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Abstracts

In the Aftermath of Gezi-From Social Movement to Social Change

Anita Sengupta

Rhetoric and Gezi Park

Events in Turkey unfolded when a call went out on May 28, 2013 for people to defend the Taksim Gezi Park against bulldozers that had appeared overnight to uproot trees as a first step towards replacing the park with a reconstruction of the historic Taksim Military Barracks demolished in 1940. The initial alert came from Taksim Solidarity, an umbrella platform that had been organized to spearhead movements against urban transformation projects that characterize the ruling AKP's (*Adalet ve Kalkinma Partisi* or Justice and Development Party) urban policy. This includes environmentally destructive infrastructural projects like the third Bosporus Bridge and the Istanbul Canal and the privatization of formerly public spaces like the Gezi Park. What began with a small group of people keeping watch over the trees rapidly grew into round-the-clock occupation of the park with the number of people increasing every day. When police used tear-gas and water cannons on the occupants and set up barricades to keep them out, there was a wave of protest that was replicated in sixty seven cities from Ankara to Izmir, Adana and Hatay. The movement inspired rhetoric, from leaders of AKP, particularly Recap Tayyip Erdogan but also from those who participated in the movement. Erdogan described the protestors as looters, a small minority of marginal characters, thereby seriously undermining the numbers of people involved. In fact a neologism *chapulling* was introduced into Turkish political lexicon when Erdogan referred to the demonstrators at the Gezi Park and elsewhere as *chapulcu*. On the other hand, Erdogan's understanding of democracy was defined as one restricted to the ballot box with questions raised about the 50% of society who did not elect him, but still demanded to be heard. This presentation will be based on the rhetoric that surrounded the Gezi Park events and will highlight the sharp differences between the supporters of the AKP and those who have opposed its policies in the course of the recent protests throughout Turkey. As the outer limit of social

acceptability was redefined by the state notions of belonging acquired political overtones in terms of ideological convergence.

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VIOLENT COMMUNICATION: THE CASE OF GEZI

In recent decades, research on human violence in the social sciences and humanities has focused on debunking the notion that there is such a thing as senseless violence. All types of violence have been said to carry some sort of meaning. Hence, violence is now studied as a form of communication. In his 2006 Malinowski Memorial Lecture, anthropologist and anarchist activist David Graeber goes against this trend by suggesting that violence, including structural violence, is predicated on a reduction of meaning—at least as far as those who commit the violence are concerned. The charging of violence with meaning is an asymmetrical affair: the perpetrators need not bother with understanding their victims; the victims exert themselves to comprehend even the smallest gesture of the perpetrator. The interpretive work is unevenly distributed. Graeber argues that, as a consequence, the retention of power through violence, for example in the shape of a state monopoly on legitimate violence, produces systemic stupidity, which is enacted by bureaucrats, the police and other state institutions at all levels. The idea of systemic stupidity will be applied to the case of Gezi. At the same time, Graeber's definition of violence as the true face of power and as the ultimate cause of social order, which is reminiscent of Carl Schmitt's political philosophy, will be challenged against the background of the communicative and physical violence of the Turkish state. In conclusion, the nature and role of rhetorical violence in the public sphere of countries like Turkey, Russia, the US and Denmark will be addressed as a form of strategic stupidity.

Milja Ramö

Why and how were the Gezi Park Protestors othered?

This Bachelor Thesis looks at the Gezi Park protests that started in Istanbul in May 2013. The protests started as protection of the park but they quickly spread around Turkey. The protests' agenda became anti-government. Prime Minister Erdoğan reacted to the protests with violent rhetoric. The aim of this thesis is to look at the violent language through othering and show its importance as a political instrument. In this thesis othering is looked through example cases such as Yugoslavia and Banda's Malawi. The aim is to show the importance of othering as an instrument of legitimizing politics. It will also be looked through Orientalism and Occidentalism in order to understand the division on West and East, which also affect Turkish politics. Othering is common in Turkey. It has been used to legitimize political changes for decades. The country has a strong division between Muslims and seculars. In order to make these group identities stronger the negative characteristics of the other has been highlighted. This thesis will shortly look at this division so that one can understand the historical background of the polarization. This thesis concludes that the strong rhetoric was an instrument to dehumanize the protestors. The aim of it was to strengthen Erdoğan's position.

Pola Rojan Bagger

Turkey's faceless enemies

The violent events of May 2013 unfolding in Istanbul's Gezi Park and subsequently throughout Turkey marked a turning point for the AKP government. Since this alleged attempt at a coup d'etat, the government's rhetorical framing of civil discontent, political opposition and even institutional obstacles to government policies within state apparatus has given birth to a series of faceless enemies. These are most vehemently being articulated by President Recep Tayyip Erdogan and a few of his closest advisers, and then echoed by a number of pro-AKP pundits. These enemies that are supposedly posing a grave new threat to the Republic of Turkey can according to this discourse be identified in the economic field as well as in politics and in civil society all together. Internationally as well as domestically. "They", as the enemies most commonly and rather tacitly are referred to by Erdogan, can be found in very different places like the country's own central bank, in the media, in international institutions and in Turkish public sphere. Examples are too numerous to mention in an abstract. I will be making the argument that President Erdogan is essentially reintroducing a well-known image to Turkish politics: The Kemalist narrative of a Turkish nation surrounded and infiltrated by enemies. Originally, this image was the military establishment's argument for keeping liberal democracy at bay. My argument is that President Erdogan, similarly, is making a political case for Turkey's future. One in which liberal democracy is an unsuitable regime for Turkey who's inner and outer enemies pose an existential threat. According to this logic, democratic institutions like freedom of speech and the right to free assembly must be limited with the aim of necessary containment. The controversial Domestic Security Act by the government is another example of how forcefully this political perspective is being pushed through. In my analysis this is a coherent political strategy rather than isolated and coincidental outbursts from a colourful and hot-tempered public speaker such as the President. Of course, by renewing Turkey's subscription to the image of the faceless enemy he is effectively abandoning any course of reform and political liberalisation that originally was the AKP core narrative.

Cengiz Aktar:

Gezi along 4 topics: Governmental control of public space; governmental control of political space; heterogeneity of Gezi versus monolithic and homogeneous nation; Gezi as a best practice

Jacob Lindgaard:

It is too dangerous to be an individual in Turkey What the Gezi core of personalized connective action for individual rights and freedoms is up against

In a recent article, anthropologist and Turkey expert, Jenny White, quotes the Turkish political scientist Soli Özel for observing that "it is too dangerous to be an individual in Turkey because no institutions exist to reliably protect your rights" (White 2015). I share this observation. The fear of social chaos is part and parcel of the Turkish Republic. So is a diversity of highly salient subnational group identities. This has created not only the early unitarian heterophobia against the perceived threats to the Kemalist project — from the non- Muslims, the Kurds, and the 'Reactionaries' — in the early days of the Republic, but also a network-based society with notably low levels of generalized social trust and a conception of democracy as a competition of networks where the 'winner takes it all' after the introduction of democracy in 1946/1950.

Individuals depend on their **networks** for basic security, socio-economic prosperity, and recognition of their particular identities. Internally, these networks depend on an ethos of reciprocity of highly personalized favours and obligations. Externally, they are guided by the ever-present habitus of a self-other consciousness, leading especially those outside the centre of power to wear masks. As White also notes in her acclaimed 2013 book, "[b]elonging to a group [...] is essential for social survival, as well as social identity" (White 2013). These network dynamics translate, in turn, into a conception of democracy that renders virtually impossible: (i) coalition governments (as the failures of the coalition governments of the 70's and 90's have proven amply), (ii) the creation of strong and independent democratic institutions, and (iii) the constitutional protection of individual rights and freedoms. **Now**, with the liberalization first of Turkey's economy and civil society through Turgut Özal's reforms in the 1980's and then of the political landscape through the so-called 'third wave of democratization' and pro-EU years after the Cold War in the late 90's and early 2000's, expectations were raised, especially amongst the urban youth, that they could join the (globalized) world of **individualized lifestyles** and concomitant quests for individual rights. The current AKP Government in many ways led this elevation of expectations. However, it also led to their disappointment.

Finding representation neither in the established political opposition nor in the mainstream media landscape, the core of **the Gezi social movement** deployed what Bennett and Segerberg aptly have coined the social media-driven 'connective action' (Bennett & Segerberg 2012, 2013) — with its three elemental modes of production, curation, and dynamic integration of various crowd-enabled types of information content (Bennett, Segerberg, and Walker 2014) — to mobilize support for all the aspects of their contentious politics. As described by a number of my interviewee participants in and supporters of the Gezi demonstrations, this gave birth not only to an explicitly shared animosity especially against the leader of the the AKP Government, Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, but also a quest for social justice and individual rights across network-specific fault lines (interviews 2013-14). The **purpose of this paper** is to investigate in what sense, if at all, the *social* network-driven individualism of the globalized youth holds out the promise of challenging the core traits of Turkish *traditional* network society and network democracy. The question is if the social network-driven Gezi events have introduced a tipping point for Turkey's traditional network democracy, in spite of appearances to the

contrary (interviews 2015). I **will argue** that connective action of the kind witnessed both in Cairo's Tahrir square and Istanbul's Taksim square *alone* faces a tall order in relation to the reach and influence of entrenched traditional networks with strong (male) leaders who are able to vouch for the basic security, socio-economic prosperity, and recognition of the identity of the network members. This is the case especially at times, such as these, where the fear of social chaos is particular salient, also in Turkey. For example, no less than 24% of Turks believed that terrorism was the most important issue facing their nation in GMF's 2014 Transatlantic Trends survey (GMF 2014). The US came in second of the 13 countries surveyed with 4%. **But** as *part* of a number of key developments including the appearance of a rapacious government leadership engulfed in dreams of regional leadership against the backdrop of developments such as an ever more pronounced international isolation, towering economic challenges, large scale conspiracy theories against opponents, both domestic and international, social indignation of the AKP Government's handling of the 2014 Soma mining disaster, and the increasing presence in Turkey of jihadist sympathizers recruiting for the Syrian battlefields, Turkey could soon witness significant political change. It is a good question, however, if the liberal hopes of the connective action of the Gezi movement will emerge as the result of this political change. In the short run it will probably remain too dangerous to be an individual in Turkey for that to be the caze. This is also reflected in the apathy creeping out through the cracks in the most responses I have gotten from (non-core) participants in and supporters of the 2013 Gezi-related events (interviews 2015).

Spyros Sofos

'Alone in the city: Gezi as a moment of transgression'

Two years after the Gezi events many commentators as well as ordinary people still discuss about the impact of Gezi in Turkish politics. Has there been a spirit of Gezi and, if yes, what has happened to it? Has this unique mobilization left an imprint on Turkish society or has it fizzled out and disappeared as abruptly as it came to existence? Has authoritarian resilience been strengthened after the protests of May/June 2013? This presentation will draw eclectically on social movement and anthropological literature, in order to propose an understanding Gezi as an instance of transgression, a liminal moment, Turkey's own and particular version of anti-politics. It will propose an agency and (non)organizational approach to the mobilization and will attempt to sketch out some of its key implications.

Serhat Koç

Turkey according to recent changes in internet laws in the light of gezi park protests

At stake are the innovation and free exchange of information that have transformed global culture and business over the past two decades. As outlined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression. This right includes freedom to have opinions without interference and receive information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers. But over the past year, many users received suspended sentences and fines for their social media activity, usually on charges related to terrorism or criticism of the state and its officials.

Subsequent to Gezi Park protests of June 2013 dozens of people were detained for their social media posts in the crackdown. However, such criminal investigations and prosecutions "endanger our so called democracy" by creating a chilling effect on all social media platform users. However many Internet users' disinterest in government surveillance has made it difficult to raise awareness about the new amendments to Turkish Internet Law and the likely effects on internet censorship and unlawful data collection. But interest in anonymity has been growing since last year's protests in Gezi Park were met with police brutality. By the way Turkey blocked access to about 45.000 websites subject to Law Number 5651 beginning from May 2007, and this code is already governing the country's all Internet activity and there has even been a European Court of Human Rights ruling against this code. Currently, access to popular platforms such as Scribd, Last.fm, Metacafe, and Soundcloud is blocked from Turkey. Access to Wordpress, DailyMotion, Vimeo and Google+ has ben blocked temporarily by court or administrative orders during the last year. In fact, censorship often takes place in subtle ways under the pretext of protecting the general public from online dangers. So, as freedom of speech activists and human rights lawyers we insist that the most effective resistance to censorship and digital surveillance will be promoting Internet security by all means.

Zeyno Pekünlü

Newly emerged dissidents after Gezi resistance

This presentation aims to look at dissidents of Gezi resistance and their possibility of creating a geometric effect by solidarity of actions and joint struggles beyond an arithmetic sum. In recent years, all around the world, albeit in different ways, we have been experiencing the simultaneous crisis of neoliberal politics, severe measures taken against the crisis, and the increasing authoritarianism of many governments. When we look at the pre-Gezi Resistance social opposition in Turkey, a few features stand out. Although the left and the social opposition groups in total had quite a few organizations, their effect was weak and they could not manage to mobilize broad masses. Totalizing struggle was lacking, that protests and movements were only periodic and organized out of urgencies against the attacks of those in power, and that a feeling of defeat and pessimism was dominant. Against the policies of the government, which drew boundaries and seized our places, the small counter-boundaries that were attempted to be drawn until that day turned into a resistance line by the participation of the masses. Although this defense line first aimed to protect existing things, within the organization of life in Gezi Park, in the long run, rather than being a defense line, it started to create future imaginations and new forms of relations and spaces that included all of us. In this way, it played a key role in changing the feeling of fragmentation and powerlessness and in re-establishing the "public" and the lives that would touch each other. The structures which emerged and spread after Gezi, such as orchards, squatted buildings, and neighborhood forums, football leagues, radios, election campaign initiatives, election security civil initiatives etc. increased the importance of the spaces of opposition and solidarity, and the alliances formed in these spaces.

Reece Waldron

The 'Gezi Spirit' As Social Change? An Evident but Overlooked Process.

The strong rhetoric of the Gezi Park movement having ended without securing social change and development has led to an overlooking of the fact that what was experienced in the Park has been used as a point of reference (Sayers, 2014). Thus, with various strengths of the movement having been utilised in and translated into a variety of collective protests since May 2013, this itself can be comprehended as an example of social change, while also challenging the understanding of social change as a fixed point of arrival, rather than a process. This discussion regarding Gezi Park and Social Change will be using my undergraduate thesis, 'The Gezi Spirit: Re-Imagining National Identity in Turkey' as a point of departure. Arguing that what was witnessed in the Park was a cosmopolitan re-imagining of national identity, also inherent within its horizontal structure, some of the strengths of the movement can be identified within this cosmopolitanism, defined along the lines of; *engagement with one another*, *respect*, and m*orality*. Utilising the discussion within my thesis and when looking at examples, the characteristics seen in Gezi Park are not only demonstrated within these movements, but can also be translated and understood as being examples of social change in action. With the imagining of nationhood that occurred in Gezi Park having provided guidance to the collective memory (Akhat, 2014), my discussion will revolve around how engagement with one another has encouraged a certain level of trust among once conflicting groups (albeit constructing new oppositions in the process) as well as, along with respect and morality, producing an environment of acknowledgement of one another's cause and marginalisation, producing confidence and camaraderie within and between different groups in Turkish society.

Christian Christensen:

"Turkey, Twitter & the Political Economy of Journalism"

Our benchmark for understanding of the importance of Twitter in Turkey (during and after Gezi) cannot be rooted in how Twitter is seen or used in Sweden, the United States or the UK. It's a simple point, but one which is often lost. In Turkey, the importance of Twitter—and hence the importance of moves to block Twitter—is intrinsically linked to the political economy of Turkish news media. As we know, most news outlets in Turkey gave the Gezi protests short shrift (CNN Türk's decision to air a documentary on penguins instead of live protest images being the iconic example), and have been weak in their criticism and examination of AKP power. Thus, in the absence of a vibrant, critical news culture, social media such as Twitter, Facebook and YouTube became important venues for the collection and dissemination of news in Istanbul, Izmir, Ankara and beyond. Of course, a great deal of the blame for the weak state of contemporary Turkish journalism can be placed at the feet of Erdoğan and the AKP, but it is also important to note that the current architecture of Turkish media was established during a period of rapid (some would say "wild") de-regulation in the 1980s. This unfettered commercialization of the market led to the rise of media moguls such as Aydın Doğan: moguls who utilized their ownership power to, amongst other things, weaken Turkey's journalism unions (Christensen, 2007). This may have served the interests of private capital, but, as we have seen

in Turkey over the past few years, it did nothing to aid news workers when facing the wrath of the state. The events of Gezi and the blocking of Twitter cannot be understood without considering the state of Turkish journalism, and the state of Turkish journalism cannot be understood without a look back at the 25-year impact of neo-liberal policies and cronyism (including the pre-AKP era). So, when Erdoğan tried to block Twitter, his ability to do was aided by the presence of a weakened, largely uncritical Turkish journalism that has offered little resistance. Thus, an honest appraisal of Erdoğan's actions should note that he not only corrupted the free market, but that he also played off of it.

Erliza Lopez Pedersen och Marco Zoppi:

From Gezi to Gezi- *Media's role in sending (or not sending) the message beyond Gezi*

This paper is concerned with the analysis of media representations in the Gezi context, with a specific angle on the relation between the 'centre'- Istanbul, and the rest of Turkey, the 'periphery'. The aim of the study is that of throwing light on media's effectiveness in sending the arguments of Gezi protesters beyond the centre to reach also those living outside it, namely on the media's role in transforming a local event into a nation-scale movement capable of bringing about social change. Through the analysis of media contents as well as current literature available in English, we will attempt at providing the picture of both in-Gezi and out-Gezi representations and, ultimately, of participation to its claims. Given the focus on English-produced media, the paper also aims at exploring the potential global implications of Gezi.

Sofia Hafdell

"The role of social media during Gezi: potential and limitations for social change"

In May-June 2013, the protests against the Turkish government's plans to demolish Gezi Park in Istanbul quickly spread into a regime-critical movement across Turkey, triggered by widespread media censorship and excessive use of police force against demonstrators. In the absence of Turkish mainstream news coverage, Turkish citizens effectively relied on social media to access information from the ground and to resist against the Turkish authorities. On the background of these events and the representations placing social media as an alternative to Turkish mainstream media, this paper analyzes social media usage's role in the Gezi Park protests as well as its potential to encourage civic participation and social change in Turkey. The paper draws from theoretical discussions of mediated mobilization, citizen journalism, civic cultures, and alternative media as an alternative and as rhizomatic in relation to mainstream media. It builds on a social constructivist approach to research and combines critical discourse analysis of two selected alternative media texts with qualitative interviews with Gezi Park activists. The paper argues that representations of social media as an alternative to the Turkish mainstream media fail to consider the complexities of social media usage for the activists as well as the complicated relationship between media and the state in Turkey and its consequences for open, democratic debate.

Thomas Tufte

The Dramaturgy of Social Change

Five challenges of communication for social change in and beyond processes of insurgence

The waves of dissent not just in Gezi but seen in recent years across the globe have come across as protests and mass social uprisings critiquing political and economic systems and questioning the enormous gaps between these systems and their citizens. We have seen enormous crowds of angry citizens, and we've seen their often, creative ways of communicating critique and formulating visions for the future. However, the big question that emerges in the aftermath is; what comes after the emotional outpour and the massive sit-ins, camps and demonstrations in streets and squares? How do the uprisings enhanced by social movements connect with longer-term and more sustained social, economic and political change, and what role do digital media play in this? By briefly examining the examples from the Vinegar Revolution in Brazil and the Indignados Movement in Spain, I identify five challenges these social movements are faced with in their process to sustain and reinforce their calls for change. I embed this analysis in a broader definitional debate about the character and role of civil society in social change, arguing that an effective communication for more profound social change will constitute a dramaturgy of both the 'noisy' moments of rupture and emotional outpour as well as the more 'silent' longer-term activities that cultivate a new culture of governance.
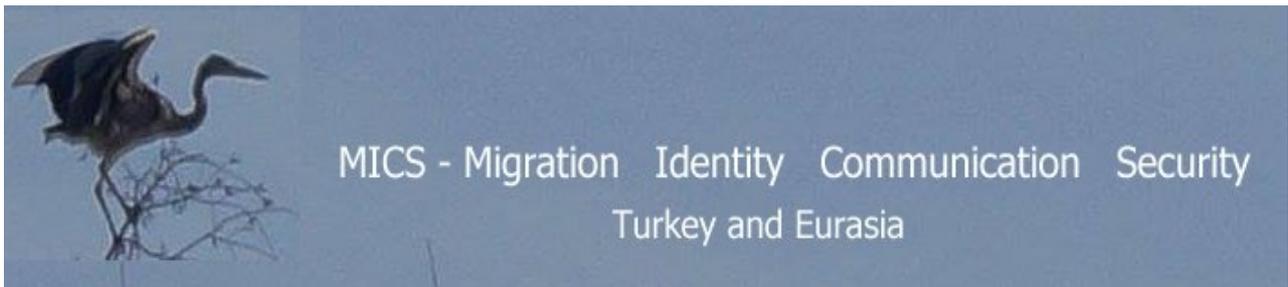
The general point of departure for activities within the MICS program is to form, consolidate and sustain a network for Nordic and Eurasian scholars in humanities and social sciences. More specifically, the rationale is to promote cooperation and scholarly advances in issues pertaining to Migration, Identity, Communication and Security in Eurasia. These four, closely intertwined, processes denote key societal challenges which scholars and practitioners alike will need to confront continuously within the foreseeable future.

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