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WHAT KIND OF MO(VE)MENT IS FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE? MOTIVATION, SUCCESS PERCEPTION AND CLIMATE ACTION FRAMING IN FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE CROATIA

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ABSTRACT

Fridays for Future climate protests, which began as individual actions, soon morphed into a powerful global youth movement, with millions participating in Global Climate Strikes in 2019. In this study, we conducted 19 semi-structured interviews with the organizers and participants of the Fridays for Future Croatia movement and we aimed to examine the main characteristics of these protests in the context of new social movements theory and contemporary movements research, as well as in the specific national context. Challenging the suitability of the new social movements theory to adequately explain the Fridays for Future movement, we found many connections with contemporary social movements: participants are a new generation of first-time activists; social media use is crucial and qualitatively different; the organisational structure is completely loosened; and the issues encompass environmental protection and political economy, urging the transformation of both individual and social identities and socio-economic systems.

KEY WORDS

new social movements theory, contemporary social movements, environmental movements, Fridays for Future, Croatia

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INTRODUCTION

On 20th August 2018, a 15-year-old Swedish high school student, Greta Thunberg, sat in front of the Swedish Parliament in Stockholm with a sign 'School Strike for the Climate' [1]. Her lone strike continued as she began to boycott school every Friday, urging the Swedish government to honour the Paris Agreement on climate change [1]. This 'Fridays for Future' campaign soon had millions of followers, who joined the four Global climate strikes in 2019 [2]. Their goal was to facilitate climate change mitigation by pressuring policymakers and raising public awareness about climate change [3]. The campaign was met with some criticism as well, most prominently from heads-of-state, such as the U.S. President, Donald Trump [4].

This study analysed the Fridays for Future (FFF) youth climate strikes to deepen our understanding of the protests in Croatia, the motivation behind it and efficacy perceptions. We conducted a sociological qualitative analysis using semi-structured interviews with FFF Croatia organisers and participants, one of the FFF's national variants. Participants were asked about their involvement in the organizing and participation of the protests; and how they experienced the many different aspects of the protests in Croatia. The new social movements (NSM) theory and theoretical contributions from recent research on contemporary (post 2008) movements were employed to inform our understanding of this phenomenon. Croatia is a particularly interesting case because of the complex socio-political context of this Central European post-socialist EU country, which has a recorded passivity with regards to activism, even among young people, and a somewhat lower level of environmental concern, specifically about climate change.

THEORETICAL APPROACH: NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS THEORY AND CONTEMPORARY SOCIAL MOVEMENTS CHARACTERISTICS

Although the NSM theory has been around since the 1960s, it is still a widely acceptable model for the analysis of social movements, protests, and collective actions. NSMs, which arose from the developed countries entering a stage of late modernity as described by Giddens [5], differed largely from traditional social movements in their topics of interest, goals, and ways of mobilising. New social movements are defined as anti-fundamentalist, anti-hegemonic, anti-totalitarian, and anti-bureaucratic in their aims and practices, pointing to the growing politicisation of everyday life in postmodernity and the intrusion of the political and economic sectors into everyday life [6-10]. NSMs turned their attention toward identity-related topics, post-materialistic social values, and lifestyle [11, 12]. Environmentalism was a key NSM from the 1970s onward, and was one of the first (and, as it turns out, the longest lasting) movements considered in literature as 'new'. It is also one of the more successful NSMs, succeeding in achieving its goals and continuing to mobilise the public [9; p.114]. Modern environmentalism had unprecedent mass mobilisation, and relied on the achievements of modern science, mass media, new open political space, and expanding proportions of an educated middleclass population, who saw environmental problems as a consequence of modernity [9, 13, 14].

However, as Buechler [11, 15] warned, despite the ideal type characterisation of NSMs, many theoretical approaches make an epistemological mistake when analysing collective action as one-dimensional (see also [16]). Rootes [14] underscored this problem by discussing environmental movements' history and development, which at least partially, and at times completely, broke the NSM rules. For example, having a non-formal organisation and adhering to postmodern values is certainly prominent in environmentalism, but they often do not completely reject or exclude the role of large organisations existing alongside non-formal, localised, ad-hoc practices [14]. In addition, their actions are based on

post-materialistic green values, but they have also pointed to the material issues of individuals and communities who are directly affected by environmental degradation in discussing their modes and perspectives of survival (e.g. the prevention of agricultural activities because of environmental pollution and climate change; see, for example, [17]).

At the beginning of the 21st century, an increasing number of authors detected additional novel elements in NSMs as well, especially in the context of mobilisation, technology use, and social movements' goals and collective identification [18-21]. These authors defined them as postmodern [22; p.19], which may not be the most precise assessment, since postmodern key characteristics (as well as the defined period of postmodernism, which overlaps with NSMs' development) do not differ that much from NSMs. Just like other NSMs, they also rallied around post-materialistic values, had informal organisations, horizontal leadership/participation structures, and were largely reliant on mass media and technology mobilisation, mostly of the middle class. However, at the same time, there are some undeniable differences between the 'new' and what we term as 'contemporary' social movements.

A prominent characteristic of contemporary social movements in the new century has been using the Internet as a primary means of communication and mobilisation. The new generation of activists, especially those associated with post-2008 social movements, rely on the Internet and social networks to an extent that was not present before, and in a qualitatively different ways than earlier movements' use of the mass media [18, 19]. The Internet and social networks also contribute to developing a collective identity, combining technology and participation, and providing a source for peer pressure to recruit participants and development of so-called 'self-mobilisation' [22; p.14].

Besides the internet, the social and political context of the 21st century has also had a defining influence on contemporary social movements as well, especially the period after the 2008 Great Recession [19]. For example, Milkman [19], referring to the precariousness of the labour market and describing American Millennials as highly educated but unemployed, stated that contemporary social movements are led 'by the graduate with no future' [19; p.5] who, although 'economically inactive are not necessarily politically inactive – can form powerful constituencies that lobby for a reduction in inequality or even a fundamental change in the system itself'. Consequently, alongside the affluent white middle class that is still predominantly present in some movements, other contemporary movements also attract people from lower income households, the unemployed, the educated, and those who bring issues of class and resource distribution back into social movements – issues that have not been represented since the 1980s [19, 21, 23].

Following Kerb's 1982 theory, Vrablikova [21] made a distinction between 'movements of affluence', which correspond to NSMs, and 'movements of crisis', which are more in line with contemporary social movements of the post-Great Recession period. Returning questions of capitalism to the centre of interest, a dominant socio-economic system is seen as the root of inequality and injustice that inspires collective mobilisation (e.g. in the Occupy and Anti-Austerity movements in the U.S. and Europe) [19, 21]. For more on Occupy as a 'new new social movement', see [24].

Although Vrablikova and Milkman focused more on the Anti-Austerity and Occupy movements and did not include environmental movements in their analyses, a theoretical connection can be drawn based on the mobilisation in contemporary climate movements where the crisis is visible and life conditions are threatened not only for the present, but for future generations as well, motivating further mobilisation of the movement. The climate movement is much like other contemporary movements in its intersectional framing of the issues, informal organisation, and use of the Internet and social networks for mobilisation [25, 26]. Within the climate

movement (since 2009, with mobilisation around the UNFCCC Summit in Copenhagen), a climate justice movement has been growing [26-29], connecting the issues of environmental degradation and climate change with broader issues of human rights and perceived injustices in the economic system.

There has been several research on FFF movement describing its organization, mobilisation, problem framing, motivation etc., and to analyse how protesters frame climate action, Marquardt [30] finds that although FFF protestors call for deeper societal transformation their strong focus on science-driven politics overshadows broader societal debates, leaving space for only techno-centric, apolitical and market-driven solution framing. Perhaps most comprehensive comparative survey has described in two rounds the attitudes, motivations, and affiliations of young protesters who took part in Global Climate Strikes in 2019 (in first round conducted in 13 EU cities, and in second with added 6 EU cities [31, 32]). The studies showed that young first-time activists were significantly more present in school strikes, with a predominance of female organisers and that there were no formal organisations behind the school strikes. In addition, protesters had both instrumental (pressure government to change) and expressive (expressing identity) motivations. The study further revealed that young protesters place importance on the need for individual behaviour changes, put their trust in science, but not politicians, and that they are politically inclined, despite not yet being politically active (not yet having the right to vote).

Since there has been no research on FFF movement in Croatia, nor has Croatia been included in comparative studies mentioned before, we conducted a qualitative analysis of FFF Croatia to gain a deeper understanding of the movement and protesters motivations and perceptions, and to identify similarities and differences with already published research.

FRIDAYS FOR FUTURE CROATIA

Croatia is geographically, historically, and culturally a Central and South-East European country with a post-socialist legacy. Its legacy is particularly reflected in the lack of citizens mobilisation to social or political action, especially around NSM topics of interest. The European Value Survey reported a low percentage of citizens engaged in activism, volunteering, voting, and other forms of political and civic activism [33-35]. However, the passivity among Croatian citizens cannot be exclusively attributed to the older generation who experienced an authoritarian socio-political context. Ilišin [36] reported a noticeable civic passivity among 15- to 29-year-olds, see also [37]. It should be mentioned here that there is a noticeable rise in neo-conservative activism in Croatia, especially during the last decade, which defies the previous statement. However, there is yet no substantial research about this kind of activism. Youth activism and volunteering that is relevant for this paper, however, is still reported to be generally low [37]. Furthermore, the author showed that Croatian youth were mostly worried about materialistic rather than post-materialistic issues, such as their low standard of life, lack of life perspectives, and unemployment [36]. Some authors explain this as more than the inherited passivity from the socialist period, reflecting the process of post-war re-traditionalization of Croatian society from the 1990s onward, which was further reinforced by the period of social depression following the 2008 economic crisis [38, 39]. In addition, there is a reported general decline of trust in key democratic institutions and the state [40-42], which all contribute to general dissatisfaction, social anxiety, and passivity [43; p.105]. This inherited lack of interest in activism has translated into a lack of education for civil society [44; p.799].

Croatian citizens rate lower than the EU average regarding climate change concerns [45]. This can also be attributed to inherited lack of education on such topics, the process of

re-traditionalization, and a general feeling of futility regarding social actions. Given this, it was surprising that the FFF strikes took hold in Croatia despite its low activism, low environmental and climate change concerns, and a more materialistic orientation.

FFF Croatia began with the first Global Climate protest and the protests and activities continued throughout 2019. The high school students had Facebook [46] and Instagram [47] pages, which, to date, have 3 002 and 2 566 followers, respectively. Their goals were very much in line with the general FFF goals, but also emphasised some local issues (e.g. the consequences of climate change that can already be felt in Croatia, such as floods, droughts, and temperature change, and about Croatian contributions to climate change through deforestation, traditional agriculture, tourism, etc.). The largest strike attracted around 1000 to 2 000 pupils in the capital Zagreb with a hundred or two more in six other cities across the country. The protesters compiled an official document with eight specific climate demands addressed to the government and the Parliament: 1) the government must publicly acknowledge that climate change poses existential danger and act accordingly; 2) the Parliament must declare a reduction of greenhouse gas emissions; 3) formation of an interdisciplinary 'Climate Commission' of scientists; 4) stopping all fossil fuel projects and investing in renewable energy; 5) ban plastics; 6) ban the sale of fossil fuel powered vehicles and provide incentives for electric vehicles and public transport; 7) ensure quality waste management systems; and 8) the Ministry of Education must introduce education on anthropogenic climate change in school curricula.

Between protests, they remained active on social media, participated in public panels and interviews about climate change, and organised or promoted additional activities, such as tree planting, clean ups, etc. For the most part, their actions were not radical. The only exception was a public performance on April 24, possibly influenced by Greta's speech in Strasbourg, when some of the organisers brought a coffin in front of the government with the message: 'You have killed our future'. There were also some posts supporting some of the actions from the Anonymous or leftist Green parties, but mostly they claimed political neutrality. They rarely officially responded to negative criticism in the media or on their social pages. Once they reacted with a longer post explaining that they were not protesting 'to become famous' or 'to avoid school and schoolwork':

> We are doing this not only for ourselves but for everyone who will suffer the consequences of climate change (…) We refuse to be the ones who did not do anything. Also, some say that all we do is protest. We also organise clean-ups, tree plantings, we have a panel this week (…) [46] (post from 1st May 2019.)

As the protests continued every Friday, they began to falter in support and participation, especially with the COVID-19 pandemic, although there was another online protest organised in April 2020. The protests did receive public support from the Ministers of Education and Environment, celebrities, media, (especially green) NGOs, and the Prime Minister, who talked officially to the representatives.

METHODOLOGY

SAMPLE

The qualitative empirical data were collected through 19 semi-structured interviews with high school student FFF Croatia strike organisers (n = 13) and participants (n = 6), of which 16 were female and three were male. All were between 16- and 19-years- old. Five of the interviewed students were first year university students at the time of the interview but were still in high school during the 2019 protests. The interviewees were from the capital Zagreb

(15) and the city of Split (4), the two largest cities in Croatia, where the most and largest FFF strikes and actions were held. Initial contacts with high school students were established via their Facebook page and snowball nonprobability sampling was used to recruit additional interviewees. Saturation and overall information density and quality in qualitative research and thematic analysis is not an easy task and according to recent theoretical and practical findings [47] a term information power is found to be more adequate ([48; p.28]. Accordingly, "information power" was reached when major themes and experiences of interviewees started to overlap causing bigger bodies of data to occur during the coding and interpretation process. Basically, as more and more interviews were analysed, themes became clearer and interviewees accounts have been satiating the themes even more.

DATA COLLECTION

The results presented here are part of a broader two-year study of Croatian high school and university students' environmental attitudes and behaviour, funded by the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Zagreb ('School Strike 4 Climate Croatia: Environmental Attitudes and Activism of High-School Students in the City of Zagreb', 2018-2019; 'Environmental Knowledge, Attitudes and Behaviour of Croatian Students', 2019 2020). The interviews were conducted between January and June of 2020. This qualitative section of the research was approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Sociology at the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences in Zagreb (05-2019/20). Students who were under age 18 were required to inform their parents to be allowed to participate.

Anonymity was secured by giving all respondents alternative code names with a random number and letter for their gender (for example 3F, 9M). No person names or other identifying information was included in the transcripts. Interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes and were conducted and transcribed verbatim by the authors and sociology students from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences face-to-face in public places, schools, and universities. Sociology students already have some experience and were also additionally instrcuted by the authors on the interview conduction and transcription procedures in line with sociological ethical research standards before they went out to field research. Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, seven interviews were conducted online via Skype. Interviews were conducted in the Croatian language and all the quoted citations were translated into English by the authors. Interviews were recorded using a voice recorder or a mobile phone and all interviewers, especially students, as part of their initial education before conducting the interviews,were instructed to delete all contacts, files, and interview transcripts to ensure the participant's anonymity. After the transcripts were checked, they were stored in the project leader's archive. The data can only be used by project team members for scientific purposes.

DATA ANALYSIS

The interview protocol included the following topics: personal motivation for involvement, how the strikes were organised, reception, perception of the goals and success of the strikes, whom they considered responsible for climate change mitigation, and participant socio-demographic characteristics. The semi-structured nature of the interview allowed the interviewer to ask additional questions to probe deeper responses, and the interviewees to add things they deemed important. Data were analysed using MAXQDA 2020 software for qualitative data analysis. Thematic analysis was used, defined by Braun and Clarke [49] and King [50] as a useful method for examining the perspectives of research participants, the similarities and differences in their responses. We inductively generated codes directly from

the data and themes were generated from the generated codes. Regarding the coding procedure, all three of the authors of this article worked on coding and there was a uniformity of response for multiple coders which is a commonly used credibility method. Peer debriefing among authors was used to check the credibility of the analysis. The results were further checked against the existing FFF quantitative study. Finally, the theoretical background of NSM theory was used to analyse our results to respond to the main research objective of the article.

RESULTS

PERSONAL ACTIVISM AND SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

While some interviewees were volunteers at one of the largest Croatian environmental non-governmental organization (ENGO) 'Zelena akcija' ('Green Action'), only a few of them were active members of it or any other ENGO. Regardless of this, some of them still emphasized that they were personally practicing pro-environmental behaviour and implementing it in their households. Regarding their socio-demographic characteristics, most of the interviewed students' parents had university degrees. Interestingly, all interviewed students stated that they plan to continue their education after they finish high school. There are again similarities with Wahlström et al.'s [30] research, where most of the protesters had never demonstrated before. Another similarity was that the organisers of the school strikes were predominantly women. While this is a qualitative study and we do not pertain to make conclusions on the entire population of highschool student organizers and participants of FFF strikes in Croatia, we find it interesting to point out the similarities between Croatia and other international research of these protests.

THEME 1: PERSONAL MOTIVATION FOR PARTICIPATION AND ORGANIZATION OF THE FFF STRIKES

The source of students' motivation to organise or join the FFF strikes in Croatia was diverse. Most stated two main sources of motivation: their parents, who either had pro-environmental attitudes or were activists themselves, and a general sense of necessity to raise awareness about ecological issues. The students' altruistic motivation was obvious throughout the interviews, as some exhibited a sense of urgency regarding the subject that they felt directly affected them and future generations (e.g. there will be no more clean air, water, or natural world as we know it today). This can also be seen in expressing care for other people, and more generally other living beings which is an interesting source of motivation exhibited by some of the participants in FFF strikes. From altruistic motivations stems also the expressed secondary motivation to raise awareness about anthropogenic climate change, and to participate in protests. Furthermore, the so called "Greta effect" [51] was also noticeable as some interviewees pointed out Greta Thunberg and their friends or peers as important motivators for participation and organization of FFF strikes in Croatia. In their own words:

> "My parents have always been very ecologically aware and when you realise what is really going on and that there is a possibility that your children will be living in a world in which they won't be able to breathe normally (…) for me that is, like, saddening." (4F)
>
> "Mostly I was motivated by Greta Thunberg. I first found out about her when my mother pointed her out … since then I had seen several of Greta's speeches and her TED Talk which really made me realise how this is a big thing." (9M)

Interviewees responses to some extend correspond to Wahlström et al.'s research [31] in which Greta Thunberg was a powerful motivator for strikes along with a sense of importance regarding the climate change topic. In addition, it seems that Croatian parents' support was

very important for some students; while the students themselves were not activists, their parents either were or supported activism, at least on this topic.

THEME 2: STRUCTURE OF THE PROTESTS

Students unanimously reported that the protest organisation was done by them alone. However, they also spoke of assistance from their schools and teachers, support from one of the leading ENGOs in Croatia ('Green Action'), and networks they created between schools, cities, and internationally. This kind of network building is not only important for building a movement [14], but it seemed to provide the interviewees with know-how on both protest organization and protest outreach:

> "They totally supported us logistically, financially and psychologically, we had numerous meetings with them, they gave us all of their knowledge and advice how to use peaceful protests to arrive to a solution, how to approach media with symbolic actions, how to communicate with the media." (7F)

Although they had organisers and participants, there was no real hierarchy and many of our interviewees said they soon became organisers themselves, recruiting others, writing slogans, contacting the media, etc. They also said that many of their peers who were not directly involved, helped with recruitment and disseminating information about the protests through their own social media and personal networks.

Students also talked about the key role of the Internet, especially social networks such as Instagram and Facebook in organising the strikes, spreading information, and recruiting others; they largely credited social media for the success of the strikes.

> "It was positive, because when you put an event on social media, one student confirms that he or she is coming, the second one sees that and confirms that they are coming, and the same for the third, and that's how it spreads. Really, social media platforms really helped, because young people are present there 24/7." (19F)

With regard to organization and mobilisation of the protest, our results correspond with results of a comparative quantitative study of 13 EU cities [31], which reported the same lack of formal and overarching organisation behind the protests because the students were mostly the lone force behind organising and leading the strikes there as well. It also reported that social networks were a powerful marketing and recruiting tool, as well as personal connections, which was highlighted and accounted for by our interviewees as well.

THEME 3: PUBLIC RECEPTION OF THE PROTESTS IN CROATIA

Interviewed student organizers and participants highlighted the mixed reception they received. Although they appeared in the media and prominent politicians and celebrities expressed public support, some participants felt that their demands and protests were disregarded by the government, particularly because of their young age (for analysis of media coverage and ageist linguae see [52]). Nevertheless, some participants were quite aware of their future roles as voters, activists, politicians, and policymakers. They felt that other negative criticism was related to the general apathy in Croatia; the overwhelming sense that protests are futile; the belief that citizens, especially young people, lack the power to influence government decisions; and a general lack of understanding regarding climate change as an important topic for Croatia. Aforementioned is perceived as learned behaviour where lack of citizens engagement is passed on from generation to generation, and is supported by external locus of control:

> "I think it is in some way instilled upon us, the adults put it in our heads, that we can't make a change, so you rather don't bother with that. I also heard this from my professors when I came to them with the idea to organise the protests, they also said: 'Why bother, you won't do anything, it's not realistic'." (6F)

> "Protests in Croatia are not so well known, we rarely protest, and when we do rarely anyone comes, and that's the Croatian problem because we expect someone else to do it for us." (5F)

Students also said they received mixed support from their teachers. A very small number supported by coming to the protests themselves, but others showed their support by allowing absence from their classes or more often included climate change as a topic in their classes. Only a small number were unsupportive or openly denied climate change.

THEME 4: PERCEIVED SUCCESS OF THE PROTESTS' GOALS

According to some interviewees, the most important strike goals were to educate the public and raise awareness about the importance of the environment protection and the importance and consequences of climate change. They felt that these goals were achieved and they largely considered the protests successful:

> "The goals are that the public opens their eyes and sees what's going on in the world, what is happening to the environment, what is going on with climate change..." (19F)

Additional goals mentioned by some students were putting pressure on the Croatian government to act by adhering to FFF Croatia's eight specific climate demands and solving some local environmental issues, such as waste management, which effects both cities in which the interviews were conducted, Zagreb and Split. When discussing whether they thought the strikes could influence Croatian as well as global politics, some of the interviewed students exhibited a rather sceptical view of Croatian politics. So, although interviewees had a notion that one important goal was achieved (influencing the public perception), the another goal (influencing the government) was seemingly given up on *a priori*.

> "The problem is that our politicians are always looking at momentary profit, they will do anything to get money now. No one looks to invest for a better future." (13F)

Regarding the future of the strikes and the movement in general, some students also felt that protests will not be enough, and that movement should include other forms of public/collective actions. They recommended further education through workshops and similar peaceful activities.

> "The protests are, how to say, a good way to turn the attention towards a certain problem, so I think that the protests should continue, but they alone are not enough, and alongside the protests some other events or workshops should be organised." (1M)

THEME 5: RESPONSIBILITY FOR CHANGE

Regarding the responsibility for addressing climate issues and challenges, interviewed students in general agreed that new laws should be implemented to regulate and support ecologically responsible and climate positive behaviour from citizens. They felt that the responsibility is on everyone equally, but they did note that it is not reasonable to expect people with a lower economic status to contribute the same as wealthier individuals:

> "The role should be on the citizens to change their lifestyle (...), but the government has to have some policies, something that will change." (8F)
>
> "I think its best solved on local jurisdiction, but for it to happen locally there has to be a want from the leading party, we can all buy electric cars, but it is in vain when we don't have a station where we can charge those cars (...) So there should be some sort of cooperation and cohesion between the government, local jurisdiction and citizens themselves." (7F)

Although some interviewees expressed the need for lifestyle change, a strong sense of need and urgency was felt for systemic changes and convergent politics in Croatia. This deviates from both Wahlstrom et al. [31] and De Moor et al. [32] comparative studies where there was a stronger emphasis from respondents on lifestyle change, despite climate justice discourse from the movement 'leaders' [53]. This, however will be more accurately confirmed in future quantitative research on this topic in Croatia.

DISCUSSION

There is sufficient evidence identifying FFF as a collective movement rather than individual sporadic social 'moments' or actions, including its evident organisational and participatory structure, goals, and (however limited) power to influence change in public and political perception. However, using the NSM theory framework to inform our understanding of the FFF movement revealed that at least some of the FFF characteristics stretch that frame and make it more like other 'contemporary' movements of the 21st century, such as Occupy or Anti-Austerity. In the case of Croatia, besides the need to raise awareness on environmental issues and the care about other living beings, there is also a sense of urgency regarding threatened life conditions (i.e. consequences of climate change), and a notion of systemic change regarding climate action. Those are some of the prominent characteristics of contemporary movements that bring back the material issues and resource distribution in the way that problems are framed by the movements. In that way we can say that our interviewees combine post-materialistic (in line with NSM theory) with more materialistic issues (e.g. feeling that their life conditions are threatened, and an awareness of climate change consequences and climate change policy effects on specific local issues that directly affect them, such as waste management in their cities).

Specific to our case, interviewees find themselves within the wider socio-political context where they feel discriminated against because of their age and lack of economic and political power, leaving them sceptical and distrustful. However, they place that distrust in the wider socio-cultural context while deciding to break from that context with regard to climate action. In that sense, there is a perception of lack of responsibility and action on behalf of government, but also a positive perception of collective efficacy regarding protest influence on public awareness about climate change.

In the organizational sense, FFF Croatia, like other national variants have loose organizational structure and informal networks which they form partly ad hoc (between different schools and cities), and partly with receiving support from other formal environmental organisations (and even international networks). They use spontaneous mobilisation through mass media to recruit adherents, allowing each fraction of the movement to decide on the mobilisation process and the mode of protest. Just like in other national variants [31] reliance on mass media, especially social media and the Internet, is supported by personal connections and acquaintances.

Finally, FFF Croatia have mostly remained moderate and peaceful in their requests and actions (unlike some other contemporary movements, but similar to other FFF national variants). However, a moderate approach is often connected to the idea that the solution lies primarily in individual choices and non-radical social changes toward pro-environmental behaviour, while a more radical notion often requires fundamental changes of the socio-economic system. In this sense, goals that our interviewees put forward are both moderate and radical, because they ask for individual and social change, but also systemic change in the way the government approaches and handles the climate crisis.

The main limitations of this research are its lack of a control group and low sample variability. Future research would benefit from including high school students who were not involved in the strikes, to gain a more thourough account on youth perception about importance and urgency of climate action, problem framing outside or within climate justice discourse, and perception on protest success. Furthermore, some topics emerged during the interviews that will be explored further through a quantitative survey of high school students in Croatia, including activism and collective efficacy beliefs as potentially important predictors of student engagement. Lastly, a study relying on ethnographic methods of data collection and analysis can be a potential avenue to provide clarity and solidify the interpretation of the FFF movement in the Croatian context.

CONCLUSION

Our qualitative analysis of FFF Croatia revealed that, in theoretical sense, while NSM theory is useful for understanding some of the FFF characteristics, it is clearly not a perfect fit. With motivation both materialistic and post-materialistic and the goals that include individual as well as systemic social and political changes, FFF Croatia retain both NSM characteristics and contemporary movement characteristics. Contemporary social movements are characterised by a very different socio-political context of the new century, an increasingly precarious labour market, insecure futures in the economic and environmental (climate) sense, and the development and widespread use of new communication technologies.

The significance of this movement is that a typically voiceless group of high school students spoke on a topic they felt greatly affects them, despite their lack of political or economic power, mixed public support, and in countries like Croatia, where such movements are quite unexpected. They used all means available to their generation to promote their goals (skipping school, relying on the social media, engaging their parents, peers, teachers, creating international networks, and eliciting help from other NGOs, celebrities, politicians etc.). Thus, they contributed to the changing socio-political landscape of civic activism and raised public awareness on the often-abstract topics of environment protection and climate change. They also started a wider discussion on class inequalities as they warned that a greener lifestyle is not affordable for everyone. Therefore, this and similar contemporary environmental movements warrant sociological attention.

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