter. (2004) Mapping the Terrain in *The Blackwell Companion to Social Movements*, Blackwell Publishing LTD, Oxford UK
- Tarrow, Sidney. (1998) *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- Tarrow, Sidney. (2005) *The New Transnational Activism*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press
- Tarrow, Sidney (2012) *Strangers at the Gates; Movements and the States in Contentious Politics*, Cambridge University Press, New York
- Tilly Charles. (1984) Social Movements and National Politics in Bright C. and Harding S. (eds.) *State-making and Social Movements: Essays in History and Theory*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press
- Tilly, Charles. (1998) Social Movements and (All Sorts of) Other Political Interaction – Local, National, and International – Including Identities; *Theory and Society* 27, issue 4 (p. 453-480)
- Tilly, Charles. (1999) From Interactions to Outcomes in Social Movements in Giugni, Marco, Doug McAdam, and Charles Tilly (eds) (1999) *How social movements matter*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- Tilly Charles (2002) *Stories, Identities, and Political Change*, Rowman and Littlefield Publishers
- Tilly Charles and Tarrow Sydney (2007) *Contentious Politics*, Paradigm Publishers, Boulder Colorado
- Tilly, Charles. (2008) *Explaining social processes*, Boulder, CO; London: Paradigm Publishers
- Touraine, Alain (1981) *The Voice and the Eye; An Analysis of Social Movements*, Cambridge University Press
- Touraine, Alain. (2002) The Importance of Social Movements, *Social Movements Studies*, 19(1); 89-95

Touraine, Alain. (2004) On the Frontier of Social Movements; *Current Sociology*, vol. 52 (4) 717-725, Sage

Touraine, Alain. (2005) *Un nouveau paradigme; Pour comprendre le monde d'aujourd'hui*, Fayard

Turner, Ralph. (1981) Collective Behavior and Resource Mobilization as Approaches to Social Movements: Issues and Continuities in Kriesberg, L. (ed.) (1981) *Research in Social Movements, Conflicts and Change*, vol.4, Greenwich, Conn., JAI Press

Turner, Ralph and Killian, Lewis. (1987) *Collective Behavior*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Englewood Cliffs, N.J. Prentice Hall

Urry, John. (2000) *Sociology beyond societies, mobilities for the twenty-first century*, London, Routledge

Van Der Heijden, Hein-Anton (1999) Environmental Movements, Ecological Modernisation and Political Opportunity Structures p. 199-221 in Rootes, Christopher (1999) (ed.) *Environmental Movements: Local, National and Global*, Frank Cass Publishers, London

Ward, Barbara and Rene Dobos (1972) *Only One Earth; the Care and Maintenance of a Small Planet*, W.W. Norton, London

Warren Karen J. (1993) Introduction to Ecofeminism p. 253-267 in Zimmerman Michael E. (ed. [et al.]) (1993) *Environmental Philosophy: From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey

Woehrl Lynne M. (2010) Environmental/Green Cultural Shifts: Dynamics of Social Change, *Sociology Compass* Volume 4, Issue 11, November 2010, Pages: 936–946

Worster, Donald. (2013) *Nature's Economy (Studies in Environmental History)*, Cambridge University Press, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition [Kindle edition]

Zald, M.N. and McCarthy, J.D. (eds.) (1987) *Social Movements in Organizational Societies: Resource Mobilization, Conflict and Institutionalization*, New Brunswick, Transaction Books

Zimmerman, Michael. (ed) (1993) *Environmental Philosophy; From Animal Rights to Radical Ecology*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey