

# Introduction: Protest in the New Media Ecology

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## Introduction

Much has been made of the relationship between protest and social media in the recent wave of contention (Koopmans 2007). The Tunisian and Egyptian uprisings, and the broader Arab Spring, of 2010-11 were dubbed by some as Twitter and/or Facebook revolutions. This special issue about protest in the new media ecology sets out to examine this relationship. The concept of the New Media Ecology builds on Simon Cottle's (2008) notion of a media ecology, made up of the various mass media channels and their inter-relations, through which the objectives of mass protest have more and more come to be pursued. The articles in this issue extend this notion to include Web 2.0 and mobile platforms, namely social media such as Facebook and Twitter. Hence the term should be read as the new "media ecology", rather than the "new media" ecology.

Response to the call for papers for this special issue was impressive and covered a variety of protests, using an array of social media and methodologies, in locations around the world. The items ultimately selected for inclusion are indicative of this diversity, with papers discussing protests in Greece, Spain, New York, Egypt, Quebec and India, examining protestors' use of platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Ustream, websites and weblogs.

A number of different approaches are evident in this issue, showcasing the opportunities for research in this field. Kostas Maronitis develops a new term, Communitarianism 2.0, to help explain a Greek protest group that used Facebook as its main vehicle for articulation of the grievances for which its members took to the streets. Venetia Papa and Dimitra Milioni propose a new analytical framework for studying citizenship in relation to social movements and communication technologies, taking the Spanish Indignados movement as their starting point.

Sylvie Jochems, Melanie Millette and Josianne Millette research the Quebec red square movement using methods of auto-ethnography to discuss the notion of hybridization of engagement practices. Ben Lenzner examines the use of mobile technology by citizen journalists in New York through the lens of assemblage theory. Soha Elbatrawy and Margot Buchanan use interview data to consider how involvement and trust alter the ways in which Egyptian citizens at home and abroad used social media during the revolution, and ask whether dissemination equals citizen journalism.

Examining gender-based activism, Eve Ng and Sophie Toupin research protest in New York by conducting interviews with feminist and queer participants in Occupy Wall Street to explore how web 2.0 platforms empowered them. Paula Ray explores how social media,

namely Facebook, opens up accessibility to protest for women in India using the notion of gossip as her vehicle.

The result is a fascinating collection of seven papers that examine protests from around the world, explore the relationship between protest and social media and offer up new terms and frameworks as well as questions for future research.

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### **References**

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