

# Contention For the Right to Information: Hacktivism as A Social Movement

## Bilgi Hakkı Mücadelesi: Bir Toplumsal Hareket Olarak Hacktivizm

Elif KARA 

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### ABSTRACT

Social movements have evolved significantly over time, adapting to historical developments and conditions. Initially perceived as aggressive and aimless, they have transformed into more organised forms, particularly in response to industrialisation. Post-World War II and the Cold War era witnessed a diversification of movements, encompassing issues like women's rights, identity and the environment. And the "right to information" concept has emerged as a modern element, emphasising freedom and accessibility of knowledge. Technological advancements have further reshaped movements, with hacktivism emerging as a modern form, leveraging information to influence politics. The Internet has become integral to social movements, facilitating communication, governance, and activism breaching geographical limitations. This article aims to indicate that, contrary to the general literature on the digitalisation of social movements, Hacktivism is a new social movement that contends on the idea of "right to information" which can be formulated as the information is public property and must be free. The article argues that hacktivism is a modern social movement incorporating politically charged hacking into the social movement repertoire and contending for the right to information, demanding more inclusion in political processes and a new societal order. To demonstrate the validity of these arguments, the article provides an analysis based on Tilly's formulation of social movements. Furthermore, political instances are given to support the assertions along with the hallmarks of Anonymous and RedHack, two hacktivist groups with different organisational structures and ideological underpinnings, and a comparative analysis is provided anticipating that it will avail on political sciences literature.

**Keywords:** Social Movements, Hacktivism, Right to Information, Anonymous, RedHack.

### ÖZ

Toplumsal hareketler, tarihsel gelişmelere ve koşullara uyum sağlayarak önemli ölçüde evrilmiştir. İlk olarak saldırgan ve amaçsız olarak algılanan hareketler özellikle endüstrileşmeye yanıt olarak daha organize formlara dönüşmüşlerdir. II. Dünya Savaşı ve Soğuk Savaş sonrası dönemde kadın hakları, kimlik ve çevre gibi konular toplumsal hareketlerin konuları arasına dahil olmuştur ve "bilgiye erişim hakkı" kavramı, bilginin özgürlüğünü ve erişilebilirliğini vurgulayarak modern bir unsur olarak ortaya çıkmıştır. Teknolojik ilerlemeler, hareketleri şekillendiren temel hedefleri ve eylem repertuarlarını dönüştürmüş, bilgiyi kullanarak politikayı etkilemeyi amaçlayan hacktivizm gibi modern bir formun ortaya çıkmasına neden olmuştur. İnternet toplumsal hareketlerin önemli bir parçasıdır ve coğrafi kısıtlamaları aşarak iletişimi, yönetimi ve aktivizmi kolaylaştırmıştır. Toplumsal hareketlerin dijitalleşmesine ilişkin genel literatürün aksine, bu makale Hacktivizmin bilginin kamusal ve özgür olması gerektiği şeklinde basitçe formüle edilebilecek bilgi hakkı mücadelesi veren başlıca bir toplumsal hareket olduğunu ortaya koymayı amaçlamaktadır. Çalışma ayrıca, hacktivizmin politik sebeplerle hacklemeyi toplumsal hareketler repertuarına dahil ettiğini, bilgi hakkı için mücadele ettiğini, politik süreçlere daha fazla müdahil olmak ve yeni bir toplumsal düzen inşa etmek isteyen yeni bir toplumsal hareket olduğunu ileri sürmektedir. Bu savların geçerliliğini kanıtlamak amacıyla makale, Tilly'nin toplumsal hareketlere ilişkin formülasyonuna dayanan bir analiz sunmaktadır. Ayrıca, farklı örgütsel yapıları ve ideolojik temellere sahip iki hacktivist grup olan Anonymous ve RedHack'in ayırt edici özellikleriyle birlikte, hipotezi destekleyecek örnekler yer verilmekte ve siyaset bilimi literatürüne katkı sağlayabileceği öngörülen karşılaştırmalı bir analiz sunulmaktadır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Toplumsal Hareketler, Hacktivizm, Bilgi Hakkı, Anonymous, RedHack.



## Introduction

*Scientia potentia est.*  
(*Leviathan*, Thomas Hobbes)

A general and widely accepted definition of social movements consists of three elements: sustained and organised effort to make collective claims on target authorities, a repertoire (employment of different political actions such as demonstrations, petitions, public meetings, media appearance, pamphleteering etc.) and participants public representation formulated as WUNC: worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment (Tilly, 2004, pp. 3–4). Social movements have perennially existed in global and national politics, developing various forms of struggle and action in accordance with historical developments and conditions, and being defined differently over time. Initially characterised as indiscriminate aggressive behaviour with unclear goals (Le Bon, 1997), movements have evolved to be defined in economic and urban dimensions with the benefits of industrialisation. Movements diversified in their political aspects, encompassing issues such as women's and children's rights, identity, and environmental concerns after World War II and the Cold War (Çayır, 1999; Topal Demiroğlu, 2014). In addition to the mentioned contention topics, the "right to information" concept defined as the freedom and accessibility of knowledge and communication by everyone, has also been included as a modern element in social movements.

While the mentioned political dimensions continue to change, the transformation and progress in technology and communication methods have also reshaped both the primary objectives and the action repertoires of social movements. Due to the inherent nature of the Internet, devoid of any national or international geographical boundaries, it has become one of the most indispensable communication, governance, and management tools in today's world. Mainstream literature on the internet use of social movements endorses that the internet is a tool for digitalisation of the social movements and a medium for people to put forward their opinions and perform

activism. This article acknowledges that modern social movements are keen to get digitalised, use the Internet to enhance their activities and endorse their causes. Digital activism differs from traditional forms by providing innovative opportunities for action, even though many online activities reflect offline practices. Traditional repertoires have been replaced by new digital tools and methods, each with distinct requirements, uses and results. These tools represent a repertoire of digital actions (Selander & Jarvenpaa, 2016). On the other hand, this article also asserts that hacktivism, by attempting to influence national and international politics based on acquired and liberated information and with a special focus on the right to information, thus has features of a new social movement in and of itself, contrary to the wide-range literature on digitalisation of social movements. Also, according to Milbrath (1981, p. 200) there are three modes of political participation. These are apathetics (persons withdrawn from the political process), spectators (persons who are involved in politics minimally) and gladiators (active political combatants). According to Milbrath's classification hacktivism is a digital gladiatorial activity that provides the most impact (George & Leidner, 2019, p. 7). According to George and Leidner (2019) digital activism is hierarchical and consists of ten activities which are clicktivism, metavoicing, assertion, e-funding, political consumerism, digital petitions, botivism, data activism, exposure, and hacktivism. Based on this hierarchical classification, clicktivism as its general definition as internet activism by "liking", "following" or upvoting (George & Leidner, 2019, p. 4; Halupka, 2014, p. 115, 2018, p. 130) and hacktivism as using in-depth technical knowledge to hack to achieve specific political and social objectives, more importantly seeking for information and distribution to online direct action (McCaughey & Ayers, 2013, p. 72) and can be considered as "the radical face of online politics" (Jordan & Taylor, 2004). Therefore, clicktivism and hacktivism are different on opposite ends.

Liberalism, as an ideology, particularly influenced the political and economic thought history of the

eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and classical liberal thought thrived on concepts of equality, rationality, freedom, and property. According to the principles of liberalism, individuals are created equal and possess certain inviolable rights such as the right to life and right to freedom. When examining nineteenth-century liberalism, the concept of “equal opportunity” will be seen as one of its fundamental principles. Liberally, an individual also has the right to meet and demand their needs in rational ways. Liberalism holds that people can comprehend physical and social realities in their environments. Thus, in this respect, liberal thought serves as a critique of crowd theories claiming that individuals exhibit irrational behaviour in social movements.

According to liberal thought, the individual should be prioritised, and the individual's freedom should be expanded. In this regard, the coincidence of the development of Liberalism with the increased visibility and acceptance of Social Movements as a research field following industrialisation and urbanisation is not a mere coincidence. As a political doctrine, liberalism has one overriding aim which is securing the political conditions that are necessary to exercise personal freedom (Bell, 2014, p. 684) and a certain “conception of equality” (Dworkin, 1985, p. 183). Based on the ideological premises of liberal tradition and the New Social Movements approach this article, argues that the right to information posits a fundamental freedom and hacktivist contention is a new social movement which acts upon it.

Social movements require a certain democratic level to exist, and their fundamental goals centre around more inclusion and a desire to change the political structure, to be involved or to effect policy-making procedures. According to Alain Touraine (1985) social movements are not a simple reflection of constructing social reality but moreover a specific mode of it. Despite being able to employ destructive instruments, social movements are constructive in their desire to create a new order. Additionally, it is asserted that the right to information, which general academic studies

have not yet fully incorporated into the analysis of social movements, should be considered among the goals of social movements. The hypothesis of this study is built on the assertion that hacktivism, as a modern form of social movement, involves utilizing information and technology to obtain knowledge, form international alliances, and influence international politics.

To comprehend the meaning of New Social Movements, it is essential to begin with the definition of social movements and what is considered “old” in this context. The subsequent sections of the study will introduce the fundamental elements of social movements. The definition, structures, actions, and repertoires of RedHack and Anonymous hacker groups will be explored by archival research to examine and exemplify hacktivism as a new social movement.

### **Old and New Social Movements**

Social movements have emerged as a field of study with the recognition of changes in the method of attaining the demands of ordinary individuals. Undoubtedly, wars, crises, economic downturns, fragmentation, and integrations continue to serve as fundamental catalysts in the evolution of the international system. However, the rise of social movements in the twentieth century and their unabated, albeit reasonably transformed, continuation in the 21st century; particularly the relative reluctance of states to opt for warfare after two world wars as a factor of change and transformation; and the inadvertent inclusion of populations/societies/communities in this process of change, along with the era of science and knowledge, have led to a more frequent and widespread occurrence of social movements. Also, globalisation in its sense of intensification and creation of worldwide social relations that connect specific localities in such a way that local accidents are shaped and affected by events developed in distant geographies and vice versa (Giddens, 1990, p. 64), connects social movements likewise and furthermore lays the ground for social movements that “connection” in technological sense, is a key element.

One of the foremost figures among social movement theorists, Charles Tilly, begins his book "Social Movements" by quoting an article published in the Harare Daily News in December 2002. In this brief newspaper article, he essentially summarises the three pillars of social movements:

"As the name suggests, social movements are inclusive organisations comprised of various interest groups. Social movements will contain the significant strata of society such as workers, women's groups, students, youth, and the intellectual component. These various interest sectors of society will be bound together by one common grievance which in most cases will be the commonly perceived lack of democracy in a specific political setting." (Tilly, 2004, p. 1, 2008, p. 13)

Undoubtedly, although this represents the most modern form of social movements, the overview provided here offers a glance at what these movements are, who creates them, and why they originate. Initially, they were encapsulated under the descriptor of "inclusive organisations comprised of various interest groups." Despite having different interests, those involved in these movements decided to act within the same "organisation" - presumably believing that behaving in this way would be more rational - reaching a consensus on what their interests were and how to achieve them. Those who decided to form this unity varied, but they shared a common point: they were in a certain "deprivation." This explained the reason for their coming together: a lack of democracy. Tarrow et al. (2005) also share this democratic idea that social movements have often pushed for direct democracy and question how the protesting repertoires adapt to address institutions with low democratic accountability and transparency.

While social movements may arise from a lack of democracy, they utilise rights granted by democracies, including the freedom of assembly, march, and expression - rights that democracies themselves have acknowledged, and in fact, initially granted to them. Tilly (2004) even discovers that parliamentary democracies

contribute to social movements, finding the essence of this contribution in the process of parliamentarisation. The representation of rulers (regardless of how they are elected, democratically or fairness can be debated) as representatives of society necessitates consideration, especially in terms of ensuring the continuity of the presence and legitimacy of leaders in the face of bottom-up demands. In this context, democratisation should be a primary assumption when studying social movements. Additionally, it should be noted that although social movements are not entirely new to the discipline of International Relations, they are relatively emerging with prominence due to the contributions of the global process the international system is undergoing. Their impacts on international relations as a "destructive" and "constructive" force should not be overlooked, and the possibility that they may have become a preferred new tool for systemic changes should be considered.

Social movements have been defined in various ways by various academics. Gustave Le Bon, a pioneer in the study of social movements or the irrationalist school of social movement studies, describes these movements as the irrational behaviour of a mass of deviant crowds coming together. With the developments of the twentieth century, social movements and their definitions have evolved accordingly. In the eighteenth century, social movements were seen as the disturbing behaviours of deviant crowds, as described by Gustave Le Bon (1997, p. 26), the precursor of Crowd Theory, while Collective Behaviour theorists, who define social movements as irrational behaviour, suggest that these movements consist of individuals imitating others (Goode, 1992, p. 58). Mass Society theorists, on the other hand, argue that in industrialised societies, individuals who migrate to industrial cities and become isolated and alienated only participate in social movements because they provide social security and refuge, and claim that when modernisation meets these needs of individuals the movements will cease (Kartal & Kümbetoğlu, 2018, p. 35). These theories assume individuals

and thus communities as irrational, unknowing, imitating others, or unhappy individuals deprived of basic rights.

For a long time, social movements were defined as the deviant behaviours of crowds, which led to a lack of or insufficient academic research on the subject. However, in today's world, political and economic issues, wars, and aggressive state behaviours disturbing societies (with the influence of technology making a wide range of society aware of what is happening) have led to an increase in grassroots social dissent. As a result, social movements have once again become the focus of academia and politics. For example, focusing on what happened in Türkiye, the Gezi protests became a focal point for advocating for long-standing and unseen problems in Türkiye. The government's interpretation of the Gezi protests as a mixed provocation by external forces and attempts at a civilian coup to seize power can be seen as a resurgence of "Crowd" theories to the extent that it does not analyse the protesters' rational behaviours.

The rationalist school, which includes Resource Mobilisation, Political Process (Political Opportunity), and New Social Movements theories, argues that individuals engage in a kind of cost-benefit calculation when participating in action (this school prefers the term "action" over "behaviour" (Çetinkaya, 2008, p. 21)), and they are rational because of this calculation. It contends that these individuals are not misguided crowds but rather perfectly normal people. In summary, the Resource Mobilisation approach outlines that rational individuals resort to action through an economic analysis aiming to reduce the losses and increase the gains of the individuals and groups involved in the action. The success of a social movement is determined by achieving political recognition and increasing material gains. In other words, what can be achieved with an action, the existence, variety, and use of available economic resources, the extent to which success depends on the use of external resources, and the tactics used by the authorities controlling the movements

are all proportional (McCarthy & Zald, 1977, p. 1213). Political Process Theory focuses on the political system in which movements are embedded. According to Tilly, the political process is the struggle of marginalised and excluded groups to enter the political scene. While the importance of material resources is acknowledged, the existence of a political plane where social movements can exist, i.e., a certain level of democracy, is decisive for the realisation of movements (Caren, 2007, p. 2; Tilly, 2008, p. 92). The New Social Movements theory, on the other hand, has emerged due to the influence of multiple factors. Melucci (1980, p. 218) argues that the changes in the system of production allow us to speak of new class conflicts, different than it is in Marxism. As the industrial phase of capitalism evolves, control over consumption, services, and social relations becomes desired by advanced societies. Hence, social relations, social systems, and, production and reproduction of the aforementioned effect the production of an individual's biological and interpersonal identity. (Melucci, 1980, p. 218) As personal and social identity becomes more and more of a product of the capitalist system, class conflict gets personalised and identity-oriented. Therefore as Melucci states, new social movements are not manifested in the action of a single class but of a social group, constitute the end of the separation between public and private space, not focused on dominating the political system but more on gaining autonomy or independence, last but not least having "solidarity" as an objective, and direct participation and rejection of representation is preferred due to anti-hierarchical and anti-authoritarian nature of the New Social Movements (Melucci, 1980). As well, the New Social Movements do not rely on the self-identification of their already established political codes such as left/right or liberal/conservative nor their corresponding socioeconomic codes such as poor/wealthy or working class/middle class. Moreover, their self-identification relies on the categories that corresponds to the movements' issues such as gender, age, locality etc. (Offe, 1985, p. 831, 1999, p. 66). Therefore, the anonymity and extensiveness of New Social Movements

participants feature as an element. Considering the development in communication technologies and having the internet as a new public space that provides equality and anonymity, internet activism and hacktivism provide a valuable research ground under the scope of New Social Movements.

With the astonishing period of development that communication, transportation, and technology have entered, new identities have begun to be constructed (Çayır, 1999, s. 8), or suppressed identities have found the opportunity to be expressed. One of the factors that differentiate the social movements defined as the new social movements paradigm from the old social movements paradigm is their attention to which social networks the organisers of the movements use within society (Çetinkaya, 2008, p. 26). However, simply put, old movements can be defined as movements pursuing narrow economic goals, aiming for revolution or the conquest of power (Çetinkaya, 2008, p. 34) from the perspective of new social movement theory that is rooted in continental European political philosophy and social theory constructed as an aversion to classical Marxist reductionist economic analysis (Buechler, 1995, p. 441). Alain Touraine, on the other hand, places new social movements in the context of the post-industrial society model (Reid, 1979, p. 91; Touraine, 1977, p. 155). This is because contemporary movements take place in the space opened by the post-industrial society. In capitalist societies, politics is increasingly becoming individualised. Cultural symbols and communication tools also play an important role in the individualisation of politics.

Furthermore, how a social movement operates also defines the movement, in addition to what it is. Sidney Tarrow (2011, p. 9) defines social movements as “collective challenges, based on common purposes and social solidarities, in sustained interaction with elites, opponents, and authorities” This definition contains four empirical features: collective struggle, common purpose, social solidarity, and continuous interaction. These features, on their own, define a social movement.

One of the well-known figures in the study of social movements, Charles Tilly, considers social movements as inherently contentious because when they mobilise, they will conflict with the interests of others. He also views them as a distinct form of politics because, in demanding rights, whether as claimants, the objects of claims, or controllers of the conflict, they bring about discussions of government design in some way (Tilly, 2008, p. 16). Tilly (2004) notes that social movements consist of three elements: campaign, repertoire, and WUNC (worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment). The combination of WUNC display and repertoire creates the difference of new social movements. WUNC stands for:

Worthiness: Moderate behaviour, proper attire, participation of religious officials, high-ranking officials, and mothers with their children.

Unity: Similar badges, banners, announcements, costumes; marching in ranks, singing, or praying together.

Numbers: The number of people, signatures on petitions, messages from voters, filling the streets.

Commitment: Not giving up the action even in bad weather, making the elderly and disabled visible, resistance to pressure, ostentatious sacrifice, donations, and assistance. (Tilly, 2008, pp. 17–18)

These definitions and empirical elements define social movements. However, there is one missing point. The conditions mentioned above, such as unity, worthiness, numbers, and commitment can affect a social movement's success. However, the success of a social movement is defined only by whether its demands are met which is connected to its effectiveness. The hacktivist struggle, which I want to emphasise here and elaborate on below as a social movement meets the above conditions with a slight difference. The number of participants might be less than a protest on the streets. It is rather difficult to assess a social movement's success by the number of participants since calculating the minimum number of



people that will determine the success is highly relative. Instead, hacktivism may accomplish the effectiveness element with lesser participants. On the other hand, George and Leidner (2019, p. 4) suggest that many parts of the WUNC theory are no longer mandatory for the success of digital activism. Worthiness can be imitated by glossy websites and manufactured testimonials; unity is no longer essential as many movements have decentralised actions and participants have autonomy to go in their own direction creating content and posting their opinions. Numbers can be boosted by bots or in the case of hacker groups such as Anonymous, talented hackers produce impact with fewer participants. Last but not least commitment and success are no longer correlated as low-level activities such as social media and #hashtags can have huge impact with less commitment. Yet, it is important to highlight that WUNC being less necessary does not mean that movements refrain from utilizing them.

### Internet Activism and Hacktivism

Hacktivism is a portmanteau word made from the combination of “activism” and “hack,” indicating a fusion of technology and politics. More specifically, hacking for political reasons is a hacktivist action that involves using technology or creating a new technological path to achieve a political or social goal. With its limitless nature, constantly changing tactics, and methodology, hacktivism is an open process that undergoes continuous evolution. The words “hacker/hacktivist” and “cracker” should not be used interchangeably as “cracker” is often used, and also signifies a person who breaks into a computer system/interferes with a system without permission. However, “hacktivist” refers to a person who intervenes in a computer system for political motivations.

Dorothy Denning (2000) defines internet activism as the harmless use of the internet to support an agenda or cause while questioning how the internet has changed political discourse and advocacy. Internet activism involves using the web to obtain information, creating websites to share information, distributing electronic publications

and letters via email, and using the internet for discussion, alliance building, and action planning and coordination. On the other hand, she defines hacktivism, as “using hacking methods to disrupt normal operations but not to cause serious damage”. Jordan (2002, p. 119) defines hacktivism as politically motivated hacking. Examples include online sit-ins (creating congestion on servers to make it impossible for other regular users to perform transactions), automated email bombs, virtual blockades, web hacks, computer viruses and worms and, computer break-ins. The last category, cyber terrorism, describes the merging of cyberspace and terrorism. Cyberterrorism involves carrying out hacking actions for political motivations, leading to loss of life or serious economic damage (Denning, 2000, p. 241). An example could be taking control of air traffic control systems and causing planes to crash or disrupting emergency services like 911 or 112. However, Denning (2000) notes that as the methodology differs among these three categories, yet the political effectiveness does not differ as much, considering that an electronic petition with one million signatures could be more effective than disturbing emergency services and, the difference in methodology among these three categories do not imply the boundaries. Politically, some activist actions may be understood as terrorist actions as one individual may play all three roles at once.

What makes internet activism, hacktivism, and cyber terrorism important is the individual use of technology on the internet as a public space. In capitalist societies, politics becomes increasingly individual. As stated above, cultural symbols and communication tools play an important role in the individualisation of politics per se in new social movements. According to Offe (1985, p. 826), the liberal theory assumes that all action can be categorised as either private or public yet the new movements locate themselves in an intermediate third category. This will lead us to Keane’s understanding of the public sphere. Keane (1995, p. 1) argues that the advancement in technology erodes the old hegemony of state-structured and territorially-bound public space

and, causes a complex mosaic of differently sized, overlapping, and interconnected public spaces as he categorised micro-, mezzo- and macro-spheres. Hereby, I will not dig deep into Keane's meso- and macro-public spheres however the micro-public spheres are important in studying internet activism as a new social movement since the micro-public sphere is a space where the citizens enter into disputes about who does and who ought to get what, when and how (Keane, 1995, p. 9) which provides a bottom-up representation of citizens in political discussion. The Internet itself provides citizens with a space to speak up easily and at any time possible and as Cairncross (2002) puts it causes "the death of distance". Moreover, micro-media such as email, communication lists, and personal websites (blogs), as well as internet channels such as e-zines, can create a public space different from mass media (Bennett, 2003, p. 13; Şener, 2006, p. 122).

Internet activism, as far as is known, was first successfully used by Zapatistas in Chiapas, Mexico in 1994. Zapatista National Liberation Army (EZLN), a guerrilla-like insurgency, used the internet to spread their message and gain international support which was later called by some academics especially for the period between 1994-1996 a "social netwar" (McCaughey & Ayers, 2013, p. 165; Ronfeldt & Arroyo Center, 1998, p. xi) to identify the rise of network forms of organisation whereby small and isolated groups can communicate, contact and cooperate. This does not necessarily transform the Zapatista movement into internet activism considering that a certain number of Zapatistas did not have water or electricity, let alone the internet (Khasnabish, 2010, p. 184). However, the integration of the Internet into the Zapatista movement not only helped the communication of different corresponding groups but also bolstered the engagement of national and international activists in politics. In 1998 internet activism was once again used to receive international attention to the campaign against the Multilateral Agreement on Investment (MAI) (Hauben & Hauben, 1997; Katsiaficas, 2021). When

the secret MAI negotiations were leaked to the internet, an international campaign supported by 600 organisations from 70 countries was launched, and the approval of the investment agreement text was prevented. Without the power of the internet, a similar campaign would not have achieved the success of the anti-MAI campaign, as it would have used more expensive and time-consuming methods (Ayres, 1999, p. 140; Van Aelst & Walgrave, 2002, p. 468). This proves how much of an advantage the internet provides for social movements. Macroeconomic and microtechnological changes are carried out by social network actors who perceive concrete threats, respond to them, and perceive opportunities and resources to cope with them or benefit from them. (Tarrow, 2005, p. 230) One of the microtechnological changes mentioned here is undoubtedly the widespread use of the internet. The use of search engines like Google has made finding an organisation's website and online membership extremely cheap and easy, making it a preferred choice for adaptation to social movements in a short period of time.

Globalisation and advancing technology sometimes help achieve the same or even greater impact with fewer movement repertoires. Hacktivism is a social movement in this context that uses technology as its repertoire (Rolfe, 2005, p. 65). Hacktivism-based social movements have a repertoire formed using hack elements, which can save on numbers. They can channel the movement through email bombs or online signature campaigns while people sit at home in front of the internet, without needing to pour masses of people into the streets, bringing the movement home instead of calling people to the streets. With just a room full of hacktivists, not a street full of people, they can succeed in attracting the attention of the authorities. Hacktivists can establish "reasonableness" by adopting a certain ideology, order, and system, proving their "unity" through the emblems, messages, or mottos they use and, can achieve the principle of "commitment" by eliminating the influence of bad



weather conditions and geographical barriers on the action, carrying out their action from anywhere with internet, a suitable computer, and electricity.

In this context, shedding light on the historical development of social movements and the new forms they have taken in the modern age, it is possible to consider Hacktivism as a new form of social movement. However, Charles Tilly (2008, pp. 157–158) emphasises four aspects to consider when analysing modern social movements:

1) Avoiding technological determinism: The newest features of social movements do not stem from technical innovations but rather from changes in their social and political contexts.

2) The communication technologies of the 21st century, like those in the past, operate on a two-way basis: while enhancing the communication and motivation of those with access to them and reducing costs, they also exclude those without such access from the movement.

3) It should not be forgotten that most of the 21st-century social movements rely on the local, regional, and national organisational forms that were dominant in the late 20th century.

4) While globalisation shapes the distribution of social movements around the world, it should not be assumed that globalisation and anti-globalisation are currently dominating the social movement scene.

Tilly's four points listed above are crucial aspects to keep in mind when studying social movements. Many social movements use information and the Internet, but they occasionally rely on it. Yet hacktivism poses an exception to Tilly's aspect of technological determinism, as its motivation banks on the liberation of information sometimes in combination with digital disruption. Describing how the technological potential of the Internet enables individual and collective forms of protest, Castells states (2001, p. 138), "The cyberspace has become a global electronic

agora where humanity's dissatisfactions explode in a cacophony" reminding us of the Internet's anarchic nature. Therefore, it is important not to interpret all methods used to express dissatisfaction in cyberspace, such as creating agendas through #hashtags, solely as internet activism. However, these methods have made the Internet a useful, important, and pioneering tool for social movements. The Internet is a primary medium for new social movements for three main reasons. (1) Social movements that emerged in the Information Age united around cultural values, and transferring these values through a communication system became a priority. (2) Social movements oppose the vertical and therefore hierarchical organisations of previous movements, and the internet offers the opportunity for horizontal communication that transcends hierarchy. (3) As power transcends nation-state boundaries, social movements also need global means of communication (Castells, 2001, pp. 139–142). It is important to note that the Internet being a medium does not underestimate the essence and primary objectives of the social movements. Contemporary changes in the economic, political and social spheres such as capitalist market structure, internationalised production systems and labour, the interdependency of economic and political interests (Wallerstein, 2004), and disorganised capitalism provide a contention basis for social movements. According to Castells (2015, p. 15), social movements historically depended on the existent communication mechanisms varying from rumours, pamphlets, and traditional press, to manifestos or whatever communication mediums were available. In contemporary times digital networks and multimodal means of communication provide horizontal, fast, autonomous, interactive and self-expanding communication between people. The change in the characteristics of the communication process between the people who engage in the movements also transforms its organisational characteristics. More interactive and self-configurable communication brings less hierarchical and more participatory engagement. Departing from this internet activism and hacktivism can be understood as anti-hierarchical

as engaging in and communicating through the movement works horizontally and autonomously. Another dimension of the anti-hierarchical characteristics of the New Social Movements is its criticism of representative democracy. Hardt and Negri (2012, p. 28) assert that representation is an unreliable mechanism for democracy furthermore, it is not a vehicle but an obstacle to the realisation of it. In that sense, it is possible to argue that especially with the inclusion of the Internet social movements and direct engagement of people in through the internet signify objection against being represented and politically construct direct interference in policy-making processes.

Although the internet provides significant advantages for social movements, it also poses certain barriers. These include issues such as connectivity problems, access to the internet, technical skills, differences in written and oral cultures, language barriers, socio-economic and gender-based digital divides, hardware and technical problems related to access, computer literacy, education, and cultural assimilation of technology. For a social movement to make its voice heard and expand its audience on the internet, there is still a need for mass media, and for someone newly interested in politics to discover a new social movement, curiosity and the need to search with the right keywords in search engines are necessary, requiring a certain level of education (Şener, 2006, p. 128). The change in social movements starting from the end of the nineteenth century (especially the marching under banners and certain signs at the end of the nineteenth century) and the fact that groups expressed themselves with words, slogans, and writings rather than pictures, was due to increasing literacy rates. (Tilly, 2008, p. 79) Thus, in literate societies, it is not surprising that as the education level increases, the use of technology in social movements also increases. In the next part, I will try to demonstrate the abilities of internet activism and hacktivism and their potential to affect national and international policies by examining hacking groups Anonymous and RedHack.

### **Anonymous and RedHack Examples as National and International Social Movements**

Hacktivist actions are often in the spotlight in national and international media. The reason for focusing only on the hacker groups Anonymous and RedHack in this article is due to their ability to publicise their hacktivist actions, with Anonymous gaining attention in the international media and RedHack in the Turkish media.

Gathering clear information about who or what Anonymous is, can be quite challenging, as they hide their identities, as their name implies, and do not have a definitive organisational structure. Their main ethos is the freedom of information and the belief that the internet is the only place in the world where true freedom exists. Accepting state control in this realm is not an option for internet activism and hacktivism (Trottier & Fuchs, 2014). However, it is known that the formation of the Anonymous hacktivist group dates back to 2003-2004. During this time, a web-sharing site called 4Chan was established, where users could share photos and comments without revealing their identities. Users on this site did not use nicknames, and each image and comment posted was labelled with the word "anonymous" ensuring that the identity of the person commenting remained unknown. This allowed individuals to express themselves honestly in an environment where their identities were not disclosed. The group's initial hacker actions involved thousands of 4Chan users creating a character resembling a black-suited African player and entering game sites to have fun, entertain themselves, and amusingly disturb other users while drawing attention to racism.

Until then, the seriousness of users who had been entering game sites in large numbers became known in 2008 with the Chanology Project or Operation Chanology, an action they took against the Church of Scientology. The action was in response to the Church's attempts to remove a widely circulated interview from all sites on the internet that featured the famous actor and

Scientologist Tom Cruise, in which he discussed Scientology's secrets (*Article by Jeff Jacobsen on Project Chanology, n.d.*). Following the start of the action, they announced in a video shared on YouTube, stating that the Church of Scientology's efforts to remove Cruise's interview amounted to internet censorship, which they opposed. They then engaged in actions intended to disturb the Church, such as DoS attacks, sending fifty thousand emails, faxes, and prank calls. In 2008, the action continued through legal means, with non-violent protests demanding an investigation into the tax exemption of the Church of Scientology being carried out at the U.S. National Revenue Service, marking the entry of Anonymous into political activism. Anonymous emerged as a movement that opposed the Church of Scientology's behaviour, which included filing lawsuits against press and media organisations, journalists, and ordinary people to remove criticism and news about Scientology. Anonymous argued that the internet is a free space where criticism and satire are as much a right as praise, opposing the Church's attempts to remove negative coverage.

Anonymous advised participants to wear masks, not bring any weapons, and dress in a coordinated manner (remember: Tilly's characteristic of "unity" in WUNC demonstrations) due to Scientology's practice of tracking and threatening legal action against those who wanted to join a march they planned. Several marchings organised at locations where Scientology Churches are located in, nearly all major cities around the world. Through a video released on January 21, 2008 organisers issued a call to action which would be on February 10, 2008. Despite expecting few participants (Knappenberger, 2012) hundreds of people gathered in front of Scientology Church buildings in different cities worldwide. In a gesture in line with the theme, hundreds of protesters gathered wearing Guy Fawkes masks (which later became a symbol of Anonymous) referencing the movie "V for Vendetta" in various places.

About 500 protesters in Times Square in New York (USA), 250 protesters in Sydney, over 200 protesters in Adelaide, Perth, and Melbourne (Australia) each, more than 100 protesters in Tel Aviv with Israelis and Palestinians standing together; 600 protesters in London (UK), 300 protesters in Clearwater, Florida (USA), 200 protesters in Berlin (Germany), and over 1000 protesters in Los Angeles (USA) gathered in the streets to protest against the Church of Scientology.<sup>1</sup> This was the turning point of Anonymous' online action became an international social movement.

The event in which Anonymous first confronted a state occurred in Australia, where government websites were hacked in response to the government's proposal to censor the internet. Behind the global fame of Anonymous lies the consequences of another information struggle. As will be recalled, Wikileaks, founded by Julian Assange in 2006, carried out one of the largest information leaks in the history of the American Defence, based on the freedom to acquire and disseminate information, leaking over ninety thousand documents. Among these documents were significant ones related to the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, as well as documents concerning Türkiye. When PayPal, VISA, MasterCard, and Amazon closed the avenues for donating to Wikileaks over the internet, Anonymous responded by "Operation Payback" (Addley & Halliday, 2010), launching DDoS (Distributed Denial of Service) attacks against the websites of PayPal, MasterCard, VISA, and Amazon. These attacks helped Anonymous get even more well-known.

With the Arab Spring, the political orientation and depth of the actions became more pronounced (Uçkan, 2012a). During the Arab Spring that flared up in Tunisia, Tunisian activists united against the Tunisian State, which censored the internet and stole many people's Facebook accounts. Anonymous supported Tunisian activists in response to the oppression of the

<sup>1</sup> Numbers are approximate, info from "We are Legion" documentary which includes one on one interviews with Anonymous' members aka "Anons".

Tunisian government and influenced the course of the revolution. Hacktivist attacks were not the primary cause nor key actions in the Tunisian revolution however, assisting information flows and organisation through these interventions was part of the revolution (Howard et.al. 2011, as cited in Jordan, 2015, p. 177). Following the spread of the Arab Spring, the Egyptian government shut down the internet nationwide on January 27-28, 2011, to restrict the communication of protesters. Anonymous collaborated with Egyptian protesters by providing technical assistance to restore the internet and explaining how to protect themselves from tear gas. As a retaliation for the government restraining people's right to communication, Anonymous also brought down the website of the Egyptian government (Somaiya, 2011). Another hacktivist group called LulzSec (aka. Lulz and AntiSec) also supported protesters and cyber-activists in some of these actions. It is possible to observe that with the inclusion of other hacker groups like LulzSec, cyber-activism internationalised and professionalised<sup>2</sup> rapidly and support networks were established on the internet. It is obvious that the action repertoire, which is a necessity of social movements, has been adapted to the electronic environment. Hacktivism in cases like Tunisia and Egypt, operated to try to bend the information flows ensuring access to information is possible which then allowed information to reach multiple different places through mediums such as social media and finally offering potential protests promoting change (Jordan, 2015, p. 178) As Uçkan puts it:

"The internet itself, as a public space, has been a universe where political activity has opened new fronts from the very beginning. John Perry Barlow, the founder of the Electronic Horizons Foundation (EHF), one of the first civil initiatives of the online environment, published the "Declaration of Independence of Cyberspace" in 1996 and called out to the states, "You are not wanted here" ..... The same Barlow posted the following message on

Twitter at the end of 2010 when the first attacks and defense movements against Wikileaks' "Cablegate" publications began: "The first serious information war has begun. The battlefield is Wikileaks, and you are the armies." (Uçkan, 2012b)

As a public space, the internet has become an arena where information wars take place, and anonymous hacktivists have begun to stand alongside the subalterns against states and international companies, forming the new class movement of the informational world by demonstrating their ideological, political, and economic lines: hacktivism against political or economic powers. Surely, there are efforts to develop mechanisms against this hacktivist contention.

On the other hand, RedHack posits a different aspect of organisational structure compared to Anonymous. RedHack defines itself as "the attack, defence, research, and development power of the proletariats of various nationalities, Türkiye and the world in the technological field" and continues, "RedHack is a socialist organisation aiming to use technology for the benefit of the people, committed to revolutionary solidarity, basing on similarities rather than differences among revolutionaries, and rejecting no means" (Aybastı, 2013). In this context, RedHack differs from Anonymous in terms of ideology and organisational dimension. As mentioned above, while Anonymous has adopted the mask symbolised by the V For Vendetta film, RedHack has chosen the hammer and sickle figure in connection with its ideology. There are also illustrations of this hammer and sickle figure created using a mouse and keyboard. Another difference between RedHack and Anonymous is their preference to identify themselves with the names of characters from The Smurfs cartoon, which was banned in Türkiye for communist propaganda reasons, rather than an anonymous identity. For example, the organisation's leader is

2 LulzSec is a black hat hacker group that conducted several high-profile attacks to affect national and international politics such as taking CIA's website down or organizing attacks to show the racist and corrupt nature of the military and law enforcement.

referred to as “Şirin Baba” (Papa Smurf).

In general, the most fundamental action of Wikileaks, Anonymous, and RedHack is leak journalism, which shares information with the public that the state and companies do not reveal or do not want to reveal, in essence. GreenLeaks, which publishes leaks related to environmental issues, TradeLeaks, which spills international trade secrets, BrusselLeaks or RuLeaks, which publishes the scandals in the European Union, and country-specific national leak sources like TuniLeaks and IndoLeaks, are other examples of such organisations.

RedHack has become known for its attacks on government institutions and companies in Türkiye since around 2010, but its history and actions date back further. One of their first major actions was to erase all traffic fines in Istanbul in 2005. (Savaşta, 2007). A RedHack member shared their pseudonym and stated that although they have been active since 1997, RedHack was discovered by both society and the press relatively late due to “the society’s acquaintance with the internet and active use of the internet being closer to a more recent period.” (Kara, 2013, p. 88) The increasing awareness of Turkish society through social networks led them to encounter RedHack for the first time with a striking event like the crash of the Ankara Police Department’s website, which made RedHack suddenly well-known. The RedHack member using the pseudonym “Şirine” (the Smurfette) emphasised that the key was to increase awareness and that the number of actions taken before 2012 was unpredictable and not particularly important. Şirine also emphasised that the internet is not the only repertoire they use but just one of them. (Kara, 2013, p. 88). Although hacktivist contention combines digital and traditional repertoires it is highly motivated by attaining the right to information and deliberate it. Taken into account the nature of new social movements focusing on freedom, identity values,

post-materialistic values, freedom of expression etc. and its inclusion of the new middle class, young people and educated people (Offe, 1985) right for information and inclusion of official or self-educated hackers, hacktivist contention has the potential to form a distinctive new social movement therefore it should be considered as a part of social movements practically and academically.

In 2011, when the Information Technologies and Communication Authority of Türkiye (BTK) announced the central filtering decision by the state under the name of “safe internet” both the BTK and the Telecommunications Communication Presidency (TİB) websites were attacked and remained closed for a period, and similar attacks were launched on other state institutions. Some of these attacks were claimed by Anonymous under the name “#OpTurkey” (Turkey Operation)<sup>3</sup>, while the organisers of some remained as a secret, as well as what kind of information was obtained during these infiltrations. However, hacktivists continue to act politically and militantly to intervene in the policies pursued by states other than their own and to change the course of policy. In February 2012, the RedHack group also temporarily disabled nearly 350 police department websites nationwide in Türkiye. Some examples of RedHack’s attacks in chronological order are;

- Deleting traffic tickets by infiltrating into Istanbul Police Department’s internet system in 2007 (Savaşta, 2007)
- Hacking Ankara Police Department’s website in February, 2012 (‘Ankara Emniyet Müdürlüğü’nü Hacklediler’, 2012)
- Publishing the entire text file containing the 77-megabyte-sized tips they had previously obtained from the Ankara Police Department’s website after threats to supporting academics and journalists (‘RedHack Elindeki Tüm Belgeleri

<sup>3</sup> Turkey’s name changed to Türkiye in 2022 upon Türkiye’s application to the UN. Hereby I preferred to use Türkiye in sentences where the state is mentioned. However, in cases like “#OpTurkey” and when information provided from press archives for the sake of historical correctness, I abide by the original.

Açıklıyor', 2012)

- Leaving a message on a subpage of the Ministry of Interior's website, in April 2012 ('RedHack İçişleri Sitesini Hackledi', 2012)
- Disrupting the internet service of the Internet service provider TTNNet (a Turkish internet and gsm provider) for about 2 hours on April 27, 2012 ('Red Hack, TTNNet'e İnterneti Dar Etti', 2012), TİB confirmed the attack but denied reports of internet interruption ('TİB Saldırısı Doğruladı, Kesintiyi Yalanladı', 2012)
- Conducting a cyberattack on the website of Turkish Airlines to support a strike, on May 29, 2012 ('THY'nin Resmi Sitesi Hacklendi', 2012)
- In May 2012, infiltrating the system of the Turkish Armed Forces Command and disclosing the information of some Turkish Armed Forces personnel ('Redhack Yaptı Yine Yapacağını!', 2012) The Turkish Armed Forces later denied the news, stating that the documents claimed to be obtained by RedHack were old and contained outdated information created by personal users ('İnternetin Tartışılan Korsanları... RedHack Kimdir?', 2016)
- In July 2012, hacked the website of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to criticise Turkey's Syria policy by stating "We dedicate this to the people of Turkey and Syria" ('Redhack Dışişleri Bakanlığı'nı Hack'ledi', 2012)
- Targeting the file-sharing site of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, resulting in the publication of the identity information of many foreign diplomats working in Turkey through the site Dropbox ('RedHack Kapatıldı, RedHack Açıldı', 2012)
- On July 17, 2012, temporarily crashing the Student Selection and Placement Center (ÖSYM) website ('Sabah Sabah ÖSYM'yi Çökerttiler!', 2012)
- On October 29, 2012, hacked the homepage of the Presidency of Religious Affairs and published a series of criticisms against the government

and the Fethullah Gülen movement ('RedHack Diyanet'i Hackledi', 2012)

- On November 2, 2012, RedHack attacked the Public Procurement Authority (KİK) to protest the AK Party's auctioning off for 1 penny ('RedHack, KİK'in Sitesine Saldırdı', 2012)
- On December 7, 2012, hacking the Ministry of Finance website to simulate a raise for civil servants ('RedHack'Ten Memura Zam!', 2012)
- Conducting an operation to expose and shut down accounts related to paedophilia (child abusers) on December 25, 2012 ('Pedofilleri Türk Hacker'lar Yakalattı', 2012)
- Hacking the website of the Council of Higher Education (YÖK) on January 8, 2013, for the second time and publishing documents of corruption and injustice they had obtained ('Öğrenci Harçları İle Rektöre Lüks Araba Alındı', 2013)
- Publishing documents regarding Ankara Metropolitan Mayor Melih Gökçek on February 26, 2013 ('Redhack'ten Şok Melih Gökçek Belgeleri', 2013)
- Temporarily shutting down the official website of the Justice and Development Party (AKP) by leaving the message "I apologise on behalf of my party and my nation for the comedy of the operation that took place on Friday." ('RedHack, AKP'yi Hackledi!', 2013)

The next four news are a few examples of international hacking cooperation;

- Anonymous' attack on Turkish National Intelligence Organisation (MİT), General Directorate of Security (EGM), and Ministry of Economy in support of RedHack in July 2012 (Anonymous, RedHack'e Destek İçin Emniyet Genel Müdürlüğü'nün ve MİT'in Sitesini Hackledi!, 2012)
- Joint attack with Anonymous and hacking the website of the Ankara Metropolitan Municipality



('Pekin'de Panda Pazarlığı', 2013)

- On March 23, 2013, crashing the site of the Israeli secret service MOSSAD in collaboration with the Anonymous group ('İsrail Gizli Servisi Çöktü', 2013)
- On March 24, 2013, publishing the names, addresses, and other identification information of 32,000 Israeli employees, including senior bureaucrats and judges ('Hacktivists Claim They Breached Mossad Computers', 2013)

These attacks given above are indicators of autonomous actions to deliberate information for political achievements and also forms of international hack alliances. After these actions, many hacking groups including RedHack, Lulzsec, and Anonymous collaborated for #OpIsrael (Operation Israel) to bring down the websites of the Israeli Ministry of Defence, the Israeli Ministry of Industry and Trade, and the Israeli Central Bureau of Statistics. ('Anonymous Hacker Attack on Israeli Websites "Causes Little Real Damage"', 2013) The total estimated damage reached over \$3 billion ('Anonymous Provides Damage Report for #OpIsrael', 2013). Compared to the annual \$2,9 billion military aid given by the United States to Israel (*Total U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel (1949-Present)*, 2024) in the year 2013, the scale of the action becomes clearer.

#OpIsrael is a product of a truly international hacker collaboration. The Gaza Hacker Team targeted the Israeli Defence Electronic infrastructure and government members' Facebook accounts, and hackers from Albania and Kosovo targeted the Israeli Police and Government Servers. The Latin Hack Team targeted the Israeli Military Ammunition electronic infrastructure, the Pakistani hacker group Hitcher targeted the entire Israeli National Infrastructure systems, the Moroccan Islamic Union targeted 8 government sites, and Anonymous targeted 16,000 Facebook accounts and 900 websites. Additionally, the LIKUD Party, the Israeli Ministry of Industry and Trade, and the Ministry of National Education were brought down by RedHack. ('İsrail'e Barışmayanlar

Da Var: Redhack ve Anonymous İsrail'e Saldırı Sözünde Durdu!', 2013)

These instances provide a comprehensive look at the power of hacktivism to interfere in international politics as well as to attract the attention of the international audience and create new contention agendas. This matter maintains its importance even today. The conflict between Israel and Palestine routinely attracts intense interest from politically minded hackers. After Hamas' surprise attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, leading Israel's counterattack on Palestine and causing more than fifty thousand casualties in 6 months attracted international hacker groups' attention. For example, a hacktivist group supporting the Palestinian side called AnonGhost has claimed that they disrupted an Israeli emergency alert application (ICT Cyber Desk, 2015), and AnonymousSudan announced that they were actively targeting Israel's critical infrastructure although provided little evidence, yet according to security analysts more than a hundred websites in Israel have been defaced or temporarily disrupted by DDoS attacks (Bing & Satter, 2023; Dalmia, 2023). The long-term damage of hacktivist attacks seems thin, yet it shows the potential of international cooperation in bringing war online.

## Conclusion

Most of the social movements utilise technology, digitalism, and the internet. While this article does not refute this, it seeks to demonstrate that hacktivism should be understood as a new social movement that advocates for the right to information while also supporting and intersecting with the activities of other social movements' contention basis. Since globalisation progresses rapidly, global movements against globalisation have emerged as the other side of the medallion. Although this definition may seem ironic, globalisation, which can be assumed as the greatest integration in human history, cannot be restrained without a comprehensive struggle. However, it should be noted that anti-globalisation movements are not against globalisation per se, but against capitalist globalisation. The process

of globalisation, which creates economic and cultural integration, also determines how people will organise politically, how they will generate solutions to their problems, and the methods they will use to do so. The increase in social and anti-globalisation movements, evident with the 1999 Seattle Protests, has led to an increase in internet usage in social movements. Therefore, the Internet's inclusion in the repertoire of contention is not a coincidence.

This article asserts that, unlike general literature of digitalisation of social movements, hacktivism bears the features of a social movement and seeks to verify this assertion by providing both technical information regarding Tilly's formulation of social movements and political instances that bolsters the analysis. There are several dimensions to consider hacktivism as a distinctive new social movement encompassing global and anti-globalisation aspects. Herewith, we will follow Charles Tilly's formulation and definition of social movements. As explained earlier, Tilly (2004) remarks that social movements consist of three elements, that are the campaign, the repertoire and WUNC.

A campaign is an organised and sustained public effort on a matter to demand collectively from the targeted authorities. Both the examples of Anonymous and RedHack—it is possible to multiply the cases—directly address grassroots information politics as an antagonism, as information politics is contentious politics in itself (Jordan, 2015, p. 190). A campaign should not be confused with reflexive activism. Campaigns are generally a long time run. Even though the targeted authorities may change in time, hacktivists' demand for the right to and freedom of information, and the desire for political change remains. Second, the repertoire. It means the employment of various political actions to attract attention, create awareness and utter demands. At a social movement, the most known versions of the repertoire are pamphleteering, rallies, petition drives etc. The internet activism, on the other hand, employs hashtags, online petitions, bulk emails etc. that

require less digital competencies compared to hacktivism. Hacktivism uses skilful tech-savvies and their talents to breach sometimes very well-protected systems to acquire information to reveal for the public's opinion or simply, attract national and international attention to their cause. Last, is the WUNC, which stands for worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment. As previously stated, argue that the WUNC theory is less crucial for digital activism success. Worthiness can be faked with polished websites, unity is diminished with decentralised actions, numbers can be inflated by bots or skilled hackers, and commitment is decoupled from success as high-impact hacking activities can be as significant (George & Leidner, 2019, p. 4). Therefore, the significance and impact of hacktivism ascertain that it is possible to include hacktivism in the literature of new social movements.

As can be understood from the analysis of the Anonymous and RedHack groups, they have become internationalised through actions like #OpTurkey, #OpIsrael, or #OpBrazil. Secondly, they are political as they develop attacks that manipulate the domestic and international policies of the targeted countries. Moreover, their actions are contentious as they do not align with the interests of political, commercial, and economic powers, and as the nature of the technology and methods (viruses, email bombs, DDoS attacks, etc.) used in hacktivist movement repertoire. Also, as they simultaneously seek to disrupt the status quo and establish a desired political order, they are both destructive and constructive.

According to the Mass Society Theory, socially isolated people are more vulnerable to the appeals of extremist movements (Buechler, 2013, p. 1). The theory of the Mass Society stated that social movements resulted from the fact that the benefits of modernisation did not reach all the masses, while including the benefits of modernisation in the analysis and excluding its negative effects. While capitalist globalisation opens resources up for the use of every corner of the world with mediums like the internet, it also widens the gap

in political and economic disparities between regions due to its capitalist dimension. In this respect in areas where the Internet is available, internet activism and hacktivism manage to extinguish geographical distances and involve more individuals and groups in social movements. However, despite these efforts, it has not prevented activists' communication from being limited or completely excluded from social movements in underdeveloped areas where internet access or technology is unavailable and/or widely used. Still, even if they do not demonstrate hacktivist skills, significant participation and expressing social demands are possible through social media channels, chatting applications and #hashtags. Despite all its limitations social movements combined with internet activism, can spread to larger areas, and become increasingly inclusive and powerful.

This also indicates how the Political Opportunity Structures of Tarrow reflect on the practice of social movements. According to his approach, political opportunity structures and threats affect the anticipation of success or failure of people in participating in collective behaviour. These opportunities are not necessarily formal, permanent or national. Threats might be repression or the authorities' capacity to present a solid front to insurgents (Tarrow, 2011, p. 32). It is important not to take the Political Opportunity Structures for granted as it has been modified by Tarrow himself arguing that opportunities may not be structural but perceived and situational. Anticipation of opportunities may also promote the construction and participation of a social movement. However, here in this article, we argue that Hacktivism as a new social movement uses technological opportunities to intervene in the political sphere where political opportunity structures may be scarce. Considering Anonymous and RedHack's attacks on governmental institutional websites and databases and their collaboration with international hacker groups such as during the Arab Spring indicates that scarcity of political opportunities or threats against political contention can be breached.

The utilisation of the internet in activism and hacktivism in the context of a political opportunity structure feeds and enhances social movements. As a social movement, internet activism and hacktivism are both intriguing in terms of revealing the usage of global communication systems—which is one of the biggest weapons of globalisation itself—against globalisation and discovering the Achilles' heel of globalisation.

The hacktivist movement does not have a one-and-only ideological aspect and may have interconnected ideologies corresponding to the contention basis of other movements. For instance, unlike Anonymous which does not develop actions based on a single political ideology but on the claim of freedom of information, RedHack defines its actions based on a socialist/communist ideological basis and uses the freedom of information as an impetus. Along with many other hacktivist groups, Anonymous and RedHack may assist other movements' causes by employing hacktivist repertoires. It is possible to sum up that internet activism and hacktivism attempt to minimise international injustices within the framework of their ideologies, aiming for the globalisation of true justice, and on the other hand, aiming to resist predatory globalisation. Another important aspect is that by penetrating the panopticon of states, they aim to change the direction of the information hierarchy or to continue it in a reciprocal direction.

While social movements grow by including individuals on one hand, hacktivism has to some extent eliminated the perception of exclusion of those who do not have access to the movement on the other hand. Insomuch as in the Tunisian leg of the Arab Spring revolution chain, the authoritarian state blocked the internet, which was the biggest material of the movement. International hacktivists' helping local protesters to turn on the internet by providing technical information is an indication of how they managed to minimise the exclusion from the political arena.

On a national level, Türkiye ranks high among

countries with internet censorship, even though freedom of expression is counted as a constitutional right. In terms of the number of detainees and convicts for expression crimes, Türkiye also ranks high globally. However, the situation is not very different for other international cases. Such as in the United States, a young man named Aaron Swartz was sentenced to 35 years in prison for accessing and sharing articles from MIT University's internet access to the JStore, after which he committed suicide (Schwartz, 2013). While the intellectual basis of hacktivism uses Hacker Ethics grounded on the idea that information is public property and must be free, against such obstacles from states and "liberal" authoritarianism, declaration in Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." per se legitimises hacktivists' contention.

Ultimately, although internet activism and hacktivism require a certain democratic and technological level for their contention and existence, they act with the motto of "more global democracy", and have "destructive" features from the perspective of the targets (yet hacktivists claim that their actions never result in irreversible consequences) but are "constructive" from their own perspective as they have constructive demands to protect the public interest and establish global justice yet "contentious" as they have disrupting and disturbing methods and finally "international" as they build a global hacktivist solidarity which unravels itself as international modern social movements.

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## Genişletilmiş Özet

Bu çalışma, internet kırılcılığı ya da daha yaygın adıyla bilinen “hack” ile toplumsal hareketleri kendi bünyesinde bir araya getiren dijital aktivizm yöntemlerinden “hacktivism” olgusunu, Anonymous ve RedHack grupları üzerinden değerlendirmektedir. Bu bağlamda makale, bu iki grubun küresel ve küreselleşme karşıtı hareketlerdeki rolü, toplumsal değişim ve politik mücadele zemini olarak bilgi hakkına dayalı mücadelesini analiz ederek hacktivismi yeni toplumsal hareketler teorilerinin geniş kapsamı içerisine dahil etmektedir.

Bu çalışma toplumsal hareketlerin eylem repertuvarları ve MBSM gösterileri ile kolektif kimliğin ifade edildiğini öne süren Charles Tilly'nin toplumsal hareket teorisini temel almaktadır. Bu çerçevede Anonymous ve RedHack gibi hacktivist grupların kaynaklarını nasıl mobilize ettiğini, birlik

hissiyatını nasıl oluşturduklarını ve amaçlarına ulaşmak için nasıl stratejik eylemler geliştirdiklerini anlamak için kullanılmıştır. Çalışma aynı zamanda politik fırsat yapılarına dikkat çekerek, politik bağlamın toplumsal hareketlerin oluşumu ve gelişimini nasıl etkilediğini göstermeye çalışmaktadır.

Bu bağlamda bu çalışma öncelikle, aktivizm, clicktivizm, hacktivizm ve siber terörizm kavramlarının tanımlarını ve birbirlerinden farklılıklarını ortaya koymakta, sonrasında Anonymous ve RedHack örneklerini birer vaka analizi niteliğinde ele almaktadır. Bu iki grubun eylemleri, benzerlik ve farklılıkları ve eylemlerinde yapmış oldukları işbirlikleri dolayısıyla hacktivizmin uluslararası bir toplumsal hareket olduğuna dair niteliği gösterilmeye çalışılmış ve bu iki grup üzerinden karşılaştırmalı bir analiz de sunulmuştur.

İnternet aktivizmi, bir konuya dikkat çekmek veya bir davayı savunmak için internetin en genel anlamda kullanımıdır. Siber terörizm adından da anlaşılabilirliği üzere sanal alan ve terörizmin birleşimini tanımlar ve politik motivasyonlarla gerçekleştirilen siber saldırılarla can kaybı veya maddi hasara yol açılması anlamına gelmektedir. Bu iki kavramdan farklı olarak hacktivizm, hack ve aktivizm kelimelerinin birleşiminden türetilmiş, politik amaçlar doğrultusunda gerçekleştirilen ve aktivizmden farklı olarak daha nitelikli beceriler gerektiren hack unsurları içeren bir eylem olarak tanımlanmaktadır. Hacktivizm web sayfalarının kullanılmaz hale getirilmesi gibi basit eylemlerden, DDoS (hizmet aksatma saldırıları) ve veri sızdırıcılığı gibi daha karmaşık saldırılara kadar geniş çaplı eylemleri içermektedir. Hacktivistler, politik ve yasal zeminin dışında faaliyet göstererek, politik, toplumsal ve ekonomik konulara müdahale etmeyi, değişiklik yapmayı ya da değişiklik taleplerini dile getirmeyi ve/veya bu konulara dikkat çekmeyi amaçlamaktadırlar.

Anonymous, net bir örgütsel yapısı bulunmayan ve üyelik sürecinin ve üyelerinin kimliklerinin belirsizliği ile bilinen uluslararası ve merkezlessiz (decentralised) bir hacktivist grubudur. 2008

yılında interneti sansürlemek isteyen Scientology Kilisesine karşı gerçekleştirdikleri "Operation Chanology" eylemi ile adını duyurmuş ve dikkatleri üzerine çekmiştir. 2008'den sonra "Operation Payback" olarak bilinen ve WikiLeaks'e bağış yapılmasını engelleyen şirketleri hedef alan eylemleri ve Arap Baharı sürecinde Tunus ve Mısır'daki protestocuları desteklemeleri gibi farklı eylem türleri de geliştirmişlerdir. Anonymous, kendisine sembol olarak V for Vandetta filmiyle ünlenmiş Guy Fawkes maskesini kullanması, bilgi özgürlüğü ilkesine bağlılığı, sansür ve devlet kontrolüne karşı ideolojik duruşuyla öne çıkmaktadır. Anonymous grubuna üyelik için belirli bir süreç olmadığı ve katkı sağlayacak herkese eylemlere katılım açık olduğu gibi tüm üyeleri grubun ismiyle müsemma anonimdir.

RedHack ise sosyalist ideolojiyi benimsemiş olması ve örgütsel bir yapısı ve hiyerarşisi olması dolayısıyla Anonymous'tan farklılaşan bir hacktivist örgüttür. RedHack kendisini proleter örgütü olarak tanımlamakta ve sıklıkla devlet kurumlarını hedef alan eylemler gerçekleştirmektedir. RedHack saldırıları, İstanbul Emniyet Müdürlüğü'nün web sayfasının ele geçirilerek hassas bilgilerin sızdırılması gibi popüler saldırıları içermektedir. Anonymous'tan farklı olarak RedHack üyeleri kendileri için komünizm propagandası içerdiği iddiası ile Türkiye'de gösterimi yasaklanan Şirinler çizgi filmi karakterleri olan rumuzlar tercih etmiş ve anonimliğe ve toplumsal katılıma farklı bir yaklaşım sergilemeyi tercih etmiştir.

Anonymous ve RedHack bir toplumsal hareket formu olarak hacktivizmi tercih etseler de örgütsel yapıları ve ideolojik temeli açısından farklılık göstermekle birlikte, eylem hedefleri ve bilgi hakkına yaptıkları vurgu açısından benzerlikler göstermektedir. Anonymous daha ademi merkezizetçi bir yapıya ve ideolojik çeşitliliğe sahipken, RedHack net bir sosyalist gündeme sahiptir. Farklılıklarına rağmen iki grup da interneti, destekçilerini harekete geçirmek, bilgiyi erişilebilir kılmak ve yaygınlaştırmak için kullanmakta, devletlere ve kurumsal şirketlere meydan okumak amacıyla eylemler gerçekleştirmektedir.

Anonymous ve RedHack'in de dahil olduğu birden fazla hacker grubunun iş birliği ile gerçekleştirilen ve İsrail hükümetinin web sitelerine yönlendirilmiş saldırılardan oluşan #OpIsrael gibi eylemler, hacktivizmin nasıl ulusal sınırları aştığını ve uluslararası bir nitelik kazandığını göstermektedir.

Sonuç olarak, bu çalışma hacktivizmi, diğer toplumsal hareketlere de müdahil olabilen, internet kırılcılığını (hacking) bir repertuvar olarak kullanan, ancak kendi iddia noktası olan bilgi hakkı savunuculuğuyla yeni bir toplumsal hareket olarak ele alınması gerektiğini ve uluslararası ittifaklar kurarak sadece ulusal değil uluslararası politik süreçlere de müdahil olduğunu göstermeye çalışmıştır. İnternet, kanunilik, etik, devlet gözetimi ve kapitalist şirketleşme karşıtlığı konusunda önemli konuları gündeme getirmek için politik aktivizm sayesinde kamusal bir alan sağlamaktadır. Hacktivism, toplumsal hareketler konusunda yeni bir cephe temsil etmekte ve geleneksel protesto ve aktivizm yöntemlerini dönüştürmektedir.

#### Yazar Bilgileri

##### Author details

1- (Sorumlu Yazar **Corresponding Author**) Öğr. Gör. Dr.,  
ekara@ogu.edu.tr , elifkaraphd@gmail.com

#### Destekleyen Kurum/Kuruluşlar

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