

**Scope of Comparative Methods in Social Movement Research**  
***A Study of Multi-Profile Movement Organizations***

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Paper for the 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Graduate Retreat of Society for Comparative Research  
Central European University, Budapest, May 2002

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*ABSTRACT: Since the 1990s there are more and more works in the field of social movement analysis based on comparative research. Some scholars see the end of theoretical debates in a synthesis that is based on and suited to cross-national comparisons. Comparative methods are increasingly popular among students of social movements. The problem is that the choice of research design is not independent of theoretical assumptions. Therefore cross-national comparisons can settle theoretical debates only to the extent they consider the relationship between movement emergence and macro-social context. Cross-national comparisons have become the dominant method for social movement research in the era of unprecedented transnational insurgency, and of proliferation of the use of relational and non-relational channels of diffusion. This article argues that the dominance of international comparisons and the salience they attribute to political opportunity variables in movement activity cannot be the basis of an integrative theoretical synthesis. Instead, I advocate the study of multi-profile movement organizations that allow multi-level comparison and equal treatment of all important branches of variables.*

Theoretical debates about social movement phenomena seem to be less fierce in the last decade. Competing approaches of instrumentalist/institutionalist and identity-oriented/constructivist traditions are about to advance a division of labor in accounting for social movement activity. In the dialogue of theories the pertinent question has become the relationship between relevant variables influencing movement form and activity. Synthesizing approaches are important steps toward a thorough theory of social movements, although their basic assumptions and methodological choices still carry old problems. Which approach explains better certain movement types, certain stages in movement career, or certain causal links in their development? Synthesizing theories have to face fundamental problems of social sciences, such as the relationship between structure and agency, the given or socially constructed nature of opportunities, questions of individual motivations, and cooperation. The emerging synthesis proposed by McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996) propose a comparative approach that departs from the causal priority of macro-structure. It uses the attributes of macrosociological units in explanatory propositions. But how influential are states in shaping the prospects and tactical choices of social movements today? Can the national structure of political opportunities account for the variations of these choices?

Comparative research is increasingly popular among the students of social movements. There are more and more cross-sectional empirical datasets available from Eurobarometer to various ISSP projects. The relatively large number of variables relevant in shaping contentious action compared to the small number of cases in the clusters of outcome types suits comparative design. Cross-national comparisons are a highly potent tool for theorizing the role of different aspects of political and cultural contexts in collective action. Nevertheless, in the state of art, its capacity to provide an integrative framework for the compromising theories is limited. Cross-sectional comparisons are only capable to account for the influence of those constraints and opportunities created that by and large channel the form of contentious action. For a thorough synthetic approach the analytical toolkit has to cope with the wide range of variations of collective action. In this paper, following Sidney Tarrow's (1996, 1998) line of thought, I will argue that in spite of its increasing popularity the scope of cross-national comparison is limited in accounting for movement phenomena. Particularly those arguments are losing credibility, which associate certain nations with certain movement types (Kriesi 1996, Kriesi et al. 1994, Rucht 19996). The wide range of sub-national variations, the transnationalization of movement networks and ideas, the fast diffusion of modular

actions through multiplying communicational channels, the formation of multi-level polity, and the volatile nature of social movements all question the role attributed to national political opportunity structures in shaping the form and the outcome of contentious politics.

In the first part of this paper I give a critical overview of the dominant comparative approaches in social movement research. I show that national differences in social movements are continuously diminishing. Instead we find a proliferation of multi-profile or “hybrid” movements that creatively combine the advances of different organization forms, mobilization tactics, and legitimacy. These simultaneously bear characteristics of constituency-oriented supportive organizations and self-help associations, as well as norm-oriented interest groups and political movements. Multi-profile organizations apply various tactics, offer various bundles of collective and non-collective goods to its supporters for different kinds of commitment. I argue for the study of multi-profile movement organizations that allows multi-level comparison. In the last part, I give an example for how a multi-level comparison of multi-profile organizations can account for individual mobilization.

### ***Comparative syntheses focusing on the structure of political opportunities***

Synthesizing theories suggest a division of labor between approaches focusing on collective identity formation and those emphasizing the role of institutional context. Gusfield (1992) argues for differentiating fluid identity-oriented, and linear norm-oriented movements that require different approaches. Melucci (1985) proposes a joint application of structural and resource mobilization approaches that can complement agency-focused action-system analysis. Structural analysis can answer why movements emerge, what structural strain initiates collective action; resource mobilization can account for how movements are set up, and maintained through conflicts with other actors. As a matter of fact, Melucci initiates a theoretical model that incorporates micro-level agency focus, meso-level organizational research, and macro-level structural analysis with the primacy of micro level.

A more recent synthesis proposed by McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996) represents a comprehensive endeavor to integrate research areas of social movement phenomena. It is less motivated by theoretical puzzles, rather it works out a framework to relate research questions from state involvement to strategic use of framing. Research frameworks do not necessarily work out full-blown theories; they usually fix certain

variables on the basis of assumptions regarding these variables. The rationale behind is to facilitate comparative analysis on this field. Consequently, it attributes primacy to macro-level variables and lacks theoretical coherence at certain points. The authors identify three broad sets of relevant factors in researching movement emergence and development: political opportunities, organizational forms, and framing of issues.

“[There are] three broad sets of factors in analyzing the emergence and development of social movements/revolutions. These three factors are (1) the structure of political opportunities and constraints confronting the movement; (2) the forms of organization (informal as well as formal), available to insurgents; and (3) the collective processes of interpretation, attribution, and social construction that mediate between opportunity and action.”

(McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996: 2)

The concept of political opportunities originates in Tilly’s political process model (1978) that shortly became a very successful concept in movement research, especially in longitudinal single-movement, and in international comparative research. A set of political opportunities constitute – a more or less institutionalized – political environment, which sets the stage for a given movement activity. The most relevant dimensions of it are (1) relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system; (2) the state’s capacity and willingness to repress movements; (3) the presence of elite allies; and (4) the stability of elite alignments (McAdam 1996). Opportunities influence the timing of collective action and partly shape movement form. For example, reform movements emerge in relatively open political systems with new elite allies, while revolutions rise in closed systems with shifting elite alignments. This view associates certain environmental settings with specific movement forms, which in a further step facilitate certain courses of mobilization. If this causation holds, one should find relatively little variance in organization forms and the tactical repertoire of successful movements in a given society.

Mobilizing structures are those “collective vehicles, informal as well as formal, through which people mobilize and engage in collective action” (McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996: 3). The resource mobilization approach focuses on organizations, while the political process model emphasizes the role of grassroots settings like local

communities, friendship networks in mobilization.<sup>1</sup> McCarthy (1996) categorizes mobilizing structures along two dimensions: their degree of formalization and their dedication to policy change.

Focus on mobilizing structures and opportunities were extensively combined in classic resource-oriented research. The last and most current addition to this research framework is the integration of framing processes. This claims that political opportunities and mobilizing structures provide only potential for collective action, but for successful mobilization a shared definition of the problem is also needed. Moreover, potential participants have to agree on the possible solutions as well. Collective frames condition the perception of social problems, raise consciousness over an issue in a specific public, mould discontent and outline solutions to the problem.

The importance of shared meanings and constructed nature of grievances are underscored by many new social movement theories (Melucci 1985, Buechler 1995); however, Snow and Benford (1988) initiated the integration of the study of framing processes into the resource-oriented approach. McAdam, McCarthy and Zald used a rather narrow definition of framing as “conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action” (1996:6). Zald (1996) terms strategic framing the active opportunity making or manipulation of perceptions. Movement cadres, politicians, etc. operate as issue entrepreneurs: they define issues, coin metaphors, interpret the social world, blame, and suggest lines of action.

These are the three main clusters of variables that influence collective action. Individual theories vary in the identification of the crucial point of emergence. The political process model emphasizes political opportunities, resource mobilization stresses the role of mobilizing structures, while identity-oriented approaches underscore the socially constructed nature of definitions. McAdam, McCarthy and Zald argue that neither is sufficient alone to explain movement dynamics, for these are interacting factors, where framing mediates between opportunities and mobilizing structures. How can this framework answer the two fundamental questions of collective action: What kind of interaction elicits emergence of a new movement? What circumstances are conducive to one or another movement form?

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<sup>1</sup> Network analysis is increasingly popular in movement research. Experiences of network approach in stratification studies facilitate social movement analysis to contribute to the debate on theoretical models of structure and agency in this field. (e.g. Diani 1992, Gould 2000, Passy 2000 Sandell and Stern 1998)

The explanation for movement origin can be found in two fundamental relationships. Structural changes both influence objective opportunities, and set framing in motion which, in the end, further change the perception of opportunities. The other relationship is between organization and framing. Framing fosters mobilization but, at the same time, framing is more successful if there is a strong organization behind. Movement types are not seen as distinctive qualities, but as results of different variations of opportunities, mobilizing structures and collective action frames.<sup>2</sup> The authors claim that it is opportunity structure that determines the broad category of movement; organizational forms and ideology are influenced by the mobilizing structure. In later stages, movements are less influenced by opportunities, and the social environment is not fully independent from movement activity. At the birth of the movement, structural conditions determine the outcome, and later on agency is in effect.

Gamson and Meyer (1996) warn us that that dynamism of these factors threatens the robustness of the theory. If political opportunity can be taken as an independent variable in accounting for emergence, intervening variable in comparative studies, and dependent variable in researching movements' influence on policy, explanations can easily collapse into circular reasoning. They propose to differentiate elements of political opportunity structure along two dimensions. The first is the stability dimension; it sorts out how deeply embedded certain opportunities are. Stable elements are independent variables both in the emergence and operational phase, while volatile elements are subject to framing activity. The second is cultural versus institutional dimension. Culture and history of a given society may heavily influence chances of collective action. Values, belief systems, class-consciousness, etc. constrain or facilitate movements. However, it is difficult to operationalize cultural factors for a comparative study.<sup>3</sup> More importantly, in the age of global communication and transnationally networked activists, the cultural toolkit available to insurgents is far less constrained than historical case studies suggest. Elizabeth Clemens (1996) in a study analyzing the U.S. labor movement claims that organization form is chosen from a set of familiar, cognitively and materially available organizations. At the turn of the last century these were the fraternal, the military and the union models of organization for labor. Consider a contemporary aggrieved group that

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<sup>2</sup> I think a very explicit variable is ignored here: the goal of the movement. The scope and quality of movement issue is associated with organization form. Certain kinds of interests require certain forms of organization. For example, professional claims require professional organization; movements wanting to change the rule of the game will not engage in lobbying.

<sup>3</sup> See for example the debate on the relationship between cultural values and economic development in the *American Journal of Political Science* (Granato, Inglehart, Leblang 1996a, b, Jackman, Miller 1996a, b).

faces a strategically important decision of organization form. Is their choice constrained as much as the U.S. labor movement's a century ago? The set of culturally familiar and accepted patterns of organization forms and actions continuously broadens due to the expansion of different kinds of media.

The proposed synthesis of political opportunities, mobilizing structures and framing attempts to deal with many variables by clustering them and placing along different dimensions. The problem is that some of these variables fit into more than one category. For example, media systems can be seen as an element of opportunity structure – constraining openness of social discourse –, at the same time they can be part of the mobilizing structure – certain subcultures communicate primarily through their media – like the Internet. Consequently, it is difficult to establish causal relationships between elements of clusters, if the same variables can be dependent and independent in different configurations. After all, this framework provides a common research agenda, and helps to relate the findings of different research traditions. It can be welcome as an important step to elaborate a dynamic, multiagent approach to social movements<sup>4</sup> that is appropriate to explain phenomena that emerge and operate in a structural environment, and which aim to elicit changes in this structure at the same time. The framework succeeded to incorporate considerations of diverse theoretical traditions. Yet, it overstates the influence of macro-structure, and handles meso- and micro-level variables as dependent upon it.

This synthesis stresses the dominance of structural variables – structure of political opportunities in the first place – which shape the prospects of collective action. The state structure influences the scale and sets the opportunities of collective action. Mobilizing structures together with political opportunities determine the movement form. The available cultural toolkit, organizational culture and connective structures shape further the organizational form of movement. National variations of political structure, organizational culture and connective structures determine the likely type of collective action. According to the proponents of this approach cross-national comparisons of social movements can shed light on the relationship between the relevant variables by analyzing the variance of structural variables and movement types.

### ***Volatile organizations in a globalizing structure of opportunities***

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<sup>4</sup> Charles Tilly (1985) has called for an approach like this to specify the connections between the individual (micro-level) and the collective decisions (meso-level).



There are two main reasons why cross-national comparisons are losing ground. One is related to the transnational tendencies in movement activity, the other to the particularly volatile nature of movement phenomena. Growing relevance of inter-, and supra-national jurisdiction and political organizations (e.g., international juridical and economic treaties, the European Union, the UN, the NATO, WTO, etc.) defines a multi-level polity that reduces the constraints a national political structure poses on collective action. A multi-level polity provides the challengers multiple choices to influence the domestic policy outcome (Marks and McAdam 1999). Parallel to this change, mobilizing structures are also less constrained by national contexts. Insurgents can join to transnational movement networks and compete for international resource pools. Due to the multiplication of relational and non-relational channels, they are less constrained by the readily available cultural toolkit and organizational infrastructure defined by their national context.

Besides transnational movement organizations and supra-governmental organizations, Keck and Sikkink (1998) emphasize the increasing role of a global public. When political opportunities to influence the government are blocked, various NGOs often mobilize their transnational advocacy network. Fellow NGOs from other countries exert pressure on their governments to exert pressure on the insurgent organization's government through direct contacts or intergovernmental organizations.

The structure of political opportunities are still important factors in shaping movements, but states have less power to constrain the opportunities. For example the European Union creates a multi-level polity "in which institutional power is increasingly distributed over a host of EU, national and even sub-national bodies, commissions and other decision-making agencies" (Marks and McAdam 1998: 97). It defines a new set of opportunities to insurgents, which compete for recognition at least on European and on domestic level simultaneously. To complicate the question further, some of these are also represented on the global level. Ostensibly, these organizations have to adapt to three set of political opportunities. Take France, for instance, which was the example of "selective exclusion" in Kriesi's typology of political opportunity structures (1996). France is a strong state with an exclusive dominant strategy on the behalf of the state. In this national setting challengers are bound to chose disruptive tactics like mass strikes, sit-in, marching and blockading. On the European level, French movement organizations had better compromise and use non-disruptive tactics. The European institutional system is open to interest group activity through the Commission, but can hardly be influenced by unconventional activity. Imig and Tarrow (1998) found relatively little transnational contentious activity forming around the European Union. This is because of the decision-

making system of the EU on the one hand, and because nation states, as policy implementers, are more visible targets for unconventional political action in the current state of the integration process on the other.<sup>5</sup> However, they claim the EU is a relevant institution in reshaping the political opportunity structure. It is a new center of decision-making, a generator of a unifying European public, and even a funding source for certain social issues.

The other reason why cross-national comparisons are becoming less promising concerns the volatile character of movement phenomena. Social movements are the most flexible elements in democratic political representational systems. They are characterized by reative combination and aggregation of various resources. Goals, tactics, forms are influenced by several variables from social structure to political opportunity space; only the role of the movement is permanent. Their resource maximizing capacity is dependent on their adaptation potential. Professionalization of leadership has resulted in accumulated knowledge on tactical repertoires. Fast diffusion of mobilization tactics and protest techniques through relational and non-relational channels helps movement entrepreneurs to creatively combine different orientations and means (McAdam and Rucht 1993). Professional leaders are consciously involved in researching for solutions of institutionally equivalent movements, and in constructing identification with the transmitter movement. Transnational networking, multi-level polity settings and the expansion of available modular repertoire erode coherent movement types. Consequently it is very difficult, if possible, to match movement types with national settings. Therefore, the scope of cross-national comparative research is becoming increasingly limited.

Tarrow (1996) suggests a model of “dynamic statism” which focuses on changes of institutional structure in time, allows sub-national comparisons, and differentiates between opportunities for the advance of different goals and diverse constituencies. He proposes a method that Charles Ragin (1987, 1994) terms qualitative case-oriented research. This explores how different causes, conditions or opportunities fit together in one setting, and contrast it with other settings or an ideal-typical construction.

Tarrow claims that the state structure provides only a rough initial grid in understanding how movements make decisions. The differences can be grasped on sub-national levels. The same structure of opportunities affects movement organizations with different goals and with distinct social locus of support differently. The same structural environment results differently in relatively similar movements in different phases of

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<sup>5</sup> Tarrow (1998) in comparing pre-modern and modern tactical repertoires of contentious politics notes that pre-eighteen century challengers of power were *parochial*, because local communities

their life cycle. Moreover, while organizations operate in a structured environment of opportunities, they are about to change these opportunities. Social movements continuously redefine the state, while making new opportunities for themselves, for their allies and opponents.

Although this multi-level comparative approach is able to explore the dynamics of the relationship between key forces and key actors, yet it is almost impossible to find comparable movements. The dynamism of this model threatens the robustness of the explanation. A small change in the opportunities of a movement elicits changes in the opportunities of all other actors. In turn, the adaptive answer of these actors alters further the political environment. If we add the dimension of cycle phase and the consequences of identical changes on the transnational level to this causally complex model, there will hardly be any instances that could be compared. This model allows the comparison of complex combinations of diverse variables, but makes extremely difficult to control for any single variable.

I assert that it is possible to enjoy the strength of both cross-sectional and qualitative case-oriented study of social movements. This possibility lies in the selection of convenient subjects of study. I claim that the study of multi-profile movement organizations allows us to make a multi-level comparison in which we can control for the effects of different variables. Multi-profile movement organizations are concentrating on a single issue. In response to the volatile and diversified structure of opportunities these maximize utility by the extensive combination of diverse orientations, tactical repertoires, organizational characteristics and mobilizing tactics. In such organizations, one finds the combination of pressure group activity, interest representation, client service, self-help, and collective-identity building functions. That is, multi-profile organizations diversify their tactical repertoire and mobilizing strategies. Diverse profiles of the same organization contest with a separate set of modular repertoire to access different types of resources in order to gain the most efficient combination of these. Respectively, the multiplication of the organization's face allows distinct treatment of relevant actors, to offer them suitable exchange values and arguments.

Sympathizers are offered with different bundles of incentives by movement organization. People choose the one that suits the set of resources they are willing to exchange. Supporters connected to the same profile contribute with the same composition of resources. Organization leaders are involved in the aggregation, and make use of these various resources in goal achievement. Finally, various profiles award the organization

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contended local executives, and failed to identify the centers of power.

with different sources of legitimacy, which can be allocated to support interest group, self-help service or value representation activities.

The study of multi-profile movement organizations can offer a multi-level comparison. On the cross-national level, we can examine what types of opportunity structures facilitate this organizational hybrid. To what extent volatile opportunity structures and multi-level polity settings are responsible for the mushrooming of it? Or, on a certain level of European integration, how constraining is the national political structure? On the level of social movement sector, we can ask, what issues are advocated by such organizations? And what is the location of support? On the level of the social movement industry, we can relax the variable of movement issue to explain the role of support base, underlying networks, or transnational connections. Finally, on the infra-movement level, we can relax such variables as national context, movement issue, organization's support base, relationship with other organizations and authorities, and underlying networks. It lets us examine individual mobilization, the emphases and relationships between movement profiles.

Multi-profile movements provide us with an experiment-like research design where we can control for the most variables possible. It also offers a more refined tool for tracing longitudinal changes. The examination of a single multi-profile organization is more sensitive to small changes in opportunities. Earlier studies have focused on the rise and decline of movements and movement organizations to explain the role of political opportunities. The picture is distorted by path-dependence effects and is not sensitive to small shifts in opportunities. In multi-profile organizations it is enough to examine the small shifts in emphases between organizational profiles. This highly adaptive structure is responsive to relatively small changes in the environment.

In the second part of this paper I show how the study of multi-profile organizations is capable to compare different types of individual mobilization. Previous multi-level comparisons neglected this question. These have operated with rather vague assumptions about individual decisions on participation. Individual mobilization is the core problem of social movement activity. If we want to know anything about the role collective action plays in modern democracies, we have to draw a clear picture of how social movements overcome the participation paradox. Supporters are the ultimate resource of the legitimacy of movement organizations, even if their role in financing is diminishing. The examination of courses of individual mobilization explores the kind of resources used by organizations to what causes on the one hand, and contributes to current debates on the legitimacy of social movements.

### ***Comparative research of multi-profile movement organizations***

The synthesis of McAdam, McCarthy and Zald (1996) leaves the question of participation without answer. In their comparative framework analysis individual mobilization is out of focus. The tradition in which their study originates presumes rational actors, whose utility function is heavily influenced by the structure of society and the activities of authorities. Individual willingness to act is taken as constant and structural changes alter the threshold of participation by altering costs and benefits. Comparison, for them, is a tool for sorting out different effects, to explore diverse configurations of facilitating conditions for the emergence of collective action. Causal relationships of environmental variables (such as political opportunities and mobilizing structures) can only support or disprove certain concepts of individual participation indirectly, but cannot be decisive regarding the expressive or goal-directed nature of action and of calculation processes. Political opportunity variations can justify cost-sensitivity of contribution, while diverse settings of mobilizing structures can clarify the role of social context in decision making. Both the examination of contextual variables in this case cannot offer a satisfactory explanation of cognitive processes conducive to collective action. Mobilizing structures are only facilitate contribution, but do not account for individual mobilization.

McAdam, McCarthy and Zald accept a notion of mobilization that is termed constructive by Tilly (1985). It assumes the prior existence of social ties, the repeated communication of connected individuals that constructs shared attitudes. Collective action is seen as a “direct expression of a fully formed group – a social class, community, ethnic group, union, party, or something else – without asking seriously what connection exists between the acting group and the base population it claims to represent.” (Tilly 1985: 731).

Movements emerge if (1) there are political opportunities to represent new social demands, (2) there are sufficient material resources available, and (3) if the issue in focus gains popular support. The proportion of these three elements determine the form of collective action. It is difficult to think of a movement that completely lacks any one of these elements.<sup>6</sup> The framework of McAdam, McCarthy and Zald allows the examination

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<sup>6</sup> McCarthy and Zald (1990) talks about movements without membership. Similarly, Walker found that 90% of citizen groups received donation from a major financial contributor (from a foundation or firm) in their formative stages (Jordan and Maloney 1996). Nevertheless, membership and popular support is not identical. Rather, membership and support are different levels of

of organizations and social ties of decision-makers under the heading of mobilizing structures. Considering the role of social contexts in mobilization, it makes a step toward bridging the micro-macro gap in social movement theory, yet misses an important element. Mobilization is first and foremost a cognitive process, which can be more feasible under certain conditions than others. Until we do not have a clear picture of this cognitive process, we cannot adequately ascertain the role of environmental variables in mobilization.

The problem of free-riding and the participation paradox described by Olson (1994) occupy central roles in social movement theories. Empirical data show that collective action regularly emerges without providing calculable benefits for the individual. This failure of rational actor theory is often used as an ultimate claim to jettison models that are based on rational actor assumptions. The challenge is serious, since costs-benefits calculus is a pivot of political process and resource mobilization approaches. There are several attempts to solve free-riding problems without denying rational calculus, by merely broadening the notion of rationality. I am going to review these attempts in order to find a solution that fits the empirically successful framework of McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, and which can be used in comparative studies.

Olson's theory predicts that rational self-interested individuals of a large group will not contribute to the production of a valued collective good, if they are not excludable from the consumption of the collective good, and their contribution is not perceptible. That is they will free ride. If there is no one whose benefit of the collective good exceeds the cost of contribution, the collective good will not be produced.

What explains proliferation of collective action and social movements then? Olson argues that collective action is a by-product; organizations provide selective material incentives in a "tied sale" of collective and non-collective goods (1994). Offering selective material incentives postulates the existence of a strong formal organization. There is a clear trend of proliferation of inclusive organizations, and more "public" interest groups. Obviously these cannot secure membership in this way, although it can be a useful tool in the hand of organizations of the same social movement industry that are competing for the same membership pool.

There are at least three directions to resolve this paradox: (1) denying the existence of the paradox; (2) offering a more appropriate model of individual decision

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commitment to a specific movement goal. Indispensability of popular support is highlighted by the fact that professional interest groups, pressure groups, or sometimes even state agencies try to launch their own popular movements (e.g. Useem and Zald 1990 on promotion of nuclear energy

making, usually with various incentive types; and (3) collectivist solutions that depart from the individualist nature of the decision process. The first group consists of very diverse arguments. One stream denies that membership is costly. The mechanism of calculus is the same that Olson describes, and the problem is eliminated by lowering the costs below the threshold. Another branch of arguments is that of new social movement theories. Oversimplifying and blurring the difference of various theories, they see collective identity as the ultimate good for which individuals join movements. The rewards a movement of this kind can offer are not subject to free riding.<sup>7</sup>

This second branch of solutions identifies individual payoffs, and tries to broaden the notion of rationality by entering various non-material incentives into the individual's equation of participation. Olson himself accepts the role of social and moral inducements in mobilization, but he claimed these non-calculable. Soft or non-material incentives are grouped in three categories (Jordan and Maloney 1996). Solidarity incentives derive from socializing opportunities of membership (attending gatherings, meet people, etc.). Purposive incentives are tied to the purposive ends of the movement. It sounds trivial that joining the production of a collective good is rewarding if one approves that purpose. Proponents of purposive incentives neglect the non-excludable nature of the collective good. It might be more adequate to see purposive incentives as psychological rewards of being influential in the production of a highly valued collective good.<sup>8</sup> The last type is that of expressive incentives, benefits derived from the expression of certain interests or values. This case is very close to expressive voting (Aldrich 1997, Brennan and Hamlin 1998); the only difference is that alienation is not threatening since there is a wide range of products to choose from - or at least more than in an election. Soft or social incentives try to grasp the different types of rewards a movement can provide. Entering various incentives into the equation allows combining rival theories.

Besides soft incentives there are other alternatives to Olson's calculation. Some argue that the provision of a collective good is evaluated differently than the avoidance of a collective bad. Instead of maximizing expected utility members try to minimize

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use, McCarthy (1994) on drunk-driving legislation, Goode and Ben-Yehuda 1994 on American drug legislation).

<sup>7</sup> Jordan and Maloney (1996) differentiate a solution under the heading of consumerism. Participants value the social signal that membership bears, with subscribing they buy a piece of cultural identity. Identity-orientation was stressed by theorists of new social movements. However, I can hardly imagine a membership that lacks this feature. Even juvenile delinquent subcultures trade in cultural identification and prestige.

<sup>8</sup> This raises the question of imperfect information and framing. Framing opportunities and manipulating the perception of personal influence are standard tools of mobilization.

maximum regret.<sup>9</sup> It was argued that new social movements are dominantly reactive, and threats of loss are an important mobilizing force of risk society.

It is very easy to present empirical data that contradicts the expected monetary utility model of participation. More difficult is the task to measure the effect of soft incentives. Despite Olson's skepticism, incorporation of soft incentives into the rational calculus of costs and benefits of participation is manageable. Opp, in an empirical study examining the West-German anti-nuclear movement (1988), found three categories of incentive variables. The principal explaining variables in participation were public good incentives, i.e., preference for the collective good (to be more accurate, to avoid bad). Normative factors – protest norms and expectations of reference persons – also had a positive effect on contribution. The third contributing factor was the psychological gratification of protest, especially a 'feel good' factor. These were also more important than sanctions.

The normative factor of Opp takes us to the last family of solutions of the participation paradox, what I have called collectivist solutions. These are collectivist in the sense that the individual calculus is heavily influenced by the preferences attributed to others. Individuals are not detached from their social context while making decisions about membership. Rational actors reckon that success or failure of collective action hinges on individual choices of like-minded people. Therefore to estimate the necessity to join they calculate the likely decisions of other potential members. This concept of collective decision does not eliminate the problem of free-riding, only gives it a new perspective: expected utility is conditioned by others' choices.

Game theoretic approaches to voting behavior predict either nearly zero or nearly maximal turnout, but never the typical real-life outcome. Anticipation of other rational actors' choice on the basis of one's own reasoning results in a never-ending cycle moving from one equilibrium to the other. If I am aware that it is not rational to vote and I know that everyone thinks the same, I go voting. But I assume that every rational actor concludes this way, therefore I do not vote. If they are like me, it is rational to vote again, and the cycle cannot be settled (Aldrich 1997).

Finkel and Muller (1998) tested a collective interest model in a panel survey. This model predicts participation on the part of the individual if she is unsatisfied with the current provision of a public good, sees the collective effort likely to succeed, and believes that her contribution enhances the likelihood of provision of the collective good.

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<sup>9</sup> The minimax regret strategy also comes from the theory of voting. (Aldrich 1997)



Survey data suggested that soft incentives are not as important as generally accepted. Rather, soft incentives are by-products of rationalization of past participation.<sup>10</sup>

Anthony Oberschall (1994) argues that protest goods are different from all other collective goods, because their benefit does not diminish as a function of the number of beneficiaries. It is also subject to free-riding but not to the crowding effect. He describes a value-expectancy theory of participation in which the key variables are the value of the collective good, the individual participation's contribution to success, costs, selective incentives and the number of participants.

“They exchange information, communicate intentions, build confidence and commitment, influence one another with social rewards and sanctions in an assurance game. When they decide, they are assured of the other's participation. [...] commitment and assurance results from the mobilizing activities of associations, clubs, churches, civic groups, and informal peer groups.”

(Oberschall 1994: 94)

Eventually, he argues for the importance of non-organizational mobilizing structures in individual calculations. Here we are again at the role of preexisting networks. It sounds reasonable to accept that people count as a team member (Sugden 1993), but the question what makes them a team remains unresolved again. Both theoretical considerations and empirical evidences underscore the influence of social networks on mobilization (Gould 1992, Oberschall 1994, Finkel and Muller 1998). It is obvious that cooperation problems vanish with infinite iteration (Opp 1994), but how durable and binding are the social relationships in question? Gould (1992) notes that the stronger the network ties are, the less credible is the threat of exit options (e.g. in friendship networks). Along with the increasing relevance of weak ties and simplex relationships, networks become less binding and sanctions much weaker. One could add that an individual bears multiple social roles many of those are conflicting: separate roles tie her in various networks (professional, local community, friendship). Social conflicts are often manifested within a single decision-maker by conflicting role-expectancies. Which network mobilizes a nuclear engineer who lives in a community near to a planned nuclear dump, and whose friends are members of the community elite? The problem is puzzling. Networks are

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<sup>10</sup> Research of motivation based on member (and even non-member) reports are subject to several distortion effects. Respondent accounts are rationalizations of past decisions, their attitudes to past participation might change due to new information, movement success or failure, etc. It is no wonder that material interest is rarely reported.

subject to individual choices while constraining choices in turn. However, individuals strive to harmonize their social roles, and this ambition fashions their choices. In the case of conflicting role-expectations different network ties are also evaluated in the decision making process.

What would be an adequate comparative approach to mobilizing processes? I think the concept of selective incentives equip us with a useful tool to examine simultaneous effects of diverse motivations. The influence of social context can be described in terms of costs and rewards, therefore the calculus that entails social incentives does not ignore the embeddedness of decision making. Most practical problems with selective incentives derive from the research design that aimed to explore the influence of incentives by member reports. Finkel and Muller (1998) warn us that member narratives of participation are distorted. They propose panel survey to reveal the real structure of motivations, but I think this method is very costly and focuses solely on the reliability of the data.

Different movement types require different level of commitment and provide different rewards for participation. A proper comparison would be one that relates movement types to incentive types, level of organization and movement goals. There are many typologies of social movements, categorizing variables are numerous from the level of established representation in polity to the level of organization. However, the categories are volatile, and their boundaries are blurred. Difficulties of categorizing derive from three processes: (1) the changing social and political environment evokes adaptation of formal structure and tactical repertoire of the movements; (2) successful mobilizing and campaigning techniques are subject to cross-sectional diffusion (McAdam and Rucht 1993); (4) formation of supranational centers of power creates multi-level polities; and (3) life cycle and movement history also change the face of movements. As a result of these factors we experience proliferation of hybrid, multi-profile movements. Pressure groups with grassroots wings, self-help movements with established party or state connections bring in new difficulties. A hybrid movement applies various tactics and offers various collective and non-collective goods to its members, yet it can be a single-issue movement. Diversification of movement activity allows efficient combination of advocacy and mobilization tactics. Multi-profile movements are able to mobilize huge blocks of diversified membership around an issue and/or an ideology by tailoring costs and rewards to subgroups of potential membership. Diverse profiles of the same movement offer diverse incentives to attract as many people as possible. Those who are attracted by the same profile are likely to exploit the same selective opportunities, will

contribute at the same level, and will be arranged along an identifiable internal network pattern.

Let me show an example to clarify this hypothesis. The Hungarian Association of Large Families (abbreviated NOE in Hungarian) is among the best-organized social movement organizations in the country. It was founded in 1987 in the year before the introduction of the progressive tax-system in the late Kádár-era. NOE has started with 150 members and today has 23,000 member-families.<sup>11</sup> The general goal of the organization is to represent the interests of large families independently from any party or church.<sup>12</sup> It has three main profiles. First, NOE works as an interest group, which maintains established relationships with the institutions responsible for family-policy, social, education and economic policy, and also with those civil organizations that can influence legislation in these fields.<sup>13</sup> They aim to establish good relationships with all governments, but they have stronger influence when conservative parties are incumbent. Not only middle-right politicians are represented in NOE, but the organization was invited to some advisory and legislative committees in its own right.<sup>14</sup> In the period of left-libertarian government they become more active in protesting and petitioning. Their only huge contentious event, the so-called “*Stroller March*” was organized to demonstrate against the *Bokros-package* which cut welfare spending in 1995.

Second, it works as a self-help group that offers club goods, organizes mutual help networks and educational programs. They run a legal advice service, an advice service on how to obtain social policy benefits, another on housing problems, one on consumer rights, and an educational counseling service. “Home-start” is a mutual help program for families with newborn babies. Local chapters and the central body regularly organize family days, summer-camps, excursions and other social events. Local associations organize consumption communities and swapping networks. Collective-identity building and connection of like-minded people are among the main goals of NOE. They argue – right – that those founding a large family are often stigmatized and regarded as deviant in Hungary.

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<sup>11</sup> It means a membership over 100 000, because the average family size is six people.

<sup>12</sup> The ideological affiliation of leaders and members can be well identified with middle-right conservatism. Nevertheless, the organization keeps more distance from historical churches than it is usual among the organizations of this ideological register.

<sup>13</sup> “Our participation in committees of legislation is not spectacular. The achievements are usually manifested in the endproduct of legislative work only, often without any reference to the NOE” – quotation from the official website of the organization (www.noe.hu 20.03.2002.)

<sup>14</sup> The first Minister of Family and Social Affairs of the Third Republic was among the founders of the Association.

Third, NOE works as an inclusive movement that aims to strengthen and to represent family values to the larger society.<sup>15</sup> They want to raise consciousness about the problems of large families, and about the threatening consequences of decreasing population. This broadening of focus legitimizes their inclusion in governmental committees as representatives of family interests, however, their definition of family is quite restrictive. It is an interesting and quite neglected question that the inclusiveness of a movement organization cannot be anything else than a communicative construction. Only statements can make an organization inclusive. The three identifiable profiles of NOE can also be explored through the distinct communicational repertoire of the distinct profiles. Statements, declarations and advisory documents of interest group activity are rational arguments presented in an official tone. Representation of family values to the larger society is calling attention of the national public to gain popular support. These are strong ideological arguments about basic goals and values presented in an emotional fashion. The major communicational channel for supporting self-help activity is the official newsletter of the organization. It lacks the arguments of the previous type, rather it aims to strengthen the collective identity, and to show how its basic ideological framework can construe all relevant questions of life (Kitzinger, 2000)

NOE has a federal structure. Its strong central leadership works like a classic interest group: it organizes the work of local chapters, maintains relations with the polity, participates in legislation committees, communicates aims to the national public, issues official declarations and recommendations, and fosters the diffusion of local initiatives. Local chapters carry out tasks related to the latter two profiles. In addition, local movement communities secure high level of involvement through free-riding-proof social incentives, and foster the emergence of multiplex ties through dense transactions among members. This results in high level of commitment and continuous mobilization of membership. The joint presence of these two profiles allows the organization to make credible commitments to institutional politics and, at the same time, keep the number of free-riders low. The organization does not hold recruiting campaigns; they are aware of the mobilizing potential of networks. In addition, it offers material selective incentives to large families, like reduced seasonal tickets, discount shopping opportunities, etc. The work and life of local movement communities support the identity-oriented approach of

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<sup>15</sup> “Our interest protection activity does not aiming at protecting only the interests of large families or the interests of our member families. We work in the interest of all Hungarian families.” – quotation from the mission statement of the Association ([www.noe.hu](http://www.noe.hu) 20.03.2002.) This inclusiveness is separated as an abstract ideal within the organization. Deprived Roma population is highly overrepresented among the large families in Hungary, but there are only a few dozen Roma families in the Association.

new social movements that interpret movements as media for collective production of shared meanings and identities. At the same time, interest representation, influencing policy, and efficient and organized mobilization of resources support the view of the resource mobilization paradigm.

The value representation profile lies between interest group and self-help activities. It aims to gain popular support for their claims that strengthen their position in lobbying, on the one hand, and fosters recruitment, on the other. Value representation and lobbying require high level of organization; transactions are mediated by a few professionals who connect peripheries of the movement network and maintain outside relationships. This builds a wheel-shaped network pattern that characterizes inclusive public interest groups (Diani, 1992). Movements of this kind require minimal investment on behalf of members and offer few prospects to influence movement goals. Self-help and community building activities build redundant network ties, which suggests strong emotional involvement and high individual investment. “Clique” network pattern has a strong expressive dimension. The high level of involvement is often based on strong ideology or cultural orientation, and accompanied by relatively high influence on movement goals. In NOE different rewards can be obtained at different levels of involvement. Basic material incentives are available to every single member, who has at least three children and pays the HUF 1500 annual subscription<sup>16</sup>. Membership in a local chapter allows access to further material and soft incentives; additional costs of participation in these are non-material, and members contribute with voluntary work and mutual help. We can expect NOE members to participate in networks that fit their demands best. They can choose their level of involvement and also on the incentive opportunities they exploit.

With the examination of infra-movement network ties of members of hybrid movements, we can draw a picture of their motivations and cost/benefit calculations without depending solely on rationalizing narratives. Agents of the same network pattern might account differently for their participation, but their network ties mark their motivations for becoming and, most importantly, for staying members. Research into multi-profile movements allows us to fix many variables that make the comparison of individual mobilization difficult. We do not have to filter the effect of movement issue and ideology or cultural orientation of the movement, because these are common in all profiles. The varying influence of political opportunity structure is also settled from the

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<sup>16</sup> HUF 1500 is about \$60, the price of ten loaf of bread or two adult entry ticket to the Budapest Zoo (members are entitled to buy a seasonal family ticket to the Zoo for HUF 500).

perspective of movement profiles, because every profile at a given moment is constrained by the same opportunities.<sup>17</sup> And finally, movement profiles have to manage the same resources. Individual payoffs vary with different packages of costs and rewards. When everything else is equal, choice of participation and participation form is determined by individual preferences for different bundles of costs and rewards which different movement profiles can offer them.

### ***Conclusions – A Research Agenda***

The existence of multi-profile movement organization shows, that national structures of political opportunities do not constrain the strategic choices of movement organizations to the extent it was assumed earlier. Moreover, the organizations' position in the movement sector is also a weak predictor of its tactical repertoire and course of mobilization. The characteristics of those clear movement types, that were associated with certain configurations of political opportunities, can now be find within single movement organizations. This change calls for a new approach to explore those complex combinations of variables that influence movement emergence and outcome.

The research of multi-profile movements offers new prospects to comparative research of social movements. It allows a multi-level comparison that combines the strengths of cross-sectional, variable-oriented and qualitative, case-oriented research. The units of analysis allow an experiment-like research. We can relax many variables on different levels of comparison to account for the causes of variations. This setting is able to explore the combination of causal relationships on different level. It also helps to overcome the problems that originate in the a priori assumptions about the hierarchy of the clusters of relevant variables.

In order to examine the causes of variations of movement activity, first, we have to explore what kinds of opportunity structures are facilitating the emergence of multi-profile organizations. How important variable is the level of integration into supra-governmental organizations? Is there a difference between new and older democracies? Does the instability of governments make movement organizations to develop diverse organizational profiles? Sub-national comparison can shed light on what issues and

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<sup>17</sup> However, changing political opportunities influence the relationship between profiles of a movement. For example when a coalition governs which is supportive to movement goals interest group activity increase; when another hostile coalition is incumbent, the mass mobilization and self-help profiles become more relevant. (Jenkins 1995, Jenkins and Klandermans 1995).

support base is feasible to such organizations. On the level of movement industry the relevant questions are concerned with the characteristics of the support base. What connective structures are conducive to the development of diverse profiles? How connections to transnational advocacy networks influence movement strategy? Finally, sub-organizational research shed light on how diverse profiles are harmonized with each other. What mobilization tactics are in effect? What kinds of resources are exchanged? And how the diverse profiles are used in the production of public goods? The proposed analysis of multi-profile movement organizations provides a common framework for all these questions.

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