

**Synopsis of “The Self-Organization of Social Movements,” by Christian Fuchs,**

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**Week 2**

The two main approaches in Social Movement (SM) research seek to explain the emergence of SMs in post-industrial societies and reformulate traditional theories of collective action. The characteristics of the European New Social Movements (NSM) approach seem dichotomous to the Resource Mobilization (RM) approach.

<b>New Social Movement</b>	<b>Resource Mobilization</b>
questions class and economic reductionism of Marxism	rational choice theory
emphasizes cultural nature	emphasizes political nature
explains SM origins in macro terms	uses micro processes
exclusively in terrain of civil society	instrumental aspects of the state
social integration	system integration
discontinuity by highlighting differences between the new SM and traditional collective actors	continuity of social structures

Examination of these two paradigms show that they are not incompatible in spite of significant theoretical differences. Fuchs identifies SMs as social systems characterized by the essential activity of protest, and self-organization is a way of taking both NSM and RM approaches into account and allows that dynamic concept of protest. He states that self-organization is a process where a system reproduces itself with the help of its own logic and components; i.e. it's own internal logic (102). He further describes social movements as dynamic self-organizing systems with participants (actors) who share political beliefs for societal change.

Fuchs favors and/or is influenced most by the NSM background, although he points out that this approach analyzes why SMs exist but neglects how SMs act. He believes that system-theory approaches (eg. Luhmann) are uncritical and ignore the productive relationship between human actions and social structures in the process of social self-organization.

Fuchs outlines a number of critical system theories and characteristics to support his thesis and describe how SMs as self-organizing systems relate to critical thinking. Critical protest is a salient characteristic in self-organizing systems because this element “is oriented towards the future and identifies possibilities within existing society that help to improve the situation of mankind and to reach a higher and progressive level of societal organization” (130).