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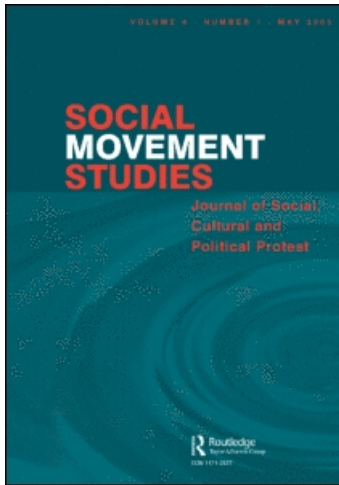
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### Explaining How Political Culture Changes: Catholic Activism and the Secular Left in Italian Peace Movements

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# Explaining How Political Culture Changes: Catholic Activism and the Secular Left in Italian Peace Movements

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**ABSTRACT** *Political cultures have usually been studied as static and perhaps monolithic. If any attention has been dedicated to how political cultures change it has been devoted to exogenous factors. In recent years, however, some authors have advocated exploring the role of endogenous factors. In this article, we reflect on the advantages of a comprehensive approach to explaining how political cultures change, embracing endogenous and exogenous factors. We look at peace mobilizations in Italy as a case study, which allows examination of the interactions of the two political cultures of Marxism and Catholicism. Our work suggests some provisional theories about the dynamics that lead to hybridization between different political families. These dynamics can be understood through the genealogy of a ‘grammar of responsibility’. We argue that the factors that condition change in political culture relate to both the national and the international political context. We also show how these processes of change occur as a result of collective action, although individuals also perform important functions of co-ordination, brokerage, leadership, and subversion of codes. Moreover, we show that change in political cultures does not occur in a linear manner but follows a shifting course, which alternates periods of innovation and of involution or regression.*

**KEY WORDS:** Political cultures, peace movement, Italy, political violence, social change, direct action

## How Do Political Cultures Change?

Political cultures had long been neglected by the social sciences, until the seminal works by Almond and Verba at the beginning of the 1960s.<sup>1</sup> For both Marxist-influenced approaches and those of a liberal origin, ‘the study of political culture was senseless, since all the indicators signalled the advent of an educated society, civically oriented and participative’ (Almond, 2005, pp. 252–253). Later, the first research programme was fully structured on the basis of quantitative comparative methods for analysing values, sentiments and beliefs to explain political behaviour. The main limitation was the holistic and rather static character attributed to political cultures. More specifically, the concept

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of political culture that emerged from the research by Almond and Verba gave rise to a number of research questions.

One of these concerned the relative distribution of orientations and attitudes in a nation-state in the search for any cleavages that might exist. Secondly, the role played by institutional models in shaping prevalent cultural norms was investigated. Questions were also asked about political culture as a dependent variable, to be explained in terms of its origin, its transmission through processes of socialization and its conservation over time. Other questions concerned political culture as an independent variable, with questions asked about its impact on the effectiveness of collective action (Czudnowsky, 1968).

On the whole, however, most of the research into political cultures, especially in the English-speaking world, remained anchored on two basic assumptions: firstly, the stability and cohesion of political cultures conceptualized and analysed as a *corpus* of cohesive norms and behaviours, identifiable with 'relative clarity' and, secondly, the preference for the nation-state as a framework of reference, which has resulted in the strong neglect of more local political sub-cultures.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, even if Almond himself underlined the importance of grasping not only the cognitive components of knowledge and beliefs but also the affective component concerning feelings and judgement criteria, the research has concentrated above all on the definition of attitudinal clusters. This neglect of the complexity and organic structure of the concept of political cultures has today become one of the main focus points for research. The central question has become that of the relationship between the persistence and autonomy of political cultures on the one hand and the factors and events which influence their change on the other.

In the literature we can find three main factors relevant to explaining change in political cultures: (1) factors that condition these dynamics related to both the national and the international political context (Almond, 2005); (2) the practices and forms of political action used by actors and how these take shape within broader and more general processes of cultural change (Melucci, 1996a); and (3) how these processes of change occur by means of group action, although individuals can also perform important functions of co-ordination, brokerage, leadership, subversion of codes, etc. (della Porta & Tarrow, 2005).

But another set of factors could be outlined. This would entail an attempt to integrate macro- and micro-aspects, structures and processes, based upon a 'sensitivity to history' in a dynamic and relational way (McAdam *et al.*, 2001). This means that political culture takes shape through the negotiation of different components in contentious historical processes in constant evolution. This brings us to a fourth approach: the importance of taking account of relational and diachronic terms between different cultures. We will see that in our case study changes did not occur in a linear manner but followed a shifting course which alternated between periods of innovation and regression.

Within this frame we broaden the concept of political culture in a dynamic way, both towards inner and external relationships. Following Lichterman and Cefaï (2006, p. 392), political cultures are 'sets of symbols and meanings or styles of action that organize political claims making and opinion-forming by individuals or collectivities'. Political cultures are patterns of shared public symbols, meanings and styles of action, which emerge and become consolidated through *longue-durée* historical processes. Therefore, it is important to study political cultures not only in so far as they are performative – that is, capable of binding, supporting and directing the actions of individual and collective actors – but also inasmuch as they are *structures*. In effect, these structures are not simply collections, inventories

or catalogues of moral and political values and options, but are 'structures' in that they constitute coherent articulations of views on the world and actions, aiming to reduce the complexity and the intrinsic contradictory nature of action, of the codes of communication which allow actors to understand and comprehend each other reciprocally.<sup>3</sup> In this direction, a useful tool is the concept of grammar. Generally, grammars are stable frameworks of rules which do not predetermine the content of their expression (although they do constrain the actual formulas) but rather give free vent to expression and reciprocal understanding. In this sense, grammars may be said to have a generative character. Here we use the concept of grammar in a narrower sense. As suggested by Boltanski (2008), a political *and* moral grammar is an ideological construction designed to reduce, attenuate or dissimulate some contradictions of a specific political culture.

The dynamic and relational turn allows us to highlight, therefore, whether or not, and how, real shifts take place in cultures and practices, styles of action and of thought: in other words, which kinds of dynamic lead to *métissage*, contamination and hybridization among different families of political actors. We do not deny the relevance of other sets of factors and conditions but merely aim to contribute to a cumulative knowledge about the ways in which hybridization between political cultures goes on. Our specific objective is *to analyse the ways in which reciprocal changes take place among various social movement organizations*.

We proceed by showing the history of relationships between the two main groups active in the Italian Peace Movement (Catholics and Marxists). In a first period, covering the 1950s and the 1960s, we observe a prevalent incorporation of Marxist elements by the Catholic pacifist field, and a grammar of responsibility emerging within the Catholic peace movement. During the 1970s the relationships became more complex: on the one hand relations between groups atrophied; on the other, for many activists the two identities overlapped. After 1977 the rejection of violence became again a field of intensive dialogue. In the 1980s a revision of the grammar, emphasizing elements of direct action began to occur by a few Marxist groups. This process of incorporation spread and became more important in the 1990s, contributing to the birth of the Global Justice Movement, where exchanges and encounters between the two cultures were intensified again. In the conclusion, we examine the outcomes in terms of change in political culture.

### **Peace and Justice: First Encounters between Catholic and Secular Politics (the 1950s and the 1960s)**

Historically, the Italian peace movement has been characterized as a meeting place for different traditions of thought: Christian pacifism, secular pacifism, anti-militarism (whether of a revolutionary, anarchist or socialist expression) and internationalism (Ruzza, 1997; Giugni, 2004). In particular, in view of the heterogeneous nature of this constellation of experiences and organized realities, we focus on the relationships among *Christian pacifist* groups and *left-wing social movement* organizations. We are not speaking of two completely separate cultures, but consider them as analytically distinct because this is how activists view them.

#### *Encounters between Intellectual Elites*

The journey we describe here begins in the second post-war period. Between the start of the 1950s and the first half of the 1960s in Italy, some individuals, especially intellectuals,

tried to establish points of integration between Christian and Marxist ideas and demands. In these years other forms of collaboration with anti-imperialist Marxist movements came to the fore. Between the mid-1950s and the start of the 1960s, there was a first wave of protests against nuclear testing and in favour of nuclear disarmament. At the same time, backing and support for movements in favour of decolonization (particularly in Africa and most especially with respect to Algeria), became vital for many movements of Catholic background. This was a period in which the support for anti-colonial movements and active interest in the agendas of non-aligned countries overlapped, thus forming another important point of contact between factions of the Communist Party and left-wing and union sections of the Christian sphere. In many cases, their philosophy could not strictly be regarded as non-violent. In both the Catholic and secular spheres, these movements sometimes justified violence, in specific cases of defensive violence.<sup>4</sup> A further influence came from French Christian thought. As well as publications from the other side of the Alps, there emerged in Italy small journals which served as a space for reflection and the elaboration of new ideas. These publications were either Catholic or based upon a Catholic and secular collaboration. They were quite varied, but one common tenet was a piercing criticism of the DC (Christian Democracy Party) party, held to be guilty of narrow-minded integralism and of a lack of attention to social reform. Similarly negative was the judgement passed on the PCI (Italian Communist Party), as a result of its attempt to establish dialogue with the DC on the basis of an analogous integralism. At the same time, the PCI was criticized by some left-wing activists for overlooking the fact that the Catholic sphere was broader than simply the DC, and that the dialogue was not merely within the institutional party field, but had to be found on a revision of respective *weltanschauung*. These experiences played a significant role in maintaining the debate in the period following the Second Vatican Council, as well as in favouring the meeting with some groups of the Marxist left in 1968. Many of the realities of the new left were to surface from the convergence of these different political cultures (Saresella, 2005).

These publications were not made accessible or distributed in parishes or seminaries. In this period, the toughest opposition to such debate came mainly from ecclesiastical hierarchies. The Second Vatican Council (held between 1962 and 1965) was a significant moment of contact and revision which absorbed some of the demands emerging from this debate.<sup>5</sup> One indication of its relevance to Vatican II may be observed in the document *Pacem in Terris* (cf. Pope John XXIII, 1963), an encyclical which directly and explicitly deals with the issues of peace, war and disarmament. A valuable quality of the encyclical is its

exit from the fortresses and the ghettos, the tumbling of the ramparts and bastions which Roncalli had already spoken of in Istanbul, the renouncing of ritual purity, the abandoning of all sacred jealousy, for the reunion of believers and non-believers, or better still, 'between Catholics and non-Catholics in the fields of economy, social issues and politics'. (La Valle, 2003, pp. 55–56)

In fact, *Pacem in Terris* concludes with a specific instruction for Catholics to collaborate with non-believers: 'Thus we may witness that an approach or encounter of a practical nature, regarded until yesterday as inappropriate and infertile, may be valuable and fruitful today or become so tomorrow' (La Valle, 2003, p. 57).

The encounters between left-wing Catholics and left-wing secular parties that we have referred to, together with their promoters and respective spaces for debate, are obviously not exclusive to the issues of disarmament, conscientious objection and peace among nations. Co-operation occurred also in contemporary politics, linking peace with justice in practical projects aimed at overcoming exploitation rather than through an ideology. Catholic pacifism remained strongly 'contaminated' by the vision 'of total revolution and of creation of a new person, wholly human in that he or she is liberated from the dehumanizing constraints with which modern capitalism weighs down humanity at the present time' (Boltanski, 2002, p. 6).

### *Brokers for the Future*

The figure of 'broker', as discussed by McAdam *et al.* (2001), can be useful to look more deeply into the effective productive mechanism of new connections between previously unconnected or weakly connected sites. Among the more relevant brokers, we should recall Don Primo Mazzolari, an ex-military chaplain during the First World War, active against fascism during the Resistance, later taking on radically anti-militarist and pacifist positions against Italian membership of NATO. Father Ernesto Balducci, the first to be condemned by an Italian tribunal in 1963 for having openly defended the legitimacy of conscientious objection, publicly appealed for people to fulfil their duty to disobey war and military service, which had become 'necessarily unjust after the invention of the atomic bomb'. In doing so, he talked with secular left leaders and organizations. Don Lorenzo Milani, the parish priest of a little mountain village called Barbiana situated in the area of Mugello (Tuscany), set up a lively popular school and devoted himself to teaching the children of farmers, writing books in collaboration with the students sustaining the idea that 'obedience is no longer a virtue' and the notion of 360° responsibility. Although not acknowledged at the time, their influence on the secular left and their role as brokers would become clear after the 1970s.

Alongside these clergymen, other figures of the Catholic sphere played a brokerage role by encouraging discussion among different political cultures. Among these we may find certain politicians at the local level, such as La Pira, the Christian Democrat mayor of Florence, known for having actively supported conscientious objection and for having been the first to come up with the idea of Cities for Peace.

Individuals on the secular front also played an important role as brokers. The experiences of Danilo Dolci and Aldo Capitini, for example, are particularly emblematic. Despite advocating the spiritual dimension of engagement for peace, both these individuals distanced themselves from the Catholic sphere and took on a distinct critical position.

As a result of Capitini's efforts, an important initiative took shape and has continued to this day. This is the Perugia to Assisi march for peace, the first of which took place on 24 September 1961. Although it did not arise from within Catholic movements, the march represents an event in which sectors of Christian and secular pacifism came together. This setting served to consolidate the rejection of violence and of weapons in the solution of conflicts among classes and among peoples, as well as the debate between Christian pacifists and those referred to as 'Partisans of peace'. The latter were accused of being not against war but against *some* wars, and of being implicitly used by the PCI with regard to pro-Soviet ideas, with the departure of Italy from NATO as their main goal.

*Let's Stay in Touch, at a Distance*

As noted, in the 1960s, the debate between the two sides encouraged the creation of links: actors in conflict recognized a common territory of value-related norms and references in which to set their arguments.<sup>6</sup> Despite the diffidence felt by much of the Catholic hierarchy, this space contributed to a clear definition of respective positions and identities, and also enabled the joint initiatives mentioned above.

In the period from 1968 to the beginning of the 1970s, relations between left-wing (but not exclusively pacifist) Christian associations and Marxist groups became more intense than ever before, assisted by the double militancy of individuals in Catholic and left-wing groups (Tarrow, 1988). Several organizations, particularly the ACLIs (Italian Associations of Christian Workers, the largest multi-purpose association in Italy), played a crucial role in multiplying opportunities for dialogue between Christians and the secular left concerning peace issues. The wave of protests against the Vietnam War, and more generally the broad cycle of protests on the part of workers, students and feminists, enhanced the relations between secular organizations and left-wing Catholic groups (Tarrow, 1989). Ideas coming from the Second Vatican Council became more diffuse and a fragmentation of the Church hierarchy opened room for independent, explicit, left-oriented actions (Diani, 1996, p. 1066).

Particularly significant in this period was the role played by the CISL (the Christian trade union). Within this trade union, we observe a consistent internal articulation and the co-existence of various cultural formulations and structures. Exponents of left-wing Christian culture, representative of the socialist tradition and individuals of the radical left all formed part of this union.

The formation of an organization named *Cristiani per il socialismo* (Christians for Socialism) in 1972, influenced by the experience of Chile and unthinkable even a few years previously, is a paradigmatic example of the extent to which hybridization between the left-wing Catholic and Marxist spheres took place: the previously almost invisible amalgamation of Catholic partisanship and left-wing militancy was made public, and the participation across the traditional cleavages became visible (Diani, 2000, pp. 398–399).

This was a fertile phase which produced intellectual exchanges and innovations. Although the political culture of the anti-imperialist and pro-Soviet left remained essentially closed to Christian activism, the latter, however, was marked significantly by its encounters with Marxism and by elements of historical materialism. The creation of an 'attribution of similarity' effect, i.e. identification of another political actor as falling within the same category as your own (McAdam *et al.*, 2001, p. 334), particularly significant among Christians mobilized around the issues of peace and justice, was based on the experience of the resistance and struggle against Nazism and fascism. On the other hand, the sketching out of extreme 'polarizations', that is a process of increasing ideological distance between political actors or coalitions (McAdam *et al.*, 2001, p. 322) and ruptures also derived from this experience of resistance. This at once explains the absolute impermeability of the Catholic hierarchy before the Council, and the impermeability mirrored by the socialist and communist parties. Nevertheless, we may point out that certain Christians committed to issues of peace and justice underwent a profound hybridization, thus shedding elements of Puritanism and absolutism, gradually developing a new moral and political grammar. This was not a complete reformulation of the political culture, nor was it a framework imposed on this movement: this is the reason why below we speak about a 'political and moral grammar' (Boltanski, 1990).



### The Grammar of Responsibility

In this case, a new grammar emerges to manage the contradictions within various political cultures. Therefore, the grammar of responsibility tries to deal with the contradictions of Catholicism when involved in political activities and to some extent of Marxism when involved in everyday activities.

Put briefly, we can say that Catholicism has a problematic relationship with the political sphere which goes back to the '*non expedit*', to the critical relations with the twenty-year fascist regime and, until the 1960s with the embarrassment and failure to recognize Catholic activism in factories on the 'social question'. Catholics had a contradictory relationship with political action which for historical reasons had put a brake on the development of their political culture (Manuel *et al.*, 2006). For Marxism, the problem was more an omission of the personal sphere. Where individuals conceived of their commitment in terms of total militancy, the revolutionary choice meant that the questions of why they had made that choice were never asked. This is probably because it was a culture with an aura of clandestinity and sacrifice, with a hiatus between practice and long-term goals. It had an ethic of sacrifice which only justified personal choices through collective reasoning.

This type of contradiction between personal life and the political dimension was not only addressed by the pacifist movement. It also emerged, for instance, as a central issue in the feminist movement, as in the formula 'the personal is political'. Generally, activists in new social movements started to question a tradition of militancy which omitted reflection on motives and personal reasons for one's own political action. Each of these movements found formulas based on the importance of personal engagement and responsibility.

One specific trait of pacifism is that it hinges on a particular interpretation of the principle of direct responsibility. This topic began to be examined and discussed even outside the frontiers of left-leaning Christian associations, and in particular within groups close to pacifist groups and, more generally, *artistic critique* (Boltanski & Chiapello, 2005).

It is a grammar embedded in a principle of responsibility and coherence in peace and social justice politics: that is to say that through these years a culture rooted in links between global themes (such as war, global inequalities, colonialism, environmental problems, power) and personal conduct developed. In this sense, an innovation marked the Catholic political culture which had traditionally framed peace only in terms of individual conscience, and never in terms of collective action. The sensibilities emerging in these years put at the centre of the reflection about global issues this question: *what can I do?*

In very schematic terms, we may state that the grammatical structure we are examining breaks down into three very simple cultural elements, which at the same time are distinct from those of other left-wing cultures:

1. Peace depends on each person, on every individual.
2. Peace is built on dialogue in the contexts of work and everyday life.
3. Peace is built on the sharing of suffering and misery.

This grammar therefore tends to shift the exercise of moral responsibility onto the level of the everyday life of individuals. In other words, it suggests that by reifying 'evils' as systemic evils, each and every individual is prevented from recognizing the roots of evils in everyday life. For this reason, it is necessary to make visible and explain forms

**Table 1.** The grammar of responsibility in the peace movement

Responsibility	Everywhere (everyday life)	Only in specific places and times
Of everyone ( <i>direct</i> )	Everyday responsibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>sharing</i>: downshifting, care taking</li> <li>• <i>not sharing</i>: political consumerism</li> </ul>	Situated responsibility: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>sharing</i>: ‘peace camps’, human shields, twinning, non-violent direct action</li> <li>• <i>not sharing</i>: disarmament campaigns, demonstrations</li> </ul>
Of someone else ( <i>delegated</i> )	Responsibility as a vocation (on a traditional, charismatic or legal basis): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>sharing</i>: <i>conscientizacao</i> (making consciousness)</li> <li>• <i>not sharing</i>: lobbying</li> </ul>	Responsibility as a role: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <i>sharing</i>: peace-brigades</li> <li>• <i>not sharing</i>: peace education</li> </ul>

of personal commitment through educational and cultural practices rather than through forms of political engagement.

In the Table 1 we use the three rules to represent the grammar of responsibility in peace mobilizations and its different forms. We linked each case of the grammar to some kind of repertoires of action. Obviously, it is a representation that stresses the ideal-type character of these practices. The observable phenomenology of empirical actions is, in most cases, the product of combinations between the three rules.

The specific feature of the grammar that surfaced from left-wing Catholic movements consisted in emphasizing the active dimension of responsibility on issues of war, the proliferation of weapons and the dynamics of economic growth. Within this picture, direct responsibility is the stake, it is the most important *enjeu*, it is the expected result of cultural activities for socialization or, more precisely, to use the language of the actors themselves, of *conscientizacao* (making consciousness) (Freire, 2000). In these processes, *direct responsibility* takes shape as a specific form of responsibility. Its political meaning lies in its transformative and generative form of power, through both individual and collective action.

Direct responsibility invites us to go beyond blaming and denunciation. It pushes us towards direct involvement in the struggle against injustice. This appears to be a consequence of the basic principles of non-violence and of the importance given to coherence between goals and action. Individuals are driven to engage in individual and collective action, where means must comply with the intended aims, ‘with no separation between individual change and external action’ (Melucci, 1984, p. 17). Thus, the expressive and instrumental elements of action cannot be distinguished (Biorcio, 2003).

### Violence in the 1970s: An Opportunity to Reflect on Non-violence

The process of hybridization of Catholic pacifism with demands, practices and cultures coming from the left continued gradually throughout the entire decade of the 1960s, reaching its peak at the start of the 1970s. However, at this point we observe a drastic break. The panorama of political opportunities suffered a radical change during the 1970s, due to the declining phase of the cycle of protest and the spread of political violence (Tarrow, 1989). The largest communist party in Western Europe, the Italian Communist

Party seemed to be in the grip of what the literature termed the ‘fear of overtaking the Christian Democrats’. This was one of the structural factors which made a deep mark in the political field. It is not possible in making a more careful reading of this climate to overlook memories of all the bombings and attacks with which the period of the ‘strategy of tension’, as it was called, commenced. The political line of the PCI – the so-called ‘Historical Compromise’ – received harsh criticism and was opposed by all the groups on the new left which had emerged from student and worker activism in the preceding years. The PCI viewed the groups on the new left with class prejudice (particularly if they were not working class), judging them as over-ambitious, insurgent and rebellious.

Violence came to the fore as a theme in this 1970s milieu, even in the difference between those who stigmatized it and those who gloried in it:

1. The police had adopted harsh and particularly violent methods for handling demonstrations since 1968 and these escalated substantially in the early 1970s (della Porta & Reiter, 1998).
2. Violent clashes between groups on the right and left became more violent.
3. Clashes between groups on the left to acquire hegemony became much more frequent and violent (Tarrow, 1989).

The structure of political opportunities had closed and there was a turn by some to extremely radical interpretations and strategies and a willingness to use violence as a strategy. This frame essentially interrupted and blocked the encounters and joint action between pacifist Christians and radical left-wing movements.

But, despite this, some contacts between left-wing Christian movements and the organization linked s mainly to the PCI and CGIL<sup>7</sup> continued. We should also point out that the main cleavage was not between left-wing Christians and the Workers’ Autonomy (whether or not they had embraced the ‘armed option’) but between the constellation of organizations revolving around the PCI and trade unions on the one hand and the vague cluster of extra-parliamentary leftist groups on the other. In this sense, shared opposition to violence created most of the conditions for a common alliance between some Marxist groups and some Christian groups. Moreover, it started a process that little by little made it possible to share some common views about the sense of, and the tactical reasons for, a non-violent repertoire.

### **The Spread of Direct Responsibility (the 1980s and the 1990s)**

#### *Falling in Love Again (the 1980s)*

NATO’s decision to install a new generation of nuclear weapons in Europe in 1979 (cruise and Pershing missiles) created the conditions for a new attribution of *threat and opportunity* (McAdam *et al.*, 2001, pp. 46–47), because in each European country where the missiles were to be sited, governments had to give their own approval for deployment. In parallel, the weakening of leftist terrorism provided a further opportunity for renewed collaboration between left-wing Christians and other movements. The protests against the Euromissiles saw Christians and secular organizations joining hands, constituting a first opportunity for joint participation for many members of Catholic ‘base communities’ (i.e. grassroots left-wing local believers’ collectivities), evangelical churches, Christian workers’ organizations (ACLI) and other local and community associations after the dark

years of terrorism (Salio, 1986, p. 23). Not only did many Christian organizations join and co-promote the main anti-nuclear demonstrations and marches, but above all they offered their publications, press agencies and territorial headquarters. Together with the infrastructures offered by the ARCI,<sup>8</sup> 600 Committees for Peace were established (Lodi, 1984). We should also add that in this phase, a characteristic already present in previous years became even more emphasized, that is, multiple militancy, whereby many members of Christian pacifist organizations also took an active part in secular movements. Christians engaged in the peace mobilizations went beyond organizing demonstrations openly and directly against the Euromissiles by becoming particularly engaged in reflection, debates, assemblies and seminars on the imbalances and inequalities between the Northern and Southern parts of the world, as well as in educational peace activities for the young, fasts, *via crucis*, prayers and vigils for peace, and a wide range of initiatives supporting conscientious objection (della Porta, 1995, p. 109; Ruzza, 1997).

Even more than in the 1970s, the debate around the legitimacy of political violence constituted a new space of encounter and hybridization among groups of different positions. Here we can see the spread of an appeal for a non-violent sensitivity and for an 'aspiration for individual responsibility' (della Porta, 1995, p. 93). On the one hand, fewer confrontations took place between those directing their action towards political goals and those looking towards cultural objectives and lifestyles. Furthermore, those opting for non-violent direct action and those giving preference to institutional politics came together. One interesting aspect of this phase is that, as national demonstrations declined, more action developed at the local level. Here, this new and broad non-violent element led to a multitude of local committees directed towards local initiatives to sensitize municipal public opinion, and towards exerting pressure on local governments to create nuclear free zones (Klandermans, 1996, p. 452; Ruzza, 1997, pp. 103–105). This brought together political sensitivities and cultures which had previously been quite separate: not only Catholics and secular leftist Marxist groups, or non-violents and environmentalists but also a wide range of small local groups, such as anarchists and also some feminists.<sup>9</sup>

Hence, in this period the political culture of the pacifist Catholics seemed to open up to new hybridizations, consolidating the symbolic meanings derived from the non-violent repertoire, focusing on the worth of a condition of weakness (or, more precisely, of 'smallness').<sup>10</sup> Also in this phase, hybridization appeared to be less one-way: earlier it was essentially the political culture of the Catholic left which came to be modified, strengthening certain elements of its moral and political grammar. In the 1980s other peace movement organizations began to undergo hybridization from elements of the Catholic left, whilst the debate on coherence between means and ends, as well as on the practical issues of objectives, began to spread. This occurred in a context wherein teleological action had fallen into crisis. Within the family of the libertarian left, there emerged groups 'based on the principle of individual responsibility', with a 'secular, inclusive and non-totalising approach' (della Porta, 1995, p. 170). Here we witness a now mature process of 'identity shift, defined as alteration in the shared definition of a boundary between two political actors' (McAdam *et al.*, 2001, p. 162). In particular, the distance perceived between the various Catholic organizations is in many cases greater than that between pacifist Catholics and secular left-wing movements.

*Individualization and Direct Responsibility (the 1990s)*

Since the fall of the Berlin Wall, the moral and political grammar of direct responsibility has made room for the expression of two broad repertoires of action: (1) that of lifestyles, embracing a plurality of practices ranging from conscious consumption to boycotting, to self-restriction in what and how one consumes (Micheletti, 2003); and (2) the repertoire of non-violent direct action, also embracing practices to various degrees of commitment, ranging from the display of the peace flag to obstructing trains carrying weapons and polluting nuclear waste, to blockades and direct intervention in places of war (Tosi & Vitale, 2008). There are two aspects we would like to address. On the one hand, in the 1990s certain repertoires of action (political consumerism, peace corps) had *also* been justified on the basis of a grammar dialectically stemming from the encounter between left-wing Catholics and secular groups, which had survived (albeit with modifications) in the practices of Christian pacifist organizations. On the other, from the 1990s onwards, this grammar extended far beyond the frontiers of Christian pacifist organizations and in doing so underwent further modifications, hybridizations, and at the same time contaminated other political cultures.

In other words the grammar of responsibility spread well beyond the confines of the peace movement alone and became a general normative framework of reference for the movement of movements and it favoured the construction of 'tolerant identities' (della Porta, 2005). The reference to direct responsibility spread so much in the 1990s that today it is a trait common to all the movements for global justice, both among individuals and in terms of the organizational culture of social movement organizations.

Of course, similar processes emerged in various middle-class mobilizations (Doherty, 2002). For instance, Lichterman analysed Green movement changes to underline what he called 'Personalism', which supposed that 'individuality has inherent value, apart from one's material and social achievement, no matter what connections to a specific community or institutions the individual maintains' (Lichterman, 1996, p. 86). If this is a general trend in all Western movements, what is specific to the grammar of responsibility in the Italian peace movement is that personal participation is mediated by activism in-groups, and that direct responsibility is not conceived especially for its expressive meaning but, moreover, for its effectiveness in social and political transformation.

**Conclusion: Change in Political Culture**

Far from being fixed and stable, political cultures transform noticeably over time, following capricious logics, within political processes. The study of political cultures has traditionally discussed changes referring only to one of two major kinds of explanation: those related to exogenous factors (i.e. political opportunities, contexts, institutional rules and devices), or related to endogenous factors (i.e. political culture incompleteness and contradictions, charismatic leaders and internal tensions). In this article we have articulated these two approaches by looking at dynamic relationships among political groups. We have focused intensively on the ways in which initially distinct political cultures with well-distinguished symbolic boundaries underwent hybridization through gradual, reciprocal – but non-linear – change. We have looked at peace mobilizations in Italy as a case study rich in events, groups, debates and repertoires of action useful in enlightening this relational approach.

Our main thesis is that over the years the peace movement in Italy has defined a grammar of responsibility for itself, which emerged in specific form in the 1960s, became widespread in the 1990s and today constitutes a framework of reference shared broadly by a large part of the movements for global justice (della Porta *et al.*, 2006). It is worth pointing out that even if we have treated Catholic and Marxist political cultures as separate and analytically distinct,<sup>11</sup> this does not imply that the borders between the two are sharp and clearly distinguishable. Above all, it does not imply that there are no individuals who within themselves experience both cultural matrices and live a dual existence of belonging to both. How can the spread of this normative framework of reference be explained? Of course, no single explanation is sufficient. We see three joint causes.

Firstly, the centrality of the grammar of responsibility is without doubt connected, with its foundational link, to the peace movement. And the issue of peace survives over the years. It moves further and further away from the reference to war and assumes an absolute meaning: the promotion of peace is an asset in itself and is not merely a reactive strategy. Furthermore, it is on the issues of peace that conflicts develop in the political field, in both the institutional arenas and in the relationships between parties and movements. In other words, peace is the issue posed by the new social movements which has mobilized activation, passion and commitment most over the years, while other issues have tended to decrease in intensity (Giugni, 2004). Of course, while there is a relative robustness of the peace movement's *basis* (movement organizations, networks, participants, and the accumulated cultural artefacts, memories and traditions), the peace movement *campaigns*, by means of concerted public displays of worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment, using such means as public meetings, demonstrations, petitions, and press releases (Tilly, 2004, p. 4) are not continuous and could disappear from the public sphere in latent periods. Peace also condenses in itself that set of issues relating to social justice and the environmental sustainability of capitalism. Evidently similar outcomes, with respect to a convergence between previously separated political cultures, have been developed in all Western countries, as the Global Justice 'Movement of Movements' testifies. But, if the outcomes are similar, more comparative research should permit us to highlight different regional paths, and to better consider the different forms of activist dialogue and group encounters (and conflicts) that shape change in political culture.

Secondly, the consolidation and diffusion of individual responsibility must be set in relation to a much more profound set of transformations, related to the processes of individualization which characterize late modernity. Mass society evidently also remains based upon depersonalization, standardized consumption, indifference towards social ties, irresponsibility with regard to social ties and the manipulation of information. Alongside this, however, the processes of differentiation appear also to contain a strong impulse towards the autonomy of individuals, together with many institutional resources to support this impulse. According to Melucci (1996b), individuals increasingly wish to count as *individuals* and not as the *members* of collective groups. Effectively, in an attempt to 'become individuals', each person actively searches for instruments of thought, choice and decision as individuals in all circles of their own everyday life. People tend to set out the definition of limits in mainly individual terms (Melucci, 1996a), more as a form of self-restriction than as a search for new regulations, the

demand for individual responsibility or the need to answer *to* something and *to* someone (Melucci, 1996b).

Thirdly, as we have stated clearly above, the two political cultures that animated the peace movement, those of Marxism and Catholicism, presented internal contradictions and were therefore impracticable. They sought normative elements capable of attenuating their contradictions and they sought them internally and also by interaction. It is a question of looking at how events are interpreted by actors that share a certain political culture and at the meanings they attribute to their action. When events are destabilizing and are neither intelligible nor comprehensible, political actors modify their way of interpreting facts, giving rise to a collective change in political cultures.<sup>12</sup>

While the first two points are well known in the literature, the third point deserves further study to try and make use of the indications that the case study suggests. From a comprehensive sociological viewpoint, political cultures are naturally subject to both internal and external tensions.<sup>13</sup> External events, however, furnish evidence in reality (reality tests) that show up inconsistencies in a culture which require new interpretations. They therefore produce changes in political culture because they change the interpretation and the objectives of action (interests and identities)<sup>14</sup> at the same time. In other words, they furnish escape routes for unsustainable political practices perceived internally as no longer feasible. *We see two ways in which this change occurs.*

The first way consists of a search for a reflexive change of one's own culture, looking mainly inside oneself. Individuals who identify with a certain political culture seek solutions to contradictions that their original matrix reveals to them in their political culture itself. This can occur by emphasizing or underestimating specific cultural or normative elements, by creating symbols or by inventing traditions.

The second way is through taking a look at the cultures of others. This occurs in a more or less meditated fashion by processes of interaction. The processes consist of seeking a change in one's culture, looking to the *outside*. Individuals who identify with a certain political culture seek solutions to their contradictions in the cultures with which they have relations. The terms for describing this type of process tend to overlap. Incorporation, contamination, hybridization, 'inculturation', importation, appropriation, *métissage*, immission, annexion, combination and finally assimilation are all terms which can often

**Table 2.** A periodization of encounters between Catholics and Marxists in the Italian Peace Movement

	1950s and 1960s	1970s	1980s and 1990s	Global Justice Movement
<i>Catholics</i>	←	↔	→	
	Marxism is a source of innovation in Catholic pacifism	Violence leads to a cessation of interactions. But the struggle against terrorism contributes to a deeper convergence on non-violent issues	Catholic pacifism is a source of innovation in Marxist culture	Levels of exchange and encounters are at their best
				<i>Marxists</i>

be equivalent, because they have a semantic range which partly overlaps, but which in their heterogeneity indicate different ways, degrees and directions. We think that *importation* (De Blic, 2007) can be considered as a valid general term for this class of processes.

As we have seen in the article, the enacting of a grammar of responsibility within the pacifist movement is the result, above all, of this second way. It was born and has spread because groups of both Catholic and Marxist origin in the peace movement have modified their political culture through reciprocal exchanges. As we saw in detail in the second section, this occurred (above all in the 1950s–1960s and in the 1980s) through forms of importation, on a one-to-one basis, of elements of one culture into the other (see Table 2).<sup>15</sup>

This is how we explain how political cultures changed in the history of Italian peace movements. Of course, we are aware that not all political cultures necessarily change and learn by hybridizing. Many case studies attest to the frequency of paths that lead to ‘integralist’ registers, which deny the contradictory character of a political culture and lose the capacity to relativize its cultural elements. Then the group becomes a sect. Cultural elements become absolute and *tout se tient*, without contradictions.

## Notes

1. Obviously there may be some exceptions. See, for example, Wallas (1921) and Lippmann (1922).
2. On the other hand, elements of local analysis of political cultures were characteristic of the Chicago School. In any case, a divergence can be seen between the path of ‘community studies’ and the comparative intentions of political studies. Spatial analysis of specific political cultures did start to expand in Italy in the 1960s more than in other nations. See, for example, La Palombara (1964), Barnes (1967), Tarrow (1967), Galli *et al.* (1968) and Bettin (1970).
3. One of the most important attempts in this trend of study has been the analysis based on the concept of ‘frame’ (Snow, 2004).
4. The roots of the moral framework of the justification of violence accepted by Catholic movements are to be found primarily in the consideration of the Italian Resistance to Nazism and fascism as: a necessary moment of freedom; a founding cornerstone for the Republic; and a shared experience of the advantages and difficulties of joint action between Catholics and the secular.
5. However, according to some radical left-wing Catholic groups of the 1960s, the Second Vatican Council represented a moment of normalization (Cuminetti, 1983).
6. The concept of recognition brings together two possible meanings: recognition as a ‘condition of possibility’ for individual action and for the aims of an individual in society to be formed, and recognition as ‘motivation of status’, that is to say, the motivation to be included in a respected circle (Pizzorno, 2000).
7. CGIL is the largest Italian workers’ union.
8. ‘ARCI’ stands for Italian Cultural and Recreational Associations. Traditionally linked with the PCI (and to a lesser extent with the PSI and other left-wing parties), it is the largest non-confessional association in Italy, with thousands of local clubs.
9. Here, a repertoire of action emerges tending to privilege local institutions as necessary spaces for *montée en généralité* (‘increasing in generality’ or ‘generalization’) (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006), by promoting public debate and the politicization of elements that would also require regulation at the supranational level.
10. The 1980s were a period of general celebration of strength and powerfulness. Just think about the rhetoric and the style of Craxi’s governments both in domestic and foreign politics. As a kind of reaction to this climate some social movements discovered that ‘small is beautiful’ (Schumacher, 1973) and more generally, on the Catholic wing ‘smallness’ was rediscovered as an archetypical gospel principle.
11. What remains in the background is obviously the fact that both the cultures we have spoken of are neither internally homogeneous nor even can they easily be identified with an ‘original culture’. The cultures are obviously not natural facts and their purity is, if anything, something constructed *ex post*. They are always already the outcome of hybridizations processes (de Certeau, 1984).
12. Part of this argument was already stressed both by collective behaviour theorists and by frame analysis scholars. Nowadays, sociological perspectives attentive to the internal contradiction of each political grammar revisit these approaches (Boltanski & Thévenot, 2006; Cefai, 2007).



13. From a classic viewpoint there are internal and external sources of change. The links between the two are important. However, this does not mean that change cannot originate almost exclusively from within or from without. One example is the case of the change which Italian communist culture was subjected to during the twenty-year fascist period. One approach which analysed organizational dynamics, in particular, from this viewpoint of culture change is neo-institutionalism (Powell & DiMaggio, 1991).
14. Obviously not everything changes and the changes we are speaking of tend to remain within a structured and stable framework of goals.
15. This does not mean that at some particular times, dynamics of importation have not been produced unilaterally.

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