

Kristina Elise Torvik

Fridays For Future:

Using Social Media in the Mobilization of a Global Social Movement



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Faculty of Education and International Studies

OsloMet – Oslo Metropolitan University

## Abstract

This master's thesis in International Education and Development contributes to the understanding of how social movements can mobilize globally through digital advocacy. Specifically, it focuses on the youth-led climate justice movement Fridays for Future (FFF). This is done by examining the research question: How has the Fridays for Future-movement used social media to mobilize on a global scale? By observing and collecting public digital content from social media accounts who represent the movement, I have examined the movement's use of social media to spread awareness of the cause, promote their strikes and protests, and build community on a global scale. Further, the thesis used the same methods to look closer at three national FFF-groups, namely FFF Colombia, Afghanistan, and Norway. This showed how the global movement is impacted by local circumstances, and vice versa, bringing me to present a 'glocal' understanding of the mobilization of global social movements. Last, the theories of Castells (2009; 2015), Morozov (2012), and Gaventa (2006; Gaventa and Martorano, 2016), are used to examine the power structures limiting and/or enabling FFF's global mobilization through social media, focusing on inequalities in access and representation, censorship and surveillance by governments and commercial actors, the role of mass-media, and the movement's own ability to mobilize resources. The research shows that while social media can be a highly effective tool for social movement mobilization, there are problematic aspects of this which one should be conscious of.

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# Part I

## Chapter 1: Introduction

“The struggle for action will no doubt be difficult and hard-fought, and no matter what it achieves, it is already too late to avoid some serious disruptions of the global climate. But I would like to believe that out of this struggle will be born a generation that will be able to look upon the world with clearer eyes than those who preceded it” (Ghosh, 2016, pp. 161-162)

Social movements have throughout modern history challenged established values, structures, and power relations. Ranging from small local movements to large international movements, their common denominator is that they wish to encourage large groups of people to stand up and take an active role to further their cause. In recent years, digital platforms have become an important tool for advocacy and mobilizing support. Knowledge and experience with using social media for this purpose is currently developing at express speed. One movement which has used this, is the Fridays for Future (FFF) movement. What started as a small grassroots protest against political climate inaction has developed into one of the largest movements of our time, with an estimated 16 million people having participated (FFF, 2020b). It is a global youth-led movement, giving a voice to future generations.

Being global also means functioning on local and national levels. This entails a need to be compatible with various circumstances and conscious of inequalities which affects the target group. In 2021, only 63% of the world population had access to the Internet (Statista, 2022). Most of those with Internet access are living in the Global North. At the same time, a majority of areas facing the most urgent and devastating consequences of climate change can be found in the Global South. Still, internet access is becoming more available and the effects of climate change will be felt in every corner of the world. These factors create the opportunity to build a united global social movement.

Much of the FFF’s advocacy and mobilization is taking place in social media. As Internet access and use become more available, this use of digital spaces will likely grow and continue to engage people on a global scale. With this thesis, the hope is to gain increased understanding of how social movements, through social media, mobilize and empower others, especially youth, to participate and engage in sociopolitical processes.



## 1.1 Research Aim and Scope

The overarching aim of this thesis will be to explore the possibility for social movements to mobilize globally through digital advocacy. With this purpose in mind, I will examine one of our time's largest global social movements, the youth-led Fridays for Future movement. This is done through observing and collecting public digital content from social media accounts who represent the movement. Although it will be natural to look at both, the main focus of the thesis will be on examining the methods used by the movement, rather than the results it achieves.

### *1.1.1 Research Questions*

This thesis asks the question:

**How has the Fridays for Future-movement used social media to mobilize on a global scale?**

I will answer the question with three sub-questions to focus the research:

- *How are the FFF's main global social media accounts used to engage and spread information globally?*
- *How have local FFF-groups structured their activity to combine activism on global and local scales?*
- *Which power structures are limiting and/or enabling FFF to mobilize on a global scale?*

The first sub question's answer will provide an understanding of the practicalities of the international FFF-team's social media presence and digital activism. The second will give insight into the opportunities and challenges of a multiscalar movement, through examining three local/national FFF groups in Colombia, Afghanistan, and Norway. This is done to understand how local circumstances affect global scale activism, and vice versa, highlighting the 'glocality' of the social movement. The third sub-question examines social and political power structures that affects the FFF movements reach on a global scale, with a focus on their role in social media. Together the three questions will shed light on essential aspects of how the Fridays for Future-movement has used social media to mobilize on a global scale.

### *1.1.2 Core Concepts and Delimitations*

In this thesis the terms environment and climate will be used frequently. Environment, in this setting, can be understood as all living species, climate, weather and natural resources that surrounds us, while climate concerns long-term average weather conditions (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2021). These two terms are different, but they are also closely interlinked. Because this is a paper focused mostly on the movement rather than the cause, the clear separation of these two terms serves little purpose. What is important is that the climate change and environmental degradation that the world is experiencing threatens “to destroy livelihoods, drive migration and conflict, and cripple opportunities for children and young people” (UNICEF, 2019). The concepts of climate and environment will therefore be used somewhat interchangeably here, as they are used in other literature.

The terms around modern technology, digital tools, digital spaces, social media, etc. are many, and they are inconsistently used in various literature to describe the same trends. Defining them all separately is therefore not necessary for the purpose of this thesis. This thesis uses these terms to discuss online spaces with a high concentration of information available, in combination with the personal and social aspects of these sites. These spaces, such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter, are not considered separate from the ‘real world’, but rather integral to everyday life – becoming tools for people to use (Miller et.al., 2016).

Civil society is often described as a part of society which exists somewhere between state, market, and family (Jones, Jones, and Woods, 2015). It is a widely and loosely used term which lacks a universally acknowledged definition. Within civil society are people with a myriad of different interests. While their reach and influence may vary, all individuals, groups and organizations actively engaged in sociopolitical affairs is part of civil society. This thesis will focus on one part of civil society, namely the social movement. A social movement is a somewhat organized social resistance consisting of citizens who are seeking to build up public action and directly engage in political processes (Jones et.al., 2015).

A social movement usually arise from tensions and dissatisfaction with the norm, displayed in the form of protest against those in power. For this kind of counterpower to be heard, the group must be loud, of significant size and have sufficient availability and usability of resources (Della Porta and Diani, 2020). Therefore, it is vital for a social movement to be able to mobilize. Mobilization is traditionally a term used for preparing troops to go into war

or battle. With time, it has also become a common term for describing “the network and organizational activities that transform potential for action into real action” in social movement activity (Della Porta and Diani, 2020, p. 8). In this thesis, mobilization is understood to be any action taken which contributes to further action by others.

All parts of civil society can partake in a social movement – including commercial actors. In social media, commercial actors and activists operate in the same space, often fighting for the attention of the same audience (Etter and Albu, 2021). Further, social media spaces are owned and run by commercial actors. Commercial actors thus have significant power to affect the goals and organizing of activists (Etter and Albu, 2021). The problems and possibilities that arise from this will be central when answering the research question of this thesis.

An issue can be addressed on various scales. A local issue usually demands local action, while a nationwide issue demands action on a national scale. The climate and environmental issues are experienced both locally, nationally, and globally. The various scales must be seen as relational and intertwining, rather than separate from each other (Sayre, 2009). Strategic social movement mobilization should therefore have a “glocal” focus. This means building alliances between people who, despite being located in diverse places, are “bound up in complex socio-spatial processes operating on a global scale” (Miller, 2004, p. 225). This thesis’ focus will be on the action taken by the FFF on a global scale. It will however, for the reasons mentioned above, also be of relevance to explore multi-scalar relations.

## 1.2 Area of Study

This research shows that FFF has used social media actively to spread information on the cause and their actions, engaging with politicians and mass media, and supporting each other both within and across geographical spaces. Still, a disproportionately high number of areas facing the most urgent and devastating consequences of climate change can be found in the Global South, countries which generally have the lowest economic development (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2021). This research adds to the Global North/South-debate, highlighting the movement’s local variations and the importance of adaptability of the cause and its methods due to global inequalities.

Further, by exploring social movements and their power relations in digital spaces, this thesis will be a useful contribution to the discussion on activism and democracy in digital spaces. The technology, and use of it, is in constant change. New technology is affecting every aspect of people's lives. Increasingly many people have access to these technologies, and the amount of time people spend online is also increasing. Online networks are created across borders, class, race, and gender. We are communicating with people far outside of our local community. This use of new technology can provide more power and agency to youth and vulnerable groups, who have previously not been heard. In this way social media can strengthen democratic institutions. However, there are also claims that our increasingly digital lives make people vulnerable to surveillance, fraud, and false information – and in this way undermines democratic institutions. (Miller et.al., 2016)

With a grassroots origin, strong leader, and young target audience, the FFF movement holds an ability to influence, empower and educate their audience. However, the usefulness and authenticity of activism in social media is often questioned, and various research provide various conclusions (Morozov, 2012). The youth of today belong to the first generation who grew up with the Internet. A deeper understanding of how a youth-led movement such as the FFF use this technology will be valuable to the discussion of social media activism.

Finally, the FFF is a part of the climate and environmental movement. Climate change is becoming an increasingly large threat to human wellbeing, peace, and development (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2021). This thesis will be part of gaining increased understanding of the climate activists' relation to justice, humanity, and the environment, as well as their power and agency.

### 1.3 Outline of Thesis

This thesis is divided into two parts. Part 1 consists of chapters 1-4 and includes the introduction, methodology, framework, and background for the thesis. Part 2 consists of chapters 5-8 and includes three chapters of analysis/findings as well as the thesis' concluding chapter.

In chapter 1 I have introduced the thesis' aim, scope, and significance.

Chapter 2 describe the research strategy and methods used.

Chapter 3 presents the theoretical framework that is used to discuss the findings in the thesis analysis. It will introduce the theory of climate justice, relevant power theory, and a theorization of global and digital social movements.

Chapter 4 will provide the reader with relevant background of social movements before and after the digital revolution, a general overview of climate change in global politics, and a presentation of the Fridays for Future-movement.

Chapter 5 will present and discuss the findings and analysis of the first of the three sub-research questions: how are the FFF's main global social media accounts used to engage and spread information globally?

Chapter 6 will present and discuss he findings and analysis of the second of the three sub-research questions: how have local FFF-groups structured their activity to combine activism on global and local scales?

Chapter 7 will present and discuss the findings and analysis of the third of the three sub-research questions: which power structures are limiting and/or enabling FFF to mobilize on a global scale?

In chapter 8 I will conclude the thesis by presenting the main findings and discuss its relevance for future research.

## Chapter 2: Research Methodology

This chapter presents a detailed overview of the thesis' research methods used to explore and answer the research question. First, there will be an introduction of the research strategy. Second, I present the methods used in the data collection and analysis. Last, there will be a discussion of the thesis' limitations and the ethical considerations which followed the methods of this research.

### 2.1 Research Strategy

In order to successfully discuss the research question, it was first needed to set up a strategy for how to conduct the research and find the relevant data in an ocean of information. This thesis set out to gain an in-depth understanding of *how the Fridays for Future-movement has used social media to mobilize on a global scale*. This section gives an introduction and discussion on the overarching methods used to conduct this research in the most appropriate way: qualitative content analysis, digital ethnography, and comparative case studies. Further details of the process will be given in the following sections.

#### 2.1.1 Qualitative Content Analysis

With the thesis' aim and research question in mind, it was important to find the best suitable approach to answer it. I set out on this research project with the intent to gain an in-depth understanding for *how the Fridays for Future-movement has used social media to mobilize on a global scale*. I chose to do this through a qualitative research strategy. Further, this thesis has used content analysis to structure the sampling of FFF's social media content.

In order to analyze the social media channels and find the power structures, it was necessary to first establish a way to work with the vast amount of available content in the digital spaces. As the focus of the research was the social media activity of the FFF, I used content analysis to make comparisons, find patterns, and reveal differences between the various groups and platform accounts analyzed in the thesis. Content analysis use categories based on theory to

put empirical material, often textual, in system (Flick, 2018, p. 482). The coding frame created for this research will be presented in chapter 2.2.1.

Further, a *wide* content analysis was used for this research, meaning I also sought further information outside the specific content chosen for analysis (Flick, 2018). This information was found through observation and in reading/watching other relevant documents (see 2.2.2 and 2.2.3). While the content analysis allowed me to systematically go through the vast amount of information from FFF's social media, it can be a quite reductive form of qualitative analysis. To make enough room for an in-depth analysis, some inspiration was also drawn from discourse analysis. Here, discourse is understood as it is explained by Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 64), as "a socially shared perspective of a topic". To put it simply, I have looked at how the way things are talked about and understood affect how knowledge is perceived by smaller or larger groups of people. By combining this idea with a content analysis, the thesis was able to both gain a broader, contextualized picture and establish concrete data on the FFF's work to mobilize activists through social media.

### *2.1.2 Comparative Case Studies*

A case study is "an in-depth study of a single example of a category of phenomena" (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2021, p. 142). While the FFF can be argued to be a case of a global social movement, this thesis does not treat it as such. Rather, this thesis focuses on three case studies within the FFF-phenomenon. In order to gain significant insight into how the international works of the FFF affected and was affected by local circumstances I decided to study three national groups of the FFF, as a supplement to further understand the global activities. This approach provided an opportunity to study the activity of the FFF in the social context of the climate movement and power structures in multiple scales and spaces.

In order to maximize the comparative, as well as the descriptive, use of the case study method, it was important to carefully choose cases. Cases were chosen based on their representation of different social, political, and geographical contexts. To enhance the international development aspect of the thesis, focus was put on choosing cases with various access and use of the Internet, who also reflect the Global North/South divide.

Of course, when examining inequalities, there is always a risk of the researchers own biases clouding the results. This issue was extra significant as I could not travel due to COVID-restrictions. Therefore, countries I was already familiar with were chosen to minimize this risk. Then, it was important to be aware of the risk of my own preexisting knowledge and assumptions affecting my analysis. By being aware of these and taking precautions, however, that risk was outweighed by the benefits of understanding. This was also furthered by focusing on the digital activity.

FFF Colombia bears the burden of being an environmental activist movement in the most dangerous country for environmental activists. I know Colombia through having spent a significant amount of time in South America. Many local FFF groups use their local language as the main form of communication. This was also the case in Colombia. As I understand Spanish, the language they use, this was also a factor for my ability to choose this as a case.

FFF Afghanistan's activism is set in the midst of war, where surveillance and lacking access to the Internet has made digital communication difficult. Through having worked closely with a group of young Afghan refugees, I have gained a basic understanding for the country's sociopolitical and cultural situation. While I do not speak the language, this was never a hindrance to my analysis of the FFF Afghanistan content, as the vast majority of this was in English.

FFF Norway is struggling to establish a footing in a country where several environmental youth organizations already have a strong footing. As this is my home country, I consider my knowledge of the country to be deep. This is the only country where I had to consider that my preexisting knowledge may run so deep that it could potentially cloud my judgement. However, because the same methods were used in this case as in the other two cases, this risk was minimized. There are also clear advantages to doing research 'at home', such as contextual understanding (Unwin, 2006).

The three cases of FFF Colombia, FFF Afghanistan, and FFF Norway in chapter 6 are used to gain more concrete understanding of how local on-the-ground activity correlates with the global scale mobilization and promotion tactics examined in chapter 5. It also allows for further exemplification, and thus understanding, of the power structures at play across levels, spaces, and forms, as is examined in chapter 7.



### *2.1.3 Digital Ethnography*

Due to the COVID-pandemic, physical fieldwork became difficult, especially as the university did not allow for out-of-country fieldwork to be conducted. I thus decided to use a desk study approach. My research is not alone in having to adapt to this pandemic. This was a unique moment in history, as the whole world became affected in one way or another. The progress made in the digital space, and the increased reliance on it, has increased the need for research in this area.

“Digital ethnography is a method used to study societies and cultures in the digital space – on the Internet, online, without a necessity to travel” (Góralaska, 2020, p. 47). Due to the nature of this study, digital fieldwork was a suitable method to gain insight into the mobilization of the FFF from the viewpoint of the target group. While ethnography traditionally entails getting involved with the object/community of research (Flick, 2018), I chose to take a non-participatory observational approach. This way I only gained access to already public data. However, this allowed me to maintain the viewpoint of the common social media-activist, who the FFF aims to mobilize.

Because this area of research is so complex and new to study, I decided to follow Flick’s (2018, p. 7) advice to have the object under study be “the determining factor for choosing a method”. I always had the overarching research strategy in the back of my mind. However, I remained open for adjustments and took a step-by-step approach to the collection and sampling of data (Flick, 2018, pp. 176-180). I went into the research with an open mind as to what I was going to find. The sampling strategy and relevant cases was identified during the process. In the following section, I provide the details around the data collection process and specifics of the methods used.

## **2.2 Data Collection and Analysis Methods**

This section presents the details of the methods used in the data collection and analysis process: the sampling of social media content, the observation done, the documents analyzed, and the choices made regarding the use of academic literature.

### *2.2.1 Social Media Sampling*

Due to the nature of the research question, it was natural to choose social media as the medium of analysis. As the case is based largely in the public digital space, and since this is where a large portion of the target group gathers, there was much data with easy, open access. With the amount of content available there was no way to go through it all with the time and resources available for a master's thesis. Therefore, some clear criteria needed to be established before the collection of this data.

#### **Platforms**

There exists an immense number of platforms and websites that could have been included in this research. That would not have made the research possible to finish with the allocated time and resources for this master's project. Arguably, no project would be able to include every part of digital activity made by FFF activists. Therefore, sampling choices needed to be made.

This thesis focuses on the activity on the platforms Instagram, Twitter, Facebook, and websites. Of these, Instagram will be referenced the most as this is the platform with by far the most activity. All of these are chosen, however, for their continuous high popularity and activity throughout the entirety of the FFF's existence.

Other popular platforms such as YouTube, TikTok, Discord etc. will not be analyzed as they have only recently been officially taken into use by the FFF, or due to low activity on the subject. For example, the FFF's YouTube channel will not be analyzed because the account is not significantly popular, was never very active, and has not been updated in 8 months.

#### **Accounts**

After choosing platforms, the focus was directed toward accounts directly linked to the movement (see list of main accounts in Appendix). This was due to the thesis' focus on how the FFF themselves used social media. Many of these accounts are connected to each other in the form of similar names (thus they appear in the same search), by following each other, or often by direct interaction on posts (liking, commenting or tagging each other). Thus, it is easy

to navigate between them. Of course, there is always the chance of overlooking some of the accounts how have been less interactive with the rest. However, the goal was to understand how the FFF reached and motivated supporters in social media. Thorough searches and a long sample period have minimized the risk of overlooking any accounts who effectively contributes to reaching and motivating supporters. If this thorough and continuous observation did not find them, chances are that most others did not either.

A set time period for the sampling needed to be established. Most accounts were set up sometime in 2019, as this is when the movement took off. All the accounts posts dating back to the establishment of the various accounts and up to the spring of 2022 were gone through as part of the content analysis. However, there is content which gets published but does not stay published, such as Instagram and Facebook ‘stories’. These disappear after 24 hours. These ‘stories’ are a frequently used method of communication, especially on the international accounts. Therefore, it is relevant to say that I followed the international accounts from September 2021 through April 2022. The accounts related to the three case studies were followed from December 2021 through April 2022. The case study accounts, however, had less activity on their accounts in general, and on their stories function in particular. Getting to know the movement through following the accounts over a long period of time and throughout the researching process gave insights to draw comparisons and explore differences in the forms and frequency of the various groups’ activities.

For the sake of building a wider understanding of the movement and writing an informed analysis, other related accounts and hashtags were also looked at. These were chosen by random, or in relation to specific cases (ex. FFF Philippines). In addition to the focus on official social media channels, it was also relevant to look at how popular hashtags spread. These include, but are not limited to, #FridaysForFuture, #SchoolStrikeForClimate, #UprootTheSystem, and #DigitalStrike. Last, some other movements and digital campaigns were examined for comparative analysis and to further contextualize the FFF movement’s digital presence.

## **Content**

Based on the thesis’ research questions, the theoretical framework (ch. 3), and the contextual background (ch. 4), I created a template for analyzing the accounts and cases:

Figure 2.1: Social media content analysis template

Categories	Criteria
Cause and Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are the values / cause / focus, and how are these portrayed?</li> <li>- How are they demanding the three official demands of the FFF?</li> <li>- What are the local issues/demands and how are they combined with the global official demands? ((intersectional) climate justice)</li> <li>- How are they community building? (glocal identity, inclusiveness)</li> </ul>
Social Media Content	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How is the Internet access, accounts, following?</li> <li>- How are they using social media? (frame alignment, language, hashtags) (variations from the others?)</li> <li>- Different ways of communication? (because of context, surveillance or other factors?)</li> </ul>
Methods of Action	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- What are their methods of action?</li> <li>- How are their protests promoted and executed? (look up registered strikes)</li> <li>- Different ways of protest/action? (Digital strike participation, other civil disobedience)</li> </ul>

The international groups of the FFF (discussed in ch. 5) and the cases of the three national groups (ch. 6) are all analyzed by using the coding strategy laid out in table 2.1. First, three main categories were established. The first one, cause and community, discuss the background for the establishment of the group, their community, and their core values. The second, social media content, focus on how the group use social media to spread their message. The third category, methods of action, focus on how the group take action, both on and off the Internet, for the cause.

While much of the information gathered through these questions is about the FFF groups' activity outside of the digital space, all the information is collected through their social media

activity. Thus, this analysis shows how the groups position themselves online– and how many this activity mobilize.

### *2.2.2 Observation*

I categorized a sample of the content with the intent to reduce the material, as Flick (2018) describes is the intention with a qualitative content analysis. However, I followed all these accounts with my personal, frequently used accounts. This gave me the opportunity to observe over time and build a fuller understanding of the various groups.

I made a conscious decision not to do participatory research or interviewing, but rather focus on observing and analyzing publicly accessible content. The thought behind this decision was that observing the digital communication as an outsider gave me a better picture of how this communication reaches out to others in order to mobilize the masses.

This approach is a much ‘easier’ method to take in the digital space than in the ‘real world’, because so much information and content is published and available to the public. Removing one’s own interference is also easier to do in digital spaces, as there is no immediate need to be visible. It would be difficult to hide one’s appearance at a meeting or a demonstration. On the Internet however, popular accounts are not even likely to notice the one extra follower.

According to Flick (2018, p. 326), “the complete observer maintains distance from the observed events in order to avoid influencing them”. Observing and researching objects who do not know they are being observed does, however, introduce several ethical dilemmas. While most of the research in this thesis avoided focusing on individuals and entering private spheres, some ethical considerations still needed to be taken. This will be further discussed in 2.3.2.

### *2.2.3 Other Documents*

In order to do a thorough analysis of the content gathered from the data collection, other relevant documents were used to understand the sociopolitical context that the FFF movement is situated in. Among such documents used were:

- Relevant reports and statistics were used to establish context and give depth to the discussions of findings.
- The Lausanne Climate Declaration (SMILE (Summer Meeting Lausanne in Europe), 2019a), which is the movement's joint statement document created by FFF-activists after a gathering in Lausanne, Switzerland.
- Documentary: I Am Greta (Grossman, 2020).
- Google searches for news reports on various trends and events, for example COP26.

When using documents as data, it is important to be aware that these are “communicative devices rather than containers of content” (Flick, 2018, p. 383). All these documents have been created to send a message. They have then again been interpreted and reformulated by me in the data gathering process. These sources have therefore been approached with a critical eye.

## 2.3 Rationale of Choices

As seen above, several methods of data collection and analysis have been used in this research process. This “combination of different methods [...] and perspectives in dealing with a phenomenon” is called triangulation (Flick, 2018, p. 191). Triangulation has been used in order to widen the scope and strengthen the validity of the research. Still, there is a need to look critically at the methods used. In this section I wish to discuss the limitations and ethical concerns which have had to be considered during the period of this research and defend the choices made.

### 2.3.1 Limitations

Being aware of the limitations of the methods chosen makes it possible to delimit the research and take efforts to minimize the impact of the methodological shortcomings. Further, to ensure reliability and validity of the research it is important to choose appropriate methods and apply them consistently throughout the process (Flick, 2018). This allows the project to unfold and answer the research questions in a structured way that fits the thesis guidelines.

The most obvious limitation for this research is the sole use of existing data with no participating research. Being critical to the sources I have used has then been very important.

Digital ethnography, or what Flick (2018, p. 343) calls ‘virtual ethnography’, “is never holistic but always partial as you will not be in touch with the research partners face to face, but only with the image they present of themselves online”.

While the FFF’s real world actions were explored, it was mostly through content found online. The only exception to this approach was the global #PeopleNotProfit strike on 25.03. As I was in Norway, and was researching the FFF Norway branch, I decided to go to the protest held in Oslo. I still made sure to stick to the role as a complete observer and did not initiate conversation with anyone. While this deviated from the methods, I considered it to be too valuable for the research to not attend. As Flick (2018, p. 346) says, it is necessary to link the virtual to ‘real-world’ activity in order to build a comprehensive view.

Another limitation with this study is its focus on the Internet on a global scale. This can be a challenge due to the limited reach that the Internet has in large parts of world (Mawdsley, 2006). The digital sources are geographically very unequally produced and spread. That was important to keep in mind during the analysis of the movement’s global scale activity, as well as during the analysis of the case studies.

### *2.3.2 Ethical Considerations*

As a researcher, certain ethical considerations need to be taken. There are many ethical principles one need to follow throughout the process as a researcher (see Flick, 2018, p. 135). While I will not list every principle, I wish to clarify some of the most important ethical considerations made during the writing of this thesis. I therefore want to end this chapter with a discussion the ethical dilemma of ‘lurking’ in the digital space, as well as my own biases as a researcher.

As a researcher from Norway, one of the countries with the most access and knowledge about the Internet, who also speak English, the ruling language on the Internet, it was important to be aware of my own position. Especially since much of the research looked at countries in the Global South. In the case of doing digital fieldwork, however, the advantage of easy access to the digital space and digital literacy that comes with this position must also be viewed as an advantage.

For the data collection, I used my own personal social media accounts. This allowed me to keep track of the groups' activities on a regular basis. However, as I did not tell anyone that they were being researched, this does provoke "the ethical dilemma of lurking" (Góralaska, 2020, p. 49). Still, Góralaska continues by arguing that as long as what is studied "takes place in the so-called 'networked publics', which are (in theory) publicly accessible", this is ok. It is first when one enters the more private spaces of the Internet that "lurking" becomes a challenge. It turns out though, that this distinction between the public and private is not always easy to pinpoint.

It is not rare for a researcher to encounter a dilemma between getting valuable knowledge and maintaining ethical considerations. In the data collection for FFF Afghanistan, the Instagram account for the FFF Afghanistan (n.d.-a) was set to private. There is also a private Facebook-group. There are several reasons why public profiles choose to set their account to private. Instagram is largely a one-way sharing of information, while Facebook-groups are more private channels of cross-communication between individuals. I therefore chose to follow the Instagram-account, while I chose not to ask to be part of the Facebook-group. As I suspected, the Instagram-account shared little new information, as most of it has been shared on the public Facebook and Twitter accounts (FFF Afghanistan, n.d.-b; FFF Afghanistan, n.d.-c). The account also has over 1000 followers, which makes it quite public. It is not, however, active. Based on these factors, I have chosen to include a few insights from the Instagram-account in the research. I do, however, avoid direct citations or using any information which may be considered sensitive in any way. In this way I uphold the anonymity of the participants and the movement's actions.

Last, it is important to make clear that the type of analysis used in this text does inevitably involve some subjective interpretation. I therefore wish to note that while I do consider myself a supporter of the climate justice cause, I have not been personally invested in any form of organizational work or activism related to this subject. My interest in this subject has been scientific and the research has been conducted in an impartial manner. With that said, we now move on to the thesis' theoretical framework.



## Chapter 3: Theoretical Framework

This chapter will introduce the theoretical framework of the thesis. This consists of academic literature and was collected to establish a historical, sociopolitical and theoretical framework to build the research on. These are all peer reviewed publications by recognized researchers. The framework will be used to understand the thesis findings in following chapters, when examining how the Fridays for Future-movement have mobilized on a global scale through social media. This chapter will start with a presentation of the climate justice tradition. Climate justice will be essential in this thesis' analysis as it is an essential part of the FFF and other climate movements' agenda. This will be followed by an overview of the thesis' approach to power, mainly the power cube presented by Gaventa (2006), which will be used to examine FFF's power of mobilization and change in opposition to other powerful actors, such as governments and companies. Last, there will be a thorough review of relevant social movement theories and concepts, by way of which the analysis can understand and examine the FFF movement.

### 3.1 Climate Justice

The FFF presents climate justice as a core value and a demand when combating the climate crisis (SMILE, 2019a). This is a concept used to demand acknowledgment of the various ethical concerns of climate change. Climate justice springs from the environmental justice tradition. In the 1970s and 80s, activists in the USA started to mobilize for environmental justice (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2021, p. 47). While the climate crisis and environmental problems will affect us all, it will affect us differently. There is also great inequality of power to fight these issues. It is these inequalities, which “typically places the heaviest environmental burdens upon marginalized, disadvantaged, and less powerful populations” (Holified, Chakraborty, & Walker, 2017, p. 1), that sets the premise for the environmental justice and climate justice traditions.

At the turn of the century the tradition diversified, and transnational connections were made. Terms such as “environmental racism, environmental equity, and environmental inequality” (Holified et.al., 2017, p. 1), started to find footing also outside of the US. As with the increased visibility of the impacts of climate change, many of those arguing for environmental justice

started to focus on injustices in even broader terms than environmental degradation. Schlosberg & Collins (2014, p. 362) names the 2005 hurricane Katrina as a defining intersecting moment between environmental and climate justice. The clear disproportionate burden that fell on the African American community was highlighted. So was the aspect of climate change and how new policies could either ease or increase this burden for an already vulnerable group.

While local policies are of great importance, climate justice is also concerned the seeming limitations of global governance to tackle the pressing large-scale issues, such as increase in extreme weather, that climate change presents. Benjaminsen and Svarstad (2021, p. 131) argue that climate justice in time and space is “fundamental for democratic decision-making on climate mitigation”. They put this in accordance with Caney’s theory of harm avoidance and burden-sharing justice in addressing climate change, which aim to avoid harm for future generations and to share the burdens between countries in a just way.

*Temporal climate justice* implies that a country’s climate policy reduces climate emissions sufficiently and fast enough to avoid the most serious consequences for future generations. *Spatial climate justice* means that climate mitigation takes place in ways that distribute burden among people today in ways that can be seen as just. (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2021, p. 131)

These aspects of inequity are important. As climate change is just starting to be felt, it will cause more harm on future generations than those of today. In present time, climate change is affecting some harder than others, as island states are already fearing the disappearance of their land, and some areas are nearing uninhabitable due to temperature rises. Understanding the complexities of inequities related to climate change are essential for understanding what is needed to achieve climate justice (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2021).

While climate justice in time and space have been highlighted here, it is important to note that there are many other factors at play making some more vulnerable to climate change than others. One theory for explaining this is intersectionality. In 1991, Crenshaw presented the term as “a way of understanding the various interactions of race and gender in the context of violence against women of color” (p. 1296), while also noting that the term can be used in a broader sense to understand various identity and group politics. With intersectionality Crenshaw (1991) recognizes that one person relates to multiple groups, and that the failure to address differences within groups contributes to tensions. For example, a wealthy woman may experience sexism

in a different way than a poor woman, or a black woman may experience racism in a different way than a black man. In this way, intersectionality theory sees the notions of race, class, and gender as inextricably linked in issues of inequality and power.

In a climate perspective, intersectionality is used for recognizing the inequality in responsibility, vulnerability, and decision-making power of people based on social structures and human characteristics such as age, gender, class, or race (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014). It is in this way this paper will use intersectionality and climate justice theory. This will be helpful for understanding the methods of the FFF movement.

### 3.2 The Power Cube

This section will give a brief introduction of the most important aspects of the power theory relating to this thesis, namely the power cube. The reader is urged to keep the theory in mind throughout the analysis. However, the theory will be used mostly in chapter 7, to examine social and political power structures that affects the FFF movements reach on a global scale, with a focus on their role in the digital space.

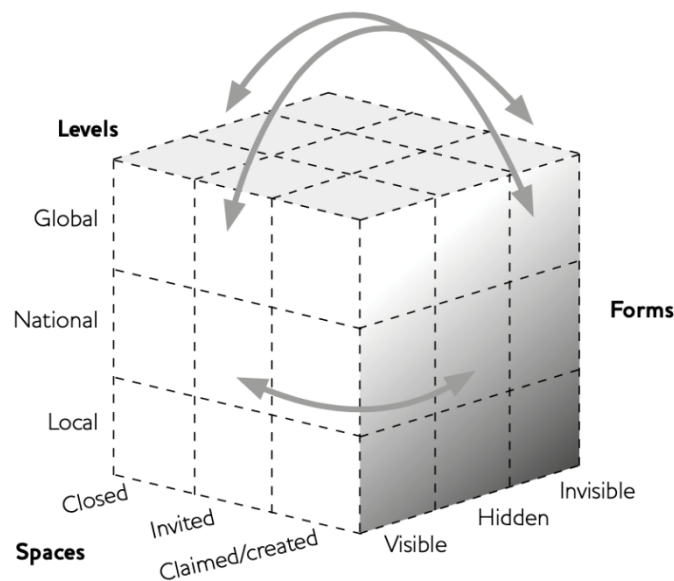
“Social movements, throughout history, are the producers of new values and goals around which the institutions of society are transformed to represent these values by creating new norms to organize social life. Social movements exercise counterpower by constructing themselves in the first place through a process of autonomous communication, free from the control of those holding institutional power.” (Castells, 2015, p. 9)

Castells (2015, p. 5) claims that wherever there is power, there is counterpower. Power relations are embedded in all our social, economic, and political structures. The FFF movement comes at a moment in time where the neoliberal capitalist society is more contested, but also more established, than ever before. A few control a majority of the world’s resources, and the power of the nation state is weakening (Castells, 2015). The role of the citizen, and the role of the activist, in this society can be confusing. To understand the global mobilization of the FFF movement, it will be important to understand the structures of power limiting or facilitating such a mobilization.

In his theory of power, Lukes (2004) presents a three-dimensional understanding of power, namely overt power, hidden power, and invisible power. Building further on this theory, Gaventa (2006) presents his model of the power cube. The theory focuses on the relationship between inequality, power, and political participation as a way to examine opportunities for movement, mobilization, and change. Three interactive axes of power are presented: levels, spaces, and forms.

*Figure 3.1: The power cube illustrated.*

*Source: Gaventa and Martorano, 2016.*



### *3.2.1 Levels of Power*

The levels of the power cube can be understood as what I in this thesis refer to as scales. Gaventa and Martorano (2016) emphasize that while the figure presents the global, national, and local levels, the power cube recognizes levels ranging from the global down to the household or even the individual level. Further, these various levels should be understood as interrelated and fluid.

With the power cube theory, Gaventa (2006) argue that globalization is changing the dynamics of power and territory. Connecting an issue to multiple levels and mobilizing across levels simultaneously can therefore be seen as an effective strategy for achieving change. It does, however, present its own challenges of power. In the instance of FFF, one such issue can be its

close association to one individual, Greta Thunberg, and her continuous role of speaking on behalf of the entire movement. This power of hers gives her great power over the movement, and can also overshadow the more local voices of the movement.

### 3.2.2 *Spaces of Power*

Action and participation take place somewhere, in arenas and channels where citizens can be part of decision-making. There can be many kinds of such spaces, but the power cube (Gaventa, 2006; Gaventa and Martorano, 2016) refer to three main categories in the power cube: closed, invited, and claimed spaces.

- *Closed spaces* are where leaders and experts etc. make decisions without the involvement of the masses.
- *Invited spaces* are spaces created by various authorities to institutionalize broader involvement and strengthen public participation in policy making.
- *Claimed spaces* are the spaces created by relatively powerless or excluded groups as a way of joining together for common goals outside of the institutionalized policy arenas which they cannot or will not enter.

Importantly, those who create the space often control the space. Who creates the spaces are important for who participates in it, and who feels welcome. While power in one space does not necessarily mean power somewhere else, power built in one space can be used to go into other spaces. If we again use Greta Thunberg as an example, she started out by claiming the space outside of the Swedish parliament building, creating a space for others to join. The power she gained through challenging this closed space of government have since gotten her invited in, to both invited and closed spaces as high up as the UN.

### 3.2.3 *Forms of Power*

The forms dimension of power considers how power manifests itself in visible, hidden and invisible forms (Gaventa and Martorano, 2016). This can be directly related to the three dimensions of power first presented by Lukes (2004). *Visible power*, or one-dimensional power, is what “can be seen in the more open and observable aspects of the political process”

Gaventa and Martorano (2016, p. 15). *Hidden power*, or two-dimensional power, refers to power where “certain key actors may exercise control through shaping what issues and decisions enter the public arena in the first place” (Gaventa and Martorano, 2016, pp. 15-16). *Invisible power*, or the third dimension of power, “includes the psychological aspects of power, including how it affects people’s perceptions of what constitutes a legitimate grievance or issue for action in the first place” (Gaventa and Martorano, 2016, p. 16).

These forms of power can be used to assess how inequality of power can shape participation, and they are highly interrelated. A fitting example for this thesis is how dominant actors have long profited from ignoring human responsibility in climate change (visible power), thus ensuring society that business as usual is ok (hidden power). Because of these actors’ positions of power, many people have accepted this and continued to ignore the scientific evidence of climate change (invisible power).

### 3.3 Theorizing (Global) Social Movements

“When traditional norms no longer succeed in providing a satisfactory structure for behavior, the individual is forced to challenge the social order through various forms of nonconformity” (Della Porta and Diani, 2020, p. 13). And while dissatisfaction with the global community’s inaction in combatting the climate crisis sparked the FFF movement, it takes more than dissatisfaction to make millions of young people take action and join a social movement. For us to further understand FFF’s global mobilization, it is necessary to examine previous research and theories on social movements both in and off the digital space. It is to this I now turn.

#### 3.3.1 Networked Social Movements

The FFF, like many others, operate on a variety of scales, ranging from the individual to the local, national, and all the way to the global. According to Nicholls (2007, p. 617), this trend of operating on multiple scales connects to the decreasing possibility of using local/national institutions to shape economic power structures on behalf of citizens in this time of neoliberal globalization. The trend also stems from the advances in technology and digital communication

tools. These tools make it possible to build connections to likeminded people, organizations, and movements around the world in real time.

A consequence of the new information technologies in a network society, is the growth of social movements connecting and organizing between the North and the South (Della Porta and Diani, 2020). This result in knowledge exchanges and solidarity between many different groups of people, giving both an international and intersectional dimension to social movements. Lindell (2008) explains how international activities and networks can be beneficial for local advances. This is in part because these connections provide support and boost motivations. They also enable local movements to be more assertive and articulate through knowledge sharing. Importantly, from Castells (2015) we can draw the conclusion that this can also work in reverse. When movements are locally or nationally anchored and collaborate on a global scale, it can give international recognition. Today, much of this happens through images and messages spreading in networks on the Internet.

Thanks to digital tools, maintaining such networks are easier than ever for social movements. However, it is important to remember that online spaces are not neutral spaces. They are created for commercial gain and also used by commercial actors. Myers West (2017) explains how the media platform creators hold the power to shape content through designing how we can communicate with each other digitally, through moderating what is allowed on these sites, and through creating algorithms which makes content visible or invisible. Thus, in digital spaces, the commercial, political, and personal co-exists. This may in many ways be beneficial for social movements, but it may also “invite reliance on commercial entities and lead to a loss of control and exposure to external forces of surveillance, censorship and retribution” (Merrill, Keightley and Daphi, 2020, p. 12). So, while digital tools have become important for building and maintaining activist networks, it is important to beware of the control market forces and digital platform owners and creators hold over these networks and their freedoms.

### *3.3.2 Building Community*

Social movements establish networks of distinct organizations and individuals in order to attain their common goals. Creating ties within these networks is important as they encourage contribution and mobilization even when there is risk for the individuals involved (Nicholls, 2007). Through digital networks and social media channels these networks can easier be upheld

on a continuous basis. However, in a space of seemingly endless options, strong-tie communities become rare:

Each of us belongs to tens if not hundreds of weak-tie communities; email lists to which people subscribe can be thought of as weak-tie communities. Weak-tie communities are wonderful for disseminating information. In contrast strong-ties are harder to come by. These are the people to whom we turn in times of real need, for a loan, a ride to the hospital, or to pick up your child from school when an important meeting is running over time. (Preece, 2004, p. 147)

Preece (2004) recognizes the good of weak-tie communities for disseminating information, but also reveal their weaknesses in other areas of community life. Granovetter (1973), however, challenge us to see the importance of these weak ties in a community. Going so far as to claim the “strength in weak ties”, he argues that weak ties help form broader community connections and less fragmentation of society. A community built mainly in digital spaces is quickly considered to be weak-tied. Both Castells (2015) and Granovetter (1973), argue that such a weak-tied community, or what Castells called a network, is beneficial for building a movement. Because of the safety in numbers when it comes to participation in a risky or deviant activity, a large network/community, can be more important than a strong-tied one when it comes to civil disobedience. A large group of people also make change seem more likely as there is both safety and power in masses, which is helpful when individuals are standing up against powerful, well-established actors and structures.

Geographical borders and distances are rarely a hindrance to such online communities. The deeply intertwined local-global relations have resulted in the term ‘*glocal*’ relations (Miller, 2004). A glocal identity will be composed of varieties of multi-scalar aspects and traits, and the focus will often naturally fall on the dominant aspects and traits of a group (Miller, 2004, p. 233). How spaces and ‘sense of place’ are constructed become important tools in building community then, determining how inclusive or repressive a community structure is. This affects the discursive frameworks used to bind the various actors together (Nicholls, 2007). It also lay the foundation for individuals’ assessment of the risks and benefits of joining a community/movement. For people to enter into such “political collectivities” that a social movement is, they:



[...] must perceive problems as presenting a threat to their common interests, resources need to be pooled and organized, beliefs in the cause must be constructed, political openings need to be available to advance their cause etc. (Nicholls, 2007, p. 608)

In what Giddens (1990, in Della Porta and Diani, 2020, p. 51) calls a “worldwide social relationship”, globalization allows for the creation of close linkages between distinct localities. Today, through digital networks, we are in many ways connected in real time with people, cultures, and happenings across the globe. Far away events and disasters become more real because of ties, although relatively weak ties, to those affected. This can in some instances increase our perception of issues as real, pressing, and a matter of global concern (Della Porta and Diani, 2020). At the same time, this constant exposure to news of events and disasters can be overwhelming, forcing us to be more selective of what we concern ourselves with. In turn, this can make people less responsive to issues which does not make the cut in the fight for one’s attention (Della Porta and Diani, 2020). As the world has become more connected than ever, it has become increasingly difficult to be truly heard.

### *3.3.3 Mobilization*

Beyond the existence of tensions, mobilization derives from the way in which social movements are able to organize discontent, reduce the cost of action, utilize and create solidarity networks, share incentives among members, and achieve external consensus. (Della Porta and Diani, 2020, p. 15)

While common discontent and structural conflict can be seen as the basis for many social movements, it is important to note that not all discontent leads to mobilization. More is expected for people to choose to join in on a movement. Because of this, social movement actions, demands, and goals need to be somewhat organized. The structure of a social movement can vary greatly depending on the movement. It can be leaderless, or it can have a clear leader. It can be a grassroots movement organized by devoted individuals, or it can grow out from one or several established organizations. A social movement characteristic is still that they tend to be rather loosely organized.

Della Porta and Diani (2020, p. 165), argues that the success of a social movement lies in influencing and activating other groups to become politically involved, a process which

involves frame alignment to connect to them. Through protest and mobilization even seemingly powerless actors can aspire to engage the public. However, “in order to succeed, protest must produce positive stimuli, winning the sympathies of those who have more resources to invest in the arenas where decisions are taken” (Della Porta and Diani, 2020, p. 165). In short, while powerful actors can directly engage with the source, actors with less power need to go through several channels in order to gain the resources needed to get their message across to the masses. For mobilization to take place, the right resources need to be available and applied in a useful manner.

The resource mobilization approach of McCarthy and Zald (1977 p. 1213) points to “the variety of resources that must be mobilized, the linkages of social movements to other groups, the dependence of movements upon external support for success, and the tactics used by authorities to control or incorporate movements”. There are endless examples of resources, and they can be economic, political, social, or other (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2021). These are the resources available to a person or a group which enables them to exercise power. For example, children and youth tend to have limited power because they have limited access to resources such as money, political representation, and other rights that adults more often tend to have etc.

Benford and Snow (in Della Porta and Diani, 2020, p. 83) theorized frame alignments. This is the process of shaping credibility, familiarity, and in that way, collective action through framing a social movement in a culture to make it appealing and mobilize people to join. These frames can be extended so that the movement’s goals are related to the context of more general goals. But frames can also be removed, minimized, or restricted to make the movement’s goals appear narrower and more focused (Lavine, Cobb, and Roussin in Della Porta and Diani, 2020, p. 84). What frames are used largely depends on the movement’s goals. Radical groups tend to use narrow framing to intensify their statement, while a wider focus tend to give broader but more moderate support.

Because it is hard to maintain full participation from large masses of people over time, Della Porta and Diani (2020) describe how social movements work in cycles, or waves, of protests and campaigns. These cycles can be sparked by unforeseen events, such as when the killing of George Floyd sparked massive protest from the Black Lives Matter movement. They can also be planned protests leading up to elections or other important political events. After a while of protest, the attention and participation will gradually quiet down, with only some dedicated members remaining active until the next cycle begins.

### *3.3.4 Digital Activism*

An important factor for the survival of a social movement is their ability to adapt and be innovating. With social media came the opportunity for everyone and anyone to produce contents, information, and misinformation, for the public. We are no longer just receiving media messages from large news agencies or TV-channels – we are also in the position to produce and/or transmit them ourselves (Della Porta and Diani, 2020, p. 227). The ways of consuming, producing, and distributing media are in constant change, and social movement activists have found a way to use this to further their causes. Digital activism has become a popular tool to fight injustices.

For something to go viral, or gain a massive presence across social media platforms, it must resonate with people's experiences and be mimetic (Castells, 2015). Castells explains how, during the Occupy Wall Street movement, protests and activities were shaped to facilitate their viral spread on the Internet, with creative pictures and videos of slogan chants, signs and gestures. In this way the movement, transcended “both time and space, projecting itself in history and reaching out to the global visions and voices of our world” (Castells, 2015, p. 180). Importantly, nothing exists in a vacuum. A social movement's digital presence cannot be seen as separate to its presence in other spaces, such as the mass media, physical spaces, and political arenas.

One important resource for social movements is the (positive) attention of mass media and other communication channels. With this type of attention, a campaign or protest quickly attracts both social and political attention. However, it can be argued that the mass media is now in competition with popular social media accounts and viral campaigns. Activists on social media channels spread knowledge and awareness and can inspire active engagement in issues we care about. This has weakened the idea that certain issues are too big for anything to be done as individuals. However, in such a massive ocean of contents as can be found on social media, attracting attention is a difficult task.

Much of social media content is constructed to be easily available and thus often provide engaging rather than truly informative content. Etter and Albu (2021), as well as Myers West (2017), are concerned with the role of social media platforms' commercial interests and how they often contrast the goals of social movements. These companies have the power to determine the content spread out to their users, not only through algorithms but also through

banning, deleting and blocking content, groups and individuals (Morozov, 2012). Partly due to attempts of adapting to algorithms put in place by social media companies, activists are increasingly creating “shareable” and “clickable” campaigns to attract attention (Etter and Albu, 2021).

A concept closely associated with this form of digital activism is the concept of slacktivism. The term combines the words ‘slack and ‘activism’. It refers to the trend in social media of showing solidarity with a cause without any intention of putting efforts into furthering said cause in ‘real life’ (Kristofferson, White & Pelozo, 2014). Joining a Facebook-group or sharing a picture-post on Instagram can be easy ways of creating group attachments. This ensure that many digital campaigns can boast of a large quantity of supporters. Morozov (2012) argues for the importance of not drawing conclusions about the quality/success of a campaign by evaluating the number of participators in digital campaigns. This is because it is not necessarily mobilization of masses “but rather the ability to organize and wisely expend one’s resources [...] that makes or breaks a revolution” (Morozov, 2012, p. 195).

Slacktivism is often considered to be lazy givers of non-meaningful support. Morozov (2012) fears that the digital world will give activists/slacktivism a false comfort that removes the desperation that historically have fueled civil disobedience. Noland (2020), on the other hand, claims that slacktivism is a simple way for people, especially youth, to share their attitudes in spaces they frequent. He further argues that those who participates in digital activism, are more likely to also participate in other forms of activism. While happening on a larger scale than before, it is not a new phenomenon that some social movement supporters are more devoted to the cause than others. There is a risk that slacktivism stops some from taking more effective actions, but there is also a chance that it spreads awareness to people who otherwise would not engage with a cause at all.

I have now given a brief overview of the concepts and theories which will be used to examine FFF’s global mobilization and activity. Before doing that, however, I will in the next chapter present some relevant background information.

## Chapter 4: Background

Before we can further explore how a social movement as Fridays for Future went global through digital media, we need to understand where and what such a movement stem from. Therefore, this chapter will start by presenting a brief history of social movements and the digital age. It will then give a short overview of the climate crisis, to better understand why the FFF is mobilizing. Last, this chapter will in depth present the FFF movement and how it has evolved.

### 4.1 Social Movement History

“It is not desirable to cultivate a respect for the law, so much as for the right”, Henry David Thoreau wrote of civil disobedience in 1849 (Thoreau, 2012, p. 262). Throughout modern history, social movements have been challenging existing values and norms on which we organize social life, and thus also been “the producers of new values and goals around which the institutions of society are transformed to represent these values” (Castells, 2015, p. 9). These have shown that individuals coming together to protest injustices is an integral part to socio-political development.

Social movements are often supported by other branches of civil society. NGOs and other formal or informal civil society organizations usually work outside of the realm of government as this gives them the ability to bypass the bureaucracy of state organs and international relations, in order to create social change. While this is a critical and useful part of the work to challenge laws and norms, social movements differ from this type of organized civil society in that they tend to be more radical, less formally organized, and aiming for structural and political change. (Della Porta and Diani, 2020)

What I in this thesis call ‘global social movements’ are not new. In fact, already during the 1848 revolutions we saw global ripple effects for protest. This was the time of what Immanuel Wallerstein called the beginning of a ‘world revolution’ and came after European colonialism established a worldwide political and economic system (Sherry, n.d.). This period saw revolutions and civil wars in several countries on every continent. The people were raging against the elites, calling for political rights and economic justice.

1848 was also the year of the Seneca Falls Convention, the first women's rights convention in the United States. In the following years women mobilized for the right to vote in countries ranging from the USA to Finland and Australia. (History.com Editors, 2019). With the establishment of the UN after WW2, the international women's rights movement gained a platform (UN Women, n.d.). Ever since, the movement has been characterized by its international solidarity, with activists and campaigns in most every corner of the world. Undeniably, this kind of international solidarity has become more available than it was 100 years ago;

Although the process of global interdependence has its roots in the distant past (Wallerstein 1974; Tilly 2004a, Chapter 5), the technological revolution of the 1980s contributed to intensifying "both the reality of global interdependence, and also the awareness of the world as one single unit" (Robertson 1992, p. 8). (in Della Porta and Diani, 2020, p 42).

Jones et.al. (2015) explains how social movements work to occupy, subvert and transform public spaces into communal sites for political expression. This is why cities have long been, and still are, drivers of social movements. With the expanding technological revolution, however, these movements are moving into the digital space and are in this way bringing the world "closer to an ideal of universal access to discussion" (Jones et.al, 2015, p. 131), in practice partially transcending the physical space. This opens up for many new opportunities for social movement actors, but it also invites new issues and problems that need to be considered.

## 4.2 The Digitalization of Social Movements

Since the Internet was officially launched in the 1980's, it has completely transformed how and with whom many of us communicate. For the first few decades of the Internet's existence, it was normal to speak of the virtual world and the real world as two separate entities. In recent years however, the Internet has become recognized as simply (and complexly) being "another place in which people live, alongside their office life, home life and community life" (Miller et.al., 2016, p. 7). As the Internet has become such a large and normal part of the lives of so many of us, it is natural to see people taking their activism into the digital space.

The most known early examples of movements taking use of social media were the Arab Spring (2010) and the Occupy movement (2011). They both used social media to spark outrage and coordinate large-scale physical protests in several geographical sites at the same time. For a social movement to gain momentum, people need to be emotionally motivated, and not trust that those in power are taking sufficient action to combat some form of injustice. They also need to transform these emotions into action. Then, the vast information on the Internet and the communities of like-minded activists are powerful motivators.

Digital spaces can function as a safe space for people to choose between a myriad of communities and find ‘theirs’. When a social movement operates largely through online networks it becomes less reliant on formal leadership or centralized control center. Rather, the movement can to a larger extent take on a life on its own, building on the knowledge and inspiration of the individual actors that partake (Castells, 2015). This allows such movements to be global and local at the same time. Through continuous global interaction in real time, a “consciousness of the intertwining of issues and problems for humanity at large” can be established (Castells, 2015, p. 251).

The global reach of the Internet presents many opportunities. However, the level of access varies greatly. In 2020, among children and young people aged 25 years or less only 6 per cent in low-income countries have internet access at home, compared to 87 per cent in high-income countries (UNICEF, 2020). While a large portion of the world population has access to digital spaces, their level of access is often dictated by factors such as “age, household income, educational achievement, English level, disability and rural/urban location” (Miller, 2016 p.130). Because it is such new technology, social media has a disproportionately young user base. Further, people living in high-income countries have better, wider, more stable access to the Internet. This is even more so for people of higher household income and/or educational achievement. Even more so if they are living in urban areas, or if they do not have any disabilities. Access is also affected by language barriers, as exemplified by the overwhelming amount of online content which can only be found in English (Ibrahimova, 2021). The digital space then, is marked by clear imbalances and inequalities.

The integration of the digital space into people’s everyday lives, and especially the digitalization of social movements, have created changes in protests and activism. Still, at the bottom of every social movement, we still find discontent and anger towards those in power. In the case of Fridays for Future this is inaction to combat climate change.

### 4.3 Climate Change and Global Politics

In 1987 the UN World Commission on Environment and Development famously acknowledged the threat of climate change. In the report called *Our Common Future* (Brundtland, 1987), the commission called for the need of sustainable development, which was defined as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs”. Today, most scientists agree that earth has entered the Anthropocene, the geological period where humans are substantially impacting the planet, its climate, and its ecosystems (Leichenko & O’Brien, 2019).

The effects of climate change are here, and they are beginning to be felt around the world. Sea level rise and increases in extreme weather such as droughts and hurricanes, are undeniable. The visible threat this has begun to pose for humanity give fear, as well as hope for change, to climate scientists and activists. Environmentalists are calling for humanity to change how we live, and to start building a culture where the human species views itself and acts as a component of nature (Castells, 2009), a culture in which we learn to value humanity as a part of nature rather than its superior. On the other hand, many resist the discouraging facts of climate change and refuse to alter their beliefs and ways of life to combat it. In this way, humanity remains stuck in the structures of capitalism and mass-consumption (Leichenko and Obrien, 2019).

In the last decades, countless commissions, conferences, and agreements have been held both nationally and internationally on the subject of climate change and sustainability, but with little results. In 2015, the Paris Agreement was signed by nearly every country in the world. A historic climate agreement, where the international community together agreed to limit global warming to well below 2°C and pursue efforts to limit it to 1.5°C. Five years later, at the COP26 in 2021 in Glasgow, two weeks were spent negotiating how to continue the efforts to reach this goal. Whether or not the pledges made at these conferences will be met, remains to be seen. One of the largest excuses against large-scale action against climate change, is economic growth. There has been little willingness to let go of the capital incomes from the oil industry and mass production of goods. Thus, sustainable sources of income or alternative socio-economic systems have not been developed or prioritized. In this political climate of inaction, the climate movement has grown.



## 4.4 Fridays for Future

Within the movement fighting for environmental and climate justice, there exist a large variety of people and groups with different identities, protest measures, and goals (Castells, 2009). The FFF movement is one of them. What started as a youth-led grassroots protest, has grown into one of our time's largest global movements. They are youth advocating for forceful political action to limit global warming.

### *4.4.1 The Beginning of a Global Movement*

According to FFF (2021c), it all started in August 2018, when 15-year-old Greta Thunberg began a school strike in protest of the Swedish society and government's unwillingness to take drastic action to combat the climate crisis. This was picked up by the media and Greta was soon joined by others. Together, the strikers created the hashtag #FridaysForFuture and started sharing their protest in social media. The strikes gained massive attention, both in social media and the mass media. It encouraged other young people all over the world to join their protest for climate justice. By the time the Swedish elections were over, the youth-led fight for global climate justice was only just beginning.

Since starting the school strikes, Greta Thunberg's climate activism and speeches have gained massive attention and press coverage. Thunberg has been open about her Asperger's syndrome. While the syndrome makes social situations difficult, she has become known for her strong speeches. It can also explain her ability to gain excessive knowledge on the topic of climate change at such a young age (Malt and Weidle, 2021). Her firm demands for serious political action to fight climate change is part of what has driven the Fridays for Future to gain the level of attention that it has. It has also given her much attention amongst sceptics and deniers of climate change, such as former US-president Donald Trump (Luscombe, 2020). Still, or maybe because of her unyielding stance in the face of mockery, Thunberg remains an inspiration and leader figure for young climate activists around the world.

In August 2019, a FFF initiative called SMILE for Future, hosted a conference for hundreds of climate strikers from more than 35 European countries (SMILE, 2019a). As the meeting was not a representative meeting, with mainly European activists being represented, SMILE for Future notes that decisions on the Fridays for Future movement as a whole could not be made.

However, the conference still produced a non-binding declaration for the participating countries which describes the movement, its values and demands. In what has been named the Lausanne Declaration the FFF's demands are: "1. Keep the global temperature rise below 1.5 °C compared to pre-industrial levels; 2. Ensure climate justice and equity; and 3. Listen to the best united science currently available" (SMILE, 2019a, p.3).

While originating in Sweden and Europe, the school strike for climate have become a global phenomenon. According to the movements own statistics, it is estimated that 16 million have partaken in the FFF strikes since august 2018. These are spread across all continents, with over 128 000 events in 8500 cities in 217 countries/territories in the world (FFF, 2020b).

In our hearts we all carry the same concerns, goals and values and they connect us in every moment, no matter where we are and what challenges we face. The climate crisis knows no borders and neither do we. Together we will change this world for the better. For us and for all generations to come. (SMILE, 2019a, p. 2)

#### *4.4.2 FFF Today*

Today, the FFF is creating original content on the movement's website, Instagram accounts, Twitter accounts, appearing in documentaries etc. It has also engaged volunteer activists to organize local protests and operating national social media accounts as part of the movement. The movements concept is simple. Every Friday, students are encouraged to skip school as a strike, and protest for climate action in their local community. Much of this is taking place physically, but is spread online, in social media.

The official @FridaysForFuture Instagram-account (FFF, n.d.-a) has gained 486 000 followers (07.01.22), while FFF-founder Greta Thunberg (Thunberg, n.d.-a) has gained a significantly stronger follower-base with 14 million Instagram followers (07.01.22). Since 2018 (data collected 07.01.22), the #FridaysForFuture has been tagged in over 1 million posts on Instagram alone. In comparison, however, #Covid has been tagged in over 22 million posts since the start of the pandemic in 2020. This indicates that while a significantly large and devoted group are actively involved in the FFF-movement, its viral reach can seem to be relatively limited.

On the FFF website (FFF, 2020a), various ways of striking and protesting are encouraged. Physical strikes in public spaces on Fridays are the main form of protest for the FFF. However, not every student can afford to skip school every Friday. The FFF then suggest several ways of in-school protest, with methods ranging from protesting around school at the start of the day or during lunch, to silent protest through not speaking the whole day. To also include those not able to strike publicly due to COVID-restriction, dangerous situations in their societies, disabilities etc., digital strikes on social media have become a common way of protest.

Further, the FFF encourage strikers to promote and share any FFF-action on social media, with the hashtags #FridaysForFuture, #ClimateStrike, and #UproofTheSystem. It is also encouraged to alert the local media and prominent local people to join in order to amplify the message. Striking on social media have own hashtags (#Climatestrikeonline, #Digitalstrike) (FFF, 2020a). Through these hashtags, the strikes and protests exist in common, global, digital spaces frequented by young climate activists. On the other hand, the large number of different hashtags, and the room for errors such as misspellings, leaves the movement with an ocean of content spread all around.

Much of their online presence is collected under various hashtags, as well as over 200 national FFF Social Media channels (FFF, 2021a). The many various hashtags, platforms etc. indicates that many devoted activists are involved with the movement, but so many various channels of communication also present challenges. These are some of the issues which will be addressed in part 2 of the thesis, where I move on to analyze how the Fridays for Future-movement has used social media to mobilize on a global scale.

## Part II

## Part II: Findings and Analysis

The main research question to this thesis is: *how has the Fridays for Future-movement used social media to mobilize on a global scale?* The coming chapters will provide the findings and analyses from working with the three sub-questions chosen to answer this, namely:

- *How are the FFF's main global social media accounts used to engage and spread information globally?*
- *How have local FFF-groups structured their activity to combine activism on global and local scales?*
- *Which power structures are limiting and/or enabling FFF to mobilize on a global scale?*

Together these three questions will shed light on essential aspects of the Fridays for Future-movement and central factors around it, which together will provide a base for concluding with a reflection on the main research question.

## Chapter 5: How are the FFF's main social media accounts used to engage and spread information globally?

The FFF-movement consists of over 200 local and national FFF social media channels, spread across Twitter; Instagram, Facebook & YouTube etc., with over 20 million followers combined (FFF, 2021a). In this chapter, I will analyze the main principles and methods of action of the international FFF-team, and the role of social media in spreading the cause and causing engagement. This will be done to provide an understanding of the FFF's global narrative, and practicalities of the movement's social media presence and digital activism. This section will primarily focus on the main accounts of the international FFF-team (see list in Appendix).

This chapter will first examine the cause and community structure that the global FFF social media accounts portray. Next, there will be a run-through of the social media platforms chosen for this research and how they are used by the FFF. Last, this chapter examines the FFF's methods of action that the movement encourages through social media.

### 5.1 Cause and Community

This section looks at the core values of the FFF, namely climate justice and intersectionality. It also looks at how the movement is community building, how this is done through social media, and implications of these core values and strategies.

The three basic official demands of the FFF, which were set out in the Lausanne Declaration (SMILE, 2019a), are that large-scale action to meet the 1,5°C-target of the Paris Agreement and combat climate change is taken by governments, international organizations, and corporations. Further, they demand that this is done in a manner that ensures climate justice *for all*. Rather than presenting all the answers for how to tackle the crisis, the movement refers to the findings of renowned scientists and urges those in power to “listen to the current best available united science”. This is, according to the FFF, because the scientists have already modeled pathways to a better future (FFF, 2021b). It is also due to the time sensitivity around the issue, and a demand for the current generation to take responsibility for ‘cleaning up their own mess’ before it is too late.

A main factor in the youth-led movement's demand to "ensure climate justice and equity" (SMILE, 2019a, p. 3) is their concern with temporal climate justice, or the impacts climate change will have on future generations. While this concern is for the general future of the earth, attention is directed mainly on their own futures. Young climate activists have grown up with news and experiences of climate change, while seeing the older generations' lack of response.

Protest banners with quotes such as "Our future is not for sale" or "There is no planet B" are common to see on pictures from FFF protests. Even the name, Fridays for Future, relates to the possibility of no future if humanity does not change its behaviors. Climate anxiety amongst youth is becoming an issue reported by doctors, particularly in rich countries (Nylander, 2019). Nylander (2019) explains that negative emotions, more so than positive emotions, can be a strong motivation towards becoming more climate friendly. However, if the facts become too frightening, it can have the opposite effect and lead to denial and/or apathy. Further, it is pointed out that action can be a way of addressing these fears. This is also emphasized by the FFF, who names their collective action as a way for youth to cope with climate anxiety and worry. In their words, "striking together brings us hope" (FFF, 2021b). With "our future is not for sale" and similar quotes FFF activists take their fear and attempt to hold those they believe cause their fear accountable for it. This is explicitly presented in their latest campaign (as of 26.01.2022) #PeopleNotProfit;

The catastrophic climate scenario that we are living in is the result of centuries of exploitation and oppression through colonialism, extractivism and capitalism, an essentially flawed socio-economic model which urgently needs to be replaced. A system where rich nations are responsible for 92% of global emissions, and the richest 1% of the world population are responsible for double the pollution produced by the poorest 50%. Guided by historical struggles and lived experiences, led by the most affected people and areas (MAPA), we are demanding climate reparations. (FFF, 2022b)

FFF also recognizes the spatial climate injustice that our world is experiencing. Climate change is disproportionately affecting some geographical areas more than others. The class issue is clearly mentioned in relation to this. A disproportionate number of areas facing the most urgent consequences of climate change can be found in the global South, countries which generally has the lowest economic development. They are the least to blame for human-made climate change, and with the least agency to combat climate change (Benjaminsen and Svarstad, 2021). In correlation with these values, the official FFF-group acknowledges that, in addition to

fighting for global large-scale climate action, the many various groups associated with the movement also have varied demands for tackling local climate change and environmental issues. One way the global team aims to encourage this, is uplifting local groups, their experiences with climate change, and their demands through their global channels. In social media, this takes the form of reposting or sharing pictures and infographics to spread news from local and national groups.

The FFF also have several international groups working on specific issues or in specific fields. One of these are FFF MAPA, which consists of climate activists from Most Affected People and Areas (MAPA). While only having ca. 9000 followers on Instagram, this is a significant and active group of the FFF movement's global activism whose content is frequently shared by the main FFF accounts as well as Greta Thunberg. The FFF MAPA-group defines themselves as activists from countries, regions, and peoples (mostly, but not exclusively the Global South) who are most affected by climate change and climate injustice (MAPA, n.d.-b). They use their platform to spread awareness of these injustices, to call for global scale action, and to amplify the reach of the smaller, local groups of the FFF in the Global South.

Without ignoring the importance of geographical inequalities, the MAPA-term holds a larger focus on class inequalities. MAPA acknowledges that climate vulnerability is closely linked to intersectional factors. For example, a rich, older man in a country in the Global South is likely less vulnerable to climate change than a poor, younger woman in a country in the Global North, due to his power to protect himself from vulnerabilities. This worldview makes the FFF and their establishment of the MAPA-term a clear example of a slow, gradual shift in the discourse on global inequality away from the duality of the Global North/Global South-discourse.

Much of the content on the @FridaysForFuture (FFF, n.d.-a) and @FridaysForFutureMAPA (MAPA, n.d.-a) Instagram-accounts are similar. It is clear that they are working closely together. The difference, however, is that the main channels of FFF have a European origin and, in addition to giving voice to those in the MAPA-group, they speak for the demographics who does not fall under this umbrella term. On the other hand, the usefulness of a separate account for this purpose can be questioned when the content published on the two channels are so similar. This may put those who are merely partially interested off from following both, due to spam. Further, much of the content spread on the MAPA channel stems from even smaller local groups. Still, the MAPA channel gives underrepresented people their own direct channel where they are free to frame things on their own terms.



The MAPA-channel creates a greater authenticity than if the content would be shared directly through the main channel, as it comes directly from an underrepresented source. One important note here, however, is that this authenticity is difficult to fact check. There is no information available on who runs these channels. Similarly, most posts are also not traceable to a source. While the FFF has given their followers no reason to doubt the origins of their contents, it is a factor of concern that their information cannot be traced back to a source.

The FFF is concerned with being a global movement for everyone. One way they are showing this is by trying hard to implement their ideal of intersectional climate justice. This goes beyond temporal and spatial climate justice by also acknowledging that social structures and human characteristics such as race, gender, age, class causes inequalities in responsibility, vulnerability, and decision-making power (Kaijser & Kronsell, 2014). The term MAPA was therefore coined by activists to avoid what they claim to be outdated terms such as the Global South or Third World Countries. Instead, MAPA is aimed to be a term which accounts for the diverse group of people and areas who are more vulnerable to climate change. To symbolize this, their logo (two knuckles together) is the sign for ‘solidarity’ in various sign languages (MAPA, 2021). While MAPA is yet to gain wide academic recognition, the term is spreading on social media and amongst activists – especially within the FFF.

*Figure 5.1: Intersectional representation at FFF-march in Switzerland.*

*Source: FFF, 2021d*



Part of what has made the FFF into such a large movement, can be attributed to its inclusiveness. While it originated in Europe, it stands strong on its global and intersectional perspectives and

values. Because the FFF relates the combating of climate change with social issues and justice, their reach and support spread far out from just climate activists. The above picture is from a strike in Switzerland, where they had a Strike for Future with over 30,000 people. The strike was initiated by Climate Strike Switzerland as a part of the FFF movement, trade unions, the feminist movement, farmers, NGOs and over 150 local climate groups (FFF, 2021d). In such ways, the movement manages to mobilize engagement from people of larger interest groups than the young climate activists which are the main target group.

The FFF's success rests significantly on the back of the movement's creator and leader, Greta Thunberg. As of 13.04.22 she has 14,4 million Instagram-followers (Thunberg, n.d.-a) and 5 million Twitter-followers (Thunberg, n.d.-b). Compared to FFF's 486 000 Instagram followers (FFF, n.d.-a), it is clear that Greta is the backbone of the movement internationally. There are significant risks to having one so prominent leader (which will be discussed in detail in chapter 7), but it is also one of the main factors of the FFF's success.

During the filming of a documentary at a protest where Greta Thunberg was speaking, a reporter asked a young activist why they were attending. The young activist answered that she had to do something too, when Greta was doing so much (Grossman, 2020). With her climate strike, Greta Thunberg created a space for all the young people who felt powerless in the face of climate change and political inaction. She has become the face of youth climate activism and a common leader for the FFF-movement, an ideal who is not afraid to stand up against the powerful enemy, such as Donald Trump or the UN, who represent the political elite who ignores taking significant climate action. However, when confronted with the fact that protesters in the crowd were there to support her, Thunberg simply responded that "no, they are here for themselves" (Grossman, 2020).

Connected through the Internet and social media, the FFF can be considered a 'glocal'-alliance of young people teaming up against governments, organizations, and corporations, on multiple scales. This alliance can also be a helping hand in times of need. When particularly devastating crises hit, such as after the typhoon Odette in the Philippines or the volcanic eruption in Tonga, the FFF community show support, spread awareness, and encourage donations and petition signings. But while digital technology has made such activities more efficient and easier to organize, it is not without its challenges.

First of all, not everyone has access to the social media sites used by the international FFF group(s) such as Instagram, Twitter, or Facebook. In fact, “globally, 2.2 billion children and young people aged 25 years or less – two-thirds of children and young people worldwide – do not have an internet connection at home (UNICEF, 2020). An important aspect of mobilization through digital media is that it is not possible to reach everyone this way. This makes the extensive digital FFF global activity and resources problematic, as it excludes those who do not have sufficient access to them.

Second, how effective is this kind of activity? Kristofferson et.al. (2013) found that token support can effectively lead to more meaningful support for a cause if done in private. However, “providing public token support satisfies impression-management motives, leading to a lower likelihood to provide meaningful support for a cause” (Kristofferson et.al, 2013). Following this, those who publicly show support and spread awareness are less likely to also donate or engage in other ways. Slacktivism has become a serious issue and a sobering phenomenon for all those who believed that social media would revolutionize activism and political action.

Importantly, however, spreading awareness and encouraging support is effective when it reaches enough people. The recent call for donations to the FFF Philippines group after the typhoon Odette, gathered over PHP 900 000, or USD 17 583 (YACAP - Fridays for Future PH, 2022). This money, collected through international awareness- and fundraising by FFF activists, will go to local on-ground relief efforts (YACAP, 2022). Online token support is often just a symbolic action which needs to reach a large number of people to gather sufficient action. However, the extensive reach of large social media campaigns often allows exactly this to happen. While the ease of doing just a little bit leaves many doing just a little bit, the cumulative effect of all these small actions becomes significant. All these little actions become part of the networked society that Castells (2009) explains. When we see and hear about climate and environmental issues repeatedly, if only just a little bit, it eventually becomes natural to us. As Castells (2009, p.425) said it, “whoever, or whatever, wins the battle of people’s minds will rule”.

Third, there is also a concern that a “glocal” identity easily adapts into an identity built on the dominant members’ traits, following their example and overlooking traits of less influential members (Miller, 2004). The official FFF strategy was laid out in the Lausanne Declaration (SMILE, 2019a). It was established by 400 FFF activists from 37 countries who gathered in Switzerland for the Summer Meeting in Lausanne Europe (SMILE) (SMILE, 2019b). This

event, called SMILE for future, aimed to “create a global cohesion and coordination through several conferences, workshops and discussions” (SMILE, 2019b). However, as the commission itself acknowledges, the meeting was not a representative meeting, as most participants were from Europe and most local groups were not represented. Thus, it is claimed that “decisions on the Fridays for Future movement as a whole could not be made” (SMILE, 2020). Still the demands, values and methods decided upon during this meeting, are the demands, values and methods fronted by the official FFF team(s) today.

The FFF movement works hard to be inclusive and intersectional. Still, their European origin, European leader, and European-based declaration of demands, values, and methods, can be considered problematic as they have grown internationally. Local groups remain autonomous, and everything decided during the SMILE for Future conference followed the principles of intersectionality. However, those who identify with the FFF movement cannot simply ignore this collective identity – whether they were part of the decision-making or not.

## 5.2 Social Media Content

This section explores the main social media platforms used by the FFF, namely Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, as well as their website. It then discusses tactics used in the FFF’s social media activity and implications of these.

Today, social media is growing into a major source of news and world updates for people, especially young people. It then becomes important to gain attention in these spaces. What content is published and spread online can determine the success of a movement. However, as shown in the study by García Galera, Fernández Muñoz and Porto Pedrosa (2017), 50% of the young people asked in the survey indicated that it was the cause itself which made them mobilize. Further, 23% name the emotional aspects of the cause as a mobilizing factor, and 11% name the ease to participate. 8% said they do not usually mobilize for social reasons.

Interestingly, only 1-3% in the study name the creativity of a campaign, friends’ participation, the organization behind the campaign, and the campaign’s attention from influencers as mobilizing factors (García Galera et.al., 2017). Of course, this study can be questioned on several accounts. The youth may have ‘polished the truth’ by saying they do not care what their friends do etc. In reality, they are likely more influenced than they themselves are aware. There

are strong arguments for claiming that, while participants may not be aware of the effect, these tools help mobilize and attract attention.

Creative digital campaigns have in the past years made fundraising and awareness go “viral”. One such campaign was the #ALSIceBucketChallenge. This campaign increased annual funding to the ALS Association by 187% during its peak year of 2014 (ALS Association, 2019). It was a simple task, which was also fun. The majority who participated did not donate to the cause. In the UK, only 10% of those who participated also donated (Baton, 2014). Still, the amount of attention that the campaign gained made sure that it was a fundraising success. The core concept of the #ALSIceBucketChallenge was to dunk oneself with a bucket of ice and challenge specific others to do the same. It is a good example of campaigns who spread through celebrities and friends’ participation and ease of participation, rather than because of the cause itself. While ALS gained much awareness and money through the campaign, the disease was not the center of attention, and campaign participants gained much criticism for being slacktivists and ignorant to the cause.

Further, social media algorithms tend to create so-called “echo chambers” and “filter bubbles” (Kitchens, B., Johnson, S. L. and Gray, P., 2020). Algorithms ensure that yours and your friends’ online activity largely determines what content you are exposed to, which again forms your perception of reality. Also, the FFF sometimes use attention from influencers, famous activists, or renowned scientists to attract people to their protests or gain attention from mass-media. All these trends will be analyzed further in this section. The García Galera et.al (2017) survey is a 5 year old survey. Since its publication, social media has only become more important. Still, the survey does show the importance of not overstating the significance of campaign activity over the cause itself for mobilization.

### *5.2.1 Social Media Platforms*

The FFF operates on several social media platforms. Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter platforms are all connected, meaning users can share their content across the platforms. Facebook and Instagram even have the same owners and ad platform. The FFF’s website is also linked to their other social media platforms. However, these different platforms are commonly used for slightly different purposes, something the FFF adheres to in order to increase their attention.

**The fridaysforfuture.org website** is where all the various information, plus more, is collected. This page's link can be found on all the FFF's main social media accounts. The other platforms are used to continuously promote, inform, and engage. The website is where people go to read up and learn more about the movement, find information or toolkits they need in their activism, register, or donate, etc. It is kept updated, has simple design and is easy to navigate.

On the front page of their website, the FFF have a "What can you do?"-section (FFF, 2022a). Here they provide information on how activists can:

- *Connect.* Here we find links to the international social media channels and a feed of the various FFF country Twitter-channels. This way one is encouraged to follow FFF, both internationally and locally, on social media to keep up with the movement's activity.
- *Find.* Through an interactive world map, one can search for past, current, or future registered strikes and protests. This way you can easily navigate and find the closest protest for you to join.
- *Donate.* This leads to the page with information (mail-addresses and social media accounts) for all the different national and regional groups.
- *Register/report.* Here anyone can register a strike or meeting through a Google Form. Thus, if one is missing a group in their area, one can easily create and connect a local group to the global network of FFF activists.
- *Stay informed.* The FFF also have started a 'Newsletter for Future'. The newsletter informs subscribers of strikes, interviews, meetings, climate camps, tools, tips for striking, and anything else of relevance for the movement's activists. All these actions are also promoted regularly on their other social media channels.

**Facebook** is the largest social media platform in the world with 2.9 billion users, 43% female vs. 57% male. While its largest age group is 25-34 (31.5%), it is generally the older demographics who are the most active users. While other platforms emerge to steal the attention of the younger social media users, Facebook remains the most-used social media platform. (Barnhart, 2022)

Fridays for Future International has 38 945 likes and 43 463 followers as of 27.01.22 (FFF, n.d.-b). The posts by FFF on Facebook are of movement updates from around the world, mostly the same as is posted on other platforms. Three things separates the FFF Facebook-page from their other social media accounts. First, events are posted here, but not continuously and those

who show up seem somewhat random. The global climate strike announced on January 25<sup>th</sup> did not gain its own Facebook-event until approx. one month before the strike was set to take place. It only had 61 interested and 51 participants, indicating that it was not the most successful event marketing strategy. Facebook events are known to gain large amounts of interested clicks but has a tendency not to be followed up. Second, the page also has a “community”-site where people outside of the administrative team can publish posts and have discussions. This is mostly used by older supporters of the FFF who wants to discuss climate-related articles/theories. The youth activists do not use it much. Third, and maybe most importantly, the Facebook-page is used to livestream meetings. This was a feature on Facebook that became broadly used during the pandemic. The livestream can be watched live, but it also can be saved for later. This makes it an easy way to ensure global access to informative meetings and events.

**Twitter** is the smallest of these social media platforms, with 211 million active users. Its largest age group is 18-29 (42%), and the users are 39% female vs. 61% male. Further, it holds status as a place to discuss events and gather breaking news. Twitter is the platform for business people, journalists, celebrities, and politicians. While picture sharing is possible, the premise for the platform is short text updates. (Barnhart, 2022)

Fridays For Future’s verified Twitter account have 131 700 followers as of 27.01.22 (FFF, n.d.-c). A lot of the activity consists of retweets (reposting others’ tweets) of FFF-activist or -groups. The original tweets are often related to upcoming strikes, or urgent calls for action on pressing issues. As Twitter is where breaking news often leak first, or where journalists and politicians are easiest reached, it is fair to assume that they are the target for the FFF’s activity on the platform. This is also where Greta Thunberg often makes her big statements. Tweets are quick, short and concise statements. Thus, they are often picked up and used in mass media when discussing the movement and its activities. FFF activity on Twitter is therefore an important resource for their mobilization despite not being the most used platform by their young activist target group.

**Instagram** is the second largest social media platform in the world, after Facebook. It has 2 billion monthly active users. The platform keeps fighting to keep their younger demographics. Its largest age group is 25-34 (31.2%) and the users are 48% female vs. 52% male. Instagram is a main source for keeping up with influencers, celebrities, organizations, and brands through picture and video sharing. (Barnhart, 2022)

Instagram is the clearly largest channel for FFF, with 486 000 followers as of 28.01.22 (FFF, n.d.-a). That this is their largest platform correlates with the young user base of Instagram and young target audience of FFF. Instagram is therefore the platform where the FFF has the most interaction with their target group. Here, the FFF is active more or less every day, posting ‘stories’/‘highlights’ (pictures which disappears after 24 hours), educational content, livestreams with FFF activists, and updates on worldwide FFF activity. Further, they share links to their own or other websites where activists and strikers can find tools and information about how, where, and when to strike or other possible actions they can take. Another important feature of the FFF Instagram-page is their interactive Instagram-stories, where followers can write in their response to questions regarding various aspects of the FFF’s activity. As this is the page with the most followers and the most direct contact with the activists and supporters, this interactive part of the channel is an important feature in the attempt to meet the democratic ideal of the movement.

As mentioned about the FFF MAPA-channel above, the FFF’s social media channels have little transparency. It is not possible, with purely non-participative methods, to figure out who runs the various accounts or how the movement’s leadership is organized. The only clear information is on who created the website (FFF, 2021e). While the FFF has given their followers no reason to doubt the origins of their contents, it is not ideal that much of their information and organization is unknown to the public.

The most used platforms, of course, varies greatly around the world. There is some FFF activity on the platforms TikTok and Discord. Some local/national groups also use WhatsApp to communicate through message groups. While this thesis will not discuss these platforms in detail, it is important to keep in mind that the mobilization process of the FFF takes place on a large variety of apps and websites. With slight variations, the original content published on the different platforms is much the same. Being active on several platforms ensures that they reach a broader audience. It also enforces the perception of the movement being ‘everywhere’. Keeping these variations in mind, we now move on to take a closer look at the tactics and implications of this social media use.

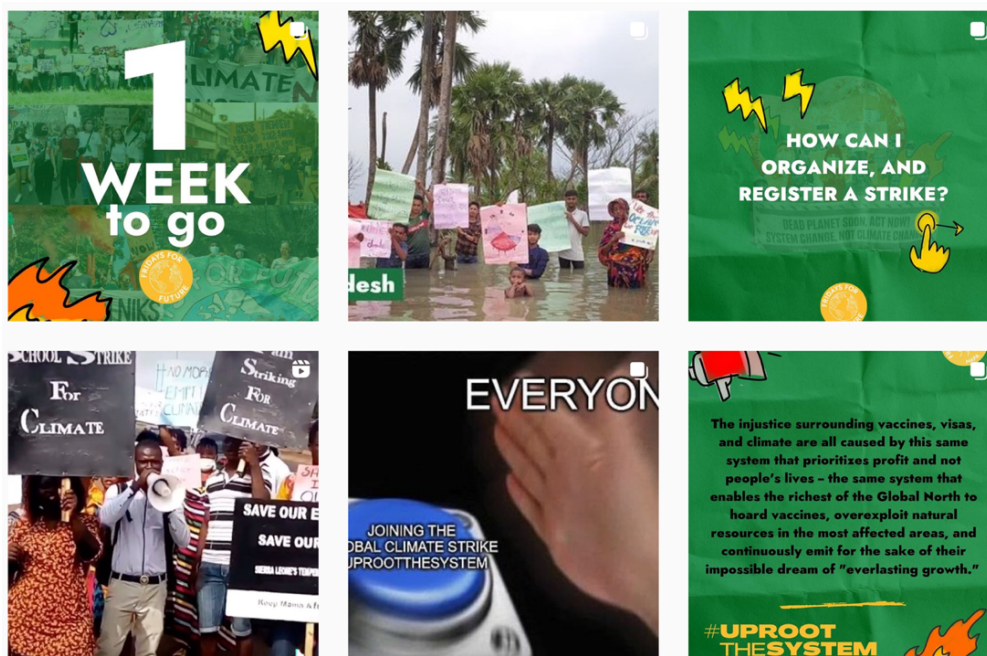


### 5.2.2 Tactics and Implications

Frame alignment is the process of shaping credibility, familiarity, and in that way, collective action through framing a social movement in a culture to make it appealing and mobilize people to join (Benford and Snow in Della Porta and Diani, 2020, p. 83). The picture below shows a screenshot of 6 pictures posted on the @FridaysForFuture Instagram-account. The account posts varied content, ranging from funny memes to informational texts and pictures of protests to attract the attention of the movement's target groups. Through a wide variety of posts, they produce something that interest most of those who are concerned with the causes of FFF.

Figure 5.2: Screenshot of FFF's Instagram-page

Source: FFF, n.d.-a, 11.01.22



Just as trends determine what content spreads in social media, it also plays a role in determining which issues and cases to focus on. FFF often shares content from small local groups to spread awareness of climate-related issues that may not reach the mainstream news channels. More often than not, however, they follow the big trends.

Amongst youth, the climate crisis is a large concern, and a lack of agency to contribute to real change has become difficult to deal with for many (Nylander, 2019). Internationally, the Paris agreement created hope for real dedication across the globe in 2015. Holding governments and

large companies accountable to this agreement is a strategically smart cause for the movement, as it is universal, familiar to most, and quantifiable.

The youth of today are also very dedicated to intersectional justice, equality, and representation. As inequality is an issue for climate justice just as climate change is an issue for social justice, focusing on these aspects attracts youth who sympathize with the social justice cause. In this way, the FFF are expanding their span for mobilization. On the other hand, and in grave contrast to the inclusive framings of the FFF, “research has found Indigenous people disproportionately bear the brunt of practices of trolling, cyberbullying, and other forms of digital violence” (Campbell et al. in Carlson and Frazer, 2020, p.1). This means that Indigenous people are more at risk in the digital spaces, and they are also underrepresented. This problematizes the digital focus of the inclusive movement, as some people might feel less invited to partake in digital communities.

There is a growing fear that algorithms have a tendency to create so-called echo-chambers and filter bubbles (Kitchens et.al., 2020). Eli Pariser (in Kitchens et.al., 2020) coined the concept filter bubbles to explain how digital platforms use personalized algorithms, based on our internet activity, to filter what we see online. This happens automatic and is thus not a conscious thought. We don’t know why an algorithm shows us what we see, or what we do not get to see. Kitchens et.al. (2020) argue that while they claim to be neutral, there is no such thing as a neutral algorithm. Rather, every list is based on some form of criteria. Further, the data that these filters are based on, are not our whole human being but only our recent digital history. Thus, only certain aspects of our personality get magnified, which creates the possibility for echo chambers and polarizing views.

However, the filter bubble theory is by many considered controversial. While “there is a clear potential for the use of social media to be associated with a narrowing of information diversity”, the empirical evidence is inconclusive on the power of social media to create these echo chambers, according to Kitchens et.al. (2020, p. 1620). They found in their study that, social media exposes people to more sources of information than their family, friends, and preferred newspaper would. In a positive angle, these algorithms navigate one towards information on one’s interests and can make one more independent of those around them to find other interests and perspectives. For example, there is research finding that “the demographic groups most likely to use social media [are] also the least likely to be ideologically segregated” (Boxell et al. in Kitchens et.al., 2020).

Since starting this project in the fall of 2021, I have used my personal social media accounts to follow and search for FFF-related accounts and contents. This activity has caused me to receive a large amount of content related to climate change and human rights activism. When this happens, it becomes easy for me, and others who experience the same, to assume that this movement is spreading everywhere on the Internet. This can be misleading. In conversations with people who do not follow any social media accounts with content on climate/environmental issues, some had not even heard of the FFF, and did not see the environmental movement as “spreading everywhere”, as my algorithmic filters would have me to believe.

The FFF states that “our movement is independent of commercial interests and political parties and knows no borders.” (FFF, 2021c). However, working in the digital space means working in intersections between the commercial, private, and political. These social media sites are designed to keep users interested. When my account showed interest in the FFF movement, the algorithms showed me more to keep me logged on. The algorithms hid the same content from my friends, as there was little to no reason for believing they would find it informative or interesting.

Mainstream, moderate content is typically more popular and commercially viable (Cooper in Kitchens et.al. 2020), and therefore more likely to be favored through prioritization algorithms and filters. The FFF is a political movement, with a strong message. Their framing inevitably excludes some from being interested in the movement. However, in order to reach the masses of people who may be interested, content is adjusted to adhere to trends on social media platform(s).

Hashtags are a simple way to adhere to algorithms and make your post part of a larger pool of post on a subject. The FFF uses hashtags to gather posts made to their cause. Hashtags such as #FridaysForFuture, #SchoolStrikeForClimate and #UprootTheSystem are especially popular. Naturally with a global movement, these hashtags have been adapted into various languages and local variations. There are also a great deal of similar hashtags with small mistakes, such as #UprootTheSystems or #Fridays4Future. When this happens, the effect is lost as these posts end up in collections of just a few pictures with the same mistaken captions.

Another important factor when gaining reach in social media, is language. We have seen how the FFF is concerned with using inclusive and non-offensive language, as they have done for

example when coining the term Most Affected People and Areas. Another aspect worth noticing, however, is how much of this global communication is in English. On all the global channels of the FFF the content is overwhelmingly posted in English, with the exceptions of reposts, or if the global team wish to shed light on certain local cases.

According to Ibrahimova (2021), English is drastically losing its domination online, shrinking to a share of around 30%, as other languages grow. Much of this can be attributed to the growth of other large languages such as Malay, Arabic, Spanish, and Mandarin. However, it is also interesting to note that the “others” group makes up 23% of online languages. So, while English is still the dominating language in digital spaces, its retracting shares indicates that people are increasingly using their own languages for communication.

Access to devices and sources is not the only issue. Estimations indicate that nearly forty-three per cent of the world’s languages and dialects are unwritten – posing another challenge for the way they could fit into the often text-based online world. (Ibrahimova, 2021, p. 50)

English is the widest spoken language in the world. Therefore, it is natural to use this language when aiming to reach as many parts of the globe as possible. English has the widest reach, but its use also excludes the majority of the world who does not speak the language. The website of the FFF is also solely found in English. This places responsibility on local groups to communicate the FFF information on to their local participants who does not speak the language. It can thus make it difficult to mobilize those who do not speak English as they become dependent on someone to translate.

Fronting a cause through social media is not as straight forward as it may seem at first glance. It takes a lot of calculation and conforming, plus some rebelling and sheer luck to break through in the vast ocean of social media content. Then, as we will explore in the next section, it helps to have some stance in the physical world as well.

### 5.3 Methods of Action

This section looks into the methods of action chosen by the FFF, both in the ‘real world’ and online. It is examined how and for which reasons the various methods are used. Further, the

climate movement Extinction Rebellion and this movement's methods of action are discussed in comparison to those of the FFF.

As previously mentioned, the FFF started from Greta Thunberg's strike in front of the Swedish parliament building. Fridays for Future built further on this, and youth are encouraged to strike from school on Fridays to protest climate inaction. This becomes well covered in social media before, during, and after. During larger events, it also gets well covered in the news and other mass media. FFF's tactics are rooted in non-violent civil disobedience. They back this choice of action with the research of Erica Chenoweth (2020) on how non-violent civil disobedience is the most successful way to bring about change.

[T]he larger the movement, the more likely it is to disrupt the status quo and induce defections that sever the regime from its major pillars of support. And nonviolent movements have the capacity to expand participation in ways that armed groups cannot. (Chenoweth, 2020, p. 74)

The methods used by the FFF are mainly school strikes, digital campaigns, and peaceful protests in front of government buildings or other significant landmarks. While some dedicated activists organize events and speeches etc., what these forms of action rely on the most are numbers. In the study by García Galera et.al (2017), only 11% of young people named the 'ease to participate' as a mobilizing factor. This number is not high, but it is also not insignificant. Chenoweth (2020) claims that high-visibility (in social and mass media) and low-demanding forms of action (protest) cause ambivalent people to join in, who would not otherwise dare to or care to. Thus, the use of simple, non-violent methods lowers the risks associated with participation.

Within the environmental movement, FFF is moderate in their demands and methods. In contrast, another global environmental movement called Extinction Rebellion, has become known as a fanatic group of activists. Their protests are small, but disruptive, and range from human roadblocks to visual displays of the climate crisis (see figure 5.3 below). While the protests are non-violent, they are often disruptive enough to cause arrests. It is a conscious decision made by the group to waste police time and disrupt people's lives to gain attention (Extinction Rebellion, 2022). And many of their protests do gain a lot of attention. However, the group's methods also risk alienating thousands of potential supporters. More extreme actions may gain more attention, but they also gain less sympathy. Further, the group's

disruptive methods are not possible for everyone to participate in, as they would be too dangerous. This applies for example in authoritarian regimes such as Afghanistan. While FFF estimate that between 14 to 16 million activists have shown up to their protests and strikes around the world (FFF, 2020b), Extinction Rebellion's 2021 report estimate that they have over 160,000 rebel activists worldwide (Extinction Rebellion, 2022).

*Figure 5.3: Extinction Rebellion protest*

*Source: Extinction Rebellion, 2021*



Still, Extinction Rebellion have more followers in social media than FFF does. As of 15.02.22, the @extinctionrebellion Instagram-account (Extinction Rebellion, n.d.) has 678 000 followers, in contrast to FFF (n.d.-a) which has 485 000 followers on the same platform. Their methods may not be for everyone to participate in, but they make for fascinating coverage. On social media, everything is a fight for attention. The creative and radical protest methods of Extinction Rebellion are interesting visual content, more so than the FFF's somewhat repetitive mass-protests and school strike pictures. Consistency is not necessarily a valued trait in the digital world, where people's attention spans are narrowing, and the amount of engaging content is endless (Morozov, 2012).

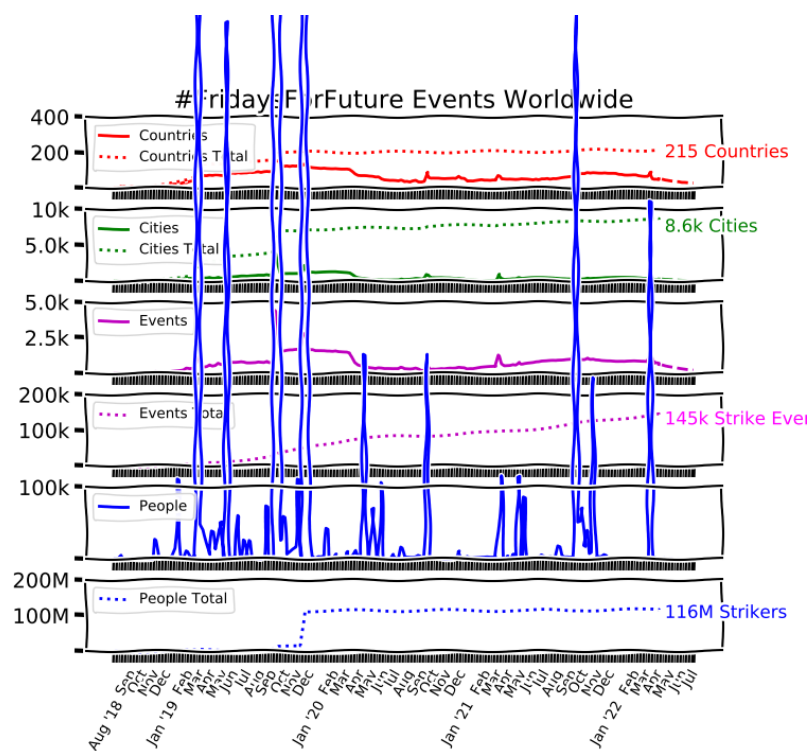
There are several reasons why Extinction Rebellion have gained a slightly higher number of followers in social media. There are also clear reasons why FFF have gained a much higher number of activists in their protests. An inclusive movement cannot afford to go too radical. This would not only exclude people from wanting to participate, but it would also exclude those who cannot afford to get arrested or who live under repressive regimes. Protesting calmly,

in large groups, makes it easier to participate because there is safety in numbers. The reasonable methods and demands of the FFF also makes the movement more difficult to critique. The ambivalent people, who the FFF rely on to be able to protest in large numbers, would most likely stay home if the FFF began protesting along the lines of Extinction Rebellion.

Relying on ambivalent people the way that FFF does can make protests harder to sustain over time. Naturally, not every active activist has skipped school once a week since 2018. Only a few very dedicated activists, including Greta Thunberg, protest every Friday. 480 cities have registered weekly strikes between 26.11.2021 and 18.03.2022. Of those who have reported the number of participants, only 6 strikes have had more than 1000 people, while the majority have had between 1 and 25 participants (FFF, n.d.-e). Following this then, the movement becomes reliant on massive mobilization around large events.

Figure 5.4: FFF global strike statistics

Source: FFF, 2020b



The FFF's cycles of globally coordinated protests are often related to international climate meetings. The large spikes in the chart above correlate with the global school strikes for climate on: 15. March 2019, 24. May 2019, 20.–27. September 2019, 29. November 2019, 25. September 2020, 19. March 2021, 24. September 2021, and 25. March 2022. Their largest

protest wave occurred during the UN Climate Action Summit in September 2019. Most recently, large protests were held in relation to the COP26 in October and November 2021. These FFF global climate strikes are major mobilization projects. Global events have undoubtedly become easier to organize through social media. This relates both to the amount of people one can reach to mobilize in real time, and the visibility one gets from using social media to engage support from those not willing or able to take to the streets.

The global school strike of March 25<sup>th</sup> 2022 is demanding climate reparations and replacement of a flawed socio-economic model. The strike, called #PeopleNotProfit, was announced on January 25<sup>th</sup>, two months prior to the protest. Issues of exploitation, oppression, capitalism, inequality, and intersectionality are essential aspects of climate justice and not new to the FFF agenda. With the announcement of a new global strike, the movements focus becomes directed towards the current campaign in the time leading up to it.

With this campaign, they direct the focus not on political action to secure the 1,5<sup>o</sup>-target, but rather aim to challenge the colonial and capitalist exploitation of marginalized communities. The language is unafraid, with powerfully worded phrases such as “The richest capitalist 1% must be held responsible for their actions and willful ignorance. Their profit is our death. Their profit is our suffering” (FFF, 2022b). This is a strike for the people and areas most affected by climate change (MAPA), whose FFF-team is also leading this particular strike, according to the website (FFF, 2022b). This is mainly countries and communities in the Global South, but also contested communities such as Sápmi and Palestine are mentioned. It seems that the movement is becoming more confident and more radical in their demands.

The digital promotion of the strike is clearly a massive part of the mobilization of participators to the event. Castells (2015) argues that social media influence how protests are shaped, in that they are shaped to facilitate the campaign’s viral spread on the Internet through creative pictures and videos of slogan chants, signs, and gestures. One clear example of this is that the hashtag #PeopleNotProfit is also the name of the strike, making it compatible with both hashtag-use in Internet culture, and chanting in physical protests. When announcing the upcoming strike, the FFF team simultaneously launched a webpage complete with information about the theme and various digital resources for local groups (FFF, 2022b). Here, one can also find a profile picture generator, so that people can show support through framing their social media profile pictures with a FFF and #PeopleNotProfit frame. In the time leading up to the event, social media promotion increases, with posts reminding followers of the upcoming strike,



as well as informational/educational posts about why the strike is happening and why its theme is what it is.

The movement's graphic designs are also changed for the occasion. FFF has had a green logo, but now this is changed on all the international social media channels. The color is now yellow. Namme Villa del Ángel, is an FFF activist from Mexico who also designed the campaign's poster (FFF, n.d.-d). Namme held a promotional/informational livestream (a live video broadcast) on Instagram (FFF, n.d.-d). Here it was explained that the change from green to yellow symbolize the complexity of nature as more than 'green', which is commonly known to be the color of environmentalism. Thus, this change is a way for the FFF to shed light on the complexity of the environment, climate, and the related crises that we face.

García Galera et.al (2017) found in their survey that 50% of youth agree that online social networks contributed positively to their commitment to social causes, either through enforcing their already existing commitment (30%) or through creating a concern for social issues that was not previously there (20%). This indicates that social media does play an important role in encouraging youth engagement with social issues. There is, however, no mentioning of the extent of this commitment.

As mentioned earlier, the effect of activism through social media is contested. The real effects it has is questionable, arguments to which usually boils down to slacktivism. Facebook events have become one of these classical 'slacktivism' traps. It is common to show interest in events, or even announce that one is attending an event, on Facebook. On the day of the event, however, far fewer people than announced show up. Likely aware of the issues of Facebook-events such as these, little effort is put into promoting events on Facebook (FFF, n.d.-b). For attendance to be possible for their followers, FFF International would also have to put events as taking place everywhere. It makes more sense for people to 'attend' their local event, as this provides details about the actual protest one is attending or considering attending.

Luckily, more than 61 people took part in the global strike #PeopleNotProfit on 25. March 2022. If we go back to Figure 5.4. we can see a clear spike in protesters in March '22. The FFF estimates that 500 000 people from 93 countries participated in the strike (Thunberg, 2022a). As we can see from the graph, the number of participants in this strike was significantly lower than the other major global strikes they have had. Since this strike did not coincide with any major meeting of world leaders, a somewhat lower participation rate was to be expected

than for example during the strike held simultaneously as COP26. Still, the #PeopleNotProfit global strike became the second largest protest since the pandemic started in March 2020. As restrictions are lifting many places, it is becoming easier to participate again. Whether or not the FFF will regain its strength from 2019 is too early to tell.

When the COVID-19-pandemic hit the world with full force in 2020, taking to the streets became difficult for most people. For the FFF, as for other activists, the pandemic made many of their traditional methods of action difficult to maintain. This created discussion and creativity around how to keep promoting climate action during lockdown. It also provided some downtime for activists to breath and regroup.

One new addition to the movement is the Fridays for Future Digital movement. The initiative was created by US students Iris Zhan and George Zhang (Schofield, 2020; Natanson, 2020). Before the pandemic, they created a virtual strike for those who were unable or unwilling to skip class. The concept being that participants post pictures under the hashtag #DigitalStrike. When the pandemic struck, the digital movement only had about 100 participants (Natanson, 2020). Then, on March 13<sup>th</sup> 2020, the pandemic had caused a lockdown in large parts of the world. Greta Thunberg had learned about the FFF Digital initiative, and now she, through Twitter, urged FFF activists to “join the #DigitalStrike - post a pic of you with a sign and use #ClimateStrikeOnline ! #schoolstrike4climate #fridaysforfuture #climatestrike #COVID—19” (Thunberg, 2020). Suddenly, over 3000 activists started to post pictures.

By being promoted by Greta Thunberg, and as the pandemic dragged on, the FFF Digital movement grew into an important method of action for many activists. The FFF Digital team expanded to 50 students across the globe (Natanson, 2020). They have set out to be an international youth-led digital movement of FFF that “help local groups make the most awesome digital campaigns by giving support, connections, tools and partners that can amplify their campaign” (FFF Digital, n.d.-a).

Just as the physical protests aim to be visible and disruptive in the streets, digital protests aim to do the same in social media. We saw how powerful this can be during the Black Lives Matter #BlackOutTuesday digital protest. On June 2nd 2020, people all over the world posted black pictures all over social media to force people to pay attention and reflect on racism. As of 18.02.22, the hashtag has over 19 million posts on Instagram alone. It was only a one-day protest, but because of the amount of people participating, it was impossible for someone on

social media not to be made aware of it. The vast support from celebrities also helped to give the protest attention. The #BlackOutTuesday did in this way become important in creating awareness and support for the anti-racism movement. The FFF's digital strike never got this big. Although it has been a weekly initiative since March 2020, the #DigitalStrike only has 21 000 posts as of 18.02.22. Its effect on the public then become small, as the few posts that are there, easily drowns in the vast amount of content spread on social media.

While a lot of good alternatives were created during the pandemic, activity still fell, and many of the less dedicated supporters fell out of the movement. As soon as lockdowns eased up, FFF Digital's activity decreased, and is now (18.02.22) on hiatus according to their Twitter (FFF Digital, n.d.-b) and Instagram (FFF Digital, n.d.-c) accounts. The FFF is not solely an Internet movement, and the pandemic clearly portrayed the importance of physical methods of actions. We must be careful not to overestimate the importance of social media. We must, however, also acknowledge the possibilities and resources in digital space – many of which were discovered during the COVID-19-pandemic and the following lockdowns.

As discussed previously, the movement is promoting forms of action other than protesting (see chapter 5.1.1). Donations and signature campaigns for issues on both local and global scales are regularly promoted by the FFF on social media sites. This gives the channels content to put out there, keeping their visibility up and keeping their followers engaged in between large strikes and protests. Building a movement on a global scale, across borders, oceans, and differences, is a challenging task. Thus, while it is important to have common ground in a multiscale movement, it is also important to leave room for differences in values and methods. In this chapter, I have examined how the overarching, global FFF teams work and how they use social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram and Twitter to mobilize supporters. To truly understand the movements global scale mobilization, however, we now move on to examine three of the national groups' activities.

## Chapter 6: How have local FFF-groups structured their activity to combine activism on global and local scales?

Fridays for Future is a global movement with a global message: climate justice now. Still, most of the activists' actions take place in physical locations under various local circumstances. These actions cannot effectively be managed from the global level. The movement thus consists of many local, national, regional, and global groups. These arrange strikes and other events and manage their own social media accounts dedicated to the cause, in their own ways. This chapter of the analysis answers the sub-research question; *how have local FFF-groups structured their activity to combine activism on global and local scales?* It will give insight into the opportunities and challenges of the multiscale movement, with a focus on the role of digital networks.

The answer to this sub-question will be given through examining the online presence and work of three different geographically determined groups of FFF. Namely, FFF Colombia, FFF Afghanistan, and FFF Norway. These three represent three significantly different circumstances and movement organization. FFF Colombia bears the burden of being an environmental activist movement in the most dangerous country for environmental activists. FFF Afghanistan's activism is set in the midst of war, where surveillance and lacking access to the Internet has made digital communication difficult. FFF Norway is struggling to establish a footing in a country where several environmental youth organizations already have a strong footing. All three cases are examined one by one, using the same methods as in the past chapter, which analyzed FFF's international groups. We will now look at the extent to which these FFF-groups differ from the global narrative in terms of community, communication, and protest methods.

### 6.1 FFF Colombia

The case of Fridays for Future (or *Viernes por Futuro* in Spanish, Colombian official language) in Colombia represents young activists who are willing to take great risk to support the FFF and their cause. Being an environmental and climate activist is not without danger. This danger varies greatly, depending on area and heritage. Latin America is the region in the world where this has the most risk. Colombia is the number one most dangerous country to be a climate

activist and those at most risk of being killed are indigenous people (Global Witness, 2021). This is due to a tragic mix of historical struggles, the interests of armed guerilla groups and drug cartels, and the government's exploiting economic model. This case shows how the global movement function on this national and local scale under these circumstances.

### *6.1.1 Cause and Community*

The FFF Colombia is concerned with the core values of the FFF. The upholding of the Paris agreement, the importance of science, and climate and environmental justice. According to the FFF register of strikes (FFF, n.d.-e), strikes/protests affiliated with the FFF have been held in 62 different cities in Colombia as of 22.02.22. In correlation with the rest of the movement, the activity was at its height in in the fall of 2019. FFF Colombia support the international FFF community and partake in weekly school strikes as well as the global climate strikes. While these protests are at the base of the FFF national group, Colombian activists are more concerned with local issues and causes.

One Colombian youth activist, commonly seen in his green “No hay planeta B” (English: “there is no planet B”) sweater, is 12-year-old Francisco Vera. Vera gained international recognition when he spoke at a FFF protest during the climate summit CoP26 in Glasgow, where he also met with Greta Thunberg (Torrado, 2021). Vera's charisma and knowledge combined with his young age has made him one of the most popular climate activists in Colombia. He is getting mass media attention both nationally and internationally and has, as of 23.02.22, gained 117 000 followers on Instagram (Vera, n.d.-a) and 83 000 on Twitter (Vera, n.d.-b).

For his public presence and climate activism, the 12-year-old Francisco Vera have received several serious death threats (McClure, 2021). These threats have been made anonymously over social media platforms, mainly Twitter. No one has been arrested for the threats, but they caused significant uproar. Even Colombian president Iván Duque, who is considered to be part of the problem by many environmentalists, addressed the threats and “pledged to find the ‘bandits’ that sent the message” (Dingwall, 2021). This is a good example of how a global network of support can put pressure on politicians and provide a partial safety net for activists. Threats such as these in Colombia are not to be taken lightly. In Colombia, being a climate activist is dangerous. Global Witness reports that;

Colombia was once again the country with the highest recorded attacks, with 65 defenders killed in 2020. A third of these attacks targeted indigenous and afro-descendant people, and almost half were against small-scale farmers. (Global Witness, 2021)

Colombian climate activists are closely linked to the country's indigenous peoples, who oftentimes are the most affected, both by violence towards activists and the effects of climate and environmental changes (Global Witness, 2021). In January 2022, 14-year-old environmental activist Breiner David Cucuñame was shot and killed. Breiner belonged to the Nasa indigenous group. He was part of the *Guardia Indígena* (English: Indigenous Guard), “an organization formed by men, women and children that seeks to protect indigenous communities and land” (Torrado, 2022). The death of the young boy caused uproar in Colombia, also within the FFF movement. A campaign and protests under the hashtag *#JusticiaParaBreiner* (English: Justice for Breiner) was created and was the focus of FFF Colombia for the second half of January 2022.

Protesting the dangerous situation for activists appear to be a high priority for FFF Colombia, as this is the source of most of their local campaigns. Towards the end of February 2022, the two prominent peasant leaders Teófilo Acuña and Jorge Tafur were shot dead after years of death threats and persecution (Colombia Solidarity Campaign, 2022). Their deaths further nurtured the anger of Colombian FFF activists, who now protest under a campaign called *#QuePareElGenocidio* (English: Stop the genocide). In such a dangerous climate, the leveled methods and demands of the FFF can be a safety. The same goes for the global community of support and attention that a connection to the movement entails. This is evident from the protection of Francisco Vera. There is also a safety in the large number of activists participating in the FFF protests, as this significantly reduces the chances of being killed or even identified, compared to standing up to the injustice by oneself.

The Colombian FFF movement is to a large extent incorporating intersectionality to their climate movement. The focus of their environmentalism is on its relations to other social issues, such as the fight for gender equality, indigenous rights, and the safety of activists. On 24.02.22, the Colombian FFF also hosted a Women for Climate Justice Summit (Spanish: *Mujeres Por La Justicia Climática*) in Bogotá. Here, a group of about 20 people got together to workshop on issues related to the role of women in the fight for climate justice (FFF Colombia, 2022).

This is a good incorporation of climate justice. The activists are working for more than just climate action, they also want social justice and equality.

Because of the immensity of issues to handle on the national and local scale in Colombia, this is where most of FFF Colombia's focus appear to go. Their local and national social media accounts are largely promoting actions against the crimes directed towards climate activists, and the protection of indigenous rights. However, the movement recognizes the importance of the global FFF activist community and the importance of international action to combat climate change. This is proved, for example, by their participation in the #PeopleNotProfit global strike, March 25<sup>th</sup>, and Francisco Vera's participation in COP26.

### *6.1.2 Social Media Content*

According to the World Bank, 65% of Colombia's population were using the Internet as of 2019. This is above the global average of 56,7%, but less than the average of the OECD countries, which lies at 85% (World Bank, n.d.). While many in the country lack stable access, there are several FFF Colombia groups active in social media.

Fridays For Future Colombia (FFF Colombia, n.d.-b) have a verified Facebook-page, meaning it carries a badge of credibility that proves the account belong to exactly who they claim to belong to (Lancaster, 2021). This page is also linked to on the FFF-website. The page is kept updated, but the interactive activity is minimal. The page has 1,587 likes (as of 22.02.22). Posts consist of reposting of news articles, or often the same content as is provided on Instagram. The posts rarely receive even just one like or comment.

The Twitter account @act\_ambientalsm (Activismo Ambiental SM, n.d.) is the one linked to on the contact page of the FFF-website FFF website. This account, with only 44 followers, was active between September and November 2019. There is a separate, verified @fffColombia (Viernes por el Futuro Colombia, n.d.-a) account on Twitter, with 732 followers (as of 23.02.22), but this has not been active since July 2021. This indicates that Twitter is not a frequently used channel for the FFF Colombia team.

FFF Colombia's most frequently used platform is, like for the international FFF team, Instagram. The Instagram account linked to on the FFF-website is @fffcolumbia (FFF

Colombia, n.d.-c). This is an account with only 187 followers, which only posted between 26<sup>th</sup> and 29<sup>th</sup> September 2020. However, the @fridaysforfuture.colombia Instagram-page (FFF Colombia, n.d.-a) has 3,385 followers (as of 22.02.22). According to the page biography, this account is run by several young Colombian climate activists, including the famous youth climate activist Francisco Vera.

There is also a third national FFF Colombia Instagram-page. This one is called @viernesporelfuturocolombia and has 1,370 followers (Viernes por el Futuro Colombia, n.d.-b, 22.02.22). The content is similar to what is on @fridaysforfuture.colombia (FFF Colombia, n.d.-a), but there is less activity. It is also not possible to see who runs this page, but the page is verified. This existence of several accounts with the same purpose gives the impression that FFF activists in Colombia are not a unified group, but rather several independent groups who tries to be part of the global movement in their own separate ways. This lack of unison can be an issue when both groups are as small as they are, as it can create confusion and cause ambivalent participators to refrain from participation. It also lowers the ‘saftey in numbers’-effect that we have seen the importance of in Colombia.

The Colombian FFF channels are similar to the international accounts. They are used for similar purposes, such as promoting strikes and spreading information about climate justice causes. They do post some of the same content as FFF international, but they mostly have their own causes and content. This often relates to the social and environmental situation in the country. Still, the social media content of FFF Colombia does in many ways match the FFF “look”.

The language used on accounts related to FFF Colombia is Spanish, which is the official language of Colombia. According to Translators Without Borders (TWB), only 3,82% of people in Colombia speak English, while more than 99.5% of Colombians speak Spanish, and a small percentage only speak one of the many indigenous languages (Translators Without Borders, 2021). Naturally then, Spanish is mostly used in FFF Colombia’s communication. However, English is used when appealing to the global community. It is also worth noticing that the English name of the movement, Fridays for Future, is more frequently used than the Spanish translation, Viernes por Futuro. As the English name for the organization is used globally, the name creates a connection to the movement on a global scale, while the activities take place within the borders of Colombia.



In addition to the international accounts, the individual activist accounts, and the several national accounts, there is also many smaller, local groups with their own social media accounts. This is especially evident on Instagram. In Colombia, cities such as Villavicencio, Meta, Medellin, Bogotá etc. have their own channels where they coordinate local strikes in accordance with the international and national campaigns (FFF Villavicencio, n.d.; FFF Meta, n.d.; FFF Medellin, n.d.; FFF Bogotá, n.d.)

Normally, local channels have only a small following. For example, the FFF Villavicencio (n.d.) has 160 followers as of 23.02.22. This is not much in a city of over 550 000 people (Population Stat, n.d.). There are, of course, exceptions to this rule. FFF Bogotá (n.d.) has 7,447 followers on Instagram, over twice the size of the official national page, as of 23.02.22. The local groups are important for the execution of FFF actions. An active local group might be more relevant to follow, as this is where you will find the information most directly relevant to your activism. Still, the larger scale accounts have more general info of national concern and is therefore also of interest. A local group need to contribute with supplementary content to the national and global groups, avoid spamming but still provide relevant information to the movement.

### *6.1.3 Methods of Action*

The statistics on the FFF website have registered 179 strikes in Colombia between March 15<sup>th</sup> 2018 and November 5<sup>th</sup> 2021 (FFF, 2020b) The turnout on these strikes and protests ranges from 1-2 participants to over 20 000 participants. As mentioned, however, FFF strikes have a low reporting rate (between 9% and 61% according to FFF, 2020b), and it can therefore be assumed that the real number of strikes and strikers is significantly higher than this. As these numbers are the FFF's own, they should be viewed with some caution. There is, however, little reason to suspect tampering with the numbers as allegations of this would be devastating for a movement who bases so much value facts.

One thing the FFF Colombia have embraced is the digital protests and frequent use of hashtags. Campaigns such as #JusticiaParaBreiner and #QuePareElGenocidio are common. Protesting on social media is encouraged through the main account's regularly sharing of pictures of activists holding signs with hashtag-slogans on them. This is especially prominent on Instagram.

There exist a few Facebook events for protests. This has, however, not been an effective way of organizing protests for FFF Colombia. The events have few people interested, and the sites are not frequently updated. Rather, individual posts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram are used to promote and share information on the larger strikes. The average weekly strikes are not promoted on the national accounts. Whether or not they take place at all, is therefore unknown – to me as a researcher, but then also to the rest of the international community. If these strikes in fact does take place, their effect outside of their local, maybe national, community is lost. A clear example of how the reality of a global movement is that ‘if it is not on social media it did not happen’.

The FFF movement is part of a larger environmental movement, which works closely together. This is very evident in Colombia. Colombia is home to many devoted climate activists and was so long before the FFF’s time. The FFF often work with Extinction Rebellion and other, more established groups and activists in the country on their campaigns and protests. While the FFF movement may have added numbers and attention to the climate protests on a global scale, Colombia has long had a culture for individuals who speak loudly in defense of the cause.

The unique campaigns from the Colombian FFF movement, tackling national social issues are powerful. While the movement lack structure and consists of many groups, the youth activists are raising awareness and urging for protection of the indigenous land and their own future. Like Greta Thunberg is doing internationally, Francisco Vera is leading the youth climate movement in Colombia. His popularity outweighs the popularity of the FFF Colombia social media channels. His activism has made him both an inspiration and a target. The dangers of protesting climate change is not to be taken lightly, as we have seen in this case of FFF Colombia. In the next case, we will explore these dangers further, as we go on to learn about the young climate activists in war-torn Afghanistan.

## 6.2 FFF Afghanistan

The FFF Afghanistan group is a relatively small group of the FFF-movement. Most of the digital communication takes place in English and seems to be reaching outside of the Afghan borders. This group has previously arranged marches and events in Afghanistan. However, since the Taliban takeover in 2021, the activity on the pages have stopped – except for a couple

of pictures shared on Facebook in January 2022 (FFF Afghanistan, n.d.-b). This is also one of very few official FFF Instagram accounts to be on private mode and it does not appear active anymore. The FFF Afghanistan group is another example of how dangerous it can be to protest for climate justice and how a global movement can, to some degree, function as a safety net.

### *6.2.1 Cause and Community*

Afghanistan is a country with challenging geography and varying seasonal climate. It is also struggling after decades of war and a population heavily dependent on small-scale agriculture. These factors together are all contributing to frequent, major environmental issues and food insecurity (Norwegian Red Cross, n.d.). But, in a country ravaged by war and poverty, how does one go about protesting for climate justice?

The FFF Afghanistan group have adapted the international movement's tactics and goals to fit their local circumstances. Afghanistan is a strictly Muslim country, and one thing they have done is to incorporate 'green' into the Islam tradition of Ramadan. During Ramadan in April 2021, the group held a "Green Iftar and climate change discussion". Here, those interested in climate change could come together to celebrate Iftar and learn more about the cause at the same time (FFF Afghanistan, n.d.-a).

Unlike in Colombia, there does not seem to be any prominent individuals standing up as leader of the youth climate movement in Afghanistan. Rather, the group seem to turn towards Greta Thunberg as a leader. Posting videos and photos of her speeches and calls for climate action, and even throwing an event to celebrate her birthday (FFF Afghanistan, n.d.-a). After decades of living with war and an oppressive regime, the danger of and culture for being an activist in Afghanistan is vastly different from that of Colombia. The stronghold of the government, and the struggle for survival have not created a viable space for strong activist leaders of the climate movement in the country. However, in recent years there have been signs that this has been changing. The Afghan FFF movement is one of these signs.

Women's rights were never strong in Afghanistan. It is one of the most repressive regimes in the world (Strand, Stenersen, and Johannessen, 2022). Still, the movement's social media content suggest that the group is encouraging women's right to protest and participate in the group activities. This is evident in their celebrations of Greta Thunberg. Several women also

took part in the celebration of Green Iftar, both as audience and as speakers (FFF Afghanistan, n.d.-a). In the picture below you see the level of danger FFF-activists in Afghanistan go through to strike, needing armed guards to march with them. What you also see, is all the women walking in the foreground, holding the banner. These women took to the streets, well-aware that this involves great danger especially for women. The mobilization of the FFF Afghanistan looks to have been a strong and inclusive process, having provided significant levels of reliability and security.

*Figure 6.1: FFF-march in Kabul, Afghanistan.*

*Source: Thunberg, 2019.*



In 2019, one of the founders of FFF Afghanistan had an interview with the newspaper The National (Glinski, 2019). In the activist’s words “many people already advocate for peace in Afghanistan, but climate change is the biggest war we’re fighting”. Further, he stated “the war has brought desperation, but this group motivates me and spreads positive energy in an otherwise tough place”. The continued war situation in Afghanistan can seem like a hopeless struggle. It is interesting to see that these activists have turned towards fighting climate change to find a source of agency and hope. That climate change appears a greater threat than war is a testament to the immense issues that climate change has brought to the country. However, this interview took place before the regaining of control by the Taliban.

The Taliban arose in the 1990's, in the midst of the Afghan civil war. They are an Islamic fundamentalist movement, known for their strict implementation of Sharia law and brutal use of force and violence against their opponents. They first ruled Afghanistan from 1996 until 2001, when the US and NATO military forces overthrew them. In 2021, they rose to power again, re-implementing the strict laws and regulations many hoped belonged to the past. (Strand et.al., 2022)

When the Taliban retook control, the international FFF started a campaign to evacuate activists from Afghanistan. They started a fundraising campaign and engaged the movement's own "Activists in Risk Zones"-team. It is difficult to find much information on this taskforce, but it appears that it was established for the Afghan situation. The Crowd Funder, an Internet platform commonly used for independent fundraising, raised £23,762 through 526 donations (FFF Activists in Risk Zones, 2021). On another fundraising platform, GoFundMe, the campaign raised £24,386 through 661 donations (Climate 2025 Ltd. & Barabas, 2021). The money is, according to FFF, used in collaboration with selected NGOs and organizations to get activists in high risk of capture by the Taliban and their families out of Afghanistan (FFF, 2021f).

The campaign is lacking in transparency and updates on its success are poor. On Saturday 28.09.21, 10 individuals were reportedly extracted by plane to Germany (FFF Activists in Risk Zones, 2021). In a Tweet on 09.10.21, @Fridays4Future stated that the "Activists In Risk Zones team has evacuated 23 vulnerable activists and family members from Afghanistan into Pakistan" (FFF, 2021g). The lack of transparency in this case is claimed to be due to the risk and safety of the activist refugees. It thus is a heavily trust-based campaign, to which over 1000 supporters have donated money. This goes to show the strong sense of community within the FFF network, despite the weak ties they have to the various local groups.

### *6.2.2 Social Media Content*

In 2015, only 8,25% of the population were using the Internet according to the World Bank (World Bank, n.d.). This makes Afghanistan one of the countries with poorest Internet access. The poor access can be explained by the country's history of war and poverty. DataReportal reports more recent and specific statistics of the Internet situation in Afghanistan. According to them, the Internet access have been on the rise, with social media users increasing by 800

thousand (+22%) between 2020 and 2021, totaling 4.40 million social media users in Afghanistan (11.2% of the total population) in January 2021 (Kemp, 2021). This is still, however, far below the global average.

The lack of Internet access seems to have made digital activity less of a priority for FFF in Afghanistan. The group's social media accounts are not very active, nor popular. Facebook have only 16 posts/re-posts, with only 341 likes on the page as of 09.03.22 (FFF Afghanistan, n.d.-b). On Twitter the group have 925 followers (FFF Afghanistan, n.d.-c). The Instagram-account is the most popular, with a mere 1,121 followers (FFF Afghanistan, n.d.-a).

The content that they have posted, is mostly pictures of protests and strikes that the group has held. The causes that FFF Afghanistan have been most vocal about in social media, are plastic waste and littering, as well as tree planting. These causes are important steps towards bettering the local environment. This is something individuals can do to better their local environment, without relying on support from the regime. It is also a benign issue to tackle. Thus, it is a safer choice of topic to choose when trying to raise awareness and knowledge in a country such as Afghanistan, where education and other human rights have been denied for so long.

On Twitter, the group have also actively used the "retweet"-function. Often, rather than posting their own content, they would retweet other FFF groups or climate activists. This shows solidarity and awareness for causes outside of own borders. It can also be read as a sign that the FFF Afghanistan wants to be recognized internationally by other climate activist groups. In this way, the FFF community functions as a gateway to international communication for Afghan youth.

Further proof of this is found in how most of the group's original content is produced in English language. While the country is severely affected by climate change, Afghanistan is responsible for only 0.03% of global emissions (WorldOMeter, n.d.). By communicating in English, and actively engaging with other climate activist groups online, the Afghan FFF is appealing to the international community. It gives a highly affected country a chance to voice their climate and environmental hardships. It also enables them to call for action from those who are contributing more to these issues than themselves. Or at least it was, before the Taliban took over again and made their activism that much harder and dangerous.

Between Jan. 30<sup>th</sup> 2020 and Jan. 21<sup>st</sup> 2022, no posts were made on Facebook (FFF Afghanistan, n.d.-b). The last post on Twitter (FFF Afghanistan, n.d.-c) was made Oct. 10<sup>th</sup> 2020. Instagram (FFF Afghanistan, n.d.-a) remained active until May 25<sup>th</sup> 2021, but the account has been set to private. When I asked to follow the account in December 2021, it took about two months before I was granted access. This indicates little and sporadic activity on the account in this period. There has also not been any activity since I gained access and up until now, in April 2022. One tool the Taliban use to find people breaking the rules of the regime is surveillance. The lack of social media activity is therefore likely to be a precaution in order to avoid punishment. It must also be kept in mind that the little activity there currently is on these accounts can come from people living outside of the country. There is, however, not sufficient transparency on these accounts to be able to make a conclusion on this.

### *6.2.3 Methods of Action*

FFF Afghanistan was created by Greta Thunberg-inspired students of the Oxygen program, which is a program by Mobile Mini Circus Children (MMCC) (MMCC Global, n.d.-a ). This is an NGO established in Afghanistan in 2002 by danish Berit Muhlhausen and David Mason. The organization seeks to empower vulnerable children through “educational entertainment shows and workshops” (MMCC Global, n.d.-b). The Oxygen program consist of workshops and campaigns to inform and educate people, especially youth, about climate change and climate actions (MMCC Global, n.d.-a).

In addition to the FFF Afghanistan official accounts, there is also a private Facebook group for “Fridays for Future Afghanistan Oxygen”, which will not be referenced in this text for privacy reasons (see chapter 2.3.2). There are also links to an Oxygen public Facebook group on the MMCC website, but this page is unavailable. It seems that, like other FFF social media accounts, the Oxygen program as well has had to go silent.

FFF is at its core a school strike movement. In Afghanistan, about 3.7 million children are not attending school, 60% of whom are girls, and the education systems are of the poorest in the world (UNICEF, n.d.). With scarce possibilities, getting an education will be of the highest priority for most of those lucky enough to attend. For those who are not going to school, most are likely too busy surviving to prioritize joining the FFF.

The FFF Afghanistan have encouraged digital strikes. Because the group is so small it appears to only have one national group, without the smaller local groups. If one cannot participate in strikes for reasons such as geographic location, safety, etc., digital strikes become the only opportunity for many Afghans to participate. Unfortunately, most Afghan youth cannot access social media to partake in a digital strike. This means that most do not have the ability to participate as part of the group.

There have been many obstacles related to the FFF's organization in Afghanistan. Still, the local group have managed to adapt the FFF core values and demands into a shape that fits their circumstances. Up until mid-2021 several FFF events in Afghanistan were organized. These were supported and facilitated by MMCC's Oxygen program. This close association with an organization could potentially challenge the independence from outside interests that the movement vows to uphold according to FFF (2021c). However, considering the dangerous circumstances in Afghanistan, an established NGO have resources that can facilitate safer settings for the young activists.

Pledging allegiance to a social movement stemming from the 'Western world' is a dangerous affair in a country where the 'West' is considered the ultimate enemy by many – including the now ruling regime. At the demonstrations held by FFF Afghanistan, they had armed guards walking with them for protection (see Figure 6.1). Unorganized or spontaneous strikes/demonstrations seem unlikely under circumstances such as these, and weekly protests would take an enormous amount of resources.

It is not a shock to find that Afghanistan reports no strike statistics on the FFF-website (FFF, n.d.-e). Even though we can see that they have held demonstrations through their social media, these are rare occasions. Their dramatic appearance does, however, make up for their rare actions. If they are willing to face this level of danger and resource mobilization, that must mean they have a strong belief in the cause. Greta Thunberg saw this importance and posted about a Kabul protest herself (see Figure 6.1). If citizens of a country facing so many hardships are putting this level of effort into the climate cause, it speaks loudly to its importance.



## 6.3 FFF Norway

Norway is a relatively peaceful country whose people take pride in their closeness to nature and environmental consciousness both nationally and internationally. Free speech and democracy is also a core value. Norway has several well-established groups of youth environmental activists with several youth organizations dedicated to environmental activism. At the same time, the country benefits greatly from income gained through extraction and export of oil and gas, which is considered one of the biggest contributing factors to climate change (Arvin, 2021). This case will contrast the two other cases in several ways. We will now examine the role of FFF in a relatively equal, wealthy, and peaceful society with a strong history of environmental protection activism.

### *6.3.1 Cause and Community*

Politically, Norway is trying to be a leading force in the fight for international peace and a sustainable future (Arvin, 2021). Yet, the country's inhabitants have some of the highest climate footprints in the world. The climate and environmental movement in Norway is standing up and demanding measures be taken to change this.

Norway is one of the countries who will be the least affected by climate change, while being one of the leading contributors to it (Natur og Ungdom, n.d.-e). Still, there is no lack of causes to fight for for climate activists in Norway. Encroachment on nature, alternative waste management and the use of chemicals in mining projects, protection of fjords and ocean life, and strengthening indigenous peoples' rights. These are the main local/national causes of the Norwegian youth climate organization closest to FFF, Natur og Ungdom (English: "Nature and Youth") (Natur og Ungdom, n.d.-d). For many people living comfortably in Norway, climate change can to a larger extent be seen as a cause of bad conscience for the massive impact it is having on other people's lives than a direct threat to one's own life and even comfort.

As the consequences of their actions will hurt others more than Norwegians themselves, the international aspect of climate justice becomes important. The phasing out of Norway's oil and gas industry is one of the biggest issues for Norwegian climate activists. As most of the oil and gas produced in Norway is sold out of the country, the profits stay in Norway, while the emissions do not. The premise then, becomes that Norway must use their wealth to find

alternatives, rather than benefit of other countries' and generation's environmental destruction (Natur og Ungdom, n.d.-e). Another aspect of the fight for climate justice is the protection of indigenous rights in Norway for the Sámi people. As the Sámi people also live in Sweden, this cause has also engaged Greta Thunberg, claiming the Sámi people are still being colonized (Thunberg, 2022b). These causes echo the glocal identity, inclusiveness, and intersectionality that is so central to FFF.

While the Norwegian youth environmental activists are on the same page as FFF they are not clearly framing themselves as part of the FFF movement. In Norway, FFF is less of a self-organized social movement, and more of a movement that other, well-established organizations promote and support. Rather than the movement organizing themselves, we see the well-established youth environmental organizations coming together around the FFF campaigns. There are no prominent activist leaders. 'Natur og Ungdom' has gained the FFF International recognition as the 'official' group of FFF Norway. However, the FFF values appear to be present in the minds of several other Norwegian youth organizations. This is discussed in more detail in the following sections.

### *6.3.2 Social Media Content*

Norwegian society is highly reliant on the Internet and one of the countries in the world with the most access to the Internet. In 2019, 98% of Norwegian households had internet access (Statista, 2021). Further Statista reports that "the average number of devices with internet access per household in Norway that year was 7.96". In 2020, 93% of Norwegians between 16 and 79 years used the internet for banking (Statista, 2021). Using digital spaces to manage your money indicates a strong trust in the digital spaces. When access to the Internet is high, communicating through digital spaces also becomes common. Today, it is a natural part of everyday life for the majority of Norwegians.

Despite this relation to the Internet, FFF Norway never became established in social media. On the contact page of FFF's website (FFF, 2020d) the Norwegian FFF groups link to the official accounts of the youth organization "Natur og Ungdom" (English: Nature and Youth). This is the largest youth environmental organization in Norway and is the youth branch of the Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature, which again is partners with the Friends of the Earth International, a network of environmental organizations (Naturvernforbundet, n.d.).

The benefits of FFF being attached to an already well-known and established organization is that it automatically adopts their following and resources. As of 19.03.22, the @naturogungdom Instagram-account has 16,500 followers, the @NaturogUngdom Twitter-account has 14,800 followers, and the @naturogungdom Facebook-account has 24,455 likes (Natur og Ungdom, n.d.-a; Natur og Ungdom, n.d.-b; Natur og Ungdom, n.d.-c). These channels, where all communication happens in Norwegian, are used so spread information about the causes of Natur og Ungdom and how the organization is working for progress towards these causes -from meetings with politicians to summer camps. The organization was also part of a lawsuit against the Norwegian state on behalf of the climate (Jakobsen, 2021). They lost the lawsuit, which went all the way to the Norwegian Supreme Court. Still, it is clear that this organization has more resources than an average small FFF movement volunteer-based local group have.

The drawback to FFF being attached to an already well-known organization is that the movement or its school strikes are rarely mentioned and are not portrayed as a priority among the many causes the organization is working on and supporting. The FFF movement thus mostly lies forgotten. Another challenge to the movement's strong Natur og Ungdom connection is that this is an organization with paying members. While organizations participating and supporting a social movement is good and can be beneficial, their control over the national branch has in this case caused the movement to lose some of its independence.

There is a seemingly independent Skolestreik for Klima (English: School strike for climate) page on Facebook (Skolestreik for Klima – Norge, n.d.). This page has 5 700 followers (as of 20.03.22) and the activity have mostly consisted of sharing info leading up to various strikes taking place around the country. Between October 1<sup>st</sup> 2021 and March 3<sup>rd</sup> 2022 there was no activity on the page. The latest post was about the upcoming global FFF strike #PeopleNotProfit, where a planned demonstration takes place outside of the government building in Oslo.

On Instagram, the @skolestreik\_norge account has 3 043 followers as of 20.03.22 (FFF Norway, n.d.) The account calls themselves Fridays for Future Norway and is followed by both Greta Thunberg and the official international Fridays for Future account. This indicates that the account is recognized as a relevant part of the movement. It links to the previously mentioned Skolestreik for Klima Facebook-page in the account's biography, indicating that the

accounts are run by the same people. Further, this account too was inactive between November 4<sup>th</sup> 2021 and March 19<sup>th</sup> 2022, when posting about the upcoming global strike.

There is also @studentenes\_klimastreik, which only has 395 followers as of 20.03.22 (Norwegian Climate Students, n.d.). The account run by Norwegian students was active from 07.02.2020 to 02.11.2021, but since then it has been silent. They followed the causes and framings of the @skolestreik\_norge account, while also promoting the role of higher education students. The lack of success on the account can probably be seen as due to a combination of many reasons, but maybe most fundamentally was it that their first organized “student strike” were set to March 20<sup>th</sup> 2020 – right at the start of the COVID-pandemic, when the whole country was on lockdown. They tried to encourage and organize a digital strike, but it does not seem to have been a large success. After this there have only been sporadic posts made on the Instagram-account and no new student strikes have been organized.

Interestingly, the Norwegian supporters seem to continuously use the term school strike rather than Fridays for future, and generally present a relative loose relation to the movement. The many well-established youth environmental organizations may be filling the need for local/national level activism for FFF-interested activists in Norway. However, it does to some degree alienate Norway from participation in the global movement and community.

### *6.3.3 Methods of Action*

In March 2019, 40 000 activists protested against climate inaction as part of the FFF movement (FFF Norway, 2020a). There are 126 registered places of protest in Norway, but only 6 have reported activity after the end of 2019, the FFF’s biggest year (FFF, 2020b). No weekly or future strikes have been registered in the country as of 16.03.22 (FFF, n.d.-e).

During the pandemic, FFF Norway participated in the digital strikes through their Instagram-account, @skolestreik\_norge. It seems that this initiative caused a spark in participation in FFF activism in Norway. On one Friday in April 2021, 1200 participants registered their strikes according to the @skolestreik\_norge Instagram-account (FFF Norway, 2020b). For several weeks that spring, students posted pictures of themselves in social media with signs demanding climate justice. Taking into account the low level of FFF-activity both leading before and after these few weeks this does seem to be a classic example of slacktivism, where a mixture of

pandemic-boredom, ease of participation, and curiosity for the concept made people attempt to build a new method of action amongst young climate activists in Norway. As it did not gain significant attention, the initiative stopped.

Several of these youth environmental organizations, especially Natur og Ungdom, are known for their use of civil disobedience such as chaining themselves together to block roads, sit-ins etc. They are at times arrested for their protests (Helland, Sæle, & Grimeland, 2022). These methods, frequently used by Natur og Ungdom, are not regular practice in FFF. Getting arrested are actions more affiliated with movements such as Extinction Rebellion, which, as we have seen previously (see chapter 5), the FFF supports but does not lead the same methods as. This goes to show the loss of control the movement have when operating on a global scale. Especially when established organizations are put in a management position.

The strikes do not seem to have resurfaced after the pandemic and FFF activity have been rather scarce. Young Norwegian climate activists do, however, remain adamant on partaking in the major global strike events. Other environmentally conscious youth organizations are supporting FFF's goals and organizing the events. According to the Facebook event (Oslo Natur og Ungdom, 2022), the #PeopleNotProfit protest in Oslo is organized by the following organizations:

- Natur og Ungdom (English: *Nature and Youth*) (Norway branch and Oslo branch)
- Framtiden I våre hender (English: *The Future in Our Hands*)
- Spire (Norway branch and Oslo branch)
- Changemaker Norge
- kNUst Oslo (Nature and Youth's Art Students)
- Naturvernforbundet (English: *The Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature*) (Norway branch and Oslo branch)
- Naturvernstudentene (Naturvernforbundet's student branch)
- Greenpeace Oslo
- Oslo Grønn Ungdom (English: *Oslo Green Youth*) (youth branch of a political party)

This long list of organizations organizes the protest, but they do not show direct support for the FFF movement on a regular basis. As of Thursday 17.03.22, only Naturvernforbundet (English: The Norwegian Society for the Conservation of Nature) (Naturvernforbundet, 2022), had

posted one photo with information about the protest on their Instagram-account. The protest, like all support for the movement, drowns in all the other work that they do.

The first big strike organized in Norway after the pandemic was the #PeopleNotProfit-strike. It was an ambitious event, set to last for 4 hours – from 10.00 to 14.00 on Friday 25.03.22. The program consisted of several speakers, including the mayor of Oslo, Marianne Borgen, six youth organizations/youth political parties, and the Minister of climate and environment, Espen Barth Eide. There were also some singing and dancing from lesser-known artists to get the protester spirit up. The vibe was nice and TikTok dances were being made – a good sign that this was an event by and for youth. As an observer, however, I got the impression that the event felt a little long and slow for many.

538 were interested in the Facebook-event, 201 said they would be ‘attending’ (Oslo Natur og Ungdom, 2022). This turnout seems rather accurate, as I would estimate that about 200 people were present at the strike, with many more coming and going throughout. While the protesters were people of all ages, the overwhelming majority were youth in an estimated age group of 13-19. “We are here because by the time we are old enough to vote, it will be too late” one youth said. This is a familiar statement, said in many settings by other FFF activists. Youth everywhere, including Norway, are feeling powerless in the face of climate change and all the hope they have is in activism.

“What do we want? Climate action! When do we want it? Now!” (Original: «Hva vil vi ha? Klimahandling! Når vil vi ha det? Nå!»)

“Støre (referring to Norwegian prime minister Jonas Gahr Støre) you must listen, get us out of the oil race” (Original: «Støre du må høre, få oss ut av oljekjøret»).

*Chants by protesters at the global climate strike #PeopleNotProfit in Oslo, 25.03.22*

These chants were screamed over and over again by the protesters. Many of them were holding home-made posters, referencing local causes as well as international causes. Present were also the classical FFF-posters, such as Greta Thunberg’s famous “Skolstrejk för klimatet” and the “There’s no planet B”-poster. The turnout was low compared to other major demonstrations at the same place, such as the Black Lives Matter-demonstration in 2020 or the pro-Ukraine-demonstration on 5. March 2022. Despite a few very prepared activists, the strike/protest was a relatively small, quiet affair which gained little media attention.

Norway neighbors the origin country of FFF, Sweden, and have an active environment of youth environmental activists themselves. It is a wealthy country with a strong democratic tradition and much trust in the political system and people's freedom of speech. This should lay the foundation for a strong FFF movement. However, there has been little FFF activity since 2019. It is difficult to say whether this is due to activism fatigue or the pandemic, but it is likely due to a mix of both. Further, much of FFF activity in Norway is organized through already established youth organizations. They only take part in the global mass demonstrations and have their own campaigns and projects that they are working on separate from the FFF. They also have their own methods of action and social media usage. Still, their ideals line up with those of the FFF.

This chapter has shown the global movement in local spaces. The groups of FFF in Colombia, Afghanistan, and Norway have all chosen to structure their activity in different ways, adapting to their national and local circumstances in order to effectively protest for climate justice on both local and global scales. In practice this means focusing on issues closer to home, using social media in a way that resonates with the target group, and finding alternate, more engaging methods of action to mobilize activists. What these groups have in common, however, is that they base these activities on the global standards for the FFF movement. They all also share the FFF's international values and demands.

This 'glocal' organization show that even a global movement cannot escape the local, and vice versa. The communities and issues are simultaneously separate and connected. Who, then, has the power to control and influence the movement? In the next chapter I examine which power structures are limiting and/or enabling FFF to mobilize on a global scale, in order to gain a deeper understanding of the role of social media in the FFF movement's mobilization.

## Chapter 7: Which power structures are limiting and/or enabling FFF to mobilize on a global scale?

It is easy to draw the conclusion that with the expansion of the Internet, and especially since the pandemic, humanity has gained access to easy communication across spatial borders in real time. As usual, and as the examples from the Fridays for Future movement have shown, the reality of the digital space is more complex than so. To understand the global mobilization of the FFF movement, it will be important to understand the structures of power limiting and facilitating such activity. This chapter therefore examines social and political power structures that affects the FFF movements reach on a global scale, with a focus on their role in the digital space.

Global power structures are not straightforward. Gaventa's (2006) model of the power cube describe the relationship between inequality, power, and political participation as a way to examine opportunities for movement, mobilization, and change. As explained in chapter 3.2, the power cube consists of levels/scales (global – national – local), spaces (closed – invited – claimed/created), and forms (visible – hidden – invisible). In this chapter I will use this, along with theory from Morozov (2012) and Castells (2015), to analyze power structures and relations, focusing first on inequality and the North/South divide. Second, I examine issues of surveillance and censorship. Third, I explore the relations between social media and traditional media. Fourth and last, I will examine the resource mobilization of the FFF. This is all to answer the third sub-question of which power structures are limiting and/or enabling FFF to mobilize on a global scale.

### 7.1 MAPA and the North/South Divide

Power [...] is no longer concentrated in institutions (the state), organizations (capitalist firms), or symbolic controllers (corporate media, churches). It is diffused in global networks of wealth, power, information, and images, which circulate and transmute in a system of variable geometry and dematerialized geography. (Castells, 2009, p. 424)

It amounts to this: The rich have the social power generally to impose their vision of seemly behavior on the poor, while the poor are rarely in a position to impose their



vision on the rich. [...] There is one exception, however. The rich, while they may be relatively immune to material sanctions, cannot escape symbolic slander, gossip, character assassination. (Scott, 1985, pp. 24-25)

In the digital age, these two ideas together should allow room for the exploited to rebel against the elites through networks, defying the previous restrictions of geography. As we will see throughout this chapter, however, existing power structures remain difficult to alter.

First, when we talk about power on a global scale, it is easy to focus on the powerful – those who run the debates and control the actions taken. This, however, leaves out the majority of people. Castells's (2009) description of the modern-day global system of networks as ground for power give room for both wider exploitation of the powerless, and of a diffusion of power that hinders such exploitation. What Castells (2015) calls rhizomatic networks, decentralized networks spreading everywhere with no core and no overarching control center, have become much easier to construct with social media. These networks make a movement harder to shut down and harder to hold accountable, as there is simply no end to take hold of.

Second, I wish to argue that we can find the essence of civil disobedience in Scott's (1985) explanation of everyday resistance above. While everyday resistance as Scott explains it, mostly happen covertly, it does describe the poor's (or the powerless') conscious rejection and opposition of the elites (or the powerful). This resistance by the poor can be transferred to any group experiencing a lack of power. For example, youth are generally thought to be powerless. Not yet mature enough to make informed decisions, protected by the control of the older, wise generations in power. The youth led FFF may not have the power to materially sanction those in power. However, as we saw throughout chapter 6, the FFF youth activists are resisting through civil disobedience, using powerful tools such as “symbolic slander, gossip, and character assassination” in public. While some of these actions can be defined as slacktivism, it is still a form of activism that this group can partake in. And a form which has gained the cause much attention.

Because of the complexity of the inequalities that exist in the world not only the will, but also the power and opportunity to affect the climate change debate varies greatly. In chapter 6 we saw that the three cases discussed in this thesis have significantly different focus points. At the global climate strike #PeopleNotProfit in Oslo, 25.03.22, FFF Norway protesters urged Norway to “get out of the oil race”. The Norwegian state is earning a lot of money participating

in oil and gas extraction, while fossil fuel production is one of the largest environmental issues globally. On the other hand, FFF Colombia focuses on national issues. They are challenging the state and criminal groups on the overproduction of their lands and on crime directed towards farmers and environmental activists. Last, FFF Afghanistan directed their calls to action towards the local community, urging them to plant trees and clean the streets of garbage. They also directed their activism towards the international community, while no direct action was made towards the government. Due to the dangers of challenging the Afghan government, this is not surprising, but it is interesting. That this is at all possible, shows the possibilities that digital spaces provide.

The role of language became apparent through the research on the case studies. In Colombia and Norway, the national languages were used to communicate. In Afghanistan, English was used. It is clear from this that the main audience of the first two are activists at home, while in the case of Afghanistan the use of social media was more about reaching the global community outside of their own country's borders. The use of the English language to reach an international audience has become an established tradition on the Internet. For the majority of the world population, who does not speak the language, this means missing out on much.

In an extension of the language issue, representation is also an excluding issue in the digital space. Carlson and Frazer (2020) points to the two sides of social media for indigenous peoples. Social media presents new opportunities to speak one's own truth, and challenge racist ideologies and colonial domination. However, it also presents a space for further marginalization. With the Internet's growth, there was an idealist thought that this would bring about increased understanding across cultures and geographical borders. This idea of a "global village", however, has in many ways turned out to be little more than a myth (Morozov, 2012, p. 287). Instead, xenophobia and polarizing ideologies are on the rise. The spread of information and access to it is highly uneven, especially between the Global North and the Global South.

Following the MAPA-term ('Most Affected People and Areas') and the principles of intersectionality, the youth of today, regardless of geographical location, are more at risk due to climate change than the older generations are. However, youth living in what is known as the Global South, are more at risk than youth living in the Global North. Meanwhile, youth living in the Global North have a better opportunity to participate in, and influence, the climate change debate. Then again, the older generations have an even better opportunity to do this.

Because the least affected by it are the most responsible for climate change, the power to change our relation to the climate and the environment does not always correlate with the will to do so.

The established terms of the Global North and the Global South allow us to draw a line and discuss inequalities in a productive manner, but the terms are generalizing. The MAPA- term used by the FFF, as well as the movement's intersectional understanding of global inequalities and vulnerabilities, suggest a change in the Global North/Global South-dynamics. MAPA acknowledges the intersectional factors of climate vulnerability. The term thus establishes a more universal understanding of inequality, speaking for the demographics who does not fall under the Global South-term but are still part of the most vulnerable group. Borderless, digital communication has created spaces for people to become familiar with other countries, people, and ways of living which were previously unreachable. While the Global North/Global South-divide still holds strong in academic and development discourse, the creation of the MAPA-term illustrates a likely coming shift towards a more complex understanding of the world and its inequalities.

While the FFF can be proud of having activist all over the world, it has also become evident throughout this research that there are immense differences to the ease of participation around the world. Climate activism is life or death for some youth, while it is a 'fun' extracurricular activity for others. As Morozov (2012, p. 291) states it, "throughout history, new technologies have almost always empowered and disempowered particular political and social groups, sometimes simultaneously". Digital resources have made us think we are enlightened, yet surveillance, algorithms, and filter bubbles ensure our sources of information remain biased. These are among the issues which will be discussed in the next section.

## 7.2 Surveillance and Censorship

Activism has changed with the Internet. Protests and demonstrations are not just taking place in the streets, but online as well, and an increasing amount of communication and mobilization takes place in the digital spaces. Much have become easier through the growth and development of the Internet. Unfortunately, this includes the ability of those in power, both governments and commercial actors, to surveil and censor the public.

Many of us are naïve in our relation to the Internet. For the most part we enjoy the ease of navigating the Internet through the sharing of information across websites and platforms, and through the algorithms built to give us personalized recommendations and advertisements. However, as Morozov (2012) points out, this technology can just as easily be used against us, to monitor our activity or censor the information we access. In chapter 5 and 6 we saw that lack of access to the Internet is a hindrance for many to be part of a global community today. We also saw how authoritarian regimes can practice digital surveillance and censorship to avoid rebellion to form online, such as in the case of Afghanistan. Due to the nature of the Internet, commercial actors have the power to aid or complicate this process. This is explored in this section.

### *7.2.1 Governmental Actors*

As we saw in the cases of Afghanistan and Colombia, climate activism is, for many, a dangerous affair. Activists are persecuted, their right to free speech is threatened and certain public voices are regularly attempted to be silenced. This is not always, but often, the works of official authorities. Amnesty International (2022) monitored 154 countries during 2021. They found that “43% of countries monitored introduced new laws to restrict people peacefully expressing their rights”, “55% of countries use excessive or unnecessary force against demonstrators”, and “54% of countries arbitrarily detain human rights defenders” (Amnesty International, 2022). Silencing is not something that is lost on the FFF. In July 2020, state officials took down Fridays for Future India’s website. This happened due to their campaign against the weaknesses in the new draft Environment Impact Assessment Notification (FFF, 2020c). While the website was soon restored, FFF India claim they continue to receive threats of censorship (FFF India, 2021).

Authorities do hold the ability to censor certain websites, block certain information, or even shut down mobile networks. “Governments have mastered the art of keyword-based filtering, thus gaining the ability to block websites based on the URLs and even the text of their pages” (Morozov, 2012, p. 96). Still, few authoritarian states would get away with completely shutting down the entire Internet for an extended period of time. This was attempted by the Egyptian regime during the Egyptian Revolution in 2011, according to Castells (2015). However, the

people soon found loopholes and ways to work around the shutdown. The disconnection was also severely hurting the functions of the state and economy. The shutdown lasted five days.

Both Morozov (2012) and Castells (2015) agree that it is easier for the authorities to allow for some rebellious content to be spread, as long as they have the ability to monitor and surveil the activity. Oftentimes, the mere knowledge that one is being watched can be sufficient to, if not silence, at least quiet rebel voices. Morozov explains the ramifications of such publicized surveillance campaigns, beyond information gathering:

Knowing that they might be watched by government agents but not knowing how exactly such surveillance happens, many activists might lean toward self-censorship or even stop engaging in risky online behavior altogether. Thus, even if authoritarian governments cannot actually accomplish what the activists fear, the pervasive climate of uncertainty, anxiety, and fear only further entrenches their power. (Morozov, 2012, p. 145)

One example of this effect is FFF Singapore. There were efforts to participate in the FFF-movement, such as the establishment of social media accounts (FFF Singapore, n.d.). However, the Instagram-account is not active and the FFF never amounted to much in Singapore, according to digital sources. Strict demonstration laws and heavy surveillance in the island-state has made civil disobedience almost non-existent. Yet these efforts have not been sufficient to completely kill the movement (Han, 2020). On the global strike on 25. March, one single activist took to the streets with posters. His picture was shared on FFF MAPA's Instagram story (MAPA, n.d.-a), gaining international recognition for his disobedience.

The saying goes that "history is written by the victors". When the first major social media-organized revolts happened with the Arab Spring and the Occupy Movement in 2010/2011, people saw a new chance to write their own history. Thus, social media as a platform for activism and revolution presented a challenge to this well-established fact. However, this optimism is fading with experience.

### *7.2.2 Platforms and Commercial Actors*

Morozov (2012, p. 186), claims the effectiveness of digital campaigns is often overestimated, while their risks tend to be underestimated. Companies and commercial actors can use their

power to control their user-base's information flows. This also makes them a powerful challenger to governmental actors. However, in the search of market shares and capital, this power often becomes part of the problem rather than the solution.

A very clear example of this, was when Facebook launched its Internet.org project in 2015 (later renamed Free Basics). It is marketed as an initiative to bring free Internet to the poor and those who otherwise cannot access it. The company is able to do this by restricting the access to Facebook, and limiting the availability of photos and videos etc. It was soon discovered that this was simply a marketing tactic to secure Facebook as the main (or even only) source of digital communications (Taylor and Broeders, 2015). The service has been widely criticized and was even banned from India for violating net neutrality (van Boom, 2016). After having seen the importance of images in the mobilization of movements and communities such as the FFF, it is clear that this is a very limited and excluding form of Internet access. Yet, according to Meta (n.d.) (previously Facebook) one billion people still use the services to access the Internet.

This power to code and filter what information people find online, is a power that platform designers and owners have not taken sufficient responsibility for. Gatekeeping is when platforms “rank, channel, promote, censor and delete content”, effectively “facilitating or hindering information flows” (Myers West, 2017, p.28). These acts are based on algorithms aimed at giving personalized content to users. It is also used to control the information available on various platforms, such as Facebook choosing to censor female nipples but not male nipples (Myers West, 2017). Suddenly, companies such as Facebook (now Meta) have the ability to decide what content and information is appropriate for the public to access. What seems like open, invited spaces are in effect closed. People are not aware of what they are not seeing and believe that they have insights into a neutral reality, with little power to decide what content they wish to access. This, then, also becomes a way to exercise hidden, or even invisible, power.

Platform owners profit off of letting surveillance and tracking mechanisms be available and misused by governments and commercial interests, mainly because the same technology “allows social networking sites to expand their user base” (Morozov, 2012, p. 159). Commercial actors use the technology and information to run ads, make specialized deals, and increase their sales. Moreover, the information can be sold to other interested actors, who can use it to undermine the activists or rebellious groups.

Echo chambers and filter bubbles (as discussed in chapter 5.2) are a threat to the inclusive, uniting vision we once had for digital communication (Kitchens et.al., 2020). The Internet often do not dissolve our differences at all. Rather, it more often enhances them. The polarized climate debate is only one of many examples. Increased access to information gives the impression of increased knowledge. However, the information we are exposed to is often one-sided, with algorithms choosing it to fit us personally. Importantly, this form of accessing news and information is relatively new. As we are becoming used to this new technology, one can hope that awareness of its prominence makes more people question easily accessed information, and new ways of surpassing these obstacles become established.

### *7.2.3 Activists and Counterpower*

While there are significant limitations and complications attached to using digital spaces for activism, staying offline is not a valid option for most activists today. It is important channels for mobilizing support, counter government propaganda/misinformation, and raise awareness of their cause. Castells (2009) claim that global networks are taking over much of the power previously held by nation-states. By being aware of the issues discussed above activists can learn to maneuver and work around them, using these networks to their advantage.

One example of this is information sharing. “The centralization of information under one roof—as often happens in the case of Google—can do wonders from the perspective of productivity, but from the perspective of security it often only increases the risks” (Morozov, 2012, p. 173). The FFF communicate through many different channels and platforms. Still, at one point there has to be made a compromise between efficiency and security. Because the FFF relies on information being available to as many as possible, the information must also be made available as easily as possible. Therefore, the use of open platforms such as Google Drive is often, but not always, used for sharing of strike material etc. This technology thus allows them to easily spread information. That they are not solely relying on this channel makes them less vulnerable to potential threats.

Much of the surveillance and censorship tactics discussed above relates to authoritarian crackdowns on rebel groups. Because of their moderate methods and demands, the FFF are safe from the worst forms of censorships discussed in this text. Yet there are no lack of cases proving that there are strong voices aiming to silence climate activists, including those in the

FFF. In addition to local interests, we must also acknowledge that there are global interests at play, for example polluting industries such as the oil industry.

The young FFF activists have been subject to ridicule based on their age, their fear, and even their hope by those who do not share their values and concerns. We have seen this for example in the personal attacks of Greta Thunberg by politicians and media houses (Luscombe, 2020). This too is a form of censorship. Those who oppose taking action to combat climate change, are willing to go to great lengths to delegitimize those who are fighting for climate justice. What this does is scare people away from joining the fight and make people question their legitimacy. If successful, this can silence the movement – at least partly.

Censoring and surveilling people's Internet and social media activity is more normal than most of us comprehend. Filtering available information is part of what makes social media platforms successful. It is also part of what makes these so-called new media problematic. Censoring and surveilling, though, is only possible to a certain degree. When it is not politically or economically favorable to limit the information flows, governments or other actors move on to publicly undermine their counterparts through propaganda, or what we have come to know in the last years as “alternative” or “fake” news. Powerful actors often do this through official mass-media channels. Therefore, we now move on to examine the power relations in social and traditional media.

### 7.3 ‘Social’ vs. ‘Traditional’ Media

What changed with the expansion of social media was that suddenly anyone could be both the audience and the content creator on the same platform. With traditional mass media, people are simply the audience. Social media brought with it feeling of increased agency and access to knowledge. As we have seen throughout this paper, however, the reality is not that simple. In the words of Morozov (2012, p. 275), “technologies, it seems, tend to overpromise and under deliver, at least on their initial promises”. While some predicted the death of journalism in social media's early days, social media have rather shown us the importance of thorough, critical journalism. We will now examine the power relations between social and traditional media.



### *7.3.1 Gaining Attention*

Social media can be a great source of power. It allows for creating one's own spaces without geographical limitations. Further, it allows for knowledge exchange on many scales. These opportunities fade significantly, however, for those who do not manage to establish a significant name and following. While the FFF have established a name for themselves, their accounts do not have a large following. Supporters and leaders within the FFF-movement, such as Greta Thunberg and Francisco Vera, are the ones with the significant follower base. This indicates that people prefer to follow individuals in social media, rather than groups, organizations etc. Further, this means that the power to control and promote the movement lies with individual voices within the movement.

Social media in itself cannot explain the mobilizing success of the FFF. Traditional mass media are still our main source for news updates and thus hold much power over setting the debate. They are also present in social media. Social media, and especially Twitter, is a channel commonly used by journalists and mass media houses to gather information, promote their work, and interact with their readers. Social movements are still reliant on gaining attention in the mass media in order to be seen, heard, and taken seriously.

Importantly, mass media can never be neutral in their reporting. Rather, they are selective, commenting, and often critical. The larger the scale, the more selective must they be over which cases to report on. The media houses can thus be allies or enemies. How the media frames a case is part of creating the subjects' narrative for the audiences. An important aspect of the non-neutrality of mass media is the commercial, political, and economic interests behind their reporting. What separates the common understanding of the differences between social and mass media is the perceived reliability and integrity of mass media. Still, media houses rely on commercial funding, political affiliation, number of readers, or a combination of the three.

Using social media to hold media houses to account has become a common way for activists to create discussion. One example of this is when the Associated Press (AP) released an article from the Davos World Economic Forum conference in 2020. Attached to the article was an image of four white activists, including Greta Thunberg. The only person of color, Ugandan Vanessa Nakate, had originally been in the photo but was cropped out. She used Twitter to ask AP why she was cut from the picture (Nakate, 2020). This quickly gained attention from other large profiles on the platform, and from other media houses. And just like that, the incident had

created a major debate on racism and inclusivity. It also gave a boost of attention to the climate justice movement.

Morozov (2012, p. 60), makes the case that the ability of media to cultivate political knowledge was easier before the Internet, and before cable TV, due to the limited choices of entertainment. Due to the massive production of content, in the massive maze of platforms, it is far less likely that what one writes today will reach as widely of a demographic as 50 years back. This makes it harder to win over people's minds and does, to an extent, hinder propaganda.

In what Castells (2015, p. 123, 125) describe as "postmedia movements", everyone has the capacity to "be their own media" and messages go viral because they resonate "with people's personal experiences". Thus, the idea is that if the message is important enough and people are loud enough, traditional media is not a necessity to establish a movement base. This allows social movements to build without the help of traditional media, who eventually will have to notice the movement if it gets big enough.

The ability for anyone to share their views and feelings to news and facts have created a new issue, however. 'Fake news' and 'alternative facts' have become household terms. While the terms relate to the spread of inaccurate information, many use them to delegitimize information which does not fit with their worldview. This has led to a debate on the reality of media integrity. "Journalists need facts to tell stories, but they need data to understand how to engage audiences with this accurate information" (Albright, 2017, p. 87). Today, the act of winning the audience is often overshadowing the act of spreading factual knowledge.

### *7.3.2 The Battle of People's Minds*

Power is a function of an endless battle around the cultural codes of society. Whoever, or whatever, wins the battle of people's minds will rule, because mighty, rigid apparatuses will not be a match, in any reasonable timespan, for the minds mobilized around the power of flexible, alternative networks. (Castell, 2009, p. 425)

According to Castells, power in the information age is identifiable yet diffused. It is rhizomatic, everywhere and nowhere at the same time. True power can no longer be established by force

but can only come through winning over people's minds. This form of invisible power is, however, limited to those who hold much power and influence.

In a relatable, yet seemingly opposite argument, Morozov (2012) accuses the media industry's abundance of content and their focus on entertainment functions more as an 'opium for the masses' than as a source of knowledge. As Morozov (2012, p. 80) puts it, "Big Brother no longer has to be watching its citizens because they themselves are watching Big Brother on TV". He claims that the Internet's "absence of high ideals and stable truths" makes it "nearly impossible to awaken people's political consciousness, even to fight authoritarianism" (Morozov, 2012, p. 67).

Castells (2009) argue that winning people over mobilizes them to act in one's favor. Morozov (2012) assumes that all have taken the 'opium' of entertainment media and thus have lost all interest in action. Based on the findings of this thesis' research I will argue that, as we always have, we can find both kinds of people in the world today. Historically, even long before the introduction of television and the Internet, there have always been those who escape reality through various means. Moreover, there has always been those who turn towards inequalities and political action. Where the arguments of Castells and Morozov meet, is on the understanding that we today are drowning in information. It is so easy for most people to produce almost anything and have it published globally on the Internet. All this noise makes it more difficult to be heard today than ever before. Still, those who are, those who "wins the battle of people's minds" (Castells, 2009), will be able to "awaken people's political consciousness" (Morozov, 2012). This is exemplified by how, while the FFF shows some apparent signs of classical 'slacktivism', it is also clear that many are actively engaged in the movement and politically conscious.

Many hoped that social media would be the start of a worldwide social relationship, while others feared it would turn into an even harder fight for attention in media (Della Porta and Diani, 2020). I will argue that both these claims have become the reality of our society today. There is power in being heard through the media, whether it be social media, traditional media, or both, as it is in most cases. As seen in chapter 4 and 5, FFF was established after Greta Thunberg's school strikes gained attention in the media, but it is the continuous mobilization on and off social media by the activists themselves which has made the movement.

Morozov's (2012) main argument, that information plays as important a role in enabling propaganda as it does in its destruction, seems to hold in this analysis of the FFF. How climate and environmental issues are discussed by politicians and mass media largely sets the standard for how most of society view the issue. We tend to direct our focus towards the seemingly most threatening issue. This is evident in how the people who are experiencing the devastating effects of climate change are the most eager for action on the subject, as we have seen in the case studies (see ch. 5 and 6). All this is discussed further as we move in the next and final section of this analysis, where I will examine how the FFF has mobilized their resources and made themselves heard on a global scale.

#### 7.4 FFF Resource Mobilization

An interest in action does not always translate into action. Resource mobilization is “the network and organizational activities that transform potential for action into real action” in social movement activity (Della Porta and Diani, 2020, p. 8). The FFF is a youth-led, decentralized, grassroots movement. Its local and national groups are largely independent and holds autonomy over their actions. In addition to geographically specific groups, there are special-interest groups. These groups, such as FFF MAPA and FFF Digital, have a global perspective with focus on a special cause, target group, or form of action. How does a movement with such wide range and so little organization, mobilize the resources and power needed to sustain a global movement?

While it is a global movement, it is evident from all three case studies in chapter 6 that local-level activism and mobilization is the most important factor for getting people to participate. The global team creates the basic terms and interest on which the movement operates. They decide the dates and theme for global strikes, and they also create digital tools and guidelines. They do not, however, have control over how the movement's supporters use these FFF resources. Local groups base their actions on the fundamental principles decided on the international level, but still do their own thing. They have their own local-/national-based causes, and fight for them through locally adjusted forms of action.

The FFF have created their own spaces in the digital world through deliberate use of social media platforms. They have also claimed spaces in the public such as streets and parks through

their small- and largescale strikes and protests. As a social movement where many participants are below voting age or live under authoritarian regimes, they do not have access to closed spaces and oppose those who sit in closed spaces and decide their future for them. However, some of the most profiled FFF activists, such as Greta Thunberg and Francisco Vera, have been invited into spaces such as the UN to speak on behalf of the movement.

The ability to mobilize activists and gain the level of support needed to be invited into closed spaces on the global level, does seem like a far reach for an unorganized group of young people. There are a lot of resources these young people do not have access to, such as money, experience (age), political power to name a few. On the other hand, the FFF movement have managed to navigate their lack of resources and sometimes even use them to their advantage. A major point for the FFF is using their seeming lack of agency as a pressure point to pressure those who can act into acting for them, such as the Norwegian youth protesters during the global climate strike 25. March 2022 (see ch. 6.3.3). They have also managed to do much with the resources that they do have access to, such as social media, Greta Thunberg's celebrity status, support from renowned scientists etc.

Navigating in various spaces and on various scales in the way that the FFF does, further ensures that they reach a varied audience and are seen and heard. It is here we see the true strength and power in what Granovetter (1973) described as weak tied communities. Castells (2009; 2015) makes a similar argument with his theory of networks societies. Because the FFF activists are everywhere, on so many scales and in so many spaces, they cannot be easily silenced. When they have grown as big as they have, the only thing that truly can kill the movement is apathy.

This mobilization of supporters and of resources on multiple scales and in multiple spaces becomes increasingly complicated as the movement grows. FFF is a decentralized, non-hierarchical movement, consisting of autonomous groups. As discussed above, this kind of loosely structured civil society can be beneficial. Still, when reaching a size as large as the FFF, the difficulties start to arise. According to the Lausanne Declaration (SMILE, 2019a, p.5), the FFF “strive to have non-hierarchical structures and no single decision-makers. We should all work to assure that every voice is heard and listened to equally”. As we saw in chapter 6, the local and national groups do stand freely to choose their own causes and methods. However, there is a lot of power in controlling FFF's official international social media accounts and the website. This is where the global strikes are announced, and where much of the information and contents of focus stem from. There is no information on who

run these accounts, but that there is a core administrative group of some kind is highly probable. Striving for “every voice” to be “heard and listened to equally”, is then a naïve ideal in such a large movement. It does, however, speak to the openness and adaptability of the movement’s values.

FFF started as a striking movement. In 2019, when the movement was at its peak, the millions of striking youths in public spaces around the world, became a portrayal of their ability to exercise their visible power. However, the number of youths who still skip school on a regular basis is low (FFF, n.d.-e). Larger protests and digital campaigns are the main methods of action for the FFF, and activity outside of major global strikes is low. The disruptive actions of groups such as Extinction Rebellion gain more attention and creates more discussion and may in this way be more effective on some fronts (see ch. 5.3). Still, the youth-led protests of the FFF and the powerful speeches of Greta Thunberg have had the power to create much political discussion and action.

The FFF is a clear example of how action on multiple scales can increase the power of a movement. Most local groups are small on their own, but they find inspiration and support through the network of the movement. Being visible in social media and exercising one’s power in public is difficult and, as we have seen, dangerous for many. It is possible to use social media anonymously. Anonymity, however, does for the most part make involvement “far less effective” (Morozov, 2012, p. 157), for one because you then lose the power of the icons. One example of this is Greta Thunberg. She could not have had the level of influence over international environmentalism had it not been for the personal support she has from every corner of the world through this movement.

On the movement’s 4<sup>th</sup> year more people have heard of Greta Thunberg than of Fridays for Future. One factor that made Greta Thunberg the leader of a movement was her consistency. She did not go in expecting to be famous. Rather, she simply wanted to do what she could. She did not stop after a few weeks of little attention, like for example the digital strikers in Norway did. Her consistency and dedication to the cause, presented through powerful speeches, has made her a symbol of climate activism. As such a clear leader of the movement, Greta Thunberg, holds the hidden power to frame the movement and the discussion.

There are ‘good’ and ‘bad’ prophets, depending on individual preferences, including my own. But they are all prophets in the sense that they declare the path, affirm the

values, and act as symbol senders, becoming a symbol in themselves, so that the message is inseparable from the messenger. (Castells, 2009, p. 427)

Here, Castells illustrates the importance of being critical of the power of the leader, or “prophet”. Greta Thunberg was an unlikely leader, an underdog whose concerns resonated with many. Her ability to inspire a global movement speaks to the importance of a leader. On the other hand, the amount of power laid on her as an individual can be problematic. Her persona has become a representation of a whole movement. This means that what she says is uncritically received by many of her young, impressionable followers. It also means that when she goes ‘too far’ in the media, it reflects negatively on the whole movement.

Historically, young people have been conditioned to see themselves as politically powerless. Governments and other power holders have been exercising invisible, and often also visible, power, “creating obstacles to participation of the powerless, and over time, contributing to their internalization or acceptance of an unjust and unequal status quo” (Gaventa and Martorano, 2016, p. 12). The seemingly lack of power of FFF activists have made them an easy target of ridicule. However, they have found a strength in this “weakness”.

As Castells (2009, p. 428), points out, it is in the “demise of cultural hegemony” that social movements gain success. This happens through action on many different levels, spaces, and forms. It is, claims Castells, through subtle, incremental, yet pervasive infiltration of cultures and everyday life that networks of change form history. Not through loud, colorful parades. While I do believe this thesis have shown the importance of the loud and colorful as an important igniter and driver of this change, Castells makes a valid point on the importance of the unremarkable. Much of the success of the FFF relies on the slow demise of the neoliberal, capitalistic hegemony of eternal growth.

The environment and climate consciousness have crawled under our skin. The continuum of research reports, media debates, and lived experiences of climate change has led to a growing international focus on climate action. The power of the politicians, media houses, and activists to set the focus for what we consider important in our lives has come together around our climate and environment. Whether it is concern for the future, critique of the climate hysteria, or something in between, few people remain neutral in the climate change debate today. Environmental awareness has become a part of popular culture.

What we have seen in this chapter is that the growth of the digital world has altered our power structures, but only to a certain degree. In essence, there are new issues to tackle, new channels of communication to master, and new pitfalls to avoid when using the digital space for mobilization. However, while direct communication has become easier, the political-media-activist-relations remain largely unaltered. One of the most interesting aspects of the FFF in particular and the digital space in general, is the intersecting of the local and the global, and the way that this shapes worldviews and actions. In the next and final chapter, I will summarize the most interesting aspects from the findings and analysis of this thesis.



## Chapter 8: Conclusion

The main research question in this thesis has been: *how has the Fridays for Future-movement used social media to mobilize on a global scale?* The findings suggest that FFF has used social media actively to mobilize on a global scale. They have done this by spreading information on the cause and their actions, engaging with politicians and mass media, and supporting each other both within and across geographical spaces. This chapter first present a summary of the analysis and lay out the main findings from this research. Next, recommendations for further research will be made, based on the thesis' findings as well as its limitations. To end the thesis, I then have some concluding remarks in the last section of this chapter.

### 8.1 Main Findings

Chapter 5 examined *how the FFF's main global social media accounts are used to engage and spread information globally.* What was found was that there are many activists trying hard to build solid accounts for promoting the cause and spreading information. A lot of activity in various channels and platforms, with various focus points. For example, FFF MAPA focus on spreading the word on climate (in)justice in the Global South and other highly affected areas/communities, while FFF Digital create helping toolkits for activists who want to contribute to the online promotion of the movement. Chapter 5 thus found that the movement's activists have created a networked community through social media. However, as the accounts have a relatively low number of followers compared to the movement's number of activists, this community seem to be bound largely by weaker ties than anticipated before doing this research.

Chapter 6 examined *how local FFF-groups have structured their activity to combine activism on global and local scale.* The analysis found that there were many similarities between the cases of FFF Colombia, Afghanistan, and Norway, most clearly found in the core values and forms of action. Importantly however, the chapter uncovered a heavy influence of local circumstances on group organization, social media activity, and causes in focus.

Chapter 7 examined *which power structures are limiting and/or enabling FFF to mobilize on a global scale.* Here, it became evident that prevalent structures of inequality are huge factors against inclusive digital mobilization. At the global level this entails not only unequal to access

to Internet, but also unequal representation and coverage on the Internet, for example in the form of language. Social media platforms are for ‘everyone’, and a space where both individuals, media houses and political profiles coexist. Chapter 7 examined related issues of censoring, surveillance, and how social media has made it simultaneously easier to have a voice – yet harder to have a voice that is heard.

In light of the findings made in the above-mentioned chapters, I wish to highlight three main findings from this thesis:

**1. Social media is a tool for communication, not a separate reality.**

First, this thesis has found that for a social movement, social media functions as a tool for communication, but without losing the importance of the non-digital community. Its social media use, even within the same global community, varies greatly depending on local circumstances. Social media communities are fundamentally similar to non-digital communities in many ways. The multiple scales at which the communication happens, and the ability to communicate internationally in real time and constantly, has made communities less geographically bound. Still, as we have seen throughout this paper, what happens in the digital space is closely linked to what happens in real life. This finding is in line with the finding of Miller et.al. (2016), and contrary to the other common understanding of the digital space as a virtual, separate reality.

**2. A global social movement needs to be adaptable to local circumstances.**

Second, this thesis has emphasized the ‘glocality’ of global scale activities. Even a global movement cannot escape the local, and vice versa. While the FFF groups examined have the same core values, they have all adapted their message and organization to fit local circumstances. Part of the reason why the FFF has made it on a global scale, is its adaptability. Climate change and injustice is a problem everywhere, but the problem takes many forms depending on where in the world you are, and who you are. While the movement is global at its core, the local and national groups are heavily influenced by local factors. This makes it easier for people to relate to it and engage with it.

### **3. Global communities are altering the Global North/Global South-dynamics.**

Last, this thesis has seen a new, emerging view of international inequality. The “Most Affected People and Areas” (MAPA)-term is created by FFF activists to encompass all those who are extra vulnerable to climate changes, but who cannot be identified through the Global North/Global South-terms. More than that, however, the creation of the term can be seen as an effect of the borderless communication that takes place in social media. This has allowed people to become familiar with other countries, people, and ways of living which were previously unreachable. While the Global North/Global South-divide likely will remain strong for a long time, there are clear tendencies of shifting understandings of inequality and power imbalances as more complex and intersectional than these terms allow.

## **8.2 Recommendations for Further Research**

This thesis has brought attention to social media’s impact on the establishment of global networked communities, more specifically social movements. As the Internet is only expanding and globalization shows no signs of stopping, the global scale of many problems will only become more apparent with time. This includes, but is by no means limited to, the climate issue.

As is always the case in a research project, there are certain limitations to this thesis. To achieve a focused paper with the time and space allocated, the methodology of this research has forced me to avoid a thorough examination of some interesting points of focus. Based on this, I wish to give some recommendations for further related research.

First, it is interesting to note that the FFF’s own channels have so relatively little reach. This indicates that the viral mobilization of the youth climate movement happens not mainly through the FFF’s own channels, but through the online community that the activists create themselves. While this has not been the focus of this thesis, it would be interesting to look at more closely in future research.

Second, research with a different aim could have more thoroughly examined the power structures mentioned in this thesis. Especially, the algorithms and security/surveillance aspects should be of concern. How interactions between commercial and political actors affect the user-

base, and which factors are at play in how these interactions play out. While this has been touched upon in this thesis, it does hold such importance to society that it deserves a more detailed examination.

Third, I wish to comment on the methodology of this paper. This thesis used a digital, non-participative approach. This allowed for a focused and detailed examination of the movement's digital life. A participatory approach would likely add new perspectives to this discussion. For example, first-hand experiences and perceptions from the activists could be an interesting take.

In relation to this, I wish to end with a note on the methodology of this thesis. Observation in the digital space is new. As Góralaska (2020, p. 48) also says, it does by no means make the work “less real, less challenging, or easier”. Digital fieldwork is confusing and difficult to navigate, and it presents many new and unexpected challenges. It is also a space with much valuable information and phenomena yet to be researched. As the Internet is becoming a larger part of society, this is sure to be reflected in future research. It is my hope, therefore, that appropriate methods to do digital fieldwork and analyze this space continues to be thoroughly tried out and evaluated.

### 8.3 Concluding Remarks

The overarching aim of this thesis was to explore the possibility for social movements to mobilize globally through digital advocacy. The findings suggest that FFF has used social media actively to mobilize on a global scale by spreading information on the cause and their actions, engaging with politicians and mass media, and supporting each other both within and across geographical spaces. This research shows that social media is a highly effective tool, but that it is also just one more tool in the toolbox.

Many of the accounts produce little posts, do not have a massive following, and appear poorly structured. It is important then to remember that social movements act in cycles. If, and if so how, the FFF-movement will bounce back to the activity level it was at before the pandemic is too early to tell. However, climate change and its unjust implications will only become more visible in the coming years. What we can say with more certainty then, is that social media is sure to continue growing as an important tool for climate activists and other social movements to challenge responsible power structures on ‘glocal’ scales.

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## Appendix: List of Social Media Accounts

List of main social media accounts and websites used in the data collection, with hyperlinks.

### International accounts

#### Instagram

- Fridays For Future, @fridaysforfuture, <https://www.instagram.com/fridaysforfuture/>
- MAPA, @fridaysforfuturemapa, <https://www.instagram.com/fridaysforfuturemapa/>
- Greta Thunberg, @gretathunberg, <https://www.instagram.com/gretathunberg/>
- Fridays For Future Digital, @fff.digital, <https://www.instagram.com/fff.digital/>

#### Facebook

- Fridays for Future International, @FridaysForFuture.org, <https://www.facebook.com/FridaysForFuture.org/>
- FFF Digital, @fffdigital, <https://www.facebook.com/fffdigital>

#### Twitter

- Fridays For Future, @Fridays4future, <https://twitter.com/Fridays4future>
- Greta Thunberg, @GretaThunberg, <https://twitter.com/GretaThunberg>
- Fridays For Future Digital, @fff\_digital, [https://twitter.com/fff\\_digital](https://twitter.com/fff_digital)

#### Websites

- <https://fridaysforfuture.org>
- <https://smileforfuture.eu>

## **FFF Colombia accounts**

### Instagram

- Fridays for Future, @ffocolombia, <https://www.instagram.com/ffocolombia/>
- Fridays For Future Colombia, @fridaysforfuture.colombia, <https://www.instagram.com/fridaysforfuture.colombia/>
- Viernes por el futuro Col, @viernesporelfuturocolombia, <https://www.instagram.com/viernesporelfuturocolombia/>
- Francisco Activista, @franciscoactivista, <https://www.instagram.com/franciscoactivista/>

### Facebook

- Fridays For Future Colombia, @FFFColombia, <https://www.facebook.com/FFFColombia/>

### Twitter

- Viernes por el Futuro Colombia, @fffColombia, <https://twitter.com/fffColombia>
- Francisco Javier Vera Manzanares, @franciscoactiv2, <https://twitter.com/franciscoactiv2>

## **FFF Afghanistan accounts**

### Instagram

- FFF Afghanistan, @fridaysforfuture.afg, <https://www.instagram.com/fridaysforfuture.afg/>

### Facebook

- Fridays For Future Afghanistan, [https://www.facebook.com/Fridays-For-Future-Afghanistan-2208791042784816/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/Fridays-For-Future-Afghanistan-2208791042784816/?ref=page_internal)

#### Twitter

- Fridays For Future Afghanistan, @FffAfghanistan, <https://twitter.com/ffafghanistan>

#### Website

- <https://mmccglobal.org/climate-action/>

### **FFF Norway accounts**

#### Instagram

- Natur og Ungdom, @naturogungdom, <https://www.instagram.com/naturogungdom/>
- Fridays For Future Norway, @skolestreik\_norge, [https://www.instagram.com/skolestreik\\_norge/](https://www.instagram.com/skolestreik_norge/)
- Norwegian Climate Students, @studentenes\_klimastreik, [https://www.instagram.com/studentenes\\_klimastreik/](https://www.instagram.com/studentenes_klimastreik/)

#### Facebook

- Natur og Ungdom, <https://www.facebook.com/naturogungdom/>
- Skolestreik for Klima – Norge, [https://www.facebook.com/SkolestreikNorge/?ref=page\\_internal](https://www.facebook.com/SkolestreikNorge/?ref=page_internal)

#### Twitter

- Natur og Ungdom, @NaturogUngdom, <https://twitter.com/naturogungdom>

#### Website

- <https://www.nu.no>