What's Been Happening After "New Social Movements"?
Reflections on Indigenous-led Autonomous Space Making in Canada

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1. Introduction

This paper emerged from my simple question: What's been happening after "new social movements"? The concept of new social movements (NSMs) was proposed by famous sociological theorists to point out that many important social movements from the 1970s showed new forms, styles and aims that seemed different from those of orthodox class-based mobilization. My question regarding NMSs has been in my mind for some time because of two findings.

The first finding comes from my experience as a sociology teacher. When I looked for useful textbooks for teaching social movements in introductory sociology classes, I found scarce resources for gaining a clear overview of contemporary social movements. Here, I use "contemporary" as a reference to the current historical period, especially from the 1990s onwards. There are abundant textbooks that refer to NSMs, but many stop there. However, the time when NSMs could be proclaimed as "new" was from the 1970s to the 90s to the latest, when the sociopolitical dynamics of the world started to change drastically. Indeed, the expression and imagination of "global" is the outcome of this new era of globalization, characterized by the "end" of the Cold War[1], increasing migration of diverse trajectories, normalization of US-led neoliberalism, climate change, and so on. These changes have incited a new wave of social movements, and it is difficult to think that their forms, styles and aims are the same as those of previous times. A newer era provokes newer social movements, yet it seems to me that there is a lack of clear concepts for depicting and explaining them (at least at the textbook level).

The second finding comes from my research. As a researcher, I have studied multiculturalism and Indigenous politics in contemporary Canada, and in the course of this, I have followed ongoing grassroots Indigenous-led movements. Indigenous peoples are those who have lived on a particular land from pre-colonial times and have unique cultures and distinct historical experiences of colonial dispossession and anti-colonial struggle. Although Indigenous peoples and their political mobilization have been almost completely out of sight in sociology (this fact reveals disciplinary limitations and deserves further inquiry, which cannot be done in this paper), Indigenous movements are likely to be seen as another kind of "identity politics" and categorized into NSMs under existing sociological frameworks. This means they would be labelled as movements not mainly seeking economic redistribution but cultural "recognition for new identities and lifestyles" (Polletta and Jasper, 2001: 286). This interpretation would largely miss the point of Indigenous political mobilization over their land, self-governance and jurisdiction. In Canada since the 1990s, there has been a new wave of Indigenous movements that is less interested in seeking recognition from the settler state and more inclined to rebuild communities and living spaces through direct action, which is the main subject of my research and is explained later in detail.

The two findings above led me to ask: What do social movements after the 90s look like and what is their uniqueness and difference from NSMs? How have these movements been depicted, and what kinds of concepts and perspectives are already available in sociological theoretical toolbox for capturing and explaining them? How can my investigation of Indigenous movements taking place in Canada contribute to theoretical arguments on social movements? This paper shows my partial responses to these questions. The next section is a selective literature review, in which I explore existing studies on contemporary social movements and check if some available concepts and perspectives suit my case. Then, using conceptual toolkits, I theoretically reflect on my case study to gain a new conceptualization of social movements that can function as an alternative (or complement) to NSM and contribute to updating theoretical arguments in social movement scholarship.

2. Indigenous-led Autonomous Space Making and Social Movement Research

2.1. Brief Background

Before going into the literature review, a short introduction to the case study utilized for this current paper is needed because it serves as a reference point for the review. I have followed and visited Wet'suwet'en-led land defense campsites near the small town of Houston in the interior area of British Columbia (BC), Canada. Wet'suwet'en are Indigenous people whose original territory is said to cover 22,000 km^2, where towns such as Burns Lake, Houston and Smithers are located today. Some activists initiated direct action in 2009 against the proposed construction of seven pipelines by major North American energy companies: TransCanada (now TC Energy), Chevron and Embridge. The pipelines were planned to run from the interior to the coastal city of Kitimat of Canada. Although the route avoids populated areas along Highway 16, it would go directly through the middle of the land affiliated with the Wet'suwet'en people; there would be mass devastation of the land if the pipelines were constructed, such as cutting down a large proportion of the trees, deep digging of the earth and pollution of clean rivers (see Figure 1 for a drastic change of the landscapes). To prevent such devastation by watching and stopping companies' activities, some collective campsites along the proposed route have been constructed and maintained for more than a decade by Indigenous activists as well as non-Indigenous and settler supporters (see Figure 2 for a geographical overview).

There have been similar pipeline construction plans in North America. Though their routes differ, their purpose is to bring petroleum resources extracted from the interior land of Alberta to the USA or various coasts of North America. They have been contested because of concerns about expected damage to the environment and to Indigenous land. Some plans have been abandoned; others have been approved but are still being contested: for example, 1) The northern leg of the Keynote XL pipeline proposed by TC Energy "that would have run from Hardisty, Alberta, through Montana and South Dakota to Steele City, Nebraska" (Denchak and Lindwall, 2022) was finally abandoned in June 2021 after tenacious protest; 2) the Trans Mountain Expansion project proposed by Kinder Morgan and supported by the federal government of Canada, which would run "from Edmonton, Alberta, to the Westridge Marine Terminal and the Chevron

refinery in Burnaby" (Government of Canada, 2022), BC, is under construction but protested—one of the major oppositions coming from Indigenous Secwépemc warriors affiliated with the land around Kamloops; and 3) the Coastal GasLink (CGL) pipeline of TC Energy, a topic of this paper, has been constructed since 2020 but is still being fiercely rejected by Wet'suwet'en activists.

Figure 1. Drastic change of the landscapes (trees cut down for the proposed pipeline route)

Available at: https://earth.google.com/web/search/morice+river/@54.17870185,-127.10725632,684.13882993a,2385.13536311d,35y,68.65442447h,65.00915861t,360r/data=CigiJgokCXFhBQJ9QzVAEXFhBQJ9QzXAGcNK5M61rgZAIUxL0z04G1nA (accessed 31 August 2023)

Figure 2. Proposed CGL pipeline route

(Martens 2020)

In this way, the Wet'suwet'en-led land defense is one of the major frontline direct actions against the proposed pipeline projects in North America. Importantly, however, the aims of this Indigenous-led

movement are not only to prevent the CGL pipeline. Rather, what is crucial for Wet'suwet'en people is to live on their ancestral land again and recreate their relationships with it by rebuilding their hereditary sociopolitical system, drinking water from the river, gardening, harvesting and hunting and eating the food that is given directly from the land. The vision of the movement is that historically created injuries and health problems among their communities can be healed through such activities, not through welfare programs sustained for a short period by a small amount of money gained by approving an extractive project that would ruin the land.

2.2. Previous Studies in Social Movement Scholarship

How would this Indigenous-led movement be perceived and conceptualized within existing frameworks in social movement research? It may easily be classified as NSM, which aims for the due recognition of Indigenous identities and lifeways. The movement is indeed related to Indigenous identities and lifeways, but what significantly differs from NSM characterization is that it does not demand recognition from somebody else. Of course, there is a need for certain recognition from wider society to gain support and maintain the movement, but it does not require recognition from the settler state, such as legal rights or recognition of Wet'suwet'en people's Indigeneity to the place.

This is the point where many current Indigenous-led movements show the most striking difference from the NSM model, which is often missed in the sociological mainstream. The case in point is Michel Wieviorka's (non)understanding of Zapatista. In his paper titled "After New Social Movements", Wieviorka (2005: 8), a world-famous sociologist, asks what new form of social movement has been emerging after NSMs and uses the term "global movements" to refer to what he perceives as "novel figures of action" from the mid-1990s. According to him, "global movements" "constantly include demands for cultural recognition" (Wieviorka, 2005: 10). and, therefore, is a reinforced form of NSM in that aspect. Overlooking or ignoring the contemporary movements' inclination toward autonomy, Wieviorka's recognitionist argument failed to recognize the newness of them that others found (Holloway, [2002] 2010; Khasnabish, 2008).

The rejection of state-centred politics and aspiration for autonomous governance can be found widely among contemporary Indigenous-led movements in the Americas. In the North American context, the movements and thoughts with this kind of orientation have been conceptualized as Indigenous resurgence[2]. Indigenous resurgence often takes direct action as a movement tactic, such as blockade and occupation, to express disobedience to the state and stop the settler colonial business as usual. In Canada, direct land-based actions were on the rise in the 1980s, resulting from the culminated frustration of Indigenous peoples with the state's failed promise to recognize and affirm their rights proclaimed in its new constitution of 1982 (Coulthard, 2014: 116–117). From then onwards, a significant series of Indigenous-led direct actions has been documented in Canada, including the Wet'suwet'en-led land defence on which this paper focuses (Blomley, 1996; Zig Zag, n.d.; Vowel, 2013; Montreal Counter-Info, 2022; Turner, 2023).

What theoretical frameworks in social movement studies are available for us to analyze such direct action? First, Richard Day's argument in his *Gramsci Is Dead* provides an appropriate perspective for capturing the non-statist orientation of Indigenous resurgent movements. In this book, Canadian anarchist

sociologist Richard Day (2005: 4–5) concentrates on contemporary radical activism "primarily of the late 1990s and early 2000s" and summarizes their innovative features under the provisional term "newest social movements", distinguishing them from NSMs. While carefully rejecting dismissive and unqualified interpretations of NSMs that miss the intersectionality of NSMs by seeing them as "merely symbolic" or single-issue struggles, Day (2005: 70) argues that in NSM politics, "there remains a strong orientation to the state, and this is a crucial moment of commonality between them and the OSMs [old social movements] they are usually thought to superseded" (explanation in parenthesis added).

NSMs are oriented toward state power in the sense that they aim to reform the existing social order by appealing to the benevolence of the state. According to Day (2005: 14–15, 80), the newest social movements are different from this "politics of demand" model and more interested in nurturing affinity, that is, "non-universalizing, non-hierarchical, non-coercive relationships based on mutual aid and shared ethical commitments", exemplified by certain Indigenous communities such as Zapatista in Mexico and the Mohawk Nation in Canada (Day, 2005: 9).

Other prominent studies are those on "autonomy" and "protest camp". Böhm et al. (2010), recognizing the increasing importance of autonomy in contemporary activism and the lack of substantial examination of autonomy by social movement theorists, classify autonomous movements into three types according to their respective conceptions of autonomy. Beyond the minimal definition of autonomy as collective self-organizing based on mutual aid, they discern three broad strands of autonomy: autonomy from capital, state and unconditional development[4]. Significantly, cautioning against naïve intellectual tendency to take autonomy as pure space completely away from the dirty outside, they instead take it as antagonistic political demand in the counter-hegemonic paradigm (Böhm et al., 2010: 28). Here lies the critical difference between them and Day (2005: 8), who argues that contemporary radical movements with autonomous orientation "challenge the logic of hegemony at its very core" by "operating non-hegemonically rather than counter-hegemonically". I return to this theme of counter-/non-hegemony later.

"Protest camp" is the phrase adopted by Frenzel et al. (2014: 457) to refer to the "spaces where people come together to imagine alternative worlds and articulate contentious politics, often in confrontation with the state", often represented by Occupy movements in recent years. Respectively having studied various protest camps in the European context, they recognize protest camps' increasing significance and expanding visibility in major social movements in the 2010s and propose building protest camp research as a collective field of research for comparative study of protest camps over the world, where they are treated not as just one of many tactics but as something creating a unique form of social space that requires analysis of its own. They put forward a significant observation that "protest camps seem to respond to the desires of protesters to move beyond 'demands' and towards a constituent politics of claiming space, building affective ties and forming autonomous polities" (Frenzel et al., 2014: 471), highlighting spatiality, affect and autonomy as basic concepts for analyzing those camps. This point again resonates with Day's conceptualization of newest social movements as movements going beyond the politics of demand.

3. Case Study: Life at Wet’suwet’en Camps

Now, I return to my case study of Wet’suwet’en-led land defense and associate it with the existing arguments of contemporary activism. As already explained, this movement has organized collective campsites on the route of the proposed pipeline to stop it. There are two main campsites, Unist’ot’en camp and Gidimt’en camp; though established in 2010 and 2018 respectively and led by Indigenous leaders affiliated with different clans, both share basic aims. While I have followed both camps online, the Gidimt’en camp is where I visited in October 2019 and June 2023 for a couple of weeks each time. Based on indirect information and direct participant observation during the visit, I highlight three distinct features of this camp action: centrality of the land, miscellaneous space and duality of action.

Firstly, as is manifest in my calling “land defense movement”, land plays the central role in the movement. It is not just for preventing pipeline construction but also, or primarily, for collectively recreating human relationships with the land. In terms of recreation, practices such as watering and gardening are case in point. Drinking water is brought from the nearest Morice River, which is called Wedzin Kwah in the Indigenous language (Figure 3). The name of the Indigenous nation, Wet’suwet’en, means people of the place around Wedzin Kwah (Daly, 2005: 107)[5]. The campers would go to the river to get water during my first visit, but the watering system was completed by my second visit. During the four years I was away from the Gidimt’en camp, gardening had been greatly developed, from a few gardens to a dozen of them. Now, campers can eat various vegetables and herbs harvested from the gardens (Figure 4). Harvesting is not only from the gardens but also from the surrounding land. A long-time camper, who is Wet’suwet’en and had already been there for ten months, preserved Labrador and nettle tea leaves harvested from a nearby site and made a tea from them. These herbal teas are traditionally used as medicines in the Indigenous communities of North America. Regaining a direct connection with the land through living such activities has essential meaning for Wet’suwet’en people.

Figure 3. Wedzin Kwah (taken on 17 June 2023 by the author)

Figure 4. Gardens at the Gidimt’en checkpoint (taken on 15 June 2023 by the author)

These activities help us to figure out what this Indigenous-led movement aims for. It is for making everyday life “real”, in the sense that it is directly connected to the land and people have sovereignty over their lives, what they eat and drink, for example. This aspect is probably a reason why organization for food sovereignty, such as the National Farmers Union, expressed solidarity with the Wet’suwet’en and Indigenous land protectors (National Farmers Union, 2020). To the Indigenous people, land is where their ancestors had lived and they can have contact with them through prayer rituals. Prayer to the ancestors and the land by burning small amounts of food before eating has been practiced at the Gidimt’en camp, especially at dinnertime, by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous participants. Connection to the land is thus ascertained.

This is why space making is an essential part of the movement. It needs autonomous space to do such practices as watering, gardening, harvesting and rituals for re-dwelling in the land in a meaningful way. What is aimed at is community rebuilding and healing. During my first stay, Sleydo, the Indigenous leader at the Gidimt’en checkpoint, explained to visiting elders of the Gidimt’en clan that she wanted to make the campsite “space for us forever” (19 October 2019). This dream has become more actual by widening the space, constructing lodges, and building basic infrastructures such as a watering system, solar power, and Feast Hall to maintain a hereditary system (Figure 5).

Figure 5. Feast Hall in construction (taken on 15 June 2023 by the author)

As Böhm and others caution, "it should be clear that there is a large degree of commonality between" the different discourses of autonomy: autonomy from capital, state and unconditioned development (Böhm et al., 2010: 23). In fact, those three types of autonomy intersect simultaneously in the Wet'suwet'en-led struggle. While making a distinction between different types of autonomy is of analytical use, it runs the risk of having us overlook the principal factor that integrates them all at once: care for the land. Care for the land leads the activists to seek autonomy from capital, state and unconditioned development at the same time. These three types of autonomy are not desired separately at the actual site of Indigenous resurgence to protect the land. Care for the land may be specific to Indigenous and environmental activism, but space making is more generally manifest in contemporary activism. In this regard, we are reminded that spatiality is paid attention to in the protest camp framework, and it is relevant here in particular that the camps are said to serve as home places that "provide shelter, food, services and sanitation systems for protesters" (Frenzel et al. 2014: 462).

Second feature of Wet'suwet'en-led activism is that it creates miscellaneous space. While the movement is led by Indigenous people, it is not closed in identitarian categorization but open for everyone who has an interest and does not bring harm to the land and communities. Realistically, the movement cannot be maintained only by Indigenous people, who are fewer in number. Both camps have protocols and guidelines for outside visitors, and they must get consent from the movement bodies before their visit. Sensitivity to discrimination is important for the movement to be inclusive. In my experience, for example, when the work camp starts, participants were asked to tell each other their (pseudo)names and pronouns that they prefer to be called by (10 October 2019). This practice is for preventing gender/sexuality-related discomfort and helping them communicate respectfully. A similar consciousness was sensed during my second visit when some people confirmed how to call my Japanese name and tried to call it properly.

But what motivates non-Indigenous participants to join those camps in the first place? Motivations are various: belief in the cause of environmental protection, interest in Indigenous issues, desire to live anarchistic, etc. In my observation, however, what was sensed as real were feelings of alienation or marginalization from mainstream city life and a desire to have an alternative way of life. In this regard, the words of a non-Indigenous supporter with long experience at the Gidimt'en camp are suggestive. One night, in a circle of supporters around a campfire, she talked a bit about her fear of loneliness. She said that she was afraid of being alone and left alone when she was alienated from mainstream society (18 October 2019). She had told me that she joined the camp because she was interested in Indigenous sovereignty (10 October 2019), but to me, it felt that this sense of alienation and worry about being left alone was her visceral motivation. Not the same but similar feelings of discomfort can also be found in the words of Indigenous people. One Wet'suwet'en participant told me that she feels strange during her stays in the cities and towns because people there don't know about and care for what's happening on the grounds of her homeland. There is a significant gap (16 June 2023).

It is not that the movement participants wholly share their feelings nor differences are fully respected

in those spaces. Such a utopia-like depiction of any movement must be dubious and may be scary, to be honest. In this regard, I remember one day at the Gidimt'en camp, there was an Indigenous visitor from another camp and she talked with some non-Indigenous participants. During the conversation, when she knew some of them were vegetarian or vegan, she said, "I cannot be vegetarian because I am Indigenous". Being Indigenous means being a hunter and an eater of the prey to her. Later, those non-Indigenous supporters complained about her attitude and general ignorance towards vegetarians and vegans at the camp (19–20 October 2019). This is one example of a moment when the expression of difference evokes conflicts.

Containing conflictual moments, the campsites constitute an open space for various kinds of people. This feature prevents the movement from being fixed to categorical identity. While Indigeneity is essential and foundational, as a matter of course, what is also crucial about the Wet'suwet'en-led land defense is its mixed and open character. Indeed, this miscellaneous nature is implied in the saying of "Indigenous-led" movement instead of Indigenous movement; while the movement is led by Indigenous people and their will and control are primary, it is not closed within an identarian circle marked by Indigeneity. This does not mean there is no collective movement identity but that it is not fixedly confined to categorical identity. This point is easily missed when the movement is treated under the NSM framework with strong recognitionist bias, where NSMs are regarded as movements seeking "cultural" recognition of categorical identities, such as female, gay, lesbian, disabled, Black, etc.

Finally, the Wet'suwet'en-led movement is dual in its dealings with state hegemony. The movement has a non-statist or non-hegemonical orientation in Day's sense, but at the same time, it is necessarily engaged with the state in a counter-hegemonic way. It is not a protest nor demonstration for demanding something in the state hegemony. This point stands directly against the concept of a "protest camp" and makes Day's argument of non-hegemony convincing. Indeed, Wet'suwet'en clans opted out of the BC treaty process in 2008, turning away from the state-led negotiation table and performing their own jurisdiction.

At the same time, however, the movement is forced to face the state. It is exposed to state violence. While the occupation is legitimate because Wet'suwet'en has never ceded their land to the settler governments or the Crown, as is the case with many Indigenous nations in BC, it is criminalized and oppressed by the state. There have already been several police raids into the campsites, one of which is infamous for its preparation to use lethal weapons (Dhillon and Parrish, 2020). In this situation, Wet'suwet'en activists have also been struggling in court against the police and pipeline company. So, the movement is not completely turning away from the state; that is impossible from the beginning. As Glen Coulthard clarifies well, "turning away from the state" is practically a call for "engagements with the settler-state legal apparatus with a degree of critical self-reflection, skepticism, and caution" (Coulthard, 2014: 179).

Direct resurgent action can create another possible way of engaging with the state. This is exemplified in the "Memorandum of Understanding between Canada, British Columbia and Wet'suwet'en" agreed and signed in 2020, setting an alternative negotiation table for legal recognition of Indigenous jurisdiction (Bellrichard, 2020). This was not possible without opting out of the treaty process prepared by the governments and taking direct camp action, which urged the federal and BC governments to offer another way of negotiating outside the treaty process. In this way, non-hegemonic action can advance counter-

hegemonic struggle; they are not as separate as the preceding literature suggests but intertwined in motion.

4. Conclusion

The Wet'suwet'en-led camp movement, like other Indigenous direct actions, focuses on the land and Indigenous relations with it. The movement has tried to create an autonomous space where Wet'suwet'en people can recreate their relationships with the land through activities such as rebuilding a hereditary sociopolitical system, drinking water from the river, gardening, harvesting and hunting and eating food that is given directly from the land. This feature makes the movement truly Indigenous. At the same time, however, participation in it is not restricted to Indigenous peoples but is open to everyone who gets consent from the movement body.

Settlers and non-Indigenous people are not the leaders of the movement but play active roles as supporters. This is why the movement can be characterized as "Indigenous-led". Not in the same but similar way, many Indigenous and non-Indigenous campers are alienated or marginalized from the mainstream settler colonial space and desire alternative spaces to live differently. While the difference occasionally causes friction, they spend life together at campsites and co-create autonomous spaces. This relative autonomy from capital, the state and unconditional development is what constitutes the non-hegemonic orientation of the Wet'suwet'en-led movement. That said, this does not mean that it just retreats from the state. As the trace of the movement shows, non-hegemonic rejection of the negotiation table preset by the state can bring chances of negotiating with the state in an alternative way. In this way, non-hegemonic and counter-hegemonic struggles can intersect and strengthen each other in actual moments of social movement.

As this paper has pointed out so far, those innovative features of the movement are not exclusive to it but can be found more generally in contemporary activism and cannot be fully understood by the already old-fashioned NSM theory. How can we conceptualize contemporary social movements with innovative aspects? I propose the concept of "dwelling movements" to grasp and explain what is at the core of those movements. Against the backdrop of today's era of expulsion, some newer social movements are engaged in questioning the state's legitimacy and claiming spaces in which to dwell. Creating and claiming spaces for dwelling has become significant in today's world, where more and more people are being expelled from the social mainstream.

Notes

1. To say the Cold War "ended" is controversial and Western-centered because we see its geopolitical structure is deeply persistent and evident in such areas as East Asia (divided Koreas). This point was informed by Yoneyama (2016: 5).
2. I have written elsewhere in detail on Indigenous resurgence in the Canadian context (Suzuki, 2020).
3. The use of the word "postcolonial" here follows that of Stuart Hall (1996). Postcolonial studies tend to be doubted in Indigenous studies and settler colonial studies because "post"-colonial can imply that colonial domination is over, which is clearly not true in settler colonial situations where domination over and

dispossession of Indigenous peoples materially continues (Sykes, 1996). However, as Hall's use of this term means that we cannot go back to the pure precolonial era after colonial encounters and contacts changed both the colonizers and the colonized, it is not incompatible with Indigenous critiques of settler colonialism. See A. Simpson and Smith (2014: 13–16) on the compatibility of postcolonial and Indigenous studies.

4. Compared to those from capital and the state, their concept of autonomy from development does not seem sophisticated. Although they take local actions against developmental invasion as an example and tend to dichotomize development and preservation, this formulation misses the point (Böhm et al. 2010: 22–23). Autonomy aimed at those actions is not always about the preservation of the present against development but about conditional development under their control. That is, what is at stake here is not whether to develop or preserve but the autonomy of the will to decide that. To clarify this point, I added "unconditional" to the original wording of their paper.
5. The nation is also called "Witsuwit'en". While that is the linguistically established orthography according to Tyler McCreary (2020: xiii), I follow the spelling "Wet'suwet'en" used by the movement bodies.

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