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0521578434 - Challenging Codes: Collective Action in the Information Age

Alberto Melucci

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In *Challenging codes*, leading social theorist Alberto Melucci brings an original perspective to research on collective action which both emphasizes the role of culture and makes telling connections with the experience of the individual in postmodern society. The focus is on the role of information in an age which knows both fragmentation and globalization, building on the analysis of collective action familiar from the author's *Nomads of the present*. At the same time, a fresh, social psychological nuance is drawn out, which reflects the preoccupations of *The playing self*, published as a companion volume to *Challenging codes*.

Alberto Melucci addresses a wide range of contemporary issues, including political conflict and change, feminism, ecology, identity politics, power and inequality.

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On ne connaît que les choses qu'on apprivoise

(We only know things that we have been able to
domesticate)

Antoine de Saint-Exupery, *Le Petit Prince*

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Preface and acknowledgements

The ideas and findings presented in this book were assembled over the last twenty years from a great deal of field research and an ever growing body of literature, and through an ongoing discussion with many students and colleagues in various parts of the world. My former students and associates of Lams (Laboratory of Research on Social Change) at the University of Milano contributed directly to some of the ideas on contemporary movements presented here. Together with its companion *The Playing Self*, the first version of this book was written with the linguistic assistance of Adrian Belton and at its intermediate stage it was improved substantially by the careful and supportive editing work of Timo Lyra, to whom I am deeply indebted. I am grateful to Jeffrey Alexander and Steven Seidman, who wanted the two books to be part of the series on Cultural Social Studies. I wish also to thank Catherine Max, social sciences editor at Cambridge University Press for her support in the editorial and production process.

I would like to dedicate this book to my family, my roots in the everyday; and to my readers in different regions and cultures of our incoming planetary society: together we share the responsibility of this little portion of knowledge represented by the present book.