

# Media's Role in Organizing the Occupy Gezi Movement

## Final Project Proposal

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I. Case: The "Occupy Gezi" movement in Turkey during the summer of 2013.

II. Question: What roles did the media (both civic and mass media) play in the Occupy Gezi movements in Turkey, and in what way did the media positively contribute to, and negatively dilute the aims and organization of the movement?

III. Abstract:

The project will look to examine multiple media outlets that played a formative role during the Gezi movements in Turkey during the summer of 2013. The movements were widely a response to Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan's attempts to enact legislation that encroached on the rights of the Turkish people in multiple areas of public life, as well as demolish a historic park in the center of Istanbul, known as *Gezi Park*. Mediums to examine will include Twitter, YouTube, Facebook, and the comment threads on web forums of news channels. However, the project will also look to prove that while social media was the most important platform for organized protest and collectively voiced dissent, it also worked against protestors, in that it became a haven for faulty information, contra-involvement (debatably supported by the reigning AKP regime), and ultimately, led to the dissolution of the Gezi movement. Additionally, I will analyze media sources to examine the effect government pressure and bias on the mass media had on the Gezi movement at different stages. Finally, the project will look to identify and discuss the implications of the *Gezi* movement's evolution in regards to the current restrictions the Turkish government is trying to place on the mass media, and activists who voice their dissent both online and on foot.

IV. Methods:

1. Ethnography: I will be going to Istanbul over spring break, and I will have the opportunity to talk to students who were involved in the Gezi protest (Bertug Baloglu, Nikki Falay, and Aylin Yardimci).

2. Content analysis: Analyzing tweets by protestors, by looking into specific tags: #OccupyGezi, for example; Analyzing content of YouTube videos of police response to protests, especially the comments section both in Turkish and English; Analyze parody/meme accounts: there was an influx of Facebook and Twitter accounts that parodied members of the Turkish government, in regards to how they responded to the protest.
3. Mass media analysis: news shows like “Shefaf Oda” as well as Turkish talk show culture. Some shows were permitted to cover the protests, others blatantly ignored them; discuss why/how the mass media was influenced. Also, YouTube videos of mainstream news coverage (channels like Kanal D and ATV).

#### V. Tools:

1. PageOneX: This will enable me to track how many times the Gezi movement made the front page of major newspapers both in Turkey and the rest of the world. This is an important comparison to make, because of the restrictions placed on Turkish media coverage of the protests; I want to use this tool to see how much the Turkish media was stifled, compared to the freedom other world newspapers enjoyed in covering the protests. Also, the content differences are important to my research as well (how much detail Turkish papers were permitted to cover, versus other papers, for example)
2. Tweetbinder: This tool is useful from both a content and statistical analysis perspective. It presents data about number of tweets, “influence” the hash tag searched has on the site in general, and reach, each of which I will examine independently; for example, the “reach” tool is useful to analyze when discussing the start of the movement, and the “influence” tool is useful to identify main players in the movement at different stages- has there been a shift in most vocal accounts throughout the movement? What could be the reason for such a change?
3. twXplorer: Firstly, this tool allows for a multi-lingual search, and I will be using both Turkish and English for this project, because I’m interested in seeing how the movement was perceived at different stages both in Turkey, and in the English-speaking world. Also, many Turkish bloggers encouraged activists to tweet/post in English so as to attract more attention, and I’d like to look into how successful this movement was. TwXplorer also links to popular news stories that were associated with each hashtag, and this will help with my content analysis.
4. ProQuest: I can use this to look at newspaper coverage of the movements from an American perspective
5. [http://amirmideast.blogspot.com/2011/01/open-access-newspapers-archives\\_24.html](http://amirmideast.blogspot.com/2011/01/open-access-newspapers-archives_24.html): Turkish newspaper archive (all info is in Turkish).
6. \*\*Instagram: I want to find a method to help me look into Instagram, especially because both photoshopped and real images were shared (with hashtags) on this medium throughout the protests, and today.

## VI. Workplan:

I want to split my work into four different stages, each of which will enable me to use the methods and tools stated above to examine what prompted Gezi, how the movement developed, dissolved, and what this process means in context of what the Turkish government is currently doing in regards to the movement and its implications.

### Stage I: What prompted Gezi?

1. Legislation proposed by AKP
2. *Gezi Park*: historical significance, details of plan to demolish
3. Background of Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdogan, President Abdullah Gul (pre-existing public perceptions, reputation as portrayed by the media up until Gezi)
4. Timeline of Gezi: Dates in which initial movements cropped up, locations, types of movements. Early voices both online and on foot.

### Stage II: Gezi Is a Movement. How Did It Progress?

1. Initial movements; Taksim, university movements (Istanbul Technical University, Istanbul University, Koc University, Bogazici University)
2. The first leakage onto the Internet: who were the initial “tweeters” and voices of this movement? Use TwXplorer.
3. Interview students from universities mentioned above, try to find people who were involved at different stages of the conflict.
4. Early signs of government intervention: ProQuest, JSTOR, similar literature review sources (newspaper archives of publications like *Hurriyet* and *Cumhuriyet*)

### Stage III: How did Gezi Get Disorganized?

1. Government intervention cracks down; YouTube videos of Prime Minister Erdogan’s inflammatory speeches against Gezi and its participants
2. Examples of “contra-media”; bloggers/accounts spreading falsified accounts of the protests and their locations, meant to inflame the public without cause/for the wrong causes. Focus on photoshopped images, defamed Tweeters and bloggers.
3. What happened to the park? Accounts (YouTube interviews) of some protestors who didn’t even realize the movement was about *Gezi Park*; indicative of how much focus the movement had lost.

### Stage IV: Implications of Gezi; Gezi Today

1. What has the government seemed to learn from Gezi? Has the administration changed its behavior in any way to pacify the protestors?
2. Current motions by the government to limit social media outlets like Facebook and YouTube; responses to the continued oppression imposed by AKP

3. Interviews/speeches Erdogan has given since summer 2013: what do they suggest for Turkey's future, in terms of tolerating protest/organized dissent?

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