

**Internet Use in Anti-Globalization Movements:
'Fifty Years Is Enough' Network**

**Meltem Yilmaz Sener
Department of Sociology
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign**

Although its increasing importance is recognized by almost all people writing about the Internet, there are various different positions about the kind of impact it has on how the societies are organized. From an optimistic perspective, the Internet is associated with freedom and democracy; it increases the opportunities for communication and empowerment of people. From another perspective, however, the Internet is used for manipulating users and increasing consumption. One way or the other, the Internet has unquestionably changed many aspects of our lives; the ways we are educated, we work, have entertainment, communicate and participate in politics. Considering this last aspect, namely political participation, significant changes took place especially in terms of contentious politics or social activism, which is regarded as outside the formal, centralized channels of politics. The Internet, through its power of diminishing the importance of spatial and temporal differences, made it possible for the activists from different parts of the world to mobilize around common issues. At a time when corporate capital is organized around the world, transcending the borders of nation states, social movements also started to be organized at a global or transnational scale. The Internet played two major roles in relation to global activism: First, it helped people to be mobilized globally, facilitating their communication across different countries. Secondly, it had an important part in the organization of people against globalization of capital and its damages on the peoples of the world. In this paper, first I look at different histories of the Internet, which focus on different factors that have been influential in its emergence. Reflecting on this history also provides the opportunity to discuss the question of potentials of the Internet in terms of democratization. I argue that it is not possible to attribute an essence to the Internet (or technology in general). It produces its effects through its articulation with the existing institutional, social structures. Considering the debates on the Internet, especially in relation to politics and participation, I focus on the link between activism and the Internet. I comment on the question of whether the Internet had a quantitative effect (amplification) or qualitative impact (transformation) on social activism. I also discuss the role of the Internet in transnational activism against corporate globalization focusing on the case of 'Fifty Years is Enough', a global network against neoliberal globalization and the damages of structural adjustment programs imposed by international financial institutions. I interpret the effects of Internet use on the organization of this network.