

**NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN NORTHEAST INDIA:
CONTEXTUALIZING ENVIRONMENTALISM IN
CONTEMPORARY COLLECTIVE ACTION**

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DEPARTMENT OF POLITICAL SCIENCE

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BY

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Submitted

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CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis entitled “NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN NORTHEAST INDIA: CONTEXTUALIZING ENVIRONMENTALISM IN CONTEMPORARY COLLECTIVE ACTION,” submitted by DAVID BUHRIL for the award of the degree of DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY, is a research work, done under my supervision and guidance. The thesis, submitted by him has not formed the basis for the award to the scholar for any degree or any other similar title and it has not yet been submitted as a dissertation or thesis in any university. I also certify that the thesis represents objective study and independent work of the scholar.

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ABBREVIATIONS

NSMs – New Social Movements

NGOs – Non Governmental Organizations

CSOs – Civil Society Organizations

SANDRP - South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People

DONER - Department of Development of the North Eastern Region

CEA - Central Electricity Authority

NHPC - National Hydro Power Corporation

NEEPCO - North Eastern Electric Power Corporation

SEBs -State Electricity Boards

INGOs - International Non-Governmental Organizations

KMSS - Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti

LSHP - Lower Subansiri Hydropower Project

AFSPA - Armed Forces Special Powers Act

EMRIP - Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

FPIC - Free, Prior and Informed Consent

MoEF - Ministry of Environment and Forest

WCD - World Commission on Dams

IGOs – Inter- Governmental Organizations

WCED - World Commission on Environment and Development

MLR&LR Act - Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms (MLR&LR) Act

NHPC - National Hydro Power Corporation

MW – Mega Watt

RF – Reserved Forest

EIA - Environmental Impact Assessment

EAC - Expert Appraisal Committee

PAPs – Project Affected Persons

AASU - All Assam Students Union

NEC - North-Eastern Council

UNC - United Naga Council

NWUM - Naga Women’s Union, Manipur

ANSAM - All Naga Students Association, Manipur

NPMHR - Naga People’s Movement for Human Rights

CATD - Committee Against Tipaimukh Dam

MoU - Memorandum of Understanding

ZU - Zeliangrong Union

ZWU - Zeliangrong Women Union

ZYF - Zeliangrong Youth Front

CCCD - Citizens Concern for Dams and Development

HSA – Hmar Student’s Association

SIPHRO - Sinlung Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Organisation

WCD - World Commission on Dams

YMA - Young Mizo Association

MZP - Mizo Zirlai Pawl

MHIP - Mizo Hmeichhia Inzawmkhawm Pawl

MUP - Mizo Upa Pawl

HI - Hmar Inpui

HYA - Hmar Youth Association

HWA - Hmar Women's Association

ACTIP - Action Committee Against Tipaimukh Project

TMHP - Tipaimukh Multipurpose Hydroelectric Project

PFR - Preliminary Feasibility Report

DPR - Detailed Project Report

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CHAPTER – I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter broadly sketches the concepts of New Social Movements (NSMs) and look into how the movement grows out of various social and political discontents. It traces the roots of NSMs theory from the break-up of the New Left that fractured into diverse single issue groups. The chapter hints at the incapability of the old left or the working class that gave way for the emergence of new social movements. New social movements were the products of the break-up of the New Left at the end of the 1960s.¹ The New Left fractured into a multitude of single issue groups representing the peace movement, the environmental movement, the student movement, the women's movement, and the gay liberation movement. The creation of these single issue groups were seen as an indication that the old left, composed of workers and unions, were incapable of addressing these issues. It was in this fractured socio-political context that the 1970s saw emergence of NSMs theory and activism.

The roots of new social movement theory can be traced to an attempt by Marxists to explain different social formations within capitalism in the post-war era and the supposed failure of the working class in the pre and post-war periods. Particularly influenced by Herbert Marcuse and Louis Althusser, sociologists worked on theories that embraced the idea of a new working class as a revolutionary agent. Pressed to explain the revolutionary activity of French students, professionals, and petit bourgeoisie in May of 1968, these Marxists explored how to account for these activists, and explain their

¹ New social movement theory was first put forward by French sociologist, Alaine Touraine (Alaine Touraine , 1981, *The Voice and Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe are often associated with the first works on new social movement theory. Touraine's first foray into this field can also be traced to his book *The May Movement Revolt and Reform: May 1968*. (New York: Random House, 1971).

alleged failure of the working class. Althusser shifted the attention of Marxists from the economic base, or the forces of production in society, to the superstructure, which is everything else including politics, religion, culture and identity. He focused on culture, part of the superstructure, in order to explain the development of this new way of struggle and new revolutionary agent. However, Althusser did not completely abandon class, and believed that class was the determinant in the last instance.² However, what the last instance was, or how it was determined, was never fully explained. The theorist who expanded these ideas into the theory of the new working class was French sociologist Alain Touraine.

In *The May Movement Revolt and Reform: May 1968 – the Student Rebellion and Workers’ Strikes – Birth of a Social Movement*, Touraine theorized that a new working class developed out of the current era of capitalism as illustrated by the May Movement. Touraine differed from orthodox Marxism, arguing that modern industrial capitalism had created a new working class. In his opinion, this working class was made up of professionals, not industrial workers. As Touraine puts it, “the main actor in the May movement was not the working class but the totality of those whom we may call the professionals. A major theme in Touraine’s analysis is that class relations have changed within modern advanced industrial capitalist society. Within advanced capitalism, Touraine argues, a new relationship between capital and labor is forged where professionals replace traditional workers. This new relationship occurs as professionals become responsible for tending the technologically sophisticated machinery necessary for advanced capitalist industry. According to Touraine, these technicians, civil servants,

² Althusser, Louis. (1971). *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, London: New Left Books.

engineers, researchers, scientists, and students training to be in those professions, formed not only a new social movement but also a new class.

Alberto Melucci, one of the first new social movement theorists, explicitly rejects class as a tool of analysis and gradually abandoned the concept of class relationships. Melucci believed that in systems like contemporary ones, where classes as real social groups are withering away, more appropriate concepts are required.³ Melucci deserts historical materialism for “slices of experience, past history, and memory.”⁴ The NSMs theory disassociation from class in favor of identity has been put forward as post-Marxism, post-structuralism, post-modernism, and more recently “radical democracy.” Put succinctly, the argument is that:

New social movements are based not in material interests but in the discursive practices that construct new political subjects, create new political spaces in which to act, and may ultimately lead people to rethink what we mean by community, or power, or reason, or consciousness, or energy, or security, or development or democracy.”⁵

Ernesto Laclau, a leading theorist on social movements also agrees:

The demands of a lesbian group, a neighbor’s association, or a black self-defense group are therefore all situated on the same ontological level as working class demands. In this way the absence of a global emancipation of humanity allows

³ Alberto, Melucci. (1994). “A Strange Kind of Newness: What’s ‘New’ in New Social Movements?”. In Enrique Larana, Hank Johnston, and Joseph R. Gusfield (eds.), *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity* (eds.), Philadelphia: Temple University Press, pp. 103.

⁴ Ibid. pp. 115.

⁵ Carroll, William K. (1992). *Organizing Dissent: Contemporary Social Movements in Theory and Practice*. Victoria: Garamond Press, pp. 3.

the constant expansion and diversification of concrete emancipatory struggles.⁶

The focus on discourse reduces class to an identity that is not differentiated from neighborhood associations or self-defence classes. This reduction through equivalence makes the retreat from class complete.

There is dissent against the theories put forward by NSMs theorists. Those dissenting argue that the intellectual move away from so-called “foundational”⁷ narratives to explore the fractured identities and multiplicity of experiences characterized by post-modernism and framed in new social movements represents a retreat from class and is essentially re-framing the bourgeois liberalism in a different guise. At its core, the new social movement argument is really about modest reforms to capitalism. By deeming class struggle irrelevant, capitalism is never challenged, just altered to allow access to a few more groups. Thus class struggle is contained and the hegemony of capitalism maintained.

In their attempt to discredit both class as an explanatory tool and the working class as a revolutionary agent, new social movement theorists create a strong argument against Marx. New social movement theory rests on the idea that there is a discontinuity in capitalism; while class once mattered, it is not important now in the post-modern era. However, this discontinuity does not exist. As Wood points out, the logic of capitalism – accumulation, commodification, profit maximization, and competition – has not changed: it has only adapted to current conditions. As Wood states:

⁶ Laclau, Ernesto. (1990). *New Reflections on the Revolution of Our Time*. Verso. Pp.263.

⁷ Scott, Joan. (1991). “The Evidence of Experience,” *Critical Inquiry*, 17. pp. 773-797.

If we had been seeing something new since the 1970s it's not a major discontinuity in capitalism but, on the contrary, capitalism itself reaching maturity. It may be that we are seeing the first real efforts of capitalism as a comprehensive system.⁸ Wood is arguing that rather than a discontinuity in capitalism, we are seeing a realization of capitalism's goal, a comprehensive capitalist system.

Environmentalism as new social movements can be considered the archetypical form of postmodern politics – grass roots, protest from below, solidarity, collective identity, and affective processes – all in the struggle against the established order outside the normal channels⁹ The environmental movements advocate a new form of citizen politics based on direct action, participatory decision-making, decentralized structures, and opposition to bureaucracy. The NSMs advocate greater attention to the cultural and quality-of-life issues rather than material well-being. They advocate greater opportunities to participate in the decisions affecting one's life, whether through direct democracy or increased reliance on self-help groups and cooperative styles of social organization. They appeal to value-and issue-based cleavages instead of group-based or interest group issues. While the new movements envision a better society for all, there is no inclination to withdraw into a spiritual refuge.¹⁰ They are determined to fight for a better world. While the humanistic composition is not new, there have been repeated criticisms of modernization, the willingness to challenge the existing order in practical ways claiming

⁸ Wood, Ellen Meiksins. (July-August). "Modernity, Postmodernity, or Capitalism?" *Monthly Review* 48:3, pp.37.

⁹Scott, Alan. (1990). *Ideology and the New Social Movements*. Boston: Unwin Hyman.

¹⁰ Tarrow, Sidney. (1990) "The Phantom at the Opera: Political Parties and Social Movements of the 1960s and 1970s in Italy." In Dalton & Kuechler (Eds.), *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*, Oxford University Press, pp.251-73.

to represent the interests of the population at large sets them apart from historical predecessors.¹¹ On the other hand, there is no grandiose plan for a better society. The NSMs critique modernity's institutionalized patterns of rationality. They reject both the liberal and the Marxist traditions. Their concept of the future society is largely negatively defined. They know what they do not want, but they are unsure and inconsistent about what they want in operational detail. While they oppose modernity, they do not advocate a return to an idealized version of traditional institutions such as the family, religious values, or the nation. They are clearly different from reactionary forms of social protest; instead, they represent a universal critique of modernity and modernization by challenging institutionalized patterns of technical, economic, political, and cultural rationality.

These movements are also distinguished from both the liberal and Marxist traditions because of their lack of a comprehensive vision or institutional theory for a new society. The "enemy" is not a social class but rather a kind of dominant rationality. In the absence of strict doctrine, these movements have been called "post-ideological" which is probably the most significant reason why they deserve to be called "new."¹² Although these "post-ideological" characteristics are distinctive, Claus Offe believes that they made it extremely difficult for new social movements to develop the necessary institutional forms to achieve their demands. Because of the lack of a comprehensive vision or institutional design for a new society, the new social movements are incapable

¹¹ Dalton, Russell J., & Manfred Kuechler. Eds., (1990). *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies* (Eds.), Oxford Polity Press.

¹² Kuechler, Manfred, & Russell Dalton. (1990). "New Social Movements and the Political Order: Inducing Change for Long-Term Stability?" In Dalton and Kuechler, *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*. Pp. 277-300.

of using the language of liberal and socialist traditions. The scattered set of issues, complaints, and demands do not constitute a unified force or vision. Rather, than a social class or other essentialist category, the “enemy” is a more abstract kind of dominant rationality.

There is no notion of a universal class which, by establishing its institutions, would perform a civilizing and liberating mission for society. There is no comprehensive design of a just order as the necessary and desirable outcome of revolutionary or reformist change.¹³ Under such conditions, the absence of a basic and global “alternative” is not just a matter of the failure of intellectual imagination and political vision. It is a result of substantive difficulties that did not lead to feasible and attractive transformative strategies.¹⁴ Offe’s point is that the transformation of the movement happened because of the deliberate rejection of a global revolutionary critique. There was no vision of alternative relations of production or political authority. In these circumstances, accommodation with the political institutions of liberal democracy appears pragmatically attractive because there hardly seems anything else.¹⁵ Faced with these dilemmas, movements often act in uneasy coalitions with traditional parties. The outcome is often, at best, reform – partial, disappointing, incremental.

Offe and Boggs argue that the dilemmas of the new social movements stemmed from the core beliefs of anti-statism, anti-bureaucracy, and anti-power as well as their rejection of large-scale social theories. Yet, these beliefs are regarded as fundamental to

¹³ Handler, Joel F. (1992). “Postmodernism, Protest, and the New Social Movements,” *Law & Society Review*, Vol.26, No. 4 (1992), pp. 697-732.

¹⁴ Offe, Claus. (1990). “Reflections on the Institutional Self-Transformation of Movement Politics: A Tentative Stage Model,” in Dalton & Kuechler, pp. 232-50.

¹⁵ Tarrow, Sidney. (1990). “The Phantom at the Opera: Political Parties and Social Movements of the 1960s and 1970s in Italy,” in Dalton & Kuechler, pp. 251-73.

the postmodern project. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, considered by many to be among the more prominent of the postmodern political theorists, reject the possibility that a coherent politics could be based either on class or social movements.¹⁶ They reject capitalism because of the inherent coercive relations between capital and labor. They reject socialism on the grounds that it was essentially teleological.

While postmodern politics is the politics of discourse, the actors are detached from institutional constraints. Anti-institutionalism is a necessary condition of postmodern political theory. However, without a positive theory of institutions, postmodernism could not come to grips with institutionally based power. And that, according to Offe and Boggs, is the more fundamental problem. Rosenau also contends that the contemporary stories were stories of resistance, but they are also stories of despair of the marginalized people. The response of new social movements, to quote Rosenau:

Post-modern social movements are not interested in speaking for the working class, which they consider reactionary or obsolete. The politics of redistribution is not part of their program. Nor do they struggle for the social benefits that were central to the old left, such as welfare or unemployment insurance. Such assistance, these post-modernist contend, just creates problems. They look to new forms of politics that would go beyond emancipation because the “enemies,” if they exist at all, are no longer the bourgeoisie or the boss so much as the

¹⁶ Laclau, Ernesto, & Chantal Mouffe.(1985). *Hegemony & Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. New York: Verso.

bureaucracy, centralized government, and “democratically” elected representatives.¹⁷

While analysts of social movements in Europe were more concerned with the structurally determined growth of new protest potentials resulting from the development of Western industrial society, the context of this research, Northeast India, requires a different concern as well as question. In contrast to the resource mobilization approach, the “new social movements” approach in India’s northeast would explain not how, but why, the new movements arise. The European approach stressed that the new movements such as the ecology movement, the anti-nuclear movement, the women’s movement, the peace movement differ from the old movements (the labor movement in particular) in values and issues, action forms, and constituencies.¹⁸ In contrast to the old labor movement, the new social movements have not primarily articulated economic demands but have been more concerned with cultural issues dealing with questions of individual autonomy and with issues related to new, invisible risks affecting people in more or less similar ways, irrespective of their social positions.

Although the mobilization processes of these new social movements have in general been issue specific, their challenges have been intimately related to one another. Different movements have mobilized the same kind of people, on the basis of shared general value patterns that differed significantly from the dominant ones in the Western

¹⁷ Rosenau, Pauline. (1992). *Post-Modernism and the Social Sciences*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

¹⁸ Klandermans, Bert. (1986). “New Social Movements and Resource Mobilization: The European and the American Approach.” *International Journal of Mass Emergencies and Disasters*, 4:13-37.

liberal democracies.¹⁹ In so far as the constituencies of NSMs had been described in terms of class locations, observers have agreed that their mobilization potential was primarily located in parts of the new middle class. Several empirical studies from different European countries have supported the view that NSMs were above all instances of middle class radicalism.²⁰ European discussion of the NSMs has, however, not been linked explicitly to other contextual realities. This lack is evident, particularly, in cases of tribals and indigenous peoples²¹ of India's Northeast.

This remains one of the central dilemmas of social science: how to study that of which we are a part and still remain part of it. How can we, at the same time, be full, committed participants in society and detached observers of it?²² To this dilemma, Milton Kay suggests that anthropology neither obliged its practitioners to adopt a moral stance on anything, nor precluded them from doing so. Indeed, Milton added, "we should be highly suspicious of any argument that seeks to identify anthropology with a particular position on anything, for the one thing that is entailed in an anthropological approach is that we should apply 'systematic doubt'²³ to all views, including our own". However, while accepting the 'lack' or 'absence' of assimilating the discourse of environmentalism

¹⁹ Little, Paul E. (1999). "Environments and Environmentalisms in Anthropological Research: Facing a New Millennium." *Annual Review of Anthropology*, Vol.28 (1999), pp. 253-284.

²⁰ Cotgrove, Stephen, and Andrew Duff. (1980). "Environmentalism, Middle Class Radicalism and Politics." *Sociological Review*, 28: 333-51.

²¹ The term 'indigenous' is now used widely in international discourse on human rights and environmental issues, to describe societies whose economies have never been industrial in character. The label is difficult to define in precise terms, but are probably the more useful for that. For instance, Chapter 26 of Agenda 21, the most comprehensive of the agreements to have emerged from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, the Rio Earth Summit), states, "Indigenous people and their communities have an historical relationship with their lands and are generally descendants of the original inhabitants of such lands. However, and needless to say, it is also often impossible to establish who were the 'original' inhabitants of a region.

²² Milton, Kay. (1996). *Environmentalism and Cultural Theory – Exploring the role of anthropology in environmental discourse*. Routledge: London and New York, pp. 1-7.

²³ Morgan, G. (1991). 'Advocacy as a form of social science'. In P. Harries-Jones (ed.) *Making Knowledge Count: Advocacy and Social Science*, Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's Press.

or new social movements in the Northeast context; Milton opines that the relative absence of anthropology from environmental discourse should be a cause for concern, given that a great deal of the knowledge generated by anthropological research, particularly on the ways in which people understand and interact with their environments, could be of value in the search for solutions to environmental problems.

The European tradition, while it may have advanced our understanding of the role of social movements in a wider context, has therefore not produced the kinds of definitions which can form a useful framework for analysis. In the American tradition, ‘social movement’ is typically treated as an ‘empirical generalization’, recognized by its broad organizational features: ‘more organized than protesting crowds or mobs, less formalized than political parties and more concerted than simple social trends.’²⁴ On the other hand, European theorists have tended to identify social movements in terms of ‘their perceived capacity for major social transformation’, who is drawn to search for signs of transformative capacity.²⁵ For the European theorists, social movements are sources of new collective identities, and while those in the American tradition see social movements as mechanisms for ‘resource mobilization’, and identify them empirically by their organizational features.²⁶ However, their comparative analysis of environmentalism in Sweden, Denmark and Holland shows that their new composite definition was found wanting as an empirical tool.

²⁴ Yearley, S. (1994). ‘Social movements and environmental change’. In M. Redclift and T. Benton (Eds.), *Social Theory and the Global Environment*, London and New York: Routledge. Pp. 152-3.

²⁵ Ibid. pp. 151.

²⁶ Jamison, A., Eyerman, R., Craemar, J. and Laessoe, J. (1990). *The Making of the New Environmental Consciousness*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

Environmentalism takes on different shapes in different countries as environmentalists have to organize their activities according to the political context in which they operate. The analysis showed that in Sweden environmentalism did not develop a distinctive oppositional character, for two main reasons. First, there are financial incentives for new organizations to formalize their structures along the lines of established political groups, with the result that ‘the borders between the established and the oppositional were blurred. Second, it is difficult for new political actors to loosen the grip on Swedish political culture of the long-established cleavage between the socialist and bourgeois blocs.

Instead, new interests tend to be incorporated into those of existing blocs and promoted through their activities. As a result, in Sweden, environmentalism can hardly be called a social movement.²⁷ Thus, despite their declared intention to combine transformational and organizational criteria, the analysts fall back on the organizational when identifying social movements empirically.²⁸ Although environmentalists in all these countries share the same collective identity, environmentalism in Sweden is less of a social movement because it does not possess the appropriate organizational features.

The distinction between organizational and transformational criteria is significant in relation to the perceived existence of two environmentalisms. Both the conservative and the radical forms have been seen as displaying the organizational features of a social movement. But by definition, only the more radical form has the capacity to transform society, and so analysts who have understood social movements in this way have tended

²⁷ Ibid. pp. 194-198.

²⁸ Milton, Kay. (1996). *Environmentalism and Cultural Theory – Exploring the role of anthropology in environmental discourse*. Routledge: London and New York, pp. 80-82.

to restrict their use of the term to the more radical form.²⁹ Thus Cotgrove who, quoting Banks,³⁰ saw social movements as self-conscious attempts to introduce innovations into a social system, suggested that something more like a coherent movement emerges if we focus only on the groups that fundamentally challenge dominant economic values.³¹ However, it would probably be more accurate to say that transformative capacity of radical environmentalism has more often been seen as identifying it as a new social movement.³² The radical character of environmentalism also defines the newness of the NSMs.

Ramachandra Guha clearly described: “The Indian environmental movement is an umbrella term that covers a multitude of these local conflicts, initiatives and struggles against the agents of resource-intensification who are given preferential treatment by the State, through the grant of generous long leases ...at an enormously subsidized price. With the injustice so compounded, local communities at the receiving end of this process have no recourse except direct action, resisting both the state and outside exploiters through a variety of protest techniques. These struggles might perhaps be seen as the manifestation of a new kind of class conflict. Where traditional class conflicts were fought in the cultivated field or in the factory, these new struggles are waged over gifts of nature such as forests and water, gifts that were coveted by all but increasingly monopolized by a few. Guha termed this as “the environmentalism of the poor,” originating in social conflicts over access to and control over natural resources. Conflicts

²⁹ Ibid. pp. 82.

³⁰ Banks, J. (1972). *The Sociology of Social Movements*, London: Macmillan.

³¹ Cotgrove, S. (1976) ‘Environmentalism and Utopia’, *Sociological Review*, 24:23-42.

³² Yearley, S., Baker, S. and Milton, K. (1994). ‘Environmental policy and peripheral regions of the European Union: an introduction’. In S.Baker, K. Milton and S. Yearley (Eds.), *Protecting the Periphery*, Ilford, Essex: Frank Cass.

between peasants and industry over forest produce, for example, or between rural and urban populations over water and energy. Many social conflicts often have an ecological content, with the poor trying to retain under their control the natural resources threatened by state takeover or by the advance of the generalized market system.³³ Guha maintains that in India, still dominantly a nation of villages, environmentalism has emerged at a relatively early stage in the industrial process that were played out against a backdrop of visible ecological degradation, the drying up of springs, the decimation of forests, the erosion of the land. Sheer immediacy of resource shortages means that direct action had been, from the beginning, a vital component of environmental action. Techniques of direct action often rely on traditional networks of organization, the village and the tribe, and traditional forms of protest, the *dharna* and the *bhook hartal*.

Although the general literature on environmental movements and environmentalism is rapidly increasing, relatively little effort has been made to categorize the enormous diversity of organizations and collective actions in Northeast India. Peter van der Werff addresses this diversity when he analyses the environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Kerala along four dimensions: scientific education vs. social activism; radical rejection vs. acceptance of environmentally unsound units; ‘environmental science’ vs. ‘non-mechanistic environmentalism’; and retreat vs. bridging intercultural gaps.³⁴ It is important to locate the potential social movements have in this age of globalization and to trace how the politics of collective

³³ Guha, Ramachandra and Alier, Martinez.(1997).Varieties of Environmentalism – Essays North and South. Oxford University Press: New Delhi. Pp.3-21.

³⁴ Werff, Peter van der. (1998). “Divergent Approaches to the Environment in Kerala”. In *Environmental Movements in Asia*, (Eds.), Arne Kalland and Gerard Persoon, Curzon Press. Pp.253-270.

action at the local level develop as rural social movements to change and shape national and international development agendas.

In our attempt to understand the new social movements in the Northeast, the centrality of the “civil society” cannot be left out. These actors significantly shaped, influenced, and at times, determined the nature and direction of local politics and link them to national and international processes and actors. In the 1980s, the term civil society was increasingly used with reference to the political dynamics of a democratization process. As for the discourse on development, its use as a descriptive analytical and policy tool became widespread among both scholars and practitioners in the 1990s in a conceptual shift away from the notion of a “third sector” of voluntary, non-profit and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) toward the emergence and strengthening of all sorts of grassroots organizations and civil associations.

In the liberal tradition, one of the main functions of civil society is to prevent abuse and misuse of the state and to hold its officials accountable, in effect to create a bulwark of democracy to secure the conditions of democracy in both the political and the development sphere.³⁵ The liberal tradition is focused on both the political and the development processes, which are most clearly articulated by Diana Mitlin in the following terms: “Civil society is increasingly represented as being critical to the successful realization of development namely the importance of local institutions in supporting and undertaking development ... such as poverty reduction and good

³⁵ Blair, H. (1997) “Donors, democratization and civil society.” In Chantal Mouffe (Ed.), *Gramsci and Marxist Theory*. Routledge: London.

governance.”³⁶ Today the discourse of all international and governmental development agencies, as well as associated practitioners and intellectuals, is informed by the notion of civil society advanced in the liberal tradition.

In this discourse, civil society includes all manner of organizations found between the family and the state to paraphrase Hegel on this point including business associations that used to make up the “private sector.” Thus, a civil society discourse allows the global community of international development organizations, governments and practitioners to simultaneously:

1. advance a non-state and market-led or market-friendly approach toward international development, as per ideas advanced in the counter-revolution in development theory and practice during the 1980s,
2. reduce the reliance on third-sector non-governmental organizations (NGOs) for the execution of development programmes and to turn toward a strengthening of civil society – that is, the myriad of informal associations in civil society, so as to broaden the social basis for a more participatory and equitable form of development and good governance,³⁷
3. pursue the strategy of international donors and government agencies to form partnerships with business associations – to incorporate the private sector into the development process,
4. provide an alternative to organizations and movements that share an antisystemic and “confrontational” approach toward change, and

³⁶ Mitlin, Diana. (1998). “The NGO sector and its role in strengthening civil society and securing good governance.” In Armanda Bernard, Henry Helmich and Percy Lehning (Eds.), *Civil Society and International Development*. OECD Development Centre, Paris.

³⁷ United Nations Development Programme (1997) *Governance for Sustainable Human Development*. UNDP, New York.

5. provide a countervailing force against the recent appearance of rural activism in different rural societies of the world,³⁸ which acted as a bulwark against the persistent search by class-based social movements in these societies for radical or anti-systemic solutions to the problems of land reform.

Within the framework of poststructuralist/Marxian or Gramscian critical approach, the bearers of these counter-hegemonic forces are found among diverse actors in civil society,³⁹ including what Marshall Wolfe terms “spontaneous grassroots movements”⁴⁰ and most recently, a broad array of indigenous organization and communities.⁴¹ In the context of this discourse, the relevant civil society organizations (CSOs) and associations are not class-based (peasant or worker) but rather a community based organizations that took the form, for the most part, of spontaneous grassroots movements, particularly those new social movements (NSMs), which like so many economic associations or other CSOs, are formed around a single issue, with a highly particularized, albeit heterogenous, social base and a concern with the politics of identity.

In this context, profit-oriented business associations and organizations of the hegemonic class, including associations of big landlords, chambers of commerce and paramilitary forces, are excluded from any notion of a civil society.⁴² These classes represent the actors of the old movements.

³⁸ Helmore, Kristen and Naresh Singh. (2001). *Sustainable Livelihoods: Building on the Wealth of the Poor*. Kumarian Press, West Hartford, CT.

³⁹ Laclau, Ernesto and Chantal Mouffe. (1985). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Conflicts*. Verso, London.

⁴⁰ Wolfe, Marshall. (1996). *Elusive Development*. Zed Books, London.

⁴¹ Stavenhagen, Rodolfo. (1994). “Indigenous organizations in Latin America.” *CEPAL Review*, August, pp. 63-75.

⁴² Melucci, Alberto.(1989). *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*. Hutchinson Radius, London.

The environmental movements in Northeast India are responses to very concrete problems in people's immediate neighborhoods. Majority of environmental movements in Northeast India consist of relatively small, temporary coalitions of local groups or civil societies formed to oppose exploitation of natural resources by outsiders and to protect their immediate environments. Compared to the large environmental organizations in the Western world, it is evident that the ones in the Northeast in general focussed far more on local issues. Even if they link up with other organizations, they do so primarily to strengthen their position with regard to the issues at stake in their own environment. Some of them have taken positive steps to change the course of history and escape from the downward movement of environmental degradation by reorganizing access to their resources and by re-prioritizing their survival with their environments. History of these localized movements usually goes unnoticed for reasons unexplained. It could be because it is not considered spectacular or that they were over-ridden by the chains of other conflicts that the region was better known for. However, from many local case studies, it is evident that they were also very much part of the environmental movements.

As environmental and developmental issues are intimately interwoven, the interference from any actors outside the region to have an effect on any of them results in collective action. In the process, environmental concern and local participation inevitably became part of a global discourse,⁴³ making it more acceptable to those in power. For Lohmann, environmentalism has become a new fashion in the East because it allows people not only to partake in this discourse, with all the prestige and international support that entailed, but also to define their identity in contrast to the West or the centre by

⁴³ Milton, Kay. (Ed.) 1993. *Environmentalism*. London: Routledge. Pp. 16-19.

appropriating the Western idealization of the East.⁴⁴ While it is impossible to understand environmental movements in the Northeast India without referring to the wider global context, the argument that many of the Asian movements acquired a special flavor framed in religious terms⁴⁵ is not relevant in the case of Northeast India.

Indeed, the concepts of environment carry heavy metaphoric loadings and that analysis of environmental issues cannot therefore be dissociated from social and cultural contexts.⁴⁶ Furthermore, environmental movements are affected by the power of symbol systems to consolidate or dissipate social consensus and the alliances needed to mount effective political action. If culture is the ideological battleground of the modern world-system,⁴⁷ then attention to the symbolic associations within environmental discourses is a crucial part of developing strategic frameworks for engaging public support and negotiating a political agenda.

The new social movements in Northeast India that would be studied in this research are the collective actions and responses spurred by the building of dams in the name of development. These collective actions are labeled as new social movements as they fall within the ambit of environmental movements' discourse that was discussed earlier. While popular thinking hold big dams to be of great economic and social benefit because they produce clean power, stop damaging floods, and help combat world hunger

⁴⁴ Lohmann, Larry. (1993). 'No rules of engagement. Interest groups, centralization and the creative politics of "environment" in Thailand'. 5th *International Conference on Thai Studies*, SOAS (London), 5-10 July 1993.

⁴⁵ Warren, Carol. (1998). Symbols and Displacement – The Emergence of Environmental Activism in Bali." In *Environmental Movements in Asia*, (Eds.) Arne Kalland and Gerard Persoon, Curzon Press. Pp. 179- 204.

⁴⁶ Sachs, W. (1992). 'Environment'. In W. Sachs (Ed.), *The Development Dictionary: A Guide to Knowledge as Power*. London: Zed Books.

⁴⁷ Wallerstein, I. (1990). 'Culture as the ideological battleground of the modern-world System'. In M. Featherstone (Ed.), *Global Culture*. London: Sage, pp. 31-56.

by providing water for irrigation. They also leave a legacy of unsurpassed cultural destruction, disease, environmental damage, human rights violations, elimination of forests and significant wildlife habitats and ruination of the very land designed to be made productive. The staggering array of problems caused by large-scale water development is so alarming and widespread that it had also impacted Northeast India immensely.

The water-development projects immediately raised diverse issues that put the biggest stakeholder, the indigenous peoples at stake in the implementation of the law on territories of traditional nature use, legislative control over access to land, documentation of indigenous self-identity in order to gain specific land use and access rights, protection of the right to a dignified existence in the case of loss of traditional livelihood system, instruments for indigenous peoples to control the commercial use of lands, instruments for indigenous peoples to represent themselves in decision making related development, adequate processes for assessing the impacts of development projects on the environment, natural resources, and social and economic development of indigenous peoples. These issues are inextricably linked to the rights of indigenous peoples, which is one of the driving forces of new social movements in Northeast India.

This research attempts to study the emergent environmental discourses and of an incipient environmental movements in Northeast India. Throughout the region, broad based dissenting positions on the direction of local development have been evolving in a political climate where opposition movements of any kind have been difficult to mount. Political context, therefore, profoundly influences the content and framing of environmental issues and predictably becomes a central component. Indeed, new social

movements in Northeast India incorporates themes of social justice, human rights, ecological sustainability, and development. Second, it illustrates the growing ability of transnational civil society networks to contribute to global environmental movements. Third, it stood out for its diversity, rather than limiting itself to one class. Finally, by including a broad range of stakeholders, the new social movements inculcate a multi-stakeholder process.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

General literature on environmentalism and new social movements is growing. However, they are structured in the context of European and American industrial society. It is said that literature essential to understand and analyze the new social movements in Northeast India is wanting. As a result, a thorough scrutinization of the corpus of theories on the subject becomes inevitable to understand and relate them to the rise of new social movements in the Northeast. But still, it must be acknowledged that there was lack of appropriate theories for explaining the new and emerging trend of Northeast India. Needless to say, this explains the overgrown of theories in this research. They, however, remains the basis for the empirical enquiry necessary to pursue this study.

Despite the challenges posed by these inadequacies, the review of literature provides an insight on the subject and enhances one's understanding of the under-current issues and problems. In the attempt to explore a clear overview and synthesis of pertinent sources that had been studied, this research employs Integrative Review by assimilating reviews, critiques, and synthesizes representative literature in an integrated manner so

that new frameworks and perspectives on the subject could be generated. The body of literature is representative of the study that addressed related or identical hypotheses or research problems. In doing so, the corpus of theory that had been accumulated is synthesized and their relationships and interrelationships are integrated. This helps in establishing the lack or inadequacies of appropriate theories to explain the new social movements in Northeast India, while at the same time explaining the new or emerging research problem posed by this study.

In his book, *Ideology and the New Social Movements*, (1990),⁴⁸ Alan Scott opens up the one-sided, “movement-centric” approach when students of new social movements are very often misled by their object of investigation to overestimate both its “newness” and its importance for social change. Paradoxically, the interpretation he presents is new just because it is essentially a “revisionist” interpretation of social movements.⁴⁹ In this well written book, Scott overcomes the romantic European tradition in social movement research and presents an alternative and more realistic approach by integrating the advantages of traditional macro and micro-analytical theories. Scott is right to criticize mainstream macro-sociological theories, such as functionalism and neo-Marxism, for treating social movements as secondary phenomena that merely reflected the structural problems of the total society or respond to them in a non-rational way. In Chapter 5, Scott brilliantly assesses micro-sociological theories, among them the Resource Mobilization Theory. Scott sees its shortcomings in its impoverished view of social action and its neglect of the socio-political context in which social movements operate. He makes a

⁴⁸ Scott, Alan. (1990). *Ideology and the New Social Movements*. London & Boston: Unwin & Hyman. 174 pp.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 156.

very good point when criticizing resource mobilization theory for overlooking the fact that preferences for social action and social definitions of “cost” and ‘benefit’ were not given, but culturally created in and by social movements themselves. He recommends the formation of preferences and group identity as an object of investigation in itself.

Scott made significant suggestions for future research on social movements, which is worth taking. First, the study of social movements should create a chance to reconcile micro- and macro-sociological analyses. Second, Scott recommends that future research would focus on the processes of interest articulation, aggregation, and intermediation and that we study the cultural styles that movements invented in order to promote these processes. Third, Scott stresses the need for theory building on the problem of in which socio-political context social movements are likely to arise, develop, and disappear. Fourth, Scott suggests that we investigate social movements in their role of shaping preferences and creating loyalty and emotional bonds among their participants.

Unfortunately, Scott devotes only one chapter to presenting his own theory of intermediation, which he develops on the basis of the works of Offe and Nedelmann. According to this theory, social movements are to be located in the interface between state and civil society. Their main activity is articulating and aggregating interests and transmitting them into the political system as a measure of their success.

In *Green States and Social Movements: Environmentalism in the United Kingdom, Germany, and Norway*, (2003),⁵⁰ John S. Dryzek, David Downes, Christian Hunold,

⁵⁰ Dryzek, John S., Downes, David, et al. Eds., (2003). *Green States and Social Movements: Environmentalism in the United Kingdom, Germany, and Norway*. New York: Oxford University Press, pp. xiv, 223.

David Schlosberg and Hans-Kristian Hernes employs the case method of comparative politics to negotiate the perils of co-optation that accompanied inclusion. The question he raised was, is it possible that the environmental movement could benefit not by being included in state centres of policy-making, but by being excluded from them? Exclusion, by contrast, is portrayed as potentially enhancing the autonomy and oppositional vitality of discourse in the public spheres of civil society. Rejecting determinism, however, John S. Dryzek, David Downes, Christian Hunold, David Schlosberg and Hans-Kristian Hernes emphasize that social movements were reflexive, capable of understanding themselves and facing up directly to the question of what was to be done.

What the authors achieve is the most systematic and sophisticated study yet to address the opposition between radical and reform tendencies in environmentalist strategy. Dryzek and his team of authors provides a fine-grained analysis of the promise and pitfalls of inclusion. They asked: under what conditions does inclusion become effective or co-optive? The big issue is whether the interests of the environmental movement coincide with the core imperatives of state action; if not, the result of inclusion is likely to be co-optive, rather than effective.

This argument is based on a conceptualization of the state in terms of core and periphery. At the core of the state are imperatives, constituting a ‘zone of necessity.’⁵¹ In regard to established liberal democracies, the authors identify five core state imperatives: keeping domestic order, competing internationally, raising revenues, securing economic growth, and maintaining legitimacy. The policy successes of the US environmental movement during the social activism of the late 1960s and the early 1970s are a result of

⁵¹ *Ibid.* pp. 3.

the fact that the state then faced a problem of legitimacy, and action on the environmental front was an effective response. Since then, in the absence of a strong link between core state imperatives and movement goals, passive inclusion of US pluralism has tended towards co-optation. Co-optation has been specially dramatic in the active inclusion of expansively corporatist Norway, chief example of the risks of inclusion in the absence of a link to core state imperatives. Exclusion is not necessarily a help to environmentalism, as can be seen in the case of a hostile, active exclusion in the authoritarian liberalism of Thatcherite Britain. However, the German case of passive exclusion through legal corporatism indicates that a lack of easy access to the state could enhance the vitality of an oppositional green public sphere able to influence the state at a distance while advancing the environmentalist agenda through changes in discourse and culture.

Indeed, the book contemplates the potential for the environmental movement to foster change to core state imperatives themselves. With an environmental conservation imperative at the core of state, inclusion in state centres of policy-making would promote environmentalist success rather than co-optation. Yet, the possibility for such a new imperative to emerge would depend on the vital, oppositional discourse of a green public sphere. The book, even though, overweighs with theoretical vocabulary with cases of advanced industrial society; crafted a complex and nuanced argument that constitutes a landmark in the study of environmental politics. The comparative approach that it adopted situates far outside the domain of this research. However, it intimates one about the instances of obvious co-optation that can turn out to have an important role when viewed in a larger historical context.

In *The Power of Politics: New Social Movements in France*, (1995),⁵² Jan Willem Duyvendak explains France's lag behind in the trend toward growing political influence from new social movements when a wave of new social movements based on environmental, anti-nuclear, peace, squatters' rights, women's rights, and homosexual rights groups arose and became important political forces in most West European nations during the 1970s and 1980s. This was paradoxical given France's long tradition of disorderly politics. In addition, many observers looked at the "events of May 1968" in France as a point of origin for the European wave of new social movements. But, beyond a short-lived antinuclear energy movement in the early 1970s, France appeared much less involved in the broader wave of new social movements that continued for the next two decades in the rest of Western Europe.

Duyvendak finds the explanation for France's lagging new social movements in the "political opportunity structure." The general structure of political institutions, formal and informal procedures of governing, and the configuration of power in the broad sense of nature and power of political parties and interest groups create this political opportunity structure with which those challenging the status quo must contend. In addition, challengers, such as new social movements, must devise their strategies not only with reference to this political opportunity structure but also with regard to the specific mix of repression, facilitation, and chances of operating successfully within that structure.

⁵² Duyvendak, Jan Willem. (1995). *The Power of Politics: New Social Movements in France*, Routledge, New York. Pp. 264.

The author focuses on the strength of the French state. He points also to the extensive powers of selective exclusion that the state could use to isolate and demobilize those forces it wishes to ignore. Duyvendak also illustrates how the two-ballot electoral system works to limit opportunities for challengers. He also directs attention to a less commonly recognized element in the French opportunity structure; the pervasiveness of traditional conflicts over social class and religion. Duyvendak argues that the strength to these traditional cleavages and their embedded nature in the party system and in political discourse had worked to limit opportunities for new forces that sought to define themselves outside the parameters of these old cleavages. On the other hand, Duyvendak rejects the claim that the events of May 1968 represented the birth of new politics of new social movements. Instead, he argues that the events were “old politics” dominated by class conflict.

Duyvendak, then, looks at the consequences on the new social movements with the arrival of the French Left to power in 1981. During the decades of opposition, the Left had become the source of political hopes for countless causes, including those of the new social movements. Duyvendak explains how these hopes were shattered, not so much because of the realities of political life but more because of the Left’s inability to rise above its concerns linked to traditional cleavages. Duyvendak shows well disillusionment of the new forces as Mitterand’s government gave preference to traditional class-based politics and electoral considerations over the aspirations of the new social movements. He sees in this disillusionment the key to explaining the demobilization and demoralization of French social movements.

Two features make this book noteworthy. The first is the author's interest in comparing the French experience in a systematic way to the experience of new social movements in three other European countries: Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. The second feature is the quantitative analysis. Duyvendak and his colleagues have developed an important data set that allowed for the incidence, measurement, and classification of protest events obtained from four newspapers from 1975 to the end of 1989. The issues used were selected from Monday editions, which presumably would capture the weekend news, when political demonstrations and other events are most likely to occur. In France, however, the combined Sunday-Monday issue of *Le Monde* actually appears on Saturday afternoon, well before it can report on the weekend's activities. Another potential unreliability of the data may come from the fact that many smaller events in France might not all be reported in a country where they were expected as part of the legacy of political contention. On the contrary, in Germany, the Netherlands, and Switzerland, where a tradition of political dissent is not as well established, newspaper may cover events that would be ignored in France.

The book, by enquiring empirically and comparatively at unconventional political behavior, stands out on new social movements in France. However, the methodological limitations that were further plagued by minor typographical errors remains to be cited.

New Social Movements and the State in Latin America, (1986),⁵³ authored by David Slater is organized around four major themes: (1) theoretical departures and delineations; (2) Social movements and the city; (3) regions, social conflict and the state; (4)

⁵³ Slater, David. (1986). *New Social Movements and the State in Latin America*. Amsterdam, The Netherlands: Center for Latin American Research and Documentation (CEDLA).

revolutionary change, popular hegemony, and the role of the women's movement. In this book, social movements are reconceptualized as new social practices conducive to democracy.

Basic framework of this book is that the democratizing force of these new social movements lies in the multiple ways in which society was forced to respond to the proliferating demands geared toward the opening of political spaces at all levels of institutionalization, rather than a utopian revolutionary rapture. The democratic potential of the new social movements lies in their open and indeterminate view of society in the struggle for a more open, pluralistic form of democracy. Moreover, these new social movements are seen as the concrete results of crisis of the state.

Four central theses are advanced in the book: (1) that these movements represent new forms of struggle, very much rooted in the contemporary social development of capitalist societies, and that they did not represent forms of class antagonism, but are, rather, the embodiment of the increasing politicization of spheres and social relations; (2) that the existence of these movements provoked a theoretical break with the notion that the economy could remain determinant in the last instance; (3) that democracy can be achieved through higher levels of direct participation rather than by the actions of an enlightened avant-guard; and (4) that there was no *a priori* fixed and necessary link between socialist objectives and the positions of the social agents in the relations of production.

Despite the clear theses provided, there is a theoretical divorce between those essays of a more analytic nature and the case studies. The case studies tend to be more

descriptive than analytic, whereas the theoretical pieces are highly abstract and draw little from the case studies. Moreover, broader comparative and historical assessment of social movements is also missing from the book. Although the book provides alternative avenues to an understanding of new social movements, it fails at developing a general model by which to understand the impact of social movements on political transformations in different socio-political contexts.

The first three chapters of Robyn Eckersley's book, *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach*, (1992),⁵⁴ are devoted to the establishment of an ecocentric standpoint, which Eckersley believes is the only adequate evaluative response to environmental crisis. Ecocentrism, for Eckersley, involves the emancipation of people and nature. Thus, it recognizes the diversity of human interests in the natural world, as well as the interests of nature itself. She suggests that the two litmus issues for ecocentrism are human population reduction and wilderness preservation for its own sake, rather than for human interests.⁵⁵ However, the population litmus test might exclude ecofeminism, which she gives as one of her three examples of ecocentrism (the other two being intrinsic value theory and transpersonal, or deep ecology); for many ecofeminists oppose coercive population control.

Having established this central principle, Eckersley devotes the remainder of book to an ecocentric scrutiny of four traditions of radical political thought: Marxism, critical theory, ecosocialism, and ecoanarchism. Eckersley believes that multiple and interacting levels of ecosystem organization should be matched by multiple and interacting levels of

⁵⁴ Eckersley, Robyn. (1992). *Environmentalism and Political Theory: Toward an Ecocentric Approach*. Albany: State University of New York Press, pp. 274.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 29.

government. Thus, her preference is for “a multi-tiered, democratic decision making framework” including a state, the rule of law, basic human rights, and checks and balances.⁵⁶ She considers it crucial that this framework be matched by the cultivation of an “ecocentric culture.”

Eckersley’s proposal for changes is at the level of morality, rather than politics, so that her quest for an ecocentric political theory ended with a statement of the need for an ecocentric perspective. *Environmentalism and Political Theory* shows that political theory really can engage important real-world issues, concerns, and actors in comprehensible and insightful fashion.

In *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*, (1994),⁵⁷ edited by Enrique Larana, Hank Johnson, and Joseph R. Gusfield, a number of themes identify the new social movements. First, the collective search for identity, not material deprivation, is a central aspect of movement formation: “Social classes are no longer the social basis of the majority of mobilizations.” Culture has been rediscovered. Controlling cultural codes is more important than controlling the means of production. Second, social movements are “social construction processes”, they “occur when they are perceived to be occurring.” Social movements are not “things” but “social processes that emerge and develop.” New collective identities are “incubated” in “submerged social networks” and are formed through processes of interaction and negotiation within the movement.

⁵⁶ Ibid. pp. 178.

⁵⁷ Larana, Enrique, Johnson, Hank, and Gusfield, Joseph R., Eds. (1994), *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity*. Temple University Press, pp. 368.

Not all of the contributors to this volume actually use the new social movements paradigm. Szabo looks at the impact on collective action of regime transition in Hungary; Alvarez Junco describes how regime changes have altered forms of collective action in Spain. These can be tagged as “political opportunities” analyses. McAdam and McCarthy look for ways to combine the insights of different paradigms.

The heavy emphasis on “identity seeking” reflects a bias toward white, middle-class movements in Western Europe and North America. It examines only political movements with progressive agendas, ignoring right-wing and religious movements; “a search for democratic reforms” is listed as one essential *characteristic* of new social movements. The book places too much emphasis on “identity” as a mark of newness, when all social movements seem to address identity issues. In short, much of what is “new” in the new social movements is not made clear enough to offer fresh insights.

Joan Martinez-Alier’s *The Environmentalism of the Poor*, (2002),⁵⁸ is a book about the history of environmentalism that tried to fit the struggles of native peoples into that history. The author begins by telling us, “This is a book about the growth of the environmental movement, an explosion of activism that recalls the beginning of the socialist movement and the First International, almost a century and a half ago.” In this pathbreaking book, Martinez-Alier divides environmentalism into three main movements. They are:

1. The “cult of wilderness,” preservationism which “arises from the love of beautiful landscapes and from deeply held values, not from material interests.” In this

⁵⁸ Alier, Joan Martinez. (2002). *The Environmentalism of the Poor*, Cheltenham UK/ Northampton MA : Edward Elgar.

thread, Martinez includes the “deep ecology” movement and the organization “Friends of the Earth.”

2. The “gospel of eco-efficiency,” connected both to the “sustainable development” and “ecological modernization” movements and to the notion of the “wise use” of resources. Martinez-Alier tells us that “ecological modernization walks on two legs: one, economic, eco-taxes and markets in emission permits; two, technological, support for materials and energy-saving changes”. This, then is a reformist movement attaching itself to industrialism, and for it, ecology becomes a managerial science mopping up the ecological degradation after industrialization.” It also promotes “eco-efficiency,” which “describes a research programme of worldwide relevance on the energy and material through-put in the economy, and on the possibilities of ‘delinking’ economic growth from its material base.” The weakness of the cult of wilderness is that it “concedes defeat in most of the industrial world, but it fights a ‘rearguard action’... in order to preserve the remnants of pristine natural spaces outside the market, and so it doesn’t challenge industrialism or market economics. The industrialists have then dreamed their own, more inclusive, version of environmentalism.
3. The third current of environmentalism, the “environmentalism of the poor,” has come to challenge the first two currents. This environmentalism has as its main interest “ not a sacred reverence for Nature but a material interest in the environment as a source and a requirement for livelihood; not so much a concern with the rights of other species and of future generations of humans as a concern for today’s poor humans.” This is the “environmental justice” movement, and it is

centered on what Martinez-Alier calls “ecological distribution conflicts.” Its protagonists are locals whose livelihoods are threatened by environmental impacts. It “receives academic support from agroecology, ethnoecology, political ecology and, to some extent, from urban ecology and ecological economics.”

The third type of environmentalism was not recognized as such until the 1980s and 1990s, as “actors in such conflicts” over environmental justice “have often not used an environmental idiom.” Martinez-Alier suggests that the three strands of environmentalism complemented each other; but his rhetorical tack is to persuade that the first two types were rather limited in what they can do, and that the third type should be seriously investigated.

The *Environmentalism of the Poor* is a difficult-to-piece-together book. The author wants one to face up to some rather essential facts about environmentalism. The economy is not “dematerializing,” and so environmental harm and its corresponding environmentalism is not going to go away. Environmental concerns use different languages of valuation than economic concerns, with one language often not translatable into another, and that the environment, like the economy, was about “distributional issues.” Martinez-Alier concluded with the thought that the “environmentalism of the poor,” popular environmentalism, livelihood ecology, liberation ecology and the movement for environmental justice (local and global), growing out of the complaints against the appropriation of communal environmental resources and against the

disproportionate burdens of pollution, may help to move society and economy in the direction of ecological sustainability.

The book situates the “environmentalism of the poor” in the domain of our concern. The “poor” turns out to be the victims of environmental injustice as they are in groups so marginalized by economic and political power. As a result, they are obliged to suffer ecosystem damage along with nature. The book rightly and abundantly draws out the plights or the environmentalism of poor when the global discourse is overdriven by post-industrial priorities. The redressing of environmental injustice should be situated in the agenda of contemporary environmentalism.

Ramachandra Guha’s book *Environmentalism: A Global History*, (2000),⁵⁹ is a historical account and analysis of the origins and expressions of environmental concern of how individuals and institutions have perceived, propagated, and acted upon their experience of environmental decay. As such, it is not just a history of environmentalism itself, but a history of environmental ideas. Guha covers many of the most prominent environmental thinkers over the last two centuries, and adds a few lesser known as well. The thinkers are placed in their social contexts, with particular attention to the unfolding of industrial and colonial and post processes.

Guha divides the book into two halves, one for each of two waves of global environmentalism. In the first wave, which began in the 1860s and continued through the interwar period, three varieties of environmental thought competed to construct a diagnosis of environmental degradation and an alternative vision to it; the back to the land movement, the scientific conservation movement, and the wilderness movement.

⁵⁹ Guha, Ramachandra. (2000). *Environmentalism: A Global History*, New York: Longman. Pp. xiii, 161.

The back to the land movement found strong adherents in England and Germany, as industrialization brought a revival of agrarian sentiment. Scientific conservation, characterized by a concern with environmental degradation and confidence in science as ability to reverse that degradation, also took root in Britain and Germany before spreading elsewhere. Global transmission of the ideas of scientific conservation was more direct and custodial, as colonial powers established state-run departments to manage their colonies, forests, soil, water, wildlife and fisheries. Guha strongly criticizes these management efforts on both social and environmental grounds, preferring Japanese indigenous forest science. Similarly, colonial rule spread the wilderness idea to European colonies, with protection of native wildlife often taking priority over the native peoples. The first wave of environmentalism ended with an interlude of ecological innocence after the World War II, when both North and South were committed to economic growth through technology.

Guha dates the beginning of second wave of environmentalism to Rachel Carson's *Silent Spring*, which he extols for its impact and quality. Across the globe, the second wave added an environmentally engaged public to the previously expert arena of environmental thought. Guha differentiates deep ecologists from environmental justice activists in American radical environmentalism. Guha cites Gandhian influences in all of these branches of modern environmentalism, but still sees a strong polarization between this environmentalism of the affluent and the environmentalism of the poor. He rejects the hypothesis of Inglehart and others that environmental concern belonged to the wealthy, but notes a change in its concern. When peasants and indigenous peoples of

Malaysia, India, Thailand, and Brazil mobilize on environmental issues, they link environmentalism to social justice and livelihood concerns. The brief chapter on environmentalism or the lack thereof in the Soviet Union and in China serves mostly to underline that the strongest debate of the second wave was that between North and South.

In the concluding chapter, Guha argues that a shared global common future would have to be based on a genuinely equitable and participatory global democracy. In the absence of that democracy, concrete environmental debates would be conflict-ridden. Yet, Guha's final word is that two ideas united all the kinds of environmentalists he has discussed: restraint, in the sense of limits on behavior toward both the environment and other humans, and farsightedness, looking toward a common future and the multiple paths to get to it.

Guha present a trans-national perspective on the environmental debate and also document the flow of ideas across cultures. The chapters show the global relevance of certain environmental ideas, such as wilderness, and their very different local meanings depending on where, how, and by whom they are put into practice. However, on the second wave, there is much less attention to the transnational flow of environmental ideas, despite the fact that global news reports, the internet, and international travel and meetings have shrunk the effective distance between peoples. This is especially noteworthy in the chapter on the southern challenge, where several of the examples Guha uses are commonly cited as classic instances of international advocacy networks. Guha opines that the environmental justice movements of the north were inspired by their

southern counterparts. The book focuses much on environmental thinkers across the globe, which limits Guha from presenting the complexities of his own perspective.

In Arne Kalland and Gerard Persoon's edited book *Environmental Movements in Asia*, (1998),⁶⁰ two major points are made in general picture. The first is that environmental campaigns in Asia tend to have a local focus and most of them are run by citizen action groups. They react to very concrete problems in the immediate neighborhood and as such usually people are engaged in a cause for practical rather than idealistic reasons. Such can be seen in case studies from the volume dealing with campaigns against logging and tree plantations, tourist facilities and factories and in support or defense of nature reserves. This pattern is in marked contrast to the profile of the successful Western movements for whom the focus is on perceived problems in distant parts of the world. The second point is evident in several of the case studies in the volume, namely that environmental campaigns cannot be understood in terms of environmental issues alone. Rather, they should be regarded as a form of cultural critique and frequently forms of political resistance in situations which make open political statements risky. At other times, they are convenient ways of manipulating local, ethnic and national identities. The authors stress the importance of comparative philosophy and believed that perceptions of and behavior in nature were two different things and there is no deterministic relationship between the two. They doubt that environmental problems could be solved by adopting the Eastern views wholesale, nor by reinterpreting Christianity.

⁶⁰ Kalland, Arne and Persoon, Gerard., Eds. (1998). *Environmental Movements in Asia*, Richmond: Curzon. Pp. xiii, 296.

The authors believed that there was no such thing as an Asian perception of nature. Asia is a huge continent with a great diversity of ecological adaptations. Bruun and Kalland stated that to expect a unified Asian perception of nature was at best naïve. Second, the close association with nature does not necessarily imply that Asians had an *ecocentric* or *biocentric* perspective of nature based on a holistic-organic view in contrast to a Western *anthropocentric* perspective based on an atomistic-mechanistic view that places humans in domination over nature. Third, the notion that Asians live in harmony with nature does not necessarily mean that nature was protected. Contrary to widely held notions, Kalland and Persoon maintain that there was nothing in Asian perceptions that prepares people for a more environmentally friendly behavior than elsewhere. A pragmatic approach to nature prevails where nature is valued in terms of its usefulness to humans. The authors believed that this pragmatism was one reason why there is a proliferation of small, localized groups established to solve immediate environmental problems occurring in people's neighborhoods, yet why it has been difficult to mobilize the public to environmental problems of a more transcendent nature. Kalland and Persoon rightly point out the reason that environmental campaigns were not necessarily about the environment at all but about local, social problems.

The frequent finding of the authors was that environmental issues, undoubtedly for strategic reasons, are invoked locally in Asia when solutions to social problems are sought. The environmental movement, then, exists within a larger socio-cultural context and is frequently linked to other political issues such as equal rights, democracy, liberation, nationalistic sentiments and so forth. The book weaves a productive analysis

of these interconnections and produces in-depth insights of the environmental movements in Asia. It draws significant relevance to the subject of this research by shedding diverse perspectives which is effectively contributive.

Rachael Carson's *Silent Spring*, (1962),⁶¹ served as a catalyst for the modern environmental movement. Today, Carson's red flag still influences environmental law and policy. In *Silent Spring*, she shifted from documenting nature's beauty to advocating positions link to a darker tradition in American environmental thinking, neo-Malthusian population control and anti-technology efforts. Canonizing *Silent Spring* helped build those darker themes into mainstream environmentalism today. Carson's prose is powerful, but the substance of the book is not what one would expect from a leading "science" book. *Silent Spring* presented an emotional argument against chemical pesticides. It left key data and issues out of the picture. Her outrage was prompted in part by government spray programs that blanketed cropland and forests with heavy doses of pesticides in an effort to eradicate pests. Such programs often ran roughshod over landowners' wishes. But it was not only the overuse that agitated Carson. She was highly critical of chemical pest control in general. She proposed mass introduction of alien species as a means of "biological" control of pests, a problematic alternative. Above all, *Silent Spring* is a work of advocacy, weaving anecdotes and carefully selected bits of science into a compelling brief against uses of chemicals that had already saved millions of lives at the time Carson wrote. *Silent Spring* garnered attention because of the contemporaneous thalidomide story. She began *Silent Spring* with what became one of its most famous passages, describing a town where there were no song birds. Carson also

⁶¹ Carson, Rachel. (1962). *Silent Spring*. Houghton Mifflin, pp. 400.

warned about the effects of pesticides on human health and well-being. But she was accused of alarmism and ignoring the benefits of chemical pesticides.

Carson's alarmism was not new. But it expressed a theme that could be traced back to the organic food literature of the 1930s. Carson tapped into a growing, deep unease with rapid social advances that arose to challenge the dominant "gospel of progress," which resonated with longstanding American religious ideas. She was criticized for ignoring the benefits of pesticides for both human well-being and the environment. These include reductions in habitat loss and biodiversity, lessened hunger, increased no-till farming, reduced erosion and agricultural runoff, and more agricultural productivity.

The last chapter of *Silent Spring*, "The Other Road," sets out an alternative approach to pest control. Carson enthusiastically reported on the use of other living organisms (including other insects, small mammals, birds, and carriers of insect disease, such as bacteria, viruses, and fungi), mass introduction of sterile insects, pheromones, and sound. She suggested that all of these could be tried as part of efforts to control food-destroying or disease-causing pests. But these methods are neither universally available nor always desirable. The book glosses over potential potholes in these other roads. Anti-pest organisms sometimes turned out to be destructive pests themselves. On the other hand, Carson averred that she was not opposed to chemical pesticides on principle, only to their overzealous application, which had "potentials for harm."

Silent Spring is a beautifully crafted but ultimately flawed polemic. It performed a public service in warning against the misuse of chemical pesticides, but it is marred by its overreliance on anecdotes rather than systematic analysis of data on hand. The book is also criticized for encouraging some of the most destructive strains within

environmentalism: alarmism, technophobia, failure to consider the costs and benefits of alternatives, and the discounting of human well-being around the world. However, the book has stirred consciousness, which is the bedrock of new social movements.

Rob Nixon's book, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, (2011),⁶² involves people ignoring ugly truths as they pursue material interests in the context of complex, uneven global relationships. They involve what Nixon calls "slow violence" – attritional, slow-moving environmental damage – caused by "resource imperialism inflicted on the global South to maintain the unsustainable consumer appetites" of the relatively affluent. The outsourcing of environmental crisis has resulted in a resurgent "environmentalism of the poor," a term used by Ramachandra Guha and Joan Martinez-Alier for the resistance by impoverished communities against the assaults on the ecosystem on which their lives depend "by transnational corporations; by third-world military, civilian, and corporate elites; and by international conservation organizations".

The book focuses on writer-activists such as Ken Saro-Wiwa, Wangari Maathai, Njabulo Ndebele, Arundhati Roy, Indra Sinha, Abdelrahman Munif and Nixon himself who represent and bring urgency to slow violence in the global South and its causes. These authors reveal how international oil and chemical companies, the dam industry, wildlife tourism, agri-business, and the American military cause long-term environmental damage that undermined the health and livelihoods of peoples deemed disposable. This representational work is challenging because time itself, geography, and contemporary media (focused on the spectacular and immediate) can render slow violence invisible and

⁶² Nixon, Rob. (2011). *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press, pp. xiii, 353.

decouple it from its causes; temporally disbursed and geographically distanced from their beneficiaries, the “external” costs of business and war can too easily be suppressed or ignored and responsibility for them too easily denied. As a result, tackling slow violence requires challenging the temporal and geographic order embedded in dominant, official discourse by generating representational forms with alternative time scales and spatial mapping. Nixon suggests that the writer-activists must write back to a language that writes off.

Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor placed Rob Nixon in the vanguard of a movement to make eco-criticism and environmentalism more attuned to imperialism (past and present), to related global injustices, and to postcolonial literatures. The book is impressively interdisciplinary and activist. Not only does it draw extensively on environmental history, the social sciences, and various kinds of journalism, it also offers keen historical and sociological insight into pressing contemporary issues. The book reveals the ironical truths of state of environmentalism even though it is absent of any theoretical presentation.

In his book, *Political Nature: Environmentalism and the Interpretation of Western Thought*, (2001),⁶³ John Meyer argues that nature was political because it constituted people and their politics. Moreover, interpretations of nature can only be controversial and so contested. Meyer believes that contemporary theoretical thinking about politics and the environment was mostly mistaken. He admits that environmental political theory was growing in quantity and sophistication. But he condemns it for being dominated by

⁶³ Meyer, John M. (2001). *Political Nature: Environmentalism and the Interpretation of Western Thought*, Cambridge, MA: MIT Press. Pp. 210.

two fallacies. The first is dualism: the idea that most political theorists throughout the ages have portrayed humanity in complete isolation from non-human nature, such that the task for ecological political theory is to overcome this separation, and re-embed politics in ecosystems. The second is derivation: the idea that a normative model of an ecologically sound polity can be derived from a model of how nonhuman nature works. Derivation tempts those green theorists who believe that the problem with the world was its current domination by a mechanistic model of nature, which ought to be replaced by an ecological model. While Meyer chooses his targets well, these fallacies are perhaps not quite so universal among green theorists as he suggests.

Meyer does discuss dualism and derivation in his contemporaries, but spends much more time on their roots in the history of political thought. Most of the book is devoted to Hobbes and Aristotle. Meyer argues that both Hobbes and Aristotle shared the basic idea that nature, with both non-human and human aspects, helps to constitute who we are as political beings, though as pre-ecological thinkers, neither could have thought in terms of ecological nature. However, the big question is: How can these interpretations of Hobbes and Aristotle inform contemporary environmental political thinking and practice? Meyer's justification for attending to Hobbes is that his mechanistic view of nature was widely seen as underpinning the modernity that some ecological theorists wanted to supersede. Aristotle, for his part, represents a teleological alternative that might be attractive to some greens.

Meyer then turns to discuss the implications of his constitutive view of political nature for the theory and practice of environmental politics, especially in terms of a

politics of experience and place. His view of environmental politics is expansive in seeking to escape the idea that “the environment” is just an issue area, and inclusive in the kinds of movements and viewpoints that he wants to draw into the conversation. But how can a movement that can see this existence only in terms of traditional and unsustainable extractive resource use be described as “environmental”? *Political Nature*, however, is a landmark in the environmental history of political thought, particularly compelling in its analyses of Hobbes and Aristotle.

In his book, *The Promise of Green Politics: Environmentalism and the Public Sphere*, (1999),⁶⁴ Douglas Torgerson raises important questions about the relationship of means to ends within contemporary environmentalist politics. Instrumental rationality and its embodiment in “the administrative mind” are the primary subjects of critique in this book. At their core is a tragic seriousness that Torgerson finds central to the project of control and domination of nature from which greens vehemently dissent. As an alternative, he points to manifestations of the comic and the “carnavalesque” in environmentalism: early German Green Party representatives in the Bundestag who deliberately flouted standards of dress and decorum, irreverent Greenpeace banners hung from dams and nuclear power plants. At moments such as these, we might come to see political action as fun. Where others have seen these qualities of environmentalist political action as either irrelevant or problematic, Torgerson presents them as constituting a vital alternative that highlighted human fragilities and deflates the pretenses of the administrative mind. They are manifestations of what he calls a

⁶⁴ Torgerson, Douglas. (1999). *The Promise of Green Politics: Environmentalism and the Public Sphere*. Durham, NC: Duke University Press. Pp. 218.

“performative green politics valued for its own sake.” Torgerson attends to the importance of our conceptions of politics in relation to environmentalist critiques. He is also persuasive in his call to move beyond often sterile debates that seek to establish the true foundation for environmentalist action. In contrast to many thinkers who see deep divisions among those professing environmental concern (i.e., “deep” versus “shallow” ecology; “ecocentrism” versus “anthropocentrism”), Torgerson advocates an embrace of the “inescapably broad and diverse nature of the green movement,” all varieties of which are a part of what he terms the “green public sphere.” It is the allure of instrumentalist thinking and strategizing, he argues, that leads one to the mistaken belief that these divisions are of central importance. Embracing the green critique of instrumentalism that Torgerson elaborates, the most creative or expressive forms of environmental activism have a purpose or an end outside themselves.

John McCormick’s *Reclaiming Paradise: The Global Environmental Movement*,⁶⁵ is considered as a first attempt at recording the history of environmentalism as a global social, economic, and political phenomenon. The author is primarily interested in the emergence of the so-called New Environmentalism from 1962 to the first Earth Day in 1970 and the subsequent emergence of “green” politics. McCormick attempts to show how a popular movement finally pushed the environment to the top of the international political agenda where, he believes, it will remain beside other crucial issues of governmental policy: the economy, defence, and the public welfare. He opines that environmental revolution was the outcome of the ‘new

⁶⁵ McCormick, John. (1989). *Reclaiming Paradise: The Global Environmental Movement*. Bloomington: Indiana University Press. Pp. XV, 259.

environmentalism' of the 1960s. McCormick believes it is a conceptual revolution that had overturned the assumptions of centuries and that brought fundamental changes in the values of human societies around the world. These changes include the rediscovery of the dependency of human life on a healthy natural environment; a reassessment of modern technologies in terms of their contribution to the quality of life; and a challenge to replace orthodox models of economic growth with the new models of sustainable development based on the long-term management of environmental resources.

In support of his thesis that environmental problems were not new or newly recognized, McCormick examines the nineteenth-century roots of the movement and traces six reasons for the sudden rise in prominence of environmental issues in the late 1960s. The affluent postwar generation began asking questions about the quality of life. The increasing number of atmospheric atomic tests raised public fears about the danger of fallout. Then Rachel Carson's book *Silent Spring* exposed the dangers of chemical pesticides. A series of environmental disasters hit the headlines: oil spills, killer smog, Minamata and Itai disease in Japan. Eventually, scientists pooled their research efforts on environmental problems, and other public movements in the US and Western Europe aimed to resolve the related issue of social and economic justice.

McCormick also covers the political and institutional highlights of the 1970s, including the creation of the United Nations Environment Programme, the pivotal UN Stockholm Conference on the Human Environment in 1973, the creation of national environmental agencies in 140 countries, the rise of the Green parties, and the development of the discussion of environmental protection in the Third World.

Reading the book, one question why environmentalism emerged so powerfully in the 1960s. Drawing on the work of recognized environmental historians, McCormick offers a multipart explanation centered on fear for survival in a polluted world and changing social and economic priorities. But while doing so, McCormick's suggestion of "advances in scientific knowledge" as a reason for environmentalism fails to draw on the rise of ecological perspective. McCormick discerns no link between civil rights, social liberations, and modern environmentalism. And in contrast to the global organizations, the European Community is given one meager page; perhaps the book is more about the evolution of national and global, rather than regional institutions. Otherwise, McCormick is right in his belief that environmentalism constituted an essential and lasting revolution in human values.

Ramachandra Guha's book, *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance, (1989)*,⁶⁶ in the Himalaya, is a historical analysis of change in the forests of Uttarakhand that originated with the opposition to external intervention in local forest use. Guha documents the change from forests use to meet the subsistence needs of local people to meeting the wider commercial demands of the expanding British Empire. As village economies were incorporated into British India, demand increased on local forests to supply resin and timber for railway sleepers; local people's rights were translated into privileges and in many cases access to local forests was denied.

The conflict, however, was between two different notions of property ownership: 'There did not exist a developed notion of private property among these peasant communities, a notion particularly inapplicable to community owned and managed

⁶⁶ Guha, Ramachandra. (1989). *The Unquiet Woods: Ecological Change and Peasant Resistance in the Himalaya*, Oxford University Press, Delhi. Pp. xx, 214.

woods and pasture land'. The resulting grievance at the state's attempt to demarcate forest land led to widespread unrest and incendiarism in the forest areas. However, the destruction was directed and only the coniferous forests were burnt, broadleaved forests used by local people for fodder and firewood were left untouched. The actions were directed against the state and were not indiscriminate.

Guha has drawn interesting parallels between peasant resistance in the Himalaya and similar forms of resistance in Britain, France and Russia. The parallels of history as well as the comparisons serve to reinforce the necessity for us to understand the historical evolution of our current patterns of resource use. The study concludes with a detailed examination of the formation and actions of the Chipko movement, as one of many protest movements which have marked the forest history of Uttarakhand. Chipko is responding through its actions to a denial of local rights by state and commercial interests. The book cannot be seen merely as one that appeals to practitioners of forestry. Guha has provided a framework in which to link current environmental change with the historical origins of these changes. More importantly, he has illuminated the mechanisms by which local people are able to articulate opposition to the loss of control over their resources.

In *Civil Society in United Nations Conference – A Literature Review*, (2005),⁶⁷ Constanza Tabbush explores the interactions between civil society and the international system of governance. Tabbush takes three different sets of literature into account (i) to discuss the theory of civil society; (ii) to evaluate the engagement of civil society at global conferences; and (iii) to consider the role of civil society in global governance.

⁶⁷ Tabbush, Constanza. (August 2005). *Civil Society in United Nations Conferences – A Literature Review, Civil Society and Social Movements*; Programme Paper Number 17, UNRISD/PPCSSMI7/05/3. Switzerland.

Tabbush also highlights the need for a systematic inclusion of theoretical considerations in empirical studies of this field. This could provide more solid grounding for the study of the consequences of civil society participation in UN conferences. Tabbush considers different ways of conceptualizing state and non-state actors, as well as some key debates on civil society theory, and looks into the policy implications and empirical effects these can have on the ways civil society participates in global conferences.

Although the UN remains a state-based system of international negotiation, the growth of powerful non-state actors has placed a greater demand on the UN to accommodate their interests and improve collaboration with them. These developments point to a new, strengthened role for civil society in global governance. It also validates the role of the new social movements in Northeast India whose actors comprised not of class, but the conscious civil societies. Nonetheless, the way in which this state-based system would be able to integrate non-state actors is an arena of highly contested debate. Therefore, the conceptual analysis and its implications for policies directed toward participation of civil society becomes all the more imperative.

This paper reviews the current literature on the role of civil society at UN conferences. The objectives of this paper are (i) to examine the terms civil society and UN conferences, including their definitions and linkage; (ii) to analyze the models and ideologies that shape participation of civil society in summits and influence the research done in this field; and (iii) to identify gaps for further study. The first section explores the links between the growth of international civil society and the role UN-sponsored conferences acquired as a regular site for global policy debates. The second section reviews the empirical research on the relationship between UN conferences and civil

society, and considers the effects civil society had on the outcomes of conferences as well as the changes this produced on global activism. And in the third section, the main paradigms of international relations and some theoretical discussions that constituted the current debate on civil society are analyzed in order to understand the diverse usages of the idea of civil society within UN decision-making processes. Finally, the conclusion outlines some gaps in current research and suggests future directions.

The state-centered approach to global governance views civil society as an “outsider” to these processes that, in turn, can provide useful inputs through supplying expert information. By contrast, societal approaches identify civil society as an informal or formal “insider” to global policy debates. These two views are also taken up by UN conference arrangements and policies that promote and support the participation of civil society, and create two distinct models: one that situated civil society as an interest group, whereas the other model defines it as a stakeholder. However, the second perspective with the development of multi-stakeholder approaches to global policy making has increased support from a wide political spectrum.

With the surge of environmentalism and new social movements, the civil society becomes an integral part of global policy making to enhance their say in the global policy agenda even of local realities. The new social movements in Northeast India have also significantly employed the plank ordained by the civil society to address their peripheral issues in the UN and other international conferences. The paper draws relevant validities, particularly for the new social movements and its actors, the civil society, in the Northeast context.

Transnational collective action or transnational social movements have been a growing focus of attention in academic literature since the 1990s and are usually discussed under the umbrella of the ‘globalization of world politics. One of the pioneers of transnational collective action is Margaret Keck and Kathryn Sikkink’s book *Activist Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (1989).⁶⁸ The book gives a conceptual introduction to transnational advocacy networks, which is understood as “communicative structures” or “political spaces” composed of differently situated actors, ranging from domestic and international NGOs, local social movements, foundations, the media, churches or research organizations to parts of intergovernmental organizations. In their work, Keck and Sikkink analyze three case studies: human rights advocacy networks, environmental advocacy networks, and transnational networks on violence against women. The book is an important contribution to the bridging of domestic and international politics. It further academic literature by introducing the concept of ‘boomerang pattern’ or ‘boomerang effect’. For instance, when a national government violates or refuses to recognize rights or when it blocks claims, individuals or domestic organizations often see no other options within domestic political or judicial arena. Hence, such individuals or organizations may directly seek international allies in order to express their concerns and to pressure their states from outside.

In *Large Dams for Hydropower in Northeast India – A Dossier*, (2005),⁶⁹ an alarming concern was raised about the large dams being proposed for the Northeast

⁶⁸ Keck, Margaret and Kathryn Sikkink. (1989). *Activist Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

⁶⁹ Menon, Manju and Kanchan Kohli. (2005). *Large Dams for Hydropower in Northeast India - A Dossier*. Kalpavriksh and SANDRP, New Delhi.

region. The concern was sparked off by e-mails from Bittu Sahgal, editor *Sanctuary Asia*, who had also been a member of Ministry of Environment and Forest's Expert Appraisal Committee for the region. Back then, there was little news in the public domain about projects proposed for the region. It was evident that all the planning and decision-making were taking place in Delhi Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) or citizens' group and the affected communities in the region had no clue of it. The South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP), New Delhi, which was then in the process of disseminating the findings of the World Commission on Dams, saw the relevance of bringing some of these groups together for an initial brainstorming on the issues of dams in the Northeast India. The meeting called the 'Regional Consultation on Dams and Development', held at Mawlein, Meghalaya, in July 2001, gave the SANDRP the opportunity to present the findings of their research to communities in the Northeast. Since that meeting in 2001, there have been several others and the information base and number of organizations and individuals involved in the issue has grown tremendously. Kalpavriksh and several other groups undertook detailed investigations, organized press meets, community level discussions, made clear presentations to government officials, NGO networks and students. Several groups from the region committed to continuing this process until an informed public opinion on the issue is built up and local communities and indigenous peoples' groups are allowed to participate in the decision making process for the projects that were imposed in the region.

In *Large Dams in the Northeast- a bright future?*,⁷⁰ (2003), the authors, Manju Menon, Neeraj Vagholikar, Kanchi Kohli and Ashish Fernandes opines that Northeast is undergoing enforced isolation which have, for decades, protected the region's biodiversity from the destructive large-scale development seen elsewhere in the country. The region, marked by socio-political complexities, also includes struggles for political autonomy and resulting armed conflicts. The Indian constitution has attempted to deal with the Northeast's unique nature by adopting a system of administration that differed from the rest of the country. Despite this, there seems to be little opportunity for participation in the planning of larger developmental projects. Faced with a multitude of challenges, the region is currently charting a course for 'development' and large hydel projects for power export are a part of the development plan.

The July 2002 press release of the Department of Development of the North Eastern Region (DONER), presented the northeast region's "potential to be India's future powerhouse." The October 2001 Central Electricity Authority (CEA) 'Preliminary Ranking Study' of the potential of hydroelectric schemes conducted for all river basins in the country gave the highest marks to the Brahmaputra river system. About 149 schemes were ranked for viability for this region; schemes which would be developed by agencies such as National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC), North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO), the Brahmaputra Board and State Electricity Boards. The government and proponents of large dams in the region paint a win-win picture: exploiting the country's largest perennial water system to produce cheap, plentiful power for the nation, economic benefits through power export, employment generation, the end

⁷⁰ Manju Menon, Neeraj Vagholikar, Kanchi Kohli and Ashish Fernandes. *The Ecologist Asia*, Vol. 11 No. 1 January-March 2003.

of militancy, flood control and little direct ‘displacement’ of local communities. Dams are projected to be the panacea for all the problems of the northeast. However, northeast India’s unique characteristics and past lessons from large dams are enough reason to critically examine these promised benefits. A close look at some of the project reveal planning based on inaccurate and inadequate information, legal violations by project authorities, lack of transparency and little scope for effective people’s participation in decision-making.

*In Big Dams in Northeast India- For whose benefits? For what benefits?, (2002),*⁷¹ Himanshu Thakkar questioned the logic behind the Government of India’s major aggressive strategy to build big water projects in the northeast region. The author stated that the planned big hydro projects of India contained 168 projects from the region with combined installed capacity of over 38000 MW, which is over 1.5 times the India’s existing hydropower capacity. Thakkar opines that the main apparent benefit of the proposed projects was not meant for the northeast region, but for the rest of the region. Thakkar further opines that if the existing (installed capacity being 1790 MW) and under construction projects (with installed capacity of 1545 MW) in the region are taken into consideration, they have enough capacity, if operated optimally, to satisfy power needs of the region as the Parliamentary Standing Committee on energy reported. It may be noted that even peak demand in the region is only 926 MW. The officials of NEEPCO and NEC also admit that new big dam projects were not required for the region.

Thakkar pointed out that central government and its institutions like NEEPCO, NHPC and Brahmaputra Board, and water and power ministries that were taking all the

⁷¹ Thakkar, Himanshu. (February, 2002). *Big Dams in Northeast India – For whose benefits? For what benefits? Dams, Rivers and People.*

decisions for the region practically have no involvement of the people of the region. When all the social and environmental costs would be borne by the people of region, Thakkar advocates for less expensive, less destructive options, which he hold is apparent.

In *Strategic Priorities: A New Policy Framework published by the World Commission on Dams, (2000)*,⁷² the Commission proposed a new approach to decision making based on recognizing the rights of, and assessing the risks to, all stakeholders. This means that all stakeholders whose rights might be affected, and all stakeholders who have risks imposed upon them involuntarily, should be included in decision making on development. The Commission upholds that public acceptance of key decisions was essential for equitable and sustainable water and energy resources development. Acceptance emerges from recognizing rights, addressing risks, and safeguarding the entitlements of all groups of affected people, particularly indigenous and tribal peoples, women and vulnerable groups. Decision-making processes and mechanisms should be used to enable informed participation by all groups of people, and result in the demonstrable acceptance of key decisions. Where projects affect indigenous and tribal peoples, such processes should be guided by their free, prior and informed consent. The World Commission on Dams holds that alternatives to dams did often exist. To explore these alternatives, needs for water, food and energy are assessed and objectives clearly defined. The appropriate development response should be identified from a range of possible options. The selection is based on a comprehensive and participatory assessment of the full range of policy, institutional, and technical options. In the assessment process

⁷² *Dams and Development – A New Framework for Decision-Making* (November 2000) The Report of the World Commission on Dams. Earthscan Publications Ltd. London and Sterling: VA.

social and environmental aspects should have the same significance as economic and financial factors. The options assessment process should be made to continue through all stages of planning project development and operations.

Significantly, the World Commission on Dams uphold the need for joint negotiations with adversely affected people so as to secure mutually agreed and legally enforceable mitigation and development provisions. These provisions should recognize entitlements that improve livelihoods and quality of life, and affected people were made the beneficiaries of the project. The Commission maintains that successful mitigation, resettlement and development were fundamental commitments and responsibilities of the State and the developer. Accordingly, the State and developer bear the onus to satisfy all affected people that moving from their current context and resources would improve their livelihoods. Accountability of responsible parties to agreed mitigation, resettlement and development provisions should be ensured through legal means, such as contracts, and through accessible legal recourse at national and international level.

In *Environmental Aspects of Large Dams in India – Problems of Planning, Implementation and Monitoring*, (2005),⁷³ Ashish Kothari pointed out how large dams in India, as elsewhere, have entailed massive incursions into natural ecosystems and human settlements. While dam proponents assert that the impacts of these incursions could be minimized by appropriate steps, including Environmental Impact Assessment and preventive measures; overwhelming evidence, however, points to the contrary. Kothari observed that environmental impacts had rarely been fully anticipated or understood, let

⁷³ Kothari, Ashish. (2005). "Environmental Aspects of Large Dams in India – Problems of Planning, Implementation and Monitoring." In *Large Dams for Hydropower in Northeast India - A Dossier*. Kalpavriksh and SANDRP, New Delhi. Pp.70-78.

alone prevented or ameliorated. He cited a national assessment of the state of dams cleared in the 1980s and 1990s, which shows that in 90% of cases, the environmental conditionalities under which clearance was given by the central government have not been fulfilled by the project authorities. This is not just a matter of lack of implementation, but points to a series of systemic failures. Such failures, according to Kothari, are part of India's development planning process in general, but they have serious implications in the case of large projects like big dams. Analysis of the ground situation with regard to environmental planning, implementation, and monitoring, suggests that these systemic faults might be inherent and difficult, if not impossible, to remove. If this is the case, Kothari concludes, making big dams environmentally viable may simply not be possible.

In *Environmentalism: A Global History*, (2016),⁷⁴ Ramachandra Guha provided an incisive and wide ranging survey of environmental thinking and the movements that it had spawned are genuinely cross-cultural and global in scope. His focus is environmentalism in the modern age, but he delineates and explores in depth a multiplicity of approaches to those issues, with particular emphasis on the often variant currents of the latter half of the twentieth century. Ideas about the environment and movements aimed at focusing attention on the causes of its degradation and the ways to protect it are set in the different socio-economic and political contexts which gave rise to them. But Guha is also sensitive to the ways in which thinking about ecology is reworked or transformed when it is exposed to international or intercultural influences. He seeks to

⁷⁴ Guha, Ramachandra. (2016). *Environmentalism: A Global History*, Penguin Random House India. Pp. 248.

identify the commonalities and differences in environmental thinking and activism through case studies drawn from the experiences of diverse areas.

Environmentalism and the movements associated with it, according to Guha, particularly in America, resulted in protecting large chunks of wilderness from the threat of ‘development’, moreover turning its attention to controlling the hazardous byproducts of industrialization: air and water pollution, and the production of toxic or radioactive wastes. This in turn forced the Congress to enact over seventy environmental measures into law. Environmentalism, therefore, according to Guha, has come to constitute a field-of-force in which different individuals and organizations, far removed in space, collaborate and sometimes compete in forging a movement that often transcends national boundaries.

In *New Social Movements: A Critical Review*, (1997),⁷⁵ Nelson A. Pichardo conceived the “New” Social Movement (NSM) paradigm as a recent addition to social theory that stressed both the macro-historical and micro-historical elements of social movements. On the macro level, the NSM paradigm concentrates on the relationship between the rise of contemporary social movements and the larger economic structure, and on the role of culture in such movements. On the micro level, the paradigm is concerned with how issues of identity and personal behavior are bound up in social movements. The NSMs paradigm offers a historically specific vision of social movements as associated with new forms of middle-class radicalism. It presents a distinctive view of social movements and of the larger socio-political environment, of how individuals fit into, respond to, and change the system.

⁷⁵ Pichardo, Nelson A. (August 1997). *New Social Movements: A Critical Review*. *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol. 23: 411-430. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.soc.23.1.411>.

Accordingly, the NSMs paradigm argues for a temporal, structurally linked understanding of social movements. Social movements are seen as being shaped and largely determined by social structure. In the industrial era, following a Marxist logic, social movements were believed to be centered in the working class. Working class movements were seen as instrumentally based actions concerned with matters of economic redistribution. Regardless of whether social movements of the industrial era can be characterized in such categorical terms, it was the standard by which contemporary movements were compared. Contemporary movements (post 1965) were, however, not well explained by social theories that saw the working class as the site of revolutionary protest. With the predicted Marxist revolution not in sight, the shift of protest away from the working class, and the changing shape and form of protest in contemporary times, Marxist theorists saw the need to reformulate their ideas. While not all Marxist went in the same direction, some of them postulate the NSM paradigm as an alternative. According to Epstein, Laclau and Mouffe and Plotke, much of the NSM discourse can be said to be a direct reaction to the perceived deficiencies of Marxism.

Although there are differing perspectives on NSMs, a set of core concepts and beliefs can be said to comprise the NSMs paradigm. The central claims of the NSMs paradigm are, first, that NSMs were a product of the shift to a postindustrial economy and, second, that NSMs were unique and, as such, different from social movements of the industrial age. The NSMs are said to be a product of the post-material age (some refer to it as mature capitalism or post industrialism) and are seen as fundamentally different from the working class movement of the industrial period. The NSMs demands are believed to have moved away from the instrumental issues of industrialism to the quality

of life issues of post-materialism. The NSMs are, according to Melucci, qualitatively different.

The central factor characteristic of NSMs is their distinct ideological outlook. It is from this difference that all others flowed. The NSM paradigm states that contemporary social movements represented a fundamental break from industrial era movements. Rather than focusing on economic redistribution, NSMs emphasize quality of life and life-style concerns. Thus, NSMs question the wealth-oriented materialistic goals of industrial societies. They also call into question the structures of representative democracies that limited citizen input and participation in governance, instead advocating direct democracy, self-help groups, and cooperative styles of social organization. According to Cohen, the theme of self-defense and democratization, raised implicitly and sometimes explicitly by the movements is the most significant element in the contemporary struggle for democratization. Taken together, Offe holds that the values of NSMs centered on autonomy and identity. This is expressed in the notion that “the personal is political.” The other, supposedly unique, ideological feature of NSMs is its self-reflexive character. This means the participants are constantly questioning the meaning of what is being done. This has led to conscious choices of structure and action-choices said to typify NSMs.

The existing literature provides a theoretical background to the subject of this research. It provides significant contribution towards establishing the links between the new social movements and the environmental movements in the Northeast. The available

literature enhances and consolidates the knowledge base while at the same time it integrates the research findings with the existing body of knowledge. The comparative possibility that these literatures built up opens the door to integrate with other research and existing literature to form a coherent body of knowledge, which further consolidate the empirical temper that this research required.

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM

Diverse actors from wide arrays of the civil society have been engaged in representing and addressing the problems and issues that were generated by ‘development projects’ in Northeast India that came in the form of dam building. The region is conceived to be ‘India’s future powerhouse.’ Although, these collective actions are real, they remain protracted as the ‘development projects’ failed to deliver its promises when they are seen as imported from outside and above and not from within and below. Issues and questions of negative environmental and social impacts of the project, unfavorable cost-benefit ratios, impacts of conservation offsets such as compensatory afforestation, human rights, traditional land rights, livelihood security, internal displacement, participation in decision making processes and mechanism, entitlement rights, compensation and resettlement, remains unanswered. On the other hand, the questions of transparency, accountability, feasibility, and its peoples orientedness looms large due to severe lack of adequate and consistent information regarding these projects in the public domain. The experiences of the people with these “Temples of Modern India” have been one that was negating their rights and

entitlements; even their existence. This, inevitably, turned the collective actions into what is studied here as the new social movements.

While this research attempts to establish the collective actions as new social movements, the near absence of literature to relate and inter-relate these issues and integrates them into the domain of 'new social movements' in Northeast India remains a challenging task. This research acknowledges that much has been theorized about 'new social movements', but little studied from the context of the Northeast. This 'lack' or 'absence' is a concern which is shared here. Moreover, the development of new social movement theory has not been uniform, which makes it more inevitable to relate its validity to the contemporary collective action of Northeast India. As stated earlier, much has been theorized about 'new social movements', but little studied from the ground level, particularly in the context of Northeast India. The vast majority of previous and current theory has been developed with reference to movements in America and continental Europe. There has been no concerted attempt to assess how applicable such theories are to the Northeast India experiences of the new social movements.

Therefore, this work, by scrutinizing theories of new social movements, will be undertaken to enhance our understanding of the new social movements in northeast India and to test the validity of the theories themselves. Moreover, this study attempts to weave together the diverse 'new social movements' that were represented by the civil societies, which remains outside any class and their interest. The environmental movements in the Northeast that were supposed to be fragmented or disoriented, if and when vividly seen from outside, are not what they are supposed to be. After closely examining them they

are also found to bear similar evident resemblances and share the same characteristics that new social movements elsewhere exhibited. They just happen to be outside the focus of any in depth enquiry. This research attempts to establish the collective environmental movements in Northeast India as new social movements.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The study of environmental movements in Northeast India as new social movements is a novel enquiry although similar developments are unfolding elsewhere in different parts of the world. As such, this study is on the search for theory, characteristics, identity, and strategy of new social movements that was people-led, -centred and -managed, socially inclusive and initiated from below and within rather than from outside. In doing so, several cases are emphasized to test the validity of their 'newness' that posited them outside the framework of 'class' and 'labor' movements. Inevitably, here, the question of class surfaces. However, in the context of Northeast India, the actors of the new social movements are classless. The newly conscious civil societies emerged as a valuable actor in leading, representing, placing, and linking the local issues with the national and international actors and platform. The objectives of this research include to:

1. study and contextualize the growing environmental movements of Northeast India as new social movements,
2. analyze and integrate the existing theories and relate them to the context of new social movements in Northeast India,
3. study the cases of environmental movements in Northeast India, and

4. identify and analyze the actors, the civil societies, in the new social movements.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. How do the local environmental movements that are very heterogeneous fit into the framework of new social movements?
2. How can the European and American theoretical traditions explain and relate the new social movements in Northeast India?
3. How to contextualize the new social movements of Northeast India?
4. What are the characteristics, class and identity of the new social movements in Northeast India?

METHODOLOGY

This research employs descriptive methodology to study the heterogeneous environmental movements in Northeast India as new social movements. In doing so, it amalgamates the myriads of relevant theoretical and conceptual contexts that were defined to give a theoretical basis to the new social movements in Northeast India. The research study cases of two environmental movements to support the theoretical framework that was propagated. Moreover, to ascertain the similarities or differences of the cases, the research was conducted at different periods of time.

This study also employs Qualitative Methods by relying on Grounded Theory, which is an approach to theory development grounded/rooted in the data rather than empirical testing of the theory. This implies that data are collected and analyzed, and then

a theory is developed which is grounded in the data. The applied methodology, therefore, is one where the theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered, and analyzed through the research process. The main aim of this method is to generate theory from field by using observations. Here, the attempt is to derive a general, abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction grounded in the views of participants in a study. This research is directed towards discovering new methods of understanding or investigating the social processes and interactions and to generate or discover a theory based on possibility fundamental patterns in life. In short, this research employs an inductive approach to study the new social movements.

DATA COLLECTION

Primary data are collected through interviews and observation. Besides, Sampling is based on theoretically relevant constructs by employing both Nonprobability sampling and snowball sampling. The method of data collection is based on the semi-structured interview schedule, and collection of published and unpublished literature. Secondary sources of data collection include books, journal articles, government documents, newspapers, and both print and electronic sources.

SEMI-STRUCTURED AND UNSTRUCTURED INTERVIEW

This research employs semi-structured interview and unstructured interviews to secure primary data collection. The semi-structured interview contains 12 (Twelve) questions that were constructed in English. Quota sampling is applied in the case of semi-structured interview. On the other hand unstructured interviews are also conducted according to

Nonprobability sampling as it is more suitable for in-depth qualitative research of this sort in which our focus is to understand complex social phenomena.

The semi-structured interview questions were arranged in such a way that it started with the questions on the perception of social movements, composition, participation, activities and the goals that it attempts to achieve. Two hundred (200) semi-structured interview schedules were conducted among different socio-economic backgrounds in terms of gender, age, occupation, district and state. The respondents were from Manipur's Churachandpur, Imphal, and Tamenglong districts. Another group of respondents are concentrated in Guwahati, Assam. On the other hand, unstructured interviews were conducted with journalists, academicians, researchers, civil society leaders, church leaders, activists, and women association leaders. Each respondent was interviewed using a schedule comprised mostly of open-ended questions spanning a wide range of issues. Response to the open ended questions were tape-recorded and transcribed verbatim into a qualitative database manager. Our analysis here concerns mainly respondents' answers to some of the open-ended queries that pertain to our research questions, but as background we first provide a socio-demographic profile of our respondents.

The methodology is adopted to analyze and understand the environmental movements that are generated by Tipaimukh Dam and Lower Subansiri Hydropower Project. The collective action that grows out these environmental movements constitutes the primary subject of this research.

SCOPE AND LIMITATION OF STUDY

The term “new social movements” entered the lexicon of social theory during the 1980s. These movements are thought to be defined by an orientation to identity and cultural politics rather than to state and class politics. The new social movements are characterized as anti-bureaucratic movements, engaging in the defence of, and are located in, civil society. This research attempts to establish the heterogenous environmental movements in Northeast India as new social movements. In doing so, it amalgamates the myriads of relevant theoretical and conceptual contexts that were defined to give a theoretical basis to the new social movements in Northeast India. The research enquires into few environmental movements that are led by the civil societies to support the theoretical framework that was propagated. Most theorists describe new social movements as having a loose, informal organizational structure and a membership recruited mainly from the new middle class that is associated with new forms of middle-class radicalism. The redefinition of identity in the context of new social movements in the Northeast also constitutes the scope of this study.

However, the largely Western European and American discussion has received limited currency in India’s Northeast and elsewhere. Whether or not this nascent view qualifies as a cogent and empirically grounded paradigm has not been seriously examined, at least in the context of Northeast India. Second, much of the new social movements discourse is said to be a direct reaction to the perceived deficiencies of Marxism. With the predicted Marxist revolution not in sight, the shift of protest away from the working class, and the changing shape and form of protest in contemporary times, Marxist theorists saw the need to reformulate their ideas. While not all Marxist went in the same direction, the new

social movements in Northeast India cannot be constructed from and within the Marxist theoretical paradigm alone. Comparatively, the new social movements in Northeast India are qualitatively different and when the Marxist theoretical paradigm is broadly related to these movements, it tends to be essentially flawed. Just as the Marxist theories tended to marginalize protest that did not stem from the working class, so too have NSM theorists marginalized social movements that do not originate from the left. Thus, the NSM paradigm tends to describe at best only a portion of the social movement universe. The existing theoretical paradigm, though, unmistakably is limited in its scope. However, it cannot negate the distinct ideological outlook, goals, tactics, structure, network, participation and role of the civic sphere where culture and identity reside in contemporary conflicts, which is perhaps the most provocative and informative aspect of the NSM thesis and the element around which a reformulation of the new social movement thesis would be constructed. The role of civic sphere or the civil societies and the social and political conflicts involving the civic sphere remains to be detailed in the study of new social movements in Northeast India.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Firstly, this research, by thoroughly understanding the nature and characteristics of the heterogeneous local environmental movements, significantly establish them into the domain of new social movements. These new social movements are not stagnated in their local context with their localized issues; nor are they spontaneous or sporadic. They represent the new social movements in every possible manner.

Secondly, this research amalgamates the myriads of theories towards understanding the local environmental movements as representing the new social movements. It enables in providing critical conceptual insights to understand the gaps within the theory of new social movements in Northeast. However, this study significantly analyzes and examines various relevant theoretical or conceptual contexts that are defined to give a theoretical basis to the new social movements in Northeast India.

Thirdly, this research significantly weaves together the myriads of environmental movements in the Northeast by focusing on their issues and dynamics; their organizations, networks, coalitions and solidarity linkages and their allies that cut across national boundaries and seek to influence their agenda. The diverse cases that are studied here represent the basis of the new social movements.

Fourthly, this research delves into the emergence of conscious civil societies that represent the actors of new social movements as redefining the theoretical assumptions of a class based movements. The civil societies, as the new class, have become vital conduits for the development of an effective counter-hegemonic movement vis-à-vis the dominant neoliberal model of capitalist development.

This study inculcates the productive capacity of the civil societies in working outside the class interest to bring together broad sectors of the popular movement to devise effective forms of collective action to contest the political, economic and cultural hegemony of the dominant class and political elite. These civil societies have always insisted on autonomy as a social movement, joining the broader struggle for systemic

change and providing or seeking solidarity with other organizations in their struggle in particular conjectures, but retaining the integrity of their organization and struggle. In the process, the civil societies pursued a politics of broad intersectoral alliances, seeking to concert the forces of resistance to government policy, with a myriad of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and International Non-Governmental Organizations (INGOs), global advocacy network, and the media. This represents the new face or identity of the new movements in Northeast India.

TENTATIVE CHAPTERIZATION

The study consists of six chapters, with an introduction and conclusion. The first chapter sketches the concepts of new social movements and look into how the movement grows out of various discontents that are embedded in the old left politics. The second chapter looks into various perspectives of environmentalism that had emerged from the multiplicity of, and interrelations between humans and their environments, which have been accompanied by a concomitant surge in environmentalism.

It looks at how environmentalism emerged as one major new social movement by representing new social paradigm, reflecting new forms of peoples involvement in politics and indicates that the general public was increasingly supporting 'New Politics' issues. It also attempts to understand how the term 'new social movement' designates the principal category into which social scientists have slotted the new phenomenon of environmentalism. Chapter three attempts to locate the object of analysis by exploring diverse relevant theories or conceptual contexts that are propagated on new social movements to understand the same movement in India's Northeast. Chapter four attempts

to locate the identity and participants of new social movements in Northeast India by analyzing the civil society that constitutes the actor(s) of the environmental movements. Chapter five discusses the new social movements in Northeast India by taking a case study of Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) movements against Lower Subansiri Hydro-power Project (Assam) and Anti-Tipaimukh Dam Movements (Manipur). It involves an analysis of these movements, their emergence, styles of protest, participants, aspirations and deep immersion in the social struggles for space, rights, environmental justice, and their confrontation and resistance against the “hegemonic” forces of capital and the state that controlled scarce and shrinking environmental resources. The chapter attempts to study these environmental movements as the new social movements in Northeast India. The concluding chapter summarizes the discussed theories and modes of action of the environmental movements in the Northeast and examines its newness that is represented by the actors, issues, values and styles in the course of its struggle. The chapter concludes with the understanding that environmentalism in Northeast India was not only a domain of competing interests but conflicting interests, which resulted in the emergence of new social movements.

CHAPTER - 1: INTRODUCTION

The first chapter broadly sketches the concepts of new social movements and look into how the movement grows out of various social and political discontents. It traces the roots of new social movement theory from the break-up of the New Left that fractured into diverse single issue groups. The chapter hinted at the incapability of the “old left” or the working class that gave way for the emergence of new social movements. The chapter explores the new social movements theory disassociation from class in favor of identity,

which has been put forward as post-Marxism, post-structuralism, post-modernism, and more recently as “radical democracy.”

CHAPTER – 2: ENVIRONMENTALISM AND NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: A CONCEPTUAL VIEW

The second chapter looks into various perspectives of environmentalism that had emerged from the multiplicity of, and interrelations between humans and their environments, which have been accompanied by a concomitant surge in environmentalism. It looks at how environmentalism emerged as one major new social movement by representing new social paradigm, reflecting new forms of peoples involvement in politics and indicates that the general public was increasingly supporting ‘New Politics’ issues. It also attempts to understand how the term ‘new social movement’ designates the principal category into which social scientists have slotted the new phenomenon of environmentalism.

CHAPTER – 3: THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

This chapter attempts to understand the theoretical perspectives of new social movements. It attempts to locate the object of analysis by examining various relevant theoretical or conceptual contexts that are defined. The theories that are examined are based on North American and western European experiences of new social movements. While doing that, this research acknowledge that much have been theorized about ‘new social movements’, but little studied from the ground level, particularly in the context of Northeast India. This ‘lack’ or ‘absence’ is a concern which is shared here. Moreover, the development of new social movement theory has not been uniform, which makes it more

inevitable to relate its validity to the contemporary collective action of Northeast India. This chapter overwhelmingly explores the diverse theories that are propagated on new social movements to understand the same movement in India's Northeast.

CHAPTER - 4: NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, CIVIL SOCIETY AND POLITICS

Chapter four attempts to locate the identity and participants of new social movements in Northeast India by analyzing the civil society that constituted the actor(s) of the environmental movements. It analyzed the environmental movements arising in the civil society that come to the forefront as the vanguards of democracy by focusing on the identity of new social movements. In doing so, the chapter proposes that the participants of new social movements in Northeast India are classless and without the ethnic identity that social movements in the region are made of. The chapter explores the common values that define the character and identity of the civil society that constitute the actor(s) of the new social movements and their role in building transnational links between civil actors and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). It also focuses on the role of civil society in enhancing its role at the negotiating table, while at the same time increasing the presence of civil society in global forums.

CHAPTER – 5: NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN NORTHEAST INDIA: A CASE STUDY OF KRISHAK MUKTI SANGRAM SAMITI (KMSS) MOVEMENTS (ASSAM) AND ANTI-TIPAIMUKH DAM MOVEMENTS (MANIPUR)

This chapter discusses the new social movements in Northeast India by taking a case study of Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) movements against Lower Subansiri Hydro-power Project (Assam) and Anti-Tipaimukh Dam Movements

(Manipur). It involves an analysis of these movements, their emergence, styles of protest, participants, aspirations and deep immersion in the social struggles for space, rights, environmental justice, and their confrontation and resistance against the hegemonic forces of capital and the state that control scarce and shrinking environmental resources. The chapter attempts to study these environmental movements as the new social movements in Northeast India.

CHAPTER – 6: CONCLUSION

This chapter brings out the summarization of each chapter. It analyzed the discussed theories and modes of collective action of the environmental movements in the Northeast and examines its newness that was represented by the actors, issues, values and styles in the course of its struggle. The chapter synthesized the collective action based in politics, ideology, culture and environmentalism as the root of new social movements. It affirms the understanding of new social movements in the region as a defensive reaction against the encroachment of invasive capitalism; and environmentalism as a domain not only of competing interests but conflicting interests and struggles for democracy and justice. The chapter weaves together environmental movements as new social movements by crystallization of collective activity autonomous of the state; challenging domination by a direct call to personal and collective action based on solidarity carrying on conflict and breaking the limits of the system in which the action occurs.

Environmentalism in Northeast India is not only a domain of competing interest but conflicting interests. The social contradictions between nature and the dominant market economic system deepen as power relations with regard to the environment

continue to threaten the ecological basis of the survival of the indigenous peoples. The new social movements that arose out of these contradictions bear similar resemblances and share the same characteristics that new social movements elsewhere exhibit. They just happen to be outside the focus of any in-depth enquiry.

CHAPTER TWO
ENVIRONMENTALISM AND NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS:
A CONCEPTUAL VIEW

This chapter looks into various concepts and perspectives of environmentalism that have emerged from the multiplicity of interrelations between humans and their environment, which have been accompanied by a concomitant surge in environmentalism.¹ Environmentalism emerged as one major new social movement by representing new social paradigm, reflecting new forms of peoples involvement in politics and indicates that the general public is increasingly supporting ‘New Politics’ issues.² The study of social movements with environmental concerns has expanded the notion of environmentalism to include not only explicitly environmentalist nongovernmental organizations (NGOs), but also a large number of movements in the industrializing nations of poor or marginalized peoples that are struggling with such environmentally based issues as control over and access to natural resources, encroachment on their lands and livelihood, and protests against environmentally destructive development projects.

The concept of the environmentalism of the poor developed by Martinez-Alier has been applied to India by Ramachandra Guha who mentions situations that have “pitted rich against poor: logging companies against hill villagers, dam builders against forest tribals, multinational corporations deploying trawlers against artisanal fisher folk

¹ While recognizing that the roots of environmentalist thought have been growing over the centuries, most commentators attribute the rise of popular contemporary environmentalism to the publication of key texts during the 1960s (Carson 1962, Commoner 1963, Hardin 1968) and 1970s (Ehrlich 1970, meadows et al. 1972, Goldsmith et al. 1972). Comprehensive accounts of the history of environmentalism can be found in O’ Riordan (1981), Nicholson (1987), McCormick (1989), Paehlke (1989) and Norton (1991). However, in this work, we intend to study environmentalism as a new social movement in reaction to ‘modernism’ and the state paradigm of ‘development’ and not merely due to the publications of abundant literature based on the subject. In this work, we also try to relate the theoretical understanding of environmentalism to the growing environmental movements of Northeast India.

² Dalton, Russell J., and Manfred Kuechler. (1987). *Challenging the Political Order*, New York: Oxford University Press.

rowing country-boats.”³ Environmentalism, therefore, is not only a domain of competing interest but conflicting interests.

2.1 ENVIRONMENTALISM: LOCATING THE ROOTS OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The growing interest among political theorists and philosophers in environmental ethics, Green arguments about democracy, and the link between Green thinking and other ideologies significantly represents the crux of environmentalism as well. On the other hand the State’s high degree of autonomy and causal responsibility for the environmental crisis has made political theorist like Achterberg to examine the idea that democracy might be a barrier to overcoming environmental problems, pointing to the difficulties which this poses for Green arguments for democratization and the decentralization of power.⁴ The women’s environmental movements tend to arise when gender is a determining factor in issues involving the division of labor, access to natural resources, and property relations in ways that are disadvantageous to women. In efforts to maintain existing rights or to resist new policies that seek to extinguish them, the emergence of women’s resistance movements that are directly related to environmental issues has generated the new fields of feminist political ecology⁵ and ecofeminism.⁶

Rise of new social movements has been altering political agendas and signals the continuation of intense political conflicts over fundamental issues. Environmentalism is

³ Guha, R. (1997). “The environmentalism of the poor,” in R.G. Fox and O. Starn (eds.), *Between Resistance and Revolution*, Rutgers University Press: New Brunswick, NJ.

⁴ Dobson, Andrew and Lucardie, Paul. Eds. (1993). *The Politics of Nature: Explorations in Green Political Theory*, Routledge: London.

⁵ Rocheleau, D., Slayter, B., and Wangari, E. Eds.,(1996). *Feminist Political Ecology: Global Issues and Local Experiences*, Routledge: London.

⁶ Townsend, J.G. (1995). *Women’s Voices From Rainforest*, Routledge: New York.

and has been a contested issue at an ideological as well as material level by going beyond the literary appreciation of landscapes and the scientific analysis of species. It is defined as the promotion of values, attitudes and policies aimed at reaching an accommodation between human needs and the limits of natural environment. The politics of environmentalism, therefore, are to re-establish the social and cultural control of man over nature, which has been undermined by economic and industrial development. Environmentalism is a part of longer established political, economic, social and cultural debates; debates which arose particularly during the nineteenth century and were essentially about the problems of modernism.

In the American tradition, environmentalism as ‘social movement’ is typically treated as an ‘empirical generalization’, recognized by its broad organizational features: ‘more organized than protesting crowds or mobs, less formalized than political parties and more concerted than simple social trends.’⁷ On the other hand, European theorists have tended to identify environmentalism as social movements in terms of ‘their perceived capacity for major social transformation’. New Social movements have not only led to significant political and social reforms but have challenged governments and forced them to change the very nature and character of its numerous activities in the pursuit of development. In the twentieth century, new social movements became more of a deliberate tool for social change, moving from being largely an *ad hoc* strategy growing naturally out of the need to protect and promote rights of the peoples by resorting to non-violent actions and methods, to a reflective, and in many ways institutionalized methods of struggle.

⁷ Yearley, S. (1994). ‘Social movements and environmental change’, in M. Redclift and T. Benton, Eds., *Social Theory and the Global Environment*, London and New York: Routledge.

India's Northeast has witnessed a remarkable upsurge of environmental movements, cases of which will be studied here as the new social movements.⁸ The new social movements have always been undermined and negated by the state and its allies where development and modernization is seen as the only path before their agenda. However, this concept of the state has been immensely challenged and contradicted by the new social movements.

Where others have seen the qualities of environmentalist political action as either irrelevant or problematic (e.g., Robert Goodin, *Green Political Theory*, 1992), Torgenson presents them as constituting a vital alternative that highlights our human fragilities and deflates the pretenses of the administrative mind. They are manifestations of what he calls a “performative green politics valued for its own sake”.⁹ This view represents the distinctive account of the intrinsic value of action within the sphere of the political. In contrast to many thinkers who see deep divisions among those professing environmental concern (i.e., “deep” versus “shallow” ecology; “ecocentrism” versus “anthropocentrism”), Torgenson advocates an embrace of the “inescapably broad and diverse nature of the green movement,” all varieties of which are a part of what he terms the “green public sphere”.

It can be argued that environmentalism has enjoyed limited success in halting deterioration,¹⁰ very few social movements fully achieve their goals and most fail to

⁸ I have chosen the case study method because many of the hypothesized traits of new social movements are qualitatively – not quantitatively – different from earlier movements.

⁹ Torgenson, Douglas and NC, Durham. (1999). *The Promise of Green Politics: Environmentalism and the Public Sphere*, Duke University Press.

¹⁰ Dowie, M. (1995). *Losing Ground: American Environmentalism at the Close of the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

survive for more than a few years.¹¹ In addition to the impressive staying power and large organizational base of environmentalism, the movement has clearly had significant institutional and cultural effects within most industrialized nations and beyond.¹² A key reason for the success of environmentalism, relative to that of most social movements, is that its goals of environmental protection are widely supported by the general public. Public support is a crucial resource for any social movement,¹³ and the largely consensual nature of environmental protection has given the environmental movement an advantage over movements that pursue more divisive goals.¹⁴ Indeed, of all the contemporary social movements, environmentalism is often deemed the one with the greatest level of actual and potential public support.¹⁵ This could be because of the challenges that it posed to the current society.

Environmentalism is considered to be a crucial component in the wave of “new social movements” that has swept industrialized societies in recent decades. It possesses characteristics that distinguish them not only from their own historical precursors but also from many other movements. It is argued that they represent significant ideological challenges to the status quo, especially the growing incursion of the economic and government sectors into civil society and everyday life, and they are associated tangentially with economic and class interests, stem from causes endemic to advanced

¹¹ Mauss, A.L. (1975). *Social Problems as Social Movements*. Philadelphia: Lippincott.

¹² Buttel, F.H. (1992). “Environmentalization: Origins, Processes, and Implications for Rural Social Change.” *Rural Sociology*, 57: 1-27.

¹³ Giugni, M.G. (1998.). “Was It Worth the Effort? The Outcomes and Consequences of Social Movements.” *Annual Review of Sociology*, 98:371-93.

¹⁴ Dunlap, R.E. (1995). “Public Opinion and Environmental Policy.” In J.P. Lester. Durham (Ed.), *Environmental Politics and Policy*, NC:Duke University Press. Pp.63-114.

¹⁵ Scott, A. (1990). *Ideology and the New Social Movements*. London: Unwin Hyman.

capitalism, reflect “postmaterial” values as well as ‘identity politics,’”¹⁶ and entail unconventional organizational forms and tactics.

Environmental movement encompasses traditional as well as newer, typically more radical element. Analysts usually distinguish between at least two broad wings of contemporary environmentalism found in the United States and especially in western Europe: conservationism and environmentalism.¹⁷ Conservationism, which has roots going back a century or more, is often depicted as being primarily interested in the preservation of wildlife and aesthetic environments, and, particularly the conservation and efficient use of resources. Its challenge to the status quo is seen as very limited and its long history makes it difficult to label it a “new” social movement. Environmentalism, on the other hand, is seen as encompassing the broader goal of environmental protection and entailing a more exacting critique of the status quo.¹⁸ Because of this distinction, new social movement scholars have readily accepted the latter as a true ‘new social movement’ and have been more skeptical of the conservationist elements of contemporary environmentalism.¹⁹ New social movements are seen as representing a fundamental challenge to industrial societies, a challenge that is explicitly encompassed by environmentalism but not by conservationism.

New social movements are widely assumed to constitute “a coherent social force”²⁰ representing one larger, overarching movement or “general movement.”²¹

¹⁶ Buechler, S.M. (1995). “New Social Movement Theories.” *Sociological Quarterly*, 36:441-64.

¹⁷ Cotgrove, S. (1982). *Catastrophe or Cornucopia: The Environment, Politics and the Future*. New York: Wiley.

¹⁸ Dalton, R.J. (1994). *The Green Rainbow: Environmental Groups in Western Europe*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Scott, A. (1990). *Ideology and the New Social Movements*. London: Unwin Hyman.

Despite inter and intra-movement variations, new social movements are thought to represent a “movement family” sharing several important elements.²² The environmental movement is further assumed to be the new social movement with the greatest potential to bring all of the new social movements together under one umbrella, providing the ideological “glue” or “master frame” to hold them all together.²³ Indeed, Scott states that many scholars have focused on “the ecology movement as the one ... most likely to synthesize the disparate concerns of the new social movements into a coherent oppositional force,”²⁴ and Lowe and Rudig argue that “the ecological movement represents a totally new political cleavage which in turn can integrate the others.”²⁵ Similarly, Dalton observes that “environmental groups have often spearheaded the New Politics, the new social movements, challenge to the traditional political values of industrialized societies.”²⁶

In short, the environmental movements are conceived as constituting the vanguard of new social movements, embracing and encompassing other contemporary movement goals in addition to environmental protection. These new movements also amalgamate concerns including social equality, human rights, and world peace as well as environmental protection.

²¹ Turner, R.H. (1994). “Ideology and Utopia after Socialism.” In Larana, E. and J.R.Gusfield (Ed.), *New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity* (pp. 79-100). Temple University Press.

²² Della Porta, D. and D. Rucht. (1991). *Left-Libertarian Movements in Context: A Comparison of Italy and West Germany, 1965-1990*. Berlin: Wissenschaftszentrum.

²³ Buttel, F.H. (1992). “Environmentalization: Origins, Processes, and Implications for Rural Social Change.” *Rural Sociology*, 57: 1-27.

²⁴ Scott, A. (1990). *Ideology and the New Social Movements*. London: Unwin Hyman.

²⁵ Lowe, P.D. and W. Rudig. (1986). “Political Ecology and the Social Sciences: The State of the Art.” *British Journal of Political Science*, 16: 513-50.

²⁶ Dalton, R.J. (1988). *Citizen Politics in Western Democracies: Public Opinion and Political Parties in the United States, Great Britain, West Germany, and France*. Chatham, NJ: Chatham House.

2.2 LINKING ENVIRONMENTALISM TO THE PARADIGM OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

For a long time, resource mobilization theory has become the dominant paradigm for studying collective action within environmentalism. With its characteristic premises of rational actors engaged in instrumental action through formal organization to secure resources and foster mobilization, this paradigm has demonstrated considerable theoretical and empirical merit for understanding social movements.²⁷ However, some have questioned the utility of this perspective for understanding at least some kinds of movements and constituencies, while others have lodged important criticisms against this approach.²⁸ These developments have created an intellectual space for complementary or alternative perspectives for analyzing social movements. One such alternative is social constructionism, which brings a symbolic interactionist approach to the study of collective action by emphasizing the role of framing activities and cultural processes in social activism.

New social movement theory is rooted in continental European traditions of social theory and political philosophy.²⁹ This emerged in large part as a response to the inadequacies of classical Marxism for analyzing collective action. First, Marxism's economic reductionism presumed that all politically significant social action will derive

²⁷ McCarthy, John D. and Mayer N. Zald. (1977). "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory." *American Journal of Sociology*, 82:1212-1241.

²⁸ Buechler, Steven. (1993). "Beyond Resource Mobilization? Emerging Trends in Social Movement Theory." *The Sociological Quarterly*, 34:217-235.

²⁹ Cohen, Jean. (1985). "'Strategy or Identity'? New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements." *Social Research*, 52:663-716.

from the fundamental economic logic of capitalist production and that all other social logics are secondary at best in shaping such action. Second, Marxism's class reductionism presumed that the most significant social actors will be defined by class relationships rooted in the process of production and that all other social identities are secondary at best in constituting collective actors. These premises led Marxists to privilege proletarian revolution rooted in the sphere of production and to marginalize any other form of social protest.

New social movement theorists, by contrast, have looked to other logics of action based in politics, ideology, and culture as the root of much collective action, and they have looked to other sources of identity such as ethnicity, gender and sexuality as the definers of collective identity. The term "new social movements" thus refers to a diverse array of collective actions that have presumably displaced the old social movement of proletarian revolution associated with classical Marxism. Even though new social movement theory is a critical reaction to classical Marxism, some new social movement theorists seek to update and revise conventional Marxist assumptions while others seek to displace and transcend them.

Despite the now common usage of the term "new social movement theory," it is a misnomer if it implies widespread agreement among a range of theorists on a number of core premises. It would be more accurate to speak of "new social movement theories", with the implication that there are many variations on a very general approach to something called new social movements. As a first approximation to this general approach, however, the following themes may be identified. First, most strands of new social movement theory underscore symbolic action in civil society or the cultural sphere

as a major arena for collective action alongside instrumental action in the state or political sphere.³⁰ Second, new social movement theorists stress the importance of processes that promote autonomy and self-determination instead of strategies for maximizing influence and power.³¹ Third, some new social movement theorists emphasize the role of post-materialist values in much contemporary collective action, as opposed to conflicts over material resources.³² Fourth, new social movement theorists tend to problematize the often fragile process of constructing collective identities and identifying group interests, instead of assuming that conflict groups and their interests are structurally determined.³³ Fifth, new social movement theory also stresses the socially constructed nature of grievances and ideology, rather than assuming that they can be deduced from a group's structural location.³⁴ Finally, new social movement theory recognizes a variety of submerged, latent, and temporary networks that often undergird collective action, rather than assuming that centralized organizational forms are prerequisites for successful mobilization.³⁵ To understand the characteristics of the new social movements, it, therefore, is necessary to understand the major debates that typify this general approach. The first concerns the meaning and validity of designating certain movements as "new" and others by implicating as "old". The second debate involves whether new social movements are primarily or exclusively a defensive, reactive response to larger social

³⁰ Cohen, Jean. (1985). " 'Strategy or Identity'? New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements." *Social Research*, 52:663-716.

³¹ Habermas, Jurgen. (1984-1987). *The Theory of Communicative Action*. Beacon Press, Boston.

³² Inglehart, Ronald. (1990). "Values, Ideology and Cognitive Mobilization in New Social Movements." In Kuechler and Dalton (Eds.), *Challenging the Political Order* (pp.43-66).

³³ Hunt, Scott A., Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow. (1994). "Identity Fields: Framing Processes and the Social Construction of Movement Identities." In Larana, Johnston and Gusfield (Eds.), *New Social Movements*(pp.185-208).

³⁴ Johnston, Hank, Enrique Larana and Joseph Gusfield. (1994). "Identities, Grievances and New Social Movements." In Larana, Johnston, and Gusfield (Eds.), *New Social Movements*(pp. 3-35).

³⁵ Melucci, Alberto. (1989). *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*. In John Keane and Paul Mier (Ed.). Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

forces or whether they can exhibit a proactive and progressive nature as well. The third debate concerns the distinction between political and cultural movements and whether the more culturally oriented new social movements are inherently apolitical. The fourth involves the social base of the new social movements and whether this base can be defined in terms of social class.

Many of these themes signify a divergence from both classical Marxism and resource mobilization theory as well as some points of convergence with social constructionism. However, various new social movement theorists give different emphases to these themes and have diverse relations with alternative traditions, thereby warranting a language that speaks of new social movement theories.

A central debate that has attracted considerable attention concerns the extent to which NSMs are not as distinct as proponents of the paradigm suggest. For instance, David Plotke argues that new social movement discourse tends to overstate their novelty, to selectively depict their goals as cultural, and to exaggerate their separation from conventional political life.³⁶ Sidney Tarrow points out that many new social movements are not really all that new,³⁷ because they often have grown out of preexisting organizations and have long histories that are obscured by new social movement discourse.

Many of the new social movements seem to be distinctly human rights oriented. It is, at first sight, difficult to grasp outside the framework of contemporary human rights normativity or movements contesting environmental degradation. These movements are

³⁶ Plotke, David. (1990). What's So New about New Social Movements?“, *Socialist Review*, 20:81-102.

³⁷ Tarrow, Sidney. (1994). *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

not just human rights reinforcing, in the sense that they revitalize through social action the texts of human rights norms and standards. They are also human rights creating. Many a development of new human rights is simply inconceivable outside the dynamic of new social movements. And yet, the literature on new social movements is not concerned with ways in which these relate to the practices of human rights. Rather, it is more centrally concerned with, inter alia, the social base of the new social movements;³⁸ ways in which identities shaping collective behavior are formed, the use of dramatic and disruptive modes of direct action and the emergence of agenda of radically pluralist identity politics.

The new social movements are distinguished from the traditional social movements in that they are movements of popular resistance to government authority which either consciously or by necessity eschew the use of non-violence in the face of recent developments and problems generated by industrialization in the name of development. The new social movements seek to address the increasingly global issues whereby activists share their wisdom to challenge a system of political control that is increasingly global in nature. Therefore, the study of new social movements is a recent mode of inquiry. However, issues pertaining to the study of new social movements do not rest in the domain of temporality, but in the substantive process of historical specificities that are germane to them.

At this juncture, it is important to recognize that the political and social crisis, issues and problems of one society, at one point of time, may emerge with an assertion;

³⁸ Touraine, Alain. (1981). *The Voice and the Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

they may fail or succeed and fade away in history only to reappear again, in another society, in another period of history. It is our contention that collective social action and movements emerge from and get dissolved in society, and that society validates its existence only by the expressions of such movements. The late 1980s and the first half of the 1990s were to undergo a new wave of grassroots mobilization which at times seem to hark back to the heady days of the early 1970s. The inspirational values of the new social movements, therefore, are a mixture of libertarianism and environmentalism.

The newness of environmental concerns is more apparent than real in that thinking about the environment, its meaning, significance and value is as old as human society itself. However, it is clear that the present human generation is faced with a series of unique environmental dilemmas, largely unprecedented in human history. The present human generation is the first one, for example, to have the capacity to destroy the planet many times over, while at the same time, it is also the first generation for which the natural environment cannot be taken for granted. So while the environment has been a perennial theme in human thought, its use has become an increasingly central and important aspect of recent social theory and political practice.

The environmentalism we are dealing with is concerned to the “retreat of the state”³⁹ from practicing certain regulatory functions with regard to multinational enterprises, particularly in relation to the environment.⁴⁰ It can be argued that this ‘retreat’ creates a crisis of governance, in that while traditional methods of regulation and oversight of companies’ activities fall apart, new forms of government intervention are

³⁹ Strange, S. (1996). *The Retreat of the State*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

⁴⁰ Clapp, J. (1997). “Threats to environment in an era of globalization: an end to state sovereignty?” In T. Schrecker (Ed.), *Surviving Globalism: The Social and Environmental Challenges*. Basingstoke: Macmillan.

incapable of replacing them. In the vacuum left by this gradual retreat of governmental control of the environmental impact of companies' activities, environmental Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs), through a wide spectrum of co-operative and confrontational strategies, have been targeting companies themselves. Government and political parties have begun to respond to peace, environment, or other New Politics issues because these parties experience the electoral consequences of their past unresponsiveness.⁴¹ Environmental organizations successfully stage unconventional events to capture the attention and sympathies of mass publics.⁴² This has produced a new and interesting set of relationships; the dynamics and its progress of which are dealt in this work by contextualizing environmental movements of Northeast India.

On the other hand, there is a need to look at “environmentalism as a social program, a charter of action which seeks to protect cherished habitats, protest against their degradation, and prescribe less destructive technologies and lifestyles.”⁴³ Environmentalism, therefore, is activism aimed at improving the environment, particularly nature. This activism is usually based on the ideology of an environmental movement and takes the form of non-violent protest, advocacy, legislation and treatise. Environmentalism is also seen ‘as a trans-cultural discourse.’⁴⁴ Kay Milton employs the notion of discourse to imply both a process and a substance. As a process it refers to how social reality is constituted by the organization of knowledge in communication. As a substance, environmentalism is a discourse about the environment. Milton emphasizes

⁴¹Ruedig, Wolfgang. (1988). “Peace and Ecology Movements in Western Europe.” *West European Politics*, 11:26-39.

⁴² Milbrath, Lester. (1984). *Environmentalists*. State University of New York Press :Buffalo

⁴³ Guha, Ramachandra.(2000). *Environmentalism: A Global History*. New Delhi.

⁴⁴ Milton, Kay. (1993). “Introduction: Environmentalism and Anthropology”. In K. Milton (Ed.,) *Environmentalism: The View of Anthropology*, London.

diversity and complexity of ideas and values constituting the discourse about the environment.

Environmentalism as a discourse then is the field of communication through which environmental responsibilities are constituted.⁴⁵ Of the myriad ways in which human activity and the natural world impinge upon each other, some are identified as problems. Groups crystallize around the search for solutions, messages are articulated, and responsibilities are defined and allocated. Depending on the perceived scope of the problem, this may happen within a local community or on the international stage.

Cohen, Arato and Touraine treat new social movements as part of the struggle for civil society to maintain autonomy from state and economy and as a source of reform and the introduction of new concerns into political agendas.⁴⁶ Scholars of the new social movements explain the emergence and nature of the recent movements by examining grievances, which they argue, arise from the structural condition of post-industrial society.⁴⁷ New social movement theorists argue that recent social movements represent an entirely new form of social protest and reflect specific properties of advanced industrial societies.⁴⁸ As a result, actors of the new social movements seek to regain control over their personal and collective sense of identity.

The new social movement perspective competes with the “resource mobilization” perspective and the “political opportunity” perspective. For instance, the collective search

⁴⁵ Ibid., p.9.

⁴⁶ Cohen, Jean. (Winter 1985) “Strategy of Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements.” *Social Research*, 52:pp. 663-716.

⁴⁷ Ibid., pp. 663-716.

⁴⁸ Offe, Claus. (Winter 1985). “New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics”. *Social Research*, 52.

for identity, not material deprivation, is a central aspect of movement formation. Controlling cultural codes is more important than controlling the means of production. Second, social movements are “Social construction processes”; they “occur when they are perceived to be occurring.” Social movements are not “things” but “social processes that emerge and develop.” New collective identities are “incubated” in “submerged social networks”⁴⁹ and are formed through processes of interaction and negotiation within the movement.

The shared characteristics of the new social movements can be divided into four general areas: goal orientation, forms, participants, and values. Each characteristic reflects this discomfort with the intervention by the system of state social control and a desire to replace these intrusive formal organizations with cooperative community networks. They also echo the desire for self-actualization within reconstituted primary group relations.⁵⁰ As the advanced industrial state increasingly regulates and invades everyday life, the goal orientations of the new social movements have shifted inward, in an attempt to reappropriate dominion over their own lives from a system of supervisory institutions.⁵¹ Whereas prior social movements fought to secure political and economic rights from the state and other institutional actors, new social movements target their activities away from the state.⁵² The movement itself and its participants become the focus of its member energies. The personal becomes political. Organizational structure

⁴⁹ Gusfield, et al. (June 1995). “New Social Movements: From Ideology to Identity”. *Social Forces*, Vol.73 (No.4):pp. 1633-1635.

⁵⁰ Kitschelt, Herbert. (1981). New Social Movements in West Germany and the United States.” *Political Power and Social Theory*, 5:pp.274-308.

⁵¹ Melucci, Alberto. (1980). “The New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics.” *Social Science Information*, 19: pp.789-797.

⁵² Cohen, Jean. (Winter 1985). “Strategy of Identity: New theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements.” *Social Research*, 52:pp. 664-670.

represents another defining characteristic, in particular, the notion that forms as vital an element as substance. Significant emphasis is laid upon moving away from traditional structures in favor of more decentralized open democratic organizations.

The “old social movement” was utopian and sought to remake the whole of society through overcoming existing relations of domination and exploitation. New social movements, in contrast, defend specific spheres of life; their demands are more limited in scope but are also less negotiable. New social movements theories points valuably to the importance of the defense of specific life-worlds. It is also implicit in Habermas’s account of how conflicts moved outside the range of distributive issues that welfare states were developed to manage. In this view, the state embodied the utopian drive of labor and social democratic movements but faced crises as the systems of money and power grew to dominate so much of social life that cultural reproduction could no longer provide people with the motivation for either ordinary participation or transformative rebellion. New social movements arose out of this “exhaustion of utopian energies” and embodied a too-often neo-conservative focus on defense of endangered ways of life.

Central to the importance of identity politics and defensive orientations is the argument that new social movements are distinctive in politicizing everyday life rather than focusing on the large scale systems of state and economy. While the postwar consensus consecrated overall economic growth, distributive gains, and various forms of legal protection as the basic social issues that the political process was to address⁵³, the new social movements brought forward a variety of other issues grounded in aspects of

⁵³ Offe, Claus. (1985). “New Social Movements: Challenging the boundaries of institutional politics.” *Social Research* 52: 817-68.

personal or everyday life: sexuality, abuse of women, student rights, protection of the environment. These were not just new issues of familiar kinds, but a challenge to the extant division between public and private spheres, state and civil society. The collapsing of divisions between state and economy paved the way. Giant corporations assumed state like functions in the putatively private economic sphere, while the welfare state was called to defend a growing variety of civil rights and to intervene regularly in the economy.

Several explanations for why this gave rise to new social movements contend that a hierarchy of needs notion suggests that affluence made it feasible to stop worrying about the old economic issues and take up these new concerns.⁵⁴ A political opportunity argument says that the transformed state created new opportunities for the pursuit of grievances.⁵⁵ Habermas's notion of the colonization of the life world⁵⁶ proposes that the erosion of the boundaries between life world and economic and political system was itself experienced as threatening.

Compared with the postwar consensus, a politicization of everyday life certainly began in the 1960s, but this was not a reversal of long-standing consensus about the proper boundaries of the political. On the contrary, the modern era is shaped by a certain oscillation between politicization and depoliticization of everyday life. In the late and early twentieth centuries, as well as in the early nineteenth century, social movements brought a range of new phenomena into the public realm. Indeed, the early labor

⁵⁴ Melucci, Alberto. (1989). *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

⁵⁵ Tarrow, Sidney. (1989). *Struggle, Politics and Reform: Collective Action, Social Movements and Cycles of Protest*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press (Western Societies Papers no.21).

⁵⁶ Habermas, Jurgen. (1988). *The Theory of Communicative Action. Vol.2, Lifeworld and System: A Critique of Functionalist Reason*, Boston: Beacon.

movements themselves aimed crucially to politicize aspects of everyday life formerly not considered properly political. Temperance, abolitionism, campaigns for popular education, and perhaps above all early women's movements sought public recognition or action with regard to grievances their detractors considered clearly outside the realm of legitimate state action.⁵⁷ In the case of women's movements, the struggle to politicize aspects of everyday life and the contradictions around it continued right through the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. It recurred also in the temperance/prohibition and civil rights movements. The one great victory of women in this period, thus, was on the issue of suffrage, not on any of the other gender concerns that women voiced.

A central link between new social movements theory and the notion of a post-industrial or postmodern society is the idea that political economic identities have lost their salience and are being replaced by a mixture of ascriptive identities (like race or gender) and personally chosen or expressive identities (like sexual orientation or identification with various lifestyle communities). New social movements, accordingly, neither appeal to nor mobilize predominantly on class lines.

Offe suggests that members of the new middle class and "decommodified" persons – that is, those with no stable labor market position or identity – are disproportionately involved in new social movements. Though Offe approaches these groups in economic terms, they are in fact hard to assimilate into schemes of class analysis. The decommodified are obviously outside class categories to the extent that these depend on stable positions in the relations of production. The new middle class is usually defined in terms of high levels of education and technical skill combined with

⁵⁷ Evans, Sara M., and Harry C. Boyte. (1986). *Free Spaces*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

employee status rather than ownership of capital. More generally, middle class affluence may facilitate movement activity, but class membership is not the identity that determines choice of new social movements.

If class bases were ever central determinants of mobilization patterns, it was in late nineteenth and early twentieth century Europe. Before that, class was seldom the self-applied label or the basis even of worker's mobilization. The question here is, was Chartism strictly a class movement? Though its ideology increasingly focused on class, its demand included issues with appeal to most of the range of people excluded from suffrage and effective citizenship rights in early nineteenth-century Britain. Indeed, its admixture of members of the industrial working class with artisans, outworkers, and others presaged the fault lines of its eventual demise. The point is not that class was irrelevant but that the early nineteenth century struggles most often taken as paradigmatic of class-based political movements were political movements internally differentiated by the appeal of their ideology to different groups of workers, shopkeepers and others.

One of the most striking features of the paradigmatic new social movements has been their insistence that the organizational forms and styles of movement practice must exemplify the values the movement seeks to promulgate. This means, at the same time, that the movements are ends in themselves. Relatedly, many new social movements are committed to direct democracy and a non-hierarchical structure, substantially lacking in role differentiation, and resistant to involvement of professional movement staff. New social movements depart from conventional parliamentary and electoral politics, taking recourse to direct action and novel tactics. It is indeed generally true that any movement of or on behalf of those excluded from conventional politics starts out with a need to

attract attention; movement activity is not just an instrumental attempt to achieve movement goals, but a means of recruitment and continuing mobilization of participants. Each new movement may also experiment with new ways to outwit authorities either in getting its message across or in causing enough disruption to extract concessions or gain power. In this way, each movement may add to a repertoire of collective action that is available to subsequent movements.

2.3 ENVIRONMENTALISM AND POLITICAL THEORY

Environmentalism, today, emerged against the state(s) concept of ‘development’, thereby seeing the state(s) as the prime environmental destroyer. From the basic ontology of interstate anarchy, Realists in international relations generate a rather different research agenda. From a number of subtle, but important and fundamentally different assumptions, Realist generates a research agenda which focuses on the potential of environmentalism to produce inter-state conflict.⁵⁸ Baldwin suggests that the nature and consequences of anarchy, with Realists suggesting that anarchy requires state(s) to be concerned primarily with their survival.

Environmentalism, therefore, is immensely concerned about the domination of policy-making by the state in its quest for survival, which ultimately results in destroying the environment or nature. Therefore, the prospects for saving the environment, as the Realists suggests, would be harder to achieve, more difficult to maintain, and more dependent on state’s anarchic power. As the state’s quest for survival motivates the relative-absolute gains, Realists tend to suggest that state(s) are concerned primarily with

⁵⁸ Baldwin, D. A. (1993). *Neorealism and Neoliberalism: The Contemporary Debate*, New York.

the gains they make by exploiting the environment. It is the relative-absolute gains debate which is crucial in accounting for the Realists concept of environmentalism.⁵⁹ As a consequence of the nature of international anarchy, Realists argue that state(s) must always be concerned primarily with their own security, which goes to the extent of achieving security at the cost of exploiting the environment. So, the possibilities of cooperation to save the environment in the face of the priority given to security for survival in state goals derived from the assumption concerning the implications of anarchy. Whereby, a preoccupation with relative gain makes it more difficult to get cooperation, securing the environment tends to fail as the instrument of security.

In a Realists mode, environmentalism, which professed environmental security, is simply an additional component to pre-existing notions of security. The referent of security – what is to be secured – remains the same – the nation state – while only the causes of insecurity have changed from military enemies to environmental degradation. According to the Realists, some of these new threats are old ones dressed up as environmental conflicts – the struggle between states for access to strategic resources.

Kaplan suggests that the root of the threat is “nature unchecked”. He continues: “It is time to understand ‘the environment’ for what it is: the national security issue of the early twenty-first century. The political and strategic impact of surging populations, spreading disease, deforestation and soil erosion, water depletion, air pollution and possibly, rising sea levels in critical, overcrowded regions such as the Nile Delta and Bangladesh – developments that will prompt mass migrations and, in turn, incite group

⁵⁹ Paterson, Matthew. (2000). *Understanding Global Environmental Politics – Domination, Accumulation, Resistance*, New York.

conflicts – will be the core foreign policy challenge ...”⁶⁰ Kaplan goes on to suggest that wars could result from environmental degradation and of the decline in the relevance of borders, which he calls the “lies of map makers.” Homer Dixon suggests that such conflicts are caused either through resource capture, where powerful social groups provoke conflicts by using their power to shift in their favor the regime governing resource access.⁶¹ The author mentioned that such conflicts are caused by ecological marginalization, where the poor are driven into ecologically marginal areas, which produce both greater ecological destruction and social conflict.⁶² The international power structures, therefore, are inconsistent with principles of sustainability, in the sense that they provide insuperable obstacles to achieving that goal. This could be because of the spatial mismatch between state sovereignty and the global scale of environmental change or that the commitment to a deregulated globalising economy override attempts to regulate economics to pursue sustainability.

Realism epistemological position on environmentalism posits that environmental-social problems can be known in an objective manner and that these objective phenomena have ‘real’ impacts.⁶³ Thomason provides useful characterization of the Realists perspective by suggesting that the Realists holds the belief that the “world makes its sense to us.”⁶⁴ In essence, Realism is “reification” – a process of making a product of

⁶⁰ Kaplan, Robert. (February 1994). “The Coming Anarchy”. *Atlantic Monthly* (pp. 190).

⁶¹ Dixon, Homer Thomas. (1998). “Environmental Scarcity and Mass Violence”. In Gearoid O’ Tuathail, Simon Dalby and Paul Routledge (Eds.), *The Geopolitics Reader*. London.

⁶² Peterson, Mathew. (2000). *Understanding Global Environmental Politics – Domination, Accumulation, Resistance*, New York.

⁶³ Williams, Jerry and Austin, Stephen F. (Fall 1998). “Knowledge, Consequences and Experience: The Social Construction of Environmental Problems”, *Social Inquiry*, Vol.68 (No.4):pp. 476-97.

⁶⁴ Thomason, Burke C. (1982). *Making Sense of Reification: Alfred Schutz and Constructionist Theory*. London.

consciousness “thing-like.”⁶⁵ Thomason again suggests that to treat social reality as though it were already just there, independent of the sense we make of it is to grant an improper thing-like givenness to the world. This Realists or “sense making” approach is implied by what Jonathan Weiner called “a slow eureka about global warming.” He states that we have known about global warming for a very long time, but we have hardly made any effort to understand it.⁶⁶ From Arheniuson, people simply did not know what they were looking at. Nor was there any single moment when everyone cried, Eureka! There was only what one student of the green house calls the evolution an awareness.

On the other hand, Robyn Eckersley argued for an ecocentric ethic in green political ideas. Through critical engagements with realist international relation theory, contemporary Marxist theory, Rawlsian liberalism, and theories of cosmopolitan democracy Eckersley calls for more regulation of environmentally damaging activities to what she sees as a contradiction in green political theory; between green values, identified as decentralization, non-violence and grass-roots democracy. Green values are anti-state, but the practical demand for more regulation suggests to Eckersley that “the green movement needs the state ... if it is to move closer toward its vision of a socially just and ecologically sustainable society.”⁶⁷ Eckersley analysis of the theoretical obstacles and the proposed solution follows a Herbermasian approach. She identified three principle obstacles to the green state’s development: the anarchic system of sovereign states, the role of the state in promoting capital accumulation, and the

⁶⁵ Berger, Peter L. and Luckman, Thomas. (1996). *The Social Construction of Reality: Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York.

⁶⁶ Weiner, Jonathan. (1990). *The Next One Hundred Years’: Shaping the Future of Our Living Earth*, New York.

⁶⁷ Eckersley, Robyn. (2004). *The Green State*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA. pp.11.

democratic deficit within liberal states. The response to the anarchic international system involves a Kantian, or what Eckersley calls a post-Westphalian, approach to international relations. Realist theory denies civil society's role, and, instead the interests, identities and roles of states are "essentialised". Civil society, however, gives rise to counter-hegemonic protests that can "constitute or reconstitute the interests and identities of social actors by defining or redefining the set of practices that make up social activity."⁶⁸ This redefinition can persuade nation states to relate to each other, and to reach agreements to protect the global commons.

In response to Marxist understandings of the state's role in capital accumulation, Eckersley's objective is "to restore the dual focus of critical theory on the state as a site of not only environmental exploitation, but also environmental protection." Neo-liberalism and economic globalization tend to re-enforce the role of states as enablers of capital accumulation, but the theory of ecological modernization is increasingly influential. Modernization involves greener growth that uses less energy and resources, produce less waste per unit of gross domestic product, and seeks constant technological innovation in production methods. According to Eckersley, a stronger form of ecological modernization, responsive to civil society, would make the state reflexive and market activity would be disciplined, and in some cases curtailed, by social and ecological norms.

The ecological limitations of liberal democracy concern the split between structure and agency, and also that between public and private. Liberalism, Eckersley thinks, neglects the ways in which individualistic characteristics are formed in society. In

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 35.

its place she proposes a relational ontology in which individual conceptions of the good can only be acquired and maintained through membership of a language community in which individuals are located. The public/private split treats investment, production and property as private affairs and this, Eckersley thinks, leaves the sources of the most serious ecological and social problems beyond democratic political control.

The solution that Eckersley then offers to all of these problems is a deeper ecological democracy. To develop this idea, she starts with an “ambit claim”: “all those potentially affected by a risk should have some meaningful opportunity to participate or be otherwise represented in the making of the policies or decisions that generate the risk”.⁶⁹ This is a democracy rooted in deliberative and cosmopolitan models, following Jurgen Habermas and David Held, but Eckersley also wants to add something new. Participation and representation, she thinks, should be extended to all those potentially affected by a decision, regardless of location, age, gender or species. This would unite the concerns of “environmental justice advocates, risk society sociologists, and ecocentric green theorists.”

With Habermas, Eckersley believes that participants in a procedural democracy should not be bound by decisions to which they have not given their informed consent. But unlike Habermas, she softens the human/nonhuman divide. This forms part of the commitment to treat each individual as an end in itself, wherever it is situated. Furthermore, the ecocentric ethic “extends the moral principle to differently situated others as ends in themselves and seeks a kind of rational consent from these communities by means of representative thinking on their behalf... by those within the dialogue

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 111.

community”.⁷⁰ This principle is offered as a critical standpoint from which to evaluate and seek to reconstruct political institutions. The green state would give civil society and nature’s representatives a much greater voice in decision-making, and could lead to a system of states protecting their environments through deliberation and agreement with each other. This, indeed, represents the interests of the new social movements.

Green political theory took a clear democratic turn in the late 1990s, following some earlier flirtations with authoritarianism. Considering liberal democracy inadequate, those who have advanced this democratic turn maintain that a green democratic state could emerge only through a process of democratization that would alter prevailing alignments of power and provide openings for environmental voices. This turn in green political theory converges with recent developments in democratic theory that have accentuated the importance of public discourse and deliberation. In this light, John S. Dryzek argued that a more discursive form of democracy promises not only to be more democratically legitimate but also more effective in addressing the extraordinary complexity of environmental problems.

2.4 ENVIRONMENTALISM AND SOCIAL LOCATION THEORIES

The new social movement thesis limits the phenomenon to Western nations. There is an urgency to extend the thesis to underdeveloped countries as well. Despite a proliferation of explanatory models, however, research in this area suffers two shortcomings. First, several models, while theoretically sophisticated, remain untested in a cross-national setting, leaving it uncertain to what extent they provide a proper

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 120.

explanation for the present popularity of the new social movements in the northeast. The empirical validity of these movements has to be established. Second, most of the models remain disintegrated because no serious attempt has been made yet to integrate them into a comprehensive explanation of the movements in the northeast. By analyzing public opinion toward environmental movements, the present research attempts to synthesize the macro model and the psychological model to locate the roots of public opinion and explain why mass publics support these movements.

The first model emphasizes broad macro characteristics of diverse societies in explaining the rise of new social movements.⁷¹ The individual-level implications of these models assert that the social location of individuals constitutes an important source of favorable evaluation of new social movements. A second group of models emphasizes psychological factors in explaining public opinion toward new social movements. This research focuses on contextualizing environmentalism as new social movements in the contemporary collective action. Environmentalism is frequently cited as one of the major new social movement. This movement presumably represents a new social paradigm,⁷² reflects new forms of citizen involvement in politics and indicates that the general public is increasingly ready to support new politics issues. As the environmental movement appears theoretically situated at the transition between industrial and post-industrial politics,⁷³ it provides a very good background to test various theories of political change. Thus, by analyzing public opinion toward environmental movements, the analysis

⁷¹ Offe, Claus. (1985). "New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics." *Social Research*. 52:817-68.

⁷² Milbrath, Lester. (1984). *Environmentalists*. Buffalo: State University of New York Press.

⁷³ Inglehart, Ronald. (1987). "Value Change in Industrial Society." *American Political Science Review*, 81:1303-19.

presented here represents a crucial test case for the explanatory value of new social movement theories.

Social Location Theory, based on macro approaches, focus on broad societal characteristics in explaining the rise of new social movements. These macro approaches often differ in regard to the causal forces that presumably generate the rise of protest movements. Some theories, for example, emphasize the inability of political institutions to deal with complex political issues of advanced industrial societies⁷⁴, while others focus on the cyclical recurrence of protest movements in modern nations.⁷⁵ Despite these differences, however, these theories maintain that an individual's social location reflects these broader social forces and thus influences support for new political movements.⁷⁶ Specifically, several macro theories suggest that an individual's membership in the new middle class generates sympathetic attitudes toward new social movements.

A first social location explanation which focuses on the new middle class as a potential source of movement support emphasizes the inability of existing economic and political institutions to deal effectively with the risks and complex problems which emanate from industrial policymaking.⁷⁷ Offe and other prominent theorists of postindustrial society argue that industrial democracies suffer from the following dilemma. On the one hand, state bureaucracies increasingly regulate the private spheres of individuals, thereby limiting the personal autonomy of citizens in advanced industrial societies. On the other hand, such problems as environmental pollution or the inequality

⁷⁴ Offe, Claus. (1985). "New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics." *Social Research*, 52:817-68.

⁷⁵ Tarrow, Sidney. (1983). *Struggling to Reform*, Occasional Papers, No. 15. Ithaca: Cornell University.

⁷⁶ Lowenthal, Richard (1984). *Social Change and Cultural Crisis*. New York: Columbia University Press.

⁷⁷ Offe, Claus. (1984). *Contradictions of the Welfare State*. In John Keane (Ed.). Cambridge: MIT Press.

of women continue to exist, despite the expansion of bureaucratic authority into the private life space of citizens. In Offe's words, industrialized nations continue to be incapable of coping with the "perverse effects of political and economic modernization."⁷⁸ New social movements therefore emerge as a reaction to the high risks inherent in industrial policy priorities and as a reaction to the restriction of personal autonomy by bureaucracies. The new middle class, according to Offe, has the cognitive skills necessary to anticipate the disastrous effects of industrial policymaking and to understand the complex and abstract contradictions of modern societies. This explains why large parts of the new middle class are particularly supportive of new social movements.

Another new-middle class variant links the emergence of new social movements to a widespread cultural pessimism in modern societies. Mobilization waves of new social movements and their predecessors appear in phases of a general cultural crisis, in an atmosphere conducive to the spread of anti-modernism in its various forms. These modernization-critical moods produce a heightened sensibility of individuals to the problems of policymaking in industrialized democracies. While all sections of society are exposed to these developments, the new middle class is, according to this model, especially receptive to these moods because it is at the forefront of the development from industrial to post-industrial society. Therefore, members of this class become disproportionately supportive of protest movements.

⁷⁸ Offe, Claus. (1985). "New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics." *Social Research*, 52:817-68.

Another approach that focuses on the new middle class asserts that a radicalism within this class generates its support for new social movements.⁷⁹ Parkin hypothesizes that individuals who are estranged from central core values of industrial society become involved in new social movements in order to express their opposition to those core values. The opposition to the dominant values is primarily located within the new middle class because individuals choose an occupation in accordance with their basic value system. New middle class professions, especially in the welfare sector service, provide estranged individuals with an outlet for their basic political outlook. In Parkin's words, the "welfare and creative professions provide acceptable sanctuaries to those who wish to avoid direct involvement in capitalist enterprises."⁸⁰ A variation of Parkin's radicalism thesis is specifically applied to the environmental movement in Western Europe.⁸¹ These authors maintain that the new middle class is not primarily concerned with environmental protection per se. Rather, it uses environmentalism as a vehicle to express its opposition to the present economic and political structures and thus to improve its weak political status in advanced industrial societies. Cotgrove and Duff maintain that the new middle class is employed in what they call the "non-productive" sectors of the economy.⁸² These professions lack a powerful economic basis that could be translated into political power in industrial society. New middle class individuals, in turn, express their resentment about their comparatively weak political status by supporting the environmental movement because this movement often questions basic economic and political arrangements of industrial society. In short, the middle-class radicalism thesis interprets

⁷⁹ Parkin, Frank. (1968). *Middle Class Radicalism*. New York: Praeger.

⁸⁰ Ibid. pp. 192.

⁸¹ Cotrove, Stephen, and Andrew Duff. (1980). "Environmentalism, Middle Class Radicalism, and Politics." *Sociological Review* 28:333-51.

⁸² Ibid. Pp. 341.

the support of this class for new social movements as a symbolic protest against the dominant values in advanced industrialized society.

A second social location approach emphasizes the lack of social integration of individuals within their societies as an explanation of public support for new social movements. The most general version of this approach maintains that individuals who have few ties to the existing social order have the weakest commitment to it and “are available for political adventures against that order.”⁸³ In contrast, the social integration of individuals through membership in traditional organizations (churches or unions) commits individuals to the existing political and social institutions; such a phenomena increases the psychological threshold to protest against these institutions. Furthermore, social disintegration may occur independent of organizational networks. If individuals do not accept the broad value consensus of societies within which they live they are also more prone to support or engage in protest movements that criticize the existing political order.⁸⁴ In contrast to the new-middle class explanations, this model is explicitly classless.⁸⁵ Any disintegrated segment of society is, from this perspective, prone to support anti-establishment movements. Viewed from this approach, then, the environmental movement receives disproportionate support from those individuals who are disintegrated from established organizations or from the established values and norms of advanced industrialized societies.

⁸³ Kornhauser, William. (1959). *The Politics of Mass Society*. New York: Free Press.

⁸⁴ Lowenthal, Richard. (1984). *Social Change and Cultural Crisis*. New York: Columbia University Press.

⁸⁵ A variant of the disintegration approach supported by Buerklin and Alber maintains that socially disintegrated intellectuals support the environmental movement because they are dissatisfied with their future career prospects in the face of severe shortages of employment opportunities. These authors maintain that new social movements or New Left parties are primarily supported by unemployed academics because protest groups criticize precisely those institutions which young intellectuals blame for their low career prospects. However, the empirical evidence does not support this more specific variant of the disintegration approach.

In sum, social location explanations primarily emphasize the social position of supporters of new social movements. Most analysts that were mentioned focus specifically on the new-middle class sector as the origin of public support for protest movements. In addition, the social disintegration approach implies that the degree of social integration significantly influences citizens' support for new social movements.

2.5 MICRO THEORIES OF ENVIRONMENTALISM

In contrast to social location explanations, micro theories emphasize such psychological factors as values, or the perception of problems as an important determinant of issue opinions. First, the most prominent model to explain the rise of new social movements has been Inglehart's model of postmaterial values. A second, self-interest model argues that individuals utilize information collected from their personal lives as the major basis of issue opinions. A third, sociotropic approach suggests that citizens support environmental organizations because they perceive the deteriorating condition of the national environment as threatening.

One of the most frequently discussed factors that may explain popular environmental group evaluations is postmaterial values. In a series of writings, Inglehart developed the thesis and furnished empirical evidence that the rise of a material-postmaterial value cleavage is an important cause of the political changes observed in industrialized democracies.⁸⁶ Postmaterialists emphasize, for instance, the quality of life, alternative conceptions of security strategies, or the protection of the environment. Materialists, on the other hand, continue to focus on such issues as continued economic

⁸⁶ Inglehart, Ronald. (1981). "Postmaterialism in an Environment of Insecurity." *American Political Science Review*, 81:1303-19.

growth, keeping inflation rates down, or traditional security strategies. Inglehart combines a scarcity with a socialization hypothesis that, taken together, provides the basis for his theory. Once these value priorities are shaped, individuals have acquired a broad set of values that guides the perception of political problems, provides cues for the orientation in the political space, and influences their political behavior. Viewed from this theory, then, citizens evaluate environmental groups positively because post-material symbols are invoked by environmental groups.

A second source of issue opinions on political affairs stands in the tradition of economic voting theories. Applying this model to environmentalism, citizens support environmental groups largely on the basis of personal experiences with pollution problems. Thus, individuals who experience local pollution problems should be disproportionately among the supporters of environmental organizations if self-interest motives are a basis for environmental group support. In contrast to self-interest theories, a sociotropic model asserts that issue opinions are rooted in a concern that reaches beyond the personal environment.⁸⁷ In this approach, the national circumstances relating to a given issue determine whether citizens concern themselves with a particular issue or not. The logic of sociotropism applied to popular support for environmental groups suggests that individuals support these groups because publics are concerned with the deteriorating conditions of the national environment.

In sum, social location and psychological approaches explain citizen support for environmental movements on the basis of distinct factors. Social location theories view

⁸⁷ Kinder, Donald. (1981). "Sociotropic Politics: The American Case." *British Journal of Political Science*, 11:129-61.

certain qualities of the new-middle class sector or the lack of social integration of individuals as one important source for the evolution of environmental movements support. Psychological models, in contrast, emphasize value priorities and the perception of local and national pollution problems as the major sources of public support for environmental movements.

2.6 OLD UNIONS AND NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

In the social scientific literature, unions have often been interpreted as social organizations bereft of transformative potential. In a stream of critical scholarship running at least from Marcuse through Gorz to contemporary meditations on “new social movements,” trade unionism has been depicted as an institutionalized practice of organized capitalism, integrated into the legally-sanctioned apparatuses of industrial relations, and capable of lending at most a social democratic inflection to the political life of the state.⁸⁸ From such a vantage point, unions appear as a reactionary foil to the more dynamic and contemporary social movements that revolve around the various politics of identity and of everyday life. Within this discourse, as Alan Scott points out, qualitative differences are traced between the labor movement and new social movements as to social location, aims, organizational form and medium of action. Movements such as environmentalism and feminism are said to occupy the terrain of civil society, in contrast to the increasingly state-centric strategies of labor.

New social movements embrace a politics of everyday life that prioritizes changes in lifestyle and values in the defence of civil society. Their “self-limiting

⁸⁸ Scott, Alan. (1990). *Ideology and the New Social Movements* (pp. 18-29), London.

radicalism”⁸⁹ rejects the modernist project of large scale transformation through unified agency in favor of a concern for autonomy, both of individuals, who are involved in multitudinous projects of self-reconstruction, and of movements themselves, which construct their agendas “without subordinating their demands to other external priorities.”⁹⁰ The organizational corollary of these distinctive aims is an emphasis on informal networking at the grassroots,⁹¹ which in turn enables new social movements to operate outside of institutionalized channels by taking direct action around a limited range of issues and by fashioning cultural innovations that challenge the codes through which subjectivity is constructed.

On all these points, unions are characteristically viewed as limited to an older style of political contention. Their aims are framed in terms of the political integration and economic rights of workers – the pursuit of full social and economic citizenship – objectives that may be given a radical or a reformist accent but which in either case are silent on issues such as local autonomy and micro-politics. Their modes of organizations are instrumentally adapted to more abstract aims, and hence take on formal, hierarchical and bureaucratic dimensions. Conversely, their actions place an emphasis upon a narrowly-defined political mobilization, as in supporting a social-democratic party.⁹² Yet, as Scott himself points out, these dualisms – through which “new social movements” are constituted as an analytic category – often turn out to be misleading when applied to those very movements. Often times, such movements address the state and make

⁸⁹ Cohen, Jean L. (1985). “Strategy or identity: New theoretical paradigms and contemporary social movements,” *Social Research*, 52, 4, 664.

⁹⁰ Patton, Paul. (1988). “Marxism and beyond: Strategies of reterritorialization.” In Cary Nelson and Laurence Grossberg (Eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture*. Chicago.

⁹¹ Aronowitz, Stanley. (1992). *The Politics of Identity: Class, Culture, Social Movements*. New York.

⁹² Carroll, William K. and Ratner, R.S. (Spring 1995). “Old Unions and New Social Movements,” *Labour/Le Travail*, 35(Spring 1995), pp. 195-221.

citizenship claims (as with the civil rights movement); they may adopt formal-organizational structures and even participate directly in electoral politics; and they may also embrace the politics of cross-movement coalition formation in the service of structural transformation.

Barry Adam argued that new social movements have two faces.⁹³ In addition to the 'cultural nationalism' that valorizes particularistic identity politics and that is highlighted in new social movement theory, there is a socialist face of new social movement mobilization. The latter includes a great many participants who understand their praxis within a comprehensive worldview which recognizes and supports subordinated people wherever they exist.

Although unions may adopt opportunistic strategies that substitute bureaucratic practices and external guarantees of survival for the dialogical cultivation of members' willingness to act, such opportunism incurs long-term costs of demobilization and the weakening of collective identity. Continued survival then requires reactivation at the grassroots. Best and Kellner grasp very crucial issue here, that raise possibility of combining a politics of difference with a politics of identity. By articulating differences between groups and crucial issues for a variety of movements, a politics of difference can prepare the ground for more multi-issue movements; and by fostering the development of political and cultural similarities and solidarities, a politics of identity can advance the struggle against oppression and for a more just society. Yet both forms of politics have their limitations. "Differences can become reified and fetishized, and can produce rigid

⁹³ Adam, Barry. (1993). "Postmarxism and the new social movements," *Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology*, 30 (1993), 330.

barriers between individuals and groups, leading to a replication of special interest group politics.”⁹⁴ However, a politics of identity can foster the chauvinistic attitude that one’s own group struggles are more important than those of others.

2.7 ENGENDERING NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

Gender is a fundamental feature of social movements,⁹⁵ including those movements that do not directly target gender issues and arrangements.⁹⁶ Gender is one kind of “cultural resource” that actors in a social movement arena can use to further their goals.⁹⁷ Literature in social movements and social psychology argues that framing and legitimacy processes are central to the gendering of social movement identities and attributions. This framing both implies a way of understanding the issues and designates certain actors as legitimate players in the issue arena. Both social movement theorists and social psychologists claim that familiar framings of issues are likely to be more widely accepted than novel ones. This line of reasoning would suggest that movements that are associated with traditional meanings of gender will be more acceptable than those that resist such meanings. As the political arena has been understood to be masculine, movements that claim or are labeled with feminine identities face a double bind. In part

⁹⁴ Best, Steven and Douglas Kellner. (1991). *Postmodern Theory* (pp.213). New York.

⁹⁵ Here, the attempt is not to present gender as isolated from other sets of cultural meanings. It is important to recognize that gender is intertwined with other statuses such as race, class, age, and sexual orientation. Although movements may claim masculine and feminine gendered identities, women are the “marked” and visible case of gender. Thus, gender is obvious in situations where women and femininity are present but invisible, yet still important when men and masculinity predominate. The fact that men are “unmarked” makes movements associated with masculinity appear to be ungendered like most organizations. As such, gender may be an overt or salient aspect of a movement only if it evokes or invokes images of femaleness or femininity. Nonetheless, the contention here is that gender is also an important characteristic of all movements, even those that seem ungendered.

⁹⁶ Taylor, Verta. (1999). Gender and social movements: Gender processes in women’s self-help movements. *Gender and Society*, 13:8-33.

⁹⁷ Williams, Rhys H. (1995). Constructing the public good: Social movements and cultural resources. *Social Problems*. 42:124-44.

because of the conceptual split between men's and women's separate spheres, political participation is perceived to be normal for men. In contrast, women's participation has been seen as anomalous, ineffective, and sometimes inappropriate because it contradicts gender expectations.⁹⁸ Thus, while images and identities associated with femininity may help a movement in the short run because they resonate with widespread cultural beliefs, they may prove problematic in the long run because of the association of politics and political power with masculinity.

The term gender is generally used to refer to the social and cultural interpretations and expectations that are associated with sex yet that go beyond biological characteristics. Gender operates at various levels: as an individual characteristic, as a social activity, as group level expectations and patterns of behavior, and as a broader system of hierarchy. Capturing all of these dimensions, Lorber describes gender as an institution, one that “establishes patterns of expectations for individuals, orders the social processes of everyday life, is built into the major social organizations of society, such as the economy, ideology, the family, and politics, and is also an entity in and of itself.”⁹⁹

Gender theorists argued that social movements are gendered on all of these levels: individual, interactional, and structural. Acker defines the meaning of the term ‘gendered’:

To say that an, organization, or any other analytic unit, is gendered means that advantages and disadvantages, exploitation and control, action and emotion, meaning and identity, are patterned through and in terms of a distinction between male and female, masculine and feminine. Gender is not an addition to ongoing

⁹⁸ Einwohner, Rachel L., Hollander, Jocelyn A., and Olson, Toska. (October 2000). “Engendering Social Movements-Cultural Images and Movement Dynamics. *Gender & Society*. Vol.14 No.5, 679-699.

⁹⁹ Lorber, Judith. (1994). *Paradoxes of gender*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press.

processes, conceived as gender neutral. Rather, it is an integral part of those processes, which cannot be properly understood without an analysis of gender.¹⁰⁰

When we say that a movement is gendered, we mean that some aspect of the movement constructs differences between women and men and / or elicits a certain set of social meanings because of its association, actual or assumed, with femininities or masculinities. In some cases, movement actors use gender strategically to further their goals; in other cases, people outside the movement manipulate gender for their own aims, such as to portray protesters negatively and thus detract from movement achievement.

One of the most obvious ways movement can be gendered is in their composition. Movements are also gendered in the social arrangements enacted and reconstructed by their participants through the use of their tactics. Movements can also be gendered on the basis of the collective or individual identities they claim. Social movement actors often strategically claim or construct gendered identities to achieve their goals, whether or not those goals are explicitly gender related. In doing so, movement actors incorporate elements of cultural meanings about gender into their individual and collective identities and use those identities to lay claim to certain issues.¹⁰¹ Women's assumed "feminine" qualities (e.g., peacefulness and nurturance) are presented as a rationale for expressing opinions on peace and war; as Marullo notes, "The solution to this problem of violence is believed to lie in feminine characteristics and feminine principles."¹⁰² Since war making has historically been considered a masculine domain that has been difficult for women

¹⁰⁰ Acker, Joan. (1990). Hierarchies, jobs, bodies: A theory of gendered organizations. *Gender & Society* 4:139-58.

¹⁰¹ Members of peace movements often use feminine or maternal images, as the names of movement organizations, such as Mothers Embracing Peace and Disarmament, the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, and Women's Action for Nuclear Disarmament.

¹⁰² Marullo, Sam. (1991). Gender differences in peace movement participation. *Research in Social Movements, Conflict, and Change*, 13:135-52.

to enter, the strategic use of gendered images of motherhood claims a voice for a population that would otherwise be ignored and legitimizes its participation in the conflict.¹⁰³ Beckwith notes that women have also used their relationships with men as sisters, wives, daughters, or mothers, to claim political standing or a legitimate right to participate in a movement.¹⁰⁴ However, culturally available ideas about gender are not simply something that social movement actors manipulate by and for themselves. These meanings are also available to other cultural actors and therefore may be attributed to movements by opponents and other observers. As Beckwith argues, “The context of collective action is a gendered context, and ... political movements, their opponents, their struggles, and their effects develop and are modified with reference to the gender of the actors.”¹⁰⁵ Thus, movements are also gendered to the extent that opponents and other third parties evaluate them in terms of gender. The intersections between gender and social movements have shown that gender is more than simply a characteristic of individual movement participants.

Instead, movements, their activities, and the arenas in which they operate are all gendered. Elements of culturally specific ideas about gender shape and are reflected in all social movements, including those movements that are not explicitly about reinforcing or challenging gender arrangements. Gender, therefore, is not a static or objective protest tool; instead, its meaning is heavily dependent on the broader social and political context. Gender is constructed and enacted by actors within cultures and is therefore dynamic and flexible. The substance of gender can vary across cultures. In addition, it may vary across

¹⁰³ Enloe, C.H. (1987). Feminist thinking about war, militarism, and peace. In *Analyzing gender: A handbook of social science research*. (Ed.) B.B.Hess and M.M. Ferree. Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

¹⁰⁴ Beckwith, Karen. (1996). Lancashire women against pit closures: Women’s standing in a men’s movement. *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 21:1034-68.

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.* pp.32.

the same culture at different points in time and across different groups within the same culture.

2.8 SYNTHESIZING THE DEFINITION OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The emergence and nature of the new social movements, therefore, requires the examination of grievances which arise from the structural condition of postindustrial society.¹⁰⁶ New social movement theorists argue that recent social movements represent an entirely new form of social protest and reflect specific properties of advanced industrial societies. The rapid economic expansion of the 1950s and 1960s and the redistributive policies of the welfare state secured a level of prosperity capable of satisfying basic human needs. Delivery of this economic security was not, however, without its problems. The morass of bureaucracies and formal organizations designed to implement the welfare state and maintain economic growth began to “expropriate the capacities of societal actors to organize their own spheres of social production autonomously.”¹⁰⁷ In other words, in contrast to the industrial phase of capitalism, state control in postindustrial society reaches beyond the productive sphere and into areas of

¹⁰⁶ Cohen, Jean. (Winter 1985). “Strategy of Identity: New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements,” *Social Research*, 52; Klaus Eder, “The ‘New Social Movements’: Moral Crusades, Political Pressure Groups, or Social Movements?,” *Social Research*, 52 (Winter 1985); Jurgen Habermas, “New Social Movements,” *Telos*, 49 (Fall 1981); Herbert Kitschelt, “New Social Movements in West Germany and the United States,” *Political Power and Social Theory*, 5 (1981); Alberto Melucci, “The New Social Movements: A Theoretical Approach,” *Social Science Information*, 19 (1980); and Claus Offe, “New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics,” *Social Research*, 52 (Winter 1985).

¹⁰⁷ Kitschelt, Herbert. (1981). “New Social Movements in West Germany and the United States,” *Political Power and Social Theory*, 5: pp.274-308.

consumption, services, and social relations.¹⁰⁸ Hence the participants in these new movements seek to regain control over their personal and collective sense of identity.

The shared characteristics of NSMs can be divided into four general areas: goal orientation, forms, participants, and values. Each characteristic reflects this discomfort with the intervention by the system of state social control and a desire to replace these intrusive formal organizations with cooperative community networks. They also echo the desire for self-actualization within reconstituted primary group relations.¹⁰⁹ As the advanced industrial state increasingly regulates and invades everyday life, the goal orientations of the new social movements have shifted inward, in an attempt to re-appropriate dominion over their own lives from a system of supervisory institutions. Whereas prior social movements fought to secure political and economic rights from the state and other institutional actors, new social movements target their activities away from the state. The movement itself and its participants become the focus of its members' energies. The personal becomes political.

According to new social movement theorists, the new social movements differ from past movements not only with respect to what or whom they direct their energies against, but also with respect to whose interests they represent. Whereas "old" social movements were movements of a particular class, generally the working class, and articulated the interests or demands of that class (the right to organize, voting rights, working hour issue), new social movements are interested in the provision of collective

¹⁰⁸ Cohen, Jean. (Winter 1985). "Strategy of Identity: New theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements," *Social Research*, 52:pp. 664-670.

¹⁰⁹ Melucci, Alberto. (1980). "The New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics," *Social Science Information*, 19: pp.789-797.

or intangible goods that would enhance the quality of life for all sectors of society.¹¹⁰ In the larger framework, new social movements play a significant role in the democratization of nation states.¹¹¹ The waves of protests constitute a rite of passage in which the public learned to overcome the traditional orientation toward authority. New social movement served as the catalyst to reach democratic maturity and they provide alternatives for democratic change.

The new social movements, therefore, are seen as illustrative of a different style of political involvement characterized by decentralization and much wider public participation than is common in traditional forms of interest group activities.¹¹² They are also said to be more likely to resort to unconventional political tactics in pursuit of their goals and to advocate a new worldview, contrasting with the dominant goal structure of Western societies.¹¹³ According to new social movement theorists, the NSMs differ from past movements not only with respect to what or whom they direct their energies against, but also with respect to whose interests they represent. Whereas “old” social movements were movements of a particular class, generally the working class, and articulated the interests or demands of that class, new social movements are interested in the provision of collective or intangible goods that would enhance the quality of life for all sectors of society.

It is argued that membership in contemporary movements does not follow traditional class lines but rather falls into two categories: those who are paying the costs of

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp.274-308.

¹¹¹ Koopmans, Ruud. (Nov.,1996). “Democracy from Below: New Social Movements and the Political System in West Germany,” *Contemporary Sociology*, Vol.25 (No.6):pp. 764-766.

¹¹² Lowe, Philip and Jane Goyder. (1983). *Environmental Groups in Politics*, Allen and Unwin: London.

¹¹³ Milbrath, Lester. (1984). *Environmentalists: Vanguard for a New Future*, SUNY Press: Buffalo, NY.

modernization and have been marginalized by the development of the welfare state and the new middle class. Constituents of the latter group, who comprise the majority of new social movement participants, span the political spectrum and tend to be young, well educated, and employed in the public sector. Recruitment of participants in new social movements is often based on ascriptive characteristics such as gender, race, or ethnicity. Cleavages between labor and business and between left and right, typical of old social movements, dissolve as participants in new social movements converge on such universal, nonpartisan issues as ecology, “life-chance” considerations, and disarmament.

The domain of the new social movements is shifting from the industries and cities to the villages and the university campuses, social clubs, and middle-class neighborhood. The new movements differ from old movements in terms of their support bases, goals, structures, and styles.¹¹⁴ The old movements were rooted in the class conflicts of capitalist societies, whereas the new ones derive itself from value cleavages that identify communities of like-minded people. The latter are drawn less from the politically powerless than from the more sophisticated middle classes.

The goals of the new social movements are the realization of collective goods rather than the more narrow self-interests of older social movements. Their internal structures are also more decentralized, open, and democratic than the traditional movements. The representational style of the new movements derives from a conscious rejection of corporatism and the institutional framework of government. Moreover, their

¹¹⁴ Rommel, Mueller F. (1985). “Social Movements and the Greens.” *European Journal of Political Research*, Vol. 13: pp.53-67.

collective protests more planned, organized and spontaneous.¹¹⁵ Touraine views the emergence of contemporary movements as deriving from the struggle between a highly centralized, technology-dominated state and citizens determined to exercise some degree of autonomy in an increasingly programmed society.¹¹⁶ A blurring of the line between the public and private spheres is reflected in the forms that these new social movements assume. The form of the movement is both symbolic of the rejection of bureaucratized society and instrumental in creating a cushion behind which collective bonding and self-development can occur, beyond the grasp of the state's system of social control. While a highly structured, hierarchical organization may be considered the most effective mechanism for mobilizing a constituency and commanding attention from state actors, new social movements choose a less traditional form of organization.¹¹⁷ To avoid duplicating the interventionist aspects of post-industrial institutions, the movements themselves must provide an arena within which personal autonomy and development can flourish. Hence the emphasis in new social movements is on direct democracy, spontaneity, nonhierarchical structures, and small-scale, decentralized organizations.

Given the importance that members of the new social movements place on a participatory, spontaneous, and nonhierarchical organization, it is hardly surprising that their strategies and tactics are not those characteristic of conventional politics. Traditional party politics and lobbying activities remain peripheral to their actions, since these movements eschew established channels of political action. Instead, the movements adopt

¹¹⁵ Capra, Fritjof and Charlene Spretnak. (1984). *Green Politics*, Dutton: New York.

¹¹⁶ Touraine, Alain. (1981). *The Voice and the Eye: An Analysis of Social Movements*, Cambridge University Press: London.

¹¹⁷ Kitschelt, Herbert. (1981). "New Social Movements in West Germany and the United States," *Political Power and Social Theory*, 5:pp.274-308.

a variety of unconventional tactics: mass rallies, site occupations, and sit-ins.¹¹⁸ The values of new social movements reflect and extend their universalistic goals, new middle class participants, and organizational forms. Reflecting what Inglehart has called the “silent revolution”,¹¹⁹ the new movements reject the premises of postwar compromise between labor and capital. Economic growth and the material rewards that it provided are no longer endorsed if they entail the destruction of the natural environment and the control of collective and personal identities. Instead, the new social movements seek the achievement of “postmaterial” values, “the preservation of social bonds, collective goods and the quality of production and consumption.”¹²⁰ The new social movements are associated with the politics of reconstruction. These movements, conventionally contrasted to the old movements of labour or nationalism, are taken to include a diversity of regional, local or community associations with national and even international networks and coalitions. These are seen to represent a qualitatively different form of transformative politics and, in embryo, a new societal paradigm. These movements stress their autonomy from party politics and prioritize civil society over the state. In social movement politics, power itself is redefined, no longer being seen as something out there ready to be seized, but as a diffused and plural polity woven into the very fabric of society. These social movements have, arguably, help to create a new political space where new identities have been developed, new demands have been

¹¹⁸Melucci, Alberto. (1980). “The New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics,” *Social Science Information*, 19: pp.789-797.

¹¹⁹ Inglehart, Ronald. (1977). *The Silent Revolution: Changing Values and Political Styles among Western Publics*, Princeton University Press, Princeton.

¹²⁰Contradicting Inglehart’s perspective, Offe does not feel, however, that a value change has occurred. Instead, Offe stresses that there are trade-offs between various values and that the new social movements choose to emphasize some values over others.

articulated, and the dividing line between the public and private domains has lost much of its meanings.

The very notion of power is, hereby, redefined, the limits of state politics exposed, and a challenge laid down to the atomization alienation characteristic of contemporary capitalism. Alan Scott has usefully summarized these assumed differences in terms of the distinct location, aims, organization and medium of action of the workers' movement and the new social movement respectively.¹²¹ Whereas the struggle of labour has increasingly been located within the polity, the new social movements are usually assumed to operate within civil society; they stress the autonomy of civil society and often seek changes in social values or lifestyles. Moreover, the new social movements tend, at least during their inception and in theory anyway, towards a networking and grassroots type of organization and go for direct action and daring attempts at cultural innovations.

From this brief summary, it is possible to identify some of the key features that distinguished this 'new' form of social movement activism from its more traditional predecessors; features that were reflected within Green party analysis. Firstly, new social movements are to represent a new social paradigm, contrasting with the dominant goal structure of modern industrial society.¹²² Emphasis is placed upon quality-of-life issues rather than personal, wealth and material well-being, leading to a focus upon social and collective values surrounding, among other things, issues such as the environment and women's rights. While it is true to say that feminist, ecological and peace movements all

¹²¹ Scott, Alan. (1991). *Ideology and the New Social Movements*, London.

¹²² Keuchler, M. and R. J. Dalton. Eds. (1981). *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*, New York.

had a long history of activism before the 1960s, what has changed is the value that society placed on these issues and the manner in which these has been channeled through the new social movements.

2.9 ENQUIRING ENVIRONMENTALISM AS NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN NORTHEAST INDIA

A wave of environmental activism arose and became an important political forces in India's Northeast. These activism are largely generated by the state and multi-national corporations (MNCs) dogged vision of delivering 'development' by building dams in the region. The growing new social movements are linked to the impacts of the multitude of 'development projects' on the people and the environment. While these projects failed to take into account the rights and "free prior informed consent" of the indigenous peoples,¹²³ the new social movements conceived the States' "ill conceived" and 'anti-people.'" The new social movements, by propagating environmentalism, aim to reinstate what has been undermined by modernism. It strives to regain that social, culture and political control over nature, which has been ignored by the imported paradigm of 'development.'

¹²³ The term 'indigenous' is widely used in international discourse on human rights and environmental issues to describe societies whose economies have never been industrial in character. The label is difficult to define in precise terms, but is probably the more useful for that. For instance, Chapter 26 of Agenda 21, the most comprehensive of the agreements to have emerged from the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED, the Rio Earth Summit), states, "Indigenous peoples and their communities have an historical relationship with their lands and are generally descendants of the original inhabitants of such lands." The terms 'indigenous peoples', 'indigenous ethnic minorities', 'tribal groups', and 'scheduled tribes' describe social groups with a social and cultural identity that is distinct from the dominant groups in society and makes them vulnerable to being disadvantaged in the development process. Many such groups have a social and economic status that limits their capacity to defend their interests in and rights to their land and other productive resources, or that restricts their ability to participate in and benefit from development. Needless to say, it is often impossible to establish who the 'original' inhabitants of a region were.

The new social movements in Northeast India are conceived as struggling against state domination in the autonomous spheres of the indigenous peoples. The state's mechanisms of accumulation are viewed as reaching beyond exploitation of the indigenous peoples land, rights and resources to manipulation of complex organizational systems by colluding with powerful national and international multi-national companies. The new dynamics is translated to negate the indigenous peoples in any processes of decision making. The new social movements in Northeast India are negotiating for the appropriation of time, space, and a relationship in the societal as well as individual's daily experience. While some analysts use the new social movement label to refer to a very limited cluster of contemporary movements in their countries, the spectrum of organized network and coalition in India's Northeast is much wider and far-reaching.

The new social movements in the Northeast India aim to reinstate what has been undermined by the state in the name of development. This is an interpretation particularly where environmentalism strives to regain that social, cultural and political over nature which has been ignored by the imported paradigm of 'development.' In the pursuit of "delivering development", the State has been repeatedly abusing human rights, enhanced militarization, and employing the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA). Environmentalism as a new social movement is an integral part of the general critique of not only the present industrial society but also the stand and integrity of the state actors as they act hand-in-glove with various national and international financial institutions and multi-national corporations to secure their narrow interests.

However, the cultural and ideological premises on which the respective civilizations base their critiques definitely differ. For instance, in the West, environmental

ideas and discourses are derived from a concept of nature that refers to those aspects of the physical environment that were not directly created or influenced by humans. There is a clear nature/culture dichotomy. However, recently in the West, the concept of nature has become a positive, morally loaded word with environmentalism taking the form of new social movements and addressing issues of human rights as well as about the 'finite' nature. As a matter of fact, present-day environmentalism has developed on two interrelated organisms in which the species fit both by taxonomic coherence and functional interdependency within an integrated system.¹²⁴ The other is that of nature as a system vulnerable to damage and extinction.

In India's Northeast, environmentalism is more than just a protest against the immediate effects of a polluted or over-polluted world where natural resources are running out. It is also a discontent at the gross violations of human rights, resulting in large internally displaced persons, the abuse of the AFSPA, loss of traditional land rights and the failure to secure a space through the democratic institutions and constitution. The new social movements, therefore, are an attempt to realize what ought to be possible for the indigenous peoples despite their weak political standing. As the focused cases of environmentalism in this study is related to dams generated movements, it is imperative to understand that large dams have long escaped deep and clear and impartial scrutiny into the process by which they emerge and are valued. This lapse is especially glaring when set against the politically and economically marginalized indigenous peoples of India's Northeast.

¹²⁴ Bruun, Ole and Kalland Arne. Eds. (1995). *Asian Perspectives of Nature: A Critical Approach*, London.

The mandate of new social movements in Northeast India raises questions that involves the most precious element on earth, and that, of course, involves power: who wields it, how to share it, which ways the state may better balance it and who should be the shareholder. The new movements in the region collectively held that real development must be people centered, while respecting the role of the state as mediating, and often representing their interests.¹²⁵ The growing movements endorse globalization as led from below by all, while at the same time raising the issue of ‘self-defense’ of the community and society against the increasing expansion of the state apparatuses: “agencies of surveillance and social control.”

The new social movements in the Northeast are fanned by the five big components: interest, organization, mobilization, opportunity, and collective action, while contending with other groups in civil society rather than with the state. States are institutionally organized in ways that provide recognition for some identities and arenas for some conflicts and freeze others out. States themselves, therefore, shape the orientations of new social movements, which is true in the contexts of the Northeast. While the development projects with all its promises tends to undermine not only the environmental damage but also the existence and prospects of the indigenous peoples; negating these damages undermine the exuberant confidence that inspired the advent of the industrial order that is controlled by the state actors. Lapses in control signal that the rationality of this order is not to be taken for granted. What is at stake here is the life-support value of eco-systems. The new social movements in the northeast are also directed towards preserving the life-support value of eco-systems on which human beings

¹²⁵ Singh, Rajendra. (2001). *Social Movements, Old and New – A Post-Modernist Critique*, India.

depend, which is a precondition to the continued existence of society itself and its institutional forms.

While the administrative state has consistently adopted policies to advance the cause of industrialization, relatively little attention was given to the environmental consequences of these policies. The new social movements brought the diverse issues into the public spotlight; marking a culmination of extraordinary environmentalist agitation and legislative response. The environment and the rights of the indigenous peoples, which has for a very long period, constituted an enormous blind-spot for industrialization and ‘development’, could finally secure a share of attention. The new social movements in the northeast is, as Samuel Hays has emphasized, was a call to reason. It also toe the Habermasian line of the resistance of lifeworld to system, where the lifeworld is colonized by economic and administrative systems and large scale state and capitalist structures are inescapable. The new social movements in this marginalized periphery is a part of the struggle for civil society to maintain autonomy from state and economy and as a source of reform and the introduction of new concerns into political agendas.

As a child of the sixties, environmental movement has stayed its course. Where other manifestations of the that decade of protest – pacifism, the counter culture and the civil rights struggle – have either lost out or lost their way, environmentalism shows no sign of abating. Since then, environmentalism has gained steadily in power, prestige, and what is perhaps most important, the ‘social appeal.’¹²⁶ Environmentalism has thus come to constitute a field-of-force in which different individuals and organizations, far

¹²⁶ Guha, Ramachandra. (2000). *Environmentalism – A Global History*, New Delhi.

removed in space, collaborate and sometimes compete in forging a new social movement that transcends national boundaries.

The rise of environmentalism has been attributed to the development of environmental consciousness, the pattern of opportunities and constraints imposed by institutional arrangements and the shifting balance of political competition, and upon unprecedented awareness of environmental problems.¹²⁷ Environmentalism takes on different shapes in different countries out of a class framework. According to Yearley, environmental movements are called new social movements as the movements take politics out of a class framework.¹²⁸

The clearest indication of how environmentalism can be seen as a genuinely new departure from the established political spectrum is defined is crucial. Paehlke observed that traditional politics is about distribution – who receives what – and that interests are generally interpreted in these terms; the left-right spectrum, insofar as it is useful, represents a range of views about distribution. Environmentalist do not ignore distributive issues, but they give a higher priority to matters of technology- how resources are used and how our relationship with the rest of natural world is organized. Thus, once environmentalism is included within the political spectrum, the distributive axis between left and right is no longer an adequate representation of that spectrum.¹²⁹ But Paehlke also made the point that, in order to fulfill its potential as a political ideology, and offer a realistic alternative to neo-conservatism, environmentalism should break away from its

¹²⁷ Burchell, Jon. (2002). *The Evolution of Green Politics: Development and Change within European Green Parties*, London.

¹²⁸ Yearley, S.(1994). "Social Movements and Environmental Change". In M. Redclift and T. Benton (Eds.), *Social Theory and the Global Environment*, London and New York.

¹²⁹ Paehlke, R.C. (1989). *Environmentalism and the Future of Progressive Politics*, New Haven, CT and London.

‘neither left nor right’ image, and be prepared to engage in distributive politics. In other words, environmentalism can only become an effective player in the political arena if it is concerned with the kinds of issues that have traditionally fuelled political debate in the industrial world. Such is the “central tactical dilemma.”¹³⁰ This dilemma haunts environmentalists and undermines their aspirations to become an effective political force while remaining truly green.¹³¹

It could be argued that the new social movements were also about distribution, but not of material wealth. Instead, they seek to evenly distribute access to power, and go a long way in restoring the rights of the human and non-human world. Therefore, environmental consciousness and its social expressions through various protests form part of what come to be known as the new social movements. Besides, one of the significant factors that distinguish the newly emerging environmental groups and their activities from the older movements is the growth of development-oriented action groups, popularly known as Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs). Most environmental movements are now spearheaded by these¹³² groups and thus constitute the actors of the new social movements. The nature of these groups is varied and disparate with numerous ideological shades. Yet they share one common platform, the non-party political platform. Politically conscious of their movements, these groups operate outside the sphere of party politics.

¹³⁰ Scott, A. (1990). *Ideology and the New Social Movements*, London.

¹³¹ Dobson, A. (1990). *Green Political Thought*, London.

¹³² Andharia, Janki and Chandan Sengupta. (Jan.1998). “The Environmental Movement: Global Issues and the Indian Reality”, *Indian Journal of Social Work*, Vol.59., Issue I: pp.440.

Environmentalism, in all its forms, was born in environmental movements. Environmental movements emerged from within the non-institutional, more informal realms of society and its politics. This creative politics of the people is evident in the dynamic, amorphous networks, associations, grassroots groups and alliances.¹³³ Rarely is this dimension governed by formal laws and statute of association, such as constitutions. Boggs believed that the post-industrial setting generated a unique social and political climate that promoted the formation of movements differing from those that went before in terms of class, ideological and organizational characteristics. Boggs argues that the new social movements were less likely to be co-opted than movements existing prior to the 1970s.¹³⁴

Environmentalism as a new social movement, therefore, has since spawned a mass movement, generated new bodies of law, hatched new political parties, encouraged a rethinking of economic and social priorities and became a central issue in international relations. Humanity has awakened to the basic truths about the interrelatedness of the biosphere, and has been alerted to the basic truth that nature was finite, and that our mismanagement of the environment ultimately threatens our own existence. Indeed environmentalism and the new social movements raise the interdependent issue between man and nature. The questions are matters of grave concern for all the members of the international community. The destructive impacts of these problems transcend national jurisdictions irrespective of the question of who have made what portion of contribution in the creation of these global environmental problems. The problems compelled a shift

¹³³ Doyle, T. (2000). *Green Power: The Environmental Movement in Australia*, Sydney.

¹³⁴ Boggs, C. (1980). *Social Movements and Political Power: Emerging Forms of Radicalism*, West Perth.

in the development discourse and gave rise to various environmental movements which are called new social movements.

The study of new social movements in Northeast India delves into the contemporary environmental movements that were fundamentally different in character than movements of the past. These differences appear in the ideology and goals, tactics, structure, and participation of the movements. The study, aided by theoretical explanations, integrates the 'newness' of the movements in the region and shed light on its contemporary relevance.

CHAPTER THREE

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

This chapter attempts to understand the theoretical perspectives of new social movements. It attempts to locate the object of analysis by examining various relevant theoretical or conceptual contexts that are defined. The theories that are examined are based on North American and western European experiences of new social movements. While doing that, this research acknowledged that much had been theorized about new social movements, but little studied from the ground level, particularly in the context of Northeast India. This lack or absence is a concern which is shared here. Moreover, the development of new social movement theory has not been uniform, which makes it more inevitable to relate its validity to the contemporary collective action of Northeast India. This chapter overwhelmingly explores the diverse theories that are propagated on new social movements to understand the same movement in India's Northeast.

The New Social Movement (NSM) paradigm is a recent addition to social theory that stresses both the macro-historical and micro-historical elements of social movements.¹ On the macro level, Pichardo stated that the NSM paradigm concentrates on the relationship between the rise of contemporary social movements and the larger economic structure, and on the role of culture in such movements. On the other hand, at the micro level, the paradigm is concerned with how issues of identity and personal behavior are bound up in social movements. The new social movement paradigm presents a historically specific vision of social movements as associated with new forms of middle-class radicalism.² It presents a distinctive view of social movements and of the

¹ Pichardo, Nelson A. (1997). "New Social Movements: A Critical Review," *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol.23:pp.411-430.

² *Ibid.*:pp. 411-415.

larger sociopolitical environment, of how individuals fit into, respond to, and change the system.

Since the 1960s, movement theory has been dominated by two schools of thought, resource mobilization and new social movement theory with a variety of approaches woven around them. More recently, there have been attempts to synthesize the various approaches along with the two main schools of thought. However, the vast majority of previous and current theory has been developed with reference to movements in America and continental Europe. There has been no concerted attempt to assess how applicable such theories are to the Northeast India experiences of the new social movements.³ Therefore, this work, by scrutinizing theories of new social movements, will be undertaken to enhance our understanding of the new social movements in northeast India and to test the validity of the theories themselves.

The study of new social movements in Northeast India is focused by examining the contemporary collective actions that were directly and indirectly generated by dams that are commissioned in the name of development. At the heart of the new social movements in Northeast India, issues of equity, governance, justice, rights, control over and access to natural resources, encroachment on their lands and livelihood, and power underlie the many intractable problems faced by the people of the region. New social

³ While saying that, the theoretical advantage in understanding the new social movements in Northeast India derives itself from the Western and European notion of “new social movements.” The argument here is that there are distinctive characteristics of certain contemporary movements such as the environmental and peace protests that set them apart; the newness of the movements derives, ultimately, from the nature of the grievances in question. I must also argue that the theoretical works based on western European and North American experience inevitably leave unanswered questions when used to explain Northeast cases, but that their usefulness far outweighs their shortcomings. Moreover, there is no single western level or pattern; it remains to be seen which of the various patterns the new social movements in Northeast will follow.

movement theories, therefore, is necessarily concerned, at least at the level of submerged networks, with social interactions, at a face-to-face level, that translated histories of embodied experiences of social harm into collective injustices. The socialization of ‘grievances’ into causes of social praxis is a staple theme of NSMs theory. The theories of new social movements suggest a qualitative change in the nature of contemporary protests compared to former ones.

A profound transformation in the nature of the post-industrial state or in the values of its citizenry is responsible for qualitative differences between earlier and current social movements. One of the intent of this study is to contrast recent movement with earlier ones in terms of their origins, constituency, values, focus, and modus operandi. Whereas the concern of the older social movements centered on economic and class issues with the workers’ struggle as the outstanding example new social movements in Northeast India concentrate on a wide range of social, cultural, political, security, and quality-of-life controversies. New social movements have emerged as the key to understanding the transformations occurring in the region.

Local peoples do not only form structured social movements in defense of their interests, they also rely on a host of everyday forms of resistance in what Scott classifies as the “weapons of the weak.”⁴ Peluso analyzes the many confrontations between the “cultures of control” of the state and the “cultures of resistance” of indigenous peoples that had been involved for centuries in struggles for the control of land, trees, forest labor,

⁴ Scott, J.C. (1985). *Weapons of the Weak: Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance*, Yale Univ. Press: New Haven, CT.

and ideology.⁵ Parajuli categorizes these many groups under the rubric of “ecological ethnicities,” which he uses in reference to “those people who have developed a respectful use of the natural resources and consequently a commitment to creating and preserving a technology that interacts with local ecosystems in a sustainable manner.”⁶ These groups can include peasants, indigenous peoples, rural inhabitants, fisher folk, forest dwellers, nomadic shepherds, and a host of people marginalized by development projects and the programs of environmental modernization.

What is particularly noteworthy about these ethnicities is that they represented viable, functioning, ecological alternatives to existing models of modernization and environment destruction. Johnston summarizes the basic thrust of these varied movements: “Social justice environmentalism, with its emphasis on human rights and wrongs, calls for a reordering of priorities in decision-making systems, and for restructuring the balance and loci of power in the decision-making process.”⁷ Development of new social movements is linked to value priorities and socio-economic change, claiming that an adherence to ‘post-materialist values’ lay at the heart of these new social movements.⁸ In particular, Inglehart identified a shift away from the traditional concern with class conflict and material wealth and towards a greater concern for “belonging, esteem and the realization of one’s intellectual and aesthetic potential.”⁹

⁵ Peluso, N.L. (1992). *Rich Forests, Poor People: Resource Control and resistance in Java*, Univ. Calif. Press: Berkeley.

⁶ Parajuli, P. (1998). “How can four trees make a jungle?”, *Terra Nova*, Vol.3 (No.3):pp. 15-31.

⁷ Johnston, B.R. (1994). “The abuse of human environmental rights: experience and response.” In B. R. Johnston (Ed.) *Who Pays the Price?*, Island: Washington, DC.

⁸ Inglehart, R. (1979). “Values, Ideology and Cognitive Mobilisation in new Social Movements.” In M.Keutchler and R. J. Dalton. (Eds.), *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*, New York.

⁹ *Ibid.*: p.308.

New values and new goals, he claimed, resulted in the adoption of different styles of political action.

On the other hand Touraine links the development of new social movements to the search for alternative forms of social and cultural life. He argues that recent changes represented a reorganization of the relationship between society, state and the economy with new movements which is the potential bearers of new social interests. Touraine also emphasized the importance of the spontaneity of action and their anti-institutional characteristics.¹⁰ On the other hand, Habermas also highlights a new focus for conflict based around issues such as cultural reproduction, social integration and socialization. He argues that it was no longer possible for these conflicts to be channeled through traditional parties and organizations as they are ill suited and often unprepared to tackle such issues. New social movements, therefore, provide an outlet for these conflicts and a defense against the encroachment of state and economy on society.¹¹ In maintaining this position, Habermas argues, it is vital that the movements remained committed to the ideal of grassroots horizontal control and the restriction of organizational growth.

Building upon these concepts, Melucci describes the new social movements as displaying a multi-dimensional character incorporating a plurality of perspectives, meanings and relationships.¹² They function within a new political space between state and society, from which they can ...make society hear their messages and translate these messages into political decision making while the movements maintain their

¹⁰ Touraine, A. (Winter 1985). "An Introduction to the Study of Social Movements," *Social Research*, Vol.52 (No.4):pp.749-787.

¹¹ Habermas, J. (Autumn 1981). "New Social Movements", *Telos*,:p.35.

¹² Melucci, A. (1981). *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*, London.

autonomy.”¹³ This aspect is identified as an important element of what exactly is ‘new’ about these groups.

New social movements seek to reveal fundamental problems within a given area. As such, the social movements have an indirect effect, seeking influence over the central issues and concerns of modern society. They develop grassroots, informal and hidden forms of organization, and their strength lies in their ability to stimulate radical questions about the ends of personal social life. Through their unique style of activism, Melucci argues, “they are able to announce to society that something else is possible”.¹⁴

The main set of theoretical principles, explaining the nature and strategies of new social movements, can be traced back to the work of, amongst others, Laclau and Mouffe. This work helps us to understand “the open and contingent nature of political identities and political struggles.”¹⁵ Against the privileged status of workers in traditional labor/socialist discourse, they examine the plural nature of society and the autonomy of the various oppressed groups. Radical politics, for them, could abandon a narrow, productivist logic, and adopt a broader strategy aimed at articulating new democratic political identities across society. Society is seen as open, unstable and contingent, being discursively constituted through a process of articulation and negotiation.

Once the traditional idea of the working class as a central unifying feature in the social strategies is abandoned, the doors are opened on a new radical democratic politics

¹³ Melucci, A. (Winter 1985). “The Symbolic Challenge of Contemporary Movements,” *Social Research*, Vol. 52 (No.4): pp. 789-816.

¹⁴ Ibid.:p.812.

¹⁵ Laclau, E. and C. Mouffe. (1985). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*, London.

more attuned to the needs of the next century.¹⁶ This, more pluralist, politics clearly entails an engagement with the multiple identities and diverse struggles of the new social movements. Faced with uncertainty, fluidity and even chaos, it is not surprising to see radical thought and new approaches.

3.1 MAJOR THEORISTS OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The major theorists of new social movements will illustrate the range of orientations as well as the distortion that was introduced when these very different perspectives are referred to as a single paradigm. Second, it will provide a foundation for a more detailed examination of the major debates associated with new social movement theories. Third, it will suggest the need for some organizing typology that summarizes but does not oversimplify the diversity of social movement theories. With the focus to understand the range of new social movement theories in the context of their intellectual traditions, as well as to understand and relate them to the contemporary collective actions, it remains significant to examine their considerations.

First, Manuel Castell focus is the impact of capitalist dynamics on the transformation of urban space and the role of urban social movements in this process. He argues that urban issues had become central because of the growing importance of collective consumption and the necessity of the state to intervene to promote the production of non-profitable but vitally needed public goods. It is in this context that Castells saw the rise of urban social movements in a dialectical contest with the state and

¹⁶ Ronaldo, Munck. (2000). "Labour in the Global Challenges and Prospects." In Robin Cohen and Shirin M. Rai (Eds.). *Global Social Movements*, London.

other political forces seeking to reorganize urban social life. He thus approaches the city as a social product that is a result of conflicting social interests and values.

On the one hand, socially dominant interests seek to define urban space in keeping with the goals of capitalist commodification and bureaucratic domination. On the other hand, grassroots mobilizations and urban social movements seek to defend popular interests, establish political autonomy and maintain cultural identity. While arguing that class relationships are fundamental, Castells recognizes that they existed alongside other identities and sources of change, including the state as well as group identities based on gender, ethnicity, nationality and citizenship. For Castells, urban protest movements typically develop around three major themes. First, some demands focus on the forms of collective consumption provided by the state, thereby challenging the capitalist logic of exchange value with an emphasis on the provision of use values in community contexts. Second, other demands focus on the importance of cultural identity and its links to territoriality, thereby resisting the standardization and homogenization associated with bureaucratic forms of organization by establishing and defending genuine forms of community. Finally, still other demands express the political management and autonomous decision making. For Castells, the goals of collective consumption, community culture, and political self-management may be found in a wide variety of cross-cultural settings that warranted the concept of urban social movements.

Castell's analysis of urban social movements exemplifies several new social movement themes while also bringing a distinctive framing to these themes. The emphasis on cultural identity, the recognition of non class-based constituencies, the theme of autonomous self-management, and the image of resistance to a systemic logic of

commodification and bureaucratization all serve to illustrate dominant strains in new social movement theories. At the same time, Castells remains closer to some of the concerns of conventional Marxism than many other new social movement theorists, and he does so by offering a “both/and” rather than an “either/or” stance toward some familiar social movement dichotomies.

Thus, rather than counterpoising “old” class-based and non class-based movements, Castells recognizes the roles of both class-based constituencies in urban social movements. Rather than contrasting “political” and “cultural” orientations, he recognizes that urban social movements contained a dialectical mixture of both orientations that finds expression in civil society and the state. Rather than dichotomizing between “instrumental” strategies and “expressive” identities, Castells acknowledges the mutual interplay between these themes in many urban social movements. Because of this more catholic and inclusive approach, Castells’s version of new social movement theory is more attentive to the role of the state than some other versions of the theory that appeared to eschew instrumental action altogether. As a result, he is more likely to recognize the role of political dynamics, such as changing political opportunity structures, than some other scholars of new social movement theory. Finally, Castells’s approach suggests the compatibility of a certain style of new-Marxist analysis with at least some versions of new social movement theory.

Alan Touraine argues that with the passing of metasocial guarantees of social order, more and more of society comes to be seen as the product of reflexive social action. The growing capacity of social actors to construct both a system of knowledge and the technical tools that allowed them to intervene in their own functioning, a capacity

Touraine calls historicity, makes possible the increasing self-production of society, which becomes the defining hallmark of postindustrial or programmed society. The control of historicity is the object of an ongoing struggle between classes defined by relations of domination. Such classes take the form of social movements as they enter into this struggle.

In postindustrial society, major social classes consist of consumer/clients in the role of the popular class and managers/technocrats in the role of dominant class. The principal field of conflict for these classes is culture, and the central contest involves who will control society's growing capacity for self-management. As the state becomes the repository of society's ever increasing capacity to control historicity, there is reason to believe that the central conflict in postindustrial society would come to center around this institution. In a recent formulation, Touraine locates new social movements between two logics: that of a system seeking to maximize production, money, power, and information, and that of subjects seeking to defend and expand their individuality.¹⁷

Touraine's work anticipates several of the major debates associated with new social movement theory. One debate considers the likely constituency for such movements. In an empirical study of the workers' movement in France, Touraine reiterates his distinctive claim that there was one central conflict in every type of society. In industrial society, this conflict centered around material production and the workers' movement posed the obvious challenge. With the coming of postindustrial society, Touraine suggests both that there was no single class or group that represented a future

¹⁷ Touraine, Alain. (1992). "Beyond Social Movements." *Theory, Culture and Society*, 9:125-145.

social order and that different oppositional social movements were united simply by their oppositional attitude.

Touraine's inability to define the constituency for collective action, despite his insistence that each societal type had a single central conflict, underscores the difficulties that new social movement theorists had in identifying the constituency for such movements. In Touraine's case, this uncertainty may be related to a second debate anticipated by his work concerning the seemingly apolitical nature of these movements. He sees contemporary social movements as evidence of a displacement of protest from the economic to the cultural realm, accompanied by the privatization of social problems.¹⁸ The typical result is an anxious search for identity and an individualism that may exclude collective action.

In another context, Touraine suggests that movements based on difference, specificity, or identity might easily dismiss the analysis of social relations and the denunciation of power, and in still another work he suggests that appeals to identity are purely defensive unless they are linked with a counter-offensive that is directly political and that appeals to self-determination.

Jurgen Habermas proposes the most elaborate theory of modern social structure by distinguishing between a politico-economic system governed by generalized media of power and money and a life-world still governed by normative consensus. Whereas the system follows an instrumental logic that detached media like money and power from any responsibility or accountability, the life-world follows a communicative rationality

¹⁸ Touraine, Alain. (1985). "An Introduction to the Study of Social Movements." *Social Research*, 52: 749-787.

requiring that norms be justifiable through discussion and debate. The problem for Habermas is that in modern society, system imperatives and logic intrude on the life-world in the form of colonization, resulting in the media of money and power coming to regulate not only economic and political transactions but also those concerning identity formations, normative regulation, and other forms of symbolic reproduction traditionally associated with the life-world.

Habermas suggests that the relationship of clients to the welfare state was a model case for this colonization of the life-world, in that the welfare state monetarizes and bureaucratizes life-world relationships as it controls the extent and kind of spending on welfare policy to fit the imperatives of money and power. More generally, Habermas argues that the process of colonization altered each of the basic roles that arise from the intersection of the politico-economic system and public and private life-world: employee, consumer, client, and citizen. In each case, these dynamics locate more and more decision-making power in the hands of experts and administrative structures, which operate according to the system logic of money and power and whose decisions are correspondingly removed from contexts of justification and accountability within the life-world.

Given this conception of social structure, Habermas locates new social movements at the seams between system and life-world. This location leads him to identify two features of these movements that had shaped further debates within new social movement theory. First, Habermas seems to imply that new social movements will have a purely defensive character: at best, they can defend the life-world against the colonizing intrusion of the system and sustain the role of normative consensus rooted in

communicative rationality that has been evolving within this sphere throughout the process of societal modernization. But Habermas offers little evidence that new social movements could contribute to any broader social transformation, particularly concerning the dominance of system over life-world and the dominance of generalized media of exchange like money and power in the system world.

While no one sees new social movements as bringing about complete societal transformation, many of its theorists envision a more extensive and progressive role for movements than simply defending the life-world. A second Habermasian theme, which is more broadly accepted among new social movement theorists, concerns the nature of goals or demands associated with these movements. For Habermas, as for many others, the conflicts in which new social movements engage are less about material reproduction and more about cultural reproduction, social integration, and socialization.

The new movements bring with them a new politics concerned with quality of life, projects of self-realization, and goals of participation and identity formation. Many of these movements are united around the critique of growth as a central ideological foundation, with ecology and peace movements playing central roles. As they are not traditional distributional struggles, Habermas implies that they could not be channeled by political parties or allayed by material compensation. The implication is that under some circumstances, the conflict associated with new social movements may contribute to the larger legitimation crisis that Habermas associated with advanced capitalism.

Alberto Melucci argues that the post-modern world would bring new forms of social control, conformity pressures, and information processing to which new social

movements responds. The movements are triggered by new sites of conflict that were interwoven with everyday life; the conflict itself involves codes, identity claims, and personal or expressive claims. Melucci would thus concur with Touraine that the political status of new social movements was unclear, but he is less troubled by this fact than Touraine. While these conflicts are far removed from the conventional political sphere, they are not without structural effects that are central in Melucci's argument. In a society increasingly shaped by information and signs, social movements play an important role as messages that express oppositional tendencies and modalities.

The very focus on personal, spiritual, or expressive aspects of modern life typical of new social movements is an implicit repudiation of the instrumental rationality of the dominant society. Perhaps the most important systemic effect of new social movements is to render visible the peculiarly modern form of power that resides behind the rationality of administrative procedures; in this way, collective action emphasizes the socially constructed nature of the world and the possibility of alternative arrangements. Melucci's positive view of these movements and their messages underscores the importance of free spaces between the level of political power and everyday life in which actors can consolidate collective identities through both representation and participation.

Melucci's work also helps to define some of the central issues of new social movement theory. One such issue concerns the role of identity in modern collective action. Melucci's starting premise is that in modern society, the pace of change, the plurality of memberships, and the abundance of messages all combine to weaken traditional points of reference and sources of identity, thereby creating a homelessness of personal identity. This means that people's propensity to become involved in collective

action is tied to their capacity to define an identity in the first place.¹⁹ It also means that the social construction of collective identity was both a major prerequisite and a major accomplishment of the new social movements.

The fluidity of identity in the modern world and in its social movements is related to the fragility of organization in such movements. Melucci is insistent that new social movements be seen as ongoing social constructions rather than as unitary empirical objects, givens or essences, or historical personages acting on a stage. In contrast to these conceptions, whatever unity movements may achieve is a result of ongoing efforts rather than an initial starting point for collective action. On another level, Melucci steers attention away from formal organization by stressing that much collective action was nested in networks of submerged groups that occasionally coalesced into self-referential forms of organization for struggle but often on a temporary basis. He thereby suggests that we speak less in terms of movements and more in terms of movement networks or movement areas to capture the transitory nature of much contemporary mobilization.

The sketches of major theorists hints at some of the main contours of new social movement theory while also suggesting its diversity. This diversity derives in part from different national settings in which theorists like Castells, Touraine, Habermas, and Melucci have operated, as well as the rather different histories of social protest within each nation. This diversity also derives from the different theoretical traditions that inform the work of these theorists: Castells extends Marxist analyses of collective consumption, Touraine builds on his pathbreaking work on postindustrial society,

¹⁹ Melucci, Alberto. (1988). "Getting Involved: Identity and Mobilization in Social Movements." (pp. 329-348). In Klandermans, Kriesi, and Tarrow (Eds.). *From Structure to Action, International Social Movement Research*, Vol. 1.

Habermas works out of the German tradition of critical theory, and Melucci introduces some semiotic and postmodern elements. This diversity warrants speaking of new social movement theories rather than a unitary new social movement theory. Having said that, there are important threads of continuity across these thinkers.

Despite their differences, all concur that their societies had moved into a distinct social formation that might be designated as postindustrial, advanced capitalism and that the structural features of their societies had shaped the kinds of current collective action as decisively as the structural features of liberal capitalism shaped the dynamics of proletarian protest. At the same time, these sketches hinted at some of the issues that defined the paradigm of new social movement theory.

3.2 DEBATES ON NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

One of the first major debates on new social movements concerns the meaning and validity of designating certain movements as “new” and others by implicating as “old”. David Plotke argues that new social movement discourse tended to overstate their novelty to selectively depict their goals as cultural, and to exaggerate their separation from conventional political life. On the other hand, Sidney Tarrow points out that many new social movements were not really all that new because they often have grown out of preexisting organizations and have long histories that were obscured by new social movement discourse. In Tarrow’s analysis, the supposed newness of these movements has less to do with the structural features of advanced capitalism and more to do with the fact that these movements were studied in their early stages of formation within a

particular cycle of protest in the late 1960s and early 1970s.²⁰ The implication is that with the ending of this cycle of protest and the political realignments it promoted, social movement activity has decreased and returned to more conventional forms; the proponents of “newness” thus mistook a temporary and cyclical phase for a new historical stage of collective action.

The most sweeping critique of this sort is offered by Karl-Werner Brand who suggests that “new social movements” were the latest manifestation of a cyclical pattern that had been evident for well over a century.²¹ In this argument, new social movements and their predecessors appeared in cyclical phases in response to cultural crises and critiques of modernization. In the latest cycle, a mix of moral-idealistic and aesthetic-countercultural critiques of modernization, along with a pessimistic civilization critique, provided the stimulant for new social movements. However, Brand argues that similar periods of culture critique prompted similar movements around 1840 and 1900 in Britain, Germany and the United States.

In various ways these, these critics suggest that new social movements were continuous with past movements and are simply the latest manifestation of a cycle or a long wave of social protest movements. These critics see all these movements as romantic, cultural, idealistic, and even anti-modern responses to patterns of societal evolution and modernization, rather than being new.

²⁰ Tarrow, Sidney. (1994). *Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action, and Politics*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge.

²¹ Brandt, Karl-Werner. (1986). “New Social Movements as a Metapolitical Challenge: The Social and Political Impact of a New Historical Type of Protest.” *Thesis Eleven* 15:60-68.

Inevitably, these critical challenges have forced proponents of new social movement theories to specify convincingly wherein the newness may be found, and several responses have been forthcoming. For Russell J. Dalton and Manfred Kuechler, new social movements may draw on a long-standing humanistic tradition but their²² genuinely new aspects include their post-materialistic value base, their search for pragmatic solutions, their global awareness, and their resistance to spiritual solutions.

For Claus Offe, the newness of these movements involves their post-ideological, post-historical nature as well their lack of a positive alternative and specific target in the form of a privileged class; because of these features, they deny accommodation to existing power and resist standard forms of co-optation.²³ For Klaus Eder, new social movements are inherently modern because only in modernity can their distinctive challenge to the cultural orientation of society be formulated.²⁴ In his view, new social movements provide an alternative cultural model and moral order that both defended normative standards against the strategic, utilitarian, and instrumental goal seeking and decision making of elites and points in the direction of a more democratic formulation of collective needs and wants within society.

On the other hand, for Russell J. Dalton, Manfred Kuechler and Wilhelm Burklin, these movements are new in their advocacy of a new social paradigm that challenged the dominant goal structure of Western societies by advocating post-materialist, antigrowth,

²² Dalton, Russell J. and Manfred Kuechler. Eds. (1990) *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*. Oxford University Press: New York.

²³ Offe, Claus. (1985). "Reflections on the Institutional Self Transformation of Movement Politics: A Tentative Stage Model." (pp. 232-250). In Dalton and Kuechler (Eds.). *Challenging the Political Order*.

²⁴ Eder, Klaus. (1985). "The 'New Social Movements': Moral Crusades, Political Pressure Groups, or Social Movements?" *Social Research*, 52:869-880.

libertarian, and populist themes.²⁵ In addition, the political style of these movements involves a conscious avoidance or rejection of institutionalized politics and a careful distance from established political parties. For these authors, it is the combination of ideological bonds and political style that distinguished from utopian and romantic movements of the past in terms of their visions or goals for social development. Whereas utopian and romantic movements typically sought the de-differentiation of society, economy, and state into a pre-modern utopian community, new social movements presuppose and defend the structural differentiation of modern society and attempts to build on it by expanding the social spaces in which non-strategic action can occur.

The second set of debates in new social movement discourse concerns both the extent to which these movements are characterized as either defensive or progressive and the extent to which they are seen as carrying a liberatory potential. One strand in this debate begins with Habermas, who has characterized the new social movements as primarily defensive reactions to the colonizing intrusions of states and markets into the life-world of modern society. As vital as this role may be, Habermas has said relatively little about the prospect that new social movements would assume a larger and more progressive role in societal transformation.

Other theorists working within this tradition have been somewhat more forthcoming. Dieter Rucht argues that, although movements were likely to emerge during qualitative breakthroughs in societal modernization, they may be proactive, reactive, or ambivalent with respect to these patterns. Rucht implies that modernization in the life-

²⁵ Dalton, Russell J. and Manfred Kuechler. Eds. (1990). *Challenging the Political Order: New Social and Political Movements in Western Democracies*. Oxford University Press: New York.

world produced conflicts around democratization, self-determination, and individualization and that the expressive, identity-oriented movements this provoked had a progressive character. At the same time, modernization in the system tends to provoke a more defensive kind of protest against the side effects of technological, economic, or political changes that could have an anti-modernist cast. This vision of new social movements as progressive with respect to life-world rationalization and as defensive with respect to system intrusion is one logical way of addressing this debate from a Habermasian perspective.

Another response is offered by Jean Cohen, who also expresses dissatisfaction with the somewhat marginal role envisioned by Habermas for social movements. In her view, this is because movement interest Habermas not in terms of their substantive claims but rather as carriers of universalistic cultural potentials. Thus, social movements are granted significance only if they become vehicles of societal modernization and cultural rationalization.

Cohen argues that both past and present movements had played a vitally important role in helping to institutionalize civil society as a sphere that is both differentiated from and connected to the state and that gave social actors the space to translate life-world concerns into systemic priorities for change. This can be grasped through neither systems theory nor action theory but rather requires analysis of the process of institutionalization by which movements have contributed to civil society and the creation of new associational and democratic forms, thereby building up the space that allows them to operate more progressively as change agents.

In Cohen's view, social movements can be more than defensive, anti-modern reactions precisely because they have established a foothold in civil society in which they can pursue larger goals of progressive social change.²⁶ These goals include both the self-defense and the further democratization of society, and Cohen implies that these were best seen as complementary rather than contradictory imperatives of new social movements.

Analysts of new social movements from a more traditionally Marxist perspective have not necessarily arrived at clearer answers or more internal agreement on these questions. For example, Joachim Hirsch argues that new social movements must be understood as part of the crisis of Fordism. Fordism was itself a response to an earlier capitalist crisis that introduced mass production and of consumption, a Keynesian and corporatist welfare state, and a broader "stratification" of society that extended surveillance and control throughout the society. These developments promoted the commodification and bureaucratization of social life, and new social movements are a response to these developments. These movements thereby sought to overcome alienation and regulation by promoting individual emancipation and the recovery of civil society through a radically democratic form of politics.

Despite this seemingly progressive agenda, Hirsch argues that the organizational forms and ideological premises of many new social movements still reflected the fundamental contradictions of the Fordist period to which they are a response. As a result, they transcend the conventional dichotomy between left and right, or progressive and

²⁶ Cohen, Jean. (1985). " 'Strategy or Identity'? New Theoretical Paradigms and Contemporary Social Movements." *Social Research*, 52:663-716.

conservative. Hirsch expects these movements to play complex and contradictory roles during the transition from the Fordist mode of accumulation to a new strategy of accumulation in advanced capitalism.²⁷ They may simultaneously embody genuine opposition to the old order and become unconscious vehicles for establishing a new order.

Colin Mooers and Alan Sears are more pessimistic about the prospects for new social movements. In their view, the focus on civil society is consistent with a political agenda of lowering the horizons and range of possibilities to what can be achieved within the limits of the existing market and state. To the extent that the new politics of social movements did indeed accept capitalist social relations and turn away from confronting the capitalist state, this politics is simply a new reformism in their view.²⁸

The third debate revolves around the question of whether new social movements are “political” in nature or are better classified in some other way, as “cultural.”²⁹ Indeed, there is a general agreement that all movements would rest on cultural foundations and play some representational or symbolic function. Therefore all movements are cultural in some basic way.

Similarly, all movements take explicit or implicit political stances, and it can be argued that even those which opt out of any conventional contestation for power have taken a political stance of quietism, hence all movements are political in an equal basic

²⁷ Steinmetz, George. (1994). “Regulation Theory, Post- Marxism, and the New Social Movements.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 36(1): 176-212.

²⁸ Mooers, Colin and Alan Sears. (1992). “The ‘New Social Movements’ and the Withering Away of State Theory.” (pp. 52-68). In William K. Carroll (Ed.). *Organizing Dissent*. Garamond Press: Toronto.

²⁹ McAdam, Doug. (1994). “Culture and Social Movements.” (pp. 36-57). In Larana, Johnston and Gusfield. (Eds.). *New Social Movements*.

way. The discussions about the political dimension of new social movements tap profound questions about their transformative potential. The operative definition of political in most of these discussions seems to involve two fundamental dimensions: political movements are at least in part focused on influencing or altering state power, and such movements must thereby have some explicit strategy aimed at transforming power relations.

One way of challenging the political nature of new social movements is to argue that they were about something larger than conventional politics. Meanwhile, Brandt casts new social movements as providing a metapolitical challenge to modernity through a new historical type of protest.³⁰ He sees these movements as carriers of a classical critique of modern civilization as well as the very project of modernity. Even though he classifies them as metapolitical, he identifies them as having discrete, political effects in terms of consciousness-raising, political socialization, and the politicization of decision making. The more standard critique of new social movements is that they were an apolitical or at least a pre-political form of social activism.

On these arguments, Alberto Melucci stance is not that the new social movements were political in any conventional sense of the term but rather that it was just as well that they are not. If the new social movements were more political in the conventional sense of the term, they would be playing by sets of rules that benefited existing power-holders and they would in all likelihood be much easier to co-opt through the normal channels of

³⁰ Brandt, Karl-Werner. (1986). "New Social Movements as a Metapolitical Challenge: The Social and Political Impact of a New Historical Type of Protest." *Thesis Eleven*, 15:60-68.

political representation and negotiation. Hence, their apolitical or anti-political stance should be regarded as strength rather than weakness.

However, to be apolitical in this sense does not mean a retreat into excessively individualist orientations for Melucci. Although he operates with a culturalist reading of new social movements, he also believes that such culturalist movements could pose major challenges to existing social relations. In part, this is because these relations have come to be defined more and more in the cultural language of symbolic representation. Thus, if power has become congealed, particularly in media messages and administrative rationality, the most profound challenge to such power may come from cultural movements that challenged these messages and rationality. By rendering power visible and by repudiating the instrumental rationality of the dominant society, cultural movements may be more effective than conventionally political movements at, in Melucci's terms, breaking the limits of compatibility of the system.³¹

The fourth set of debates delves into another basic premise implicit in the notion of new social movements. If old social movements presupposed a solidly working-class base and ideology, then new social movements are presumed to draw from a different social class base. However, there is no consensus on how this social base should be defined or even whether the concept of class should remain central to the definition of a movement's base. Part of what makes new social movements new is precisely the fact that class becomes much less important in determining the base, interests or ideology of the movement than in the older economic reading. It is only by jettisoning such

³¹Melucci, Alberto. (1989). *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*. In Larana, Johnston, and Gusfield (Eds.).

economic notions that one could appreciate the extent to which new social movements are defined by the dynamics of race, ethnicity, culture, gender, or age – social divisions that might well have transcended class in their relevance for shaping collective action.

While new social movements may not be economically determined in the straightforward manner that old social movements were presumed to be, they nevertheless have what a Weberian would call “economic relevance.” For example, the goals and policies pursued by a movement may have a very different impact on diverse social classes, just as differing class positions are likely to shape people’s definition of a grievable issue in the first instance. If movements can no longer be reduced to class, neither can they be understood apart from class, as one among several salient structures and identities in contemporary forms of collective action.

Another theoretical strategy that marginalized the role of class is to argue that new social movement constituencies derive more from an ideological identification with certain issues than membership in some homogenous social base. An example of this strategy may be found in Dalton, Kuechler, and Burklin who argue that the defining characteristic of new social movements was their advocacy of a new social paradigm that challenges the dominant goal structure of Western societies. In their account, such movements draw on a socially diffuse base of popular support rather than any specific class or ethnic base. They see this as a shift from group- based politics rooted in instrumental interest to value-based politics rooted in ideological support for collective goods. The shift from interest to ideology may therefore be a reflection of the fact that in advanced capitalism, many deprivations and forms of domination have acquired a relatively classless character because their effects touch members of many different

social groups and classes.³² Hence, movements responding to these effects will not have an exclusive class character but will recruit across a variety of social groups.

Despite these two theoretical strategies that shift attention away from class, the most common strategy within the new social movement literature is to argue that these movements did indeed have a social class base that could be conceptualized as a middle – class base in contrast to the working-class base of old social movements. Erik Wright’s concept of “contradictory class locations” provides one promising analytical tool for addressing the complexity of contemporary class structure and its implications for movement mobilization.

While Wright has not specifically addressed the issue of new social movements, Claus Offe has. Offe suggests that the social base of new social movements was threefold: the new middle class, elements of the old middle class, and “decommodified” groups outside the labor market.³³ This unusual combination of groups derives from the structural features of advanced capitalist society, which include a broadening of the negative effects of the system beyond a single class, a deepening of the methods and effects of social control and domination, and the irreversibility of problems and crisis potentials in the society. These effects create a tripartite constituency for new social movements whose only common feature may be their distance from the old poles of capital and labor.

³² Steinmetz, George. (1994). “Regulation Theory, Post- Marxism, and the New Social Movements.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 36(1): 176-212.

³³ Offe, Claus. (1985). “New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics.” *Social Research*, 52:817-868.

The new middle class is a modern, class-aware group whose goals are more general than those of traditional class politics. The old middle-class elements and the decommodified elements more often draw upon pre-modern, particularistic ideologies that shaped their role in new social movements. As a result, the complex politics of new social movements will depend on which of these three factions becomes dominant at any given movement, as well as the alliances that such groups might pursue with other political actors. The possibilities range from maintenance of the old, growth-oriented paradigm to a new form of corporatism to a genuinely new challenge to the prevailing social order. The latter, in Offe's view, would require new social movements rooted in new middle – class elements, which then ally with the traditional left and proceed to establish a positive relation with peripheral and decommodified groups. Only this alliance could effectively challenge the old paradigm of growth-oriented politics and replace it with a new paradigm rooted in distinctively new social movement values and goals.

A multifaceted response to the question of class and social movements may be found in the work of Klaus Eder. His general approach to these questions is informed by the assumptions that class and collective action had been decoupled in advanced capitalism, that culture played an increasingly important intervening role between class structure and collective action and that all collective actors were socially constructed rather than structurally determined.³⁴ Eder constructs his argument about the middle-class base of new social movements by stating that this class had an intermediate position between upper and lower social classes.. It blends bourgeois individualism and Plebeian particularism in a class-specific defense of individualization and the middle class life-

³⁴ Eder, Klaus. (1985). "The 'New Social Movements': Moral Crusades, Political Pressure Groups, or Social Movements?" *Social Research*, 52:869-890

world. Such a habitus can generate new social movements, but it can also generate moral crusades and political pressure groups. New social movements, as opposed to other collective forms of collective action, are most likely to derive from those niches of contemporary society that preserved old communitarian traditions and radically democratic projects while also seeking new social relations that transcend moralism and power.

In another essay, Eder proposes a theory of middle-class radicalism that saw new social movements as a class-specific response to the middle-class realities of upward mobility, cultural capital, and the lack of a clear group identity.³⁵ For Eder, new social movements are not class movements in the traditional sense, but they manifest a new type of class relationship in which the making of the middle class as a group with a distinct identity and consciousness is dialectically intertwined with the mobilization of new social movements.

Another argument is proposed by Hanspeter Kriesi's study of new social movements in the Netherlands. Kriesi identifies antagonisms within the new middle class between technocrats with organizational assets and specialists with professional identities. He proceeds to distinguish between occupational segments, offering a broad contrast between "social and cultural specialists," "craft specialists," and "protective services," on the other. It is the social and cultural specialists with professional identities but without organizational assets who constitute a genuinely new class, which is formed out of the underlying antagonism between technocrats who favor administrative rationality and specialists who seek non-instrumental uses for their knowledge.

The struggles of new social movements, in turn, may be seen as both expressing and contributing to the formation of this new class. Kriesi thereby suggests that the notion of a generic oppositional new middle class was both too broad and too narrow. It is too broad because it is not the class as a whole but only the younger generation of social and cultural specialists that tended to support new social movements. It is too narrow because there are other groups beyond the middle class who often provide support to new social movements as well.³⁶ Kriesi concludes that if new social movements indeed have such deep structural roots in a segment of the new class, then they could not be dismissed as temporary, conjunctural phenomena but must be seen as fundamental manifestations of advanced societies.

Offe's Eder's, and Kriesi's analyses also hint at a subterranean issue related to the broad question of social base of new social movements. If it is generally accurate to see new social movements as rooted in some type of middle-class base, this raises the possibility that these movements might not be unrelated to the older class politics as much as they may operate in opposition to traditional working-class interests. This possibility is exemplified by the supposed trade-off between environmental protection and job creation that appeared to pit the interests of ecologically oriented new social movements against those of traditional labor union movements.

The relatively small amount of research on this issue has typically taken the form of arguing that the success of new social movements would ultimately depend on their ability to form alliances and coalitions with traditional labor movements. Thus, Barbara

³⁶ Kriesi, Hanspeter. (1989). "New Social Movements and the New Class in the Netherlands." *American Journal of Sociology*, 94:1078-1116.

Epstein concludes her overview of contemporary social activism by arguing that any successful movement would have to recruit from both the middle and the bottom third of modern society. In a more detailed analysis, Carl Boggs argues that any successful future social transformation would depend upon building a sustained connection between working-class struggles and new social movements.³⁷

While there is no consensus on the question of class and new social movements, this debate provides significant lessons. First, these movements represent a major form of social activism whose social base is sometimes best defined in something other than class terms, whether that be gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality, or age. Moreover, new social movements require us to rethink how all collective identities – including class identities – are not structurally guaranteed but socially constructed. As such, they do not come in neat, mutually exclusive, one-dimensional packages but rather in dialectically interrelated combinations of positions and identities.

A second lesson is that some movements might be best characterized not in terms of a social base rooted in conventional statuses, rather in terms of values and goals with which participants agree. Thus, alongside identity-based movements where such statuses are central, there are issue-based movements in which identities are secondary to the question of congruence between individual and movement values and goals. A third lesson is that there appeared to be an elective affinity between a middle-class location and new social movements. Many have noted the problems of clearly defining the term middle class, which too often serves as a residual category for groups between the traditional poles of capital and labor. To some extent, this problem can be addressed by

³⁷ Boggs, Carl. (1986). *Social Movements and Political Power*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

more careful and systematic research into the constituencies for various new social movements.

3.3 CLASS CULTURE AND NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

The debate on new social movements requires a revisit by examining the relationship between social class and social mobilization. The interdependence between interests, values, and expressed ideas has to be accumulated for interpreting the complex relationship between class interests and consciousness in the new social movements. This is when or where Class-Cultural Theory provides an alternative framework for interpreting the complex relationship. Through a comparison of working-and middle-class cultures, the theory proposed that social class ordered consciousness and shaped the interpretation of interests.

Class culture refers to beliefs, attitudes, and understandings, symbols, social practices, and rituals throughout the life cycle that were characteristic of positions within the production process.³⁸ Cultural forms, produced and reproduced through practice, combine both conformity and resistance to the structural demands of class. Class cultures, therefore, reflect evolving strategies for living within class structures. An understanding of class cultures, then, requires an analysis of both the structures within which classes function and particular strategies adopted by class members.

Class structures culture both through direct experiences within the production process and through institutions that socialized class members for work. The influence of production processes derives from both the material and cultural organization of work.

³⁸ Croteau, David. (1995). *Politics and the Class Divide*, Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.

Different classes confront distinct forms of authority relationships, work organization, and social regulation in the workplace that shaped different class cultures.³⁹ Class cultures produce distinct class forms of political and organizational behavior while not defining any particular content of movement issues or politics. In particular, the middle-class membership of new social movements is explained by the cultural form of these movements which is distinctly middle class.

Social class shapes distinct cultural subsystems that ordered consciousness, organize perceptions, defined priorities, and influenced forms of behavior. The specific content of consciousness emerges through historical experiences and action within the framework created by class cultures. Movements reflect the class background of participants even if they do not explicitly articulate their goals in class terms. This has enormous implication for when and how people from different classes mobilize politically. Class cultures encompass a range of strategies structured by similar conditions, and thus significant cultural variation can be found within each class.⁴⁰ Class cultures evolve as historic conditions change and as people's strategies develop in response to members of their own and other classes over time. Fred Rose proposed that new social movements represented one among this range of related middle-class strategies.

Theories to explain this correlation fall into three broad camps. The first, "New Class" theory, argues that these movements were pursuing distinctly middle-class

³⁹ Rose, Fred. (Sep.,1997). Toward a Class-Cultural Theory of Social Movements: Reinterpreting New Social Movements. *Sociological Forum*, Vol.12. No.3, pp. 461-494.

⁴⁰ Clarke, John. (1979). "Capital and culture: the post-war working class revisited." In John Clarke, Chas Critcher, and Richard Johnson (Eds.), *Working Class Culture*, 238-253. New York: St. Martin's Press.

interests. Thus the class makeup of these movements reflects the motivations of the movements themselves. The second, “New Social Movement” theory perceives these movements as a defensive response to the encroachment of economics into other cultural spheres. This culture-based explanation suggests that the middle class was particularly responsive to these society-wide changes. A third, “Cultural Shift” theory, representative of theories about post-industrial society, proposes that new social movements represented a change in values due to the growing wealth of society.

The New Class theory applies Marx’s materialist interpretation of history to the middle class, suggesting that new social movements advanced class interests. The new middle class consists of managers and professionals who control organizational skills and knowledge through recently expanded institutions within the state, corporate, and non-profit sectors. Alvin Gouldner provides a sophisticated variation on the rise of new class, emphasizing both cultural struggle as well as the pursuit of class interests. The professional middle class brings with it a new set of values and goals, most significantly its emphasis on rationality and rejection of arbitrary authority. It creates new forms of hierarchy based on merit, educational attainment, and rational regulation by experts. Interests of this new class are bound within these new, rationally based institutions. Thus the struggle between the rising professional middle-class and the old capitalist class has both a cultural and material dimension. The middle class challenges capitalist profit maximization as a goal as well as the material organization of private enterprise.

In Gouldner’s scheme, new class movements advance class interests in their emerging struggle for power against the capitalist class. Gouldner proposes a general pattern of intellectuals and professionals rebelling against established authorities as they

find opportunities restricted and access to political power blocked. Movements of the 1960s are seen as elements of class struggle against the old dominant capitalist class. Students, blacks, and women sought access to professional middle-class jobs and thus expansion of institutions that employed the new class. Consistent with this interest analysis, Gouldner believes that the environmental movement represented “guerilla warfare” against the irrationality of corporate polluters.

These attempts to interpret new social movements as aspects of class conflict, however, fail in several ways. First, they oversimplify the goals of these movements, which cannot be understood in the narrow framework of class interests. For example, the individual or class benefits from efforts to preserve remote areas such as the arctic or obscure species such as snail darters are insignificant. In many instances, regulations create substantial costs that industry passed on as higher prices, contrary to consumer interests. Often, the middle-class is not an immediate beneficiary of new social movement activism. Furthermore, class interest doesn't explain why the environmental movement is a middle-class rather than lower-class movement. On the basis of class interest alone, environmental protections could benefit lower class members more than the middle class because pollution is disproportionately placed in lower income neighborhoods.

A related weakness is that New Class theories did not distinguish the qualitatively different nature of new social demands from class interest movements. New social movements pursue universal goals that cut across classes. Gouldner does recognize that the middle class could align with different classes, but new social movements are more ambiguous than this. Different segments of the same movement may ally with different

classes or may shift alliances depending on the issue. Thus class interests do not explain what unifies these movements whose issues cut across class lines with inconsistent distributional implications.

Finally, the New Class theory fails to recognize that new social movements challenged some basic tenets of middle-class society and are not simple extensions of middle-class power. Segments of these movements do seek to make society more rational as Gouldner suggests. However, many of the goals of these middle-class movements run counter to the technocratic and bureaucratic interests of middle class professionals. New Social Movement theorists rightly observe that these movements rebelled against the over-rationalization of society.⁴¹ They promote participatory democracy over expertise, personalized lifestyles over institutionalization, and scepticism of technology over progress. In sum, New Class theories fail to understand the relationships between consciousness and action. They deny the significance of expressed beliefs and interpret consciousness as a mask for underlying ideological and material interests. They therefore cannot explain many dimensions of middle-class movements that did not advance well-defined class interests.

On the other hand, New Social Movement theorists address some of the weaknesses of New Class theory. Theorists of the New Social Movements interpret these movements as a defensive response to structural changes in the economic system. Rather than a shift toward socialism, these theorists perceive a new stage of “disorganized”

⁴¹ Melucci, Alberto. (1980). “The new social movements: a theoretical approach.” *Social Science Information*, 19:199-226.

capitalism.⁴² Applying Habermas's concept of life-space, New Social Movement theorists argue that the production process had imposed new levels of control beyond the sphere of production into consumption, services and social relations. This encroachment is caused by the growing needs of capitalism to control not only labor power but also complex organizational systems, information, process of symbol formation, and interpersonal relations. Alberto Melucci explains:⁴³

The new social movements are struggling, therefore, not only for the reappropriation of the material structure of production, but also for collective control over socio-economic development, i.e., for the reappropriation of time, of space, and of relationships in the individual's daily existence. Rather than class interests, these movements seek new forms of community to replace the "formal, abstract and instrumental relationships characterizing state and society."⁴⁴ New Social Movement theorists emphasize the differences between these contemporary movements and "old" social movements mobilizing around material needs. Claus Offe contrasts "old" vs. "new" movements in terms of their actors, issues, values, and "modes of action." Older movements, most importantly the labor movement, mobilize as socio-economic groups pursuing selective interests, while new movements promote goals that cut across class lines such as gender, race, and locality. In this view, the values of individualism and material progress are being replaced with priorities of personal autonomy and self-determination. Finally, the formal organizational systems and interest group politics of

⁴² Offe, Claus. (1980). *Disorganized Capitalism*. Cambridge, MA:MIT Press.

⁴³ Melucci, Alberto. (1980). "The new social movements: a theoretical approach." *Social Science Information*, 19:199-226.

⁴⁴ Breines, Wini. (1982). *The Great refusal: Community and Organization in the New Left:1962-1968*. New York: Praeger.

older movements are giving way to greater informality, egalitarian structures, and protest politics.

New Social Movement theorists provide various explanations for the disproportionate middle-class participation in new movement politics. Some propose that while the structural changes that new social movements address affect everyone, the middle class has the leisure time and security to pursue non-material goals.⁴⁵ Others argue that radicals critical of capitalism choose careers that reflect non-economic values.⁴⁶ Groups that are distant from capitalist economic relations were more likely to express non-materialist values.⁴⁷ A third, self-interest approach suggests that these movements consist of members of society most affected by new forms of domination such as middle-class consumers and less powerful groups in society such as women and people of color.⁴⁸ Hanspeter Kriesi proposes that new social movement values and attitudes were generated among professional specialists whose jobs require them to defend clients against impositions from the state and corporations, or educated young people freed from dying traditions.⁴⁹ David Croteau argues that the middle-class had the resources and skills, which the working class lacks, to participate in new social movements.⁵⁰

New Social Movement theories have some important virtues that addressed weaknesses of class-interest theories. They recognize the qualitative differences that

⁴⁵ Inglehart, Ronald. (1977). *The Silent Revolution*, NJ: Princeton University Press.

⁴⁶ Parkin, Frank. (1968) *Middle Class Radicalism*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

⁴⁷ Friberg, Mats and Bjorn Hettne. (1985). "The greening of the world: Towards a non-deterministic model of global processes." In Herb Addo et.al (Eds.), *Development as Social Transformation: Reflections on the Global Problematique*(pp.204-270). Toronto: Hodder and Stoughton.

⁴⁸ Melucci, Alberto. (1980). The new social movements: a theoretical approach." *Social Science Information*, 19:199-226.

⁴⁹ Kriesi, Hanspeter. (1989). "New social movements and the new class in the Netherlands." *American Journal of Sociology*, 94:1078-1116.

⁵⁰ Croteau, David. (1995). *Politics and the Class Divide*, Philadelphia,PA: Temple University Press.

distinguished these movements from traditional movements. Most significantly, new movements do not simply advance middle-class interests in the way that traditional labor and community organizing advanced the immediate interests of their constituencies. New Social Movement theorists draw attention to the distinct values, ideologies, organizational forms, and political strategies that characterized new social movements.

These theories are also more able to understand conflicts within the middle class over the goals of new social movements. New Class theories fail in this regard because they perceive new social movements as a direct expression of class interests that emerge with this class. As New Social Movement theorists see these movements as responses to new developments in the organization of capitalism rather than political expressions of existing middle-class interests, they are able to examine divergent responses within different segments of the middle class. Furthermore, New Social Movement theorists rightly dispute the claim that these movements were advancing socialism. Instead, they observe the search for new forms of identity and personal expression, often in opposition to traditional middle-class values of rationality and order. While New Social Movement theorists perceive these movements as a defensive reaction against the encroachment of invasive capitalism, Inglehart proposes that they were a positive affirmation of new values resulting from growing affluence. Capitalist development, therefore, is viewed as apposite rather than negative process. Rather than protecting existing spheres of life from new encroachments, Inglehart sees a new “postmaterialist” generation discovering new values given their freedom from material want. A growing share of the population in industrialized countries is being liberated from pre-occupation with economics and survival and shifting attention toward the search for personal meaning and quality of life.

To Inglehart, the more affluent middle class is making this shift first, while those with greater material needs are still struggling to survive.

While the new social movements have middle-class memberships, they do not reflect narrow material interests. Nor are these movements simply responses to new economic developments, given similar characteristics within earlier middle-class movements. Furthermore, the middle class is not unified in these movements, nor are these movements themselves unified in their values and interests. Thus their goals cannot be understood as a simple extension of middle-class politics.

3.4 NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE REVISED CLASS CONCEPTS

The new social movements pose a direct challenge to Marxist theories on what should be their most secure terrain – their ability to identify the main lines of social division and conflict and to explain the broad contours of historical change in the advanced capitalist world. Rather than rejecting class analysis altogether, some researchers have tried to explain patterns of support for the new movements by using revised class concepts. The new social movements have been explained as an outgrowth of the interests of the new middle class⁵¹ or new class; the state-sector middle class;⁵² the service class;⁵³ the old and new petite;⁵⁴ and classes located in contradictory locations

⁵¹ Kitschelt, Herbert. (1985). "New Social Movements in West Germany and the United States." In Maurice Zeitlin (Ed.), *Political Power and Social Theory*. Vol. 5, 5. Greenwich, Conn.: JAI Press.

⁵² Cotgrove, Stephen and Andrew Duff. (1980). "Environmentalism, Middle-Class Radicalism and Politics." *Sociological Review*, 28:2, 333-51.

⁵³ Lash, Scott, and John Urry. (1987). *The End of Organized Capitalism* (pp. 180-195). Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

between proletariat and bourgeoisie.⁵⁵ Wilde, on the other hand, described the new social movements as “protest movements within the working class.”

For Vester, the new movements represent the reemergence of traditionally lower-class resistance among the “new plebeians,” characterized as those who are highly educated but blocked in their chances for upward mobility. According to Offe, at least three different groups constitute the new movements’ social base: the old and new middle classes, and economically peripheralized (decommodified) strata, such as the unemployed and underemployed, housewives, and students.⁵⁶ Other putative characteristics of participants in the new conflicts which can be linked more or less closely to social class include youth, high levels of education, and employment within the cultural sector.⁵⁷ All such attempts to account for the new movements in terms of social classes run into difficulties. First, recent studies indicate that the new social movements social composition is much more diverse than any of the class-based approaches suggest. There is evidence that even non-active supporters of the new movements were drawn from the various social classes in approximately representative proportions. The lack of class distinctiveness of the new social movements base might be seen as reflecting the relative classlessness of many contemporary forms of deprivation and domination.

⁵⁴ Eder, Klaus. (1985). “The ‘New Social Movements’: Moral Crusades, Political Pressure Groups, or Social Movements?”, *Social Research*, 52:4, 869-90.

⁵⁵ Kriesi, Hanspeter. (1989). “Local Mobilization for the People’s Petition of the Dutch Peace Movement.” *International Social Movement Research*, 1:41-81.

⁵⁶ Offe, Claus. (1987). “Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics: Social Movements since the 1960s.” In Charles S. Maier (Ed.), *Changing Boundaries of the Political*(pp. 63-106). Cambridge University Press.

⁵⁷ Kriesi, Hanspeter. (1989). “Local Mobilization for the People’s Participation of the Dutch Peace Movement.” *International Social Movement Research*, 1:41-81.

According to an influential German study originally published in 1983, “the population of those who are immediately affected [negatively by the modernization process] cannot be pinned down according to clear categories of class and stratum, in contrast to other cases of social advantaging.”⁵⁸ As a result, “one should not expect to find sharply differentiated new social-structural social camps alongside the new lines of conflict, comparable to the class contradictions of class society.”⁵⁹ Ulrich Beck’s notion of a shift from a class society to risk society elaborates upon the idea that: “The generalization of modernization risks unleash a social dynamic that can no longer be grasped and understood in class categories.”⁶⁰ What makes new social movements new is precisely the fact that class becomes much less important in determining the base, interests, or ideology of the movement than in the older economic reading. While this logic is compelling as a means of dispelling the lingering influence of economic readings of sociopolitical activism, it is not a sufficient way of dealing with the question of class.

New social movements may not be economically determined in what a Weberian would call “economic relevance.” For instance, the goals and policies pursued by a movement may have a very different impact on diverse social classes; just as differing class positions are likely to shape people’s definition of a grievable issue. One strategy for sidestepping the issue of class is to argue that the group identities undergirding collective action have shifted from class to status, race, gender, ethnicity, or nationality. Another

⁵⁸ Brand, Karl-Werner, Detlef Busser and Dieter Rucht. (1986). *Aufbruch in eine andere Gesellschaft. Neue Soziale Bewegungen in der Bundesrepublik*. Frankfurt am Main: Campus. Pp. 33.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.* pp. 43.

⁶⁰ Beck, Ulrich. (1986). *Risikogesellschaft. Auf dem Weg in eine andere Moderne* (pp. 52). Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

theoretical strategy that marginalized the role of class is to argue that new social movement constituencies derived more from an ideological identification with certain issues than membership in some homogenous social base.⁶¹ An example of this strategy may be found in the argument of Dalton, Kuechler, and Burklin, that the defining characteristic of new social movements was their advocacy of a new social paradigm that challenged the dominant goal structure of Western societies. In their account, such movements draw on a socially diffuse base of popular support rather than any specific class or ethnic base. They see this as a shift from group-based politics rooted in instrumental interest to value-based politics rooted in ideological support for collective goods. The shift from interest to ideology may therefore be a reflection of the fact that in advanced capitalism, many deprivations and forms of domination had acquired a relatively classless character because their effects touch members of many different social groups and classes.⁶²

Despite these two theoretical strategies that shifted attention away from class, the most common strategy within the new social movement literature is to argue that these movements did indeed have a social class base that could be conceptualized as a middle-class base in contrast to the working-class base of old social movements. The new social movement paradigm offers a historically specific version of social movements as associated with new forms of middle-class radicalism.⁶³ The “new” middle class, a recently emerged social stratum employed in the nonproductive sectors of the economy,

⁶¹ Buechler, Steven M. (Summer, 1995). “New Social Movement Theories.” *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol.36 (No.3):pp.441-464.

⁶² Steinmetz, George. (1994). “Regulation Theory, Post-Marxism, and the New Social Movements.” *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, Vol. 36 (No.1):pp.176-212.

⁶³ Pichardo, Nelson A. (1997). “New Social Movements: A Critical Review,” *Annual Review of Sociology*, Vol.23:pp.411-430.

constitutes the base of support within the new social movements.⁶⁴ Research on the rise of the new middle class within postindustrial society seems to establish the credibility of this social phenomenon.⁶⁵ New social movement theorists go a step beyond, by arguing that this stratum produced the chief participants of NSMs because they are not bound to the corporate profit motive nor dependent on the corporate world for their sustenance.⁶⁶ Instead, they tend to work in areas that were highly dependent upon state expenditures such as academia, the arts, and human service agencies, and they tend to be highly educated.

The other view of participants of the new social movements is that they were not defined by class boundaries but are marked by a common concern over social issues. It is an ideological, rather than ethnic, religious, or class-based community. They are defined by common values rather than a common structural location. Offe offers a slightly different view of the actors of NSM. He argues that they were drawn from three sectors: the new middle class, elements of the old middle class (farmers, shop owners, and artisan-producers), and a “peripheral” population.⁶⁷ These populations consist of persons not heavily engaged in the labor market (students, housewives, and retired persons).

Studies of environmental movements reveal that NSM participants were drawn primarily from two populations: the “new” middle class is one; the other is geographically bound communities that were being directly affected by the negative

⁶⁴ Rudig, W. (1998). “Peace and ecology movements in Western Europe.” *Western Europe Politics*, Vol.11:pp. 26-39.

⁶⁵ Brint, S. (1994). “New class and cumulative trend explanations of the liberal attitudes of professionals.” *American Journal of Sociology*, Vol.90:pp. 30-71.

⁶⁶ Offe, C. (1985). “New social movements: challenging the boundaries of institutional politics.” *Sociological Research*, Vol.52:pp.817-868.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*: pp. 817-830.

externalities of industrial growth. Participants are the more ideologically committed middle class as well as communities that were affected by the adverse impacts of the development projects.⁶⁸ However, whether middle-class participants engaged significantly in protest in the past is a critical question for the NSM paradigm. Waves of middle-class protest have occurred since the early 1880s in both Europe and the United States. These include the abolition, prohibition, suffrage as well as a number of nativist movements. Thus, whether the middle class is only involved in social movements is indeed open to question. The problem, here, is that too many exceptions were cited.

Claus Offe suggests that the social base of new social movements was threefold: the new middle class, elements of the old middle class, and “decommodified” groups outside the labor market. This unusual combination of groups derives from the structural features of advanced capitalist society, which include a broadening of the negative effects of the system beyond a single class, a deepening of the methods and effects of social control and domination, and the irreversibility of problems and crisis potentials in the society.⁶⁹ These effects create a tripartite constituency for new social movements whose only common feature may be their distance from the old poles of capital and labor.

As a result, the complex politics of new social movements will depend on which of these three factions becomes dominant at any given moment as well as the alliances that such groups might pursue with other political actors. The possibilities range from maintenance of the old, growth-oriented paradigm to a new form of corporatism to a

⁶⁸ Apter, D.E. and Sawa, N. (1984). *Against the State: Politics and Social Protest in Japan*, Harvard University Press: Cambridge, MA.

⁶⁹ Offe, Claus. (1985). “New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics,” *Social Research*, Vol.52:pp.817-868.

genuinely new challenge to the prevailing social order. The latter, in Offe's view, would require new social movements rooted in new middle-class elements, which then ally with the traditional left and proceed to establish a positive relation with peripheral and decommodified groups.⁷⁰ Only this alliance, according to Offe, could effectively challenge the old paradigm of growth-oriented politics and replace it with a new paradigm rooted in distinctively new social movement values and goals.

According to Eder, new social movements, as opposed to other forms of collective action, are most likely to derive from those niches of contemporary society that preserved old communitarian traditions and radically democratic projects while also seeking new social relations that transcend moralism and power.⁷¹ For Eder, new social movements are not class movements in the traditional sense, but they manifest a new type of class relationship in which the making of the middle class as a group with a distinct identity and consciousness is dialectically intertwined with the mobilization of new social movements.

While there is no consensus on the question of class and new social movements, this debate provides several important lessons. First, these movements represent a major form of social activism whose social base is sometimes best defined in something other than class terms, whether that be gender, ethnicity, race, sexuality or age.⁷² Moreover, new social movements require us to rethink how all collective identities, including class identities, are not structurally guaranteed but socially constructed.

⁷⁰ Ibid.: pp.817-840.

⁷¹ Eder, Klaus. (1985). "The' New Social Movements' : Moral Crusades, Political Pressure Groups, or Social Movements?. *Social Research*, Vol. 52:pp.869-890.

⁷² Hunt, Scott A., Robert D. Benford and David A. Snow. (1994). Identity Fields: Framing Processes and the Social Construction of Movement Identities". In Larana, Johnston and Gusfield (Eds.), *New Social Movements*.

3.5 NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, ENVIRONMENTAL RIGHTS AND THE CONSTRUCTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The complex domain of environmental rights refers to those cases where the claims and rights of peoples to territories, natural resources, knowledge systems, and even their bodies are being ignored or abused.⁷³ The rights of indigenous, or “first peoples”, to the lands and natural resources they have historically occupied and continue to use have been a central focus of anthropologists working with these groups.⁷⁴ The territorial rights of these peoples are now being analyzed from the vantage point of their historical patterns of and future potential for the environmental protection of their respective lands.⁷⁵ On an explicitly political level, the rights of indigenous peoples to their territories are also analyzed with regard to the concepts of sovereignty, autonomy, and self-determination.

The discursive appropriation of indigenous peoples as natural conservationists and tropical forests as pristine habitats by northern environmental movements has created an arena of heated anthropological debate. Redford critiques the notion of the “ecologically noble savage” and argues that as indigenous peoples entered into contact with the Western world, they reveal “the same capacities, desires and perhaps, needs to overexploit their environment as did our European ancestors.”⁷⁶ Edgerton also “challenges the myth of primitive harmony” by documenting a host of “sick societies” that had made maladaptive decisions in the past and then maintained them, sometimes

⁷³ Miller, MS. Ed. (1993). *Environmentalism: The View from Anthropology* (pp.240). New York: Routledge.

⁷⁴ Goldtooth, TBK. (1995). Indigenous nations: summary of sovereignty and its implications for environmental protection. In B. Bryant (Ed.), *Environmental Justice* (pp.139-48). Washington, DC: Island.

⁷⁵ Hannum, H. (1996). *Autonomy, Sovereignty, and Self-Determination: The accommodation of Conflicting Rights* (pp.525). Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

⁷⁶ Redford, K.H. (1990). *The Ecologically Noble Savage*. *Orion* 9 (3): 22-37.

driving themselves into extinction.⁷⁷ Sponsel rebuts this position with the forceful argument that “for millennia, these indigenous people have developed the land, generally in ways that used land and resources on a sustained basis without major, irreversible environmental degradation and destruction.”⁷⁸ Bodley takes up what can perhaps be taken as an intermediate position and affirms that “when a group has no politically or commercially driven cultural incentive for expanding its population, production, and consumption, its members do not need to be self-conscious conservationists.”⁷⁹ Regarding the discursive appropriation of the Amazonian rainforest by environmentalists, Fisher chronicles the way the perception of Amazonia as wilderness was consolidated in the twentieth century with the effect that “indigenous peoples disappear from the social history of the area and from the policy recommendations of local administrators only to be later resurrected as part of the natural attributes of the wilderness region.”⁸⁰ Nugent also makes a similar argument regarding Amazonia’s *caboclo* population, which for years were “invisible”⁸¹ in Amazonian anthropological research and even today, with the new interest in environmental issues, are still not recognized as a historically specific peasantry that was forged from the economic forces of Amazonian colonial history but rather are recognized as examples of sustainable development.

⁷⁷ Edgerton, R.B. (1992). *Sick Societies: Challenging the Myth of Primitive Harmony* (pp.278). New York: Free Press.

⁷⁸ Sponsel, L.E., Headland, T.N., Bailey R.C., Eds., (1996). *Tropical Deforestation: The Human Dimension*. New York: Columbia University Press.

⁷⁹ Bodley, J.H. (1997). Revisionism in ecological anthropology. In Headland, T.N. (Ed.). *Current Anthropology*, 38(4): 605-25.

⁸⁰ Fisher, W.H. (1996). Native Amazonians and the making of the Amazon wilderness: From discourse of riches and sloth to underdevelopment. In E.M. Dupuis, P. Vandergest (Eds.), *Creating the Countryside: The Politics of Rural and Environmental Discourse* (pp. 166-203). Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

⁸¹ Nugent, S. (1993). *Amazonian Caboclo Society: An essay on Invisibility and Peasant Economy* (pp. 278). Providence, RI: Berg.

These critiques are linked to the even broader issue of how environmental discourses are constructed at a global level and point to the difficult cross-cultural issue of developing a global discourse that is shared rather than imposed. Shiva takes the latter position and argues that “the global does not represent the universal human interest; it represents a particular local and parochial interest that has been globalized through the scope of its reach.”⁸² Milton explores the possibilities of a shared position by showing how global environmentalist discourse “encompasses a number of transcultural perspectives which both compete and overlap with one another.”⁸³ On the other hand, Yearley postulates that environmentalism has a type of global specificity based in the three factors of its intimate relationship to science, its practical claims to international solidarity, and its ability to offer a concerted critique of, and alternative to, capitalist industrialism.⁸⁴

To say that human rights are socially constructed is to say that ideas and practices in respect of human rights were created, re-created, and instantiated by human actors in particular socio-historical settings and conditions. David Beetham has argued that the subject of human rights “demands attention to considerations of both power and justice, of political struggle and justiciability, if the subject was to be adequately understood.”⁸⁵ Similarly, in *Human Rights in the Twenty First Century: A Global Challenge*, a number of writers discerns links between social movements, power, and

⁸² Shiva, V. (1993). The greening of the global reach. In W. Sachs (Ed.), *Global Ecology: A New Arena of Political Conflict*, ed. W. Sachs, pp. 149-56. London: Zed Books.

⁸³ Milton, K. (1996). *Environmentalism and Cultural Theory: Exploring the Role of Anthropology in Environmental Discourse* (pp.266). London: Routledge.

⁸⁴ Yearley, S. (1994). Social movements and environmental change. In M. Redclift, T. Brenton (Eds.), *Social Theory and Global Environmental Change* (pp. 150-68), London: Routledge.

⁸⁵ Beetham, David. Ed. (1995) *Introduction: Human Rights in the Study of Politics. Politics and Human Rights*, 1,8.

human rights. Perhaps most interestingly, the entire literature which focuses on supposed “generations” of human rights could be seen as being built on an assumption of the link between rights claims and the historical struggles of particular social movements.

The construction and use of rights discourses by social movements has played an important and positive role in challenging relations and structures of power, both in respect of concentrated sites of power and in terms of the way that power was embedded in everyday social relations. While the use of rights discourse has been considered in purely instrumental terms, they also operate expressively in seeking to legitimate alternative values, norms, and lifestyles and validate the perspectives and identities of those oppressed by particular relations and structures of power.⁸⁶ In Gramscian terms, they might be said to be seeking to establish “counter hegemony” at the level of public common sense.

The idea that claims to natural rights and the rights of man were socio-historical constructions that sought to challenge extant relations and structures of power; the power of absolutist states.⁸⁷ The rise of new social movements that had mobilized around a wide variety of issues has become global social movements, in the sense that they were both global in scope and have an overtly global orientation. This is true even in cases such as that of indigenous peoples’ movements where the assertion of cultural identity and difference lies at the heart of the movements. In fact, all of these movements have made extensive use of rights discourses and proliferated whole new sets of rights claims, many of which have been articulated as claims for human rights. In the process, new social

⁸⁶ Bartholomew, Amy and Mayer, Margit. (Nov. 1992). Nomads of the Present: Melucci’s Contribution to “New Social Movement” Theory. *9 Theory, Culture and Society* pp. 141-154.

⁸⁷ Donnelly, Jack. (1989). *Universal Human Rights in Theory and Practice*(pp -28-29).

movements have identified and challenged relations and structures of power in a wide diversity of forms. Even though such challenges may not have succeeded, it is possible to see here an unfolding and expanding of increasingly complex understandings of power arising as a consequence of the struggles of the new social movements.

While rights are employed to challenge power, they are not a product of social relations but are embedded within them, positioned at the concrete conjuncture of two fields of the social: agency and power. However, while saying that, human rights are above all the result of historical political struggles. In other words, rather than seeing human rights claims as being constructed as challenges to extant relations and structures of power they are also an expression of the consolidation of newly emerging relations and structures of power challenging old forms of power while seeking to consolidate new ones.

Social movements have been important agents in the processes fostering socio-historical change. Social movements construct claims for human rights as part of their challenge to the status quo. To the extent that social movements succeed in facilitating change, new relations and structures of power would typically become institutionalized and culturally sedimented within a transformed social order. In other words, political, economic, and cultural forms come to reflect and sustain that balance of relations and structures of power both instrumentally and expressively and do so, through existing discourses on human rights.

In the context of India's Northeast, marginality of the indigenous peoples from the powerful decision making institutions produces their support for the environmental

movement. These new conscious peoples are victims of alienation by the dominant systems and values that represented high-handed bureaucratization and capitalist's interest. These new conscious peoples also tend to be the new radical communities nursing development-critical moods. In a strict sense, these peoples are classless as they represent diverse social, political, economic and intellectual background. At the same time, they abundantly bank and adopted the rights based approach to pursue their interests.

In 2011, indigenous peoples' right to participate in the decision-making processes was high up in the national and international indigenous agenda. The objective is not to marginalize the indigenous peoples. Special focus was on the state's duty to consult indigenous peoples in order to seek their free, prior and informed consent when issues that would affect their lives and future are planned. The final study on indigenous peoples and the right to participate in decision-making, elaborated by the UN Expert Mechanism on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (EMRIP), was presented to the UN Human Rights Council.

This study gives an authoritative interpretation of indigenous peoples' rights to participate in internal as well as external decision-making processes in accordance with international human rights norms. The study makes it clear, for example, that the right of indigenous peoples to participate in decision-making processes was a substantive as well as a procedural right based on the right to self-determination, and that indigenous peoples' right to participation also includes their collective right as peoples to have decision-making authority and to affect the outcomes of consultations. The EMRIP's

study also gives advice on consultations and on the implementation of Free, Prior and Informed Consent (FPIC). In relation to FPIC, it makes the following precision:

The element of “free” implies no coercion, intimidation or manipulation; “prior” implies that consent is obtained in advance of the activity associated with the decision being made, and includes the time necessary to allow indigenous peoples to undertake their own decision-making processes; “informed” implies that indigenous peoples have been provided all information relating to the activity and that information is objective, accurate and presented in a manner and form understandable to indigenous peoples; “consent implies that indigenous peoples have agreed to the activity that is the subject of the relevant decision, which may also be subject to conditions.

While assimilating the variants of approaches and theories towards understanding the new social movements in Northeast India, it remains imperative to establish the social construction of human rights in shaping the new movements. Fields and Narr opines that “if people are not aware of the historical and contextual nature of human rights and are not aware that human rights become realized only by the struggles of real people experiencing real instances of domination, then human rights are all too easily used as symbolic legitimizers for instruments of that very domination.”⁸⁸ Despite recognition in recent literature that there is some sort of link between social movements and human rights, the nature of this link and its possible implications for understanding human rights have rarely been explored in any detail. These lacunae arise because dominant discourse

⁸⁸ Fields, A. Belden and Narr, Wolf-Dieter. (1992). Human Rights as a Holistic Concept. *14 Human Rights Quarterly*. 1,5 (1992).

from both proponents and opponents of human rights are not analytically equipped to grasp the way in which ideas and practices in respect of human rights have been socially constructed in the context of social movement challenges to extant relations and structures of power. The contention, here, is that if one uses the triadic relationship between human rights, social movements, and power as an organizing focus for analysis, one would get a very different picture from those offered by the dominant discourses.

3.6 NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN NORTHEAST INDIA: CONSCIOUSNESS FROM WITHOUT

In India's Northeast, evolution of awareness was realized with the planting of widespread, irreversible and catastrophic potentials of development projects impact, particularly big dams, that became associated with excessive centralization of decision-making power, the state's incapacity to deliver adequate social services, and the eroding legitimacy of the state. Meanwhile, the evolution of awareness assisted by the contemporary genres of grievances resulted in translating the momentum into new social movements. The myriads of grievances and the awareness emerge through social interaction, and their precise articulation is the result of negotiation among movement members. This eventually resulted in building the solidarity and coalitions.

Despite the emergence of numerous social movements in the region over a decade, there has been little research done to emphasize the continuities between contemporary and earlier protests or to study the distinctiveness of the new movement. Instead of viewing contemporary social movements primarily as aberrations, they are clubbed together as inheritors of old grievances. However, in this research the label "new

social movements” or environmentalism is employed to suggest a qualitative change in the nature of contemporary protests compared to former ones. Post-independent India’s discourse of development in the industrialization deprived region of the Northeast added by the varied values of its citizenry and their rights is one of the reasons responsible for the qualitative differences between earlier and contemporary social movements.

Although the “new social movement” label is used in different ways by various Western European theorists and writers, this study attempts to exhume the characteristics of contemporary movements in terms of their origins, constituency, values, focus, and modus operandi in the context of Northeast India. There is a serious need to acknowledge that the post-Marxist bent of many strands of new social movements theory failed to take the relationship between social class and identity formation in this marginalized periphery. Moreover, new social movements theory models are insufficient in terms of explaining the political action of non-Western actors. While doing that, new social movements in this study will focus particularly on the environmental movements generated by dams in the region.

This research also applies theoretical concepts derived from discourse theory to the cases of new social movements in the northeast while also comparing the explanatory power of new social movement theory and discourse theory. The new social movements in Northeast India are reactions to the concentration of power held by the state in collusion with entrenched corporatist groups to negate the indigenous peoples from their traditional land rights and exempt them as stakeholders in the name of development.

According to the Dossier prepared by Kalpavriksh, South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP), the organizations concern about the large dams being proposed for the Northeast region was sparked off by e-mails from one Bittu Sahgal, Editor of Sanctuary Asia, who had also been a member of Ministry of Environment and Forest's (MoEF) Expert Appraisal Committee for river valley projects (1998-2000). Back then, there was little news or information in the public domain about the 'development projects' for the region. The few active groups in the Northeast had close to no information on them either. It was clear that all the planning and the decision-making was taking place in Delhi and NGOs or citizens' groups in the region had no clue about the leviathan projects. The SANDRP convened a meeting with activists and NGOs from the region under the banner 'Regional Consultation on Dams and Development' at Mawlein, Meghalaya, in July 2001 and disseminate the findings of the World Commission on Dams (WCD). SANDRP also presented its findings of their research to participating groups from the Northeast.⁸⁹ Since that meeting, there have been several others and the information base and number of organizations and individuals concerned about the issue has grown tremendously. However, acquiring and accessing information about the 'development projects' for the Northeast region remains a hurdle.

As the dams debate is rooted in wider, ongoing debate on development, the growing coalitions and networks within the region started voicing for a framework of internationally accepted norms on human rights, the right to development and sustainability, a rights based approach where recognition of rights and assessment of risks provides the basis for negotiated decisions on dams and their alternatives. In the process,

⁸⁹ Menon, Manju. (2005). *Large Dams for Hydropower in Northeast India: A Dossier*, Kalpavriksh, New Delhi.

reconciling competing needs and entitlements becomes the single most important factor in addressing the conflicts and grievances associated with development projects, particularly large scale interventions such as dams. The new coalitions and organizations bring new voices, perspectives and criteria into decision-making, and develop a new approach that would build consensus around the decisions reached.

Initially, in the absence of ‘mandatory’ information’s, the differences in movement types, analysts’ perspectives, and state structures account for the inability of the new social movement label to catch on in the region. But there is a novelty associated with the contemporary movements that merited serious consideration. The argument is that this newness derives, ultimately, from the nature of the grievances in question. When discontents are regional in scope, though already national and international outside the Northeast, adequate solutions depend upon cooperation not only from the region, but also from the national as well as international support groups. Considering the river networks the region has outside India, isolated efforts by individual state(s) do not address the larger issues involved. Inevitably, the local or regional issue is immediately translated into a wider national or international issue. In other words, it becomes a nation-transcending grievances.

New social movements refer to movements and organizations that dealt primarily with issues of identity and meaning, in contrast to traditional class-based organizations such as unions or political parties. New social movements are “new” because of their concern with post-material goals such as creating shared meanings around collective identities and alternative lifestyles. New social movement theory has made important

contributions to theorizing the political actor, despite the ethnocentric views that often pervaded it.

Laclau and Mouffe recognized the plurality of political subject. For example, workers are not only workers, but also women and/or students. They argue that one facet of identity (class) should not be privileged in terms of understanding how social change was made. Moreover, there is no “necessary” logic between “class identity” and “class position.” Attempting to avoid class reductionism, Laclau and Mouffe argue that the mode of production did not determine the “interests” of the political actors. Therefore, political actors presumably play a more conscious and active role in their identity formation, constructing their identities around whatever individuals recognize their “interests” to be at any given moment.⁹⁰ Instead of attempting to locate agency as struggling with structural forces, Laclau and Offe offer the concept of “articulation.” Actors “articulate” social elements to create identity and meaning as they attempt to implement a political project. Without the concept of ideology, it is difficult to understand how power operates in the formation of identity.⁹¹ Laclau and Mouffe’s notion of ‘articulation’ highlights the importance of the power of language and discourse in the construction of identity.

Although this is a critical insight into identity construction, discourse becomes reified because it is completely divorced from the material reality of social life and history. In relation to this, three aspects of Laclau and Mouffe’s formulation stands problematic for the study of social movements. One is that, all identities are regarded as

⁹⁰ Laclau, Ernesto and C. Mouffe.(1988). *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics*. London: Verso.

⁹¹ Ibid. Pp. 65.

equal in weight; there is no historic specificity as to why one identity might take precedence over another. Second, their post-industrial bias excludes a large number of collective and individual subjects, with the exception of white middle-class people living in postindustrial societies. Assymetrical race and class relations are glossed over in the U.S. and Europe. Political subjects that did not fit their model, namely Third World and minority subjects fell into a category of “other” against whom Western political actors can define themselves.⁹² Third, there is an overemphasis on agency in identity formation. This ability to create and live out multiple identities is a gift that only people in “postindustrial” democracies had. This reality is evident in the “working class” that is becoming increasingly racially diverse and feminized.⁹³ Therefore, our ideas about who is an actor and our theoretical approach to their social movements should reflect these socio-historical changes.

According to Laclau and Mouffe, there are democratic subject positions (read European) and popular subject positions, read Third World. The Third World lacks the ability to have multiple identities because the societies in which they live are considered undemocratic in comparison to Europe.⁹⁴ For these authors, popular subject is still mainly concerned with the distribution of economic resources, with “less developed” types of consciousness such as nationalism. So, Third World subjects become simplified, rendering the Third World subject’s consciousness a reflection of their political economic situation. For Laclau and Mouffe, orthodox Marxist reflection theory, which views

⁹² Said, Edward. (1993). *Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vintage Books.

⁹³ Sassen, Saskia. (1998). *Globalization and Its Discontents*. New York: The New Press.

⁹⁴ Escobar, Arturo. (1992). “Culture, Economics, and Politics in Latin American Social Movement Theory and Research.” In A. Escobar and S.E. Alvarez (Eds.), *The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy, and Democracy*. Boulder: Westview Press.

consciousness as a reflection of the mode of production, is unacceptable for European subjects living in Western democracies, but suitable for Third World subjects.

The global threats from the new grievances typically make national boundaries irrelevant. Many contemporary discontents focus on public rather than private goods. The “no exit” nature of these grievances virtually eliminates the otherwise useful distinction McCarthy and Zald make between beneficiary and conscience constituents.⁹⁵ Social movement organizations sometimes unite with mainstream corporations and interest groups in opposition to certain state and corporate targets. Nations themselves occasionally join the challengers, as happened after the Bhopal disaster when India stood with the environmental activists against the multinational Union Carbide Corporation.

The central argument is that the widespread, irreversible, and catastrophic potentials ushered by big dams that were associated with the new grievances make social movements focused on these threats significantly different from the movement for autonomy, students’, farmers, and other civil rights movements that were popular in the region that addressed their claims to incumbent political authorities and are limited to national boundaries.

In the course of time, grievances take the form of collective consciousness that emerged through experiences and actions of the classless movements although sharing the same interests, values and objectives.⁹⁶ The new social movements in Northeast India

⁹⁵ McCarthy, J. and M. Zald. (1997). “Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory,” *American Journal of Sociology*, 82: pp. 1212-1241.

⁹⁶ While in the West and Europe, movements are largely defined by the character of the class that spearheaded them. However, in the case of the Northeast, as the movements were cooperating within coalitions that crossed class lines, the character of such movements represents layered labels; that they are authoritative, rebellious, inherently reactionary, radical, conservative, or that they are ambiguous. The

are represented by coalitions of shared grievances and consciousness against the oppressive development projects ushered by the state and dam builders without securing “free prior and informed consent” of the indigenous peoples who have been marginalized in every processes of the projects.

The new social movement in Northeast India represents the voices of dissent against the ‘over-rationalization of society.’⁹⁷ The new movements share a propensity to question and disrupt settled patterns of intellectual, social and political life. The voices of dissent have been portrayed as the key to “transformative politics,”⁹⁸ which, drawing upon the democratic potential of new social movements, would advance active political life and social equality.

Environmentalism, in Northeast India, has clearly emerged as the source of a significant current of dissent by raising questions about progress that had sustained the pattern of development characteristic of the advanced industrial order. The sphere of environmental politics, thus, forms a particularly prominent site of contact and contest between the largely antagonistic worlds of policy professionalism and dissenting social movements. The idea of a transformative politics challenging the established order has significantly informed particular social movements and provides a way of understanding the ensemble of “new social movements”⁹⁹

new social movement in Northeast, indeed, represents the synthesis of all these characters at one point or the other. Having said that, they are also open for negotiation and discourse to settle their grievances.

⁹⁷ Offe, Claus. (1985). “New social movements: challenging the boundaries of institutional politics”, *Social Research*, Vol.52:pp.817-868

⁹⁸ Torgerson, Douglas. (Spring, 1997). “Policy Professionalism and the Voices of Dissent: The Case of Environmentalism.” *Polity*, Vol.29 (No.3):pp.345-374.

⁹⁹ Offe, Claus. (1985). “New social movements: challenging the boundaries of institutional politics”, *Social Research*, Vol.52: pp.817-868.

Applying Habermas's concept of life-space in the context of Northeast, New Social Movement theorists argue that the production process had imposed new levels of control beyond the sphere of production into consumption, services, and social relations. This encroachment is caused by the growing needs of capitalism to control not only labor power but also complex organizational systems, information, processes of symbol formation, and interpersonal relations. As Alberto Melucci explains:

The new social movements are struggling, therefore, not only for the reappropriation of the material structure of production, but also for collective control over socio-economic development, i.e., for the reappropriation of time, of space, and of relationships in the individual's daily existence.¹⁰⁰

The environmental movements in Northeast India has clearly made a mark on the contemporary political landscape in the region, affecting both terms of public discourse and features of the policy process. At the same time, environmentalism or the new social movements has an immense influence on policy professionalism by shaping the focus of attention in three related ways; through agenda setting, problem definition, and epistemology.¹⁰¹ Environmentalism, in the Northeast, is about realizing "transformative politics."

¹⁰⁰ Melucci, Alberto. (1980). "The new social movements: a theoretical approach". *Social Science Information*, Vol. 19: pp.199-226.

¹⁰¹ Torgerson, Douglas. (1995). "The Uncertain Quest for Sustainability: Public Discourse and the Politics of Environmentalism." In Frank Fischer and Michael Black (Eds.), *Greening Environmental Policy: The Politics of a Sustainable Future*. Paul Chapman: London.

3.7 NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS: NEGOTIATING NEW FRONTIERS

The new social movements seek new forms of community to replace the “formal, abstract and instrumental relationships characterizing state and society” rather than class interests.¹⁰² The new movements do not explicitly articulate the goals of any particular interests in class terms. Instead, it seeks to establish new forms of identity as legitimate options in society. New social movements reflect continuity with society rather than some dramatic schism.¹⁰³ Melucci opines that the new social movements were movements for a new democracy. He stated that the self-limiting concept of emancipation allows these movements to offer the concept of “democracy of everyday life”¹⁰⁴ and perceive democracy as the condition for recognition, autonomy, and self-affirmation.

New Social Movement theorists emphasize the differences between contemporary movements and “old” social movements mobilizing around material needs. Claus Offe contrasts “old vs. “new” movements in terms of their actors, issues, values, and “modes of action.”¹⁰⁵ Older movements, particularly the labor movement, mobilize as socio-economic groups pursuing selective interests, while new movements promote goals that cut across class lines such as gender, race, and locality. In this view, the values of individualism and material progress are being replaced with priorities of personal autonomy and self-determination. Finally, the formal organizational system and interest

¹⁰² Breines, Wini. (1982). *The Great Refusal: Community and Organization in the New Left: 1962-1968*. Praeger: New York.

¹⁰³ Rose, Fred. (Sep.1997). “Toward a Class-Cultural Theory of Social Movements: Reinterpreting New Social Movements”. *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 12 (No.3): pp. 461-494.

¹⁰⁴ Melucci, Alberto. (1992). “Liberation or Meaning? Social Movements, Culture and Democracy.” *Development and Change*, Vol.23 (No.3):pp. 43-77.

¹⁰⁵ Offe, Claus. (1985). “New social movements: challenging the boundaries of institutional politics”. *Social Research*, Vol.52:pp.817-868.

group politics of older movements are giving way to greater informality, egalitarian structures, and protest politics.¹⁰⁶ The new movements may represent a new genus of class politics: the new middle-class politics. But as Offe recognizes, in contrast to the older working - or middle-class politics, this politics of class is “not on behalf of a class.”¹⁰⁷

New social movement theorists have looked to other logics of action based in politics, ideology, and culture as the root of much collective action, and they have looked to other sources of identity such as ethnicity, gender, and sexuality as the definers of collective identity. The term “new social movements” thus refers to a diverse array of collective actions that had presumably displaced the old social movements of proletarian revolution associated with classical Marxism.¹⁰⁸

New Social Movement theorists perceive these movements as a defensive reaction against the encroachment of invasive capitalism. Inglehart proposes that they were a positive affirmation of new values resulting from growing affluence. Inglehart sees a new “postmaterialist” generation discovering new values given their freedom from material want. As a result, growing share of the population in industrialized countries is being liberated from preoccupation with economics and survival and shifting attention toward the search for personal meaning and quality of life.¹⁰⁹ On the other hand, Melucci not only views new social movements as the movements of the postindustrial era, he also

¹⁰⁶ Rose, Fred. (Sep.1997). “Toward a Class-Cultural Theory of Social Movements: Reinterpreting New Social Movements”. *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 12 (No.3): pp. 461-494.

¹⁰⁷ Offe, Claus. (1985). “New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics.” *Social Research*, Vol.52 (No.4):pp.817-868.

¹⁰⁸ Buechler, Steven M. (Summer, 1995). “New Social Movement Theories.” *The Sociological Quarterly*, Vol.36 (No.3):pp. 441-464.

¹⁰⁹ Inglehart, Ronald. (1997). *The Silent Revolution*. Princeton University Press: Princeton, NJ.

perceives them as a certain response to the failure of modernization and an urge towards it at the same time. The new movements push toward a development that had been constantly impeded by the political system and the institutionalization of development requirements. They struggle against such hindrance. This objective is achieved through resistances against repression and the opening of the institutions.¹¹⁰ The new movements are reaction to the state's attempt to control the civic sphere;¹¹¹ emerging primarily outside the bourgeois public sphere as extra-institutional phenomena rooted in civil society. Ultimately, the aim of the new social movements is "not to seize power in order to build a new world, but to regain power over their own lives by disengaging from the market rationality of productivism."¹¹² Supporting this view, Cohen stated that the ideological hegemony of the state required counter-hegemonic actions by social movements to dismantle the dominant social views that reinforce the legitimacy of the capitalist system.¹¹³

Considering the strengths and limitations that new social movement theories could make, its greatest contribution lies in understanding collective action when situated alongside other theoretical schools. In most general terms, it may be that different theories speak most effectively to different levels of analysis. The more political version of new social movement theory is more micro-oriented and has equally strong affinities with social constructionism. By exploring the links across levels and paradigms, our

¹¹⁰ Melucci, Alberto. (1981). "New Movements, terrorism, and the Political System: Reflections on the Italian Case." *Socialist Review*, Vol.11 (No.2):pp.97-136.

¹¹¹ Boggs, C. (1986). *Social Movements and Political Power*. Temple University Press: Philadelphia, PA.

¹¹² Gorz, A. (1982). *Farewell to the Working Class*. Pluto: London.

¹¹³ Cohen, J. (1985). "Rethinking social movements." *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, Vol.18:pp.303-325.

theoretical understanding and empirical analysis of collective action are likely to be enhanced. New social movement theory promises to be a vital part of this process.

To sum up, scrutinizing the diverse theories of new social movements, it is evident that new social movements challenged the conventional division of politics into left and right and broadened the definition of politics to include issues that had been considered outside the domain of political action.¹¹⁴ The conceptualization of their novelty was part of the movements themselves as well as of the academic analyses that took debate on these movements as an occasion to reform or reject Marxist theory and social democratic politics. The emphasis on novelty was extended to claims of epochal change when the new social movements were taken as signs of postindustrial or postmodern society.

The idea of new social movements has been brought into academic currency by several authors with various conceptual frameworks.¹¹⁵ In all cases, the concept is defined through a crucial counter-example: the nineteenth and early twentieth-century working class or labor movement. This is primarily understood in the singular, while new social movements are plural. Backdrop to the idea of new social movements, thus, is the notion that labor struggles had implicit objectives and were potentially transformative for the whole society. This was conceptualized sometimes in largely economic terms as the transcendence of capitalism and other times in more political terms as the social democratic transformation of modern states. In varying degrees, new social movements

¹¹⁴ Scott, Alan. (1990). *Ideology and the New Social Movements*. London: Unwin Hyman.

¹¹⁵ Touraine (1971, 1977, 1981, 1985, and 1988), Melucci (1980, 1981, 1988, and 1989), Habermas (1984 and 1988), Offe (1985), Eder (1985), and Cohen (1985; Cohen and Arato 1992) are among the more prominent. Besides, there are various other authors who are validating the discourse of new social movements.

theorists emphasize post-industrial society,¹¹⁶ the options opened by relative affluence and a growing middle class,¹¹⁷ the turn to individually defined needs after the common denominator of material sustenance had been satisfied,¹¹⁸ and expansion of the welfare state. Their positive examples come from the wide range of movements that began to engage people in the 1960s and 1970s after the apparent conservative quiescence of the 1950s. For Touraine, a key question is whether these new movements could ever coalesce in order to embody some of the decisive potential for social transformation once attributed to the labor movement and socialism. Habermas suggests not, theorizing new social movements in terms of a broader post-Marxist account of why movements can no longer hold the potential for fundamental social transformation in a society where the lifeworld is colonized by economic and administrative systems and large scale state and capitalist structures are inescapable. He sees the movements as part of the resistance of life-world to system. Similarly, Cohen and Arato and Touraine treat new social movements as part of the struggle for civil society to maintain autonomy from state and economy and as a source of reform and the introduction of new concerns into political agendas.¹¹⁹ For Melucci, new social movements must be seen simply as ends in themselves.¹²⁰

¹¹⁶ Touraine, Alan. (1985). "An introduction to the study of social movements." *Social Research*, 52:748-88.

¹¹⁷ Offe, Claus . (1985). "New social movements: Challenging the boundaries of institutional politics." *Social Research* 52:817-68.

¹¹⁸ Melucci, Alberto. (1989). *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

¹¹⁹ Cohen, Jean. (1985). "Strategy or identity: New theoretical paradigms and contemporary social movements." *Social Research*, 52: 663-716.

¹²⁰ Melucci, Alberto. (1981). "Ten hypotheses for the analysis of new movements," In D. Pinto (Ed.). *Contemporary Italian Sociology*. New York:Cambridge University Press: 173-94.

Melucci also employs the common postmodernist trope of arguing against the “metanarrative” of socialist liberation. With others, he sees the labor movement’s claim to be the main or exclusive source of progressive change or representative for those disadvantaged by the established order as intrinsically repressive, not just historically obsolete. In order to mount their challenge to that “old” social movement, however, these new social movements’ theorists have exaggerated the extent to which it ever was a unified historical actor with a single narrative and a disciplining institutional structure.

Throughout the history of labor and class movements, there has been contention over who should be included in them and how both common and different identities should be established. By leading to research on the protests of women, people of color, and other marginalized people, the recent growth of new social movements has helped to explode the myth that the narrowly white, male labor movement, against which new social movements were defined, was completely predominant.

The old social movement was utopian and sought to remake the whole of society through overcoming existing relations of domination and exploitation, theorists claim. New social movements, in contrast, defend specific spheres of life; their demands are more limited in scope but are also less negotiable. Here, new social movements’ theory points valuably to the importance of the defense of specific life-worlds and its link to non-negotiable demands, but through a sharply misleading historical opposition.

In this view, the state embodied an utopian drive of labor and social democratic movements but faced crises as the systems of money and power grew to dominate so much of social life that cultural reproduction could no longer provide people with the

motivation for either ordinary participation or transformative rebellion. New social movements arose out of this “exhaustion of utopian energies” and embodied a too-often neoconservative focus on defense of endangered ways of life.¹²¹ Central to the importance of identity politics and defensive orientations is the argument that New Social Movements were distinctive in politicizing everyday life rather than focusing on the large-scale systems of state and economy. Where the postwar consensus consecrated overall economic growth, distributive gains, and various forms of legal protections as the basic social issues that the political process was to address, the new social movements brought forward a variety of other issues grounded in aspects of personal or everyday life.¹²²

The collapsing of divisions between state and economy paved the way.¹²³ Giant corporations assumed state-like functions in the putatively private economic sphere, while the welfare state was called to defend a growing variety of civil rights and to intervene regularly in the economy. Several explanations for why this gave rise to new social movements contend that a hierarchy of needs notion suggested that affluence made it feasible to stop worrying about the old economic issues and take up these new concerns.¹²⁴ A political opportunity argument says that the transformed state created new opportunities for the pursuit of grievances.¹²⁵ Habermas notion of the colonization of the

¹²¹ Habermas, Jürgen. (1990). *The New Conservatism: Cultural Criticism and the Historians' Debate*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.

¹²² Offe, Claus. (1985). “New social movements: Challenging the boundaries of institutional politics.” *Social Research*. 52: 817-68.

¹²³ Galbraith, John K. (1967). *The New Industrial State*. Boston: Houghton-Mifflin.

¹²⁴ Melucci, Alberto. (1989). *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

¹²⁵ Tarrow, Sidney. (1989). *Struggle, Politics and Reform: Collective Action, Social Movements and Cycles of Protest*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press.

life-world proposes that the erosion of the boundaries between life-world and economic and political system was itself experienced as threatening.

From the discussions of diverse theories, it becomes evident that a central link between new social movements theory and the notion of a post-industrial or postmodern society is the idea that political economic identities had lost their salience and were being replaced by a mixture of ascriptive identities (like race or gender) and personally chosen or expressive identities (like sexual orientation or identification with various lifestyle communities). New social movements, accordingly, neither appeal to nor mobilize predominantly on class lines.

Offe suggests that members of the new middle class and “decommodified” persons that is, those with no stable labor market position or identity are disproportionately involved in new social movements. Though Offe approaches these groups in economic terms, they are in fact hard to assimilate into schemes of class analysis. This is true in the context of indigenous peoples of Northeast India who are carrying out the new social movements. The decommodified are obviously outside class categories to the extent that these depended on stable positions in the relations of production. More generally, middle-class affluence may facilitate movement activity, but class membership is not the identity that determines choice of new social movements.

One of the most striking features of the paradigmatic new social movements has been their insistence that the organizational forms and styles of movement practice must exemplify the values the movement seeks to promulgate. This means, at the same time, that the movements were ends in themselves. These movements depart from conventional

parliamentary and electoral politics, taking recourse to direct action and novel tactics. In another sense, unconventional is defined not by novelty per se, but by movement outside the normal routines of politics. All forms of direct action thus are unconventional. What defines unconventional action in the political realm is mainly the attempt to circumvent the routines of elections and lobbying. Unconventional means in this sense are particularly likely in a movement of people who have few resources other than their public actions.

The claim of old social movements was to handle all the public needs of their constituents, to see that one's specific interests were all attended to with a primary commitment to that organization.¹²⁶ The new social movements, by contrast, do not make the same claims on their members or offer the same potential to resolve a range of issues at once. They are not political parties or other organizations that accepted the charge of prioritizing the range of issues that compete for public attention. They are affinity groups knit together not by superordinate logic but by a web of overlapping memberships, rather like the crosscutting social circles thought essential to modern identity and social organization.

¹²⁶ Simmel, George (1903) "The metropolis and mental life." In D.N. Levine (ed.) *George Simmel on Individuality and Social Forms*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press: 324-39.

CHAPTER FOUR

NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS, CIVIL SOCIETY AND POLITICS

Central message of the new social movements is civil society against the state. The social movements arising in the civil society come to the forefront as the vanguards of democracy.¹ Discussion of New Social Movements has sought to explain the apparent shift in the forms of contemporary social movements in Western nations by linking it to the rise of a postmodern world. Study of NSMs has always been surrounded by debate about its identity- the driving forces, its ideologies and goals, tactics, structure, and participants of contemporary movements. Identity and participants are always differentiated in NSM² discourse. After analyzing the two determinants, this chapter attempts to locate both the identity and the participants in the civil societies in the context of Northeast.³

4.1 IDENTITY AND PARTICIPANTS IN NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

In many ways, identity claims are the most distinctive feature of NSMs⁴, though all previous movements can also be described as expressing identity claims.⁵ The focus on identity is considered unique in modern movements because “identity politics also express the belief that identity itself its elaboration, expression, or affirmation is and should be a fundamental focus of political work. In this way, politics of identity have led

¹ Arora, Vibha. (March 2001). “Politics of Class(ness) in the Farmers’ Movement in India: Validity of the New Social Movement Paradigm. *Sociological Bulletin*, 50(1), Pp. 84-121.

² In this study, I interchangeably used new social movements, environmentalism, or environmental movements. They should be viewed as the collective action, at least in the context of Northeast India, which is the subject of this study. I also acknowledge that there are different forms of collective action that are not seen to take on the forms of action and organizational practices associated with new social movements.

³ Civil societies, in this study, refers to the wide arrays of actors who are formally or informally part of, or becoming part of, the new social movements.

⁴⁴ Kauffman, LA. (1990). The anti-politics of identity. *Socialist Review*, 20:69-80.

⁵ Aronowitz, S. (1992). *The Politics of Identity*. New York: Routledge.

to an unprecedented politicization of previously nonpolitical terrains ...”⁶ This is expressed in the notion that “the personal is political.”⁷ However, whether the politics of identity represents a liberation or stagnation of modern politics is a point of contention. The liberation of joining the personal with the political may represent a radical challenge to the hegemony of state domination, but it may also result in an “anti-politics of identity,” an apolitical withdrawal from politics.

Related to identity, the participants of NSMs have been a widely debated issue. The first places the base of support within the new middle class, a recently emerged social stratum employed in the nonproductive sectors of the economy.⁸ Research on the rise of new middle class within postindustrial society seems to establish the credibility of this social phenomenon.⁹ But NSM theorists go a step beyond, by arguing that this stratum produced the chief participants of NSMs because they are not bound to the corporate profit motive nor dependent on the corporate world for their sustenance. Instead, they tend to work in areas that were highly dependent upon state expenditures such as academia, the arts, and human service agencies, and they tend to be highly educated.¹⁰ The other view of participants of NSMs is that they were not defined by class boundaries but are marked by a common concern over social issues. It is an ideological, rather than ethnic, religious, or class-based community. Arato and Cohen refer to them as

⁶ Kauffman, LA. (1990). The anti-politics of identity. *Socialist Review*, pp. 67.

⁷ Ibid. pp. 67-69.

⁸⁸ Cotgrove, S. and Duff A. (1981). Environmentalism, values, and social change. *Berkeley Journal of Sociology*, 32:92-110.

⁹ Brint, S. (1994). *In an Age of Experts: The Changing Role of Professionals in Politics and Public Life*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

¹⁰ Offe, Claus. (1985). New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics. *Sociological Research*, 52:817-68.

“catch-all.”¹¹ They are defined by common values rather than a common structural location. Offe offers a slightly different view of who the NSM participants are. He argues that they were drawn from a “peripheral” population consisting of persons not heavily engaged in the labor market.¹² A number of studies of the peace movement in various countries have demonstrated an equally diverse set of participants. Diana and Lodi show that within the Milan ecology movement, several different currents attract somewhat different sets of participants.¹³ Studies of environmental movements reveal that NSM participants are drawn primarily from two populations: The new middle class is one; the other is geographically bound communities that were being directly affected by the negative externalities of industrial growth. Participants are the more ideologically committed middle class as well as communities that protested the siting of hazardous waste sites, landfills, and waste incinerators, or chemical and/or radiation poisoning of the local environment.¹⁴ The old middle class is also involved in regional issues.¹⁵ In short, the participants of environmental movements do not draw significantly from outside the white middle class unless there is some motivating, geographically based, grievance.¹⁶ For example, minority communities have rarely participated in the environmental movement, except in protest over the placement of unwanted waste facilities.

¹¹ Arato, A. and Cohen, J. (1984). The German Green Party: a movement between fundamentalism and modernism. *Dissent* 31:327-32.

¹² Offe, Claus. (1985). New Social Movements: Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics. *Sociological Research*, 52:817-68.

¹³ Diana, M. and Lodi G. (1998). Three in one: currents in the Milan ecology movement. In B. Klandermans, E. Kriesi, S. Tarrow (Eds.), *International Social Movement Research*, 1:103-24. Greenwich, CT:JAI.

¹⁴ Apter, D.E. and Sawa, N. (1984). *Against the State: Politics and Social Protest in Japan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

¹⁵ Szasz, A. (1994). *Ecopolitism: Toxic Waste and the Movement for Environmental Justice*. Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

¹⁶ Bullard, R.D. (1990). *Dumping in Dixie: Race, Class and Environmental Quality*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

The question here is, are these proposed characteristics unique? If such differences exist, then it would mark a significant break from the past. NSMs also espouse open, democratic, nonhierarchical structures, yet there are many NSM organizations that were not so characterized. They disdain institutional politics, yet many NSMs are regularly consulted by governmental bodies, and others have formed political parties. The NSMs tend to draw from the new middle class, yet many community-based mobilizations (primarily environmental) have developed. Furthermore, the middle class is not a new site of social protest. NSMs tend to employ nontraditional tactics but also use those commonly employed by social movements of the past. For Evers, what is new about NSMs is that the “transformatory potential within new social movements were not political, but socio-cultural.”¹⁷ That is, they aim to reappropriate society from the state.

4.2 THE EMERGENCE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

One of the focuses of study is to move away from the traditional “class” debate and establish an empirical stand that makes clear, at least of the characteristic of new social movements. While doing this, it remains inevitable to move away from the class theoretical paradigm and focuses on civil society that represented the new class of NSM in Northeast India. One of the most striking features of the discourse of NSM was the prevalence and centrality of the notion of civil society.¹⁸ The revival of this notion of

¹⁷ Evers, T. (1985). Identity: the hidden side of social movements in Latin America. In D. Slater (Ed.) *New Social Movements and the State in Latin America* (pp. 43-71). Amsterdam:CEDLA.

¹⁸ In the 1980s, the term “civil society” was increasingly used with reference to the political dynamics of a democratization process. As for the discourse on new social movements, its use as a descriptive, analytical and policy tool became widespread among both scholars and practitioners in the 1990s in a conceptual shift away from the notion of a “third sector” of voluntary, non-profit and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) toward the emergence and strengthening of all sorts of grassroots organizations and civil associations. Descriptive definitions acknowledge the reality of civil society, but can sometimes include organizations that do not necessarily perform the social function that they are supposed to. For

civil society and its conceptual reformulation can be traced along two lines of academic studies: a liberal tradition concerned with the dynamics of the political process and that of international development – the empowerment of civil society to be the true guardians of democracy and good governance everywhere¹⁹ and poststructuralist/Marxist or Gramscian traditions on the left of the intellectual and political-ideological divide. Currently, the discourse of new social movements is informed by the notion of civil society advance in the liberal tradition.

Within the framework of this poststructuralist/Marxist or Gramscian critical approach, the bearers of these counter-hegemonic forces are found among diverse actors in civil society, including what Marshall Wolfe terms “spontaneous grassroots movements”²⁰ and most recently, a broad array of indigenous organizations and communities.²¹ In the context of this discourse, the relevant civil society organizations (CSOs) and associations are not class-based (peasant or worker) but rather community-based organizations that took the form, for the most part, of spontaneous grassroots movements, particularly those new social movements, which are formed around a single issue, with a highly particularized, albeit heterogenous, social base and a concern with the

instance, many UN conferences define civil society in practical terms as NGOs, but that does not necessarily mean that they act as civil society; for example, in certain parts of the world, NGOs might not be the main organizational form that conforms civil society. The fact that in global conferences a particular type of organization – NGOs – is identified with civil society tends to narrow its meaning. And due to NGOs being a typical Western way of organizing civil society, other forms of non-Western associations are being left aside.

¹⁹ United Nations Development programme (UNDP. 1997). *Governance for Sustainable Human Development*. UNDP: New York.

²⁰ Wolfe, Marshall. (1996). *Elusive Development*. Zed Books: London.

²¹ Stavenhagen, Rodolfo. (August 1997). “Indigenous organizations in Latin America.” *CEPAL Review*, pp. 63-75.

politics of identity.²² In this context, profit-oriented business associations and organizations of the hegemonic class, including associations of big landlords, chambers of commerce and paramilitary forces, are excluded from any notion of a civil society.

In the theoretical and political space between these two notions of civil society, a liberal one favoured by the community of international and governmental development agencies, and a critical one rooted in a Gramscian notion of hegemonic and counter-hegemonic power can be found a broad array of views and loose ideas associated with a growing complex, and diverse networks, of NGOs, the urban and rural poor. In the 1980s, these third-sector NGOs were the favoured partners of governments and international donors in the implementation of their programmes in the form of projects and at the level of local community.

However, these organizations of civil society, ranging from international advocacy networks to community based organizations and pursuing alternative agendas of environmental protection, human rights and social development, or opposition to the corporate agenda, are generally oriented toward a politics of resistance and committed to what could be termed “another development,”²³ development that is from within and below rather from outside and above, that is people-centred and managed, human in scale, socially inclusive, sustainable in terms of both the environment and livelihoods, and participatory and empowering of the poor.

²² Melucci, Alberto. (1989). *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*. Hutchinson Radius: London.

²³ Veltmeyer, Henry and Anthony O'Malley. (2001). *Transcending Neoliberalism: Community-Based Development*. Kumarian Press, West Hartford, CT.

4.3 CIVIL SOCIETY IN INTERNATIONAL SYSTEM

The 1990s saw the development of unprecedented links between global civil society and international conferences. As the conferences became an important feature in global governance, international activists came increasingly to see them as an opportunity to influence the global policy agenda. In turn, civil society was viewed by many international organizations as a valuable partner that would increase the latter's legitimacy and constituency. Thus the UN system itself further encouraged the participation of civil society in global conferences. Traditionally, within the United Nations (UN) system, civil society has been present mainly during operational activities at a national or global level. More contemporarily, civil society has gained an advocacy role that shapes its participation in consultations as the legitimate "voice of unrepresented populations" in UN forums and world conferences. This role has impacted international decision-making processes and influenced government decisions. Civil society generally acts as a source of expert information, consultation and, in some cases, as stakeholder of decision-making processes.

In recent years, there has been an unprecedented growth of transnational links between civil actors. Their subsequent impact on international politics has made them an emerging subject of current intellectual debates. Advocacy efforts strengthened in the 1970s and evolved during the 1980s²⁴ until the 1990s when they were intertwined with participation at major UN conferences.²⁵ The past decade has been the most intense

²⁴ Clark, John. (1992). "Policy influence, lobbying and advocacy." In Michael Edwards and David Hulme (Eds.), *Making a Difference: NGOs and Development in a Changing World*. Earthscan Publications, London.

²⁵ Anderson, Ian. (2000). "Northern NGO advocacy: Perceptions, reality, and the challenge." *Development in Practice*, Vol. 10, No.3 and 4, pp. 445-452.

period of engagement between civil society and intergovernmental organizations (IGOs). A wave of UN conferences provided civil society with a unique opportunity to participate in global governance, as conferences represent a new form of addressing global problems where different points of view for struggle legitimacy in articulating a consensus. Moreover, civil society enhanced its role at the negotiating table, while at the same time, the IGOs attempted to retain legitimacy for their decisions by increasing the presence of civil society in global forums.

Although the UN remains a state-based system of international negotiation, the growth of powerful non-state actors has placed a greater demand on the UN to accommodate their interests and improve collaboration with them. These developments point to a new, strengthened role for civil society in global governance. Nonetheless, the way in which this state-based system would be able to integrate non-state actors is an arena of highly contested debate. Therefore, the conceptual analysis and its implications for policies toward participation of civil society becomes all the more imperative.

4.4 THEORY OF CIVIL SOCIETY

Civil society is a concept historically related to Western history and political philosophy.²⁶ Debates on civil society were open to new discussions in the 1980s, where democratization efforts in Eastern Europe and Latin America revived the concept by utilizing it as a tool for their democratic struggles.²⁷ Civil society refers to the non-

²⁶ Kaldor, M. (1999). "The ideas of 1989: The origins of the concept of global civil society." *Transnational Law and Contemporary problems*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 105-114.

²⁷ Cohen, Jean L. and Andrew Arato. (1994). *Civil Society and Political Theory*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

economic and non-state space of social interaction²⁸ that seeks to articulate values and represent their interests.²⁹ However, civil society is not strictly equated with all social life outside the state bureaucracy and economic processes. Civil society channels its demands through political society (political parties and organizations), economic society, cultural society and the media. So its *raison d'être* is to voice demands to the state and market.³⁰ It is not directly related to the control or conquest of power, but to the generation of influence through democratic associations and debates in the public sphere.

The 1990s witnessed an extravagant growth of international civil society, “from about 13,000 international non-governmental organizations [INGOs] in 1981 to over 47,000 by 2001”,³¹ mainly due to its linkages to globalization. The increase in capital, technology and trade flows, coupled with the subsequent interconnectedness between states, made this explosion possible.³² The international connections among segments of civil society were focused on attempting to influence the policies of governments and international organizations.³³ They found the processes of global conferences a fertile ground to achieve this because throughout the 1990s they became a new form of global governance.

²⁸ Anheier, Helmut, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor. (2001). “Introducing global civil society.” In Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor (Eds.), *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2001*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

²⁹ Lenzen, M.H. (2002). “The use and abuse of ‘civil society’ in development.” *Transnational Association*, Vol.3, pp. 170-187.

³⁰ Cohen, Jean L. and Andrew Arato. (1994). *Civil Society and Political Theory*. MIT Press, Cambridge, MA.

³¹ Anheier, Helmut and Nuno Themudo. (2002). “Organisational forms of global civil society: Implications of going global.” In Marlies Glasius, Mary Kaldor and Helmut Anheier (Eds.), *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2002*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

³² Kaldor, M. (2000). “‘Civilising’ globalization? The implications of the ‘Battle of Seattle’.” *Millennium Journal of International Studies*, Vol. 9, pp. 475-488.

³³ Calrk, John (Ed.), 2003. *Globalizing Civic Engagement: Civil Society and Transnational Action*. Earthscan Publications, London.

According to Jacques Fomerand, one of the main causes of the sudden increase in UN conference was the need to deal with problems that could not be treated purely from a national perspective.³⁴ For example, environmental issues traverse national or regional boundaries and, as a result, nations have to address them jointly. The universality of the issues being dealt with makes previous forms of cooperation inadequate and requires other forms of negotiation.³⁵ In other words, global problems need global solutions. Fomerand defines UN conferences as “political events par excellence”, while Willets goes as far as defining them as a new phenomenon in international diplomacy.³⁶ Considering their salience and political role, these conferences provide an arena for the struggle for legitimacy between different claims within the processes of structuring a response, or lack of it, to the international issues. The World Conference on Human Rights in Vienna in 1993 saw two competing claims battle for legitimacy: “There was a fundamental disjuncture between governments that wanted to strengthen UN human rights procedures and governments that wanted to deal them a death blow.”³⁷ Accordingly, the key function of global conferences is to provide a source of legitimization; to seal the approval or disapproval of claims, policies and actions of participants.³⁸ The legal structure of NGOs and UN relations is based on article 17 of the UN Charter that empowers the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) to make

³⁴ Fomerand, Jacques. (1996). “UN conferences: Media events or genuine diplomacy? *Global Governance*, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 361-375.

³⁵ Reitano, R. (1999). “Summits, multilateral diplomacy, and the United Nations.” In J.P. Muldoon, Jr., J Fagot Aviel, R. Reitano and E. Sullivan (Eds.), *Multilateral Diplomacy and the United Nations Today*. Westview Press, Boulder, CO.

³⁶ Willetts, P. (1989). “The patter of conferences.” In P. Taylor and A.J. Groom (Eds.), *Global Issues in the United Nations’ Framework*. St. Martins Press: New York.

³⁷ Gaer, Felice D. (1996). “Reality check: Human rights NGOs confront governments at the UN.” In Thomas G. Weiss and Leon Gordenker (Eds.), *NGOs, the UN and Global Governance*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., London.

³⁸ Fomerand, Jacques. (1996). “UN conferences: Media events or genuine diplomacy? *Global Governance*, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 361-375.

suitable arrangements for consultation with non-governmental organizations that are concerned with matters within its competence.

The regularity and active role of UN conferences in global governance make them attractive for civil society since they provide a spot for influencing global policy debates. International organizations also view civil society as an attractive partner as it could further enhance their legitimacy and encourage public and political constituencies to support them.³⁹ In fact, international organizations attempt to regain some of their legitimacy by bringing CSOs into global governance.⁴⁰ Civil society is seen as the holder of moral authority for action and operational knowledge, or what Chandhoke calls “the peculiar hallmark of ethical political intervention: moral authority and legitimacy.”⁴¹ Civil society claims to truly represent general interest in opposition to official or power-driven interests of the state or of the economy. And it is this claim – independently of its veracity – that makes them an attractive new partner in global forums.

Furthermore, many of the UN processes of the 1990s were informed by the academic discussions concerning the rights-based approach to development and the topic of participation that argued in favour of enlarging the capacity of excluded groups to make claims on the state and international system.⁴² Another interconnected theoretical debate that fuelled an open attitude toward civil society in UN conferences was the idea of civil society as civil as a representative of excluded groups, which established civil

³⁹ Edwards, M. and J. Gaventa. (2004). *Global Citizen Action*. Earthscan Publications, London.

⁴⁰ Foster, J. W. (1999). *Civil Society Engagement in International Decision-Making: The Quest for an Enabling Environment*. UNRISD Background Paper for Visible Hands, UNRISD, Geneva.

⁴¹ Chandhoke, Neera. (2002). “The limits of global civil society.” In Marlies Glasius, Mary Kaldor and Helmut Anheier (Eds.), *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2002*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

⁴² Stiefel, Matthias and Marshall Wolfe. (1994). *A Voice for the Excluded. Popular Participation in Development: Utopia or Necessity?* Zed Books and UNRISD, London and New Jersey.

society as an instrument for harnessing democracy.⁴³ These discussions facilitated the opening up of UN processes to the participation of civil society. Moreover, the mobilization and activism of these movements around issues of international concern reinforced their role as an actor in the international policy arena.

Civil society found fertile ground in UN conferences for advocacy efforts because they provided a chance to pressurise states and raise consciousness for relevant issues. Civil society need to influence IGOs' policies and programmes because some local problems emanate from decisions made at the international policy level or because crises, though not international in nature, are able to attract international attention. They also provide the opportunity to influence national governments in order to alter their policies. This was also reinforced by some donor and UN agencies increasing their funds for civil society's participation in UN conferences; in the case of Southern NGOs, access to ⁴⁴resources drove them to seek relationships with UN summits. Furthermore, civil society saw a unique opportunity to access the international media and put forward ideas in dramatic ways.⁴⁵ The conferences were also viewed as occasions to discuss future strategies with other CSOs, since summits supplied a space for networking among civil society itself. The civil society plays significant role in the international system; the state has been under particular scrutiny.⁴⁶ Uvin also asserts that the scaling down of summits and scaling up the grass roots suggest that the state is being caught in the middle, squeezed from both sides and pushed into irrelevance.

⁴³ Vaan Rooy, A. (1998). *Civil Society and the Aid Industry*. Earthscan Publications, London.

⁴⁴ Uvin, P. (1996). "Scaling up the grassroots and scaling down the summit: The relations between Third World NGOs and the UN." In Thomas G. Weiss and Leon Gordenker (Eds.), *NGOs, the UN and Global Governance*. Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., London.

⁴⁵ Chandhoke, Neera. (2002). "The limits of global civil society." In Marlies Glasius, Mary Kaldor and Helmut Anheier (Eds.), *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2002*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

⁴⁶ Vaan Rooy, A. (1998). *Civil Society and the Aid Industry*. Earthscan Publications, London.

The UN review of its relationship to civil society suggests that the UN system should view civil society, the private sector and the state as “constituencies, or stakeholders, of the Organization’s processes”⁴⁷ A stakeholder is commonly defined as anyone who affects or is affected by the operations of an organization.⁴⁸ Civil society as an empirical category becomes a label for the sum of organizations that were generally different from the state. As Axel Honneth’s definition notes, civil society is “civil institutions and organizations which are prior to the state.”⁴⁹ Descriptive definitions acknowledge the reality of civil society, but can sometimes include organizations that did not necessarily perform the social function that they were supposed to. For instance, many UN conferences define civil society in practical terms as NGOs, but that did not necessarily mean that they acted as civil society. For example, in certain parts of the world, NGOs might not be the main organizational form that conform civil society.

The fact that in global conferences a particular type of organization (NGOs) is identified with civil society tends to narrow its meaning. And due to NGOs being a typical Western way of organizing civil society, other forms of non-Western associations are being left aside.⁵⁰ Cultural relativists argue that NGOs implied the principles of voluntary and formal associations.⁵¹ But many types of associations developed in non-Western countries challenge these two principles. For example, even though many

⁴⁷ Panel of Eminent Persons on United Nations-Civil Society Relations (PEPUN-CSR). 2004. *We the Peoples: Civil Society, the United Nations and Global Governance*. Document No. A/58/817, United Nations, New York.

⁴⁸ Freeman, R.E. (1984). *Strategic Management: A Stakeholder Approach*. Pitman, Boston.

⁴⁹ Chandhoke, Neera. (2002). “The limits of global civil society.” In Marlies Glasius, Mary Kaldor and Helmut Anheier (Eds.), *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2002*. Oxford University Press: Oxford.

⁵⁰ Lewis, David. (2001). *Civil Society in Non-Western Contexts: Reflections on the “Usefulness” of a Concept*. Civil Society Working Paper No. 13, Center for Civil Society, London School of Economics, London.

⁵¹ Kaldor, M. (2003). “The idea of global civil society.” *International Affairs*, Vol. 79, No. 3, pp. 33-38.

religious and ethnic movements do not respect these two principles, they are key actors in non-Western civil societies.

By contrast, functional definitions of civil society have the advantage of regarding civil society as a set of rules or functions that were different from other societal spaces. The view that closely associates civil society with civility is a particular way of conceptualizing civil society that was especially fertile in UN grounds. Many proponents describe global civil society as progressive and democratic, or even “good”, society.⁵² Another ingredient to this moral assertion of civil society is the concept of social capital, which civil society is supposed to harness.⁵³ Social capital is described as community volunteerism, selflessness and public or civic spirit, and carries this moral tone to the civil society debate.⁵⁴ This assumes that “civil” implies a normative behavior of these organizations that was altruistic, developmental and democratic. For instance, Naidoo and Tandon describe global civil society as “the network of autonomous associations that rights-bearing and responsibility laden citizens voluntarily create to address and promote collective aspirations”,⁵⁵ which could be a good example of what Keane called “proletariat in civvies”.⁵⁶ As a result, civil society becomes intertwined with value-driven conceptions that, by definition, are worth encouraging and supporting. Agenda 21, drafted in 1992 at UNCED, stated that non-governmental organizations play a vital role in the shaping and implementation of participatory democracy. Their credibility lies in

⁵² Laxer, Gordon and Sandra Halperin (Eds.), 2003. *Global Civil Society and Its Limits*. Palgrave Macmillan, New York.

⁵³ Putnam, R., R. Leonardi and R.Y. Nanetti. (1993). *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy*. Princeton University Press, Princeton, NJ.

⁵⁴ Vaan Rooy, A. (1998). *Civil Society and the Aid Industry*. Earthscan Publications, London.

⁵⁵ Naidoo, K. and R. Tendon. (1999). “The promise of civil society.” In Civicus (Ed.), *Civil Society at the Millenium*. Civicus, West Hartford, CT.

⁵⁶ Keane, J. (2001). “Global civil society?” In Helmut Anheier, Marlies Glasius and Mary Kaldor (Eds.), *Global Civil Society Yearbook 2001*. Oxford University Press, Oxford.

the responsible and constructive role they play in society. The nature of the independent role played by non-governmental organizations within a society calls for real participation; therefore, independence is a major attribute of non-governmental organizations and is the precondition of real participation.⁵⁷

Unparalleled linkages were forged between the international activism of global society and the salience of UN-sponsored conferences during the 1990s. As global conferences gained regularity and became an integral part of global policy making, international civil society groups found in them a key venue to influence policies of governments and international organizations, and saw in world conferences an opportunity to enhance their say in the global policy agenda. At the same time, the United Nations found in civil society a partner to increase conferences' legitimacy and constituency. This convergence between the salience of conferences and the international development of society moulded the development of these two processes from the 1990s onwards.

This study shows some of the linkages between different frameworks for understanding the relationship between the state and non-state actors, and their implications for policy making and civil society activism. However, even though the existing literature provides broad views on the new role of NGOs in global governance, it does not offer detail examinations of the interconnections between their empirical results and theoretical debates on global governance.

⁵⁷ United Nations Division for Sustainable Development (UNSD). 2003. *Agenda 21*.

The United Nations system has seen a virtual explosion of intergovernmental negotiations to formulate multilateral environmental agreements. The 1990s in particular saw the emergence of a series of global development and environmental agreements. These agreements are increasingly seen as important processes to alleviate poverty, social inequities and environmental degradation. The most important milestone was undoubtedly the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), which was held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, and is popularly known as the Earth Summit. The Earth Summit was the world largest environmental gathering, attracting 103 Heads of State. It was an unprecedented event both in terms of participation and the quantity, range, and scope of the initiatives produced to promote more sustainable patterns of development at the world level. Rio established the growing recognition amongst the world's political leaders that cooperative global action on a number of key issues was essential. The Earth Summit produced several landmark documents to chart a course that would halt environmental destruction, poverty and inequality. As the global environment and the international economy have become globalized, so inevitably have civil society's efforts to ensure that social, political, environmental and economic justice prevails and that disadvantaged and neglected peoples are included in global progress of decision making. In many cases, Multi-Lateral Environmental Agreements are the outcomes of successful alliances of governments and institutions of civil society.

According to Oran R. Young, NGOs loom large not only in processes of regime formation but also in catalyzing and aggregating public pressure on officials to live up to the commitment they make. The environmental movement once concentrated exclusively

on domestic concerns has been situated in the political dynamics surrounding international environmental governance. The above discussion relates to the point that new social movements or environmentalism, represented by the civil society, acted as the relevant agents of social transformation; as authentic representatives of post-industrial social forces.

The new social movements represented by the civil societies, which is also evident in its working in the international systems, have proved that the workings of the traditional institutions or organizations were far from “new.” The difference between old and new social movements partly overlaps a famous conceptual pair in social theory, the polarity movement-institution. Movement implies that something; it is where the action is. Activity, participation, engagement, responsible and conscious action are key concepts that characterized a movement.⁵⁸ They cover the socio-psychological and inter-organizational aspects, i.e., the relations between the participants/activists, and the struggle and goals, as well as the sociological aspects, their relation to society and its institutions at large. Institution here is the inversion of movement, its antidote.

Civil society is the realm of protest and civil activities, which do not seek to gain power but to limit it. It established its function within the system. Civil society carved out its role very clearly, separating itself from party politics, and embarked on an independent role, while maintaining continuous interaction with both political parties and authorities. Environmental movements became an important part of this process. They attracted members and a large number of sympathisers. Besides, it has significantly

⁵⁸ Olofsson, Gunnar. (1988). “After the Working-class Movement? An essay on What’s ‘New’ and What’s ‘Social’ in the New Social Movements. *Acta Sociologica*, 1988 (31), 1: 15-34.

penetrated inside the international system to assert its stand in the policy or decision making processes.

And, civil society cannot be treated in isolation from state and political parties, since it is the interaction between them that shaped civil society. From the current discussion it becomes evident that civil society was the product of democratization, which is the central process underlying the new social movement phenomena described in this study. While stating that, the concept of civil society should not be treated ahistorically, different experiences of democratization are crucial to the differences in their patterns of new social movements.

The understanding of this study is also that civil society could not carry the full weight of a theory. The concept is useful in demarcating a category of power-challenging phenomena and the conditions under which they arise. However, unlike new social movement theories, which are concerned with how and why new social movements emerge and function, civil society is concerned with the context-setting and power-challenging aspects of the political process. It is therefore useful to this extent rather than as a rival to either new social movements or democracy theories.

4.5 RURAL NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE AGE OF GLOBALIZATION

While the collective agenda of NSMs has been identified, it is necessary to locate the potential of the social movements. In doing so, one can also enquire into how the politics of collective action at the local level develop as rural social movements to change and shape national and international development agendas. This part of the study also considers the diversities and originalities of local rural politics in which poverty is a

dominant factor, where the nature and direction of local politics are shaped, influenced and, at times, determined by national and international processes and actors.

With respect to rural new social movements, two significant developments can be seen to have occurred. First, their nature has changed significantly in terms of their form, objectives and techniques practiced. And second, the way in which rural social movements are defined, located and analysed has changed quite markedly. Both reflect the new context for collective action and a restructured political space⁵⁹ that emerged, enabling the marginalized indigenous peoples to engage in different forms of political action. It is a situation in which local and global processes have increasingly combined to affect the environment trajectories of rural locales.

It is in the more general forms of collective action that significant change had occurred, changes in their character, their organizational form, the forms of mobilization, the associated discourses and the forms of actions undertaken. Even the terminology has changed, too: from peasant movements to environmental movements and indigenous peoples' movements, to name but a few. Rural social movements whose objectives were previously concerned with the defence of a way of life, of a type of production, of a community from the intrusions and demands of a state have been replaced with social movements that cross spatial boundaries and delineate new political and cultural spaces. Where once the state and its institutions and organizations were to be strategically

⁵⁹ Political space is defined in terms of three dimensions: institutional channels linking local politics with national politics; a public discourse that acknowledges poverty as a social problem; and the acceptance of the agency of the poor in poverty reduction. However, in this study, political space will be added with another dimension; a public discourse that acknowledges environmentalism as a new social movements, which represents the rural collective.

contested and repelled, now the state is seen as more fragmented in form and nature, with a diversity of interests held by different stakeholders.

Today, government can be contested in elections, politicians lobbied, officials subpoenaed, changes to the constitution challenged and the rights of citizenship demanded. Diverse tactics, both within and outside the formal political and judicial framework, can be used at different levels of society and government, and trans-local and transnational alliances can be forged. The objectives of new social movements are also to change policies, their implementation and their outcomes, rather than to demand the retreat of state and government from their locality. Again, it is the diversity of rural social movements that need to be captured, how they have become increasingly disaggregated, more specific and more nuanced in their objectives, in the means they utilize and in the alliances of interests they attract.

To view rural social movements in this light is to bring them into the contemporary age of globalization. Previously there was a tendency to locate rural social movements within an analytical framework based upon class, with a central debate being whether the peasantry should be understood as a class or as divided by class.⁶⁰ More recently, the concern has been with the diversity of rural social movements, the originalities to be found in organizing principles they draw upon and the complex politics of “naming” and “claiming” that characterized their social and political relations to other social groups and public authorities.

⁶⁰ Hammar, Amanda. (2001). “Speaking with space: Displacements and claims in the politics of land in Zimbabwe.” In N. Webster and L. Engberg-Pedersen (Eds.), *In the Name of the Poor: Contesting Political Space for Poverty Reduction*. Zed Books, London.

Politics concerns power; the demarcation of new fault lines within the social formation together with new analytical approaches to these calls for new political strategies on the part of social movements. The politics and practice of the new social movements is to engage with the state. Whether by means of conflict and open contestation or through lines of patronage and primordialism, the state is a point of focus for a diverse set of strategies on the part of the social movements.⁶¹ One can also recognize that what characterized much of the politics in these arenas, at least at national and international levels and increasingly at the local level, are the politics of democratization.

What is required is an analysis of the democracy and democratization present in the political system, of the nature and role of civil society, and of the condition of citizenship. Reformism can be understood as a logical extension of a radical social movement within a political system experiencing a process of democratization, rather than as being in some way an ideological break with a revolutionary past.⁶² India provides a good example of the transition of rural social movements from revolutionary class movements to struggles for equity and the rights of citizenship in a wide range of different public spheres.

From a theoretical standpoint, new social movements suggest rapture with any past history of social movements, seeking to treat them instead as unique phenomena. Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe's critique of the central role of class and class

⁶¹ Webster, Neil (2004). *Understanding the Evolving Diversities and Originalities in Rural Social Movements in the Age of Globalization.* In Civil Society and Social Movements Programme Paper Number 7, UNRISD.

⁶² Mohan, G. and K. Stokke. (April 2000). "Participatory development and empowerment: The dangers of localism." *Third World Quarterly*, pp. 247-268.

consciousness in traditional Marxist analyses was an important contribution in this theoretical development. The proliferation of “new social movements” was evidence to them of the construction of new cultural identities that informed and shaped new struggles, breaking with class-based struggles and their mass organizations of workers, peasants. In the development context of the South, these emerging movements were seen to be a demonstration of the failure of the state and of traditional political parties and their mass organizations to counter and offer alternatives to market-based liberalization. New social movements have been understood as attempts to reassert some form of control and autonomy by people over their lives.

New social movements were seen to counter-pose local culture, local knowledge and local practice to the economics and culture-based knowledge systems and practices of the North and its experts. New social movements tend to comprise low-profile networks of small groups, organizations, initiatives, local contacts and friendships submerged in the everyday life patterns of civil society. These submerged networks, noted for their stress and solidarity, individual needs and part-time involvement, constitute the laboratories in which new experiment are invented and popularized.⁶³ They tend to be identity and issue-based rather than class-based phenomena contesting aspects of public policy at different levels of society and government, more often than not seeking to (re-)negotiate rights and responsibilities between citizens and the state.

⁶³ Keane, J. (1998) *Civil Society: Old Images, New Visions*. Polity Press, Cambridge.

4.6 NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE LANGUAGE OF RIGHTS

The new social movements have acquired a sense of efficacy and a belief that they could alter their lot,⁶⁴ especially when demands are stated in terms of rights. From that critical moment, their demands lost the quality of petition and began to reverberate with calls for change. At the same time, these new demands were directed to the state, since it alone was capable of delivering the rights in question.⁶⁵ New social movements seek to overcome the problems of collective action through increasing organization, and will try to increase their resources by adopting lower-risk and more institutional forms of action.⁶⁶ Various justifications for the values of rights can be classified into three broad categories: normative, pragmatic and ethical. The normative justification is that rights put values and politics at the very heart of environmentalism.

Hausermann argues that what was distinctive about a human rights approach was that it works by setting out a vision of what ought to be: that is, it provides a powerful normative framework to orient development cooperation. In doing so, she suggests, it brings an ethical and moral dimension to development assistance, one that by implication had been lacking.⁶⁷ By stipulating an internationally agreed set of norms, backed by international law, it provides a stronger basis for citizens to make claims on their states and for holding states to account for their duties to enhance the access of their citizens to the realization of their rights.

⁶⁴ Piven, Frances Fox and Richard A. Cloward (1977) *Poor People's Movements: Why They Succeed, How They Fail*, Pantheon Press, New York, 1977.

⁶⁵ Caldeira, Teresa Pires De Rio (1990) "Women, daily life, and politics" in Elizabeth Jelin (ed.), *Women and Social Change in Latin America*, UNRISD/ Zed Books, London.

⁶⁶ Oberschall, Anthony (1973) *Social Conflict and Social Movements*, Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

⁶⁷ Hauserman, J. (1989) "A human rights approach to development". Discussion Paper commissioned by the Department for International Development of the UK Government in preparation of the Government White Paper on International Development, London: Rights and Humanity.

Rights-based approach calls for existing resources to be shared equally, and assisting the marginalized people to assert their rights to those resources, thus making the process explicitly political... as rights are based on legal obligations.⁶⁸ Ferguson also argues that to talk in terms of rights was in itself a 'vehicle for increasing the accountability of government organizations to their citizens and consequently increasing the likelihood that policy measures would be implemented in practice.'⁶⁹ But for actors keen on giving meaning to rights beyond the accepted boundaries of state accountability, the language of a rights-based approach also offers the possibilities for an expanded notion of accountability for rights to non-state actors. Rights-based approach can also serve as an opportunity to reflect more broadly on the power dynamics inherent in the practice of international development and on the question of ethics.

For Eyben and Ramanathan, to talk of rights is to talk about power and about the obligations of those engaged in development assistance. What lies at the heart of such an approach, she contends, is an impetus to actors involved in development to engage reflexively with issues of power.⁷⁰ As such, rights-based approaches can work both to sharpen the political edges of participation in the wake of instrumentalism produced by mainstreaming, and to make critical linkages between participation, accountability and citizenship.

⁶⁸ Jonsson, U. (2003) *Human Rights Approach to Development Programming*, Nairobi:UNICEF.

⁶⁹ Ferguson, C. (1999) 'Global social policy principles: human rights and social justice', London: DFID

⁷⁰ Eyben, R. and Ramanathan, U. (2002) 'Rights-based approaches to inclusive development: perspectives on the implications for DFID India', mimeo.

4.7 POLITICS OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY

In a word, politics of this middle-of-the road civil society can be summed up as reformism. Virtually, all scholars and practitioners in the field are committed to the belief in need for institutional or structural change as a precondition and means of bringing about or promoting development. However, in the context of current or available conditions, very few of them prescribe radical change, that is, a fundamental overhaul of the existing system and the power structure that supports it. In the 1990s, most of the new social movements that had materialized in the 1980s in the context of an emergent civil society subsided, with a consequent dissipation of the opposition and resistance that they had mobilized under different conditions.⁷¹ The context for this emergence of a vibrant civil society had radically changed, undermining this form of political response precisely at a point when social and political analysts, who shared an ideological orientation toward reform or more radical change, discovered the emergent power of civil society.

The political context of this demobilization process included a completion of the transition toward political democracy, namely the institution of civilian constitutional rule and the mechanisms of electoral politics, decentralization of policy- and decision-making structures and so forth.⁷² Other elements of a changed political context involved a process of political reform engineered by the political class from within the state apparatus. In most countries, the dominant and critical element of a new political context

⁷¹ Kothari, Smitu (1996) "Rising from the margins: The awakening of civil society in the Third World." *Development*, Autumn Supplement, pp. 145-159.

⁷² Lijerton, H.E. (1996) *Decentralization, Local Governments and Markets: A Comparative Study of Recent Trends in Selected Countries*. Working Paper. Institute of Social Studies, The Hague.

was the result of actions taken, a strategy of accommodation and reform, and partnership in a development enterprise initiated from above and outside.

In this new political context, the nature and dynamics of struggle associated with the popular movement had markedly changed. For one thing, the popular movement became increasingly fragmented. One stream of the movement is based on the class struggle of workers against capital and against the state where and in as much as the state represented or was dominated or controlled by propertied interests or the capitalist class within the private sector. However, other parts of the popular movement focused on a broad range of issues including the lack of democracy, the violation of human rights and gender-based inequalities, and problems of poverty, irregular employment and social exclusion. In the 1990s, state –initiated reforms and a strategy of partnership, appeasement and accommodation were the primary source of the new political context that confronted civil society. However, depending on the context and available conditions, governments in the region pursued diverse strategies.⁷³ These strategies included the following:

1. setting up parallel organizations to class-based anti-systemic organizations, such as peasant organizations and unions, that have confrontational politics;
2. repressing class-based organizations with an anti-systemic agenda under certain circumstances and where possible or necessary;
3. dialoguing and negotiating with representatives of class-based organizations with the capacity to mobilize forces of opposition and resistance;

⁷³ Veltmeyer, Henry (October 2004) "Civil Society and Social Movements – The Dynamics of Intersectoral Alliances and Urban-Rural Linkages in Latin America. Civil Society and Social Movements Programme Paper Number 10, UNRISD.

4. pacifying belligerent organizations on the basis of a reform agenda; a partnership approach and a populist politics of appeasement and clientelism;
5. strengthening CSOs with a reformist orientation and a democratic agenda, and weakening organizations with an anti-systemic agenda and a confrontationalist direct-action approach in their politics;
6. accommodating the leadership to policies of economic, social and political reform, often with the mediation of NGOs; and
7. incorporating groups with an anti-systemic agenda into policy-making forums and institutions when all else fails.

4.8 ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS AND THE CIVIL SOCIETY

Environmentalism, new social movements and the civil society are such broad concepts that a detailed focus on their characteristics had to be made while at the same time their relations have to be linked to establish the subject of this research. The divergence of perspective added by the theoretical contradictions, expectations and demands of civil societies and social movements are very heterogenous so that an objective treatment of the subject has to be done.

The discourses, praxes and proposals of environmental social movements involve a critique of the “civilizational model” and the hegemonic instrumental rationale of postmodernity that is supported by international multilateral agencies such as the United Nations and by governments all over the world. This study will also analyse the discourses and proposals that underlined the environmental values and rationale of new

social movements in developing countries⁷⁴ and NGOs from their participation at the United Nations Conference on Environmental and Development (UNCED, or the Earth Summit). It will also contrast these discourses and proposals with those advanced by governments attending such summits including governments of countries in the developing world. This will help to shed a light on the role of civil society in its pursuit of new social movements.

The above comparison will be primarily based on the main policy documents produced at UNCED by social movements and governments, since they were the principal guides for the Johannesburg summit. These documents include:

- i. The Alternative Agenda, Rio '92,⁷⁵ which was drafted by the International Forum of NGOs and Social Movements. This was known as the alternative agenda because it was the result of participatory and democratic discussions among NGOs and social movements attending the Earth Summit.
- ii. Agenda 21 (United Nations 1992b) and the Programme for the Further Implementation of Agenda 21 (United Nations 1997). This agenda is referred to as the “official agenda of governments” and refers to the model of sustainable development adopted in the Rio Declaration on

⁷⁴ Environmental social movements from developing countries – despite common strategies such as mobilization against large international corporations and globalization, and the protection of biodiversity and the environment – differ from similar movements in industrialized countries in the importance given to economic, ecological and social dimensions of sustainable development. While environmental social movements in developing countries prioritize social dimensions, the environmental social movements in industrialized countries tend to emphasize the unsustainable consumption pattern and ecological issues.

⁷⁵The Spanish version of the documents, *Construyendo el futuro: Tratados Alternativos de Rio '92* (1993) was used here. Therefore, quotations from that document are based on a free translation from Spanish to English.

Environment and development (United Nations 1992a) subscribed to by governments.

When the techno –scientific rationality excludes the peoples interests, it does not provide the basis for a democratic agreement. The new social movements sought for the creation of new spaces for the participation of civil society in the decision-making process, and the promotion of a dialogue centered on sustainable development, and the adoption of humanistic approach. It has also to be grounded in one of the characteristics of democracy that is, in its pluralism, which implies the recognition and acceptance of the great diversity of beliefs and values held by human beings. For this to be possible, all parties must have similar bargaining power. Since this is not the case of social movements, there is the need for these civil societies to empower themselves through the reinforcement of their already existing networks, thereby creating a space from which to participate in the collective and democratic construction of a viable and equitable framework for placing their agendas.

The alternative Rio Declaration adopted by NGOs and social movements⁷⁶ highlighted the conflict existing between their model and the hegemonic civilization model, unfair and unsustainable, built upon the myth of unlimited development, which

⁷⁶ Unlike governments and international organizations such as the United Nations, environmental NGOs, activists and social movements are all part of the complex and heterogenous universe of civil society. The term “NGO” is used to refer to the most institutionalized organizations that tender to accept the official Agenda 21, despite the fact that they differ in diagnosing the origin of environmental problems and sometimes align with social movements in the critique of the economic model of development. In contrast, environmental activists and social movements have an alternative approach and reject not only the economic model of development, but also the civilizatory model behind its rationale and values. This study focuses mainly on social movements, which have alternative explanations and proposals for challenging Agenda 21 and the position of governments, the United Nations and international institutions. In those cases where NGOs and social movements have the same view, both terms are used. NGOs and proponents of entrepreneurial environmentalism whose interests are closer to those of international institutions or governments than to those of the environmental social movements are excluded.

ignored the finite limits of earth.⁷⁷ In the face of challenges posed by the deterioration of environment, the NGOs and social movements concluded that the process of globalization has introduced new challenges for sustainability and for social equity.

In contradiction to the recognition by governments all over the world regarding the need to address the negative consequences of globalization on the environment, little attention has been given to the rationality and values implicit in Agenda 21. In this sense, the model proposed for sustainable development in the official Rio Declaration tends to neglect the structural origins of the socioeconomic problems of developing countries, confusing the consequences with causes, blaming the poor for poverty, and poverty for the prevailing environmental problems. Thus, in order to face the political, social, and economic problems, the solution was not sustainable development, as the official discourse proposed, but democratization and social equity as defined by the community, NGOs and social movements.

On the other hand, social movements have argued that environmental problems and the aggravation of ecological crises were rooted in the capitalist model of development. NGOs and social movements are not only against globalization, but also against the market, the capitalist model of production and, in general, the model of civilization that supported those values. The NGOs and social movements identified environmental problems such as the degradation of the quality of life and the difficulties for the reproduction of natural ecosystems as a priority. In this regard, social movements and NGOs emphasize the social and political dimensions of sustainable development,

⁷⁷ Declaracion de Rio (1993) In Foro Internacional de ONGs y movimiento sociales. www.eurosur.org/NGONET/tr923.htm, accessed in January 2005.

closely linking social and environmental problems. A content analysis of the discussions at the two World Social Forums held in Porto Alegre in 2001 and 2002 identified globalization, neoliberalism and insufficient democracy as the most critical problems for the environment. Social movements propose grassroots participation or participatory democracy, which implies the need to go beyond representative democracy.

Ten years after the alternative Rio Declaration, NGOs and social movements all over the world continue to criticize globalization as “an evil” that impeded the advancement of sustainable development. The document, *We, the People Believe that Another World is Possible*, adopted in Bali in June 2002 by developing world environmental networks and organizations issued a robust critique of globalization and the increasing power of big corporations that are acquiring more rights, obligations, privileges and access. They called on the United Nations, which is considered to be largely debilitated by these socioeconomic trends, to listen and redirect its attention to the communities and peoples. They also stressed the need to curtail the control that business, industries and large corporate enterprises have on the United Nations. The purpose was to urge the UN to revisit the original principles of the UN Charter of 1945, which puts its faith in fundamental human rights, the dignity and value of human beings, and equitable rights for men and women and for big and small nations. However, despite these efforts, official international institutions such as the United Nations have continued to propose the capitalist development model as part of the solution for sustainability. What is evident with the content analysis of the resulting documents is the revealed differences in the importance given to each dimension and in the interpretation of social equity. When governments use the discourse of sustainable development, they stress economic

development, while social organizations and movements tend to focus on social equity and ecological criteria.

4.9 ENVIRONMENTAL DEMOCRACY: MULTIPLE MEANINGS, MULTIPLE PRAXES

The World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED 1987) considered environmental problems as political issues that could and should be resolved democratically. For the WCED, sustainable development did not depend on democracy. The WCED separates global and local levels, and calls for local democracy and full participation but does not stress a commitment to democratic values. Moreover, there is the danger that democracy could be conditioned by the market, since the economic model is not questioned and market mechanisms are not considered incompatible with protection of the environment. When talking about democracy, the governments of industrialized countries as well as international institutions usually refer to liberal representative democracy, which could be complemented with more participation, that is, a centralized vertical democracy. In contrast to the official position, social organizations and social movements advocates a type of democracy based on horizontal, decentralized participation in decision making, concerning the distribution of scarce resources, including power, and they consider it a prerequisite for sustainable development. In 2001, the Civil Society Networks drafted a declaration in Rio de Janeiro that represented the view of social movements with regard to the role of democracy in sustainable development. It proposes, at the economic level, “to create new spaces of participation

for civil society, to participate in the decision making process regarding development”; at the political level, to consolidate a participatory democracy that allows the integration of civil society in the design, planning, implementation and social control of projects, programmes and policies; and at the environmental level, to reinforce the mechanisms of consensual decision making among governments and civil society in order to uphold environmental sustainability.

Social movements believe that there was an indissoluble relationship between economic and political models – they criticize the economic model for not being democratic since it does not guarantee the participation of all sectors of society nor the equitable distribution of environmental costs and benefits. They blame the neoliberal model of democracy (capitalism) for not being able to control economic, social and environmental policy.⁷⁸ Social movements and NGOs have mobilized for the inclusion of their demands, values and visions of society and tend to blame representative democracy for their prior exclusion, arguing that this type of democracy maximizes benefits for a small group of people, affording them exclusive access to resources and opportunities.

One of the objectives of social movements is to constitute a democratic system with greater participation to face the limitations of representative democracy and to open the decision-making process to previously ostracized social groups. In their documents, they make proposals to encourage democracy at the grassroots. The fact is that, regardless of the type of democracy (representative or from the base), environmental problems will continue to emerge. The rationale behind this assertion is based on the fact that these problems were not solely a consequence of the application of neoliberal models

⁷⁸ Scott, Alan (1990) *Ideology and the New Social Movements*. Unwin Hyman, London.

of development. As the situation in various Eastern European countries have shown, social ownership of the means of production does not prevent environmental degradation.⁷⁹ For this reason, social movements and NGOs direct their critique to the civilizatory model, which provides the foundation for the rationale for both liberal-capitalist and socialist economic models.

It is interesting to note that sharp class divisions, aggravated by increasing levels of poverty and by the segregation and marginalization caused by macroeconomic adjustment policies were obstacles to achieving a unified democratic environmental ideology in Latin America.⁸⁰ Environmentalism, understood as an ideology consisting of a common meaning and shared values, is not identifiable within social organizations and movements in Latin America: poor people's environmentalism, centered on survival and basic needs, coexists with rich people's eco-capitalism, which focuses on post-materialistic values. To this extent, environmentalism in Latin America resembles that which existed in the most industrialized countries.

Leff states that in Latin America it was not possible to talk of environmentalism as a cohesive ideology that transcended social class divisions, due to obstacles in articulating environmental struggles with popular demands. He recognizes in environmentalism an intrinsic democratic rationale grounded in nature's biological diversity and in people's cultural, political and social diversity, which is able to regulate the social, cultural, political and economic relations that existed between the state and

⁷⁹ Parkin, S. (1989) *Green Parties: An International Guide*. Heretic Books, London.

⁸⁰ Garcia-Guadilla, Maria Pilar and Jutta Blauert (1992) "Social Movements: Development and democracy." In Garcia-Guadilla, Maria Pilar and Jutta Blauert (eds.), *Environmental Social Movements in Latin America and Europe: Challenging Development and Democracy*. MCB University Press, Bradford.

society. This rationale presupposes a plurality of forms of development, which goes beyond representative democracy and makes implicit the need for a participatory democracy⁸¹ in the sense that forms of direct democracy may only regulate such plurality, diversity and heterogeneity so that communities may partake in the management of productive resources.

4.10 EMPOWERING ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENTS

The new social movements have been demanding for new democratic and participatory constitutional texts in which sustainable development and environmental rights are included. The result of this institutionalization of sustainable development and environmental rights was the inclusion of participatory designs for achieving consensus and making decisions about resources and wealth distribution, new notions of citizenship based upon environmental and indigenous rights, and the recognition of social organizations and movements as strategic sociopolitical actors.⁸² The inclusion of environmental rights created a vehicle for new and more democratic relations to resolve conflicts between the state and civil society, given the increased legitimacy of new visions of society, but it could also have potential negative consequences, particularly on

⁸¹ Leff, Enrique (1994) "El movimiento ambiental y las perspectivas de la democracia en America Latina." In Maria Pilar Garcia Guadila and Jutta Blauert (eds.) *Retos para el Desarrollo y la Democracia: Movimientos Ambientalistas en America Latina y Europa*. Editorial Nueva Sociedad, Caracas and Fundacion Friedrich Ebert-Mexico, Mexico City, DF. Pp. 362-369.

⁸² A strategic sociopolitical actor is a collective actor with economic, political, institutional or social power. As governments increasingly recognize social movements as strategic sociopolitical actors, there is a greater possibility of their inclusion in the negotiation process in order to resolve conflicts.

social movements.⁸³ Moreover, once environmental rights have been institutionalized or included in the constitution, social organizations and movements face new challenges for their autonomy and survival because these organizations, their demands and their discourse, may be co-opted or institutionalized, resulting in the loss of alternative discourses and proposals. On the other hand, the sanctions of these constitutions represent an opportunity for legal empowerment to further sustainable development.

Despite the institutionalization or constitutionalization of environmental and indigenous rights, that is, the enrichment of actors and values in these new constitutions, and despite the fact that the resolution of conflicts should go through what has been called participatory democracy, conflicts that involved a plurality of constitutional values are not resolved easily or automatically.⁸⁴ This is because in constitutional democracies, all constitutional values have the same weight, and in the face of conflicting value systems, it is difficult for parties to agree upon which values should prevail.

The institutionalization of environmental rights could have two consequences. On the one hand, the previous socio-environmental actors can enter the political arena and transform themselves into political actors,⁸⁵ leading to the dilemma of party versus social movement and possibly abandoning defense of the more limited environmental objectives. On the other hand, some social movements and organizations, particularly

⁸³ Garcia-Guadilla, Maria Pilar and Monica Hurtado (2000) Participation, Social Actors and Constituent Process in Venezuela and Colombia. Latin American Studies Association (LASA), Miami, www.pitt.edu/lasa/elecpapers.htm, accessed in December 2003.

⁸⁴ Melucci, Alberto (1988) "Social movements and the democratization of everyday life." In John Deane (ed.) Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives. Verso, London.

⁸⁵ Escobar, Arturo and Sonia Alvarez, eds.(1992) "The Making of Social Movements in Latin America: Identity, Strategy and Democracy. Westview press, Boulder, CO.

formal organizations and some NGOs, could demobilize, considering they have already achieved their main objectives.

Another worldwide trend that is observable in developing countries is the proliferation of visible or invisible, and formal or informal, networks of NGOs and social movements.⁸⁶ In fact, collective mobilization constitutes the root of the definition of social movements.⁸⁷ The composition of the environmental networks that mobilized at international and regional forums and meetings is extremely heterogenous, including human rights, gender, indigenous and peasant movements, among others. In recent years, there has also been a tendency towards networking, defined in the literature as the creation of larger networks from pre-existing ones, resulting in a network of networks. While the explicit aims of these networks are multiple and have to do with their need for empowerment, some of the unperceived consequences of these actions are the incorporation of a broader range of interests and values that could help build common conceptions of sustainable development among institutionalized NGOs and non-institutionalized social movements – in sum, to build a common ethic – if we accept Larissa Adler’s understanding of social movements as networks that share a community of values.⁸⁸ Perhaps, the most important consequences of building networks are that their participants focussed on their similarities instead of their differences. This recognition establishes the potential for building a broad-based consensus for collective mobilization that could contribute to empowering the alternative proposed civilizational model.

⁸⁶ Melucci, Alberto (1988) “Social movements and the democratization of everyday life.” In John Deane (ed.), *Civil Society and the State: New European Perspectives*. Verso, London.

⁸⁷ Garcia-Guadilla, Maria Pilar and Jutta Blauert (1992) “Social Movements: Development and democracy.” In Garcia-Guadilla, Maria Pilar and Jutta Blauert (eds.), *Environmental Social Movements in Latin America and Europe: Challenging Development and Democracy*. MCB University Press, Bradford.

⁸⁸ Adler, L. Larissa (2001) *Redes Sociales Cultura y Poder: Ensayos de Antropología Latinoamericana*. Miguel Angel Porrás Grupo Editorial, Mexico City, DF.

Despite the great diversity of alternatives proposed by the environmental movement, the official Agenda 21 continues to guide the aims, praxes and policy proposals of international institutions and governments with regard to sustainable development. At stake is a growing environmental crisis, and the diminishing possibility of achieving sustainable development. The instrumental techno-scientific rationale on which the official documents and agendas of sustainable development rely seems to exclude the vision, aims and proposals of social movements. An extensive dialogue centered on sustainable development has to be democratic and focus on a humanistic approach based upon the human being, not on technology or economic growth per se.

Social movements regard democracy as a prerequisite for sustainable development while Agenda 21 did not place enough emphasis on democracy as a way to achieve sustainable development. Social movements demand greater democracy and have mobilized for a direct and social democracy and for the institutionalization of participatory democracy in constitutional texts as a prerequisite for the respect of environmental and social rights included in those constitutions. Thus, a broad dialogue between social movements, governments and international institutions has to be guided by democratic participation at all levels, international, national and local – and has to focus on horizontal participation that emerged from the base to affect decision-making processes.

To sum up, the gap between official and the alternative agendas concerning the relationship between the environment and development seems to be widening because the language, values and rationales of governments and social movements are divergent. The principal challenge for discourse around a common agenda will be to explore the

empowerment of all NGOs and social movements in the process and the development of common rationales and values.

The new social movements in Northeast India operate within a transformative logic in which struggles for power and rights over environmental resources connect broader popular social struggles for empowerment and democracy. The many environmental conflicts are driven by dominant power relations over the environment, which continue to benefit the few and threaten the survival of the majority. Meanwhile, the globalized notions of human rights and political participation have placed economic rights and citizen participation on the political agenda, opening up new areas for social mobilization and new social movements.

The expansion of civil societies in the region is due to both internal and global factors. Beyond the pressure of globalization, it is attributed to the inability of the populist state to either incorporate or suppress the new social forces which they helped generate. In other words, when state(s) are unable to accommodate the needs of these groups, they seek civil society institutions to fulfill them. This has invigorated the new social movements and civil societies of such alternative institutions.

CHAPTER FIVE

NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN NORTHEAST INDIA: A CASE STUDY OF KRISHAK MUKTI SANGRAM SAMITI (KMSS) MOVEMENTS (ASSAM) AND ANTI TIPAIMUKH DAM MOVEMENTS (MANIPUR)

This chapter discusses the new social movements in Northeast India¹ by taking a case study of Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) movements against Lower Subansiri Hydro-power Project (Assam) and Anti-Tipaimukh Dam Movements (Manipur). It involves an analysis of these movements, their emergence, styles of protest, aspirations and deep immersion in the social struggles for space, constitutional and entitlement rights. Particular attention is focused on the ways in which they confront or resist the “hegemonic” forces of capital and the state that control scarce and shrinking environmental resources. In other ways, these environmental movements are the bearers of environmental and policy professionalism² critique of the political and economic monopolies (extractive external/multinational interests) that dominated Northeast India in the quest for profit and power. The struggles of environmental movements in Northeast assume much prominence only after the twentieth century and the beginning of twenty first century.³ Environmentalism, in the region, is a new consciousness that had activated diverse collective action.

¹ Northeast India, as a region, consists of the eight states of Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Manipur, Meghalaya, Mizoram, Nagaland, Tripura and Sikkim. It is known for its ecological, biological and cultural diversity and the unique Brahmaputra river system. The region is home to over one hundred tribal communities and a large percentage of the population is dependent on traditional natural resource-based livelihoods. The region is conceived to be India’s future powerhouse

² Torgerson, Douglas. (Spring 1997). “Policy Professionalism and the Voices of Dissent: The Case of Environmentalism.” *Polity*, Volume XXIX, Number 3, pp. 345-374.

³ Big Dams issues and concern in the Northeast may be traced to the Environmental Action Group, Kalpavriksh and South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People (SANDRP) concern about the same when the proposals for large dam for the region was sparked off by e-mails from Bittu Sahgal, editor Sanctuary Asia. Sahgal had also been a member of MoEF’s Expert Appraisal Committee for river valley projects (1998-2000). Back then, there was little news in the public domain about projects proposed for the region. The few groups in the region had close to no information on them either. It was clear that all the planning and decision-making was taking place in Delhi and NGOs or citizens’ groups in the region had no clue of it. Kalpavriksh and SANDRP spent the summer of 2001 reaching out to organizations, groups, networks and individuals to communicate the random, incomplete and sometimes inconsistent information that they stumbled upon from various sources. SANDRP, which was then in the process of

While insignificant attention has been given to the activities of these movements within the chicken neck⁴ boundary, environmentalism as new social movements in Northeast India are not being documented in a systematic manner. But as new social movements, it has caught attention within national borders and has established international or trans-global linkages, particularly from the perspective of rights of indigenous peoples.

Kalland and Persoon stated that environmental campaigns in Asia tend to have a local focus, whereas many of the most successful Western campaigns focus on perceived problems in distant parts of the world. The authors maintained that Asian campaigns were usually responses to very concrete problems in people's immediate neighborhoods. Hence, most of them are run by citizen action groups. People become involved in a cause for very practical reasons and not out of some sort of idealism.⁵ Environmental movements in Northeast India operate within a transformative logic in which struggles for power over environmental resources connect broader popular social struggles for empowerment, decentralization of democracy, rights, participation in governance and decision making processes. The environmental movement, then, exists within a larger socio-cultural context and is frequently linked to other political issues such as rights,

disseminating the findings of the World Commission on Dams, saw the relevance of bringing some of these groups together for an initial brainstorming on the issue of dams in Northeast India. The meeting called the 'Regional Consultation on Dams and Development', held at Mawlein, Meghalaya, in July 2001, gave the two organizations their first opportunity to present the findings of their research to groups from the Northeast. Since that meeting in 2001, there have been several others and the information base and number of organizations and individuals involved in the issue has grown tremendously.

⁴ The Siliguri Corridor or Chicken's Neck is a narrow stretch of land of about 22 kilometers, located in the Indian state of West Bengal, which connects India's northeastern states to the rest of India, with the countries of Nepal and Bangladesh lying on either side of the corridor. The kingdom of Bhutan lies on the northern side of the corridor. The Kingdom of Sikkim formerly lay on the northern side of the corridor, until its merger with India in 1975.

⁵ Kalland, Arne and Persoon, Gerard. (1998). *Environmental Movements in Asia*. Curzon Press.

justice, representation, equality. Environmentalism or new social movements are voices of collective dissent oriented by the 'goals of transformative politics.'⁶ These movements, inevitably, encounter its share of uncompromising opposition in a democratic set up that was to accommodate the growing voices of dissent. On close examination, they are not just voices, but a movement that had gained political popularity in the peripheral political geography.

Drawing upon the democratic potential of new social movements, which is situated in opposition to established forms of power, the voices of dissent have been portrayed as the key to a transformative politics to advance active political life and social equality. Environmentalism, by taking the form of new social movements, has clearly emerged as the source of a significant current of dissent by throwing into question comfortable assumptions about development that is characteristic of the advanced industrial order.⁷ The sphere of environmental politics thus forms a particularly prominent site of contact between the distinct, largely antagonistic worlds of policy professionalism and dissenting new social movements.

The fusedness of the environmental with the political with respect to the struggles of the new social movements is real. Many of the environmental conflicts that were driven by dominant power relations over the environment, which continue to benefit the few and threaten the survival of many, has been one of the roots of growing dissent. Northeast's civil societies response to environmental problems have been as varied as what Rush refers to a myriad of roles played by people working within these non-

⁶ Torgerson, Douglas. (Spring 1997). "Policy Professionalism and the Voices of Dissent: The Case of Environmentalism. *Polity*, Volume XXIX, Number 3, pp. 345-374.

⁷ *Ibid.* pp. 346.

governmental organizations (NGOs): watchdogs, gadflies, teachers, scientists, lobbyists, reporters, publishers, community organizers, development workers, lawyers, priests and monks, students and intellectuals ... all of them are directly or indirectly related to either the escalating conflict ... or to problems of overexploitation and pollution.⁸ Few such groups develop into what Dalton calls 'environmental interest groups', defined as 'ongoing institutionalized advocates for political action that reach beyond the concerns of a specific locale'.⁹ The reason for this is partly a widespread tendency in Asian societies to be guided by particularistic rather than universalistic norms.¹⁰ Environmental issues are invoked locally when solutions to social problems are sought as they are intimately tied to a very specific case of environmental degradation or resource use conflict.

5.1 UNDERSTANDING NORTHEAST POWERHOUSE CAPACITY: NATIONAL POLICY ON HYDROPOWER DEVELOPMENT

The new social movements in Northeast, therefore, are hatched by the myriads of projects that came in the name of development, while the region is isolated in economic and political neglect. Northeast India is marked by socio-political complexities, which also include struggles for sovereignty and political autonomy resulting in armed conflicts. The Constitution of India has attempted to deal with the region's unique nature by adopting a system of administration that differed from the rest of country. The Sixth

⁸ Rush, J. (1991). *The Last Tree -Reclaiming the Environment in Tropical Asia*. New York: The Asia Society.

⁹ Dalton, Russel J. (1994). *The Green Rainbow. Environmental Groups in Western Europe*. New Haven: Yale University Press.

¹⁰ Callicott, J. Baird and Roger T. Ames. (1989). 'Introduction: The Asian tradition as a conceptual resource for environmental philosophy'. In J.B. Callicott and R.T. Ames (Eds.), *Nature in Asian Tradition of Thought: Essays in Environmental Philosophy* (pp. 1-21). Albany: State University of New York Press.

Schedule and other constitutional provisions relevant to the Northeast offer different degrees of autonomy and self-administration (including natural resource management) to indigenous communities. Despite this, there seems to be little opportunity for participation in the decision making processes or planning of the large development projects that comes in the form of 'Big Dams.'

In this backdrop, a quick look at available legislation of the region on land and resources will add substance to this study. In the Northeast, access to and control and management of land, land based resources, and water bodies were linked with the communities that lived on it. With the coming of state, such rights became the property of state. More often than not, such rights are not recognized or are suppressed by the state in its provisional ambiguity. There is even a general feeling among state functionaries that de facto communal resource holding system had stagnated development activities in these areas.¹¹ The new ownership has led to a 'take-over' of the more productive resources by powerful individuals and groups and opened access to resources that were previously managed by communities.¹² The layering legislation ambiguity often intervenes to negate the people of their entitlement rights. For instance, the Manipur Land Revenue and Land Reforms (MLR&LR) Act was enacted in 1960 to establish the State's rights over the entire landed area in Manipur. The Act declares that "All lands, public roads, lanes and paths and bridges, ditches, dikes and fences on or the same, the beds of rivers, streams, nullahs, lakes and tanks and all canals and water courses, and all standing and flowing water and all rights in or over the same or appertaining thereto, which are not the

¹¹ Roy Burman, B.K. (1999). '*Note on Communal Land System and Problems of Survey and Settlement and of Flow of Institutional Finance*'. Unpublished note on Communal Land Holding System.

¹² Swallow, B.M. and Bromley D.W. (1995). "Institutions, Governance and Incentives in Common Property Regimes for African Rangelands". *Environmental and Resource Economics*, 6, 99-118.

property of any person and are hereby declared to be the property of the Government.” There are other legislations¹³ that sought to empower the people of NEI. These legislations often come into conflict with the many conceived development projects that are planned in the region.

In the year 2002, the Department of Development of the North Eastern Region (DONER) presented the Northeast region’s “potential to be India’s future powerhouse.”¹⁴ The October 2001 Central Electricity Authority (CEA) ‘Preliminary Ranking Study’ of the potential of hydroelectric schemes conducted for all river basins in the country gave the highest marks to the Brahmaputra river system. 149 schemes were ranked for viability for this region. These schemes would be developed by agencies such as the National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC), North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO), the Brahmaputra Board and State Electricity Boards.

The government and proponents of large dams in the region paint a win-win picture, exploiting the country’s largest perennial water system to produce cheap, plentiful power for the nation, economic benefits through power export, employment generation, the end of militancy, flood control and with little direct displacement of local communities. Dams are made out to be the panacea for all problems of the region. The National Policy on Hydropower Development stated that India was endowed with enormous economically exploitable and viable hydro potential assessed to be about

¹³ Article 371A of the Constitution of India provides special provision to the state of Nagaland: (1) Notwithstanding anything in this Constitution, - (a) no Act of Parliament in respect of - (i) religious or social practices of the Nagas, (ii) Naga customary law and procedure, (iii) administration of civil and criminal justice involving decisions according to Naga customary law, (iv) ownership and transfer of land and its resources, shall apply to the state of Nagaland unless the Legislative Assembly of Nagaland by a resolution so decides.

¹⁴ Press Release of DONER, July 2002.

84,000 MW at 60% load factor (1,48, 700 MW installed capacity). In addition, 6781.81 MW in terms of installed capacity from small, mini, and micro hydel schemes have been assessed. Also, 56 sites for pumped storage schemes with an aggregate installed capacity of 94,000 MW have been identified. However, only 15% of the hydroelectric potential has been harnessed so far and 7% is under various stages of development. Thus, 78% of the potential remains without any plan for exploitation. The Government of India set the objectives for accelerating the pace of hydropower development¹⁵ to ensure targeted capacity addition during 9th Plan.¹⁶

The policy instruments also mentioned: “The funding agencies like World bank and Asian Development Bank (ADB) have shown their interest towards funding the survey and investigation activities for hydroelectric projects. ... With a view to bring in additional private investment in the hydel sector, there would be a greater emphasis to take up schemes through the joint ventures between the PSUs/SEBs and the domestic and foreign private enterprises. There is a need that project authorities are insulated from the problems arising out of land acquisition and Resettlement and Rehabilitation (R&R). It will be the responsibility of the State government to acquire the land for the project and also negotiate ...with land owners as per the policy adopted by respective State Governments.

¹⁵ <http://www.nhpcindia.com/hydro-policy.htm>

¹⁶ The 9th Plan programme envisages capacity addition of 9815 MW from hydel projects in the total capacity addition of 40245 MW. The Central Sector hydel projects would contribute 3455 MW, State Sector would add 5810 MW and Private Sector 550 MW. Keeping in view that the achievement in 8th Plan had been dismal, the Government is determined to ensure that no slippage was allowed to occur and the targeted capacity addition in the 9th Plan is achieved in full. The objectives are directed towards exploitation of vast hydroelectric potential at a faster pace; Promoting small and mini hydel projects; Strengthening the role of PSUs/SEBs for taking up new hydel projects; and increasing private investment.

The Department of Development of North Eastern Region stated that “The hydroelectric power potential in the North Eastern Region is enormous. Out of an exploitable potential of 63, 257 MW as assessed by the Central Electricity Authority (CEA), only 1,011 MW has been developed so far. Thus, out of the available exploitable hydroelectric power potential in the region, only about 1.6% has been developed.

From what is evident, the Government of India has launched a major, aggressive strategy to build big dams in the Northeast region of India. A CEA ranking study of planned big hydro projects of India contains 168 projects from the region with combined installed capacity of over 38000 MW. To give an idea of the scale, this is over 1.5 times the India’s existing hydropower capacity and equivalent of more than 26 times the capacity of the infamous Sardar Sarovar Project.

5.2 LOWER SUBANSIRI HYDROPOWER PROJECT – ASSAM

This research will look into two cases of big dam projects in Northeast India that generated collective peoples responses, which is studied here as part of the new social movements. The analysis of the movements give an opportunity to examine the terms of their structure and goals, the characteristic of the participants and leaders, the extent of conflicts, and the networks and coalitions that build-up the newness of environmental movements in this region. These new social movements also consider the relevance of existing theories; and also attempt to apply them in Northeast context.

As one looks into the cases, one will be guided by Pakulski definition of social movements: “Social movements are partially institutionalized collective activities which

have a structure but where no formal membership is necessary, unlike political parties. Broad participation accompanies openness in terms of ideas as well as recruitment. Instead of discipline, it is solidarity and dedication which is expected from movement members.”¹⁷ In understanding the new social movements of Northeast India, one can also look into the role of the actors, the civil societies, who represents the distinctness of the movements. The structure of this chapter is as follows. The first part will look into three different cases of environmental movements in the region. The second part undertakes a comparative analysis of their characteristics, which will be used to establish their “newness.” Finally, in establishing its “newness” the relevance of western theories will be examined in explaining the environmental movements as new social movements.

The Subansiri is one of the principal tributaries of the Brahmaputra river and forms one of its largest sub-basins. It is sustained by snowmelt run-off, the ablation of glaciers and monsoon rainfall. The Subansiri originates in Tibet beyond the Greater Himalayan ranges at an altitude of 5,340 m., then flows west before cutting through the Greater Himalayan ranges of the Indo-Tibetan border and taking a southeasterly course as it descends along the Lesser Himalayan ranges. After traversing the Miri hills of the outer Himalayan zone (the Shivalik foothills), the Subansiri enters the Brahmaputra plains at Dulangmukh. A major portion of the rivers’ catchment in Tibet and some areas in India lie above the snowline.¹⁸ Several glaciers form part of its catchment and hydrological system. Around 60% of the catchment area lies in India and except for the upper stretches, this portion is clothed with forests.

¹⁷ Pakulski, J. (1991). *Social Movements: The Politics of Moral Protest*. Longman Cheshire: Melbourne.

¹⁸ Vagholikar, Neeraj and Firoz Ahmed. (January-March 2003). “Tracking a Hydel Project – the story of Lower Subansiri. *The Ecologist Asia*, Vol. 11, No. 1.

The Lower Subansiri Hydroelectric Project (LSHP), an inter-state project, proposes to harness the hydel potential of the lower reaches of the Subansiri river. The project site is located on the border of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The left bank of the dam would be in Assam and the right bank of the dam, the powerhouse and most of the submergence would be in Arunachal. The proposed dam site is 2.3 km., upstream of Gerukamukh village in the Dhemaji district of Assam, about 70 km. from North Lakhimpur. The 116 m. high dam would submerge 3,436 hectares (ha.) of forests. The total requirement of forestland for the project is 4,039.30 ha., out of which 3,183 ha. is in Arunachal Pradesh and 856.3 ha. in Assam.

The Lower Subansiri hydroelectric power project is being developed as part of India's 50,000MW hydropower programme initiated in May 2003. The 2,000MW Lower Subansiri hydroelectric power project (LSHEP) is located on Subansiri River, which is located on the border of India's two north-eastern states, Arunachal Pradesh and Assam. The Central Electricity Authority (CEA) has taken up pre-feasibility studies of 162 projects as part of this initiative, among which a total 5,600MW was planned on Subansiri River. The Subansiri hydropower project was envisioned as a mega project with three components, namely the 2,000MW Upper Subansiri HEP, the 1,600MW Middle Subansiri HEP, and the 2,000MW Lower Subansiri HEP. National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC) was asked to prepare Detailed Project Reports (DPR) of all the three HEPs on River Subansiri. The Lower Subansiri HEP received clearance from the government in August 2003, following which NHPC started developing the project. The cost of Lower Subansiri project was originally estimated to be INR62.85bn (\$1.16bn) at 2002 price level but has since been revised to INR106.6bn (\$1.97bn) at 2010 price level.

The project cost is expected to further go up because of the delay. The project cost is being met through 70% equity and 30% debt financing by the provision of a term loan. The central government is providing budgetary support as part of the equity component.

The LHSEP consists of a concrete gravity dam, which will be 116m high from the river bed level and 130m from foundation. The length of the dam will be 284m. The gross storage capacity of the reservoir will be 1.37km. The construction contract was awarded by NHPC in December 2003, but the construction did not commence until 2005 because of delays due to land allotment issues. The diversion of the rivr was completed in April 2007, after which the excavation works were carried out. The dam was, however, redesigned in October 2008. The LSHEP will be the single largest hydroelectric plant in India when completed. However, the project has been plagued by delays due to stiff opposition over its potential environmental impact. As of early 2013, the project was more than 50% complete, but the construction works had been stalled for an indefinite period because of strong peoples movements against the dam.

The dam site is located in an important biodiversity spots of this region. The reservoir will submerge primary forests, which are also important wildlife habitats. The submergence area will include parts of Tale Valley Sanctuary, Tale Reserved Forest (RF) and Panir RF in Arunachal Pradesh and Subansiri RF in Assam. The project is to come up in the midst of a rich biodiversity zone comprising Kakoi, Dulung, and Subansiri RFs of Assam and Tale Valley Wildlife Sanctuary, Tale RF, and Panir RF of Arunachal Pradesh. The area is also part of an important elephant corridor besides other notable endangered species.

5.2.1 ENVIRONMENTAL PUBLIC HEARING FOR LSHP: THE EMERGING FAULTLINES

The Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) took a serious technical stand, which will not be considered here in this study. However, the environmental public hearing will be considered as it involves the response of peoples who will be affected. The Public Hearing for the Lower Subansiri Hydel Project took place on September 4, 2001. This was done in keeping with the mandatory requirement under the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 1994, which states that certain set of industries/operations/activities (As mentioned in Schedule I of the Notification) need an environmental clearance from the Central Government.

The process of Public Hearing was made mandatory for the activities mentioned in Schedule I by an amendment to the EIA notification in 1997. Since then, public hearings have been held by project proponents for many projects of different kinds in various parts of the country. The NGOs, environmentalists, local community groups and even government officials have developed ways and means of ensuring that these hearings served the objective for which they are held. Yet, a lot remains to be improved and made effective. One glaring loophole in the notification is that it did not lay down clear guidelines for the conducting of a public hearing. Neither does it state, what exactly happens before and after a hearing and how the project needs to be viewed or reviewed with the hearing.

The public hearing was criticized by the civil societies for its inability to secure mandatory requirements. These relates to:

Information dissemination about the Public Hearing: Schedule IV of the EIA notification states that the announcement of the date and venue of the hearing must be published in at least two newspapers. Communities living in Gerukamukh have no access to newspapers. So they never get to know about the public hearing prior to the date of the hearing. This rendered the objective of the hearing unfulfilled as the community members were not prepared with their opinions, comments, suggestions, or objections about the project.

Moreover, for the purpose of reaching out to the community members of project targeted places, it would have helped to distribute handouts giving basic information about the project and seeking the participation of the community members in the discussion on impacts of the project. The collective opinion is that this could have been done a month in advance so they could have had enough time to prepare or gather data which may have helped them to form their opinions.

Medium of communication: Another complaint is that the NHPC made their presentation giving details of the project in Hindi and English. It is obvious that unless the proceedings take place in the local language it will be impossible for a majority of the community members to understand and participate in the deliberations.

Inadequate Executive Summary: As per the notification, an executive summary containing salient features of the project can be made available for reference by interested parties. The objective of this is to make the findings of survey and investigation and the study on the probable impacts of the project known to everybody concerned. However, in the case of this project, the Executive Summary is a very inadequate document of 4 pages

with absolutely no information whatsoever about environmental or social impacts of the project. It only has information on the physical dimensions of the project and numerical figures related to the engineering aspects.

If a public hearing is to take place, the Executive Summary which is the only document made available to the public needs to be comprehensive and give relevant information about every aspect of the project like environmental, social and cultural impacts, proposed mitigation measures, cost benefit analysis. A number of groups who have attended such hearings and who are keen on making it a meaningful process have also proposed that a non-technical summary could be made available to the public which has technical details explained in simple language. When the issue of no information being available through the Executive Summary was mentioned at the public hearing, the project authorities stated that those interested should look at the EIA. However, this is a contradiction because, as per the law, the Pollution Control Board is only bound to allow the public to refer to the Executive Summary and not the full EIA report.

Public Hearing Panel: Schedule IV of the EIA notification also lays down the constitution of the panel. The panel for this hearing was incomplete, as the representative of Department of Environment (Assam) was not present at the public hearing panel. Also, the panel members were not given adequate prior information about the date of the hearing. They were neither informed about the role they were meant to play in this important process. One of the members of the panel, Pegu, even stated that a panel could not perform its functions unless it is informed of its role and the objectives of such an exercise. Another member, Medok stated that he did not even know that he was a panel

member till he was called upon by the authorities and asked to take a seat on the dais. In fact, he had come for the hearing to participate as a local citizen.

It is important that the panel members could be informed well in advance about the public hearing so that they could be present at the venue. Also, information regarding the project, the Executive Summary, the Detailed Project Reports and the EIA report can be made available to them in advance so that they were well aware of the project and its proposed impacts. The list of the panel members can be circulated widely and even placed at all the local offices and meeting places within the area so that local people could have discussions with them over the period of sixty days rather than only on the day of public hearing. This helps in giving the communities enough time to make collective opinions. It also helps the panel members to generate their thoughts through their interaction during the sixty days.

Lying at the Public Hearing: The public hearing was conducted at the site of the project and it was evident that construction was taking place on the right bank of the river. One of the participants brought up the issue that the construction activity was illegal as per law, as it is stated in the EIA notification that “no construction temporary or permanent is allowed till the site and environmental clearance is obtained.” To this, the project authorities stated that construction was not taking place. This was a blatant lie when it was evident to everyone who had gathered there, that construction was indeed taking place.

Poor presentation and no satisfactory answers to raised questions: A number of questions about critical issues was raised to the consultants of the EIA report, but the answers to them were rather unsatisfactory as indicated by some examples below:

The consultants agreed on the negative impacts on the rich biodiversity. But this was despite the fact that out of the entire 70+kms that would be submerged, only one km upstream of the dam site had been surveyed. One of the participants, who had also been invited by the State Pollution Control Board to review the EIA report on their behalf stated very clearly that it did not have any mention about the imminent landslides and neither did the disaster management plans take this into serious account. It was also stated that the EIA report had no mention about impact on thermal regimes. Although it does recognize the presence of Mahseer population and that the project will adversely impact it, there is no mention of compensation for the communities living downstream who are dependent on the availability of fish for their livelihoods and survival.

Abuse of authority: A public hearing is a forum for all interested parties to state their opinions about the project in front of the panel. It is not a decision-making forum. All the stated opinions of the public are to be synthesized by the panel and submitted in the form of a report. Audio and visual recording of the proceedings are also useful. The objective is to carry the suggestions and objections of the local people and other participants as accurately as possible to the government officials who would then relook into the project.

However, at this public hearing, the project authorities seem to have abused their authority and got the participants to sign a resolution saying that there was no opposition

to the project from the people there as it had no environmental impacts. This was done despite the comments made by some people that they were not satisfied with the information presented to them by the authorities. Some participants and even a panel member refused to sign the proceedings, but most people did sign it as they thought they were expected to sign it because they had attended the hearing.

5.2.2 KRISHAK MUKTI SANGRAM SAMITI: ASSAM'S NEW VOICES OF DISSENT

Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) is an Assam based peasant organization founded by the Right to Information activist Akhil Gogoi in the year 2005. The organization works on a diverse range of issues from Public Distribution System (PDS) thefts, non-implementation of National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA), land rights, government and corporate corruption, Right to Information (RTI) and construction of big dams in the Northeast. The organization came to national limelight after it joined the agitation against corruption under the leadership of Gandhian activist Anna Hazare. However, KMSS broke with India Against Corruption (IAC) campaign after some of the IAC members decided to form a political party. Since mid-2009, KMSS has been leading a statewide movement against the construction of Lower Subansiri Hydroelectric Power Project in the ecologically fragile and tectonically sensitive Northeastern region especially in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh.

On March 30, 2010, thousands of ordinary people marched to the Deputy Commissioner's office in the remote, eastern district of Dhemaji in Assam. Mega dams

numbering as many as 168 are being constructed in Arunachal Pradesh by flouting environmental clearance norms. Dhemaji is the place where the Brahmaputra enters Assam from Arunachal. Farmers fear that the dams were going to lay waste their source of livelihood. The Bogibeel bridge over the river had allegedly devastated one-fourth paddy cropping area of the district. There are apprehensions that earthquakes, by breaking the dams, may send apocalyptic flood down the Assam valley. Weigh down with these apprehensions, the thousands of marchers waited patiently to hand over their memorandum to the DC. However, the DC did not oblige to step out. The crowd became restive; perimeter gate was crashed. The police retaliated with lathi-charge, tear gas, rubber bullets, and blank firing. Many were injured and hospitalized. Leaders of KMSS were arrested by the police and arrest warrant was issued for Akhil Gogoi. The next day, there was an uproar and walkout in the state assembly. Earlier, a house committee appointed by the Assam assembly had submitted an interim report to halt construction of the dams until the final report comes out. But the decree of Capital overrides the will of people. In towns of the province, farmers demonstrated against the police action. KMSS drew a firm resolution to organize more demonstrations against big dams. KMSS also submitted memorandum to the Chief Minister of Assam.¹⁹

¹⁹KMSS memorandum reads: "As you know the interim report of the House Committee of the Assam Legislative Assembly constituted to study/examine the impact of big dams being constructed on the upper reaches of the Brahmaputra river on the downstream areas of the State has called for keeping in abeyance all construction activities on major dams pending submission of its final report. We would also like to draw your attention to the recommendations of the committee which include: comprehensive scientific studies prior to giving clearances by various agencies of the Government of India for all future mega and small hydro-electric projects in Arunachal Pradesh, a proactive role by the Assam Government for impressing upon the Centre not to consider such projects without any comprehensive downstream impact study covering all relevant aspects, and making the Centre to issue necessary directions to the NHPC to consider the observations and recommendations of the expert group made in their report and also the recommendations of the inter-ministerial group (IMG).

Akhil Gogoi, the general secretary of KMSS stated: “This new awakening of the people is totally political. The movement is a consolidated and organized expression of the political aspiration of people of Assam. The people are dissatisfied with the political decisions that were oppressing the people. The people don’t have any platform to resolve their problems. No nationalist organizations, no leftist parties, no opposition parties are there. We have gone to the people, we have tried to understand their disgruntled state, and we have tried to politically project their anger. But the ruling classes which are incapable of people’s welfare and who have lost their wherewithal to the big capital are getting more autocratic by the day and are attacking the very people who have elected them to the office. At this juncture, the movement which has been built up by the people is completely political. The peasant workers who are at the forefront are politically educated and are men shining with the dream of a new society.”

The newness of the social movements in Assam is reflected in the statement of Debarshi Das, a member of Sanhati (an organization that is fighting neoliberalism in Bengal and beyond): “Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti, in many ways, is an anomaly in Assam. This a land which finds national attention only in times of blasts, floods, massacres. KMSS breaks the media orientalism and manages to make news. KMSS launches agitations on patently non-exotic issues such as Public Distribution System thefts, construction of big dams in fragile seismic territories, non-implementation of NREGS, Right to Information Act. Aside from these issues, the other feature which sets KMSS apart in the political landscape of the state is its non-alignment. KMSS is not close to any political party. And more importantly it does not swear by any tribal, linguistic,

religious group. This is something of a miracle in a region almost balkanized by identity politics.

5.2.3 POLITICAL IDEOLOGY OF KMSS

Before one examines the tactics and styles of the KMSS as new social movements, their demands and pursuit of interest will be looked into . Akhil Gogoi stated: “The people are not with us. We are with the people. As long as there are problems, there will be the struggle. And as long as there are programmes to take the struggle of people forward, people’s struggle will advance.” Gogoi believed that people all over the world had been facing challenges of the extreme form of capitalism and extreme state apparatus. But there is a counter tendency as well. He believed that the source of political inspiration is the aspiration to freedom from the extreme form of imperialism, from backbreaking exploitation of capitalism, from the day to day deprivation.

Gogoi believed that the primary aim of KMSS was to raise political consciousness of the people of Assam. Political consciousness according to Gogoi refers to consciousness of parliamentary democracy. KMSS is determined to elevate democratic consciousness which it aspire to achieve through mass movements. In the present political and economic structure, Gogoi did not believe in contesting elections and becoming part of the political structure and system.²⁰

²⁰ Gogoi stated: “That would not solve the problem. Neither can these be solved by forming a government.” He cited two reasons. One, constitutional, and two, recent international economic policies. He believed that the constitution has given the rights over minerals and main sources of income to the centre in India’s federal system. Deliberations over a federal state structure have also veered towards greater centralization. Therefore, “no fundamental change in Assam is possible through capturing power

Gogoi asserts the ideology of KMSS as peoples' ideology; a creative ideology borrowing heavily from our tradition, folklore, people's culture and progressivism." Although KMSS believed in people's philosophy, they try to "realize the limitations of the parliamentary system." They endeavor to transform this system creatively by influencing it through people's philosophy. Gogoi stated that KMSS had a weakness for Gandhi as the historical limitation of his philosophy is unsuitable in the aggressive capitalism of the present day. KMSS believed that Gandhi's thoughts were limited by bourgeois philosophy, Gandhi's Gram Swaraj was imaginary, an utopia. "Within capitalist system," Gogoi stated, "real village self-rule is not possible. That is why we need people's philosophy." Gogoi believed that alternative to capitalism is not soft capitalism, but socialism which is a form of egalitarianism. Therefore, while being differential towards Gandhian socialism, KMSS assert its believe in Marxism; a modern Marxism, where nationalism will be given emphasis. KMSS believed that Marxism which is practiced in India has either fallen to revisionism or to anarchism. This is when they are trying to march ahead "with a creative ideology borrowing heavily from our tradition, folklore, people's culture and progressivism." Gogoi stressed that "mass movement is the fulcrum of KMSS tactic. Without political assertion, political development, and mental transformation through mass movement even if power is captured through armed actions it would not lead to true emancipation of people."

in Dispur." On the other hand, "international capital has throttled the states" that the current financial system is fully dependent on the international institutions.

5.2.4 KMSS MOVEMENTS AGAINST LOWER SUBANSIRI HYDROPOWER PROJECT

In September 7, 2009, KMSS submitted a joint memorandum to the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, with the subject: “Large dam juggernaut in Northeast India ignores downstream impacts on Assam.”²¹ KMSS memorandum stressed their concern “... by the manner in which Central Government is ignoring issues vital to the general public while granting permissions to large dams in the Northeast of India. ... the downstream impact issue has become a major issue of conflict in the region in recent years and the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) and its Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) on River Valley and Hydroelectric projects have been repeatedly requested to address downstream impacts and risks during the environmental decision-making process. Such repeated and deliberate denial of vital downstream issues is unacceptable to us.” The memorandum talks about absence of comprehensive downstream studies and the false assurance about these projects being ‘environmentally benign’ because most of them are “run-of-the-river (RoR) projects. According to the KMSS, “This is an ecological lie by the government.”

KMSS also raised the very poor state of environmental risk assessment in downstream areas: “A downstream flood risk due to sudden releases of water from upstream reservoirs in the monsoons is an important area of concern which needs proper study. Frequent occurrence of such dam-induced floods is likely in the geo-environmental setting of the Eastern Himalayas and the public cannot be fooled by saying

²¹ Joint Memorandum of Various Civil Societies to the Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, on September 7, 2009.

that dam-induced floods take place only during ‘dam break’, the occurrence of which is rare. The downstream is also subject to considerable risks during the construction stage, a fact ignored in the decision-making process. KMSS demanded for “comprehensive downstream impact studies and public consultation to be part of the process to determine the viability of these projects.”

KMSS reminded the Prime Minister that his office, the Prime Minister Office, asked for downstream impact studies to be done in the Lower Subansiri project in 2006, which was only after the construction work had begun. When downstream impact concerns were raised since 2001, the concern of people was ignored while granting clearance to the project in 2003. The second phase of downstream impact study of the Lower Subansiri project was commissioned to an expert committee formed by the Government of Assam by constituting members from Gauhati University, Dibrugarh University and IIT Guwahati.

This committee in its February 2009 interim report has raised concern about the very location and foundation of dam on geological grounds and has asked for all work to be stopped on the project till the full downstream study has been completed. But this has been ignored by NHPC and work continues. KMSS asked: “What is the use of prescribing post-clearance downstream impact studies as a formality? They pointed out that the Terms of Reference (ToR) of these projects did not ask for comprehensive downstream studies, which is an imperative necessity and has been repeatedly demanded by people in the region.

KMSS also pointed out to the Prime Minister that with atleast 135 projects for 57,000MW proposed in Arunachal Pradesh alone, the issue of cumulative impact of projects (including in downstream areas) assumes great significance. KMSS blamed the Manmohan Singh government: “Your government has failed to implement an April 2007 order of the National Environmental Appellate Authority (NEAA) in which an advance cumulative study of series of different dams coming up in a river basin has been felt necessary.

The above mentioned scenario, according to KMSS, is leading to a situation wherein the long term social and environmental security of the Northeast in general and Assam in particular is being severely compromised. The wave of protests and movements in Assam, therefore, is against imposition of involuntary risks on downstream populations through arbitrary decision-making on upstream dams.

KMSS objectives and resolutions are clearly stated here: “When the government is unable to address our concerns, it is also resorting to an explanation that trade-offs were required to meet our development and power needs. We would like to clearly point out here that such explanations cannot be used as a fig leaf to cover up for shoddy impact assessment and appraisal of projects,²² as well as the involuntary imposition of these mega projects on us in the region. We want comprehensive impact assessments by credible persons and institutions in consultation with local communities. Based on such

²² “Environment and Forest ministry carries out an Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) study for every single project. Usually a small group of experts would fly down from Delhi, Mumbai or Kolkata to a location in the Northeast for EIA study. They stay for a night in a hotel in Gauhati, or in a nearest urban centre. Maybe the entity, which is going to promote this power project, would have a helicopter commissioned for such a study. They will fly around the zone; they will have an aerial view of the proposed site. Then they will get back to Delhi and they will file their EIA.” (Source: Tehelka, September 9, 2010).

studies and consultations, and an appraisal process which respects the precautionary principle, we can decide which projects need to be shelved and which can be allowed. It is only for the projects which are allowed to go ahead after careful scrutiny and public consultation that we will discuss issues related to trade-offs, appropriate compensations.

KMSS stated that they would not engage in discussions on trade-offs on projects which inherently carry major risk to the downstream people and the environment. Till such a process is in place for carrying out comprehensive individual and cumulative downstream impacts of dams in advance and a credible public consultation process in downstream areas, we demand a moratorium on clearances to all dams in Northeast India.”

KMSS in its letter to the Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, reiterated its concern and resolution.²³ The organization hinted at democracy deficit in the execution of mega-infrastructure projects. KMSS in its letter to the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Dorjee Khandu,²⁴ also intimated the impacts of the projects on the local people and Northeast region as a whole would be so widespread, intense and far reaching that the region could see increased militant activities as people get disempowered, their livelihoods destroyed, they become destitute and impoverished in their own lands. They

²³ KMSS memorandum to Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh (Dated: February 25, 2010): “We have decided that we will no more allow this authoritarian and undemocratic decision-making on mega projects impacting our social and environmental security in the Brahmaputra floodplains. There is a serious democracy deficit in the planning and execution of mega-infrastructure project being promoted by powerful developers and being involuntarily thrust on us. How can such anti-people approaches be termed ‘development’? ...we cannot allow the Central Government to trample over our rights and resources. The state government (Assam) has not been consulted while giving clearances to upstream mega projects. Till the decision making on mega dams in the Northeast becomes truly democratic, and not merely function as diktats from Central authoritarian technocracies to the people of the Northeast, we will have to resort to civil disobedience and thwart projects...”

²⁴ KMSS letter to the Chief Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Dorjee Khandu, dated October 20, 2010.

also share the need for a much more rational, pro-poor, democratic and pro-environment approach to the very issue of development. “Unless we are ready for that”, KMSS adds, “such projects will continue to face opposition from all of us in Assam and all over Northeast.”

On October, 22, 2010, KMSS submitted a memorandum to the Union Power Minister of India, Sushil Kumar Schinde, seeking a moratorium on clearances for large dams in Northeast India; withdrawal of clearances granted to 2000MW Lower Subansiri, 1750MW Demwe Lower and 1500MW Tipaimukh Multipurpose project. They also demanded that future steps on hydropower projects and dams be taken only after full, prior, and informed consent of people in the region; and to protect the Brahmaputra river basin as a cultural and ecological endowment.

KMSS reminded the Union Power Minister of India that the Northeast of India was an ecologically and geologically fragile, seismically active and culturally sensitive region. There are plans to harness 63,000MW of hydropower through 168 large dams in the Brahmaputra and Barak river basins. The state of Arunachal Pradesh alone plans to develop 135 projects for a cumulative capacity of 57,000MW. Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) and Memorandum of Agreements (MoAs) have already been signed for over 120 projects by the state government. An important role is played by the Central Government which grants environmental and techno-economic clearances to projects. The environmental clearance process also assumes significant importance as it is currently the only clearance in which comprehensive social impact assessment and public consultation has to be done.

KMSS raised serious concern over the manner in which Terms of Reference (ToR) for Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) studies have been granted by the Ministry of Environment and Forest (MoEF) for atleast 54 large dams in Arunachal Pradesh since September 2006. In most cases, KMSS pointed out, the baseline-data collection has been asked to be restricted to only 10 KM. downstream and the 'actual prediction' has been asked to be restricted to an even smaller distance downstream: only between the dam and the powerhouse. There is only one aspect which has been mandatorily asked to be studied beyond 10 KM. downstream in all cases: this is the 'dam-break analysis' which predicts what will be flooding downstream in case the dam actually breaks. But dam-break is not the only downstream risk a dam poses.

Infact, most detailed downstream studies are only prescribed as post-clearance studies as has been done in 2010 in the 2000 MW Lower Subansiri project on the Subansiri River, the 1500 MW Tipaimukh Multipurpose project on the Tuiruong/Barak River and the 1750 MW Demwe Lower project on the Lohit River. This clearly indicates that the projects were being treated as fait accompli and downstream studies and consultations a formality.

5.2.5 UPSTREAM: THE MYTH OF BENIGN PROJECTS

While Pandit Nehru and the former adviser to NEFA, Verrier Elwin, argued for development interventions in the state needing to be sensitive to the local indigenous ethos of state, current Central and State government policies, according to the KMSS, seem to contradict this philosophy. Current plans involved the building of 135 dams to harness 57,000MW of hydroelectricity, leaving no river or stream to flow free in the

state. The KMSS also cited the example of Dibang and Siang valleys of Arunachal Pradesh where citizens (particularly youth) are opposing the juggernaut of large dams which threaten the very ecological and social fabric of their homelands.

Opponents of dams in the Dibang and Siang basins certainly want development and economic activity, but that which was socially and ecologically appropriate. The civil societies opine not for multiple large dams which will submerge large tracts of forests and agricultural landscapes; destroy the rivers including sacred and historical sites; bring in massive socio-cultural and demographic changes due to influx of large labour populations in the state outnumbering the local populations; give little opportunity of sustainable livelihoods for local populations and cause major downstream impacts both within Arunachal Pradesh and neighboring Assam.

The KMSS blames the government for sowing the seeds of conflict by accelerating hydropower development in Arunachal Pradesh and the hurried signing of MoUs with power companies. The people of Dibang Valley have opposed the holding of public hearing for the 3000MW Dibang Multipurpose project no less than ten times. With huge upfront premiums already paid by companies' to the state government before public consultation and green clearances, citizens opposed to the Dibang dam believe that it was pointless having cosmetic public hearings. In the Siang Valley, villagers protesting the 2700MW Lower Siang project near Pongging had to face violent action by the paramilitary forces in May 2010, injuring several people. The KMSS indicated that this was the first such incident in the state and has set a dangerous precedent in the otherwise peaceful state.

The Expert Appraisal Committee on River Valley and Hydroelectric projects and the MoEF have granted environmental or pre-construction clearances to virtually all projects in the state, indicating a clear pro-project bias. These clearances have only further perpetuated several myths about the projects coming up in Arunachal Pradesh at the national level. One such myth is that ‘Social impacts of projects in Arunachal Pradesh is less as it is relatively thinly populated as compared to other parts of the country.’

The small displacement argument to sell dams in Arunachal Pradesh is considered by KMSS as one of the most misleading arguments. Firstly, project affected persons (PAPs) are being grossly underestimated as only people whose lands are being directly acquired are being treated as PAPs. Rights and resource use of local communities in a much larger landscape will be impacted. These include the following: submergence of jhum lands will shorten jhum cycles over a large area; land use restrictions over large tracts for Catchment Area Treatment and Compensatory Afforestation (particularly in the context of FRA); impacts on downstream livelihoods due to major fluctuations in flow regimes.

Arunachal Pradesh is home to small populations of culturally sensitive indigenous communities. Therefore, direct and indirect displacement is high if looked at in the perspective of local population as opposed to the population of country. The land in state has been customarily delineated between different communities and clans and there is no place to resettle people or provide alternative land. Moreover, these large hydel projects being labor intensive and long gestation projects will involve influx of large labor populations for long stretches of time. These will have serious socio-cultural and demographic consequences for this tribal state.

Being a geologically and seismologically sensitive region, comprehensive environmental risk assessment assumes great significance in the Northeast (both during construction and operation of project) to decide the viability or otherwise of mega dams in the region. In the current environmental decision-making process, 'dam break analysis' is the only risk assessment which is done. The Lower Subansiri Expert Committee report has thrown up many issues related to the paucity of understanding of earthquakes and their impacts in the region while planning and designing dams. Beyond the impact on the dam structure itself, there are other risks both during earthquakes. For example, heavy sedimentation impacting viability of dam and overtopping of dam due to heavy landslides in reservoir inducing floods downstream. KMSS pointed out that these and other environmental risks need to be properly understood while evaluating the viability of dams in the Northeast.

The region, particularly in downstream Assam, has seen a major grassroots social and political movement against the mega dams. The scientific/technical recommendations of the Lower Subansiri expert committee clearly suggest the need for scrapping of mega dams in the Northeast, questioning the reports dished out by pro-large dam technocracies on earlier occasions. This has further strengthened and reinforced the concerns of people of the region who have been expressing concerns against the imminent dangers of mega dams. The Expert Committee's report has been categorically endorsed by the Assam Legislative Assembly's House Committee in its report on dams submitted to the Assembly in July 2010. The House Committee's report embodies a clear political mandate against mega-dams in the region. In the light of all the factors, KMSS, in its memorandum to the Union Minister of Environment and Forests (Independent), Jairam

Ramesh made its demand clear: A complete moratorium on all clearances including pre-construction clearances by the MoEF to large dams and hydropower projects in Northeast India.²⁵

5.2.6 KMSS STYLES AND TACTICS OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS

KMSS styles and tactics and networks or coalitions for leveraging its movements is popularly considered as ‘novel’. Even though the KMSS spearheaded the movements against big dams in Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, KMSS brought into its fold over 57 organizations to pursue its objectives. These organizations are classless and goes beyond the ethnic, linguistic, party, and regional interests that often represented traditional social movements, particularly, in the Northeast. The aggressive character of KMSS, sometimes, made the state actors to believe that KMSS were colluding partners of the Maoist. Contradicting to the Maoist “short cut” idea of social transformation and less emphasis on people’s movement, Akhil Gogoi stated: “We abhor irresponsible, anarchist, gun-centric politics. We aim to establish a non-violent, humane society. In the process of achieving it, there might be application of violence depending on the nature of the enemy. But it can only be in the form of as was advocated by Jyotiprasad Agarwala: all struggles

²⁵ KMSS memorandum to the Union Minister of Environment and Forests demanded for: 1. Immediate withdrawal of clearances granted to the 2000 MW Lower Subansiri project, 1750 MW Demwe Lower and 1500 MW Tipaimukh which were granted environmental clearance without downstream impact assessment and public consent. 2. Commission of a special study group consisting of Independent Reviewers (including scientists, social scientist, people’s representative) to study the environmental and social impact of all the existing dams in Assam, Arunachal Pradesh and Bhutan. 3. Future steps on hydropower projects (the people of Assam will only endorse micro and small dams where community’s rights will be fully ensured) and dams to be taken only after full, prior and informed consent of the people of the Brahmaputra and Barak rivers basin. 4. The Brahmaputra River and its tributaries to be protected as a cultural and ecological endowment of the people of the region and the country as a whole. Development plans will need to respect the environmental and cultural sensibility of the region.

strive for non-violence; but the struggle would change its face according to the nature of the adversary. Gogoi said: “We have to retain the non-violent essence of our tradition even then.” KMSS is also a constituent organization of National Alliance of People’s Movement (NAPM).²⁶

On July 13, 2011, KMSS under the leadership of Akhil Gogoi organized a huge anti-dam rally in Guwahati, which was addressed by Medha Patkar, demanding for the shelving of all the proposed 168 mega dam projects in Arunachal Pradesh and immediate halt to the ongoing construction of LSHP. Since December 16, 2011, KMSS has been continuing road-blockade programme to stop vehicles carrying equipment for NHPC dam site from reaching Gerukamukh. The agitation against the 2,000MW hydel project was called off when ministers expressed reservations on holding talks while the agitation was on. However, when the stir was called off on December 27, the government showed little interest in holding talks. All the 57 organizations resumed their stir on December 30 again.

Akhil Gogoi went on indefinite hunger-strike demanding the release of 27 anti-dam protesters, arrested from Ghaghar village in Lakhimpur district on May 11, 2015. The anti-dam protesters were stopping construction machinery from being transported to NHPC’s Lower Subansiri Hydroelectric Project site. The KMSS accused the Government of Assam of trying to resume supply of construction materials for the dam when feasibility study is yet to be completed. KMSS also accused the state of deploying over

²⁶ National Alliance of People’s Movement is a network of progressive people’s organizations and movements in India. It is an umbrella organization for a larger alliance integrating various civil society organizations and individuals working towards similar goals. It struggles across India against injustice and several other discriminations.

300 police personnel to arrest its activists. Akhil Gogoi's indefinite hunger-strike was supported by Takam Mising Porin kebang, the Mising students' union of Arunachal Pradesh. The students' union extended their support as their community was most threatened by the displacement to be caused due to construction of the dam.

The KMSS and 32 anti-dam organizations, including All Assam Students Union (AASU) had a joint meeting with officials of Central Water Commission (CWC), governments of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh, and NHPC in 2015 to resolve the deadlock over the 2000MW Lower Subansiri Hydroelectric Project in Dhemaji district in Assam. KMSS leader Akhil Gogoi who was representing 32 organizations, however, was not satisfied with the outcome of the discussion. Gogoi felt that officials from CWC, NHPC and Government of Assam were all bothered that the construction work should resume and had ignored the dam safety and other related concerns. He also expressed that the committee which was formed in 2011 to review the dam design was not independent and comprises only of NHPC officials.

In 2011, a committee of experts from Gauhati University, Dibrugarh University and IIT-Guwahati had said that construction of big dams in the foothills of Eastern Himalaya was not feasible as the region fell under sensitive earthquake prone zone and was highly seismic. The Central government then formed two teams experts, one appointed by NHPC and the other comprising of people from Gauhati University. The committee, comprising former bureaucrats with the Ministry of Water Resources, C.D. Thatte and M.S. Reddy said the project was not scientifically and technologically viable and calls for a major overhaul in the design. It also indicated that an independent dam

design review panel should be set up, following which NHPC set up a dam design review panel.

KMSS movement is also supported by prominent Assam intellectuals, including Gnyanpeeth awardee Indira Goswami and Sahitya Akademi honour recipient Prof. Hiren, calling for review of the projects. The intellectuals appealed to the Prime Minister to review the government decision predicting that the dams would have enormous downstream impact in Assam. In a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India, Manmohan Singh, the intellectuals and academics asserted that the Lower Subansiri Hydel Dam construction was started with the most “perfunctory environmental impact assessment and its viability from seismological point of view that was decided on an old 1983 report.”

KMSS has practically stalled the construction of Lower Subansiri Hydropower Project since 2011. The NHPC officials said that they had been losing rupees 10 crore daily since 2011 because of non-completion of the project that was more than 65% through. The work remained paralyzed as protests have not allowed transportation of turbines and other construction materials to the site of project. According to Social scientist Sanjay Barbora, Gogoi and his Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti came to represent “Assam’s new voice of dissent.”

5.3 TIPAIMUKH DAM: THE CONTROVERSIAL HISTORY

The project on Barak (Tuiruong)²⁷ River was conceived of in 1954 when the Government of Assam requested the Central Water and Power Commission for ways to manage floods in the river basin. However, the commission surveyed and rejected three sites by 1965 on two grounds: The sites were geologically unsafe and that large-scale submergence of cultivable land made it economically unviable. During this time, India and Bangladesh discussed about construction of barrage on the Barak river at the very first meeting of the Joint Rivers Commission held in New Delhi on 25-26 June 1972. At that time, the construction of a storage reservoir on Barak river was envisaged to manage peak floods.

The broader context for this decision was the flood situation in Eastern India, and as a response, both countries decided to undertake a joint study to assess the flood situation in Sylhet area in Bangladesh and Cachar and other adjoining areas in India. Significantly, the maiden understanding between India and Bangladesh was thus on flood prevention and management. Tipaimukh dam entered the lexicon of the Joint Rivers Commission more categorically in 1978, when it was decided that “the concerned Superintending Engineers of the two countries should jointly examine the scope of the Indian scheme of storage dam on Barak river at Tipaimukh.” It further added that the potential flood control and other benefits (particularly power) to Bangladesh should be studied expeditiously.

²⁷ The indigenous Hmar tribe who lives in and around the proposed dam site calls the river as Tuiruong. The other river is also called Tuivai. These two rivers are projected to be dammed in its confluence near Tipaimukh village.

The North-Eastern Council (NEC), then, intervened and discussed the project with three states through which Barak River flows – Assam, Manipur and Mizoram. On its request, the Central Water Commission began investigations in 1977.²⁸ In 1984, it identified a new site, where the river takes a 220 degree bend from southwest to a northerly direction flowing through a gorge. The stretch was 24 KM downstream of Tipaimukh. The dam, it was then estimated, would cost Rs. 1,078 crore. But the project was put in the cold storage because it did not have the requisite environmental and management plans.

The Brahmaputra Board, then, step in to pursue the project. The Brahmaputra Board is a government body to manage the Brahmaputra and Barak River basins. The Board also carried out studies, revising the plan until the estimated cost went up to Rs. 2,899 crore in 1995. The communities who will be affected by the project began to take notice. In July 1995, Union Environment Minister Kamal Nath ensured resettlement issues would be taken care of and nothing would be done in haste. In 1999, Pranab Mukherjee, Deputy Chairman of the Planning Commission, gave similar assurances.

However, in 1995, Chief Minister of Manipur, Rishang Keishing made a statement declaring that the State Cabinet did not approve of the dam. In 1998, the Manipur Assembly passed a resolution not to implement the project. In 1999, the Central Government handed over the project to North Eastern Electric Power Corporation (NEEPCO), under circumstances which many civil societies consider as questionable.

²⁸ Sethi, Nitin. (October 15, 2006). "Tipaimukh Dam in Manipur Driving a Wedge?", *Down to Earth*, New Delhi.

The civil societies claimed that during a spell of President's rule in Manipur in 2001, the governor approved the project.

5.3.1 PRESIDENTS' RULE, CLEARANCE FOR TIPAIMUKH DAM AND THE POLITICAL INDECISION

On December 7, 2001, the state Governor-in-Council gave the green signal for launching the controversial Tipaimukh dam project. The decision was taken during a meeting of the council at the Raj Bhavan with the Governor Ved Prakash Marwah in the chair. The process of implementation of the dam construction had been initiated during the chief ministership of Wahengbam Nipamacha.²⁹ The Telegraph, Guwahati Edition, also reported: "The Manipur government has finally agreed to the execution of Barak dam mega-hydel power project, a Central government scheme, at Tipaimukh at the revised cost of Rs. 3,200 crore. The Manipur government was dilly-dallying for the past 16 years on clearing the multi-purpose project on the plea that it would inundate nearly 286.2 square km area in the Tipaimukh sub-division.

On December 12, 2001, ten Naga voluntary associations decided to impose a one day Manipur bandh on December 15 in protest against the decision of Nipamacha ministry to give the green signal for the construction of Tipaimukh Dam. In a press statement, president of the Naga Women Union, Manipur, Gina Sangkham said the Nipamacha ministry decided to go ahead with the construction of the dam inspite of heavy public opinion against the dam. The statement added that the argument put forward by the Geological Survey of India and Zoological Survey of India are not at all

²⁹ *The Imphal Free Press*, December 7, 2001.

convincing as the region lies in a seismic sensitive zone. The president of the Naga women body further said that the construction of the dam would sound the death knell of the many cultures and folklores connected with the Barak River.

Following these developments, *The Telegraph, Northeast*, reported: NEEPCO has assured those likely to be affected by the proposed Tipaimukh power project in Manipur that they would be adequately rehabilitated. NEEPCO executive director S.R. Nath said the power project would be of immense benefit to the state. The Manipur government, which had opposed the project, has finally decided to sign the MoU with the power company. The NEEPCO, however, is yet to obtain environment and forest clearance from the Centre. Nath said the NEEPCO would conduct a detailed investigation only after the MoU is signed. The project needs clearance at three stages and can be wound up if found unfeasible. He said the actual construction work of the dam would start after the ministries and agencies at Centre give clearance after assessing the NEEPCO's survey report.³⁰

The Naga Women's Union , Manipur (NWUM) sent an open letter on February 15 to the Prime Minister of India saying no to the proposed Tipaimukh High Dam project. On March 1, 2002, the Governor of Manipur Ved Marwah stated that the Union Ministry of Power was holding back its decision on the proposed Tipaimukh High Dam for a temporary period as the Ministry was facing funding problems.³¹ On April 1, 2002, a team of MPs from the Northeast led by Santosh Mohan Dev called on the Prime Minister, Atal Behari Vajpayee in New Delhi. The Prime Minister assured the visiting

³⁰ *The Telegraph, Northeast*, February 1, 2002.

³¹ *The Imphal Free Press*, March 1, 2002.

MPs that the construction of the long-pending Tipaimukh dam project would be taken up immediately.³²

5.3.2 CIVIL SOCIETIES RISE AGAINST TIPAIMUKH DAM

Naga bodies of Manipur including its apex organization United Naga Council (UNC) came out with their firm stand to the controversial Tipaimukh Multipurpose project. They submitted a memorandum to Manipur Governor, Ved Marwah, urging his immediate intervention not to sign Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for the controversial Tipaimukh project before seeking people's free and prior consent. The Naga bodies also castigated the lack of transparency and accountability of the concerned authorities into the project. They warned the government that they would be compelled to take a stringent stand of resisting the project to the last if the concerned authority failed to respond to their demand.³³ Civil societies in Manipur collectively responded to oppose the proposed dam that was supposedly planned to deliver development. The nature of the project, which failed to secure their trust and confidence from its initial stage, failed to deliver the same as a people-centered project.

Despite resistance from various civil societies, on December 28, 2002, the Manipur Cabinet approved the Memorandum of Understanding signed between the Government of Manipur and NEEPCO on Tipaimukh dam.³⁴ In 2003, the Public Investment Board and the Central Electricity Authority cleared the project by which time its estimated cost had been revised by NEEPCO to Rs. 5,163.86 crore.

³² *The Assam Tribune*, April 1, 2002.

³³ *Eastern Mirror*, September 1, 2002.

³⁴ *The Sangai Express*, December 28, 2002.

5.3.3 CENTRE BACK OUT OF TIPAIMUKH DAM

“Whatever little hopes Manipur had for an end to the oppressive regime of power shortage”, The Imphal Free Press stated, “has dimmed further as the Centre has decided to back off from taking up Loktak Downstream Project and Tipaimukh Hydro Electric Power Project. The sources also stated that the Union Power Secretary has expressed the desire of the Centre to altogether drop the power projects. Citing reasons for the proposal to terminate the project, the Union Power Secretary stated that the project would not be cost effective as the loss incurred on completion could be well beyond 50 percent of the total cost.”³⁵ The withdrawal of the Centre from the project was merely on the ground of its cost-effectiveness and not because of the pressure generated by people’s movements.

In Mizoram, the public hearing conducted by the Mizoram Pollution Control Board (MPCB) over Tipaimukh Dam project failed to go in favor of the dam as people to be affected were against it. The MPCB, in a report about the hearing, stated that people and organizations that attended hearing objected to the dam. People in Mizoram who would be affected by the dam were not satisfied with the rehabilitation and implementing agency, NEEPCO. The affected people and the organizations that came for public hearing were not satisfied with NEEPCO’s rehabilitation and compensation plans. Human Rights Network of Indigenous People, Northeast Chapter that participated in the hearing, also resolved to oppose any development in the Northeast that would adversely affect indigenous people. The Rights group believed that the norms being applied for

³⁵ *The Imphal Free Press*, February 4, 2004.

development projects, especially hydroelectricity, at the national level did not take into account Article 46 of the Indian Constitution which seeks to protect the weaker sections of the people from social injustice and all forms of exploitations. The organization also opined that the central government had to change the norms that have general applications, which totally did not take into account the safeguard measures provided to Schedule Castes and Tribes by the Constitution.

Further, in 2007, NEEPCO commissioned the Agricultural Finance Corporation of Mumbai to carry out an Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA), following which an environmental clearance was given by the Ministry of Environment and Forest, Government of India on October 24, 2008.

However, the Northeastern states and Bangladesh disapproved the report as being unilateral and one which did not include them as they would be bearing environmental impact due to it. The opposition to the dam gained new momentum especially after the signing of Memorandum of Understandings (MoUs) among Manipur Government, National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC) and Sutlej Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited (SJVNL) on April 28, 2010. The MoUs also contains the signing of Promoter's Agreement with the purpose of setting up of a Joint Venture Company (JVC) between the Government of Manipur, NHPC Ltd. and SJVNL on October 22, 2011.

The water sharing of trans-boundary rivers between India and Bangladesh has witnessed a bitter past with the Farakka dispute over sharing of waters of the Ganges. The issue has been played to the hilt in the domestic political scene in Bangladesh in the past, and the lines are clearly drawn with the former Prime Minister of Bangladesh Begum

Khaleda Zia actively supporting the anti-Tipaimukh dam civil society groups in Bangladesh. The four party alliance led by the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) has vowed to take the Tipaimukh Dam issue to international forums if the government fails to stop it. The BNP led by Begum Khaleda Zia called the Tipaimukh dam “a death trap for Bangladesh.”³⁶ The Tipaimukh has been a life-and-death question for Bangladesh, and thus people regardless of political affiliation, intellectual and ideological background, ethnic and cultural variation, and religious affiliation have come onto a common platform to render massive protest against the construction of the Dam. With a unilateral demand for an abrogation of India’s decision, protest in different forms, rallies, human chains, protest meetings, seminars and symposia, strikes and so forth continue to carry on across the country.³⁷ Protests and demonstrations have, indeed, transcended the national boundary and taken on a transnational form. The movement thus turned to a global social and environmental movement embodying the environmentalism of the poor.

5.3.4 PUBLIC HEARINGS: ORCHESTRATED DRAMAS AND CIVIL SOCIETIES RESPONSE

Five public hearings conducted by the government have been boycotted. The Government of Manipur announced public hearing for November 2006, after it floated a global tender for works on it and the Union government promised a 400 crore security cover for the proposed project. The Prime Minister of India decided to inaugurate the

³⁶ “Controversial Tipaimukh Hydroelectric Dam Strains India-Bangladesh Relations, *IHS Global Insight Perspective*, June 3, 2009.

³⁷ Islam and Islam. (2016). “Environmentalism of the poor”: the Tipaimukh Dam, ecological disasters and environmental resistance beyond borders. *Bandung Journal of the Global South*, 3:27.

dam even before the environmental clearances were conducted. On November 17, 2006, public hearing was held in Churachandpur district headquarter behind closed doors with heavy security in the office of Deputy Commissioner. The DC, Sumant Singh, chaired the hearing along with representatives from organizations such as the Manipur Pollution Control Board, NEEPCO along with few village chiefs. Representatives of over 30 villages, environmental activists and the media were not allowed to be part of the public hearing. Earlier, the government had already declared in its advertisement that only those able to prove their proposed displacement would be allowed to be part of the public hearing. The officials made the public leave the premise with the excuse that they had come from faraway places. Later, at a press conference held after the hearing, the DC announced: “Churachandpur today gave its assent to the proposal for construction of Tipaimukh Dam. Among the organizations that were present in the hearing, no one has voiced their opposition to the construction of the dam, rather many had words of appreciation for the project.”

Civil societies raised contrasting voice with the public hearing. ACTIP co-convenor, Oinam Bikramjit differed by stating that the public hearing was null and void and there should be a fresh notification for another real public hearing. He also stated that besides allowing selective participation, the notification for public hearing as well as copies of the environmental impact assessment was not made available to the villagers who would be affected.

In Tamenglong district, public hearing was held on November 22, 2006. Two days ahead of the public hearing, the state government sent two companies of Indian Reserved Battalion (IRB) to the district headquarter. Militarization takes over the public

space. Security forces patrolled a kilometer away from the office chamber of the DC, the venue of hearing. Representatives of 26 different organizations, including Zeliangrong Union (Assam, Manipur, and Nagaland), ACTIP, Zeliangrong Students' Union, and others were allowed entry to the meeting after long shuffle with the security forces. But they walked out midway boycotting the hearing. On the other hand, the DC gave a conflicting version to the public hearing and said that four representatives from 13 villages out of the 53 that stand to be affected had come to give their consent for the dam. In the absence of informations in local dialects, the DC also clarified that translating the huge volumes to all the local dialects was not feasible.

The government of Manipur conducted the first public hearing on March 31, 2008 in Sipuikawn village, in Tipaimukh sub-division, which recently comes under the newly created Pherzawl district. This was the first ever public hearing ever held in Tipaimukh on the proposed dam. Sipuikawn village stands to be submerged with the proposed Tipaimukh dam. The event was heavily militarized. The village authorities were not informed in advance about the public hearing. The news about the hearing was spreaded by word of mouth. The DC of Churachandpur district dictated the event with handpicked speakers who delivered speeches in support for the dam. Many of the speakers lectured in a language that was not known to the villagers. The public hearing was not public or democratic, nor was it representative or participative. The public hearing was a suppressed exercise to fulfill the mandatory requirement. It was not a mechanism for the participation of the local communities in the decision making process.

5.3.5 ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE FOR TIPAIMUKH DAM

On October 24, 2008, the Ministry of Environment and Forests accords environmental clearance “as per the provisions of Environmental Impact Assessment Notification 1994 and 2006”, which is “subject to strict compliance of the terms and conditions.” The project received the nod for clearance after the referred proposal of the project was considered by the Expert Appraisal Committee for River and Hydroelectric projects. Accordingly, the responsibility of implementation of environmental safeguards “rest fully with the M/s NEEPCO and Government of Manipur and Mizoram.” According to the conditions of the clearance, a total amount of Rs. 253.68 crore is kept in the budgetary provisions for implementation of environment management plan. The Ministry also reserve the right to add additional safeguard measures if found necessary and to take action including revoking of the clearance under the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, “to ensure effective implementation of the suggested safeguard measures in time-bound and satisfactory manner.” The Ministry made the clearance letter valid for 10 years from the date of issue for commencement of construction work.³⁸ However, construction of the controversial project could not still materialize.

The environmental clearance was given on the basis of most cursory ecological appraisals. The omission of adverse ecological and social problems is staggering in the absence of appropriate studies and public acceptance. The crude ‘guestimate’ involved in estimating the possible impact would only validate the government to give the environmental clearance. The presently existing data of government is largely insufficient

³⁸ *Environmental Clearance for Tipaimukh Dam*, No. J-12011/63/2006-IA.I, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India, Paryavaran Bhawan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi – 110 003, 24.10.2008.

as the assessments are, if not biased, inadequate. Therefore, it is insufficient to predict or estimate the adverse impact the project would have on indigenous peoples, their land, rivers, forest and their livelihood prospect. The decision did not even seem to take into account the subsequent studies of the Central Water and Power Commission in 1965 that rejected the same project on the grounds that: 1. It was geologically unsafe. 2. The large-scale submergence of cultivable land made it economically unviable.

Despite the unchanging conditions, the dogged efforts of government that resulted in issuing the environmental clearance made its contradicting stand evident. The two conditions that hurdled the Commission from its earlier efforts to build the dam at the same site fail to speak for itself. Besides the environmental impacts, there exist no reliable studies of the social effects of the project that could open up an entire new chapter of crisis when it involves indigenous peoples, their land and resources.

5.3.6 ANTI TIPAIMUKH DAM MOVEMENTS: THE SECOND WAVE

The proposed Tipaimukh Dam generated massive environmental movements not only in the Northeast and different parts of India but also in Bangladesh. The downstream as well as the upper-stream impacts that dams creates situates the communities to negotiate the side-effects of the project socially, economically, culturally as well as environmentally. Much before the structure is constructed, the project clearances in its various stages create a crisis of confidence in the government as well as the dam builders.

In all these processes, the voices of the peoples have been suppressed continuously. This represents failure on the part of government and the dam builders to

adhere to the legal processes that were, otherwise, supposed to be mandatory. The environmental movements, Civil societies, NGOs and INGOs have protested against the dam and have used all democratic means possible to secure the attention of the government of India from stopping its efforts to build the dam. Memorandums and letters by the score, rallies, sit-in-protests, blockades, strikes, press releases, meetings, leaflets, and email campaigns have all been used. Besides that, bandhs and economic blockade were also employed to raise their voices effectively.

Environmental movements network and coalitions of civil societies and NGOs were built to enhance the protests against Tipaimukh dam in the Northeast, different parts of India as well as internationally. There has been pronounced campaign against the project for its adverse impact on environment. After signing the MoU between the Government of Manipur and NEEPCO, on March 19, 2003, many organizations made formal objections to the MoU and the proposed project. The organizations are: Citizens Concern for Dams and Development (CCCD), Naga Women's Union, Manipur (NWUM), Centre for Organization Research and Education (CORE), Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), Hmar Student's Association (HSA), United Naga Council (UNC), and All Naga Students' Association, Manipur (ANSAM). These organizations demanded that the government and NEEPCO stop all efforts to build Tipaimukh dam.

On September 19, 2003, in a memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister of India, A.B. Vajpayee by the indigenous peoples of Manipur represented by Committee Against Tipaimukh Dam (CATD), Naga Women's Union, Manipur (NWUM), Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR), United Naga Council (UNC), and All

Naga Student's Association, Manipur (ANSAM), lamented that "the proposed project authorities are not taking the people into consideration and aspirations of the people are not taken into account. The construction of this dam will submerge many sacred sites and cultivable lands, which form inalienable part of the people's cultural heritage. The construction of this dam will submerge 18 Zelianrong Naga villages and submerge the cultivable land of more than 55 villages which are likely to affect a population of approximately 40,000." Further, the memorandum contended that agriculture land was the soul of the hill people and the only source of living and their intimate and most valuable possession. Non-availability of agriculture land owing to the water submergence would seriously affect the right of life of the people of the area.

In another move, five Naga organizations of Manipur, viz., UNC, NWUM, CATD, NPMHR, and ANSAM petitioned the Union power Minister and strongly stated that the dam was not conceived with the interest of the tribal people in mind. They also threatened the Manipur government that they would go in for more stringent action if the government failed to shelve the project. The organizations also demanded that the Nagas should not be denied the right to information on environmental assessment and for participation in any development project that affected their livelihood and dignity. The dams cannot be allowed to be constructed if it is inevitably going to destroy one section of society. Besides, the Citizens Concern for Dams and Development (CCCD) demanded that till informed public scrutiny of the project was not accomplished, the project should

not be taken ahead. CCCD also demanded that the project should follow World Commission on Dams guideline.³⁹

On January 4, 2005, seventeen (17) organizations from the country and abroad objected to the then Union Minister of State for Industries and Public Enterprises Santosh Mohan Dev who convened a meeting of the Chief Secretaries of the three states of Assam, Manipur and Mizoram at New Delhi for discussions on the project. The indigenous people spearheaded the people's movement in these two states arguing that proper documents relating to the assessment study were not supplied to the people by NEEPCO authorities.

The public meeting on the assessment report called by the Mizoram Pollution Control Board on December 2, 2004, had to be postponed following widespread public protest. In a communiqué to the authorities concerning the dam, CCCD said, "any decision on the Tipaimukh power project should not be taken without the prior and informed consent of the people of Manipur. An independent accountable and participatory Environmental Impact Assessment must be undertaken involving full participation of people of Manipur." CCCD also maintained that there were no concrete plans for resettlement and rehabilitation of the people who will be displaced by the project. It also added that no environment management plan or cost benefit analysis have been conducted.

The Chairman-cum-Managing Director of NEEPCO accused the environmentalists and NGOs of misleading the people on the proposed 1500MW

³⁹ *Dams, Rivers and People update*, SANDRP, February, 2003.

Tipaimukh Dam project. Responding to the statement, Sinlung Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Organisation (SIPHRO) blamed the actions of the government and NEEPCO for their insensitivity and indifference towards environmental issues and sustainable development of the indigenous peoples in the region. SIPHRO stated that the government and NEEPCO are instead misleading the public on the proposed destructive project through false promises, militarization, staged and restrictive public hearings that were held without free, prior and informed consent of the indigenous peoples. The rights organization equate the insensitivity and indifference of the government and NEEPCO as inhumane, undemocratic and unconstitutional.

On September 28, 2010, SIPHRO organized a massive protest rally in Aizawl against Tipaimukh dam and other small dams that are “imposed” in Mizoram’s Sinlung Hills; an administrative council dominated by the Hmar people. The protest rally was the first environmental related rally in the state. The rally endorsed the four principles of World Commission on Dams (WCD) and demanded that the governments and the dam builders also endorsed the same.⁴⁰ A joint memorandum that was endorsed and signed by Sinlung Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Organization (SIPHRO), Hmar Students’ Association (HSA), Young Mizo Association (YMA), Mizo Zirlai Pawl (MZP), Mizo Hmeichhia Inzawmkhawm Pawl (MHIP), Mizo Upa Pawl (MUP), Village Councils and

⁴⁰ The four principles of the WCD are: 1. Recognition of rights and assessment of risks are the basis for the identification and inclusion of stakeholders in decision-making on energy and water resources development. 2. Access to information, legal and other support is available to all stakeholders, particularly indigenous and tribal peoples, women and other vulnerable groups, to enable their informed participation in decision-making processes. 3. Demonstrable public acceptance of all key decisions is achieved through agreements negotiated in an open and transparent process conducted in good faith and with the informed participation of all stakeholders. 4. Decisions on projects affecting indigenous and tribal peoples are guided by their free, prior and informed consent achieved through formal and informal representative bodies.

Church denominations based in Sinlung Hills demanded that immediate moratorium be placed on all these dams.⁴¹ The memorandum also demanded for free-prior informed consent of the people in all processes of the government.

5.3.7 SOCIAL AUDIT REPORT: THE GRASSROOTS PERSPECTIVES

This report⁴² is a result of this researcher's project that was supported by *PANOS South Asia*.⁴³ The research took him to villages in Tipaimukh sub-division in Manipur's Churachandpur district in the year 2009; villages that would be directly affected by the proposed Tipaimukh Dam. The relevance and validity of the report necessitates inclusion of the indigenous Hmar peoples perspectives in whose land the dam is designed to be situated. The research attempts to understand the perspectives of indigenous Hmar tribe whose fate are sealed by the dam. The Hmar tribe is totally dependent on river Tuiruong (Tipaimukh) to sustain and stabilise their livelihood system. Besides studying the indigenous people's perspective on dams and development, the study also looked into the response of indigenous people on what the river means to them and what their expectation is from the dam that is ambitiously presented as a "development project".

⁴¹ *Memorandum submitted by Sinlung Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Organization (SIPHRO) and Sinlung Peoples Collective on September 28, 2010 to Shri Lal Thanhawla, Chief Minister of Mizoram.*

⁴² This report has been used widely to understand the perspectives of the indigenous peoples who will be affected by Tipaimukh Multipurpose Hydroelectric Project. The research initiative for this report was supported by Panos South Asia. The author is extremely grateful to PANOS South Asia and Sanjay Barbora for the initiative. I am also indebted to Lalthansang Pulamte and Lalchunghnung who made the trip with me.

⁴³ Panos South Asia is a part of the family of Panos Institute worldwide that encourage and facilitate public discourse and debate on a wide range of issues. The institute is engaged in research that enables them to influence the building of capacity and work in partnership with both local and regional partner organizations to stimulate and inform public and policy debate, and to provide information on key environment and development issues that is accessible to multiple target groups.

The study, then, enquire into how they relate the proposed Tipaimukh Multipurpose Hydro Electric Project to their understanding of development.

The researcher met and interviewed the village authorities, leaders of Hmar Inpui, Hmar Youth Association, Hmar Students' Association, Hmar Women's Association, Church leaders and the villagers of different Tipaimukh villages. Public meeting was held in all the villages that he visited. Many of the villages would be submerged if the proposed project takes shape. The conclusions derived in this report are layered in many levels. At one level, the planning of project failed to take into account the disastrous impact the dam would have on the livelihood process and culture of the indigenous Hmar people of Manipur, Mizoram and Assam's Cachar who co-exist with the river since time immemorial. This severely negates the relation and significance of the indigenous people with the river system that had been nursing them since time immemorial.

The planning of the mega-project has been highly compartmentalized and fragmented. While missing out the people from the leviathan project, the project with its ambitious promises confronts one big question; whether the project and the broad policy behind it are really for 'development' in its true sense. This question becomes inevitable as the project would bring in environmentally destructive forces to negate the target and goals of development. Moreover, despite the detrimental consequences the project would have on the indigenous Hmar people, the very process of gaining public acceptance is absent. At another level, the project will not only usher in man-nature conflict, but will also generate man-man conflict, as it is already evident from the diverse stakes of interest that were stacking high, involving the indigenous tribes that live along the river banks,

various non-State armed actors, the interest of State and the dam builders. The conflict will surface when the project enters its investment stage and when money power comes into play. The conflict of interest involving various actors would shelve and stagnate the entire efforts of 'development' to further threaten the indigenous people from their secure and stable existence. When this takes over, militarization would gain upper hand to validate development. This would necessitate aggressive development and ultimately leave the people out as it has already done today.

The coercive pursuit of development took its course with the aid of militarization that was already evident from the decisions of the Government of Manipur. Much before the environmental clearance was issued, the Government of Manipur went ahead to open security posts at seven kilometre intervals along the 99 km stretch of Mon Bahadur road, which is to be used for movement of materials required for the construction of the controversial dam. A total of 15 posts of the Central Reserve Police Force (CRPF), Border Security Force (BSF), and Indian Reserve Battalion (IRB) have been decided to be initially positioned to provide security as well as ensure smooth movements of NEEPCO officials. Moreover, the Centre had already promised a Rs. 400 crore security cover for the proposed project.

Again, the indigenous people were excluded from control over the decisions and regulative institutions that, otherwise, ought to represent them. This will go a long way to change not only the course of the river but also the democratic process that is necessary for them as independent survival culture and community. Allowing such forces to take them over would mean erasing indigenous peoples, their culture, history, identity, by vacating spaces to profit making organizations like NEEPCO, the dam builder. The

questions of development and democracy would fail to answer to the indigenous Hmar people and other communities who failed to secure their future with the necessary number that seemingly defines democracy. The question whether democracy is only about the number game needs to be further answered.

At another level, the definition of ‘affected people’ needs to be redefined in the context of the people who would be affected by the proposed Tipaimukh dam. The current estimation of affected population that takes into account only those villages that would be submerged entirely. This negates the realities of people whose livelihood, culture, identity and relations are secured by river Tuiruong, which is their only existing lifeline. As a result, the environmental, socio-cultural and economic validity of the multipurpose project becomes highly questionable. To any pro-dam protagonist the report could be seen as excessively negative of the might and power of development that the proposed Tipaimukh Dam seemingly envisages.

However, after a thorough understanding and witnessing of the intimate relationship that the indigenous Hmar people shared with river Tuiruong and the high handedness on the part of the Government and the dam builders that were pushing for the project, it becomes evident that the proposed Tipaimukh dam would miss the development goals that it set for itself. The long term impact that the dam would have on the indigenous Hmar people and other communities, the larger impact it would have in the upper stream as well as the downstream, the anti-conservation nature of the giant

project and the militaristic approaches to pursue the project would go a long way to negate the short-term developmental goals.

5.3.8 UNDERSTANDING RIVER TUIRUONG PEOPLE

River Tuiruong is the ancestral lifeline of indigenous Hmar people who live along the river in the upper stream as well as the downstream of proposed dam site. From Manipur's Tipaimukh sub-division to the Barak valley of Assam's Cachar, Hmar villages dotted alongside Tuiruong River, which is considered as the river of life. Besides, the Zeliangrong peoples also inhabit along the river. In the absence of functioning roads, bridges and highway, river Tuiruong has been the only stable source of transport and communication for the Hmar people in Manipur, Mizoram and Assam. Launch⁴⁴ has been the most trusted means of transport that not only bridge the diasporic Hmar people who were divided by five state boundaries. Following river Tuiruong, it becomes evident how the Hmar people were being fractured by the imposing boundaries, which, otherwise, are linked only by the river. If the mega-structure comes into existence, it is certain that it would dam not only the river, but also more severely the indigenous Hmar people who co-exist with the river in Manipur, Mizoram and Assam.

The State actors as well as the dam builder have not dealt with the adverse cultural, social, economic, demographic and environmental impacts that the dam would leave on the indigenous peoples. As a result, even though all the indices of under-development are present in the course of river, the Hmar people as well as the

⁴⁴ Launch is boat popularly used in Tuiruong River to transport people and goods. The boat is fitted with rice-mill engines and it can carry upto 100 bags of rice.

Zeliangrong Nagas strongly opine that the river of life be secured, instead of damming the river in the ever elusive name of development.

5.3.9 REVIEWING THE FIRST PUBLIC HEARING IN TIPAIMUKH

On March 31, 2008, the Government of Manipur conducted public hearing at Sipiukawn village in Tipaimukh sub-division. This was the first public hearing ever held in Tipaimukh on the dam. Tipaimukh villagers strongly raise their voice against the farcical character of public hearing. Village Authorities complained about the rushing affair of the public hearing. Tipaimukh villagers felt that the Deputy Commissioner of Churachandpur district and other officials treated them with brusqueness. There was no prior intimation about the public hearing. The news about the elusive event was spread by word of mouth, which prohibits the villagers from attending the hearing. Parbung village authorities who participated in the event said that it was a messy and confusing affair. The participants could hardly make it out what the authorities and the handpicked speakers were talking about. Many said that the authorities were even lecturing in a language that they never knew. The Tipaimukh villagers felt that the DC who came to Tipaimukh with security forces was dictating the event. They could not make any sense of the entire affair where the authorities could not accommodate any space for the villagers who would, otherwise, be the affected lot.

Tipaimukh villagers as well as the village authorities stated that the handpicked speakers who colluded with the authorities were the compensation seekers. This minor

group, the villagers felt, did not even want the dam but they want the money. Most of the attendants did not know what was being discussed or talked about. They did not even know the outcome of public hearing. The public hearing was far from being representative and participative. Rather, it was seen as a suppressive tool that seemingly validated the authorities of conducting a public hearing that otherwise was inevitable in the disguise of gaining public acceptance.

However, the public hearing that took place cannot be seen or interpreted as a mechanism for participation of local communities in the decision making process. It also did not go to gain or even receive public acceptance for the massive project that was luring them in the name of development. The first public hearing that took place at Sipiukawn village, therefore, cannot be seen or interpreted as bearing a trace of approval or consent of the Tipaimukh villagers.⁴⁵

5.3.10 TIPAIMUKH DAM: TIPAIMUKH PEOPLES RESPONSES

September 24, 2008 / Senvon Village (Tipaimukh Sub-Division): Senvon, one of the biggest villages in Tipaimukh sub-division, would be severely affected by the Tipaimukh Multipurpose HEP. Senvon is the first Hmar village in Manipur to receive the Gospel in the year 1910. I had a meeting with diverse civil societies, besides the village authorities. Even though, the project would not displace any families in Senvon, the jhum-farming villagers would lose immense village forest and land that was annually

⁴⁵The public hearing negates the participation of the affected villagers and brought to light the absence of free, prior, and informed consent; mechanism for gaining public acceptance; consultation and participation of the people who would be affected; transparency in the process of pursuing the project; and public education and awareness about the dam and the adverse impact it could have on the indigenous peoples and their future.

distributed amongst the villagers to sustain and stabilize their livelihood system. The agrarian population's total dependence on the forest land would be severely jeopardised once the project take its shape. It will eventually push the agrarian villagers out of their traditional livelihood system as the villagers would be robbed of their land for the mega-project.

The project has created a visible confusion in the village as they were not provided with necessary information and awareness about the dam that will, otherwise, submerge their jhum land. In the midst of the confusion, compensation, with its monetary promises, caught the attention of a section of the villagers. In the absence of any State aided welfare and development opportunities, many villagers who wanted to receive compensatory money without losing their land and forest. There is a collective expression that agrees that the compensatory money, if at all they get, will merely be a momentary relief to their marginalized life, which actually enlighten them to the need for safeguarding their land and forest.

Despite the talk of compensation that was doing its round in the village, no one knows who is entitled for compensation, as there is no permanent land holding system or ownership of the jhum land that constantly changed hands under the village authorities' regulation. This has, indeed, activated a coterie of compensation seekers that represented the affected people wherever required without their actual knowledge and consent. The villagers were left out of the necessary mechanism of securing free, prior and informed consent. The absence of this has severely failed to derive confidence with this particular project and any other efforts of the Government that came in the name of development.

The villagers opine that when the village, in its hundred years of existence, failed to reap any development measures, they could not imagine progress and development by losing their land and resources. The project is seen by many as an instrument that would further marginalize them from their present state of despair, when they are living without governance, health facilities, public distribution system, and food crisis. The villagers expressed non-participation in the entire process that went to shape the project. The absence of representation is seen as a popular culture where democracy and decentralization has visibly lost its way in the fringe constituency. The State authority and its machinery are seen as an entity that remained outside them. Many expressed their distrust of the Government of Manipur. They failed to see any sense of democracy in the hot pursuit of building the project. They opine that in the absence of democracy, development would be far from taking off, more obviously when it would tax their land and resources.⁴⁶

September 26, 2008/ Sitam Village: Sitam village sits beside river Tuibuom that joins river Tuivai in its downstream. Sitam is one of the villages that is destined to be submerged if the dam is built. There is not even a road to reach the village. A small path that keep changing its courses according to the seasons help to reach the village. On meeting the village authorities as well as the villagers who were seriously concerned

⁴⁶Senvon villagers strongly opine that: 1.The representation, consultation and public confidence gaining mechanism should be reworked if the project has to be further pursued. 2. The project has severely fragmented the community with its money power. 3. There is nothing they knew about the project than the talks about compensation that has caught up with everyone. 4. The collective good of the Tipaimukh villages would be looked into if the project has to be considered. The dam project is not seen as the vehicle that would deliver to them the development promises that the State or the dam builders are banking on. 5. They did not acquire necessary information and awareness about the dam and its possible adverse impact. 6. Development, representation and governance have been a distant reality in their lives.

about the upcoming project that would entirely change the course of their future, certain information was gathered.

Despite knowing that the village was bound to be submerged, the villagers have no idea what is in store for them when the river that nurses them turns against them. The villagers have no information or awareness about the gigantic project that would push them out of their ancestral land. Village authorities said that they were told by the authorities that they had not much to choose as the decision to build the dam had already been taken by the Government. The villagers expressed their dissatisfaction when they realized that the authorities took them as “gullible lot.” The Government’s decision was presented to them as unchallengeable, untouchable and unmovable. They were told to chart their own course of future before the water level turns high against them. The villager’s desperation stacked visibly high in the absence of any transparent mechanism that ought to freely inform them for affirming their interest and consent. Shelved in the lurching river valley, the self-reliant villagers would get to taste the might and power of democratic Government when the water swells high against them. Their frustration sees no valve as they did not know how to voice their plight.

The damned villagers wanted the Government and decision makers to rethink and retreat from the project, which they thought is inhumane. They could not imagine their future when their farm land, river and forest would cease to exist for them. The project is seen as an imposition where they could not find any space to exercise their will. Compensation is not even the last thing that Sitam villagers would exchange for their land and resources. There is endless talk about compensation. The villagers were far from happy with the democratic processes that reduce them to nothingness. The villagers felt

that the entire process involved in mapping out the project was inhuman and irrelevant. They believed that if the project was for development, it should also favor their survival prospect without doing away with their land and resources. They felt that if this was the character of development, it will give them no chance in its structure and system.

The villagers did not even know who will be getting compensation and how much. Sitam villagers stated that they did not take part in the public hearing that took place in Sipiukawn / Tipaimukh village. They were not intimidated about the event. They were left in the lurch where the project haunts them day in and day out. The villagers found themselves waiting to be swallowed and submerged. When decisions affecting their land, rivers, forest, and their future were taken in distant power corridors, Sitam villagers, like every Tipaimukh villager, questioned the rationale of project that would uproot them from their ancestral land.⁴⁷

September 28, 2008/Parvachawm Village: A huge area of Parvachawm village forest land would be submerged if the project comes into existence. This reality, in the absence of population displacement, has been used to minimize the prospect of the impact of project. Despite the land that the village would lose to the project, the villagers were never involved in any consultation and consensus making process. Some of the

⁴⁷ Sitam villagers, therefore, opine that: 1. The government and the dam builders should retreat from any further pursuit of the project. 2. The project will never bring development for them as it is evident from the entire representation process and mechanism that did not take them into account. 3. Development should provide them with road, hospital, school, public distribution system, governance, etc., rather than uproot them from their stable existence. 4. The Tipaimukh Multipurpose HEP is an imposition that alienates them from their land and resources. 5. There was no pragmatic democratic process that attempts to represent their interest. 6. They knew nothing about the mega project, other than the ambiguous talk about compensation, which, even, is uncertain to them. 7. Governance, representation and development have never been associated to their lives. 8. They prefer to preserve their land and resources rather than giving way to a project that will uproot and displace them.

villagers learned about the public hearing much after the event. Parvachawm villagers believed that the project would create irreparable division and misunderstanding amongst the Hmar community when money started flowing in. The project is seen as a vehicle that would deliver disaster. They believed that school, road, hospital and other welfare and development efforts should be initiated without disturbing the indigenous population and their land. They did not see the project as centered to the people.⁴⁸

September 30, 2009 / Leisen Village: Leisen village will also lose its village forest land to the Tipaimukh Multipurpose HEP. This land constitutes their jhum field, which is their only stable source of securing livelihood. Few Leisen villagers knew about the public hearing after it was conducted. The majority did not even get to hear about it at all. Leisen villagers were not informed about the project. They did not know how the project would adversely impact them and their livelihood prospects.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ With serious concern over the mega project, Parvachawm villagers felt that: 1. The Government as well as the dam builders should rethink and review the project. 2. A humane alternative should replace the doom spelling project. 3. The absence of free, prior and informed consent and other confidence gaining measures are a negation of their existence within the fold of democratic institution. 4. The Tipaimukh dam should not be presented as development delivering project when the Government of Manipur has entirely failed to even build a road inside the village. 5. The campaign for Tipaimukh dam with promises of awarding contracts, compensation and other monetary rewards should immediately end.

⁴⁹ Leisen villagers strongly opine that: 1. The Government as well as the dam builders should involve them in any decision making process that will impact them and their land. 2. In the absence of any informed awareness, knowledge, and consensus, the project should not be allowed to take off. 3. The biggest stakeholders, the indigenous people whose land and resources are at stake, should be at the centre of the project. 4. Their silence out of their unawareness and ignorance should not be interpreted as signs of affirming un-negotiated consent. 5. The project has to be thoroughly negotiated amongst the State actors, the dam builders and the indigenous peoples. 6. The project has been effectively hidden from public scrutiny.

October 2, 2009/ Lungthulien Village: Lungthulien villagers knew about the large area of its village forest land that would be submerged by the Tipaimukh Multipurpose HEP. However, they did not know what the project has in store for them as they were left out of the necessary process of acquiring free, prior and informed consent. The villagers expressed that the quest for cornering monetary benefits had activated few contract seekers pursuing with narrow, selfish and individual interest.

The villagers believed that the project that would usher such forces would further import complex and incomprehensible consequences that would push them to the end of their survival prospect. They strongly believed that giving a space to such inhumane forces would result in development benefiting few moneyed sections at the cost of unconsented majority. For this majority section of the population, the loss of land would mean losing the chance of survival as their only stable and reliable source of livelihood would sink. The collective expressed that there could be no compensation for any such loss. They could not relate compensation with development, which is seen by them as the license to push them out of their ancestral land.

The villagers were also surprised at the way the democratic process of representation failed to take them into account. When their land secures their survival prospect, they believed that the much talked about development project will merely be a distant dream when they are alienated from their land. They strongly believed that development cannot be a prize for the land that they will lose. Lungthulien villagers believed that a failed state like Manipur should not be entrusted to bring in any project, not even in the name of development when their experiences are marred with denial, deprivation, marginalization and neglect. When people's trust and confidence of the

Government itself is missing, the absence of gaining the public's confidence in the entire process of shaping the project has further distanced them from conceiving the project as a development oriented one.⁵⁰

October 4, 2008/ Parbung Village: Parbung villagers believed that the project has severely alienated them from their land and the decision making processes, which, otherwise, they believed, ought to bear the stamp of their consent. The absence of transparency is visibly pathetic when the villagers said that the decision to build the dam had already been taken by the Government . The villagers were left to fend for themselves, while the decisions to militarize their land had also been taken by the Government of Manipur. Parbung villagers question why the indigenous peoples were not involved when crucial decisions involving their land, resources and survival prospects were taken. The project is seen as devoid of any democratic mechanism. Moreover, the project fails to embrace the Tipaimukh indigenous peoples as the target of development

⁵⁰Lungthulien villagers were of the opinion that: 1. The Government of Manipur should rather concentrate on making the National Highway 150 operational to introduce them to "development." Besides, they also opine that the Government of Manipur should build school, health centre, and activate public distribution system rather than working on a project that will only push them out from their land. 2. The Government should rather secure and develop Tuiruong as a river-highway as it is the only channel that links them with their tribesmen in Mizoram, Assam, and Meghalaya. Besides, river Tuiruong is the only functioning lifeline through which they could market their ginger and other agriculture products to various parts of Assam and Meghalaya. 3. The absence of any democratic process to inform and aware them is a clear example of State imposed discrimination. 4. Development will not be about compensation. Rather, they believed that development should involve them as equal and participatory stakeholders. 5. The project will not result in any collective good, which, then, negates the entire interest of development. 6. The project will not only dam the rivers of life, but will also dam them from maintaining further relations and contacts with their tribesmen in Mizoram, Assam and Meghalaya. 7. The Government and NEEPCO should rethink and retreat from pursuing the project.

project. The unconsented decisions are seen as means to push them out of their ancestral land.⁵¹

October 7, 2008/ Rawvakawt Village: The Tipaimukh Multipurpose HEP heightened the apprehension of villagers whose vast forest and jhum land would be submerged. Their apprehension is not merely confined to the loss of land, but also to the other adverse social, economic and political impacts the project would impose upon them. In the abject absence of any welfare and development efforts in the deprived subdivision, Rawvakawt villagers wonder if the project would bring them any relief to aid their neglected livelihood system.

In the absence of any constructive measure to gain public confidence, the villagers regarded the project as an imposed one. Compensation and contract seekers, amounting to about five persons in the village, have been doggedly involved in delivering a promising version of the project. If not for the few money seekers, Rawvakawt villagers

⁵¹ Parbung village authorities learnt about the public hearing at the last moment. Some of the village authorities took part in the hearing. However, the participants stated that the public hearing had no meaning at all as it was a doctored one with handpicked speakers playing to the whims and fancy of the State authorities. The handpicked speakers did not even represent the interest of Tipaimukh villagers. They strongly asserted that the public hearing should not be seen as a session to listen and consult the interest and plight of the people whose land and survival prospects are put to question by the project. The public hearing was seen as contempt and disgrace for the Tipaimukh indigenous people as it further affirmed the imposing character of the authorities. The villagers stated that the public hearing could not be made acceptable and that it should be declared as null and void. The villagers resolutely stood for preserving their forest, land, rivers and other resources that would be severely affected by the project. Parbung villagers opine that: 1. The Government and the dam builders should, for the moment, back off from pursuing the project as it did not have the approval and consent of the Tipaimukh indigenous people. 2. The project is merely a disguise for development when the project will actually reduce them of their land and resources. 3. Development would have no meaning at all for the Tipaimukh indigenous people when their land and resources are submerged and the population comes under threat. 4. The public hearing was conducted merely to fulfill the formal requirements demanded of the project. The public hearing held in Tipaimukh, otherwise, had nothing to do with the Tipaimukh villagers who did not even have prior information about the event. 5. The project will usher in various non-state armed actors to fulfill their respective vested interest. This will create conflict and social crisis to eventually disturb and reduce Tipaimukh to a deplorable state.

stood firmly against the project, which left them out of any required processes. The round of talks about submergence, compensation and militarization sowed insecurity with the villagers who believed that they will have to sacrifice for development without benefiting from it. This is when the promising face of development with the upcoming project failed to win their imagination.⁵²

October 9, 2008/ Sipuikawn Village: Sipuikawn village had long been marked to be submerged by the Tipaimukh Multipurpose HEP. Recently, the village authorities were served an order by the Government of Manipur to clear the forest in one of the highest points of village hills. The villagers cleared the forest and later learnt that the place would station the security forces that would be present to provide security for the upcoming project.

The villagers did not know who all would be entitled for compensation and what they would be getting if they ever get. One of the village authorities believed that only about 10% of the villagers would be compensated even after the entire village is submerged. The absence of information and transparency in pursuing the project had evidently frustrated the villagers. While desperation grows, militarization knocks in Tipaimukh's door. The unfolding events failed to sow the seed of development in the imaginations of

⁵² As the project ushered in fear and confusion, Rawvakawt villagers opine that: 1. The project should be reconsidered as it is not centered on the indigenous people, whose land and resources and their survival prospect would be at mire. 2. The Government as well as the dam builders should be transparent in their efforts. 3. The little information that trickles down to them are utterly biased as it only talked about the promises of development without mentioning the adverse impact it would have on their land and survival prospects. 4. The Government as well as the dam builders should restart the project by taking it back to the indigenous people who are the biggest stakeholders. The present project does not contain the indigenous peoples consent, awareness, and confidence. 5. The project that will create loss of land and dam the rivers of life will introduce them to a vulnerable and uncertain future.

the deprived Tipaimukh villagers who are just waiting for the rivers of life to swell its water against them.

Despite the first public hearing (March 31, 2008) that was conducted in their village, Sipiukawn villagers did not know what the public hearing was all about. It was seen as a commotion that failed to represent the plight and interest of the people who would be pushed out of their ancestral land. The public hearing was termed disorganized, dictated, chaotic, and unrepresented by the villagers. The villagers said that the public hearing did not go towards disseminating information, spreading awareness, generating public opinion or gaining public acceptance. The villagers considered the project as an imposed one that failed to bear their consent, confidence and approval. The villagers could not relate such a project to a people centric development project.⁵³

October 11, 2008/ Tipaimukh Village: Tipaimukh village is located near river Tuivai and river Tuiruong, which together would give way for the Tipaimukh Multipurpose HEP. Besides knowing that their village would be submerged, Tipaimukh villagers did not know what the project has in store for them. They were not part of any democratic process that disseminates free, prior information to garner their informed consent. The villagers remember the public hearing as messy and confusing. The

⁵³ The ongoing developments which negate their existence compelled the Sipiukawn villagers to ask: 1. Why development should deprive them of their land and resources? 2. Why the Tipaimukh villagers were always left out from getting necessary information about the project that will eventually push them out of their ancestral land? 3. What benefits the Tipaimukh villagers would be getting from the project? 4. Where they would be resettled or relocated? 5. What means of alternative livelihood system would be made available to them? 6. What would happen if they did not want the rivers to be dammed? 7. What should be done to stop the project from taking its shape?

promises of development for the villagers have all been about compensation and fourth grade job, which are used as the tool for Tipaimukh dam campaign slogan.

The villagers stated that the project had been pushed down against their knowledge. There was no mechanism adopted to even identify their interest or will. This made the Tipaimukh villagers realize the suppressive character of the Government in pursuing the project. NEEPCO officials recently grabbed a helpless widow's land in Tipaimukh village to give way for building quarters. The widow was paid a pitiable amount of Rs. 4000/ only. She was uprooted with all her possession. Tipaimukh villagers saw their fate in the manner the widow was treated; compensation would be employed as a license to uproot and displace them from their ancestral land. Tipaimukh villagers were left out of the small contracts that were released for maintaining pathways for inspection purpose. When little things started going out of their way, Tipaimukh villagers are certain that the leviathan project could only push them out without any trace.⁵⁴

October 13, 2008/ Sartuinek Village: Sartuinek village would lose its huge forest land to the upcoming project. Moreover, the rivers that sustain their livelihood system and links them to their tribesmen in different parts of Manipur, Mizoram and Assam would alienate them forever. The quiet village, otherwise, shimmers with distress and anger with the decisions and progresses that are building up against them. The villagers

⁵⁴ The distressed Tipaimukh villagers opine that: 1. The mega-project would stand to mark the end of their history. The project is not seen as a development oriented one as it will be anti-people, anti-conservation, and anti-environment. 2. The Government of Manipur did not initiate and involve the indigenous peoples in any of the decision making process that concerns their land, resources and survival prospect. 3. They will not move out of their ancestral land. 4. They will not exchange their land for any compensatory measures, which will only put an end to their lives. 5. They wanted to be a part of a development project that involves them, secure their land and resources and promises them humane returns. 6. The Government and the dam builders should retreat from the ongoing project.

collectively said that they would stand to protect and preserve their ancestral land and will not surrender to any inhumane project. Sartuinek villagers have no development expectations from the giant project. They firmly stated that their land and resources and the continuity of their culture and identity as a collective people cannot be exchanged for any monetary compensation. Sartuinek villagers believed that the idea of development would be acceptable if their land and resources are preserved and protected. After the Government of Manipur failed to even build a motorable road inside their village, the villagers could not imagine development benefits to shower upon them when their land and resources are submerged.

Sartuinek villagers did not get to know about the public hearing. Their unabridged plights are worsened by the distance that the government and the dam builders were maintaining. The democratic channels that ought to represent them had been evading them endlessly. This eventually made the villagers realize that they had been reduced from their citizenship rights, which, otherwise, ought to be fundamental in their existence.⁵⁵

⁵⁵ With a serious concern over the injustice the project has put them through, Sartuinek villagers opine that: 1. The Government should immediately retreat from imposing the Tipaimukh Multipurpose HEP. 2. The Government of Manipur should rather build roads, school, hospital, and avail public distribution system, governance to usher development, instead of the mega-project that will uproot, displace, and submerge their land and resources.

3. The absence of any development and progress in Tipaimukh sub-division, which was actually created by the State, should not be used to validate the Government to impose the flawed Tipaimukh Multipurpose HEP in the name of development. 4. They prefer their land and resources to be protected and preserved to give way to a peaceful and humane development. 5. They are not ready to trust a government or the State that had been foreign to their existence. More so of an entity that was working to uproot and displace them and submerge their land and resources. 6. Their land and resources are important to them than any contracts, fourth grade job or monetary compensation. 7. Instead of damming the rivers, greater emphasis should be placed on the many possible uses of the rivers for bringing real development to the indigenous people without disturbing their land, resources and livelihood prospect.

CONCLUSION

Enquiring into the ongoing project for the construction of Tipaimukh dam inevitably leads one to question whether the project would bring about development or destruction. The project is bound to generate sudden turbulence in the ecological, social, economic, political and security dynamics not only of the Tipaimukh subdivision, but also in other parts of Manipur, Mizoram and Assam and beyond that. The fringe locality of dam site and its backwardness should not compel the State or the dam builders to analyse and imagine the project in the context of development.

The severe adverse social, economic, cultural, ecological, political and security impacts that it would have on the indigenous peoples, their land and resources should be considered in the context of the development policy hidden in the project as well as in the experiences of the affected people where large dams are built. The economic benefits envisaged by the indigenous peoples do not correspond at all to the development targets of the project. The indigenous people and their land stood more fragile than ever as the project had already activated diverse Manipur based non-state armed actors who have expressed their interests in the project.

While the presence of these armed actors vis-a-vis the State actors resulted in labeling the State as a disturbed one, the same situation, if not a deteriorated one, would take over the development project. The social assessments have not taken into account the price that the indigenous people would have to pay after losing their land and resources. The short term “development” project would usher a longer social crisis as is already the problem in Manipur. As is evident in pursuing the Tipaimukh Multipurpose HEP, social issue has been one of the least addressed issues.

The Tipaimukh Mutipurpose HEP is inducing the development starved indigenous peoples of Tipaimukh to make hasty decisions, which have made them realize the irrationality behind it. Tipaimukh villagers are slowly waking up to the grim reality of realizing their powerlessness in their present state of underdevelopment as much as in the ongoing process of negotiating the prospect of the development project, which is seen as a zero-sum game. Far from generating power for export to distant urban centres, the State could be further burdened with more protracted social crisis that would inevitably snowball into various aspects of life when the project disturbs, uproots and displaces the indigenous people ancestral settlements. The State cannot afford to stabilize its democratic institutions by militarization.

The project is seen by the Tipaimukh villagers as a symbol of threat, powerlessness and defeat. The dam, if it is built, will not only uproot, displace, and submerged the indigenous peoples land and resources, but will also wall the channel that links them to their tribesmen in Mizoram, other parts of Manipur, Assam and Meghalaya. The river is not only their trade and economic lifeline, but also is the route where their culture, language, identity and history flow.

The foreseeable impact that the project would have on indigenous peoples and resources has been severely underestimated, if not missed out in all its previous impact assessment. The powerful political factors that influenced the decision to build the Tipaimukh dam did not have any relations with the grassroots indigenous people on whose land the dam would be constructed. The unrepresented state deprived them of

fitting their plights in any of the decision making process. This will go a long way to invite legal cheating of the indigenous people and their land.

5.3.11 RAMIFICATIONS OF TIPAIMUKH DAM

A major aspect which placed the Tipaimukh dam issue in the global domain is its ramifications that cut across national borders. Barak / Tuiruong is an international river bound by the ramifications of riparian rights, bilateral agreements, and dialogues. Besides, Manipur's riverine zone is located in an international and intra-national border tract involving Myanmar, Bangladesh and the Indian states of Tripura, Assam and Mizoram where large areas in the tract are plagued by 'insurgents' and even some 'ultra-national activities.' Due to the sensitive nature of the area, some even propound that development by construction of a major project like Tipaimukh dam with the ancillary downstream economic activities will assist in curbing these movements, with better access and obliteration of their hideouts.⁵⁶ On the other hand, there is also belief that the proposed dam would not deliver its promises with various non-state armed actors fighting for their respective interests and dominance.

In this context, it is important to note that after the Prime Minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh visited Manipur on December 2, 2006, announcing that the 1500 MW Tipaimukh Hydro Electric Project will be executed, four underground groups of Manipur, namely UNLF, PREPAK, KYKL and KCP immediately issued a press release against the construction of Tipaimukh dam. The statement of these group says: "Tipaimukh project

⁵⁶ Singh, Kshetri Rajiv. (2011). "Dams as a Metaphor of Development: Exploring the Politics Within." In Lal Dena (Ed.), *Dialogue On Tipaimukh Dam*. Akansha Publishing House, New Delhi. Pp.97-127.

is nothing but a bid by the colonial power to loot the natural resources of Manipur after having used it as captive economy for the past 60 years.” The groups asked all individuals and organizations which are working for the implementation of the project to stop their activities immediately. They also appealed to all the citizens of Manipur not to fall for the enemies of the people.

On July 28, 2009, another militant organization, the Hmar People’s Convention (Democratic) issued a press release which stated that the proposed Tipaimukh Multipurpose Hydroelectric Project is a war imposed on the indigenous Hmar people and various other communities located downstream and upstream. The power-greedy governments and Dam builders in India, who are driven by short-term interests in their blind pursuit for profits are putting indigenous communities at stake. They have not sought the consent and opinions of these indigenous communities in whose land the Dam is proposed. The HPC (D) statement also stressed that “the Rivers that nursed and fed our honored generations before shall continue to flow for all the generations to come. We cannot allow the rivers to be disturbed and are obliged to see that no outsiders, their forces and might will destroy or disturb the natural flow of the rivers of life.”⁵⁷

India’s decision to build Tipaimukh Dam seemingly overshadows the debate with Farakka Barrage and the Gajoldoba Barrage on the Teesta River in Bangladesh. India’s unilateral plan has prompted a wide range of debate and discussion on its merit in both India and Bangladesh.⁵⁸ The debates have gradually transcended the realm of government officials, academics and civil societies and transformed into various modes of protests

⁵⁷ Hmar Peoples Convention (Democratic), *Press Release*, July 28, 2009.

⁵⁸ Mirza, M. Monirul Qader.(2009). “Fallacies of India’s Tipaimukh Dam”. *Holiday International*, 4 September 2009.

and resistance in Bangladesh as well. Experts in Bangladesh are concerned and have voiced apprehensions that the proposed Tipaimukh dam would cause colossal damage to Bangladesh's economy, society, and environment; practically drying up two major rivers, Surma and Kushiara, which provide water for most of the north eastern region of Bangladesh.⁵⁹ Over the last few decades, Indo-Bangladesh relations have not been strained more by any issue other than that of water. India continues to unilaterally control and manage most of the international rivers that Bangladesh shares with her.⁶⁰ Over the last several decades, there have been intense debates between the academic circles, civil society, environmental groups, human rights organizations and the media in Bangladesh over the implications of the Tipaimukh dam upon the dividend of water coming from upper-riparian India. This debate continued to get new impetus since the protest movement expanded to the transnational space.

Muzaffer Ahmed, president of Bangladesh Poribesh Andolan (Bangladesh Environmental Movement), a leading environmentalist organization in Bangladesh, remarked that Tipaimukh dam would be “a disaster for Bangladesh's river system, livelihood and environment. We have done rigorous study on Tipaimukh dam and found that it was going to be more disastrous than the Farakka Barrage that had already destroyed the Padma River and ecology in the country's south-western region.” He added, “What is power-luxury for India is a life-and-death question for Bangladesh. Energy cannot be more important than human disaster.”⁶¹

⁵⁹ Islam, Md Saidul. (2012). *Development, power, and the environment: neoliberal paradox in the age of vulnerability*. New York, Routledge.

⁶⁰ Rahman, Mirza Zulfikur. (August 17, 2009). “India, Bangladesh and Tipaimukh Dam,” *Institute of Peace and Conflict Studies*, No. 2945.

⁶¹ *The Daily Star*, May 28, 2009.

Environmental movements against Tipaimukh Dam have swept through North America through formal protests, organizing seminars, and submitting petitions to the United Nations.⁶² Although the movements could not stop the project entirely, it pushed the government of both countries to address certain concerns. Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina brought up Bangladesh's concerns relating to the Tipaimukh Dam project with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh during their meeting on the sidelines of the 15th Non-Aligned Movement Summit held in July 2009 in Egypt.⁶³ In September 2011, during the Indian Prime Minister's visit to Dhaka, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) titled "Indo-Bangladesh Framework Agreement on Cooperation for Development" was signed by the two Prime Ministers that prevented India from taking any unilateral decision to construct Tipaimukh Dam. Accordingly, official responses stated that technical teams from both countries should have regular meetings on this high-voltage issue.⁶⁴ It is evident that concern over Tipaimukh Dam is situated not only in Northeast India and the movements that it has generated are far-reaching.

5.3.12 MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS AND TIPAIMUKH DAM

On February 22, 2007, clearance to Tipaimukh dam project was stalled for a second time because of lack of sufficient data submitted to the appraisal committee for project's environmental impact assessment. The Expert Appraisal Committee for River

⁶² Islam, Md Saidul. (2013). *Development, Power, and the environment: neoliberal paradox in the age of vulnerability*. New York: Routledge.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Rashid, Harun Ur. (2013). "Tipaimukh Dam: what is the current position." Available online at: <http://www.priyoaustralia.com.au/articles/179848-tipaimukh-dam-facts-current-position.html> (Accessed 31 Mar 2015).

Valley and Hydroelectric Projects under the Union Ministry of Environment and Forests once again deferred clearance to the Tipaimukh Hydro Electric project saying it had not received all the information it needed to clear the EIA report of the project. NEEPCO, the state government agency handling the project, said they were unable to do so due to high insurgency in the area. However, the Action Committee Against Tipaimukh Project (ACTIP), a coalition of 29 NGOs, maintains that insurgency had always been there in the state. They claimed that a thorough EIA was not carried out since the assessment was a mere formality with the Prime Minister's Office (PMO) supporting the project. Besides, they also stated that the inauguration of the project by the Union Ministry of Power in December 2006 was illegal.

5.3.13 FOREST ADVISORY COMMITTEE REPORT

In July 2013, the Forest Advisory Committee (FAC) of India's Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) has recommended against the clearing of forest land for the construction of the controversial 1500MW Tipaimukh project. The overall forest clearance for the project is on the scale of 24,329 ha (60,118 acres) traversing the states of Manipur and Mizoram. What was listed before the FAC in July 2013 in Tipaimukh's instance was the proposal for 22, 777.50 ha (56,284 acres) in Manipur alone. In its meeting, FAC notes that "forest area required for Tipaimukh Dam project is extremely large and involves the felling of 7.8 million trees."

The committee observed that the total area "is more than one-fifth of the total 118,184 hectares of forest land diverted for execution of 497 hydel projects in the entire

country after the Forest Conservation Act came into force.” It further notes that “the per-megawatt requirement of forest land (16 hectares of forest land per megawatt) for the above project of 1,500 MW installed capacity is much higher than the average per megawatt requirement of forest land for the existing hydel projects in the country.”⁶⁵ While strongly recommending rejection of forest clearance for Tipaimukh Dam, the FAC based their decision on two core facts; one relates to the unique biodiversity and wildlife importance of the area and the other is the fact that the project would directly displace indigenous Hmar tribe from their ancestral lands. The FAC upheld the statement of Principal Chief Conservator of Forests of Manipur that “no compensatory measure can replace what would be lost if the forest are submerged.” The FAC while acknowledging that they had received several objections to the project concluded that the proposal for clearance of forest land was disproportionate to its power generation capacity.

5.3.14 COMPARING THE PERSPECTIVE OF THE TWO MOVEMENTS’

Environmental movements in Northeast India weave together large number of civil societies; deeply discontent from the conviction that some condition of society was no longer tolerable. They are collective challenges by people with common purposes and solidarity in sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authorities,⁶⁶ which proliferated the new social movements. The environmentalism that are being witnessed in this region also represents the popular environmentalism of the Global South. This new

⁶⁵ Mehta, Samir. (2013). *Experts Reject Flooding Forests for Tipaimukh and Dibang Dams*. www.internationalrivers.org.

⁶⁶ Tarrow, Sidney. (1994). *Power in movement: social movements, collective action and politics*. New York: Cambridge University Press.

trend has been termed differently by different authors. It has also been appropriately called livelihood ecology,⁶⁷ or liberation ecology.⁶⁸ While other scholars of global environmentalism such as Martinez-Alier, Rob Nixon, Ramachandra Guha and Martinez-Alier have indiscriminately used the term “environmentalism of the poor”⁶⁹ to refer to as the environmentalism of the Global South.⁷⁰ However, in this research, the environmentalism discourse is studied as new social movements. Environmentalism or new social movements that emerged out of the resistance against the Lower Subansiri Hydropower Project (LSHP) and Tipaimukh Multipurpose Hydroelectric Project (TMHP) has been largely diverse and widespread.

In the two cases, several commonalities are observed that pointed to create a crisis of confidence in the government as well as the dam builders as they had aggressively manipulated all the processes of the Preliminary Feasibility Report (PFR), Detailed Project Report (DPR), Environmental Impact Assessment and the stage managed affairs of the public hearings where the peoples voices were suppressed to negate their share of approval, consent and confidence.

In both the cases, the new social movements were successful in situating the plight of the peoples; in its protest and opposition to counterbalance and limit power. What is also distinctive in the two cases is that the new social movements did not seek to gain power but to limit it. The interplay of dedication and solidarity amongst its members

⁶⁷ Gari, Josep Antoni . (2000). *The political ecology of biodiversity: biodiversity conservation and rural development at the indigenous and peasant grassroots*. D.Phil. Thesis. UK: University of Oxford.

⁶⁸ Peet, Richard and Michael Watts, Eds. (1996). *Liberation Ecologies: Environment, Development, Social Movements*. New York: Routledge.

⁶⁹ Martinez-Alier, Joan. (2002). *The Environmentalism of the Poor: A Study of Ecological Conflicts and Valuation*. Massachusetts: Edward Elgar Publishing.

⁷⁰ Guha, R., and J. Martinez-Alier. (1997). *Varieties of environmentalism: essays north and south*. London: Earthscan Publications.

act as the strength of the movements, which also points to the relevance of the civil societies. In both the cases, the core members and leading figures are often highly educated, while the people whom they are representing and who constitutes majority, the directly project affected people, are not educated. In both the cases, there was a high proportion of female participation in environmental movements at every level. The new social movements in Northeast India provide good evidence that women were very much part of political activism.

The structure of environmental movements in both cases follows the same pattern. There is a core of people containing the most active members, devoting most of their time to the movement. The second circle of movement participants is the group of activists who co-operate on a regular basis with regular responsibilities. The widest circle is the circle of sympathizers who are ready to demonstrate with the movements as and when necessary. The fourth circle consists of the non-active sympathizers who, otherwise, support the ideas the movement stands for, which is important in creating a social base. They remain as the dormant base; but can be activated in pursuing the movements' concrete causes.

Movement leaders, according to the Resource Mobilization approach, are mostly well educated people who often hold prominent positions. They have a strong motivation towards upward social mobility which, according to Oberschall, they achieve by becoming the leaders of movements.⁷¹ Similar phenomenon is found in Northeast context. Those who were highly educated were much more likely to become leaders.

⁷¹ Oberschall, A. (1973). *Social Conflict and Social Movements*. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

Collective behavior studies have emphasized the role of charisma in leadership.⁷² Charisma and social skills therefore play a very important role in a movement's life in helping to avoid internal conflict. This is also supported by our experiences. The leaders were chosen because they were active, willing to devote the necessary time and energy to running the movement, and were charismatic enough to be accepted as the leadership. They were always well educated people and their expertise was always regarded as the necessary basis for leading an environmental movement in its struggle. As such, the leaders as well as the organizations are mandated by the communities. As suggested by new social movement theory,⁷³ collective leadership is practiced where duties and responsibilities were all divided and shared and decisions were consistently made on a collective basis.

The new social movements in Northeast India came into existence because of particular objective, such as stopping the construction of big dams. Initially, they mobilized forces for or against a concrete goal, which was followed by the widening of their interest. They identify various interrelated issues attached to their primary objective and weave them together as their struggle evolved. These movements also coalesced with other organizations to establish a bigger and wider network and coalitions to strengthen their struggle. In this manner, they also take up the wider role of representing people with environmental problems. They also focus their attention significantly to educate the

⁷² Killian, L. and Turner R. (1972). *Collective Behavior*. Prentice Hall, Englewood Cliffs, NJ.

⁷³ Offe, C. (1985). New social movements: challenging the boundaries of institutional politics. *Social Research*, 52(4), 817-868.

population at large. This is very much in line with the arguments of environmental consciousness theory advocated by Eyerman and Jamison.⁷⁴

The new social movements in the Northeast were organized, which united people around a common interest. This is one of the cohesive factors which kept the movements together. They became significant for the members as a source of activity and a forum for social cohesion and consequently kept the core activists together even in the Northeast atmosphere of general decline of embryonic democracy. The new social movements should be understood in terms of an emergent environmental consciousness, as a particular set of knowledge interests, and sees success in terms of the movements' capacity to spread its knowledge interest or diffuse its consciousness.⁷⁵ These movements are also successful in the sense that they had political influence at the local level.

On the other hand, absence of choice before the movements in the given political context made it complex for them to define their attainable objectives. Leaders of the new social movements in the Northeast work in difficult political circumstances and lack basic resources. Despite their great efforts to overcome these obstacles, they face growing hostility and exclusion from the government. This is when building a strong network and coalition helps to strengthen the movements.

5.3.15 MEDIA AND THE NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN NORTHEAST INDIA

Another factor which plays an important role in the development of political opinion about environmental issues and also in the environmental movements in Northeast is the extent of media support. Environmental issues were in any case a subject

⁷⁴ Eyerman, R. and Jamison, A. (1991). *Social Movements: A Cognitive Approach*. Polity Press, Cambridge.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

which did not irritate the government; its coverage in the press gained significantly only after the environmental movements become visibly strong.

On the other hand, political parties in the Northeast do not pursue environmental or Green issues; none of them were in a position to oppose Green issues at the same time. With the emergence of environmental movements that takes a political turn, environmental movements began to receive considerable attention. The media is also consciously and systematically used by the Northeast environmental movements to build their own reputation and gain publicity. This in turn results in most movements securing their public space and support. Environmental movements organized in an obscure village may be as widely reported about as a state or regional movement.⁷⁶ The reports mostly portray the movements' efforts sympathetically, which always contributes to their strength and in turn to their success.

The new social movements' in Northeast contact with journalist or the media house is continuous; they are readily approachable and are also sympathetic to the cause of movements.⁷⁷ As environment is a political subject which is very much attached to the interests of the people, it is a subject favored in the media and easy for the movements to get journalists to put their concerns on the agenda. This has, indeed, resulted in many journalistic activisms in the Northeast with environmental movements.

However, in many areas where environmental movements are proliferating, local papers do not serve the desired objectives. They tend to end up 'local' as their circulation

⁷⁶ This, however, is far from reality before the real advent of technology with all their conveniences. It should also be noted that till the date of writing this thesis, significant number of villages in Manipur's districts still have no stable access to phone/internet connectivity.

⁷⁷ The journalist or media house that is referred here is particularly confined to the respective state journalist or media house. It does not necessarily refer to the national media house.

is limited and because they only reached those living in the neighborhood. However, while saying that, public opinion has not been altered by local news, as the national newspapers are not subscribed by the local people who matters in the new social movements. Even though the mobilizing effects of national media seems wider, the new social movements in Northeast India significantly banks on the local support for its struggle. This, however, is not to negate the many proactive network, movements and coalitions that exist outside the region.

5.3.16 INTERPRETING THE DATA

The data is an outcome of researcher survey that was done in Assam (August and December 2017) and Manipur (2018) by employing semi-structured and unstructured interview. The data is also supported by the researcher's survey in Tipaimukh Sub-division (Churachandpur, Manipur) in the year 2008 (September and October) that employed unstructured interview. However, the data that will be analyzed are generated particularly through semi-structured interview.

Table 1. Activities / Tactics of the Environmental Movements in Assam and Manipur

	(a). Rally, protest, demonstration, campaign, mobilization	(b). Petitioning, talks, lobbying and negotiation	(c). Networking and coalescing with other environmental movements	(d). All the above
Assam	21.30	7.70	5.50	65.50
Manipur	10.30	5.30	15.70	68.70

The data from the two states, as shown in Table 1, reveal the novelty of new social movements in Northeast India in the politicization of more and more activities and relations. The collective understanding of new social movements in the two states embrace the significance and integrity of rally, protest, demonstration, campaign, mobilization, petitioning, talks, lobbying, negotiation, networking and building strategic partners; and not merely in a confined area of activism. This offers a perspective of the new forms of radicalism that is present in the new social movements by exploiting all possible form of activism that goes to the extent of networking with coalition partners.

The activities and tactics of the environmental movements mirror their ideological orientation. The belief in the unrepresentative character of modern democracies is inconsistent with its anti-institutional tactical orientation. The environmental movements in Assam and Manipur prefer to remain outside of normal political channels, employing disruptive tactics and mobilizing public opinion to gain political leverage.

This, however, does not mean that environmental movements did not involve themselves in politics. They call for and create structures that are more responsive to the needs of individuals, open, decentralized, nonhierarchical. Environmental movements in Northeast India saw the emergence of diverse actors that register their protest in different ways; employing different medium of protest. However, in the course of their struggle, organization employs different mode of protest to voice their demands and raise their issues. A significant characteristic of the new social movements is evident with the data revealing the inevitable relations and inter-relations of different mode of protest that associates environmental movements in Northeast India.

Table 2. Impact of the Environmental Movements

	(a). Mass education, empowerment	(b). Influencing policies	(c). Transforming politics, redefining development agendas/goals/objectives	(d). Giving importance to indigenous peoples rights and issues	(e). All the above
Assam	9.5	3.5	4.00	12.00	71.00
Manipur	12.00	2.00	3.80	17.20	65.00

The impact of the movements as reflected in Table 2., reveals diverse thrust of the environmental movements. The movements is instrumental in educating and empowering the peoples in both the states, while also influencing policies, transforming political agendas and situating indigenous people's rights and issues where it should matter. However, the overall impact is aggregated significantly, as evident, by collectively influencing the areas that was desired by the movements. Taken together, the data reflects the values of new social movements which is evident in the autonomy of the objectives that it secures. This also makes clear the autonomy that it exercises in the course of its struggle.

The central factor characteristic of new social movements is their distinct ideological goals. It is from this difference that all others flow. The unique ideological orientation and self-reflexive character largely dictate the kinds of tactics, structures, and participants evidenced in new social movements, which results in creating diverse impacts that was desired of the movements. This abundantly reflects the subjective consciousness of the actors and the value shift that is taking place within the environmental movements. The overall impacts that the movement(s) is securing relates to the personal growth and self-actualization of its actors. Thus, new social movements

represent the shift to post-material values that stress issues of identity, participation, and quality of life rather than economic matters.

Table 3. Defining the Movements

	(a). Political	(b). Cultural and identity	(c). Economical	(d). Environmental	(e). All the above
Assam	7.50	17.30	5.50	3.70	66.00
Manipur	12.00	17.20	3.80	2.00	65.00

Table 3 reveals that identity claims are among the distinctive feature of environmental movements in the two states. The focus on identity is considered unique in contemporary movements because “identity politics also express the belief that identity itself – its elaboration, expression, or affirmation – is and should be a fundamental focus of political work. In this way, the politics of identity have led to an unprecedented politicization of previously nonpolitical terrains. This is expressed in the notion that “the personal is political.” The politics of identity, here, is believed to define and represent what is conceived to be the political, cultural, economical, and environmental aspects of the movements. The aggregation of all these represent a radical challenge to the hegemony of state domination and an apolitical withdrawal from politics. The politics of identity constantly question the meaning of what is being done, which led to conscious choices of structure and action, which differentiate the environmental movements as new social movements.

Table 4. Classifying the Movements.

	(a).Class based movement	(b).Ethnic/Community based movement	(c).Classless mass/grassroots movement	(d).Students/Women's movement
Assam	7.57	8.43	80.10	3.90
Manipur	2.35	14.65	81.00	2.00

Table 4 makes clear the environmental movements in Northeast India as classless mass / grassroots movements. Northeast India witnesses movements that were dominated by diverse actors, groups, and community. Within the environmental movements, the large majority of organizations are regional and local grassroots environmental groups that operated without the concept of class. They are generally small, informal organizations that were anti-bureaucratic, egalitarian, and communal in nature.

Lacking the institutional resources of large organizations, these grassroots organizations have also formed inter-organizational coalitions, alliances, and networks for information sharing and for mounting advocacy and protest campaigns. Many of the environmental organizations are likely to have adhocracy and simple network structures.

New social movements, as a group and without classes, are widely assumed to constitute “a coherent social force” representing one larger, overarching movement or genera movement that is classless. They are thought to represent a “movement family sharing several important elements. The environmental movement is further assumed to be the new social movement with the greatest potential to bring all of the new social

movement together under one umbrella, providing the ideological “glue” or “master frame” to hold them all together.⁷⁸

Table 5. Identifying Difference in the Movements.

	(a).Not class/ethnic movements and focus on diverse issues	(b).Represent ethnic/class interest and focus on single issue	(c).They are open and inclusive in its approach	(d).They are exclusive in its approach
Assam	57.90	2.10	36.43	3.57
Manipur	41.00	14.65	41.00	2.35

Much of the answers for Table 5 have already been reflected in Table 4. Data in Table 4 have shown the classless/ ethnic-less characteristic of the environmental movements in Northeast India. However, as environmental movements, the movements do not capitalize on a single issue alone, which is environmental issue. As discussed earlier, the environmental movements as new social movements represent one larger, overarching movement or general movement; representing a movement family sharing several important elements.

The data shows that the environmental movements in Northeast India synthesized, embrace and encompass other contemporary movement goals in addition to environmental protection. They also advocate and amalgamate diverse issues and concerns including human rights, livelihood security, excessive centralization of decision-making power, dispossessing the tribals/indigenous peoples of their resources,

⁷⁸ Olofsson, G. (1988), “After the Working-Class Movement? An Essay on What’s ‘New’ and What’s ‘Social’ in the New Social Movements.” *Acta Sociologica* 31: 15-34.

the flaw in decision making processes, environmental justice, rights of the indigenous peoples, land rights, the need to pursue just development approach, the state's incapacity to deliver adequate social services, and militarization, etc. Although environmental protection may be the most popular of new social movement goals, the argument that environmentalism is the most encompassing of the new social movements implies that support for this movement is strongly tied to support for other goals and objectives as well while remaining largely open and inclusive.

Table 6. Decision Making Process in the Movements.

	(a). By few leaders	(b). By a committee	(c).Through open discussion and consultation	(d).By an individual / Leader
Assam	26.67	32.33	39.85	1.25
Manipur	20.45	38.50	40.55	0.50

Within movements, conflicts of interests are bound to take place and the course of action for the movements has to be devised and redefined. Table 6 clearly indicates that the decision making process with the environmental movements in Northeast India is democratically made and not rely on the charisma of a leader. Whether decision is made by a committee or through open discussion and consultation, the involved process is one that is collective and inclusive. The participation of the peoples in the decision-making processes ensures the popularity of movements as new social movements. The accommodation of the peoples in the decision making process is another factor that empowers the movements with grassroots participation. It significantly defines the newness of the movements in the region.

Table 7. Defining the Contemporary Environmental Movements.

	(a). Social movements with old/traditional characteristics	(b). Social movements with novel characteristics	(c). Same old movements with familiar/similar characteristics	(d). Cannot say
Assam	21.60	62.85	14.15	1.40
Manipur	18.55	66.45	15.00	0.00

Table 7 indicates that the contemporary collective action in Northeast India is defined by novel characteristics that concentrate on the relationship between the rise of contemporary social movements and the larger economic, political, identity and cultural structure. It presents a distinctive view of social movements and of the larger sociopolitical environment, of how individuals fit into, respond to, and change the system. Environmentalism as new social movements in Northeast India represents a fundamental break from other social movements that flooded the region. These differences appear in the movements' ideology and goals, tactics, structure, and participants as we have discussed. The central factor characteristic of new social movements is their distinctive ideological outlook. It is from this difference that all others flow. The tactics of new social movements mirror their ideological orientation. The belief in the unrepresentative character of modern democracies is consistent with its anti-institutional tactical orientation.

New social movements prefer to remain outside of normal political channels, employing disruptive tactics and mobilizing public opinion to gain political leverage. This, however, does not mean that new social movements do not involve themselves in politics, nor avoid becoming institutionalized themselves. New social movements in the

Northeast attempt to replicate in their own structures the type of representative government they desire. That is, they organize themselves in a fluid non-rigid style that avoids the dangers of oligarchization. They tend to rotate leadership, vote communally on all issues, and to have impermanent adhoc organizations. These novel characteristics of the contemporary environmental movements define the newness of the new social movements.

CONCLUSION

New social movements in the Northeast emerged to confront or resist the hegemonic forces of the state that are trying to clutch environmental resources of the region. In other ways, these movements are the bearers of the ecological critique of the political and economic monopolies that dominate Northeast ecosystems in the quest for profit and power. Yet, their organizational power and the quest to save the rivers from the control of exploitive, extractive, degrading and authoritarian forces strongly implies the dialectic of conflict: repression versus resistance, expropriation versus distribution, domination versus liberation.

The new social movements have been able to interrogate the dominant hegemonic power relations over the ecosystem, particularly the monopoly of environmental resources by the state and its arm of extractive external/ multinational interests. In the process, these movements have also been able to mobilize the peoples support to empower their local claims to secure people-centered democracy and development.

As the dams' debate is rooted in wider, ongoing debate on development, the growing coalitions and networks within the region started voicing for a framework of

internationally accepted norms on human rights – the right to development and sustainability - rights based approach where recognition of rights and assessment of risks provides the basis for negotiated decisions on dams and their alternatives. In the process, reconciling competing needs and entitlements becomes one of the most important factor in addressing the conflicts and grievances associated with development projects, particularly large scale interventions such as dams. The new coalition and networks bring new voices, perspectives and criteria into decision-making, and develop a new approach that build consensus around the decisions reached.

Initially, in the absence of ‘mandatory’ information’s, the differences in movement types, analysts’ perspectives, and state structures account for the inability of the new social movement label to catch on in the region, but there is a novelty associated with the contemporary movements that merits serious considerations. The argument here is that this newness derives, ultimately, from the nature of the grievances in question. When discontents are regional in scope, though already national and international outside the Northeast, adequate solutions depend upon cooperation not only from the region, but also from the national as well as international support groups. Inevitably, the local or regional issue is immediately translated into a wider national or international issue. In other words, it becomes a nation-transcending grievances.

The global threats from the new grievances typically make national boundaries irrelevant. Many contemporary discontents focus on public rather than private goods. The “no exit” nature of these grievances virtually eliminates the otherwise useful distinction

McCarthy and Zald make between beneficiary and conscience constituents.⁷⁹ The central argument here is that the widespread, irreversible, and catastrophic potentials ushered by big dams that are associated with the new grievances make social movements focused on these threats significantly different from the movement for autonomy, students', farmers, and other civil rights movements that are popular in the region that address their claims to incumbent political authorities and are limited to national boundaries.

In the course of time, grievances take the form of collective consciousness that emerges through experiences and actions of the classless movements by sharing the same interests, values and objectives.⁸⁰ The new social movements in Northeast India are largely represented by coalitions and networks of shared grievances and consciousness against the oppressive development projects ushered by the state and dam builders without securing "free prior and informed consent" of the indigenous peoples who have been marginalized in every process of the projects.

The new social movements in Northeast India represents the voices of dissent against the 'over-rationalization of society';⁸¹ sharing a propensity to question and disrupt settled patterns of intellectual, social and political life. The voices of dissent have, indeed, been portrayed as the key to "transformative politics" which, drawing upon the democratic potential of new social movements, would advance active political and social

⁷⁹ McCarthy, J. and M. Zald. (1997). "Resource Mobilization and Social Movements: A Partial Theory." *American Journal of Sociology*, 82: pp. 1212-1241.

⁸⁰ While in the West and Europe, movements are largely defined by the character of the class that spearheaded them. However, in the case of the Northeast, as the movements were cooperating within coalitions that crossed class lines, the character of such movements represents layered labels; that they are authoritative, rebellious, inherently reactionary, radical, conservative, or that they are ambiguous. The new social movement in the Northeast, indeed, represents the synthesis of all these characters at one point or the other. Having said that, they are also open for negotiation to settle their grievances.

⁸¹ Offe, Claus. (1985). "New social movements: challenging the boundaries of institutional politics". *Social Research*, Vol.52:pp. 817-868.

equality.⁸² The advancement of these equalities inevitably relates to environmental justice.

Environmentalism in Northeast India has clearly emerged as the source of a significant current of dissent by raising questions about progress that have sustained the pattern of development characteristic of the advanced industrial order. The idea of a transformative politics challenging the established order has significantly informed particular social movements and provides a way of understanding the ensemble of new social movements in the Northeast as well.⁸³ The sphere of environmental politics, thus, forms a particularly prominent site of contact and contest between the largely antagonistic worlds of policy professionalism and dissenting social movements

The environmental movements in Northeast India has clearly made a mark on the contemporary political landscape in the region, affecting both terms of public discourse and features of the policy process. As Torgerson puts it, environmentalism or the new social movements has an immense influence on policy professionalism by shaping the focus of attention in three related ways; through agenda setting, problem definition, and epistemology,⁸⁴ which reflects continuity with society rather than some dramatic schism.⁸⁵ The new social movements are movements for a new democracy. The self-limiting concept of emancipation allows these movements to offer the concept of the

⁸² Torgerson, Douglas. (Spring 1997). "Policy Professionalism and the Voices of Dissent: The Case of Environmentalism." *Polity*, Vol.29 (No.3):pp.345-374.

⁸³ Offe, Claus. (1985). "New social movements: challenging the boundaries of institutional politics". *Social Research*, Vol.52:pp. 817-868.

⁸⁴ Torgerson, Douglas. (1995). "The Uncertain Quest for Sustainability: Public Discourse and the Politics of Environmentalism." In Frank Fischer and Michael Black (Eds.) *Greening Environmental Policy: The Politics of a Sustainable Future*. Paul Chapman: London.

⁸⁵ Rose, Fred. (Sep. 1997). "Toward a Class-Cultural Theory of Social Movements: Reinterpreting New Social Movements". *Sociological Forum*, Vol. 12 (No.3): pp. 461-494.

democracy of everyday life and perceive democracy as the condition for recognition, autonomy, and self-affirmation.⁸⁶ New democracy in the context of new social movements also refers to the engagement of affected peoples in decision making processes, accessing mechanism for gaining free, prior and informed consent. The new social movements have not primarily articulated economic demands but have been more concerned with cultural issues dealing with questions of individual autonomy and with issues related to new, invisible risks affecting people in more or less similar ways, irrespective of their social positions.

⁸⁶ Melucci, Alberto. (1992). "Liberation or Meaning? Social Movements, Culture and Democracy." *Development and Change*, Vol. 23 (No.3): pp. 43-77.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

This chapter brings out the summarization of each chapter. It analyzed the discussed theories and modes of action of the environmental movements in the Northeast and examines its newness that was represented by the actors, issues, values and styles in the course of its struggle. New social movement theorists have looked to other logics of action based in politics, ideology, and culture as the root of much collective action, and they have looked to other sources of identity as the definers of collective identity. The new social movements emerged in the Northeast as a defensive reaction against the encroachment of invasive capitalism.

Environmentalism in Northeast India is not only a domain of competing interests but conflicting interests, as the social contradictions between nature and the dominant market economic system deepen, and as power relations with regard to the environment continue to threaten the ecological basis of the survival of indigenous peoples. In the face of push and pull between those who had power over the environment and others whose survival was threatened as a result of their lack of power over the environment, the cycle of repression, resistance and conflict was further reinforced. Environmental movements which are deeply immersed in the political ecology breeds conflict and connects broader social struggles for democracy and justice. In this context, political ecology refers to the distribution of power over the environment.

In the Northeast, where the state is central to the extraction and accumulation process by direct intervention in, or appropriation of, environmental resources, either on its own, or in partnership with other interest groups, environmental movements emerge autonomous of the state to contest the control of environment and defend the rights of

people whose survival is tied to the land. In this regard, environmental movements as new social movements involve the crystallization of group activity autonomous of the state to challenge the domination by a direct call to personal and collective action based on solidarity carrying on conflict and breaking the limits of the system in which the action occurs.

By the “new”, the other major theorists (J. Habermas [1981], A. Melucci [1985, 1989], and Laclau and Mouffe [1985]) of new social movements refer to the fundamental shifts in the social structure; and the emergence in post-industrial societies of different actors, different issues and loci of action that are different from the ‘old’ working class movements. These movements are identity involving and transforming, they are ‘social’, not class oriented, and located in the civil society. Scott’s analysis of the various new social movement theorists as he delineates the characteristics for new social movements: They are pre-eminently social and cultural in character and only secondarily political. They transcend class boundaries. They are located within the civil society and bypass the state. The aim is to defend civil society against the encroachments from inner colonization by the society’s technocratic substructure.

New social movements are concerned with cultural innovation, the creation of new lifestyles and a challenge to entrenched values. These new social movements are characterized by a common societal critique that aimed at social change through the transformation of values, personal identities and symbols. The new social movements in Northeast India are popular social movements and expressions of people’s struggles against exploitation and oppression and for survival and identity in a complex dependent society. In such societies, these movements are attempts at and instruments of democratic

self-empowerment of people, and organized independently from the state, its institutions and political parties and are a reflection of people's search for alternatives.

In this context, Ramachandra Guha has argued that the new social movements work at two levels simultaneously. At one, they are defensive, seeking to protect civil society from the tentacles of the centralizing state; at the other, they are assertive, seeking to change civil society from within and in the process putting forward a conception of the 'good life' somewhat different from that articulated by any of the established parties.

Gail Omvedt's characteristics of new social movements are also relevant in the new social movements in Northeast India. New Social movements are revolutionary in aspirations and anti-systemic in their impact. They are oriented as single-issue efforts to bring about change. These are 'social movements in the sense of having a broad overall organization, structure, and ideology aiming at social change. They have a 'new' ideology which is characterized by the use of non-Marxist concepts of exploitation and oppression (appropriation by the state from peasants through the market); and a corresponding rejection of class, class politics and ideology together with the vanguard role of the urban working class and political parties. These new social movements, according to Omvedt, have grown in a period in which the solutions of traditional socialism are so overwhelmingly discredited; they are forced, in spite of this single issue orientation with the task of 'reinventing revolution.'

Environmental movements emerged in Northeast India, particularly in the early 2000s, as a potent social force to contest power over environmental resources by the state. In the age of globalization, in which the quest for a maximization of profits by

exerting pressure on the world's finite resources is at its peak, the conflict between political-economic and environmental interests, particularly in Northeast India, has assumed new and more ferocious dimensions. In the bid to contest the monopolization of environmental resources and the attendant abuses and corruption, environmental movements have also adopted political and rights identities in the region.

Inglehart proposes that they were a positive affirmation of new values resulting from growing affluence. On the other hand, Melucci not only views new social movements as the movements of the postindustrial era, he also perceives them as a certain response to the failure of modernization and an urge towards it at the same time. The new social movements in the region push toward a development that had been constantly impeded by the political system and the institutionalization of development requirements. They struggle against such hindrance. This objective is achieved through resistances against repression and the opening of the institutions. Supporting this view, Cohen stated that the ideological hegemony of the state required counter hegemonic actions by social movements to dismantle the dominant social views that reinforce the legitimacy of the capitalist system.

The new social movements in the Northeast are breaking the assumption that grassroots movements were inherently limited to the local or domestic level. Environmental movements of the region are paradigmatic for this recent phenomenon. The building of alliances and networks with strategic partners to enhance its agenda has enabled them to redefine themselves as part of the global environmental movements while balancing the focus at the domestic and regional level.

Even though the environmental movements started lately in the Northeast, they have been accepted as the voice of marginalized rural peoples not only in the national but also in international political arenas. The new social movements build coalitions and networks by sharing objectives and joining forces with other movements and organizations. The strategic alliances assumed a major role in fostering the new social movements by providing ideological and political support, linking with other movements particularly rights based movements, supplying logistical support and/or training in organizational and intellectual skills.

However, despite the alliances and coalitions these new social movements are working with, they operate with utmost autonomy from their coalition partners. These new movements are against entering into an alliance that would make the movements dependent and end up in hierarchical, unilateral decision-making process. The convention of building alliances, hence, emphasizes the need to stay politically independent and have autonomy to determine the space it will occupy with the objective of securing enough space to effectively influence the event, campaign, and the objectives.

As a result, it stresses the need to recognize the different mandates of the grassroots environmental movements as represented by the affected peoples, while the coalitions are based on mutual recognition and the combination of particular strength and capacities. In fact, alliances that had emerged on different scales have mutually strengthened the struggles on each level.

In the Northeast, the state actors tend to look at the new social movements as absent of having the needed expertise or scientific knowledge to back up their arguments

and standpoint. They are conceived as simplistic, poorly researched and driven by fashion and sensation rather than being empirical and scientific. The state actors and the dam builders also believed that raising the ceiling of compensatory amount would tempt them to accept the development paradigm proposed by them. However, the many visible failed projects in the region that had been experienced by the peoples has eventually made them to have a relook and question the broad paradigm of development proposed by the state and the dam builders.

The politics of development, as complex as it is, is instrumented by the state actors to pursue their interest that pushed the indigenous peoples to the brink of negotiating for their survival. In the process, democratization and the improvement of human rights records dwindled; distancing the concept of good governance from its targeted group. While the overall thrust of new development orthodoxy is characterized by the features of capitalist democracy that seems to promote both peace and prosperity because they generate economic growth and do not go to war with each other, the new social movements is often conceived as anti-democracy, anti-peoples or anti-development.

However, the new social movements is an assertion and evidence to show that what had been presented has not always been an immediate or sufficient guarantee that economies will prosper and development occur especially in the Northeast. When the acceptance of conceived and imposed development model has often had destabilizing effects by imposing heavy burdens on the poor tribals who have responded in predictable ways, the new social movements emerged as the voice to represent the plights of marginalized peoples.

Northeast India, indeed, represent examples of 'late' development and democracy and which have occurred under conditions which have not remotely approximated competitive democracy; the presentation of uniform development paradigm act as a hurdle then a solution. As such, democratization in the socio-political and economic conditions which prevail in much of the third world and elsewhere is likely to engender political turbulence and also blow stable 'market friendly' development strategies wildly off course. The new social movements, to a large extent, therefore, represents what Leftwich call "democratic reversal" and not democratic consolidation in the midst of few democracy-sustaining conditions. The new social movements emerge as the kind of politics that can alone generate, sustain and protect the people's interests.

When people change the way they use resources, however, they change their relations with each other. New social movements in the Northeast, indeed, negotiate the change relations ushered by the capitalist interest; represented by the state and the dam builders. In the two cases that had been discussed, the issue is not merely about damming the rivers; they also touched upon the livelihood system and its security, the use of resources and how new relations will emerge out of the relationship that would forever change the socio, political, cultural and economic sphere. The new social movements interrogate the dominant hegemonic power relations over the ecosystem, particularly the monopoly of environmental resources by the state and extractive external/ multinational interests. This is one reason why the new social movements has been so political; for no significant change occurs in society without destabilizing some status quo, without decoupling some coalition and building another, without challenging some interests and promoting others.

New social movements in the Northeast are also claims to, and demands for, rights; seeking equity and justice, while interrogating the contexts of relative deprivation, rights denial, and injustice. These have mostly involved marginalized, excluded and oppressed groups, indigenous peoples, women's and community based organizations that had seized the momentum offered by global trends conducive to struggle from below to seek redress of various forms that typically had to do with equal and inclusive citizenship, equitable power relations, environmental justice and entitlement rights.

The main weapons of struggle are human rights whose perceived emancipatory and empowering attributes have endeared them to equity and justice-seeking groups. The very notion that people have rights that entitled them to protection, equality, development, and self-determination is enough reason to take the risks of struggling to assert them. The new social movements in Northeast India are, therefore, collective challenges mounted by relatively marginal groups against powerful elites and dominant ideologies. This is especially true for weak, oppressed and marginal groups, typically minorities, whose members demand political, civil, cultural, social, and economic rights to protect the identity and other interests of the group and redress unjust and inequitable power relations. As it were, rights are demanded because they are believed to be potent emancipatory weapons within existing states.

While it is not the attempt of this study to dwell at length on this subject, it suffices to note that the communitarian perspective is popular in the Northeast for at least two reasons. First is the centrality of primary groups in social formations and political relations, which has been reinforced over the years by ethnic profiling and group arithmetic politics played by state managers that tie the access and opportunities available

to citizens to the ethnic and tribal groups they belong to. Second, historically, the struggle in Northeast India has been more for collective rights than individual rights.

While the new social movements in Northeast India have emerged as classless collective movements, a close examination of the layered form, character and structure of the movement indeed suggests that a community of interests does exist. The core movements have been built around ethnic identities and have mostly pursued parochial interests. This is inevitable with several minor ethnic communities or tribes that represented the project affected peoples. For instance, the Zeliangrong based organizations and associations represent the interest of diverse Zeliangrong peoples interests while the Hmar based associations and organizations represents the interests of affected Hmar people in Manipur, Mizoram and Assam.

However, as these organizations are tribe or community mandated organizations, their leaderships are woven together in the larger and wider coalitions and network that focused on the need for collectivizing their interests on the basis of the common problems centered on environmental justice and rights; it did not result in the ethnicization of new social movements. The community of interests did not give way to the ethnicization of the new social movements. Instead these interests are transformed to give a mandate to the movements to bear the collective representation. These mandated organizations have been more mobilizational in their approach, raised awareness and provided a grassroots base for the environmental movements.

Mention may also be made of many environmental and civil rights groups that had played crucial roles as rights advocates and monitors, and had established linkages

and networks with the grassroots movements under focus, but they generally lack the grassroots presence and mobilization that were central to the definition of movements. However, in the discourse of new social movements in Northeast India, they may be at best be regarded as part of the enablers and reinforcers of the rights struggles that produced new social movements from its initial stage.

Another distinctive characteristic of the new social movements in Northeast India, particularly in Manipur, was the recourse to traditional forms of solidarity and organization where the *Inpui* (The Supreme House of the Tribe) takes the decision and stand for the tribe/community on matters that involved ancestral land and traditional rights of the people. The *Inpui* indeed summoned a joint meeting with all its affiliated organizations that also included students, youth, women and rights organizations to deliberate the stand for the tribe / community.

The resolved stand derived from such deliberations becomes the stand and interests of the community in the course of the struggle. This form of *retribalization*, which involves a reinvention and utilization of traditional cultural practice and the growing definition of local identity through ethnic discourse is found to be common with emergent youth generational ethnicity in Manipur among the tribes. This re-connection with traditional institutions created bonds of solidarity and made identification of most ordinary people both in the urban and rural areas with the cause of the struggles much easier. Advocacy and sensitization campaigns through declarations and press release, rallies, petitioning, periodic meetings, consultations and meetings with other affected peoples organizations and communities, were some of the strategies employed by the movements.

The third notable feature of the new social movements in the Northeast also lie in its innovative understanding of how to influence the development of modern societies and, consequently, the introduction of new modes of action repertoire and shifts in strategy. Rather than addressing the established political system or the corresponding corporate organizations, their aim was principally to cause a shift in civil society or the basic cultural layer of modern society.

To achieve this, it became of uttermost importance to visualize their standing in the public sphere, to gain attention through provocative or controversial means, to introduce alternative values and new cognitive knowledge. An underlying assumption within this new-social movement discourse was the existence of a relationship between the institutional form of a movement and how it works to achieve its aims, or even more ‘radically’, that the aims were intrinsic to the action.

In the context of the Northeast, it is obviously difficult to say in which direction these effects are working; whether institutional form leads to new modes of action or new modes of action result in institutional changes. Nonetheless, the assumption is that more formal and structural organizational forms would complement more traditional strategies and behavior, whereas more movement-like institutional forms might involve fewer conventional strategies.

The fourth characteristic of the new social movements in the Northeast was their ideological orientation which, at least for some, represented an attempt to establish a critical discourse beyond classic political ideologies such as Marxism and liberalism. On the one hand, they were skeptical to the capitalistic organization of the economy and

positive to the state as a counterweight. On the other hand, skepticism was extended to bureaucratic organizational forms as such, and thereby also to the modern liberal-democratic welfare state. As a result of such skepticism, their new social movement ideology could be described as left-liberal or post-material, implying certain reluctance towards established institutions such as the liberal-democratic political system, the capitalist economy and modern culture and values. The assumption, again, is that the more formally organized the less radical in ideology, and, conversely, the more dynamic in form, the more radical, ideologically speaking.

The new social movements in Northeast India are the accumulation of the myriads of environmental movements that had come out of their sporadic constituencies through interrelations with other similar movements that are politically motivated. They operate outside the framework and constitutions of the already existing organizations, however gaining its base from the members of same organizations. There is no clear dissociation from the existing associations and organizations but seek new forms of action and goals, which results in shaping new identities to defend themselves against neoliberal politics.

Some of them posit themselves within a broader anti-globalization movement. In the process, collective action experiences a 're-primarization' where its members associate themselves to 'affected peoples'. This inevitably builds up strong 'territorialization of the protest' with many new networks and coalitions that alliance beyond sectors, classes, tribe or ethnic groups. The new social movements in Northeast India recognized the shared concerns of indigenous peoples of region and stressed upon the need for a joint struggle to make their voice effective in the course of its struggle.

For instance, during the Northeast Region Consultation on the World Commission on Dams under the theme, “Local Experiences and Future Steps” that was organized on July 9-11, 2001 at Mawlein, Meghalaya, the participating organizations felt the need to assess the overall impact of the large number of dams that exist in the region or are in the pipeline. Raising their concern over the power sector in the Northeast which has been given the status of industry by the Government of India, added by the adverse impact of several existing dams set up in the region necessitates the civil societies to take a close look at the final report of World Commission on Dams (WCD) and the existing legal framework related to hydel power and water resources development.

The consultation strongly stressed that the knowledge of the local population should be part of the decision-making process. It also felt that utmost importance should be given to five core values – equity, efficiency, participatory decision-making, sustainability and accountability. The regional consultation felt that evolving a popular consensus with local communities in the project area, rather than adopting a top-down confrontationist attitude, can be given highest priority for implementing the upcoming development projects.

The new social movements in Northeast India is evident of substantial convergence between different definitions of the concept: ... as networks of informal interactions between a plurality of individuals, groups and/or organizations, engaged in political or cultural conflicts, on the basis of shared collective identities; as the coming together and formation of some kind of collective identity. The development of a shared normative orientation; the sharing of a concern for a change of the status quo; and the

occurrence of moments of practical action that were at least subjectively connected together across time addressing this concern for change.

These connections may be linked to rural communities, indigenous territories and distant peripheries that were seen as shared local space that enabled the development of dense networks and facilitated sustained face-to-face interactions. These spaces tend to have very limited access to resources and therefore rely primarily on an unpaid workforce of highly motivated and ideologically committed volunteers. And out of ideological commitment, grassroots movements strive to keep the locus of control at the local level and the leadership structures egalitarian and decentralized.

Von Bulow emphasizes that what is new, then, is not the emergence of a global civil society, but the increased internationalization of organizations that, for the most part, remain rooted at the local or national scale. To take into account this particular situation, she uses the concept of a 'double embeddedness' of actors in social networks and political environments domestically and beyond national borders. This rootedness or embeddedness in new social movements is fundamental when speaking about grassroots movements. Individuals, groups, organizations and networks with vastly different attributes, structures and ways of functioning, can also be found within the new social movements at different locations.

As mentioned above, new social movements at the grassroots level are mainly linked to tactics of confrontation and direct action. They tend to have a deep distrust of methods proposed by authorities to channel dissent, including conflict resolution, stakeholder dialogue and consultation. Often based on frustrating experiences, they feel

that negotiation positions are just too uneven and that, mostly, promises are not kept. However, not entering into dialogue and negotiation does not mean that there was no interaction.

Cathcart highlights that the “necessary ingredient” for a political or social movement is, in fact, the interaction – the reciprocity or dialectic – between the movement, on the one hand, and the established system or controlling agency, on the other. Thereby, also confrontation and non-dialogue has to be understood as interaction, since contrary to popular notions, confrontation is not anti-communication but rather is an extension of communication in situations where confronters have exhausted the normal (i.e. accepted) means of communication with those in power. New social movements adapt its action to the different arenas in which they are operating.

Environmentalism, as new social movements, despite its late arrival in Northeast India has clearly had significant effects with impressive staying power. A key reason for the success of environmentalism, relative to that of most social movements, is that its goal of not only environmental protection but the rights of the diverse peoples and communities who will be affected is widely supported by the general public. Public support is a crucial resource for any social movement, and the largely consensual nature of environmental movements in Northeast India has given the new social movements an advantage over movements that pursued more divisive goals. Indeed, of all the contemporary social movements, environmentalism is often deemed the one with the greatest level of actual and potential public support.

The new social movements in Northeast India represent significant ideological challenges to the status quo, especially the growing incursion of the economic and government sectors into civil society and everyday life, and that they were associated tangentially with economic and social interests, stem from causes endemic to advanced capitalism, reflect “postmaterial” values as well as “identity politics,” and entail unconventional organizational forms and tactics. New social movements are seen as representing a fundamental challenge to industrial societies, a challenge that is explicitly encompassed by environmentalism.

New social movements in Northeast India widely assumed to constitute a coherent social force representing one larger, overarching movement or general movement. While public support certainly does not readily translate into activism nor political victories, a supportive public clearly enhances the likelihood that the new social movements would achieve desired social changes.

FINDINGS

1. Environmentalism in Northeast India is not only a domain of competing interest but conflicting interests, as the social contradictions between nature and the dominant market economic system deepen, and as power relations with regard to the environment continue to threaten the ecological basis of the survival of the indigenous peoples.
2. The environmental movements in the Northeast that are supposed to be fragmented or disoriented, when vividly seen from outside, are not what they

are supposed to be. After closely analyzing them they are found to bear similar evident resemblances and share the same characteristics that new social movements elsewhere exhibit. They just happen to be outside the focus of any indepth enquiry.

3. The new social movements in Northeast India are classless, nor do they represent the ethnic identity interests that social movements in the region are largely made of. At the same time, NSMs in Northeast India share common interests, values and objectives against the oppressive development projects ushered by the state and dam builders.
4. The new social movements in Northeast India represents the new voices of dissent against the over-rationalization of society; sharing a propensity to question and disrupt settled patterns of intellectual, social and political life. These voices of dissent act as the key to transformative politics by drawing upon the democratic potential of new social movements to advance active political and social equality.
5. The environmental movements in Northeast India has clearly made a mark on the contemporary political landscape in the region, affecting both terms of public discourse and features of the policy process. The NSMs has an immense influence on policy professionalism by shaping the focus of attention in three related ways; through agenda setting, problem definition, and epistemology.

6. The NSMs are movements for a new democracy by offering the concept of “democracy of everyday life” and perceive democracy as the condition for recognition, autonomy, and self-affirmation.
7. The NSMs in Northeast India, by building alliances and networks with strategic partners to enhance its agenda, has enabled them to redefine themselves as part of the global environmental movements while balancing the focus at the domestic and regional level. However, despite the alliances and coalitions these new social movements are working with, they operate with autonomy from their coalition partners.
8. NSMs in the Northeast are also claims to, and demands for, rights; seeking equity and justice, while interrogating the contexts of relative deprivation, rights denial, and injustices. The main weapons of struggle are human rights whose perceived emancipator and empowering attributes have endeared them to equity and justice-seeking groups.
9. The NSMs were skeptical to the capitalistic organization of the economy and also to the modern liberal-democratic welfare state. As a result of such skepticism, their ideology could be best described as left-liberal or post-material, implying certain reluctance towards established institutions such as the liberal democratic political system, the capitalist economy and modern culture and values.

APPENDICES

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE
ON
“NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN NORTHEAST INDIA:
CONTEXTUALIZING ENVIRONMENTALISM IN THE CONTEMPORARY
COLLECTIVE ACTION”

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am David Buhril, research scholar, working under the supervision of Prof. K.V. Reddy, Department of Political Science, Mizoram University. My Ph.D. research topic is “New Social Movements in Northeast India: Contextualizing Environmentalism in the Contemporary Collective Action.” The attempt of this research is to examine the contemporary collective actions or movements that are particularly generated by dams in the name of development and situate them in the context of environmentalism. Moreover, it is also to establish this environmentalism as the new social movements in Northeast India.

The new area of study has to be constructed and substantiated by different perspectives to explore the various dimensions that constitute new social movements in Northeast India. In this pursuit, a semi-structured interview schedule is developed and I request you to sincerely spare your valuable time to share your opinion / perspective in this research project. I assure that the information gathered here in this study will be kept confidential and no individual will be identified in any manner without their prior informed consent. Your input and participation will significantly contribute and crystalize the study. However, if there is any question that you find irrelevant, intrusive, and insensitive; kindly ignore it. Besides the question, you are free to write comments or make additional input on the subject, which will be invaluable.

I remain ever grateful for your valuable response in great anticipation. Thanking You.

Yours faithfully,

David Buhril
PhD Scholar
Department of Political Science
Mizoram University

PROFILE OF THE RESPONDENT

1. Name _____
2. Age _____
3. Sex _____
4. Educational Qualification _____
5. Profession / Occupation _____
6. Organization _____
7. Address _____

8. Marital status _____

QUESTIONNAIRE

1. How long have you been engaged in the movements against dams?

..... (Mention year [s]).

2. Have you participated in any Public Hearing?

Yes / No

(Tick the appropriate)

3. If Yes, are they:
- a. Free and fair.
 - b. Meaningful and productive
 - c. Dictating and imposing
 - d. Null and void
- (Tick/ Write any)
4. Is your organization part of any network / coalitions? If yes, can you name the network / coalition?
-
5. What are the activities / tactics of your movements?
- a. Rally, protest, demonstration, campaign, mobilization
 - b. Petitioning
 - c. Networking and coalescing with other environmental movements
 - d. Lobbying and negotiation
 - e. All the above
- (Tick /Write one or more)
6. Do you think your movements are making any impact? If Yes, how?
- a. Mass education and empowering the people
 - b. Influencing policies
 - c. Transforming politics
 - d. Redefining development agendas/ goals and objectives
 - e. Raising compensation ceiling
 - f. All the above

..... (Tick / Write one or more)

7. How do you define your movement?

- a. Political
- b. Cultural and identity
- c. Economical
- d. Environmental /Conservationist
- e. Human rights
- f. All the above

..... (Tick/ Write one or more)

8. How will you classify your movement?

- a. Class based movement
- b. Ethnic / Community based movement
- c. Classless mass/grassroots movement
- d. Students / Women's movement

..... (Tick / Write the relevant)

9. How is your movement different from other social movements?

- a. They do not represent class/ethnic interests and focus on diverse issues.
- b. They represent class/ ethnic interest and focus on single issue.
- c. They are open and inclusive in its approach.
- d. They are exclusive in its approach.

..... (Tick / Write one or
more)

10. What are the strategies / activities of the movements?

- a. Rally, protest, demonstration, blockade
- b. Petitioning, Negotiation, Talks, Lobbying
- c. Networking, building coalition and partners
- d. Mobilization, campaign, and grassroots education
- e. All the above

..... (Tick / Write one or more)

11. How is decision made in /for the movements?

- a. By few leaders.
- b. By a committee.
- c. Through open discussion and consultation
- d. By an individual.

..... (Tick / Write the relevant)

12. How will you define the contemporary environmental movements?

- a. Social movements with old / traditional characteristics
- b. Social movements with novel characteristics
- c. Same old movements with similar/familiar characteristics
- d. Cannot say

..... (Tick/Write the relevant)

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