

Fukushima and Civil Society

The Japanese Anti-Nuclear Movement
from a Sociopolitical Perspective

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Chapter 4

Post-Fukushima anti-nuclear movement

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4 Post-Fukushima anti-nuclear movement

The eruption of social protests after March 2011 was Japanese society's reaction to the nuclear accident at the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant and its consequences but also – and perhaps more importantly, as argued in Chapter 2 – to the actions taken by the government and the power plant operator, TEPCO, in the weeks and months following the disaster. The post-Fukushima cycle developed, similarly to the post-Chernobyl wave, as a protest against NPPs, referred to in Japanese as *hangepatsu undō* (anti-nuclear power plant movement), but also as *datsugenpatsu undō* (literally “out-off NPPs”), which can be translated as “movement for abolishing NPPs” or “nuclear-phaseout movement.” Along with the demand to close down nuclear facilities, the transition to new, green technologies became an important goal. The term *datsugenpatsu* first appeared in Japanese newspapers after the Chernobyl accident, referring predominantly to the situation in Western Europe (e.g., *Asahi Shinbun*, 14 July 1986, p. 5; 27 July 1986, p. 9), then addressing the problem in Japan, and finally becoming very common after March 2011.

The most conspicuous activities in that period were carried out by groups involved in direct action, such as demonstrations, rallies, pickets, marches, and political happenings, which are, in fact, the symbols of the anti-nuclear movement and are often analyzed almost exclusively in this respect. They are the most prominent political activities, publicized and commented on by the mass media. Direct forms of action, to use sociologist Oguma Eiji's figurative comparison (Oguma, 2013, p. 208), are the “flower of the movement” (*undō no hana*).

After the accident at Fukushima Daiichi, there was a notable increase in this type of social activity, as well as in the importance attached to it. According to research conducted by Oguma (2013, pp. 193–194), in 2013, of 1,600 civic organizations (*shimin dantai*) under investigation, as many as 47 percent reported “participation in demonstrations” as one of the primary methods to achieve their goals. It was almost a fourfold increase compared with the responses obtained in a similar survey in 2006. Nevertheless, it is worth emphasizing that demonstrations are not the anti-nuclear movement's only form of action, and, as the survey shows, they are also not the most important. “Symposia and seminars” (74 percent) came first, followed by “material assistance and fundraising” for victims of disasters second (50 percent; Oguma, 2013, pp. 193–194).

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The flower, following Oguma's metaphor, is only one part of the plant; it also has leaves, a stem, and roots, and functions in a broader "associative ecosystem," to borrow from Michael Edwards (2011, pp. 7–8). In addition, therefore, to a visible and conspicuous form of protest, the number and variety of groups and organizations constituting the post-Fukushima anti-nuclear ecosystem in Japan are much broader and more diverse than usually assumed (see also Figure 1.2). Those groups and organizations are divided into seven functional categories, as discussed in Chapter 1:

- 1 direct action – organizing demonstrations, manifestations, rallies, and similar forms of collective protest (synonymous with the term protest groups);
- 2 research and education – focusing on research, information collection, analysis, and public education on nuclear energy;
- 3 watchdog – monitoring the work of state institutions and private entities in the field of nuclear energy or matters related to the Fukushima accident;
- 4 aid – directly assisting persons and organizations affected by nuclear energy;
- 5 legal – supporting lawsuits against the state and companies directly responsible for the Fukushima Daiichi accident or related to the nuclear industry;
- 6 policy advocacy – preparing alternative programs and plans for energy policy;
- 7 other – including such diverse entities as electoral campaigners, local governments, international organizations, financial institutions, as well as private companies.

In the following sections, I will trace the origins and analyze the organizational features of the first type of direct-action groups, exemplified by the best-known Metropolitan Coalition against Nukes (hereafter called Hangenren).

“Flower” of the anti-nuclear movement

Organizations involved in direct action attract attention, as mentioned, because of the conspicuous nature of their repertoire and strategy. After March 2011, the number of protest groups increased significantly. To show diversity within this category, the analysis in this chapter and the following, Chapter 5, focuses on six case studies, the well-known examples of Hangenren, Sayonara Nukes, Tendo Hiroba, Women of Fukushima, TwitNoNukes, and the Right's Network. Before taking a closer look at these organizations, I will outline the development of social protests immediately following the events of 11 March 2011, which expose an essential feature of the anti-nuclear movement, the coexistence of new and old groups.

The largest wave of anti-nuclear demonstrations swept through the Japanese islands in mid-2012 – that is, more than 1 year after the Fukushima accident – in response to the order from Prime Minister Noda to restart the reactors at the Ōi NPP. Nevertheless, smaller, but intense, demonstrations began soon after the accident. The first protest, according to Oguma (2013, pp. 197–198), citing

a report by a journalist, Iwakami Yasumi, of the *Independent Web Journal* (IWJ), took place in front of the METI on March 12, the day after the earthquake. It is not known who organized the event or how many people participated in it. But it is plausible that it was one of the old anti-nuclear organizations that had been active for a long time. Only such an organization could have figured out the potential consequences of the nuclear accident so quickly, despite the prevailing information chaos, and in addition, had the resources to act promptly and mobilize participants. In the afternoon of the same day, Tanpoposha, another post-Chernobyl organization, staged a protest in front of the headquarters of the Fukushima Daiichi operator, TEPCO, near Shinbashi station, the Tokyo business center (Sono, 2011, p. 17). The number of participants is unknown, although it was probably relatively small. In many descriptions from witnesses and participants in protests from that period, we find references to groups consisting of a very few (e.g., three) to a few hundred (300) persons.

The relatively small number of participants in the first protests was probably influenced by the “atmosphere of self-censorship” or “self-restraint” (*jishuku mūdo*) that enveloped the public after the catastrophe, which many people later remembered and invoked in rather negative terms (Brown, 2018, p. 39; Kogure, 2013, p. 88; Noma, 2012, pp. 136–137; Oguma, 2013, pp. 196–202; Sono, 2011, pp. 27–28). This atmosphere of self-censorship, which will be discussed in more depth in Chapter 12, involves restricting all forms of public entertainment, such as festivals, concerts, shows, sports, and other events, as a way of expressing respect for and fellowship with the victims of the disaster. But, with the passage of time, the atmosphere became suffocating and, in addition, was presumably used by the authorities to control the public and suppress criticism of the political and economic elites.

In this context, many people later recalled the feeling of relief when they learned about the demonstration planned for 10 April 2011 in Kōenji, a district popular with young people and with a “retro subculture,”¹ located west of Shinjuku. The protest organized in Kōenji on 10 April became the first significant event in the series of direct actions to come, although several minor protests took place between the previously mentioned action by Tanpoposha and another one launched on 18 March 2011 by Sono Ryōta, the “Action in front of the TEPCO Headquarters.” Sono (b. 1981) was a *freeter*,² as he called himself, and an activist who spontaneously gathered a few friends and began a series of intense protests, staged every day or at intervals of several days (Oguma, 2013, p. 204).

The three streams

Generally, the protests that were staged in the days and weeks after 11 March 2011 can be categorized into three streams, all of which later merged, at least partially, to form the Hangenren coalition (see Figure 4.1). The first of these streams will be referred to as the “Freeters,” drawing on research by Carl Cassegård (2013) and Alex Brown (2018), the second as the “Old Guard” of the

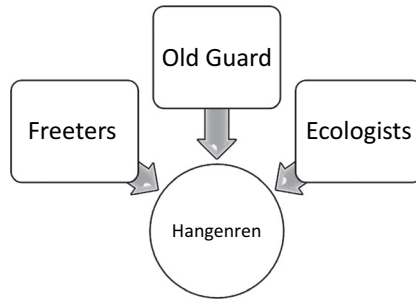


Figure 4.1 The three streams of the early post-Fukushima anti-nuclear protests.
Source: By author.

anti-nuclear movement, formed after the Chernobyl accident as discussed in Chapter 3, and the third as the “Ecologists.” Protests that were representative of these types were organized on 10 April by the Freeters and the Old Guard and on 24 April by the Ecologists.

On Sunday, 10 April, a month after the disaster and on the day of the election of the Tokyo governor, Shirōto no Ran (Amateur Revolt) organized a protest under the slogan “Demonstration to STOP NPPs,” which, to its surprise, attracted 15,000 participants, mainly young people under 30 years old (Akihito1957, 2011; Brown, 2018, chap. 2). The demonstration took the form of a political happening, becoming part of the so-called “sound demonstrations” (*soundo demo*), which were first organized, or at least first labeled like that, in Japan after the Iraq war in 2003 (Manabe, 2016, p. 156). At that time, musicians, DJs, and their equipment (speakers and amplifiers) stood on top of trucks that moved slowly, leading the crowd, which marched and danced to the music. The protest on 10 April in Kōenji took a similar form.

Sound demonstrations should be placed in the broader context of the social and political changes that began in the last decade of the 20th century. At that time, social movements in Japan began to undergo a metamorphosis, together with the development of the anti-globalization movement (also called alter-globalization) and the global justice movement, although these concepts are not always synonymous. Although anti-globalization protests were not particularly big in Japan, the forms and ideas of this movement were adopted in demonstrations against the war in Iraq in 2003 and became known in Japan as sound demonstrations (Brown, 2018, pp. 44–48; Manabe, 2016, chap. 5.2; Noma, 2012, p. 14). After the accident at Fukushima Daiichi, that protest repertoire was employed by the first protestors, the Freeters, with the significant difference that, in Japan, the protests did not take the radical form of confrontations with the police.

Going back to 10 April 2011, on this day, at 1 p.m., an hour earlier than in Kōenji, a demonstration of the Old Guard began under the slogan: “Stop the Hamaoka NPP Immediately! Tokyo Shiba Park. 10 April Rally and Demonstration of Tokyo Residents.” The protest was organized by the anti-nuclear

organizations formed after the Chernobyl accident, including Tanpoposha and Gensuikin, which had been staging protests against the Hamaoka NPP for a long time and had scheduled this particular event before the Fukushima accident. The participants were mainly middle-aged or retired and numbered 2,500, much fewer than in Kōenji. The protest had the traditional form of a meeting, with speeches given by representatives of various organizations to the participants, after which the crowd marched with flags and banners from Shiba Park towards Tokyo station. On the way, it passed close to the Tokyo branch of Chūbu Electric Power Company, the Hamaoka NPP operator, then by the headquarters of the TEPCO company, and then in front of one of the METI buildings. The entire route was designed to pass in front of the most important offices of institutions representing the business and government elites responsible for nuclear energy and the accident at Fukushima Daiichi. The protest had been planned earlier, as mentioned; therefore, the name of the demonstration included Hamaoka NPP, not Fukushima, but slogans referring to the Fukushima disaster, in fact, dominated the entire event. Whereas, in the case of the Freeters from Kōenji, the choice of route was somewhat secondary, for the Old Guard, the symbolic meaning of passing in front of the power holders' buildings was of particular importance, had been thoroughly considered, and was repeated on multiple occasions.

The protest by the third stream, the Ecologists, was carried out 2 weeks later, on Sunday, 24 April, in one of Tokyo's best-known parks, Yoyogi, under the slogan of "Energy Shift Parade." From the park, demonstrators marched through Tokyo's well-known, upmarket shopping and entertainment districts: Shibuya, Omotesando, and Harajuku. In this case, the targets of the protest were other citizens, not business and government elites, as in the case of the Old Guard. The protest was organized as part of "Earth Day" by, among others, Greenpeace Japan. It was also supported by famous personalities from Japanese public life, including music critic and writer Yukawa Reiko, musician Kobayashi Takeshi, actress Katō Tokiko, writer and anti-nuclear activist Tanaka Yū, Welsh writer C. W. Nicole, a literary critic and environmental activist Tsuji Shin'ichi, and a politician from the conservative, pro-nuclear LDP, Kōnō Tarō, who had been at the forefront of anti-nuclear activities in the parliament, chairing the interparty Zero NPPs Association (Genpatsu Zero no Kai). The number of public figures supporting the anti-nuclear movement gradually began to increase and then took the form of the Sayonara Nukes campaign, which will be discussed in Chapter 5. On 23 April, approximately 5,000 people attended the demonstration, most of them in their mid-30s and 40s, and many came with their entire families, including young children. The participation of families with children would become a permanent element of the Hangenren protests, as well as a symbol of the universality of the goals and peaceful methods of the anti-nuclear movement.

Less than 2 months after the April events, on Sunday, 11 June 2011, the three streams of the anti-nuclear movement again carried out protests: the Old Guard marched from the same place as previously, Shiba Park, starting at 1 p.

m.; the Ecologists also marched from the same site as before, Yoyogi Park, setting out at 3 p.m. and proceeding through Shibuya district; whereas the Freeters moved to one of the main communication hubs of Tokyo near Shinjuku station, the famous square in front of the Alta screen, at 6 p.m.,³ where they started an occupation protest.

Research conducted by Japanese anti-nuclear movement scholar Hirabayashi Yūko from Tsura University, presented in Table 4.1, reveals the age composition of participants in all demonstrations on that day, although one has to keep in mind that the samples were not big (Hirabayashi in Oguma, 2013, p. 204).

The first protest, at Shiba Park, was organized by the Old Guard – pre-Fukushima anti-nuclear organizations such as Gensuikin, Citizens’ Nuclear Information Center, and Tanpoposha – under the slogan “Don’t Repeat a Nuclear Disaster! Let’s Create Anti-Nuclear Society! 10 July Rally and Demonstration at Shiba Park.” It attracted over 6,000 people, of which the majority (65 percent) were people over 50 (22 percent) and 60 (43 percent) years old (Table 4.1). The second demonstration, in Yoyogi Park, convened by, among others, Ecologists – Greenpeace Japan, E-shift, and Friends of the Earth Japan (FoE Japan) – under the same slogan as before, the “Energy Shift Parade,” gathered relatively fewer participants, about 1,500 people, of which the largest group (55 percent) were over 30 (28 percent) and 40 (27 percent) years old (Table 4.1).

The largest number of participants gathered at the protest organized by Shirōto no Ran in Shinjuku under the slogan “Demonstration to STOP NPPs. Occupy Alta.” More than 30,000 people responded to the call to action and the occupation of the square in front of the Alta screen. The majority of participants (52 percent) were under 30 (29 percent) or 20 (23 percent) (Table 4.1). At that time, the Shinjuku protest became the largest anti-nuclear protest organized after the Fukushima Daiichi accident. The event’s slogan referred directly to the Occupy movement.⁴ The participants managed to block the square in front of Shinjuku station, which is one of the key communication hubs of the Tokyo metropolis, for several hours. As with the Kōenji events,

Table 4.1 Age cohorts during demonstrations on 11 June 2011.

<i>Place</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Shiba (%)</i>	<i>Yoyogi (%)</i>	<i>Shinjuku (%)</i>	<i>Total % of all participants</i>
Under 20		6	14	23	15
30s		17	28	29	25
40s		13	27	15	19
50s		22	17	15	18
Over 60		43	14	21	21
Total %		100	100	100	100
N (participants)		134	173	153	460

Source: Hirabayashi in Oguma (2013, p. 204).

Note: $\chi^2 = 58.978$, $df = 8$, $p < 0.001$.

music dominated, as many participants came with their own instruments (as requested by the organizers), colorful posters, novelties, balloons, and festive costumes. However, the occupation of the square under the Alta was not entirely spontaneous. Interestingly, political parties were involved in the protest (Brown, 2018, p. 101). In response to a request from the organizers, they provided so-called electoral vans – that is, vehicles with loudspeakers on the roof typically used by politicians during electoral campaigns to give speeches in town centers, before driving through the streets and greeting bystanders through the window. During the protest in Shinjuku, the electoral vans lined up around the square, effectively blocking police cars' access via very narrow streets. The occupation of the square was illegal, but blocking the streets with electoral vans around the square was not, as the political parties are allowed to do so in Japan under a clause relating to “political party’s street speeches” (Oguma, 2013, p. 203).

Each of the demonstrations on 11 June 2011, as shown in Table 4.1, was obviously attended by participants of different ages, apart from the dominant cohort. In Shiba Park (Old Guard), the older generations constituted 63 percent (over 60, 43 percent; 50s, 22 percent), while the other generations were represented, respectively, by people in their 30s (17 percent) and 40s (13 percent).

The three protests on that day were not coincidental but the result of coordinated efforts by various anti-nuclear organizations. They were actually scheduled in such a way as to make it possible to attend them all, at 1 p.m., 3 p.m., and 6 p.m. (as some people, in fact, did). All three protests were organized as part of the larger anti-nuclear initiative, “10 Million People Action,” known in English as Sayonara Nukes (discussed in Chapter 5). But, more importantly, the events of that day, which required coordination between the three streams of the movement, can also be seen as the beginning of a process that later took the form of the Hangenren coalition.

Hangenren as the movement’s face

The Metropolitan Coalition against Nukes (Shutōken Hangenpatsu Rengō or, in short, Hangenren)⁵ was established in September 2011 as a collaboration between several groups and organizations that decided to join forces to increase their power and ability to put pressure on the ruling elites. The important element was that their cooperation took the form of a coalition, a loose network, and not a new monolithic organization. All the member groups and organizations, some of which will be discussed in Chapter 5, had been organizing independent protests in the Tokyo metropolitan area since March 2011 as part of the three main streams previously discussed. It is worth emphasizing that, as part of the coalition-building process, the leaders met face to face during earlier events, before September 2011. Those direct meetings and interactions became the basis for further cooperation (Noma, 2012, pp. 258–259).⁶ Therefore, the formation of Hangenren was a product

of a consciously chosen strategy and planned action and not a spontaneous gathering convened through social media.

The first Hangenren rally was organized in October 2011 in Shibuya, one of Tokyo's shopping and entertainment centers that was especially popular with young people, with about 800 participants (Redwolf, 2013a, p. 11). About 4,500–5,000 people came to the next protest, organized in January 2012 under the slogan “The Great March in Yokohama for a World without NPPs” (Oguma, 2013, p. 10; Redwolf, 2013a, p. 7). On 11 March 2012, the first anniversary of the Fukushima disaster, a parade was held, starting in Hibiya Park and ending at the parliament, where the participants surrounded the buildings with a human chain. Between 14,000 and 30,000 people participated in these events, organized jointly by several groups and organizations (Oguma, 2013, p. 11; Redwolf, 2013a, p. 11).

After it was formed, Hangenren became the organizer or co-organizer of, or participant in, the largest demonstrations and protest events held in the Kantō area and other parts of the country after the accident in Fukushima Daiichi. Many features of the coalition were noted by scholars and activists themselves as innovative, and it was branded a new social movement (Oguma, 2016), a “new [type] of demonstration” (*atarashii demo*; Noma, 2012, pp. 33, 129; Redwolf, 2013a, p. 2; Tsuda, 2012, p. 92), or even a “new, new social movement” (*atarashii, atarashii shakai undō*; Doi, 2014, p. 100). In the context of Japan's history, this term referred not only to academic discussions on social movements but also to specific concepts of the “old movement” of the 1960s and the “new movement” of the 1970s, which will be discussed in more detail in Chapter 12, on creating frames. The coalition's distinctive organizational and mobilization features included: place, time, form of action, and rules.

Place

Hangenren is best known for the weekly Friday protests (Kantei Mae protests) in front of the prime minister's residence (Kantei), which took place continuously until the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020. These protests began, on 29 March 2012, because the final decision on restarting the reactor was to be taken by Prime Minister Noda right there. Earlier, protests were staged in front of the METI buildings because it was the place where the NISA, the predecessor of the current NRA and the most important institution in charge of regulating and monitoring the nuclear industry – was to conduct a public consultation on restarting the reactor. The METI buildings are located about 700 meters from the prime minister's residence, down Gumi Hill (Gumizaka). In addition to the stage in front of Kantei, a second stage was set up, in July 2012 in front of the Diet buildings, relatively close to the prime minister's residence and the METI buildings, to extend the protest to spaces that were symbolic of state power and to diversify its repertoire. So, although the choice of the location for the Friday events was somewhat accidental (shaped by the decision-making process at successive levels of the state apparatus), the decision to routinely protest in these

particular spaces, in front of the Kantei and the Diet, was the result of a conscious choice (Redwolf, 2013a, pp. 12–16). The protest site in front of the prime minister's residence, in the heart of the Natagachō and Kasumigaseki districts, was meant as a challenge to the political and bureaucratic power of the state.⁷

Time

The Friday protests in front of the Kantei always started exactly at 6 p.m. (6:30 p.m. from January 2015)⁸ and ended precisely at 8 p.m., not a minute longer or a minute shorter. This time frame was intended to allow people working in the Tokyo metropolitan area to join the protest after work (which usually finishes at 5 p.m.). The fixed time (and place) was a mobilization mechanism to increase the number of participants as information about the protests spread by word of mouth, later by social media, and, finally, via the mainstream media. People could expect to be able to join a protest on a specific day, at a certain time, and at a certain place. What is probably most surprising is the extraordinary punctuality of the meetings. They always started at exactly 6 p.m. and ended at 8 p.m. An anthropologist and musician, Oda Masanori, commented that such arrangements perfectly suit such Japanese character traits as “diligence and perseverance” (Oda, 2013, p. 102). Whether the spatial and temporal predictability of the protests was the result of the cultural characteristics of the organizers or the result of other accidental factors is probably disputable. The fact is, however, that this type of organization has been recognized as a characteristic feature of the Kantei Mae protests and became a mobilization vehicle, as it enhanced the visibility of the movement. A well-known journalist and commentator on public life, Tsuda Daisuke, viewed the routine of the meetings in pragmatic terms as a “mobilization revolution” (Tsuda, cited in Noma, 2012, p. 52).

Form

The Kantei Mae protests, which at times gathered thousands of people, changed depending on the number of participants but generally took the form of a long row of demonstrators standing in the middle of the sidewalk, stretching from the prime minister's residence down Gumi Hill towards the intersection with the METI buildings. At the peak, in mid-2012, the crowd filled the entire area, including the roads and intersection, around the Kantei and the parliamentary buildings. When attendance was lower, the protesters stayed on one part of the sidewalk, which was divided into two by traffic cones connected by rods, set up by the police before each event. Dividing the sidewalk allowed free movement for people unrelated to the protest, most often officials and politicians returning from work.

The Kantei Mae demonstrations followed the tradition established by protests in front of the METI buildings, which took the form of chanting slogans (in Japanese: *kōru*, short for German *Sprechchor*) after the leader, to the rhythm of music mainly played on drums, and directed towards the authorities'

buildings. Hangenren was not the only organization to show up in front of the METI buildings in March 2012, during the Nuclear and Industrial Safety Agency meeting. Instead of speeches addressing the participants, which were characteristic of the old movement and the Old Guard, Hangenren decided to target the NISA members, who at that time held public hearings on the Ōi restart on the seventh floor in the METI building (Redwolf, 2013a, pp. 8–9). To the anti-nuclear protesters, the public hearings were *public* only in name, because they were attended by members of the nuclear village – that is, representatives of nuclear energy companies, their experts, bureaucrats from the relevant ministries, and local authorities from municipalities hosting NPPs, while civic groups could participate only as observers. The chanting was intended to be the voice of the public, and, to reach the people on the METI building’s seventh floor, Hangenren began using megaphones with amplifiers.

The protest in this form then moved to the space in front of the Kantei, this time directed at the prime minister and his staff. Over time, a group of drummers joined the chanting, which became another characteristic feature of the Kantei Mae protests (Figure 4.2). The inclusion and importance of music in the post-Fukushima anti-nuclear movement, as evidenced by Noriko Manabe (2016) and Alex Brown (2018), are considered part of the tradition of “sound demonstrations” or “sound demos.” The protest events organized by Shirōto no Ran in Kōenji, initially also joined by the later Hangenren leaders, were part of that tradition. A musician and organizer of a drum team (*dramutai*), Oda Masanori, recalled that the idea of combining chanting with the rhythm of



Figure 4.2 Hangenren at a Kantei Mae (Friday) protest (August 2014).

Note: The drum team, the chant leader, and participants during the Kantei Mae (Friday) protest. The rest of the protesters are lined up round the corner, down Gumi Hill.

Source: Author’s collection.

drums came to him on 22 June 2012, when over 40,000 people gathered in front of the prime minister's residence. It was very difficult to hear the voice of the leader of the chanting (Oda, 2013, pp. 59–61). Oda learned to play the drums during field trips in Africa and then used the skill in sound demonstrations against the war in Iraq and Shirōto no Ran's protests in Kōenji and Shinjuku. Oda decided that the voices would be better if accompanied by the rhythm of the drums, and, from the next rally, on 29 June, with 200,000 attendees (the peak of the protests; see Figure 4.3) around the Kantei and the parliamentary buildings, chanting slogans to the rhythm of the drums became an integral part of the Friday protests.

Rules

In order to continue the protest and avoid conflict with the police, participants, and other groups, Hangenren adopted five rules, which were published on its website and briefly announced at each meeting. In addition to the place and time of the meeting, the following were included: (a) speeches should last less than 1 minute (initially it was 3 minutes), refer only to anti-nuclear topics (*hangenpatsu/datsugenpatsu*), and not promote the goals of specific organizations; (b) posters, banners, and speeches should relate to anti-nuclear issues and should not propagate the goals of a particular organization – known as the Zero Banners policy; (c) brochures, leaflets, and other information should be distributed after the protest – that is, after 8 p.m. – to avoid chaos; (d) the protest must be peaceful and nonviolent; and (e) participants should follow instructions given by the organizers (Redwolf, 2013b, p. 13). Among these rules, the Zero Banners policy and peaceful, nonviolent action became the most contested principles.

The principle of Zero Banners meant that participants should not bring flags or other symbols of their organizations, only ones relating to anti-nuclear issues. The protest was designed as an event open to all people, regardless of their organizational and ideological affiliations, as a protest of ordinary citizens. One of the member organizations of the Hangenren coalition, Tanpoposha, was faced with a dilemma. The organization had been established in the 1980s after the Chernobyl disaster and, at the time of the accident at Fukushima Daiichi, had a long tradition of activism in the anti-nuclear movement. Hangenren organizers, who initially insisted on compliance with the principle of no banners and flags, eventually gave up. The compromise was that Tanpoposha members would line up with their flags in the middle or at the very end of the demonstration (at the intersection opposite the METI buildings). Another example of compromise on the part of Hangenren was the occasional presence of the Japanese flag at weekly protests, the owner of which usually stood halfway up Gumi Hill. It must be said that, in Japan, the national flag, which was only formally recognized as a symbol of the state in 1999, is often associated with ultra-right and revisionist movements. The man at the Friday protests was a member of the Right's Network, a conservative but non-radical right-wing

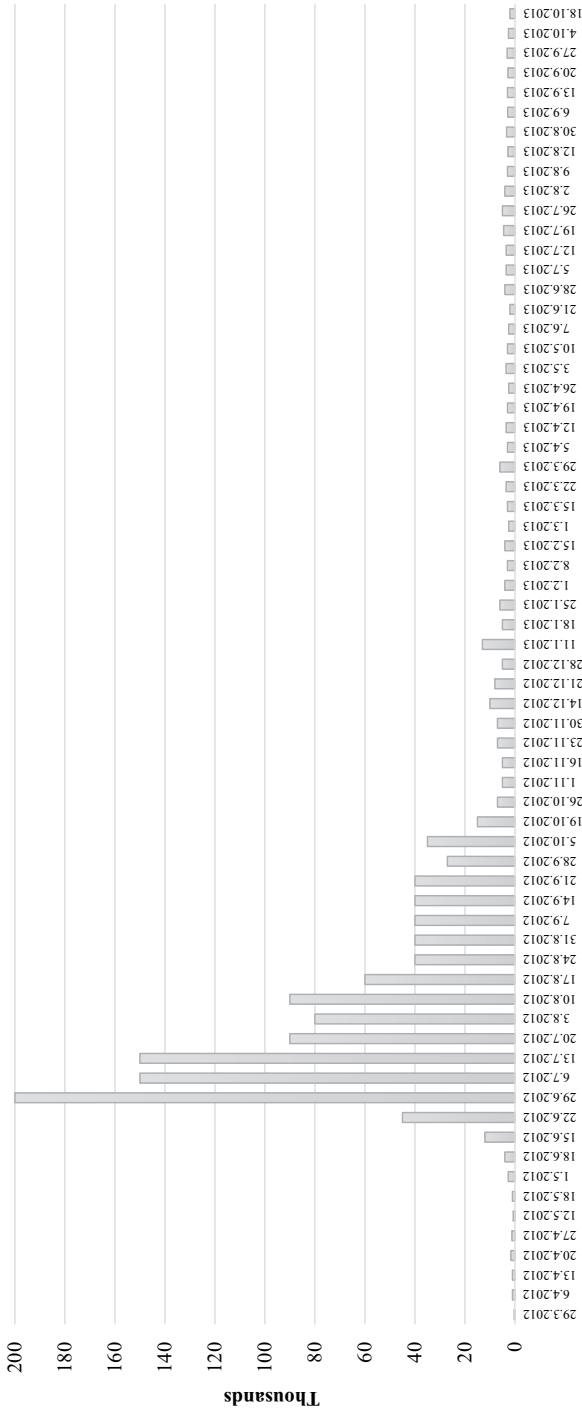


Figure 4.3 Kantei Mae protests (March 2012–October 2013; in thousands).
Source: Data from Hangnen (2021).

group that supports all opposition to nuclear energy, regardless of the ideology (discussed in Chapter 5). Eventually, the Japanese flag was allowed to be displayed during the Kantei Mae protests under pressure from other participants who spontaneously voiced their support for the man with the national flag and criticized attempts to remove it from the rally.¹⁰ The rules adopted by Hangenren were, thus, clearly articulated, but their execution was quite flexible and depended on circumstances.

Relations with the police

Another controversial rule adopted by Hangenren was, somewhat surprisingly, the principle of nonviolence. This principle obviously means that any form of violence during protests is forbidden. Why did it become so controversial? Hangenren decided that, in order to ensure the safety of the protesters and prevent the use of violence, it should cooperate with the police. The decisive moment, in the early stages of the post-Fukushima protests, was the demonstration organized by Shirōto no Ran on 11 September 2011, in Shinjuku. Twelve demonstrators were arrested on charges of “interference in the execution of official duties” (*gyōmu shikkō bōgai*), which, according to other participants, in most cases meant physical contact (most often an accidental touch) with police officers trying to contain the protesting crowd (Oguma, 2013, pp. 217–218).¹¹ With the help of organizers, lawyers, and well-known public figures, all those arrested were soon released, but the shock and stigma of arrest remained. On the other hand, the police, accustomed to demonstrations organized by left- and right-wing organizations, were confused by the lack of both leaders and a clearly defined organizational entity.¹² When interrogated, the protesters often did not even know who organized the event, were not affiliated with any organizations, and had often come to the protest individually or with a few friends. The ephemeral form of the demonstration seemed inconceivable to the police, and this is probably why the police willingly agreed to cooperate with the Hangenren coalition when it emerged (Noma, 2012, pp. 36–37; Oguma, 2013, pp. 215–218).

The September demonstration in Shinjuku became a turning point for the first stream of anti-nuclear protests (Shirōto no Ran), while Hangenren’s collaborative relations with the police became a source of misunderstanding. One of the prominent supporters of this policy was Misao Redwolf, one of the leaders of Hangenren, who explained that, in relations with the police, they applied the “principle of business” relations.¹³ Both sides acknowledged that their cooperation brought them benefits: protesters could peacefully stage their demonstration, and the police could fulfill its duties to maintain public order. Redwolf added that the ordinary police officers appointed to monitor the rally, mainly from Kōjimachi police station in Tokyo, executed top-down orders. She added that the police were not the target of the protest. On the other hand, confrontations and incidents could lead to a “loss of face” by the police (*mentsu ga tsubureni*), especially for the unit on duty (Redwolf, 2013a, pp. 22–

27). Furthermore, the police officers also included individuals who privately supported the goals of the anti-nuclear movement, and so there was no need to antagonize them if not necessary (Hara, 2013, pp. 36–37).¹⁴ Redwolf emphasized that, for the organizers, the participants' safety was most important, and, hence, cooperation with the police seemed a reasonable solution.

The organizers of the Kantei Mae protests contacted the police in advance every week regarding the demonstration, although they were not legally obliged to do so. According to Japanese law, public meetings that do not interfere with the traffic – for example, those on sidewalks, as is the case with the Friday protests – do not require prior authorization (Noma, 2012, pp. 49–53). This is also why the activities in front of the prime minister's residence are formally called not demonstrations, but “protests” (*kōgi*). Despite the absence of formal requirements, Hangenren informed the police weekly (sometimes only by phone) about its schedule. In this context, it is not surprising that the police's behaviour towards the coalition was “friendly.” During the biggest protests in 2012, the police decided to close several traffic lanes on an ad hoc basis (although there was officially no permission for a demonstration) to allow the growing crowd to exit the underground station to the surface and participate in the demonstration (Redwolf, 2013a, pp. 22–23). There was also an instance when Hangenren used megaphones on a police van to end the protest ahead of time (i.e., before 8 p.m.), when the number of participants kept increasing, and there was a high risk of trampling and outbreaks of violence. The decision was met with severe criticism from some organizations; 2 years after that event, one of my interlocutors spoke very heatedly on this subject, using contemptuous epithets for the leaders of Hangenren. According to that person, they should have broken through the police cordon and stormed the prime minister's residence.¹⁵ The person alluded to the events of 1960, when a protesting crowd did indeed break down the gates leading to the parliament buildings.

The partnership with and nonconfrontational stance towards the police were criticized by other activists, the Old Guard, who had participated in the Anpo and students' struggles of the 1960s and 1970s. The public later associated the protests with violence and aggression, as well as with “helmets, masks, and sticks,” as discussed in Chapter 12. The Hangenren leaders were even given the pejorative epithet “police dogs” (*keisatsu no inu*) for their policy (Noma, 2012, p. 27). At the same time, the same critics admitted that Hangenren managed to gather the largest crowds in the postwar history of the anti-nuclear movement.¹⁶ As a result, while sometimes being critical of the actions of Hangenren, those organizations and individuals continued to participate in the activities organized by the coalition.

Leaders

Who are the leaders of Hangenren? According to the organizers themselves, the coalition has no leaders. This is, as mentioned, a leitmotif that often appears in conversations with activists in new social movements who adhere to the

principle of egalitarianism. The coalition is run by so-called “core members” (*koa membā*). The initiative to establish the coalition came jointly from Misao Redwolf and Hirano Taiichi in March 2011. Redwolf is the artistic pseudonym of an illustrator that she also uses for political activities. For family reasons, she did not want to disclose her family name. Redwolf represents an organization called No Nukes More Heart (www.nonukesmorehearts.org), which she founded in 2007 to protest against the construction of the Rokkasho Nuclear Fuel Reprocessing Facility in Aomori Prefecture. Redwolf recalled that her motives for founding the movement, which is both new age and at the same time strongly rooted in Japanese spirituality and ecology, were related to the history of Rokkasho. According to Redwolf, when she learned that the Rokkasho nuclear facility was built on the site of a former settlement from the Jōmon era,¹⁷ she felt that her ancestors expected her to join the fight against the facility to prevent devastating consequences for the natural environment. Nature, as Redwolf emphasizes, was the object of worship of former inhabitants of these lands (Redwolf, 2013a, pp. 55–58). Redwolf was elevated to the position of leader of Hangenren mainly by the media coverage. Nevertheless, it is also true that she was one of the leading forces behind the bringing together of other organizations and individuals to cooperate within the coalition. In some sense, Redwolf thus became a bridge between the “new” and the “old” movements.¹⁸

Formally, Hangenren is led by a council (*kaigi*) made up of one or two representatives of member organizations – approximately 15 people in total. The council decides on a general action plan and discusses the details of the organization of demonstrations or the number of volunteers. Some of the council members are in charge of strategy, and some are responsible for contact with the police, the press, and foreign relations, technical services (transport and installation of sound equipment), accounting, and so on. The division of functions arose out of the movement’s expansion. Interestingly, the council dealt primarily with the practical aspects of protests, not ideological disputes. Similar observations were made by Oguma (2013, p. 206) in relation to organizational meetings of Shirōto no Ran at the beginning of its activity. Anyone could attend and take part in such meetings, and all participants discussed the proposals submitted. Records of these meetings are still available on the internet and are interestingly described by Alexander Brown, who conducted in-depth research into the group (Brown, 2018). Hangenren meant this form of organization to be an alternative to the bureaucratic and hierarchical organizations of “old movements” or state institutions.

The average age of the Hangenren council members was over 40, although there were also representatives of younger and older generations, in their 20s and 60s.¹⁹ The professional spectrum of the council members was quite broad (illustrator, theater producer, office worker, small business owner, musician, housewife), but the features common to all of them were the relatively flexible working hours and ability to organize their own work (Oguma, 2013).

Participants

Who were the participants in the events organized by Hangenren? The answer is complicated and depends on the type of event and the period. Generally, people of all ages, from various professional and social backgrounds, participated in Hangenren demonstrations. The coalition, therefore, represented a broad spectrum of the general public. However, the situation varied depending on the type and time of the events. Based on weekly observations between April and September 2014 – in other words, 3 years after the accident and 2 years after the most intense wave of protests in the summer of 2012 – the majority were people of retirement age – the generation of Anpo and the student protests from the 1960s and 1970s, or the Senior Left as accurately named by Kobayashi Tetsuo (Kobayashi, 2016). Other large-scale data analysis also confirmed that observation (Matsutani, 2020, loc. 735). Younger people joined after 7 p.m., probably returning from work and often wearing their business uniform. During events organized on weekends and in holidays, participants were much more diverse and sometimes came with young children. For the latter, a special “family zone” was organized, located in a shaded place near the Diet buildings (Noma, 2012, pp. 156–160). According to various sources, cohorts with similarly diverse ages and occupations characterized protests organized immediately after the Fukushima disaster (Noma, 2012, pp. 42–45; Oguma, 2013, p. 204).

Organizational structure

Hangenren is not strictly speaking an organization, as the leaders emphasize, but a communication platform for various groups and organizations that have joined forces to protest against NPPs (Redwolf, 2013a, p. 4).²⁰ According to Redwolf, it is a type of network movement in which various organizations and groups cooperate on specific projects, narrowly defined as “direct actions” (*chokusetsu kōdō*). And direct action, according to Redwolf’s definition, means “protests” (*kōgi*) and “demonstrations” (*demo*), while the latter includes “marches and rallies” (*kōshin, shūkai*; Redwolf, 2013a, p. 6).

The number of Hangenren’s member groups ranged from 11 to 14, in addition to some individual members. In February 2014, the coalition consisted of 11 entities, including No Nukes More Hearts (est. 2007), Tanpoposha, TwitNoNukes (est. 2011), Act 3.11 JAPAN (est. 2011), the KodoMira Music Group (abbreviation of Orchestra for Safe and Peaceful Future for Children), the organizing committee of the Drums of Wrath, EnePare (abbreviation of Energy Shift Parade), Demonstration at Kunitachi, Sugunami for Nuclear Phaseout, Let the Vegetable Speak! Demonstration Goodbye Nuclear Power Plants, private company Loft Project (discussed in Chapter 11), and a few individuals without organizational affiliations.

In addition to the above members, Hangenren’s network also included other groups that independently organized weekly Friday protests (Kinyōbi Akushon)

throughout the country. Those events, organizationally independent, created a loose network of groups linked to the Kantei Mae protests by adding the term “Friday” to their names.

To sum up, Hangenren became an institutionalized form of cooperation between various groups and organizations that had begun staging protests after March 2011, initially operating in three different streams. They included both organizations formed after the Fukushima Daiichi accident and the old, post-Chernobyl actors. The coalition thus symbolizes continuity and innovation, combining elements of the “old” and “new” anti-nuclear movements. The Old Guard was mainly represented by Tanpoposha, and the new by TwitNo-Nukes, discussed in Chapter 5.

Financing

Hangenren, like most organizations in the anti-nuclear movement, operates thanks to public fundraising and donations (*kanpa*). Funds are collected during events, as well as through the sale of T-shirts, postcards, books, other materials, and items with anti-nuclear slogans. The leaders were fully aware of the difficulty of maintaining the movement without funding. Redwolf openly stated that the biggest difference between the anti- and pro-nuclear camps was the size of their wallets (Redwolf, 2013a, p. 41). Much of their effort, therefore, went into obtaining funding from independent sources – for instance, the Takagi Fund and private donations. The total amount of donations collected at each event was usually announced at the end. The amounts ranged from tens to hundreds of thousands of yen, which are relatively small, although there were also larger donations channeled directly to the leaders.²¹ Hangenren had no office, which significantly reduced its running costs, and just rented a small space in a warehouse for its audio equipment and banners. Weekly meetings of the council usually took place in cafes, which also underlined its open character. Among the member groups, only Tanpoposha (and the Loft Project, being a company) had permanent offices and employed staff. The Tanpoposha office served as a storage facility for Hangenren in the initial stage. With the development of the movement and the need to devote more time to it, some council members who gave up or limited their work began to receive a small amount of financial support. However, most core members combined their professional life with protest activities, which in the long run became an enormous burden and challenge.

Mobilization and the media

The internet, email, and new social media such as Facebook and Twitter have become some of the basic tools of modern social movements, used more often by progressive movements than by more conservative ones that have greater financial resources (Mosca & della Porta, 2009, p. 214; Tarrow, 2011, loc. 3674). Scholars point to the multiple functions of the internet, which serves as a tool to

mobilize participants and to manage activities, creating an organization's "material infrastructure" in the form of a network. It has also become a tool for creating a sphere of public debate (Mosca & della Porta, 2009, pp. 196–197). In the words of one of the protesters at Tahrir Square in Cairo in 2011: "We use Facebook to plan protests, Twitter to coordinate, and YouTube to tell the world about them" (cited in Moore & Selchow, 2012, p. 28).

The description applies to Hangenren, which uses the internet and social media not only for simple communication between the core members (e.g., the council), but also to mobilize participants, provide information on future protests (calendar of events), give updates on the latest events and problems related to Fukushima Daiichi, carry out programs of education about nuclear energy (*No Nukes Magazine*), conduct fundraising, campaign, and collect signatures, all of which testify to the varied protest repertoires of the coalition. The process of communication and information exchange also contributes to creating a shared identity and group solidarity.

Although new social media have been recognized as an important factor shaping modern social reality (Obar, 2014), their actual impact is much more difficult to assess and more complicated than it would appear from headlines such as "Internet demonstration," "Twitter demonstration," or "Twitter revolution." The results of quantitative research will be discussed later, but it is also worth quoting some of the opinions of people involved in the anti-nuclear movement. One of Hangenren's council members, Hattori Norimichi, emphasized, for instance, the importance of traditional word-of-mouth communication, by which he meant exchanges of information in the workplace and between parents picking up their children from kindergartens and nurseries. And although, in the age of the internet, such a statement might seem passé, Hattori's assumption was also confirmed by the quantitative research discussed below (Hattori in Oguma, 2013, p. 17).

Another perspective was taken by the sociologist Oguma Eiji (2013, pp. 198–199), who identified networks of face-to-face interpersonal relations and a community as important mobilization tools. The formation of Shirōto no Ran – which organized the biggest protests immediately after the Fukushima Daiichi incident, including the "Demonstration to STOP NPPs" (Genpatsu Yemerō) in Kōenji on 10 April 2011 – was one of the examples. One of the leaders of the protest was Matsumoto Hajime (b. 1974), who owned the Shirōto no Ran recycling store,²² after which the events were named. The store was located on a street of shops (*shōtengai*) in Kōenji, where Matsumoto had a very extensive network of contacts as the store owner, the deputy chairman of the local association of shop owners, and a moderator of various events with ironic and funny slogans, such as "Give Back My Bike!" (*Ore no Jitensha o Kaese*) or "Lower the Rent to Zero!" (*Yachin o Tada ni Shiro*). In all those undertakings, music played a significant role (Matsumoto, 2011). When he was a student, Matsumoto had already engaged in anti-mainstream and alternative activities, establishing, for instance, the Hōsei Association for the Protection of the Poor at Hōsei University and, later, the Mega-Rebellion Group of the Poor (Binbōnin Daihanran Shūdan). As Brown (2018, p. 57) commented, such actions were not isolated or separate events,

but “a way of life that is made possible through connections with others.” Throughout his life, Matsumoto established an extensive network of friends and acquaintances from various social strata (including a very large group of musicians and artists), local communities in Kōenji and the Nantoka neighborhood (Brown, 2018, chap. 3), and also places abroad that he and other Shirōto no Ran activists visited, or from which visitors came to Kōenji.

After the Fukushima accident, Matsumoto and his friends decided to organize the anti-nuclear demonstration in Kōenji, which, in the prevailing atmosphere of self-censorship, as mentioned, was perceived as a “ray of hope” (Kogure, 2013, p. 88). The protest, like the previous events, resembled a political happening, full of music and parade costumes. Over 15,000 people showed up for the demonstration, and the mass media declared that “city young residents gathered thanks to the Internet” (Oguma, 2013, p. 199). Oguma, as mentioned, disagrees with such an interpretation, as did Matsumoto himself, who believed that “the use of social media was insufficient to explain the success of the event,” and “the number and diversity of the participants was a reflection of the Shirōto no Ran network’s deep roots in local communities” (Brown, 2018, p. 55). That extensive network included shopkeepers, musicians, actors, and artists. Within this expansive network of social relations, the new communication technologies were used to spread information to friends and acquaintances first, and then more broadly to others, but the key element of this organization was the community built on face-to-face encounters.

The situation was different in the case of *TwitNoNukes*, which is an example of a group and event organization using new technologies and new ways of mobilization between strangers and is discussed in detail in Chapter 5.

Quantitative research on the means of communication used by the anti-nuclear movement, conducted by the Research Group on Ways of Information Diffusion (JKRK) on 6 July 2012 during a Friday protest, shed some light on how the movement was organized and mobilized. The survey results presented in Table 4.2 show that, in total, the biggest share of participants (39 percent of

Table 4.2 Means of communication at Kantei Mae protest (6 July 2012).

<i>Means</i>	<i>1st participation (%)</i>	<i>2nd time & more (%)</i>	<i>Total (%)</i>
Twitter	24	56	39
Word of mouth	22	12	17
Internet	11	12	12
Facebook	9	4	7
TV	12	1	7
Newspapers	9	3	6
Organizations	6	6	6
Other	7	5	6
(Number of people)	(257)	(234)	(491)

Source: Data from JKRK (2012).

491 respondents) learned about the demonstrations via Twitter, while the internet and social media (Twitter, Facebook) together were the primary source of information for the vast majority (58 percent; JKRRK, 2012). These results seem to confirm the mass media's widely spread perception of the significant role played by social media in mobilizing participants.

A more detailed analysis of the data paints a slightly different picture. There were two questions about communications means: the first was about first-time participation in the event, and the second was about the second and later attendances. Among those who went to the demonstration for the first time, Twitter (24 percent) was almost as important as a source of information as word of mouth (22 percent), which seems to confirm the earlier opinion of Hattori on this subject, while social media accounted for a total of 44 percent. Somewhat surprising was the fact that, for people who had participated before, Twitter was the main source of information (56 percent), word of mouth and the internet were responsible for 12 percent, and all social media and the internet applied to 72 percent of respondents. In contrast to common perception, Twitter was a more important source of information for people who had already participated in a demonstration – that is, for those who already knew about the event. Although there is no doubt that social media and the internet were very important tools to mobilize new participants (44 percent in total), other forms of communication, such as word of mouth (22 percent) and other traditional media such as television and the press (21 percent), also played an important role in the mobilization and communication process (a total of 43 percent; JKRRK, 2012). Subsequent large-scale data analysis of all post-Fukushima anti-nuclear protests confirmed these trends – that is, that newcomers relied on social media and the internet for information, and that the traditional media (TV, press) were important for all participants, but especially those with previous experience of protests, the “veterans” (Satō, 2020, loc. 293–326).

Another interesting observation was made by the Hangenren leaders, although from a slightly different angle (the number of retweets in relation to the number of participants). According to them, Twitter was an important mobilization tool and indicator of future participation in the initial period of protests, when the total number was fewer than 2,000 people. At that time, the number of participants increased in proportion to the number of retweets, in a ratio of 1:2 – that is, if there were 200 retweets, 400 people showed up at the demonstration, if there were 300, about 600 people joined the protest, and so on – confirming thereby the importance of Twitter as a mobilization tool (Noma, 2012, p. 112). Nevertheless, it was only after the information about the demonstrations in front of the Kantei was reported by the mainstream TV stations that the number of participants began to increase rapidly, reaching its peak on 29 July 2012 with approximately 200,000 attendees (Redwolf, 2013a, pp. 18–22; Figure 4.3). One of the leaders, Misao Redwolf, believes that the influence of television and the press was crucial, adding, critically, that Japanese mainstream media provide information from the point of view of the political

and economic elites.²³ Many echo these views, pointing to structural problems with the mass media system in Japan (e.g., press clubs), the general perception of social protests before the Fukushima accident, and the pro-nuclear stance of some media outlets (Satoh, 2012). As commented by LDP lawmaker Kōno Tarō, the demonstrations were of no interest to the mass media and politicians prior to March 2012 (Kōno & Makino, 2012, p. 18). Thus, in general, while increasing their reliance on internet-based and social media for communication and mobilization, the movement's actors also try to get access to the mainstream media (Wiemann, 2020).

Notes

- 1 In the Kōenji (Suginami ward) area, there are many small shops that sell second-hand clothing and goods, as well as bars and music clubs.
- 2 *Frīta* is a neologism created in the 1980s combining the English word *free* (or *freelance*) and the German *Arbeiter* (*worker*) to describe young people under 35 years old without permanent employment and social security.
- 3 Alta is the name of a building with a large LED screen in Shinjuku (Alta Shinjuku), a well-known meeting place.
- 4 The Occupy movement began on 17 September 2011 with the Occupy Wall Street actions in New York, directed against social and economic inequalities.
- 5 This part of the chapter partially overlaps with the content of this article: Bochorodycz (2015).
- 6 Interview 29, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 11 July 2014; Interview 36, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 13 June 2014.
- 7 Nagatachō, Kasumigaseki, and Kantei are the site names symbolizing the power triangle associated with the influence of politicians, bureaucrats, and the prime minister, respectively.
- 8 The time was initially shorter because of low winter temperatures.
- 9 Interview 29, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 11 July 2014; Interview 36, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 13 June 2014.
- 10 Interview 36, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 13 June 2014.
- 11 Interview 36, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 13 June 2014.
- 12 Interview 43, police officer of the the Kōjinmachi unit, Tokyo, 11 July 2014.
- 13 Interview 29, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 11 July 2014.
- 14 Interview 36, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 13 June 2014.
- 15 Interview 24, a member of the Fukushima Badge Project, Tokyo, 23 September 2014.
- 16 Interview 36, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 13 June 2014; Interview 39, one of the leaders of Tanpoposha, Tokyo, 31 August 2014; Interview 40, one of the founders of Tanpoposha, Tokyo, 28 July 2014.
- 17 A prehistorical era that lasted from approximately the 12th century B.C.E. to 300 B.C.E.
- 18 Interview 29, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 11 July 2014; Interview 36, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 13 June 2014; Interview 40, one of the founders of Tanpoposha, Tokyo, 28 July 2014.
- 19 Interview 5, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 18 July 2014; Interview 29, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 11 July 2014.
- 20 Interview 5, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 18 July 2014; Interview 36, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 13 June 2014.
- 21 Interview 29, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 11 July 2014; Interview 36, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 13 June 2014.

- 22 There are a few shops named Shirōto no Ran, to which numbers are added. Some of them were opened by Matsumoto's friends.
- 23 Interview 29, one of the leaders of Hangenren, Tokyo, 11 July 2014.

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