

A2 Sociology

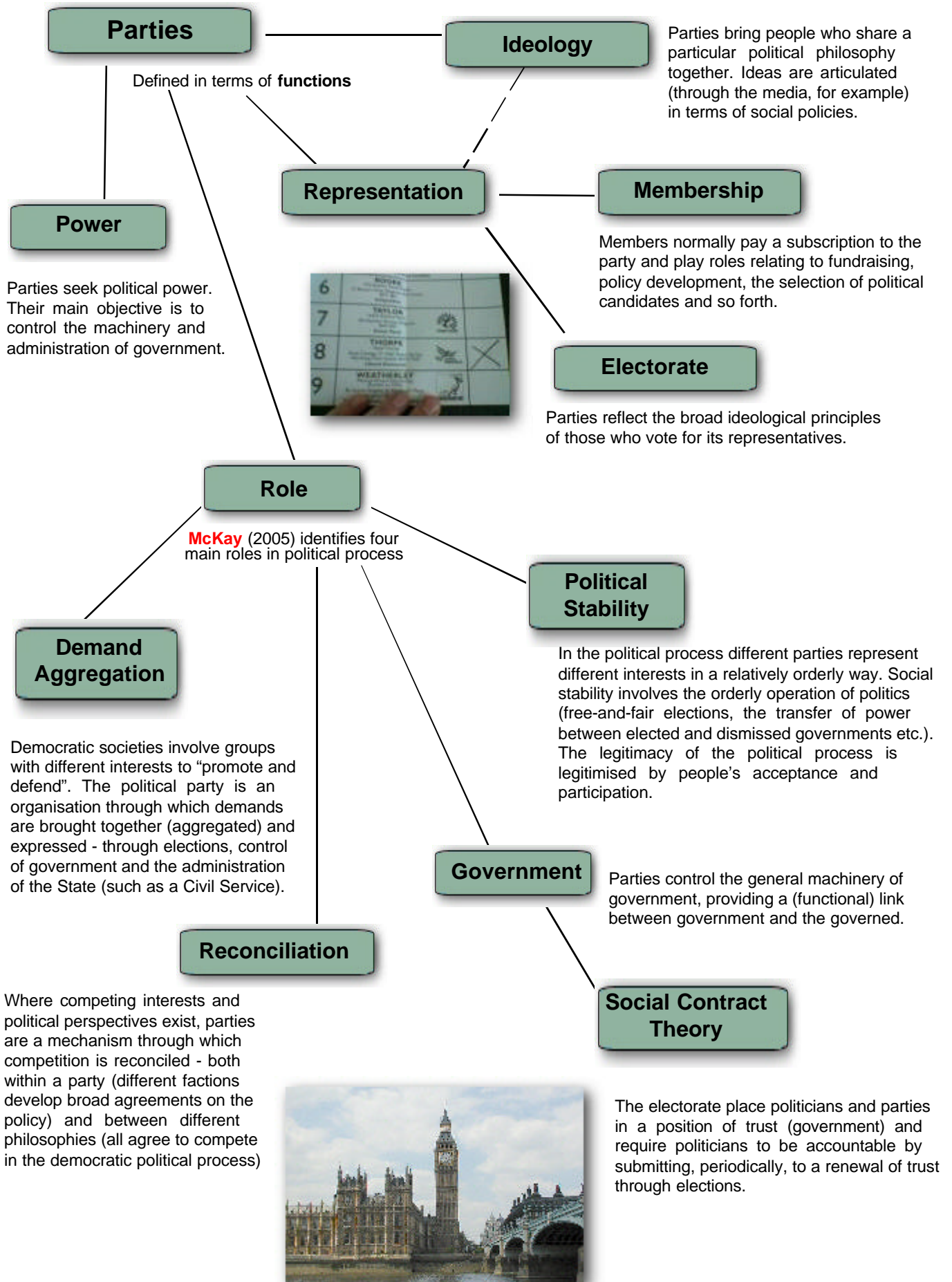


Revision Mapping

Power
and
Politics

The Role of Political Parties and Movements, Pressure / Interest Groups and the Mass Media in the Political Process

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Pressure / Interest groups

Wilson (1990) "Organisations, separate from government, that attempt to influence public policy"

Smith (1995): two ways pressure groups influence parties

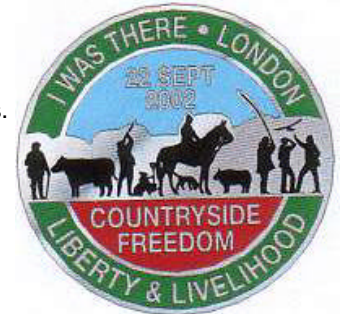
Direct action

Includes things like demonstrations and political events.

Indirect action

Action to influence the general political philosophy of a party.

Example: Interest group using a combination of these two forms. The **Countryside Alliance**: Direct action involved mass public demonstrations and "political events" (such as interrupting a parliamentary debate). Indirect action through the media.



Types

Causal or Promotional

Sectional or Protective

Exist to promote a particular cause - representing the interests of the "politically unrepresented". Organisationally, the general membership / support more-likely to have an indirect (non-personal) interest in the cause being promoted (an open membership).

Represent the common interests of a particular social group. Organisationally, members have a direct involvement in the particular interests being promoted (a relatively closed membership).

Example: Trade Union or Professional Association (such as the British Medical Association).

Demonstrations and public meetings (the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament, for example).



Direct action - in 2000, Greenpeace supporters destroyed a field of Genetically-Modified maize as a protest against GM crops.

Publicity stunts: Fathers For Justice specialised in public events designed to bring their argument (a lack of access to their children following divorce) to media - and hence public - attention.

Episodic

Supporting or opposing a specific cause or issue (such as the proposal to build a new airport). Once the issue has been resolved, the group disbands.

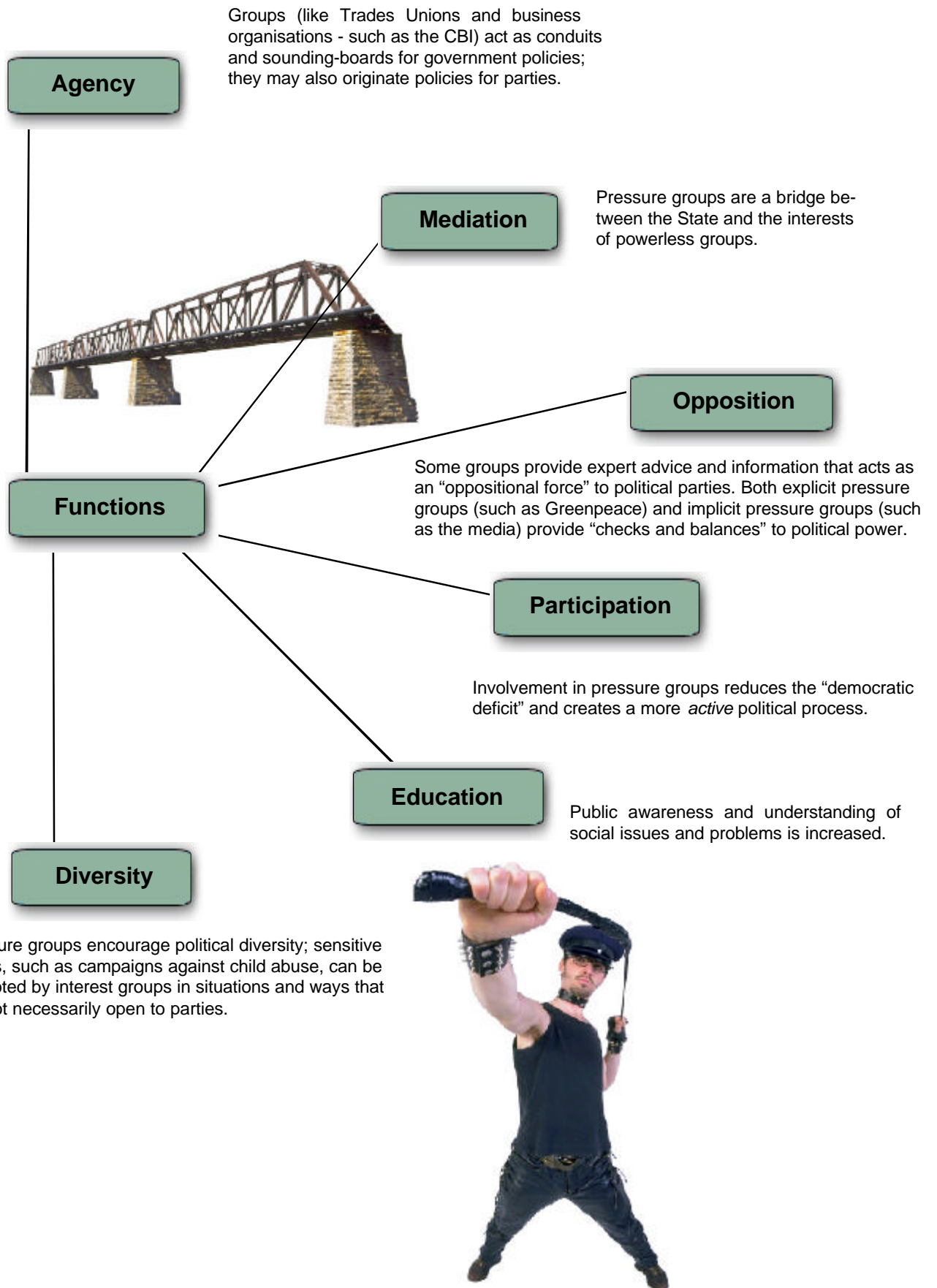
Insider

Outsider

Groups able to directly lobby significant (politically powerful) politicians on a face-to-face basis. "Access to power" gives insider groups a powerful advantage, but blurs the distinction between parties and pressure groups.

No direct access to government and political power. Usually publicise their particular area of interest through the media. For example, using advertising campaigns or creating "media events" (demonstrations and publicity stunts, for example) to publicise the group's message.

Blumenthal (2005): Questions of possible "undue political influence" and corruption. Those closest to political power can further their own, personal, interests and those of powerful but unrepresentative groups.



Social Movements

Glaser (2003): A "loose community of like-minded people who share a broad range of ideas and opinions".
Example: the "Environmental movement" - a very broad category of people concerned with protecting the physical environment.

Old (OSMs)

"Old" refers to the focus, behaviour, concern and organisation of this type, rather than the idea they no longer exist.

Barnartt and Scotch (1999): OSMs focus on "Issues of rights and the distribution of resources".

Examples: American Civil Rights movement in the 1960's and the Trade Union movement in the UK.

Roth (2003): "Rights" (OSM) and "Lifestyles" (NSM) distinction not hard-and-fast.. Many NSMs address "old problems" like unemployment and poverty.

Bottomore (1991) some NSMs have developed out of and alongside OSMs.

New (NSMs)

Barnartt and Scotch: NSMs are more concerned with "Values (postmodern and post-materialistic), lifestyles, and self-actualization, especially among marginalised groups".

Anspach (1979): Focus on "Identity politics".

Spretnak (1990): "A joining of environmental, feminist, and women's spirituality concerns" extending across national boundaries. This NSM has its origins in (feminist) OSMs of the past, where the emphasis was on women's *rights*."

Ecofeminism



Synoptic Link Theory and Methods
 Link types of feminism to modernity and postmodernity.

Especially issues of *national* and *global* significance. Concerns of movement adherents are either not being addressed by political parties or, if they are, the movement's adherents are strongly opposed to the policies being proposed / enacted.

Della Porta and Diani (1999)

Informal networks

The "movement as a whole" is loosely structured. People come together as a movement on the basis of:

Shared beliefs

Conflict issues

Protest



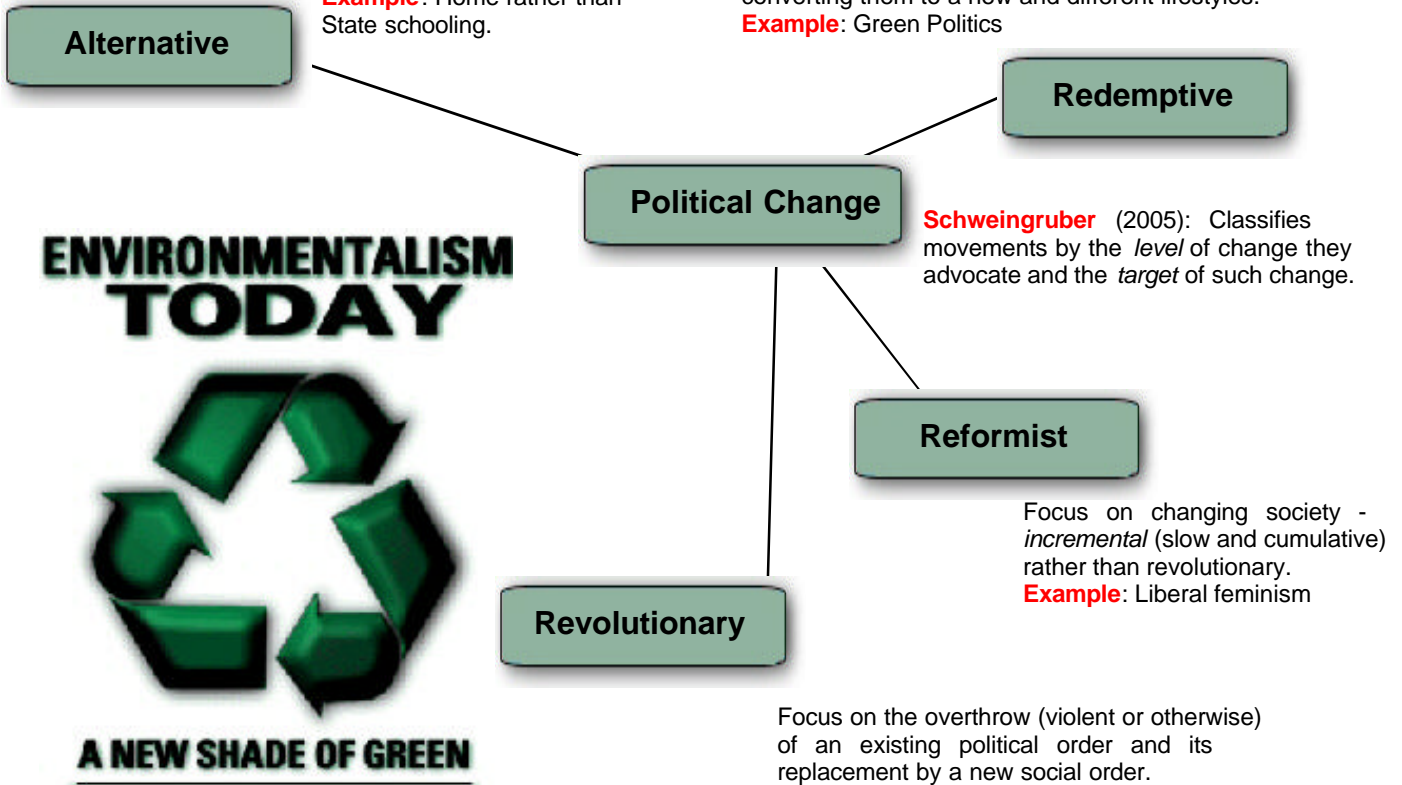
Schweingruber (2005): Social movements involve: "Continuous, large-scale, organised collective action, motivated by the desire to enact, stop, or reverse change in some area of society".

Providing an alternative to prevailing social norms. The focus is on developing different ways of doing things.

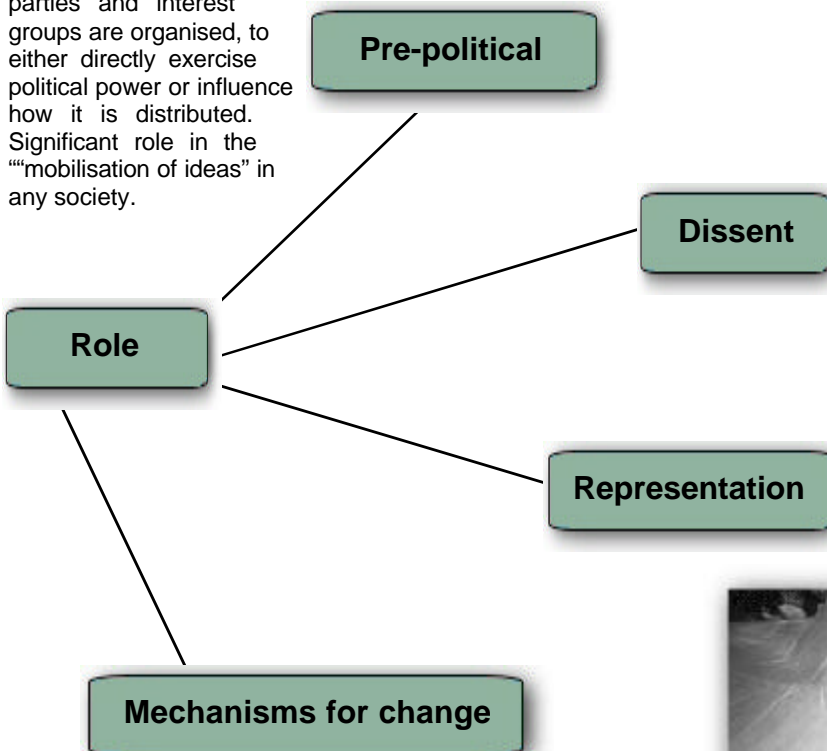
Example: Home rather than State schooling.

Focus on "redeeming others" - for example, converting them to a new and different lifestyles.

Example: Green Politics



Not organised, in the way parties and interest groups are organised, to either directly exercise political power or influence how it is distributed. Significant role in the "mobilisation of ideas" in any society.



OSMs and NSMs as focus of political dissent - acting as "channels and voices" for a range of social groups to promote change.

Example: Trade Unions and social class / Gay Liberation movement and sexuality.

Provide representation for the "politically marginalised" - those whose ideas and interests have been "pushed to the political margins".

Provide alternative sources of political dissent, ways of living and associating that generate "new ideas", "ways of seeing" the world and pressure for social change.

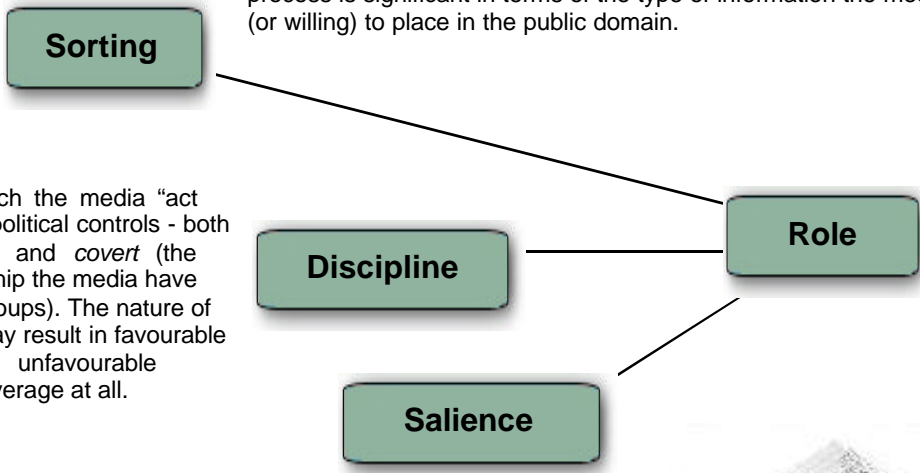


Besley et al (2002):
Conventional ways the media contribute to the political process



Synoptic Link
Mass Media
Issues relating to the role and effect of the Mass Media in modern societies are discussed throughout the AS Mass Media chapter.

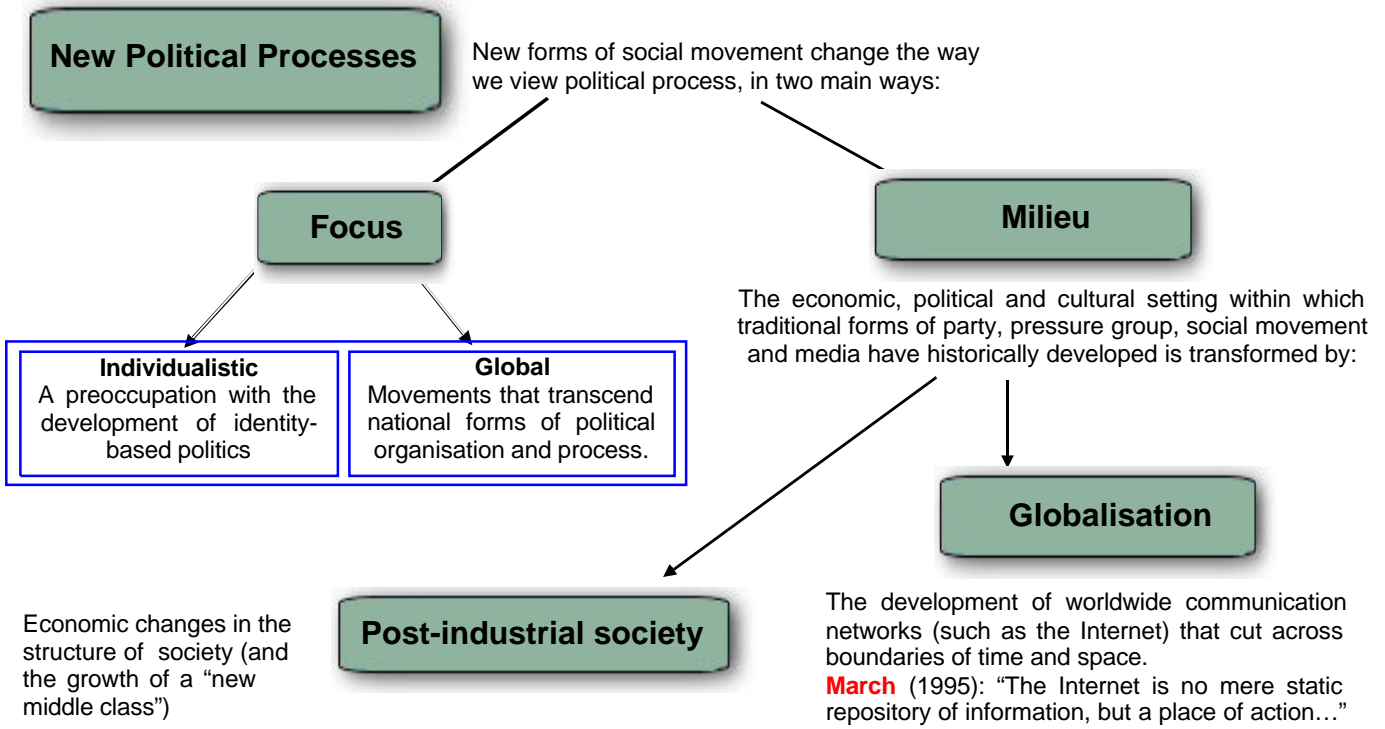
How information presented to the public, in terms of both *positive and negative coverage* of particular policies, politicians and groups. This process is significant in terms of the type of information the media are able (or willing) to place in the public domain.



The extent to which the media "act independently" of political controls - both *overt (censorship)* and *covert* (the particular relationship the media have with parties and groups). The nature of this relationship may result in favourable political coverage, unfavourable coverage or no coverage at all.

How different issues are presented or ignored within the media. Some types of information have different levels of salience at different times in the political process, with the role of media organisations being to "set the political agenda" (deciding, in effect, what issues are politically significant).





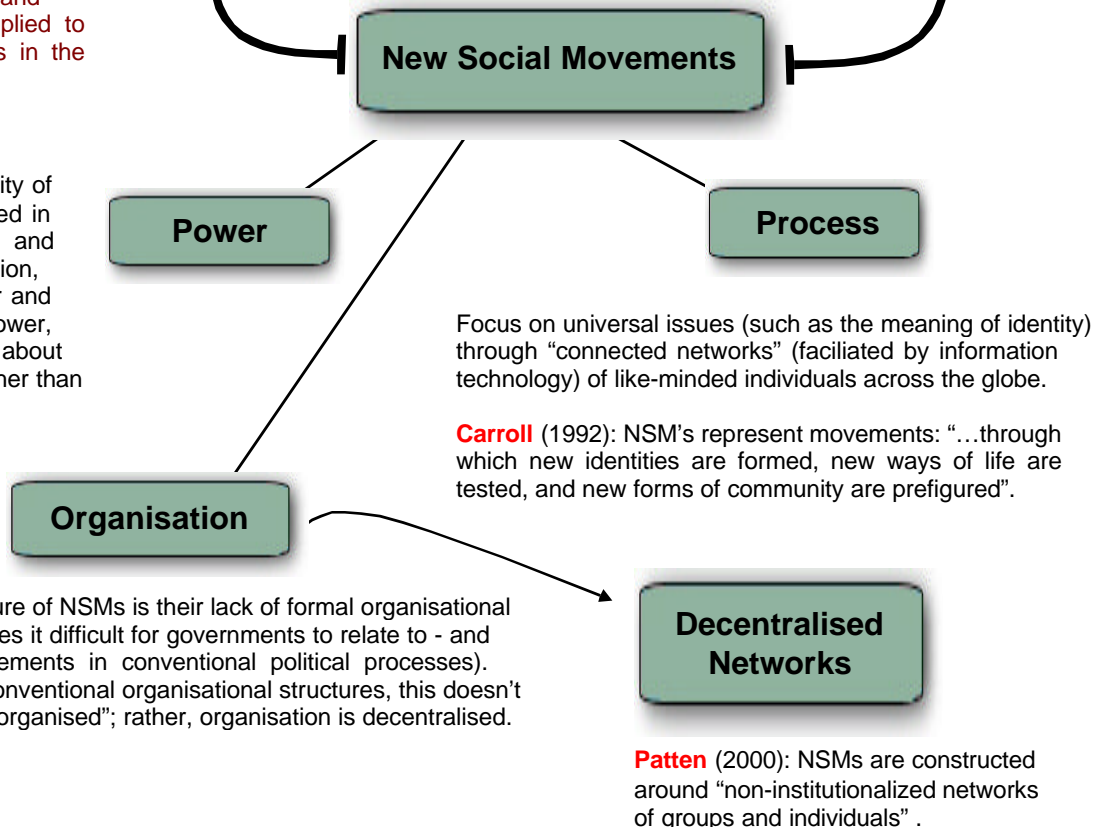
Patten (2000): "The defining feature of contemporary social movements is their commitment to cultural transformation at the level of social relations and political identities".

Are the "rules of the political game" changing?

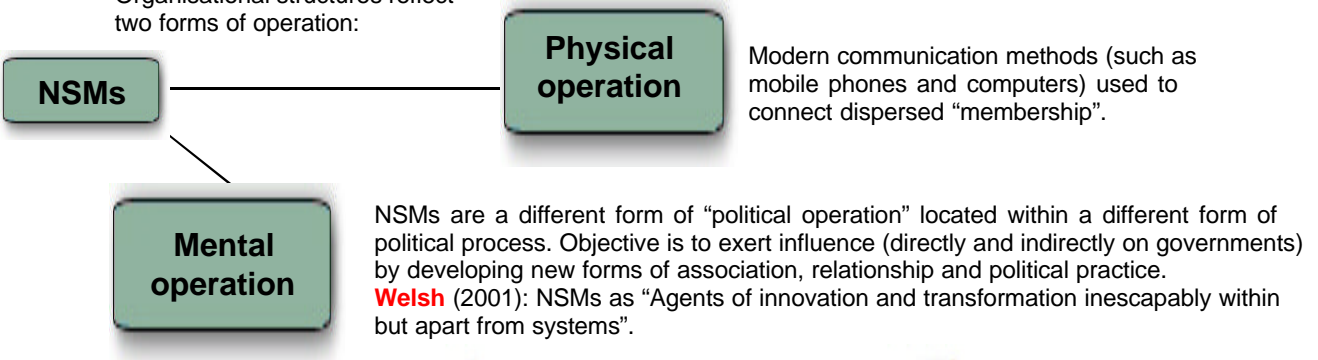
Is a *postmodern politics* developing where the ideas, activities and behaviours of NSMs have consequences for both national and international political processes?

Synoptic Link
Theory and Method / Stratification and Differentiation
The concept of post-industrial society can be related debates about modernity and postmodernity and applied to contemporary changes in the class structure.

NSMs embrace a diversity of issues traditionally viewed in terms of class, gender and ethnicity (anti-globalisation, sexualities, Black Power and beyond). Concepts of power, however, relate to ideas about identity and lifestyles rather than economic inequalities.



Organisational structures reflect two forms of operation:



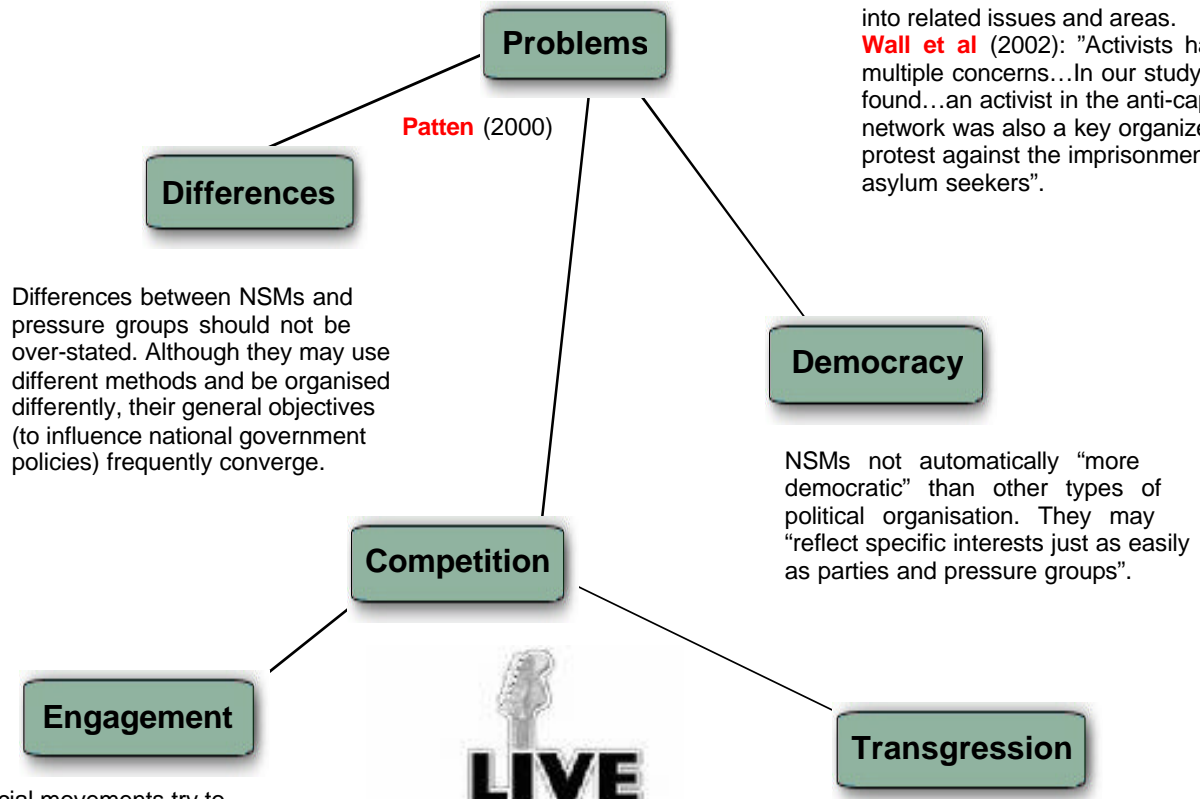
Cox (1996): Move "beyond the language of social movements" to embrace the idea of NSMs as:



Seeking to influence *globally-networked* political processes that address "global problems" - environmental destruction, poverty, slavery, sweated labour, disease...

Melucci (1996): Movement "members" (or activists) buying into a "political worldview" rather than a particular "issue" (such as "Saving the Whale"). Once "inside" the individual is linked into related issues and areas.

Wall et al (2002): "Activists have multiple concerns...In our study we found...an activist in the anti-capitalist network was also a key organizer of a protest against the imprisonment of asylum seekers".



Differences between NSMs and pressure groups should not be over-stated. Although they may use different methods and be organised differently, their general objectives (to influence national government policies) frequently converge.

NSMs not automatically "more democratic" than other types of political organisation. They may "reflect specific interests just as easily as parties and pressure groups".

New social movements try to influence national political processes and parties - they do not simply "by-pass" these significant political channels of influence.

Just as New Social Movements may attempt to form political parties, established parties and pressure groups have responded to "changing national and global political landscapes" by focusing on issues, such as environmentalism and identity politics that have conventionally been the preserve of New Social Movements.



Exam Questions

8 marks

Identify and briefly explain two ways political parties use the mass media to compete for votes.



40 marks

Evaluate the view that political pressure and interest groups have become more effective means of influencing the political process than seeking representation through political parties.

40 marks

Evaluate the role of the mass media in the political process.