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INFLUENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA ON DEMOCRACY:

Twitter as a Tool of Social Uprising During #OccupyGezi

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We have all become potential citizen journalists who, if equipped with a mobile phone, can record and instantly upload to the global networks any wrong doing by anyone, anywhere. Unless the elites permanently withdraw to an invisible space, their actions are exposed to the decentralized surveillance of millions of eyes: we are all now potential paparazzi.

Manuel Castells, *Communication Power*

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ABSTRACT

One thing is certain that, recently, social media has been taking an essential role in the new social movements all around the world. These platforms have expanded the influence and sphere of social movements. Especially in the countries with media that is under state control, social media channels help the activists to spread their words and to get more public support. This work aims to analyze the influence of social media, specifically Twitter, during the Gezi Park protests in Turkey in May, 2013. In this case study, I studied tweets that have been sent during the first ten days of events and tried to find the intended purpose of Twitter usage by the protestors and supporters of the movement with the help of content and frame analysis.

Key words: Twitter, Gezi Park protests, social movement, social media.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

While entering the 21st century, the world have transformed from an industrial society to an information society. In the industrial society, information was mostly monopolized by big mass media groups. However, with the significant development of wireless technologies, the distribution of the information became faster than ever and highly developed mobile technologies, storage and communication facilities allowed ordinary people to access information with ease. In this respect, it is obvious that internet and social media have had remarkable roles in social development, communication and social networking.

These technological developments have also impact on social movements. With the help of the communications technologies, they organize their own communication networks and organizers of social movements speed up communications and increase the number of people with whom they have been in contact (Tilly, 2004).

These kind of social movements have started to appear in different regions of the world such as Iceland, Tunisia, Egypt, Arab countries (Arab Spring), Spain (Podemos), the USA (Occupy Wall Street), Brazil and Turkey (Occupy Gezi), due to the economical crisis, antidemocratic governance, social injustice, environmental issues, etc. Even though they had different motivations and reasons, they had at least one thing in common: usage of information technologies, especially social media, more specifically, Facebook and Twitter. The reasons for the usage of these platforms were various, but we can state that the users' target is to reach as many individual as possible to have a collective consciousness about the democratic conditions, to have a common social and political agenda via applicable discourses.

This study will focus on the Twitter usage by the protestors during the Occupy Gezi movement in Turkey. The occupation of Gezi Park started on the 28 May, 2013, in protest against the enforcement of an urban management project in a central park of

Istanbul. The police interfered brutally with a small environmentalist group in the park and used aggressive force that caused the movement to gain a strong support from the middle class and to expand from Istanbul to other major cities of the country (Gole, 2013). Since traditional media was under the strict control of state and was censured, people got and shared the news mostly from Twitter; they also organized the protests and shared information from there. Twitter and Facebook became the medium of central communication and intelligence. Many logistical organizations have been made possible via the communicational activities conducted on Twitter.

1.1. Background

All societies have breaking points in their history. These moments might arrive unexpectedly and emerge as a result of unsuspected agents depending on conditions and the spirit of the times. The 18 days of Gezi Park protests were one of these breaking points for Turkish society. These protests were one of the most important social events in the recent history of the country and probably have changed the political structure irreversibly. According to Ministry of Interior's report, there have been 4,725 events in all but one of Turkey's 81 provinces. Since the protests spread all around the country from Istanbul, they are all covered under the generic name of ''Gezi'' (Özel, 2014).

After 2011 elections, in their third term, ruling party AKP and its leader Recep Tayyip Erdogan started to interfere to daily-life of people in a conservative way. As a result of this manner, complaints about the government caused a social explosion and turned out an outrage in Gezi Park events (Yıldırım, 2014).

On 27 May 2013 night, demolition machines of municipality entered the Gezi Park, located near Taksim Square, in the city center of Istanbul. The aim was to uproot the trees in the park in order to build an identical reproduction of the Ottoman army barracs to serve as a commercial center and a mosque, as a part of urban development project of the municipality. A small group of environmentalists gathered in the park and decided to start a camp and spend the night there to prevent the work (Farro, Demirhisar, 2014). Consequently, the activists quickly organized and spread the news to more people by using Facebook and Twitter and called the attention of more people

and they succeeded. For the next three days, the main objective of activists was to protect a public area from the destruction that favored a few capitalists. Namely, in the very beginning, ''the resistence was organized against an urbanism that puts the interests of capital over the interests of ordinary inhabitants of Istanbul (Kuymulu, 2013, p. 275).

After resisting demolition successfully during three days and nights, on May 30, at five in the morning, protestors were woken up with a police operation and attacked by tear gas bombs and water cannons; their tents and other belongings were burned by the police. That morning became the breaking point of the protests. The AKP government and its police were thinking that this operation would be enough to disperse the people in the park. Even though they managed to make them leave the park, protestors regrouped in Taksim Square, and in a few hours, by collective mobilization, around one hundred thousand people gathered in the square. This mobilization was almost completely organized through social media because mainstream media was associating with the AKP government and implementing a media blackout (Kuymulu, 2013).

Disproportionate police violence and intolerance of government authorities on the protests provoked the reactions of the people and attracted public attention. The people supported the resistence of environmentalists and also reacted against the police violence. They came to the park spontaneously. Students, workers, fans of football teams, academicians, doctors, lawyers, LGBT members and so many other groups supported and joined the protests. During these days, the legitimacy of government was highly criticized since some of its decisions were regarded as a threat to human rights and freedoms (Demirhan, 2014). While the protests escalated to the urban scale of Istanbul, the main focus shifted from grievances on the city to civil rights and freedoms since they were hindered by the Prime Minister Erdogan's authoritarian style of governance that was shaping the public space and the city (Varnalı, Görgülü, 2013).

Turkish authorities were not particularly competent on reconciliation the protestors' demands or relieving fears of rising authoritarianism. Prime Minister Erdoğan personally humiliated the demonstrators calling them 'looters' (çapulcu), accused them of tarnishing the international reputation of the country or trying to overthrow the government. Even Twitter, which was the main platform of the protestors to

communicate with each other, was accused to be a 'menace' to society, as well as 'interest loby' and their international partners. Under these circumstances, Erdogan ordered the riot police to interfere on the 18th day of the protests. Police attacked the park with tear gas, water cannons and plastic bullets, raiding to shops and hotels which were accommodating protestors and even attacked and arrested the medical staffs who were treating the injured people. After all, in the end of protests, 5 people died, more than 8000 people were injured and the country has been deeply polarized since then (Özkırımlı, 2014).

Occupy Gezi movement was spontaneous, politically unincorporated and like its counterparts around the world its participants were urban, young, well educated and non-ideological and as in the similar movements, social media had an essencial role in organization of the mobilization and spreading the information and images from the park and other places (Özel, 2014).

Turkey is one of the countries with the highest penetration rate of Twitter with 31.1% of its total population and with more than 11 million active users (Minto, 2013). During Occupy Gezi events, like in Arab Spring and Iranian Elections, Twitter was actively used by the protestors in order to communicate about the protests. A few hours into the protests, two million tweets were sent with the related hashtags (i.e. #resistgezipark, #OccupyGezi). In the first day of the protests, May, 31, the total number of tweets sent daily in Turkey increased from 9-11 million to 15.2 million (Varnalı, Görgülü, 2015). In the Gezi Protests, 69% of the activists stated that they heard about the protests from social media while only 7% stated that they heard from TV (Konda's Gezi Resistence Poll, 2013). The day before the protests, May, 30, the number of active twitter users in Turkey was 1.8 million. This number increased to 9.5 million on June 14, 2013 (Hacıyakupoğlu, Zhang, 2015).

During the uprising, Twitter was also used as a source of information for the Turkish public because the mainstream Turkish TV channels failed to cover the protests. While CNN international was showing live the clashes between the police and protestors, CNN Turkey was showing penguin documentaries due to the censorship. For that reason, most of the early news of the protests arrived to the outer world via Twitter. Besides, it also served as a helpful surveillance platform, since many protestors have

recorded and shared police violence against the people and warned each other in real-time regarding the whereabouts of the riot police (Varnalı, Görgülü, 2015; Farro, Demirhisar, 2014).

Twitter became a leading application during Occupy Gezi protests as a tool that meets the need of quick acquisition of logistic information which had a great importance since it let the people learn the places of police attacks, to gather the wi-fi codes with open access in the region, get the information for safe locations to hide from the police confrontations and learn the places of infirmaries set by volunteer doctors, etc. Most of the protestors received real-time information from Twitter. According to a research made among the protestors, most of them were not active Twitter users before the Gezi Protests and some of them even did not have a Twitter account, but while the protests continued, Twitter became the most widely used tool for logistic information. It let protestors interact among themselves even if they did not know each other, which is not possible in Facebook or whatsapp. Even though Gezi Protests did not have a leader or leaders, some opinion leaders have appeared in Twitter in whom people trusted. These opinion leaders included celebrities, famous activists and NGOs. ''The selection criteria of the sources to follow and to trust: their physical presence in the protest, their relevant experience, prior knowledge of their opinions, their articulation of thoughts, and the feeling of acquaintance'' (Hacıyakupoğlu, Zhang, 2015, p. 457).

Social media was in the center of this movement as a unique and unconditional alternative of mainstream media and their silence. Very creative and humorous slogans were created through Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Tumblr. People created an alternative information pool since their right to information has been heavily violated by Turkish mainstream media. That pool was updated constantly by assuming citizen journalism. Besides, social media had a very important role in keeping the soul of resistance alive. The people, who were injured by excessive violence, taken into custody or lost their relatives, used social media as a tool of irony against fear and also created a high level of humor which was expertly used in order to overthrown the symbols and terms of government, present social codes and institutions (Kurt, Köse, 2014).

1.2. Purpose of the Research and Research Questions

During the Occupy Gezi protests in Turkey, traditional media was under strict state control as in Egypt. For that reason, social media, particularly Twitter, has become an essential medium to get and to share information easily and rapidly about the events. Thus, in this study the role of social media, namely Twitter during the uprisings in Turkey will be examined. The main objective of this study is to investigate the influence of Twitter in the rising of social movements that caused tremendous turmoil in Turkey during the hot months of 2013 regarding the Gezi Park protests. This work will also try to analyse with what purpose and how the protestors used Twitter during the events. In addition to these, this study will also try to answer the following questions:

Q1) Is Twitter more control free than conventional media in Turkey?

Q2) Has social media transformed the Occupy Gezi protests to a more organized and highly participated movement?

Q3) Did Twitter has an integrative influence and helped young people to express their feelings about the political issues during Occupy Gezi protests?

1.3. Hypothesis

In this study, first of all, I will try to show that state media control could not censor the flow of information by social media. During the Gezi Park protests, social media was used as a tool for political confrontation with the state. Twitter has helped to change the course of events during the Gezi Park protests because the attempt to control and censor social media by Turkish State was a complete failure, also due to the high level of ICT knowledge of young people who were involved. During the events, the unifying influence of Twitter has transformed the protests. Protestors were very organized by the help of Twitter and they wrote to the common hashtags to make them trend topic. They shared the information that they received from Twitter and Facebook to extend participation. Participants used Twitter to organize the events, to strengthen their solidarity by building a political identity and broadcasting the news to the wider public without the help of mainstream media.

Twitter increased the political participation of youth. The participation level of young people (X and Y generations) in the protests was quite high; the average age of protestors was 28 (Konda's Gezi Resistence Poll, 2013). This is mainly due to the undemocratic conditions that restrict the daily life of young generations that are humiliated and oppressed under the autocratic regime of Erdogan and his party, AKP. Protestors also used Twitter to frame the movement and to explain their aims to the wider public.

1.4. Research Methodology

Analysis in this work has been done on the basis of *case study* and *mixed method*. In case study, a certain case or a few of them are studied intensively. On the contrary, in representative study, a large number of cases or respondents are selected to infer from the features of the sample to the population as a whole (Cooper, 2008). The advantage of case study design is that it can be a much more detailed research than the one with a large sample while its disadvantage is that it is almost impossible to generalise the findings.

Types of case studies are defined according to the size of the cases, such as whether it involves one person, a group of people, a program or an activity. ''Cases are bounded by the time and activity, and researchers collect detailed information using a variety of data collection procedures over a sustained period of time'' (Creswell, 2009, p.13). It can also be seen as an object of the study ''as well as a product of the inquiry'' (ibid).

A case study is appropriate if the ''case'' is clearly identifiable with limits and the researcher wants to obtain an in depth analysis of the cases. Then, researcher should define the case or cases. These cases can contain an individual, several people, a program, event or activity. It is preferable to choose cases that show ''different perspectives in the problem, process or event'' (ibid). Applying these recommendations to our research, it is not the whole Gezi movement which will be analyzed but the role of Twitter in the movement.

In *mix method research design*, quantitative and qualitative data is integrated and analyzed in a single study or a program of enquiry. Mixed methods can help to generalize, to a degree, qualitative data (Creswell et al, 2003). Without using computers, capacity of the researchers to integrate different types of data in an analysis is quite limited. Recent

developments in computer software for data analysis gave the researchers the capability to export coding information in tabular form.

'' Coding or categorising of data is undertaken to facilitate understanding and retrieval of information in almost any approach to analysis. Whether they are called variables, themes, concepts, categories or values, responses are "coded". And codes are the means by which data are transferred from one format into another, or between QDA and statistical software. The kinds of things codes can stand for are similar in the different softwares, but the way they are generated and the way they are used are often quite different, making for potential complication of interpretation when they are read in a different context" (Bazeley, P., 2002).

In this study, I used quantitative data by coding the tweets on QDA Miner program and used this data to make a qualitative analysis. Obtained data was used to make content and frame analysis.

Frame analysis is a methodological approach and was first used as a form of analysis by Erving Goffman. He defines framing as a ''schemata of interpretation'' which allows people to analyze and to understand social interactions (Goffman, 1974). Wherever it is used, framing enables to describe the power of a communicating text. ''Analysis of frames illuminates the precise way in which influence over human consciousness is exerted by the transfer (or communication) of information from one location to that consciousness'' (Entman, 1993, p. 52). Frames also higlights some parts of information that are the subject of a communication and make that information more noticeable, significant or catchy for audiences (ibid).

Content analysis was also used in this study. Content analysis is ''a technique for examining the content or information and symbols contained in written documents or other communication media'' (Neuman, 2014, p.49). Content analysis is a proper method for e-research. This methodology produces valid, regardful, replicable and reliable results (Small, 2011). In order to analyze the relationship between social media framing and its effects on the Gezi Park events, a content analysis have been performed on the tweets that were sent during the Gezi Park occupation period and demonstrations. The tweets that are under the most popular hashtag (#resistGeziPark) were analyzed. In order to make that analysis, QDA miner content analysis software was used.

The tweets that were sent from 31st May to 09th June 2013 were analyzed. By using Twitter's own filtration system, suitable tweets were picked and framed. A code scheme was developed and each tweet that was selected was coded systematically acording to their content (solidarity, criticism, media censorship etc.). This coding system provided an overview of the types of interaction under these hashtags in Twitter.

The tweets were transferred to QDA Miner program. Each sentence in each tweet was coded according to their content and meaning and each sentence was transformed into a concept. Since these concepts could be related with some other concepts, in this content analysis I tried to find out the interrelationships between the concepts and which concepts can explain which social and political facts. Some basic concepts can have a wide range of content network that can explain the other concepts (category and code). In this content analysis, by using code, category and themes I tried to understand the semantic world of the Occupy Gezi youth by framing their sharings in social media.

In addition to the statistical data obtained, some tweets from the same hashtag (#resistGeziPark) were randomly chosen within the same time gap (first ten days of the protests) to analyse and understand the use of twitter from the perspective of protestors.

Secondary source data of this study was gathered by using different information sources like academic articles, bibliographic database, surveys and news about the events.

CHAPTER 2

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Social movements are a serious of challenging performances, by which common people make collective requests on others (Tilly, 2004). Social movements and protests constitute a type of network that brings people together for a common goal or interest. They have also the capability of mobilizing weakly connected individuals into networks with stronger ties, in this way expanding dissatisfaction into mass movements. In this regard, social media can be seen as technology and space to widen and maintain the networks which social movements hinge on. For that reason, social media are not only tools to be used or adopted by social movements, but also affect the way activists' shape social movements (Lim, 2012).

According to recent research on political participation, some more conventional forms of democratic participation are decreasing; such as voting or political party-related activities, while protests are more commonly preferred. People vote less but that does not mean that they are less interested and informed about politics. However, commercialization and/or absence of political autonomy of the mass media is a serious problem for the role of a 'power of oversight' over politicians (Della Porta, 2011).

Due to the financial crisis that shook global capitalism since 2008, the wealth of Western world has started to be questioned. It threatened governments, states and big corporations with breakup. Deepen social inequality all around the world became an intolerable position for many hopeless people who lost their trust towards political institutions that govern the countries (Castells, 2013). On the other hand, we can not explain the main reasons of social movements with only poverty and political hopelessness. From this point of view, 21st century social movements have some specific properties, despite indicating certain causes of emergence (Kurt, Köse, 2014). For instance, even though the protestors joining the new social movements are members of some civil society movements (feminist, environmentalist, gay, religious, leftist, trade union movements), they usually will be present in the public square as individuals, not as representatives of those movements. The participants in the protests come to an agreement about some claims like pluralism, dignity and justice. The main

difference of these new movements from the ones in the past is being without a core ideology. ''They are also different from the identity movements of the 1980s, such as feminism or Islamism, yet they generate a sense of cohesion, a collective force that enables them to mobilize civic resistance (Göle, 2013, p. 2).

Studies show that internet-mediated activities are not only an evolvement of offline political actions but also an explicit environment in which political behavior occurs. Internet creates a new setting which allows the progress of new forms of community which are not dependent on the obligations of traditional, offline community life. (Jensen *et. al*, 2007).

Internet and social media have an important role in authoritarian regimes. During the Arab Spring uprisings in Egypt, liberals, minorities, religious groups and other opposition groups actively used internet. Online political space first appeared as blogs and personal web sites, then in Facebook, YouTube and Twitter. Even though Internet was not censored in general in Egypt, some bloggers were jailed for long periods. Since traditional media and communicative infrastructure tend to be controlled by the government and individual participation in the protests are discouraged and mostly punished by authoritarian regimes, social media has changed the key tenets of collective action in such regimes. By doing so, it generated new vulnerabilities for even the most powerful authoritarian regimes. News coverage of the recent uprisings has started to be given with the catchphrases like ''Twitter Revolution'' or ''Facebook Revolution'' (Tüfekçi, Wilson, 2012).

These movements that emerged with the participation of individuals, who look for new ways of co-existence in a world of crisis, will characterize the societies in 21st century. For whatever the reason is, either financial crisis, authoritarian regimes or protection of public arena as in Turkey, all of these movements are acts of reputation for people that want to exist with their own identities. Turkey's Occupy Gezi movement is such an action of reputation and it took place in a period when new social transition models have started to appear all around the world (Kurt, Köse, 2014).

2.1. Media and Social Movements

One thing is certain. Mass media are very importantant for all political actors in contemporary societies. This is especially true for social movements (Rucht, 2005). As Joachim Raschke (1985, p. 343) states that ''A movement that does not make it into the media is non-exixtent''. For that reason, social movements always try to receive media attention, especially positive media coverage which can be essential to influence public opinion. While some groups are very succesful on this, some groups manage to receive only little attention, while others fail on it (Rucht, 2005).

Starting from the 18th century, incipient social movements started to appear in media. Print media in those days, started to publish campaign messages, announcements, forthcoming activities and then evaluated their successes or failures. However, in 20th century, by discovery first of radio and then TV, media provided unimaginable opportunities and exposure for social movements. Protests could be more visible and the wider public could hear them. Besides, mass media created an ''echo chamber'' by which protestors could hear how others were interpreting their claims. Nevertheless, 20th century social movements could not have equal relations with mass media. ''This built-in asymmetry meant that activists could rarely count on media coverage, had little control over their portrayal in the media, and usually came away dissatisfied with the media treatment they received'' (Tilly, 2004, p. 85). Mass media show considerable differences in this asymmetry. While print media, radio and TV allows little feedback from the readers and audiences except by letters to editors, op-ed columns and talk shows, telephones and internet allows a bigger symmetry between protestors and the wider public. For that reason, 20th century social movement organizers, for instance, used preestablished telephone trees to make the movement visible (ibid.)

Media are the most obvious shapers of cultural sensibilities and also they are the main channel for protestors to proclaim their messages and movement identity. Moreover, media are very important to get outside support and to spread cultural meaning between protestors and the public. On the other hand, there are some forces that shape what media present to the public; such as expectations of audience, norms of journalists, sources of information, decisions of editors and censorship by owners and advertisers (Jasper, 1997).

There is no doubt that the success of a social movement is related to the amount of media coverege and that also influences social movement organizations' character. In order to get enough media attention, a movement has to have a large number of participants, use radical tactics or be quite innovative. In a social movement, the content of the message transmitted is as important as the quantity of publicity received (Della Porta, Diani, 2006).

On the contrary of 'legitimate' social groups, such as the police and mainstream politicians, most social movements do not constitute the main interest of mass media. For that reason, if a social movement can not turn out to a big public event, it would most probably not be covered by mass media. Most governments are already very critical of social movements since they undermine their authority, but mass media's marginalisation of the events of many social movements is more harmful than that. Getting positive media coverage is essencial for many social movements because portrayal of the events in mass media can help the movement to mobilise citizens to participate in their protests (Barker, 2008).

2.2. Network Society and Internet

In Western societies, social movements emerge as the process through which some groups and associations increasingly leave ''a purely organizational logic of action, aiming at strengthening their monopolistic representation of specific niches of public opinion/issue publics'' (Diani, 2011, p. 470). They progressively transfer to coalition activity that creates more powerful inter-organizational connections and formation of more extensive term identities. In some cases, the links and shared perspectives are strong enough to produce permanent solidarities and cooperations between the actors involved (ibid).

As Diani (2011) states, technologies cannot create a collective action, people do. On the other hand, it has a significant influence on its context and on shaping its forms. Street protests are the result of collective excitement, a ''spirit of energy'' that grabs people who are desiring for change. In this era of communication, people use the internet as a source of news and information during political crises. Online social

networks are not only extremely influential as a communication tool but also as a basic substructure of social movements (Howard, 2011).

Traditional media is known as a restraining and misleading tool that is at the service of elite interests. For that reason, most of the early news about the protests in Egypt during the uprisings, for instance, have spread to the outside world through Twitter, and then traditional media (Kurt, Köse, 2014). Besides, when people get information about a social movement or protest through mass media, they only know the actual state of the event in that moment. However, when they get the information and news through social media, they can see the sequence of decisions taken upon that point. For example, when someone makes a search in Twitter about a certain event, he/she can get the last conversations about the issue, and by scrolling down the page he/she can see all previous tweets about that issue. In the same way, on Facebook, users can write comments and also can read all previous comments about the topic. ''Tweets and comments are informative about the individuals' decision to join the protests or to stay at home. By contrast, when TV or radio inform about the state of a given event, the precise history remains hidden, only aggregate information about the turnout is reported'' (Kiss, Rosa-Garcia, 2011, p. 3).

Castells defines this situation with the concept of ''network society''. In this era of technology and internet, social movements also experience a transition by means of interaction-based, complex and horizontal networks of communication. In 21st century, social transition happens in consequence of people's actions that create networks by communication tools. The biggest difference of these contemporary movements from the previous ones is that people have an ability of founding communication and self-organization. On the other hand, it does not mean that social networks are the reason of social movements. As Turkish Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan (elected president in 2014) states: ''Twitter is the enemy of the people''. Indeed, they are the devices for people who want to pass their opinions or share their indignation to join a protest in the urban space (Castells, 2013). Thanks to digital technology, we all have become potential citizen journalists by the help of mobile phones that can record and immediately share in global networks any kind of unfairness in anywhere (Castells, 2009).

Digital technologies provide a chance of vertical and horizontal communication that assists civic engagement and deliberative democracy. Internet has turned into a revolutionary tool for democracy since it has instantaneous impacts in real time. It is quite obvious that the ''web'' provides unimagined opportunities in respect of information, communication and global mobilization around the world. Besides, new social movements managed to use the dynamics of internet efficiently in order to publicize ideas and suggestions, to collect more supporters all around the world or to mobilize transnational strategies generating virtual forums open to everyone who wants to support such actions (Romero, 2014)

Communication technologies have become essential devices for social movements since they disseminate the logics and motives of collective action. In the digital age, technological devices that are connected to Internet are very important tools for social protests, as these can begin as quickly as technology lets and, in some situations, only in a few hours after the first impulse. The restrictive response of governments generally comes much slower, only after the messages are circulating in the cyberspace, after they have been read and shared all around the world many times. Even though some governments have implemented restrictions for Internet and social media as they blocked some web-pages, services or accounts, people have always found side roads to use the network for protest (La Rosa, 2014). Besides, mobile phones and the Internet increase the capacity of a movement to coordinate events, to give rapid responses and let the movement to be less dependent on mainstream media in order to be known to the public. Especially in countries with state-controlled media, this effect of the Internet can be seen more clearly (Lim, 2012; Diani, 2011).

Internet offers a resilient and decentralized communication platform by facilitating fast and cheap communications for social movements all around the globe. The tools of the Internet can help protestors to find and disseminate information, assist, organize and coordinate events. These tools also offer easy access to several mainstream publications, news, reports and relevant information. Being a low cost tool, Internet allows social movements to easily bypass the mainstream media by creating their own news platforms. During the protests of 2009 G20 summit in London, for instance, protestors formed a clustor of websites (Put People First, Meltdown in the City,

Climate Camp, etc.) and organized the events through these kind of websites. Each one of these sites was supporting a specific event, but they were also providing links to others. ''The websites offered a variety of information to prospective participants, including advice on what to carry on the day, downloadable maps of the protests sites, as well as cards outlining the protestors legal rights in case of an arrest''. Protestors also actively used Twitter to spread the latest news about the events, to transmit their impressions and to send solidarity messages (Kavada, 2010, p. 107).

In all these movements, social media is not only a tool that is exterior to the organizational and cultural framework of these movements. Alternatively, ''it has become increasingly clear that communication is a form of organization, and the form of communication strongly interacts with the form of organization'' (Tufekci, 2014, p. 205). Besides, simplicity of social media let movements to improve significant aspects such as engagements, occupation, synchronization, visibility, publicity, logistics and coordination. These capacities helped protestors continue their activities without needing traditional political tools that they are disappointed with. For that reason they tried not to develop, engage or use the least possible (ibid).

Social media gives a new shape to public sphere and this causes 'the conservative dilemma', so named because it disturbs the dictatorships. New media enabling wider public access to speech or assembly create the dilemma. Since it is hard to limit the transmission of the internet and two common reactions of conservative dilemma – censorship and propaganda- are highly ineffective as a source of control, preventing the progressive impact of these tools will reflect the weakness of the government in the eyes of pro-regime citizens or harming the economy (Shirky, 2011).

Although still in transition, new technology and communication tools are catalysing new politics. Of course old version of governance continues to rule the world. Nevertheless challengers want to use their own terms and due to digital affordances, they are increasingly managing to do so (Tüfekçi, 2014).

2.3. Social Media and the Role of Twitter

Nowadays, social media has started to be considered as an influential instrument to spread ideologies, doctrines and thoughts rapidly, to limit the impact of official media that are controlled by government, and to explain the motives behind protests. Besides, social media is quite effective for the protestors for fast planning and emplacement (Comunello, Anzara, 2012).

Internet based technologies and social media may produce new possibilities for social movements. Since Internet lets protestors cooperate, they can organize a protest much more quickly than ever and spread a message through the world with a lower cost than traditional methods (Niederman, 2010). Moreover, by simplifying the fast expansion of ideas, tactics and strategies, Internet lets social movements cope with problems that relatedt to collective mobilization (Annals, 1999).

Since the 1990s, with the rise of the Internet, the network population of the world has been growing day by day. Having 1.89 billion active users, Facebook is the most popular of them all as of January, 2017[1]. Twitter, on the other hand, in spite of being far less popular than Facebook (320 million), provides some specific properties which gives opportunity to share effective information and support activism (ibid).

Twitter is basically a microblogging service that was founded in 2006 to allow sharing short messages (tweets) which has 140 characters limitation. Since the system was designed in the beginning for tweets to be shared by SMS, it had this character limitation. Even though it developed in time and enabled more uses than SMS, this limitation has not changed. As Twitter's Creative Director Biz Stone says ''creativity comes from constraint'' (Boyd *et al*, 2010).

'Friendship' status on Facebook has a symetrical relationship (both sides has to accept friend's request). On the other hand, on Twitter the relationship is asymmetrical, that means, there is no need to follow back. Since most of the profiles are open, users can read the tweets and join in general discussions mostly through a keyword search (# hashtags), and can access to the most popular subjects discussed in a specific moment. Users can 'retweet' a message to their followers and help to its spread (Comunello,

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[1] http://www.statista.com/statistics/272014/global-social-networks-ranked-by-number-of-users/

Anzara, 2012). Besides, since Twitter enables users to update via their mobile phones, ''postings can increase the number of people within a loose social network who can be made aware of coordination efforts or news alerts''. Live tweeting also allows people to share thier messages beyond the persons that they know. Protestors can use Twitter as a platform to gain the attention of mainstream media (Cullum, B. 2010, p. 56).

According to Java *et.al* (2007), there are four main reasons of using Twitter: daily chatter, conversations, sharing information and reporting news.

There is no doubt that social media networks have brought a new aspect for reporting breaking news events. Since Twitter posts are usually public for all to see, it is also commonly used as a tool of citizen journalism. In several different aspects, Twitter has shown its superiority to traditional mainstream media on breaking news stories. For example, during the earthquake that hit China's Sichuan region in 12th May 2008, Twitter was the first breaking news source much before than CNN or BBC. Twitter has turned out to a ''real time communications platform'' and this is its advantage to other media tools because it spreads the international news to the world even faster than the traditional media (Jewitt, 2009).

There are several researches about the usage and influence of Twitter in different social movements. In 2009 Iranian presidential election, for instance, Twitter helped on spreading of information and hence, supported democracy by challenging the censorship of an authoritarian state. The Iranian case shows that connections between old and new forms of communication and mobilization, ''between traditional media and micro-blogging, between on-the-ground protests and online activism, allow a social media site like Twitter to become more than sum of its tweets and play an important role on the globel stage'' (Niederman, 2010, p. 30). In fact, during the election period, Twitter turned out to become a medium in which citizens could protest and communicate about the elections and have global conversations even though the government routinely censored the citizens. Even some optimists asserted after the election period that these protests deserved the label of ''Twitter Revolution'', because of the integrative role of micro-blogging site (ibid). In the international press, Twitter was highlighted during this period as the technology that allowed protestors to disseminate events rapidly (Glaisyer, 2010).

In a similar way, during the Egyptian uprising of early 2011, social media, especially Facebook and Twitter, had an essential role. These platforms provided space and tools for the creation and enlargement of networks that an authoritarian regime could not manage to control. ''Social media functioned to broker connections between previously disconnected groups, to spread shared grievances beyond the small community of activist leaders, and to globalize the reach and appeal of the domestic movement for democratic change'' (Lim, 2012, p. 244). Protestors recorded the events with the help of their cell phones and shared them via YouTube and Facebook with the rest of the world and mostly in live streaming. They debated on Facebook, organized the events through Twitter and used blogs to spread their ideas. According to an analysis of a large data set of tweets in Tahrir Square in the last week of January during the events, individuals were the most effective tweet organizers rather than organizations. Twitter procured a technological platform for people to become trendsetters in the movement (Castells, 2015). On this basis, as Lotan *et al*. states ''the revolutions were, indeed, tweeted'' (2011:1401).

Kavanaugh *et al.*(2011) states that Facebook was more widely employed than Twitter in Egypt, but Twitter was more resistive to internet blockage by government. Namely, since Twitter could still be used over cell phones, it reached very high adoption rates through Egypt, Tunisia, Iran and in the rest of Middle East, and was a main communication tool in the Egyptian uprising.

Social media expands the channels, speeds up the delivery of the messages and creates a different platform to share ideas. This virtual medium allows citizens ''to share, collaborate, and cooperate using social media technologies with no information costs and a common technology ground'' (Sandoval-Almazan, Gil-Garcia, p. 369). This media response lets activists aggregate information and allows late activists to join the movement. Mass media publishes the news by using their usual channels (TV, radio, newspapers), and even if citizens do not have access to these channels, they still can use the internet in order to communicate. As a result, social media can be helpful for social movements in three ways: 1) rapid mobilization 2) to weaken regimes' legitimacy, and 3) to increase national and international awareness to regimes' atrocities (ibid).

Although technology alone cannot bring on political change - as it did not in Iran- it can assure new capacities and enforce new restrictions on political actors. New technologies and social media do not take down authoritarian regimes, yet they can be used to force these regimes' guard down. Nowadays, influential social movement means effective usage of social media. By this way, brutality of authoritarian regimes stream around the world. As it happened in Iran and Egypt. ''The world saw the dissent; the regime knows that the world saw the dissent'' (Howard, 2011, p. 12).

Mark Pfeifle (2009), a former national-security adviser in George W. Bush administration, states that even though Twitter has been criticized as being a time waster ″140 characters were enough to shine a light on Iranian oppression and elevate Twitter to the level of change agent. Even the government of Iran has been forced to utilize the very tool they attempted to squelch to try to hold on to power.'' According to some scholars, SNS platforms like Facebook permit political communication far more than mass media by the help of their unique designs. Political groups can gather and disseminate information more easily through their social structure and interactive channels (Arora, 2015). Somehow they turned out to be coordinating tools of almost all of the world's political movements and most of the authoritarian governments (and also increasing number of democratic ones) are trying to limit access to them (Shirky, 2011).

2.4. The Case of Turkey: #OccupyGezi

Gezi Park movement is a unique example in Turkey, since it was organized without the support of any institutional opposition. For that reason it has both similarities and differences with other global and local movements. Indeed, it can be said that social movements are having a transformation at global level. ''It is about growing the importance of individual grievances which demand autonomy and democratization for ordinary people, not just as an organizational behaviour or institutional level'' Social movements influence each other and people learn from each other's experiences (Yıldırım, 2014, p. 177).

Gezi movement in Turkey was a turning point for the country since it showed up the sharp contrast in Turkish society. The reaction of Erdogan and his government towards

the protestors was part of a more extensive policy to progressively transform the society and infuse the strict Muslim conservative values into personal lives, especially for women. The strict restrictions for alcohol sales, for instance, conflicted with the personal freedom that young generations appreciate in a modern society. Values like environmentalism, democracy or tolerance were in conflict with the traditional, religious culture quite common in rural areas or in the less educated parts of urban population. Standing to the legitimacy of the ballot box, Erdogan was imposing the Islamic values to society and coming in a direct contradiction with the highly educated urban middle class. Besides, he adopted economic globalization and neoliberal policies in economics and had considerable success. With this confidence, ''he presented himself on the world scene as the political bridge between the Muslim world and the West'' (Castell, 2013, p. 229).

Because of these reasons, Gezi Park was not a simple conflict between environmentalism and speculative development. It was a struggle for citizens' right to the city as a public space and against the conservative policy that restricts cultural and personal lives of the people. These policies were interfering with people's personal life, forcing them to follow the traditional family patterns and asking women to have at least three children, limiting abortion and regulating the uses of public space. These kinds of conflicts started to deepen on the social networks much before it emerged as an open confrontation in Gezi protests (ibid).

This urban movement that was started by young people, strongly supported by middle class, and having a dominant female participation, created ''new standards for democracy'' in Turkey. The movement gave an opportunity to the unrepresented groups whose voices were not heard in the mainstream media and to the social groups that were not represented during the elections and formed new alliances by getting through old divergences (Göle, 2013). In that perspective, Gezi Park movement was put into place by ordinary people, and it related mostly specific demands about daily life. It was not about removing the government, it was not a class-conscious movement and also it was not connected with any organization or institution (Yıldırım, 2014).

The information flow through different communication tools was a substantial part of the collective Gezi protests. Individuals formulated their choices against ''the

authoritarian government seen as a symbol of domination and control that affect the cultural, economic and social policies of the course of their lives'' by joining these protests (Farro, Demirhisar, 2014, p. 182).

On the background of Gezi Park movement one can see ''ecologically conscious, human rights focused, grassroots movements around the world, such as the Bolivian water wars of 1999-2000'' (Harmanşah, 2014, p. 131). The movement has made a contribution to the history of such movements by forming important platforms for demanding public space and away from the ambitions of political actors. This movement was also deeply engaged with social media networks, such as Facebook and Twitter, and by using these networks combined the virtual, discursive and architectural mediums to each other. Facebook and Twitter were used as strategic devices to activate and mobilize people. Social media networks served as a ''transient, fast-changing space of instantaneous information, visual representation, immediate witnessing and collective action'' into which state forces had very limited means of control (ibid, p. 131).

According to a survey made by SAMER research center, 16.27% of Istanbul population over the age 18 joined the Gezi protests. Class analysis of the protestors shows their mixed nature. 31,2% of them were mostly white collar or self-employed and have a higher average income than the other groups. 35.5% were workers or persons without regular jobs. The survey also shows the sharply divided nature of Turkish society: While 41,4% supported the events 43.4 were opposed, and 15.2 were indifferent (Özel, 2004). Most of the participants of the protests were college and high school graduates, the proportion of women was slightly higher than that of men and participants' average age was 28 years (Farro, Demirhisar, 2014).

Gezi Park supplied a platform for interaction and performativity. Contrary to traditional political movements, it was open to spontanety, creativity and humour. Thereby, Gezi protestors have experienced a communal life like the '68 counter-cultural movements. They have also shared with the world their peaceful, creative and alternative communal life through social media with the world (Göle, 2013).

In those days the German magazine *Der Spiegel* stated that demonstrations in Turkey were ''drawing more than students and intellectuals. Families with children, women in headscarves, men in suits, hipsters in sneakers, pharmacists, tea-house proprietors'', all were taking to the streets in order to show their displeasure (Gezer, Popp, and Trenkamp, 2013).

The movement has also formed its own language and jargon. The insulting words like ayyaş (drunkard) and çapulcu (scum, looter) that Prime Minister Erdoğan has used for the protestors have acquired new meanings. Protestors used these names to present themselves as ''ayyaş'' and ''çapulcu'' and converted these hurtful and offensive words into humoristic affirmations. Especially the word ''çapulcu'' became the common identity of the movement. Global public figures declared their solidarity with the movement. Noam Chomsky, for instance, shared a picture with the subtitle ''I am also a çapulcu'', and that picture was widely shared in social media (ibid).

Lack of mass media coverage during the Gezi Park events in Turkey was one of the most protested issues during the events. The biggest mainstream media channels, including private broadcasters CNN Turk, NTV, Haber Turk, public broadcaster TRT and many other TV channels and newspapers applied self-censorship, and this situation went ''as far as firing off journalists or forcing them for a mandatory leave''(Yüksek, 2013, n.p.). According to an internet poll made by Istanbul Bilgi University, 84.2% of the protestors claimed that they were protesting the ''silence of media'', 91.3% were protesting the authoritarian attitude of the Prime Minister, 91.3% were protesting the unbalanced power used by police, and 91.1% were protesting the violations of democratic rights (ibid).

To give an example to show how media can mislead the public, Haber Turk, one of the biggest news channels of the country, was covering the protests in Taksim square in June 11 as 'Marginal groups are attacking the police with molotov cocktails and stones', while CNN International was reporting the same event with the headline 'Police fire tear gas at the protestors. Several fires appear to be burning in Taksim'. Even worse than these one-sided news, some of the TV channels were broadcasting false news to increase hatred towards the protestors. Public TV channel TRT, for

instance, claimed that the protestors burned Turkish flag, and later it appeared that the shootings footage were from a battle with PKK from 3 years before (ibid).

According to a recent report published by Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism (2016, p.72), ''While the Turkish government intensifies its suppression of media outlets, social media has increasingly become an alternative platform for news''. As well as censorship, lack of professionalism in the mainstream media also enabled people to rely on social media, particularly Twitter and Facebook in order to get information about the latest news and express solidarity with the protestors during the Gezi Park events. Starting from the first day of the events, social media was actively used by protestors to communicate, to organize the events and to act as an essencial information network in a medium where mainstream media was non existing. This situation was well expressed in one of the slogans of the movement: ''The revolution will not be televised, it will be tweeted'' (Yüksek, 2013).

Effective use of social media was one of the most important characteristics of Gezi Movement. According to Social Media and Political Participation Lab (SMaPP) Data report, the role of social media in the protests was 'phenomenal'. Between June 1 and June 11 2013, 22 million tweets were posted related to the demonstrations. Twitter was constantly active even at nights, and in the first 18 hours of the events at least 2 million tweets were sent with the related hashtags of #direngeziparkı (950,000), #occupygezi (170,000) and #geziparkı (50,000). As it can be seen in chart 1, the activity on Twitter was constant during the day. Even after midnight, more than 3,000 tweets were sent every minute (SMaPP, p. 2).
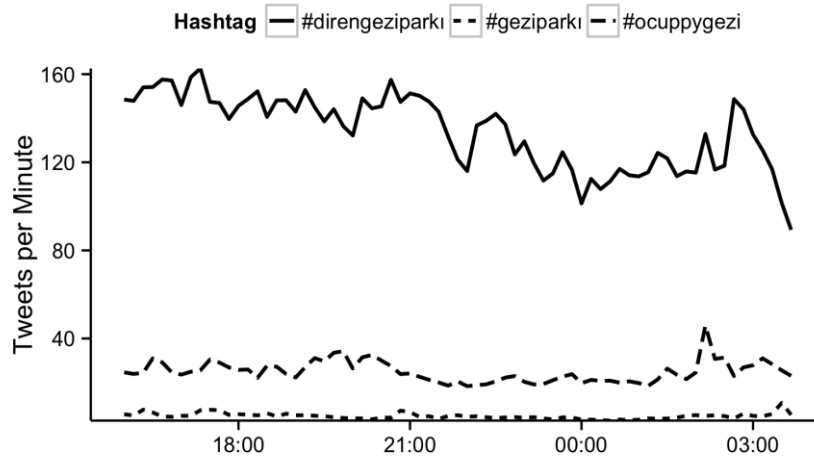
Chart 1: Number of mentions of the top 3 hashtags in the first 18 hours of the events (SMaPP Data Report, p. 2).

Twitter was actively used to spread the information about the protests from the ground. Unlike some recent similar uprisings, 90% of all tweets were coming from Turkey and 50% of them all from Istanbul 88% of the tweets were in Turkish which shows that the audience were Turkish people more than the international community (See chart 2).

Additionally, according to some reports, 3G network was down in much of the area. Even though some shops and small businesses opened their WIFI networks to allow internet access, it is almost sure that reduced signal had an important impact on these numbers (SmaPP, p.3).

Due to lack of media coverage in Turkish media and dissatisfaction about mainstream media, people started to live-twitting the protests by using smart-phones. Indeed, in the beginning of the events social media was the major source of information for almost everyone. Since traditional media has failed to reflect the intensity of the protests, social media provided an infrastructure not only to communicate and exchange information with each other, but also to replace traditional media (ibid).
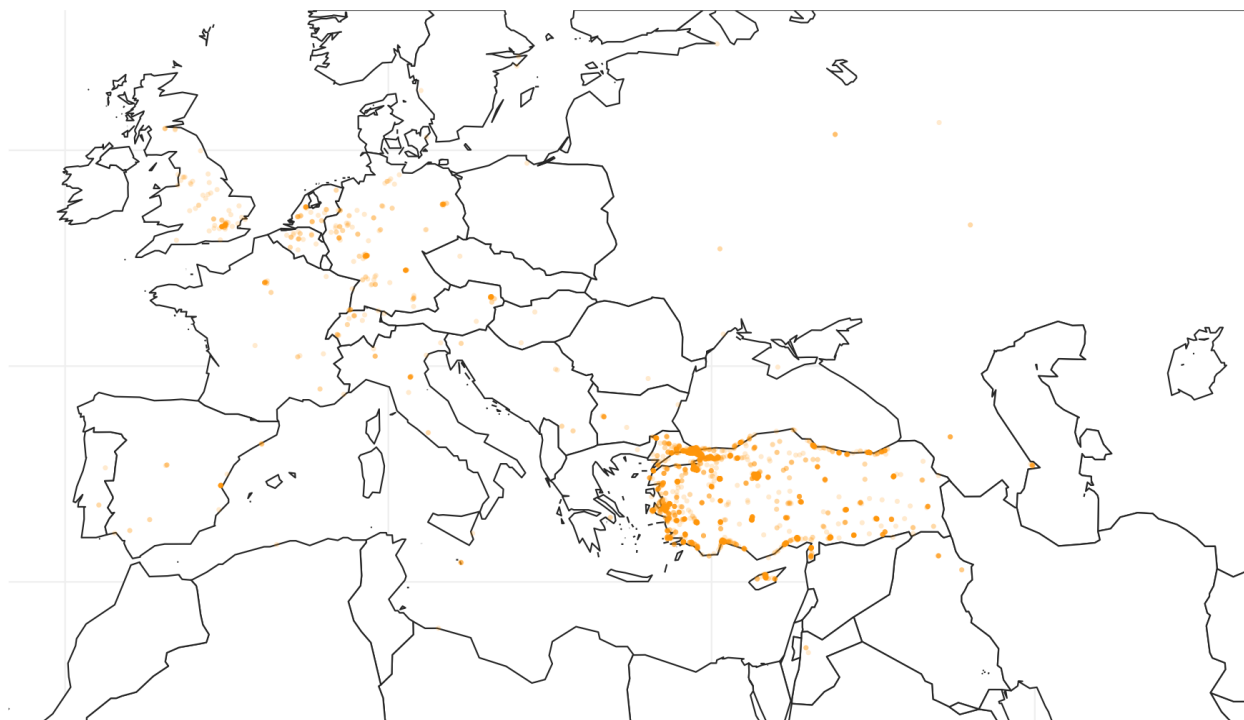
Chart 2: Geolocated tweets sent from Turkey and Europe (SMaPP Data Report, p.3)

During the first weekend of the protests, the hashtag #direngeziparkı was tweeted more than 1.8 million times, which was more than the main hashtag (#jan25) during the entire Egyptian revolution. Even after three days of protests, the number of tweets did not have a significant decrease, but the proportion of tweets in English increased. ''This could suggest both that protestors were attempting to increase international awareness, and that the international community itself is taking a greater interest in the protests'' (ibid, p. 4).

Alongside the dissemination and coordination of events, social media were also used as a platform to criticize the government through a powerful humor. People were tear gassed, shot, blinded and even killed, but, on the other hand, humor became the language of the resistance. During the protests, the streets and the screens filled with satirical images, expressions, and demonstrations that mocking the police, politicians, and the media.''Humor during the Gezi events formed a language that was unexpected yet ordinary, entertaining yet deeply political'' (Dagtas, 2013, n.p.).

Nancy Baym (1995) states that humorous performance can be used to form ''group solidarity, group indentity and individual identity'' in computer mediated communication.

Moreover, humor reflects the complications and problems of the social life. Therefore, humorous language used during the Gezi protests constrained both its users and audience to think differently from existing social structure of common expression, and created a political presence that is unique in Turkish history (Dagtas, 2013).

CHAPTER 3

THE ROLE OF TWITTER DURING GEZI PARK PROTESTS

In this chapter, I will present an analysis of 1760 randomly selected tweets that have been sent during the first 10 days of Gezi Park protests to the hashtag #direnGeziParki (#resistGeziPark). I will try to answer three research questions that have been posed in the beginning of this work according to the result of qualitative data analysis and content analysis of tweets.

3.1. Is Twitter more control free than conventional media in Turkey?

Most of the recent social movements that have shaken the countries around the world have strongly integrated digital connectivity by social media. One of these, Twitter, for instance, strengthen protestors in three important points: appeal for public attention, bypassing media censorship and coordination and logistics. Traditional forms of gatekeeping were mostly depended on a few broadcast outlets that do not work as affectively or in the same way as in the past. ''Digital technologies provide a means by which many people can reach information that governments would rather deny them. Street protests can be coordinated on the fly'' (Tüfekçi, 2014, p. 2).

As it is seen in chart 3, according to the analysis of randomly chosen tweets, Twitter has been intensively used to organize the activities (10.8%), to provide intelligence and information (13.6%), and to give support to the protest movement (14.8%). This graphic shows that people used Twitter during the events both to get information and for logistic guidance for themselves. Since participants were discussing so many different issues about the protests on Twitter, I had to use a large number of different analytic codes. The list of the codes that were used to categorize the tweets can be seen on Appendix 1.
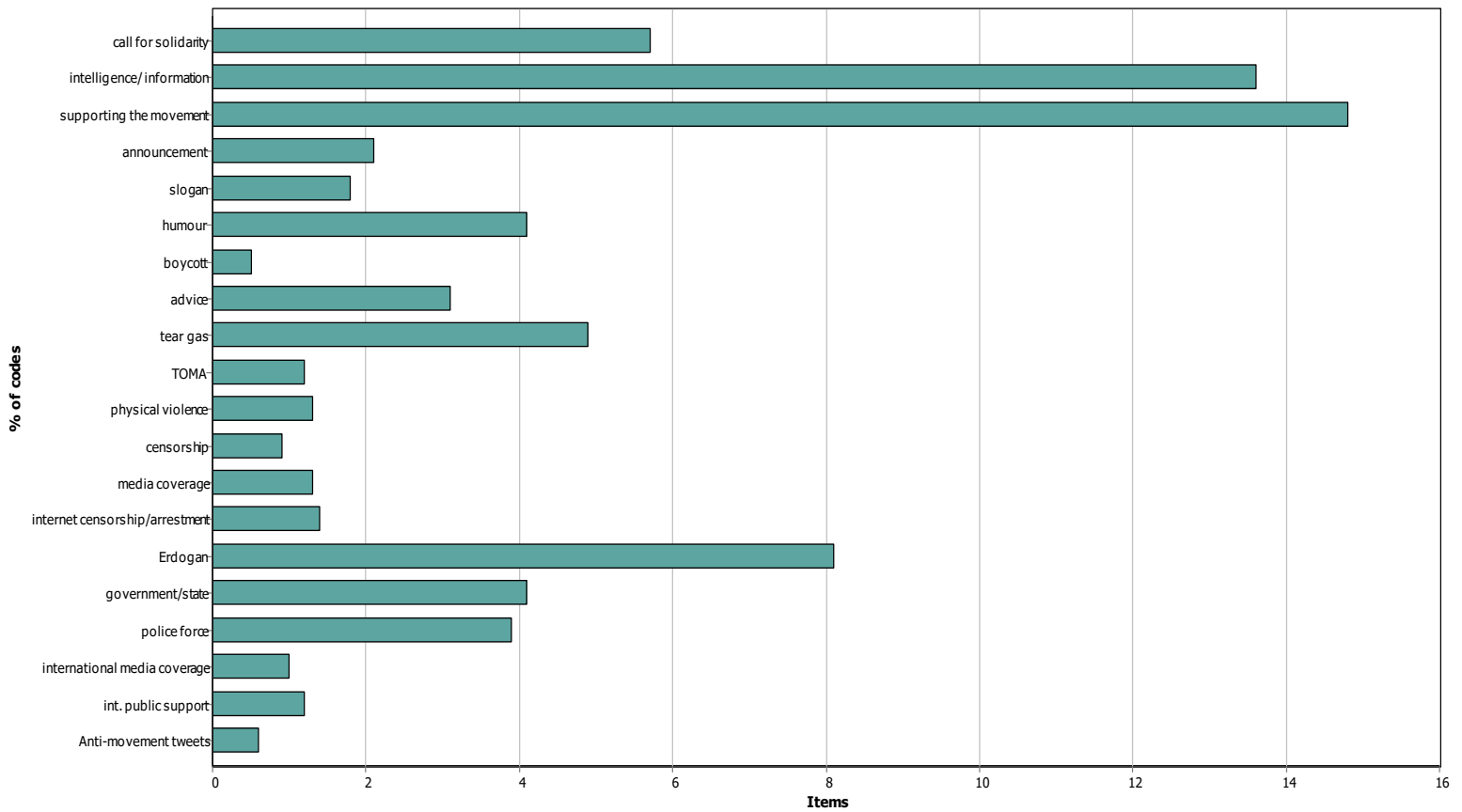
Distribution of keywords (% of codes)

Chart 3: Distribution of % of analytic codes (elaborated by the author)

During the Gezi Park protests and even after that, Turkish government has tried to block Twitter several times to stop the news flow. However, ''what they apparently don't realize is that blocking Twitter is unlikely to make any of it better'' (Taylor, 2014). Talented Internet users all around the country were soon able to find that they could still tweet just by changing their DNS settings, or by using VPN. According to Hurriyet Daily News, even after the Twitter ban, the number of tweets that has been sent by the users in Turkey has not diminished. What's more, the hashtags #TwitterisblockedinTurkey and #TurkeyBlockedTwitter became trending topics worldwide. Many of the country's elite, even president Abdullah Gul, has broken the ban. In each attempt to ban Twitter, Turkish users found a way to get around the ban and even mock about it. One widely shared picture, for instance, was showing a bunch of blue Twitter birds defecating on Prime Minister's head (Figure 1) (Taylor, 2014). For the citizens of democratic countries, these kinds of critiques on politicians can be a daily issue, but in Turkey it is almost impossible

nowadays to see such critiques about the government, the Prime Minister or President in daily newspapers or mainstream TV channels. According to Committee to Protect Journalists, Turkey is still one of the countries with the highest number of imprisoned journalists.

When we look at some of the tweets that was sent during the events, we can see that Twitter was used mostly to organize, to give and to get information. There were many instant tweets to warn people about the recent police operations, police locations and first aid advices against gase.

Figure 1 A widely shared cartoon of PM Erdogan that criticizes Twitter ban

For instance:

@turkmen_erman: The police are coming from Taskısla, it is confirmed that first tear gas capsules has been thrown. Gezi Park needs support. #direngeziparki (16:46, 02 June 2013)

@soundofmco: We are in Taksim, the ones who need first aid can contact us from Twitter. #occupygezi #direngeziparki @okanbayulgen @barburjehan (16:57 01 June 2013)

As it is seen in the first tweet, Twitter usage helped to the protestors to learn and monitor immediate police intervention, their location, what to do or where to go for more support. Some groups helped as first aid team and told people how to protect themselves from tear gas or where to go in the need of first aid (second tweet). By this way, protestors could create their own agenda and information sources to guide them and help to each other. In the tweet seen below (Figure 2), a user shared a modified map of Besiktas and Taksim region, which shows the first aid points (green pins) for injured protestors, police locations (skulls), current resistance places (blue pins) and even free wi-fi connection points (pink pins). With the help of these kind of maps that were shared on Twitter, protestors could find where to go to join to the other protestors, the safest routes to these areas, where to go

Figure 2 A map of Taksim-Besiktas region in Istanbul that shows essencial locations for the protestors

in case of first-aid needs and how to avoid police locations. Instancy of these kinds of tweets was making them more trustable and essential.

In addition to organization and intelligence, Twitter was also used to inform people what to do in emergency situations. Because of the disproportionate use of police force and the intensive use of tear gas, many protestors have been injured during the protests. In order to help those people, many simple first aid informations were shared in Twitter.

@xitscoolbieber: In case of you exposing to tear gas, water doesn't work. Your pain relieves only if you apply milk and lemon to your face. #direngeziparki (21:58, 01 June, 2013).

@cansuthejedi: Put a box of Talcid tablets and same amount of water in a spray bottle. When you are exposed to gas, spraying it to your face and applying some lemon juice is an immadiate solution. ##direngeziparki #occupygezi (17:56, 1 June, 2013)

Emergency situations were not only limited to health and first-aid issues. Since many people were arrested during the events, information about the constitutional rights has been shared and people learned their rights in case of their arrest. Phone numbers of lawyers and bar associations was also shared.

For example, in figure 3, we see an image that was shared frequently during the events. In the first box there are phone numbers for the ones who may need asthma medications, gas masks and help of medical students for medical aid. In the second box it says ''we have gas masks, medicines and googles in stock. We are in front of Ataturk library, please share the message''.
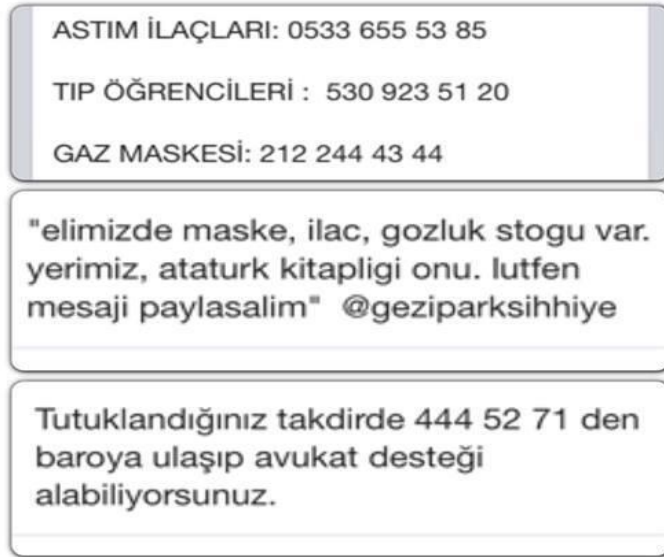
Figure 3 A widely shared image that announces important phone numbers and first aid points

In the third box ''In case of an arrest you can call this number and ask a lawyer from the bar association''.

In sum, Twitter created an area of freedom to protestors during the uprising and allowed them to communicate with each other swiftly, to access any kind of information at first hand and organize the events easily. For that reason, it provided a free medium for protestors in order them to organize events.

3.1.1. Bypassing the Mainstream Media

In collective actions, Internet has a potential for a wide range of social movement activities, such as; ''accessing and disseminating information, coordination and decision making, as well as building trust and a sense of collective identity'' (Kavada, 105). Apart from that, Internet and social media help activists to disseminate their own content and attract the attention to their demands. By this way, they can bypass mainstream media much more easily and become pioneers of citizen journalism (ibid).
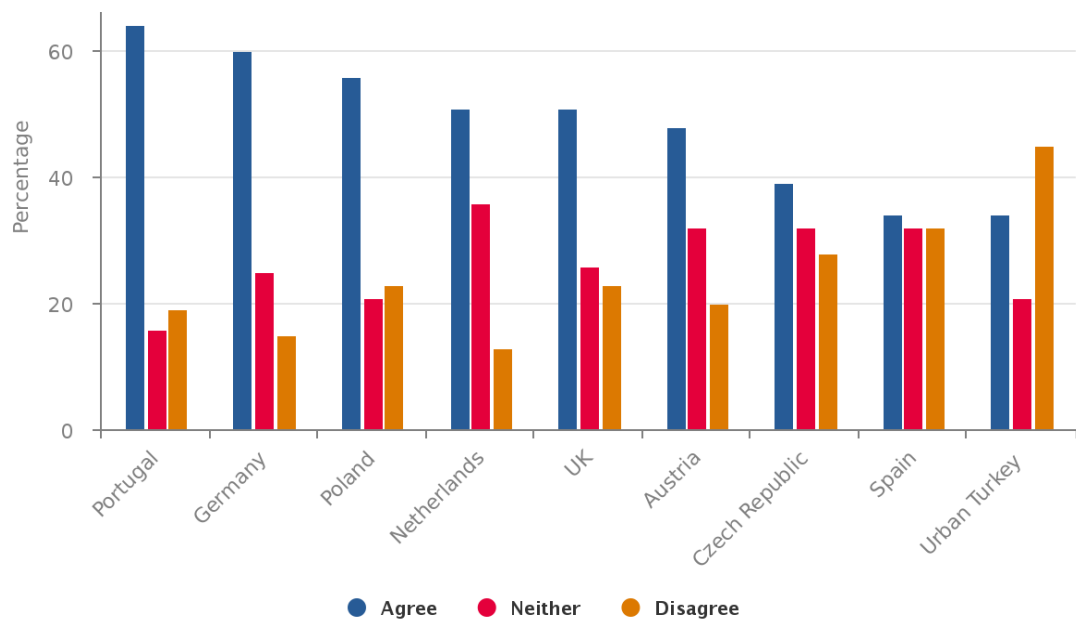
Chart 4: Proportion that agree/disagree that they 'trust most news most of the time' by country (Dogramaci, Radcliffe, 2016)

According to 2013 statistics of Twitter usage in Turkey[2], before the protests, the average daily number of tweets that were sent from Turkey was 8 million. Starting from the first day of the protests, this number doubled and showed an increasing trend during events.

According to Reuters Institute Digital News Report 2015, 67% of Turkish people use social media as a news source, while the average for other 18 countries included in the research is 44%. High usage of social media as a news source shows low level of trust in traditional media. In urban Turkey, 45% of the respondents stated that, 'do not trust most of the news most of the time' (Dogramaci, Radcliffe, 2016) (See chart 4).

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[2] http://boomerangistanbul.com/gezi-parki-olaylari/

During the uprising, but especially in the first days, the media in Turkey was censored. Turkish media did not cover the events sufficiently and even most of the cases, not at all. The authorities in the area of the protests also cut Internet connection. In brief, ''the mainstream communication channels were more or less frozen in Turkey and alternative media (i.e., non-mainstream and new or social media) took over to cover the on-going protests'' (Yılmaz, 2013, p.17).

Mainstream media was on the target of protestors all the time and when we look at the tweets analysis in chart 5, we can see that media criticism was one of the most mentioned issues during the events.
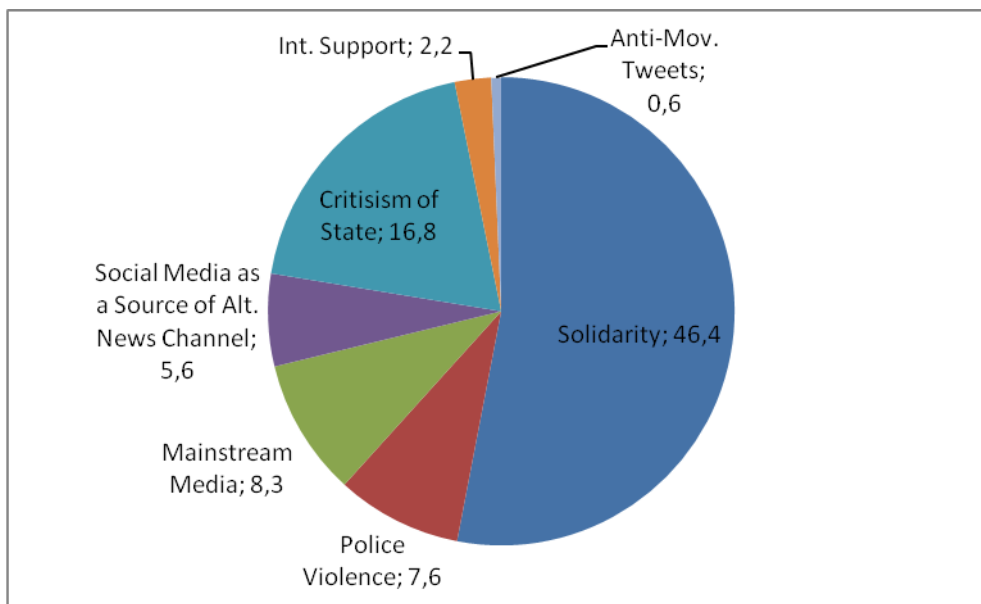
Chart 5 Distribution of the Main Categories (elaborated by the author)

According to Susan Lohmann, in authoritarian regimes, people may not call into question every information that they receive or they can undertake costly actions to express their dissatisfaction with the regime. However, when a small group starts a protest, it can be eye-opening for the rest of the people as they see the changes in the size of the movement in time. As a result, ''the regime loses public support and collapses if the protest activities reveal it to be malign''. Lohmann labels this as ''informational cascade'' (1994, p. 49). In this regard, Gezi uprising created an ''informational cascade'' during the events. While there were big protests, barricades, turned down cars and vast amount of tear gas that was even felt inside the houses in the biggest cities of the country, there was no single news for

days on the main TV channels. Under these circumstances, people started to use social media as a main news channel. Protestors shared the videos and pictures of the clashes, users added foreign news agents links to their tweets, requirement lists, phone numbers of doctors and lawyers, places of the police forces or places of protests were all shared instantaneously. In many tweets that have been analyzed for this research, there was clear anger and disappointment about the attitude of mainstream media.

@gulesinn: Since they switched off all of the media, this place is our only source of news so no propaganda, no fake news please! #direngeziparki #occupygezi (09:43, 1 June 2013)

@minekuruu: Twitter users took on the task of media and this became a fault (in the eyes of the government) *#resistizmir we will see beautiful days.#direngeziparki (07:42, 5 June 2013)*

@efdonmaz: Our elders who don't use social media are unaware of everything because of the #cowardmedia. Don't be too lazy to call and tell them the truths! #direngeziparki (04:57, 1 June, 2013)

On the third day of the protests, when police brutality got out of control in Istanbul, CNN Turk, one of the biggest news channels of the country, was airing a documentary on penguins and this enfuriated protestors. Penguins turned out one of the symbols of the movement and they were used as a tool of criticism against media censorship. In figures 4 and 5 we can see the criticism about the differences between CNN Turk and CNN International.

Figure 4 A cartoon of media criticism

Figure 5 A cartoon of media criticism

During the events, every single piece of news that was ignored by mainstream media spread with an increadible speed. '' Twitter became the obvious outlet for digitally literate people in search of information'' (Tunc, 2014, p. 14). Besides, constantly the updating

characteristic of social media made it a crucial tool for protests. Citizen journalism allowed to fill the gap of mainstream media and seized media functions by letting users share and verify first-hand information in quickly developing circumstances. The users not only used the tools, but also undertook as a duty of gathering and spreading the information. A popular slogan to promote civic journalism during the protests was: "There is no media, we are all journalists." Even though there was eventually misinformation, lack of verification or hate speech, citizen journalism played a significant role in creating awareness and mobilizing participations (ibid).

According to the tweet analysis made for this research, police violence was the second most criticized issue, right after the Prime Minister Erdogan (See chart 3). 8.3% of the tweets were about mainstream media. Since mainstream media did not show the brutal police violence during the protests, protestors used social media as a tool to show the violence that they were exposed to. In fact, the reason of the first sparkle that started the protests was the appearance of this brutal violence in social media.

First, police attack to a small environmentalist group in the park mobilised the crowds, and during the events social media channels were used to report police violence everywhere in Turkey and to request support for the movement. Social media connected protestors all across the country, and helped them to spread the news to the world. In figure 6, a protestor with a gas mask and smart phone is doing this task in the middle of the protests.

In the tweets below, photos of police violence are seen. Twitter user @kralcarsicom in figure 7 states that ''Police have started to throw gas bombs again in Inonu'', and shares a picture of protestors in a gas cloud. In figure 8,

Kurdish Question @Hevallo · 6 Jun 2013
FRONT LINE of the social media war! #WeAreGezi #OccupyGezi #DirenGeziParki

Figure 6 An ''active'' social media user

@GurkanTwit displays a photo of Taksim Square during a police attack with gas bombs and water cannons.

Figure 7 A photo of protestors in a gas cloud

Figure 8 A photo of Taksim Square during the protests

Even though international public support was not on the top levels according to tweet analysis in this research (2.2% together with international news covarage) (Chart 3), it was still very important to get the attention towards the events. Especially the Twitter accounts with millions of followers like celebrities, famous writers, politicians, international news agents or international organizations, helped to take the attention of international public opinion, and also helped to bypass the mainstream media censorship.
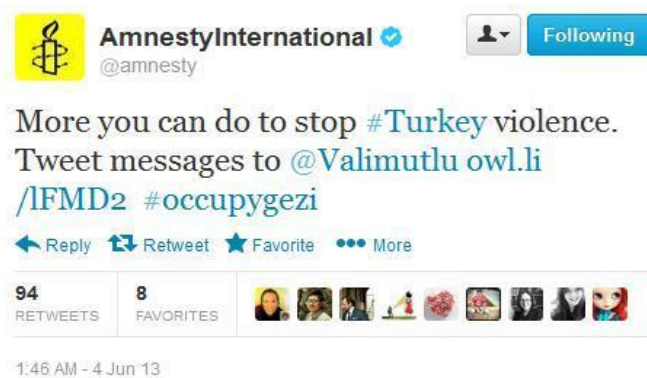
Figure 9, for instance, shows a tweet sent by Amnesty International that invites their followers to send tweet messages to the governer of Istanbul for him to stop police violence in the protests. In figure 10, worldwide

Figure 9 A tweet from official account of Amnesty Int.

famous Brazilian writer Paulo Coelho shares a news link of CNN international about the unprecedented police violence during protests in Ankara. A pop culture icon, Madonna, also gave her support to protestors via her Instagram account, and this message by Madonna was also widely shared by twitter users. These kinds of messages made the movement more visible to international public opinion. In brief, during the Gezi Park events, social media, but especially Twitter replaced mainstream media in giving and receiving information, and allowed people to have a more censor-free medium.

Figure 10 Paulo Coelho shares a CNN link about the protests in Turkey

3.2. Has social media transformed the Occupy Gezi protests to a more organized and highly participated movement?

3.2.1. Organizing the movement from social media

Rapid emergence of social media in 21st century had a big impact on social movements. Researchers consider social media ''as a tool in shaping social movements' agendas and aiding collective action both online and offline at the local or global level'' (Lopez, 2014, p.2). Social media networks have given ordinary people the opportunity to explain their opinions, when before their voices would not be heard (ibid).

Charles Tilly affirms that the primary element of social movements is the interaction between individuals (Tilly, 1984). Having a group identification induces collective action participation (Lopez, 2014). This kind of identification can only evolve by communication between individuals. Accordingly, social networks are essencial for social movements to connect and mobilize weakly linked individuals and transform them in mass movements (Lim, 2012). Since they allow for a more reciprocal communication between ordinary citizens, social media democratize communication (Kidd, 2002). Besides, they cannot only create massive network that connects the movement to the world, but also allow people the chance to publicize their opinions easily at a low cost, and speed up group coordination (Lopez, 2014).

As it was already explained in the previous section, during Occupy Gezi movement, protestors from different parts of Istanbul or Turkey connected to each other, followed the developments and organized through social media. Besides, to support and help the protestors in Gezi Park, many different needs such as shelter, food, first aid and so on were organized by social media communication (Yılmaz &Yılmaz, 2015).
In the first days or even first hours of the protests, while mainstream media was completely silence about the issue, protestors informed and called for support via Twitter. In the tweets below, these kinds of calls can be seen.

@Kizkrosu: We are all here to help the people who came here, put up tents and exposed to gas bombs on Thursday night, we are on the watch. #direngeziparki (6:39, 07 June, 2013)

@ipekcc: From every corner of Turkey, people are flooding into Istanbul! Resistace is magnificent!! Happiness is undescribable!#direngeziparki (9:57, 31 May 2013)

@Brcdmir: #direngeziparki If you want, everything comes true. Tomorrow come to Taksim in order to take your rights back! If you can't come, give support through social media. DON'T STAY SILENT! (9:25 p.m., 31 May, 2013)

According to the tweet analysis in this study (see Chart 3), the most common content of all tweets was to give support to the movement (20.5% together with call for solidarity). People used Twitter as a medium to explain their feelings about the events, their anger against the mainstream media, government or Prime Minister, to criticize the police violence and so on. The third tweet above for instance, was sent in the evening of the first day of the resistance to call people to support the protests either by being in the square or by giving a support through social media.

Twitter was one of the most important tools for organization in Occupy Gezi movement. By ''organizing'' it is meant the effort of mobilizing individuals. In the 21st century's social movements, an Internet connection and a device to connect to the Internet are more important than traditional resources of the past, like money and labor. Social media let protestors communicate for free and to broadcast essential information for everybody. Needless to say that social media is not an element to replace the organization of social movements; physical participation is always crucial, but, social media can help to increase the participation and make organisation easier (Tusa, 2013).

In Gezi Movement, Twitter was also used to announce the meeting locations and times of the events in different cities. In the absence of media channels, it helped to organize the

Figure 11 List of the locations of the protest

events all around the country in a cheap and fast way. Tweet by @mete_cannn in Figure

11 displaces the list of the meeting points in different cities in Turkey and even in Europe (last two in the list are from Netherlands and Germany) for the protests of the next day and says: *We are here for our people and for our future, meeting locations of different cities #direngeziparki #occupygezi* (*12:46, 31 May, 2013).*

By this way, people could easily learn where and when to come together, and this helped to mobilize and organize the crowds.

There were smilar tweets for specific events in order to inform and gather the people. For example:

@nazdurumola: Tomorrow at 15:00, we are gathering in front of Robert Collage, Arnavutköy entrance and marching to Besiktas-Taksim, Gezi Park. EVERYBODY SHOULD COME!!! (06:05 PM, 1 June, 2013)

@aylaoncer: We will march from Tunel to Taksim today at 18:00 as academicians. There will be a press statement at 19:00 in front of AKM. #direngeziparki (10:17 a.m. 6 June, 2013)

In the first tweet, the user indicates the meeting point, the route and the meeting time of the march clearly and calls everybody to join to the event. In the second tweet, we see that a group of academician would march to Taksim, again detailed information about the location and the time is given and also information to followers about a press statement to happen in the end of the marching route. As a consequence, this kind of tweets informed the followers about the ongoing

Figure 12 Requirement list for Gezi Park

protests and events, and helped to organize and mobilize the crowds.

During the Occupy Gezi process, social media mostly took part as an extention of the actions that were occuring on the ground. By using Twitter, protestors found opportunity to have emotional conversations with sympathisers and establish a ''sense of solidarity''. Even though only some of these sympathisers actually joined the protests, ''testifying to the difficulties involved in turning sympathy into actual participation'' (Gerbaudo, 2012, p. 16).

Since some of the protestors set up camp into Gezi Park, pitched tents and slept in them during the occupation period of the park, most of their basic needs such as food, water, warm clothes etc., were fulfilled by other people and it was organized through Twitter. The tweet by @glaslantepe in figure 12 announces: *today's requirement list of Gezi park, retweet please (9:10 a.m., 5 June, 2013)* and the photo attached to tweet shows the list with specific date and time. The list includes: *Good quality of gas mask, rain coat, socks, polar blanket, stretcher (3 pieces), fruit juice, water (a lot). Please share this list from Facebook and Twitter. Urgent!*

According to Time Magazine, people arranged all needs of the park in a very organized way with the help of Twitter. The Reporter writes from the field on the 5th of June, the first week of the protests that:

> ''Gurs and friends pooled their money, made bread and cheese sandwiches, bought water in bulk and began giving it all away for free. Using Twitter, they called for donations and others joined. Thousands responded. The park now has a fully functioning kitchen serving hot food and eight more stands. People arrive each morning bearing homemade cakes and savories to donate. Dozens of volunteers staff four shifts. As the protest, which kicked off May 28, spreads, thousands are fed each day'' (TIME, 5 June, 2013).

Free public access to the Internet connected the protestors, and by this way they shared their sorrows and hopes, planned projects from multiple sources and formed networks irrespective of their personal opinions or organizational connections. They leagued together by this network and this connection and support allowed them to ''overcome fear, this paralyzing emotion on which the powers that be rely in order to prosper and reproduce, by intimidation or discouragement, and when necessary by sheer violence, be it naked or

institutionally enforced'' (Castells, 2013, p. 2). Starting from the safety of cyberspace, people from different backgrounds began to occupy urban space, trusting and helping each other and demanding their rights. A user expressed very well this solidarity that occured among the people against the police violence and government:

@irmakmete: If the police have tear gas, water cannons or plastic bullet, these people have courage then. Nobody is escaping. Wall of fear has broken down. (7:02 p.m., 8, June, 2013)

With the help of social media, protestors participated actively i order to build a collective identity, creating a concept of ''us''. Occupying the urban space and making it visible via Twitter, each individual turned out to be the hero of the resistance. They defined themselves and the movement expanded by means of videos, photos, tweets and links connected with hashtags. They searched other smilar posts on the web by fellow protestors and re-tweeted. Besides, social media gave voice and visibility to these narratives. ''This hashtag-style collective is flexible, real-time, and crowd-controlled. It connects individual stories into a broader context that gives them meaning'' (Milan, 2011). By this active usage and occupation of online space, the movement became more visible in the eye of the public in both national and international level through making TT (Trend Topic) hashtags.

@cay_kahve_: We are doing what #cowardmedia don't do and giving support through social media! Our voice is in the world TT list. #direngeziparki, don't sleep, continue to support!(04:04, 01 June, 2013)

@PARLA_ŞENOL: ATTENTION! #direngeziparki has been trend topic on the world list for a long time, in order to continue that you should necessarily add this hashtag to your tweets (18:32, 31 May, 2013).

Beyond all these organizational and communicational usage, social media were actively used to criticize the government and Prime Minister through humor. The streets were filled with posters, caricatures, banners, satirical images and statements which were ridiculing the police, politicians and media. Political humor turned out to be the language of

resistance even though ''resistance'' was also mean being tear gassed, shot at, blinded or even killed by the police. This new language forced ''its users and audience to think beyond existing social frameworks of public expression and formed a political presence'' (Dagtas, 2013, n.p.).

3.2.2. Humor as a Political Weapon

Nancy K. Baym argues that, humorous performance can be used to frame a group solidarity, group identity and individual identity (Baym, 1995). Since being a very spontaneous movement and having no leader or classical type of organization, humor became very important to create a social meaning amoung the protestors during the Gezi

Park events. In our tweet analysis, humor was the sixth most popular code (4.1%). The most fascinating example of this was that Erdogan's use of the word ''Çapulcu'', which means ''looters'', to describe and to insult the protestors, went viral rapidly as something

Figure 13 Evaluation of a protestor

funny and became a symbol word to identify protestors and used in many languages to refer to ''fighting for one's rights'' (Dagtas, 2013). The word turned out to be the motto of protestors and different images were shared on social media about that. A word which was used to demean opponents became a common point of identify protestors that had very different backgrouds. According to Luke Harding from *the Guardian,* protestors from all around the country have embraced the word and were proud of labelling themselves *çapılcu,* and they even coined an English verb, *chapulling*. The word became ''synonymous with the alternative, youth-driven anti-Erdogan movement''. The word went viral in social media and played an essential role in spreading news of the protests. Many Twitter users put the

word in front of their username to define themselves as a supporter of the movement *(The Guardian,* 2013*)*.

The word ''çapulcu'' almost started to be used instead of ''protestor'' and became a very popular joking matter on Twitter. In figure 13, a user shares different photos of a protestor from the first four days of the events, and shows the evaluation of resistance methods against the police violence.

This kind of humor and ''çapulcu soul'' has a function of ingrouping and outgrouping of the relations among protestors on a societal level. The humorous language identified and differentiated the actors of the movement. This function of humor created a strong identification among protestors: the protestors (we) against the power (they). It created a culture of resistance. ''Thus, protestors support each other to overcome political and individual apathy, as well as becoming internediators for people who are not actively part of the resistance movement, and hence movement attracts more members'' (Marva, 2016).

Humor became the most powerful weapon against the state and police power. Protestors composed ''Chapulcu'' marches and sung together, they played on words to create slogans from the popular culture figures like: ''Daytime Clark Kent, Nightfall Superman'', was signifying white-collar workers participating in the resistance after work; the song ''Everyday I am shuffling turned into ''Everyday I'm Chapuling'' (see figure 14), or commercial slogans like ''Nokia, connecting people'', became ''Fascism, connecting people''.

Figure 14 One of the most popular slogans of the protests

The word that was used by the Prime Minister Erdogan to insult the protestors was embraced by the protestors and given positive connotations, it had a new meaning ''for people who were proud to be fighting for their rights, for their dignity as human beings, resisting all forms of oppression'' (Baykal, Ergin, 2013, n.p.).

Turkish novelist Elif Shafak said that this movement brought together the people from very diverse groups: liberals, feminists, Kemalists, nationalists, leftists, conservatives, the ones that were not happy with the government or those who do not had any political labels. And two things united the people that are so different: a common anger and a shared sense of humor (Shafak, 2013).

In the beginning of the protests, people participated into the events based firstly on the sense of injustice more than on a common identity, but, after Prime Minister Erdogan used the word ''çapulcu'' for all of the protestors, they defined themselves as such and put away all other labels. Different people who have the same sense of injustice felt like a group but not like a crowd under this new common identity.

''A sense of shared identity with other protestors allows the individual to see her/his fate as connected to the fate of those around her/him. The stronger the belief that what happens to all happens to the individual, the more likely the individual is to feel an attachment to the group and to perceive injustice against other members as injustice against the self. '' (Ulug, Acar, 2015).

On the contrary of protestors being condemned, they answered the police violence with creative humor, sarcasm and satire by using graffiti, graphics and social media (Gruber, 2013). In an extremely polarized medium, the Prime Minister's offensive tone was mostly replied humorously and sarcastically by the supporters of the movement (Gole, 2013). This humorous response against the Prime Minister helped to build a common identity of being a *chapuller*.

In sum, Twitter helped protestors in organizing and mobilizing the movement also creating a group identity by means of humor. Ease of coordination and organization allowed protestors to communicate with each other; they learned what to do and how to do it from Twitter. Because of all these characteristics, Twitter took an essential role during the Gezi Park protests and helped it to become a highly participated movement.

3.3. Did Twitter has an integrative influence and helped young people to express their feelings about the political issues during Occupy Gezi protests?

3.3.1. Framing protestors' concerns

Social movements are not only composed of organization or resistance. In order to explain them, a meaning construction is also essential. Goffman (1974, p.8-11) calls this process ''framing''. The frame analysis has two main purposes: it searches to diagnose fundamental framings in society that help to understand the events and situations and to analyze their change (ibid). According to Entman, framing is selecting some perspectives of a comprehended reality and making them more explicit in a communicating text. By this process, a communication text highlights some details and covers the others and makes the part of the topic more clear and meaningful (1993).

In a social movement, organizing and framing processes are intermingled. ''A frame can inspire people to go out and protest while organization tells them how and when. Similarly,

good organization of a protest that physically brings people together can create a sense of unity that in turn can be the beginning of a frame'' (Tusa, 2013, p.4).

The Internet and social media gave a new context to the framing process. It enables a protestor, for instance, to comment immediately on an event and disseminate those comments to other persons. The skills of sharing multi-media tools improve this framing ability. The speed and the ease of access to these devices make social media very helpful in the framing process (ibid). The opinions of the protestors can spread very rapidly, and this can help them to gain new supporters for the movement. They can also discuss, and interact by the social media channels and get decisions without even coming together.

The Internet also helps protestors to build a sense of collective identity. They can share the images, news and statements that convey the mission of the movement. The Internet also let protestors discuss the main issues and to identify to the movement (Kavada, 2010).

In this study, tweets that have been analyzed also showed that Twitter was not only used for organization and as an alternative information channel, but also to spread the ideas and demands of the protestors and framing the movement. According to our analysis, tweets about supporting the movement under solidarity category were 32.1% of the all codes. Criticism of Prime Minister Erdogan and the government (12.2%) was also one of the popular subjects. In this part, my aim is to show that Twitter was used to explain the motivations of the movement to the wider public and also helped young people to express their feelings about the political issues and by this way gaining more support from citizens.

As it was mentioned in the previous chapter, protests' participants were mostly young people. Almost 50% of the protestors were under the age of 30 (KONDA, 2014). Besides, one in every four protestors was a student. The major group that joined to protests was young, urban, educated and apolitical (Ozel, 2014). Until the Gezi Park protests, this societal group was assumed to be uninterested in politics. This young and educated profile of protestors also allowed social media being one of the most important resources of the protests (Bocu, 2015).

Even though protests started due to environmental problems, only 10% of the protestors said that they were protesting for the trees of the park. 90% of them stated that they were

disturbed with the authoritarian discourse of Prime Minister Erdogan. 85% also expressed that government increasingly interfered with people's lives (Atay, 2013).

The following tweets give evidence of this disturbance and apolitical characteristic of the protestors:

@belovedbride: This resistance is about being human, not about political opinions. Definitely go there if you can. #direngeziparki #occupygezi (6:24 a.m., 31 May, 2013)

@SevayPasa: Your unjustness and apathy made all apolitical youth related with politics again, it is no longer only about Gezi Park. #direngeziparki (2:19 p.m., 31 May, 2013)

@medicinewords: This is the rise of people, it cannot be appropriated by any ethnic group, political party or ideology! #direngeziparki #occupygezi (11:47 a.m., 2 June, 2013)

As it is seen in these three tweets, the apolitical character of the protestors is strongly emphasized putting a distance to all political ideologies.

On the other hand, although protestors were apolitical, this does not show that the movement was also an apolitical one. People with different priorities have joined the movement during the protests. Therefore the objectives of the protests became more diversive than in the beginning of the movement and protests went beyond just the reorganization of a park (Polat, Subay, 2016).

To affirm that the protests were only against the government and the Prime Minister Erdogan would also be problematic, since this evolution ignores the many dimensions of the movement. ''Gezi Park Protests is a movement against capitalism, it's production of anti-democratic conservative government and the implementations of this government'' (ibid, p.109). This anti-democratic government interfered daily with the private lives of the people, and as a result of this interfering; some social groups in Turkish society that wanted to continue benefiting from the gains of modernization and secularism, reacted against this intervention in order not to lose those gains (ibid).

The tweet in Figure 15 explains what the reasons of this uprising were and what should be done. Some of the main concerns of different sections of Turkish society about the government are listed in the beginning and stated that these are not the only issues. In the image it says that: ''The problem is not only Gezi Park, tear gas, police violence, Cinema Emek (which was an historical movie theatre in Taksim area that was demolished by this government), alcohol ban, 3rd

Figure 15 An image that explains the reasons of the protests

bridge on Bosphorus (which also caused a great amount of forest destruction and got protests by environmentalists), abortion law, three kids (PM Erdogan recommended to have at least three kids for each couple), Roboski (Turkish army killed a group of Kurdish smugglers in the border of Irak supposing that they were terrorists) or arrested journalists; the main problem is dictatorship. Dictators stay in power as long as they are obeyed. If people are not afraid of them, and do not obey them they run into difficulty. Gezi Park is a symbol, even if you are afraid, support it''. In brief, the movement was much more than about defending a green area. All these different types of concerns show that this movement did not come out of nowhere. ''Rather, AKP's strong hand in governing has created constituencies for whom plurality and tolerance is a key value. Hence, this tolerance was not just a momentary convenience, but also a value that has emerged from an experience of feeling and being shut out'' (Tufekci, 2013).

Figure 16 Major demands of the protestors

In figure 16, a user shares a very common image which lists protestors' demands. These were mainly basic demands about the protests: ''Government officials who were responsible for the violence during the protests must resign, usage of tear gas must be prohibited, detained protestors must be released, demonstration bans in common areas must be stopped''. And of course the main purpose of all these protests, that was to protect the park, was also stated clearly.

On 7th of June 2013, *New York Times* published a full-page ad in favour of Turkish protestors (Figure 17) that was paid by a crowd-sourced fundraising campaign on Indiegogo web site. *Forbes* magazine stated that this was the fastest political campaign to hit the goal of higher than $6.000 in the history of the crowd-funding platform. Two different versions of the ad were voted online and the winner was published in New York Times. All the fundraising campaign was organized through Twitter.

Figure 17 New York Times ad that was paid by protestors

Since it was not a movement that was organized by a certain group or a leader, and also, not having the media support, protestors had to explain the reasons behind these protests judiciously. For that purpose, they used social media and Twitter. During the protests many different speculations have been produced about the movement. Prime Minister Erdogan

claimed that Israel was behind the protests (Greenfield, 2015), and his chief advisor Yigit Bulut blamed protestors of being behind a coup atempt of against the government (*T24 News*). Some newspapers close to government blamed the opposition parties and marginal groups. In brief, the reasons behind the events were various for the different sides, and because of the non existence of any other platform to explain these reasons, Twitter became an essential tool to explain the movement to the wider public.

Many tweets were sent by protestors calling other people to Gezi Park, also instructing them not to believe the speculations and conspiracy theories, but to see what was happening there for themselves. One of the most famous of them all was probably this tweet below which was sent by a famous Turkish actor and human rights activist that says: ‘’*It's not only about Gezi Park, didn't you still get it, come join us.*’’

Figure 18 A widely shared tweet that appeals for support to the movement

This tweet has been retweeted more than twenty thousand times and became one of the symbol slogans to call people to the park and to the protests.

Twitter allowed not only protestors but also other citizens who were trying to understand what was happening during the protests to communicate through tweets and hashtags, managing to pervade the platform with their own politics and turning it into a political sphere. Participation was significantly channeled through social networks in which people could share their own stories and opinions. This pervasive use of social media enabled individuals to become essential catalysts of collective action, while they were activating their own social networks (Bennet, 2012).

In the tweets below, this kind of activation of social networks can be seen:

@elifabethizm: This resistance belongs to all of us, please don't stay silent. They have to understand that they cannot squelch us by harshness. Let's join us. #direngeziparki (3:11PM- 31 May 2013)

@itsmemusty: Hand to hand for the fundamental freedoms, for the rights and for life! #OccupyGezi #DirenGeziprki #TurkiyemDireniyor #Taksim #AllCopsAreBastards (10:14 A.M., 1 June, 2013)

Gezi Park resistance reveals that Turkish movements also became similar to the new kind of social movements that happen all around the world. ''In globalization era, while the knowledge and experiences converge each other with growing communication possibilites, social movements also have a tendency to look like each other'' (Yıldırım, 2014, p. 178). This process creates a new framework for politics. In this new politics, social movements concentrate on appealing to ordinary citizens that demand getting back their own lifes. These kinds of movements show a tendency for anarchist ideas that are against any kind of authority. Therefore, by the act of social movements, hierarchical organizations and institutional structures have been reconsidered. When viewed from this perspective, Gezi Park movement grounds ordinary people and their specific claims on daily life. Contrary to pro-government conspiracy theories, the movement's main aim was not to overthrow the government, and it was not also class conscious movement. Besides, it did not have any connection with existent organizations or institutions (ibid).

These social movements formed a new type of opposition that appeals for people to occupy public spaces. They create their own ironic language and form new networks. They do not use specific methods of an organization to mobilize citizens. They refuse the given alternatives for political standpoints, form new ones. ''Their plural and multi-cultural manner has a potential to create a newness to change the established system. This was an attempt to constitute a new common. Like current mobilizations, Gezi Parki resistance tried to create a new ground to constitute new political interactions'' (Yıldırım, 2014, p.178).

In the tweets below, this kind of anarchist approach can be seen that put a distance to the political parties, organizations or traditional hierarchical structures.

@yokaitendency: There is no hierarchy amoung us. The one who was there on the first day and the one who came to the park today have the same right to speak. We are listening to everyone. #direngeziparki

(12:51 PM, 8 June, 2013)

@CagriGksl: There are no political parties; there are no marginal groups here. There are people who defend their freedoms. #direngeziparki Defend your right. (4:52 PM, 8 June, 2013)

@Farmer1907: In Taksim Gezi Park there is NO Kapitalism, NO Fascism, NO Global Capital! There is Freedom...! #direngeziparki #direnankara #direntürkiye (4:53 PM, 8 June 2013)

Not having any other platform to explain the movement and the demands of the protestors, tweets like the one in Figure 19 were shared in order to restrain the information confusion about the movement. This leaflet summarizes the reasons behind the protests. Firstly, it was about protecting a public space from the destruction. Secondly, unproportional force was applied on peaceful protestors, starting from the first day of the protests. Thirdly, due to

Figure 19 An image that explains the reasons behind the protests

media censorship, Turkish media did not cover the protests and that caused protestors to explain themselves through social media, and lastly, it was about government's restrictive attitude towards opposition groups and minorities and not showing any tolerance to the different opinions. In sum, protestors used social media intensively to show other people that all those conspiracy theories of pro-government media were not true, and they were in the squares because of democratic reasons.

Consequently, protestors actively used social media as an alternative to other traditional media channels during Gezi Park events in order to frame the movement. Social media broke state control on information and became the voice of the activists. ''The popular demands of democracy to effect decision making process and the critics of the privatization of public life under neoliberal values are raised by the social movements and these efforts try to constitute a new politics with pressure on liberal democratic system''(Yıldırım, 2014, p. 184). Gezi Park protests turned out as a social movement that extended these demands beyond criticizing the ruling party but criticize the whole Turkish democracy.

CONCLUSION

In this work I tried to analyze the role of social media in social movements, especially in underdeveloped democracies. As a case study I chose to examine Gezi Park Protests that erupted in May 2013 in Istanbul, Turkey. I wanted to show the main purposes of Twitter usage by activists during the protests. By analyzing 1760 randomly chosen tweets, I came to the conclusion that activists used Twitter as an organization tool, as a medium to express their opinions and to bypass the media censorship that was fiercely controlled by state. In the third chapter it can be clearly seen that, social media can be a more control free medium for the protestors to extend and to frame their opinions and by this way they can reach more people and get more support from the public.

In the lack of free mainstream media, social media platforms were used as a main communication tool by the protestors and they also united the protestors. Even though there was some fake accounts and fabricated news that tried to mislead the people, protestors created their own channels and criteria to replace the mainstream media and cover the news as fast as possible. Through citizen journalism ordinary people could capture the events or police brutality with their cell phones and share them in social media channels and even in international media. Consequently, instead of mainstream media, social media took on the duty of publishing about the whole resistance.

Another property of Twitter was the unifying effect of it. Most of the protestors were coming from different social and political backgrounds, but sharing their individual opinions and experiences made them closer. By this way they learned to trust each other and to organize events. Twitter was intensively used to mobilize people, to keep them informed and to help them in case of emergency situations.

Compared with contemporary social movements, it can be said that Gezi Park protests show similarities especially with the Arab Spring Movement, mainly due to analogous political factors. All of these countries have similar political systems with authoritarian leaders, regardless of being democracies or dictatorships. They all have state controlled media and a lack of freedom of speech. In such athmosphere, social media became a revolutionary and indispensible tool for social movements.

On the other hand, Gezi Park Movement has marked differences with Arab Spring. First of all, in spite of being authoritarian, Erdogan is an elected leader. For that reason, overthrowing him from power never became the main purpose of the protestors, contrary to Arab Spring movements. Their main concerns were mainly interference with their life styles, rapid islamization of the country, limitation of freedom of speech and some urbanization projects by the government. Besides, young generations and women were predominating among participants in the movement. Due to young generations acquaitance with ICT, protestors heavily used social media contrast with their use by the government. Their particular sense of humor also infused the movement with a different dynamic, to which the government did not know how to react.

An ecological problem, the putting down of a number of old and charismatic trees in the heart of Istanbul, flared into a national issue that shook the Turkish state for some weeks. This standing point of many protestors was not only possible due to their resilience, but was based on the use of Twitter as the new tool to enforce political and social changes. Lastly it can be said that the path the Turkish government followed ended in forgetting the constructions that were planned for Gezi Park, and that would put down those old and charismatic trees, at least for the time being, in spite of many abuses and authoritarian moves that have been taken since by the same authorities.

4.1. Limitations and Further Research

It is unignorable that this research had some limitations. Firstly, the research covers only a limited time period and small number of tweets when compared with the millions of tweets that were sent during the events analysed. For this reason the research may not give a fully inclusive result of Twitter usage during the Gezi Park Protests. A more comprehensive research might diversify the obtained results. Secondly, tweets that were chosen for textual and visual analysis were also a very small set of data and were chosen randomly according to their thematic focus.

This work can lead further research about social media usage in social movements, expecially in developing countries. Rising importance of social media shows that these virtual platforms will have an important role in the democratisation processes of

developing countries, since it is getting more and more difficult to ban them. By using the results of this work, the role of social media in other countries can also be analyzed.

This work can also be used in further research about Turkey, where political environment is still very tense and social media is still a very important political tool.

Lastly, it may sound strange to a careful or even casual reader of international politics or Sociology that nowadays Turkey is into turmoil of internal problems with an increasingly tougher government towards people's rights and freedoms. These internal problems intermingle with external ones. Just in a quick survey of problems affecting Turkey we have:

- The war in Syria with R. Tayyip Erdogan (nowadays President) trying to replace Bashar al-Assad area of influence;

- The millions of refugees Turkey accepted in exchange for money from the EU;

- The struggle with Russia who sees Syria as its last ally in the region, which led already to some military confrontation

- The July 2016 coup to put down Erdoğan by civil and military factions within Turkish society which led to a big wave of arrests, specially in the public sector;

- The abandonment of Turkey's efforts to enter EU gave an even more free hand on civil rights, namely the threat to return to death penalty.

Gezi Park events and its associated Twitter usage was expected to result differently if you look to Turkey in the moment this work is being discussed. But the main material of this research focus on those few days and those few tweets that were analysed. I just hope that this work will be of use for other researches to study the role of social media for social movements and for social struggle in other contexts.

Appendix 1 – List of the categories and codes

Category	Code
solidarity	organization
solidarity	call for solidarity
solidarity	intelligence/ information
solidarity	supporting the movement
solidarity	announcement
solidarity	slogan
solidarity	humour
solidarity	boycott
solidarity	advice
solidarity	misinformation
solidarity	LGBT
police violence	tear gas
police violence	TOMA
police violence	physical violence
police violence	plastic bullet
media	censorship
media	media critisism
media	media coverage
media	fabricated news
media\spreading the news	by photo
media\spreading the news	by video/Çapul TV
media\spreading the news	by tweets
internet usage	social media as a source of news
internet usage	internet censorship/arrestment
Critisism of...	Erdogan
Critisism of...	governer
Critisism of...	mayor
Critisism of...	government/state
Critisism of...	police force
Critisism of...	opposition parties
international support	international media coverage
international support	int. public support

Negative comments	Anti-movement tweets

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