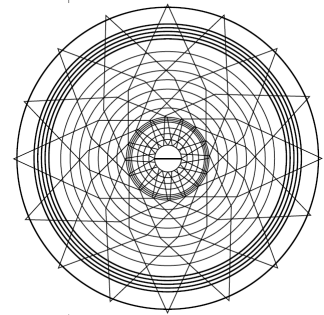


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*The Role of Digital Communication in Spreading Socio-Political
Protest Moods among Russian Urban Youth
(Using the Example of Yekaterinburg)*



THE ROLE OF DIGITAL COMMUNICATION IN SPREADING SOCIO-POLITICAL PROTEST MOODS¹ AMONG RUSSIAN URBAN YOUTH (USING THE EXAMPLE OF YEKATERINBURG)

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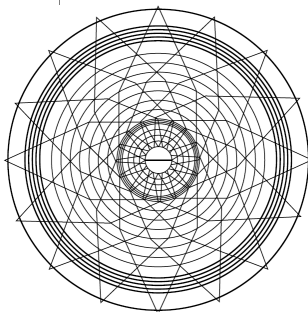
Abstract:

The role of digital communication in spreading socio-political protest moods among young people is currently an actual scientific and practical problem and is actively being studied. However, whether internet technologies and platforms, especially social networks, intensify offline protest and social and political transformation remains unclear. The scientific community has conflicting views on this issue. A number of studies show that the relationship between online and offline protests depends on the country in question. In this regard, an important task of the research presented in this article was to analyse the relationship between social and political protest activity of young people in the online and offline environment, taking into account the peculiarities of Russia and its socio-political situation.

In addition to the role of digital communication in spreading socio-political protest moods among young people in Yekaterinburg, the study also examines the most popular forms and channels of internet communications among young people as part of their protest activity. The main factors and reasons for the emergence of protest moods among young people in Yekaterinburg are discussed, in correlation with the most influential theories about why protest moods and actions emerge: collective action, relative deprivation, and resource mobilization.

Survey and expert interview methods were used to conduct the research. The survey covered 506 representatives of the city's youth between 14 and 29 years old, selected according to a quota sample based on criteria of district of residence,

¹ We take the liberty of using the term "protest moods" as a direct translation from the sphere of Russian political science, fully knowing that there is actually no English equivalent. We understand protest moods as the inclination to protest, a type of social sentiment characterized by dissatisfaction of social groups with the current state of affairs, unjustified expectations, and, at the same time, readiness to take concrete action to change the individual's situation which is perceived as unfavorable.



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gender, and age. Expert interviews were conducted with five people, two of whom were academic researchers in the area of youth protest and had been conducting relevant research for several years. Three others were political practitioners.

The results of the research offer answers to questions about the social well-being of young people in Yekaterinburg in general, their values and needs, and whether their expectations meet reality; they shed light on the most effective and preferred forms and spaces for expressing and disseminating socio-political protest moods and actions among Yekaterinburg youth; and they present some explanation for why it is difficult to transfer protest moods expressed mainly in the digital environment into an offline format.

Keywords: urban youth, social and political protest, protest moods, protest actions, digital communication.

Introduction

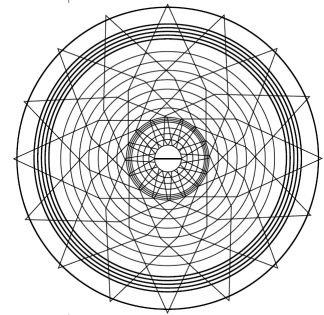
Over the past decade, there has been a significant increase in social and political protest activity throughout the world, including Russia, primarily among urban youth. Obviously, the development of digital communication in modern societies plays a significant role in disseminating information about negative aspects of the social, political, economic, and cultural life of countries and about protest activity in other cities, regions, or countries. Digital platforms also allow for the intensification of communication and consolidation of citizens with regard to protest activity. However, how virtual protest can be transformed into street action and whether it can cause real social and political changes are still open questions. Some researchers have argued that there is a positive correlation between internet activity and civic engagement, political participation, and offline protest activity (Steinert-Threlkeld et al., 2015; Skoric et al., 2016; Jost et al., 2018; Boulianne, 2019; Pyrma, 2019). Others have not found an explicit correlation between these phenomena (Lotan et al., 2011; Petukhov et al., 2014; Breuer et al., 2015). Yet others have emphasized the prevailing effects of alienation from real protest movements – concentration on virtual self-expression and interaction (Bauman, 2011; Ushkin, 2015) – as a result of the spread of the internet and social networks in particular.

In this respect, it is of interest to study the potential of online protests to turn into offline protests – meaning to turn to the streets – in Russia, where the specifics (as shown in the tables below) of the socio-political situation may have a significant impact on this process. To date, there are studies showing that the specifics of a country may indeed influence whether online protests turn into offline protests. For example, a study by E. A. Kirkizh and O. Yu. Koltsova (2016) showed that offline protest is least likely to be based on preceding online protest in Peru, Russia, and Kazakhstan and most likely in Pakistan, Egypt, and Thailand. In our study, we have attempted to trace and understand this interaction using the example of Yekaterinburg, which is one of the largest and most developed Russian megacities and which has seen an increase in youth protest activity in recent years.

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Digital communication can not only intensify protest mood and concrete action but also affect the transformation of their dominant forms. In some cases, digital technologies lead to fundamentally new, sometimes unconventional, practices of socio-political protest among young people. Therefore, another important task of the study was to describe the role that different internet formats played in different kinds of protests by city youth. The study also identified the dominating forms of internet protest communications among the youth.

Researchers N. Gil de Zúñiga, L. Molyneux, and P. Zheng (2014) identified three main types of online activity: information collection, social interaction, and creative production. They found that creative production has a direct impact on political activity, while the results of information collection and social interaction are indirect. Therefore, it is important to determine which type of activity among young people in Yekaterinburg is prevalent on social networks.

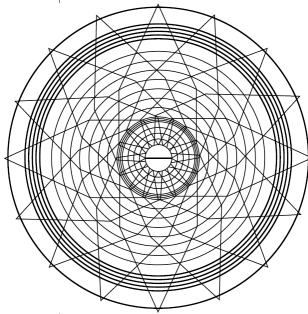
We define social and political protest as a type of political participation that is expressed in the open demonstration of a negative attitude towards the political system as a whole or its individual elements, norms, values, and decisions. Protest, however, can also take passive forms, such as political absenteeism. We look at this category through the lens of the approach of R. Merton (1968), D. Davis (1970), R. Inglehart (1977), and L. Milbrath (1965).

We define protest moods as a type of social sentiment characterized by dissatisfaction of social groups with the current state of affairs, unjustified expectations, and, at the same time, readiness to take concrete action to change the individual's situation which is perceived as unfavourable.

The reasons for protest behaviour may be, for example, a crisis of values of political culture, delegitimization of political regimes, or deprivation of an individual or entire social groups. The difference in scholars' understandings of the main causes of protest has given rise to different approaches to this phenomenon: the concepts of collective behaviour and relative deprivation, the theory of "resource mobilization", and others. It is important to understand the most significant causes and factors of protest in order to determine the degree of discontent and protest potential of the youth surveyed.

The theory of "collective behaviour" considers the most significant protest factors to be social and describes the desire to change the social conditions of the individuals as the main motivation for protest actions. The most prominent representatives of the theory are T. Gurr (2010) and N. Smelser (1963). Among social factors, this theory emphasizes economic inequality and argues that this factor is the first to provoke protests. Supporters of this concept believe that the destruction of trust in the authorities also plays a significant role in protests. Loss of trust, hostility, and inability to communicate with the authorities are highly likely to provoke protest (Smelser, 1963).

The theory of "relative deprivation" (e.g., Stouffer et al., 1949; Merton, 1968), which is a social-psychological branch of the above approach, considers the widening gap between the expectations of individuals (e.g., standard of living, career prospects) and



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the possibilities of their real satisfaction to be a main incentive for protest. From the point of view of supporters of this theory, frustration, which is a feeling of subjectively perceived deprivation, inspires people to protest behaviour.

A key tenet of the theory of “resource mobilization” (e.g., Tarrow, 2011; Ozler, 2013; Meyer, 2004) is that protest is only possible when there are political, economic, and organizational opportunities to mobilize discontent. Modern researchers are adding new media to the list of resources needed to implement protest, considering the availability of protest content and information on the internet about upcoming protests to be an important condition for the possibility of protest actions.

Along with the factors and causes of protest, we also analyse in our study the space and forms of its implementation. We consider the implementation space using the classifications of G. G. Pocheptsov and A. V. Skiperskikh. G. G. Pocheptsov divides the protest space into physical, informational, and cognitive (2005). Skiperskikh (2014) also distinguishes three main categories within the “space continuum”: the city and its physical objects (e.g., buildings, roads, monuments); the concrete person (clothing and symbols on it, the acts committed); communications (media, social networks, blogosphere). Thus, it can be seen that both researchers regard digital communication or the information space as an independent full protest space. One of the tasks of our study was to define the role of this space in comparison with other types of spaces and to understand its relationship to them. It is also important to determine which channels and forms of digital communication predominate as the most significant and convenient for young people.

We classified the forms of protest implementation according to L. Milbrath (1965), who divides protest behaviour into categories according to the criteria of activity level (low, medium, high) and degree of legitimacy (conventional/non-conventional). We supplemented this classification with the criteria of number of participants (mass, group, individual protests) and use of violence (violent/non-violent).

Finally, we considered young people to be a socio-demographic group that is identified on the basis of a set of “age characteristics, social status characteristics, and socio-psychological characteristics” (Kon, 1998, p. 151).

In summary, we can say that the main purpose of this study was to demonstrate the impact of digital technology on the specifics (e.g., intensity, forms, channels) of the dissemination of protest moods and actions among urban youth in the example of Yekaterinburg.

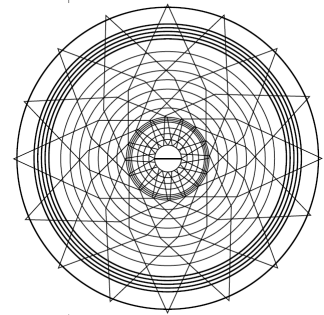
In accordance with this goal, the following tasks were set:

1. To determine the social well-being of young people in Yekaterinburg as a whole – in other words, to identify their level of satisfaction with the socio-economic and political conditions in the country, as well as with the conditions of their own life and the values on which life in their society is based. To determine the social well-being of young people in Yekaterinburg as a whole – in other words, to identify their level of satisfaction with the socio-economic and political conditions in the country, as well as the conditions of their own

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life, the values on which life in their society is based, trust in the authorities, and the willingness to communicate with them.

2. To assess the trust of young people in the authorities and their willingness to communicate with them.
3. To identify the most effective and preferred forms and spaces for expressing and disseminating social and political protest moods and actions.
4. To identify the most common and preferred forms of digital communication in the context of the spread of socio-political protest moods and actions.
5. To identify the level of support from Yekaterinburg youth for various forms of existing protest actions and their own readiness for such actions.
6. To identify the role of digital technologies in spreading protest moods among urban youth and offline activities of the youth.

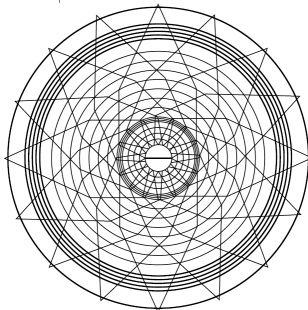
Survey and expert interviews were used as empirical research methods. The survey was implemented in Yekaterinburg in 2020 and covered 506 representatives of young people of the city aged 14 to 29 years, selected on the basis of a quota sample according to the criteria of district of residence, sex, and age. Because of the quarantine measures at the time of the survey, it was conducted interactively on the Google Forms platform (however, when selecting respondents, their compliance with the quota features was carefully controlled). The survey aimed for a comprehensive diagnosis of the social well-being of young people in Yekaterinburg, determining the intensity, nature, main factors, and causes of protest moods of young people in Yekaterinburg, as well as identifying the main channels of communication in the context of the spread of protest moods and actions.

As part of the expert interview method, five people were interviewed. Two of them were academic researchers specializing in the problem of youth protest and had been conducting relevant research for several years. Two more were practitioners working with youth audiences as part of the activities of opposition political parties. Both experts supported rather left-liberal views, although they were members of different parties. One was a practicing political expert and technologist with extensive experience in working in electoral campaigns and studying various audiences, including youth. This expert came more from a conservative, pro-government background. The goals of the interviews were similar to those of the survey but suggested a deeper consideration of youth's use of digital communication.

Research results

Youth survey

The survey showed the following about the general social well-being of youth: 71.1% of respondents rather disliked the way things are in Russian society. Young people in Yekaterinburg were most dissatisfied with such problems as lack of a normal job (37.9%, the majority of respondents), poor quality of health care (35.8%, the majority), lack of money (34.8%, the majority), and low level of freedom in society (31.8%, the majority). Young people considered the most acute problems to be



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difficulties in purchasing housing (36.6%, the majority), as well as corruption and arbitrariness of the authorities (33.4%, the majority).

In the opinion of about 70% of the respondents, Russian society is “rather unfair”, and more than half of the respondents (57.3%) gave a positive answer to the question “Have you personally experienced injustice towards yourself over the past few months?” The most frequent answers to the question about the nature of injustice were the following: “I was forced to do something I don’t want and don’t have to do” (42.2%), “My work is little appreciated, paid less than I deserve” (36.6%), and “I’m not given what is required by law” (36.2%).

The ten values which – in the opinion of the interviewed – should be the basis of an ideal state of living were the following:

Table 1.

Answers to the question:

“In your opinion, which of these principles should a society ideally be built upon?”

no	principles	number of respondents	% of respondents
1	Human rights	276	55.5
2	Freedom	252	50.7
3	Justice	244	49.1
4	Morality	207	41.6
5	Equality	185	37.2
6	Trust	178	35.8
7	Law	167	33.6
8	Family	137	27.6
9	Wealth	123	24.7
10	Respect for nature	104	20.9

Current Russian society, according to the respondents, is characterized by the following values (top 10):

Table 2.

Answers to the question:

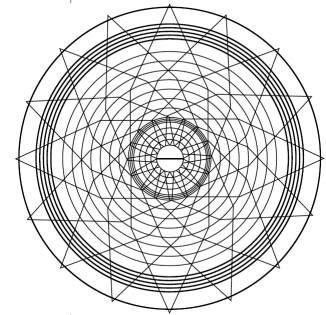
“Which of these values, in your opinion, are prevalent in Russian society?”

no	principles	number of respondents	% of respondents
1	Property	187	37.9
2	Power	184	37.3
3	Wealth	176	35.7
4	Law	172	34.9
5	Fashion/mainstream	141	28.6
6	Powerful state	122	24.7
7	Success	121	24.5
8	Pleasure	101	20.5
9	Tradition	97	19.7
10	Labour	70	14.2

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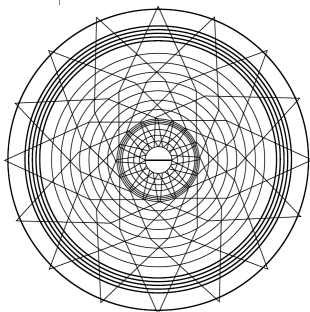


To avoid misunderstanding, we offer the following explanation of we would like to explain the principle according to which the concepts in the table were selected. Even though most of the interviewed young people had higher education, not all of them had in-depth knowledge in law or political science. Therefore, the interconnection and mutual subordination of such terms as “freedom”, “law”, and “human rights” were not obvious to everyone. For this reason, we relied in the survey less on strict scientific concepts and more on terms most often used in public communication channels such as social networks and mass media. At the same time, it was important for us to understand to what extent the respondents subjectively felt free in general; to what extent, from their point of view, there was equality and justice in the country; to what extent human rights were respected, including not only different types of freedoms and equality in different spheres of life, but also, for example, the right to citizenship or property ownership and individual dignity. It is necessary to be aware that every person who is not an academic scholar or lawyer interprets the concepts of freedom, morality, justice, respect for rights, and welfare differently when using stereotypical terms related to democracy or the welfare state in public discourse. Therefore, we believe that the approach of allowing the respondents to interpret the given terms subjectively was justified.

When asked what kind of factors formed their opinion on and attitude towards life in present Russia, the respondents answered in the following way:

Table 3.
Answers to the question:
“What most influenced the formation of your attitude to life in Russia?”

no	source of influence	number of respondents	% of respondents
1	Experience of living in Russia	471	93.5
2	Education	282	56.0
3	Books I’ve read	207	41.1
4	Opinion of relatives and friends	205	40.7
5	The experience of traveling and living abroad	186	36.9
6	Mass media	168	33.3
7	Movies and other works of art	133	26.4
8	Opinion of famous politicians and activists	105	20.8
9	Social media communication	86	17.1
10	Opinion of famous performers	26	5.2
11	Playing computer games	19	3.8
12	Communication with foreigners	19	3.8
13	Other	0	0.0



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Priorities for communication channels to obtain information about life in Russia were listed as follows:

Table 4.
Sources of information about life in Russia and abroad

Information sources	About life in Russia, % of respondents	About life abroad, % of respondents
Russian mass media	58.1	55.4
Foreign mass media	25.5	31.8
Russian groups in social networks	75.1	63
Foreign groups in social networks	45.8	33.8
Russian video blogs	41	36.7
Foreign video blogs	23.6	24.7
Friends and relatives in Russia	60.2	38.1
Friends and relatives abroad	14.2	10.5
Russian professors	14	14
Foreign professors	15.7	13.9
Russian movies, books, music	15.1	17.2
Foreign movies, books, music	14.2	16.2

Thus, we can see that the protest moods are quite intense and the protest potential is rather large. However, as for preparedness to act, the indicators are relatively scarce. The majority of the interviewed (32%) thought that mass protest actions in their city were extremely unlikely (interviews were conducted about six months after the events around Oktyabrskaya Square of Yekaterinburg). To the question "What is the probability that you personally will take part in such actions, if they take place?" the answer "I will definitely not take part" was given by the majority (39.9%), and the answer "I will definitely take part" was only 5.4%.

The most common answers to the question "What conditions must be met for you to be ready to go to a rally, strike, or other protest action?" were the following: "The action will be permitted agreed upon by the authorities" (43.5%); "The action will be supported by the party you are voting for" (40.1%); "They will pay well for participation" (29.2%); "You trust the leaders who call for the action" (15.2%); and "You will be confident in your own safety" (12.6%). The answer "There will be confidence that something will really change after the action" is in last place (7.5%).

It is noteworthy that when asked "What forms of protest behaviour would you call the most effective in modern Russia?" the majority of respondents answered "There are no such forms" (33.2%). However, second place was occupied by the answer "Participation in protest action" (27.1%).

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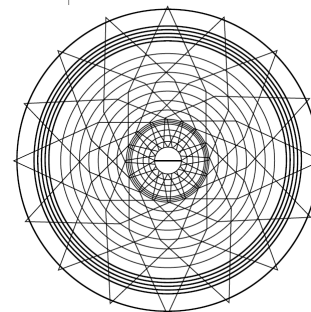


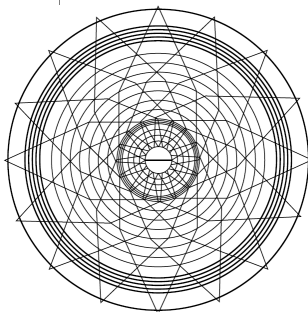
Table 5.
Answers to the question:
**“What forms of protest behaviour would you call the most effective
in modern Russia?”**

no	forms of protest moods	number of respondents	% of respondents
1	There are no such forms	168	33.2
2	Participation in a protest action	137	27.1
3	Ignore elections, do not participate in politics	90	17.8
4	Write a post on the internet, social network	84	16.6
5	Create a petition	48	9.5
6	Join a project organization/movement	39	7.7
7	Release a video and post it on the internet	35	6.9
8	Write an appeal to the authorities or a deputy	25	4.9
9	Draw graffiti in a public space	23	4.5
10	Go to a single picket	21	4.2
11	Other	13	2.6

With regard to being inclined to protest and actually protesting, the situation is as follows:

Table 6.
Answers to the question:
**“In which of the above-mentioned would you personally participate if you
wanted to somehow draw attention to some acute problems in society?”**

no	form of activity	number of respondents	% of respondents
1	Write a post on the internet, social network	220	43.5
2	Ignore elections, do not participate in politics	203	40.1
3	I wouldn't do anything	148	29.2
4	Take part in a protest action	99	19.6
5	Write an appeal to the authorities or a deputy	77	15.2
6	Create a petition	64	12.6
7	Release a video and post it on the internet	47	9.3
8	Draw graffiti in a public place	45	8.9
9	Go to a single picket	39	7.7
10	Join a protest organization/movement	38	7.5
11	Other	0	0.0



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Table 7.
Answers to the question:
**“Which of these actions have you performed at least once
in the past 12 months?” (Top 10)**

no	form of activity	number of respondents	% of respondents
1	I didn't participate in anything like this	176	34.9
2	Sign the online appeal for political or social issues	129	25.6
3	Distribute internet memes on political topics	94	18.7
4	Change your avatar in a social network as a sign of solidarity with some action or event	86	17.1
5	Donate money or items to charity	74	14.7
6	Engage in political discussions on the internet	56	11.1
7	Write in social networks about your dissatisfaction with the problems in the city/country	49	9.7
8	Participate in political discussions, conferences, and public hearings (other than scientific conferences)	48	9.5
9	Write letters to officials or meet them in person	46	9.1
10	Participate in flash mobs and/or solidarity actions on the internet	41	8.1

As we can see, based on the data of the last table, participation in authorized and non-authorized protest actions or rallies are not even among the top ten most popular answers. These options are in the 12th and 13th place, with the results of 7.1% and 5.4%, respectively. Options connected with a constructive dialogue with the authorities hold the 14th and 18th (last) positions, respectively.

Research results

Expert interviews

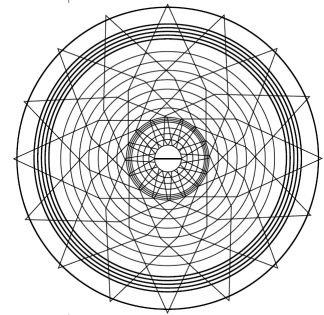
The results of interviews with experts mostly coincided with the results of the youth survey and gave more profound explanation on the reasons why young people choose the very life orientations and behaviours that became clear through the survey.

To the question “In which area does protest mainly emerge – online or offline?” the majority of experts gave the answer “online”:

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Expert practitioner: *They are formed, of course, online, because young people now do not see any technology, any means that they could use offline. Because every time they went out to protest, especially in the last few years, they received negative consequences for it. In other words, there was no positive scenario.*

Expert researcher: *For young people “the internet” to a large extent is social networks and video blogs that broadcast mainly negative content. They in fact provoke protest moods among young people, but actually they themselves become the main platform for formulating this protest.*

Expert researcher: *I believe, online. For them, this form of communication, of information transmission, is closer, more common than interpersonal communication. This kind of communication reduces the level of social responsibility, so it is easier to agree on some kind of ... “ruckus”.*

Answers to the question “In your opinion, what is the potential of virtual youth protest in the offline environment?” were divided; however, there was a dominating belief that at present, the potential is minor.

Expert practitioner: *In my opinion, right now the potential is minimal. Mainly because of the fact that in this moment none of the actors of the potential protest, who actually could lead, are able to articulate an agenda that would make young people really want to respond.*

Expert researcher: *Not too high. There is this concept of a “youth canopy”. But there are few young people in Russia. They are not able to rise either socially, or to political protest. Therefore, it has no potential in principle. The political system has been and will be sustainable. When it comes to this potential you have to look at countries that have a youth canopy, for example Asia and Africa.*

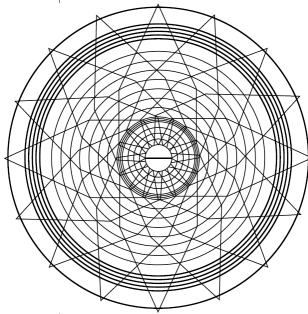
Expert researcher: *This is a difficult question, because if we proceed from the current situation, from the current configuration of institutions, from the current life experience of society, I would say that there is no [potential]. It’s just that we are on the threshold of some new social reality. And the phenomenon of self-isolation ... it very much stimulates this dominance of the internet and the increasing mixing of offline and online. When the pandemic is over, we will be a different society – that’s for sure.*

What types and forms of protest content dissemination predominate in social networks?

Expert researcher: *There is a fairly clear list of what people do in social networks for protest purposes. The main, most common is signing petitions. To a lesser extent people “like” critical posts. To a yet lesser extent, recently, it has been reposting. Probably, it played a role here that reposting in Russia can sometimes be persecuted. Creating some critical content is characteristic for only about five or seven per cent of the interviewed.*

Expert researcher: *Probably, there is a low activity. Young people are not particularly interested in anything, they do not join parties and have no political views.*

Expert practitioner: *Petitions, memes, video blogs.*



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To the question “What types and forms of disseminating protest content have the greatest response among young people?” experts gave the following answers:

Expert researcher: *Short videos, gifs, some channels on YouTube, possibly memes.*

Expert researcher: *The key is memes, some simple pictures with negative or critical inscriptions, most often sarcastic.*

Expert practitioner: *Social networks, media, video blogs.*

Expert practitioner: *Online, as a rule, social networks are habitually used – with video spots, posts, memes, pictures. Offline channels are now used to a lesser extent, based on the fact that the audience does not prefer it.*

Discussion

The results of the research show that the social well-being of Yekaterinburg’s youth is rather unsatisfactory. Young people do not consider the situation in their country to be fair or the values underlying Russian society to correspond with their ideals. The level of young people’s trust in the authorities is quite low, and a constructive dialogue with representatives of the authorities is considered unlikely by young people in Yekaterinburg. In light of the above, it is obvious that young people’s expectations and reality do not coincide. In this respect, the results of our research fit well within the conceptual framework of the theory of relative deprivation.

Notably, when asked “How can you describe your family’s financial situation?”, most respondents replied either “satisfactory” or “good”. At the same time, the survey showed that Yekaterinburg’s young people were primarily concerned with economic problems and, above all, with their financial situation (e.g., the level of material wealth in general and, in particular, wages, the possibility of buying housing). These results confirm the basic aspects of the theory of “collective behaviour”, whose representatives place special emphasis on the interaction between economic inequality and protest. This also correlates with the characteristic thesis of the theory of relative deprivation, that the main carrier of protest moods in modern post-industrial societies is in fact the middle class seeking to further improve their social position.

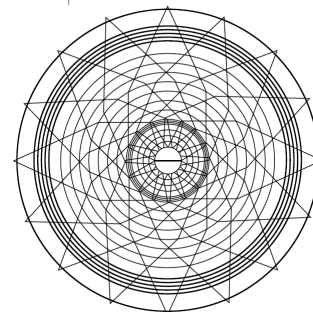
Also, the above-mentioned partially confirms the conclusion of researchers C. Welzel and F. Deutsch (2012) that people who share the values of post-materialism (e.g., social justice, equality, observance of citizens’ rights) and autonomy are more inclined to protest. In other words, it is not so much the victims of oppression who protest as those who are striving to improve their lives and their society. In the case of Russia, with its specific characteristics, we can say that this category of young people is more inclined to protest moods (without the urge for real action).

The results of the study clearly show that the difficulty of transferring protest moods into protest actions can be largely explained within the framework of the theory of “resource mobilization”. Young people do not yet see themselves as having the political, social, economic, and other resources for protest. For this reason, the answers of young people to the question “What conditions must be met in order for you to be ready to go to a rally, strike, or other protest action?” are of some interest. In

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particular, the most common answers show youth's readiness to follow mobilizing actors (e.g., a party or an individual leader).

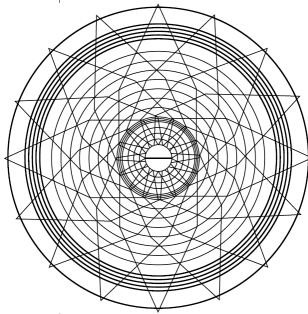
It is noteworthy that to the question "What forms of protest behaviour would you call the most effective in modern Russia?", most of the interviewed answered "There are no such forms" (33.2%), and the third most popular answer was "Ignore elections, do not participate in politics in general" (17.8%). On the other hand, the second most frequently given answer was "Take part in protest action" (27.1%). However, in general, we can talk about a high level of political absenteeism among young people in Yekaterinburg, which is a consequence of the lack of opportunities and resources for young people to implement social and political transformations through opposition or protest activity. This conclusion can also be confirmed by the answers to the question "In what which of the above would you personally participate if you wanted to somehow draw attention to some acute problem in society?" In the second and third place were the answers: "Ignore elections, do not participate in politics in general" (40.1%) and "Wouldn't do anything" (29.2%). The first place was predictably taken by the option "Write a post on the internet, social network". In general, the results of Tables 5 and 6 show that the activity associated with the expression and dissemination of protest moods is carried out mainly on the internet.

As for the forms and spaces of expression and dissemination of social and political protest preferred by young people in Yekaterinburg, moderate protest actions in the online space prevail – signing petitions and consumption and, to a lesser extent, support and dissemination of protest content. Online formats also dominate among the most popular sources of information about life in Russia in the youth environment. Social networks are the most popular, followed by mass media. Video blogs come in third. In social networks, the most popular formats are small videos, funny pictures, and memes. However, the role of personal communications also remains significant, with 60% of respondents emphasizing the importance of information received from friends and relatives in Russia.

Conclusions

Protest moods are in fact widespread among young people in Yekaterinburg and have a high level of intensity but low potential for transformation into offline protest action, which is largely due to specific Russian conditions. Most of the negative sentiments among young people are due to dissatisfaction with material living conditions, a lack of agreement with the values according to which Russian society actually lives, a lack of trust in the authorities, and difficulty in communicating with them productively.

Internet formats of protest activity predominate others. Street protests and some other formats of offline protest are considered effective by young people, but they are still not ready to participate in them. Thus, we can say that the information space using the terms of G. G. Pocheptsov (2005) and the communicative space using the terms of A. V. Skiperskikh (2014) prevail.



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Young people's protest activity on the internet is mainly based on the "slacktivism" paradigm (Bauman, 2011), meaning a leisurely form of temporary activism without any real belief or effort. Of the three types of online activity (information gathering, social interaction, and creative production) identified by researchers N. Gil de Zúñiga, L. Molyneux, and P. Zheng (2014), information gathering prevails. The signing of petitions and appeals is also popular, which can be classified in the second category, social interaction. According to experts interviewed by us, creative production is typical for 5–7% of young people.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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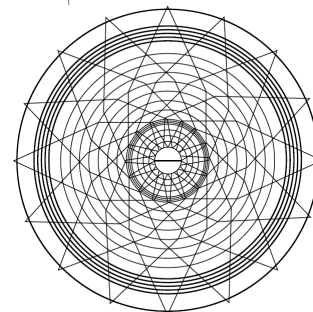
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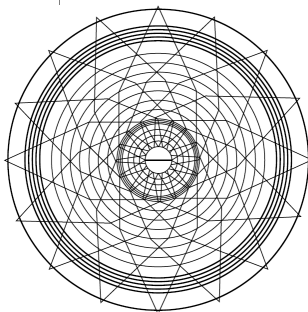
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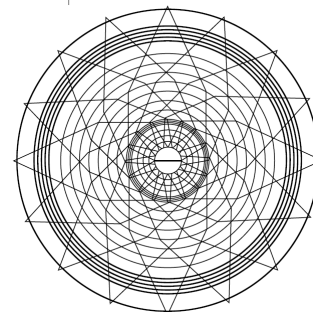
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РОЛЬ ЦИФРОВЫХ КОММУНИКАЦИЙ В РАСПРОСТРАНЕНИИ СОЦИАЛЬНО-ПОЛИТИЧЕСКИХ ПРОТЕСТНЫХ НАСТРОЕНИЙ РОССИЙСКОЙ ГОРОДСКОЙ МОЛОДЕЖИ (НА ПРИМЕРЕ ЕКАТЕРИНБУРГА)

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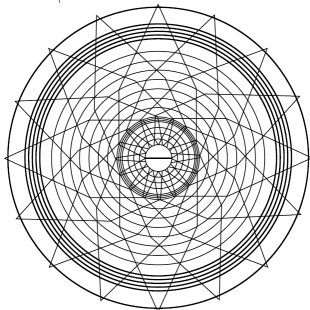
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Аннотация:

Роль цифровых коммуникаций в распространении социально-политических протестных настроений в молодежной среде на сегодняшний день является актуальной научно-практической проблемой и активно изучается. При этом вопрос о влиянии интернет-технологий и платформ, в первую очередь, социальных сетей, на интенсификацию оффлайн-протестов и возможность реализации социально-политических трансформаций остается открытым. В научном сообществе существуют противоположные мнения на этот счет. При этом ряд исследований показывает, что существует зависимость взаимосвязи онлайн и оффлайн протеста от странового контекста. В связи с этим важной задачей представленного в статье исследования стал анализ взаимосвязи социально-политической протестной активности молодежи в онлайн и оффлайн среде с учетом особенностей российской государственности и социально-политической ситуации.

Помимо, собственно, роли цифровых коммуникаций в распространении социально-политических протестных настроений екатеринбургской молодежи, изучались предпочитаемые молодежью и наиболее распространенные формы и каналы интернет-коммуникаций в рамках протестной активности. Кроме того, рассматривались основные факторы и причины возникновения у молодых екатеринбуржцев протестных настроений, которые далее соотносились с наиболее влиятельными теориями о причинах протестных настроений и действий – коллективного действия, относительной депривации и мобилизации ресурсов.



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Для проведения исследования использовались методы опроса и экспертного интервью. Опрос охватил 506 представителей молодежи города в возрасте от 14 до 29 лет, отобранных на основании квотной выборки по критериям района проживания, пола и возраста. Экспертные интервью были взяты у 5 человек, двое из которых являются академическими исследователями в области молодежного протеста и ведущими соответствующие исследования в течение нескольких лет, а еще трое – практиками в сфере политики.

Результаты исследования предлагают ответы на вопросы о социальном самочувствии молодежи Екатеринбурга в целом, ее ценностях и потребностях, соответствии ее ожиданий и реальности; наиболее эффективных и предпочтительных с точки зрения екатеринбургской молодежи формах и пространствах выражения и распространения социально-политических протестных настроений и действий; причинах затрудненности перехода протестных настроений, выражаемых в основном в цифровой среде, в оффлайн-формат.

Ключевые слова: городская молодежь, социально-политический протест, протестные настроения, протестные действия, цифровые коммуникации.

БЛАГОДАРНОСТЬ

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