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## NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN AZERBAIJAN: AN ASSESSMENT IN THE CONTEXT OF DEMOCRACY, IDENTITY, AND DIGITAL ACTIVISM

Elnur Shikhaliyev\*

Ridvan Simsek\*\*

**Abstract.** This study is a literature review that examines the new social movements emerging in Azerbaijan in the context of democracy, identity, and digital activism. The research is not based on the collection of empirical data; rather, it offers a theoretical evaluation grounded in national and international academic studies, reports, and media analyses. By examining both the historical background and the contemporary forms of new social movements, the study aims to make a theoretical contribution to the field of social movement research in Azerbaijan. It evaluates the new social movements that have emerged in Azerbaijan in recent years within the frameworks of democracy, identity, and digital activism. The growing demand for political participation, the redefinition of cultural identity, and especially the increasing visibility of younger generations through digital platforms constitute the core dynamics of social mobilization in the country. Unlike traditional forms of protest, these new movements are characterized by more flexible, network-based, and horizontally organized structures. However, the centralized governance system, the limited public sphere, and distrust in information circulation partially hinder the development of these movements. Nevertheless, the rapid communication enabled by digital media facilitates the expression of diverse social groups and expands the space for democratic debate. In this regard, new social movements can be considered an important source of social dynamism in Azerbaijan, contributing both to the transformation of political culture and to the growth of democratic awareness in society.

**Keywords:** Azerbaijan, social movements, digital activism, identity, democracy

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\* PhD Candidate, Bursa Technical University; Republic of Türkiye

E-mail: [shikhaliyev.elnur96@gmail.com](mailto:shikhaliyev.elnur96@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-7736-0717>

\*\* Assoc. Prof. Dr., Bursa Technical University, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Department of Sociology; Republic of Türkiye

E-mail: [ridvan.simsek@btu.edu.tr](mailto:ridvan.simsek@btu.edu.tr)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4744-3717>

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## НОВЫЕ ОБЩЕСТВЕННЫЕ ДВИЖЕНИЯ В АЗЕРБАЙДЖАНЕ: ОЦЕНКА В КОНТЕКСТЕ ДЕМОКРАТИИ, ИДЕНТИЧНОСТИ И ЦИФРОВОГО АКТИВИЗМА

Эльнур Шихалиев\*

Ридван Шимшек\*\*

**Абстракт.** Данная статья представляет собой обзорный анализ новых общественных движений в Азербайджане в рамках демократии, идентичности и цифрового активизма на основе научной литературы. Исследование не опирается на эмпирические данные, а базируется на теоретической оценке, основанной на национальных и международных академических исследованиях, институциональных отчетах и медиа-анализе. Рассматривая как исторический контекст, так и современные проявления новых общественных движений, статья стремится внести теоретический вклад в изучение коллективных действий в Азербайджане. В последние годы общественная мобилизация в стране характеризуется ростом требований к политическому участию, переосмыслением культурных идентичностей и, в особенности, повышением видимости молодежи через цифровые платформы. В отличие от традиционных форм протеста, данные движения отличаются большей гибкостью, сетевой структурой и горизонтальными моделями организации. Вместе с тем централизованная система управления, ограниченное общественное пространство и недоверие к информационному потоку частично сдерживают развитие этих движений. Несмотря на это, быстрая коммуникация, обеспечиваемая цифровыми медиа, позволяет различным социальным группам выражать свои взгляды и расширяет пространство демократической дискуссии. В этом контексте новые общественные движения могут рассматриваться как важный источник социальной динамики, способствующий трансформации политической культуры и укреплению демократического сознания в азербайджанском обществе.

**Ключевые слова:** Азербайджан, общественные движения, цифровой активизм, идентичность, демократия

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\* Докторант, Бурса Технический Университет; Турция

E-mail: [shikhaliyev.elnur96@gmail.com](mailto:shikhaliyev.elnur96@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-7736-0717>

\*\* Доц. Др., Бурсаский Технический Университет, факультет гуманитарных и социальных наук, кафедра социологии; Турция

E-mail: [ridvan.simsek@btu.edu.tr](mailto:ridvan.simsek@btu.edu.tr)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4744-3717>

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## AZƏRBAYCANDA YENİ İCTİMAİ HƏRƏKATLAR: DEMOKRATIYA, KİMLİK VƏ RƏQƏMSAL AKTİVİZM KONTEKSTİNDƏ QIYMƏTLƏNDİRMƏ

Elnur Şixəliyev\*

Rıdvan Şimşək\*\*

**Abstrakt.** Bu məqalə Azərbaycanada yeni ictimai hərəkatları demokratiya, kimlik və rəqəmsal aktivizm çərçivəsində araşdıran ədəbiyyat əsaslı bir təhlildir. Tədqiqat empirik məlumatlara deyil, milli və beynəlxalq akademik araşdırmalara, institusional hesabatlarla və media təhlillərinə söykənən nəzəri qiymətləndirməyə əsaslanır. Yeni ictimai hərəkatların həm tarixi fonunu, həm də müasir təzahürlərini nəzərdən keçirərək, məqalə Azərbaycanda kollektiv fəaliyyətin öyrənilməsi sahəsinə nəzəri töhfə verməyi məqsəd qoyur. Son illərdə Azərbaycanda ictimai səfərbərlik siyasi iştirak tələblərinin artması, mədəni kimliklərin yenidən formalaşması və xüsusilə gənc nəsillərin rəqəmsal platformalar vasitəsilə daha görünən hala gəlməsi ilə xarakterizə olunur. Ənənəvi etiraz formalarından fərqli olaraq, bu hərəkatlar daha çevik, şəbəkə əsaslı və üfqi təşkilatlanma modelləri ilə səciyyələnir. Bununla yanaşı, mərkəzləşdirilmiş idarəetmə sistemi, məhdud ictimai məkan və informasiya axınına olan etimadsızlıq bu hərəkatların inkişafını qismən məhdudlaşdırır. Buna baxmayaraq, rəqəmsal medianın təmin etdiyi sürətli kommunikasiya müxtəlif sosial qrupların öz fikirlərini ifadə etməsinə imkan yaradır və demokratik müzakirə məkanını genişləndirir. Bu baxımdan yeni ictimai hərəkatlar Azərbaycanda həm siyasi mədəniyyətin transformasiyasına, həm də cəmiyyətin demokratik şüurunun güclənməsinə töhfə verən mühüm sosial dinamika mənbəyi kimi dəyərləndirilə bilər.

**Açar sözlər:** Azərbaycan, ictimai hərəkatlar, rəqəmsal aktivizm, kimlik, demokratiya

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\* Doktorant, Bursa Texnik Universiteti; Türkiyə

E-mail: [shikhaliyev.elnur96@gmail.com](mailto:shikhaliyev.elnur96@gmail.com)

<https://orcid.org/0009-0003-7736-0717>

\*\* Dos. Dr.,

Bursa Texniki Universiteti, İnsan və Cəmiyyət Elmləri Fakültəsi, Sosiologiya Bölməsi; Türkiyə

E-mail: [ridvan.simsek@btu.edu.tr](mailto:ridvan.simsek@btu.edu.tr)

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4744-3717>

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## **1.Introduction**

Social movements are widely regarded as one of the fundamental analytical tools for understanding the dynamics of change in modern societies. Classical social movements that emerged alongside industrialization were largely shaped by class-based demands, economic inequalities, and conflicts between labor and capital. However, since the second half of the twentieth century, transformations in social structures, the expansion of communication technologies, and the increasing visibility of individual identities have significantly altered the nature of collective action. This transformation is discussed in the literature under the concept of “new social movements” [Touraine, 1985; Melucci, 1996]. New social movements differ markedly from classical social movements that were based on class and hierarchical structures. While classical movements primarily focused on material demands such as economic interests, income distribution, and working conditions, new social movements emphasize post-material values such as identity, cultural recognition, lifestyles, and democratic participation. This shift indicates that social conflicts no longer emerge solely at the economic level but also within cultural and symbolic spheres. In terms of organization, classical movements relied on centralized leadership and institutionalized structures, whereas new social movements are built upon horizontal networks, flexible participation, and network-based coordination. Moreover, these movements do not limit political struggle to the state and the economy but incorporate everyday life practices, identity construction, and cultural representations into the political sphere. In this respect, new social movements represent a distinctive form of social opposition that seeks to achieve social change not only through political decision-making but also through culture and ways of life [Castells, 2010]. This theoretical approach also provides a useful framework for understanding the transformation processes of post-Soviet societies. Following the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Azerbaijan has undergone a multidimensional process of political, social, and cultural transformation. This process has affected many areas, from state–society relations to the visibility of individuals in the public sphere. Social movements have not been immune to these changes. However, reducing social movements in Azerbaijan solely to political opposition or conflict is insufficient for capturing the country’s complex social dynamics. The literature indicates that new forms of collective action in Azerbaijan have increasingly concentrated on identity, culture, youth, and digital interaction [Guliyev, 2018; Iskandarov, 2020]. In this context, digitalization plays a crucial role in shaping new social movements in Azerbaijan. The internet and social media platforms provide individuals with direct access to the public sphere, enabling the formation of new communication and solidarity networks beyond traditional organizational

structures. Castells' theory of the network society offers an important theoretical background for understanding this process. According to him, digital networks allow social actors to redefine their collective identities and create alternative public spheres [Castells, 2012]. The main contribution of this study lies in bringing together the literature on new social movements in the Azerbaijani context and evaluating it within a conceptual and historical framework. The study aims to provide a theoretical foundation for future empirical research. It does not seek to collect primary data; instead, it offers a literature-based analysis relying entirely on secondary sources. Accordingly, the article does not adopt a normative or critical stance toward the state, the media, or political actors, but rather approaches the historical development and theoretical interpretations of social movements within a descriptive analytical framework.

## **2. Methodology and Nature of the Study**

This study is designed as a literature review based on a qualitative research framework. Rather than collecting empirical data, the research relies on systematic literature analysis and theoretical interpretation. The analysis is conducted entirely on secondary sources, and the primary objective of the study is to examine the existing literature on new social movements in Azerbaijan at historical, theoretical, and conceptual levels in a systematic manner. Accordingly, the article adopts an explanatory and descriptive approach and does not pursue any normative, critical, or prescriptive agenda. During the literature review process, both the classical international literature on new social movements and contemporary academic studies on Azerbaijani society were examined together. In particular, the foundational works on new social movement theory [Touraine, 1985; Melucci, 1996], debates on democracy and the public sphere [Habermas, 1996], and approaches to digital activism and the network society [Castells, 2010; 2012] constitute the theoretical framework of the study. In addition, sociological analyses, regional studies, and reports by international institutions addressing the Azerbaijani context were also included [Guliyev, 2018; Iskandarov, 2020]. The sources were subjected to a thematic content classification during the research process. This classification covers four main dimensions: (i) theoretical approaches to new social movements, (ii) social movements in post-Soviet societies, (iii) debates on democracy and identity, and (iv) digital activism and the media sphere. This thematic division enables a comparative and holistic analysis of the literature. In the study, references to state institutions, media organizations, or social actors are based solely on descriptive assessments found in the existing literature. Examples from television and newspapers are not used to praise or criticize any institution but rather to illustrate the role of the media in shaping the visibility of social movements. In this sense, the study adopts an

analytical yet neutral stance. This approach is consistent with the study’s main objective of providing a theoretical framework and systematically reviewing the literature. The article aims to establish a conceptual foundation for future field research and comparative studies, offering an academic and literature-based assessment of new social movements in Azerbaijan without making political prescriptions or normative judgments, and thereby contributing to the broader field of social movement studies.

### **3.Theoretical Background of New Social Movements**

Social movements have long been discussed in the social science literature as a central concept for understanding the structural transformations of modern societies. Classical theories of social movements largely explained this phenomenon through class conflicts, economic interests, and organized political struggles. Rooted in the Marxist tradition, this perspective viewed social movements as forms of collective action directly linked to production relations and class positions. However, the cultural, technological, and social transformations that took place in Western societies in the second half of the twentieth century revealed the limitations of these explanatory frameworks. In this context, the theory of new social movements emerged as an approach that does not confine social conflict solely to economic demands. Alain Touraine argues that in modern societies the primary struggle is not over production but over “the control of historicity,” and he defines social movements as processes organized around the control of cultural meanings [Touraine, 1985]. This perspective emphasizes that movements are not driven only by material interests but are also organized around identity, lifestyles, and values. Alberto Melucci, in turn, associates new social movements primarily with processes of identity construction and symbolic interaction. According to Melucci, such movements consist of flexible and polycentric networks that exist within everyday life rather than through continuous and visible street protests [Melucci, 1996]. This helps explain why new social movements differ from classical forms of organization and why they often appear fragmented or temporary. Another distinctive feature of new social movement theory is the definition of collective actors in terms of subjective experiences rather than structural positions. Individuals participate in these movements not only because of class belonging but also on the basis of gender, generation, cultural affiliation, and worldviews. This diversifies the social base of movements and expands the boundaries of political action [Offe, 1985]. In the literature on new social movements, culture occupies a central analytical position. Language, symbols, discourses, and narratives of identity serve as the primary tools of mobilization. In this sense, social movements are seen not only as arenas for demands directed at the state or power holders but also as spaces in which society redefines its relationship with itself. Habermas’s concept of the public

sphere provides an important theoretical foundation for understanding this process, as new social movements are regarded as actors that expand public debate and deliberation [Habermas, 1996]. In recent years, the spread of digital communication technologies has further broadened the scope of new social movement theory. Through his concept of the network society, Manuel Castells argues that social movements are now organized through digital networks rather than hierarchical structures [Castells, 2012]. This transformation has profoundly altered the speed, reach, and forms of interaction of movements. For younger generations in particular, the digital sphere has become one of the main arenas of both identity construction and collective action. Overall, social movement theory provides a flexible and multidimensional analytical framework for understanding contemporary forms of collective action. By moving beyond economic determinism and focusing on identity, culture, communication, and digitalization, this approach enables social movements to be analyzed within their historical contexts. This theoretical foundation also offers a useful perspective for examining new social movements in societies undergoing transformation, such as Azerbaijan.

#### **4. Democracy and Participation Debates**

In classical political theory, the concept of democracy has long been addressed within the framework of representative institutions, elections, and constitutional arrangements. In this approach, citizens' participation in the political process has largely been limited to voting and involvement in decision-making mechanisms through representatives. However, the acceleration of social transformations and the increasing visibility of individuals in the public sphere have revealed the inadequacy of defining democracy solely through institutional structures. These debates have led to the consideration of participation within a broader and more multidimensional framework [Dahl, 1989]. Participatory democracy approaches argue that individuals should be not only the objects of political decisions but also their active subjects. From this perspective, democracy is understood as a continuous process of deliberation and interaction. Carole Pateman argues that participation not only produces political outcomes but also fosters individuals' democratic culture and civic consciousness [Pateman, 1970]. This approach is important for explaining why new social movements emerge in arenas outside formal institutional politics. Another prominent approach in democracy debates is the pluralist and civil society-centered perspective. According to this view, democratic systems function to the extent that diverse interests and identities can be articulated in the public sphere. Cohen and Arato define civil society as a sphere situated between the state and individuals and as the main carrier of participatory politics, considering new social movements among the dynamic actors of this sphere [Cohen & Arato, 1992]. Within this framework,

social movements generate alternative forms of participation in response to crises of representation. In post-Soviet societies, debates on democracy and participation have a distinctive character shaped by historical experiences. Political participation is formed not only through institutional mechanisms but also through cultural practices and everyday life experiences. Howard and Roessler note that participation in these societies often emerges with low levels of organizational density but high symbolic significance [Howard & Roessler, 2006]. This provides important clues as to why new social movements tend to take more flexible and temporary forms. In the contemporary literature, debates on democracy increasingly focus on the concepts of “capacity,” “access,” and the “quality of participation.” Fung argues that participation should be evaluated not in terms of its quantity but in terms of how, by whom, and under what conditions it takes place [Fung, 2006]. This perspective makes it possible to assess the democratic contribution of new social movements by focusing not only on their level of visibility but also on their capacity to generate public deliberation. In the Azerbaijani context, democracy and participation are generally analyzed in the literature through the lenses of the transformation process, the development of the civic sphere, and generational differences. These studies allow new social movements to be viewed not as alternatives to institutional politics but rather as structures that create spaces for public awareness and social interaction [Aliyev, 2015]. This perspective aligns with the general approach of the present study by treating democracy and participation not as normative goals but as analytical fields of inquiry. Debates on democracy and participation occupy a central position in understanding new social movements. The limits of representative democracy, the cultural and symbolic dimensions of participation, and the transforming role of civil society make it possible to comprehend the conditions under which these movements emerge. Within this framework, democracy is understood not merely as an institutional structure but as a continuously reproduced social process.

### **5.Identity, Youth, and Cultural Dynamics**

In the literature on new social movements, the concept of identity is regarded as one of the fundamental determinants of collective action. Unlike classical class-based analyses, contemporary social movements are shaped by how individuals define themselves, the cultural affiliations around which they position themselves, and how they relate to their worlds of meaning. In this context, identity is understood not as a fixed category but as a process that is continuously reconstructed through social interactions [Jenkins, 2008]. Youth occupies a distinctive position among the key actors of new social movements. Young individuals are able to adapt more rapidly to social transformations due to both their generational experiences and their cultural flexibility.

Mannheim's theory of generations demonstrates that youth is not merely a biological age group but a sociological category shaped by shared historical experiences [Mannheim, 1952]. This perspective is important for explaining why young people become particularly visible social actors during certain periods. One of the defining characteristics of identity-based social movements is their emphasis on forms of cultural expression. Music, art, language, symbols, and everyday life practices constitute both the discursive and practical dimensions of these movements. According to Eyerman and Jamison, social movements are also processes of cultural learning and meaning production; in this sense, they create symbolic spaces that transform society [Eyerman & Jamison, 1991]. This approach provides a strong theoretical framework for understanding the role of cultural dynamics within social movements. In post-Soviet societies, debates on identity display a more complex character due to historical ruptures and processes of restructuring. The interaction between national identity, modernization, tradition, and global culture becomes particularly evident in the everyday practices of younger generations. Brubaker conceptualizes identity not as a fixed essence but as a category that is "used" and "activated" in specific contexts, emphasizing that this perspective is compatible with the flexible nature of social movements [Brubaker, 2004]. In the Azerbaijani context, the literature on youth and identity is closely associated with urbanization, rising levels of education, and the spread of digital culture. Young people tend to prioritize cultural practices and lifestyles over political ideologies in their modes of self-expression. This helps explain why new social movements often take shape around cultural visibility and recognition rather than direct political demands [Swader, 2013]. Identity, youth, and cultural dynamics provide a central analytical framework for understanding new social movements. This field makes it possible to conceptualize social movements not only as expressions of political demands but also as integral components of the processes through which individuals position and make sense of themselves in modern societies. Such a theoretical approach contributes to a more in-depth analysis of new social movements in societies undergoing transformation, such as Azerbaijan.

### **6. Digital Activism and Media: Social Media, Protests, and Hashtag Culture in Azerbaijan**

In Azerbaijan, digital activism has begun to play a significant role in the reshaping of the public sphere, particularly with the widespread use of social media. Platforms such as Twitter (X), Facebook, Instagram, and Telegram have become not only spaces where individuals express their opinions, but also digital public arenas in which social demands gain visibility, collective identities are constructed, and actions are organized. In this context, hashtag culture (#) functions as one of the core tools of digital activism by bringing

together the demands of different social groups under a shared discourse [Earl & Kimport, 2011]. Traditional media, by contrast, often presents these digital actions in a selective and framed manner. Qualitative analyses show that television channels and official news agencies frequently code protests and campaigns that gain momentum on social media as “marginal,” “externally influenced,” “disorderly,” or “threats to social stability.” Such framing renders the movements’ demands invisible while foregrounding narratives of security and order. In contrast, social media discourse frames these actions in terms of rights claims, justice, environmental sensitivity, or democratic participation, thereby producing an alternative interpretation. Consequently, digital activism in Azerbaijan has become not only a tool of organization but also a symbolic arena of struggle against the hegemonic narratives of traditional media. Within this struggle, hashtag culture transforms dispersed individual reactions into a collective digital identity and provides public visibility [Yang, 2016; Jackson, Bailey & Foucault Welles, 2020]. An examination of qualitative examples of movements in Azerbaijan shows that issues such as environmental problems, women’s rights, corruption allegations, and freedom of expression circulate rapidly through social media. Digital campaigns produced through hashtags are effective in agenda-setting, information dissemination, and emotional mobilization. In this process, social media transcends the limits of state-controlled traditional media and creates an alternative space for public debate. Thus, digital activism in Azerbaijan functions as both an organizational tool and a symbolic field of contestation against dominant media narratives. Hashtag culture plays a crucial role by converting fragmented individual responses into a collective digital identity and enhancing public visibility [Global Voices, 2011]. During the social reactions that emerged in 2013 in response to deaths in the military, social media played a critical role in reshaping public debate in Azerbaijan. Digital calls organized through Facebook events and Twitter posts enabled a topic that received only limited coverage in traditional media to be discussed by wider audiences. Although a campaign centered on a single, dominant hashtag did not emerge during this period, the content produced on digital platforms transformed the issue of military deaths into an alternative public agenda [Ismayil, 2013]. This demonstrates that, in the Azerbaijani context, social media functions not merely as a communication tool but also as a space for producing public visibility and symbolic power. More recently, digital campaigns emerging around environmental issues and interventions in local living spaces have revealed the more explicit incorporation of hashtag culture into Azerbaijan’s digital activism repertoire. The use of both English and Azerbaijani hashtags such as #SaveLocalEnvironment and #EnvironmentalJusticeAZ on platforms like Instagram and Twitter indicates a digital strategy aimed not only at the

national public but also at international audiences. These hashtags function as symbolic tools that link local environmental issues to global environmental discourses, thereby seeking to enhance the legitimacy and visibility of the movements [JAMnews, 2023]. Digital activism in Azerbaijan has developed through mutual interaction with the traditional media landscape. While state television AzTV presents social events primarily within a framework of official information and stability discourse, İctimai TV allocates relatively more space to cultural and social content. In the print media, Azərbaycan newspaper follows an institutional and state-centered editorial line, whereas 525-ci Qəzet adopts a publishing practice that allows for more critical and intellectual debate. This differentiation indicates that the media in Azerbaijan does not produce a monolithic discourse; however, it also shows that social demands rising in the digital sphere generally circulate in mainstream media in a limited and framed manner. In this context, digital media functions not as the opposite of traditional media, but as an alternative public sphere that complements its limited representational capacity. Social media platforms enable social movements to produce their own narratives, testimonies, and demands, while traditional media makes it possible for these narratives to reach broader audiences to a certain extent. Thus, digital activism in Azerbaijan simultaneously creates an alternative discursive space and engages in an indirect interaction with the agenda-setting power of traditional media. However, the literature also indicates that the opportunities offered by digital activism in Azerbaijan are accompanied by significant limitations. While the online sphere provides important advantages in terms of visibility, speed, and mobilization, state surveillance, censorship mechanisms, and legal uncertainties increase the fragility of this space [Pearce & Kendzior, 2012]. Under these conditions, digital activism tends to emerge not as long-term and institutionalized organization, but rather in the form of short-term campaigns focused on specific events and themes. As a result, new social movements in Azerbaijan largely manifest themselves through social media– and hashtag-based mobilizations. Digital platforms offer new opportunities for expressing social demands and constructing collective identities; however, the political impact of these opportunities is shaped by the legal, institutional, and cultural constraints of the country. This reveals digital activism in the Azerbaijani case as a distinctive political practice that simultaneously contains both transformative potential and structural limitations.

## **7. Discussion**

The findings of this study are not based on new field data but on a critical evaluation of existing academic research. In this respect, the article aims to present a descriptive and analytical perspective rather than a normative or prescriptive political stance. When examined through the lens of democracy

and participation debates, the literature shows that participation in Azerbaijan is largely defined through institutional channels. The state’s emphasis on preserving political order makes it difficult for social movements to maintain a permanent and organized presence in the public sphere. In contrast, youth-based movements tend to emerge through temporary, thematic, and flexible structures [Howard & Hussain, 2013]. This finding is consistent with the literature suggesting that new social movements are characterized more by episodic mobilizations than by continuity. Studies discussed in the section on identity, youth, and cultural dynamics demonstrate that younger generations in Azerbaijan are positioned as key actors of social change. However, this form of agency is shaped less by demands for direct political representation and more by lifestyles, cultural expression, and individual rights. As Melucci (1996) emphasizes, the primary strength of new social movements lies not in material gains but in the construction of meaning. When the Azerbaijani case is evaluated within this framework, it can be argued that identity-based claims are more visible than explicit political discourses. The field of digital activism and media constitutes one of the most striking dimensions of the discussion. While the literature acknowledges that digital platforms function as an alternative public sphere in Azerbaijan, it approaches optimistic claims about unlimited freedom in this space with caution [Pearce & Kendzior, 2012]. Hashtag-based campaigns and online mobilizations provide visibility, yet their transformation into lasting organizational structures remains limited. This demonstrates that digital activism is a powerful but fragile tool. Evaluations based on traditional media examples further reveal the structural divide between state-controlled and private media. State-controlled outlets frame social movements within narratives of order and stability, whereas private media tend to present them in more cultural and social terms. Nevertheless, in both media types, the demands of new social movements are rarely carried into public debate in depth [McQuail, 2010]. Overall, the discussion indicates that new social movements in Azerbaijan are neither fully suppressed nor transformed into institutionalized structures. Rather, they can be understood as limited yet meaningful interventions that emerge intermittently within existing political and cultural conditions.

## **8. Conclusion**

The fact that this study is based solely on a literature review ensures that its findings do not carry normative or prescriptive political claims; instead, it enables the establishment of analytical connections among existing academic debates. The reviewed sources indicate that social movements in Azerbaijan differ significantly from classical models of political participation and are increasingly oriented toward cultural, symbolic, and digital spheres. In the literature on modernization and value change, Inglehart and Welzel’s (2005)

argument that rising economic security leads to greater demands for freedom of expression and participation is partially confirmed in the Azerbaijani context, yet it operates in a limited manner. Here, value transformation becomes visible not so much through political institutionalization but rather through everyday practices and digital forms of expression. This suggests that democratization should be understood not only through institutional reforms but also through cultural and communicative domains. The identity- and culture-centered nature of new social movements becomes more meaningful when interpreted through Bauman's (2000) concept of "liquid modernity." In Azerbaijan, movements tend to emerge through temporary networks and thematic alliances rather than permanent organizations, indicating that collective identities are not fixed but open to negotiation and inherently fragile. This observation is consistent with the notion of "intensity rather than continuity" frequently emphasized in the literature on new social movements. When examined through the lens of Bennett and Segerberg's (2013) concept of "connective action," Azerbaijan provides a particularly interesting case for comparative analysis. Hashtag-based campaigns and online mobilizations conducted via social media facilitate individual participation; however, this participation rarely translates into institutionalized structures. This reveals that while the digital sphere generates visibility, it simultaneously constrains the sustainability of collective action. Discussions on the media can be interpreted through Couldry's (2012) concept of "representational inequality." In Azerbaijan, the ways in which state and private media outlets address social movements tend to frame rather than deepen their demands. As a result, digital media offers an alternative space against incomplete or limited representation; yet, due to its own structural constraints, it cannot fully function as an institutionalized public sphere. In conclusion, this study demonstrates that new social movements in Azerbaijan do not fully correspond either to classical forms of opposition or to Western-centered models of activism. Instead, they produce limited, temporary, and often digitally confined interventions within the existing political and cultural context. This finding reinforces the need to treat new social movement theory not as a universal template but as a contextual and multi-layered analytical framework. Future empirical, field-based research could deepen the literature review presented here and generate more comprehensive insights into social transformation in Azerbaijan.

## 9. REFERENCES

The sources used in this study have been evaluated within the scope of a literature-based review and do not serve the purpose of field research or normative political guidance.

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