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**Spontaneity in Social Protest:
April 2001 Shopkeeper Protests in Turkey**

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Strikes occurred in Russia in the 1870s and 1860s . . . they were accompanied by the ‘spontaneous’ destruction of machinery, etc. . . . The workers were losing their age-long belief in the unshakeability of the system which oppressed them and began . . . I shall not say to understand, but to sense the necessity for collective resistance, definitely abandoning their slavish submission to the authorities. But this was nevertheless more an expression of desperation and vengeance than a *struggle*.

Lenin, *What is to be Done?*

This awakening of class feeling expressed itself forthwith in the circumstances that the proletarian mass, counted by millions, quite suddenly and sharply came to realize how intolerable was that social and economic existence which they had patiently endured for decades in the chains of capitalism. Thereupon there began a spontaneous general shaking of and tugging at these chains. All the innumerable sufferings of the modern proletariat reminded them of the old bleeding wounds. Here was the eight-hour day fought for, there piece work was resisted, here were brutal foremen “driven off” in a sack on a handcar. At another place infamous systems of fines were fought against, everywhere better wages were striven for and here and there the abolition of home-work.. Backward degraded occupations in large towns, small provincial towns, which had hitherto dreamed in an idyllic sleep, the village with its legacy from feudalism—all these, suddenly awakened by the January lightning, bethought themselves of their rights and now sought feverishly to make up for their previous neglect.

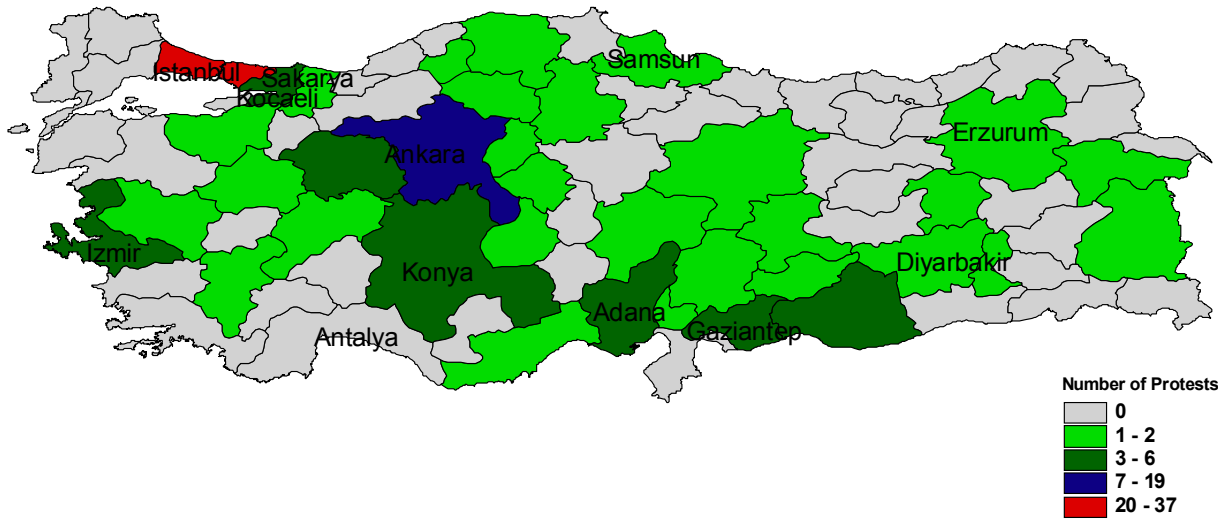
Rosa Luxemburg, *The Mass Strike*.

The Turkish economy entered into the worst recession of its history since the Second World War in February 2001. The government was implementing an IMF-backed stabilization and disinflation program for more than one year when a political crisis incited the collapse of the financial markets. The abandonment of the crawling-peg exchange rate system on February 22 under increasing market pressures declared the collapse of the structural adjustment program. During the first week of the crisis, approximately 8 billion dollars left the country. This figure was more than 60 percent of the total money supply in the financial markets. The overnight interbank interest rates increased to 6,000 percent. Indeterminacy on the economic scene continued until April 16, the date when the new State Minister in charge of economic affairs¹ announced a new IMF-backed program.

170 instances of emotionally loaded and severe protests by shopkeepers, artisans, and small tradesmen marked the political scene during the first two weeks of April 2001. The majority of the protests either involved individual acts or small groups. They extended over a wide geographic area: there had been major protests in the urban centers of South-East Turkey, central Anatolia, as well as in the industrial cities of Istanbul, Kocaeli, and Sakarya (see Figure 1). They were scattered and diffused in the sense that several separate contentious gatherings took place at the same moment. A great deal of the shopkeeper protests were short-lived in the sense that the protests were not sustained: in the majority of instances, protesters returned home or to work after the protest events and did not bother to protest again.

¹ Prof. Kemal Derviş, a famous Turkish economist who was a Vice President at the World Bank before accepting Prime Minister Ecevit's invitation for filling the post.

Figure 1. Geographical Distribution of Protests.



The Washington Post remarked that “the mass outpouring of anger is highly unusual for Turkey.”² Not only were these protests unexpected and unusual for Turkey, but they were spontaneous in the sense that most of the protests were improvised and unplanned. The development of protests did not involve formal organizations, protesters did not have a plan in advance, and their actions were not hierarchically concerted. In a great number of protests, the protesters did not even know they would be involved in a rally or contentious gathering.

One should be careful in using the term “spontaneity” to characterize social practice, though. My use of “spontaneity” refers to collective action. Following Killian (1984: 779), when I use spontaneous to describe collective action, my goal is to underline the claim that

² The Washington Post, April 7, 2001.

such collective action is more of a coincidence of individual acts than a result of prior planning, deliberation and determination by the participants of collective action. Note that I do not designate individual human acts as spontaneous. In other words, spontaneity is an “emergent group-level property” (Bandura 2001: 14), or more precisely, an emergent large-scale pattern.³

This article seeks to explicate the dynamics that produce improvised, short-lived, spontaneous collective action. Spontaneous protests should not be explained as an anarchical flock of shopkeepers, tradesmen, and artisans mobilized as a result of radical political provocation (as the Turkish political authorities suggested) or as merely “unconscious crowd behavior” (Le Bon 1982). The existing studies of riots, rebellions, social movements, contentious politics have rarely made analytical attempts to explain spontaneous elements in collective action; although they offer useful theoretical tools that can be enriched to analyze spontaneity in protest. Using national newspapers, statistical data, documentary sources, interviews in two major cities as well as secondary sources, I inquire into the development and causes of the April 2001 shopkeeper protests to scrutinize the organization and making of spontaneity in protest. Based on my study of the shopkeeper insurgency in two urban centers, I propose mechanisms through which spontaneity takes place. The central elements of the proposed model are emotions, cultural schemas, spatial processes, and social networks. I argue

³ In the context of human acts, Webster Unabridged dictionary defines spontaneous as applying “to acts that come about so naturally, are so unselfconscious and so unaffected or unprompted by ulterior motive or purpose that they seem totally unpremeditated.” Such a definition implies that there is no deliberation or explicit intention in spontaneous acts. Looking at the Latin origin complicates such a clear understanding: “sponte” means “of free will, of one’s own accord” (Crane 2003). Similar confusion follows from further research of the Ancient Greek term for spontaneity, “automaton” (Peters 1967: 199). This is not surprising since defining a term like spontaneity is a philosophical issue first of all. One has to probe into the nature of deliberation, intent, causality, chance, etc... as did Aristotle (1930, Book II) in his *Physics*, in order to have a precise definition. Such a task is beyond the scope of this paper.

that these mechanisms can only be understood in relation to the political economy and organizational structure of artisans and small tradesmen.

Collective Action Theories and Spontaneity

Improvised, diffused, short-lived collective action has been the focus of studies that focus on 'primitive', 'pre-modern', and 'archaic' forms of social unrest. These protests were often significantly different from the modern social movements that are the result from a long process of institutionalization and nationalization (Minkoff 2001: 286). The works of social historians such as Rudé (1981), Hobsbawm (1959), and Thompson (1991a; 1991b) refused to interpret such instances of social unrest as "mindless mobs" (Kaye 1988), and instead analyzed cultural, economic, and political processes that shaped them. Especially Thompson's (1991a, 1991b) "moral economy" approach to the study of riots and social protests has led to a cross-disciplinary venue of research (Arnold 2001; Buğra 2001; Booth 1994; Busch 2000; Irwin and Bottero 2000; Scott 1977). Despite Thompson's and his followers' creative use of collective beliefs, sentiments, and understandings about economic processes to explain social protest, "moral economy" has not found general applicability in collective action research (Arnold 2001; Booth 1994; Kurtz 2000). In addition to that, the moral economy approach did not develop an explicit orientation toward the study of spontaneity in social protest.

As has been noted in many other places, the literature on social movements, collective behavior, and contentious politics offers a rich set of theoretical perspectives (Loveman 1998; McAdam, McCarthy, and Zald 1988; McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 1997, 2001). However, the field is skewed towards neglecting the spontaneous elements of collective behavior, mostly due to its historical development. "Enriched resource mobilization theories" (Useem 1998), the reigning perspective in the field as has developed since the 1970s, places emphasis upon

four sets of factors in explaining contentious politics: political opportunities, mobilizing structures, framing processes, and repertoires of contention (Mueller 1992; McAdam et al. 1997; McAdam et al. 2001). The foci of the social movements literature in its early phases were emergence, change, and participation in social movements (McAdam et al. 1988); it stressed the causal role of rationality, organization, coordination, and resources in collective action.

The preeminent critics of the enriched resource mobilization approaches claim that the approaches present a static picture of contentious politics; that they are not suitable to the analysis of contentious politics outside the Western context; and that they are “silent” in certain areas (McAdam et al. 2001: 15; Aminzade and McAdam 2001: 21). Motivated by such considerations, the constructive critics of the established paradigm suggested new avenues for explaining contentious politics while acknowledging the usefulness of the existing ones. Emotions (Goodwin, Jasper, and Polletta 2001; Collins 2001; Aminzade and McAdam 2001); temporality (McAdam and Sewell 2001); and space (Sewell 2001) are some of the themes in the new agenda.

Despite novel themes in the field, the existing body of social movement theory overlooks a crucial form of contentious politics and social protest: sporadic, improvised, short-lived collective action. This tendency is reflected in the critical error of subsuming all forms of collective action under the category of “social movements” or “contentious politics” (Piven and Cloward 1992: 303; Aguirre 1994). Arguing from a position close to the pre-1970s theories of collective action, Useem (1998: 220) contends that the fact that organizational and cultural resources have a great determining power in routine collective action “does not exhaust the question of what conditions generate nonroutine collective action.” Similarly,

Piven and Cloward (1992: 301) point out the tendency of the social movements and contentious politics agenda to “normalize” collective action such as riots, rebellion, and violence: “We shall argue that RM [resource mobilization] analysts commit a reverse error. Their emphasis on the similarities between conventional and protest behavior has led them to understate the differences.”

The view positing spontaneity as irrational behavior is questioned within the social movements literature. Killian (1984: 770-71) argues that the illusory opposition between pre-70s and post-70s theories of collective behavior is determined by the fact that resource mobilization theories matured by constructing an intellectual identity opposed to the pre-70s theories that are seen as placing too much emphasis on spontaneity and irrationality. The "renaissance" of the field in the 1970s developed partly as an opposition to the earlier classical theories favoring social-psychological processes in their efforts of explaining social movements (McAdam et al. 1988: 696-697). Thus, the idea of unorganized, short-lived, collective action became synonymous to non-moral, irrational collective action argued by some earlier theorists such as Le Bon (1982) and Blumer (1978). Scholars of social movements and contentious politics constructed a false dichotomy between the spontaneous elements of social movements and the organized, rational elements. Collective behavior almost disappeared from empirical research agendas, having been replaced by organized, instrumental social movements (Aguirre 1994). As a result, scattered, short-lived, unplanned social protest is a cloudy area of study.

Characteristics of Spontaneous Collective Action

“A contentious gathering is an occasion on which a number of people . . . outside of the government gathered in a publicly accessible place and made claims on at least one person

outside their own number, claims which if realized would affect the interests of their object” (Tilly 1995: 32). Following Tilly’s minimal definition, I consider social protest as one possible type of contentious gathering. The crucial issue for the present study is what makes spontaneous social protest a distinct form of contentious gathering.

In a rare study examining the mechanisms of spontaneous collective action, Rosenthal and Schwartz (1989: 40) take the following definition of spontaneity as the starting point for their inquiry: “Spontaneity in social movement refers to an *impromptu* action or series of actions undertaken by collectivity” [original emphasis]. Opp (1995a: 43-45; 1995b: 196-202), in a study of the East German Revolution in 1989, conceptualizes spontaneity as spontaneous cooperation. Based on my understanding of spontaneity as an emergent group-level pattern, I would argue that it is possible to distinguish two elements of spontaneous protests. One is *the mobilization of individuals without a prior plan or determination to do so*. The other is *the formation of a protest group in a very short span of time*. Thus, I conceptualize spontaneity as *unplanned mobilization and unorganized cooperation*.

Accordingly, what needs to be explained is these two characteristics of spontaneous protests. Why and how do individuals mobilize without any prior planning? How do they cooperate without any formal organization? Existing theories of collective action point out several underlying conditions and causal mechanism. Following McAdam et al. (2001: 24), I consider each of the mechanisms below from the perspective of how and to which extent they influence and change the mobilization and organization of individuals.

On the issue of formation of a protest group in a very short span of time, these factors are: spatial routines (Sewell 2001: 61), copresence (Sewell 2001: 60), spatial proximity (Frisbie and Kasarda 1988: 648-50), visibility (Berk 1974: 367), small groups (Rosenthal and Schwartz

1989: 37), and community networks of trade, production, and neighborhood (Gould 1993; Barkey and Van Rossem 1997: 1347-1349). The shopkeeper insurgency in Turkey increases the importance of spatial factors and various networks because insurgency was bounded to geographically delimited production and trade neighborhoods, as I will show in the following analysis.

Rosenthal and Schwartz (1989: 37) argue that “spontaneity reflects the existence and dominance of a particular structural milieu in which previously existing primary groups utilize direct democracy to develop and sustain group unity and coordination.” In studying Turkish shopkeeper insurgency, I contend that groups should be studied in the context of social networks. Brubaker’s recent scrutiny (2002) of the concept of “group” leads one to conceptualize about group not as fixed social entity with a fixed substance but rather as a fluid social formation. That is to say, Brubaker encourages thinking about groups as something that happens, something that is performed with variability in space and time. If we accept the claim that protesting was an unplanned event, a claim that is empirically assessed by protesters’ narratives below, then the question to be addressed is how a group of people gather together in the same place for the same purpose. Following this conceptualization, I hypothesize that overlapping social networks of trade, production, and neighborhood led to the formation of protest groups.

On the aspect of unplanned and unanticipated mobilization of individuals, I argue that particular emotions (Aminzade and McAdam 2001; Barbalet 2001; Collins 2001; Goodwin et al. 2001) attached to particular cultural schemas⁴ (Sewell 1992, 1999) determined the

⁴ Cultural schemas are generalizable and transposable rules, procedures, and codes that are enacted by individuals (Sewell 1992: 8). Thus, culture is both human practice and system of meanings, the two aspects are complementary rather than contradictory (Garnham and Williams 1986: 116-121; Sewell 1999: 46-47).

mobilization of Turkish shopkeepers. The most salient and determining of these schemas were moral economy of the shopkeepers, corruption and immorality attributed to certain institutions and classes, and the idea of entitlement.⁵ I borrow from Young the distinction between intensive and extensive schemas (2002) in investigating the role of cultural schemas. These schemas were extensive as their content overlapped in different parts of the country. They were intensive as they successfully stimulated uniform perceptions and emotions, thus motivating shopkeepers to mobilize.⁶

Prior to the role of the above aspects, two issues are of primary importance in explaining the nature of tradesman and artisan protests. One is the position of tradesmen and artisans in the Turkish economy. The second is the paternalist relationship (Jelin 1976) between the Turkish state and tradesmen and artisans in Turkey. This paternalist relationship is expressed

⁵ I stress the role of emotions following the recent revival of emotions in the study of contentious politics (Collins 2001; Goodwin et al. 2001). As Aminzade and McAdam (2001: 14-15) put it, “the mobilization of heightened emotion” is a necessary but not sufficient condition for collective mobilization. For the purpose of explaining spontaneity as an emergent large-scale pattern, I argue that emotions are “dispositions to act” (Goodwin et al. 2001: 14). Barbalet (2001: 27) makes the observation that “particular emotional experiences determine inclinations to certain courses of action.” Thus, to use Bourdieu’s metaphors, emotions structure the “practical logic” or shape the “feel for the game” (1990, 1994). Here I have to underline that the connection between social action and emotions is a reciprocal one. As Barbalet (2001: 27) argues, “Emotion is provoked by circumstances and is experienced as transformation of dispositions of act.” How a circumstance is experienced and perceived by the individual actors is shaped by cultural schemas. Turner (2000: 149) points out that “cultural forces constrain the flow of emotions in situations, and without clear guidelines from these cultural forces, it is difficult to maintain an interaction without awkwardness and constant breaches.” Furthermore, research in sociology and psychology has shown that perceptions such as moral outrage, injustice, and immorality are culturally and historically patterned (Gamson 1992; Goodwin et al. 2001; Jacobs 1996; Miller 2001; Moore 1978; Walton 1989). Particular emotions such as anger and moral outrage instantiate particular dispositions to act. Cultural schemas such as injustice and fear of losing the livelihood guide the circumstances in which human emotions are formed (Altheide 2002; Cacioppo and Gardner 1999; Miller 2001). For example, as Eisenberg (2000: 683) argues in the case of negative emotions, “Anger and other negative emotions (e.g. disgust and sadness) tend to be substantially linked with the perception of injustice and immorality.” Emotions and cultural schemas have a reciprocal relationship, and together they have an influence on how a decision to act is made.

⁶ The central feature of Young’s argument is an innovative combination of Mann’s distinction between intensive and extensive power (Mann 1993: 6-10) and Sewell’s cultural schemas (1992; 1999). The basic idea motivating the distinction between extensive and intensive cultural schemas is that the power of schemas to guide social action can be analyzed in two dimensions: their spatial extension and their capacity to shape and “control meaning, motives, and actions” (Young 2002: 665). Following Mann’s earlier categorization of state power into infrastructural and despotic power (1984: 188-192) and Sewell’s stress on culture as human practice and system of meanings (1999: 46-47); I emphasize that extensivity refers to the capacity of a system of meanings and beliefs to permeate through a realm, while intensiveness refers to the capacity to penetrate into human practice.

both in the structure of tradesman and artisan organizations, and in economic subsidies from the state to the artisans and small tradesmen.

Based on the above discussion, I can now state the following propositions regarding the April 2001 shopkeeper protests. My central assertion is that the formation of a protest group in the shopkeeper protests depends on (1) various community networks because such networks shape the formation of groups where face-to-face contact is possible (Burt 1980: 20; Rosenthal and Schwartz 1989); and (2) spatial factors since they enable the diffusion of decisions, emotions, and actions. Second, I argue that (1) the flow of emotions determined the development of collective action, and (2) the flow of emotions cannot be understood without conceiving the cultural schemas they are attached to. Most fundamentally, I argue that the interplay between all the above factors should be put into the context of the economic and political conditions under which shopkeepers live and organize, since their incentives for protest and their cultural understandings are shaped by these conditions. Finally, as I have underlined in the previous sections, I do not contend that the mechanisms suggested in this paper would apply in a different manner to planned protest. These elements (emotions, cultural schemas, spatial factors, networks) are equally applicable to the study of planned protest. It is the combination and coexistence of the above stated elements in a particular political-economic situation that makes unplanned mobilization and unorganized cooperation possible.

Methods

I use three data sources to analyze the protests, their causes, and spontaneity. The first one is the major national newspapers in Turkey. The second data source is interviews I conducted with the head or representatives of important associations such as the Turkish Confederation of Tradesmen and Craftsmen (TESK), Ankara Chamber of Commerce (ATO), the People's

Bank (Halk Bankası), and the Turkish Central Union of Credit Guarantee Cooperatives (TESKOMB), with shopkeepers and small tradesmen, and with photo-journalists. The third source is statistical sources.

Using newspapers as the data source for analyzing social movements is a common practice in sociology and political science (Franzosi 1997; Mueller 1997; Koopmans and Rucht 2002; Rounds 2002). Newspaper accounts of social movements and protests are used in both qualitative and quantitative studies (Woolley 2000; Koopmans and Rucht 2002). My use of newspaper data is inspired by McAdam et al. (1997: 163) who suggest “tracing the sequence of events.”⁷ Thus, with the use of newspaper data I first of all aim a construction of contentious events after the February 2001 crisis, and more specifically during the April 2001 protests.

In order to overcome the measurement, selectivity, and bias problems, Woolley (2000: 160) recommends the use of a "media portfolio", that is to say, he recommends the use of a representative sample of newspapers for getting a measurement of the true universe of events. I rely on the Turkish Parliament's digitalized database that indexes nearly all the major national newspapers.⁸ The database allows keyword search and full-text retrieval of articles. I analyzed the entire universe of articles and news stories directly related to the protests during the first two weeks of April 2001.⁹

⁷ "...an adequate methodology must, at a minimum, trace the relevant sequence of events in a movement cycle, and not merely provide a still photograph of its high points...Whether statistically structured or narratively organized, we argue that the best way to study contentious politics as a whole - and not only social movements, protest, or revolutions - must be carried by the enumeration and analysis of contentious events" (McAdam et al. 1997: 163). "Tracing the sequence of events" asks for a longitudinal research design, which is superior to other research strategies in studies of social change (Rosengren 1981). It is indispensable in studying the April 2001 protests with a research question formulated around the social composition, form, and development of protests.

⁸ I am indebted to Hasan Gemici, and the staff of Turkish Parliament Library for granting me access to this database.

⁹ The main research design issue in constructing a “data corpus” (Bauer and Aarts 2000) was the delimitation of protest events in time (Koopmans and Rucht 2002: 236). I believe that the strategic decision of the delimitation of

I coded an event as a protest when more than 10 people gather in a publicly accessible place to advance their claims, based on Tilly's (1995: 32) definition of a contentious gathering. This decision left out ambiguous cases such as shopkeepers closing their shops during the working day. Although such a symbolic protest was very common, there is no objective way of classifying such an act as collective action. I coded newspaper articles for several variables, including number of protesters although I use only two of these variables, location and social composition of protest. As Koopmans and Rucht (2002: 235-36) note, information on location is more reliable than information on social composition of a protest. Using a digitalized database of all the major national newspapers allowed me to have a detailed account of a protest by combining reports from several newspapers. Majority of protest events I coded from newspaper sources involved detailed description of location of protest, occupation of protesters (e.g. taxi-drivers, shoemaker), economic character of protest location (e.g. furniture making, electronics trade, mechanic). Although claiming full reliability in these measures would be mistaken, I believe that using more than one source and detailed description of protests bring high reliability.

I have conducted twenty-three interviews that are possible to classify in three sets.¹⁰ One set is the key informant interviews (Blee and Taylor 2002) such as the representatives of

events in time while collecting data should be governed by the consideration of the temporality (Abbott 1992; Aminzade 1992; McAdam and Sewell 2001; Sewell 1996) of protest events the researcher is interested in. One has to look into the long-term processes as well as the turning-points (Abbott 1997) in order to analyze the spontaneity of the shopkeeper protest. Initial exploration of the events showed that the protests happened in a relatively short-span of time, two weeks. This period of contention attracted a significant amount of media attention. However, the newspaper coverage by itself does not tell us if the events were part of a continuing series of protests. It is possible that the newspapers might have neglected the small protests that preceded the intense period of protests. I relied on the interviews I conducted with the protesters and with the representatives of TESK to check for former protest activity. The interviews I conducted with the Chief Counselor of Derviş Günday, Mr. Ersen Yavuz; the Press Secretary of TESK, Mr. Hasan Uysal; the President of TAF (Shoe-makers Federation), Mr. Hasan Özcan; and various protesters confirmed that the protest activity prior to April 2001 was very limited.

¹⁰ I am indebted to Hasan Gemici, Seda Tamur, and Hüseyin Çınar Öztürk for their help in conducting the interviews.

TESK and TAF. The second set is shopkeepers and artisans in Istanbul and Ankara who worked in districts where protests occurred during April 2001. The third set consists of photo-journalists who observed the protests. The interviews with tradesmen and artisans were semi-structured interviews (Blee and Taylor 2002).¹¹ All of them except for one tradesman requested that I do not use their names in my report. Thus, I will use pseudonyms in order to hide their identity in the following sections unless otherwise noted. The quotes from the interviews and Turkish newspapers are my translation from Turkish.

Finally, the Photo Archive of Milliyet¹² has been a crucial data source for observing the development of protests, the composition of the protests, the claims articulated by the protesters, and the placards they were carrying.¹³ The sources of various statistics and primary documents are indicated where they are used in the article.¹⁴

Economic and Political Determinants

In what follows, I first analyze the economic position of and the state subsidies to the small tradesman and artisans. The development of the February 2001 crisis and its impact on small tradesmen and artisans conclude the discussion. Following my assertion that economic and political determinants should be the starting point in assessing the role of cultural understandings and emotions in the April 2001 protests, I argue that the February 2001 economic crisis was a shock for small tradesmen, artisans, and craftsmen. The crisis was most

¹¹ There were two major difficulties in conducting these interviews. The first one was that it was not easy to have consent for the interview without a reliable connection to the shopkeepers and small tradesmen. The reason became clear after I conducted several interviews. Police interrogations and imprisonment of some protesters after the April 2001 protests were the main causes of the reluctance. The second difficulty was that except for two shopkeepers in Karaköy, none of the interviewees allowed me to use a tape-recorder. Thus, I relied on the notes I took for most of the interviews.

¹² A major Turkish national newspaper.

¹³ I am truly indebted to Semra Kardeşoğlu from Milliyet for access to this data source. Again, Seda Tamur has generously helped in analyzing the images.

¹⁴ Mr. Derviş Günday, the President of TESK; Mr. Ersen Yavuz, the Chief Counselor to Mr. Derviş Günday; and Mr. Hasan Uysal, the Press Secretary of TESK, have been extremely helpful and generous in granting me access to the TESK records and documents.

severely felt by these strata of the Turkish society because of (1) the class position they occupy in the Turkish society, (2) the paternalist relationship in the form of vital economic subsidies provided by the Turkish state, (3) the economic policies of privatization backed-up by the IMF, and (4) because of the devaluation of the Turkish lira and the fall in demand.

Economic Position and Relationship with the State¹⁵

Ayata (1996) summarizes the position of tradesmen and artisans in the income ladder as above the unemployed. Their position in the distribution of income is the same as unskilled workers and state functionaries, but below the skilled workers.¹⁶ Following Ayata (1996: 488), the three main economic activity areas of tradesmen and artisans are as follows. The first area includes traditional occupations, that are artisanship such as carpenters, ironsmiths, and shoemakers as well as independent tradesmen such as grocers and butchers. The second area includes relatively new shopkeepers such as magazine vendor, mechanic, and gas distributor. The third area includes emerging occupations such as electronic repair, perfumery, tourism agent, and computer repair.¹⁷

“In the Turkish Republic, the State has acted as the primary motivating force in the organization of small businessmen in cooperatives, associations or in passing laws to regulate their activity or in fostering measures to improve their welfare” (Kazgan and Kazgan 1981:

¹⁵ The relationships between the state and artisans and small tradesmen in Turkey can be analyzed in two main areas. One is the economic relationship. The other is related to the organization of artisans and small tradesmen under corporatist institutions. This section presents the contours of the economic relationship. I look at the institutional organization of artisans below, where I assess Piven and Cloward’s claim that the absence or weakness of organizations are at the root of spontaneous protest (1979: 26).

¹⁶ Reservation is necessary in these statements. The position in the income distribution varies significantly with the type of definition one uses for artisan and tradesman. The definition of artisan and tradesman is a problematic one in the literature on artisans and small-scale production (Koniordos 2001). Koniordos (2001) gives central importance to small-scale production and participation in the labor process in his discussion of artisans. Ayata (1996: 488) respects a similar distinction when he lists three main areas where tradesmen and artisans contribute to the Turkish economy.

¹⁷ In all these occupational areas, the legal definitions forced by different laws in Turkey are not consistent with each other (Demirci et al. 2001: 121).

917). Small-scale production¹⁸, small tradesmen, and artisans are usually in an acute need of financial assistance. This follows from the fact that this sector of the economy suffers from shortage of capital. On the issue of the financing of artisans, small tradesmen, and small-scale production, the Turkish situation is even worse than the general financial constraints faced by small-scale production. This is related to three peculiarities of the economy and the banking system. One is that the private banks are generally part of large conglomerates conducting business in many different areas (Önder 2001: 316). Thus, their financial services are generally biased toward companies in the same conglomerate structure. Secondly, Turkish state ran high balance of payments deficits financed by domestic and foreign debt since the mid-1980s. This resulted in an inflationary spiral by raising the nominal and real interest rates. Not only did this worsen the supply of credits to the real economy, but it also created a high volatility in the economy that made borrowing extremely risky. A contributing factor to the upward pressure on interest rates was the private banks making profits by lending to the public sector, that is to say, to the treasury. The third peculiarity of the Turkish banking system was the absence of cooperative banks that abounded in the European countries (Önder 2001: 317).

All three peculiarities of the Turkish economy and banking system make one public bank indispensable for small-scale production and trade. Turkish State supports and subsidizes tradesmen, artisans, shopkeepers, and small-scale production through Halk Bankası (The People's Bank). Halk Bankası is a public bank, that lends cheap credits to tradesmen, artisans, and small-scale production. The objectives and actions of the bank are defined by law.

¹⁸ Defining small-scale production is not easy. Since this study is mostly concerned with artisans, I can provide the following criterion for small-scale production: the owner of the business either relies on his own labor or employs a limited number of workers (less than 9).

‘Volksbank’ in Germany and ‘Banque Populaire’ in France are equivalents of Halk Bankası, at least in their establishment objectives.

The subsidy is in the form of cheap credits, with interest rates lower than those of the free-market. These credits are in principle backed by the state. Halk Bankası is the only bank serving this purpose and has a crucial role in the financing of small-scale production in Turkey (Önder 2001: 317-18). Credit guarantee cooperatives manage the distribution of Halk Bankası credits (Kazgan and Kazgan 1981: 918). These cooperatives are organized under one national confederation, the Turkish Central Union of Credit Guarantee Cooperatives (TESKOMB).

A Brief Note on the Political Economy of Turkey and the February 2001 Economic Crisis

The Turkish economy has grown substantially despite high levels of inflation during the last twenty years. The real GDP growth rate was 5.8 percent between 1981 and 1988; although it decreased to 3.7 percent for the period between 1988 and 2000 (Ertuğrul and Selçuk 2001: 8-9). The government launched a three-year stabilization and disinflation program mainly to combat the chronic inflation at the beginning of 2000. IMF backed the program with 4 billion dollars over the three years (Alper 2001: 60).¹⁹ The core of the program was the use of nominal exchange rate as an anchor for other macroeconomic variables.²⁰ Until the financial crisis of November 2000, the program was successful in achieving most of its targets.²¹ The program gave the first signals of trouble in the November 2000 financial crisis. The November 2000 crisis was a liquidity crisis in the Turkish banking system. Prior to the crisis, ten private

¹⁹ As summarized by Keyder (2001: 22-23), some of the main points of the program were financial sector adjustment, public sector consolidation, structural reforms in areas such as the social security system and the agricultural sector, and greater emphasis on privatization.

²⁰ As it is known in the economics literature, this exchange rate regime was a crawling-peg regime where the exchange rate of Turkish lira was fixed against a basket of foreign currency and pre-announced for a certain period of time (Keyder 2001: 22).

²¹ "Confidence was restored, net foreign borrowing increased, and its maturity lengthened, primary surplus was above target levels...real output grew beyond expectations" (Keyder 2001: 38).

banks were intervened by the newly founded Bank Supervision and Regulation Agency, which intensified the fragility of the financial sector (Keyder 2001: 37).²² Most of the Turkish citizens were holding their wealth in government bonds prior to the November 2000 crisis. They experienced high capital losses as a result of increases in interest rates (Keyder 2001: 40).

The February 2001 crisis was a replication of the November 2000 crisis on a bigger scale. The collapse of the already fragile financial markets was triggered by a political row between the Prime Minister and the President on February 19. Speculative and economic pressures forced the government to abandon the crawling-peg exchange rate regime, and thus the stabilization and adjustment program, on February 22. The dollar and interest rates surged. Economic activity declined significantly due to the indeterminacy on the political and economic scene. The high volatility of the dollar-lira exchange rate and pessimistic expectations of devaluation forced economic agents to hold dollar and increased the dollar demand, contributing to the vicious cycle of rising dollar-lira exchange rate.

The impact of the economic crisis

Economic hardship was not strictly a result of the February 2001 crisis. Indeed, the economic condition in which tradesmen and craftsmen worked was in a long-term deterioration. Figure 2 presents the ratio of new entries into the market to the exits from the market and the Hodrick-Prescott filtered (Maravall and del Rio 2001) trend of this ratio between January 1998 and November 2002. These statistics are based on two sources of data. One is the monthly number of businesses recorded in the national register. Tradesmen,

²² The crisis was triggered by the withdrawal of more than one-fifth of the currency in circulation on November 21. In a couple of days, the interest rates and the demand for foreign exchange soared dramatically. The overnight interest rates reached 1,700 percent on December 2001, and 6.4 billion dollars of hot money left the country between November 20 and December 5 (Alper 2001: 58).

artisans, and shopkeepers have to register their businesses to a national register of Tradesmen and Craftsmen administered by TESK. The other is the number of business records removed from the national register every month.²³

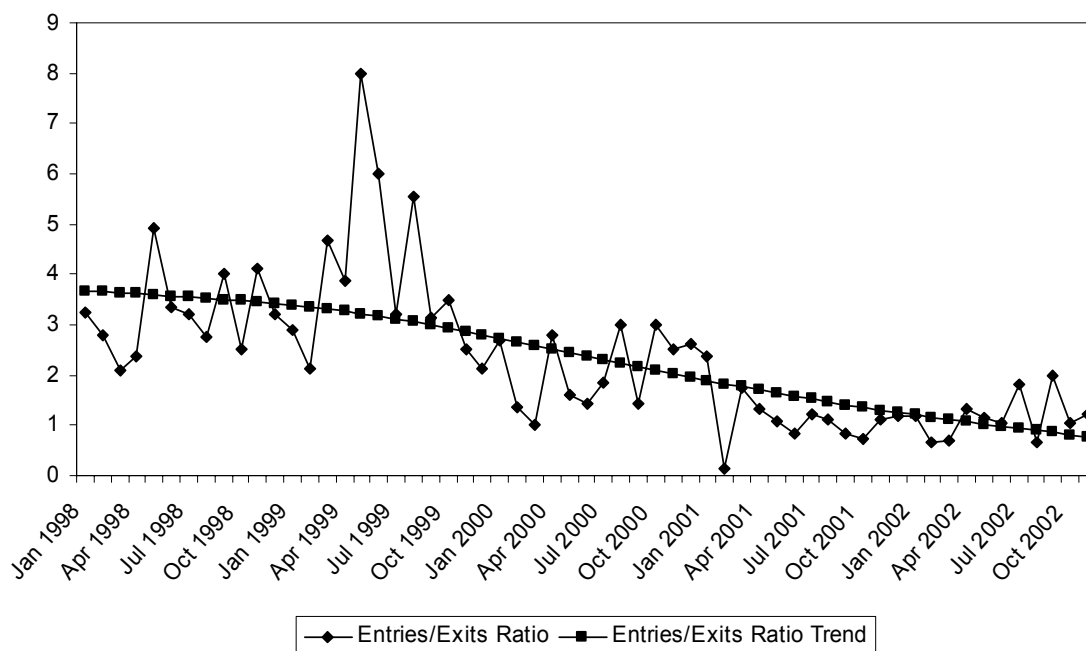


Figure 2. The ratio of entries to exits from the market, computed from the national register of tradesmen and craftsmen, January 1998-November 2002. Source: TESK.²⁴

²³ I am thankful to Mr. Ersen Yavuz for his suggestions in interpreting these data.

²⁴ Act no. 507 forces every entrepreneur to register his/her business in order to conduct their professional activities. However, there is no legal obligation for deleting this record from the national register. Thus, new entry into the market data is accurate but the data for those who are leaving the market are far from being accurate since it is on a voluntary basis. There are two ways to overcome this difficulty. First one is to interpret the trend in these figures since 1998, instead of interpreting the absolute numbers. For this purpose, I have presented the monthly data since January 1998 as well as the overall trend between January 1998 and November 2002 by smoothing the series with Hodrick-Prescott filter (Maravall and del Rio 2001). The second one is to observe the trend in the ratio of new entries into the market to the exits from the market. Since exits from the market are recorded on a voluntary basis, it is logical to expect that the recorded exits from the market will be smaller than the actual number. Thus, the ratio I computed cannot be lower than the true ratio for the entire population. This provides a safety belt for misinterpreting the deterioration in the market.

α = number of new entries into the market;

β = recorded number of exits from the market;

and θ = "true" number of exits from the market.

Then, α/β is the ratio I computed from the national register and α/θ is the true population ratio. Since $\beta \leq \theta$, α/β is greater or equal to α/θ .

Figure 2 clearly show that the market condition was in a trend of deterioration for small tradesmen and craftsmen since January 1998. The ratio of new entries into the market to the exits from the market confirms that there is a secular downward trend in employment of tradesmen and artisans.²⁵ Thus, the number of tradesmen and craftsmen leaving their professional activities increased between 1998 and 2002, where this loss in employment is not replaced by new tradesmen and craftsmen entering into the market.

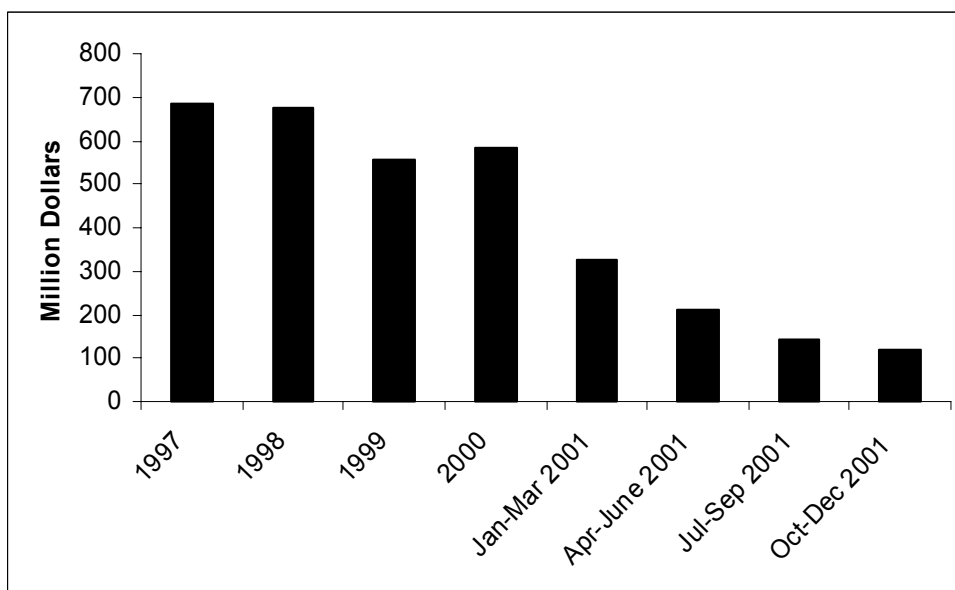


Figure 3. Dollar Value of Halk Bankasi Short-Term Cooperative Credits to Small Tradesmen and Artisans, 1997-2001, million dollars.

²⁵ One objection to this interpretation might be that such a trend is an indication of consolidation in the Turkish economy instead of a deterioration in the economic conditions of tradesmen and artisans. However, as Kazgan and Kazgan (1981: 917) argue, “Presumptive evidence is such that so long as the population growth rate persists at a high level and unemployment remains as an insolvable issue, small firms which harbor large members of workers at low levels of productivity will be an integral part of the Turkish economy.” Thus, the ongoing unemployment and high rates of population growth outrule this objection.

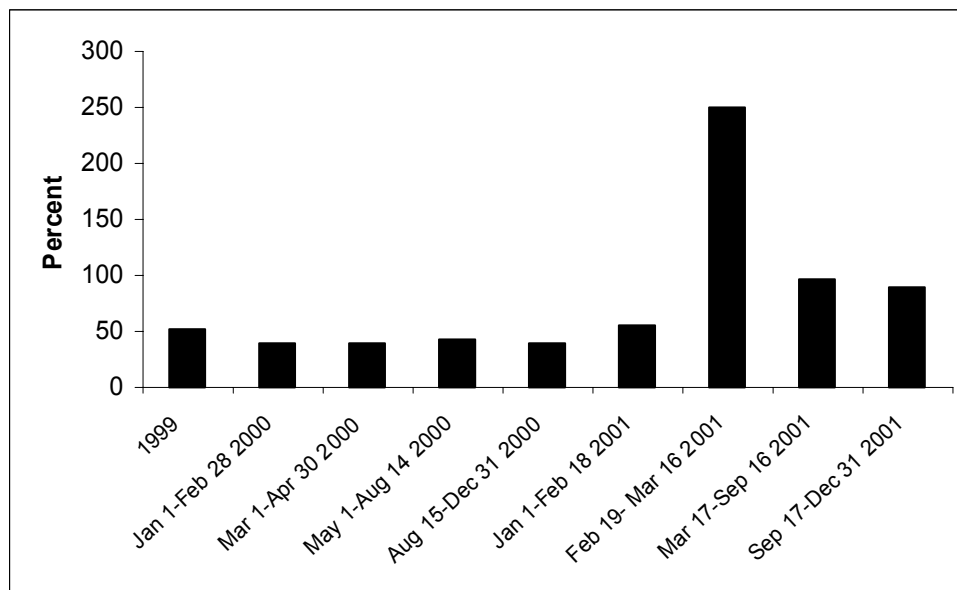


Figure 4. Nominal Interest Rates on Short-Term Cooperative Credits.

Overall, the IMF-backed economic program in 2000 was beneficial to the tradesmen and craftsmen. Real interest rates were decreasing as the program advanced in controlling high inflation and as the policy-makers ensured a stable exchange-rate. However, the IMF-backed program forced the government to pass a resolution regarding the privatization and restructuring of Halk Bankası in November 2000. Yenal Ansen, then the director of Halk Bankası, echoed the conviction that the consequences of this resolution were grave: The direct implication of this resolution was a sudden decrease in the supply of Halk Bankası credit to small tradesmen and artisans.²⁶ Figure 3 shows the dollar-value of short-term cooperative credits. It is clear that there is an apparent and sudden decrease in the volume of credits supplied. The total amount of credits between the year 2000 and the January-March 2001 period decreased by 56 percent, from 583 million dollars to 328 million dollars. This means that the bank called back 44 percent of its loans to small tradesmen and artisans.

²⁶ Interview, Ankara, December 2002.

Furthermore, the administration of Halk Bankası took a radical decision to restructure the credits of tradesmen and artisans. This implied that the bank applied interest rates close to the prevailing market interest rates to the existing debts. Figure 4 shows the nominal interest rates levels between 1999 and 2001. Since Halk Bankası was committed to supplying cheap credits to small-scale production and trade, the nominal interest rates were at the 50 percents between 1999 and 2000. Halk Bankası raised the nominal interest rates on short-term cooperative credits from 40 percent to 55 percent in the January-February 18 period. With the collapse of the financial markets and surging interest rates after February 19, the bank abandoned the policy of protecting small tradesmen and artisans. The interest rates on tradesman and artisan credits increased to the spectacular 255 percent, more than a fourfold increase in one day.

The shock instigated by the economic crisis was not limited to the decline in available credits and to the astronomic increases on interest rates. The other key mechanism through which the economic crisis was transmuted to the shopkeepers and small tradesmen was the devaluation of the Turkish lira. Large devaluation of the Turkish lira in this period affected the production and trade negatively. The foremost mechanism for this negative impact was due to the dollarization of the economic transactions in Turkey. Using the US Dollar instead of the Turkish Lira for economic transactions was a common way of protection against instability and the high levels of inflation. A very large number of tradesmen and shopkeepers were holding debts in US dollar, which resulted in doubling debts in a very short period of time. Although their revenues were in Turkish lira they faced a situation where they had to pay their debts in US dollars, meaning that the cost of US dollar denominated debts increased in proportion to the devaluation of the Turkish lira.

In addition to the above impact, the devaluation implied that the cost of production and cost of staying in business increased significantly since the input prices surged. However, tradesmen, artisans, and craftsmen could not shift the burden to the consumers whose purchasing power was hurt equally. Thus, small-scale production and trade were subject to a decrease in demand while they made operating and capital losses. Because of the financial constraints faced by small enterprises, the consequence of all these negative developments were heavier on them compared to mid-scale and large-scale businesses.

Thus, already deteriorating business conditions for small tradesmen and artisans combined with the extraordinary pressures of the economic crisis transformed the crisis into a severe shock. The small tradesmen and artisans were deprived from cheap credit vital for their finances. They faced more than fourfold increase in their interest payments. The large devaluation of the Turkish lira squeezed their profits and increased their costs substantially. In addition to supply problems, they faced decreasing demand.

Protests

The analysis of protests from newspaper sources reveals 170 protests between March 31 and April 15, 2001. As Table 1 shows, shopkeepers, artisans, and small tradesmen carried out 65 percent of the protests, while Labor Platform and peasants carried out 28 percent and 1 percent of the protests, respectively. Rallies organized by the opposition parties accounted for 2 percent of the protests. Finally, 4 percent of the protests had a diverse social composition, where shopkeepers protested with peasants, Labor Platform, and local residents present at the protest site.

Table 1. Social Composition of Protest Events.

Social Composition	Number of Protests	Percent *
Labor Platform	47	% 28
Shopkeepers, Tradesmen, and Artisans	111	65
Peasants	2	1
Rallies by the Opposition Parties	3	2
Shopkeepers and Labor Platform	2	1
Shopkeepers and Peasants	2	1
Shopkeepers and People	3	2
Total	170	% 100

Source: Various national newspapers.

* All percentages are rounded.

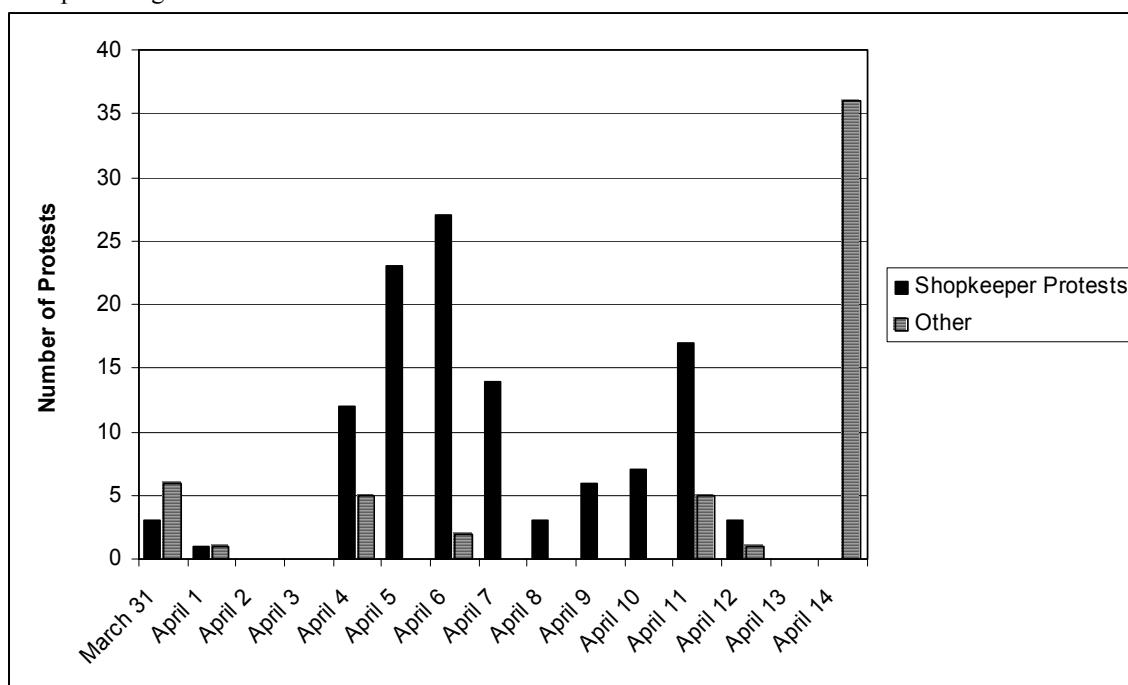


Figure 5. Timeline of Protest Events between March 31 and April 14.

The time line of the events, presented in Figure 5, shows that protests intensified between April 4 and April 7, making up 49 percent of the total number of protests. Shopkeeper protests took place in two waves. The first wave occurred after Ahmet Çakmak, a florist, hurled his cashier register at the Prime Minister on April 4. This first wave involved 75 percent of the shopkeeper protests. The protests lost momentum over the weekend. The second wave was the

April 11 events, where the majority of protests were organized protests. The sudden increase in the number of protests on April 14 is the result of Labor Platform protests at that date in multiple provinces, which were declared and publicized more than a week earlier.

The florist's hurling of his cashier register was a turning point (Abbott 1997) in the development of the protests. The following colorful statement summarizes the centrality of this event: "Ahmet Çakmak, a florist from Ankara, had a dream this week that sparked a revolt. Angry that the Turkish government created an economic crisis six weeks ago and so far has done little to solve it, Cakmak on Wednesday threw a cash register at Prime Minister Bulent Ecevit. . . . Cakmak was being hailed as a visionary and national hero. Thousands of people have staged **protests** in cities around the country demanding that the government do something -- anything -- to shore up the economy."²⁷ [original emphasis]

Nearly all the shopkeepers, tradesmen, and artisans I interviewed remembered the event as a public display of the injustice they were going through. Several independent collective protests within a three-hour period followed this individual symbolic protest: Truck drivers blocked the Adana-Mersin freeway; seven artisans were arrested at a protest in Erzurum; local tradesmen and shopkeepers of Mahmutpaşa, Tahtakale, and Alibeyköy protested in Istanbul; 5,000 small tradesmen and artisans marched towards the Prime Ministry Building before they were stopped by the local police in Ankara.

Organizational aspects

Piven and Cloward (1979: 26) argue that the absence or the limited power of organizations is at the roots of spontaneous collective action: "Disruption itself is not necessarily spontaneous, but lower-class disruptions often are, in the sense that they are not

²⁷ The Washington Post, April 7, 2001.

planned and executed by formal organizations. In part, this testifies to the paucity of stable organizational resources among the poor, as well as to the cautious and moderate character of such organizations as are able to survive.” Opp (1995b: 226) shares a similar position when he posits lack of political entrepreneurs as an important factor in the development of spontaneous collective action. Although to which extent their statement can be generalized is disputable, the lack of organizational resources is a contributing factor to the emergence of spontaneous protest. The Turkish shopkeeper protests confirm these claims.

Tradesmen and craftsmen are legally organized under one national confederation in Turkey, the Turkish Confederation of Tradesmen and Craftsmen (TESK). The organizational structure of tradesmen and craftsmen in Turkey is as follows. Local chambers are organized by occupation at the municipal district their members conduct their professional activities (Oran 1996). A municipal district cannot have two local chambers for the same occupation (Act no. 507). These chambers are members of and constitute the union of local chambers of each province in Turkey. The occupational chambers are also organized under sector federations. There are 3399 local chambers on professional activities, 11 sector federations, and 82 provincial unions of chambers (TESK 2002). Sector federations, such as the Bakeries Federation, and provincial union of chambers are organized under the national Confederation of Tradesmen and Craftsmen (TESK). TESC is a corporatist organization established by Act no. 507, Trades and Craftsmen Law. Act no. 507 determines the objectives and administrative power of all tradesmen and craftsmen organizations.

TESK is under the status of “public professional organization” in Turkey. This status is described aptly by Özbudun (1991: 46-47):

Public professional organizations in Turkey have a ‘hybrid’, if not a *sui generis*, nature. On the one hand, their structuring brings together members of certain professions to promote their professional interests; their members do not normally work for the government, and their functions as organizations are essentially non-governmental; they elect their own bodies from among their members without any interference by governmental authorities. On the other hand, they are created by law; membership in them is obligatory in the sense that nobody may practise his/her profession without becoming a member of the relevant professional organization except those regularly employed in public corporations... For all these reasons, there is no doubt that their ‘public’ character predominates, and that they are public corporate bodies.

Two points are worth emphasizing here. One is the obligatory membership in these organizations by occupation, as summarized by Özbudun above. Each person practicing a professional occupation is an ‘obligatory’ member of TESK. The other is the ‘administrative tutelage’ (Özbudun 1991: 48) exercised by public organs, Ministry of Industry and Commerce in the case of TESK. Özbudun (1991: 48) notes that this control is a posteriori in its character most of the times; however it can also take the form of a priori control. Act no. 507 gives the Ministry of Industry and Commerce the power to dissolve the administration of local chambers, union of chambers, federations, and finally the confederation of tradesmen and craftsmen (TESK).

From the beginning to the end of the protest events, what happened was not under the control or guidance of the central organization of tradesmen and craftsmen in Turkey. Indeed, TESK was not only an observer of the events, but it also collaborated with the political authorities in their efforts to stop the protests. The stance of the president of TESK, Derviş Günday, toward the protests is an example of the above point.

As I have previously mentioned, the first protest events took place on April 2. Derviş Günday and TESK made the first public statement about the protests on April 3. Günday stated that it was not possible for them to “hold back” their constituents under the current economic conditions, and the protests would intensify as a result of the increase in gasoline price and the devaluation of the Turkish lira. He also urged the government to declare immediate measures to “pacify” the protesters. The president of the Istanbul Chamber of Commerce used the same language in describing their inability to curb shopkeeper and artisan insurgency under worsening economic conditions.

The initial attitudes of these leading figures did not change with increasing number of protests across the country. On the contrary, Derviş Günday’s statement on April 7, after a great number of protests had already occurred, showed that the protests were beyond the control, knowledge and will of the TESK. Günday stated that the protests were a result of “dark plots” by hidden forces and that the TESK was willing to solve problems on the table and not on the streets. It is interesting to note that Günday’s statement is in line with the statements from the heads of local police forces and the Ministry of Internal Affairs who constantly warned the public about the role of radical and separatist political organizations in the protests. The language of provocation by radical parties was not limited to the TESK and the Ministry of Internal Affairs; major national newspapers shared the same attitude in the aftermath of violent April 11 protests in Ankara; reminiscent of Rudé’s comment (1981: 215): “For as long as no serious attempt was made to probe the deeper aspirations of the poor, their periodic outbursts in riot or rebellion were liable to be attributed to the machinations of a political opponent or a ‘hidden hand’.”

The protests were neither coordinated nor encouraged by the central organizations. On the contrary, the central organizations were trying to stop the street protests. The most visible evidence of TESK's attempt to stop the street protests was a notice sent to the federations, provincial union of local chambers, and local chambers of tradesmen and craftsmen. The TESK 2001/38 notice dated April 11, 2001, stated that tradesmen and craftsmen in Turkey were never involved in any "anarchical" event, and urged the federations and chambers of tradesmen and craftsmen to prevent mass meetings and rallies.²⁸

Similarly, the other central organization of shopkeepers, TESKOMB, attempted to curb the protests. Suat Yalkın, long-time president of TESKOMB, said he had informally contacted the governorships of different cities and requested them not to give permission to the protests. His negative attitude toward the protests is summarized in his statement: "We warned everybody that once shopkeepers got to the streets, this would become a habit for them. We have done our best to explain this to the authorities. We tried to prevent the protests. We didn't want the shopkeepers to get used to protesting."²⁹

Indeed, these findings are of no surprise if one considers the legal status of these organizations, their ideological position, and their connection to the tradesmen and craftsmen (Bora 2000). As Ersen Yavuz, the chief counselor to Derviş Günday, said, it was inconceivable for an organization like TESK to promote or coordinate open opposition to the

²⁸ The local chambers, if not the TESK and the TESKOMB, had a minor role in the mobilization of shopkeepers. It is important to note that local chambers played no part in the protests I closely analyzed in this paper. Indeed, the protest in Siteler, Ankara that I analyze below developed in antagonism to the local chamber of timber-merchants. The newspaper accounts of the protests across the country suggest that most of the protests had very similar characteristics to the protests I analyze in this paper. However, this is at best a justified speculation since newspaper accounts rarely provide a detailed description of the protests' development.

²⁹ Interview with Suat Yalkın, December 2002, Ankara.

government and to the state.³⁰ The reason is simple: administrative tutelage of the Ministry of Commerce, granting the Ministry the power to supervise and abolish TESK and its chambers.

The standpoint of the central organizations found its counterpart in street protesters' sometimes violent and emotional reactions against the organizations. There are several phenomena confirming the negative attitude of protesters against both the local and the central organizations.³¹ The attitude of protesters against the organizations can be explained through the relationship of TESK and its chambers to the tradesmen and craftsmen. Small tradesmen's and artisans' perception that they had no connection to the local chambers except for their financial obligations echoed in several interviews. It is obligatory for new entrepreneurs to register their businesses to the local chamber and pay an annual fee. Ahmet, a tea-vendor in Karaköy, was surprised when I asked him if they got any help from the local chamber during the crisis. He replied that the chamber serves to collect the fees and publish the legal plaquette that he should keep in his shop at all times, and nothing more.³²

Spatial Factors and Networks

A comparison of small-scale (less than 50 workers) and micro-scale (less than 10 workers) production between European Union Countries and Turkey reveals that tradesmen, artisans, and shopkeepers have a crucial place in the Turkish economy and the society.³³

³⁰ Interview, Ankara, January 2003.

³¹ On April 4, truck drivers protested Derviş Günday besides the government. On April 7, protesters responded to the negotiation attempts of the head of the Ankara Chamber of Commerce by throwing stones, shoes, and lighters. The protest against Derviş Günday was replicated by bus and truck drivers in Adapazari on April 8. The protesters accused the President of TESK of being indifferent to their problems. Similarly, the head of İzmir's local union of chambers, Cemal Tercan, was protested when he attempted to address the crowd in the rally organized by his chamber on April 11.

³² Interview, December 2002.

³³ The origins of artisanry go back to the 13th century in Turkey (TESK 1973). A closer scrutiny might take its roots to a more distant past since the *ahi* associations of the Ottoman Empire inherited certain characteristics of the *futuvcet* associations of the Arab civilization (TESK 1973: 3-5; Koniordos 2001: 24). Artisans and craftsmen had a major place in the economics and politics of the Turkish Republic until the collapse of the import

Small-scale production accounted for nearly 73 percent of total employment in the Turkish economy in 1992, whereas in European Union the average percentage of those employed in small-scale production was approximately 53 percent (Demirci, Akpınar, and Çevik 2001: 120). The disparity is even greater if one compares employment by micro-scale production between the EU and Turkey: 34 percent versus 62 percent, respectively (Demirci et al. 2001: 120). Moreover, the average number of employees by business unit in each sector shows that some of the key sectors such as service and trade are dominated by businesses employing less than 3 or 4 workers in Turkey. This implies that these sectors are dominated by small shops, employing a limited number of persons and commanding limited resources (Demirci et al. 2001: 121). Thus, the professional occupations in Turkey are dominated by small shops in trades and services and small-scale production in industry. The fundamental implication of this result is that trade and production relations of shopkeepers, artisans, and small tradesmen cut across economic sectors. That is to say, relationship between small tradesmen and artisans are organized in the form of trade and production networks that cut across different economic activities. Furthermore, partly because of the state policies, but also because of centuries-old organizational traditions, similar economic activities are organized in geographically bounded areas (TESK 1973).³⁴ The following description of the two sites where I closely examine the development of protests shows the above points.

Siteler, Ankara is the “heart of furniture industry” in Turkey in the words of its inhabitants. The district is a concentrated area of furniture production and trade, as well as some subsidiary industries such as timber. Most of the furniture trade occurs at the stores in

substitution industrialization (ISI) policies in the late 1970s. After the 1970s, although with significant geographical variation, their importance began to decline (Ayata 1996: 494).

³⁴ Interview with Yenal Ansen, Ersen Yavuz, Suat Yalkın.

Karacakaya Street; “the front face of Siteler” as Zafer—a furniture-maker since thirty years—calls it.³⁵ Production ateliers are distributed into the narrower surrounding streets of Karacakaya Street. Both the production and the trade of furniture and furniture related goods are organized around dense networks of micro to medium size business units. The networks in this spatially concentrated economic activity area are not limited to trade and production. They also include neighborhood and kinship networks.³⁶ The spatial structure and the concentration of economic activities in Siteler ensure that any significant event on streets is visible or audible by those who are inside their shops.

A similar spatial and economic organization also applies to the second instance of protest in Karaköy, İstanbul. The street where the protest occurred is a narrow, long, sharply rising one; where each shop and tradesman has a clear visibility of the street and surrounding shops. The shops in the street are specialized on small electronic products. Television antennas, satellite receivers, and related electronic apparels are among the commonly sold goods. Local shopkeepers and tradesmen have important trade, finance, and neighborhood networks.³⁷

Development of the protest in these two sites follows similar trajectories. The following narration of the development of protest is repeated by several shopkeepers in Karaköy and Siteler:

Q: Do you remember how the protest started?

A: I heard a shout from the street. Then I saw 5-6 people coming from Taksim, protesting the crisis. Everybody around closed their shops. . . . We joined them on the street.³⁸

³⁵ Interview, December 2002.

³⁶ Various interviews, Siteler, Ankara, December 2002.

³⁷ Various interviews, Karaköy, İstanbul, January 2003.

³⁸ Interview with Zafer; Siteler, Ankara, December 2002.

It was the end of the Friday prayer. We always chat together after the prayer. We were three or four that day. We started talking about the crisis. Somebody asked why we are not doing something about it. We felt forsaken those days. We were already 10-20 people when we started walking toward the Chamber of Timber-Merchants. The Chamber was so passive during the whole thing. It didn't help us at all. We were more than 50 people when we walked down the Ereğli Street. People [shopkeepers] came out from their shops and joined us. We were calling our friends with cell-phones too. We were more than three hundred when we came to the Karacakaya Street.³⁹

The above accounts show that the gathering of a group of shopkeepers happened in a very short span of time. The role of spatial structure and spatial processes is crucial in these protests. In Karaköy it was the spatial proximity and structure of the street that enabled the visibility and audibility of a small core of protest. In Siteler, it was the spatial routine of Friday prayer that enabled the medium in which a small group of shopkeepers initiated the protest. Spatial routines such as having lunch in the same place, drinking tea, or visiting neighboring shops are echoed by several shopkeepers in their narration of protests:

We were having tea in front of my atelier, waiting for a friend for going to the lunch. We began talking about the economic crisis. Other people from neighboring shops joined us. We were more than twenty after a while. Somebody asked "Is there anyone who will help us?" The discussion was already heated, that was the question everybody was waiting. We started marching. It was lunch time, a lot of people joined us when they saw us marching. We were more than seven hundred after five-hundred meters.⁴⁰

The above account of the protest clearly shows the interaction of local networks, spatial proximity, and particular spatial structure of the business neighborhood that ensured visibility. It clearly shows how a protest group forms in minutes: A small group of friends grew with the

³⁹ Interview with Zafer; Siteler, Ankara, December 2002.

⁴⁰ Interview with Bekir; Siteler, Ankara, December 2002.

addition of artisans, tradesmen, and shopkeepers who are connected to the small group via neighborhood networks. In addition to that, this account also shows that emotions intensified and spread quickly. It is significant that Bekir mentions the question of “Is there anyone who will help us?” as a decisive moment where the heated discussion turns into action.

Where spatial processes and networks that tie shopkeepers were not present, protest did not occur. Mert is a furniture-maker in Etlik, Ankara, where there are no comparable concentration of production and trade activities. Shops here are scattered and there are no significant networks connecting them. He had similar understanding of the crisis, faced serious economic problems, and shared anger toward “those who are responsible.” Nevertheless, he did not join any protest activity: “I had no idea of what was going on. I watched the protests from my television. I didn’t see anybody protesting, nor heard anything like that here.”⁴¹

The other crucial element is the absence of prior organization and planning:

Q: You did not have any plan or organization beforehand?

A: No, it all happened in the blink of an eye.⁴²

Q: How did the protest start? Did you see any fliers or hear any talk beforehand about the protest?

A: No. It was not an organized thing. We were talking about the crisis, it was all we talked at that time. But there was no prior organization or somebody leading the protest. I just saw the neighbor shops going out and closing their shops. I went out and walked with them. We all

⁴¹ Interview with Mert; Etlik, Ankara, December 2002.

⁴² Interview with Ahmet; İstanbul, January 2003.

know each other very well here. Everyone was angry. We were primed. A spark was all we needed to set the fire.⁴³

A wealthy businessman in Karacakaya Street, Sitaler, who employs more than 30 workers in his store gave a similar account: “I didn’t know something like that would happen. I would know it if there had been talk of it, I employ a lot of people here. Nobody really knew what was going on. Neighboring shops closed their shops when they heard the shouts, they got into the street without even knowing where they were heading to.”⁴⁴

All three photo-journalists I interviewed emphasized this characteristic of shopkeeper protests, the absence of leadership and prior organization. They consistently contrasted these protests with other types of protests they reported in the past. Timur Soykan, a photo-journalist working for Radikal, mentioned that the labor protests he observed in Turkey tended to have a leadership group that could be identified as soon as he reached the location of contention. Mehmet Akif Aydın from Milliyet stressed that generally the protests he had seen (he had more than 5 years of experience in photo-journalism) in Istanbul were protests where he would be informed usually a day in advance. The information came either from the local police forces or from the organizations coordinating the event. Aydın added that it was immediately possible to see where the leading group was because the crowd generally repeated what the leadership group shouted.

Cultural-Emotional Dynamics of Protests

As I have previously mentioned, economic and political factors were at the roots of the cultural understandings of shopkeepers. For instance, a standard form of placard asking the resignation of government was present in nearly all protest events. What is intriguing in those

⁴³ Interview with Derviş Gedikoğlu; Karaköy, İstanbul, January 2003. Derviş Gedikoğlu did not use a pseudonym.

⁴⁴ Interview with Gürhan; Sitaler, Ankara, December 2002.

claims against the government is the coexistence of signs asking for the resignation of the government with signs asking for the support of the State. For example, a photograph taken in Üsküdar, Istanbul on April 10 shows protesters carrying placards asking for the resignation of the government alongside a placard asking the State to “look after” artisans.⁴⁵ This coexistence is an indicator of an understanding of a paternal, transcendental state (Heper 1985) among the protesters. I have argued in the above sections that there are specific historical and economic reasons why artisans have a paternalist image of the State. Furthermore, this paternalist relationship is by no means exclusive to the artisans. It is a general “state of mind”, as Esmer argues (1991: 128, 132) based on a 1987 survey of 1,004 members of Istanbul Chamber of Industry: “The image of a ‘paternal State’ is still very strong in the minds of Turks. They still expect the state to intervene directly and solve a wide variety of problems.”

Such an image of the state was echoed by several shopkeepers I interviewed. For example, in the case of Bahadır, a timber merchant in Sitaler, Ankara:

Q: Did you have cash-flow problems?

A: We couldn’t even pay our electricity bill. The State kept the prices so high. The State didn’t help us at all. If I were running the State, I would provide zero-interest loans to the artisans. But the State did nothing.⁴⁶

“Betrayal by the state” is closely linked to the understanding of entitlement among the artisans. The most common expression of entitlement for small tradesmen, artisans, and craftsmen was their right to “siftah”. The Turkish-English dictionary defines “siftah” as the “first sale of the morning” (Tuğlacı 1966: 748). “Siftah” is not only a sign of prosperity of the business, but it is also a sign of the sacredness of work and a sign of the right of “earning the

⁴⁵ Milliyet Photo Archive.

⁴⁶ Interview, December 2002.

livelihood.” These were violated during the economic crisis. For instance, shopkeepers at Ulus, Ankara, rallied simply with an ironic question of “What is Siftah?” written at their placards. When asked why they are protesting, their answer was that the question on the placards was sufficient to explain the purpose of their protest.⁴⁷

Corruption in government and the state bureaucracy was the common causal attribution of the crisis. With its clientalist administration; scandalous relationships between businessmen and politicians; and routinized reciprocal economic favors between capitalists and bureaucrats, Turkey is not far from Sardan’s (1999: 27) characterization of “corruption complex.” It is natural for shopkeepers, small tradesmen, and artisans to associate their economic grievances with the publicly visible “corruption complex.” This association is expressed in many forms. One interesting symbolic representation of the corruption was the use of hose-pipes. The metaphoric uses of hose-pipe as a noun and verb in Turkish language symbolize the illegal transfer of public funds and resources to the immoral businessmen. In addition to using this metaphor in their signs, protesters in several cities, including Adıyaman, Afyon, Ankara, İstanbul, and Samsun, carried hose-pipes to condemn corruption.⁴⁸

The perception of corruption is combined with the perception of inequality, and more specifically, with the perception of private banks and “rentiers” as gaining “unfair advantage” (Barbalet 2001: 68) and immoral economic payoffs. These perceptions are directed against a particular class or sub-class. Thus, protesters in Unkapanı, İstanbul marched with a sign saying “Not Bank Coffers But Our Livelihood.”⁴⁹ Ahmet, a tea-vendor in Karaköy expressed similar persuasion: “The banks were drained and the burden was on us, on shopkeepers, and on the

⁴⁷ Evrensel, April 4, 2001.

⁴⁸ Akşam, April 1, 2001; Cumhuriyet, April 6, 2001; Milliyet, April 7, 2001; Milliyet, April 10, 2001; Sabah, April 12, 2001; Hürriyet, April 12, 2001

⁴⁹ Milliyet Photo Archive, undated.

Turkish nation. We paid the cost if ten banks were emptied. We paid it with our taxes.”⁵⁰

These complaints point to the shopkeeper’s understanding of the causes of the economic crisis, hence of the causes of their economic grievances. The first quote resonates the belief that shopkeepers need economic resources not for storing wealth but for their very livelihood. It reflects a clear perception of inequality and condemnation of private wealth where shopkeepers economically suffered. The second quote shows that the guilt is not on everybody but on a specific set of people, on rich people who made their fortunes by draining public resources.

Not only did the protesters blame the private banks and rentiers for their corrupt economic stance, but they also expressed violent and intensive reaction toward political parties, as the following section shows. This reaction was fueled by a perception of a corrupt political system and immoral politicians, blamed to forsake artisans and small tradesmen.

The above cited cultural understandings formed the basis of emotional dynamics in artisan and tradesmen communities. These emotional dynamics were accompanied by changes in individual dispositions of act that are the basis of collective action. Similar to Trotsky’s (1980: 43) remark that “the revolution is there in the nerves before it comes out on the street,” shopkeeper protests were in the nerves before they hit the streets. For instance, Zafer, an atelier-owner in Siteler, echoed a common emotional reaction against the State while narrating the beginning of a rally: “I was angry at the State. The State was ignorant of our problems. It was confiscating our machines; it was forcing us to pay taxes during the crisis; it was making

⁵⁰ Interview, January 2003.

our lives harder instead of helping us.”⁵¹ It is significant that anger is triggered by the specific perception of the State failing him instead of helping him.

Local occupational chambers and the TESK were also targets of anger and outrage. Indeed, a protest in Siteler, Ankara began as a result of a rally against the local chamber of timber-merchants. Additionally, there are several instances where protests led to emotional and violent actions towards politicians and political parties. On April 6, the leader of the religious opposition party (Virtue Party), Recai Kutan, visited the Grand Bazaar. The visit was a political move, conveying the message that the religious party was sympathetic toward the problems of shopkeepers and tradesmen. A small crowd of party members also accompanied Kutan, asking for the resignation of the government. Nevertheless, the welcome he received from the tradesmen and shopkeepers in the Bazaar was not a friendly one. Instead, the bazaar community started booing him. Tradesmen at the bazaar shouted that they did not want any politicians there.⁵² This attitude was replicated in many protests across the country, showing the extensive and intensive nature of reaction against the political system and politicians that were perceived as failing the shopkeepers. For instance, on April 11, a small group of local shopkeepers and tradesmen gathered in front of the Atatürk High School in Konya. The group stoned the buildings of major political parties, without distinguishing between opposition and government.⁵³ On April 4, truck drivers in Konya shouted for a military rule instead of a civilian one, a few hours after the florist’s protest against the Prime Minister.⁵⁴

The feelings of helplessness and abandonment were echoed by several shopkeepers I interviewed in Ankara and İstanbul. One of the leading initiators of a protest in Siteler, Bekir,

⁵¹ Interview, December 2002.

⁵² Hürriyet, April 7, 2001.

⁵³ Cumhuriyet, April 12, 2001.

⁵⁴ Radikal, Akit, April 5, 2001.

a 40 year old furniture-maker, expressed his loyalty to the State and his love for his country even before I asked him any questions regarding the protests in Sıtel. It is striking that he stressed a couple of times that he did not want to protest but had no other option. “We were at the end of our rope,” he said.

Such feelings and the emotional responses they lead to can be better understood by considering the social background and economic capital of artisans, small tradesmen, and shopkeepers in Turkey. Most of the artisans come from rural parts of the country at an early age and have either small or no financial capital. The usual pathway for having their own shop is either by inheritance or accumulation of enough capital through a long process of apprenticeship. Thus, as several shopkeepers I interviewed underlined, the possibility of losing their shop during the economic crisis meant losing all their accumulated capital. Such an indefinite future causes concern, anxiety, and fear.⁵⁵

Conclusion

This paper examined a cloudy area of collective action. Spontaneity is rarely examined in collective action, social movements, and contentious politics literature. Earlier theories of collective behavior too easily accepted a false conception of spontaneity, explaining it with irrationality and immorality. The evolution of collective behavior studies into the social movements and contentious politics studies dismissed spontaneous collective action simply because of the legacy the term carried with it. When spontaneity was rarely examined in contemporary social movements and contentious politics field, the researchers did not call into question the various causal factors producing spontaneous collective action. By adopting a minimal definition of spontaneity in collective action as an emergent group-level pattern with

⁵⁵ Various interviews: Bahadır, Bekir, Güray, Volkan, Zafer; Sıtel, Ankara, December 2002.

two main characteristics, namely unplanned mobilization and rapid formation of a protest group, I posed spontaneity in collective action as an analytical problem for the study of collective action. My leading motivation was to answer the question of what were the causal processes that produced spontaneous social protest in the April 2001 Turkish shopkeeper protests.

Both protests analyzed above unfolded a similar pattern of the development of protest in a very short span of time. A small core of people instigated a protest where a large number of people gather together with the same purpose: Raising their voice against an authority and against conditions that they found unacceptable and unjust; that they felt strong emotional reactions against. Several shopkeepers, tradesmen, and artisans I interviewed consistently mentioned that they were “at the end of their rope.” Being ready, primed for protest was echoed several times in shopkeepers’ narration. This readiness was due to a set of factors analyzed above: Cultural schemas such as the image of paternal state, the sense of betrayed entitlement; a shared set of emotions such as helplessness and anger. Thus, the inquiry into the development of spontaneity in two business sites in Turkey supports my propositions. The formation of an insurgent group of shopkeepers, tradesmen, and artisans was possible because they had common economic grievances, cultural understandings, and emotional reactions.

The central idea is that improvised social protest is produced by small-scale interaction that depended on emotional dynamics, cultural schemas, spatial processes, and local networks. I suggested that all the factors emphasized in this paper were influenced by large-scale economic and political factors. Thus, I suggested that the paternal role of the Turkish state and the class position of artisans and tradesmen shaped cultural understandings. I argued that the dominance of small-scale production in Turkish economy and the structure of production and

trade neighborhoods produced various networks that facilitated the creation of protest groups. The model proposed accounts for “how interaction in small groups aggregates to form large-scale patterns” (Granovetter 1973: 1360) as well as how large-scale patterns enable and restrain the interaction in small-groups. Furthermore, it empowers human agency, while at the same time it recognizes the social conditions under which social circumstances are shaped.

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