



International Journal of Advance Studies and Growth Evaluation

The New Social Movements: A Historical Overview

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Article Info.

E-ISSN: 2583-6528

Impact Factor (QJIF): 8.4

Peer Reviewed Journal

Available online:

www.alladvancejournal.com

Received: 03/May/2026

Accepted: 09/June/2026

Abstract

The paper attempts to provide an overview of the historical and intellectual developments that led to the emergence of New Social Movement theory as a tradition in social movement studies. By undertaking an in- depth study of the original works of scholars such as Jurgen Habermas, Alain Touraine and Alberto Melucci, this paper tries to understand the peculiar social and political context that gives rise to a different kind of conflict constituted by actors whose identity are reconstructed, playing central roles in the rise of new social movements. By further drawing on important critiques of new social movement theory, it argues that conceptualisation of certain movements as *new* throws up both challenges and new insights into the study of social movements.

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Keywords: New social movements, culture, post- industrial society, technocrats, history, identity, labour movement.

1. Introduction

The New Social Movement (NSM) theory is primarily a European tradition that attempts to theorise diverse social movements emerging from the 1970s onwards which were different from traditional labour movement in terms of issues, constituents, mode of organisation and ideology. NSM theorists argue that an age of post- industrial society has entered in which class conflict ceases to play the role of central social conflict, which it did in industrial society. This tradition developed through a process of critical engagement with Marxism. The influence of Marxism is significant in that most new social movement theorists argue that corresponding to every society, there exists a central social conflict, similar to the Marxists assertion that class conflict which is capital versus labour captures the central struggle of capitalist society, though there exist other forms of struggle based on gender or ethnicity (Edwards, 2014). Following Marx, NSM theorists argue that social movement can be separated on an analytical level from other instances of collective action which do not clearly define social actors and their opponents who address the central conflict of society and who can therefore potentially break the limits of the system (Melucci, 1996). This chapter examines how the New Social Movement

theory developed through the works of primarily three European thinkers: Jurgen Habermas (German), Alain Touraine (French) and Alberto Melucci (Italian). However, NSM theory generally share some common tenets which are new social movements engages with a new kind of politics which are post material and cultural in nature, defending identities or attempting to gain recognition of new ones and challenging dominant definitions of who we are and how we live. Secondly, the site of struggle has shifted from workplace to everyday life and the cultural realm, seeking to create cultural alternatives, i.e. new values, identities and way of living. Thirdly, the class and social base of these new movements are diverse consisting of minorities, women, young people, students, LGBTQI+ communities who were marginal to the labour movement. However, these movements are disproportionately led by middle class intellectuals. Fourthly, these *new* movements adopt organisational forms which are decentralised, participatory and involving democratic network rather than formal bureaucratic SMOs. They are submerged in everyday life and less publicly visible (Edwards, 2014). Lastly, the tactics and strategies adopted are also different in that rather than targeting the state and political institutions and making claims on them, movements

such as women and gay liberation movement or environmentalism emphasizes that social change had to start with personal change (in the realm which was considered private), change in cultural values and the way people relate to each other and the natural environment. The essence of new social movements is best captured by Habermas (1981) when he states:

In the last ten to twenty years, conflicts have developed in advanced Western societies that, in many respects, deviate from the welfare- state pattern of institutionalized conflict over distribution. These new conflicts no longer arise in areas of material reproduction; they are no longer channelled through parties and organizations; and they can no longer be alleviated by compensations that conform to the system. Rather, the new conflicts arise in areas of cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization. They are manifested in sub-institutional, extra- parliamentary forms of protest. The underlying deficits reflect a reification of communicative spheres of action; the media of money and power are not sufficient to circumvent this reification. The question is not one of compensations that the welfare state can provide. Rather, the question is how to defend or reinstate endangered life styles, or how to put reformed life styles into practice. In short, the new conflicts are not sparked by problems of distribution, but concern the grammar of forms of life (p. 33).

2. Habermas: Reactions to Safeguard the Lifeworld

Habermas (1987) conceptualises new social movements as defensive reactions to safeguard the *lifeworld* from colonisation by *the system*. By the *lifeworld*, he refers to the everyday life composed of familial and communal relationship, personal identities and the shared values, meanings and understanding that arises from them. By the *system*, he refers to the domain of the state, economy, bureaucracy and the market. He provides the politico-historical context for the emergence of new social movements which is the institutionalisation of welfare states that offset the worse effects of life in a capitalist economy by providing unemployment benefits, sick pay, health and educational services, pensions and care for the elderly among others. Welfare state is how post war social democracy got institutionalised in the west, in which the state plays a key role in redistributing material wealth to meet the demands for social justice advanced by the labour movement. However, this shifting of the problems of the economy onto the state, creates problem for other types of crises, which includes *legitimation crisis*¹ and more importantly *motivation crisis*, where the state's interference in everyday life erodes community solidarity, traditions and existing cultural values (Habermas, 1976). Welfare state, though an important achievement of organised labour movement, was responsible for shifting the central social conflict of society from place of work to seam between the system and the life world (Habermas, 1981). This is because welfare state necessitates the increasing intervention of the state and market into the realm which were earlier considered private such as interpersonal, familial and communal relationships. Habermas (1987) calls this interference of the state and the economy in the cultural and psychological aspects of everyday lives, as the colonisation of the life world by the system. He argues

that the takeover of lifeworld by the system is the new central social conflict of advanced industrial societies.

The new central social conflict arising due to colonisation is distinctively different from labour movements as it does not pertain to the workplace but to private sphere of our personal lives. In the process of colonisation, people experience an attack from above sensing a loss of values, meanings and freedom to define who are they and ability to understand the world around them. This is because the state and economy work on a different set of rationality operating through laws, bureaucratic rules and profit driven motives. When this schema of working is extended to people's everyday lives, it strips meaning and purpose away from communities and families. From the perspective of the state and market, people and communities are a set of individual clients and customers. When client- consumer relationship come to replace relationship based on mutual understanding and trust, decisions pertaining to our everyday lives are subjected to red tape, expert knowledge and market demand. This results in what Habermas (1987) terms as *cultural impoverishment* which refers to the erosion of ability of communities to reproduce existing values and social relationships. According to him, the main reason behind cultural impoverishment is the spread of *instrumental rationality* into our everyday lives. The state and economy have to adopt instrumental rationality (cost efficiency) as it attempts to balance state taxes and expenditure or market demand and supply. Scientific experts are employed to control these processes and scientific knowledge is applied because it knows the best (Habermas, 1987).

However, everyday life functions on a different set of rationality which Habermas (1987) calls *communicative rationality*. In everyday life, human beings are not instrumental but communicative in the way they do things. They discuss about what should be done, employ their lay knowledge and understanding (rather than expert knowledge) and raise and resolve moral differences through debates and discussion. This communicative rationality does not seek success but a mutual understanding between people, enabling them to make decisions collectively. Colonisation by the system redefines the entire foundation of our everyday lives: the contours of social relationship, personal identities, ways of living and the modalities of logic employed. Most realms of our everyday lives are decided by expert- scientific knowledge which employ instrumental rationality rather than communicative rationality. Thus, according to Habermas (1987), the new social conflicts produced by advanced capitalist societies are cultural and psychological in nature. In everyday lives, people experience a loss of meaning, freedom and control over their existence. The state and market have pervaded into all the realms of our lives. There no longer remains a private sphere. He provides normative significance to new social movements which must fight to protect the lifeworld from such an onslaught by the system, to defend existing ways of life and to give life new meanings and values that are democratically decided rather than imposed from above.

Habermas (1987) argues that NSMs are united in their critique of the growing system and instrumental rationality. These movement work in ways to raise moral questions and debates and reassert communicative rationality. He also accords the NSMs a special place in advanced capitalist democratic societies. He stresses that NSMs are our hope for a more democratic society as they raise and debate issues of moral concern, thereby revitalising a public sphere which was

¹ Legitimation crisis refers to the failure of state to secure democratic support for interventions in the economy. For details please refer to Habermas (1976).

in the process of decline in advanced democracies of the west. This public sphere is crucial for questioning the legitimacy of political institutions and holding them accountable. Thus, NSMs play an important role in strengthening a public sphere where political and economic issues can be deliberated, thereby enabling the public to form moral viewpoints on them. Habermas traces the origin of new social movements in the student protests and counter- cultural movements of the late 1960s. He provides environmental movements, peace movement, student movements, educational reform movements, self- help movements and the feminist movement as examples of NSMs. According to him, these movements raise issues and questions relating to who we are and how we live, rather than material distribution in the society. Regarding the mode of organisation, he argues that NSMs are organised in non- hierarchical and decentralised manner, addressing issues of participation, inclusivity and democracy. With regard to social bases of the participants, he argues that NSMs cut across social classes and involved a range of groups like women, minorities and students.

3. Alain Touraine: Struggle Over Historicity

Alain Touraine (1992) theorises new social movements as a struggle over historicity which refers to struggle for control over social production of history. This will be explained in the following lines. He regards NSMs as a product of transition from industrial society to post- industrial society. Sociologists debated the emergence of a post- industrial society from late 1960s and early 1970s where surplus was produced not from industrial manufacturing sector but from expanding service and financial sector and the new culture industries based on expert knowledge and new communication and information technologies (Edwards, 2014). Touraine (1992) refers to post-industrial society as information society where the production of wealth now depends primarily upon the circulation, utilisation and control of information and its meaning rather than manufacturing of goods in industries. This is reflected in the rise of new knowledge- based economy, information and communication technology, the rise of banking and financial markets, the mass media and consumer culture. This vast array of information has been used by people to construct meanings about themselves and the world around. The point of contention arises from the fact that things can be represented to people in particular ways and their understanding of the world and their own place in it can be controlled, if the meaning of information can be controlled. According to Touraine, this desire to control the meanings that people have of things around them ranging from consumer goods, to natural environment, to our bodies and our psychological needs is the defining aspect of post-industrial societies. The post- industrial economy is all encompassing. It controls not just the production of material goods but also the production of symbolic world of meanings, in other words, culture. Culture becomes what is produced and manipulated for the sake of capital accumulation in a post- industrial society. Thus, Touraine (1988) argues that industrial society transforms the means of production while post- industrial society alters the ends of production, i.e. culture.

Touraine (1981) further argues that the enhancement in the capability of society to produce itself, both materially and culturally goes hand in hand with the increasing dominance of technocrats, experts who employ instrumental rationality. They use their expert knowledge to manipulate symbols and signs for their own ends modifying human values, needs and

representations (Touraine, 1988). This system of total control over cultural production leads to the creation of what Touraine terms as *programmed society* (Touraine, 1971). In a programmed society, human existence is hollowed of meaning or has meaning imposed on it from above. The only way to escape it is attempt to define things for yourself, to construct alternative understanding of human existence and way of living. In other words, the only way to fight a programmed society is to become a *rebel subject*. Touraine's primary concern was to investigate whether this rebel subjects were to be potentially found in the new social movements like students' movement, anti- nuclear movement and women's movement. Touraine (1981) regarded these protest groups as potentially involving "the reaction of cultural actors who are trying to keep, or to recover, control over their own behaviour, in the same way that workers once did with respect to the working conditions" (p. 150). He regarded the women's movement as a struggle that attempts to construct this rebel subject.

Touraine (1981) argues that the struggles of NSMs can be regarded as struggle over historicity. His theoretical approach has been referred to as action theory as he argues that social actors assume centre- stage in social and historical processes as they create them through their collective action. Social movements, thus play a central role in his understanding of society. Human beings through their collective action produce society, akin to Marx's argument that people make history. The term historicity refers to the collective process by which society produces itself (Edwards, 2014). However, Touraine (1992) argues that historicity involves a struggle between the technocrats or experts (who direct and control the self-production of society) and the social subjects (who act as consumers, members of families and communities and are subjected to the process). The point of conflict arises from the dominance of the technocrats who increasingly control the production of society. Instead of democratically deciding upon the cultural values that will guide social production and hence trajectory of historical development, decisions are taken out of hand of social subjects and placed in the hand of experts (technocrats). This conflict over production of society is the central social conflict of post- industrial society. Touraine (1981) regards new social movements as critical response to this technocracy and an attempt to take control over historicity. According to him, NSMs and not the labour movements have the potential to express and engage with the central social conflict of post- industrial society. Scott (1990) contends that Touraine's work was primarily focused on the whether the new emerging movements such as women's liberation movement, environmentalism, peace movements among others can become replacement of labour movement as the central conflict of post- industrial society, in accordance with understanding of social movements drawn from Marxist analysis. In order to qualify as the central social conflict, these movements must clearly define the social group that they represent, define its enemy and project an alternative idea of social development, which is not based on current technocracy.

4. Alberto Melucci on Collective Identities

Alberto Melucci (1996) views new social movements as the creation of new collective identities. He also considers post-industrial society as information society, like Touraine. He argues that a post- industrial society has both positive and negative prospects for individuals living in it. The positive aspect is that it provides a vast cultural and symbolic system

through which individuals can construct an autonomous sense of self. This was not possible in industrial society because an individual's sense of self-identity and way of life was shaped in advance due to his/her location in the social class structure of industrial society. However, in the post-industrial society, these social categories are dissolved as material needs are largely fulfilled and production does not give rise to class based collective identities. In the social vacuum left, people are increasingly individualised, educated, knowledgeable and skilled at work. They are also increasingly self-reflexive and are able to make their choices outside work. With the dissolving of rigid social categories, individuals are able to construct an autonomous sense of self by pursuing life projects which refers to lifestyle and leisure activities. This increased in individual freedom is the positive aspect of post-industrial society (Melucci, 1996).

The negative aspect is that society depends upon certain kind of individuals, ones whose life-projects are compatible with advanced capitalism. To ensure this compatibility, social control is increasingly mounted not at workplace but personal lives of individuals, through the operation of *dominant cultural codes*. These dominant cultural codes create meanings and understandings that are used to construct identities, bodies, needs and desires that serve the dominant interests. In order to ensure the conditions of social reproduction, people's behaviour relating to consumption, sexuality, education and interpersonal relations has to be controlled from above, not just by imposition of social norms but through what Melucci calls *the hidden operation of symbolic forms*, patterning people's thoughts, emotions and feelings (Melucci, 1996). Post-industrial society forces everyone to be the same, having same values, same desires and same needs. Thus, individuals struggle to be an individual who is truly free to decide who they want to be for themselves. In other words, the struggle in post-industrial society is for the individuals to find their sense of autonomous self. Melucci (1980) states, "Personal identity- that is to say, the possibility on the biological, psychological and interpersonal levels, of being recognized as an individual is the property which is now being claimed and defended" (p. 218).

At the core, Melucci's (1996) work is about how new social actors of post-industrial society, who are at the centre of new social movements (NSMs), came to be constructed. He argues that these social actors do not arise automatically from the conditions of industrial society as "classes as real social groups are withering away" (p. 234). According to Edwards (2014), Melucci contends that the new social actors have to invent themselves while living in through their daily existence where the new conflicts over cultural codes are encountered. They struggle to regain control over symbolic resources of information society in the sub-emerged networks of everyday life. They use these symbolic resources to invent themselves as new kind of individuals. Interestingly, these new personal identities have the potential to become the basis of new collective identities which make explicit the existence of a new *we*, who is in conflict with *them* over *this*. NSMs are about constructing new collective identities that will replace the old class based mobilisation. Therefore, Melucci argues that the focus of social movement theory should be to understand how new collective identities came to be constructed. This is the aspect which is lacking in other social movement theories (Melucci, 1985). For instance, Resource Mobilisation Theory provides an explanation of how self-interested individuals owing to their common interests which

arise as a result of shared location in social structure, came to pursue collective action. It does not explain how these individuals develop a sense of shared identity, purpose and common consciousness. It is not merely about how rational individuals can be brought together to pursue collective action (Olson, 1965) or how solidarity can be built through emotional attachment (Blumer, 1951). It is about how a group of individuals develop the consciousness of being social actors.

Melucci (1985) goes on to argue that construction of new collective identities is not just a part of social movements. But that is what social movements essentially are: construction of collective identities by developing a sense of common purpose, consciousness and belongingness. He further argues that collective identities are not pre-given but emerge out of existing social relationships between people in which shared definitions and understanding of the situation which they experience are created, negotiated and reproduced. This shared understanding of the situation involves three fundamental components: a shared sense of who the challengers are, who the opponents are and what is at stake in the struggle. In other words, a common consciousness of *we* against *them*, in a struggle over *this* (Edwards, 2014). Thus Melucci (1985) defines, "A collective identity is nothing else than a shared definition of the field of opportunities and constraints offered to collective action; 'shared' means constructed and negotiated through a repeated process of 'activation' of social relationships connecting the actors" (p. 793).

An understanding of social movements as construction of new collective identities has certain implications when it comes to the analyses of these movements. This implies that movements are not built by establishing formal SMOs or staging visible events. Melucci (1980) points to this shift in understanding social movements as he regards new social movements as taking organisational structures which are informal networks composed of social relationships giving rise to aims, beliefs and exchanges. Moreover, social movement activities take place away from public view in many occasions. The construction and reproduction of new collective identities is submerged in everyday life where cultural innovation is practised. This does not imply that formal SMOs and visible collective actions have ceased to become relevant for social movements. Behind this visible events and structures, there are submerged processes of identity formation taking place in the background. These subtle processes are often missed by academics and movement scholars who are drawn to the eventful collective actions. In Melucci's framework, identity building has come to assume significance in NSMs of information society as old social class categories can no longer provide the basis for an autonomous sense of collective identity.

Conceptualising social movements in this regard leads to a fundamental re-definition of the idea of political protest. Political protests do not necessarily have to involve organised visible public events such as staging protest demonstrations or confrontations. In the post-industrial society, cultural struggles taking place in everyday lives can be considered as political actions as they involve struggle for freedom in a system that seeks total control. Thus, apart from SMOs, social movement can encompass the counter-cultural spaces, also labelled as *social movement scenes*. Social movement scenes can be understood as an alternative community promoting alternative media, shops, music, hang outs, ways of living and dressing. The fundamental purpose is to establish an

autonomous sense of self and collective identity which may or may not be mobilised by SMOs. They strive to achieve autonomy through the very nature of their activities. They have complex relationship with politics. Secondly, conceptualising social movements in these new terms give rise to the possibility of individuals staging protests, without the physical presence of fellow participants or compatriots, captured in the phrase *do it yourself- DIY politics*. Individuals undertake activities in protest while establishing an imagined connection with a wider community sharing same interests. Individual efforts contribute to the construction of this wider community. This is best exemplified in the case of environmental activism. From 1970s, Greenpeace, Friends of the Earth and Earth First argued that the way to fight against capitalist state and economy destroying natural environment was to change the way individuals live their lives (Edwards, 2014).

5. Critiques of New Social Movement Theory

While Habermas' formulation about new social movements as re- strengthening public sphere and reasserting communicative rationality has been hailed, his work has also been criticised. The criticism pertains to both general and specific ones. Firstly, his argument that new social movements mark a fundamental break in what constitutes the central social conflict in a society corresponding to emergence of a new social formation, i.e. advanced capitalism has been heavily criticised (Edwards, 2014). This criticism extends further to the approach adopted by Habermas which sees history as evolving through distinct stages and drawing firm conclusions from historical development. Instead of seeing history as moving in distinct stages defined by one central social conflict, social movement scholars have adopted an approach which sees movements in terms of cycles or waves of conflict (Tarrow, 1998). Barker & Dale (1998) criticised that attempting to map history in terms of distinct stages is Habermas' major mistake. The attempt to construct theoretical explanation for nature of social movements by linking it to social structural change should be avoided. Secondly coming to specific criticisms, Cohen (1995) raises issues with Habermas categorisation of feminist movement as purely an identity movement and not having any material concerns. She argues that feminist movement raise issues about equal pay and those concerning work places. Further, feminist movements are not exclusively organised along decentralised and leaderless networks. They establish formal organisations with bureaucratic structures like National Organisation of Women.

Thirdly, Tucker (1991) and Calhoun (1995) raises issue with reductionist understanding of labour movements (which are termed old movements). They argue that labour movements had similar concern and organisational structures as compared to the new movements. Calhoun (1995) draws attention to the cultural and identity aspect of labour movements of the past, arguing that it was overshadowed by academia's overt concern with material issue. Tucker's (1991) study of late nineteenth century and early twentieth century labour unions such as Knight of Labour, the German Social Democratic Party and revolutionary French Syndicalism shows that they raised issues about autonomy from state bureaucracy, engaged in moral critique of capitalism and defence of their cultural traditions, much like the new social movements. Tucker further observes that French Syndicalism adopted democratic structures that practised communicative rationality over instrumental rationality in Habermas terms, which according

to him was distinctive of NSMs. Not only the old labour movements, but labour movements of the contemporary times also engaged with issues which was non- material in nature. New Unionism are organised along the grass root networks improving participation, internal democracy and communication. Community trade unionism or social movement unionism aims to establish a connection between material issues and moral concerns over quality of life by campaigning for a living wage. New Unionism also seeks to mobilise non- traditional groups like women, minorities and young people. Trade Union Congress have been campaigning against racism since 1960s. In the recent times, they have expanded their campaign against racism and homophobia and are also engaged in countering anti- immigration and far right activities (Edwards, 2014). Therefore, Habermas's student Axel Honneth (1981) argues that Habermas overemphasizes the newness of the life world- system conflict in advanced capitalist societies. He further argues that issues of culture and identity are not distinct from class conflict but form a part of. Research with trade union members have shown that material and cultural concerns are inter- connected rather than distinct. Issues of material distribution raise concerns about self- worth, human dignity and societal recognition (Edwards, 2007).

As in the case of Habermas, Touraine's conceptualisation of history as evolving through distinct stages and each stage corresponding to a central social conflict has also been criticised. Alan Scott (1990) has provided specific criticisms. Firstly, he points to the futility of finding a common struggle among diverse new social movements such as women liberation movement and anti- nuclear movement which are very different in their ideological orientation that the possibility of finding a common ground is hardly existent. This criticism applies generally to new social movement theory as it puts together a diverse set of movements, attempting to find in despair common concerns, class base and organisational structure. Secondly, he points to a contradiction in Touraine's own theoretical approach. As noted above, Touraine calls his approach action theory, where social actors play central role in production of society and transformation of history. However, Scott argues that by theorising that a central social conflict corresponds to each stage of historical development, Touraine puts structure above agency of social actors. If this theorisation holds, it means that social movement emerge in response to conflict generated by social structure and human action is in response to this structural conflict/ strain. This is not very different from any structuralist account. Finally, Melucci (1989) criticises Touraine's methodology for translating activists' own understanding of the struggle, in which they were involved in, into a higher meaning of the researcher. This entails that academic researcher enjoys certain privilege in defining the movement helping the activists see *true nature* of their struggle. According to Melucci, intervention should be a two-way exchange of knowledge between the sociologists and activists where the researcher offers analytical skills of society where the social movements fit in and the activists provide understanding of their struggle, in which both benefit mutually.

As in the case of Habermas, Melucci's work has been criticised for emphasizing on the newness of NSMs. Firstly, while his conceptualisation of new social movements as construction of new collective identities has been considered a significant contribution, it has been argued that collective identity formation, i.e. constructing a sense of we, who are

against them in a conflict over this is necessary for effective mobilisation of every movement. This includes the labour movement in capitalist society. Class categories were not readily formed in capitalist societies. They have to be constructed by using symbols and meanings, in submerged cultures of everyday life. In other words, working class identity has to be constructed by drawing upon cultures of solidarity among workers (Edwards, 2014). Secondly, while Melucci's work on political significance of cultural struggle has been critically acclaimed, it has been argued that cultural struggles are not new or distinctive to new social movements. Barker & Dale (1998) argue that NSM theorists miss the cultural dimension of labour movements, due to their exclusive focus on material issues. Nilsen (2009) points out that in Marx's understanding, labour is not only about producing tools to satisfy material needs, but also about producing symbols and signs for satisfaction of human needs for meaning and value in everyday life. Secondly, he also argues that the struggle of individuals to be an autonomous self is not peculiar to post- industrial society but is general condition of capitalist society. In other words, the subjection of conscious human activity and production to the dominant needs of the society is a general condition of capitalist society. Thus, not only new social movements but the labour movements too have the potential to construct an autonomous sense of self and collective identity which challenged the dominant needs and requirements of capitalist society.

Conclusion

The term New Social Movements is used to refer to a myriad of movements such as student movements, ecological movements, peace movement, women movements, LGBTQI+ movement, starting from late 1960s, a period corresponding to late capitalist or post- industrial society in the western world, which throws up new kind of social challenges and conflicts. The new social movements share certain common tenets. They engage with a new kind of politics which are post material and cultural in nature, defending identities or attempting to gain recognition of new ones and challenging dominant definitions of who we are and how we live. Secondly, the site of struggle has shifted from workplace to everyday life and the cultural realm, seeking to create cultural alternatives, i.e. new values, identities and way of living. Thirdly, the class and social base of these new movements are diverse consisting of minorities, women, young people, students, LGBTQI+ communities who were marginal to the labour movement. Fourthly, these new movements adopt organisational forms which are decentralised, participatory and involving democratic network rather than formal bureaucratic SMOs. They are submerged in everyday life and less publicly visible. Lastly, the tactics and strategies adopted are also different in that rather than targeting the state and political institutions and making claims on them, movements such as women and gay liberation movement or environmentalism emphasizes that social change had to start with personal change in the realm which was considered private, change in cultural values and the way people relate to each other and the natural environment.

As a theoretical tradition within social movement studies, new social movement theory develop with the works of three prominent theorists in western academia- Jurgen Habermas, Alain Touraine and Alberto Melucci. According to Habermas (1987), new social movements are defensive reactions to safeguard the life world from colonisation by the system. By the life world, he refers to the everyday life composed of

familial and communal relationship, personal identities and the shared values, meanings and understanding that arises from them. By the system, he refers to the domain of the state, economy, bureaucracy and the market. Colonisation by the system redefines the entire foundation of our everyday lives: the contours of social relationship, personal identities, ways of living and the modalities of logic employed. Most realms of our everyday lives are decided by expert- scientific knowledge which employ instrumental rationality rather than communicative rationality. Thus, according to Habermas, the new social conflicts produced by advanced capitalist societies are cultural and psychological in nature. In everyday lives, people experience a loss of meaning, freedom and control over their existence. The state and market have pervaded into all the realms of our lives. There no longer remains a private sphere. Habermas provides a normative significance to new social movements which must fight to protect the life world from such an onslaught by the system, to defend existing ways of life and to give life new meanings and values that are democratically decided rather than imposed from above.

Alain Touraine (1992) theorises new social movements as a struggle over historicity which refers to struggle for control over social production of history. He regards NSMs as a product of transition from industrial society to post- industrial society. The post- industrial economy is all encompassing. It controls not just the production of material goods but also the production of symbolic world of meanings, in other words culture. Culture becomes what is produced and manipulated for the sake of capital accumulation in a post- industrial society. The enhancement in the capability of society to produce itself, both materially and culturally goes hand in hand with the increasing dominance of technocrats who are experts who employ instrumental rationality. Touraine argues that historicity involves a struggle between the technocrats or experts (who direct and control self- production of society) and the social subjects (who act as consumers, members of families and communities and are subjected to the process). The point of conflict arises from the dominance of the technocrats who increasingly control the production of society. Instead of democratically deciding upon the cultural values that will guide social production and hence trajectory of historical development, decisions are taken out of hand of social subjects and placed in the hand of experts (technocrats). This conflict over production of society is the central social conflict of post- industrial society. Touraine regards new social movements as critical response to this technocracy and an attempt to take control over historicity. According to him, NSMs and not the labour movements have the potential to express and engage with the central social conflict of post- industrial society.

Alberto Melucci (1992) views new social movements as the creation of new collective identities. His work focuses on how new social actors of post- industrial society, who are at the centre of new social movements (NSMs), came to be constructed. He argues that these social actors do not arise automatically from the conditions of industrial society as classes as distinct social groups are breaking apart. He contends that the new social actors have to invent themselves while living in through their daily existence where the new conflicts over cultural codes are encountered. They struggle to regain control over symbolic resources of information society in the submerged networks of everyday life. They use these symbolic resources to invent themselves as new kind of individuals. Interestingly, these new personal identities have the potential to become the basis of new collective identities

which make explicit the existence of a new we, who is in conflict with them over this. NSMs are about constructing new collective identities that will replace the old class based mobilisation. Melucci points to this shift in understanding social movements as he regards new social movements as taking organisational structures which are informal networks composed of social relationships giving rise to aims, beliefs and exchanges. Moreover, social movement activities take place away from public view in many occasions. The construction and reproduction of new collective identities is submerged in everyday life where cultural innovation is practised. Protests do not necessarily have to involve organised visible public events such as staging protest demonstrations or confrontations. In the post- industrial society, cultural struggles taking place in everyday lives can be considered as political actions as they involve struggle for freedom in a system that seeks total control.

New Social Movement theory has also been critiqued on many grounds. Firstly, the argument that new social movements mark a fundamental break in what constitutes the central social conflict in a society corresponding to emergence of a new social formation, i.e. advanced capitalism has been heavily criticised. The argument is based on an assumption that history develops in distinct phases, with each phase corresponding to a particular type of social conflict. Instead of seeing history as moving in distinct stages defined by one central social conflict, social movement scholars have adopted an approach which sees movements in terms of cycles or waves of conflict. Secondly, it is futile endeavour to find a common struggle among diverse new social movements such as women liberation movement and anti- nuclear movement which are very diverse in their ideological orientation. This criticism applies generally to new social movement theory as it puts together a diverse set of movements, attempting to find in despair common concerns, class base and organisational structure. Thirdly, creation of new collective identities by use of cultural symbols derived from everyday existence is not novel to new social movements.

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