

# **Contentious Youths?**

**A Case Study on The Gezi Park Protests and the Maidan Uprising**

*By Mie Scott Georgsen*

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*Abstract: The year of 2013 was very much a year of contention throughout the world. Among other places, large-scale protests took place in Istanbul and Kiev. The objective of this article is to examine whether these protests can be characterized as youth mobilization in particular. In order to answer this question, I begin this article by giving a definition of the concept 'social movement' drawing on Charles Tilly's concept of the self-same and I subsequently discuss what characterizes a youth movement in particular. Following that, I outline two cases: The Gezi Park protests in 2013 and the Maidan uprising in 2013/2014 on the basis of empirical studies in order to finally discuss whether these two cases can be seen as examples of youth mobilization. The empirical material on which this article is based upon consists of interviews made in Istanbul and Kiev respectively with people who participated in the protests.*

#### **I. Contentious years – contentious youth?**

The year of 2013 was very much a year of contention throughout the world. On May 27<sup>th</sup> 2013 a small group of environment activists gathered in Gezi Park, located next to Taksim Square – the central square of Istanbul. They did so to contest the urban development plan implying the destruction of the park. However, the 31<sup>st</sup> of May they were removed from the park by the police. The severe police crack-down on these protesters and the denial of their right to protest initiated a wave of large scales anti-governmental protests that swept across Istanbul as well as other parts of the country.

Later that same year, on November the 21<sup>st</sup> 2013, about 2000 protesters gathered in the Independence Square in Kiev. They did so to peacefully show their discontent with the government's disruption of the association agreement with EU. However, on November the 30<sup>th</sup> a special police force – the 'Berkut' – dispersed these protests. The severe police crack-down initiated an on-going series of protests. Hundreds of thousands of people

gathered at the Independence Square in an anti-governmental protest, which along the way led to the dismissal of the now former president of Ukraine Viktor Yanukovich.

Within the last couple of years a wave of contention, protests, and revolutionary uprisings has swept across the world affecting the social situations in countries such as Egypt, Spain, Turkey, Venezuela, Thailand, and Ukraine to mention but a few. Furthermore, as I am writing, protests have erupted in Hong Kong (September/October 2014). All over the world people are taking it to the streets. Thus the Gezi Park protest and the Maidan uprising are not exclusive examples. On the contrary, it seems quite common these days to fight for political changes outside the established political system i.e., in the streets or in the public square, and the social sciences are therefore faced with the important task of coming to an understanding of these phenomena.

Different social movements have over the years used different kinds of protest strategies in order to bring about societal change. Social movements consist of different kinds of individuals, brought together under certain circumstances, and they are “important vehicles for social and political change, yet it is not always apparent how it is possible to bring together a variety of groups and individuals with varying interests and ideologies to form a cohesive movement capable of effecting real changes. Thus, social movement theorists attempt to answer a variety of questions about the growth and impact of movements, which are relevant to activists and policy-makers as well as to social scientists”<sup>1</sup>.

The Gezi Park protests and the Maidan uprising are, amongst other present protests, examples of how different kind of people gathered in an anti-governmental protest, but they are also examples of how complex contemporary protest forms appear to be, and thus how difficult it can be to grasp the anatomy of the present protests.

Despite their obvious differences for instance their extent, duration, and purpose, these two lines of events also share some similarities: a large amount of people gathered in the streets, occupation of a public square, violent clashes with police forces, a common public enemy personified in the

political leader etc. Thus they tend to give rise to some of the same questions: Who were all these people in the streets and with what purpose did they gather in the streets?

Another common feature seems to be the participation of youth generations. The youth seems to have played an important role in the protests in Istanbul and Kiev both, but to what extent does this feature of the protests enable us to comprehend these protests as social youth movements, and how should such a movement – a ‘youth’ movement – be defined?

Thus the objective of this article is to examine whether these protests can be characterized as youth mobilization. In order to answer this question I begin this article by giving a definition of the concept social movement and I discuss what characterizes a youth movement in particular. In order to do so I draw on Charles Tilly’s theory of contentious politics and in particular his concept of social movements. Furthermore, I employ sociological analysis of the concept of youth in order to discuss what makes a social movement a youth movement in particular and, in connection to this discussion, I set up a claim-claimant continuum model that allows me to divide the concept of youth movement into three different kinds of youth movements. Subsequently, I outline the two cases, focussing on the claimants (the question of who) and their claims (the question of why) in order to discuss to which extent these movements can be characterized as youth movements.

## **II. What is a social movement?**

Within the theory of contentious politics, a social movement is “contentious in the sense that social movements involve collective making of claims that, if realized, would conflict with someone else’s interests, political in the sense that governments of one sort or another figure somehow in the claim making, whether as claimants, objects of claims, allies of the objects, or monitors of the contention”<sup>2</sup>. According to Charles Tilly a social movement thus consists of sustained campaigns that accentuate collective claims that oppose interests of another social grouping. Social movements can according to Tilly be said to consist of three basic elements: 1) sustained campaigns of claim-making 2) public performances (the repertoire) and 3) a repeated public

manifestation of WUNC (worthiness, unity, numbers and commitment) – elements that in combination distinguish social movements from other types of contentious politics<sup>3</sup>.

### *Sustained campaigns*

A campaign cannot be limited to a single event – a campaign consists of several events like demonstrations, protests, petitions, blockades, occupations, marches, mass meetings etc. Thus a campaign stretches in time, hence the adjective ‘sustained’. A campaign has at least three parties involved; claimants; objects of claims and the public<sup>4</sup>. A claimant is an actor who makes a public claim. A claimant can go in and out of claim-making activities and daily life respectively. You can for instance take part in a protest during your lunch break and then go back to work afterwards (as some of my informants from Istanbul actually did during the Gezi Park protests) which means that, aside from being a part of a movement, you maintain your other roles or identities in your daily life. Object(s) of claims refers to the actor the claims are directed towards. The public “refers to the people present in a given space”<sup>5</sup> – they neither undertake the role of claimants nor the role of object(s) of claims in claim-making. However, the public indeed plays an important, though passive, part of claim-making since the public performances need an ‘audience’ and furthermore its ‘applause’.

### *Public performances – the repertoire*

A repertoire consists of a collection of activities or performances that a social movement employs in accentuating its collective demands such as, demonstrations, petitions, rallies, pickets, occupations, marches, and public meetings. Social movement repertoires are in many ways similar to other political repertoires. A social movement’s repertoire could for instance consist of activities that are similar to the ones used by a political party during a political campaign or by a union improving the conditions for its members. However, social movements differ from other sorts of political engagement by integrating all or most of the above-mentioned performances.

The diversity of activities in a campaign distinguishes social movements from other political practices<sup>6</sup>.

According to Tilly, regimes play an important part of creating and shaping social movements in at least three different ways; the regime controls the claim-making repertoires; the regime constitutes both potential claimants and potential object(s) of claims; and the regime produces subjects, events and actions on the basis of which social movement campaigns are created as well as deteriorated. Tilly states that: "Within regimes, both long-term change and short-term variation affect the rise, fall, and mutation of social movements"<sup>7</sup>.

### *WUNC*

WUNC stands for worthiness, unity, numbers, and commitment. "WUNC says: pay attention to us; we matter"<sup>8</sup> thus it's a type of an efficiency stamp – a strong WUNC so to speak, legitimizes the social movement. WUNC characterizes effective demonstrations and other activities, and one can, among other things, create a strong WUNC through banners, interviews, brochures and pamphlets, badges, flags, and continued participation in meetings and other activities<sup>9</sup>.

### *Studying Social Movements and Societal Change*

What Tilly overall examines are the ways in which democratization processes unfold in society, and in this regard political contention plays an important role. Democracy, it is implied, is not to be taken for granted – it is a socially constituted form of governance and political contentions are roughly speaking struggles of who should govern and/or how society ought to be governed. According to Tilly democratization processes are unfolding in the span between the macro- and micro-political level i.e., they unfold in reciprocal influence of political structures set by those in power or by major political actors (the regime), and of the people's ability to influence and change these structures (repertoires). Thus regimes and repertoires are intertwined and together they constitute the political opportunity structures

i.e., structures that enable opportunities for social change i.e., democratization.

Consequently, one must conduct a thorough investigation of both the characteristics of a given regime<sup>10</sup> as well as the repertoires of the contenders in a study of democratization processes. I have primarily worked with the latter, since I've been focussing on the particular public performances, which constitute the protesters' repertoires in Istanbul and Kiev respectively. And I have employed qualitative research in order to do so. This means that my focus has been on the practice of action of those concrete human beings that took part in the events, paying attention to the question of 'what' instead of 'why'. In this way, I have circumvented the question of causality – a question that Tilly intentionally doesn't dodge, however, a question that causes him quite a lot of trouble as he ends up in a classic what-came-first discussion. If regimes are defining factors of repertoires and repertoires affect regimes, how are we able to account for societal change? On the other hand, my procedure doesn't result in final answers of whether the claims for societal change resounding from the mouths of the masses in the streets of Istanbul and Kiev will be fulfilled in time, nor can I answer the question of why exactly the proclaimed destruction of Gezi Park or the declination of signing the association agreement became the initial sparks for months and months of continuous contention. However, I have elsewhere, on the basis on my empirical work, characterized the anatomy of the social movements in Istanbul and Kiev using the concepts of Tilly (see Christensen & Georgsen 2013; Georgsen 2014a). Here, however, I want to focus on the claims and claimants, in order to discuss whether these events can be characterized as youth mobilization in particular, but firstly I want to raise the question of how to define a youth movement in particular. How can a youth movement be described in the optics of Tilly's concepts of social movements?

### **III. What Characterizes a Youth Movement in Particular?**

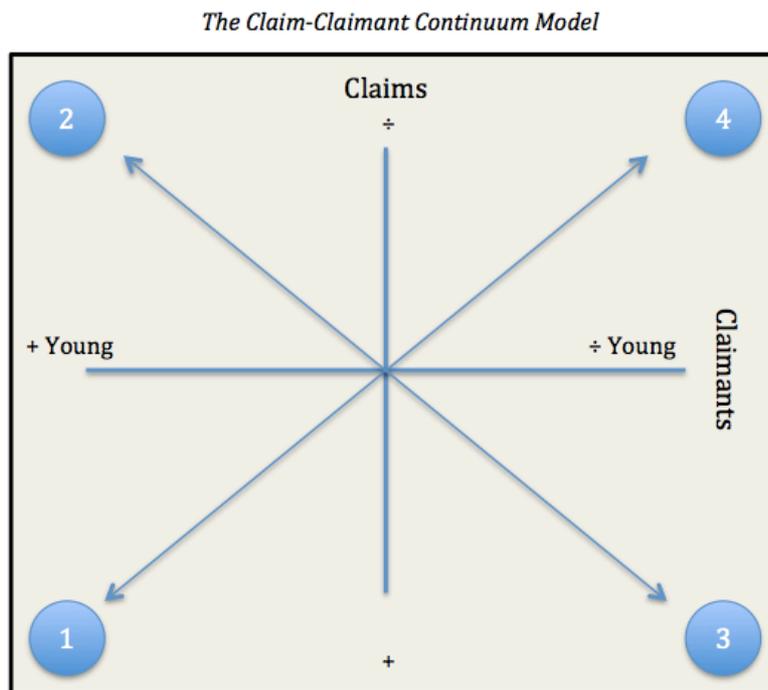
What defines a social youth movement in comparison to a social movement? How, if at all, is a social youth movement different from a social movement –

except from the fact that the one syllable word 'youth' has sneaked its way in between 'social' and 'movement'?

### *A Two-dimensional Continuum Model of Youth Movements*

It seems to be consistent with the above-mentioned definition of a social movement that a youth movement could either be defined on the basis of the claims and/or on the basis of the claimants. This enables the making of a two-dimensional continuum of different kinds of youth movements on the basis of claims and claimants.

Figure 1.1



The idea is that you should be able to assign youth as a characteristic of either the claims or of those who make the claims or even both when speaking of a youth movement in particular. This implies not only a distinction between social movements that in no particular ways can be defined as a youth movement and youth movements in particular, but also allows us to speak about different kinds of youth movements. Altogether we can talk about four different kinds of movements according to this continuum: 1) 'youth movements', 2) 'young social movements', 3) 'social

youth movements' depending on whether we define movements on behalf of the claims and the claimants both or either the claimants or the claims and finally, 4) 'social movements' which are social movements where neither claims nor claimants can be ascribed the term youth. At both ends of the continuum you find the extreme positions i.e., the distinction between what I have referred to simply as 'youth movements' and 'social movements'. A youth movement refers to a movement where the term 'youth' can be ascribed to both the claimant as well as the claims. This means that the claimants virtually are young people and the claims concern the youth. In between you find 'young social movements' i.e., youth movements defined only on basis of their claimants, which means that they are young people, but with no claims concerning the youth in particular and 'social youth movements' i.e., movements defined exclusively on basis of their claims, which means that they concern the youth in particular but the ones who accentuate them don't belong to a certain age group per se. Hence the continuum expands from youth movements (1) to both/and (2 and 3) to not being a youth movement in particular (4).

This suggests a certain approach that enables us to answer the question of whether a given social movement can be defined as a youth movement at all and, if so, how? This approach has emerged from this continuum, but is also largely consistent with Tilly's approach to social movements. To answer the question of whether the movements in Istanbul and Kiev can be characterized as youth mobilization, I examine, on the basis of my interviews, what the claims consist of, who makes them and, subsequently, whether the concept of youth can be attributed to these two.

### *Different Perspectives on Youth*

However, all sorts of questions arise from this claim-claimant model. For instance it raises the question of when someone can be considered young. However, in a given inquiry you are able to set a given standard on the basis of an explanatory statement, hence the claim-claimant-model could still be useful in a specific analysis of a given movement. For instance, 'young' could, in a given inquiry, be defined in accordance with the standards of a certain

country, a particular organization or a specified public institution. Furthermore it raises the question of what is meant by claims that can be considered claims concerning the youth. Again this would call for a clear distinction between what concerns youth and what does not, or at least some preliminary considerations on this. One way of determining whether the claims can be described as youth claims could be to examine whether the concept of youth appears in the concrete claim-making. Do the claimants express a notion on youth in their claim-making performances and in their statements?

On the other hand, the two-dimensional model accommodates the immediate rejection of defining something as a youth movement unless all of or most of the people participating are youths (which is, as we shall see, not the case in either Istanbul or Kiev).

But is it really that simple? This is of course a rhetorical question in which no is the implied answer. But how then can we define 'youth claims' or claims concerning the youth in particular and what is the definition of being young? I shall begin by considering the latter.

### *Being Young*

The concept of youth seems inevitably linked to age thus the obvious answer to what characterizes a youth movement in particular is that it has something to do with the members of a given social movement i.e., the age of the claimants. However, this indicates that a large group of people share common interests only because they are young and that these interests differ significantly from the interests of other age groups i.e., adults and elderly. Furthermore, it implies a definition of youth that gives priority to the fact that it refers to a transitional phase between childhood and adulthood.

However, it's not only possible to define claimants as young on the basis of their age. Some theorists argue that you must include social positioning in one's categorization. According to Wallace and Kowatcheva (1998) a person finds himself in-between childhood and adulthood – in the situation or phase of being young – when studying and/or before settling down with a full time job and/or family understood as a marriage partner and/or children. Thus

youth, it is argued, does not only adhere to a person's age, but largely to a person's position in society and this phase has become longer and longer in modern societies. People get older and older before settling down, while values traditionally connected to adult life continuously leach in to childhood. This means that the period of being young has been extended for the past 30 years or so<sup>11</sup>.

### *Youth Claims*

Now let's scrutinize the other possible answer mentioned above. In defining a youth movement in opposition to merely a social movement, 'youth' has something to do with the claims accentuated by a given movement – the claims must somehow concern the youth. This, however, does not circumvent the problem of age versus social positioning since youth still needs to be defined. However, as I've mentioned, you can't make the necessary link between age and interests<sup>12</sup>. To define a youth movement on the basis of claims thus seems to suggest that youth should be defined on behalf of social positions. But does this mean that a campaign can be considered a youth campaign if it focuses on education, youth accommodations, or consists of an upheaval against institutionalized norms and traditions? This calls for a more thorough inquiry of the historical and cultural settings in which the social movement exists. This is in accordance with the generational perspective of youth in which values of a generation is linked to the time and place in which a generation grew up. According to this perspective values are founded in the early years of one's life and rarely change significantly during a lifetime thus different generations have different but more or less constant values. In contrast, one's values change throughout a lifetime according to the age perspective while they change based on one's social position in society according to the social positioning perspective.

### *The Categorization of Youth*

The reason for including this preliminary discussion on the concept of youth is to emphasize the fact that the concept of youth, if not clarified explicitly, is at risk of doing more harm than good in an inquiry on political contention

with the aim of encouraging youth participation in public policy making. A categorization of a group is not a neutral exercise. Instead the category of youth is, as Bourdieu (1997) suggests, a constitutive construction that works as a differentiating mechanism. Whether we define youth in accordance to age or social position the concept itself implies something hierarchical. You develop from being a child to being an adult during youth and adulthood is the highest state in that development. In other words it is a vertical development thus “(t)he category of *youth* as a socially distinct group of people fundamentally imposes a second-class status upon young people”<sup>13</sup>. If you define youth as a transitional phase of life – a phase between childhood and adulthood, or if youth is defined as ‘not (yet) adult’ – then youth mobilization could be characterized as irrational behaviour instead of collective action, and their intention could be written off as illegitimate since they might grow apart from their claims, their needs, and their hopes in the future i.e., when they reach adulthood. Both the age perspective as well as the social position perspective holds an essentialist concept of youth and there exist numerous examples of naturalized apprehensions on youth as inevitably linked to experiments, innovation, courage, temper, irrationality, ambivalence, etc.<sup>14</sup> Thus in categorizing youth, you also risk establishing this group merely as a subject to change instead of an agent of change<sup>15</sup>.

In applying the claim/claimant continuum in a given inquiry, we need to bear in mind these considerations of how the concept of youth also works as a power of categorization. I thus accede to a social constructionist approach that conceptualizes youth in connection to specific economic, political, and societal conditions.

#### **IV. Two Cases: The Gezi Park Protests and the Maidan Uprising<sup>16</sup>**

The 27<sup>th</sup> of May 2013 a small group of environmental activists gathered in Gezi Park – a small park located on the central square of Istanbul called Taksim Square. They did so to prevent, using their bodily presence, the bulldozers from razing the park to the ground. This initial sit-in executed by a couple of hundred people was part of a longstanding campaign contesting an urban development plan of the Taksim area, which implied the

destruction of the park. The plans included the building of a replica of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Ottoman barracks, Topçu Kışlası, which was to contain a shopping mall and a mosque. Not only were the protesters contesting the destruction of the park, they also criticised the political decision making in this gentrification process – a critique that, according to critics, was more broadly applicable to a government not willing to listen to opposing positions in general. The 30<sup>th</sup> of May the police however brutally cleared the park. The severe police crack-down on these protesters and the denial of their rights to protest initiated a wave of large scale anti-government demonstrations that swept across Istanbul as well as other parts of the country. They continued in June and July before reducing regularity and the number of participants in mid-July and August 2013. According to The Ministry of the Interior approximately 2.5 million people participated in protests in 79 of 81 of Turkey's provinces and about 5000 people were at some point detained during the first three weeks. The Turkish Medical Association's statistics showed that within the first month of the protests more than 8000 people had been injured across 13 cities – approximately half of them sustained their injuries within the first week<sup>17</sup>.

Later that same year another uprising broke out in another geographical and political setting. On November the 21<sup>st</sup> 2013 about 2000 protesters gathered in the Independence Square (Maidan) in Kiev<sup>18</sup>. They did so to peacefully show their discontent with a statement of the former Minister of the Interior Mykola Azarov in which he on the evening of the 21<sup>st</sup> of November, only a week before the Vilnius Summit, had stated that the government would no longer work towards an association agreement with the EU. Thus the protests from the 21<sup>st</sup> of November till the 29<sup>th</sup> of November were primarily aimed to force the president to sign this agreement with the EU. As Yanukovych came back from Vilnius on November 29 without a signed agreement, the people went home. They left their fighting spirit materialized on banners and posters and only a few people stayed. Many thought that this was it. It was over. However, the 30<sup>th</sup> of November the protesters who remained on the square, mostly students in their early twenties, were met by the police, who made a heavy-handed effort to clear the square. This ignited

the anger of the people who took it to the streets the next day, the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2013. One million people gathered at Maidan at a time and approximately four million people have participated in protests from November 2013 to March 2014. In the period from the 30<sup>th</sup> of November to March 2014, there were several demonstrations. Unlike the initial demonstrations, which were an attempt to pressure the government to sign the association agreement, the subsequent demonstrations – including the large demonstrations that took place on the 1<sup>st</sup> of December 2013, the 8<sup>th</sup> of December 2013, the 19<sup>th</sup> of January 2014 and the 18<sup>th</sup> of February 2014 – were backlashes of the way the government and the police had been handling the situation. Besides from these demonstrations people also got together each Sunday from the 24<sup>th</sup> of November in large meetings at the square. The on-going series of anti-governmental protests along the way led to the resignation of the now former president Viktor Yanukovich. The protesters proclaimed that they would not leave the square before the 25<sup>th</sup> of May 2014 – the date set for the exceptional presidential election. However, when I visited Kiev once again in July 2014 the square was still occupied.

## **V. Are the Gezi Park Protests and the Maidan Uprising Examples of Youth Mobilisation?**

In the section above, I have shortly outlined the two cases. I now want to turn to the question of whether the claimants and the claims can be characterized in terms of youth.

### *Claimants*

The Gezi Park protests and the Maidan Uprising both gained quantitative as well as qualitative support: many participants took part in the protests – all with different backgrounds. The diversity amongst the protesters in Istanbul was so comprehensive that a concept ‘The Gezi Spirit’ was invented to describe the puzzling fact that all these different kinds of people were gathered in one place and seemingly were getting along. One of my informants from Istanbul says: "Every kind of people was there. Normally

they would not live together, but they did. This is part of a new way of looking at life. So that is why I say it is a soul materialized by people”.

The claimants can't be defined exclusively as young in a biological age sense in either the Gezi Park movement or the Maidan movement. People of all ages took part in the protests. Neither does it seem as if the claimants can be defined as young in accordance with a social position perspective since the protesters in both movements included a wide variety of people. At least it seems difficult to make a clear-cut characteristic of the protesters as students and/or people without children and marriage partners – especially in Kiev. However, in both Istanbul and Kiev the youth, in the sense of biological age, played an important role in the initial protests. They were the ones to stay put in Kiev after the 30<sup>th</sup> of November when the rest of the crowd dispersed, and the beatings of these youngsters initiated anger that motivated people to demonstrate in a completely different magnitude than before. It should also be mentioned that, according to my findings, the crowd in Istanbul in general was younger both in age and position (as students) than the crowd in Kiev, and that a notion of the claimant's age seems to be more prominent in the accounts of my informants from Istanbul. Nonetheless, informants from Istanbul stress that it was not only young people who participated. People of all ages participated and there are stories about how elderly people, who weren't able to go out in the streets, made noise from their balcony in support of the protests. Thus, one cannot characterize the Gezi protest as a youth rebellion because all ages were represented, one cannot characterize it as a secular revolt because religious people were there too, and one cannot characterize it as a left-wing insurgency. To the question of whether the protests can be described as being arising from the left the answer of one informant is: "Yeah ... no ... I don't know how to describe it, actually. It is really complex for me to describe. It is like describing the Internet. You cannot. But the thing is, it is horizontal (...) and it is all connected and for a few days all the people there collaborated no matter if they were different. No matter if they didn't share the same political ideology". The informants agree that it started with a few hundred environmental activists, but as it

developed it became difficult for them to give a comprehensive description of the protesters.

Thus, no matter which perspective you apply on youth regarding the claimants, one cannot conclude that the claimants in either Istanbul or Kiev were exclusively young people. The crowds were too diverse – hence we can't compare this in a straight line to the youth movements of the 60's that by large sprung from the universities and mostly included people young of age and/or young due to their social position as students. Nevertheless, we are not quite ready to dismiss the two cases as examples of youth mobilization. What about their claims?

### *Claims*

There are certain similarities between the claims from Istanbul and the claims from Kiev: generally, they are directed directly towards the political leader and their policies as well as the political system as such. The contenders point to the institutional provision of the electoral system as well as the political system in general. Furthermore, the contenders in Kiev are fed up with the excessive corruption in the entire Ukrainian society and the influence of the oligarchs. However one must include the specific historical, societal situation of Turkey and Ukraine in order to understand the specific claims.

In both places the protest are initiated by a program claim that, as the protests progress, develops into a more general standing claim<sup>19</sup>. Thus in Istanbul the initial programmatic claim "Let *the trees* be – preserve the park" – a claim regarding the excessive urban gentrification processes – developed into an overall standing claim, not about the trees, but about people's rights: "Let *us* be – preserve our rights of freedom!" while the initial program claim in Kiev "Sign the association agreement" – a claim regarding European integration – developed into another program claim of the resignation of Yanukovich. However the protests were not brought to an end when Yanukovich was dismissed the 22<sup>nd</sup> of February. The occupation of the Independence Square remained after the presidential election on the 25<sup>th</sup> of May and the claim had now become a standing claim of an excessive

reformation of the Ukrainian society from top to bottom. Thus, both in Istanbul and Kiev the claims developed from being very specific into being more generic concerning basic political and civil rights (the right to assembly, the right to protest, the right to a fair trial, the right to be who you are (as a sexual or ethnic minority etc.) and the informants stress that the initial claims regarding the preservation of Gezi Park and the association agreement with Europe respectively weren't the essential claims of the continuous contention as a whole. They were just the last drops and the excessive repression and the police crackdowns that took place in connection to the peaceful protests were sparks that set the protests on fire. In both places the protesters responded to the repression in the negative. They said: "stop", "no more" and "enough is enough".

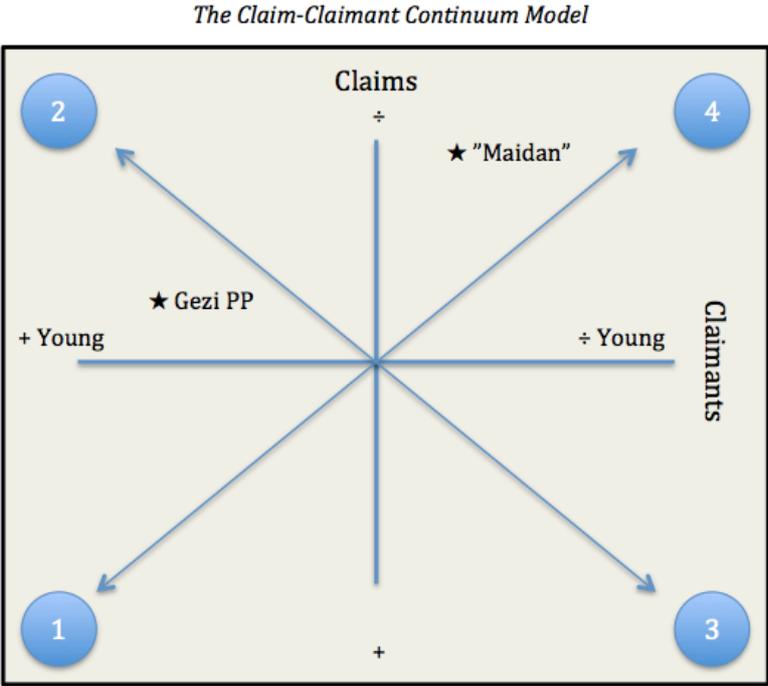
These claims do not apparently concern youth – at least not if you define youth according to an age perspective or a social position perspective. However, from a generational perspective on youth one must conduct a more thorough investigation of the societal and political situation than I've done here in order to reject these claims as youth claims. The informants from Istanbul clearly have a notion on youth in their accounts and they also compare their claims to the ones of the Occupy Movement and other movements that to a certain degree can be described in accordance with their specific temporal settings. However, the claims in Kiev seem to be more fundamental than the claims in Istanbul thus not only concerning a specific group no matter if this group is defined in accordance with age, social position or generation.

#### *Characterization of The Gezi Park protests and the Maidan uprising*

I would characterize the Gezi Park protests as a young social movement in the sense that many of the protesters were young, but the claims cannot necessarily be characterized as concerning the youth in particular thus in the two-dimensional continuum model the movement would be placed somewhere in the middle of the model while I would characterize the Maidan Uprising as a social movement (4) i.e., with no characterization of claims nor claimants as youth in particular. In the two-dimensional continuum model,

though, the Maidan uprising would be placed between 2 and 4 since there is a notion on youth in connection to the claimants but not at all in connection to the claims.

Figure 1.2



Also it should be noted that just as different types of claims can support each other or replace each other along the way, so can the crowd also alter along the way. Social movements are thus changing in time hence it can be difficult to suspend a precise characterization of a given one.

*Concluding Questions*

The purpose of focussing on youth must be to avoid marginalization of youth in policy-making processes. The Gezi Park protests and the Maidan uprising are examples of how large sections of a population, and not only the youth, feels politically powerless. By defining these two cases as examples of youth mobilization one risks to neglect the fact that these protest do not only concern the youth. They target a political deficit that affects an entire society. Nonetheless, through a discussion on how to define youth one can raise a critique of naturalized conceptions of youth that exist in academia as well as

outside and an upheaval against inappropriate categorization that might lead to stigmatization and marginalization of groups of citizens in policy-making can arise.

Instead of concluding this article with a clear-cut answer to the question of whether these two cases can be ascribed as examples of youth mobilization I want to conclude with two questions instead: Why do we ask the question of whether we are witnessing a new arise in youth mobilization? And in what way do the answer to this question inform researchers and their studies let alone policy-makers and their work?

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup>Staggenborg 2008: 2.

<sup>2</sup>Tilly in: Staggenborg 2008: 5.

<sup>3</sup>Tilly 2006: 183-185.

<sup>4</sup>Tilly 2006: 184.

<sup>5</sup>Baykan & Hatuka 2010: 51.

<sup>6</sup>Tilly 2006: 184.

<sup>7</sup>Tilly 2006: 186.

<sup>8</sup>Tilly 2006: 185.

<sup>9</sup>Tilly 2006: 184.

<sup>10</sup>A regime can according to Tilly be characterized on the basis of level of democracy and capacity. He roughly distinguishes between four types of regimes; Un-democratic high-capacity regimes; un-democratic low-capacity regimes; democratic high-capacity regimes; and democratic low-capacity regimes (Tilly 2006).

<sup>11</sup>Gundelach & Nørregård-Nielsen 2002: 28.

<sup>12</sup>As Gundelach and Nørregård-Nielsen point out this is an empirical justified proposition according to Danish data collected in 1981, 1990 and 1999 as part of the international survey on values (Gundelach & Nørregård-Nielsen 2002).

<sup>13</sup>Noguera, Cammarota & Ginwright (eds.) 2013: xix.

<sup>14</sup>For instance Sukarieh & Tannock point to a few examples on how youth has been constructed as a revolutionary subject (Sukarieh & Tannock 2014: 81-84).

<sup>15</sup>Noguera, Cammarota & Ginwright (eds.) 2013: xviii.

<sup>16</sup>The empirical data, on which this inquiry is build upon, consists mainly of interviews made in Istanbul with people who in different ways have participated in the Gezi Park protests as well as interviews made in Kyiv from the 3<sup>rd</sup> of April to the 10<sup>th</sup> of April 2014. The transcripts of all the interviews (in English) as well as the qualitative findings on the Gezi Park protests and on the Maidan uprising that are summarized in the following two sections are reported in more detailed elsewhere; see Christensen & Georgsen (2013); and Georgsen (2014ab).

<sup>17</sup>Amnesty 2013: 56.

<sup>18</sup>Another grouping primarily led by the political opposition parties met at the European Square. This in addition to the initial claims about the association agreement entailed the name 'Euromaidan', which medias and others continuously have used as a common reference of the line of protests. However, the two protests on the European Square and the Independence Square joined forces at Maidan (eng.: square) after the 30<sup>th</sup> of November when they realized that they in and by themselves weren't enough to claim the streets. Thus all of my informants refer to the protests as simply 'Maidan'.

<sup>19</sup>Tilly distinguishes between three types of claims: programmatic, standing and identity claims (Tilly 2006: 184).

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