The authors of this volume address multiple questions involving the nature of youth protest in the twenty-first century. Through their use of a case study approach, they comment upon the ways in which youth protest has been influenced by the electronic and social media and evaluate the effectiveness of protest activities, many of which were framed in reaction to neo-liberalism and state authoritarianism. A number of the authors further comment upon the utility of employing social movement theory to analyze the nature and character of protest actions, while others situate such events within specific political, social and cultural contexts. The case studies focus upon protest activities in Bahrain, Turkey, Iran, Cambodia, South Africa, China, Russia, Chile, Spain, and the U.S., and together, they offer a comparative analysis of an important global phenomenon. In so doing, the authors further address issues involving the changing nature of globalized protest participation, its immediate and long-term consequences, and the ways in which protests have encouraged a re-evaluation of the nature of inequality, as constructed within educational, social, and political spheres.
The Whole World is Texting
PITTSBURGH STUDIES IN COMPARATIVE AND INTERNATIONAL EDUCATION

VOLUME 5

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERIES

The aim of the Pittsburgh Studies in Comparative and International Education Series is to produce edited and authored volumes on topics ranging from key international education issues, trends, and reforms to examinations of national education systems, social theories, and development education initiatives. Local, national, regional, and global volumes (single authored and edited collections) constitute the breadth of the series and offer potential contributors a great deal of latitude based on interests and cutting edge research. The series is supported by a strong network of international scholars and development professionals who serve on the Advisory Board and participate in the selection and review process for manuscript development. The volumes are intended to provide not only useful contributions to comparative, international, and development education (CIDE) but also possible supplementary readings for advanced courses for undergraduate and graduate students in CIDE.

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The Whole World is Texting
Youth Protest in the Information Age

Edited by

Irving Epstein
Illinois Wesleyan University, USA
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<th>Description</th>
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<td>ABM</td>
<td>Abahlali baseMjondolo (Shackdweller’s Movement) [South Africa]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACES</td>
<td>Coordinating Assembly of High School Students [Chile]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ANC</td>
<td>African National Congress</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APF</td>
<td>Anti-Privatization Forum [South Africa]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BBC</td>
<td>British Broadcasting Corporation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BICI</td>
<td>Bahrain Independent Commission of Inquiry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCHR</td>
<td>Cambodian Center for Human Rights</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDA</td>
<td>Critical Discourse Analysis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CIA</td>
<td>Central Intelligence Agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CITA</td>
<td>Cambodian Independent Teachers Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COMFREL</td>
<td>Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CONFECHE</td>
<td>Confederación de Estudiantes de Chile (Confederation of Chilean Students)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COSAS</td>
<td>Congress of South African Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>COSATU</td>
<td>Congress of South African Trade Unions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNN</td>
<td>Cable News Network</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CNRP</td>
<td>Cambodian National Rescue Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>CNNTURK</td>
<td>Cable News Network Turkey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPP</td>
<td>Cambodian People’s Party</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSOs</td>
<td>Civil Society Organizations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DK</td>
<td>Democratic Kampuchea</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DTF</td>
<td>Student Islamic Associations and the Office for Strengthening Unity [Iran]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ECCC</td>
<td>Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia</td>
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<tr>
<td>EE</td>
<td>Equal Education [South Africa]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENU</td>
<td>Escuela Nacional Unificada (National Unified School) [Chile]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FECH</td>
<td>The Federación de Estudiantes de la Universidad de Chile (Student Federation of the University of Chile)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FUNCINPEC</td>
<td>Front Nationale Uni Pour un Cambodge Independent, Neutre, Pacifique, et Coopertif (National Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia)</td>
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<tr>
<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<tr>
<td>HaberTurk</td>
<td>Turkish News</td>
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<td>HRP</td>
<td>Human Rights Party [Cambodia]</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICTs</td>
<td>Information and Communication Technologies</td>
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<tr>
<td>IPR</td>
<td>Internet Penetration Rate</td>
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<tr>
<td>IRI</td>
<td>Islamic Republic of Iran</td>
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<tr>
<td>JDP</td>
<td>Justice and Development Party [Turkey]</td>
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<tr>
<td>LGBT</td>
<td>Lesbian Gay Bisexual Transgender</td>
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<tr>
<td>LICADHO</td>
<td>Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights</td>
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</table>
## LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

<table>
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<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>NAP</td>
<td>Nationalist Action Party [Turkey]</td>
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<td>NEC</td>
<td>National Election Committee [Cambodia]</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>NTV Tarih</td>
<td>NTV History [Turkey]</td>
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<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OPEC</td>
<td>Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries</td>
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<tr>
<td>OWS</td>
<td>Occupy Wall Street</td>
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<tr>
<td>PISA</td>
<td>Program of International Student Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRK</td>
<td>People’s Republic of Kampuchea</td>
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<tr>
<td>RPP</td>
<td>Republican People’s Party [Turkey]</td>
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<tr>
<td>RuNet</td>
<td>Russian Speaking Internet</td>
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<tr>
<td>SACP</td>
<td>South Africa Communist Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SECC</td>
<td>Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee [South Africa]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SIMCE</td>
<td>Measurement System of Educational Quality [Chile]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SMT</td>
<td>Social Movement Theory</td>
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<tr>
<td>SOC</td>
<td>State of Cambodia</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRP</td>
<td>Sam Rainsy Party [Cambodia]</td>
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<tr>
<td>TAC</td>
<td>Treatment Action Campaign [South Africa]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIMMS</td>
<td>Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNESCO</td>
<td>United Nations Scientific and Cultural Organization</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNTAC</td>
<td>United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia</td>
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<tr>
<td>USBO</td>
<td>University Student Basij Organization [Iran]</td>
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<tr>
<td>VOD</td>
<td>Voice of Democracy [Cambodia]</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WSF</td>
<td>World Social Forum</td>
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<tr>
<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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We are pleased to introduce the next volume in the *Pittsburgh Studies in Comparative and International Education* book series, which is published and distributed by Sense Publishers. The issues that will be highlighted in this book series range from key international education issues, trends, and reforms to examinations of national education systems, social and educational theories, and development education initiatives. Local, national, regional, and global volumes (single authored and edited collections) are anticipated in order to offer potential contributors a great deal of latitude based on interests and cutting edge research.

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In future volumes in the *PSCIE* series, we encourage the generation of exceptional CIDE scholarship from researchers, policy makers, and practitioners from around the world. We hope this volume will encourage prospective authors and editors to submit manuscript proposals to the *PSCIE* series about their current research and project interests.
1. INTRODUCTION

The Global Dimensions of Contemporary Global Youth Protest

In April 1968, students occupied Columbia University in protest over the University’s efforts to expand and appropriate land in the Morningside Heights neighborhood in order to build a gymnasium. This project would have displaced low income and poor residents who lived in the vicinity of the University. On April 30, the students were violently removed from Hamilton Hall and the Low Library, the university buildings they had occupied, by members of the New York City police department, ending the most prominent of a number of student demonstrations on U.S. campuses during the year (Columbia 1968, 2014). Later, on Wednesday, August 28, United States citizens witnessed on television, a massive police riot outside the Hilton Hotel in Chicago, where youthful demonstrators were gassed and beaten while protesting during the National Democratic Party Convention. Such violence served as a coda to a year where the horrors of the Vietnam War were transmitted through television coverage of the Tet Offensive in late January, and where two of the country’s most important political leaders, Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy, were assassinated within an approximate two-month span on April 4 and June 5. The refrain of the Chicago demonstrators, “The Whole World is Watching,” became an anthem for U.S. protesters throughout the remainder of the decade, as the cruelty of state perpetrated violence was exposed in its various forms. It has lived on in different iterations over the past forty odd years. We have appropriated and re-contextualized the term in order to analyze the changing nature of youth protest in the twenty-first century, with specific reference to selected global protests that arose in 2011, 2012, 2013 and afterwards. We do so however, acknowledging that a number of factors distinguish youth protest in the twenty-first century from that of the 1960s.

First, twenty-first century protests are indeed distinctively global in ways that mark their occurrence from their 1968 predecessors. To be sure, protest in 1968 was certainly not limited to the United States. In May, students protested against poor living conditions at the University of Paris campus in Nanterre, as well as general class discrimination throughout the country. They ignited massive demonstrations in France that came close to toppling the de Gaulle administration, which was saved only after it agreed to massive worker minimum wage pay increases. 1968 also witnessed the Prague Spring reforms that led to the Soviet Union’s forcible invasion of Czechoslovakia and the peaceful if unsuccessful protests that resulted; the Tlatelolco massacre in Mexico City, where numerous protesting students and civilians were killed by the Mexican police ten days before
the start of the Olympic Games; and the continuing Cultural Revolution in China, where student Red Guard factions conducted massive demonstrations against entrenched political interests.

Protest in 1968 was international in scope, and there was some awareness among individual protestors as to what was occurring outside of one’s national boundaries. Indeed, McAdam and Rucht (1993) point to the significance of some very direct and interpersonal connections between leaders of the New Left in the United States and their West German counterparts as having potentially contributed to the growth of the German New Left in the 1960s and 1970s. In any event, the motivation of the 1968 protests came from an understanding that it was essential to contest the illegitimate exercise of power conceived within the boundaries of the nation-state. Even when the state exercised its power across accepted state boundaries in imperious forms, it was the machinery and institutional apparatuses of the state as a cohesive and unified entity, that bore the criticism of the protesters (Wallerstein 2012). And so, although the whole world may have been watching in August 1968, it was the unilateral unchecked power of the United States government alone, to which the Chicago protestors referred in their chant. In so doing, they were no different from their counterparts in France, Mexico, China, and Czechoslovakia in voicing opposition to the State.

It is striking how illustrative a comparison between the protests of the 1960s and early 70s, and those described in this volume can be in demonstrating how globalization has developed and what twenty-first century globalization entails. In doing so, further unpacking the meaning of the term, “The Whole World is Watching,” is quite useful. What for instance, does it mean, when it is asserted that “the whole world” is directly interested in a domestic police riot that symbolizes the failure of conventional U.S. politics to address fundamental social conflict? Why in fact is the “whole world” impacted by these events and what ramifications would they have held for “the whole world?” One is also struck by the passive nature of the expression “is watching,” where the audience receives the visual images of state violence in front of the television screen. Their negative reaction to the viewing of a police riot that lurches out of control bloodying many innocent individuals is assumed, but the consequences or impact of their disgust is never spelled out. To be sure, it is fair to assert that even given license for the hyperbole, those who chanted the slogan assumed that the center of the world on August 26-28, 1968 was in Chicago, and that the electronic transmission of the horrific images of those days exposed the moral failings of state machinery, whose perpetrators could be justifiably shamed for their actions. Although those images were transmitted internationally, the primary audience watching the August events was domestic. Is it therefore fair to conclude that the U.S. was inherently positioned to be the primary and most important source of global events?

It is doubtful that forty-seven years ago, any of these issues would have been raised in the aftermath of the Democratic Convention or in the initial decades following its conclusion. Such a lack of curiosity not only is a function of its era, but also more importantly speaks to how dramatically our understanding of globalization forces has evolved. The consequences of that evolution are apparent
INTRODUCTION

throughout the chapters of this volume. We thus speak to the ways in which political awareness has come to mean more than the passive act of viewing a set of images, how the global dimension of such awareness has directly encouraged protest in radically different settings, and how understandings of the nature and limits of state power have become more sophisticated and nuanced. Volume authors also address the very nature of youth protest in the twenty-first century, and how it has been influenced by the social media borne from the information age, itself an important artifact representative of globalization processes. In so doing, we vary in our assessments regarding the efficacy of social media usage as a tool that has expedited successful protest outcomes or whether it has served as a catalyst that has reshaped the very nature of social movement structure and organization.

A second series of issues that we confront involve the nature of neo-liberalism, state authoritarianism, and their inter-relationship. To be clear, it is important to differentiate between globalization processes and neo-liberalism, the latter being a specific doctrine and set of practices that has become more prominent in part due to the visibility of the former. The ease with which ideas are spread and re-conceptualized according to one’s own social and political context speaks to one aspect of globalization. Other aspects include the growth of transnationalism, migration, and displacement, the construction of multiple but not necessarily exclusive civic and cultural identities, the free flow and appropriation of exogenous cultural forms, the growth of terrorist organizations undeterred by state boundaries, neo-colonial/empire building aspirations by states who also fail to recognize conventional boundaries and borders, the extra-territorial dimensions of consumption, and the expansion of global financial markets, free trade, and multinational corporate entities. Neo-liberalism represents a global ideological force that frames much of the economics of globalization in rather specific terms, while analyses of authoritarian state practices can only properly be contextualized by addressing their relationship to the global face of neo-liberalism. The case studies we present in this volume differ upon their emphasis of neo-liberal and authoritarian state policies and practices, but we make the argument that there is a linkage between the two, understood by the actors within the social movements we chronicle.

A third theme we discuss involves the characteristics of twenty-first century social movements. In so doing, we evaluate the forces contributing to their evolution, the nature of their organizational structure, and the limits of their success. Social movement theory includes an extensive literature, and in summarizing that literature while applying its foundational concepts to the protests discussed in this volume, we evaluate their usefulness as a set of analytical tools. The protests of which we comment of course involved youth. Such involvement was not necessarily exclusive to all of the protests but was always significant, even when in an indirect manner. In certain cases, youth involvement in twenty-first century protest fundamentally shaped the type of social movement that evolved; in other instances, the protests followed generic trajectories that most social
movements share regardless of the age of their participants. We assess the impact of youth participation in the various cases examined throughout the volume.

Finally, although not always noted in direct or explicit ways, educational issues, broadly conceived, with regard to access, funding, inclusivity, and the unfettered exchange of ideas are present in many of the conflicts that we discuss. In the cases of Chile, the U.S. Occupy Movement, and to a lesser extent Spain, educational issues involving financing, access, and cost play a major role in catalyzing youth protest. In Spain, Turkey, Bahrain, Iran, Russia, and Cambodia, state censorship and state efforts to control different forms of social media as well as Internet access, and of course the ideas generated from both, are important factors in understanding how the protests in many of these areas escalated. By conceiving of education in the broadest of terms in ways that extend beyond the formal institutional marker of schooling, it is possible to appreciate its significance to youth protest in ways that are important even when they are opaque. More generally, when examining the educational backgrounds of dissenting youth and their followers, one notes that participants were more likely to be well-educated individuals who valued the importance of exchanging ideas and information with one another. In the remainder of this introductory chapter, we will discuss these themes in a more systematic fashion.

GLOBALIZATION

One cannot fully appreciate the meaning of globalization without first examining assumptions governing the nature of the nation-state. The inherent hybridity of the concept illustrates its historical construction, with the merging of a collective sense of community, often fantasized or imagined (Anderson 1991), with the bureaucratic machinery typically associated with the modernist project (decision-making based upon rationality). One perspective holds that the apparatuses or institutions of the state, ostensibly designed to protect and further the interests of its citizenry, have worked to form a powerful and cohesive entity that in its most evolved forms, asserts authority that is difficult for the disgruntled and excluded to contest (Giddens 1987). Indeed, the scale of violence perpetrated during two World Wars and the nuclear terror that characterized the ensuing Cold War attest in the minds of some, to the power of the nation-state to pursue its self-interests regardless of political predilection. Indeed, some of those who analyze Middle East conflict view the Iraq War of 2003 as a twenty-first century form of U.S. empire building, which occurs when the strong state seeks to legitimately extend its imperial influence within a global arena, motivated by the desire to control access to valuable natural resources rather than accumulate territory (Hurst 2009). Foucaultian notions of governmentality further chart ways in which the state seeks to regulate the day-to-day lives of its citizenry, often through methods that are less than visible and in ways that transcend ideology (Foucault 1991). Opponents of such a perspective point to contradictions within the state that have never seem to be resolved. They include competing power centers among conflicting special interests that influence various government institutions, many of which are
themselves in opposition to one another, as well as the general erosion of institutional efficacy due to corruption. Even World War II and post-World War II states that were defined as “totalitarian” upon examination, often failed to eliminate competing internal efforts to expand power bases, nor were they able to assert control over the private spaces of daily life in ways that were as totalistic as had been asserted (Geyer 2008).

By the late twentieth century, the power of nationalist forces to disrupt state institutions smashed the nation-state nexus in numerous environments, as the failure to address nationalist and ethnic extremism became a recurrent phenomenon. One response to the failure of state efficacy has been to label governments as “failed states,” a term that has generated vigorous debate within academic circles, most often but not exclusively having been applied to African countries. While there are numerous critics of the concept with particular regard to its vagueness (Nay 2013), the prominence of the concept itself indicates the strong degree of disappointment with the performance of “weak states” regardless of their specific locales. As the attributes we associate with globalization became more prominent, the questioning of the efficacy of the nation-state from external influences became more pronounced, with weak states co-existing with authoritarian counterparts and the legitimacy of both being subject to widespread scrutiny. The dissatisfaction youth protesters have expressed with regard to the failure of their governments to address popular grievances must be analyzed in light of these trends.

Rapid increases in the number of forcibly dispossessed persons, often casualties of the ethnic and nationalist conflicts to which we have referred, have created millions of individuals without a firm sense of place or home. At the same time, as the potential for international mobility has become easier, there are those at the other end of the transnational spectrum who move in and out of and back and forth from various nation-states according to convenience. The hybridity inherent in the concept of transnationalism, and the understanding that one need not assert unitary allegiance to country, language, culture, or ethnicity in affirming one’s identity, or indeed the possibility that one can negotiate multiple identities within these spheres, are characteristics suggestive of the larger meaning of globalization (Vertovec 2009). Certainly an erosion of the permanence of place has contributed to other globalization characteristics as well. Youth and social movement activists have recognized that their actions are played out before a world stage, and have realized that acts involving the modification of their own strategies, tactics, and political perspectives according to events occurring in external settings can be inherently opportunistic rather than self-defeating.

That the concept of place lies at the heart of what we understand globalization to mean, and that such a concept has become muddied and ambiguous during the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries is not surprising. Indeed, as the meaning of globalization has become more refined, the notion of glocalization, or the process by which local communities reinterpret and redefine global cultural, social, and economic practices emanating from external sources according to their own terms (Robertson 1995), is instructive for it argues against simplistic dichotomies that
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posit the global in opposition to the local. In many of the cases discussed in this volume, global awareness of protest efforts in one setting does not result in the mechanical borrowing of tactics and strategies in the other context.

Such awareness tends to offer support for one’s own efforts without circumscribing agency. Nonetheless, even allowing for the ambiguity with which sense of place is affirmed, globalization theory does assert the prominence of place in understanding fundamental changes that are affecting the world’s population, substituting place for time, as the analytic most important in understanding the influences upon contemporary events. Conventional or modernist notions of time assume a linearity and progressivity with the past, present, and future viewed as having clear demarcations. In a world where flux, spontaneity, and speed characterize the modes in which events develop, the discrete categories of past, present, and future are easily deconstructed. That the pace of change can seem quite daunting in the twenty-first century is not surprising given the explosion of information available to large population groups and the increasing ease of access to that information. However, information accessibility has not only contributed to the enhanced speed with which events unfold but has also served to displace fixed categories in a number of domains including economics and finance, culture, and consumption. It is not coincidental that finance, predicated upon investment strategies that depend upon easy access to a wealth of information combined with the necessity of quick decision-making, has displaced traditional forms of manufacturing as a catalyst for wealth accumulation on a global scale. The ease with which financial centers can be created, repositioned, and moved is itself an artifact of globalization processes. The degree of interdependence with which they operate is also significant.

The speed and flexibility with which cultural practices from external sources are adopted, modified, and reconstructed is another artifact of globalization and is noteworthy for the multi-directionality in which cultural transmission and adaptation occur. Whether it involves food, music, dance, sport, fashion, literature, or politics, cultural exchange in a global era is messy, unpredictable but never unidirectional, as Appadarai (1996) has eloquently noted. It is because of this context that we can appreciate how easily Spanish youth were influenced by the Arab Spring protests, or why leaders of the Occupy Movement felt so comfortable in borrowing tactics from their Spanish counterparts.

Appadarai’s depiction of global cultural flows is also relevant when one examines global consumption patterns. The use of planned obsolescence strategies on a global scale has certainly limited the shelf lives of consumer items but the bombarding of consumers with product alternatives has additionally heightened the emphasis upon the acquisition of consumer products as a valued lived experience. As is true of ethnic, cultural, geographic, and political affiliation, twenty-first century consumption at its core involves a process of negotiating identity, particularly when one’s personhood is associated so closely with the products one consumes. To Ulrich Beck (1992), the uncertainty of which we have spoken creates in the minds of the global citizenry, a “risk society,” whereby there is no clarity with regard to the correct or appropriate actions one must pursue and where
one is constantly aware that the consequences of one’s actions can easily lead to failure. At the same time, Zygmunt Bauman (2004) has argued that given such circumstances, efforts to control one’s body through identifying one’s person with the objects one consumes are understandable.

There can be no doubt that twenty-first century consumption and consumerism legitimize the commodification of personal relationships as well as of objects of desire. But there are conflicting conclusions as to what the ramifications of global commodification entail. For some, the association of personhood with commodification objectifies one’s identity in ways that are crass and inherently dehumanizing (Giroux 2012). For others (Kenway and Bullen 2007), it is through the creation, possession, and exchange of artifacts that one is able to express a degree of autonomy that enhances personal agency and individuality. It is of course likely that both conclusions can be true, but in any event, it is clear that efforts to define, negotiate, and express identity are apparent within all of the spheres of globalization we have commented upon, be they geographic, ethnic, cultural, or economic. It is our belief that the characteristics of globalization that we have noted, particularly with regard to the interplay of consumption and identity, find specific expression within the world of social media and Internet usage, a topic of primary emphasis in this volume. But before fully discussing their importance from a theoretical perspective, it is instructive to go back and examine the ways in which the economic dimensions of globalization have been packaged within the specific ideological framework of neo-liberalism.

### NEO-LIBERALISM

Historians trace the antecedents of contemporary forms of global capitalism to the Breton Woods Agreements of 1944, where Allied powers established fiscal policies and mechanisms that dictated global trading patterns and policies during the 1950s and 60s. Such policies pegged national currencies to fixed exchange rates based upon the U.S. dollar as supported by the gold standard, while creating institutions including the International Monetary Fund, and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, which evolved into the World Bank. The impetus to promote international free trade policies arose as the Western victors of World War II blamed restrictive tariff policies and government intervention in currency devaluation for having contributed to the Great Depression. Of course, the standing of the U.S. after the Second World War gave it the influence to dictate the terms of global investment, as it controlled much of the world’s resources.

In 1971, the U.S. moved off the gold standard and allowed the dollar to float, but as financial reserves became depleted, as deficit spending increased (due in large part to the Vietnam War spending), and as OPEC (Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries) raised oil prices due to the 1973 Arab-Israeli War, the U.S. dollar become weaker. The immediate response included government de-regulation efforts on the part of the Carter administration in the airline industry. But from an ideological standpoint, neo-liberalism was most compellingly articulated with the ascendancy of Margaret Thatcher and the expression of Thatcherism. Ultimately,
efforts to promote free trade and extend global investment on the part of the U.S. and other “North” countries culminating in the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in 1995 (Harvey 2007).

The tenets of neo-liberalism became appealing under conditions of stagflation and deficit increases, as experienced by countries in the Global North in the late 1970s. The solutions that were proposed did not simply include the promotion of free trade policies per se, but included efforts to limit government regulations that defined acceptable corporate trading policies, offers to guarantee tax breaks to businesses that initiated global investment commitments, and decisions to restructure state support for public services by privatizing, limiting, or eliminating them altogether. These solutions resulted in the re-concentration of wealth in the hands of elites, the dismantling of labor unions and an attack upon organized collective efforts to insure the adequate distribution of state goods and services to those in need. As a result, there was a re-incentivizing of speculative financial practices to produce profit through stock holdings, corporate mergers and take-overs, and real estate investment, rather than relying upon traditional methods of accumulating wealth through the creation, manufacture and distribution of goods and resources (Harvey 2007).

Neo-liberalism of course is not simply a set of practices but involves a number of ideological beliefs that rationalize the practices. These beliefs include an uncritical faith in the power of the market to produce wealth if it is allowed to operate naturally through individuals exercising choice within an environment characterized by unbridled competition. The structural adjustment policies invoked in its name are rationalized for their contribution in making external investment palatable once a government’s budget is balanced. But they even more directly speak to a fundamental antipathy for the role of government, which is viewed as inherently antagonistic to the market. As is true of most ideological systems, neo-liberal principles are framed as supporting a set of practices whose inevitability is viewed as being beyond question. The libertarianism inherent in the ideology bespeaks of an autonomous individualism that can thrive when rational decision-making based upon the forces within a market environment are allowed to thrive.

Of course there are glaring contradictions within neo-liberalism as an ideology and a set of practices that are easily visible when the framework as a whole is scrutinized. The targeting of state assistance to corporations and investors, be it through tax breaks or even more direct forms of government support, particularly when corporate failure is immanent, belies the notion that a truly free market can operate with all players being treated in an equal fashion. Indeed, it is not surprising that different forms of crony capitalism have proliferated even within states that express uncritical support for the neo-liberal principles that they in practice violate. In a similar vein, when one examines the logic of speculation which has so driven global capitalist activity in the late twentieth and twenty-first centuries, it is clear that obtaining a comparative advantage over one’s competitors, through obtaining information not readily available to all, becomes a rational strategy for insuring the success of one’s efforts. Yet such behavior too contradicts the very level playing field upon which the pure free market concept is based.
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On a global level, European Union and U.S. farm subsidies, along with restrictive tariffs and dumping policies that have been maintained in the WTO era, privilege the “North” at the expense of the “Global South,” making it difficult for farmers in the developing world to compete with their counterparts and agribusiness interests in the North (Green and Griffith 2002). Transnational corporate investment in low labor cost industries, plagued by abuses in labor conditions and environmental degradation, has also demonstrated very mixed benefit at best to the world’s poor. In both cases, multi-state interventions intrude upon the “sanctity of a truly free market,” but within contexts that extend beyond the nation-state boundary.

Indeed, the unquestioned assumption in the importance of competition creates a global “race to the bottom” that has both exacerbated intra-state economic inequality along with the worst excesses of global capitalism on a cross-national basis, as seen in global slavery, child labor, and sex trafficking abuses (Bales 2004). However, awareness of the growing inequality caused by neo-liberal policies is not limited to those who are most dramatically affected, but is much more widespread, shared by the many who fear its consequences for their own futures. A majority of the youth who engaged in the protests we describe fell within this category; they were in fact responding to the global uncertainties of a risk society fueled by a widespread acceptance of neo-liberal policies.

Another of the contradictions within neo-liberal policies is that while global investors look for environments that are safe, secure, and offer protection for their investments, the very inequality and concentration of wealth that is produced as a result of such investment quickly becomes de-stabilizing. This may not matter for those seeking immediate short-term profit and are opportunistically more than willing to transfer their financial resources to new environs. However, the effects of polices that encourage a withdrawal of financial support before more fruits of economic growth can be shared place severe pressures upon states in need of capital. Indeed, Joan and John Comaroff have argued that as the effects of global neo-liberal polices become more widely shared in both the developed and developing worlds, the future of “Northern” countries can be seen through the negative experiences of the Global South (Comaroff and Comaroff 2011).

The search for profit, maximized through the securing of natural resources and reduced labor costs within a de-regulated business climate, coupled with the understanding that global capital is fluid and is no longer guaranteed to be reinvested once short term profits are secured, are global eventualities that most nation-states understand regardless of their democratic or authoritarian tendencies. But as economic and social inequality has become more pervasive, the challenge of defending the authoritarian state is more daunting, even when economic performance on the basis of growth rates alone is robust. Because the unfairness attributed to limited economic opportunity for all but the extremely privileged challenges the commitment to inclusivity upon which state authority is based, protests against the unfair concentration of wealth in the hands of a few occurred in both authoritarian and non-authoritarian political systems. Not all of the youth actors within the cases we examine in this volume expressed a direct rejection of
neo-liberalism. But whether they did so in specific terms or articulated their more general dissatisfaction with the authoritarian nature of their governments, in many cases, their awareness of the economic inequality they observed played into their own concerns regarding their own future economic opportunities.

In other situations, their opposition to state authoritarianism was simply more visceral, exemplifying a disgust for state efforts to control the private or public spaces of daily life, let alone denying opportunities for free expression, assembly, and political representation. As Yusuf Šarfati notes in chapter 2, the contested space of Gezi Park represented to protesters at least in a symbolic sense, Turkish government attempts to control access to a public space devoted to personal leisure, in order to privilege neo-liberal investment. It is ironic that in many cases, the libertarian values of individualism and autonomy, so much a part of the neo-liberal framework, found resonance as a reaction to the excesses of the neo-liberal authoritarian state. But this is just one of the contradictions inherent in the implementation of neo-liberal ideology that was exposed during the protests discussed in this volume.

SOCIAL MEDIA, THE INTERNET, AND THE INFORMATION AGE

In many ways, the Internet and social media characterize the nexus between the many facets of globalization of which we have spoken. The processes that involve commercialism, consumption, creativity, and the exchange of ideas and information are not only representative of what much of globalization entails, but are intrinsic to the character of the Internet and social media. As of June, 2012, it is estimated that there were 2,405,518,376 Internet users among a world population of 7,017,846,922, an increase in users of over two billion individuals since December 31, 2000 (Internet World Stats 2014). It was further estimated that one in four people worldwide would have used social networks in 2013, for a total of 1.73 billion users, up from 1.47 billion in 2012 (Bennett, 2013).

What such usage means and how it affects our daily lives has been the source of vigorous discussion and debate, but one area where there is strong agreement is that Internet protocols are indistinct, as lines of demarcation regarding commercial, personal, and state driven activities have been difficult to enunciate. Jenkins, Ford, and Green (2013) use the metaphors of spreadability and stickiness to describe the ways in which Internet usage is played out. By spreadability, the authors are referring to “the potential for audiences to share content for their own purposes” (2013, p. 3) as well as the resources that allow some content to be circulated more widely than others (2013, p. 4). The authors further note that the term stickiness, popularized by Malcolm Gladwell, refers to the need to solicit enough audience interest in an item to encourage its spreadability (2013, p. 4). In emphasizing these concepts, they make the case that users create a virtual community whose members comply with the principles one would associate with a moral economy. Citing Lewis Hyde’s work on gift exchange, they view the willingness of Internet users to share information with one another without expecting material remuneration as an important indication of the principles through which a moral economy is conducted.
They also reference Richard Sennett’s work on the nature of craftsmanship in explaining how pride in the product one creates motivates Internet users to share their work with so many, creating a notion of value that extends beyond commercialism, as evidenced within the motivation behind such movements as open software and YouTube production (2013, pp. 58-59). As will be noted later, the notion of value within the moral economy framework has specific salience when examining contemporary youth protest.

Still, there are dissenters who espouse alternative narratives that address the ramifications of Internet and social media usage. One view emphasizes the power of the media to control individual behavior, thought patterns, and the general exercise of choice within daily experiences. Mark Winocur (2007), for example, has argued that the contemporary computer screen represents a twenty-first century version of Jeremy Bentham’s panopticon, controlling one’s behavior in ways that are easily disguised to the participant. As the user’s language and vocabulary are mediated through word processing codes, with which she/he most likely has little understanding or familiarity, the very limits through which one is able to construct and interpret text are rarely understood or appreciated. The screen as window onto the outside world not only restricts one’s own personal movement, but creates limited space through which one’s visual, auditory and tactile sensations are stimulated, processed, and repackaged as responses.

Others have expressed caution regarding the addictive nature of the web given the plethora of images, sounds, and texts, made so readily available to the user, and the ease with which can become engrossed in a bombardment of information facilitated through use of the hypertext. A general concern involves the fear that Internet and social media users substitute authentic relationships with virtual ones, and as a result, succumb to a healthy degree of narcissism (Turkle 2011). What, for example, are the implications of substituting direct conversations with friends or associates with texting and instant messaging (Holden 2006; Turkle, 2011)? Even with regard to the creative processes with which youth engage, such as downloading YouTube videos of personal performances, it has been argued that efforts to gain widespread attention must conform to the commercial principles that permeate the Web (Banet-Weiser 2012).

As mobile technology has expanded and the popularity of the smartphone correspondingly increased, the above-mentioned concerns have become more prominent, as mobility has not only further eased access to information and facilitated greater communication, but in so doing has blurred the lines between work and leisure, and public versus private spaces (Winocur 2007). To the degree that critics view the use of such technology as serving to further expand the ability to control individual behavior in new realms, it is viewed with disfavor.

However, there is an alternative narrative that is at least equally compelling. This perspective views the expanding use of mobile technology as promoting agency rather than limiting it. The ease with which citizen journalists have used their Smartphones to download images of important world events while commenting upon them through use of Twitter and Facebook accounts is noted by Sahar Mohammed Khamis and Nada Alwadi in their examination of the Bahrain
case in chapter 3 of this volume. Their discussion gives context for the power of democratized journalism to profoundly enhance global awareness of important world events. The acts of Twittering or texting more generically encourage inherently creative communicative possibilities, and are the epitome of personal free expression, not its antithesis. More importantly, the cases in this volume demonstrate that the social media were a significant tool in expediting the organization of youth protest; they were employed in ways that encouraged protest participation.

There are important caveats to this contention. There are questions as to whether within a divided society, likeminded groups enhanced widespread social divisions rather than ameliorated them, resulting in social fragmentation rather than greater movement cohesiveness. In overtly authoritarian settings such as Bahrain (chapter 3), Iran (chapter 4), and Russia (chapter 6), regimes were adept at controlling Internet and social media access themselves, circumscribing their potential effectiveness for protest leaders. As Saied Golkar notes in chapter 4, Iranian authorities countered regime opposition through creating their own social network of government supporters. Nonetheless, the power of the Internet and social media allowed for events to be played out before a global audience in ways that were distinctly different from past protests. In addition, protest leaders’ reliance upon social media and the Internet proved effective in enhancing significant support within domestic populations. The protests resulting from a compromised political election in Cambodia as described by Lawrence Finsen in chapter 8, and the expansiveness and depth of student protest extending to most social sectors in Chile (discussed in chapter 5), demonstrate evidence for this contention. Even in environments where the physical expression of protest within public spaces was not possible, such as in Russia, the imagery and social media reporting that did find its way onto the Internet allowed for a limited degree of free expression to be voiced.

But did the use of social media and information gained and exchanged through the Internet serve as something more than a tool for protest leaders? As noted in chapter 5, Manuel Castells (2012) believes that this is indeed the case, with particular reference to the Spanish Indignados Movement (as well as the Arab Spring). Castells has argued for many years that the organizational structure of electronic media has markedly influenced social organization of all types. The concept of networking implies a horizontal rather than vertical communicative structure, as leadership and decision-making are more likely to occur on a collective rather than hierarchical basis, according to consensual rather than directive top-down approaches. When examining the strategies used in Spain, and to a certain extent within that part of the Occupy Movement that found expression in New York City, similar social organizational patterns are apparent. Castells also argues that the fears of a disconnect between real and virtual community building external to or within the world of social media are largely overblown, as he views the demonstrations within public space, be it at the Plaza del Sol in Madrid, or Tahir Square in Cairo, as serving to codify and enhance relationships initiated through the social media. When one is notified of a demonstration that will take
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place, and becomes aware of the acquaintances and friends of friends who will participate, it is easier to make commitment to the cause and express physical support for the goals of a movement through attending the protest march in person. In this way, the virtual and actual forms of relationship building in the name of a political cause become complementary and mutually supportive of one another.

To the extent that Castells’ contention is correct, one can also assume that the moral economy of the web, of which Jenkins et al. have spoken, is especially salient when one considers youth protest. They become interested in an issue or set issues, share their views through use of the social media and other means, understand that their views have a wider range of support, and become committed to a course of action. That the initial sharing of their knowledge and perspectives is done without material remuneration or direct compensation in mind, speaks to a consensus perspective that holds the Internet and social media to be spaces where the sharing of information is a deeply personal act. It is within this context that perceived efforts to control Internet access or social media usage were so roundly condemned in Spain and the U.S, with the pejorative term “information capitalism” (Webster 2000; Castells 2010) used to describe what was viewed as statist interference in cyberspace in order to restrict access to the collective, in order to privilege specific commercial and business interests. The negative repercussions of neo-liberal principles were thus viscerally acknowledged.

It is clear that social media and the Internet directly influenced much of the youth protest discussed in this volume, although in examining the South African case, William Munro in chapter 7 presents a compelling counter-example. But, even where social media influence is evident, it is less clear as to how fundamental that influence was in determining the character of the protest. In the case of Spain, the presence of social media and the Internet was transformative. In the other cases examined in this volume, although distinct and important, their influence advanced the goals of protesters without dramatically changing their organizational strategy or their behavior. And, in still other cases, the power of these entities as potential tools for expanding and enhancing protest was understood and limited by the prescriptive actions of the authoritarian State. But in any event, the view of social media and the Internet as having contributed to narcissistic behavior or the damaging of social relationships does not seem to have been borne out in any of these cases, as least as those views relate to political participation and social protest. In order to more fully address the questions involving contemporary youth protest, it behooves us to summarize the robust literature dealing with social movement theory for the purpose of examining its application to twenty-first century events.

SOCIAL MOVEMENT THEORY

The basic components of what has come to be known as social movement theory were first articulated in the 1970s, in reaction to prior analyses that stressed the collective behavior of mass movement participants. In so doing, they assumed that individuals naturally acted as autonomous, independent agents. However, in
reaction to the failure of social institutions to address their needs, they became influenced by the group, sacrificing their independence and rational decision-making capability for the instability and irrationality of collective mass action (Cohen 1985, 671-673). A variant of this view tended to characterize North American youth of the 1960s in particular, as little more than participants in adolescent rebellion, where institutions served as surrogates for parental authority, subject to the similar types of disrespect common within family units (Feuer 1969).

The problem with such analyses was that protest movement participants often acted quite strategically in ways that were rationally defensible. A second problem was that the Durkheimian and structural functionalist assumptions which grounded these analyses were themselves ideological constructs and products of an era that showed mistrust for any type of collective action as threatening to political and economic authority, often associating Marxist, neo-Marxist, and New Left proponents as dangerous and irrational (Cohen 1985). That their level of social analysis with respect to their understanding of “mass” behavior was overly simplistic was also problematic.

Modern social movement theory was constructed as an alternative, emphasizing four major components of social movements that deserved analytical attention whenever a movement was being discussed. They include: resource mobilization, repertoires of contention, opportunity structure, and the framing function of movement messaging. McCarthy and Zald (1977), in their seminal *American Journal of Sociology* article, argued that social movement participants engaged in serious and significant strategic thinking when organizing and developing the resources necessary to conduct a successful movement. They had to identify relevant resources to be put to their advantage, many of which were eclectic in value, robustness, and specific purpose. Once such resources were located, they needed to be coordinated and deployed in useful ways. In so proceeding, movement leaders had to interact with a number of different individuals, institutions and social organizations, interactions that required their use of sophisticated communicative skills. In short, social movements required their leaders and followers to act rationally and strategically, rather than ways that were susceptible to crowd influenced emotion. The cases in this volume certainly demonstrate evidence for this conviction, illustrating a degree of sophistication that one might not normally ascribe to “youthful” (substitute inexperienced or naïve) demonstrators.

Charles Tilly’s notion of “repertoires of contention” also significantly furthered our understanding of social movements within historical and comparative contexts. He used the term to denote the range of protest tactics individuals employed to further their claims (1977 as cited in Soule 2007, p. 300). In so doing, he discussed the ways in which such behavior was “culturally coded” but subject to real life experiences and situations (McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001, p. 16). Tilly noted that repertoires changed through time, that they took on different meanings according to the contexts in which they were expressed, but that sometimes, they were borrowed and repositioned according to the differing environments in which they were utilized. Through time, he specifically noted that repertoires utilized in
modern Europe became more generalized and not necessarily specific to the immediate grievance for which one was reacting. Above all, he viewed the process of contestation as being natural to social interaction, and saw repertoires as reflective of the interactive nature between opposing actors and institutions that created an inherently dynamic process. In this volume, we see repertoires that range from the demonstration and strike, to the Twitter message and YouTube video, to the protest camp within a notable public space, that were all used to further protest goals. Not only were the repertoires eclectic, but they were sometimes borrowed and redeployed cross-nationally.

Sidney Tarrow (2011) argued that one must consider what political opportunity structures exist in order to more fully appreciate how social movements develop and how their potential development may be limited. Factors including coalition building, relationships toward and among elites, the degree of state repression, etc., all had to be factored in assessing when, how, and why social movement formation occurred and how successful it might be. Indeed, throughout this volume, we see how the different opportunity structures in place within various political systems created the space for social movements to grow or impeded their development. Tarrow was quite clear in noting that the concept of “opportunity structure” did not preclude awareness of the importance of agency or of actors maximizing the potential for social movement creation, but instead implied an interactive relationship between the actors and the political environments within which they operated. In this volume, we see the growth of fully developed social movements as well as the repression of protest on the part of regimes that are able to limit the opportunities for such movements to foster. We additionally see expressions of protest that fail to develop into fully formed social movements, but nonetheless articulate a profound sense of grievance whose presence is unabated even after the specific acts of protest have subsided.

The final component of social movement theory that is applicable to our analyses involves the concept of framing, a “perspective [that] views movements as signifying agents engaged in the production and maintenance of meaning for protagonists, antagonists, and bystanders” (Snow 2007, p. 384). Grounded within the symbolic interaction literature, scholars such as David Snow (Snow and Benford 1988; Snow 2007) understood that conventional views of ideology as a static, pre-determined set of ideas, adapted by or imposed upon protesters, were insufficient in their failure to appreciate the fluid and constructive ways in which social movement participants create meanings that enhance collective understandings. In distinguishing between “collective action frames” and the “frames of everyday life,” Snow noted that the framing process allows individuals to focus upon relevant elements of one’s social field, prioritize or select those elements that are most relevant or important to understanding the bigger picture, and transform or alter the meaning of specific events, allowing for new interpretations to percolate. In so doing, the meanings derived from the practices of everyday life become elevated into new and broader contexts reflecting larger culturally embedded meanings within the social structure as a whole (Snow 2007, pp. 381-384).
Within this volume, examples of framing can be observed in all of the cases that are examined. The clash of frames, depicting the mass demonstration as a threat to social order (as expressed by police and/or state authorities), or as an expression of popular will heretofore ignored by the same authorities is typical of most protest events and is certainly played out in the Chile, U.S., Spanish, and Turkish, cases, to name a few. In most of these cases, the larger frame is one of protesting existing neo-liberal and authoritarian practices as having exacerbated inequality. Indeed, given the pre-existing frames that posited these practices as being inevitable and socially beneficial in the long term (promoting eventual economic growth and political stability), the force with which anti-neo-liberal and anti-authoritarian frames were expressed on a global level should not be underestimated. In looking for the long-lasting repercussions of contemporary youth protest, the fact that critiques of neo-liberal policies, crony capitalism, and the authoritarian state can no longer be easily dismissed as irrelevant and have become part of regular global political discourse represents a major achievement.

Although it is easy to see elements of social movement theory throughout this volume, the cases we present raise questions about the applicability of the theory in a globalized, information/social media driven environment as well. For example, while one can speak of resource mobilization in conventional terms, what constitutes participation in a social movement becomes less clear in the digital age. As Taylor (2013) has noted, when signing an online petition requires little more than the use of a few keystrokes, how can such a level of participation be assessed? Of course, in some of the cases we present, such an action has more profound consequences for the actor than carrying the placard, but this of course is not always true. The example is indicative of how definitions regarding what a resource entails, its value, and the conditions under which it can be mobilized can become extremely murky.

In a similar vein, we have noted the diversity of repertoires that were employed throughout the youth protests discussed in this volume. But assessing which repertoires were planned and formally scripted, which ones were spontaneous, and for which audiences their employment was intended to reach can be quite difficult to determine, particularly within globalized settings. It, for example, is certainly paradoxical that as Michael Mead Yaqub and Iveta Silova note, the performance activities of the Pussy Riots band (chapter 6) and the repression to which band members were later subjected, captured the imagination of a global audience, more engaged in the band members’ welfare than was their domestic audience. This was in spite of the fact that avant garde artistic expression within Russia and the former Soviet Union has had a long history with an expectation that such expression would be provocative and critical of political authority. Indeed, William Munro in chapter 7 presents evidence that a reliance upon social media created conflicting and not always supportive repertoires of contention among South African activists, many of whom relied upon more traditional organizational tactics. Does recognizing the fact that repertoires of contention in the twenty-first century are addressing multiple audiences within local, national, and international
contexts therefore change our ability to assess their efficacy, or the influence of the social movements they seek to promote?

Assessing the viability of political opportunity structures to encourage or allow for a social movement to develop presents an additional set of problems when one considers the global contexts of which we have spoken. Under what conditions, for example, does awareness of protest in one country create the opportunity for a social movement development in another setting? And, can such variables ever be measured given the speed but inexactitude with which ideas and events are recorded and transmitted through cyberspace? If one concentrates solely upon determining which formal structures and institutions create opportunities for successful protest, then one is compelled to assess the complementary roles of institutions at local, state, national and transnational levels with varying degrees of legitimacy and importance to different citizen groups, even when such structures may be in conflict with one another.

Finally, an understanding of the role of framing in a globalized environment where the influence of social media is pervasive creates its own set of issues. The act of meaning making within a political context implicitly involves searching for a connection between the assertion of one’s person identity and the symbols that make sense of one’s daily experiences in larger cultural terms. But as Poletta et al. (2013) have noted, congruence between the articulation of the personal, the collective, and the social can never be assumed as occurring naturally. Social media engagement does not necessarily compromise one’s individuality, nor does it uniformly create a sense of collectivity. In the Chinese and Russian cases, a circumscription of the framing process occurred with social media participants often speaking to one another rather than to those whose backgrounds may have been different from their own. To be clear, in spite of these caveats, we believe social movement theory to still be very useful as an interpretive framework. However, the elements of social movement theory of which we have spoken need to be viewed within contexts different from those that existed when they were initially formulated.

YOUTH AND EDUCATION

As we have noted, youth have historically been deeply involved in the creation of social movements. However, there are factors that explain why their participation in twenty-first century protests has been particularly compelling. As Table 1.1 indicates, youth comprise a significant segment of the world’s population (25%), and their involvement in tertiary education is noteworthy. The paradox of course is that their unemployment rate is also significant. The data collected for the cases examined in this volume largely (but not uniformly) follow global trends.
I. EPSTEIN

Table 1.1 Youth/Tertiary Educational Enrollment/Unemployment Statistics, 2013

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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>World</td>
<td>1,809,600 billion</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Turkey</td>
<td>19.3 million</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iran</td>
<td>19.2 million</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>14.9 million</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>299.1 million</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cambodia</td>
<td>4.6 million</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>4.2 million</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>23.5 million</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>6.8 million</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bahrain</td>
<td>0.2 million</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United States</td>
<td>63.8 million</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: The World’s Youth: 2013 Data Sheet

It is not difficult to see that as youth have become more demographically prominent and their educational attainment has increased, the failure to accommodate their presence either with regard to economic opportunity or political participation has created conditions that have encouraged protest movements to percolate. But even more fundamentally, our understanding of who youth are and how they shape their identities and interact within a globalized environment has become significantly more sophisticated. For example, in examining the numerical ranges in age listed in Table 1.1 (youth ages listed as ranging from 10-24, youth employment figures calculated according to ages 15-24), we see how problematic it is to define youth according to pre-determined age categories because of their arbitrary nature, and their rigidity. The field of youth studies acknowledges the weaknesses of previous academic scholarship, where the youth designation was associated with adolescence, a culturally arbitrary construct categorized as a stage of transition to adulthood, implicitly privileging the latter at the expense of the former. By rejecting the concept of youth as a discrete developmental stage but affirming its importance as a series of cultural practices that involve subjects who actively express their identities in multiple ways, youth studies advocates acknowledge the conceptual ambiguity that is also evident in the treatment of
INTRODUCTION

youth within this volume (Bucholtz 2002). Thus, in some of cases we describe, youth are indistinguishable from older colleagues with regard to their leadership and participation in protest movements. In other cases, they represent a distinct cohort that is easily identifiable.

The processes that we have discussed that mark the twenty-first century from previous eras: globalization, neo-liberalism, and information age/social media exposure, have certainly influenced the ways in which contemporary youth define their aspirations and the opportunities they utilize in seeking their fulfillment. But as we have noted, these processes too can be characterized by conceptual ambiguity. Therefore, while we see in Chile, student leaders assuming traditional political roles ascribed to those holding positions of leadership within the country’s more prestigious universities, in Spain, formal leadership of any type was eschewed. As Lawrence Finsen notes with regard to the Cambodian case, an increasingly young population that came of age took upon itself the task of pressing for greater political representation without having had significant resources in the past to do so. And, it is clear, when examining some cases such as that of Russia, that protest movements as they have conventionally been conceived, did not develop as extensively as did their counterparts in other parts of the world. But what can be said for at least most of these cases is that the presence of youth as a significant or potentially significant political force was widely recognized, that their use of social media and other forms of cyberspace communication heightened their global awareness, and that their ability to translate their own political and concerns into messaging that spoke to broader issues of political and economic inequality was noteworthy.

The role of education as a part of social movement development was a strong one during the twentieth century and this continues to be true of twenty-first century social movements as well. Members of the Highlander Folk School, for example, along with the mentorship of teachers and leaders such as James Lawson at Vanderbilt University, taught principles and tactics of non-violence to future leaders of the U.S. Civil Rights Movement (Halberstam 1999). Many of the participants of the Freedom Summer campaign of 1964, who came from the North, were taught such tactics in a national effort to register African-American citizens to vote in Mississippi. They later employed the same tactics that were instrumental in protests against the Vietnam War. The use of the teach-in on university campuses throughout the country, for example, was directly derived from the educational experiences of Civil Rights workers and movement participants. Indeed, with regard to the South African case, the anti-apartheid movement gained international support after the massacre of Soweto high school students on June 16, 1976, who were peacefully protesting 1974 regulations that stipulated Afrikaans and English to be the two official languages within the school system. It is therefore useful to recognize that the direct role of educational policy in inciting student protest in Chile, has an important global historical legacy. And, it is this legacy that helps to further explain how protests in the U.S. and Spain, that were not immediately focused upon issues of educational inequality, in time, incorporated this narrative as a part of their movements.
Two points should be reiterated with regard to the relationship between education and protest in the twenty-first century. First, the neo-liberal values of which we have previously spoken are clearly evident within many of the educational policies that have been given a global presence. They, of course, are most evident in the concerns regarding the responsibility of the state to provide public support for educational opportunity and the threat to the principle that privatization creates. But they are also present in an indirect sense. Youth are increasingly aware of the connection between education and employment, the global competition for highly skilled labor, and the claims that human capital is maximized when educational standards are raised. Those who accept these claims believe they are being denied the opportunities to compete for a better future. Those who reject the connection between educational attainment and employability view the political and economic systems within their own countries as rigged against their own futures because social institutions such as schools have been hopelessly compromised. But in both cases, their education serves as an identity marker that contributes to their broader worldviews.

A second point that bears emphasis involves the inter-relationship between educational issues and other political and social concerns. Because it is impossible to limit talk about inequality to the education sector only, given the ways in which neo-liberal policies affect the delivery of other basic services including housing, food, and medical assistance, youth were able to generalize personal grievance that was educationally focused into a broader critique of economic inequality quite easily. At the same time, those whose initial focus was centered upon the effects of crony capitalism in other domains were naturally led to consider the effects of educational inequality too.

A final comment that deserves reiteration involves the educational function of social media and Internet usage. The values that we associate with the moral economy of the Internet with regard to the privileging of what is deemed valuable rather than simply profitable, the sense of obligation that social media users feel with regard to the sharing of information with others, and the importance of protecting the right of unfettered access to information, are values that those that have also been used to justify the support of formal schooling and ancillary educational institutions. When we examine the purposes of education, these values are commonly employed in support of educational practices. Broadening our understanding of educational practice to include the use of the Internet and social media in support of political protest implies that these activities are not simply important communicative acts, but have intrinsic educational importance.

CONCLUSION

In November, 1999, in response to the hosting of the World Trade Organization’s Third Ministerial Conference, one of the largest mass protests in Seattle’s history was held to criticize the effects of free trade policies on the environment, agriculture, and worker wages and rights. The sheer number of demonstrators who gathered on November 30 and blocked access to the city Convention Center for the
meeting’s opening session, surprised the police, although protesters advertised their intentions ahead of time. Although there were scattered incidents of property destruction, most of the protesters were peaceful. A city curfew was imposed soon afterwards, but

By 5:00 pm., large squads in riot armor and gas masks, backed by armored vehicles, began sweeping through downtown using concussion grenades, rubber bullets, and tear gas to force remaining protestors and bystanders alike off the street. Later, the National Guard was called in and over 500 protesters were arrested. (Oldham 2009)

Both the Seattle mayor and the Washington State governor were accused of overreaction, let alone violating the free speech and assembly rights of the protesters, as a no protest zone was enacted and protesters were prohibited from continuing to demonstrate in public spaces near the Convention Center (Oldham 2009). It should also be noted that protests against the meeting also occurred in over twenty countries at the same time (Vidal 1999). But the Seattle protests received a good degree of the world’s attention and foreshadowed future demonstrations at U.S. national political conventions and at the World Economic Forum in Davos, Switzerland in 2003. What then, made the Seattle protests any different from the ones we are analyzing in this volume? Unlike the demonstrations of the 1960s, of which we have previously spoken, an understanding of the nefarious effects of neoliberalism and globalization processes was clearly articulated in Seattle. And, if one views the efforts of these protesters as having ultimately failed to accomplish their aims, the more contemporary protests of which we speak have certainly had at best, a very mixed degree of success.

Certainly, conditions changed in the decade subsequent to the 1999 Seattle protests. A more complete understanding of the effects of neoliberalism became evident, particularly after the Great Recession of 2008. Even before that financial crisis however, the implications of crony capitalist practices and of state authoritarianism had become clearer. The first decade of the twenty-first century was one of global terrorism and ensuing conflict in Iraq, Afghanistan and Pakistan, all of which belied the assumption that states could guarantee their public security solely through the use of domestic authoritarian practices. But above all, the growth of social media usage allowed for a global connectivity among 2011-2013 protesters that could only have been imagined in 1999. One can thus point to the scale of protests and the increased awareness of their messaging that mark the events chronicled in this volume from their predecessors. We also subscribe to the view that while it is understandable that one might assess the value of a set of protest activities according to the degree of change their presence effects, their importance lies beyond the immediate results they create. Thus the reframing of issues of inequality and authoritarian practice that occurred subsequent to the Seattle protests has had lasting significance, making concrete the issues that for many seemed to be abstractions in 1999 (Smith 2014). In the following pages, we invite the reader to examine those characteristics that are salient to the cases we bring forth in the volume, whether they involve the effects of globalization and
I. EPSTEIN

neo-liberalism, the use of electronic and social media, the elements of social movement theory, and where relevant, the role of youth and the importance of education, some or all of which speak to the ways in which protests develop and what makes them so compelling.

In so doing, it needs to be stressed that the case studies discussed in this volume offer a representative rather than comprehensive picture of contemporary youth protest. Because the Arab Spring has been commented upon at length in other venues (Howard and Hussain 2013; Lesch and Haas 2012; Lynch 2014), it is not emphasized here although certain implicit similarities and connections can be found in the authors’ analyses of the Bahraini, Iranian and Turkish cases. It should also be noted that time constraints prevent a complete analysis of protests that are ongoing, be they mass protests in the U.S. over the need for more comprehensive policies at domestic and global levels that will more adequately address climate change concerns (Foderaro 2014), or student demonstrations in Hong Kong calling for a more expansive and transparent process for electing the next chief executive (Buckley and Wong 2014; Pepper 2014a, 2014b, 2014c). The fact that the global visibility of these protests is so strongly in evidence in late 2014 speaks to the ongoing need to analyze contemporary youth protest in all of its inundations. Hopefully, the cases presented in this volume will in a small way contribute to that process.

REFERENCES


INTRODUCTION


I. EPSTEIN


2. DYNAMICS OF MOBILIZATION DURING GEZI PARK PROTESTS IN TURKEY

Capitalism will cut down the tree if it can’t sell its shadow.
– Karl Marx

To live like a tree alone and free, like a forest in brotherhood.
– Nazım Hikmet

A small group of environmentalists objected to the uprooting of trees in Gezi Park in the heart of Istanbul when the municipality began to implement its plan to raze the park and build in its place the replica of an Ottoman era military barrack with a shopping mall inside. The municipal police burnt down the tents of the camping protesters in Gezi Park and used excessive force against them in the early morning hours of May 31, 2013. When images of wounded protesters from this clamp-down spread through Twitter, Facebook and text messages, many more enraged Istanbulites flocked to Taksim square adjacent to Gezi Park, and in a few days the protest movement had been transformed into a national uprising against the government galvanizing millions all around Turkey. For fifteen days, protesters occupied the Park and established the Gezi commune, which became a tent city with a free library, daycare, makeshift clinic, and a space where spontaneous rallies were held. People mobilized in every corner of Turkey and expressed their discontent and frustration with police brutality, the government’s policies and Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan’s combative political rhetoric. The riot police used tear gas, water cannons, and pepper spray to disperse the protesters. After the police raided Gezi Park on June 15 and ended the occupation, protest groups formed people’s assemblies in various other public parks and continued to demonstrate albeit with lower intensity.

The Gezi Park uprising represented a unique experiment in Turkish politics by upsetting established political divisions and forging a multi-group alliance composed of diverse political, social and cultural currents in Turkish society, including environmentalists, feminists, soccer fan groups, gay rights movements, post-materialist youth, Islamist groups, Kurds, and ultra-nationalists (ulusalcılar).

By utilizing theoretically important insights from social movement theory and contentious politics (McAdam, McCarty and Zald 1996; McAdam, Tarrow and Tilly 2001; Tarrow 2011), this paper attempts to answer several questions: How do Gezi Park protests help us conceptualize transformations in the forms of collective action in Turkey? What were the mechanisms of political mobilization used by the protesters? What was the government’s response to dissipate and discredit the protests?

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To address these questions, first I draw parallels between the Gezi Park protests and new social movements. Then, I analyze how protesters translated societal grievances into collective action through framing processes (Benford and Snow 2000; Meyer 2004). Frames created by the protesters addressed popular grievances stemming from neo-liberal urban development projects diminishing residents’ voices in their cities’ living spaces and the governing Justice and Development Party’s (JDP) increasingly authoritarian governing style and restriction of individual life choices. By framing popular urban grievances, the protesters aimed to unify diverse groups and build political influence against a common powerful enemy (Hathaway and Meyer 1997). The protesters posed a challenge to the authorities by innovating repertoires of contention, such as utilizing political humor and embracing forms of passive resistance, and using digital media networks to spread their messages. On the other hand, the government and its allies tried to weaken the protesters’ frames by circulating counter-frames (Noakes 2005), which trivialized and securitized the protester groups, in the conventional and social media. These framing contests led to competition for cultural legitimacy between the Geziciler (Gezi protesters) and the government. This symbolic struggle over public opinion in Turkey would determine the future legacy of Gezi Park protests for Turkish politics.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The Gezi Park Protests mark a significant “episode of contentious politics” in Turkey. According to Mc Adam, Tarrow and Tilly (2001), contentious politics broadly refers to collective political struggle and is “episodic rather than continuous, occurs in public, involves interaction between makers of claims and others, is recognized by those others as bearing on their interest, and brings in government as mediator, target, or claimant” (5). An analysis of the Gezi Park Protests can inform several aspects of the literature on collective action and contentious politics. I particularly address the similarities Gezi Park protests bear with new social movements (NSMs) in regards to claim making and organizational forms, the role framing processes in mobilization, demobilization and counter-mobilization, and the framing contests between the authorities and the protesters.

Scholars of contention argue that the NSMs bear characteristics that differ from conventional social movements. While it would be inaccurate to define the multiple and highly heterogeneous constituents of the Gezi Park protests as part of one single social movement, it is clear that the protests constitute an episode of contentious politics, and many of the claims made by different protester groups and various organizational strategies they adopted have striking resemblances to NSMs. I point out five of these characteristics. 1) The grievances tend to focus on cultural and symbolic issues rather than economic grievances that characterized conventional working class movements (Melucci 1989; Johnston, Larana and Gusfield 1994, p. 7). By primarily emphasizing their ‘right to the city’ and lifestyle concerns, the Gezi Park protesters prioritized post-material concerns over materialist concerns (Inglehart 1995; Inglehart and Welzel 2005). 2) Rather than
targeting formal institutions and seizing political power, the protesters aimed to broaden participation in the civil society, democratize everyday practices, and emphasize group identities (Melucci 1996, p. 102). 3) Similar to the contemporary social movements elsewhere, the rise of the protests revealed a crisis of the conventional channels of political participation, such as political parties and parliament (Offe 1987). The protesters were careful not to accept patronage from any political formation or to be co-opted by conventional political actors. For instance, on the second day of the uprising, the protesters objected to the entrance of the main opposition Republican People’s Party (RPP) to Gezi Park with party banners. A poster held by a protester sums up the distrust towards conventional political actors: “We can attend to religion without the JDP, to father (Atatürk) without the RPP, to the motherland without the NAP (Nationalist Action Party), to Kurds without the PDP (Peace and Democracy Party), we are the people.”

4) Unlike the radical working class movements that used violent tactics of disruption, Gezi Park protesters primarily focused on non-violent forms of resistance, such as tactics of civil disobedience, and political humor (Johnston, Larana, and Gusfield 1994, p. 8). The embrace of these novel tactics created many difficulties for the authorities. For instance, on June 17, Erdem Gündüz started the civil disobedience practice known as “standing man” (duran adam), where he would ‘just stand’ on the pavement in Taksim Square for eight continuous hours to protest. Thousands joined Gündüz in his protest in different parts of Turkey after the action was diffused through Twitter, and the police found it difficult to frame an appropriate response. Through using political humor, young protesters were able to access new audiences and use a vocabulary over which the authorities had little control. 5) Unlike cadre-led hierarchical structures of traditional social movements, the social protests had a leaderless, diffused and decentralized character (Melluci 1996, p. 103; della Porta and Diani 2006, pp. 130-131). Advances in wireless technology led to the creation of horizontal communication networks, which were difficult for governments to control and which brought together various groups on relatively egalitarian platforms (Castells 2012). The creation of mass assemblies in various public parks in Turkey in the aftermath of the protests also shows the distrust towards hierarchical authority structures and an embrace of participatory modes of decision-making.

Collective Action Frames and Framing Contests

Scholars of contentious politics have long debated mechanisms of political mobilization. After the mid-1980s, there was a renewed focus on the role of symbols, ideas and meaning in mobilization efforts. Scholars of Social Movement Theory (SMT) discussed, for instance, how meaning-making is a necessary link between social grievances and collective action. In this view, structural factors, political opportunities and organizational resources are not sufficient to explain collective action, because political actors need to make grievances meaningful for potential supporters. Thus, activists interpret grievances and try to generate and diffuse those interpretations among the general population (Snow et al. 1986,
Hence, rather than focusing on macro or meso-level factors, the ideational approach emphasizes micro-dynamics of mobilization. This emphasis on ideas and meaning-making also differs from earlier works on ideology, which have treated ideas as part of a coherent template that can be deduced from works of ideologues (Snow and Benford 2005). In this social constructivist view, ideas form through intersubjective negotiation, have an emergent quality, and stem from shared meanings and identities that constitute the symbolic, expressive, and interpretative part of social life (Ross 1997, p. 42). By participating in these meaning-making processes, the makers and receivers of claims engage in a “politics of signification” (Benford and Snow 2000, p. 623). As agents of signification, political actors articulate and disseminate collective action frames that aim to mobilize potential adherents, sway by-standers and demobilize antagonists (Snow and Benford 1988, p. 198). These collective action frames are defined as “the specific metaphors, symbolic representations, and cognitive cues used to render or cast behavior and events in an evaluative mode and suggest alternative modes of action” (Zald 1996, p. 262). In other words, different aspects of the observed phenomena are sliced, assembled, and packaged in a novel way to produce a new vantage point (Benford and Snow 2000, p. 623).

Scholars of framing identified three main types of frames, namely diagnostic, prognostic, and motivational. Diagnostic frames help to diagnose problems and attribute responsibility, while prognostic frames propose ways to solve social problems (Zald 1996, p. 265). On the other hand, motivational frames “provide(s) a ‘calls to arms’ or rationale for engaging in ameliorative collective action, including the construction of appropriate vocabularies of motive” (Benford and Snow 2000, p. 617). In the case of the Gezi Park protests, the protesters primarily used diagnostic and motivational frames. While diagnostic frames identified social grievances shared by primarily urban, educated, young, post-materialist societal segments and attributed blame to the JDP government’s authoritarian policies and neo-liberal urban development projects, motivational frames provided inspiration to bystanders to take onto the streets, and motivation for the participants to continue protest activities.

The success or failure of the collective action frames and counterframes depends on the degree of resonance they have with the life experiences of the target audiences and the cultural stock of the society (Gamson 1992, 2004; Williams 2004). Hence, framing contests cannot be understood detached from their historical, cultural, and everyday context. As long as these cultural resources differ among different groups, the resonance of collective action frames among these groups also differs (Gamson 1992). The protesters primarily constructed injustice frames that appealed to the grievances felt by educated, young, post-materialist youth. These societal segments perceived the laws and regulations passed by the JDP government as restricting their lifestyles, and the paternalistic language of Erdoğan as authoritarian. The protesters also critiqued neo-liberal urban development by constructing “environmental justice” frames that appealed to urban residents.
Frames, however, are not only utilized by opposition actors to challenge the dominant authority, but also by the authorities to discredit and demobilize opponents (Naokes 2005). This leads to framing contests between opposition figures and officials (Benford 1993; Zuo and Benford 1995). The JDP government and the pro-government media outlets tried to securitize the protests by framing the protesters as vandals, terrorists, vagabonds as well as tools of an international conspiracy. Moreover, Erdoğan deliberately cast the protester groups as enemies of religion and desecrators of religious mores. The aim was to capitalize on the long-standing distrust that existed among the conservative constituents against Republican elites and their secular followers and thereby to politicize the secular-religious cleavage that formed the main axis of Turkish politics in the 1990s and 2000s.

The Role of the Media

SMT literature indicates that during contentious episodes the media becomes a site for the construction of meaning and a space where discursive, symbolic contests are carried out (Gamson 2004; Noakes and Johnston 2005). In the case of the Gezi Park protests, digital media became a site where framing contests were carried out. Moreover, the protesters utilized new forms of information technology, particularly Twitter and Facebook, as mobilizing structures. Due to their anonymous and decentralized qualities, these networks were hard to control by the governing authorities and rapidly emerged as the primary tools in organizing protest, particularly among the tech-savvy youth. In addition to their communication potential, these virtual networks also quickly disseminated the injustice frames in the forms of videos, cartoons, and slogans to both national and transnational audiences. While social media’s mobilization potential has also been emphasized in the recent Arab uprisings, in the Turkish case it is important to indicate that it also became a tool for counter-mobilization. The well-organized supporters of Turkey’s governing JDP were quick in responding to the protesters and circulating counterframes to both national and international target audiences. This shows that social media can be a potential tool in organizing protests against the state, but can also be used by the state and its allies to diffuse or discredit protests.

In the case of the Gezi Park protests, there was also a third role that the media played. The broadcasts of the visual media, mainly national mainstream TV channels, such as CNNTURK, NTV, and HaberTurk, became the subject of collective action frames. The lack of coverage of the protests, specifically during the initial stages in the mainstream mass media was depicted as a sign of government pressure, and media bosses’ complicity in the disappearance of multivocality in Turkey’s public sphere.

CONSTITUENTS OF THE NEW FACE OF POLITICS IN THE GEZI PARK PROTESTS

Socially as well as politically Gezi Park protesters formed a diverse coalition. Tarrow, Levi and Murphy (2006) define coalitions as “collaborative, means-
oriented arrangements that permit distinct organizational entities to pool resources in order to effect change.” One of the sources of coalition building in the case of the Gezi Park protests was the desire of groups to gain “legitimacy and political influence against more powerful enemies.” (Hathaway and Meyer 1997). By framing popular urban grievances, the Gezi protesters aimed to unify and mobilize various opponents of the JDP government. Erdoğan’s harsh and uncompromising reactions towards the protesters consolidated an alliance that was composed of groups who would not otherwise stand next to each other.

While the uprising included a multiplicity of groups and experiences that defy easy categorization, for the sake of simplicity I cluster the components of this coalition in two main categories. On the one hand, there were political groups that conventionally opposed the JDP. These traditional political opponents of the JDP included the hyper secular-nationalists (ulusalcılar), which were represented by groups such as the Workers Party or Turkish Youth Union, radical left organizations, such as Socialist Democratic Party, Turkish Communist Party, and the pro-Kurdish Peace and Democracy Party. On the other hand, identity based groups, such as environmentalists, feminists, LGBT activists, Anticapitalist Muslims, and post-materialist university youth composed another layer of participants. It is these latter groups that I will focus on in this chapter, as I think their participation and demands demonstrate the novelty of the Gezi Park Protests in Turkish political life.

As one of the most marginalized groups of Turkey, LGBT activists were at the forefront of the protests. Disdain towards gays is officially voiced and illustrated by the statements of the former minister of women and family Aliye Kavaf, who has claimed that homosexuality is a disease and needs to be cured (Bildirici 2010). Various gay rights organizations participating in the protests came together and formed the “LGBT Blok.” During the commune, a tent was opened under the banner of LGBT Blok in Gezi Park, demolition of which was a direct threat to the gay way of life as the park had been a clandestine gay-meeting point, where homosexual youth hooked-up (Zengin 2013). The tent, which was well attended during the Gezi Park Commune days, became the center of pro-gay rights speeches and numerous impromptu actions (Tarhan 2013). In addition, LGBT activists challenged the homophobic premises of Turkish political and public discourse by actively fighting against the police in the barricades and embracing slogans that increased their visibility, such as “Let’s say we are queer! Get used to it, we are everywhere” (Velev ki ibneyiz. Alişın heryerdeyiz), “Love is to organize” (Aşk örgütlenmek), “Lesbians exist” (Lezbiyenler vardır), “Transsexuals exist” (Translar vardır). LGBT groups also opened stands with their rainbow flags in the participatory forums conducted in public parks in the aftermath of the Gezi occupation and continued to raise awareness on LGBT issues, such as hate crimes committed towards gays. Many in Turkey became familiar with and publicly supported LGBT causes for the first time in their lives. This support culminated with the LGBT Pride Parade held on June 30, when over 30,000 gathered in Taksim to celebrate gay rights (Çakiroğlu, 1 July 2013). By many accounts, the
The feminist movement was also at the forefront of the Gezi uprising. According to one survey, half of the participants in the Gezi commune were women (Kılıç 2013, p. 114). Similar to the LGBT movement, feminists used the Gezi Park protests to challenge patriarchy and sexist stereotypes in the society. Feminists in Turkey have long criticized the patriarchal language of Erdoğan, who encourages three children for each woman and speaks of motherhood as the most significant role of women, as well as contesting the attempts of the current government to control their bodies. For instance, a year before the Gezi events, Erdoğan hastily declared in a meeting of JDP’s women branches that he is against caesarean births, sees abortion as murder, and would prepare a legal proposal outlawing abortion. JDP’s mostly male leadership supported the proposal, and some JDP parliamentarians went as far as claiming that abortion should be outlawed even in cases of rape (Radikal, 1 June, 2012). While a legal ban did not go into effect – because it drew criticism from most women, including pious women supporting the government (Çaşlar 2012) – a de facto ban on abortion is in place in public hospitals (Posta, 11 March, 2014). During the uprising, women carried signs, such as “JDP, hands off my body!” to criticize the government’s attempt to control their bodies, but also conducted “Swear Workshops” to challenge and transform the sexist as well as homophobic language used by mostly-male protesters in their chants and graffiti (Tekay and Ustun 2013). Moreover, feminist caucuses formed in the participatory public forums organized events that raised awareness on women’s experiences in Gezi and beyond, such as the use of sexual harassment by police against protesters, women’s lives in the city, uneven division of labor in the family, and women’s relation to the Kurdish question (Kavakli 2013, pp. 297-298).

Anti-capitalist Muslims, a group that weaves a radical, anti-systemic critique of neo-liberal capitalism with an Islamic worldview, was the only constituent group of the Gezi Park uprising that explicitly embraced a religious identity. The group was present in Gezi Park with its big banner “Property belongs to God, Capital Get Out” (Mülk Allahındır, Sermaye Defol) since May 29, two days before the protests evolved into a national uprising. According to members of the group, this slogan indicated that Gezi Park belonged to all Istanbul residents, to all God’s creatures and animals, to all humanity, to nature’s order, and therefore could not be converted to a mall that would serve the wealthy (Birelma 2013, pp. 67-68). During the protests, Anti-capitalist Muslims undertook Islamic practices of solidarity, such as distributing savory-rolls covered with sesame seed during Lailat Miraj (Miraç Kandili) to all protesters who in turn did not consume alcohol in the park out of respect for religious sensibilities that day. They raised a banner that
read “Holy nights are times of unification, equality and solidarity for nations” (Kandiller halkların birlik, eşitlik, dayanışma günleridir) and publicized the message of ethnic peace and socioeconomic solidarity through religious symbolism (ibid., p. 70). The group’s simple potluck-type fastbreaking dinners, called earth tables (yeryüzü sofraları) in Taksim and other public forums, were attended by over 10,000 people (Dogan 2013, pp. 311-312). Secular protesters also formed protective shields around the Anti-capitalist Muslims who practiced the Friday prayer in the Taksim Square at the height of the uprising. The group’s active and continuous participation played a significant role in countering criticism that the protests constituted a “secularist” attempt to undermine the “Islamic” JDP and were intolerant of religion (see section on framing contests below).

Lastly, it is important to mention that educated, urban, middle class youth constituted one of the main societal pillars of the uprising. According to one survey, 63.2 percent of the Gezi Park protesters were under 25 years of age, and 81 percent of the protesters were under 30 years old (Ete and Tastan 2013, p. 42). Similarly, 82.2 percent of the surveyed protesters in Gezi Park were either university students or graduates, and an additional 12 percent were high school students (ibid, p. 42). Among the non-student population, many of the protesters were white professionals, who came to Gezi Park from business plazas after work hours. Ronald Inglehart’s theory of post-materialism and self-expression values can be helpful in illustrating the demands, values and concerns of this societal segment. According to Inglehart (2006), economic development transforms societal values, because generations who are born in relatively wealthy, high-technology circumstances take survival for granted, and move from “an emphasis on economic and physical security above-all, towards increasing emphasis on self-expression, subjective well-being, and quality of life concerns” (p. 116). Thus, in post-industrial settings, a generational value change occurs from trust in state authority to skepticism towards all forms of authority, and from an emphasis on economic development and ‘law and order’ to post-material concerns, such as environmentalism and participatory decision-making in everyday institutions (Inglehart 1995, 2006). According to Inglehart and Welzel (2005) these emergent self-expression values also promote the embrace of equal rights for the marginalized, such as homosexuals, the disabled and women (p. 47).

The demands raised in the Gezi Protests by the urban, educated, middle class youth were indicative of self-expression values, as they focused on the restriction of state authority, expansion of life style choices, democratic decision making in urban settings, critique of unlimited economic development, and protection of the environment. In that regard, they differed from the major claims of the Occupy Wall Street movement in the U.S. and the Indignados movement in Spain, which primarily focused on material concerns and demanded economic justice.

Some pundits and scholars labeled the Gezi protesters as apolitical youth because of their lack of engagement in conventional political practices. According to one survey half of the participants in Gezi Park stated that they had never participated in a protest before in their lifetime (Kilic 2013, p. 114). The common perception was that the members of the 90s generation emerged as a product of
Turkey’s integration into the international capitalist system, and the members of this generation embraced a high-tech, individualistic, consumerist yuppie lifestyle with no interest in political engagement. I argue that labeling the Gezi Park youth as “apolitical” is a misnomer, because rather than participating in formal political institutions most of these youngsters politicize everyday practices, and engage in a politics of presence which is expressed in “everyday cultural struggles and normative subversions” (Bayat 2010, p. 128). For instance, dozens of couples kissed in a subway station in Ankara to challenge the subway authorities’ admonishment of a kissing couple (Kandiyoti 2013). Hence youth’s engagement with politics cannot be solely understood as participation on a formal institutional level, but can be better captured if studied on a cultural-sociological level and in everyday practices of cultural subversion.

COLLECTIVE ACTION FRAMES

The protester groups constructed two major collective action frames to mobilize supporters. These frames diagnosed injustices which stemmed from societal grievances, assigned blame primarily to the Erdoğan government, and motivated participants to act. One of the main claims used by the protesters was that the neoliberal urban development projects diminished residents’ voices in their cities’ living spaces. According to this frame – which can be broadly labeled as “right to the city” – the implementation of neo-liberal urban policies promoted developmentalist and consumerist values, while increasingly destroying the historical character of major metropolitan areas and shrinking livable spaces. In Istanbul, the destruction of the historical Emek movie theater, the construction of the hyper-modern Demirören mall in Istiklal street, the proliferation of shopping centers in metropolitan areas, plans for the construction of the third bridge crossing the Bosphorus without consideration of the ecosystems in its surrounding, gentrification projects underway in inner-city neighborhoods, such as in Sulukule, and the plans to build a mall in place of Gezi Park were all cast as projects that disregarded citizen input, destroyed the historical character of the city, and harmed the environment. A number of slogans used in the protests pointed to the undemocratic nature of wild neo-liberal ventures. A line from Karl Marx, “capitalism will cut down the tree if it can’t sell its shadow” became one of the most popular slogans. According to this frame, the implementation of neo-liberal projects by various municipalities without any citizen input has transformed the urban space, shrunk livable spaces, and therefore should be considered as “undemocratic.” In these arguments, democracy is conceptualized as participatory democracy and not representative, elitist democracy. Since political elites have a symbiotic relation with economic elites, they carry out the interests of the capital by privatizing state land, and disregarding the interests of the urban residents. Accordingly, protesters demanded the creation of a truly democratic system, which will open channels for citizens to directly participate in local political decisions that immediately impact them. The participatory decision-making structures, such as people’s assemblies created in the Gezi Commune and other public parks in the
aftermath of Gezi Park’s evacuation, were attempts to create an alternative to elitist representative democracy and neo-liberal economics. Slogans, such as “JDP hands off my neighborhood,” “these trees are not for sale,” “capital get out, these streets are ours,” and “we own this city” all framed neo-liberalism as an undemocratic and unjust system, and therefore motivated urbanites to take to the streets in order to regain their voice in their city’s future.

It is important to note that there is a significant difference between the protests against neo-liberalism in the U.S. and Spain on the one hand, and in Turkey on the other hand. In the former two cases, protests erupted during economic crises, and neo-liberalism was primarily criticized for expanding the gap between rich and poor, destroying the safety-nets and making the poor vulnerable. In contrast, the uprising began in Turkey in a relative period of affluence, when GDP per capita rose 50 percent in real terms in the past ten years under JDP governments (The Economist, 29 March 2014). However, the protests in Istanbul showed that neo-liberalism, even in contexts where it is deemed economically successful, created social, spatial and cultural effects that are harmful and unfair.

A second master-frame that was used by the protesters to mobilize support was “fight against authoritarianism.” One of the biggest catalysts for the initial popular mobilization was the harsh police force used to dissipate the protesters in Gezi Park. An unarmed girl with a red dress being sprayed with tear gas by a policeman from very close range became one of the iconic pictures of the protests. Similar photos of excessive police force against unarmed protesters were rapidly disseminated throughout social media and were used as a sign of the government’s lack of tolerance towards legitimate societal demands. In a few days, words like TOMA (vehicle to intervene in societal incidents), tear canisters, and pepper gas became part of the public debate.

Another issue that was used by the protesters to show the government’s increasing authoritarianism was the complacency of major mainstream media channels. In addition to the pro-government networks, the mainstream TV channels, such as CNNTURK, NTV, and HaberTurk largely ignored the protests in their broadcasts. One of the infamous incidents was the broadcasting of a penguin documentary on CNNTURK on May 31 and June 1 at the height of the uprising. Similarly, an interview aired by a prominent journalist with Erdoğan on HaberTurk on June 2 essentially turned into government propaganda, when the journalist did not challenge any of Erdoğan’s assertions on the protests. Doğuş Media Group closed down NTV Tarih, a reputable history magazine, and fired all its staff in order not to publish the magazine’s most current issue that documented the Gezi uprising.

The silence of the mainstream press is linked to the corporate structure of the media and the symbiotic relations of the media bosses with the government. As the owners of these media corporations also own shares in different economic sectors and depend on government contracts, the government pressures these media bosses to censor critical editorial content (Oktem 2013). Various JDP critics were fired and lost their newspaper columns due to the government’s active pressure on media outlets to discipline their personnel in previous years (Temelkuran 2012;
Ozdemir 2012). The government also did not hold back from punishing media groups that would not toe the government line. For instance, after the Doğan media group, one of the biggest media conglomerates, published reports on JDP’s alleged ties to a religious charity organization that faced trial for fraud in Germany, it was charged with a tax-evasion case, and fined $2.5 billion, which was later dropped to $600 million (Filkins 2012). The Doğan group had to sell some of its assets, including the daily Milliyet in 2011, to pay the fine (Ognianova 2012, 3). In order to avoid such consequences, many newspaper editors and journalists implement self-censorship.

The mainstream media’s lack of independence from the government and their minimal coverage of the uprisings were decried by the protesters with various slogans and graffiti, such as “Media for sale”, “Timid Media”, “Television did not show it, but we were here”, “Turn off the TV and go onto the street for freedom” (Ozkoray 2013).

Another theme that was included under the “fight against authoritarianism” frame was the demand to increase the extent of individual liberties. Many protesters voiced their concerns about losing individual freedoms. As discussed above, women protesters saw Erdoğan’s attempts to outlaw abortion and his constant advice to women to bear at least three children as an intrusion on their bodily freedoms. LGBT people saw the homophobic language used by different JDP politicians as a threat to the free expression of their sexual identity. The youth voiced their discontent about recent laws that prohibited the selling and consumption of alcohol in specific hours and places, and moralistic policies implemented by local authorities, such as chastising publicly kissing couples. Unsurprisingly, 18.9 percent of the protesters surveyed by Genar in Gezi Park cited the lack of freedoms as the most significant problem in the country (cited in Ete and Tastan 2013, p. 61). The restriction of individual freedoms is seen by many as a result of the JDP government’s authoritarian tendencies. The remarks of a 23 year-old protester are instructive:

Actually, Gezi Park was the explosion of everything that we kept to ourselves. [It was] their clarification for us. Gezi Park events were different, we used to discuss the alcohol issue, the abortion issue, but something like this could not happen. Gezi became the agenda, when it was voiced together, as a common reaction …. The fog that covered each of these issues dissolved, everything is very clear now. This problem exists, in Turkey we can say that this problem exists …. (cited in Iplikci 2013, p. 68)

This above statement shows how grievances existed on individual or group levels before the Gezi uprising among the youth. However, the protester claims that the protests highlighted the interrelation between these grievances, made their presence clear, and created a common agenda for action. Hence, these separate individual liberty concerns were framed as a collective problem that needs to be solved through popular mobilization, and blame is attributed to increasing authoritarianism.
Due to the prevalence of “fight against authoritarianism” frame among the protesters, some pundits inaccurately dubbed the Gezi Park Protests as the “Turkish Spring” highlighting similarities between Arab uprisings and the Turkish uprising. While it is true that the JDP government became increasingly authoritarian especially after its third term, it is important to note that it has always been elected through competitive elections and still has a very broad popular base. Therefore, the Turkish protesters’ main demand was not the ousting of then PM Erdoğan, as “irhal” (get out in Arabic) and “degage” (get out in French) were the rallying cries in Egypt and Tunisia for aging dictators. Rather, they highlighted the authoritarian policies of a popular government, which embraced an illiberal, majoritarian understanding of democracy and became increasingly restrictive of minority life styles, and demanded its democratization.

NEW REPERTOIRES OF CONTENTION

In order to challenge the hegemony of the JDP government, the protesters invented new repertoires of contention. Political humor provided the youth with discursive power to challenge the government in a language over which the former had the upper hand. In their own words, young protesters used ‘excessive wit’ against the authorities, who used excessive physical force against them. Humor is part of a culture of fun, which is “a metaphor for the expression of individuality, spontaneity, and lightness in which joy is the central element” (Bayat 2010, p. 138). Political humor expressed in public has subversive and dissenting aspects and poses a challenge to the moral hegemony of the authorities (ibid). The protesters ridiculed police brutality, the government’s restrictive policies, and the mainstream media’s silence with creative jokes. The protesters adopted the penguin as one of the uprising’s symbols to mock the silence of the mainstream media. Similarly, when the prime minister called them looters (çapulcu) (more below), the protesters quickly appropriated the word and called themselves çapulcular to create an alternative discourse and camaraderie among themselves. A graffiti that read “Are you sure you’d like to have three children like us?” mocked the prime minister’s constant advice to women to bear at least three children. Another made fun of the alcohol restrictions: “You prohibited alcohol, and the people got sober!”

In addition to utilizing humor, protesters invented new strategies of civil disobedience to attract public attention and capture the moral high ground in their struggle against the government. One of the most successful acts of civil disobedience was the protest dubbed “standing man” (duran adam) initiated by a young performance artist two days after the Gezi Park was evacuated by the police. Erdem Gündüz stood still in the middle of Taksim Square for eight hours facing the now unused opera house which has been a point of contention between the arts community and the government. During this defiant act he was joined by more protesters, and before he ended his stunt, the hashtag #duranadam where his pictures and act of passive resistance was shared became the most popular worldwide topic on Twitter (Tufekci 2013b). In the following days, silently standing protesters popped up in different parts of Turkey in solitude or in groups.
showing their discontent with the government’s policy of evacuating Gezi Park, disregarding their democratic demands, and demonizing their cause. The “standing men and women” in the initial group were detained and then released. However, the authorities soon realized the absurdity of detaining individuals for ‘standing’ and could not decide exactly how to deal with this new form of protest. This reveals how state institutions that have a monopoly on legitimate use of physical force while equipped to deal with violence, struggle to counter simple tactics of passive resistance.

COUNTERFRAMES

Since the suppression of the mainly unarmed protesters with riot gear, tear gas and pepper spray was not sufficient to quell the uprising, the government used discursive tactics to discredit and vilify the protesters. Erdoğan was the most vociferous actor in framing the protesters. The government and its allies constructed three main counterframes to the uprising: The protesters have been depicted as a security threat, as enemies of religion, and as tools of an international conspiracy.

The most immediate response of the government was to label the protesters as looters and vandals, who pose a threat to the stability of small businesses and increase criminal activity. While in the initial stages, most protests were non-violent, the government and the pro-government media were quick to highlight episodes that contained acts of violence, such as stone-throwing and vandalism. The government prepared a special CD, which collated all acts of disturbance and distributed it to the public and to foreign diplomats. Moreover, prominent politicians repeated these claims. For instance, the then minister of European Union Affairs Egemen Bağış said immediately after the evacuation of Gezi Park by the police, that anyone who entered Taksim Square would be treated as a terrorist (Radikal, 16 June 2013). This framing resonated with constituents for whom “law and order” issues are of prime importance.

Second, the government deliberately depicted the protesters as enemies of religion. Two events have been circulated widely by pro-government circles, and above all by Erdoğan. On June 3, around a hundred protesters who were injured in the events took refuge in a mosque in Istanbul which was quickly transformed into a make-shift clinic (Radikal, 3 June 2013). After the injured protesters spent the night there, the pro-government media started to circulate stories about alcohol consumption in the mosque. Another story surfaced, when a veiled woman claimed that she was attacked with her 3-month old baby by seventy half-naked men and assaulted because of her veil. The prime minister continuously repeated these two stories and tied them to Gezi Park indicating that the protesters were enemies of religion. The aim of this framing was to politicize the religious-secular cleavage which has shaped Turkish politics in the 1990s and 2000s. By appealing to the religious sensibilities and fears of conservative segments in Turkish society and reminding them of the wrongs committed against them by secularist actors in the
recent past, the government successfully framed the Gezi Park protests as a secularist attack against religious values.

Last, the government aimed to discredit the protesters in the eyes of the public by using conspiracy theories. The JDP politicians and the pro-government media circulated stories about how dark international forces, such as a bogus financial lobby dubbed ‘the interest lobby,’ Israel, or the CIA aimed to weaken the government by creating chaos in Turkey. By creating a link between the protests and attempts of international forces to influence Turkish politics, these frames tried to cast the protesters as a non-native and anti-democratic force.

By using these three frames, the government aimed to amplify the stereotypic views Islamist and traditionally center-right constituents had against secular antagonists. Personified as vandals, enemies of religion and tools of international conspiracies, the protesters were seen as outside of the “normative order and…the span of sympathy” (Snow et al. 1986, p. 470). These counterframes were also circulated to millions in “respect to national will rallies” organized by the JDP all over Turkey which were used as a means of counter-mobilization.

SOCIAL MEDIA AS NETWORKS OF ORGANIZATION AND COMMUNICATION

In common with other youth-led global protests, such as the Iranian Green Movement, the Egyptian uprising, and Occupy Wall Street, social media played a central role in the Gezi Park protests. The social media served two major functions in the protests. In the absence of reliable coverage by the mainstream TV channels, the digital media became the main source to spread information on the uprising to protesters and bystanders. The graffiti that read “The revolution will not be televised, but it will be tweeted” became one of the mottos of the protesters indicating the poverty of conventional media and the power of digital media. By recording events on the streets with their smart phones, posting them online, and sharing them with larger networks, many protesters were transformed from passive receptors of news to creators of information, and became practitioners of “citizen journalism” (vatandaş gazeteciliği).

Secondly, social media, particularly Twitter and Facebook, became effective means to create communication between protesters, coordinate activities, provide logistics, disseminate collective action frames to larger audiences and attract international public opinion. The hashtag #direngezipark (#resistgezipark) was used in 950,000 tweets during the uprising’s first day, 1.8 million times in the uprising’s first three days, and more than 4 million times in the first eleven days (Tucker 2013a, 2013b). Put in perspective, the main hashtag of the Egyptian uprising, #jan25, was used in less than a million tweets during the entire eighteen days of the Egyptian uprising (Tucker 2013b). Also, it is notable that ninety percent of the tweets were tweeted by users within Turkey and half by those in Istanbul (ibid). This should not come as a surprise as Turkey is a major hub of social media. 39.3 percent of Turks were Facebook users as of May 2013, which is above the average of the OECD countries, and there are about 9.6 million Twitter users in the country, which makes it the eighth country in the world with the
Greatest number of Twitter users (Irak 2013, p. 91; Aymaz 2013, p. 236; Hubbard 2013).

In the absence of strong formal organizations, social media proved to be an invaluable resource for the protesters to mobilize vast numbers of citizens. Istanbulites started to flock to Taksim square, after images of police brutality were publicized through social media. Similarly, social media proved to be key in organizing the walk of the protesters from the Anatolian side of the city to Taksim square via the Bosphorus bridge, which became a symbol of the protesters’ resilience. In addition, social media was extensively used for logistics: Food, medicine, cleaning products, legal advice and other necessities were provided to the residents of the Gezi commune as well as to protesters elsewhere after lists were circulated on Twitter and Facebook.

On the third day of the protests, Erdoğan called the social media a menace showing that this form of digital mobilization caught the government off guard. However, supporters of the government were quick to mobilize through social media as well. They led campaigns that aimed to show support for the prime minister by circulating images of government rallies and discredit the protesters and international media sympathetic to the uprising. That some of those campaign hashtags became international trending topics on twitter does not only show the extent of digital media’s penetration in Turkey, but also demonstrates that social media has the potential to be a tool of countermobilization in the hands of governmental allies.

Lastly, it is important to mention that online tools for mobilization have certain limitations in capacity building. While digital media enabled the protesters to reach millions of individuals in a very short period of time and sustain mass support for the occupation for weeks, the digital nature of mobilization impeded the building of representational capacity, which requires long-term efforts of movement building (Tufekci 2013a, 2014). For instance, when the government wanted to negotiate with the protesters, it was not clear who could appropriately represent the protest movement.

CONCLUSION

The Gezi Park uprising represented a novel understanding of politics in Turkey. The mostly young, urban and educated protesters who were organized horizontally blurred the rigid ideological distinctions of the Turkish political spectrum, revealed the crisis of conventional politics, asserted their particularistic identity claims, and invented new repertoires of contention, such as political humor and passive resistance in their struggle against the government. Two master frames created by the protesters addressed popular grievances stemming from neo-liberal urban development projects, diminishing residents’ voices in their cities’ living spaces and the governing JDP’s increasing authoritarianism. By framing popular urban grievances, the protesters unified diverse groups against a common powerful antagonist.
One of the main questions asked about the Gezi Park uprising is what the outcome of this episode of contention was. In the immediate term, the protest movement succeeded to prevent the demolition of Gezi Park. However, surveys conducted immediately after Gezi showed that public support for the government did not fall, but even increased. The local elections of 30 March 2014, in which the governing JDP received around forty-three percent of the vote and the current presidential elections which Erdoğan won in the first round, show that the JDP’s popular base is very much intact. It is important to emphasize that while “right to the city” and “fight against authoritarianism” frames resonated with post-materialist youth and middle class urban residents’ grievances they do not have the same appeal for the rural migrants and urban poor who constitute one of the main pillars of the government in metropolitan areas. These groups prioritize bread and butter issues and do not see the proliferation of malls in cities or limitations on alcohol use as social problems. The government also solidified its base by engaging in framing contests with the protesters and casting them as a threat to domestic peace and stability. This framing appealed to small shopkeepers as well as significant economic actors who would lose from political or economic instability.

The lack of an immediate effect on electoral politics does not mean however that the protests failed. After all, the protesters did voice a disapproval of conventional, formal political structures. I argue that the protesters contributed to grassroots democratization by making many particularistic claims visible and publicly contesting patriarchal, homophobic, moralistic, ideological, and neo-liberal premises imposed on them. The uprising also created a new political awareness among the younger protesters, dubbed the 90s generation. These youngsters who have been challenging authoritarian tendencies through everyday practices of cultural subversion became more cognizant of the political salience of their actions. The legacy of the protests will depend on the future success of these groups in building grassroots power, in making alliances with different sectors of the society and in spreading the new language of politics to wider audiences.

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“Tecavüze uğrayan da kurtarıp mamalı” [“The One Who Is Raped Also Should Not Have an Abortion”]. (2012). Radikal, June 1.


NOTES

1. Some protesters called it dictatorship or fascism.
2. Video footage that surfaced months after the incident showed that the assault either did not take place or was at best an over exaggeration.