

I. Occupy Gezi: Unexpectedly Uniting A Divided Society, Through a Single Hashtag

II. **Question:** How did the use of social media work to increase Occupy Gezi's stamina as a social movement, and in what way did it work to bring together protesters from multiple facets of Turkish society? (socioeconomic, gender, geographic).

III. Abstract & Context:

The AKP (Ak Parti) government's legislation to slowly interfere in the private lives of Turkish citizens had begun to spark unrest in early 2013. A decision to enact a commercial shopping venue in place of Taksim's historic Gezi Park triggered an outbreak of protests across different parts of Turkey, including Izmir, Istanbul, and Ankara. These protests brought together students, corporate businessmen, and local shop owners, as well as men and women who would otherwise have rarely interacted in a forum as widespread as the Occupy movement. This paper examines the different media outlets that were utilized by different groups within Turkish society as the Occupy Gezi movement progressed, as well as the different groups that tended to use each more (women on Instagram, for example, or students on Twitter). The overlap between these groups will help to explore how Occupy Gezi was ultimately socially unifying as a movement. Additionally, the paper will look at how Occupy movement is in motion today, and what the government's response (blocks of social media sites, possible election fraud in local elections) will do to either continue or disband the movement.

IV. Methods:

a. **Ethnography:** I visited Istanbul during Spring Break, and was able to interview multiple people who were involved in the Occupy Gezi movement at different stages, each of whom

came from different “groups” in society. Students: Aylin Yardimci (graduate student in IR-Political Science at Koc University), Yusuf Kumtepe (undergraduate student in Law at Galatasaray University, Bertug Baloglu (undergraduate student in IR at Koc University). Professor: Nalan Babur (professor of developmental psychology at Bogazici University). Other (professionals): Canset Mujdeci (industrial engineer, graduate of Istanbul Technical University in 1980s), Burak Mujdeci (assistant film director, has worked on shoots in rural parts of Turkey, was there for part of Gezi protests). I’m conducting Skype interviews with a few of these individuals, and conducted interviews in-person in Istanbul with some others. Transcripts to follow.

b. Content analysis: Analyzing tweets by protesters, by looking into specifics tags: #OccupyGezi, for example, using third party tools like TwXplorer, Tweetbinder and Hash Tracking. TwXplorer: I’m using this to analyze certain hashtags, and other tweets that are commonly “affiliated”, as shown here for #occupygezi : <http://j.mp/1iV6LL4>. This helps me look into terms, topics, or hashtags that are used along with the hashtag that I search for. Another interesting hashtag via TwXplorer: <http://j.mp/RmxGbu>, for #occupytaksim, which seems to have more tweets in English than #occupygezi (and, in this vein, more students tweeting about it, as they tend to be the ones in Turkey using social media in English). Tweetbinder: Twitter Statistics and Rankings of occupygezi via @TweetBinder. I really like TweetBinder for multiple reasons, one of which is the Stats section with visual tables of how a certain hashtag is being used on Twitter. In #occupygezi’s case, for example, this shows potential impact vs. actual impact of a tweet by views, and I’d like to use the difference between these two numbers (which is 684,403 tweets, quite a high number) to examine who isn’t tweeting at certain times to lead to such a big gap (or, if the gap were lower, who’s tweeting a lot to lead to a smaller gap). Another variable I am using with TweetBinder is number of tweets with a link or photo, which I found to be particularly low (169) in the particular panel I was examining.

I am also looking at content of YouTube videos of police response to protests, especially the comments section both in Turkish and English. I'll be doing this through traditional "review", by searching for the tag "occupygezi" in YouTube, and then reading through some of the comments on videos, looking at profiles/accounts that comment frequently. Some videos I've already began to look at are: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ai84-vkD0No&oref=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.youtube.com%2Fwatch%3Fv%3DAi84-vkD0No&has_verified=1 (a lot of "solidarity with Turkey from Germany/France/etc comments by young people), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iu-wDrZ-bsM>, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GqeEI6KSsZk>

Examine some parody/meme accounts: there was an influx of Facebook and Twitter accounts that parodied members of the Turkish government. Some parody accounts I'm looking at include; https://twitter.com/RT_Erdoyan, <https://twitter.com/Antierdogan238>, <https://twitter.com/PMTurkeyErdogan>, <https://twitter.com/BASBAKAN02>. These accounts get a lot of traffic from young people especially.

c. Mass media analysis: news shows like "Shefaf Oda" as well as Turkish talk show culture. Some shows were permitted to cover the protests, others blatantly ignored them; discuss why/how the mass media was influenced.

Sample Literature:

-http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Media_censorship_and_disinformation_during_the_2013_protests_in_Turkey

-<http://www.indexoncensorship.org/2013/07/turkeys-media-a-polluted-landscape/>

-<http://www.indexoncensorship.org/2014/03/banning-twitter-turkish-media-experiment/>

-<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/new-media-laws-increasing-internet-censorship-in-turkey.aspx?pageID=449&nID=61212&NewsCatID=396>

V. Tools (also, see Methods section):

a. PageOneX: I will use and cite how many times the Gezi movement made the front page of major newspapers both in Turkey and the rest of the world. Examples to use:

<http://pageonex.com/numeroteca/geziparki>, <http://blog.pageonex.com/2013/06/19/testing-online-front-pages-bbc-on-occupygezi/>

b. Tweetbinder: This tool is useful from both a content and statistical analysis perspective. It presents data about number of tweets, “influence” the hash tag searched has on the site in general, and reach, each of which I will examine independently; for example, the “reach” tool is useful to analyze when discussing the start of the movement, and the “influence” tool is useful to identify main players in the movement at different stages- has there been a shift in most vocal accounts throughout the movement? What could be the reason for such a change? Is there a particular group/gender/class that has remained most vocal? Or transitioned into being increasingly vocal?

c. twXplorer: Firstly, this tool allows for a multi-lingual search, and I will be using both Turkish and English for this project, because I’m interested in seeing how the movement was perceived at different stages both in Turkey, and in the English-speaking world.

d. ProQuest: I can use this to look at newspaper coverage of the movements from an American perspective

e. Turkish newspaper archive (all info is in Turkish).http://amirmideast.blogspot.com/2011/01/open-access-newspapers-archives_24.html:

f. Instagram: I’m using statigram (<http://statigr.am/search/occupygezi>) especially because both photoshopped and real images were shared (with hashtags) on this medium throughout the protests, and today.

VI. Workplan:

Restating thesis: I believe that Occupy Gezi was successful in uniting people of multiple facets of Turkish society, and that the use of social media outlets helped bring these groups together in a unique way, unprecedented in Turkish history. Parallels can be drawn to the 1970s and 1980s student movements, but Occupy Gezi remains unique because it united a wider range of people in terms of socioeconomic standing.

Section I: What prompted Gezi?

- a. Legislation proposed by AKP (Ak Parti)
- b. *Gezi Park*: historical significance, details of plan to demolish
- c. Background of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President Abdullah Gul (pre-existing public perceptions, reputation as portrayed by the media up until Gezi)
- d. Timeline of Gezi: Dates in which initial movements cropped up, locations, types of movements. Early voices both online and on foot. (use link from Hurriyet, see below)

Section II: Initial Stirrings of Occupy Gezi, First Groups Involved

- a. Initial movements; Taksim, university movements (Istanbul Technical University, Istanbul University, Koc University, Bogazici University; these are all universities, and so the group I will be looking into are students, but also how they interact with professors, scholars, reporters, and the general public. The bulk of my “student” research will therefore come from looking into what universities produced the most vocal participants, and why? Location of school, political affiliation, and financial status are all important variables to consider here.)
- b. The first leakage onto the Internet: who were the initial “tweeters” and voices of this movement? Use TwXplorer. Consider first voices from groups like women, aforementioned students, but also prominent businessmen (were they silent? Affiliation with Erdogan’s government? Fear of fines?)
- c. Interview students from universities mentioned above, try to find people who were involved at different stages of the conflict (complete).

Section III: What has the government learned? What have these groups achieved?

- a. What has the government seemed to learn from Gezi? Has the administration changed its behavior in any way to pacify the protesters?
- b. Current motions by the government to limit social media outlets like Twitter and YouTube; responses to the continued oppression imposed by AKP
- c. Interviews/speeches Erdogan has given since summer 2013: what do they suggest for Turkey's future, in terms of tolerating protest/organized dissent?

Conclusion: I want to draw a few sets of conclusions about the following- I) Which facets of Turkish society were most vocal throughout the protests? What factors could have influenced this?

II) What facets of Turkish society interacted the most as a result of Occupy Gezi?

III) What do the current actions of the Turkish government mean for the future of Gezi? Do these actions have the potential to mobilize different/the same groups that have been involved so far?

Running list of sources:

<http://www.newyorker.com/online/blogs/newsdesk/2013/06/occupy-taksim-police-against-protesters-in-istanbul.html>

<http://www.hurriyetdailynews.com/timeline-of-gezi-park-protests-.aspx?pageID=238&nID=48321&NewsCatID=341>

<http://globalvoicesonline.org/2013/06/04/turkey-a-social-media-chronology-of-occupy-gezi/>

<http://everywheretaksim.net/>

Twitter Accounts:

<https://twitter.com/OccupyGezi> (only 5 tweets, but lots of followers. Why?)

<https://twitter.com/OccupyGeziNews>

<https://twitter.com/OccupyGeziPark>

<https://twitter.com/GeziDiren>

Interview Questions:

1. How did you hear about the Occupy Gezi movements, first?
2. Were you involved in any kind of media outlets related to the cause? (Tweeting, posting photos to Facebook, status updates, etc)
3. Did you see any false or misleading media sources during the Occupy Gezi movement (fake Twitter accounts with misleading photos, news sources refusing to cover the protests or ignoring them)?
4. Do you think Occupy Gezi was successful, ultimately? What was the biggest challenge you faced as a participant or bystander?

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