

# Neo-Marxism

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**Neo-Marxism** is a loose term for various twentieth-century approaches that amend or extend Marxism and Marxist theory, usually by incorporating elements from other intellectual traditions, such as: critical theory, psychoanalysis or Existentialism (in the case of Sartre).

Erik Olin Wright's theory of contradictory class locations, which incorporates Weberian sociology, critical criminology, and anarchism, is an example of the syncretism in neo-Marxist theory.<sup>[1]</sup> As with many uses of the prefix neo-, many theorists and groups designated as neo-Marxist have attempted to supplement the perceived deficiencies of orthodox Marxism or dialectical materialism. Many prominent neo-Marxists, such as Herbert Marcuse and other members of the Frankfurt School, were sociologists and psychologists.

Neo-Marxism comes under the broader framework of the New Left. In a sociological sense, neo-Marxism adds Max Weber's broader understanding of social inequality, such as status and power, to Marxist philosophy. Strains of neo-Marxism include: critical theory, analytical Marxism and French structural Marxism.

The concept arose as a way to explain questions which were not explained in Karl Marx's works. There are many different "branches" of Neo-Marxism often not in agreement with each other and their theories.

Neo-Marxism is also used frequently to describe opposition to inequalities experienced by Lesser Developed Countries in a globalized world and as an approach to economics which stresses the monopolistic nature of modern capitalism.

## History

The development of Neo-Marxism came forth through several political and social problems which traditional Marxist thought was unable to answer. Examples to this were: Why socialist and social-democratic political parties did not band together against WWI, but instead supported their own nations' entrance into the Great War. Why, although the timing seemed to be right for a workers' revolution in the West, no large-scale revolutions had occurred. Also how at this time the rise of Fascism could occur in Europe. All these questions led to internal problems within Marxist theory which caused renewed study and reanalysis of Marx's works to begin.

There is no formal Neo-Marxist organization and seldom do people call themselves Neo-Marxists, so it is difficult to describe who belongs to this movement. Also there is no set definition as to what a Neo-Marxist is, which makes grouping and categorizing this idea even more difficult.

One idea that many "branches" of Neo-Marxism share is the desire to move away from the idea of a bloody revolution to one of a more peaceful nature. Moving away from the violence of the Red revolutions of the past while keeping the revolutionary message. Neo-Marxist concepts can also follow an economic theory that attempts to move away from the traditional accusations of class warfare and create new economic theory models, such as Hans Jurgen Krahl did.

Several important advances to Neo-Marxism came after World War I from Georg Lukács, Karl Korsch and Antonio Gramsci. From the Institute of Social Research founded in 1923 at the University of Frankfurt am Main grew one of the most important schools of neo-Marxist interdisciplinary social theory, The Frankfurt School. Its founders were Max Horkheimer and Theodor W. Adorno whose critical theories had great influence on Marxist theory especially after their exile to New York after the rise of National Socialism in 1933.

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## Neo-marxist theories of development

The Neo-Marxist approach to development economics is connected with dependency and world systems theories. Here the "exploitation" which defines it is a marxist approach is an external exploitation rather than the normal "internal" exploitation of orthodox/classical marxism.<sup>[2][3]</sup>

## Neo-marxist economics

In Industrial Economics the Neomarxist approach stresses the monopolistic rather than the competitive nature of capitalism. This approach is associated with Kalecki and Baran and Sweezy.<sup>[4]</sup>

## References

- [1] John Scott & Gordon Marshall (eds) *A Dictionary of Sociology* (Article: neo-Marxism), Oxford University Press, 1998
- [2] Foster-Carter, A (1973) Neo-Marxist approaches to development and underdevelopment *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, Vol. 3, no1
- [3] John Taylor (1974): Neo-Marxism and Underdevelopment — A sociological phantasy, *Journal of Contemporary Asia*, 4:1, 5-23
- [4] Baran, P and Sweezy, P (1966) *Monopoly Capital: An essay on the American economic and social order*, Monthly Review Press, New York

## External links

- Neo-Marxism: An Attempt at Reformation. ([http://www.maranat.de/sir\\_03\\_03.html](http://www.maranat.de/sir_03_03.html))
- Andreas von Weiss: *Neomarxismus. Die Problemdiskussion im Nachfolgemarkismus der Jahre 1945 bis 1970*. Karl-Alber-Verlag, Freiburg/München 1970, ISBN 3-495-47212-6

# Article Sources and Contributors

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