

international institutions such as the IMF and World Bank, means that such institutions have perceived an extensive role for political institutions as part of the problem of, rather than the solution to, underdevelopment. Such an abstract approach to economic development ignores the ways in which the world economy is structured in the interests of developed countries. Powerful states have been 'the midwives' rather than the victims of economic deregulation and have shaped international trade, not in ways consistent with the 'free' market, but rather in their own interests (Weiss, 1998: 204).

The apparent critique of the state in neo-liberal theory is revealed as in reality a critique of democratic governance. Domestically, the neo-liberal state is not a weak state, but a strong and unaccountable state. Internationally it is powerful states, as much as the laws of supply and demand, which have shaped a distinctly undemocratic system of global governance (See chapter 10). In effect, neo-liberalism is a particular state strategy which serves the interests of those individuals and actors who stand to gain from economic deregulation, both domestically and internationally.

This anti-democratic tendency, inherent to neo-liberalism, has been a major factor in redoubling the efforts of new social movements to oppose the coercive statism that paradoxically emerges from the application of neo-liberal policies. The challenge to the state presented by new social movements is the subject of Chapter 5.

5

New Social Movements

The most distinctive feature of new social movements (NSMs) is their anti-statism. They are therefore of particular interest to our analysis of the relationship between recent social change and the state. This chapter will outline the main elements of the NSMs thesis, before moving on to explore some criticisms that have been made of this thesis. The chapter will conclude with an assessment of the significance of NSMs.

NSMs have undoubtedly helped to highlight the limitations of a state-centred system of governance. In particular they have enhanced our understanding of the ways in which the state privileges certain identities over others. However, this chapter will argue that in their eagerness to stress the novelty and significance of NSMs theorists have overstated their discontinuity with 'old' social movements, have failed to define the relationship between NSMs and other political actors clearly, and have therefore been unable to satisfactorily tackle the dilemma of how NSMs can radically transform systems of governance without wholeheartedly engaging directly with the state. NSMs are, by themselves, therefore highly unlikely to present a serious challenge to the power of the state.

The New Social Movements Thesis

It is through the actions of social movements, which can be defined as groups of like minded individuals combining in a variety of organisational forms to attempt to enact or to prevent social change, that the relationship between the state and civil society is often transformed. For example since the nineteenth century, the labour movement in Western Europe has helped to increase the control civil society has over the state by extending political and social rights. This has ensured that the state has to attempt to (at least) be seen to operate in the general interest of the majority of its citizens. Despite the widespread acknowl-

edgement of the importance of the workers' movement, the study of other social movements was relatively neglected in the first two decades of the post-war period (Scott, 1990: 1-3).

However, ever since the rise of important movements of protest in the late 1960s, such as the Black Power movement, the anti-Vietnam War campaigns, and the student protest movements in Western Europe in 1968, social movements have become the subject of increased scrutiny by political sociologists. For many theorists, contemporary social movements are fundamentally different from those of classical industrial society. They have therefore been christened new social movements. Examples of NSMs include: feminist groups, such as the women in Britain who during the early 1980s set up a peace camp at Greenham Common and campaigned for nuclear disarmament; movements concerned with issues of sexuality such as the Gay Liberation Front and the Aids Coalition to Unleash Power (ACT UP); animal rights activists such as the Animal Liberation Front, which has resorted to the use of letter bombs and other acts of violence in their efforts to publicise the plight of animals; and ecological groups such as Earth First which have protested against the destruction of nature (see Box 5.1).

The novelty of NSMs can be seen in their disillusionment with the statist politics of the socialist left and the neo-liberal right, and their explicit rejection of the state as a tool that can be utilised to create social justice and ensure democratic accountability. Indeed, NSMs' most distinctive defining characteristic is their wariness of any centralised and hierarchical form of governance. In contrast to the workers' movement, NSMs therefore do not seek to control the state. Instead, NSMs, it is argued, display novel forms of democratic organisation which are rooted in the defence of a pluralistic and autonomous civil society.

Linked to their suspicion of the state is the global focus of many NSMs. A good example is environmental groups, such as Friends of the Earth, which have stressed the impotence of state solutions when faced with problems such as pollution, global warming and the erosion of the ozone layer, which are geographically boundless. Consequently, many environmental groups are increasingly global actors and have raised awareness of the growing global nature of many of the problems facing humanity. As Melucci notes (1995: 114), one of the defining characteristics of NSMs is that 'even when the action is located at a specific and particularistic level, actors display a high degree of awareness of planetary interdependence'.

Awareness of the failure of statist solutions to human problems is also common to the other movements normally identified as NSMs, such as anti-racist groups, like the Anti-Nazi League, and gay and lesbian liberation movements, such as Outrage and ACT UP. More generally,

Box 5.1 Anti-Roads Campaigns in Britain

In the 1990s, environmental protests against the government's road building programme in such places as Twyford Down, Fairmile and Preston provided a good example of NSM activity. They differed from previous anti-roads campaigns in three main ways. First, protesters consciously bypassed the formal consultation process in favour of direct action. Second, many activists asserted a counter-culture centred upon anarchistic and anti-modernist ideals. These activists were often critical of what were seen as 'establishment' environmental groups such as Greenpeace, who in turn saw such radicalism as potentially undermining the support amongst the general public for environmental causes generally. The 'eco-warriors' who participated in the anti-roads campaigns believed in spontaneous action rather than formal political organisation. The Brighton-based group Justice, for example, referred to themselves as a 'disorganisation'. They also aimed at a radical shift towards an ecologically sustainable lifestyle, rather than piecemeal political changes. During the campaign against the extension of a motorway through Wanstead and Leyton in East London, for instance, protesters set up squats along the route and declared them 'Free States' for the promotion of alternative lifestyles. Third, campaigners utilised headline grabbing tactics, such as preventing roads from being built by occupying trees and digging tunnels under land which was threatened by road construction. Such campaigns were co-ordinated in part by Earth First, which was set up in the early 1990s. This group had no national organisational structure and no formal leadership. Anti-road campaigns were instead set up via e-mail, newsletters and through direct contact in colleges and universities. Individual campaigns quickly dispersed when a particular road had been either built or stopped. Earth First had considerable success in raising the profile of Britain's transport problems through extensive media coverage of their high-profile protests. Even more significantly, they directly influenced the Conservative government, which cut their 1989 road building programme to one-third of its original size.

Source: Doherty, B. (1998)

this anti-statism can be seen as part of a wider rejection of authoritarianism, associated not only with the state, but also with coercive practices by other social movements, such as fascist or racist groups.

For example the anti-racist movement in Britain, which developed in the late 1970s, lacked faith in the ability of the state to counter effectively the emerging neo-Nazi groups threatening the security of many of Britain's ethnic minorities (Brittan, 1987). Thus informal coalitions of anti-Nazi groups organised protests, petitions and media events to counter the rise in popularity of racist groups such as the National Front.

The rejection of authoritarianism by NSMs can also be seen in their relationship to the workers' movement and Marxist theory. The goals of NSMs are very different from traditional socialist movements and mark a 'shift from a vision of a sudden and total transformation of the social order to the hope that partial, local, and continuous changes will add up to a transformation as profound as a revolution' (Garner, 1996: 101).

In terms of social composition, NSMs are, it is argued, not rooted in the working class in the mould of the labour movement. Instead, 'new social movements are typically either predominantly movements of the educated middle classes, especially the "new middle class", or of the most educated/privileged section of generally less privileged groups' (Scott, 1990: 138). Theorists of NSMs have either stressed that these groups cannot be reduced to their class interest, and therefore should be seen as transcending class relations, or alternatively they have radically redefined class, thereby allowing for the adaptation of class analysis to the study of these movements. Interesting examples of the attempt to rethink the relationship between Marxism, social class and NSMs can be found in the work of Touraine (1981) and Eder (1993).

For Touraine (1981: 77), social movements represent the 'organised collective behaviour of a class actor struggling against his class adversary for the social control of *historicity*'. However, Touraine is using the concept of class in a very different way to Marxist thinkers. The problem with Marxist analysis, for Touraine, is that it reduces the actions of social movements to either furthering or trying to prevent the inevitable forward march of history towards communism. Thus social movements are seen as unreflective and only dimly aware of the deeper social processes by which their actions are driven. Touraine instead wishes to reassert the importance of social action, with social movements lying at the heart of his theory of social change. He therefore begins his most important contribution to the NSMs debate in the following manner: 'Men make their own history: social life is produced by cultural achievements and social conflicts, and at the heart of society burns the fire of social movements' (Touraine, 1981: 1). The use of the term *historicity* by Touraine refers to the object of social movements' struggle, which is not to seize the state and use it to

oppress the movements' class enemies, but rather is centred upon the conflict over the competing value systems through which the architecture of society is constructed: that is the *historicity* of a social system. When Touraine speaks of class conflict then, he has in mind a struggle over the 'symbolic representation' of experience, the construction of which cannot be reduced to antagonisms over the means of material production. Therefore the workers' movement of the nineteenth century, as described by Marxism, was not a social movement in terms of Touraine's definition because it was not guided by 'normative orientations, by a *plan*, in fact a call to historicity' (Touraine, 1981: 78). The worker's movement was, according to Touraine, understood by Marxists as a pawn in a game of chess in which the result and the strategy deployed, if not the direction of every move, was already known, not necessarily by the movement itself, but certainly by the Marxist theorist! The teleological assumptions of Marxism must be rejected if the true natures of social movements are to be revealed as 'culturally oriented forms of behaviour, and not as the manifestation of the objective contradictions of a system of domination' (Touraine, 1981: 80).

Like Touraine, Eder (1993) stresses the need to analyse social movements in terms of culture, while, at the same time, retaining a revised concept of class. First, Eder rejects the idea that class conflict can be reduced to the struggle between capital and labour. Second, the concept of class nevertheless retains a utility because the struggles of NSMs are not simply concerned with the demand for universal and equal inclusion in the social system: they are also about the struggle between 'antagonistic and even incommensurable interests' (Eder, 1995: 22). Third, the use of class in a way that emphasises cultural (as well as material) conflicts, allows for the possibility of accounting for as yet unknown or undeveloped social conflicts, which may be based upon social divisions other than those that exist between the owners of the means of production and the exploited workers. For Eder, NSMs can be understood in class terms as examples of 'middle class radicalism' (Eder, 1993). This notion allows us to move beyond the naturalistic definition inherent to Marxist theory where class is 'tied to natural forces, the forces of production' towards a conception of class tied to the problem of cultural identity (Eder, 1995: 36).

It is argued that to maintain their independent cultural identities the struggle for the recognition of diversity cannot be centred singularly upon the state. For writers like Melucci, a central prerequisite for the redefinition of democracy by NSMs is the creation and maintenance of 'public spaces independent of the institutions of government, the party system and state structures' (Melucci, 1989: 173). This is because NSMs

are concerned with diverse and profound objectives, which are often centred upon issues of morality, rather than the extension of political citizenship (Eder, 1993: 149). For Melucci (1989), NSMs bring to prominence social struggles that have been ignored because of an over concentration upon workers by Marxists or by an obsession with formal equality on behalf of liberals. Thus conflicts over gender, sexuality, the ecology and animal abuse have been central to NSMs. These areas of social struggle have often been referred to as post-material by NSMs theorists, since they do not focus primarily upon issues of income, wealth or formal political representation and have therefore been defined as social or cultural, rather than political in nature (Scott, 1990: 13). For this reason, NSMs' main arena of struggle is located within civil society rather than oriented towards the state, which is seen by NSMs as having failed to guarantee social justice and freedom from discrimination. NSMs have provided powerful critiques of the welfare functions of the state, pointing towards their basis on patriarchal, homophobic and racist assumptions, as well as being connected with ecologically unsustainable economic growth and the maintenance of destructive 'defence' systems (Pierson, 1991: Ch. 3).

Touraine (1981) has identified how an increasingly technocratic state moves to colonise civil society in order to exercise social control. From this perspective, NSMs are important defenders of civil society from the increasingly coercive state machine. This coercion takes the form, not just of physical force, but is asserted through discourses of power which attempt to inhibit the self-management of social problems and create dependency upon the agents of the state such as the health service, education system and social security providers. It is for this reason that Melucci (1989) argues for maximum independence for NSMs and the deliberate distancing from the organs of the state. If allowed the necessary freedom from state interference, NSMs can be 'social laboratories', creating innovative life styles. They focus not upon confronting state power, but on changing human relationships at the micro level. Consequently, 'interactionist and cultural resistance is an ongoing process and may take the form of play, performance, and style rather than political organizing' (Garner, 1996: 392). Through these strategies of resistance within civil society, the technocratic state is revealed as 'no longer the all-powerful god it was made out to be' (Touraine, 1981: 6).

As well as presenting fresh ideological challenges to the state then NSMs have also adopted novel forms of organisation and tactics to promote themselves. NSMs place great stress upon non-hierarchical systems of organisation, which are often highly flexible and involve the interaction of loose networks of self-aware and egalitarian individuals

who consciously reject the aggressive centralisation of traditional parties, trade unions and pressure groups. The fluid organisational forms taken by NSMs are concrete statements of the democratic values that they espouse. Organisationally, NSMs do not rely upon an elite group of professional campaigners, that are common to most pressure groups, and have instead a fluctuating and dynamic membership. Activists signal their support, not through the payment of a subscription, or by the holding of a membership card, but through sporadic actions such as organising petitions, attracting media attention, demonstrating in favour of or against policy changes by government and by protesting against ideologically opposed groups such as racist, homophobic or other socially conservative forces. Advocates of NSMs see such loose networks of affiliation as a strength. By resisting the institutionalisation of their various causes, they can more easily retain their independence and their ideological purity, as well as allowing space outside formal and oppressive structures for the building of confidence and solidarity amongst their members. Tactically, their innovative efforts to influence public opinion and to assert alternative discourses that challenge the bureaucratic orthodoxy of traditional parties and pressure groups deliberately go beyond narrow political actions. As Garner (1996: 99) writes, NSMs' tactics have included such diverse acts as: 'Mass peace demonstrations, squatter takeovers of buildings to protect housing shortages and gentrification, the formation of feminist collectives, experiments in media and the arts including cultural protests like punk, and many local actions against nuclear power plants and industrial pollution'. For example the Greenham Common Women, mentioned earlier, relied on non-violent direct action such as removing fences, street theatre and spinning webs around the military base at Greenham. The British gay and lesbian group, Outrage, have advertised their message through mass gay weddings, 'kiss-ins' and by bombarding schools with leaflets about safe sex (Studzinski, 1994: 17, 50).

Many of these actions are concerned with the assertion of heterogeneous identities as symbols and signs of alternative lifestyles. They are a reaction not only to the coercive power and disabling discourses of the state, but also to the increasing commodification of all spheres of life and the promotion of junk culture associated with the assertion by neo-liberals of the free market as the main arbiter of success in late modern societies. Attempts to classify NSMs in terms of the old language of political discourse, such as left versus right, or reform versus revolution, is (it is argued) to miss the distinctive nature of these movements. NSMs attempt to transcend the traditional emphasis of the workers' movement upon the promotion of the rights of white

male able-bodied workers, as much as they do the conservative emphasis upon patriarchal private property. They reject the 'soviet type revolutionary state' as much as they do the paternalistic and dependency creating liberal state (Touraine, 1981: 17). Theorists of NSMs point to the dangers of seeing such movements as mere appendices to the greater struggle of workers against capitalists, and stress the failure of the old social movements to take into account the diverse needs of other members of society. For instance, as Campbell and Oliver (1996: 176) argue in relation to the disability movement, the idea that the disabled can achieve their aims through a closer link with the workers' movement 'flies in the face of history' since it has often been the workers' movement that has hindered progress towards the extension of rights for the disabled.

The recognition of the inevitability of difference, and the celebration of cultural pluralism, is central to NSMs conception of democracy, in contrast to essentialist liberal and Marxist accounts of the universality of the individual (liberal) or of the proletariat as a universal class (Marxist). Whilst many NSMs might fight to receive recognition on the terrain of human rights, ultimately Touraine (1981: 18) sees this as a tactical move: 'We shall have to live with cultural modernisation movements linked to a liberal critique before we are able to assist the renaissance of social movements'.

It is important to stress that theorists such as Touraine and Melucci do not believe that the new experiments taking place in these 'social laboratories' are marginal or doomed to failure. The prevailing view of the relationship between NSMs and social change amongst NSMs theorists is captured by Marable (1997: 11) who, in commenting upon developments in the black liberation movement in the USA, writes 'liberation begins by winning small battles . . . creating confidence among the oppressed, building ultimately towards a democratic vision which can successfully challenge the very foundation of this system'. It is the sum of these 'small battles' which will transform society by destabilising the coercive state and delegitimising its dominant discourses of power. As Melucci (1995: 114) contends, 'the very existence of collective action is a message sent to the society: power becomes visible because it is challenged by the production of different meanings'. In the longer term the successes of NSMs will not be marked by the replacement of one dominant discourse by another, but rather by the 'recognition of diversity': a culturally plural society (Melucci, 1989: 178). The notion of a progressive evolution towards a more advanced society is bound up with the outdated ideologies of modernity such as socialism and liberalism, and therefore the principle for social change in the contemporary world must be that the 'idea of superseding must

be replaced by the search for an alternative', because, 'we are moving quite simply into a type of society in which no transcendence . . . will any longer force collective action to take on a meaning by which it is surpassed' (Touraine, 1981: 2, 80). By this, Touraine implies that the value of NSMs lies in their existence as alternative sites of democracy to the state, rather than merely as a means to a greater end.

The NSMs thesis, the main elements of which are summarised and contrasted with an 'ideal type' definition of the labour movement in Table 5.1, presents an interesting and multifaceted challenge to definitions of governance centred upon the state. However, both the conceptual assumptions of the NSMs theorists and their description of the practical realities of NSMs have been challenged from a variety of perspectives. The next section of this chapter will examine the most important of these critiques.

Criticisms of the New Social Movements Thesis

Political scientists have been especially critical of the notion that NSMs are clearly distinct from conventional pressure groups. The problem here is that the NSMs thesis has paid too much attention to the alleged cultural and social novelty of these movements and has not properly addressed exactly how these groups are organised, what resources they use to assert their aims, and in what ways they interact with the state and other political actors. Because these issues have not been fully considered by NSMs theorists, these movements can appear to have 'something ethereal or unrealistic about them' (Garner, 1996: 14).

Without more precise definitions, there is the danger of lumping together, under a single term, groups that have very different ideological perspectives, levels of commitment to the 'cause', varied organisational forms and a variety of political as well as cultural objectives (Jordan and Maloney, 1997: 48–52). It may not be appropriate, for example, to group together formal groups such as Friends of the Earth, which offers relatively little opportunity for participation by ordinary supporters, and more radical and decentralised groups such as the anti-road campaigners like Earth First and Justice. Scott supports this point through a study of the development of the Green movement in West Germany. He finds that there is a great deal of ideological diversity, which can usefully be divided along conventional left- and right-wing lines. The fact that much NSMs theory has often failed to acknowledge these distinctions has meant that the NSMs thesis has tended to centre upon the 'most fundamentalist expression' of a particular movement, thereby giving a distorted view of the movement as a whole (Scott, 1990: 150).

Table 5.1 Ideal Types of Old and New Social Movements

Characteristics	Labour Movement	New Social Movements
Principal objective	Control of state	Maintenance of autonomy within an expanded and highly pluralistic civil society
Principal opponent/threat	Deregulated capitalism	Technocratic state
Type of movement	Primarily political but unions provide important social/economic function	Primarily cultural/social but engaged in redefining the political: 'the personal is political'
Key Issues	Questions of inequality of material goods, social justice, poverty and unemployment	Ethical questions of personal autonomy, libertarianism, protection of nature, and the maintenance of peace
Organisation	Centralised and hierarchical parties and unions	Loose networks of like minded individuals
Tactics	Participation in elections, campaigns and industrial action aimed at increasing economic and social rights	Sporadic mass demonstrations, protests, cultural expressions of alternative lifestyles and identities
Orientation to international sphere	International solidarity offset by nationalistic sentiment	Awareness of interconnections between the local and the global: 'act local, think global'
Approach to democracy	Social democracy/ industrial democracy	Democracy of difference/ deliberative democracy
Approach to citizenship	Extension of liberal citizenship (civil, political and social rights) to all members of the polity	Promotion of group rights/ protection of general human rights
Main social base	Working class and socialist intellectuals from other classes	Middle class, particularly professional and public sector workers, and university-educated working class

Jordan and Maloney (1997) also question the extent to which, in reality, NSMs can be both non-institutional and successful. This takes us to the fundamental issue of the relationship between the state and NSMs, and whether NSMs are to be understood as political or cultural entities. A consideration of these questions exposes the major weakness

of the NSMs thesis. Theorists like Touraine and Melucci assert that NSMs are cultural rather than political phenomena and should therefore not overly concern themselves with conventional political issues like the extension of citizenship. From this perspective, success is measured by the extent to which NSMs can maintain their autonomy from the state and retain their loose-knit organisation. As we have seen, however, the NSMs thesis does not assume the marginality of these groups, but instead argues that it is through these groups that society will be transformed and governance redefined. The problem with this observation is that the nature and method of this transformation are extremely vague. This is due in part to an exaggerated importance being placed upon the transformative power of the new emancipatory discourses associated with the NSMs. Such 'discursive resistance' fails to take into account the problem of how the very real material power that the state commands could be dismantled or successfully opposed, and how the coercive inequality of the market could be transcended. Therefore, NSMs theorists, who contend that such movements can have a revolutionary impact upon the social system, are forced into the position of trying to identify an appropriate harbinger of this transformation in a manner not far removed from the structuralist thinkers they criticise. For instance, Touraine (1981: 95), while asserting the need for movements to retain autonomy and to define their future through their own social agency, searches (in vain) for a single movement to 'occupy the central role held by the workers' movement in industrial society' and by doing so he falls into the teleological trap that he identifies as tripping up Marxism. He asserts that it is 'mistaken to believe social movements are by definition agents of *historical change*' while at the same time believing that 'society is animated by a *single* social movement for each social class' (Touraine, 1981: 94-5). If, as Touraine argues, individuals make their own history through their social actions, then this last assertion has all the theoretical power of wishful thinking.

Similarly Melucci, although disputing the idea that the NSMs can form a single transformative movement, is caught in the dilemma of wanting to grant great significance to the actions of NSMs while failing to overcome the problem identified by Scott (1990: 67) that 'social movement activity is unstable to the extent that there is no effective third course between sporadic action around specific questions and formal political organisation'. The problem here for Melucci revolves around the false dualism he asserts between cultural and political movements. By defining NSMs as cultural, Melucci is in danger of missing one of the most original aspects of social movements, which is their redefinition and extension of the field of politics that has occurred in a practical as well as theoretical sense. In societies that are governed

by the state, which has compulsory and universal jurisdiction, NSMs have little choice to, at some stage, interact with the state and its agents, often in alliance with more formal groups such as pressure groups. It is only by challenging the state directly, rather than ignoring it, that the state may be reformed and democratised.

Box 5.2 Classifying Social Movements

The social movement concept may be best used as an umbrella term to refer to a coalition of groups at various stages of institutionalisation which each aims to further a shared cause. A social movement may include political parties and pressure groups, as well as more informal groups. For example, in the British context, the environmental movement embraces organised political parties such as the Green Party and pressure groups such as Greenpeace and the World Wildlife Fund, as well as informal new social movements such as anti-road construction campaigners. Within this framework, NSMs can best be understood as the ideological and politically innovative subsector of a wider social movement.

Generally, then, the NSMs thesis overstates the autonomy such movements can or may wish to maintain. In reality, the dilemma of ideological purity versus increasing institutionalisation is an ever-present one for NSMs. Their ability to join together in the first place and to maintain their independence cannot be understood outside of the wider political system. Contrary to Melucci, many of the issues raised by such movements have focused upon the extension of citizenship of the state, either in terms of civil rights, for example issues of the age of sexual consent for gay men, or social rights, for instance women's struggle for changes to tax and benefit systems. Moreover, these struggles are ongoing.

A related criticism is that many theorists have failed to analyse the continuing constraints upon the actions and resources of NSMs. Political scientists have attempted to address these problems of constraints and resources through the theories of Resource Mobilisation and Political Opportunity. McAdam (1996: 27) gives an example of the political opportunity approach when he outlines the factors that shape the ability of NSMs to influence the political agenda. These include:

1. The relative openness of the state to changes that arise in civil society
2. The stability of elite alignments

3. The presence of elite allies, sympathetic to the proposed social changes
4. The nature of social control mechanisms and the state's willingness to suppress protest and the formation of new movements

This approach, along with the resources mobilisation model, which points to the need to consider how NSMs utilise such resources as time, money and leadership skills, suggests that the formation and actions of NSMs have to be understood in their political context: NSMs theory, in its desire to assert the importance of social agency, has often forgotten the importance of structural constraints. This problem is very apparent in authoritarian countries, where the autonomy and relative freedom of civil society, often taken as given by the NSMs thesis, is largely absent. Thus as Gledhill (1994: 181) notes, Touraine often displays a Eurocentric approach because he assumes that the 'explosion of "social movements" as he defines them is conditional on a society reaching a certain stage of development not yet reached in "dependent" peripheral countries'.

In fact, social movements in authoritarian regimes have to struggle to gain, rather than simply maintain, a level of autonomy. This will often only be won if for some reason the coercive powers of the state become weakened. For example Zhao (1997) has argued that the rise of the student movement in China in 1989 can be attributed mainly to the decline of state legitimacy within universities, which in turn helped to loosen the controls on student mobilisation normally undertaken by student activists in co-operation with paid party workers. As the economy was gradually liberalised, and alternative careers for the young opened up, the status and number of such loyal student activists declined and consequently the student movement was able to develop. In the Latin American context, Foweraker (1995: 42) contends that 'the very different relations between state and civil society . . . do make a difference: the challenge [of NSMs] cannot be mounted at a great distance from the state'.

If the over emphasis on emancipatory ideology and culture has led NSMs theorists to underestimate the need for empirical research into the relationship between NSMs and the context in which they evolve, it has also led them to overstate the discontinuity between 'old' social movements and NSMs. Calhoun (1993) maintains that the early nineteenth century witnessed the formation of a whole host of social movements throughout Europe and the USA that were based on non-material issues such as temperance, lifestyle issues, and religion, many of which had characteristics very similar to the NSMs of the late twentieth century. It can also be argued that the workers' movement of

the nineteenth century had a strong base in civil society through their union organisation. Nor is the emphasis on building confidence and self-worth amongst their members new to contemporary movements, as the following statement from Sylvia Pankhurst, one of the leaders of the British women's suffrage movement in the early twentieth century, illustrates:

The existence of a strong self-reliant movement amongst working women would be the greatest aid in safeguarding their rights on the day of settlement. Moreover, I was looking to the future: I wanted to rouse these women of the submerged mass to be, not merely the argument of more fortunate people, but to be fighters on their own account. (cited in Durham, 1985: 186)

The failure to include groups such as pro-family, pro-life or racist movements in most discussions of NSMs also raises suspicion as to the academic rigour being applied in the NSMs thesis. This criticism can be successfully met, however, if new social movements are defined as emancipatory and anti-statist in orientation. Nevertheless, Jordan and Maloney (1997: 57) are right to suggest that 'the NSMs term is often used as a mark of approval of the (radical) goal rather than a statement about organisational structures that usefully distinguishes the group and the movement'. This comment summarises the view of some critics that NSMs are barely more than abstract and ideological constructs, which tell us little about the true nature or objectives of collective action. As such, it could be argued that the term NSMs should be abandoned and instead collective action should be considered through conventional concepts like pressure groups and political parties.

The Significance of New Social Movements

Given these extensive criticisms of the NSMs thesis, does the concept of NSMs have any utility for the political sociologist's concern with the state-civil society relationship?

Where the NSMs thesis seems weakest is in its concentration upon the cultural aspects of movements at the expense of understanding the significant contributions some movements have made in redefining the concept of the politics. In this sense, NSMs have mounted an important symbolic challenge to the state and highlighted the ways in which the state-civil society relationship reflects deep social divisions and depoliticises important issues. For example the often innovative methods of protest adopted by ecological and women's movements

have helped to place many new issues firmly on the political agenda in many developed and developing countries. These include exposing the essentially ideologically constructed division between a male-dominated public sphere and a private sphere, where the operation of patriarchy attempts to keep women in a subservient position. Increasing awareness of the constant threat that industrial society poses to the global environment is also due in no small measure to the activities of NSMs.

As Scott (1990: 25) has argued, if NSMs are analysed in their proper political context, clearly they have helped to increase political participation amongst young people in Europe and the USA who have felt alienated from bureaucratic and increasingly similar political parties. The adoption of many of the issues championed by NSMs by political parties and pressure groups, argues Scott, should be seen as a success for these movements. Indeed, even the demise of a movement, rather than signalling its failure or its institutionalisation into a hostile system, can instead often signal the achievement of its goal (Scott, 1990: 10). The relationship between the state and social movements will be shaped by numerous economic, political and social factors that cannot be easily accommodated into a single grand theory as is often attempted by the NSM theorists. The course of events will sometimes mean that a particular movement can gain prominence and significantly influence the political debate, and at other times their prominence and relevance will fade: that is, NSMs are often cyclical in nature. A good example of this process is provided by Ruzza's (1997) study of the relationship between the Italian peace movement and the state. Ruzza observes that at times when issues of defence were high on the agenda in Italy, such as in 1981 when the government proposed deploying Pershing and Cruise missiles or in 1991 during the Second Gulf War, the peace movement had a considerable impact in shifting public opinion towards support for nuclear-free zones and draft objectors. In the absence of such galvanising events, the inherent tendency towards fragmentation displayed by such groups might lead to a decline in their influence. Such reliance on political events, the difficulties of maintaining anti-hierarchical structures while retaining coherence, and the problem of sustaining media coverage, means that many NSMs are perhaps best perceived as catalysts that sometimes spark action by more formal political actors. However, as Ruzza contends, this role can at times be of considerable importance in legitimising new areas of political concern as a basis for public debate and policy formulation.

The West European focus of much NSMs theory has obscured how, in the developing world, and throughout Eastern Europe, mass social movements have had an even more direct impact on the governance

of these countries, playing an important role in breaking down authoritarian regimes. Foweraker (1995: 91) has shown, for example, how NSMs in Latin American countries have acted as 'schools of democracy in the form of intellectual caucuses, popular assemblies, demonstrations, sit-ins and negotiations with political authorities'. By playing such a role, NSMs have strongly contributed to democratic transition in many countries. In Chile during the early 1980s, for example, a mass women's movement was formed independently of conventional political parties and through campaigns such as the Women for Life demonstration in December 1983 the movement played a central role in the development of democracy (Foweraker, 1995: 110).

NSMs have considerably improved our understanding of the multi-faceted operation of power. In this regard, they have highlighted the importance of discourses of power and the way in which specialist systems of language can be used by the agents of the state in ways that contribute to very real inequalities in areas such as health care and education. Women's groups have highlighted how the symbolic portrayal of women in popular culture through pornography, advertising and cinema has helped to create an atmosphere of oppression for women and encouraged male violence towards them.

The NSMs thesis has also highlighted the difficult issue of how fundamental differences within democratic systems are to be accommodated and raised important questions about whether the state can ever be truly inclusive. NSMs have contributed to our understanding of the importance of social agency in shaping the relationship between the social and the political, and the ways in which individuals' conscious actions can help to subvert and transform social structures. In this sense, they have shown how the state-civil society relationship is shaped by the agency of individuals as well as by structural forces. Consequently, political sociology has benefited from engaging in the NSMs debate, which has helped to expose the limits of a purely state-centred or society-centred approach to understanding the state's relationship with civil society.

Conclusion

The activities of new social movements have thrown considerable light upon the problematic relationship between the state and civil society. Their very emergence as a political force can be explained by a distrust of the ability of the state to govern civil society in ways which are democratic and inclusive. Through their novel campaigns NSMs have highlighted the way in which the state is not neutral but in fact

embodies the inequalities that pervade society. Our understanding of the nature of communicative power has therefore been deepened through a consideration of new social movements. They have shown how our state-centred and therefore exclusive and hierarchical definitions of political problems reflect deep-seated power relationships.

However, like the challenges of globalisation and neo-liberalism, NSMs have served to highlight the problems of the state rather than significantly diminishing its power. In this sense, in their desire to maintain the purity of NSMs, champions of NSMs, such as Touraine and Melucci, are in danger of ignoring rather than engaging actively with the power of the state. By themselves, the informal and sporadic actions of NSMs cannot hope to transform the relationship between state and civil society in the way Touraine and Melucci suggest. In reality, the state remains the central focal point of power, and social movements of all kinds need to interact directly with the state if they are not to be permanently marginalised politically.

The central argument of this part of the book then has been that in order to find effective systems of governance beyond the state it is first necessary to acknowledge the power of the state. We cannot prematurely announce the state's demise, as some exponents of globalisation have done. Nor can we ignore the state and find refuge in the market or in self-governing social movements. This would be to gravely underestimate the power of the state.

Nevertheless, recent processes of social change have been significant in changing the context in which the state operates and highlighting its problematic relationship with civil society. This had led political sociologists to reconsider the problem of governance. Part IV explores some ways in which the state-civil society relationship has been rethought by contemporary political sociologists. First, however, Part III continues my analysis of the impact of social change upon the state-civil society relationship through a consideration of political culture, citizenship and political participation.