The basic question of this thesis is "Why do people participate in social movements?" Specifying the "people" as the poor people socially excluded in the cities, this question becomes as "Why do the urban poor people participate in social movements?" This question came from a case of the urban poor people who participate in the social movements in São Paulo of Brazil, struggling with housing issues which affect very much their living situations.

The previous studies on the theories of social movements have mainly the following explanations in regard to the participation in social movements. These are the Marxist theory based on class struggles in the capitalist society such as labor movements, the collective action theory that focuses on dissatisfaction and strain of the people against social changes, the resource mobilization theory that analyses how to mobilize the people as a resource for movements and organizations, the New Social Movements theory that pays attention to the collective identities of participants and the common interests, the political opportunity structure theory focusing on the changes of political structures that surround the social movements, the framing theory based on the social constructivism that analyzes the discourses and gives a meaning to the movement and so on. These theories focus mainly on the attributes of the participants, the emergence of movements and the participation of people caused with rational or irrational factors, the point of how a movement rises and falls from an organizational logic, and the relations in which a movement is set.

On another hand, only recently there are some studies paying attention to the initiatives and the spontaneous changes of participants. Especially on the vulnerable people socially excluded such as the urban poor that are a subject of this thesis, the studies have just begun.

Turning to Brazil that is a country under study, the social movements on various issues are historically very active there, because of its socio-economic gap and inequality, its large amount of the people socially excluded and so on. After shifting to civilian rule from military one in 1985, a new Constitution called "The Constitution of Citizens" was
established. By a broad citizens' participation in politics adapted in this Constitution, a
direct democracy became popular characterized by the participation and deliberation in
public space, together with a consolidation of an indirect representative democracy such
as elections. A participatory administrative style as the former has been
institutionalized mainly in local governments, and its various schemes are been
experimented in conformity to the local particularities.

That is to say, a structural change is occurring in recent Brazil, for the vulnerable
people socially excluded like the urban poor under study, with more opportunities to be
able to reflect their interests in politics and the institutionalization of these
opportunities. From the view of the Political Opportunity Structure theory, this
participatory administration spread in recent Brazil means more opportunities opened
than before.

With this structural change in mind, this paper studies the question of why the
urban poor participate in social movements. On this occasion, I go after the elements for
them to participate in relation to the social structures, conceptualizing the initiatives
and spontaneous changes of the urban poor as agency, and basing on analyses and
considerations of some case studies. From its interactive relations with the social
structure that is the participatory administration spread and institutionalized in Brazil,
I try to find out agency of the urban poor, difficult to exercise because of their
vulnerability, and to clarify elements on the question overlooked in the previous studies.

The hypothesis of this paper is the follow. The structural change of the
participatory administration spread and institutionalized gave the more political
opportunities for social movements, and it allowed the urban poor to exercise their
agency difficult before, which is one of the elements to promote their participation in
social movements. The significance of this study is to find out other elements on the
participation of the urban poor in social movements in relation with the structural
change of the more opportunities institutionalized to participate, focusing on agency of
actors overlooked in the previous studies.

The theoretical framework for analysis in the thesis is to study the interactive
relations between structures and actors from the sociological view. I recognize the
participatory administration as a structure of the Political Opportunity Structure
theory, and as an actor the urban poor who participate in a social movement named
UMM (União dos Movimentos de Moradia: Housing Movements Union) in the city of
São Paulo. The reason why I give an eye to housing movements is that the issues
related to housing influences very heavily on the livelihoods of urban poor, and also the
possession of own house is a very important means to guarantee their socio-economic
stability in Brazil whose economy tends to be unstable.

In this paper, the analyses and considerations are mainly based on the following three researches. The first one is about a housing policy called a 'Mutirão' (mutual cooperation) that utilizes the urban poor in social movements. I apply Friedmann's empowerment model to this case study as a theoretical analysis approach.

The second research is a sum of the results of the three field surveys. These consist of a questionnaire survey for the resident organizations formed when the Mutirão policy is implemented, an interview one to some social movement leaders, and a participant observation on the social movement organizations.

The third one focuses on the elderly poor people considered more vulnerable groups socially excluded among the urban poor. It also deals with a Municipal Housing Council that is one of the participatory administrations, and a housing project only for poor elderly people called an 'Elderly Village' by the municipal government. On this occasion, an analytical framework based on the Critical Social Gerontology is applied to study the case.