

New Social Movements as Postmodern Challenges To Neoliberalism and Representative Democracy¹

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Abstract

In this article, the relationship between new social movements, representative democracy and neoliberalism is examined. Starting with student protests in Europe and the United State, the late 1960s have witnessed the emergence of new social movements. Ecological, anti-nuclear, feminist, student, anti-racist, and LGBTI+ protests all have been examined with the scope of the new social movements paradigm. The remarkable protest wave of the 1970s has been followed by contemporary movements in different forms like the Arab Spring and the Occupy movement. Although these movements differ in terms of issues they deal with and goals they seek, they have a lot in common. Unlike the old movements like labour protests, these new movements primarily focus on postmaterial issues. Postmaterial identity demands and rights of these movements conflict with material demands of neoliberal governments. Furthermore, modern democracies fail to address these issues. Representative democracy is seen as an obstacle to political participation. On the other hand, postmodernism is a suitable concept to explain internal discrepancies and dispersion of new social movements. It is argued that (a) the legitimacy crisis of representative democracy and neoliberal response of capitalism to its structural crisis have triggered new social conflicts and movements, (b) these movements differ from old movements in terms of their forms, goals, and demands, (c) new social movements are postmodern.

Keywords: New Social Movements, Representative Democracy, Neoliberalism, Postmodernism

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Neoliberalizm ve Temsili Demokrasiye Postmodern Başkaldırı Olarak Yeni Toplumsal Hareketler¹

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Özet

Bu çalışmada yeni toplumsal hareketler, neoliberalizm ve temsili demokrasi arasındaki ilişki incelenecektir. 1960'lı yılların sonu, Amerika Birleşik Devletleri ve Avrupa'da başlayan öğrenci protestolarını takiben yeni toplumsal hareketlerin ortaya çıkışına tanıklık etti. Yeni toplumsal hareketler paradigması ekolojiden feminist harekete, anti-nükleer gösterilerden ırkçılık karşıtı protestolara ve LGBTI+ hareketine kadar farklı kimlik ve toplumsal grupları çerçeveye almıştır. Bu dönemdeki protest dalganın farklı formlarda yansımalarını ise İşgal Et hareketi ya da Arap Baharı gibi olaylarda bulmak ve bağ kurmak mümkündür. Tüm bu hareketler farklı amaçlar ve meseleler taşısa da ortak özellikler de taşımaktadır. İşçi hareketleri gibi eski hareketlerin aksine bu yeni hareketler postmateryal meselelerle ilgilenmektedir. Postmateryal ve kimlik temelli hak arayışı ile neoliberal hükümetlerin materyal talepleri çatışmaktadır. Modern demokrasiler ise bu talepleri karşılamakta yetersiz kaldığı gibi temsil mekanizmaları siyasal katılımın önünde engel teşkil etmektedir. Öte yandan postmodernizm yeni toplumsal hareketlerin içsel çelişkilerini ve dağınık yapılarını açıklamak için uygun bir konsept sunacaktır. Bu makalede (a) temsili demokrasinin meşruiyet krizinin ve kapitalizmin yapısal sorunlarına karşı öne sürülen neoliberal düzenin yeni çatışma ve hareketlerin ortaya çıkışını tetiklediği, (b) bu yeni hareketlerin yapı, amaç ve talep yönünden eski hareketlerden ayrıştığı ve (c) yeni toplumsal hareketlerin postmodern yapıda olduğu öne sürülmüştür.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Yeni Toplumsal Hareketler, Temsili Demokrasi, Neoliberalizm, Postmodernizm

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INTRODUCTION

The late 1960s and 1970s have witnessed mass protests which have been later named as new social movements. These movements have varied in terms of rights they have been defending, of the identity of the group involving in these protests, and of their demands. Major themes of these ‘new’ movements were ranging from ecology, anti-nuclearism, gay and lesbian rights, women’s rights, and students’ rights. These movements have initially appeared in universities of Europe and the United States. While new social movements paradigm bases itself especially in those decades, it would be claimed that some recent protests and mobilizations are quite similar to these movements. The Occupy movement, anti-capitalist protests, university demonstrations, gay and lesbian prides, ecological protests, and even the Arab Spring resemble those movements of 1970s from different perspectives. Indeed, organizational and social structures of them have evolved due to technological and structural developments. Nevertheless, it would be appropriate to relate and link these recent protests with the new social movements paradigm.

In this paper, it will be claimed that neoliberal policies and institutional dynamics of representative democracy have become prominent factors that influenced the rise of new social movements. Offensive neoliberal policies based on material demands of neoliberal governments have threatened postmaterial values and different social identities. While neoliberalism alone is not the sole cause of the rise of social movements, its dynamics have opened up (and closed up) space for the formation of new social movements. Neoliberalism has become the dominant political and economic thought in 1970s. It was a response to the crisis of capitalism but neoliberalism itself created new crises. The withdrawal of welfare state and new disciplinary role that states have adopted as a result of this neoliberal turn, on the other hand, created oppression and discontent in societies. Social movements have arouse over new conflicts that has been produced with this inconvenience. On the other hand, representative and liberal democracy failed to represent plurality of society. Masses and marginal social groups have been excluded from political participation and democracy has been reduced to periodic elections. New social movements were demanding and seeking for active participation.

Understanding the social, economic, and political background of the time period when they were becoming ‘popular’ is important. In this paper, this ‘atmosphere’ will be evaluated. Although some argue that the adjective ‘new’ does not refer to a chronological order that separates new social movements from the old ones (Coşkun, 2007: 109), the rise of anti-war and anti-nuclear students movements of 1960s in Europe and the United States could “mark a radical departure from the past” (Pichardo, 1997: 426). These years have been characterized by some crises, namely the crisis of capitalism, legitimacy crisis of democracy and political system. These crises produced different responses. On the one side, all these systems tried to overcome their crisis. Some developed and presented more advanced modes to repair it whereas others insisted on the continuity of their systems. While ‘subjects’ of these systems tried to figure out their crisis, people who are ‘subject to’ these systems, on the other hand, responded in a negative way and started to question them. It would be appropriate to relate these ‘negative’ reactions with new social movements.

In the first part of this paper, the crises of representative democracy and capitalism followed by neoliberal turn will be examined while their influence over this rise of social conflicts and movements are assessed. Social movements have three levels of analysis: social, political, and economic. The dominance of neoliberal economic setting and policies have their impact over all these levels. For instance, privatization appetite of neoliberalism shows up at formal institutional arrangements. It would be a law proposition or municipal arrangement. This constitutes the (formal) political level. Economic expectations from privatization could be located in the economic level. Social transformations that privatization triggers belong to the social layer. In the following section, major social movement theories, namely resource mobilization and new social movements paradigm will be evaluated briefly. It will be followed by how new social movements differ from the old ones. Finally, after the relationship between postmodern politics and new social movements is examined, it will be argued that these movements are postmodern in terms of identity and demands of their members and the methodology they follow during protests.

Crises of Democracy, Legitimacy and Capitalism

The first crisis we would like to mention is the crisis of capitalism or more specifically the crisis of the fordist regime of accumulation. Fordism represents the character of “traditional mass production and institutional context of 1950s and 1960s” (Vidal, 2013: 451). However, socio-economic reflections of the Fordist regime of accumulation are also vital. According to David Harvey, post-war Fordism is not just a system of mass production but it is also a lifestyle (2003: 158). Despite its relative benefits it has also created inequalities, discontent for people who were excluded from employment, and also social tension (Harvey, 1997: 161). The failure of Fordism which is also related to the 1973 crisis and “structural crisis of capitalism” resulted in structural changes of capitalist production (Temelli, 2019: 22). Neoliberalism was the response to this crisis of 1970s’ capital accumulation (Tonak, 2013: 3). The decline of profits in mass production is one of the essential reasons for this change in the 1970s (Chomsky, 2013: 5). Following neoliberal policies were abandoning the welfare state, dramatic increase in privatization (Tonak, 2013: 3), switching productive economic activities to financial manipulation, moving away from industrialization and locating economic production in third way countries (Chomsky, 2013: 5-7).

The role of states has evolved accordingly. Now, what states should do is to develop and implement policies that fit new conditions of capital accumulation (Coşkun, 2007: 29-30). The relationship between the state, market, and citizens has been redefined with neoliberalism (Aksoy, 2014: 30). States acquired a new regulatory role. Since international competition became intense, states were “forced to become entrepreneurial” while preventing organised and social movements (Harvey, 1996: 192). Social and economic functions of states got extreme with neoliberal policies (Coşkun, 2007: 34). The concentration of capital with all these policies have also brought the concentration of power (Chomsky, 2013: 7). As a reaction, new social groups, new movements, and new social conflicts arose “out of the new contradictions in modernizing capitalist social formations” (Oloffsson, 1988: 28). Similarly, Touraine and Habermas illustrates the relation between new types of social conflicts and the rise of post-industrialization (Melucci, 1999).

From Marxist perspective, it is claimed that liberal project which commoditized everything has reached its borders (Tuğal, 2013: 9). For Zizek, these movements in all parts of the world share something in common: They represent diverse reactions to capitalist globalisation. Today’s capitalism aims at enlarging markets, reducing public expenses and desires political power that is more authoritarian (Zizek, 2013: 8). Capitalism should not be reduced to economic or social policies. Rather, it is a dynamic socio-economic organization causing various types of social, political, and cultural conflicts which are determined by dynamics of capital accumulation (Tonak, 2013).

Although Chomsky as mentioned above underlies the concentration of power which is questionable from a postmodern perspective, capitalism is not seen as an organized power anymore for Marxists. Rather, the production in the new global economy has been deterritorialized and dispersed (Aronowitz, 1989: 47). Thus, organized resistance to it has lost its meaning and power (Coşkun, 2007: 80).

The second crisis could be named as the crisis of representative democracy or the legitimacy crisis. These two concepts are quite interrelated and interdependent. The main problem of modern representative democracies is that they are not democratic. It would be misleading to see democracy as a rigid or a fixed concept. It has various types from classical democracy of city states to contemporary representative democracy. Today we see representative democracy as a dominant political discourse. Whether a state is authoritarian or not, it would have representative democracy. Today’s most popular undemocratic states are modern democracies.

Therefore, it would be fair to claim that the concept of representative democracy does not indicate too much about democracy. This political system has various independent variables like freedom of speech so that a country could be defined as democratic. What is bitter about representative democracy is that it is inherently undemocratic.

To put it simply, people cannot voice their demands or find ways to ‘represent’ themselves. What is missing in modern democracy is channels of expression and adequate representation in the political institutions (Castells, 2015: 223). In representative democracy, masses were excluded from participation in the political arena (Coşkun, 2007: 32). Even though fancy concepts like ‘participation’, ‘representation’, and ‘multi-actor decision making mechanisms’ are recited by rulers of representative democracies, all these variables and practices lack in reality (Ünsal, 2014: 114). Dominant actors of modern democracies are “institutionalized interest groups and political parties” and in such a political

system, a mechanism that would resolve social and political conflicts solely depends on party competition and representative government. Therefore, active political participation of the common is excluded in such a “civil” culture. (Offe, 1999: 59). Then how can we say that in representative democracies people are purely represented? Moreover, such a political setting creates cleavage between civil society and public policy while it also limits the interaction of conflicts between these two (Offe, 1999: 58). The problem of modern societies is that gap between representative decision-making mechanisms and civil society (Melucci, 1999: 82). Public policy and the public is separated in modern democracies (Chomsky, 2013: 28).

It would be impossible to demolish representative democracy while it is such a dominant political setting in global context. However, people, scholars and movements have started to question the legitimacy and principles of modern representative democracy. Hardt and Negri, for instance, while tracing back the crisis of democracy to the eighteenth century European modernity, argue that “The institutions of political representation must allow (at least some) citizens to express their plural desires and demands while at the same time allowing the state to synthesize them as one coherent unity. The representative is thus, on one hand, a servant of the represented and, on the other, dedicated to the unity and effectiveness of the sovereign will” (2014: 247). This is a moderate claim when compared to radical democracy theories and aims at restoring deficits of representative democracy but could also seem little optimistic. Today’s political and social movements rather display tendencies to “reinvent democracy” and resort to alternative and direct forms (Castells, 2015: 223).

New social and political groups cannot easily channeled to political participation (Melucci, 1992: 82) and thus are not represented. While this deficiency could create social tension, it also shows inflexibility of representative democracy. As we mentioned above, this model of representation itself is problematic, individuals were alienated and sent away from political participation (Coşkun, 2017: 32). Moreover, it is argued that the basic problem of representation resides in the fact that politics have been reduced to repeated elections and these elections became only and unquestionable source of legitimacy (Coşkun, 2017: 32). On the other hand, another factor that casts doubt on this political setting is that political parties are not trusted anymore and most governments are corrupt (Castells, 2015: 222). The idea of nation state which had been giving self-determination opportunity to people has turned into an obstacle which prevents people from participating in political action (Kadioğlu, 2008b: 31). The combination of all these deficits and problems causes a fundamental crisis of legitimacy.

It is not a coincidence that the rise and organization of new social movements are related to the lack of reliability of participation channels in modern democracies (Larana et al., 1994: 137). These movements indicated the limits of representative democracy. Societies no more “fit in the dress of representative democracy” (Tonak, 2013: 10). All these movements in different parts of the world represent the common reaction to capitalist destruction and lack of participatory democracy (Tuğal, 2013: 8) while they show anti-institutional (Pichardo, 1997: 416) and more democratic structure. For Castells, “the combination of a degradation of the material conditions of life and of a crisis of legitimacy of the rulers” together induced people suffering from these conditions to take action (Castells, 2015: 246).

Before moving on social movements, taking changes in society due to crises and factors that were mentioned above into consideration is important to understand the background. How state-society and state-individual/citizen relations have been affected by structural changes in capitalism, how technological developments turned societies and groups into networks, and how new identities were formed, claimed, politicized will be examined.

Structural changes in post-industrial societies and identity problems of individuals are interconnected (Larana et al., 1994: 140). Touraine defines post-industrial in which “new power centers, domination forms, and a reflective cultural model” emerge. Accordingly, power relations have been relocated in cultural production while novelty in production of information has started to influence and alter how “we give meaning to world” (Cohen, 1999: 126). A combination of models and resources constitute the sphere of culture of which social actors try to get the control (Touraine, 1999: 42). Thus, in cultural space, social conflicts arouse. These conflicts emerged in cultural sphere because social demands shifted from material and economic ones to post-material values (Demiroğlu, 2014: 136).

Social relations are formed on the basis of information (Coşkun, 2007: 111). Since these information societies are in cultural surplus production and they are not interested in material production that is necessary for sustaining life circle, they can be defined as “post-material” societies (Melucci, 1999: 96).

Such societies redefine time and space and extend these two concepts' boundaries (Melucci, 1999: 96) which is quite similar to how postmodern discourse humbles with time and space.

For Bauman, the freedom that postmodern era brought is full of illusion. What is important the bridge between public and private spheres which is supplied by the successful translation of issues between them. However, eventhough this connection is achieved, the *agora* where people come together and deliberate on issues freely is resurrected, the (social) agent who will be applying decisions made by these free people is still missing (Bauman, 2018: 14). Therefore, individuals could not become free unless they form an agent who will enhance their freedom. *Agora* is far away and it should be freed from privatization and depoliticization (Bauman, 2018: 117). Thus, what postmodern era has done is that it did not bring a freedom of options for people. Rather, it has transformed political citizens to consumers (Bauman, 2018: 88). Exploitation used to be at the level of labour. Today, it was relocated on consumers. That is the reason that the welfare (social) state is collapsing. Moreover, the privatization wave locates the duty to struggle with social problems on individuals who are not capable of dealing with this problems alone (Bauman, 2013: 24-25).

Globalization has torn apart spaces for different groups. Those who could not successfully adapted to consumption dynamics of the market have been excluded. The society is now a society of consumption. Consumers of this new society of consumption is radically different from any historical consumer (Bauman, 2006: 84). Here, consumption does not locate itself on needs. What is important and desired for consumer is the hope for satisfaction. Happiness of the consumption society comes from this search for hope of satisfaction (Bauman, 2006: 86-87). The level of movement which stems from this appetite for pursuit of satisfaction decides and defines 'lower' and 'upper' classes (Bauman, 2006: 90). Society would have a lower class inside, but this class is not 'included' in society. Members of this class do not belong to society (Bauman, 2013: 9-10). Even in the postmodern era in which tolerance and different life styles exist to some degree, everyone should pass the test of being able to survive in the consumer market. They should be adapting themselves to this dynamic market and those who cannot would be marked as a dirt (Bauman, 2019: 26). For instance, the reserve labour army of the welfare state is today useless and they would be defined as defective consumers (Şimşek, 2016, 227).

According to Touraine, the idea of society has been displaced and the 'social' was replaced with the 'political' which has evolved into two different forms: First is the power that is totalitarian and absorbing the whole social life. The other form of the political consists of the competition of interest groups and members of decision-making mechanisms. In such a social setting, actors and their capacity to create a social movement disappears (Touraine, 1999: 39). What new social movements aims at is the quite opposite: Their political discourse, to put it simple words, is to restore civil society and emancipate it from the monopoly of the institutions of representative democracy and bureaucracy because problems of advanced industrial societies cannot be resolved with bureaucratic regulations and authorities (Offe, 1999: 55). For Touraine, the notion of society should not be the core of sociological analysis. Rather, it should be based upon the idea of social movement so that the cleavage between actors and the system can be replaced with interdependence of these two phenomena (Touraine, 1999: 42).

The tension between state and society, state and citizens, and separation of public and private sphere have been questioned scholarly especially after the second part of the nineteenth century. Citizenship studies became popular and the role and monopoly of state have no longer been taken for granted both by these studies and some movements. This increasing interest in such studies is related to some political events and tendencies like withdrawal of the welfare state or the rise of multiculturalism (Kymlicka and Norman, 2008: 185). For Ayşe Kadioğlu, Aristotle's connection between a good person and a good citizen which assumes that there cannot be a conflict between an individual and the state, have been a barrier over an advanced civil society to appear (Kadioğlu, 2008a: 11). Superiority of states over its members is no longer assumed and moreover, it is challenged in different ways. Individuals are now expecting to be able to exist in societies with their diverse identities which were banished from the public sphere. 'Democratization of citizenship' is today on the political agenda and the institution of citizenship is shifting from membership to a concept based on rights and participation (Kadioğlu, 2008c, s. 35).

Social Movements

There have been scholarly attempts to define what social movements are and not but it is not easy to give definition that can comprise all kinds movements since they may have diverse and sometimes radical characteristics. If this plurality of social movements in terms of their forms, contents and social

bases are taken into consideration, analysis of them could be done better. Rather than labeling and examining them with a strict model and their modes of mobilization, conceiving their diversity and specific context should be preferred. Social movements are not just labour or revolutionary movements (Calhoun, 1993: 386). Similarly, Touraine claims to emancipate social movement studies from the domination of economic determinism (Touraine, 2002: 89). All in all, diverse schools over social movements literature have a common mistake for Bevington and Dixon (2005), that they are over-emphasizing in particular variables. Rather than allowing different variables to fight and compete, a movement-based attitude should be taken. What matters is not diverse variables which are over-emphasized by studies but concerns and movements themselves (Bevington and Dixon, 2005: 203).

While three basic components of social movements, namely 'networks of relations between a plurality of actors; collective identity; conflictual issues' are widely agreed in movement studies, the distinctive characteristic of movements is that they have anti-institutional styles of political participation and their attitudes are anti-systemic (Diani, 1992: 17). Social movements, according to Castells, are emotional movements and they do not have a program or political strategy in the beginning (Castells, 2015: 13). Touraine considers a social movement as a response to a 'threat' or 'hope' based on a social group's capacity to control over making decisions and changes and defines social movements as 'organized conflicts or as conflicts between organized actors over the social use of common cultural values' (Touraine, 2002: 90). Basically, a movement is a product of a social conflict with two opponent sides, which appears from a cleavage. This rupture could be about cultural values or institutional rules (Touraine, 1985: 772).

According to Olofsson, social movements are mediators between social processes or contradictions and individual or collective reactions to them. What makes these movements 'social' are basically 'their roots in social processes or contradictions, their social existence itself, and what they demand. On the other hand, one of the most obvious traits of them is their popular character. They demand a change from below because subjects of such movements are generally repressed, marginalized, and exploited groups whereas social and political actions of upper modern bureaucratic classes take more formal forms (Olofsson, 1988: 17). On the other hand, political traditions and systems of a country is also a decisive factor whether there can emerge such a movement. If new actors, new identities and social groups can easily join political participation, it is less likely to see a social movement in such context (Olofsson, 1988: 32).

Social movements, according to Manuel Castells, have been producing new values and goals while institutions of society struggle to adopt and represent these demands with creating norms and controlling social organization. Social movements, claimed to be autonomous, try to keep this freedom of autonomy while trying to escape the control of institutional power. For Castells, this effort is not that easy especially under the control of governments over the mass media. However, communicative autonomy of network societies which is based on Internet networks and wireless communication provides a space to construct the autonomy (Castells, 2015: 9).

In another study, it is argued that what shapes social movements is the social class and class culture. Class culture is presented as an alternative framework which does not neglect the interdependence between interests, values, and ideas. Accordingly, it is claimed that social class is the decisive factor over consciousness and interpretation of interests. Diverse class cultures produce diverse forms of strategy and then different kinds of movements (Rose, 1997: 487).

The spectrum of social movement studies is wide and there are also controversial claims and assumptions about movements. For instance, it is argued that their vision can be related to the whole society. If their specific demands coincide with society's needs at large, they can be acceptable. Moreover, these goals of movements should be universal because human nature is universal (Hewitt, 1993: 53-72). Naturally, such a claim is not widely accepted and internalized by the majority of social movement studies. Rather, as we will discuss in paper, new social movements and contemporary studies celebrate the plurality of identities, local values, and minority interests.

There is a tendency in social movement studies to locate these movements in a social context rather political. That is mainly because of mistrust in formal politics. The lack of representation in modern representative democracies and the lack of confidence in formal political institutions and politics as we have mentioned above in the first part and defined it as a crisis are main reasons of this shift from political to social. However, social movements are political movements. For Manuel Castells, all cases of social movements are "very political in a fundamental sense" especially when propose and practice

democratic participation (Castells, 2015: 256). For Tuğal, the claim that social movements are cultural and should not be politicized is a trap of ‘liberals’ (Tuğal, 2013: 4-5).

According to Claus Offe, movements are ‘political’ as long as actors of movements have recognition demand for legitimacy and demands of the movement are binding for a community (Offe, 1999: 61). Similarly, according to Kriesi et al., if these movements are not mediated by politics, social and cultural change cannot become relevant. Although there are multiple variables and other factors in development of these movements, that the “overt collective action that constitutes the organised, sustained, self-conscious challenge to existing authorities is best understood if it is related to political institutions, and to what happens in arenas of conventional party and interest group politics” (Kriesi et al., 1992: 239). In analyzing social movements and social conflicts, breaking off their relation with politics would be insufficient. Rather, political developments, political cleavages and conflict are interdependent with these movements.

Resource Mobilization Theory

With the rise of social movements in the 1960s, there emerged two different schools that are conceptualizing these movements. In this case, practice has paved the way for different theories to come up. On the other hand, there are some arguments about the influence of intellectuals over movements. However, it is obvious that with the increased number of students, identity, gender based, and environmental movements in that time period, scholars have started to pay attention to social movements studies.

The first school is called Resource Mobilization Theory (RMT), a theory based on the ‘American’ tradition (Olofsson, 1998; Demiroğlu, 2014). RMT focuses on an organizational structure of a social movement and strategies they follow (Demiroğlu, 2014: 135). How resources are gathered and economic interests of actors constitute the main research field for members of this school (Çayır, 1999a: 9). They concentrate their interest over ‘single-issue movements’ and examine their mobilizing character (Olofsson, 1998). For RMT scholars, formation of a social movement heavily depends on ‘resources’ and ‘opportunities’. A movement could be called successful only if a social group forming that movement is recognized as a political actor or members of the movement have material gains (Cohen, 1999: 114). RMT defines collective action as individuals’ rational action with a strategy (Çayır, 1999b: 20-21). Members of this school in their studies assume a connection between new social movements and old social movements while claiming continuity and similarity between them (Demiroğlu, 2014: 135). RMT’s novel contribution to social movement studies is that it claims that advanced organizational structures and advanced communication forms are required for mobilization rather than old and basic social mechanisms (Cohen, 1999: 113).

Critiques of RMT focus on the claim that RMT neglects the identities of actors and their relation with social norms. It is limited with strategic analysis of power relations (Çayır, 1999b: 22). This perspective bases itself on the ground of rational action however it is ignoring the importance of values, norms, ideologies, culture, and identities (Cohen, 1999: 118). An analysis of social movements consider the process of construction of collective identities, main themes and causes of social conflicts, and structural and cultural changes that are related to these conflicts (Cohen, 1999: 116).

The other school of social movements is called New Social Movements (NSM) which is mainly a Euro-centric perspective over social movements (Demiroğlu, 2014: 135). This European paradigm, rather than focusing on strategical and rational/interest-based analysis, examines interdependence of societal changes and identities (Olofsson, 1988). Processes of actors’ identity claims and identity-based claims are the main interest of the NSM paradigm (Çayır, 1999a: 9). NSM is not a unified or a rigid school. Studies are diverse in a wide range of spectrum just like movements but the common denominator of such studies is that they refer to a break between old movements and the new ones unlike the RMT paradigm which claims a continuity between them.

Since RMT school mainly looks at single-issue movements and overemphasizes on resource allocation, NSM paradigm looks more appropriate to be acquired to understand postmodern movements. These movements do not acquire method to gather people. They often appear all of a sudden and different social groups would get together to protest the same thing from own perspectives. Moreover, diversity of new social movements and theories of NSM coincides.

Comparing Old and New Social Movements

Although some theorists argue that what is new about new social movements and their relation with politics is not clear (Cohen, 1999: 109), we can talk about a paradigm shift from old movements to the new ones. As we have mentioned in the first part of this article, the adjective ‘new’ refers to a break from class and interest based movements rather than a chronological separation (Coşkun, 2007: 109). With the evolution of procedures that are resolving social conflicts, social movements have also become ‘new’ (Eyerman, 1984: 75). These new social movements are different from old movements in terms of their political demands, organizational forms, and participants’ social class. Their inner values based on identity, autonomy, and diversity are totally different from ‘values of modernism’ (Çorakçı, 2008: 97). These movements can be characterized with less objective values like identity, status, and spirituality (Larana et al., 1999: 151).

For Melucci, social movements from the 1960s have brought age, gender, health, and environment related issues in the center of analysis which have not been put in the political or sociological agenda before (Melucci, 1999: 81). The centrality of identity is unique in modern¹ movements (Pichardo, 1997: 414). New social movements represent the rise of new or excluded identities (Larana et al., 1999: 135-136). Rather than focusing on economic distribution issues like ‘industrial era’ movements, new movements’ basic concern is about quality of life and life styles (Cömert, 2019: 5). Subject matter loses its ground as these movements were looking after alternative social and cultural life (Touraine, 1985: 749). Cultural elements have more weight and more importantly these elements are framed individually rather than in accordance with social norms (Plotke, 1995: 122).

Cohen summarizes seven elements which make these movements new: a shift towards issues related to cultural and personal identities, not interesting to get the control of state power, non-material needs, increased interest in institutional topics from which ordinary citizens were excluded, dispersed and diverse networks, demands not related to pure class categories, and attaining more democratic and participatory form when compared to the old ones (Cohen, 1998: 5).

For Offe, what is not new about new social movements is that values they bear (Offe, 1999: 75) but these values obtained importance and emergency inside these movements (Offe, 1999: 64). All these movements share a common theme that is ‘society against state’ which is not new at all according to Jean Cohen (1999: 111). However, how these values whether they are new or not were mobilized in novelty in movements is unique. Besides ideology and goals, these movements’ uniqueness comes from their tactics, structure, and participatory character (Pichardo, 1997: 414). These movements are leaderless, flexible, and decentralized (Çayır, 1999b: 19). Their mobilization tactics are different from the ones of the working class (Larana, et al., 1999: 137).

Social conflicts that are giving birth to new social movements are also different in new movements. At the core of new social movements, there lies a value-based political polarization rather than class-based polarization (Coşkun, 2007: 111). That is quite the opposite of old labour movements because these conflicts are not products of a clash between members of economic production. Demands are no more class-based but much more universal or too local (Offe, 1999: 70).

Whose interests these movements represent is another reference point to distinguish with old movements. Old movements were carrying demands of a particular class, on the other hand, new social movements focus on collective or intangible goods regardless of social classes they include (D’anieri et al, 1992: 446-447). Old movements’ social base were defined in relation with economic production whereas new movements’ participants’ social backgrounds were diverse in wide range (Çayır, 1999b: 19). Old working-class based movements were replaced with new movements whose agenda and participants are defined with ‘multitude’ (Temelli, 2019: 11). These actors’ interest is based on their political standpoint which is also determined by actors, rather than their economic position (Coşkun, 2006: 69). There is also a difference in terms of these movements’ use of space. Old movements were instrumentalizing space (city centers, parks) to make them visible. However, new social movements by occupying spaces produce and reproduce themselves with practices they experience in these spaces (Candan and Özbay, 2014: 24).

¹ Pichardo’s definition of new social movements as modern is not related to modernism-postmodernism debate of this article. The adjective ‘modern’ rather refers to the newness of these movements and to a break from old social movements. On the same page he uses this phrase (modern social movements), Pichardo also acquired ‘contemporary’ to describe these movements (Pichardo, 1997, p. 414).

On the other hand, there is also a group of study arguing that these movements are not new at all. For D'anieri et al., the goals, forms, and values of movements are quite similar (1992: 445). Old movements such as Chartist and West Germany peace movements were also seeking universal aims (D'anieri et al., 1992: 446-454). Past movements also had cultural elements and goals. For instance, it is argued that in the history of the US many sharp cultural conflicts of the eighteenth and nineteenth century can be found (Plotke, 1995: 121-122). Major characteristics that are also presented above, can be found in movements of this time period (Calhoun, 1993: 386).

Postmodernism

It is not easy to define what postmodernism is. There have been a number of attempts to do that by scholars, but any definition could be missing something about it. Pauline Marie Rosenau this impossibility about identifying postmodernism is its magic and successfully refers to its open-endedness (Rosenau, 1991: 11). For Ihab Hassan, postmodernism like other categorical terms has a semantic instability and scholars have not reached a consensus over its meaning (Hassan, 1985: 121). Postmodernism is a contradictory phenomenon and any attempt to define what postmodernism is accompanied by a description about what is not (Hutcheon, 2002: 1). Moreover, it is not an original phenomenon as it “appropriates, transforms, and transcends French structuralism, romanticism, phenomenology, nihilism, populism, existentialism, hermeneutics, Western Marxism, Critical Theory, and anarchism” (Rosenau, 1991: 13). It dismisses logocentric and totalizing meta-narratives (Rosenau, 1991: 6).

What postmodernism is not is quite obvious. It signifies a difference from modernism. Progressive promises of modernity have not been sustained (Rosenau, 1991: 5). Modernity and its insistence over rationality gave birth to bureaucratic culture which excluded individual identity demands for the sake of reason and fraternity (Çorakçı, 2008: 97). Modernism having its roots in standardized production of information is a positivist phenomenon (Harvey, 1997: 50). Similarly, Foucault relates modern forms of power and form of information which have created new forms of oppression (Best & Kellner, 1998: 76). Postmodernists claim that the hegemony is never stable (Handler, 1992: 700) and even if the power and domination dispersed, it is encountered with opposition wherever they emerged (Best & Kellner, 1998: 76). Postmodernism questioned essentialism and reductionism which are essential characters of modernism and rejected them while it also replaced Western-centricism and homogenization of modernism with locality and multitude (Gökhan, 2010: 19).

The belief in premises of Enlightenment and progression disappeared (Harvey, 1997: 43). The baseline of postmodernist thought is the distrust in totalizing and universal discourses (Harvey, 1997: 21). All kinds of foundational thought have been renounced. Master discourses including liberalism and Marxism have been waived (Aronowitz, 1989: 46). World wars, militarism, nuclear threats, and holocausts of the century destroyed optimism brought by modernism (Harvey, 1997: 26). Postmodernists, therefore, are seen as the first ones admitting that the future cannot bring freedom from despotism (Handler, 1992: 722).

Postmodernism assumes everything as a text and elevates the importance of reading (Rosenau, 1991: 21). Intellectuals and academics of postmodern thought believe in the ‘inherent power of language’ while they also put emphasis on reflexivity (Handler, 1992: 726). Deconstruction and subversion are also important concepts for postmoderns which have developed first in literature, art, and architecture and then spread into politics (Handler, 1992: 698).

Postmodernism and Politics

Rosenau’s categorization of postmodernists as skeptics and affirmative is useful to understand political attitudes of different camps inside postmodernism, which are not orthodox at all. Basically, affirmative postmodernists are much more optimistic, participatory, and interested in politics. It would be appropriate to say they affirmatives did not give up politics. Rather, they are willing to transform it and emancipate it from degeneration. Even though they criticize modernity just like skeptical postmodernists, they are hopeful about the post-modern age (Rosenau, 1991: 15). These postmodernists are looking for nondogmatic, tentative, and non ideological practices (Rosenau, 1991: 16) but they are not anti-democratic or against political participation. They call for a “revival of genuine democracy and construction of authentic self-government” (Rosenau, 1991: 145). These postmodernists are complaining about representative democracy as it is not allowing political participation of masses.

Moreover, they blame representative democracy as legitimating repressive regimes (Rosenau, 1991: 39). That is what we named as ‘the crisis of democracy’ in the first part.

On the other hand, skeptics are quite pessimistic about the future and believe that any political participation is not worth it. According to Rosenau, this is the darker side of postmodernism as this camp of postmodernism “speaks of the immediacy of death, the demise of the subject, the end of the author, the impossibility of truth. If the truth disappears, what is left for skeptics is play with words and their meanings” (Rosenau, 1991: 15). As skeptics believe in the end of history and the absence of truth, they refuse to take participatory action in politics (Rosenau, 1991: 140).

To sum up, skeptical postmodernists are politically passive but affirmatives are participatory although they have lost their faith in representative democracy. Affirmatives prefer reconstruction rather than deconstruction and many affirmatives become political activists (Rosenau, 1991: 145). This categorization of two groups of postmodernists is important for one of the arguments of this paper that is that new *social movements are postmodern movements* because postmodernism here should be understood as affirmative postmodernism. This ‘bright’ side of postmodernism has a participatory character as we mentioned above. On the other hand, skeptics do not participate in any political action other than actions including ‘death’ and ‘terrorism’. Therefore, as postmodernists are diverse in terms of their political attitudes even inside the two sides, the argument does not aim to include all kinds of postmodernists. Rather it focuses on postmodern characteristics of these movements.

The major goal of postmodernists is to undermine the dominant discourse with subversion and deconstruction. They see power as diffused in all parts of society. Therefore, this conception of subversion subversion is a “key part of the explanations and ideological commitments of contemporary theorists of protest from below and the new social movements” (Handler, 1992: 697-698). Postmodernists insist on language and discourses as they believe they are sources of domination and oppression. Dominance is constructed through language. Information systems and discourses that are constructing practices to take the control of society and localized power are interdependent for Foucault. Therefore, localized resistance to power is required (Harvey, 1997: 66). Institutions and daily practices construct power while it is also local and in a dispersed form (Coşkun, 2007: 16). The success of deconstruction lies in its ability to deconstruct hegemonic structures, which are paving the way for resistance (Handler, 1992: 701).

In the postmodern age, political identities are constructed through the process of politics and identity formation (Göktolga, 2012: 165). Some Marxists criticize the centrality of identity as it legitimizes construction of any identity as it is aimed at replacing class-based identities (Coşkun, 2007: 10). Postmodernism is an open, vague concept that it cannot be located in the classical right-left spectrum (Rosenau, 1991: 24). What is obvious about postmodernism and politics is the relationship between politics and identity or processes of identity construction gained importance. Both academics and social movements/groups are focusing on identity based demands and conflicts. There appears another ambiguity: is there a postmodern political unit? We would basically say that it does not exist yet until the separation of (political) power and politics (see Bauman, 2018: 14) is reversed. The postmodern era lacks the social agent. On the other hand, there exists political groups carrying similarities with modern political units. However, there appears the postmodernity of postmodernism: social groups that are not postmodern at all would constitute a postmodern movement when they come together to protest the same thing for different reasons. For instance, a branch of fast-food franchise in a university was protested by different groups including animal rights defenders and environmentalists (see Rosenau, 1991: 148).

Postmodern Social Movements

Foucault’s ideas about localized power and resistance were attractive to social movements of 1960s (Harvey, 1997: 62). What Foucault proposed was a dispersed micro politics and resistance against localized and diffused repression and power (Best & Kellner, 1998: 77-78). These counter-cultural and anti-modernist movements questioning institutionalized, rationalized bureaucratic power and the state’s monopoly of that power (Harvey, 1997: 53). These movements have mainly a ‘negative character’ not because they display destructive tendencies but rather since they oppose routinization and manipulation of representation coming from large-scale institutions (Plotke, 1995: 117). The institution of representation is a mediator between politics and the represented but politics have become such routinized that what outsiders of formal politics demand remained excluded. Therefore, formal political

mechanisms can no longer be a reference point for resistance since it is useless. Moreover, widespread oppression cannot be resisted in a single, central space as it is too diffused.

These movements are seen as “reactions to enforced mobilization” (Olofsson, 1988: 25). They are, either rightist or leftist, questioning and resisting dogmatism and strict ideological standards while celebrating and tolerating pluralism (Rosenau, 1991: 146). Unlike modern movements, postmodern social movements do not have long term strategies (Rosenau, 1991: 147). Modern social movements had homogeneous membership, formal leadership and a hierarchical structure but postmodern ones have heterogeneous memberships in which members have cross-cultural and diverse social class backgrounds. These memberships do not last forever, rather it is seen as a part-time commitment (Rosenau, 1991: 146-147). Members of postmodern movements should avoid looking for a leader and the trap of hierarchy (Chomsky, 2013: 24).

The enemy is not a specific social class or category, rather the dominant rationality and discourses are opposed (Handler, 1992: 720). Because the concept of modern state can be defined by its centralizing tendency, postmodern social movements oppose all kinds of statism and are willing a minimal state (Aronowitz, 1989: 49). Basically, these movements aim at restoring tension brought by modernism (Cömert, 2019: 13).

These movements are not programmatic at all (Castells, 2015: 254). Rather, they carry various demands at the same time. Modern social movements were demanding material advantages but what postmodern movements want is ambiguous. These movements are not interested in redistribution issues. What is obvious about them is that they are “anti-system and subversive in orientation” (Rosenau, 1991: 147). While modern movements attributed importance to intellectuals in terms of interpreting goals and programs, postmodern social movements are constituting themselves (Aronowitz, 1989: 59). These movements are self-reflective and self-produced (Aronowitz, 1989: 59). They constantly interrogate themselves as movements (Castells, 2015: 254).

Postmodern social movements unlike formal political organizations tend to become dispersed and decentralized (Larana et al., 1999: 137). Agenda and structure of these movements have been influenced by new communication technologies (Cömert, 2019: 4). For Cömert, these technologies made social movements ‘postmodern’ with novel forms of mobilization, participation and interaction (Cömert, 2019: 2). Participating in such movements depend upon individual and friendship ties. Participants carry a distrust in any organizational structure. Drinking and doing politics, resisting and making fun seen and done together (Tuğal, 2013: 24). Members of these movements are not sure about what they want. Rather, they are pretty sure about what they oppose (Handler, 1992: 719). They are against “concentrated forms of power” (Plotke, 1995: 116).

CONCLUSION

Some feminist movements are rejecting postmodernism (Harvey, 1997: 64). Claus Offe argues that what these movements do is a modern critique of modernism since it is based on modern humanism, historical materialism, and emancipation ideas brought by Enlightenment (Offe, 1999: 76). However, what makes these movements postmodern is that they freely borrow and place terms and concepts of modernism in a “new discursive context” (Aronowitz, 1989: 61). What separates new social movements from old movements also distinguishes these postmodern movements from modern movements. Structural and organizational forms, goals, demands, localization, distrust in formal politics and politicians, self-reflectivity, and heterogenous memberships of new social movements posit altogether these movements’ postmodern character. Departing from the industrial to post-industrial era, demands and conflicts shifted from material to post-material issues. New identities have been formed and social groups started to define themselves with these new identities in politics. Indeed, it would be misleading to put all new movements in a single category. Postmodernism itself is an ambiguous concept. However, what new social movements and postmodern politics have in common apart from characteristics they share as mentioned above is this heterogeneity.

On the other hand, new social movements are byproducts of neoliberal policies. Material demands of neoliberal governments conflict with post-material demands of social groups which is often ignored in the literature. When we recall three levels of analysis of social movements namely social, economic, and political, the trilateral complex relationship of neoliberalism appears. Neoliberal economic policies did not just have influence over economic and political issues. It has also caused social transformations. Commodification of almost everything with oppression over minority groups gives birth to new

conflicts. As a reaction, movements demanding and defending post-material rights appear. Moreover, inadequacy of representative democracy which is the dominant regime type today in most countries is influential over the rise of these movements. Individuals and groups that have been systematically excluded from political decision making processes are seeking active political participation and raising their voices via these new social movements.

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