

Social Movements, Protest, and Contention

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THE FUTURE OF SOCIAL MOVEMENT RESEARCH

**Dynamics, Mechanisms,
and Processes**

**Jacqueliën van Stekelenburg,
Conny Roggeband, and
Bert Klандermans, editors**

**Social Movements, Protest, and Contention
Volume 39**



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Is the Internet Creating New Reasons to Protest?

Francesca Polletta, Pang Ching Bobby Chen,
Beth Gharrity Gardner, and Alice Motes

Social movement scholars have been wary of granting the Internet transformative political power. To be sure, the Internet and other digital technologies have changed the form and probably the amount of protest. Movement scholars have documented activists' use of cell phones, e-mail, text messages, chat rooms, blogs, and Twitter to mobilize rapid and massive demonstrations in places as far-flung as Moldova, Iran, and China. New digital technologies have made possible novel tactics of protest such as culture jamming and hacktivism (Lievrouw 2006; Van Laer and Van Aelst 2009); new forms of mobilization such as smart mobs (Rheingold 2002) and networked affinity groups (Juris 2008); and new targets such as advertisers and corporate brands (Lievrouw 2006; Micheletti and Stolle 2008). Digital mobilizing tools have undoubtedly affected the *supply* of protest, to use Klandermans's (2004, 360) phrase. But when it comes to accounting for the *demand* for protest, social movement scholars have been cautious. The Internet only "amplifies existing impulses and forces" (Bakardjieva 2009, 102); it does not produce them. "Yes, activists adopt new technologies when those technologies serve their purposes," Charles Tilly wrote in 2006, "but purposes override techniques" (42; see discussion in Earl et al. 2010).¹

In this chapter, we ask whether new digital technologies are also *creating* impulses, forces, and purposes. Is the Internet fostering new identities, new grievances, new stakes in protest, and/or new terrains of contention? Is it contributing not only to the supply of protest but also to the demand for it? We argue that it is. When thousands of Chinese visited a website to register their opposition to Google's Chinese name change, they were motivated by

an issue that did not exist before the rise of the Internet (Yang 2009). The impulse to protest restrictions on online gaming time obviously did not exist before online gaming. These may seem minor changes. Other changes, however, are further reaching. We focus on two whose importance lies in part in the fact that they force us to rethink two assumptions that have underpinned theorizing about movements. One is that protest is hard work; the other is that protest requires moving issues and people from the private sphere to the public.

With respect to the first, the Internet has transformed the typical calculus of individual participation. Participation has become easier—as easy, in some cases, as pressing a button. We explore the consequences of that development for our understanding of mobilization. Among them, we suggest that standard models centered on the mobilizing role, variously, of collective identity and friendship may be off the mark. Friendship in the Facebook era may mobilize less by levying emotional obligations on intimates to participate and more by providing information to weakly linked acquaintances. It may, moreover, produce not just the motivation to act on one's interests but the interests themselves. Collective identity, for its part, may be politically effectual, even if transient or centered on consumption choices, and more powerful by being virtual.

To some extent, the lower costs of mobilization on their own have changed the issues on behalf of which people mobilize. But new digital technologies have also altered the relations between the public and private in ways that have produced whole new classes of contentious issues. This is the second development, or set of developments, we want to discuss, as we turn from the motivations behind people's participation to the goals on behalf of which they participate. We are not the first to note that consumption has become a major site of contemporary contention. The Internet has contributed to that shift, in part by making consumption-based activism easier and by rendering corporations more vulnerable to such activism. But we focus on how the prominence of Internet technologies in people's lives, and especially in the lives of young people, is creating new perceptions of the sociopolitical context (Klandermaas, chapter 1). The Internet is creating new notions of privacy and entitlement and new boundaries between the realms of consumption and politics. In particular, the Internet may be destabilizing ideas about intellectual and artistic production that have long held the status of common sense. As a result, young people may perceive laws around copyright more as an immediate and mobilizing threat than as one more front in a long-running battle for radical artistic freedom. In other words, the Internet is affecting the demand for protest by naturalizing new boundaries between the worlds of public use and private ownership.

When we say that the Internet has helped to create the demand for protest, we emphasize that it has done so in conjunction with other developments, for example, the spread of movement forms and strategies to areas outside politics in what Meyer and Tarrow (1998) call the contemporary "movement society," capitalist production's increasing dependence on brand status (Micheletti and Stolle 2008), and young people's alienation from electoral politics (Zukin et al. 2006). Nevertheless, we believe the Internet's role deserves its own scrutiny. We do not provide anything like the kind of scrutiny we have in mind in this essay; instead, our purpose is programmatic. We ask how we might use scholarship on social movements to evaluate the possibilities claimed for the Internet, and we ask how developments associated with the Internet may require us to rethink our models of mobilization. We will be more speculative than we would like. Given the lightning fast speed at which digital technologies are changing, moreover, we suspect that some of the hunches we raise will soon be proven either wrong or beside the point. Still, it strikes us as worthwhile to pit what we know about mobilization offline against what seems to be happening online as a way to potentially rethink both.

Why Participate? Theories of Micromobilization

Social movement theorizing about why people participate has long been animated by the assumption that protest is hard work. It is often rewarding work, but is hard nonetheless. It takes time, energy, and sometimes money. It is often risky: participants may be insulted, beaten, arrested or may lose their jobs, be expelled, or lose their immigration status. The kicker, according to Olson (1965), is that participation is also irrational because participants will gain access to whatever collective good is secured even if they do not participate.

What accounts, then, for people's willingness to participate? Contra Olson, social movement scholars have shown that strong solidarity bonds, a motivating frame, and/or a powerful collective identity trump people's narrow calculations of rational self-interest. For example, friends recruit friends to participate. This is in part because friends provide a conduit of information about protest opportunities (Kirts 2000; Diani 2004) and because spending time with your friends, whether protesting or doing something else, is appealing. It is also, says Klandermaas (2004, 371), because "it is your friends who keep you to your promises." Friendship imposes an obligation to participate. Collective identity, for its part, provides a sense of shared fate. "If I know who I am, then I also know what I have to do," as Simon (2004, 169) puts it. Collective identities are not invented at will; they are nurtured in structural contexts rather than individually chosen (McAdam and Paulsen 1993). Of course, we all have multiple identities. To participate, however, our movement identity must

become most salient, while we retain a sense of identity with a superordinate entity (the nation, say, or Catholics) (Simon 2004). Compelling frames, for their part, make protest seem possible, necessary, and urgent (Snow 2004).

Numerous studies have shown that these factors motivate people to engage in the hard work, and often high risk, of activism. Now, however, imagine that protest is not hard work; at least, it is not necessarily hard work. Participating may mean simply clicking on a link contained in an e-mail message, skimming the content of a petition, filling in one's name and address, and pressing "send." It may mean getting an e-mail message about the location of a public demonstration, with information about the action's legal status, the likelihood that there will be arrests, and provisions for support to those arrested, then learning from one's Facebook page which friends are going to the demonstration and who has room in her car. It may mean getting an invitation from a Facebook friend to add the application "Causes" to one's page and then displaying the friend's cause: "Animal Rights," sponsored by PETA (with 3.4 million subscribers), or "Stop Global Warming," sponsored by the Alliance for Climate Protection (with 3.1 million subscribers). It may mean clicking on a link in a Cause message or in any of the other messages one receives by e-mail requesting donations to a political cause. It may mean donating one's Facebook status to a cause so that the status update line reads, "Francesca is donating her status to tackle Climate Change: <http://amnhblogs.org/donate-status>," or updates daily: "In 17 Days 919 palestinians killed by Israel including 284 children and 100 women, 4260 injured." We will talk later about whether all these forms of participation can be considered "real" protest, or at least political in any meaningful sense. For now, though, we emphasize simply the diverse opportunities for protest participation offered by the Internet (see also Van Stekelenburg and Boekkooi, chapter 11).

As numerous observers have pointed out, new digital technologies have made it much easier to form, join, and coordinate groups (Earl and Kimport 2011; Van Laer and Van Aelst 2009; Van Stekelenburg and Boekkooi, chapter 11; Shirky 2008). According to Internet scholar Clay Shirky, this means that you may not have to care deeply about an issue to mobilize. For example, when passengers on an American Airlines flight waited on the tarmac for a gate in Austin for eight hours, with toilets overflowing and food supplies exhausted, they were understandably furious. They were probably no more furious than the many airline passengers who, from the beginning of airline travel, have experienced equally annoying delays. But when one of their members, a Californian real estate agent, used the Internet to start a petition, this group of passengers launched a national movement for airline reform. They lobbied Congress for the passage of an Airline Passengers' Bill of

Rights and succeeded in getting airlines to voluntarily accept such standards.

According to Shirky (2008, 181), "the old model for coordinating group action required convincing people who care a little to care more, so that they would be roused to act." But in this new model, "people who cared a little could participate a little, while being effective in the aggregate." To be sure, social movement theorists never thought that simply caring about an issue was sufficient motivation to participate. After all, many people who care deeply about an issue still do not participate (Klandermans and Oegema 1987). But the factors that social movement theorists have identified as getting people over the hump from concern to participation may not be the right ones either. Presumably not many people on the stranded American Airlines flight were connected by prior bonds of friendship. They probably developed a sense of solidarity with their fellow passengers during the long wait on the tarmac, but it is hard to imagine that they developed a collective identity that was encompassing enough to motivate action on behalf of all airline passengers. It seems unlikely that it was the rhetorical power of the e-mail sent by the real estate agent who launched the petition that moved passengers from inaction to action.

It is not that people did not experience solidary bonds or read a persuasive message so much as that those factors seem beside the point. Imagine that you are mad and you can do something about it in five minutes at your keyboard in the privacy of your own home without incurring any costs other than those minutes of time. That seems to have been enough. Does this mean, then, that when it comes to Internet protest, we need completely new models of participation? Do friendship, collective identity, and persuasive frames have no place in shaping individuals' decisions to participate? One possibility is that those factors still operate, but differently.

Friendship

Contrary to some early expectations, people use social networking sites like Friendster, MySpace, and Facebook to communicate with their offline friends. People are not using these sites to network with strangers (Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert 2009; Livingstone 2008). However, at least two features of online "friendship" make it distinctive. One is the size of friendship networks. People strike up relationships with friends of friends. One study showed that networking site users had, on average, more than double the number of friends online as offline (Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert 2009, 236; see also Tufeki 2008). Along with the size of these networks of acquaintances, their visibility is striking. Users know who knows whom. They know what members of their network are doing and thinking about, and they

know that if they post information about their own opinions or activities, others may well comment on it.

What do these features of online friendship mean for protest? Movement scholars have long recognized that people are more likely to participate when they know that a critical mass of other people will also participate (Oliver and Marwell 1988). That knowledge was hard to come by before friendship networks were made visible on social networking sites; now it is easily obtained. You know who is going to a demonstration, who is considering going to a demonstration, and who likes the fact that someone is considering going to a demonstration. Online friends may also get people to pay attention to a cause that they would otherwise ignore. E-mail petitions have an option that allows the user to instruct that the petition be forwarded to a list of e-mail addresses. For petition sponsors, the fact that the petition comes not out of the blue but from a friend makes it more likely to be read. The friend's endorsement also makes it more likely to be signed. As one observer puts it, "this 'tell a friend' phenomenon is key to how organizing happens on the net. It gives people who feel alienated from politics something valuable to contribute: their unique credibility within their particular circle of acquaintances. A small gesture to these friends can contribute to a massive multiplier effect" (Boyd 2003, 2). In this scenario, one participates not for the pleasure of spending time with a friend and not necessarily because one feels an obligation to the particular friend, whom one may not even know well, but rather because the friend has vouched for the worth of participation (see, e.g., Melber 2006).

Indeed, more than helping people to get over the hump from concern to participation, online friends may help to create the concern in the first place. Groups on social networking sites form around users rather than around common interests (boyd 2006). When I send you a news story about a demonstration, a petition, or a link to a cause, I presume, boyd writes, "that anyone who is interested in being Friends should also be interested in receiving such content." Combine this with the fact that users of social networking sites enact a "hoped-for self" in their profiles—they perform the identity of whom they want to be in the consumption preferences they record, photos they post, and political views they list (Pempke, Yermolayeva, and Calvert 2009; Zhao, Grasmuck, and Martin 2008; boyd 2006; Liu, Maes, and Daverport 2006)—and one can see the potential for people to adopt political causes because a charismatic friend has done so.

Collective Identity

Note that in the scenario we just sketched, collective identity operates differently than it does in older models of participation. In their analysis of

the students who went south in 1964 for Freedom Summer, McAdam and Paulsen (1993) found that people who had a strong identification with a particular collective actor—say, teachers or the civil rights movement or the Democratic Party—were also deeply embedded in that structural context; that is, they were teachers or members of the NAACP or Democratic Party youth activists. In the age of the Internet, by contrast, subjective identifications need not be anchored in structural contexts. In other words, you can develop solidarity with people protesting a rigged election and act on behalf of that solidarity, even though you are not old enough to vote. As Abrams and Hogg (2004, 148) put it, "the 'group,' or more particularly the ingroup, is no longer restricted to specific social networks of known others." It is also not clear that the two components of politicized identity described by Simon and Klandermans (2001)—the identification both with the challenging group and the superordinate entity of which the group is a part—are necessary. It may be that mobilizing identifications are with distant groups (Lea, Spears, and Watt 2007) or are recent and transient (Langman 2005).

Indeed, the virtual collective identity fostered online may be, in some respects, more mobilizing than a collective identity forged in church basements by people holding hands and singing "We Shall Overcome." Social psychological research has shown that, while in some circumstances, being able to see other members of one's group strengthens one's sense of collective identity and makes cooperation more likely, in other circumstances, visibility does not have that effect (Lea, Spears, and Watt 2007). To the contrary, when it comes to cooperating with people whose identity is not visually obvious, for example, their nationality or their political allegiance, one is more likely to feel a common bond if one does not see them. Why? Because the less anonymous the people with whom one is interacting, the more likely one is to be distracted by the other identities they have—identities that make them different rather than the same. So a collective identity forged online may be mobilizing precisely insofar as it is virtual and therefore partial and even ambiguous. In the case of the Occupy movements of 2011, consider not the small number of people who camped out but the much larger number of people who came to the protest site for a rally, or made a donation online, or sent a petition supporting activists' right to remain on the site. These people shared a sense of collective identity with the protesters, one they gained from blog entries, Facebook posts, YouTube videos, online newspaper stories, and television reports. Would that sense of collective identity have been stronger if potential supporters had spent substantial time interacting with the protesters in the Occupy sites? Perhaps a middle-aged administrative assistant or a building trades union member would have appreciated the radicalism of many

young occupiers, would have enjoyed the long conversations about veganism, anarchism, and legalizing marijuana, would have found compelling the long meetings and the endless drumming—but perhaps not. Digital media may make possible an imagined community that is in some ways closer to what supporters want it to be than what it really is. The virtual character of the community makes it easier to project one's aspirations onto it.

Now, one might ask whether some of the collective actions we have been describing, especially the online petitions and the Facebook postings, really count as protest. Numerous observers have wondered whether online protest is evanescent, unlikely to translate into sustained mobilization. "Commitment levels are opaque," a consultant to grassroots activists worries. "Maybe a maximum of 5 percent are going to take action, and maybe it's closer to 1 percent. . . . In most cases of Facebook groups, members do nothing" (Hesse 2009). The point is a reasonable one. Why should displaying markers of a political self translate into anything resembling effective protest?

Perhaps for two reasons. One is that targets often do not know what to make of the huge numbers of people signing an e-petition or joining a Facebook group or a Twitter feed. That uncertainty can translate into impact. Maybe thousands of people signed an e-petition because it was easy to do so, but if the petition is ignored, will they take more drastic action? Will a significant portion of the five thousand bank customers who recently signed an e-petition against new ATM fees now pick up and move their accounts to another bank? Another source of uncertainty lies in just whom those five thousand represent. Are they the sum total of discontent or the tip of the iceberg? Finally, is five thousand an impressive number to reporters who may or may not choose to make it a story? To be sure, what the numbers mean will likely become clearer as e-tactics become institutionalized, returning some advantage to the targets of protest. But for now, the virtual character of online protest may confer strategic advantages on the movement.

The other possibility for more enduring impact is that online friends may press people to be consistent with their displayed identities. The fact that friendship networks are visible is a source of information but also may be one of constraint. To be sure, behaving consistently with one's identity may mean something as banal as not expressing a preference for fur coats while displaying an animal rights cause. But it may also require more active participation, especially if active participation is not very demanding.

Frames

With respect to the third mobilizing variable, collective action framing, effective frames are probably still those that combine diagnostic, prognostic,

and motivational features; that develop a clear sense of "us" and "them"; and that create a "fire in the belly and iron in the soul" (Gamson 1992, 32).² The difference in the Internet age may be in how effective frames are arrived at. Despite framing theory's origins in a symbolic interactionism, work on frames since then has tended to treat frames as stable objects produced by organizations with an expertise in persuasive communications. But the lowered costs of mobilization mean that formal organizations are less necessary to protest (Bimber, Flanagin, and Stohl 2005). To be sure, much of Internet protest is still coordinated by formal organizations, but much of it, like the bank and airline protests we described, is not. In these cases, whatever framing is necessary to motivate people to participate is accomplished by participants themselves. This suggests that we shift the analytic focus back to those more emergent processes of meaning making, among actors with varying levels of political involvement in the issue.

In sum, the proliferation and visibility of online social networks, like the growth of the Internet generally, have undoubtedly lowered the motivational threshold for protest participation. They have probably contributed to protest animated by expressive, performative, and consumption-oriented identities (see Taylor, chapter 3). But the visibility of online social networks may also exercise a constraining force: insofar as social networks constitute a public, they may compel members to act in line with their professed identities. Insofar as they constitute a public, too, they may be treated as an influential voice in political decision making.

What Are We Fighting For? The Emergence of New Issues

Theories about the emergence of new movements are undergirded by a second set of assumptions, again commonsensical on their face, about the relations between protest, politics, and the public sphere. Resource mobilization and political process theories were motivated by the recognition that groups turned to protest when they were unable to press their claims through regular political channels. This was the challenge to the older pluralist models: those who were excluded from the structure of political bargaining had no choice but to turn to extrainstitutional protest. Issues did not have to begin as recognizably public and political to become the objects of contention. To the contrary, activists often sought to get issues seen as private (e.g., segregation, or domestic abuse, or abortion) recognized as public. That recognition would compel the government to take action, to give claimants access to political decision making. The assumption, though, was that there was a public sphere that could be distinguished from the spheres both of the market and of private life. We argue that the Internet has not only shifted protest more to the market and

private life but has also eroded the lines between the public and the private in at least two ways, with real import for the demand side of protest. One, it has begun to transform people's ideas about private property and public use in a way that has helped to generate a new class of contentious issues. Two, it has turned movement participation into one among a repertoire of activities that include leisure and consumption as well as political action.

Consumption and Public Use

Consumption, not politics, has become a major site of contention. Zukin and colleagues (2006) found that in 2002, more Americans aged twenty to twenty-eight had engaged in consumer activism—either not buying a product or buying a product for ethical reasons—in the last twelve months than had engaged in any other kind of political behavior. Stolle, Hooghe, and Micheletti (2005) found that 72 percent of the Belgian, Swedish, and Canadian students they surveyed had bought something based on ethical considerations in the last twelve months, and 63 percent said they had boycotted a product. Shopping has become social activism. Activist groups have protested genetically modified foods, forced corporations to respond to charges of using sweatshop labor by implementing monitoring schemes, created labeling schemes for organic and fair trade food products, and won parliamentary seats based on their opposition to restrictions on music and movie downloading. Consumption-based activism has not ignored the state, but it has resolutely intervened in arenas that were formerly viewed as the purview of the market. Boycotts and buycotts have centuries-old precedents, and consumer activism came of age in the 1970s, but the Internet has contributed to the scale both of consumption-based activism and the demand for it.

The Internet figures prominently in today's consumption-based activism as a potent tool. "Hacktivists" disable corporate websites (Lievrouw 2006) and "culture jammers" use online visual and textual parody to spoof brand logos and images (Harold 2007; Lievrouw 2006; Micheletti and Stolle 2008; Klein 2000). What makes these strategies so attractive, and, sometimes, effective, is that they capitalize on the virtual character of commodities in late capitalism. Manufacturing giants today market not products but brands. Buyers choose products based on the image associated with them; marketers offer "identities and pleasures that can be accessed only through their brands" (Holt 2002, 72). Maintaining a variously hip, attractive, and socially responsible image thus becomes essential to the bottom line (Harold 2007; Micheletti and Stolle 2008). Insofar as the Internet, along with television, film, and print media, is one of the places where companies seek to hone and preserve their images, the Internet becomes a critical site of contention. In this sense, the Internet

generates not just tactics of protest but also vulnerabilities in the system and thus opportunities for protest.

More important, possibly, than either of these—a tool or terrain of activism—the Internet may figure in people's daily lives in a way that is changing their commonsensical understandings of the boundary between private ownership and common use. In this sense, the Internet may have contributed to producing new grievances by eroding the understandings of legal ownership that have structured consumption in the past. By new grievances, we mean the demands for open access to art, images, and ideas that have roiled the music industry but have also begun to affect the fields of journalism, science, publishing, and government (Electronic Frontier Foundation 2011; Hess and Ostrom 2006). Activists have challenged existing copyright laws by taking cases to court (Broussard 2007), engaging in civil disobedient collective acts of downloading music illegally or displaying copyrighted art (Harold 2007), launching initiatives to produce and promote alternative forms of copy agreements among artists and intellectual themselves (Broussard 2007; Harold 2007), and forming political parties aimed at securing legislative representation for a pro-file-sharing platform (Prodder 2009).

Of course, there have always been groups advocating for the freer dissemination of music, texts, and visual images, and there have long been collective challenges to the institution of private property. What may be new, however, is that the Internet is eroding the conceptual linchpins of intellectual property doctrine and law. In other words, the Internet is making such challenges increasingly commonsensical. As Yar (2008) points out, intellectual property law is based on several myths. One is that intangible goods, such as particular arrangements of words or images, are the same as tangible goods. But stealing a tangible object, say, a pair of shoes, deprives the owner of using those shoes herself, whereas stealing an image does not deprive the image's creator of its continued use. That has always been the case, of course, but in a digital age, the possibilities for reproducing content are endless and extend across vast sweeps of space and media. If it was not clear before that ideas and images have a different status than material objects, for those who have grown up in a digital age, it has become increasingly so. Copyright law also rests on a nineteenth-century notion of the individual creator, a myth insofar as intellectual and artistic works have always drawn on prior works, whether credited or not. Today, however, the myth is challenged by forms of musical and visual bricolage that have become commonplace: mash-ups, memes, and image macros (a picture with superimposed text that makes a joke of the picture's meaning); bricolage art; and sound collages (Harold 2007). In this context, the idea that a melody composed of a few notes belongs to only one

author, no matter how the notes are integrated into a new piece, becomes increasingly anachronistic. As the ideal of openness becomes easier to realize, it becomes more important to protect (for a similar argument about humanitarianism, see Haskell 1985).

Do we have evidence that this is the case? We know that young people increasingly see downloading music as acceptable; 70 percent do not feel guilty about it, with even higher numbers among younger respondents (Marakesh Records 2009). The question, though, is whether this common sense is translating into politicized grievances and collective action. Our evidence here is fragmentary. Recent legislative battles over more stringent protections against online piracy were followed more closely by young people, with 23 percent of eighteen- to twenty-nine-year-olds reporting that they followed the bills closely, compared to just 7 percent of the population as a whole (Pew Research Center for the People and the Press 2012). We also know that protests that have encouraged people to engage in coordinated illegal music downloading have secured wide participation. Although many of organizations that advocate for open access (groups like the Electronic Frontier Foundation, Free Software Foundation, Creative Commons, and Public Knowledge) are made up of professionals like computer programmers and academics, others are dominated by young people. The Pirate Party, which was formed to reform patent, copyright, and privacy laws shortly before the 2006 parliamentary elections in Sweden, is currently the fifth largest political party in Sweden, with the second largest youth branch. Although it did not follow up its unexpected victory in the 2009 European parliamentary elections with a win in the Swedish national election, it did inspire efforts by the mainstream parties to woo youth back (Wikileaks 2010a). And diplomatic cables released by Wikileaks reveal Swedish officials trying to persuade U.S. officials to take seriously the message of the Pirate Party's 2009 electoral victory in crafting legislation around copyright infringement. Whereas U.S. officials insisted that file sharing was theft, Swedish officials countered that the Pirate Party's appeal showed that young people had a different understanding of intellectual property and law, and that legislation should be responsive to that (Wikileaks 2010b). Internationally, the Pirate Party has created spin-offs in Germany, Spain, Austria, Poland, Finland, France, and at least twenty other countries (Prodder 2009). In the United States, Students for Free Culture has chapters at thirty colleges.

The notion that the Internet is leading people to think about private property differently—and about ideas of privacy based on private property—is also supported by the curious compatibility in protest discourse of principles of open access with those of privacy. One might think that the advocacy of

unrestrained access to information would be in tension with the advocacy of controls on corporations' ability to collect information on consumers. If "information just wants to be free," as the clever slogan animating anticopy-right mobilizations goes, then how can one justify disallowing it to anyone? Yet activists today tend not to recognize that tension. As a twenty-year-old explained his vote for Sweden's Pirate Party, "Civil rights. Everybody has a right of privacy for their own e-mails, SMS messages and phone calls. File-sharing is just a small bit of the whole cake" (Prodder 2009). Advocacy groups like Public Knowledge, the Electronic Frontier Foundation, and Free Press variously litigate and lobby around issues of both privacy and openness. The fact, then, that for many activists the causes of privacy and informational freedom are not in any tension speaks to changes in how each of these terms—privacy, information, and freedom—is being understood.

Again, these trends are merely suggestive. Mainly, they call for much more research on whether people's use of the Internet is changing their expectations about privacy, property, and public use. The possibility is that the Internet does not so much create new issues altogether—people have always advocated against the ownership of ideas—as it gives people a new stake in those issues.

Protest in a Repertoire of Sociable Action

We want to sketch a second way in which the Internet may be redrawing the line between private, nonpolitical issues and public, political ones. Here we go back to the questionably political status of much contemporary collective action around consumption. Earl and Schussman (2008) found that the vast majority of online petitions are targeted to entertainment entities. Sometimes garnering signatures in the thousands, online petitioners call variously for their favorite pop group to tour their country, for a cancelled television show to be brought back on air, and for a baseball manager to be fired. It is hard to see this as political or as protest in the sense of a challenge to institutional authority. And indeed, Earl and Schussman's point is that movement tactics have become both institutionalized and, thanks to the Internet, accessible. This has made them an attractive vehicle for consumption-oriented demands.

It is tempting, therefore, to draw a line between politicized consumption and nonpolitical consumption. But doing so is not so easy. We referred earlier to Zukin and colleagues' (2006) finding that nearly half of all Americans reported having boycotted or buycotted a product in the last twelve months and that, for those aged twenty to twenty-eight, consumer activism was their preferred form of politics. However, when the researchers interviewed people about their consumer activism, they found that fewer than half could give an appropriate example of boycotting or buycotting. In many cases, they cited

poor service, bad product quality, or, in the case of one young man who boycotted Busch beer, "cause it doesn't do anything for me." Conversely, many of those engaged in music downloading do see themselves as mounting a political challenge to an oligopolistic industry (Lievrouw 2006, 5). And such efforts, whether motivated by a political consciousness or not, have proved more of a threat to the industry than the parodic efforts of small groups of activists.

One alternative is that people may move from consumption-based collective action to more traditional forms of political engagement and protest. You may download music, realize it is illegal, and then join a group protesting current copyright laws. You may protest restrictions on your gaming time and then from there go on to other civil liberties issues. But no researcher has adduced evidence that this is in fact occurring. We believe that the evidence suggests something different: people may move among spheres of leisure, consumption, and politics without recognizing boundaries among them. The decisive change, here, is that the sphere of "real" politics is not experienced as separate from other spheres. Alternatively, activism is not even thought of as part of the sphere of real politics, associated, as the latter is, with the domination of special interests, party orthodoxy, and boring incrementalism (Zukin et al. 2006). Fully 51 percent of college Facebook users include their political views in their profiles—most commonly, they said, "to express who I am" (Pempek, Yermolayeva, and Calvert 2009). On one hand, the fact that political identity is put on par with what band you listen to, how many friends you have, and who you think is cute suggests a kind of devaluation of political identity. On the other hand, if acting on your political identity is as easy as acting on your musical tastes, then the fact that your profession of political commitment is one more accoutrement of an appealing self may not make it any less politically effective.

Go back for a moment to Earl and Schussman's (2008) online petitions. Although the largest category of petitions—over twelve thousand—targeted entertainment entities, almost ten thousand petitions fell into the combined categories of local, state, national, and international politics. Were the same people launching and signing these petitions? We do not know. The possibility exists, though, that someone drawn to the site to demand the continuation of his favorite TV show might also click on a petition for a political issue, or that a friend might notify him both of the petition for the TV show and the petition for the political cause. Given the fact that the means of acting in public political spheres and private nonpolitical ones are equally accessible—and, in the case of e-petitions, are the same—the divide between them may be eroding. In other words, protest may be becoming one strategy of action in a repertoire of social and sociable actions rather than civic or political ones.

More evidence comes from Bakardjieva's (2009) study of Internet use in Calgary. The people she interviewed were confused when she asked them whether they used the Internet for purposes of "civic engagement." In most cases, they had no idea what she meant; in others, they interpreted the phrase to mean using civic services such as public libraries. They were enthusiastic about their participation in social groups online, groups that were dedicated to things like parenting, pets, and jogging. What is interesting, however, is that those groups also engaged in political activism. A joggers' group was "responsive to environmental issues, a pet-lover forum to call for defense of animal rights, a parenting group to debates around day-care policies and funding (and ultimately, gender equity), the patient advocates to health care reform initiatives" (Bakardjieva 2009, 101).

Similarly blurred boundaries between the worlds of leisure and consumption, on one hand, and politics, on the other, are evident in data from the Annenberg School's national Digital Future survey. In the last three years, 15 percent of respondents have identified themselves as members of an "online community," defined as "a group that shares thoughts or ideas, or works on common projects, through electronic communication only." In 2008, nearly half of these groups were devoted to members' hobbies. Large numbers were also social (41 percent) and professional (33 percent). Only 11 percent of the groups were described as political. Yet fully three-quarters of online community members said they used the Internet to participate in "communities related to social causes" (this was up 30 percent from 2006) (Lebo 2008). Eighty-seven percent of online community members said they were participating in at least some social causes that were new to them since their involvement in online communities began (Lebo 2008, 117).

This suggests that online communities dedicated to leisure, professional, or social activities also occasionally turn their attention to political issues and protest activities. People do not carry their political commitments into their nonpolitical online communities; to the contrary, most of the Digital Futures respondents became involved in political causes through their participation in the nonpolitical online community. Rather, it seems that online groups engaged in an array of activities, some of which involved just talk, others action, some of which were not political, others political. Just as Bakardjieva's Internet users saw their activities more in terms of their group focus than in terms of a commitment to civic engagement, so the Digital Futures respondents were unwilling to call their groups political, even though they connected them to political causes.

Conclusion

In this essay, we have focused on the demand side of protest, asking how the Internet and other digital technologies have created new reasons for protesting: new identities and grievances, new stakes in and motivations for protest.

One way to sum up our answers is to say that the Internet has created new publics. This is true in several respects. New digital technologies, and especially social networking sites, have created new networks of sociability. These have provided not only new conduits of information about protest issues and events but also the compelling force of group attention. With *public* understood here in its sense as visible or open (as in "publicity"), social networking sites make public people's political identities in a way that creates pressures to consistency. People may signal their political commitments in such banal ways as modifying their status updates online or turning their Twitter pages green, but they may also encounter pressures to act further on those commitments. At the same time, social networking sites have created a public that, at least for the moment, media and political actors pay attention to. The sheer fact that thousands, sometimes hundreds of thousands, of people have signed on to a cause, whether or not social movement scholars would call it "political," makes it newsworthy. And media coverage, we know, is one of the most effective (perhaps necessary) routes to political impact (Ferree et al. 2002; Gamson 1990).

New digital technologies have also redrawn the line between the public and what is *not* public. This is in two senses. The Internet and other new digital technologies have made it possible to engage in political action with much less risk, even less inconvenience. Combined with the fact that in a "movement society," people increasingly use movement tactics to register consumer preferences (Earl and Kimpfort 2008), participating in protest has become increasingly like registering consumer preferences. Protest may be located more in a repertoire of social activities than in one of political or even civic activities.

In a second change, new digital technologies may be mainstreaming radical notions of collective ownership. Here the line is being drawn between public and private, not in the sense of personal, but in the sense of properly controlled by the market. The traction of movements for the more open dissemination and use of intellectual, artistic, and technical materials may rest less on those movements' superior mobilizing abilities than on the fact that the Internet is increasingly eroding the common sense that made those movements unthinkable. In this sense, too, the Internet is creating the basis for new grievances.

Notes

1. Earl et al. (2010) show that scholars arguing for and against the transformative power of the Internet are actually studying different kinds of e-tactics. Some scholars focus on web pages that do little more than provide information, whereas others focus on online organizing strategies such as e-petitioning. But the e-tactics that are associated with less substantial changes in mobilization tend to be less common—although they are the most researched.

2. Conversely, the ease of protest may mean that impassioned justifications for participation are less necessary. It would be an irony if, at a time when social movement scholars have turned enthusiastically to recognizing the importance of emotions in protest, emotions may be less important in protest.

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Social Movement Participation in the Global Society: Identity, Networks, and Emotions

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Research interest in the social psychology and motivational dynamics of social movements has changed dramatically over the last thirty years. The 1970s and 1980s saw the rise of the resource mobilization and political process perspectives. These approaches shifted attention away from the social psychological and group processes involved in collective action that had concerned collective behavior theorists and toward structural, political, and organizational analyses that stressed the similarity and links between movements and more routine forms of organizational and political life. As a result, questions pertaining to the emergence of shared beliefs, solidarity, group consciousness, and micromobilization were given short shrift by social movement researchers. This began to change in the mid- to late 1980s, when some scholars in the United States began to ask whether resource mobilization and political process approaches had gone too far in abandoning social psychological analyses of movements (Feirree and Miller 1985; Snow et al. 1986; Gamson 1992a, 1992b). About the same time, European scholars loosely grouped under the rubric "new social movement" theorists (Cohen 1985; Klandermans 1985; Melucci 1985; Touraine 1985) proposed the concept of collective identity as a way of understanding people's motivations to act collectively, and some sociologists sympathetic to mobilization and process theory began to use collective identity to explain how "structural inequality gets translated into structural discontent" (Taylor and Whittier 1992, 104; also Morris and Mueller 1992).

Attention to the social and psychological dynamics of collective action has increased over the past decade (Van Zomeren and Iyer 2009). Bert Klandermans (chapter 1), arguably the leading social psychologist of collective