MASTERARBEIT

Titel Der Masterarbeit:

„Gezi Park and the Media: Social Media as the New Public Sphere"

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ABSTRACT

It has been over a year since the environmentalist protest against the destruction of historical Gezi Park escalated into a national uprising against government policies. A variety of research and analyses were conducted about the protests, yet Gezi Park events continue to be an important field of investigation. Along with being a genuine example of civil mobilization, the protests revealed the limited independence of Turkish media institutions. Social media on the other hand became the major platform of organization and information sharing, leading to collective action.

Consequently, based on Jürgen Habermas' 'Public Sphere' theory, this thesis aims to present the loss of reliance on mainstream media as a source of information during the Gezi Park events, and it discusses the media's eroding role in creating the public sphere of informal discussions. Traditional media's function in the public sphere was replaced with social media, and it became the major communication platform for critical-rational reasoning. For Gezi Park protesters, social media's limitless and inclusive structure allowed the formation of joint decisions and reactions. Instead of the managed discussions and manipulated opinions of the mainstream media, social media provided a solid basis for the formation of a new and politicized public sphere during the resistance.

The thesis consists of four chapters. The first chapter introduces the thesis objective, methodology, and hypotheses. The second chapter explains Habermas' Public Sphere and helps the reader to understand the theory's relevance. The following chapter clarifies the political and social atmosphere before the Gezi Park protests in order to present a comprehensive set of the causes. The fourth chapter primarily explains the events chronologically, then evaluates the mainstream media coverage, and investigates the impact of social media. The fifth chapter concludes the thesis by evaluating the findings and discusses the hypotheses. In addition to the previous data, this chapter contains the analysis of overall twenty interviews.

Key Words: Jürgen Habermas, public sphere, Gezi Park events, protests, Turkey, social media, the media

ABSTRAKT

Es ist nahezu ein Jahr vergangen, seitdem die Umweltschützer gegen die Zerstörung des historischen Gezi Parks protestierten und dieser Protest zu einem Volksaufstand gegen die Regierungspolitik eskalierte. Eine Vielfalt von Recherchen und Analysen wurde bisher von den Protesten durchgeführt und dennoch sind die Gezi Park Ereignisse weiterhin ein wichtiger Bereich der Ermittlungen. Neben der Entstehung einer kennzeichnenden zivilen Mobilisierung, zeigen die Proteste insbesondere die begrenzte Unabhängigkeit der türkischen Medien. Andererseits wurden die sozialen Medien jedoch die größte Plattform für Organisation, sowie für das Mitteilen von Informationen, um eine kollektive Handlung der Demonstranten herbeizuführen.

Die vorliegende Arbeit hat die Zielsetzung, basierend auf der Öffentlichkeitstheorie von Jürgen Habermas, das verlorene Vertrauen in die Massenmedien als bisherige Informationsquelle darzustellen. Darüber hinaus wird die abtragende Rolle der Medien diskutiert und infolgedessen ein Entstehen informaler Diskussionen in der Öffentlichkeit. Die Funktion der traditionellen Medien für die Öffentlichkeit wurde durch die sozialen Medien ersetzt. Die sozialen Medien wurden die Hauptkommunikationsplattform für kritisch rationale Argumente während des Gezi Park Prozesses. Die unbegrenzte Struktur der sozialen Medien ermöglichte den Gezi Park Demonstranten die Bildung von gemeinschaftlichen Entscheidungen und Reaktionen auf das Geschehen. Anstelle von gelenkten Diskussionen und manipulierten Meinungen der Massenmedien, boten die sozialen Medien eine solide Basis für die Gründung einer neuen politischen Öffentlichkeit, um die Proteste in einen nationalweiten Widerstand zu verwandeln.

Die Masterarbeit ist in vier Abschnitte untergliedert. Der erste Abschnitt leitet die objektive Ansicht der Masterarbeit, die Methodik und die Hypothesen ein. Im zweiten Abschnitt wird Habermas Öffentlichkeitstheorie erklärt und dabei wird dem Leser geholfen die Relevanz der Theorie zu verstehen. Der dritte Part erläutert die politische und soziale Atmosphäre vor den Gezi Park Protesten, um eine umfassende Erläuterung der Gründe zu präsentieren. Der vierte Abschnitt erklärt in erster Linie die chronologische Reihenfolge der Ereignisse. Anschließend wird die Gesamtheit der ausgewerteten Informationen bezüglich der Massenmedien beurteilt und die

Auswirkungen auf die sozialen Medien untersucht. Schlussendlich gibt es ein Fazit, in welchem die Erkenntnisse beurteilt und die Hypothesen diskutiert werden. Des Weiteren enthält die Arbeit in dem letzten Part eine Analyse der insgesamt zwanzig durchgeführten Interviews zuzüglich einer Datenanalyse.

Schlüsselwörter: Jürgen Habermas, "public sphere", Gezi Park Ereignisse, Türkei, soziale Medien, Medien.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIST OF ABBREVATIONS

AA	Anatolian Agency
AFP	Agence France Presse
AKM	Ataturk Art and Culture Center
AKP	Justice and Development Party (Adalet ve Kalkınma Partisi)
ANAP	Motherland Party (Anavatan Partisi)
AP	Justice Party (Adalet Partisi)
BDP	Peace and Democracy Party (Barış ve Demokrasi Partisi)
CHP	Republican People's Party
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CPJ	Committee to Protect Journalists
DGM	State Security Courts
DISK	Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions
DP	Democrat Party (Demokrat Parti)
DYP	True Path Party (Doğru Yol Partisi)
EU	The Europen Union
FP	Virtue Party (Fazilet Partisi)
IHA	Ihlas News Agency
KESK	The Confederation of Trade Unions of Public Employees
LGBT	The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Organization
MNP	National Order Party (Milli Nizam Partisi)
MSP	National Salvation Party (Milli Selamet Partisi)
MTM	Media Monitoring Center
ODTU	Middle East Technical University
OSCE	The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe
RP	Welfare Party (Refah Partisi)
RTUK	The High Council of Radio and Televisions
SDP	Socialist Democracy Party (Sosyalist Demokrasi Partisi)
TMSF	The Savings Deposit Insurance Fund of Turkey
TMMOB	Unıon of Chambers of Turkısh Engıneers and Archıtects
TOKI	Mass House Administration
TTB	Turkish Union of Medical Doctors
USA	The United States of America

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Outline and Research Objective

The Gezi Park protests started as an environmentalist reaction against the transformation of Taksim Gezi Park into a complex with historical Topcu Barracks and a new shopping mall. A small group of demonstrators' efforts to prevent the demolition resulted in police intervention and in response the numbers of protesters began to increase significantly. Progression of the events was actually shaped in accordance with the reaction of authorities, because especially at the beginning, increasing police intervention resulted in growing unrest. As the protests began to spread country wide, the prominent reaction gave an anti-government insight to the unrest. Street clashes continued for more than two weeks. Protesters refused to leave the streets and the park, they resisted to police interventions, but after the evacuation of Gezi Park the frequency began to diminish. One of the most debated issues was the mainstream Turkish media's unwillingness to air the events and especially their silence against the riot police's intervention methods. On the other hand, the role of the social media throughout the protests was apparent. The means of the social media, especially famous social websites like Twitter and Facebook gave the protests a civil dynamic, in which individual contribution and organization were widespread. Protesters informed each other, shared footages, updated news and they were organized for diversified actions or reactions.

This thesis, inspired by the debates in line with the Gezi Park protests chose the subject matter as the media's attitude to Gezi Park events and the emergence of social media as a new public sphere. Following Habermas' public sphere theory, the thesis will discuss the eroding function of the mainstream Turkish media in forming the public sphere of common concern and discussion throughout the protests. In line with this argument, the thesis will investigate the social media's role on the emerging public sphere during the events, a limitless environment for social and political critique and its impact on the Gezi Park mobilization. From a personal perspective and especially as a Turkish citizen, I believe that Gezi Park resistance needs scientific attention, because first and foremost, it was a nation-wide social explosion of an indifferent and mostly apolitical nation. Social movements alone have always taken my personal attention and the experience of such unexpected mobility in Turkey inevitably shaped my preferences

for the thesis subject. Also as a political science student I always had a clear interest for the analyses concerning the relations between media and politics. Along with social media's impact on public discourses, Gezi Park events revealed a genuine form of politicized communication and mobilization. The transition from traditional to the new media during the protests motivated me to investigate the content and present a comprehensive work.

As it is mentioned above, the mainstream media's attitudes during the process are often discussed and criticized, because as it is widely accepted, the media as a source of information have a crucial role in societies for molding public opinion. Transformation of media ownerships and domination of the state are relevant discussions concerning the media's role in biased and manipulated discourses. Criticisms of the mainstream media during Gezi Park constituted a similar pattern. Social media on the other hand became a major platform for organization and communication. In this sense, starting from the first police intervention at the end of May, the scope of the thesis will mainly include the two months period of Gezi protests (June-July) and consists of five parts. First chapter is the introduction chapter and it mainly outlines the scope, the objective, hypotheses and the methodology. Second chapter discusses the theoretical approach. Jürgen Habermas' public sphere theory forms the basis of this work and in this part the historical analysis of the theory will be explained. Third chapter is an explanatory chapter and it helps the reader to understand the atmosphere before Gezi Park protests. In order to do so, primarily center-right legacy in Turkish history will be analyzed, because Justice and Development Party's (AKP) identity and current policies can only be understood on the basis of right wing heritage. In addition, the chapter briefly evaluates the escalating political problems before Gezi protests, which mostly affected the widespread reactions. Turkish media's structural transformation indicates a major point of the part; because Turkish media's silence has strong ties either with existing interest based relations, or government oppression. In order to understand the Gezi Park reactions and anti-government insight; such problems need to be clarified. In the fourth chapter Gezi Park protests will be presented chronologically. Likewise the mainstream media coverage and social media's role will be analyzed with diversified data. Fifth chapter will simply discuss the findings and conclude the thesis. As being the major method of the thesis, twenty interviews will be presented and analyzed within this chapter. Additionally it must be noted that for the description of Gezi Park events

different notions like resistance, protests and uprisings will be used. Regardless of the politicized meanings, these notions will only aim to explain the conditions.

1.2. Hypotheses

In line with the objective, three hypotheses are designed for discussion. Broadly, the media effect on Gezi Park; specifically the replacement of the mainstream media with social media for the emergence of a new public sphere will form the major hypotheses of the research. Additionally Gezi Park protests' structure will be emphasized, thus a third hypothesis is designed in accordance with Gezi Park's transformation into a nation-wide resistance. The hypotheses of the research are as follows:

- Before Gezi Park protests the mainstream media was seen as an important source for the maintenance of the sphere of informal discussions in which knowledge about events and opinions was accessible and reproachable. However during the resistance Turkish mainstream media has lost its reliability as a source of information and appeared as an artificial sphere of manipulated public critique because of the existing ownership structures and government oppression.

- During Gezi protests as a new public sphere social media emerged in which free and limitless access to political-social information, involvement through open channels and shares were enabled, thus social media provided suitable means for opposition, critical reasoning and especially organization among protesters, giving the resistance its own civil and politicized dynamic.

- Nation-wide mobility in Gezi Park resistance was enabled and achieved through the new public sphere of social media and its possibilities.

1.3. Methodology

The thesis consists of different types of data based on qualitative research methods; the contents analysis, media coverage and interviews. For the qualitative content analysis, books, journals and analyses are used for the presentation of the extensive explanatory parts. Second and third chapters are conducted based on the

content data. The fourth chapter's major source is the analysis of the media coverage, thus it contains a diversified and significant amount of news outlets. Broadly, mainstream Turkish televisions and newspapers, news-making and broadcast principles are discussed on the basis of the media coverage. Additional statistical data aims to investigate the impact of the social media. Exemplifications of tweets, entries, trend topics, social reactions, etc. are used with the data to discuss the information share and mobilization through the social media. For the analysis of the hypotheses and overall findings twenty interviews conducted in verbal form. The interviewees are chosen from various status and backgrounds and the intention is to investigate opinions about Gezi Park mobilization, the media's role on individual/public discourses, the media coverage and the impact of social media on the protests. Each interviewee is asked the same set of questions and even though they have diverse occupational skills, the respondents do not present expertise. The purpose of the interviews is to explore the views of a predetermined segment of Gezi Park protests including oppositional and supporter citizens. In this sense, the findings of the interviews do not claim to represent the public opinion regarding the subject matter. A deeper and wider data is required for a nation-wide analysis; however as they were conducted from different segments, the interviews aim to present a general insight for the extensive discussion of the phenomenon. Eleven questions are designed on the basis of aforementioned categories. The questions are as follows:

1. Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?
2. Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?
3. What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?
4. Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?
5. What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?
6. How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?
7. How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

8. Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?

9. Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?

10. What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

11. Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?

2.THE THEORETICAL APPROACH:
JÜRGEN HABERMAS' PUBLIC SPHERE

The Gezi Park resistance as a social movement had an impact on Turkish social and political lives, regardless of its consequences, and a number of studies could be conducted solely concerning the resistance element. From a personal perspective the most crucial outcomes were the media effect throughout the process and an increasing social consciousness and critical reasoning for political and democratic rights, which basically enabled the movement to become a resistance. While the first case composes the core analysis of this work, an increasing social consciousness inevitably becomes an integral part of the overall study. Communication theories broadly present a very suitable basis for the shifting balance of power between media and authorities (state, capital, and other sources), the media's role in agenda setting, and the media as a source of manipulation. Manufacturing public consent, media effect in policy making (vice-versa) and agenda setting can be given as major theoretical concepts of media studies. Broadly, these theories focus on the function and meaning of the media in political structures. Guard dog or fourth estate media are generally conducted from similar approaches. It is undeniable that the media today have a crucial meaning and effect as a source of information, since basic knowledge about our societies, order and events are primarily gained from the media. Every day we watch the evening news and read daily newspapers to follow the agenda, to understand the debates and to get informed about hot events; hence unintentionally we obtain a certain way of perception that is given through the media. Such function gave rise to a variety of theories concerning media and politics. According to Chomsky and Herman the media serve as a propaganda model. In this approach on the basis of existing ownership structures; the function of the media is transformed in to a manipulative meaning for the benefit of the patronage system. In this sense the media simultaneously reproduce a perception within society and hence manufacture public consent for higher interests. The hegemony within this structure is achieved through the maintenance of suitable editorial offices. In other words, journalists and media workers are selected on the basis of constructed principles. Collective harmony enables the formation of interest based agendas (Herman and Chomsky, 2012: 15, 16). From a personal perspective Chomsky and Herman present a significant analysis for the political economy of the media, yet their

perspective is strongly one-sided and hence lacks of different variables. On the other hand, theories about media role in politics and vice-versa in a similar perspective focus on to the mutual, interest based relations between the media and power sources, such as the state and capital powers. They present a successful evaluation of media institutions and ownership structures. Agenda-setting theories can be understood within a similar pattern, since basically they focus on to the political influence of the news media. According to agenda-setting, the news media have an ability to influence the salience of topics. Specifically this theory analyzes the correlation between the media content and public concerns. Bernard Cohen's famous statement annunciates the core assumption of the theory: *"The press may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about"* (Soroka, 2003: 29). Probably the most emphasized model in agenda-setting theory is "audience effects" assumption. In this model the correlation between media coverage and public discourse can be found in the audience's pre-existing sensitivities. *"The media effects are contingent on issue-specific audience characteristics; or, in other words, issue coverage in the media serves as a trigger stimulus to salience perceptions"* (Erbring et.al, 1980: 45). Erbring, Goldenberg and Miller demonstrated that the media shape our notions, especially about the incidents beyond our direct experience. Such influence increases among the people who are not effectively embedded into informal communication (Erbring et.al, 1980: 45, 46). Despite changing variables; agenda-setting claims that the media content shape audience agendas and it is one of the most frequently cited theories of the media studies. Agenda-setting theory's assumptions are relevant with the subject matter; however it is not sufficient to analyze the scope of Gezi Park process, because the core hypothesis of the theory can only be used to investigate one of the existing aspects of the media effect during Gezi events. Likewise agenda-setting theory does not present a comprehensive basis for the social media's role throughout the process. With the emergence of the social media, scholars began to discuss the possibilities and impacts of such alternative communication means. Today rather than new theories, mainly existing theories are used to analyze the political and social function of the social media. There are diversified approaches to the impact of social media. For instance as Hofheinz analyzes successfully; today the systematic data for social media's political effects is insufficient and for this reason we are still in the stage of hypotheses building (Hofheinz, 2011: 1422).

"The fall of the Tunisian and Egyptian régimes has led to a fresh flurry of exchanges on the role of the Internet, and in particular the role of "social media," in these events. Cyber-skeptics Morozov and Gladwell (2010, 2011) were derided as hopelessly yesteryear: "See? Here is your Facebook revolution!" The skeptics replied: "We never said that social media did not play a role; we just pointed out that it is a mere tool, a tool that can be used by protesters and governments alike, and where big brother may turn out to prevail in the end!" To which the other side retorted: "But we never said that that social media alone can bring about a revolution; it is a tool, but a highly important tool that changes the dynamics of what's going on on the ground." And so this debate continued for a while between two sides that were partly working with simplistic caricatures of their opponents' arguments, ignoring the finer points made by the other side" (Hofheinz, 2011: 1422).

Despite the differences, theoretical analyses of social media gained momentum in the last decade. As it is mentioned above; the majority of the research are based on existing theories, but the political impact of social media forms an important aspect of media studies. In this context, Marshall McLuhan's global village theory also became an important basis for many social media analyses. According to McLuhan, the technological developments in mass communication means, specifically the electric technology transformed the world into a village on global scale. "*As electrically contracted the world is no more than a village. Electric speed in bringing all social and political functions together in a sudden implosion has heightened human awareness of responsibility to an intense degree*" (McLuhan, 1994: 5). McLuhan argues that a medium used to convey the message creates an impact on our perceptions and he states: "*the medium is the message*". The effects of a medium generate a set of sensibilities upon the users. In this context the media is analyzed to have an impact on culture and values as being the medium of message and meaning. He forecast an extension of consciousness through a new medium; a technologically improved communication platform, an environment social media provides today:

"The next medium, whatever it is — it may be the extension of consciousness — will include television as its content, not as its environment, and will transform television into an art form. A computer as a research and communication instrument could enhance retrieval, obsolesce mass library organization, retrieve

the individual's encyclopedic function and flip it into a private line to speedily tailored data of a saleable kind" (Duggan, 26/07/2011, www.technorati.com).

Harold Adams Innis, a former Canadian political-economist saw the media as the major factor in shaping the culture. Like McLuhan, he focused on communication technologies and argued that the major reason behind social transformations is the development of technologies. Innis and McLuhan are considered to be associated with technological determinism. Like Innis' arguments, in this view technology is determinant for societal transformation and development. Technological determinists are criticized for placing the technology at the center of social progression and neglecting human factor; however the emergence of new media escalated the discussions concerning the impact of communication technologies (Turkmen, 2012: 18-20). Robert Logan discusses McLuhan's theory in accordance with social media and starts with an analysis of the new messages. He presents fourteen messages of social media focusing on its structure:

> "New media today seem to have 14 distinct messages that intertwine and support each other. Digitization makes interoperability, two-way communication, ease of access to information, continuous learning, convergence, aggregation of content, remix culture and the transition from products to services possible. Aggregation of content leads to variety and choice, The Long Tail, community, social collectivity and cooperation. Remix and digitization helps close the gap between user and producer, which in turn builds community, variety and choice. Ease of access and dissemination of information leads to continuous learning; social collectivity and cooperation; remix culture; and the closing of the gap between user and producer" (Logan, 06/08/2007, www.pbs.org).

Broadly, Logan's structural analyses of social media stress emerging opportunities of social convergence and aggregation. Likewise, global village and technological determinism became popular approaches within new media studies; however for the specific concept of this study, a theory of media studies with an appropriate emphasis on social cohesion and opposition is needed. The genuine platform of politicized communication was one of the major characteristics of Gezi Park events. In this sense, Gezi Park's media aspect and variables requires a socially improved understanding of interdisciplinary theory, rather than a specified field of media analysis; because Gezi Park has gained its own civil and politicized dynamic from an uncontrolled and limitless flow of information through supporters and

demonstrators. Along with the decline of mainstream media as a sphere for public discourses, a new public sphere was constructed, one in which social opposition grew stronger and spread like a chain reaction, enabled through alternative communication means, specifically through social media.

Jürgen Habermas' public sphere forms a theoretical basis for this study. In his *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, Habermas briefly introduces an analysis of publicity and the public sphere in contemporary societal structures. His original work, *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft*, was published in 1969, but his historical framework of the public sphere was not translated into English until 1989. (Garnham, 2007: 201). It can be said that ever since the public sphere has become an important basis for a variety of analyses and as Garnham puts it especially for media studies:

> *"It is now over 20 years since Habermas' concept of the public sphere was introduced to Anglo-Saxon media studies, since when it has undoubtedly become and…continues to be a major thematic perspective in media analysis"* (Garnham, 2007: 201).

Habermas simply outlines a public sphere in which private persons rationally debate and discuss the matters of common concern, and thus the cultural critique transforms into the political (Şen, 2012: 490). Such a perspective is inevitably adaptable to different versions of 'public spheres' in today's different social and political structures. In the introduction of 'Habermas and the Public Sphere,' the editor Craig Calhoun presents a partially similar and a very appropriate observation:

> "The question Habermas shows, is a crucial one for democratic theory. What are the social conditions, he asks, for a rational-critical debate about public issues conducted by private persons willing to let arguments and not statuses determine decisions? This is an inquiry at once into normative ideals and actual history. It focuses upon the bourgeois political life of the seventeenth through mid-twentieth centuries, yet it aims to reach beyond the flawed realities of this history to recover something of continuing normative importance" (Calhoun, 1992: 1).

As Calhoun states, even though a historical analysis has been set in Habermas' Public Sphere, there is an important continuity within his approaches, especially related to the variety of social opposition today. However, before constructing such correlation

between the public sphere concept and media analyses specifically related to the Gezi Park resistance, a detailed introduction concerning the historical framework of Habermas' public sphere concept needs to be given.

Habermas starts with a brief explanation for the usage of the terms "public" and "public sphere":

> *"We call events and occasions 'public' when they are open to all, in contrast to closed or exclusive affairs—as when we speak of public places or public houses… The state is the 'public authority'. It owes this attribute to its task of promoting the public or common welfare of its rightful members… The public sphere itself appears as a specific domain—the public domain versus the private"* (Habermas, 1991: 1, 2).

The term 'public sphere' refers to a realm of social life that enables the formation of public opinion. It is a free and accessible platform to all citizens; hence a public sphere is reproduced through various kinds of public conversations because citizens leave their private identities and form a public body with liberties of expression and critical thinking. Communication has a crucial role within this structure, as the message and information are transmitted through various forms of communication means (Habermas, 2006: 73).

Habermas' historical framework in this sense analyzes the roots of the bourgeois public sphere of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe, mainly through major transformations of socio-political structures. Habermas, to start with, emphasizes the absence of a specific word usage for public sphere in the seventeenth century. According to him, public sphere has emerged in Germany as a part of civil society, as a realm of commodity exchange and social labor governed by its own laws. Historically, this emergence occurred only in the eighteenth century (Habermas, 1991: 3). For the first time, a sphere of a "*good society*" was developed, taking place only after the breakdown of feudalism and the emergence of the modern states. Similarly, this was the first time public and private spheres were clearly distinguished in a modern sense (Habermas, 1991: 10, 11).

> "'Private' designated the exclusion from the sphere of the state apparatus; for 'public' *referred* to the state that in the meantime had developed under absolutism, into an entity having an objective existence over against the person of the ruler. The public (das Publikum, le public) was the 'public authority'

(öffentliche Gewalt) in contrast to everything 'private' (Privatwesen)" (Habermas, 1991: 11).

To be more precise it can be said that according to Habermas the first steps to a new social order gained acceleration with the emergence of early trade and capitalism. As he stresses, early capitalism was conservative in both the economic and political mentalities. The result of such a capitalist mentality was two-fold: on the one hand, this capitalism stabilized the power structure of an estates society, while on the other it unleashed the elements that would eventually dissolve this power structure of household economies. These elements are actually the instruments of new commercial relationships: "*the traffic in commodities and news*" created by capitalist trade (Habermas, 1991: 14, 15). Long distance trade developed trade fairs, and such commercial exchange created a horizontal economic relationship. A similar pattern was seen among news traffic. Improvements in trade brought forth the need for decisive and frequent information of events for the merchants; thus starting in fourteenth century the first mail routes were organized. Moreover, the market itself has opened up and expanded, and for this reason new necessities of an expanded market were on the agenda (Habermas, 1991: 14-17). Habermas points out the transformation clearly:

> *"From the sixteenth century on, merchant companies were organized on an expanded capital basis; unlike the old traders in staple goods, they were no longer satisfied with limited markets. By means of grand expeditions they opened up new markets for their products… however, they needed strong political guarantees. The markets for foreign trade were now justly considered "institutional products"… The old home towns were thus replaced as bases of operations by the state territory. The process that Heckscher describes as the 'nationalization of the town based economy began'"* (Habermas, 1991: 17).

In this sense, it can be said that the modern state was formed within mercantilist thought. Expansion of foreign markets assisted the improvement of domestic economies, and civil society was formed as the result of a depersonalized state authority. The role of the press within this process was also crucial. The first journals were political journals, which served the commercial needs of merchants; thus, the news itself became a commodity. The information contained within these journals was needed and had a value, and so the aim to sell more for the profit was natural. This alone gave the journals publicity, and even states began to use these journals for

administration and for intelligence. On the one hand, a new layer of the bourgeois was formed within the public, with the people who occupied central positions; and on the other, the state itself began to stress an awareness of the emerging public sphere of civil society. This transformation was inevitable and, as mentioned above, this dynamic was accelerated in the mercantilist phase, affecting a wide range of the population with new regulations, since mercantilism enabled the dissolution of private businesses and official interventions in private households generated the formation of a critical sphere (Habermas, 1991: 18-24). It is because on the one hand society was confronted with a separation of the private domain from public authority and on the other, as Habermas stresses, "the zone of continuous administrative contact became 'critical' also in the sense that it provoked the critical judgment of a public making use of its own reason" (Habermas, 1991: 24). This 'critical reasoning' here must be emphasized, because the bourgeois public sphere does not just form an opposition between society and state but also a practice of being rational-critical, a disinterested approach to political matters of an objective order (Calhoun, 1992: 9). In this sense, "*the bourgeois public sphere that emerged in the eighteenth century was seen as a neutral social space independent of the public authority and made up of private people gathering together as a public and articulating the needs of society with the state*" (Şen, 2012: 491). Two processes helped to institutionalize the public sphere: the family and the world of letters. In the new conjugal family, the understanding of the 'private' was shifted and partially differentiated from material reproduction. In other words, similar to the dissociation of state and society, economics and family were distinguished in the private realm. Calhoun stresses: "*Thus, the family provided a crucial basis for the immanent critique of the bourgeois public sphere itself, for it taught that there was something essential to humanness that economic or other status could not take away*"(11). The second process throughout the institutionalization was enabled through coffee houses and salons. By the first decade of the eighteenth century, these coffee houses and salons had become the centers of political and literary criticism. Meetings of businessmen who primarily discussed and debated trade matters and news transformed into something wider over time, and as Calhoun evaluates, "*the conversation of these little circles branched out into affairs of state administration and politics. Journals of opinion were created…*" (12). The importance of these institutions throughout the development of the literary public sphere was first the social status was indifferent and ignored; second unquestioned areas, such as matters related to church or state administration, were

discussed; finally, the emerging public established itself as inclusive. For the first time, criticism of art was heard among the people, which within time transformed into a profession. Critical writing related to the field of art emerged and continued in coffee houses and salons (Calhoun, 1992: 10-13).

> *"The privatized individuals coming together to form a public also reflected critically and in public on what they had read, thus contributing to the process of enlightenment which they together promoted… book clubs, reading circles, and subscription libraries shot up. In an age in which the sale of the monthly and weekly journals doubled within a quarter century, they made it possible for the reading of novels to become customary in the bourgeois strata. These constituted the public that had long since grown out of early institutions like the coffee houses, salons, and Tischgesellschaften and was now held together through the medium of the press and its professional criticism. They formed the public sphere of a rational-critical debate in the world of letters within which the subjectivity originating in the interiority of the conjugal family, by communicating with itself, attained clarity about itself"* (Habermas, 1991: 51).

Habermas' designation of the bourgeois public sphere results from the structural transformation progressed within early modern capitalist societies and, is, in fact "*the decline of [a] historically specific and limited form of public sphere. It is believed that the new form of public sphere is required to salvage this arena's critical function*" (Şen, 2012: 490). His historical comparison in this sense seeks a contrary approach to the modern capitalist system's threat to democracy, and his assumption points out that the way out is "*the emergence of public sphere of informal discussion generated by the growth in literacy through books and especially the press*" (Lunt, Livingstone, 2013: 89). Habermas' view of the supportive press throughout the transformation of public sphere had by the twentieth century transformed into skepticism. He emphasizes the process of increasing individualization and loss of political consciousness, which in the end produces a manipulated public sphere and hence transforms the role of the media. For this reason, Habermas' view of the media is negative, in which publicity is used to gain and secure interest-based public support (Lunt, Livingstone, 2013: 89, 90). Therefore, as Şen puts it, "*even though Habermas himself saw the media as contributing to the decay of the rational-critical discourse and causing the decline of the public sphere, numerous revisions of the concept, quite the contrary, have recognized the capacity of the media to initiate public discussion and give it a*

constructive spin" (Şen, 2012: 491). Habermas himself in recent years has emphasized the dynamic capacity of the media, as Garnham explains:

> *"Communication via the mass media plays an important role in the normative vision I advocate. A dispersed public interconnected almost exclusively through the electronic media can keep up to date on all kinds of issues and contributions in the mass media with a minimum of attention, even in fleeting moments during the day, in small private circles. People can take affirmative or negative positions on issues, and they do this implicitly all the time. In this way, they contribute to evaluating competing public opinions, if not their articulation. Public communication acts as a hinge between informal opinion-formation [sic] and the institutionalized processes of will formation. For this reason the discursive constitution of the public sphere is important"* (as cited in Garnham, 2007: 209).

Following Habermas' statement, the discursive and dynamic structure of communication means allows the formation of new public spheres in which social and political critique is often heard. This is probably another reason explaining media studies' fascination with Habermas' public sphere, because today the new media have transformed the traditional public sphere with unlimited information and opinion flow. Hence, as Şen states, "*it enabled the information about public events to be passed to all citizens and politicians and governments were able to be criticized by the society*" (Şen, 2012: 490). What the new media actually generated was the transformation of the information flow because the media's increasing commercialization and interest-based relations with the state have neglected the democratic communication roles between the public, authorities, and institutions. For this reason, even though mass media provided a critical reasoning in the public sphere, the criteria of inclusiveness was somehow limited and it affected the deliberative dialogue in the public sphere (Şen, 2012: 489, 490). As Şen points out:

> "The new media have been hailed as a potential way to break away from the vertical information flow and 'top down' politics... Instead, new media provide means for the provision of political information and in this way almost unlimited access to different voices and feedback between leaders and followers are established. New media promise new forums for the development of interest groups as well as the formation of public opinion. New media also allow dialogue between politicians and active citizens and thus it provides an arena where public

discourse can take place and public opinion, as its function, can be formed" (Şen, 2012: 490).

Moreover, Habermas' three criteria (which are defined as the preconditions for the public sphere to exist)—inclusivity, ignorance of statuses, and the ability to question the unquestionable, in other words establishment of a common concern—are, in the new media, to some extent adhered to (Şen, 2012: 490). This is naturally very much related to technological development, because today the internet provides a limitless sphere of contribution and evaluation. The rise of the social media in this sense affected the traditional media influence and society's ability to reason critically, because, following Habermas' analysis, a public sphere functions most effectively when it has a certain independence from economical and governmental hegemony. For this reason, different instruments can be maintained for an efficient public sphere, yet media provides the major communicational means, which are the crucial variants of establishing a public body. Especially in recent years, due to the transformed structure of mass communication means, censorship and dominance threats against the media have affected the efficiency of critical reasoning in the public sphere (Herman, McChesney, 2004: 3, 4). In this perspective, social media has gained importance in the debates concerning public sphere and public body formations.

Public sphere theory is commonly used in media studies, firstly because of its relevance to today's order and secondly because of the media's current position and influence; in other words, as Habermas discussed, what salons, coffee shops, or the literate world enabled back in eighteenth and nineteenth centuries is generated through the media today. Another important variable of today's picture comes from the new communication means as mentioned above. Therefore, corresponding to Şen's assumption, this study recognizes the shift between the two sides of media sources and evaluates social media as the new public sphere during the evolution of the Gezi Park resistance as the source of enlightenment, with limitless information, inclusivity, and critical reasoning. The traditional public sphere, structured through the mainstream media in Turkey, has now been questioned and has lost its reliability, because ownership structures began to dominate and manipulate the public sphere through constructed discourses and debates. Manufactured public agendas limited the consensus based discourses and formed mainly an artificial sphere of hegemony. As being an independent platform for communication and information, a new kind of public

discourse was achieved through social media during the protests, which in fact enhanced the politicized mobilization, hence a new public sphere of critical reasoning was developed throughout the resistance. As Habermas envisaged, it functioned as an easily accessible sphere of informal discussions, leading to political critique and affected the public discourse. During Gezi Park resistance social media has established a widespread and dynamic public sphere which altered the mainstream media's traditional function in social-political debating and public opinion.

3.PRE-GEZI ATMOSPHERE

Turkish political history since the borth of the republic has seen various challenges, including military coup d'états. The political and democratic order has been interrupted and harmed by such violent incidents especially during the Cold War. The political heritage of Turkey has been shaped within an intense history and broadly an authentic understanding of politics and ideology has been derived in society. The Turkish understanding of conservatism, the emergence of political Islam, and the AKP's ideological position are relevant discussions. The AKP's increasingly autocratic understanding and the transition from militarism to civil tutelage can also be evaluated within this heritage. Consequently, the increasing tensions against majoritarian and anti-democratic governance turned into a nationwide explosion after an environmentalist demonstration, and for almost two months Turkey experienced one of its widest anti-governmental uprisings.

The unexpected civil mobility during the Gezi Park protests can only be evaluated on the basis of former political and social problems. In order to do so, first of all this chapter presents a historical analysis of the Turkish right. For a comprehensive discussion concerning the increasing authoritarianism in Turkey, the AKP's political identity and its authentic understanding of conservative democracy requires specific attention. The AKP started with a modernist and liberal version of conservative democracy, and with growing success the party began to fill the necessary moral and ideological gaps, evolving into a strong center party. The lessons from the former rightist and Islamic parties gave the AKP a pragmatic understanding; however, a lack of strong ideologies generated identity ambiguities and the party policies gained an authoritarian structure especially after the third victory in 2011. The gaps of the AKP's identity were filled with these tendencies and the government started to reflect a different vision than that of its early years. In this sense, the first part of this chapter helps the reader to understand the rightist understanding of politics in Turkey and ideological ambiguities related to the AKP's identity. Two sub-parts are designed to analyze first of all the Turkish right's heritage and then the AKP's political identity. The chapter's second part briefly explains the recent problems of AKP governance. Democratic problems, paternalist understanding of governance leading to a new form of tutelage, and increasing morality in politics constitute major points of the part. These

problems generated tensions in the country and became an important ground for the anti-government uprisings. The final part in the chapter first of all explains the Turkish media's neoliberal transformation, and then discusses the patronage and government manipulation in the media institutions. Being an important question of this thesis, the Turkish media and its connections to power sources are analyzed with diversified examples.

3.1. Conservatism, Political Islam, and the AKP

3.1.1. Conservative and Islamic Parties after the Republic

Conservatism in Turkey is used differently in political and social contexts. Political conservatism is often understood as being in correlation with various norms and ideas. Socially, the Turkish public sees conservatism as a way of life and an identity that sometimes excludes its political content. Such ideological and conceptual controversies in Turkey have often influenced both politics and society, because conservatism, nationalism, and religion (Islamism) are usually intertwining ideas that affect different spheres. This is the result of the dilemma between modernization and a statist tradition, because in Turkey modernization is a major goal but taking into account local norms and values. The state, with its aims of modernizing the country, prepared the preconditions of conservatism and ensured continuity with a strict statist tradition, especially during the early years of the revolution (a paternalist state). On the one hand, such a tension forms a progressive modernity, still adhering to local communitarian tendencies, while and on the other it forms a regressive conservatism with modernist approaches (Safi, 2005: 158, 160). Moreover, Turkey's revolution generated dilemmas: What Kemalist elites achieved was the transformation of the Ottoman theocratic empire into a secular, democratic republic; however the revolution did not belong to the people, and hence ideas did not spread easily through Anatolia. In other words, while the state and political elites became westernized, the people continued to protect their traditional values and beliefs. For this reason the center-periphery in Turkey remained distant for long years (Akkır, 2006: 49).

According to Bora Tanıl, nationalism, Islamism, and conservatism form the three states of the Turkish right wing rather than merely ideological positions. Therefore,

political actions can be evaluated as intertwining and transformative states. In this way, nationalism forms the 'solid' state of the Turkish right. It has the power to adapt and fabricate content, notions, or images. Islamism is 'liquid,' since it is the source of values and rituals. Conservatism on the other hand, is 'gaseous,' being a psychological manner, a stand and a style (Safi, 2005: 160).

In Turkey, it is generally accepted that center-right politics is derived from liberal conservatives, whereas nationalist politics are based on authoritarian conservatism. Religion has always been an important aspect of right and center-right politics. The aim of Turkish conservatism was to remove the distinction between the center-periphery and ease the tension. According to this approach, it was necessary to reconcile with tradition and culture in order to achieve modernization. Therefore periphery ideas, centered upon tradition and Islamic values, were represented by the conservatives. Islamism lost legal ground after the revolution, making conservatism the most suitable channel to express Islamist thoughts. Particularly after the 1950s, Islamism started to appear in conservative discourse (Safi, 2005: 154, 155).

Conservatism in Turkey was introduced with the Democrat Party (DP) between 1950 and 1960. Broadly, such evaluations were based on the moderation of secularism. The leader of the party and the prime minister was Adnan Menderes. The DP and Menderes simply stressed the importance of religious sensitivities and clearly noted that Turkey was an Islamic nation. In this sense, the Turkish people had the right to fulfill their religious needs without politicizing the religion, because Kemalism advocated strong control over religion and religious matters. For instance, the Republican People's Party (CHP) formed the first government of the Turkish Republic, consisting of Kemalist cadres under the leadership of Mustafa Kemal Ataturk. During the early years, as part of modernization reforms, the CHP changed the language of the azan (ezan: Islamic call to worship) recital from Arabic to Turkish. One of the first actions of the DP was to reverse this action. Similarly, soon after, the DP lifted the ban on religious broadcasting via radio, and during Ramadan, Qur'an readings were broadcast daily. Simply put, according to the DP, religion was a necessary "binder" for social integrity. Therefore, according to the DP, Islam was a necessary aspect of Turkish tradition. Consequently, their approach involved Islam's integration with the constitutional process (Akkır, 2006: 47, 51; Gürel, 2007: 45, 46; 81). Unfortunately, because of the CHP's strict practices during the one-party era, a negative impression of

secularism was formed. For many years, people have misunderstood secularism as hostility and opposition towards religion; thus, the DP's moderation in religious matters and increasing conservatism led to the formation of "underground" religious groups or communities. These groups became visible after the 1950s, and a few of them were clearly against secularism. After the 1960 military coup, the DP's conservative heritage was transferred to the Justice Party (AP), which became an important player in Turkish politics. The AP consisted of different party cadres: former DP members, a group of retired military officers, and an extreme-right group, which included pan-Turkists. During the 1965 elections, the AP's slogan was "We are positioned on the right of the center and we are on the way of Allah," and in this election, the AP increased its vote share to 53 percent (Gürel, 2007: 48-51). Similar to the DP, the AP and, especially, their leader Suleyman Demirel had a religious discourse. In addition, they created an anti-communist and provincial political environment. For the people, Demirel was a figure of success because unlike the former political elites, he was raised and educated in the provincial regions. He was a good orator and was successful in gauging the pulse of the people. He stressed that as a politician, his major goal was to reconcile the state with religion and the peasantry. Economically, both parties were liberal and supported private property. Construction of dams, roads, and new factories was an important part of center-right policies. For instance, under the AP's governance, the level of construction and urban planning activity peaked. Development of the provincial regions and nationwide welfare were these parties' major promises to peasants. Culture and tradition were often accentuated. Classical populist sentiments were clearly visible in most center-right parties (Cavusoglu, 2009: 268, 269).

After the 1980 coup d'état, all political parties were banned and the constitution was suspended. The AP was reorganized as the True Path Party (DYP) under Demirel's leadership soon after the political ban was lifted. The Motherland Party (ANAP) was established in 1983 as a new center-right party under the leadership of Turgut Ozal. Ozal embraced Menderes' vision. However, unlike the former DP and AP, the ANAP could never be a real party of the people, and people's participation in the party remained limited. Moreover, conservative cadres within the party were diversified, consisting of Islamists, liberals, and nationalists. The ANAP truly aimed to engage different positions or ideologies and become a strong center party. Even though the ANAP aimed to follow the path of the DP and the AP, it lacked the distinct societal

base of these parties. The DP and AP's bases were mainly provincial, whereas the ANAP embraced the urban base. For instance, in the 1987 elections, the DYP received support from indigents and people of lower socio-economical status, whereas the ANAP support base comprised voters of middle-upper socio-economic status. Moreover, the ANAP embraced an export-based, globalized economic model against the DYP's mixed economic model. It is often stressed that the ANAP was an urban party with new cadres; however, the party always protected its right discourse because as mentioned before, its nationalist and Islamist cadres were never integrated and they remained as distinct conservative groups within the party. In fact, the ANAP had the support of several strong religious communities during the governance years. It must be noted that similar to the former center-right examples, the ANAP's success was related to its leader, Turgut Ozal (Cavusoglu, 2009: 272-275).

Turkey's experience with political Islam began after the 1970s. A clear distinction was seen in the representation of center-right and far-right voters. Nationalist conservatives and Islamist cadres established their own parties; hence, societal support for the right wing diversified. Underground religious communities began integrating with these Islamic cadres, and Islam was politicized. Political Islam in Turkey is essentially related to the "Milli Gorus" (National Vision) tradition. The term reflects a nationalist-religious vision, and it is the ideological cornerstone of Islamic parties. Milli Gorus is openly critical of secularism in Turkey, and it embraces the project of political Islam. According to the members, political Islam means to protect their core identity and not to mirror the West. This tradition revealed itself during the 1970s through Necmettin Erbakan, the former prime minister and leader of the Welfare Party (RP) (Eligur, 2010: 66, 67). Historically, first Islamic party in Turkey was the National Order Party (MNP), which was founded in 1970 under the leadership of Erbakan. However, following the 1971 military intervention, the party was dissolved and replaced with the National Salvation Party (MSP) in 1973 under Erbakan's leadership. Until the 1980 coup d'état, the MSP remained a medium-sized party, holding a 12 percent share of the votes. After 1980, the party was once more closed down, yet reorganized as the Welfare Party (RP) (Ozbudun, 2009: 544). *"[The] RP was founded in 1983 and became popular in the 1990s. [The] RP won 19 percent of the vote in the 1994 local elections and 21.4 percent of the national vote in the 1995 general elections"* (Atacan, 2006: 45, 46). (For details see Table 1). During the 11 months of

governance (in a coalition with the True Path Party, DYP), the Turkish public agenda witnessed various debates on the Islamic ideology of the party and increasing conservatism. Such debates mainly reflected the apprehensions of secularism. In fact the RP considered the existing system to be a 'fraud', a 'guided democracy,' and envisaged a 'real pluralistic democracy'. Their economic model was called 'just economic order' and they were critical of capitalism. Based on to Milli Gorus, Westernization and EU membership was rejected; instead, the RP stressed the need of a common market policy with other Muslim countries. Such sentiments and acts mainly raised concerns about the establishment of an Islamic state based on Islamic law. It is controversial whether the RP's main aim was an Islamic state, but increasing references to Islamic values created problems. As Ozbudun underlines, "*apart from promises to enhance freedom of conscience and to make greater use of referenda and popular councils, real democracy was never defined. In the party's view, freedom of conscience implied the 'right to live according to one's beliefs', a concept bound to create conflicts with Turkey's secular legal system.*" Moreover, the following days reflected a majoritarian democracy instead of a liberal and pluralistic version (Ozbudun, 2009: 544-545; Atacan: 2006: 46).

Table 1 Percentage of Votes of Islamist Parties in Parliamentary and General Local Elections (1973-2014) (Ozbudun, 2009: 545; YSK, (Supreme Electoral Council of Turkey) www.ysk.gov.tr)

Year	Party	Votes
(percent)		
1977	(parliamentary): National Salvation Party (MSP)	11.8
1984	(local): Welfare Party (RP)	8.6
1987	(parliamentary): RP	7.2
1989	(local): RP	9.8
1991	(parliamentary): RP (in coalition with MHP and IDP)	16.9
1994	(local): RP	19.1
1995	(parliamentary): RP	21.4
1999	(parliamentary): Virtue Party (FP)	15.4
2002	(parliamentary): Justice and Development Party (AKP)	34.3
2004	(local): AKP	41.2
2007	(parliamentary): AKP	46.5
2009	(local): AKP	38.6
2011	(parliamentary): AKP	49.9
2014	(local): AKP	45.6

MHP stands for the Nationalist Action Party and IDP for the Reformist Democracy Party.

After the meeting of National Security Council on February 28, 1997, military officials criticized and accused the RP of violating secular principles. This led to the resignation of the Erbakan government and prohibition of the RP. In Turkish political history, this intervention is often referred to as the postmodern coup d'état. The RP was replaced by the Virtue Party (FP). Its leader Recai Kutan was Erbakan's close associate; however, like other such parties, the FP was dissolved in 2001. Two groups emerged from the FP: innovationists and traditionalists. The innovationists established the AKP, the Justice and Development Party, under the leadership of Recep Tayyip Erdogan (Ozbudun, 2009: 546).

3.1.2. From 'Milli Gorus' to Conservative Democracy

The innovationists and their leader Erdogan established the AKP on August 14, 2001. Although the "Milli Gorus" heritage and the presence of cadres from the RP were evident, the party embraced conservative democracy as their political identity and included various members from center-right parties. Erdogan specifically stressed that he was not an Islamist and that "Milli Gorus" no longer formed their ideological basis. The AKP won 34 percent of the votes in the general elections held on November 3, 2002, only a year after its establishment and formed the fifty-eighth government of the Turkish Republic (Safi, 2005: 195, 196).

Conservative democracy was not internalized completely in the AKP; rather, it was an adopted identity for replacing "Milli Gorus." In this regard, the AKP seemed to alter strict Islamist vision with a religious, but more democratic alternative that included modernist understanding (Simsek, 2013: 431). According to Simsek, this was a necessary replacement:

> "Perhaps the greatest motivation of the AKP to proclaim conservative democracy as its identity stems from its desire to eliminate the suspicions raised about its Islamist roots by the secularist bloc, which consists of military and civilian bureaucracy, Kemalist intellectuals and non-governmental organizations, as well as an important portion of the media." (Simsek, 2013: 431)

Therefore, it can be said that the AKP strongly aimed to distinguish itself from the negative political legacy of the previous decades for avoiding Islamist prejudices and establishing a fully accomplished center-right party. As Simsek analyzes briefly:

"This legacy includes in the first place the anti-systemic discourse and confrontational attitudes of the former Islamist parties that accelerated the secularist mobilization, while disappointing many Muslims who supported them, and the bad performance record of center-right parties in coalition governments in the second. Erdogan defined the former Islamist parties as a 'political gemeinschaft' that radicalized politics, while criticizing the center-right parties on the grounds that they were functioning like a 'political company' that deprived Turkish politics of productive ideas and moral principles, and acted merely as a rantier class" (Simsek, 2013: 432).

According to Saribay, there are two reasons behind the conservative democratic identity: the first was to reiterate the party's connection with religious values and alignments, and the second was the AKP's intention to prove on a global scale that it has a legitimate ideology. To this end, the AKP, similar to many former Turkish parties, responded to the needs of political order, and, hence, its ideology was constructed based on these needs (Saribay, 2003). In this regard, a conservative democratic identity was necessary for long-term political achievement; however, the party's political identity was always subject to questions. For some scholars, conservatism is the alternative identification of Islamist thinking; hence, it is merely a preference of portrayal. Democracy, on the other hand, defines the inevitable and unavoidable innovation of a globalized world order. Others mainly share Simsek's analysis and claim that the AKP inherited the political heritage of the former center-right line, specifically, the heritage of the DP, AP, and ANAP. Some debates claim that Erdogan was ideologically inspired by Erbakan and "Milli Gorus," but politically and, especially, economically embraced Ozal and the ANAP's vision. For others, politically, the AKP showed a homogenous structure and embraced all types of ideologies. For instance, the party's alignments seemed conservative, but its program was liberal. A sizeable proportion of center-right cadres existed within the party, but Erdogan and the leading cadres had clear Islamist backgrounds (Gürel, 2007: 144, 145).

Actually, the AKP's party program has examples of ideological ambiguity. It presented an innovationist understanding of conservatism in terms of progress and development. The emphasis on conservative values is centered on sanctity of the family. In typical conservative fashion, the AKP was against intra-sex marriages, abortion, and adultery. Nevertheless, the protection of civil and human rights and liberties in political and social matters is strongly stressed. The party aimed to eliminate

economical inequalities and establish functioning welfare policies. Politically pluralist and participatory democracy was their major goal. Moreover, the AKP claimed to favor homogenization within society; hence, they rejected social and political engineering. Erdogan saw conservative democracy as the bridge between state and society for eliminating the center–periphery distinction. He was distant from regional, religious, or ethnic nationalism, and the party program stressed the need for and importance of secularism. In almost every declaration, the party's leading cadres emphasized their opposition to the integration of Islam with the political sphere. In foreign policy, the program stressed the importance of Turkey's ties with the United States, the EU, and international organizations. The party was in favor of a functioning free market economy, privatization, and encouragement of foreign investment (Ozbudun, 2009: 547, 548). Neo-liberal politics clearly distinguish the AKP from former anti-capitalist Islamic parties. In his review article, Cemil Boyraz analyzes Yildiz Atasoy's Islam's Marriage with Neo-liberalism, and as the writer stresses Atasoy's specific evaluation for the AKP also points out the new economically established synthesis that was aimed within the party's new identity:

> "In this context, Atasoy formulates the question as such: "How does an Islamic cultural construction of meanings that is specifically tied to Turkey's EU membership intersect with neo-liberal restructuring of the state and the economy?" Her answer is that the diverse sets of political orientations, normative standards, and cultural practices are brought together under a disciplinary neo-liberal form of capitalism and the AKP aims to reconfigure society through a neo-liberal discursive synthesis between a Muslim cultural orientation and European standards. For Atasoy, connecting the structural and discursive factors help us better understand how a neo-liberal market economy model and liberal principles of democracy are embraced in the reshaping of Islamic political agendas that transform the state" (Boyraz, 2011: 158).

In this respect, the AKP's party program reflected a more liberal vision than conservatism. As previously mentioned one of AKP's main aims was to ensure that they were Turkey's new pluralist center-right party with dynamic and diversified cadres and they had not inherited the Islamist values of the former RP or FP (Simsek, 2013: 432, 433):

"In light of distasteful and infamous legacies, the party searched for a new political brand and a fertile oasis that were not corrupt or tainted. It claimed to reconstitute the center-right with entirely new and positive values… [I]t welcomed the good records of the center-right in a selective manner so as to embrace the DP of Menderes and the ANAP of Ozal in a new synthesis with global neoliberalism and conservatism" (Simsek, 2013: 432)

Despite the variety of discussions, the AKP defines its conservative ideology through the protection of Turkish cultural heritage and its democratic ideology through the maintenance of modern values and institutions. The AKP is not a supporter of status quo; the definitions are centered upon modernism, innovation, and conservatism, because, even though tradition and culture are considered important, modernist learning is undeniable. The AKP's conservatism does not aim to protect existing institutions; rather, the aim is to preserve certain values. From this perspective, the party's identity is clearly distinct from traditionalist classical conservatism. In contrast to conservatism, the party was politically distant from Islamism. Erdogan, in a statement, stressed that his individual reference was Islam and his political reference was democracy. Consequently, the AKP's conservatism can be seen as the pragmatic adaptation of the "Islamist Milli Gorus" vision into the new circumstances of national and global order. Democracy, however, was aimed to be centered on pluralism. According to the AKP, ideal governance can be maintained through an organic democracy that completely spreads into the political and social spheres. In other words, they were against a democratic model dependent on elections and institutions. Ideologically, the AKP clearly identified itself with the DP's center-right tradition instead of the "Milli Gorus" vision. The AKP is a right-leaning party that follows diversified trends and approaches for establishing a central position on the political spectrum. The AKP is conservative and innovationist, traditional and modernist, liberal but also moralist; it values intelligence, but it is not rationalist. It is not revolutionary, but it claims to be a reformist party (Safi, 2005: 254; Erler, 2007: 130, 131).

Saribay states that the ideological approach and ambiguity transforms the AKP into an "all-inclusive party." The "Realpolitik" understanding is the major reason of this problem. In this view, power and material factors are perquisites for a powerful political system regardless of ideological notions. Islamic politics and ideologies are also adapted to the "Realpolitik" system and legitimized in the party's voter base as

well as in the "Realpolitik" ranks. Basically, the AKP's pragmatism generates the preconditions for such inclusivity because values, norms, ideologies, and beliefs are at best composed of ordinary names. According to Saribay, the AKP's identity is Islam in the name, liberal in regulations, democrat in attitudes, and western in direction (interview with Saribay in: Rusen Cakir, 12/10/2003, Vatan Newspaper).

During the 12 years of its governance, the AKP's ideological ambiguities and "all-inclusive structure" were observed through different regulations. The AKP's pragmatism established a necessary identity that included ideal norms of the current order, as Saribay analyzed; however, the party's achievements and, especially, the former 50 percent victory in the 2011 elections influenced and altered the executional understanding. Reformist, Western vision in the first half of the AKP's governance shifted towards an authoritarian and moralist structure during the late years, with an emphasis on Islamic alliance. The party structure, which included diversified (liberal/conservative) cadres, transformed into a "one-man" party with Erdogan's leadership style. The conservative part of the AKP's identity is protected through the preservation of culture, religion, and morality, but its democratic vision is limited to a majoritarian understanding. Journalist Cengiz Candar recently analyzed the AKP's governance as a transformation from conservative democracy to "rough statism." According to him, the major problem is Erdogan's tendency to enact his personal beliefs and perspective through state power, rather than embracing a conservative democratic vision. Simply put, Turkish politics has been transformed into a platform of arbitrary regulations with uncontrolled execution. Because of this tendency, the AKP and Erdogan gained a reputation of being authoritarian and discriminative (Cengiz Candar, 07/11/2013, Radikal Newspaper).

The lack of real political identity in the AKP generally caused the aforementioned ambiguities. Simsek highlights several brief points as a conclusion considering the matter:

> "First, the AKP, which grew as a peripheral and oppositional movement, is not a conservative party in the broadest theoretical sense of the term because the present political order and the balance of powers are not what it really wishes to conserve… It needs to reform the system first, and then conserve it. In the narrower sense, that is, culturally and religiously, it looks like a conservative party. Second… neither the cadres of the party nor its diverse constituency seem to have

organically gathered around a cohesive ideology and mass movement, despite the party activists and part of its grass roots... [being] strongly identity-conscious. What holds the party together is the charisma of its leader and the benefits of being in power. Third, the AKP is not a party of identity or ideology but rather a party of service. Many of the party's present cadres ascended to power as mayors and local governors, including the Premier himself. As a result, they had the chance to implement their accumulation of experiences gained through their local-governmental background in central-government policies. Service to people, which means service to God as well, while bringing extensive political support in this world, is seen as a good investment for the next" (Simsek, 2013: 438).

It is possible to claim that the AKP's conservative democratic identity did not have a solid intellectual basis. In this sense, the party's pragmatism enabled the conversion of its identity. The controversies can generally be observed in recent regulations and governance structure. As mentioned above, with the party's growing success, the alteration of its governance understanding became clear. The increase in its problems after 2011 will be presented and exemplified in the next part (3.2) of this chapter.

3.2. Framing the Problems

One of the most notable facts about AKP governance was shown by its reformist approach during the early years. "*Within the framework of the EU harmonization process a reform package was introduced that includes reducing the influence of the military in politics, eradicating the death penalty, abolishing the State Security Courts (DGM), strengthening gender equality, broadening freedom of the press, restructuring the judiciary in European standards, and establishing the supremacy of international agreements in the area of fundamental freedoms over internal legislation*" (Boyraz, 2011: 153). Unquestioningly, these regulations and the modernist vision enabled a more democratic atmosphere in Turkish political life in comparison with the former strict and assimilative understanding of Kemalist secularism and nationalism. The conservative and religious segments of Turkish society were included more effectively in democratic representation. Moreover, a democratic initiative was set for Kurdish citizens, and as an important progression they have been represented in the Parliament; hence, positively, Turkey experienced a pluralistic and normalized political order (Boyraz, 2011: 150).

"There was a broad public debate in Turkey on almost all critical issues. There were no longer any taboos and almost every sensitive topic is the subject of debate: be it the role of religion in the public sphere, the role of the military or the rights of the Alevi community, identity issues. A critical approach to some practices of the early years of the republic also was surfacing. This all showed that pluralism was indeed gaining ground in Turkish society. This debate could be frustrating at times, but perhaps only Turkish democracy could show the resilience to absorb a debate on such complex and difficult problems, many of them having deep roots in history, religion and ethnicity, many of them possessing the potential for conflict" (Sedat Ergin, 22/04/2013, www.researchturkey.org).

Despite these positive trends, there was increasing negativity in Turkish politics with the AKP's growing success. The early-year discussions related to the AKP were focused on the party's true identity. In other words, intellectuals—often Kemalists—questioned the party's political Islamist intentions. Despite Erdogan and the AKP's strict separation from former Islamist parties and, especially, from Erbakan's RP, hidden Islamic agendas within conservative democracy were always an important topic of discussion among Turkish secularists (Ozbudun, 2009: 549). However, recent regulations have shown that the problems of Turkish political and social lives under the AKP's governance are not restricted to only Islamism:

"The positive aspects of the change depicted so far, however, should not detract us from the fact that in certain important respects the momentum of the democratization impulse has declined during the later phase of the AKP era. Critiques of the AKP point towards a kind of "civilian tutelage" that seems to have replaced "military tutelage" of the previous era, consistent with the claim that while "old Turkey" of the Kemalist era displayed significant democratic deficits, the "new Turkey" under the AKP era has not necessarily become more democratic in total, meaning that positive steps in certain respects have been counterbalanced by a series of retrogressions on the other. What we seem to be witnessing in the later phase of the AKP era is a kind of limited or majoritarian understanding of democracy with new elements of exclusion built into the democratic system. While the old regime provided little leeway for the religious and conservatives segments to express their identity claims, the new system has similarly limited the expression identity of the claims of secularists or minority groups, such as the Alevites or others" (Onis, 2013: 107).

In fact, democracy is the most critical problem in Turkey, as was evident after the 2007 general elections and the AKP's 47 percent electoral victory, because the AKP's conservative democracy gained an apparent authoritarian structure, in which democratic institutions began to lose their true function and existed in the service of Erdogan and the AKP cadres. "*Even the liberal reformers, which form part of the AKP's electoral coalition, have become disillusioned with the declining impetus to democratization. This has manifested itself in terms of controls over the press and freedom of expression, the lack of tolerance for opposition, and the notorious malfunctioning of the judicial system*" (Onis, 2013: 107). Turkey's electoral threshold still remains at 10 percent. The AKP won 363 seats out of 550 in 2002, 341 in 2007, and 327 seats in 2011 elections in the National Assembly (Election Results, www.secimsonucu.com). The majority of the AKP seats, the absence of intra-party opposition, and Erdogan's increasing "lone ruler" psychology have often affected the checks and balances between execution and legislation. The party and legislative inspection in most cases interfere with each another. Because of the insufficient number of opposition seats, almost all law drafts pass through the National Assembly by a majority of votes. Such problems have escalated during discussions about a transition to a presidential system. The opposition has strongly rejected this transition due to the possibility of a legal dictatorship being established. Similarly, judicial independence was threatened by the domination of the government through the Ministry of Justice. A politicized judiciary has affected the state of law principle, and the Ergenekon trial which started in 2007 became an important example of judicial manipulation (Cuneyt Ulsever, 18/04/2013, www.researchturkey.org). As Onis states:

> "The "Ergenekon trials" were originally represented as an important attempt to challenge the "deep state" in Turkey. However, they have led to increasing disillusionment given the long detention periods for a large number of top military officers and journalists imprisoned as well as questions concerning the number of people arrested with dubious connections to the alleged attempted coup process. The politicization of the judicial process could indeed be considered as one of the glaring weaknesses of the new era. Turkey's "Ergenekon trials" highlight once again the significance of a genuinely autonomous and more efficient judiciary as a necessary condition for democratic consolidation" (Onis, 2013: 107).

What the aims of Ergenekon were became unclear and politicized during the trials. Judiciary independence was shaken and with increasing waves of prosecution the

case seemed to transform into an action against opponents of the government. *"Ergenekon, in particular, became a conspiracy within a conspiracy, used to go after both people who could very well have been plotting to overthrow the elected government and outspoken but otherwise peaceful critics of the AKP"* (Cook, 08/01/2014, www.foreignaffairs.com)

Sedat Ergin also stresses the problematic proceedings of Ergenekon and gives an important example which should have altered the entire process in a developed democratic society:

> "It was also revealed that around 50 judges and prosecutors who were suspected of connections with the Ergenekon network had been tapped upon the request of the Ministry of Justice; yet nothing was found that would connect them to illegal networks. This example shows that use of this method by the government had already gone beyond reasonable limits for a country which is governed by the rule of law. Systematic and uncontrolled exposition of the wiretappings' transcriptions has helped to create an environment of fear" (Sedat Ergin, ibid).

As often analyzed in the global media, Erdogan's authoritarian understanding of leadership and his increasing discriminative sentiments became a new trend in the Turkish agenda. As Ergin puts it, "*some political scientists call this trend electoral authoritarianism*" (Ergin, ibid). Erdogan, in the case of critics and opposition, often stresses the "national will"; that he is the elected Prime Minister and that everyone should respect the result of ballot polls. Through similar sentiments, he usually points out the 50 percent of Turkish society who voted for the AKP, while excluding the other 50 percent of the population. While the integration of conservative segments was achieved successfully, the increasing exclusion of people of a mainly modernist (Western) lifestyle became a major problem against social integrity. With an illiberal mindset, Erdogan's intolerance towards the opposition grew day by day. For instance, in December 2012, he attended to a ceremony at the Middle East Technical University (ODTU), where students organized a demonstration against Erdogan. After police intervention with gas and pressurized water, a student was hit in the head and had a stroke. Soon after, during a speech Erdogan stated: "What a shame! What kind of university is this, if these are the students you raised, Turkey is doomed." A year later the Ankara office of the chief prosecutor pressed charges against students, including the

injured student Baris Barisik, with a penalty up to 6 years (Ergin, ibid; Ulsever, ibid; Radikal Newspaper, 16/09/2013).

Progressive regulations are unquestioningly interrupted in Turkey during the past few years. Restrictions and violations on human rights, freedom of expression; interference into private lives; political exclusion of certain groups; increasing conservative, moral and Islamist sentiments in social lives can be given as important examples for the emerging problems of Turkey. The European Union's 2012 Progress Report stressed worrisome regulations related to human rights, freedom of expression, and judicial principles. Some of the important facts are as follows (European Commission Turkey Progress Report 2012, 10/10/2012):

- "Concerns persisted over the rights of the defence, lengthy pre-trial detention and excessively long and catch-all indictments, leading to significantly enhanced public scrutiny of the legitimacy of these trials. Offering a chance to strengthen confidence in the proper functioning of Turkey's democratic institutions and the rule of law, these cases have been overshadowed by real concerns about their wide scope and the shortcomings in judicial proceedings. Moreover, they tend to contribute to the polarisation of Turkish politics. Judicial proceedings need to be speeded up to ensure the rights of the defence and to promote transparency in these cases (7).

- There has been a downward trend in torture and ill-treatment in places of detention; however, allegations of excessive use of force continue to be a matter of concern, and there has been little progress on tackling impunity (20)

- The increase in violations of freedom of expression raises serious concerns, and freedom of the media was further restricted in practice. The legal framework, especially as regards organised crime and terrorism, and its interpretation by the courts, leads to abuses. Together with pressure on the press by state officials and the firing of critical journalists, this situation has led to widespread self-censorship (22).

- There was limited progress on freedom of thought, conscience and religion (26)."

Human Rights Watch's 2012 Turkey report presented a similar picture. According to the report, the AKP government *"failed to take convincing steps to address the country's worsening domestic human rights record and democratic deficit. Prosecutors and courts continued to use terrorism laws to prosecute and prolong*

incarceration of thousands of Kurdish political activists, human rights defenders, students, journalists, and trade unionists. Free speech and media remained restricted, and there were ongoing serious violations of fair trial rights." Moreover the report emphasized the increasing violence against women, the brutality of the security forces, arrested parliamentarians, and the murder of 34 Kurdish civilians on December 2011 by the Turkish Air Force (HRW, 2013 World Report, www.hrw.org).

Table 2 below presents a brief comparison related to Turkey's democratization process. As the both reports emphasize, Turkey is faced with a backlash in democratic reforms. The problems of Kurdish citizens, the lack of pluralism, authoritarianism, unfair judicial proceedings, polarization, and limitations in liberties are major regressions in democratization. Turkey had serious problems with neighbour countries and especially Syria, almost leading to a conflict. In fact, the adopted philosophy of "zero problems with neighbours" has foundered. Turkey's foreign policy clearly began to struggle in the Middle East. "*In Libya, before it ended up helping unseat Qaddafi, Turkey argued that the West had no business intervening against him. In Syria, it has broken completely with Assad, embroiling itself in a conflict that shows no sign of ending. And in Egypt, of course, it is setting itself on a collision course with the most populous state in the Arab world*". Instead of reconciliatory policies to undo the damage in the Middle East, Erdogan and officials often accused Western countries and some mythical dark forces for the chaos, shifting from "zero problems" to almost "zero friends" (Zalewski, 22/08/2013, Foreign Policy). These current issues clearly show that the AKP and Erdogan portray a different vision to what was envisaged in the party program. As Suzy Hansen analyzes:

> "Over the last decade, Erdogan has made himself the most powerful prime minister in Turkey's history, the most successful elected leader in the Middle East and the West's great hope for the Muslim world. In the last year, however, a thoroughly different Erdogan has emerged: a symbol of authoritarianism, corruption and police brutality whose once-populist rhetoric has turned into thundering rage" (Hansen, 05/02/2014, NY Times).

The authoritarianism of Erdogan is reflected in various aspects of political and social life. He usually states his opinion in a paternal manner, and suddenly, the Turkish agenda is generally composed of debates linked to these statements. For instance, in May 2012, a legislative proposal for abortion instantly reshaped other

existing debates at a time when the murder of 34 Kurdish civilians still occupied the agenda. The possibility of new abortion legislation created mass reaction against the government in terms of violating women's rights. Erdogan's reaction was once more aggressive and authoritarian:

> "Some people say, 'if a woman wants or needs she can have an abortion, this is her individual right, you cannot interfere with a woman's body.' Then why don't you let a person also [commit] suicide? Let him jump off a bridge, why do you interfere? This is nonsensical. There are two brutal acts here; first, a mother's murder of her fetus, second her damage to her own body. We are talking scientifically here; the murder of the fetus does not have any difference than a murder of the postnatal human being. I am saying it again; abortion is murder" (CNN Turk, 29/05/2012).

He has frequently encouraged the Turkish youth to get married, have at least three children, and emphasizes the moral family structure. In fact, the educational reform 4+4+4 was criticized within this aspect, because *according to the proposed "4+4+4" formula, compulsory education would rise from eight to 12 years, but the "continuousness" will be removed; primary education will be lowered to four years*." In addition, religious training was included in primary education, specifically courses in the Quran, in Arabic language and in the life of the Prophet.' Overall, the educational reform generates gender inequality, because especially in rural regions female education still remains considerably low and this reform contains the possibility of locking girls inside their homes after 4 years of uninterrupted education (Bilal Cetin, 01/03/2012, Hurriyet Daily News).

Similar problems emerged with restrictions on alcohol sales. In September 2013, a series of regulations that limit alcohol sale and advertisement took effect despite criticisms. Today, in Turkey, the sale of alcoholic beverages between 10 p.m. and 6 a.m. is forbidden. The sale of alcoholic beverages is banned in shops that are located within 100 m of schools and mosques. These restrictions had serious effects on retailers because a major proportion of sales occur during the banned hours (Hurriyet Daily News, 09/09/2013). Erdogan's approach to the legislation focused on the morality of alcoholic consumption:

> "During the one-party regime alcohol consumption was encouraged in order to modernize and civilize. This is an imitator understanding… In the early years of

[the] republic, beer was reflected as a national beverage; however our national drink is 'ayran' [an alcohol-free drink made up of yoghurt]… If you are going to drink [alcohol], then drink your alcohol in your house… If you will drink, drink. We are not against this. But we are not allowing this in certain places and at certain hours – and within 100 meters of mosques and schools" (Hurriyet Newspaper, 27/04/2013; Hurriyet Daily News, 28/05/2013)

Table 2: (Onis, 2013: 108)

Turkey's Democratization Process (1999-2010): Major Achievements vs. Limitations

Achievements	Limitations
• Death penalty abolished • National Security Council reformed • A New Civil Code adopted • Broadcasting in other languages other than Turkish • Rights of community foundations extended • Anti-terror law revised. A civilian appointed as the secretary general of the National Security Council • State Security Courts abolished • State television started broadcasting in different languages including Kurdish • Democratic opening initiated in 2007 • A more pluralistic approach adopted toward Kurds, Alleviates, and non-Muslim groups. • Substantial reforms introduced on judiciary, civil-military relations, privacy of individual life by a referendum in 2010 • Attempts to deal with memories of the authoritarian past through the trials of the key generals involved in the coup of September 12, 1980 and the " post-modern coup" of February 28, 1997 • The recent "peace process" introduced by the government created a significant element of hope that the Kurdish problem can be resolved in Turkey, although the successful completion of the process is confronted with serious hurdles. A peace process which does not go hand in hand with the democratic process is unlikely to have a lasting impact and is likely to be reversible	• The reformist spirit of the AKP in its first two terms waned • The dominance of the ruling party limits the space available for political completion and genuine pluralism in the political and social spheres. • The weakness of the opposition parties creates a loop-sided political contest • Unfavorable external conditions weakens the hands of pro-democratization groups • The democratic opening plunged into deadlock • Significant concerns over restrictions over the freedom of expression and the autonomy and fairness of the judicial process. The pressure over judiciary and media tended to increase • Concerns about creeping authoritarianism of the government are exacerbated • Domestic politics turned into a more conflict-driven and antagonized sphere; elements of continued polarization across the political spectrum • The maximalist demands of pro-Kurdish party turn into a stumbling block in solving the Kurdish problem • PKK terrorism renders difficult the normalization of the domestic political agenda • Attempts to side-track the on-going constitutional process towards the institutionalization of a presidential system with weak checks and balances, with the explicit objective of increasing the power of the executive over the legislature and the judiciary

The Metropoll Strategic and Social Research Center surveyed Turkey's overall social and political situation in December 2013. Of the respondents, 73.1 percent opined that the government should not interfere with private lives. The AKP's interference in this matter is divided in the polls, because while 22 percent of the AKP's supporters confirmed that the AKP government interfered in private lives, 61 percent and 78 percent of the Nationalist Movement Party and CHP's voter bases, respectively, held a similar opinion (Today's Zaman, 01/12/2013). Such diversification reflects current polarization and exclusion in Turkey. As mentioned above, Erdogan's later leadership style encourages this polarization. Candar underlines this fact successfully:

> "The 50 percent electoral victory in June 2011 didn't work for Erdogan. On the contrary, he fictionalized his political game based on the 50 percent-50 percent distinction. A 50 percent is for himself and the [other] 50 percent is for everyone else in all kinds of colors" (Candar, ibid).

The final point that needs to be emphasized in this section is the urban transformation policy of the AKP, which, in fact, triggered the Gezi protests against the shopping mall construction. The policy entails dramatic transformation, primarily, of Istanbul and a few major cities in Turkey, including rebuilding certain districts, renewing historical areas, and improving urban structures. *"With a series of legal/institutional reforms, the ruling AKP radically restructured the governance of real estate markets in Turkey, with very important consequences for Istanbul's socioeconomic geography* (1484)*."* The urban transformation project created vast opportunities for both state agencies and private developers. In addition, the AKP also restructured the Mass House Administration (TOKI), which became the most powerful real estate developer in the country (Kuyucu and Unsal, 2010; 1484, 1485). There have been various legislative changes in order to speed up the transformation:

> "… A "law on the transformation of areas at risk of natural disaster" was implemented. Though it is justified by the earthquake risk in many parts of Turkey, in actual fact it [allows] the authority to make demolition and development decisions about vast expanses of land and runs counter to preexisting legislation and supervisory bodies… The new "2B Law," which deals with the sale of public land, is expected to allow for more sales of public land to private parties…" (Pierini, 2013; 3).

Urban transformation became one of the most striking AKP policies in which the features of a neo-liberal regime were carried out. The government, and especially Erdogan, frequently intervened in the project and the principal separation of Turkey's local–general administration eroded.

> "Turkey is run like a city, where the prime minister can control local projects as if he's playing in his own private Legoland. An earlier venture he endorsed, for example, was Miniaturk, a park in Istanbul. It is a scaled-down version of the country's major historical sites (the Hagia Sophia, for one, is nose height), and it seemingly embodies Erdogan's aesthetic vision for Istanbul: a theme-park parody of itself. He started construction of a third bridge over the Bosporus, which meant removing a million trees. He flirted with a plan, known as the Crazy Project, to build a second Bosporus, as well as a second Istanbul, the promos for which looked liked something out of the 1927 Fritz Lang film "Metropolis." Then he announced a new project for Taksim Square" (Hansen, ibid).

The project had serious social effects in terms of uprooting certain communities from their neighborhoods owing to renovation projects. The Roma community is probably one of the most affected ones in this regard. Demolition in the Sulukule district for renovation uprooted hundreds of Roma residents, and, disappointingly, the renovations mostly involved the construction of modern residences and apartments. Moreover, rampant construction of high-rise modern buildings damaged the cultural fabric of Istanbul. Journalist Orhan Kemal Cengiz emphasizes the worrisome statistics: "It is estimated that more than 10000 Roma have been displaced in Turkey for the past seven years" (Pierini, 2013: 4, 5; Cengiz, 24/10/2013, Today's Zaman). Economically, this project constituted an important share of the country's short-term income because after the 2008 economic crisis, the government targeted an internal-demand–oriented, construction-based growth. Hence, driven mainly by TOKI, urban transformation, too, turned into a political project. The demand for construction products was used to sustain economic growth; thus, such accumulation could be termed as an urban transformation– and TOKI-based process (Akcay, 18/12/2013, Baslangic Dergi). The trend of non-stop construction was mostly driven in an interest- and income-based manner. The destruction of the cultural and historical fabric, negative socio-economic and environmental effects today are prominent outcomes of urban transformation:

"In undertaking these megaprojects, the Turkish authorities are taking immense responsibility for the ecosystems in and around Istanbul. Sustainable development is a prime long-term concern, as these projects have a major environmental impact, especially on the forested areas to the north of Istanbul—the 7,659-hectare (18,926-acre) airport will directly or indirectly affect 2.5 million trees" (Pierini, 2013: 2).

The major effects of urban transformation can be observed best in Istanbul. in fact, Istanbul today has increasing numbers of modern apartments, residences, hotels, roads and shopping malls. It is estimated that during this year the shopping mall numbers in Turkey will rise up to 368 from 333, with Istanbul itself having 114 shopping malls today (Emlak Kulisi, 05/01/2014, www.emlakkulisi.com).

3.3. The AKP and the Turkish Media

In a traditional sense, the media's role can be evaluated and understood through the value of information that mass media provides on a day-to-day basis. From the early penny papers of 18th century (Adaklı, 2006: 18, 19) to the current technologically improved and diversified media sources, the primary role of means of communication is to be evaluated through the presentation of information. Plainly, it is the function of information, which leads to further debates such as the media being the fourth estate or the guard dog owing to its possible power of manipulation. Because in a basic sense it can be said that we mainly learn, analyze, and understand our surroundings through what we see on the television and read in the newspapers. Especially, until the advancement in technology and the establishment of social media as a bright new field, mass media, in various ways, has shaped and affected our worlds politically, culturally, and socio-economically. Even today, its function is not eliminated. Mass media as a source of information and culture keeps influencing our minds. As Çiler Dursun puts it:

"News about the world or our community is daily presented to us sometimes with an incomplete or with a subjective perspective. The perpetual flow of news and information proceeds every day. We continuously feel that we are informed whenever we watch the news or read the newspapers constantly. In this way the world remains... a safe place for us; a place that we are aware of the characteristics and that we can to some extent manage to control" (Dursun, 2004: 39).

Among different debates and studies of media and power relations, the aforementioned evaluation highlights a very basic issue considering the media's function. It is overrated to consider the media as the only source of information; however, still it is fair to accept its possible domination. This is not anything magical naturally. The massive technological and professional network of mass media allow for the collection and presentation of information in its most adequate form. The information it provides about the past, present, and the future shapes the creation of a specific system of values, traditions, and perspectives; in other words, mass media somehow presents a certain way to understand and evaluate the world (Herman and McChesney, 2004: 3).

The transformation of the press into media corporations has deepened the effect and value of the media in our daily lives. This transformation is often linked to globalization and the emergence of neo-liberal politics. According to Rasit Kaya, the preconditions of such transformation are existent within the new order of global capitalism (neoliberalism). This is because the new world order required a communication network that would allow for global domination in the military domain and ensure functioning global money markets. Only an advanced satellite communication network could fulfill these needs. This was the era of telecommunication. Owing to the high costs of this system, new financing solutions were developed. The essential idea was to open up satellite communication for mass consumption. To generate mass consumers of satellites, privatization policies were introduced in various fields of media other than telecommunication. This is the major reason for changes in the structure of radio and television after the 1980s. Privatization and deregulation have altered the public monopoly in mass communication, and mostly, US- or Europe-based corporations in limited numbers established media industries (Kaya, 14/06/1999, http://www.dorduncukuvvetmedya.com/arsiv/akaya.htm).

The transformation of Turkish media reflected similar neoliberal characteristics similar to its global counterparts. To start with, it can be said that diverse capital mobility affected the communications sector, and hence, new regulations and policies were established within the media. In this sense, like the global examples, investors with a large capital base began to dominate the communications sector via conglomerates.

The transformation of the media in Turkey began after 1980 and was accelerated owing to increasing costs within the sector. Several reasons can be given: new technologies generated high costs, and input costs started to outstrip profit income, which at created financing problems; the regulations of January 24, 1980, caused a serious economic crisis in media institutions. Before these regulations, paper used by the print media was state subsidized. However, after January 24, 1980, papers were sold for 41 lira, which was higher than average market prices. The solution for this financial crisis was the injection of fresh capital into the sector. Owing to the requirement of advanced technologies, expenditures within visual media were higher, and hence, privatization was primary in the field. Starting primarily in the 1990s, the state monopoly in this sector was abolished, and similar to the case of print media, various private radio stations and televisions were established. (Koloğlu, 2006: 142; Görgülü, 1991: 59; Kaya, ibid). As a result, the existing intellectual framework began eroding. Instead of maintaining the existing cadres of administration and editorial department, the new owners established new management principles and reinforced the entire media sector with a pool system. Consequently, similarities in news and broadcasting policies were observed within the media. Moreover, as expected and similar to its global examples, broadcasting was defined with marketing strategies, and owing to this process, the major communication characteristics of independence and geniuneness were, in certain cases, sacrificed for the sake of market principles. Hence, the media became vulnerable to various sources of control (Demir, 2007: 175, 178; Kaya, ibid).

Media control in Turkey emerged in two ways: A few existing media institutions evolved into advanced media corporations during the neoliberal transformation and retained their growth with diversified capital investments as new conglomerates. Another few media institutions did not have the financial capacity to bear the new economical competition and were sold to new capital corporations with no direct connection to journalism (Görgülü, 1991: 36-37). However, the current perspective depicts homogenization irrespective of the heritage of structural transformation. Presently, there are major four dominant conglomerates in Turkish media; Doğan Group, Doğuş Group, Çalık Group, and Ciner Group. The Çukurova Group was a dominant conglomerate; however, in a recent crisis, their media corporations were sold off, mainly to the Ciner Group and Turkmedya. All of these conglomerates own at least one hydroelectric power station and almost all have big

investments in the energy, finance, mining, and construction businesses. As Ceren Sözeri stresses, the Çalık Group owns the tender of electricity distribution for the cities of Samsun, Ordu, Çorum, Amasya, and Sinop, in addition to operating gold mines. The Doğan Group manages oil-gas exploration activities within the lands of Kurdistan Autonomous Governance. The Ciner Group focuses on the mining business and offers thermal power plant services. (For details see Ceren Sözeri: https://t24.com.tr/haber/turkiyede-medya-sahipligi-ve-getirileri/244181.)

Their national television channels and newspapers are as follows (for details see Ceren Sözeri, ibid):

"**Doğan Group**: *Televisios*: Kanal D, CNN Türk, Tv2, EuroD, Kanal D Romania; *Newspapers and Magazines*: Hürriyet, Hürriyet Daily News, Radikal, Posta, TME Newspapers, Doğan Egmont, Doğan Magazine; *News Agency*: DHA; *Distribution:* YAYSAT; *Printing*: Doğan Printing Center, Doğan Ofset.

Doğuş Group: *Television*: NTV, Star TV, CNBC-e, NTV Sports, Kral TV, e2; *Publishing*: NTV Publishing; *Magazines*: Vogue, CQ, National Geographic Turkey, National Geographic Kids, Robb Report, CNBC-e Magazine; *Online:* ntvmsnbc.com.

Çalık Group: *Television:* ATV, ATV Europe, A News; *Newspapers:* Sabah, Sabah Europe, Yeni Asır, Takvim; *Magazines:* Cosmopolitan, Cosmo Girl, Auto Motor Sports, Harper's Bazaar, Esquire, Forbes, Transport, Touch Istanbul; *Distribution:* Tukuvaz Distribution ltd. Turkuvaz Books, Turkuvaz Printing.

Ciner Group: *Television:* HaberTürk, Bloomberg HT, Show TV; *Newspapers:* HaberTürk News; *Magazines:* Ciner Magazine, GD Magazine; *Distribution:* Ciner Printing"

NTV, CNN Türk and HaberTürk today are major news channels in Turkey, while Kanal D remains one of the oldest private and most popular national channels in the ratings. One can add ATV and Star to this list. However ATV's audience has changed due to the Çalık Group's ownership since 2007; the CEO, Berat Albayrak, is the son-in-law of Prime Minister Erdoğan and hence editorially, broadcasting remain close to the government and its policies (Milliyet Newspaper, 30/03/2007).

Today, new features of media institutions are defined through the transformation in ownership structures and newly emerged conglomerate connections, but in addition to these, in recent years, politicized media institutions and manipulated journalism have become serious problems from the media objectivity viewpoint. The

AKP's indirect connections with media institutions—for example, those of the Calik Group—and direct interference through financial inspection and intimidation generated a biased and untrustworthy media vision. Being an important ideological and political institution, the media became an essential asset for Islamic capital. In this sense, growing Islamic capital groups strengthened their property and control territories within the media. Apart from ideological association, increasing capital ownership in media, as mentioned above, necessitates sustainable profit maximization of media corporations; hence, mitigating economic apprehension requires maintaining close relations with the political authority regardless of its ideology. From the government aspect, it is practical to legitimize power through media institutions. Simply put, the mutual interests of both sides enable the continuity of entangled, close relations; however, the success of such an alliance unquestioningly depends on the preservation of the capital groups' interests (Kirmizioglu, 2010: 82, 83).

In a broad sense, the relation between the AKP and the Turkish media can be evaluated from two viewpoints. The first viewpoint deals with the elimination of media objectivity and increased government-supportive broadcasting owing to an ideological alliance and/or protection of financial interests. The second viewpoint consists of the blocking and threats to media workers and sources based on government hegemony, which prevents the production of objective news. In Turkey, the institutions that regulate the media sector are ideologically and institutionally dependent on government control. These committees rather than strengthening the freedom of expression, press, and opposition act as police forces and penalize broadcasts that violate the state's indivisible unity, national integrity, morality, etc. The High Council of Radio and Televisions (RTUK) is the main example of such institutions. The RTUK has the power to enact financial and administrative penalties, as well as the right to warn and to cease broadcasting. Moreover, recent regulations concerning media ownership have embraced the permissiveness principle. This principle encourages foreign investments in Turkish media and allows for easy disposal of media channels that do not deliver a profit. Because of the absence of legislative protection of editorial independence, most of these sales result in collective redundancy (Kurban and Sozeri, 2013: 3, 4). Due to the ideological and financial alliance numerous TV channels and newspapers in Turkey supported government acts and regulations without exception in recent years in Turkey. Any cases of opposition usually resulted in warnings, restrictions in broadcasting, and

unemployment. Journalist Sedat Ergin stressed the growing insecurity of journalists and the media sector through a scandalous incident by Erdogan several years ago:

> "On February 26, 2010, Prime Minister Erdoğan delivered a speech before a party meeting in Istanbul… 'At this point, I have to give a warning,' said Prime Minister Erdoğan: 'They have no right to create tension in this country; just yesterday, we held a trilateral summit, a meeting, chaired by our President. Now, there are interesting press commentaries on that meeting like 'How can they hold a trilateral meeting with the President, how could the Chief of Staff possibly attend such a meeting, how could you possibly call a meeting attended by the Chief of Staff a 'Presidential Summit'. Could it get any more ridiculous? These comments are so despicable, they are inconceivable. Well then, will they contribute to this country or will they continue their efforts to create tension in this country?' ... Thereafter, the Prime Minister made a call to the media magnates: 'I am, therefore, addressing the newspaper patrons; there is no way you can say, 'Not much I can do, they are columnists, I can't control them.' You have to say, 'Look pal, you are responsible for this.' Why; because no one has the right neither to create tension nor to damage [the] economy in this country... We will not allow it… Those who hand the pens to these people should say: 'sorry pal, no room for you in our shop'... You are signing the pay checks of those columnists. If the markets are down by six and a half per cent, it's quite apparent who is behind all this. And that's why I say please, everyone should know where to draw the line, and should know that well. Therefore, at this point, I am issuing my warning; this is something I have to do'" (Ergin, ibid).

Rightfully, as Ergin emphasizes, the capitalist base of media institutions should not have transformed them into "shops," neither should the journalists have been transformed into "products" from a prime minister's perspective in a democratic regime. Another important example of such an inspection mechanism is the tax penalty imposed on the Dogan Group in 2009. The rising differences between the AKP government and the Dogan Group resulted in an instant financial operation on the conglomerate and the imposition of a tax penalty amounting to almost 3 billion lira. As a result, the Dogan Group toned down their critical journalism and adopted a more government-supportive stance. Interestingly, soon after, the journalist Melih Asik stated in his column that the architect Korhan Gumus personally heard a shocking admission from the consultant to the Istanbul mayor, Kadir Topbas. In this alleged admission, the consultant clearly and confidently stated that they direct anyone who are messing with

them to Kemal Unakitan, the Finance Minister at that time (Ergin, ibid; Kongar, 26/02/2009, www.kongar.org).

Even more worrying than these interventions and restrictions is the problem of journalist arrests. The Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) presented a report and stressed the increasing numbers of imprisoned journalists in Turkey. The 2012 report detected 95 arrested journalists and warned Turkey for being one of the leading jailers of journalists. Most arrests were made under the Anti-Terror Law and the Criminal Code. In other words, opposing journalists often faced accusations of terrorist propaganda or direct action and participation in armed, criminal organizations. The report accordingly stresses the biased Oda TV trial in which 13 journalists including Ahmet Sik, Nedim Sener, Soner Yalcin, Sait Cakir, and Coskun Musluk were accused of aiding an alleged terrorist group. The Oda TV trial was one of the controversial trials of the country because of Oda TV's strong opposition to the government's actions. The trial ended in December 2013, and all accusations were dropped (OSCE, 2012 Report, www.freemedia.at). Another worrisome report came from Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) in September 2013, in which the CPJ also stressed the lack of oppositional freedom in Turkey, as well as anti-democratic restrictions against media workers (CPJ, 17/09/2013, www.cpj.org).

The repression and problematic outcomes related to media workers can be evaluated within the general authoritarian and strict regulations of the AKP's governance. The incidents and examples of the AKP's hegemony in the media are numerous. For instance, the journalist Hasan Cemal, a columnist with the Milliyet Newspaper for 15 years, resigned because of increasing editorial restrictions on articles opposing the AKP. In his last column, he criticized Erdogan for his endless interventions in the media and stated "*Making of a newspaper is different than ruling the state. The two cannot be interwoven. No one can intermeddle in others' business.*" In response to this article, Erdogan openly blamed Hasan Cemal for his former columns revealing particulars of the peace negotiations with Abdullah Ocalan, leader of the Kurdish PKK and said "*Damn that journalism if this is how you do journalism.*" In the following days, the owner of the newspaper businessman Erdogan Demiroren warned the editorial office and Hasan Cemal was suspended for two-weeks. After the two weeks, he resigned when the editorial office stated that they cannot publish his oppositional article and demanded a rewrite (Akın, 18/03/2013, T24). This issue is a

worrisome example of the AKP's hegemony on media institutions because in limited and authoritarian governance structures, corporate media institutions can be subject to direct interference by political and economical powers. Demiroren's personal warning to his newspaper's editorial office simply reiterates this contention. According to Reporters Without Borders' 2014 report, Turkey's rank has dropped to 154 out of 180 countries in the world press freedom index (BBC Turkce, 12/02/2014).

> "A growing number of journalists are resorting to self-censorship to survive. Coverage of alleged corruption scandals linked to the government is a no-go area. So is Turkey's covert support for Syrian rebels. A recent investigative piece in the *New York Times* in which it was claimed that Ankara's Esenboga airport has become a big hub for Qatari and Saudi arms flowing to the rebels was dutifully ignored" (The Economist, 06/04/2013).

Unquestioningly this evaluation stresses another aspect of the problem. Today, in Turkey, probably more than ever, news-making and information in daily agendas change based on the media source. Pro-government media such as HaberTurk, ATV, Show TV, Sabah, and HaberTurk Newspapers, which in general, have good ratings and sizeable circulation, are examples of selected news presentation. In some cases, Erdogan speeches dominate oppositional speeches, and in others, certain news items are neglected intentionally. For instance, journalist Ahmet Sik's book "Army of the Imam" was criticized by the government and its supportive media from the first day, and because of this book, Sik was linked to an alleged terrorist group and arrested. The book consisted of evidence pointing at the existence of an organized Gulen community within police and state departments. Soon after the journalist's arrest, the book was uploaded to the internet for unlimited access. Thousands downloaded the book and it instantly boomed on the Turkish agenda; however, government channels and newspapers skipped this news while government officials started an operation for the removal and ban of the book (Oda TV, 31/03/2011). Similarly, Skyturk 360 News Channel and Show TV did not broadcast the CHP leader Kilicdaroglu's oppositional assembly speech on June 2013 after both channels were refrained from doing so by the TMSF, the governmental organization subordinated by the presidency, for debts of businessmen and the former owner of the channels, Mehmet Emin Karamehmet (Radikal Newspaper, 04/06/2013).

The general perception of the media–AKP relationship is that of an authoritarian structure similar to the political and social order in Turkey. The major problem with the media is related to the presentation of information and hence a belief and value system, because people often tend to believe media sources. As a major principle for a functioning democracy, a free and objective media is one of the top requirements, and this was seen and understood once more during the Gezi events.

4. GEZI PARK AND THE MEDIA

The unexpected social mobility after the demolition plan of Istanbul Gezi Park has become a widespread phenomenon in Turkey. The uniqueness of Gezi Park protests emerged in different ways. From the beginning till the very end the protests remained as a civil and an unarmed movement. It was the mobility of self-organized citizens and it developed its own dynamic. After long years of indifference, people from all kinds of status and identity organized and acted as one, carrying out a countrywide resistance. Even though the notion of resistance is often politicized and criticized by the government, Gezi Park literally became a resistance with street barricades, clashes and stand guards lasting day and night. Various characterizations were presented for the protests. Comparisons between Gezi Park and 1968 movement were one of the notable approaches. Like 1968, Gezi Park began as a leaderless movement and the mobility was achieved through horizontal organization. Both emerged and evolved as civil reactions. The student movement in Nanterre France against the authorities in the University of Paris evolved into a national mobility specifically after the administrational shut down of Sorbonne University on May 1968. After the day the reaction instantly spread and clashes between the police and students began. 1968 movement became an uprising against De Gaulle regime. Street clashes, famous chants and barricades became symbolized characteristics of the politicized 1968 generation and their movement. The cultural norms and values of this movement affected the Europe entirely (Hur, 09/06/2013, Radikal Newspaper; Gezgin, 05/04/2014, Bianet). The comparisons between 1968 movement and Gezi Park were discussed in a similar pattern, because Gezi Park protests spread as an unexpected social reaction and they have never evolved into an armed conflict. Like the European examples the cultural norms of the resistance surpassed the clashes. The democratic consciousness, inclusivity, solidarity, communal experiences and practices of direct democracy like park forums affected the society and left its authentic traces. Even though these traces have not transformed the current system in Turkey, Gezi Park protests beyond any doubt became a unique example of social mobilization in Turkey.

Turkish media during the process reflected a problematic structure due to the existing ownership structures and government oppression. Lack of independent and objective broadcasting, manipulated and artificially structured discourses became one

of the major issues. Consequently, Turkey witnessed one of the greatest reactions against the mainstream media. The principle of objectivity is severely damaged and protesters seeking for an alternative platform began to organize through social media. The impact of social media was crucial for the protesters, because it became the major source for information and collective action or reaction. Among various lessons of Gezi Park protests, problems concerning the neo-liberal structures of the media institutions and the importance of independent communication platforms were one of the most highlighted subjects.

In line with the arguments, this chapter explains major occurrences during Gezi Park protests. Primarily, the first part presents the timeline of the protests including the clashes, humanitarian violations and widespread resistance against the AKP government. The second part evaluates the debates about Turkish mainstream media and discusses the media coverage. The Turkish mainstream media's coverage is analyzed with televisions and newspapers separately. The divergence between pro-government and oppositional media institutions is going to be discussed in line with the news outlets. Major Turkish news channels like NTV, CNN Turk, Haberturk, form the majority of the coverage analysis, because of the protesters' widespread reactions to these institutions. For the coverage of the oppositional media, channels like Halk TV and Ulusal Channel is going to be analyzed on the basis of outlets and the statistical data concerning the coverage rates. The television coverage is going to be analyzed either by the websites of the channels, or by alternative news sources such as daily newspapers and Bianet. Direct analyses of television outlets are limited because the visual sources of Gezi Park process such as evening news and discussion programs are deleted from the archives. The broadcast analysis contains a statistical data based on Media Monitoring Center's (MTM) research. The MTM is a Turkish monitoring company founded on 1999 (http://www.medyatakip.com.tr/index.php?lg=tr). The company investigates mainly Turkish print and visual media's coverage rates in various subjects. Likewise, during the Gezi Park events the MTM presented a research concerning the coverage rates of Turkish televisions and newspapers. The research archives are not open to access due to the company policies, hence alternative news portals such as Medya Tava and Medya Radar were used to obtain the research results. Medya Tava and Medya Radar are web based news portals. They are also popular sources of media news. TV ratings, newspaper circulations, recent news about media

institutions can be acquired through these websites. The newspaper coverage on the other hand is directly used by the dailies' web archives. Pro-government and oppositional newspapers are going to be analyzed separately. For the analysis front pages and main headings of selected newspapers will be used and will be translated from Turkish language. Mainly the analysis will contain; Sabah, Yeni Safak, Star, Milli Gazete, Takvim as pro-government newspapers and Cumhuriyet, Sozcu, Sol, Aydinlik and Yurt as oppositional newspapers. In addition to news coverage, the part will discuss the use of hate speech in Turkish print media. The research is presented by the Hrant Dink Foundation which was set up on 2007 after Dink's murder. Hrant Dink was a Turkish-Armenian journalist, chief editor of Agos Newspaper and was shot in front of his office on 19 December 2007 in Istanbul

(http://www.hrantdink.org/index.php?HrantDink=10&Lang=en). The Hrant Dink Foundation has multifaceted activities and publications. In this sense, the hate speech report of the Turkish print media during Gezi Park events will be included to the newspaper analysis.

Additionally this part consists of a third sub-part and analyzes the global discourse. The global media was a major alternative for the information flow especially at the beginning of the events. Turkish mainstream media's insufficient coverage directed many supporters to either social or to the global media's sources. Consequently, final part of this chapter explains the phenomenon of social media and its impact on the mobilization and public discourses. Statistical data for social websites like Twitter, Facebook and Turkey's Eksi Sozluk is going to be used in order to reveal the effect of social media. Number of users, number of entries, groups, topic popularities and social mobilization examples will be presented. This part consists of a significant amount of numerical data. The practices of citizen journalism are also going to be introduced, because many protesters and supporters actively contributed to the information flow either via blogs and websites or with voluntary broadcasts and footages. Overall, this part analyzes and exemplifies the role of social media's user oriented structure on Gezi Park events.

4.1. From Demonstration to Resistance

Among the different construction plans of the AKP's urban transformation, the Taksim project became one of the most notable and critical. It is on the one hand related to the central and cultural meaning of Taksim and on the other solely to the planning. The Taksim pedestrian project aimed to construct a vehicle-free and enlarged square by taking the traffic underground, connecting the seven streets linked to the square, and merging boulevards. The first signs of the project were given by Tayyip Erdogan before the 2011 general elections, and in September 2011 the project was approved by the members of the Istanbul Metropolitan Council. After the approval, details of the project were made public. Initial reactions were mainly critical. The 'Taksim Platform' was established by a voluntary group of people who started an

Picture 1: Pictures of Taksim Pedestrian Plan (Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality, http://www.ibb.gov.tr/tr-TR/Pages/Haber.aspx?NewsID=20709#.UzrF36h_vhk, 31/10/2012).

oppositional campaign against the project. Urban planners and the Taksim Platform stressed that the project would harm Taksim's symbiosis and cultural meaning; that it would limit pedestrian access and de-humanize the square. The underground roads would according to many, turn Taksim into a crossroads, and Taksim would lose its social and cultural function. The Platform's main demand was a transparent and participatory re-planning of the project. However, criticisms were rejected and the plan

was retained in its original form. Despite the critical atmosphere, the Istanbul Municipality took the first steps and construction of underground roads started in November 2012 (Taksim Platform Petition, http://www.taksimplatformu.com/english.php; Today's Zaman, 05/02/2012; Reclaim Istanbul, http://reclaimistanbul.com, 20/02/2012).

The Taksim pedestrian project can be evaluated in two steps, both as pedestrianization and as planning of the square. As for the planning of the square, the Istanbul Municipality approved the reconstruction of the historical Topcu Barracks, which was demolished on 1940, in Gezi Park. As the satellite image in picture 2 shows, Gezi Park is located in Taksim Square, and represents the last green area of central Istanbul. In the following days, the Taksim Platform merged into a greater organization called Taksim Solidarity and consisted of unions, associations, political organizations, etc.—in total more than one hundred constituents (for details see Taksim Solidarity: http://taksimdayanisma.org/bilesenler?lang=en). Taksim Solidarity started a petition against the Topcu Barracks and made an application to Istanbul's second regional office of cultural heritage protection. The office soon rejected the project due to its inconvenient structure for urban history, and declared that Gezi Park's historical heritage should not be demolished. Tayyip Erdogan in a following speech stated that: *"We will construct Topcu Barracks. The office rejected the project but we will reject the rejection"* (Bianet, 28/02/2013). However, the higher level cultural protection office went against the regional office's decision and gave approval to the project. While discussions about the project continued, Tayyip Erdogan's speech in his party's meeting changed the content of the discussion dramatically:

> "We said Taksim is a tourist area, they opposed to us. We said we will rebuild the barracks, they opposed to us. I said earlier, we would reject the rejection and so it happened. You protect several pots and pans, knives and forks for history so why don't you protect the historical buildings? We said back then it will be constructed. Now this is happening. Naturally it will not be barracks. It will serve as a shopping mall and as a residence" (Hurriyet Newspaper, 29/04/2013: www.hurriyet.com.tr).

Tayyip Erdogan's explanations about the barracks altered the discussions. Previously, there were suggestions of possibly a mall being constructed. However, Istanbul mayor Kadir Topbas assured the society that this was out of question. Along

with the criticism that Tayyip Erdogan was being more of a mayor than a prime minister, demolition of the central park of Istanbul for constructing a shopping mall became the major points of opposition. In fact, Xsights Research Company conducted an online survey about the construction of Topcu Barracks on Gezi Park. Among the 1105 respondents, 75.5 percent of Istanbul and 64.1 percent of nationwide residents voted against the project; 80.3 percent of Istanbul and 66.9 percent of nationwide residents stated that they would not shop at the Topcu mall if it were to be constructed (T24, 07/06/2013).

Picture 2: Taksim Pedestrian Project: Before/After (BBC, http://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-22753752, 07.06.2013)
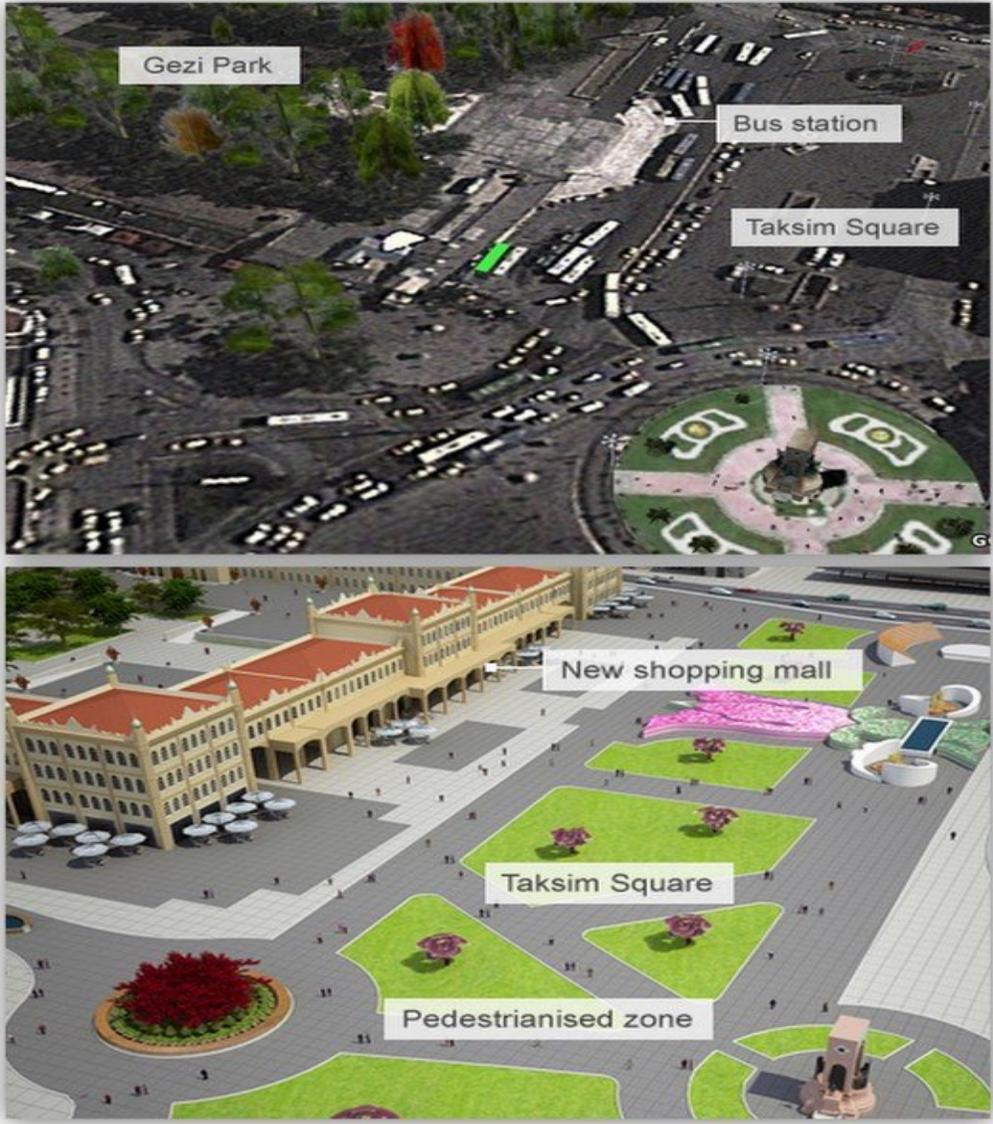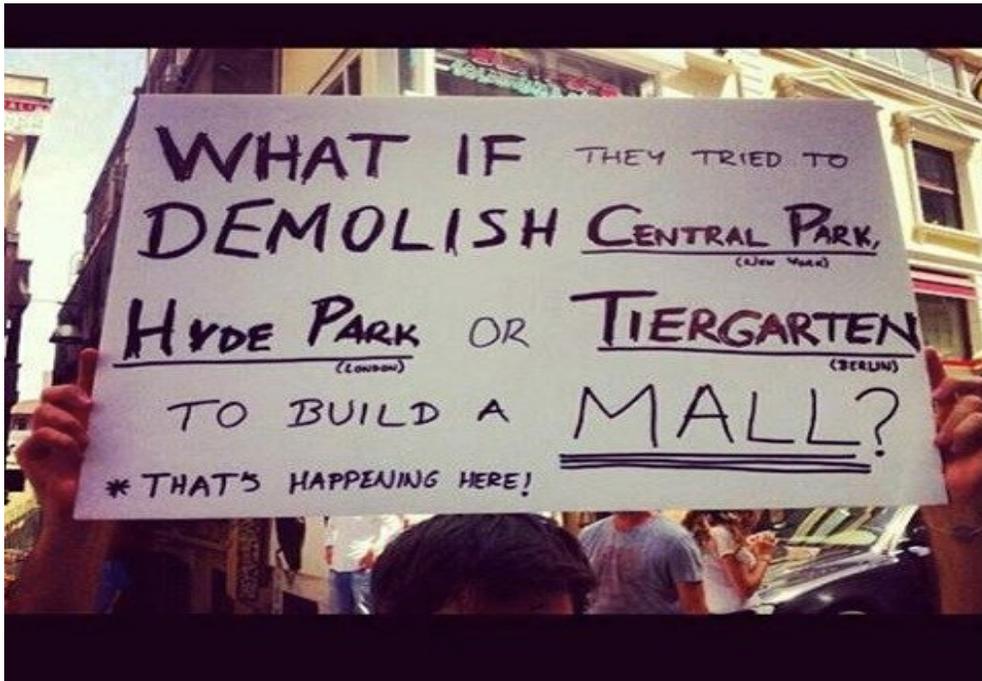
The shopping mall decision was an example of Turkey's recent consumption- and construction-based economic politics. In fact, government actions such as the urbanization of Sulukule district, demolition of the historical Emek Movie Theater and Inci patisserie, etc. were formerly resisted. Even though the opposition was limited, the AKP government was often criticized for its income-based transformation policies. The Demiroren shopping mall, which belongs to the Demiroren Group, was opened in Istiklal Avenue of Taksim in 2011. In addition to ongoing discussions about the building's architecture, functionality, and planning, the plan to construct another shopping mall in the same district elevated tensions (Ete, Tastan, 2013: 23). Despite criticisms and attempts for revision of the project, a demolition crew was dispatched to Gezi Park on the night of May 27, 2013, to start construction. Five trees were ripped out and the sidewall of the park was demolished. Soon after, volunteers started gathering around the park to prevent the construction. What happened thereafter triggered a nationwide resistance. The chronological occurrences of the two-month period are summed up in two sub-parts. The first part consists of the beginning and spread of the events. The occupation of Gezi Park and communal experiences in the park are described. The second part commences with the evacuation of Gezi Park on 15 June 2013 and elaborates on the subsequent events of increasing street violence until

the intensity of the resistance diminished. Within the two parts, the overall social, political, and humanitarian effects of the resistance, too, are presented.

4.1.1. The Beginning and the Spread: Gezi Park Occupation

Starting 27 May 2013, protesters began gathering in the park and demonstrating peacefully to protect the trees. On 28 May, at around 1:30 pm, riot police entered the park with pepper spray and tear gas. They dispersed the protesters and a demolition crew entered the park once again. Sirri Sureyya Onder, a former deputy of the Peace and Democracy Party (BDP), used his parliamentary immunity and prevented the construction by asking for a formal license, following which the demolition crew left the park. "*Sırrı Sureyya Onder made an appeal through Twitter, saying that they have stopped the dozer by standing against it. 'They can't tear down if everybody is here,' he wrote*" (Bianet, 28/05/2013). In the meantime, demonstrators started to replant the uprooted trees; on 29 May, many of them pitched tents in Gezi Park to stand guard against future demolition attempts. The government's first reaction to the protests came from Tayyip Erdogan on the same day: "*Whatever they do, we have made up our minds and will do it*" (Kongar and Kucukkaya, 2013: 101). Erdogan's response incensed the demonstrators; however, the unexpected early raid on 30 May triggered widespread fury. At around 5:00 a.m., the riot police staged an operation, dispersed the protesters while they were sleeping, and set fire to their tents. A film director, Ozun Suzen witnessed the operation: "*They fired gas bombs into the tents. They burnt the tents in which we decided to sleep. Someone could have been in the tent, sleeping. This is a disastrous act. People are faced with an obstinate government*" (Kongar and Kucukkaya, 2013: 102).

The operation led to reactions, and in the following hours people began to make calls through social media. By the evening, more than 10,000 people were in Gezi Park, including activists, artists, academics and students. The motto was "We are on guard for Taksim" with the famous slogan "This is just the beginning, the fight is continuing." However on the fifth day, on May 31, riot police cleared the park with tear gasses and water cannons in another dawn raid. A barricade was set up around the park and the entrance was blocked. Excessive use of force by the police increased tensions among the people. Taksim Platform early in the morning made a press statement outside the park, yet riot police intervened with tear gas and pressurized water. "*Three reporters, Ahmet Şık from Birgün, Osman Orsal from Reuters and Emrah Gürel from the Hürriyet*

Daily News, were injured. Another sit-in protest at 1 p.m. at Taksim Square was again subject to police intervention, causing social media organizations for a major gathering in the city center in the evening" (Hurriyet Daily News, June 2013).

Picture 4: The symbolized photo "Woman in Red" by Reuters reporter Osman Orsal on 28 May 2013 (Huffington Post, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/01/16/fatih-zengin-woman-in-red-jail-time_n_4611130.html)

On the same day, a Palestinian Turkish citizen, Lobna Allani was hit by a gas capsule from the head and critically injured. She stayed in coma for twenty-five days and required three brain surgeries. Lobna survived the injury; however, it left brain damage affecting young woman's communication abilities. Lobna's tragic injury and the riot police's excessive use of force enflamed the events and people continued to gather around Taksim. By the evening around 100,000 people were in Taksim despite the police blockade. As the numbers of protesters grew, violent interventions of riot police increased simultaneously. The police dispersed protesters from Taksim Square, so demonstrations continued in the nearby streets and avenues. People started setting up barricades to protect themselves from water cannons and to continue the resistance. Hence, in hours, the streets around Taksim were transformed into vehicle-free conflict zones. For preventing Web-based communication, the government blocked smartphone Internet connections. As a reaction, workshops and individuals began to spread the passwords of nearby wireless Internet connections. Residents opened their houses, helped protesters, and started a different type of protest involving flipping their house lights on/off and banging pots and pans to make noise. The tension at Taksim spread to

other districts of Istanbul, and by the end of the day, the streets of major cities in Turkey including Izmir and the capital Ankara were filled with protesters calling for the government's resignation. In this sense, the events of 31 May can be considered as an important turning point because after that day, the protests began to gain an anti-government characteristic and turned into explosion against the government's previous anti-democratic, authoritarian acts. Violent attacks by the police escalated the magnitude of such reactions. The mobility on the streets continued all night long, and owing to the strict police blockade on the roads, hundreds of people started walking across the Bosphorus Bridge to assist the protesters in and around Taksim. Thousands

Picture: 5 Photos from 31 May-1 June Taksim (http://www.haberform.com/foto-galeri/taksimde-dun-gece-2141-p6.htm)

of people crossed the bridge chanting "Everywhere is Taksim; Everywhere is Resistance" and "Shoulder to Shoulder against Fascism." In addition to the anti-government characteristic, the Gezi Park protests morphed into a resistance with continuous clashes between the riot police and the protesters (Ete and Tastan, 2013: 24; Hurriyet Daily News, June 2013). Even though Taksim Square and Gezi Park was blocked, thousands kept resisting in Taksim on 1 June. Meanwhile nationwide protests

grew significantly in more than 40 cities. "*Police continued to block roads to Taksim Square from all directions including İstiklal Avenue, Sıraselviler Avenue, Harbiye and Gümüşsuyu but slowly started withdrawing in the afternoon*" (Hurriyet Daily News, June 2013). President Abdullah Gul called for common sense and warned police officers to be cautious in the use of force. In a subsequent speech, Erdogan defended the police's efforts to prevent the protests and characterized the resistance as an ideological act. He called on the people to stop the clashes and to respect the democratic system and the legitimized government. He urged the people to show their reactions through the ballot instead of on the streets. Additionally, he blamed the opposition party CHP for supporting the chaos: "*We don't have such problems, because if he [CHP leader Kilicdaroglu] has thousands, I can gather a million*" (Kongar and Kucukkaya, 2013: 108, 109).

On the evening of June 1, riot police began to leave Taksim Square back to protesters and the occupation of Gezi Park commenced. However, the clashes in Istanbul and elsewhere in Turkey did not subside. In Ankara, Ethem Sarisuluk, age 26, was hit by a police gun on 1 June and sustained heavy injuries because of this. On June 2, 19-year-old Mehmet Ayvalitas was hit by a car during the protests and died as a result, thus becoming the first victim of the resistance. On the same day, university student Ali Ismail Korkmaz, aged 19, was beaten violently by undercover police officers and local artisans, and fell into a coma. A research assistant from Yildiz University and a student of the university lost their eyes due to gas capsule injury. More than 1,700 people were taken into custody in 67 cities (Kongar and Kucukkaya, 2013: 112-118).

The government's response to the increasing violence did not soften and in a party speech Erdogan denounced the demonstrators as looters: "*We will not sit and watch a few looters provoking people. We will also build a mosque in Taksim Square and I am not going to take permission from these looters or from the CHP leader*." The Turkish word for looter would be spelled in English as "chapuller," and "chapullers/chappulling" became a sarcastic definition and a supra-identity for the general opposition against AKP governance. In fact, opposition leader Kilicdaroglu at the wedding of a party member's son referred to Erdogan's "at least three children" advice, saying "*We expect you to have at least three 'chapullers'*" (Ete and Tastan, 2013: 24).

Picture 6: Taksim Square after riot police's retreat, 1 June 2013 (Radikal Newspaper, http://www.radikal.com.tr/fotogaleri/turkiye/taksimde_polis_gitti_halk_geldi-1135879-1)

Clashes in Besiktas on June 2 were very violent. As the protesters began to walk to the Prime Minister's office, riot police hardened their intervention. Wounded protesters were moved to a nearby mosque for medical care. Erdogan and some officials soon claimed that the protesters were consuming alcohol in the mosque and violating the mosque's sanctity. The reaction to the claim was tough: people began to share their own experiences and stated that they even removed their shoes despite the panic. Regardless of the situation in the mosque, Erdogan's words created tension, and the clashes continued until dawn. In fact, as Erdogan and government officials continued to dismiss the protests and retained their intolerant sentiments, the number of resistance activists grew. The Gezi Park resistance clearly turned into a united explosion against authoritarian and majoritarian state power (Kongar and Kucukkaya, 2013: 116, 117).

As the environmentalist demonstration evolved into a resistance, the Gezi Park events became an important issue at the global stage. The first foreign reaction came from the Council of Europe, which stressed the protection accorded to freedom of expression in the European Convention on Human Rights and criticized the use of excessive police force. With a similar declaration, Amnesty International condemned the use of arbitrary and excessive force and requested a trial of the officers responsible. United Nations spokesperson Martin Nesirky expressed the organization's concerns about the events in Turkey. Likewise, the White House underlined the necessity of liberty for the stability of Turkey and urged restraint (Hurriyet Newspaper,

04/06/2013). The Syrian Minister of Information, Umran El Zubi accused Erdogan of terrorizing his own people and called on him to resign (Kongar and Kucukkaya, 2013: 112). Unquestioningly it was an ironic statement because of Erdogan's former sentiments against Bashar Al Assad. Erdogan often criticized Assad for using violence against his own people and that he has lost his legitimacy:

> "We often said these positions are not perpetual positions. You [Assad] will one day have to leave that chair. You cannot govern with force. There are internal conflicts in the country [Syria], but the government claims that foreign powers are behind it. Then I am asking you, as a president what purpose do you serve, why do you allow it?" (Radikal Newspaper, 21/11/2011).

Picture 7: Another symbolized woman, Kate Mullen; "Woman in Black" resisting against water cannon, 1 June 2013 (Radikal Newspaper,

http://www.radikal.com.tr/fotogaleri/turkiye/taksimde_polis_gitti_halk_geldi-1135879-1)

On June 3, Tayyip Erdogan "*once again dismissed the protests and defended the police efforts in a press conference before leaving on a four-day trip to Morocco, Tunisia and Algeria*"(Hurriyet Daily News, June 2013). He accused the CHP of guiding protesters and said: "*There are 50 percent and we can barely keep them at home. But we have called on them to calm down*" (The Guardian, 04/06/2013). Erdogan, with an exclusionary statement, reiterated his dismissive attitude toward the protests. In the meanwhile, the Turkish Union of Medical Doctors (TTB) announced that around 1500 people in Istanbul and 1000 people in Ankara were injured during the eight days of protests. Abdullah Comert, a 22-year-old CHP youth branch member in Antakya, died

from brain trauma caused by head injuries. On the following day, Deputy Prime Minister Bulent Arınc released a statement apologizing for the police violence. Representatives of Taksim Solidarity met with Arınc and voiced their demands on June 5. The demands were as follows: Gezi Park should remain as a park; the use of gas bombs and similar materials should be prohibited; all detainees should be released; and restrictions on the right to congregate and demonstrate in public spaces and squares such as Taksim and Kizilay should be abolished (Milliyet Newspaper, 05/06/2013). The meeting was the government's first solid step toward a dialogue since the beginning of protests. Yet again, Taksim Solidarity's demands clarified that the protests were a strong social and political reaction against multiple government policies, projects, and investments. As reactions to this meeting continued to pour in, saddening news came from Adana (the southern province of Turkey) and Ankara on June 6. A police officer Mustafa Sari fell from a bridge and died during the protests. In Ankara, janitor Irfan Tuna suffered a heart attack due to extreme tear gas exposure and died at a hospital. In ten days of resistance, four people died and over 4000 people were injured, but the tension kept rising. Hopes for reconciliation ended after Erdogan's June 7 statements at the airport (Ete and Tastan, 2013: 26; Hurriyet Daily News, June 2013).

Picture 8: Photos from overall clashes and police violence in Istanbul, (Onedio, http://onedio.com/haber/gezi-parki-eyleminden-dehset-veren-fotograflar-116604)

A large group of AKP voters gathered in the airport in anticipation of Erdogan's arrival. The AKP supporters were offered free public transport services, and Erdogan held a midnight rally at the airport. Instead of hinting at reconciliation, Erdogan delivered a harsh speech and continued to blame certain organizations for provoking people against the government. He accused an "interest lobby" for playing a role in the severe drop in Turkey's stock exchanges and insisted that the barracks should and will be built. He called the protesters vandals and made a clear distinction with the AKP's 50 percent voter base:

> "Dear brothers, for the past ten days you have kept common sense and reason. We will leave here peacefully. We will compromise on common sense. You don't have pots and pans in your hands; you do not wander in the streets with pots and pans. Our youth will have computers in their hands… our youth will not be manipulated and my dear brothers you are the hope of oppressed ones" (Hurriyet Newspaper, 07/06/2013).

Despite worrisome clashes around the country, Gezi Park began to witness a genuine occupation. After 1 June, protesters occupied the park, set up tents, established Gezi market for basic needs, and established a communal life experience. Almost everything that is essential for day-to-day survival was provided free of charge in the park. "People's Communal Stand" organized major needs and protesters set up a

library, garden for fresh vegetables, kindergarten for children, and an infirmary for handling emergencies. Protestors and volunteer cooks set up a refectory and a bakery in the park.

Picture 10: Photos from 5 June 2013 Clashes in Dolmabahce/Besiktas, (Radikal Newspaper,,http://www.radikal.com.tr/fotogaleri/turkiye/dun_gece_dolmabahcede_65_gozalti-1136342)

"Chapullers Café" was built for social gatherings, and even a protester without any money could have lived a decent life in the park. People established a culturally improved life. A small stage was built for theatrical and artistic plays, where reading and music sessions were conducted in the evenings. Three TV stations and a radio station started broadcasting from the park. Residents voluntarily formed cleaning groups for preventing pollution. They prepared daily requirement lists, and every morning, volunteers from different districts of Istanbul fulfilled these needs. A volunteer at the Chapullers Café, Kenan Otlu, stressed the sense of solidarity across the park and stated: *"Here people with or without money live together at peace. There is an amazing support from the people across the country. Every day hundreds of thousands of people visit Gezi Park. We have a fully established communal life here. Every day people who don't know each other act and communicate as one."* In a few days, Taksim Square transformed from a conflict zone into a carnival area. The Ataturk Art and Culture Center (AKM) in the square was filled with colorful flags, posters, and graffiti. Daily gatherings at Gezi Park and Taksim Square became a part of everyday lives of the occupiers. Politically and socially, the Gezi Park occupation strengthened

the resistance (Ozgur Gundem, 10/06/2013, www.ozgur-gundem.com). A similar occupation movement was held in Kugulu Park, Ankara. However, state authority invested considerable effort toward preventing any such occupation in the capital. Kugulu Park and other public areas are located relatively close to the Prime Minister's office, and for this reason, the Kugulu Park occupation in Ankara did not evolve to the extent of the Gezi Park occupation. On June 7, riot police cleared Kugulu Park with a violent intervention. According to Balaban's analysis, occupation attempts in the capital was seen to potentially target state institutions and state authority and were dispersed instantly (Balaban, 14/06/2013, Bianet).

The Gezi Park resistance was unquestioningly the largest and, unexpectedly, the most socially cohesive opposition against state power in decades. It was a politicized movement, but it remained civil until the end. Although the frequency and magnitude of police–protestor clashes grew day by day, the occupation did not evolve into an armed struggle. The people involved were consciously peaceful, and their aim was to start an inclusionary dialogue for recognition. For this reason, despite positive occurrences in the resistance, people refused to leave the streets unless the government took a step back. Asli Aydintasbas, a columnist on Milliyet Newspaper evaluated briefly:

> *"We have a prime minister who has done great deeds and he really has run the economy well," she said. "But you also have this paternalistic style: 'I know what's good for you. I, as your father, can decide on the park, the bridge, the city and the constitution.' So, I think people are just wanting to have a more inclusive form of democracy in Turkey"* (CNN International, 04/06/2013,).

Picture 11: Feminist Struggle at Gezi Park, "*Air space without Tayyip (Erdogan) and without harassment*" (Sendika.Org, ibid)

Picture 12: Photos from the communal life on Gezi Park; *Gezi Park refactory, library, and park residents* (Sozcu Newspaper, http://galeri.sozcu.com.tr/2013/foto/genel/taksim-gezi-parki-komunu.html?pid=3;Sendika.Org, http://www.sendika.org/2013/06/taksim-gezi-parkida-bir-gun-daha-nasil-gecti-foto-izlenim/)
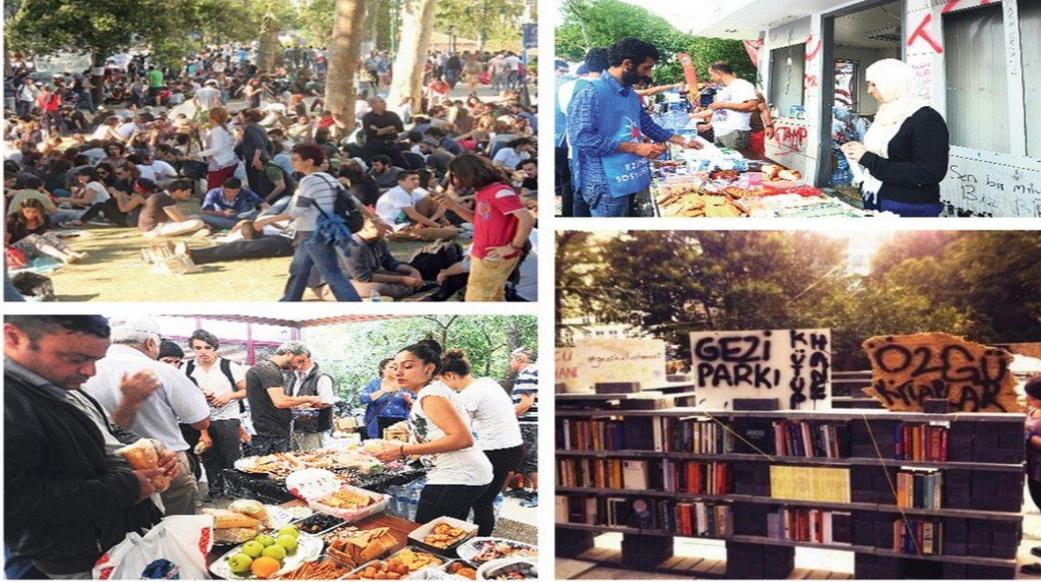
Picture 13: Photos from Gezi Park occupation; *Memorial for Abdullah Comert, Gezi Park kindergarten and a Mevlevi (Whirling Dervish) at a symbolic performance* (Sozcu Newspaper, ibid; Sendika.Org, ibid)

Picture 14: "*Chapullers Schoolroom is at your service, looking for students and teachers. Do not fail your courses while resisting.*" (Radikal Newspaper, http://www.radikal.com.tr/fotogaleri/turkiye/direniscilerin_gozunden_gezi_parki_eylemleri___2-1137433-6, 13/06/2013).

On June 9, the Taksim Solidarity made a call through social media on the 13th day of the resistance and held the biggest rally in Taksim Square. Hundreds of thousands protested the government again, calling on Erdogan to resign. "Shoulder to shoulder, against fascism" was the manifested slogan, and Taksim square witnessed one of the most moving days. The Taksim Solidarity reiterated the people's demands and called on the government to end the violence and release the detainees. On the same day, at a public demonstration in Mersin, a southern province of Turkey, Erdogan accused the protesters of being terrorists and anarchists (Kongar and Kucukkaya, 2013: 144).

On June 10, protesters in Ankara occupied Kugulu Park again; however, later in the day, riot police moved in to the park and intervened. Clashes continued around the park and around Kizilay square at night. Protesters were subjected to pepper spray, tear gas, and pressurized water. Tayyip Erdogan, on the same day, gave signals for extensive interference and stressed that they would not tolerate the protests any more: *"We will not only terminate these incidents, we will be on these terrorists' backs in the frame of law. No one will get away with what they did"* (Hurriyet Daily News, June 2013). The next morning, riot police started to gather around the square. Governor Huseyin Avni Mutlu assured the protesters on twitter that the police would not enter Gezi Park or interfere and that they would remove posters and flags off the AKM building. A small group in the square carrying Socialist Democracy Party (SDP) banner

Picture 15: The biggest rally on Taksim Square, 09 June 2013 (Radikal Newspaper, http://www.radikal.com.tr/fotogaleri/turkiye/taksimdeki_tarihi_mitingden_kareler-1136894)

and wearing masks clashed with Molotov cocktails. Soon after, the SDP, via a press statement, rejected their connection with the clashing group and stated that it was an act of provocation for the cameras. After the cleansing, riot police positioned itself in front of the AKM building and warned protesters to clear the square. These actions caused tension and people began to protest the riot police with "Police, sell bagels, live with honor" slogans. Soon after, protesters were subjected to heavy tear gas and pressurized water attacks. In just a few hours, Taksim Square turned into a conflict zone with burning cars, barricades, and numerous clashes on the streets. In the following hours, they entered Gezi Park with gas bombs and started to remove the tents, but within an hour, they stopped the intervention, left Gezi Park, and once again positioned themselves in front of the AKM building. In the evening, Governor Mutlu made another statement and said, *"We removed the flags on the AKM building, and we did not interfere as we promised. However a police officer and a protester were injured in clashes."* He called on protesters to return home, and warned that he could no longer guarantee their safety. However, heavy clashes and excessive police force use caused massive reactions, and after 6:00pm, the square was filled with thousands of people. However, the worst came after several hours. Around 8:15pm, riot police moved in to the square with tear gas shells, water cannons, and rubber bullets and the events that ensued turned into the most violent intervention since the beginning. Clashes continued

all night long (Kongar and Kucukkaya, 2013: 151-153; Hurriyet Daily News, June 2013; Sozcu Newspaper, 12/06/2013, www.sozcu.com.tr).

After the violent night, on June 12, sad news came from Ankara. The doctors stated that Ethem Sarisuluk, who was shot by the police on June 1, was brain dead. According to the TTB's Gezi Report, 5 people died, around 5000 people were injured, 10 people lost their vision (partially or completely), and 35 people were taken into intensive care due to skull fractures and brain trauma. Injuries were mostly caused by gas capsules, rubber bullets, and assault (Kongar and Kucukkaya, 2013: 154, 155).

Picture 16: Police intervention on 11 June 2013, Taksim Square (CNN International http://edition.cnn.com/2013/06/11/world/europe/turkey-protests/, 12/06/2013)

The next two days were mostly quiet around Taksim square, but clashes continued in other places. On the evening of June 12, *"German pianist, Davide Martello and Turkish musician, Yigit Ozatalay performed a joint piano concert in Taksim Square in support of Gezi Park protests"* (Hurriyet Daily News, June 2013). Tayyip Erdogan, on the other hand, stated that he had given instructions to the Interior Ministry to disperse people and to clear the streets in 24 hours. During the heavy clashes at Taksim square on June 11, 49 lawyers were assaulted and taken into custody at Caglayan Courthouse. On June 12, thousands of lawyers in Istanbul, Ankara, and Izmır started a protest against the brutal intervention at Caglayan Courthouse and police violence across the country. The European Parliament called on Erdogan to change his intolerant and discriminative attitudes toward the protesters and criticized the PM for polarizing the society. On June 13, mothers of the protesters came to Taksim Square and formed a human chain between the protesters and riot police in response to Governor Mutlu's call for mothers to calm their children and bring them home. At Eskisehir, an important city of Central Anatolia, thousands marched for Eskisehir Anatolian University student Ali Ismail Korkmaz, who was beaten by the police and, as a result, fell into a coma on June 2. On June 14, Tayyip Erdogan met with representatives of the protesters and the Taksim Solidarity. After the meeting, the Taksim Solidarity organized various forums with protesters to formulate a joint strategy for future actions. At the end of almost 9 hours of meetings, the Solidarity decided to continue the resistance until their democratic demands were recognized and accepted. The next day, Erdogan held another rally in Ankara under a "Respect for National

Will" slogan and said, *"Either you will clear Taksim Square or our security units will do it."* In fact, in the following hours of June 15, riot police began to make announcements to protesters warning of police interference unless the square is cleared. Protesters refused to leave, and police intervention began in the evening while thousands of protesters including children were at the park, leading to the evacuation of Gezi Park (Radikal Newspaper, 15/06/2013).

4.1.2. After the Occupation: Unrest on the Streets

Riot Police raided the Gezi Park on June 15 around 8:50 p.m. and cleared the area of protesters. The operation was severe, so many protesters fled the park seeking shelter and leaving personal belongings behind. In the following hours, riot police blocked the park, but protesters around Istiklal avenue continued clashes. Similar to 11 June, it was one of the worst nights of the unrest, and clashes continued until dawn. Riot police from various districts blocked the roads to Taksim Square, and as a reaction, around midnight, many protestors from Kadikoy, a central district on the Anatolian side, started to walk across the Bosphorus Bridge. However, riot police dispersed the crowd on the highway with tear gas shells before they could reach the bridge (BBC, 16/06/2013). In Taksim Square, riot police attacked the protesters with tear gas shells inside the Divan Hotel, a luxury hotel that was opened to protesters as infirmary and shelter. Over 300 people were injured as a result of tear gas exposure and head trauma. On June 16, a 14-year-old boy, Berkin Elvan, was hit by a gas capsule in the head while he was on his way to buy bread. He fell into a coma that lasted 269 days and died aged 15 on 11 March 2014 (Kongar and Kucukkaya, 2013: 166; BBC, 11/03/2014).

Besiktas football team's fan group Carsi was the frontrunner in many clashes. On June 16, 22 members of the group were detained, and in the following days Carsi withdrew their support to protect the football club. For the first time since the beginning of the resistance, Turkish military units assisted the riot police in dispersing mobs of thousands of people in various districts. Tayyip Erdogan held another rally on Kazlicesme arena with the motto "Respect to National Will" and stated that Gezi Park was cleared on his instructions. Istanbul's major transportation services were used for the rally, and mainstream Turkish media broadcast Erdogan's speech live. In the meantime, the CHP's provincial building in Sishane was attacked by a group of people. An angry mob armed with batons and stones broke the windows and threatened CHP members, while deputies Melda Onur and Binnaz Toprak were inside the

building. The Confederation of Trade Unions of Public Employees (KESK) and the Confederation of Progressive Trade Unions (DISK) called for a strike to protest the police violence, and on June 17, hundreds of members clashed with riot police on the nearby streets of Taksim. The European Council and the European Parliament called on the government to respect the people's right to demonstrate and condemned the excessive use of force. Erdogan criticized the European Parliament and stated: *"They are puzzled. I do not recognize such a parliament."* (Kongar and Kucukkaya, 2013: 169-171). German Green Party leader, Claudia Roth, a witness to the 15 June Taksim intervention shared her experiences with the German media *"I am a witness of the entire violence. Riot Police brutally targeted people and fired gas capsules. As if people were at war. There were women and children, but riot police kept firing"* (Milliyet Newspaper, 16/06/2013).

A day after, performance artist Erdem Gündüz of "The Standing Man" fame started a passive protest on Taksim Square in the evening. He began to stand still on the square facing the AKM building at around 6:00 pm, June 17. Some people joined him by standing still and others just supported silently. He continued his protest until 2:00 am and instantly "Standing Man" protests spread across the country. People began to stand still on streets (Seymour, 18/06/2013, The Guardian).

On June 18 at around 4:00 am, a small group of people sleeping in Kugulu Park was subjected to police intervention, and similar to Gezi Park, Kugulu Park was once again cleared of protesters. Riot police and anti-terror security teams conducted dawn operations and detained 64 people in Istanbul and 24 people in Ankara (Kongar and Kucukkaya, 2013: 172). While the unrest on the streets continued, another genuine event started in Istanbul and quickly spread to major cities of Turkey. The Taksim Solidarity and other protestors established evening forums in public parks. Attendance was open to all, and people began to discuss their opinions and expectations in peaceful public forums. Yogurtcu, Abbasaga, and Buyukdere Parks became major forums in Istanbul; Ankara, Eskisehir, Izmir, Mersin, and Adana followed the examples of Istanbul and started local park forums. Assemblies in certain occasions developed joint agendas, but everyone with any kind of opinion could participate, discuss, and deliver speeches on park platforms. The forums had a clear inclusionary structure (for details, see: "Parks are ours" http://parklarbizim.blogspot.com.tr/2013/06/park-forumlar-iletisim-bilgileri.html?showComment=1372001558550).

Picture 17: Photos from 15 June 2013 intervention, Taksim (Radikal Newspaper, http://www.radikal.com.tr/fotogaleri/dunya/dunya_basininda_olayli_gece-1137793-4)

Picture 18: 15 June 2013, Divan Hotel, Taksim (http://anticapitalists.org/2013/06/16/turkey-from-occupy-gezi-to-war-zone/)

"People in forums proved that everyone can coexist and live peacefully, because coexistence can only be achieved through communication, discussion and exchange of ideas. Specifically it requires understanding and persuasion. Even

though this is a minor step, we experience an activity of direct democracy with park assemblies" (Idem, 23/07/2013, Bianet).

By the end of June, street continued, but the strength of the resistance began to diminish, as riot police interventions hardened. In the following days, provinces such as Adana, Mersin, and Hatay witnessed severe unrest, while protests in Istanbul mostly altered into a passive form with park forums and with people banging pots and pans at homes. During Tayyip Erdogan's visit to Mersin for the "Mediterranean Games," around 2000 people began to protest his presence, and as a result of the clashes, 6 people were injured and 8 people were detained. On June 21, the Taksim Solidarity called on people to observe a memorial for the victims of the resistance, and the next day, thousands gathered in Taksim with carnations in their hands. Riot police positioned themselves in front of the AKM building and made announcements to the effect that the area be cleared. People began to throw carnations at the police officers and shout slogans: "Police, do not betray your people." However, riot police started intervening, and people were subjected to pressurized water. Nearby, streets clashes continued in the evening, and according to witnesses, riot police used heavy rubber bullets to disperse the protesters. In the "Respect to National Will" rally in Kayseri, Tayyip Erdogan stated that he instructed the Interior Ministry and the police to evacuate Gezi Park and Taksim. In his rallies, he called on the public to respond to the Gezi Park protests through the ballot, thus making a nation-wide demonstration of power against the resistance (The Telegraph, 23/06/2013). Throughout the process, Erdogan's attitudes did not soften, and he mainly polarized the country with 50 percent vs. 50 percent voter bases, branding the protesters as marginal instead of hearing them out. He defended police efforts many times, and in a speech at the police academy he claimed that protesters were actually violent and that it would be proven:

> "Our police officers are subjected to bullets and in return they fired tear gas and pressurized water. According to EU acquis, security units also have the right to use gas and pressurized water. Foreign country parliaments do not have the right to evaluate Turkish police forces. We will show the footages of violence against our police force." (Hurriyet Newspaper, 24/06/2013)

Erdogan did not prove his claim or release any footage as evidence. In the meantime, the TTB published an updated report, and the overall cost of the resistance

was 5 deaths, around 7000 injuries, and 11 eye losses (Kongar and Kucukkaya, 2013: 180).

The final big rally of June was organized by The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender Organization (LGBT). Istanbul LGBT pride attracted thousands, and they were joined by the Gezi Park protesters. The 2013 Gay Pride became one of the biggest LGBT marches in Turkey. LGBT has been one of the most active organizations from the beginning of the Gezi resistance (Hurriyet Daily News, 30/06/2013).

On June 28, a protest was held against the construction of a police station in Lice, Diyarbakir. Kurdish people, who are the majority in the town, stood against the new building and in the subsequent heavy clashes with soldiers, Medeni Yildirim, an 18-year-old protester, was shot and killed by soldiers. Despite the mainstream media's biased broadcasting, park forums in Istanbul and Ankara organized protests for the violence and the death of another young man. A week later, on July 10, Ali Ismail Korkmaz lost his struggle for life and died. The cause of death was cerebral hemorrhage. Korkmaz was assaulted by locals and undercover police officers and he approached a public hospital soon after for examination. The examining doctor assured him that everything was fine and sent Korkmaz home without treatment. After the day, Korkmaz fell into coma due to cerebral hemorrhage. After 38 days in coma, he died at the age of 19 (Milliyet Newspaper, 28/06/2013; Hurriyet Newspaper, 12/07/2013).

Passive protests, forums, and assemblies continued in July. Clashes on the streets started to diminish. On July 7, non-governmental associations and government-opposed media organized a festival in Kadikoy. The festival was called "Man Made of Tear Gas," and it aimed to denounce the excessive use of eye-burning and throat-searing tear gas. Tear Gas Festival was the final nationwide rally of July and of the summer. A day after, an attempt was made to enter Gezi Park again; however, riot police interfered and detained 50 individuals, including Taksim Solidarity representatives. They were released two days later on July 12. In August "Rainbow Revolt" instantly spread across the country, starting from Istanbul. People began to paint the pavements and steps of streets and avenues in rainbow colors. It was a joyful protest, but in September, for a short time, violent clashes started in the country once again. This time Kadikoy was the major base of the unrest in Istanbul. In Ankara, students of the Middle East Technical University occupied the university's forest against an unlawful road construction. Like the beginning of the Gezi resistance, different cities across the country joined the

protests. However, the use of force by security units increased significantly. Hence, the protests could not spread. Ahmet Atakan, a 22-year-old protester, died during the Antakya clashes. According to witnesses, a tear gas capsule caused his death, but the Ministry of Justice claimed that he died because of falling from a height (Hurriyet Daily News, 07/07/2013; New York Times, 03/09/2013; Hurriyet Newspaper, 10/09/2013).

The Gezi Park process was unquestioningly a genuine experience of the Turkish society. However, deaths, injuries, and prosecutions dented this genuine nature, and the result was dramatic in many senses. Seven protesters died during the clashes. The oldest was aged 26 years, and at 15 years, Berkin Elvan was the youngest to die. The victims were not just protesters: a police officer and a janitor died as well. More than 8000 people were injured. 11 people lost their eyes. More than 2000 people, including lawyers, were detained during the protests. By 29 June 2013, 134 people were arrested (Everywhere Taksim, 29/07/2013, www.everywheretaksim.net). Some of the prosecutions are yet not complete. Amnesty International published a Gezi Report and condemned the Turkish authorities for the anti-democratic acts, as well as the use of security units and excessive force. The organization urged Turkish authorities to *"ensure that laws, including 'anti-terrorism' laws are not used to prosecute people for exercising their right to organize and take part in peaceful assemblies,"* and *"ensure that police responses should include a broad range of options that include the possibility non-intervention if intervention may increase the risk of conflict."* Amnesty International also stressed that security units' equipment should be considered carefully and used proportional, lawful, and accountably (Amnesty International Gezi Report, 2013: 51, 52). Despite global reaction, Turkish authorities and security units still continue to disperse any kinds of protests instantly, using harmful equipment.

Gezi Park events were an unexpected and genuine mobilization for Turkish people. The social cohesion, political consciousness, solidarity and especially the communal occupation beyond any doubt affected the protesters and also other segments deeply. It is not possible to claim that the events have democratized the country; however the resistance awakened the people unexpectedly and proved that there is still a significant segment in the society that protects human rights and can mobilize for liberties. Especially Turkish youth was considered to be apolitical and ignorant to social or political matters. Likewise Gezi Park events broke those taboos. In fact, Turkish

youth has been incredibly politicized regardless of political ideologies. The genuine experiences of this mobility have affected different sides of the society; but as a downside it can be claimed the polarization within the society has increased; Chapullers versus AKP's youth.

4.2. The Mainstream Media

The Gezi Park protests, along with ensuing tragic outcomes, revealed the limited independence of Turkish media. As European Union Commissioner Stefan Füle put it;*"the deafening silence of the Turkish media"* became one of the most criticized subjects throughout the resistance (Pope, 2013 CPJ Report). As mentioned in the third part, Turkish media institutions merged into giant conglomerates over the previous decade. Even though the media's manipulated relations with power sources (state, capital power) have always been an issue in media studies, recent giant media corporations have altered the discussions. Currently, media institutions are dominated by cross-sector conglomerates with the aim of maximizing profits. As Baydar says: *"Media executives who intimidate or censor reporters while kowtowing to governments to protect their other business interests are undermining the freedom and independence of the press"* (Baydar, 19/06/2013; New York Times). In addition to the problems of ownership structure, Turkish media has often served as an opinion media. For instance, during the 28 February military coup, mainstream media apparently ran an anti-government campaign. On 28 February 1997, the Turkish military at the National Security Council meeting submitted their views to the government on issues regarding secularism and political Islam. The Kemalist generals dictated their policies and hence the military memorandum was called as a "post-modern coup". Erbakan and RP government was forced to resign. In the aftermath the RP was closed and Erbakan was banned from politics for five years (Candar, 28/06/1997, Sabah Newspaper; Akyol, 29/02/2012, Hurriyet Daily News). The power of manipulation was controlled by the military because of the circumstances, but the outcome was quite similar to that in the present situation. Editorial independence was absent, and military officials deliberately dominated the flow of information. The aim was to destroy the supposedly threat of Islamization and justify the intervention (Today's Zaman, 07/07/2013). Even though the causes are different now, people once again witnessed insufficient and biased coverage of the resistance by the Turkish media. Consequently, the mainstream media's

silence during the initial days of the Gezi process exposed the dependent structure of Turkish media's relations with state and capital powers.
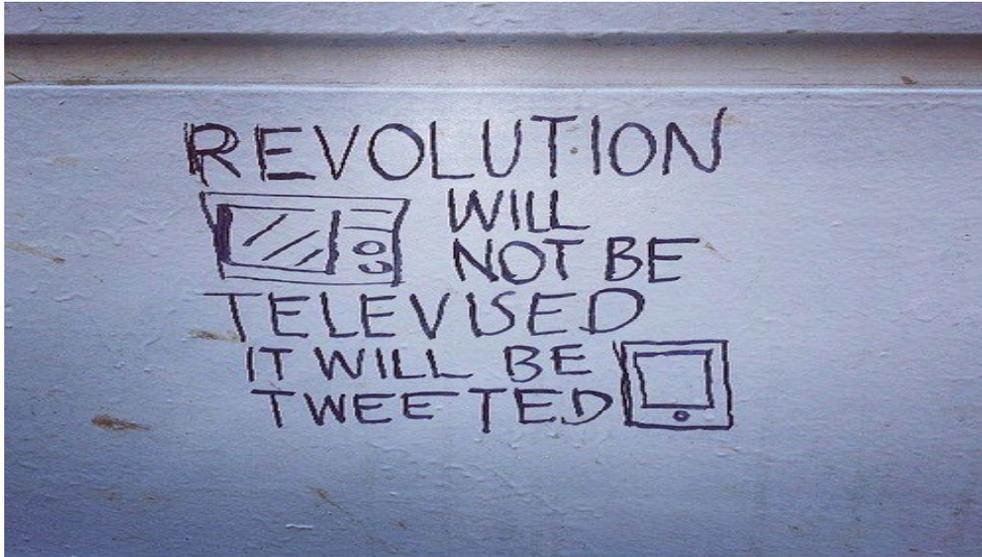
Based on the circumstances, it is possible to categorize the Turkish media during the Gezi Resistance into three groups: the first group consisted of strong pro-government media institutions such as the Calik Group (ATV, Sabah, Takvim), Albayrak Group's Yeni Safak (Tayyip Erdogan's son-in-law Berat Albayrak is from the Albayrak family), Hayat Group's Channel 7, and Ulke TV. In addition, the newspapers Milli Gazete and Akit can be added to this category. The Ciner Group (Haberturk) lies between the first and second category, being close to the first, because even though the group is apparently pro-government, its broadcasting policies are not as biased as those of the institutions in the first group are. From the beginning, the institutions belonging to the first group had a discriminative and, sometimes, aggravated attitude toward the protests, and they accused foreign powers or domestic groups for provocation. The second group includes the Dogus (NTV) and the Dogan Groups (CNN Turk, Kanal D, Hurriyet, and Radikal Newspapers). The Dogus Group, especially, adopted a cautious approached to the events at the beginning, lacked proper coverage, and avoided acting in an anti-government manner. After some time, the channel started airing the clashes; however, it continued to lose credibility owing to biased reporting and commentary. The Dogan Group, too, was unwilling to broadcast the resistance at the beginning; however, unlike other institutions, diversity was apparent. For instance, while CNN

Turk faced harsh criticisms of censorship and independence, the Radikal Newspaper published a detailed timeline of the protests from the beginning. Even though Hurriyet Newspaper's tendencies were criticized sometimes, the daily was fairly critical of police violence and the lack of a democratic platform for the demands. Especially, the Radikal Newspaper was one of the top dailies in publishing news about the Gezi Park resistance, and it remains one of the most qualified newspapers. The Dogan Group is the oldest mainstream media group in Turkey, and as Cigdem Anad stressed, entire cadres of the Dogan Media Group were successful journalists. However, the current media corporations' replacement of media workers with business professionals constitutes an important aspect of the problem.

> "To secure their well-paid positions, those in management positions need to be finely attuned to what is at stake for the proprietors." If you become editor-in-chief, understanding the owner's behavior, knowing his investment portfolio and his expectations from the government, is more important than having qualifications in the media industry," Sözeri said" (as cited in Pope, ibid).

Dogan Media enabled variety and criticism. However, its stance has mellowed since the financial operation of 2009 and the subsequent heavy tax penalty imposed by the government. In this sense, the group's (CNN Turk and Kanal D) Gezi coverage was limited, and they were among the criticized media groups. Nevertheless, after the first week, DHA (Dogan News Agency) broadcast a significant amount of live footage and Hurriyet Newspaper continuously covered the Gezi events. The third group is consisted of opposed media channels such as Halk TV, Ulusal Channel, and Cem TV; newspapers such as Cumhuriyet, Sol, Sozcu, Aydinlik, and Yurt; and news portals such as Oda TV. These media institutions provided wide and live coverage of the protests, clashes, and all types of experiences during the resistance. They are government-opposed media institutions and have limited financial sources in comparison with media conglomerates. However, they transformed into important oppositional base players after the resistance (interview with Cigdem Anad, in: T24, 01/11/2013; TMMOB Bulletin, 2013: 64, 65).

4.2.1. Televisions

During the first days of the protests, the Turkish media made little or no coverage of the protests. The media lack of images and almost blackout was a major issue of the resistance. While the clashes began to spread as a reaction to police violence, major

news channels like NTV, CNN Turk, and Haberturk broadcasted talk shows and cooking programs without any proper coverage of the protests. Today in Turkey, many people think of penguins whenever they are asked about the media during the Gezi Park resistance, because CNN Turk amazingly aired a documentary about penguins on the night of June 2. In the meantime, CNN International was broadcasting live footage from the clashes (Pope, ibid). *"Haberturk TV, only 200 yards from the now famous Gezi Park, had three medical experts discussing schizophrenia."* In fact, on the evening of June 2, Haberturk broadcasted an interview with Tayyip Erdogan that featured a lot of praise about him—at the height of street clashes, which created tension (Baydar, ibid). The protests were at most mentioned on the evening news. On the same day, many people protested against Haberturk TV in front of the building, chanting "media on sale!" (Haberdar News Portal, 02/06/2013). On 3 June, Ali Ihsan Varol the host of the TV show "Word Game" on Bloomberg HT (Haberturk) supported the protests by making references to Gezi Park and to the clashes. Varol "*asked contestants to guess words based on clues like, 'A journey undertaken to see, to have fun.' The answer, in Turkish, is 'Gezi' the name of the park where the protests first started. Other words that had to be guessed during the show included 'freedom,' 'solidarity,' 'ballot box,' 'dictator,' and 'Twitter.'*" The next day program's pre-recorded episode was broadcasted and in December the popular show was banned (Bennet, 06/06/2013; www.thewire.com; Hurriyet Newspaper, 25/12/2013). Thousands of people gathered in front of the Dogus Media Center on the same day, chanting slogans ("We don't want media that is on sale," "Penguins raided NTV," and "NTV, the news came to you") protesting NTV and the Dogus Group's insufficient coverage in hope of eliciting an official statement from the group. Some media workers inside the building supported the group, and NTV had to broadcast the event live. Before breaking for commercials, the presenter stated that a group was protesting them in front of the building and that they got the message (Sol Portal, 03/06/2013). In the following days, protesters in Taksim Square occupied NTV's broadcasting van and covered the vehicle with graffiti in response to the media blackout. After harsh criticisms, NTV started covering the events; however, the coverage was far from objectivity. On their evening news bulletin, the channel censored the image of a poster that said "Shut up Tayyip." Oguz Haksever, a famous newsman at NTV, censored Fatmagul Berkay's pro-resistance evaluations of the events and stated that the riot police did not fire tear gas shells in Gezi Park (Medya

Radar, 01/06/2013). Journalist Mustafa Mutlu evaluated the mainstream media's broadcasting along similar lines.

> "Lots of media institutions ignored Gezi events from the first day. CNN Turk broadcasted documentaries, while Haberturk aired reality shows. Because of increasing protests they began to broadcast, but it just got worse. They presented biased comments and news. They denounced the people as terrorists while making the riot police heroes. For instance, whereas CNN International showed the violence and stressed the excessive use of police force, CNN Turk used [phrases] such as "Marginal groups are attacking police with Molotov and stones" (Mutlu, 13/06/2013, Vatan Newspaper).

Picture 19: NTV broadcasting van covered with graffiti: "AKP's news channel"; "Media for Sales"; "Ferit Sahenk is in love with Erdogan" (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ferit_%C5%9Eahenk)

Cigdem Anad, the successful journalist who had worked for many years at CNN Turk and NTV, resigned from CNN Turk after the censorship of the news about the murdered Armenian editor Hrant Dink.

> "The censorship back in the days [2007] was not as heavy as today; however after Hrant Dink's murder and especially during the funeral I was warned to take things easy, because back then AKP was an appreciated party. Everyone had great expectations from the government and so... no one wanted any kind of criticisms against the government. So I resigned. Everyone thought I was overreacting, because interventions to editorial independence were very few. Now people

understand and say that I am a visionary journalist" (interview with Cigdem Anad, ibid).

Anad started working with NTV; however, after the censorship in Gezi Park broadcasting, she once again resigned, stressing the media–government relations and the need for editorial independence:

> "I have never seen Ferit Sahenk [Board Chairman of the Dogus Group] as a leader of a labor union. He is a patron in the capitalist order. In order to avoid capital loss, he simply does not wish to face off against the government, However AKP is the party of a cause; the Prime Minister and AKP will not share powerful sources with different ideologies with Ferit Sahenk in the long term. For this reason Sahenk's policies are miscalculated, because the current patronage system will eventually be transformed. Cem Aydin [CEO of the Dogus Media Group] felt the same way. He was worried about the censorship and NTV's pro-government broadcasting policies during the Gezi protests. So we had two choices; either we were going to be true journalists, making objective and qualified news, or we were going to leave; and in the end we left" (interview with Cigdem Anad, ibid).

In fact, after the protests in front of the building, the CEO of Dogus Media Group Cem Aydin made a statement stressing that the audiences were feeling betrayed because of the insufficient and biased coverage and issued an apology to the employees and the people. He was the first one to apologize for the media's biased coverage, and after a week, he was reportedly forced to leave the group (Hurriyet Daily News, 13/06/2013). In fact, despite increasing coverage, a major portion of the news and commentary in the mainstream channels was in countenance of the government. For instance, despite the "deafening silence," on the morning of 11 June, NTV, CNN Turk, Haberturk, SkyTurk360, and A News broadcast live footage of the clashes between allegedly SDP members and riot police. That was the first time when an alleged protester used a Molotov cocktail since the resistance began, and mainstream news channels were on air, broadcasting the marginal attacks. On 12 June, the CHP's Deputy Adnan Keskin attended a political program on CNN Turk. The host Nagehan Alci, a pro-government journalist, interrupted Keskin's Gezi speech and asked the video desk to end the interview. During a live broadcast from Taksim Square, an NTV reporter pointed out the clashes and stated that the police did not interfere but that some people with Molotov cocktails attacked instead. In response, when protesters on the square reacted and chanted "Stop lying NTV," the channel ended the live broadcast. Similarly,

NTV went off air when CHP leader Kilicdaroglu started to read Dolmabahce Imam's response to the accusation of "protesters entering the mosque with shoes." The Imam supported Gezi protesters in the matter, and denied the alcohol or shoe accusations. After couple of months, he was relieved of duty. The Anatolian Agency (AA), broadcasting pro-governmentally, criticized CNN International and BBC World's live broadcasting and general director Kemal Ozturk responded on Twitter; *If ever an occupation appears in London, it is AA's obligation to expose it to the entire world"* (Yurt Newspaper, 13/06/2013).

Halk TV, however, gained popularity because of its live coverage during the clashes. Similarly, Ulusal Channel and Cem TV began broadcasting live from conflict spots as soon as the clashes spread. Halk TV is close to the CHP, a major opposition party, while Ulusal TV is linked to the Worker's Party. Cem TV is close to the Alevi community. As such, these channels cannot be seen as ideologically objective. However, they became major sources of pro-resistance media coverage and were appreciated by the people. An example can clarify the reason behind appreciation. One of the memorable events was Halk TV's protest of media censorship. As a response to CNN Turk's penguin documentary and overall media ignorance, on 6 June, Halk TV broadcast another documentary on penguins during Tayyip Erdogan's national rally, even as mainstream channels were broadcasting his speech live. Aside from the government's criticism, these media channels mainly broadcast what people wished to see in the mainstream media. Detailed videos and photos of clashes, live footages from streets across the country, and protesters' demands found suitable reflection in these channels. (Pope, ibid). In fact, the Media Monitoring Center (MTM) researched the TV coverage of Gezi events between 31 May and 04 June. According to the data, Halk TV, Ulusal Channel, and Cem TV assigned the most broadcast hours to the Gezi resistance coverage. Ulusal Channel allotted 319,000 s to the events, Halk TV showed 314,000 s, and Cem TV showed 178,000 s, which are the three highest airtime proportions among all channels. CNN Turk came in fourth with 160,000 and Haberturk was the sixth with 126,000 s of airtime, while NTV was the ninth with 108,000 s. Interestingly, BBC World and CNN International surpassed many Turkish television stations with 36,000 and 31,000 s, respectively. ATV, Kanal D, Star TV, and Show TV were at the lower end of the airtime spectrum with an average of 20,000 s of coverage. Halk TV and Ulusal Channel's daytime and, sometimes, live nighttime coverage continued

throughout the resistance (Medyatava, 06/06/2013, www.medyatava.com). However, RTUK imposed a fine of 11,000 Turkish Liras on these channels for encouraging violence (Bianet, 23/10/2013).

On 14 June, the government agency AA served the photo of the mothers in a human chain at Taksim Square with a separatist angle: "a group of women, calling themselves mothers." A day after, the agency announced a protest in front of the CNN International building in New York as breaking news. However, what AA served as breaking news was a small gathering of only 6 people. The next morning, pro-government newspapers Sabah and Star used photoshopped protest photos and presented manipulative coverage. While the AA struggled with global media, on 14 June, BBC unilaterally canceled its Turkish broadcasting agreement with NTV. The reason behind this cancellation was the violation of objective broadcasting rules during the Gezi events. In line with its clear antagonistic and biased broadcasting of the Gezi events, ATV banned a reality program even before it was aired because the host Oktay Kaynarca supported the resistance (Bianet, 23/10/2013). Nevertheless, NTV and CNN Turk possibly faced the majority of the criticisms related to biased and insufficient coverage. This is because first, these stations were considered to be qualified news channels of the country, and second, until the resistance, they were never considered as strongly pro-government media organs such as ATV and Haberturk. Simply put, a sense of objectivity in coverage was expected from NTV and CNN Turk. However, in the light of what ensued, today in Turkey, labels such as "The Penguin Media" are often used for NTV and CNN Turk along with Haberturk and ATV (for details see: Birgun Newspaper, 17/12/2013).

As the mainstream media began biased coverage, resisting media workers faced suppression from the government and media institutions. According to the Journalists Union of Turkey, *"59 journalists lost their jobs in relation to coverage of the Gezi Park protests, with 22 being fired and 37 journalists forced to resign"* (Amnesty International Gezi Report, 2013: 49, 50). Among television channels, a morning news editor at Kanalturk Serkurt Bozkurt, IHA (Ihlas News Agency) reporter Diren Selimoglu, ATV's Gokcen Ozdemir, and TRT's Ipek Tanrıyar were fired for covering the resistance. In all, 10 media workers from NTV were either forced to resign because of the oppression or left the channel voluntarily because of its broadcasting policy during the resistance. After Show TV and Skyturk360 were sold to Ciner Group,

famous anchor Ali Kirca resigned with the news department workers because of the pro-government broadcasting policy during Gezi events. Five journalists resigned from +1 Channel citing editorial intervention (Bianet, 23/10/2013). In summary, it can be said that barring a few exceptions, mainstream Turkish television stations failed to objectively broadcast the events, reflected limited independence, violated journalists' rights, and disappointed a significant segment of the society by following the existing patronage system. Their apparent intention of an artificial and manipulated agenda setting, affected the diversity and political discourses in the public sphere.

4.2.2. Newspapers

During the resistance, Turkish print media mainly followed a consistent path based on the distinction between pro-government and opposed media. To highlight this consistency in coverage, newspaper spots of 1 June can be analyzed. After riot police's dawn raid on 30 May, the streets of Istanbul and many other cities were filled with clashing protesters, and by 1 June events spread nationwide:

Pro-government media: Sabah Newspaper's main heading was "*We Would Also Close Down the Business Allowing.*" Tayyip Erdogan said these words in response to the regulation banning smoking in restaurants. Accordingly, some businesses continued to allow smoking in exchange for payment. Hence, Erdogan harshly stated that the government would not allow that either. News about Gezi Park was limited to a minor news-box with a different emphasis: "*The CHP Also Approved the Barracks Construction to Gezi Park.*" Apart from this, Sabah's perspective presents the image of an ordinary day in Istanbul and Turkey. In contrast, Star Newspaper published a Gezi-related front page heading: *"There Will Be No Shopping Malls, What Is This Violence?"* Star highlighted unnecessary clashes with the riot police and stated that the construction was only for a pedestrian project, not a shopping mall. Yeni Safak unexpectedly tried to take a neutral position and criticized both the protesters and the riot police for the outburst and for the use of force: "*Both of Them Are Excessive.*" Yeni Safak's tendencies quickly shifted into the usual pro-government style in the following days. Like Sabah, Takvim Newspaper had a minor news-box for Gezi events, and the front page had entirely different stories with emphasis on a pedophile. "*Gezi Shield*" was Takvim's spot for the events, referring to homemade gas masks. Nevertheless, Takvim summarized the events with couple of sentences, stressing that protesters also threw stones and bottles at the police. Finally, Milli Gazete took a step forward and

remained unresponsive without writing any news about the events (for details see; Newspaper Spots, in T24, 01/06/2013)

Haberturk Newspaper is supportive of the government's policies. However, during the events, unlike pro-government media groups, it avoided aggravated news making. For instance, on 1 June, instead of a front page heading, Haberturk assigned several spots to Gezi events: "*Taksim Tense Again.*" The news-box occupied a relatively small space on the front page and summarized the events in Taksim (for details see; Newspaper Spots, ibid).

Opposed Media: Cumhuriyet Newspaper used the heading "*The People Revolted*" and stressed the excessive use of police force. The entire front page was filled with detailed news about the clashes. Sol's heading was: "*The People Will Not Comply with You.*" Along with the heading, a symbolic photo of a protestor was published. Sozcu Newspaper prepared a photo journal of the clashes and published it along with the heading "*The Photo Journal of Torture and Persecution to the People.*" Expectedly, major attention was focused on police violence. Like others, its front page was covered with Gezi news and photos. Yurt's heading was "*Gezi Resistance against AKP Fascism.*" In Aydinlik, a minor spot said "Tayyip Resign," in addition to a full page dedicated to the Gezi events: "*You are not Able to Cope With us,*" was the main spot referring to Tayyip Erdogan (for details see: Newspaper Spots, ibid).

Some of the major print media houses including Radikal, Milliyet, Hurriyet, and Vatan Newspapers provided daily coverage of the Gezi events, and they can be placed somewhere between the abovementioned groups because Vatan and Milliyet neither took a pro-governmental stance nor did the severely criticize the government like the opposed media. Similarly, Radikal and Hurriyet had a critical position, but avoided fierce criticisms, while emphasizing humanitarian violations and democratic demands. Still, these newspapers, along with a few others, provided the widest coverage. In fact, the MTM's Gezi Report for newspapers between 28 May and 1 June proves that Cumhuriyet Newspaper was in the first place among coverage rates during the Gezi Park resistance. Radikal Newspaper was the second, while Milliyet and Hurriyet were placed third and fourth, respectively (Medya Radar, 01/06/2013, www.medyaradar.com).

The distinction between opposed and pro-government media continued throughout the events with an increasing divergence. It is possible to expect different interpretations from different media institutions based on their positions. However, during the Gezi process, news and comments went beyond interpretation, and the people witnessed a twofold image of Turkey. Especially, pro-government and Islamist media targeted groups, parties, and sometimes protesters with an aggravated style. A few newspapers on the opposed camp, such as Sozcu and Aydinlik, also used harsh language for criticism. For instance, on 3 June, Sabah, Star, Takvim, and Yeni Safak's spots emphasized provocation and destruction of public property. Star's interpretation of the events was; "*Militants Pretending To Protest Gezi Park Turned Istanbul into a Combat Zone.*" However, probably, the most aggravated front page belonged to Yeni Safak. The newspaper criticized protesters for "joyful destruction," accused the CHP, the main opposition party, of provocation, and claimed that protesters assaulted women wearing headscarves. Milli Gazete with a minor news-box also stressed the vandalism of the protesters. Sozcu, by contrast, criticized Erdogan for acting like a "Sultan," while Sol used the headline "*Dictator has Gone Mad*" in its spot (for details see, Newspaper Spots, in T24, 03/06/2013). Despite the blackout on mainstream television stations, a variety of Turkish newspapers faced the problem of discrimination and provocation. In fact, the Hrant Dink Foundation published a report about hate speech in the media, and according to the report, during the Gezi events, Yeni Safak was placed on the top among Turkish newspapers in terms of targeting, discrimination, insulting, and the usage of separatist language. Sabah was placed second in these regards. However, Sozcu Newspaper was placed on the top in terms of "discrimination against a group, an individual, or a political party" (Hrant Dink Foundation Report, 2013: 70, 73). During the Gezi events, the twofold nature of Turkish newspapers and separatism also became a debated issue, with the Radikal and Hurriyet Newspapers being notable exceptions. In fact, both newspapers belong to the Dogan Group, and this example also clarifies group's relative independence despite the oppression.

On 7 June, seven of the pro-government newspapers used the same spot, thus presenting an apparent example of biased publishing. Sabah, Star, Haberturk, Yeni Safak, Zaman, Bugün, and Tukiye used a spot quoted from Erdogan's speech in Tunisia: "*I Will Sacrifice My Life for Democratic Demands.*" Moreover, during the events Turkey witnessed, a significant amount of disinformation was published by pro-

government and Islamist newspapers. Islamist Akit columnist Mustafa Durdu wrote an extremely discriminative article and targeted media institutions, organizations, and even individuals while claiming to reveal the reality behind the protests. According to him, 0.1 percent of Turkey organized to overthrow the legitimized AKP government under CIA (Central Intelligence Agency)'s orders. In addition, he claimed that the protesters may even have performed group sex inside the Dolmabahce Mosque (Durdu, 05/06/2013, www.habervaktim.com). On 6 June, Sabah and ATV targeted a Serbian civil organization named OTPOR instead of CIA and claimed that the organization had planned the uprisings (Cengiz, 06/06/2013, www.al-monitor.com). On 18 June, Takvim published a fake interview with Christiane Amanpour from CNN, supposedly questioning the real intentions of CNN for broadcasting the clashes live. In this interview, Amanpour confesses that they planned and did everything to destabilize Turkey for international business interests. Takvim paradoxically published an imaginary interview with a "tree" in Gezi Park with the heading "*Oh, How Much You Suffered White Alder*" (TMMOB bulletin, ibid). Yeni Safak, with another unethical attempt, published a fake interview with famous linguist Noam Chomsky. However, it was not a particularly intelligent attempt because the newspaper simply used Google Translate to translate the alleged original text:

> "Coming from Noam Chomsky, the following sentences may look as if the famed American linguist was seeking to develop a new syntax: 'While there have been tampered with, sometimes with the Republic of Turkey won democracy. It ruled democratic elections.' Except they didn't belong to Mr. Chomsky, but to an imaginative Turkish newspaper, while the quotes appear to have been translated into English using Google's translation tool" (Wall Street Journal, 05/09/2013).

Many other examples may be presented, but simply put, barring a few exceptions; the lack of objectivity in the Turkish print media was exposed, similar to the case of the television stations. Alternative news portals such as T24 and Bianet became reliable, independent, and qualified sources along with the mainstream Radikal and Hurriyet Newspapers.

> "The failure of news outlets at Gezi Park has led to new quests and turned the focus on smaller outlets that attach more value to strong editorial content. "There was a strong reaction because for the first time, problems were exposed with such nakedness," said Doğan Akın, editor-in-chief of T24, an online news website

founded in 2009 to provide independent news coverage. 'For us, it's an opportunity. During the Gezi events, our figures quadrupled. Now we have 80,000 to 120,000 daily visitors'" (Pope, ibid).

These portals' objectivity and quality beyond any doubt was connected with their financial independence. T24's expansion is supported by readers' funds, and it does not have any connections with business companies. Hence, neither state, nor capital powers have any significant means of intervention or suppression. Chief Editor Akin and a few journalists, including veteran journalist Hasan Cemal, who was fired from Milliyet before the Gezi events, founded a platform for independent journalism named Punto24. Similarly, Bianet was launched by the IPS (Inter Press Service) Communication Foundation in 1997, and journalists Nadire Meter and Ertugrul Kurkcu took charge in 2000. The network aims to improve independent and inclusionary journalism. In the past year, Bianet has published more than 3900 voluntary contributions from various writers. It is mostly funded by the EU, and the project has never been driven by commercial interests. These two examples clearly indicate the importance of financial independence for idealistic journalism. However, in Turkey, there are very few such platforms (Pope, ibid; Ustundag, 27/04/2010, Bianet).

While independent news portals became examples of qualified journalism, just as the media workers in television stations, journalists in newspapers faced suppression, and many lost their jobs. On 23 July, Sabah Newspaper's ombudsman Yavuz Baydar was fired by the administration because of Baydar's criticisms of the daily's misinformation and censorship. In addition to Baydar, Sabah fired five journalists because of the events. Aksam Newspaper's chief editor was fired because of Gezi reporting, and former AKP Deputy Mehmet Ocaktan became the chief editor on 24 June. Soon, Aksam discharged five journalists from their positions for supporting the events and started reporting in an apparently pro-government manner. Only a week later, veteran journalist Can Dündar was fired from Milliyet for similar reasons, and two weeks later, Dündar's son, journalist Ege Dündar was fired from Milliyet. "The dismissals came in an environment where many of Turkey's most well-known and critical journalists had already been forced out of their jobs by media bosses keen to maintain positive relations with the government" (Amnesty International Gezi Report, 2013; 50). On 30 June, the Dogus Group banned the monthly historical magazine "NTV Tarih" because of the magazine's Gezi Park edition. In response, the magazine's

editors uploaded the unpublished Gezi edition to the internet (Bianet, 23/10/2013). Despite the pressure and pro-governmental disinformation, Tayyip Erdogan continued to victimize himself and target the media in his speeches:

> "They say media in Turkey is convicted, they claim that journalists are jailed. If they are jailed, how are they reporting and broadcasting so easily? Today we clearly see how the media insult, lie and publish fake news. They only aim to calumniate us" (Bianet, 23/10/2013).

As Erdogan's speech and the examples reveal, journalism in Turkey during the Gezi Park events is seen as a source of legitimization of state authority and denied whenever their cause was not satisfied.

4.2.3. Global Media

The Turkish media's blackout during the first days of the resistance led many audiences to seek alternative sources for live footage. Global media became one of these sources. Throughout the clashes, many veteran journalists and media channels broadcast live footage from Istanbul and other major Turkish cities. In addition, dailies such as the Guardian and New York Times enabled live blogs for instant updates, thereby helping the protesters gain worldwide attention. Global media coverage of the events, especially in the first week of the resistance, exceeded local coverage. While many Turkish mainstream channels presented the events as evening news only, a Norwegian channel VG TV broadcast live footage of the events all night long between 30 May and 2 June. Starting from the first day, Al Jazeera broadcast daily live coverage, highlighting the use of excessive force and violence against environmentalist protesters. In addition, Al Jazeera established a live blog for news updates (for details see; http://blogs.aljazeera.com/liveblog/topic/turkey-protests-20176). Similar to Al Jazeera, through live broadcasts, BBC and CNN showcased the violence and the evolution of the protests into an anti-government explosion. German television channel ZDF announced the uprising with "*The Turks we called barbarians are fighting for the environment, and if Turks ever fight, things change*" heading. The Guardian, with reference to the Arab Spring, emphasized anti-government reaction and used the heading "*Protests in Istanbul are seeding Turkish Spring.*" Moreover, the New York Times compared Taksim Square with Cairo's Tahrir Square, and expressed that while religious segments in Turkey supported Erdogan and the AKP regime, secular segments were in discomfort because of Erdogan's intolerant acts and authoritarianism. Financial

Times and France 24 also commented on the anti-government explosion and emphasized the former anti-democratic regulations of the AKP (Radikal Newspaper, 31/05/2013).

Global media's wide coverage of the events continued until the end of street clashes, and the Gezi Park resistance became a major issue in the global discourse. On 2 June and 4 June, the New York Times and the Washington Post, respectively, published editorials about brutal police interventions and criticized Erdogan for his authoritarian and uncompromising attitudes (New York Times, 02/06/2013; The Washington Post, 04/06/2013). The British and the French print media published daily news updates, presenting detailed coverage of the clashes and political actions. These newspapers mainly adopted a critical stance, and for instance, on 14 June, the Guardian and the Independent published research on the conservative district of Istanbul with the title: "*Tear Gas is not enough. If I was the ruler, I would use guns against protesters in Taksim Square*." The dailies stressed that as the protests spread in the form of street clashes, they began to lose legitimacy among the conservative segments of the Turkish society. The French media afforded wide coverage to discussions and analyses of the events, but mainly, the commentary focused on comparing the protests to the 1968 movement. However, a few individuals such as the intellectual Bernard Levy interpreted the events as "Turkish Spring" and stated that Erdogan's myth of being the smiling face of Islamism had ended. Moreover, he claimed that Erdogan has never been the leader of human rights and state of law, but that he was accepted given his relevance to the "realpolitik" order of the West (TUSIAD Report, 2013; 3-8).

Picture 20: The famour penguins: CNN International and CNN Turk broadcasts on 2 June 2013 (Oda TV, http://www.odatv.com/n.php?n=iste-sansurun-fotografi-0206131200).

As mentioned in the previous section, CNN International and BBC World surpassed many Turkish channels in the number of broadcasting hours. CNN's senior international correspondent Ivan Watson probably became one of the most famous figures from the global media because even as the Turkish media was silent, Watson, from the heart of the conflicts and despite the challenging conditions, covered the events to a greater extent than any Turkish reporter did (For details see: http://edition.cnn.com/video/data/2.0/video/international/2013/06/01/istanbul-clashes.cnn.html). Especially, interventions such as those on 11 and 15 June attracted the global media's attention, and live coverage increased. On 12 June, Tayyip Erdogan's chief advisor, Ibrahim Kalin spoke to Christiane Amanpour from CNN and the interview became one of the most-watched videos and a social media phenomenon when Amanpour ended the interview by saying to Kalin; "the show is over, sir." On 15 and 16 June CNN, BBC and Al Jazeera broadcasted live footage of the evacuation of Gezi Park. Reuters and AFP conducted interviews with park residents and stressed the relentless intervention and side-effects of tear gas. Many of the reporters expressed that the intervention was surprising, because it was held only a day before Erdogan's Istanbul rally (CNN, 11/06/2013; Internet Haber, 16/06/2013, www.internethaber.com). In fact, in the Istanbul "Respect to National Will" rally, Erdogan accused local and global media of disinformation and conspiracy:

> "Come now, BBC, CNN, and Reuters. You produced fake news for days. You created a fake image of Turkey, you manipulatively aired the events. I am calling on the organized foreign and Turkish media; be honest for the sake of media ethics." (Bianet, 23/10/2013).

On 25 June Ankara Mayor Melih Gokcek started a campaign on Twitter with "#stoplyingCNN" hashtag and accused the channel of making false and manipulative broadcast. He earlier stated: "*God willing we will teach someone (referring CNN) a good lesson, they will regret the invention of Twitter*" (T24, 25/03/2013). In this sense, the government's attitudes to global media reflected a similar pattern. The skepticism of government officials and the AKP's voter base was apparent; but for the demonstrators, the information flow through global media was appreciated and used throughout the resistance.

4.3. Social Media and Gezi Park

Until a decade ago, the concept of media was much more traditional than the current meaning. Televisions, journals, magazines, and the radio were the major means of communication. No one would have actually visualized the internet and its variations as potential media sources and agenda setters. However, our technologically advanced era has achieved something beyond expectations and altered the concept of the media because at the global scale, the technological developments not only triggered an economic transformation but also introduced an individualist and dynamic media. This

is known mainly as social media. Blogs, interactive websites, forums, and even current smartphones are the basic components of the new media. This structure enables instant sharing of information, images, opinions, and debates about almost everything. In addition, it generates a massive worldwide network, and thus, McLuhan's global village concept is experienced everyday in various ways.

> "H. Marshall McLuhan believed that the 'linking of electronic information would create an interconnected global village' by collapsing communication space and time barriers thus enabling people to interact and live on a global scale… The globalization of the media, characterized by the internationalization of television programming, worldwide internet access, and cell phone technology, has indeed connected the world in an unprecedented manner" (Walkosz et.al, 2008: 2).

It is not clear whether McLuhan foresaw the current improved networks, however social media clearly provide a global community, and as the scope within communication enlarges the meaning of the information and daily agenda breaks away from its traditional sense. Kaplan and Haenlein's findings explain the dimensions of these new communities:

> "As of January 2009, the online social networking application Facebook registered more than 175 million active users. To put that number in perspective, this is only slightly less than the population of Brazil (190 million) and over twice the population of Germany (80 million)! At the same time, every minute, 10 hours of content were uploaded to the video sharing platform YouTube. And, the image hosting site Flickr provided access to over 3 billion photographs, making the world-famous Louvre Museum's collection of 300,000 objects seem tiny in comparison" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010: 59).

Following these findings, Kaplan and Haenlein define social media as "*a group of internet based applications*" in which the audience or the users can contribute and interact with each other directly. Their perception of social media has its roots on the 'Web 2.0' and 'user generated content' concepts. "*Web 2.0 was used first in 2004 to describe a new way in which software developers started to utilize the World Wide Web: that is, as a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created, instead are continuously modified by all users.*" This paved the way for the ideological and technological basis of user generated content, which can today be seen in the way people use social media (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010: 61).

In this sense, as a brand new field, social media affected communication sciences and with the possibilities it possesses, attracted social scientists in a major way. For political scientists, social media is an important field within political participation and engagement. New social network platforms such as Facebook and Twitter enhanced *"means for the provision of political information, and in this way almost unlimited access to different voices and feedback between leaders and followers are established."* (Şen, 2012: 490). The new or social media provide new forums for the development of interest groups and the formation of public opinion. Because social media users can instantly be informed about every kind of activity of others, they may follow political debates and agendas and even join online discussions that afford direct political interaction at different levels. A brief evaluation of the advantages of social media is as follows. First, social media eases to access information, which is always one click away in the medium. The access is open to all at all times irrespective of location. Such a situation generates an independent exchange of information, and information itself regains its value. Second, the costs are low owing to limitless information access at the global scale, thus minimizing capital-based and other external interference. Finally, the interactive structure of social media—as described above—generates a unique dynamic (Logan, 2007, www.pbs.org).

4.3.1. Facebook, Eksi Sozluk and Twitter

Social media has become an essential constituent of our lives. Turkish society's connection to social media is also very significant because a wide range of data suggests that rates of social media usage in Turkey are very high. In fact, an analysis revealed that Turkey is placed on the second rank after the U.S.A in social media use. Specifically, Turkey has world's leading Twitter use rates. According to the data, 45 percent of the country's population uses social media. Among these users, the top-rated social platforms are Facebook (93%), Twitter (70%). In terms of numbers, more than 35 million people in Turkey use the Internet and 36 million have active Facebook accounts (including fake accounts). Turkey spends 10.2 h/month on social media and is placed fourth on the world list. Thirty-nine percent of Turkey's Internet users are between ages 15 and 24 years, 31 percent are between ages 23 and 34 years. Overall, 70 percent of the Internet users are under age 34 years, and among them, 94.5 percent of them have an account with at least one social website (Algul and Ucer, 2013: 22; Kartal, 2013: 163; Ntvmsnbc, 08/11/2013, www.ntvmsnbc.com). Aside from the

widespread use of social media in Turkey, the Gezi Park events evolved the meaning and function of social media. Mainstream Turkish media's approach to the events affected the use of social media, and the people turned toward social media in need of an independent and informative platform.

Twitter and Facebook were major sources of information about the resistance. Structurally, Facebook enabled the sharing of multiple photos, messages, and videos, while Twitter acted as a platform for public critique and mobilization. However, Facebook's contribution to the process and public critique was also crucial. For instance, numerous collective groups were formed on Facebook, which instantly shared videos, photos, live coverage, and analyses: "Diren Gezi Parkı" (645,000 likes), "Taksim Gezi Parkı Dernegi (association)" (95,000 likes), and "Gezi Parkı Gerçekleri" (The truth about Gezi Park) (21,000 likes) were among the popular ones. In fact, "Diren Gezi Park's" caption was: *The group shares updated news, those neglected by the mainstream media, informing and molding public opinion during and after the Gezi Park events.* The group's shares during the resistance were re-shared instantly by more than 2000 on average. Sometimes, this number increased to 30–40,000, depending on the content. Likes and comments were accumulated at similar rates, and every like, share, or comment by a user was automatically shared with that user's friend list, thus leading to the generation of a massive network. About 2000 people debated on Taksim Gezi Parkı Dernegi's page, and the group shared 53 percent of resistance photos. The third group aimed to reveal the truth behind manipulated news, and in addition to photos, it shared 27 videos. Around 220,000 people talked and debated on the group's page (Yenicikti, 2013: 276, 278; for details see: https://www.facebook.com/geziparkidirenisi). There are more than 10 Gezi Park group pages on Facebook, all of which worked as alternative media sources during the resistance. Even today, many of them keep serving updated news about Turkey and other significant global events. "Gezi Park Direnisi Boykot Listesi" (Gezi Park resistance boycott list) is another interesting page worth noting. Even though this group is not very active any more, during the resistance, it served as a platform for boycott mobilization. Turkish commercial brands, food chains, products of conglomerates, and even banks were listed during the resistance, depending upon their acts and relations with the government. Boycotting such institutions was a major public movement during the resistance. Probably, the most significant example is Dogus Group's Garanti Bank

because its boycott was one of the biggest campaigns in the resistance. In response to Dogus Media's pro-government silence, people began to make calls of "we are closing our Garanti Bank accounts" through social media. Quickly, a Facebook group was established, and on 2 June, mainly via Twitter, people started the #garantiboykot and #garantidenparanıcek (remove your money from Garanti) campaigns (# = hashtag, a symbol used in conjunction with a keyword on Twitter to indicate messages related to the same topic). In a day, the boycott became a trending topic on Twitter, and on 4 June, Garanti Bank's manager Ergun Ozen made a statement saying he was a "chapuller," too, and that even though he respected the people's choices, the boycott affected the bank's workers. Protesters reacted harshly to Ozen's statements and the campaign proceeded. Interestingly, the AKP base as well boycotted the Dogus Group and Garanti Bank with the #boykotbaşlıyor (boycott begins) hashtag. Because of the boycott, Garanti bank lost 40 million liras in deposit money and more than 1500 customer accounts (Gercek Gundem, 04/06/2013; Twitter, #boykotbaşlıyor).

As the Garanti Bank example shows, social media calls had a great potential for inflicting political and economical effects. Numerous boycott campaigns started during the resistance. For instance, "Kizilkayalar" was one of the oldest and most popular buffets in Taksim. For years, as a tradition, many people had snacks in Kizilkayalar after weekend night outs. During the resistance, on 31 May, the workers refused to sell products to protesters saying "we do not sell to you." Moreover, the buffet closed its doors when protesters and ordinary citizens were looking for shelter from tear gas attacks. However, the worst came from Twitter. One of the managing partners, Servet Kizilkaya, posted a tweet saying, *"This place is full of curs and dogs, I am an artisan for 35 years, but god willing! Turkey will clean intestines; we will live in a Muslim country."* The reaction was instant and severe and quickly spread with the #kizilkayalarboykot hashtag. In a few days, the Kizilkayalar management apologized to the protesters and declared that they had ended their partnership with Servet Kizilkaya (Milliyet Newspaper, 09/06/2013; Eksi Sozluk, https://eksisozluk.com/kizilkayalar-hamburgeri-boykot--3866391).

In addition to Twitter and Facebook, "Eksi Sozluk" (sour dictionary), a very popular and effective Turkish website, was the third social media platform used in Turkey for debates as well as developing and improving agendas. It looks like a user-interpreted Wikipedia without any mandatory rules. Users are allowed to express their

views about any idea, event, individual, or situation by articulating their ideas through as little as a word or a sentence, but they are required to cite sources and examples for their entries. Most entries were sarcastic, but like the Gezi resistance revealed the dictionary had a clear effect and qualification as a source of information. It assisted social media mobilizations such as boycott calls and informed the society with photos,

Picture 22: Examples of Facebook Gezi Park groups (for details see; Facebook, www.facebook.com)

videos, blogs, etc., about ongoing and hidden events. In addition to the Garanti Bank and the Kizilkayalar examples, Eksi Sozluk organized many campaigns and assisted the resistance. Moreover, it influenced public opinion and introduced new sarcastic definitions. For instance, many writers on Eksi sozluk named Ferit Sahenk as "Damat Ferit," an Ottoman grand vizier who was married to the sister of the sultan and earned the title "Damat" (groom). Damat Ferit is known for his struggle against Turkish independence, and for many, it is Ferit Sahenk's nickname (for details see; Eksi Sozluk, https://eksisozluk.com/ferit-sahenk--200354?focusto=40369147; and https://eksisozluk.com/damat-ferit-pasa--220943). Eksi Sozluk is the oldest widespread social media source, and it currently has more than 20 million entries with over 3 million titles. Among these entries, 4.5 million entries are from the year 2013. There is a clear Gezi Park effect, because second top year in terms of number of entries is 2011 with 2.9 million entries. The other years since the establishment of the platform have recorded 1–1.5 million entries on average. Moreover, there are approximately 1000

different titles for Gezi entries (Eksi Sozluk, https://eksisozluk.com/istatistik/genel-istatistikler). "Recep Tayyip Erdogan" and "28 May Gezi Park Resistance" are among the top titles in the dictionary. The first title has almost 95,00 entries, and "28 May Gezi Park Resistance" has almost 40,000 entries (Eksi Sozluk, https://eksisozluk.com/28-mayis-2013-taksim-gezi-parki-direnisi--3848834; https://eksisozluk.com/recep-tayyip-erdogan--95281?p=2), in addition to entries associated with various other Gezi-related titles.

It is possible to evaluate Twitter as the primary mobilization and debate platform of the resistance. Even Tayyip Erdogan himself denounced Twitter as "trouble":

> "There is a trouble that is called Twitter. It is full of lies and exaggerations. What people call social media, according to me is the headache of societies… This is how a society is terrorized" (Bianet, 23/10/2013).

Even though Tayyip Erdogan's perceptions of social media depended upon disinformation, his frequent references to social media point out its significant potential for public influence. Social media sources such as Twitter, Facebook, and Eksi Sozluk mainly provide a genuine public sphere in which flow of debates and information is beyond control. The Garanti Bank and Kizilkayalar examples constitute only a minor part of this potential. Social media led to dissemination of information about the interventions and clashes among users and enabled critical reasoning because these sources became the major communication platform, at both the local and global scales. Social media monitoring center Somemto presented a brief analysis of Twitter's effect on the Gezi resistance with numbers. According to the data, the first significant finding is the increase in the number of Twitter users. Active Twitter users numbered around 1 million on 29 May, and this number increased significantly to 5.5 million on 2 June and further to 9.5 million by 10 June. On 1 June, which may be considered as the first day of collective resistance, around 19 million tweets were posted. After 3 June, on average, 9.8 million tweets were posted per day. The most popular hashtags are listed in Table 3 below (Kuzuluoglu, 19/06/2013, Radikal).

Table 3: Twitter hashtags in numbers (Radikal Newspaper, 19/06/2013)

Hashtag	Number of Use
#direngeziparkı (resist Gezi Park)	2.140.709
#direngezipark(i) (resist Gezi Park)	1.611.029
#direnankara (resist Ankara)	1.114.267
#occupygezi	846.020

#direngaziparki (resist ghazi park)	617.384
#sesvertürkiyebuülkesahipsizdeğil	
(response Turkey, this country is not abondened)	589.118
#direnizmir (resist Izmir)	438.813
#tayyipistifa (Tayyip resign)	403.050
#direnbesiktas (resist Besiktas)	382.252

Table 4: Twitter activities with hashtags between 22 May and 16 June (Banko and Babaoglan, 2013; 22)
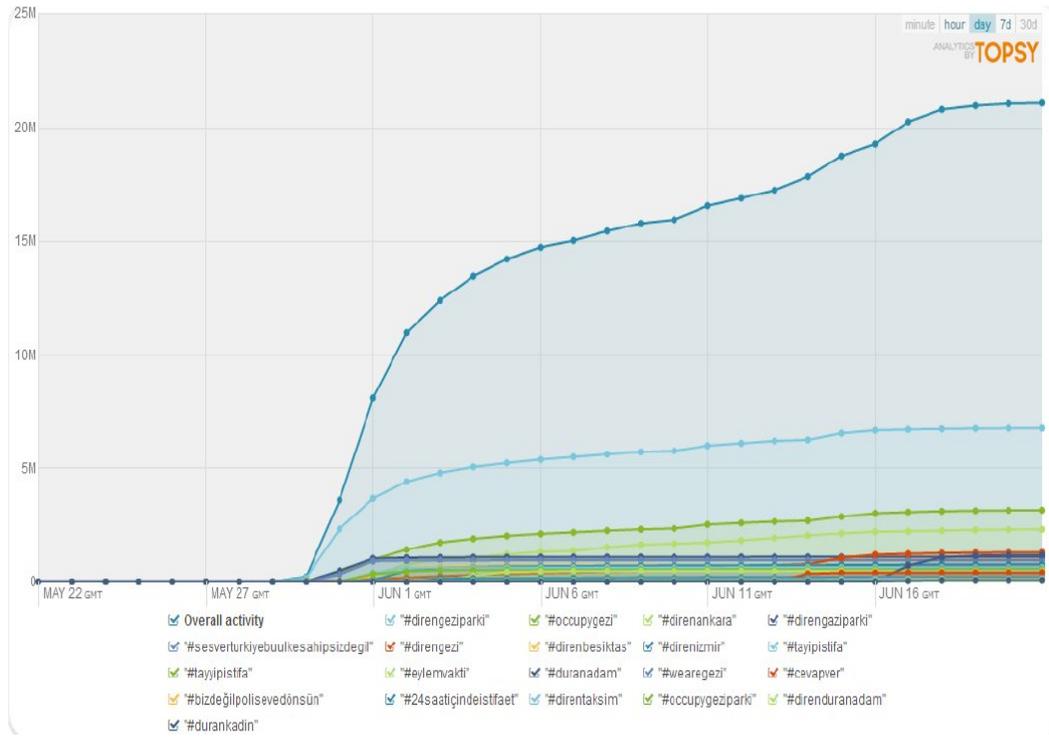
Numerous researches were conducted about Twitter activities because Twitter use during the resistance became a phenomenon beyond doubt. As mentioned in the media coverage part, mainstream media's ignorance enhanced this effect. Konda Research Center surveyed the profiles of the protesters, and as a part of the survey, the respondents were asked for the source of their information based on which they joined the protests. Sixty-nine percent of the respondents replied "social media," while only 7 percent replied television stations (Milliyet Newspaper, 13/06/2013).

"What is unique about this particular case is how Twitter is being used to spread information about the demonstrations from the ground. Unlike some other recent uprisings, around 90% of all geolocated tweets are coming from within Turkey, and 50% from within Istanbul (see map below). In comparison, Starbird

(2012) estimated that only 30% of those tweeting during the Egyptian revolution were actually in the country. Additionally, approximately 88% of the tweets are in Turkish, which suggests the audience of the tweets is other Turkish citizens and not so much the international community" (Tucker, 01/06/2013, The Monkey Cage).

Table 5: Tweets per minutes on 31 May (Tucker, 01/06/2013, The Monkey Cage)
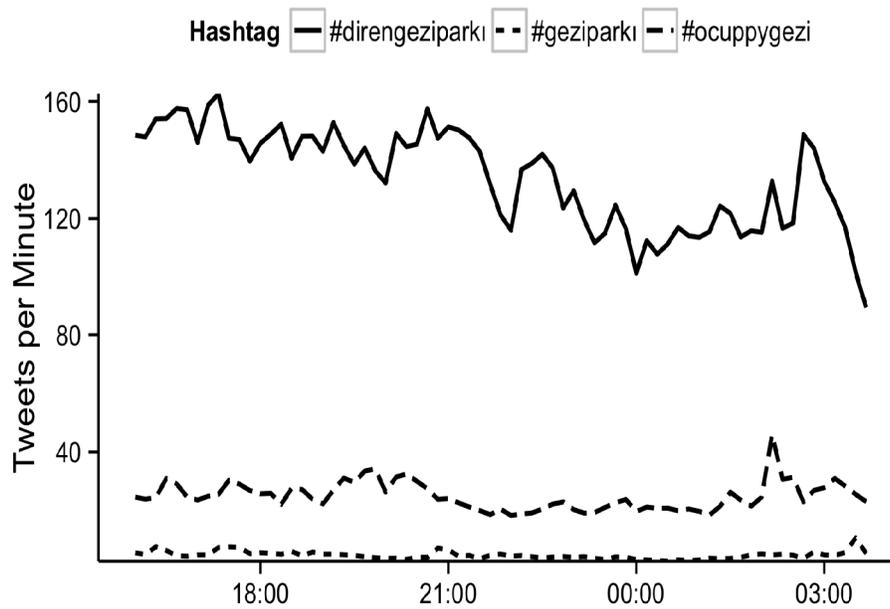
In fact, 16.3 million from a total of 24 million tweets concerning the resistance were posted from within Turkey. In order, Germany, England, Canada, and Holland posted the top-rated international tweets. Using Facebook and Twitter, activists worldwide began to support the Gezi Park resistance with demonstrations. Starting from 1 June, people from all around the world organized protests and shared their supportive photos via Facebook and Twitter. It was a genuine example of solidarity from the U.S.A, U.K., Spain, Germany, Austria, Belgium, Italy, Hungary, Taiwan, and many other countries. International hacker group Anonymous declared that they would support the Turkish resistance and, in conjunction with Turkish hacker group Redhack, they organized cyber attacks on the websites of the Turkish Presidency, Istanbul Police Department, and the AKP. In addition to collective solidarity, significant individual protests spread through social media, too. As can be seen from picture 24, an individual

protester is trying to attract public attention toward the Gezi Park violence with an unusual method. A number of such examples can be provided, but the conclusion is that social media, in addition to global media coverage, established global awareness and solidarity (Everywhere Taksim, 04/10/2013).

Table 6: Overall tweet proportion (Tucker, ibid).
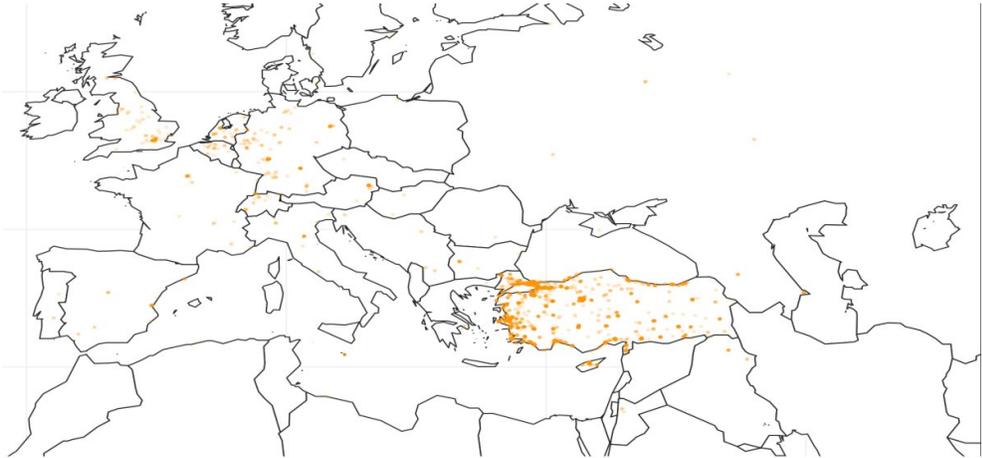
Picture 23: Berlin subway "Turkish Police Don't Kill Me" (http://twicsy.com/i/PisXVd)

During the resistance, protesters and supporters informed one another of requirement lists, mobilization calls, and warned against detentions. They announced

the names of detainees, and many voluntary lawyers offered legal assistance to said detainees. They asked help for injuries and were directed to infirmaries. In severe clashes, they recorded footage and photos, and shared them via Facebook, Twitter, or Ekşi Sözlük. Nothing remained hidden and the consciousness for solidarity was very significant. Boycotts continued throughout the resistance, and they became one of the most effective nationwide collective reactions. Apart from government and security forces, the protesters reacted and boycotted Turkish media the most. Social media users even tried to encourage citizens to turn off their TVs, and some users even shared sarcastic photos of tables and chairs made of televisions. The hashtag #bugüntelevizyonlarıkapat (turn off the TV's today) was used in more than 50,000 tweets by 2 June (Tucker, ibid). In fact, all types of calls were organized and spread through social media. One of the most famous ones was #1milyonyarıntaksime (1 million people in Taksim tomorrow) in response to the Gezi Park evacuation. The rally was organized by the Taksim Solidarity and instantly shared by thousands on Twitter. On 16 June, people responded to this call and gathered in Besiktas. Against the Taksim solidarity's call, the AKP voter base posted another topic called #bugünbirmilyonkazlıçeşmeye (1 million people to Kazlicesme today) for Erdogan's Istanbul rally. During the resistance, AKP voters and Gezi protestors raced with one another for trending topics and debatin them. Overall, around 60 million tweets were posted throughout the events (Banko and Babaoglan, 2013: 20). Similar to Tayyip Erdogan's sentiments about social media, government officials often stressed the need for future regulation. As party Spokesman Huseyin Celik in a TV program stated:

> "We do not reject the norms of the civilized world, but surely a regulation is needed for social media. The visual and print media have their own ethics and everyone is required to follow these principles. Virtual media should also have such principles" (Bianet, 23/10/2013).

In fact, new legislation was approved in February 2014 which tightened the state's grip on the Internet. "*The legislation allows Turkey's telecommunications authority (TIB) to block websites without first obtaining a court order. With a complaint filed for breach of "privacy of persons", TIB has the power to order the blocking of a URL, which will be carried out by Internet service providers within four hours*" (Al Jazeera, 25/02/2014). Today around 30 thousand websites are banned in Turkey (Bozkurt, 2013: 58). The state's efforts in dominating the Internet to some

extent reveal the impact of the social media on Gezi Park protests. A few examples of Twitter mobilization and reporting are presented below.

Picture 24: "*Urgent, oxygen tubes and tincture of iodine are required for Divan Hotel!! Let's spread!*" (Twitter, 16/06/2013).

Picture 25: "*Ercan Tatı and Aziz Kocaoğlu shouted their names when taken into custody, please RT urgently (retweet) until their families are informed.*" (Twitter, 16/06/2013)

Picture 26: The first tweet of the Gezi protests: "*Dozers are trying to enter Gezi Park from Divan Hotel entrance to demolish the park. We are calling on everyone to resist the demolition.*" (Eksi Sozluk, https://eksisozluk.com/gezi-parki-direnisine-ait-ilk-tweet--4275087)

Picture 27: An example of the boycott call by Etiler park forum: "*We are not going to shopping malls.*" (Twitter, #boykotbaşlıyor, 15/06/2013)

Picture 28: The unlawful actions of riot police revealed at Divan Hotel (Twitter, 16/06/2013)

Although the social media's limitless basis encourages a widespread communication network, the potential of disinformation occurs as a downside. As distinct from the traditional media, social media's possibilities prevent the establishment of a proper control mechanism. Consequently, during Gezi events, there has been some

disinformation at the height of tensions. Either the users were mistaken or deliberately they planted disinformation. Several examples may clarify the scope of the matter.

On the night of 31 May as the events spread, on Twitter and Facebook people began to share misleading information based on an alleged EU legislation. According to this, after 24 hours of uprisings the government supposedly would be overthrown by the EU decision. Even a Turkish journalist, Yilmaz Ozdil who is oppositional to the AKP government, shared this on Twitter and only instantly the post was retweeted by more than 7 thousand people. It is controversial whether Ozdil intentionally spread disinformation, however once the news is shared, it is almost impossible to control it. Groundless allegations were presented in diversified subjects. For instance the famous "woman in red" was accused of being an actress, a fake symbol of the resistance. Allegedly the Reuters's photo was taken in a studio during a commercial shooting, which was clearly deceptive. Especially during the first days, lots of photos and videos of police interventions have been shared through the social media. One of them was a brutal injury of a man lying on a stretcher. The caption of the photo was "*water cannon run over the man*", however after a day it was discovered that the photo originally belonged to a motor boat accident. Similarly the accusation of "*protesters have drunken beer on the mosque*" was supported by a photo of protesters in Dolmabahce Mosque, while allegedly one of them was holding a can beer. Soon after it was proven that the protester only had a can of coke (for details see: Cetin, 02/08/2013, http://www.insanhaber.com/insan-ozel/gezi-surecinde-sosyal-medya-dezenformasyonlari-h19149.html).

As the examples reveal, planting disinformation was one of the problems encountered during the events. Disinformation feeds the tension and increases polarization. Luckily most of them were revealed and clarified; however it is possible to evaluate disinformation as the major issue of social media use. Apart from this problem, social media proved to have a significant potential in organization and communication during Gezi Park events. Based on the findings within this chapter, it is also possible to claim that the social media have altered the traditional public sphere of the mainstream media throughout the resistance, but the argument will be clarified in the final chapter.

4.3.2. Citizen Journalism

Citizen journalism refers to unofficial journalist activities by citizens. This notion was not exclusively developed with social media. However, its meaning and scope have

grown with the advent of social media. Citizens mainly use the Internet and certain websites, blogs, or forums to inform others or to attract audience attention toward specific topics. In most cases, citizen journalists narrate the untold or post content that has not been yet broadcast on mass media. (Goode, 2009: 1288). The Gezi Park resistance witnessed citizen journalism, and along with social media platforms, it became an essential source of information flow. Using the news outlets on social media, people launched blogs, journals, radio stations, and even TV stations. Gezi Postası (Daily Gezi Journal), Radio Gezi, RevoltIstanbul (livestream), Gezi Parkı TV (wordpress), and Çapul TV were major examples of citizen journalism, and they formed the alternative media of Gezi Park (Bianet, 26/10/2013).

Gezi Postası was the daily journal of Gezi events, and its first edition was published on 8 June. It was free and available online via a website. The community established in Gezi Park founded its own media, and Gezi Postası was one of the significant ones. The writers were protesters. Hence, the magazine was prepared and published collectively. Volunteer contributors were organized through the social platform "Friendfeed," and they were from diverse backgrounds. Daily requirements, demands of park residents, and park events were their major news items. Gezi Postası has 14 editions (for details see: Gazete Gezi Postası, (http://gazetegezipostasi.blogspot.com.tr/).

Like Gezi Postası, Radio Gezi (FM 101.9) started broadcasting on 8 June. On the first day, residents set the equipments of the radio on a tree, and Radio Gezi continued broadcasting from 10 am to 8 pm, until the evacuation of Gezi Park. Interviews with workers and residents, daily debates about the resistance, future of the occupation, and democratic demands were among the topics broadcast (Radikal, 09/06/2013; http://geziradyo.org/).

Students of the cinema department launched Gezi Parkı TV as an independent platform. They recorded more than 180 residents' statements and published without montage on their website. People of diverse backgrounds—adults, children, educated, and non-educated—were included in the videos. The maximum length of the videos was 7 minutes and until mid-July they uploaded footage twice a day. One of the founders said: "*7 minutes may seem long, but... people are fed up with the existing order, so t they are evaluating, questioning events and stating their demands without hesitation. At the end, I heard many saying 'Yes, I am relieved. People needed*

independent platforms of public debates.'" After the evacuation of the park, voluntary journalists continued to report public opinion on the street and especially in park forums (Radikal, 09/06/2013; http://geziparkitv.wordpress.com/).

RevoltIstanbul has the motto "what's up media" and continues broadcasting via livestream. Livestream provides a worldwide broadcasting platform. Basically, the servers of the channel are not limited to Turkey, and therefore, it is not possible to delete the data. RevoltIstanbul is an open-to-all station because anyone with a smartphone or a tablet can upload footage to the channel easily. Therefore, everyone with a suitable technological device may become a reporter for the channel. For instance, this channel broadcast live footage during the memorial of Hrant Dink on 19 January 2014, and the channel is directly connected with Twitter and Facebook. During the resistance, many protesters in conflict zones recorded the events and shared them with others via the RevoltIstanbul base (Revolt Istanbul, http://www.livestream.com/revoltistanbul).

Çapul TV (Chapuller TV) started broadcasting on 6 June with assistance from the Sendika.org team and other volunteers. Sendika.org is a worker's movement-based news site. Çapul TV manifests the aim of fighting against commercialized information. In this sense, their understanding seeks the establishment of an alternative and independent form of communication. As the team states: "*We intended to witness the resistance and help others to see the events without manipulation. We seek to understand and reveal the demands, feelings and experiences of the resisters.*" In addition to television, they funded a radio station. With sendika.org, Çapul TV continues to tweet and broadcast about political and social occurrences in Turkey (Çapul TV, http://capul.tv/hakkimizda/).

In addition to Gezi media, there were numerous blogs and interactive websites that collected and published information, photos, videos, and analyses. Some of them are as follows: Everywhere Taksim, Occupy Gezi Tumblr, and Direnis Gunlugu. Everywhere Taksim was designed and launched by a group of people including students, activists, academics, artists, intellectuals and workers. Even though the group's foundation was spurred by the anti-democratic interventions and violations during the Gezi resistance, they continue to publish, primarily, local and global news, analyses, and articles about democracy and human rights (for details see; http://everywheretaksim.net/category/news/).

"We are here to reaffirm that the freedom of thought and expression, and the differences in opinions are essential in any democratic society. We are here to remind the Turkish Government its obligations under international law to respect human rights, including but not limited to women's rights, LGBTQ rights, minority rights and the right to a sustainable environment…We also condemn the silence of the mainstream media. While we are following the news through social media and foreign news agencies, the silence of Turkey's mainstream media is astonishing as well as extremely concerning. The people of Turkey have a right to see and know the extent of the events, which include thousands of people" for details see; http://everywheretaksim.net/category/news/).

There are also a variety of photos and videos in different categories: Gezi resistance, police brutality, Gezi commune, Gezi solidarity, etc. #Occupygezi Tumblr is more of a visual source, with hundreds of photos and videos of resistance. Most visuals reveal worrisome injuries due to interventions and police brutality. The database of the website provides a variety of visual documents (for details see; http://occupygezipics.tumblr.com/). Direnis Gunlugu, in contrast, provides a chorological summary of the events and clashes. It was voluntarily established by visual artists Berkay Daglar and Sinan Ascioglu. The blog is interactive and displays satellite maps that provide additional information about the districts and events in Turkey (for details see; http://www.direnisgunlugu.com/). All the aforementioned platforms are valuable sources of Gezi documents, and they have been established by voluntary protesters. Along with the Gezi media, these websites clearly show how social media and the associated new technologies create independent communication platforms.

Delilim Var (I have evidence) is similarly an interactive social website, designed and developed by the users. Like #occupygezi, it is supported by the worldwide blog site Tumblr. Delilim Var, as the name reveals, aimed to collect evidence for unjust interventions and actions. Protesters mainly shared videos and photos, and the blog provided a limitless network for individual contribution. Over 200 photos and videos in total were uploaded by users by 15 June. The blog is still accessible, but it has been a passive blog since 15 June, serving as an archive for visual sources (Delilim Var, http://delilimvar.tumblr.com/page/1).

The Turkish experience of citizen journalism was a widespread phenomenon of the Gezi Park events. Social media, as a means, enabled a significant amount of individual contributions. Protesters across the country provided diverse information, more than any media institutions. As a downside, it is possible to talk about information pollution, which may also be linked to disinformation. But as an overall effect, even though the use of websites and blogs were not as widespread as phenomenal social media sources like Twitter and Facebook, citizen journalism became an important source of information among protesters and a genuine experience in communication.

5. EVALUATION OF THE FINDINGS

This work in a broad sense aimed to present the emergence of social media as a new public sphere during the Gezi Park protests. The impact of social media was partially in correlation with the decline of the traditional public sphere linked to the mainstream Turkish media. As a result the protests were organized and mobilized through social media and became widespread. In addition, the social media enabled an independent platform for collective action and reaction. In order to present a comprehensive insight for the increasing anti-government mobilization, the AKP's conservative democratic identity, its ambiguities and emerging problems connected to governance have been analyzed; as the thesis discusses, the Gezi Park uprisings exposed the frustrations of an important segment within Turkish society. The AKP government's increasing authoritarian and conservative tendencies, its oppression of opposition groups, interference in private lives, anti-democratic, and unjust regulations resulted in a flare-up in society, which was observed and discussed during the resistance. In fact, the protesters' reaction to the AKP government often affected the debates related to the mainstream media's insufficient coverage of events, because the debates were linked either to the existing patronage system or to the government oppression. As analyzed, the media's silence and the government's dismissal lead protesters to using social media; throughout the process, the unlimited inclusion and ability to contribute allowed social media to serve as a major communication platform for the protesters. The availability of instant communication helped in debates and in organization to take place at short notice.

The content analysis and statistical data in the fourth section of the thesis provide evidence of the above claims; however, for a deeper analysis, in this section the results of interviews conducted with 20 interviewees will be presented.

The interviewees were chosen from various educational levels and professions. Among the 20 interviewees, 11 people supported and joined the Gezi Park protests; 7 of them neither supported, nor joined. 1 interviewee stated that he supported the protests at the beginning, but he was became opposed to them later on; another 1 stated the opposite—that she didn't offer support at the beginning but after some time she did. Neither of them individually joined the protests. All interviewees were asked about their political views; the proportion of political division consists broadly of left and

right wings. Specifically the right-wing respondents mainly preferred to define themselves as religious. A simple list of preferences was presented whenever the people seemed puzzled about their political identity. The list consisted of left/right, liberal/conservative, secular/anti-secular, religious, and nationalist selections. The 'religious' choice was included intentionally in order to understand whether the right wing's political preferences were shaped by religious sensitivities. As previously in part 2, Turkish society's conservative segments sometimes exclude an ideology's political content and use a much more subjective understanding. Such an understanding correlates with the morality of religion. The left segments mainly preferred 'left' as their political ideology without an elaborated definition. 'Secularism' was the second most chosen identity, but 2 of the respondents without hesitation defined themselves as social democrats. Finally, 1 interviewee stated that he didn't have any kind of political identity and only believed in 'the truth.' As can be seen in the table below, political backgrounds are divided based on the respondents' support of the Gezi protests. With one exception, while the left-wing interviewees stated that they supported the Gezi Park protests, the right-wingers clearly stressed that they did not. Two of the right interviewees explained that their support was based on certain conditions, as explained above. A higher proportion of the overall interviewees stated that they had not joined civil protests before. Specifically, 6 among 11 people had not individually joined movements until Gezi Park. The numbers present an insight into the unexpected collective mobility, because, as mentioned in the previous section, the events started as a peaceful environmentalist protest, but evolved into something wider.

Once again it must be noted that, the interviews do not claim to present expertise and to take the place of opinion polls. The opinions of diversified segments that might be representative of the various strains of Turkish socities were investigated and hence, in addition to the previous findings they give a comprehensive insight for the subject matter and aim to exhibit differentiatied attitudes.

The evaluation of the interviews was developed on the basis of three categories. These categories were designed to discuss the findings of the thesis and additionally to clarify the hypotheses:

1. Motivations behind the support for and opposition to Gezi Park protests

2. Approaches to the mainstream media and coverage

3. The impact of social media

Table 7: The profiles of the interviewees (see the Appendix: Interviews)

Gender	Age	Profession	Political View	Joined Civil Protests Before?	Supported Gezi Park?	Educational Level
Male	22	Worker	Right	No	Yes	High Sch.
Male	38	Journalist	Left, Secular	Yes	Yes	Master
Male	19	Student	Left, Secular	Yes	Yes	Undergraduate
Female	21	Student	Left	Yes	Yes	Undergraduate
Female	40	Manager	Social Democrat	No	Yes	Graduate
Female	25	Architect	Social Democrat	No	Yes	Graduate
Female	48	Housewife	Left	Yes	Yes	Elementary Sch.
Male	30	Engineer	Left, Secular	No	Yes	Graduate
Male	21	Student	Left	Yes	Yes	Undergraduate
Female	29	Academic	Left	Yes	Yes	PhD
Male	39	Pharmacist	Left	No	Yes	Graduate
Male	48	Writer	Conservative	No	No	Graduate
Female	43	Journalist	Religious, Democrat	No	No	Master
Male	45	Technician	Religious, Anti-secular	No	No	Academy
Male	50	Worker	Religious	No	No	Elementary Sch.
Male	21	Assistant	None	No	No	Academy
Female	33	Housewife	Conservative	No	No	Elementary Sch.
Female	19	Student	Liberal, Religious	No	No	Undergraduate
Male	27	Engineer	Religious, Conservative	No	Yes and No	Graduate
Female	52	Housewife	Religious	No	Yes and No	High Sch.

Total: 20

5.1. Motivations behind the Support for and Opposition to Gezi Park Protests

The content analysis of the third section in the thesis primarily presented a brief analysis of Turkish right wing policies, then discussed the AKP's innovationist conservative democracy and explained the emerging social/political problems. The findings suggested that the AKP government clearly distinguished itself from the former Islamist legacies, establishing a center-right party in accordance with the former center-right wing but with a subjective and modernized understanding of conservative democracy. That some writers see the AKP's pragmatism and 'realpolitik' understanding as the major reason for ideological ambiguities was also mentioned. Following these approaches, the transformation of the AKP governance is closely

linked to the requirements of a powerful political order, regardless of ideological notions. For this reason, even though the party reflected a liberal ideology with various democratic reforms in the early years, growing electoral success and an appreciated leadership style has revealed a different regime after a few years. While the conservatism was preserved culturally, the notion of 'democracy' gained a majoritarian structure, eventually leading to a problematic environment in which the separation of execution and legislation powers began to diminish and the independent opposition channels were blocked. Political problems were evaluated with social problems, with various examples indicating the majoritarian insight. An increasing authoritarianism with a paternalist manner has affected the private lives of an important segment within the society. The findings suggest that the lack of pluralism, intervening conservative and authoritarian tendencies, and problems of the democratic political order generated negative reactions, especially from the 50% of the population that did/do not support the AKP government, and these reactions were reflected during the Gezi Park protests, eventually giving the process an anti-government meaning. During the interviews conducted here, such a correlation was investigated and the respondents' both supportive and oppositional approaches bring out the polarization as Tayyip Erdogan often stresses: 50% versus 50%. In order to reveal this, first of all the Gezi Park protesters' responses will be analyzed, followed by 'oppositional responses,' i.e., those in opposition to the protests.

The interviewees were asked to clarify their motivations behind the support for the Gezi Park protests. The majority of the responses focused on the increasing authoritarian and anti-democratic regulations of the government. For instance a 19-year-old left-wing student gave the following response:

> **Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?**
>
> Yes, I supported, because our government's actions were authoritarian, discriminative and intolerable. Demolishing plan of Gezi Park was the last example of their irrespective acts (Interview 9)

Responses against the government shaped most of the protesters' tendencies: 8 of the respondents stressed similar points related to the AKP government. The diversified age and occupational groups also suggest that the mobilization had a common meaning in symbolizing the frustrations of the oppositional segments. The plan to demolish the

park was mainly seen as the triggering factor behind the collective mobilization against anti-democratic regulations. Consequently, a 29-year-old left-wing academic expressed her apprehensions to the planned project in terms the environment and as an Istanbul resident for the outcomes of urban transformation. In addition she states that her aim was also to defend her rights against governmental hegemony:

> **Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?**
>
> Yes I have. Current government's regulations against the liberty of citizens and sentiments alike were my major motivations. Moreover, as a resident of Istanbul, I was deeply concerned about the outcomes of urban transformation, because today Istanbul is not livable anymore. For this reason my support for Gezi Park was motivated on the one hand for the green, specifically a resistance against the demolition of the park, and on the other hand it was something beyond protecting the green, a movement against the hegemony of the government (Interview 10)

Concerns about anti-democratic politics, authoritarianism, and restrictions of liberties were the most common descriptions. One of the exceptions was a 22-year-old worker. He defined himself as right-wing and stressed that he supported the resistance because simply he was against the Topcu Barracks project (Interview 1). Another exception was a 38-year-old journalist from the left, who stated that he was concerned about Istanbul's future and that he was against the barracks project. The Gezi Park mobilization and a collective reaction were additional motivations:

> …It was encouraging to see how Gezi Park resistance turned into a platform in which the common reaction of all kinds of unhappy people is shaped. It was valuable to observe a long time silent community's the first united reaction in so many years and hear people's voices (Interview 2).

The rest of the responses focus on the criticized regulations of the AKP government. 7 of the interviewees expressed in different ways that they needed to do something about these problems. Interestingly, one of the interviewees, who defines herself as religious, expressed that she was unaware of the protests at the beginning, and hence didn't support them; but as she heard about and saw the violence on the streets she began to support passively (Interview 20; female 52, religious, housewife). On the other hand, another religious respondent stated the opposite: he supported the environmentalist protest against the demolishing of Gezi Park, but when the uprisings

spread and street clashes began, his opposed the protests (Interview 19; male 27, religious, engineer). Oppositional interviewees made similar statements, with some of them additionally explaining their reasons, though some avoided further comments. According to oppositional responses, due to the increasing violence and street clashes, they came to think that the protests were not honest, that basically the aim of the protesters was controversial. Three of the rightists expressed their reactions to Gezi Park protests:

> **Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?**
>
> No I did not. I could have supported the environmentalist movement, but after some time events became violent and gained an anti-governmental structure (Interview 18; female 19, liberal and religious, student).
>
> No, I didn't, because events lost the peaceful cause of protecting the green. The aim of Gezi shifted into something wider. They aimed to generate chaos, because you simply cannot protect the green with vandalism. If you don't have the respect for others, how can you respect the environment? People got hurt because of the clashes. Gezi events were not innocent (Interview 14; male 45, religious and anti-secular, technician).
>
> No, I did not, because I think Gezi events were nonsensical. If you want to stage a coup and if you think something is wrong about the country; you have to think bigger. They cannot achieve those aims with protests like Gezi Park (Interview 16; male 21, religious and nationalist, assistant).

Overall, the data reveals that the division between left and right wings in their approach to the protests. All of the left-wingers supported the resistance against the AKP government. It is possible to claim that government's reaction to the environmentalist protest and the police intervention symbolized the factors they often criticized. For this reason, increasing police interventions evolved the events into a resistance against the AKP and against the anti-democratic tendencies experienced during the later years of AKP governance. Simply protecting the green unexpectedly triggered a nationwide collective reaction against the government. However, oppositional segments consisting of those in the right wing were against the protests and were mainly critical of the protests shifting into an overall government resistance. Specifically, continuous street clashes and the tense atmosphere were criticized. One of

the interviewees saw the events as a conspiracy, aiming at a coup. Mainly though, the overall reaction was questioning the honesty of the protesters' demands. To conclude, a polarized approach was seen during the Gezi Park resistance, but the supporters' main motivation went beyond merely protecting the green, becoming shaped by their protests against the AKP.

5.2. Approaches to the Mainstream Media and Coverage

As one of the primary sources of information, the media plays a significant role in our lives. Media institutions produce and present news about various occurrences in our world. With this information, analytical thinking and critical public opinion emerge. It is a sphere or at least used to be the major sphere of rational–critical debates. Habermas' vision of a bourgeois public sphere was enabled in our modernized communities through the flow of information and discussions on media channels. However, the public sphere of critical reasoning has been challenged since the neo-liberal transformation of media structures. Public inclusivity and diversified debating began to diminish, as the commercialization of media began. Relationships between state and capital powers and the media at different levels produce a limited and dominated value system, managed discussions, and manipulation, thereby leading to an anti-democratic environment. The Turkish media's structural transformation followed a similar path. As revealed, today, cross-sector conglomerates own major media institutions in Turkey. The major outcome of this situation is the lack of independent and diversified information flow. In the existing patronage system, during the AKP government, Turkey's mainstream media has faced increasing oppression either by the government or by media patrons. The public sphere of diversified critical–rational debates began to erode, as monolithic news-making policies began to dominate the Turkish media's agenda. Growing pro-government media institutions and media patrons' relationships based on vested interests resulted in diminishing critique and oppositional approaches. In the public sphere, rational consensus emerging from inclusiveness and critical reasoning transformed into an artificial consensus because of manufactured or manipulated opinions of polls. In a society with low literacy levels, the visual media's impact increases significantly. As evidenced by the coverage analysis of the Turkish media during the Gezi Park events, current media ownership structures and government oppression may even incline the media to ignore or minimize a massive

civil movement. Consequently, one of the hypotheses of the thesis is the loss of reliability of mainstream Turkish media during the Gezi Park events. Following Habermas' theory, it is the partial decline of the traditional public sphere because the structural transformation of mainstream media institutions compelled them to produce a limited and fabricated public discourse. Along with the coverage analysis and findings, from general to specific, five questions were put forth to the interviewees for discussing the hypothesis and evaluating approaches to the mainstream media. The function of the media forms the first question, and the aim is to investigate the ideal mission of the media. This question had the most common approach among all, and simply, all but two of the interviewees stated that the media should be objective and provide reliable information.

What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?

To provide an objective information flow in political, social, cultural and artistic fields, so that the citizens could be able to designate preferences and interests in all fields; to help the people develop and shape their own opinions in a pluralist platform consisted of all kinds of ideologies and visions. Shortly, the media have to have a duty that acts in the benefit of the public through news and information flow (Interview 2; male 38, left and secular, journalist).

As distinct from the overall answers, a 50 year old worker, who defined himself as religious, stressed the media's function of serving the national interests and the country (Interview 15). In addition, another religious and anti-secular interviewee stressed the requirement for morality within the media, denouncing the new generations as vandals:

The media should educate and improve the society. Especially the media have an instructive function for housewives and for the new generations. I think the media in this sense is the reason behind our violent and vandal youth, because instead of educating them they provide destructive programs and shows. The media raise irresponsible and vandal generations (Interview 14; male 45, religious and anti-secular, technician).

The interviewees were asked two more questions about their opinion of media influence on their perceptions and on public opinion. The responses were divergent in some ways, but they had commonalities as well. Most interviewees agreed that the

media influences public opinions and perceptions, but they tended to separate the media's influence on their perceptions from the media's influence on public opinion. Among the 20 interviewees, regardless of their political views, eight interviewees emphasized the media's influence on their perceptions because of its widespread nature, but also explained that they were aware of biased media institutions and that they thus maintained a skeptical attitude. In fact, this is another subject of consensus among the interviewees, all of whom, in different ways, stated that the Turkish media is not objective and harbors manipulative news production tendencies. Specifically, nine of the interviewees with divergent political opinions stressed that they have noticed the problematic structure of the Turkish mainstream media during the Gezi Park events and that the Turkish mainstream media does significantly influence their perceptions any more. One of the interviewees stated that he stopped watching news on TV after the Gezi events and only reads a specific newspaper and follows news on the international media (Interview 8; male 30, left and secular, engineer). Another emphasized event was the corruption operation on 17 December, mostly by the rightist strata of the interviewees. Even though the sources of manipulation differed among the left- and right-leaning interviewees, the mutual insight was that Turkish media institutions constructed bias, and many of the interviewees stated that for the information, they now look for different sources instead of the regular source. Additionally, such responses are connected with increasing distrust of the media because instead of believing directly what they see on the media, the majority of the interviewees stated that they evaluate news through different sources and with their own perspectives. Responses to the media's influence on public opinion have similarities, too. For instance, an interviewee sees the media as a vehicle for social engineering (Interview 11; male 39, left, pharmacist). Especially, the TV stations are considered to have an important influence on Turkish public opinion, and according to the interviewees, this is connected either to low literacy levels or to the tendency of Turkish people. Similar to the responses to the previous question, eight of the interviewees stressed the importance of emerging alternative public sources of information after the Gezi Park events, while acknowledging the influence of traditional media on public opinion. An interviewee explains that the influence of mainstream media on public opinion has diminished because people have awakened after witnessing the media's true intentions in the course of the Gezi Park events (Interview 15; male 50, religious, worker). Likewise, the responses to "true intentions" are diverse among the left- and right-leaning respondents,

but the mutual point of agreement is the lack of objectivity and the apparent aim of manipulation. Below, two housewives explain their opinions about media influence from different perspectives. They believe that the media and, especially, television stations influence opinions, but they also emphasize the changing scenario.

> **Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?**
>
> We watch often TV's in Turkey, I sometimes read dailies as well, but even though I think the media in Turkey is not independent, I do not have an alternative source for the information about our country. For this reason they had some sort of influence upon my thoughts, but after the events last year Gezi Park and 17 December operations, I began to lose reliability in the media. They only serve to the interests of the interest lobby and foreign powers (Interview 17; female 33, conservative, housewife)
>
> **What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?**
>
> I think they have a great influence, especially the visual media. Majority of the people in Turkey still rely on the visual media than print media as the source of information; however Gezi Park events showed us that, alternative media changed the monolithic impact of the media and it is another important source for public opinion. People used the social media for accurate information, because of mainstream media's manipulative discourses and the protests began (Interview 7; female 48, left, housewife)

It must be noted that a few leftist responses stressed the Turkish media's contribution to the construction of a belief system about the protests and protesters. As emphasized above, the media's power on public discourse is derived from the flow of information, and the Gezi Park coverage revealed that during the most critical days of the events, mainstream Turkish media adopted either a partisan or an ignorant position. A few interviewees, who supported the Gezi protests, highlighted such problems and the resulting misperceptions and prejudices generated by the media coverage. A 19-year-old student's responses to both questions were one of the clearest among the interviewees' responses. His evaluations bring forth some important points about misinterpreted public opinions in connection with the media and hegemony.

Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?

Yes, in most cases news in different channels or newspapers affected my perceptions, but this was before Gezi. During Gezi I often thought: "Oh God we are trying to do something peaceful here, but the mass media just ignored us and even worse they reflected us as marginal. I wonder what happened to Kurdish people in the east all those years that we misinterpreted because of the mainstream media". Many people had similar thoughts; we truly understood the power of the media. After Gezi I mainly follow the agenda through social media or independent news channels and I was always skeptic to the news of the mainstream media.

What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?

I think that Turkish public opinion is mainly shaped through the mainstream media. This is partially related with low levels of literacy and education. Other reason is the current structure of mainstream media in Turkey. Turkish media is manipulated by different sources, especially during AKP governance. You cannot see any critical comment or news about government in partisan media and partisan media today have strong institutions. For this reason people tend to pick facts based on their political beliefs and they believe what they see or read in these media channels or newspapers without questioning (Interview 3: male 19, left and secular, student).

The interviewee's' opinions about Kurdish citizens beyond doubt provide a solid understanding of how media can manipulate perceptions because for long years the Turkish society have watched clashes between Kurdish citizens and riot police on the evening news. On the basis of the interviews, it can be said that during the Gezi Park events, the protesters became aware of the media's power more than ever. Based on common remarks about the media's influence, the interviewees were asked two more questions to elicit specific opinions about the Gezi Park coverage. The Turkish mainstream media's coverage analysis in the Part Four earlier proved that the events were either ignored or misinterpreted by the partisan media. Media conglomerates in the second group such as the Dogus and the Dogan Groups, with some exceptions, generated massive tension because of their insufficient coverage. Especially NTV and CNN Turk symbolized media channels broadcasting manipulated coverage. Unlike the first group, these groups' limited independence was a result of vested financial interests

and government oppression as opposed to political association. Regardless of the reasons, they were severely criticized by the protesters and completely lost credibility when insufficient coverage was replaced with biased and one-sided news making. In addition, these channels and other partisan media outlets, especially NTV, oppressed journalists, thus leading to resignations and dismissals. In contrast, the government-opposed media provided wide coverage from the beginning until the very end and were appreciated by the protesters. However, these channels and newspapers' clear support to Gezi events were sometimes seen as aggravation by other segments of Turkish society. Nonetheless, examples of hate speech and aggravation were proportionally higher in the partisan newspapers than in the government-opposed papers, and, during the process, newspapers' projected perspectives were based on whether they were in favor of or opposed to the government. A few of the interviews present examples about diversity. Expectedly, responses to the media coverage differed with the respondents' political views as well as their opinion of the Gezi Park events; however, the majority of the interviewees saw the coverage as either poor or biased. In general, only six of the interviewees gave different responses. Two of them stated that the coverage was poor at the beginning, but was sufficient after some time (Interview 19; male 27, religious, engineer; Interview 18; female 19, liberal and religious, student). One of them stated that the coverage was sufficient all along (Interview 1; male 22, right, worker). Interestingly, the other three evaluated the media coverage as being more than sufficient. According to one of these three interviewees, the media exaggerated the events because, in fact, nothing significant was happening. He talked about the brutal clashes on streets, and stated that the media should not have supported the violence and should have neglected the events for national salvation (Interview 14; male 45, religious and anti-secular, technician). The remaining responses are as follows:

How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?

There were lots of false and fake news. There wasn't any significant event, but they created a perception as if an extraordinary thing was happening in Turkey. They even funded an ad for New York Times. Turkish news hardly find reflection in the global media, but they published and ad for Gezi protests. (Interview 16; male 21, none, assistant)

How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

Mainly they broadcasted false news, as if there was something chaotic going on in the country. I also criticized the media. (Interview 15; male 50, religious, worker)

Apart from these arguments, the rest of the responses highlighted the biased coverage and agreed upon the critical debates about media censorship. Some of the interviewees remarked on the divergent picture of media institutions. In general, people who supported the Gezi Park resistance complained how their demands and cause were falsified and thus, their interpretations about the government-opposed media were mostly positive. In fact, the coverage analysis proved that government-opposed media channels such as Ulusal Chanel and Halk TV had the top broadcast ratings. The protesters' appreciation is understandable because these channels were the only sources that aired proper footage at the beginning of the resistance.

Biased coverage generates manipulated and limited public discourse. Likewise, the lack of pluralist and objective broadcasting affects self-generated public debates, but these problems grew during Gezi Park because the protests unexpectedly and rapidly evolved into a nationwide resistance. For this reason, it was an even greater mistake on the part of the Turkish media to take sides. Nevertheless, all 15 interviewees of different backgrounds shared a common distrust of the media. Their responses clarify the argument comprehensively:

How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

People were angry to the Turkish mainstream media, because either they presented insufficient coverage or they became institutions of propaganda. Especially the partisan media only reflected a manipulated perspective. You cannot describe a political program informative, when all the guests are pro-government journalists. It was even impossible to hear them saying "yes, riot police's use of force is excessive", because no matter what, government is right. So simply I agree with the critical debates. Objective media and coverage is the primary requirement for social cohesion in Turkey. (Interview 7; female 48, left, housewife)

Like I said in the former question, Turkish mass media started with an unforgettable mistake and neglected the events. For this reason "penguin" criticisms have an accurate point. (Interview 13; female 43, religious and democrat, journalist)

Turkish media minimized the events, aimed to distract the public attention. For this reason I agree with the criticisms mostly. (Interview 6; female 25, social democrat, architect)

People were quiet right about insufficient and biased coverage, because during the first days only a few Turkish channels aired the clashes. (Interview 18; female 19, religious and liberal, journalist)

After Gezi resistance I completely lost confidence in Turkish media. I was on the streets and in Gezi Park since the beginning. I witnessed violence and suffering, but Turkish media were blind. A news channel that hardly broadcast documentaries, had penguin documentaries. They only aimed to avoid the reality on the streets; they manipulated the events for the benefit of the government. So yes, I certainly agree with all of those debates. (Interview 9; male 21, left, student)

A 38-year-old leftist journalist presents a different but adequate approach, emphasizing the rules of the patronage system and their expected outcomes. He mentioned the proportional relationship between the patronage system and broadcast principles and evaluated the coverage on this basis. From this viewpoint, media institutions that were closely associated with the government either ignored the events or presented a biased broadcast. The government-opposed and relatively independent media, in contrast, presented resistance-supportive and detailed coverage. The structure of the media generated this duality. As for the debates about media coverage, he once again emphasized the existing principles: *"The major broadcasting principles, which were implemented by the global media during the first Gulf War and occupation of Iraq have also been used by Turkish mainstream media during Gezi Park against their own people"* (Interview 2).

The evaluation of the interviews about media coverage revealed the eroding trust in the Turkish mainstream media. Even though the interviewees accept the continuing media influence, most of them expressed skepticism and distrust. Such expressions affect the public discourse derived from the mainstream media. Before presenting a deeper insight including the hypothesis, an evaluation of global media coverage can be given. From the first day, the Gezi Park events attracted the global media's attention. Live footage and segments talking about the events were broadcast during and after the clashes, and some media outlets even surpassed Turkish channels in terms of the

average broadcast rate. Regarding this, in order to understand interviewees' approach, they were asked whether they perceived any divergence between Turkish and global media coverage; however, it was not possible to acquire a mutual perspective because, first of all, some of the interviewees stated that they did not have any access to the global media. Second, the responses of the rest were diversified. Specifically, eight of them indicated a clear divergence between Turkish and global coverage. All of them belonged to the leftist segment, and they evaluated global coverage as being considerably more sufficient and objective than that by the Turkish mainstream media. Some of them remarked that they were able to follow the news properly through the global media. Seven of the respondents either did not have any access to the global media or were not interested in global coverage. Some of the interviewees questioned global media's attention to the events and analyzed it in an interest-based manner. Mainly, the responses of the right-leaning interviewees were apparently skeptical of the intentions regarding wide coverage, but, overall, there was no convergence in the responses of the right- and left-leaning interviewees. Still it is possible to suggest that leftist people who supported the Gezi events appreciated the global media's attention, and they mostly followed or started to follow the news through these channels.

Habermas' historical analysis of the public sphere emphasized the medium of press for the emergence of informal discussions. In our modernized communities, the media provides the major platform for the development of the traditional public sphere. This is a sphere in which a critical–rational discourse is developed with consensus, and it is derived from the information flow. Such critical discourse inevitably produces a political discourse, and the public sphere forms the dynamic essence of democratic societies. However, the neo-liberal transformation of media institutions has affected the functioning of this sphere. Commercialized media institutions and state oppression have also shaped the meaning of information broadcasting, and a manipulated value system has been reproduced by the media based on its interests. As a result, the democratic structure of the public sphere has diminished. Biased commentary nd manufactured public opinion polls began to shape the public discourse. The first hypothesis of this thesis argues that during the Gezi Park events, such a structure revealed itself, and the people lost trust in the media as a source of information. As a result, the media's function of developing the traditional public sphere eroded. The Turkish media's tight connections with the state and conglomerate ownership generated

these major problems. As the interviews revealed, Turkish people, regardless of their political visions, started distrusting the media. Almost all of them expressed skepticism and talked about bias. There is a common agreement about the media's insufficient coverage of the Gezi Park protests, with some exceptions. With regard to the coverage analysis findings, distrust of the media actually has solid grounds because, beyond doubt, the Turkish media made a grave mistake. A nationwide social movement should have drawn the media's attention even from the news-making viewpoint. However, the politicized and commercialized media mainly preferred the opposite, and this led to media institutions being caricatured as "penguins." In this sense, it is possible to argue that the majority of the protesters completely lost trust in the Turkish media, and the mainstream information and debating platforms were replaced with social media. Even though the grounds may differ, a significant proportion of right segments also lost trust in the media. During the Gezi events, the rest formed a constructed public sphere with limited rational and critical discourse according to Habermas' insight. Consequently, the findings and the evaluation of the interviews prove the hypothesis. As a conclusion, the response of an interviewee can be cited. This response mainly summarizes the core essence of this issue:

> **What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?**
> Turkish media have an influence on public opinion, but today there are several public realms connected to the diversified media. Instead of pluralist approaches these realms produce manipulated agendas. They are mainly biased realms; hence it is hard to expect widespread critique. For an improved society the media should provide the objective grounds for information and let the public to do the analysis or the critique, but we see experts and journalist embedding certain opinions and manipulating the uneducated minds (Interview 12; male 48, conservative, writer).

5.3. The Impact of the Social Media

The correlation between social media and the public sphere is an extensive topic within social and communication sciences. The media analysis in the thesis exposed the problematic structure of traditional media, and as a result, the independent platform of social media became a strong alternative to traditional communication channels as well

as to the traditional public sphere. In fact, Habermas' three criteria for the existence of the public sphere are adhered to the most by social media because these limitless platforms are inclusive regardless of status, and all types of debates are available or can be created. The implementation of these prerequisites differs among various social media platforms; however, direct user contributions and independent networks generate a significant potential for their influence. This is related to technological developments because, today, the Internet provides a limitless sphere of contribution and evaluation. The inclusivity of social media is on the one hand very clear because it is a click away; but on the other the use of virtual platforms requires technological opportunities. As the findings of the chapter 4 suggested, overall, 70 percent of Turkey's Internet users are under age 34 years. It is possible to claim that in Turkey mainly the youth uses social media. In this sense, the inclusivity criteria may remain problematic; however, beyond any doubt, social media provides an inclusive platform for its users. Along with user accounts, sources of social media are completely available to anyone at anytime. In this sense, there is a twofold nature of inclusivity. In other words, social media have not created an all encompassing public sphere; neither eliminated the function of the traditional media completely. However the findings reveal that, during the Gezi Park mobilization, user oriented communication platforms created an alternative public sphere for the protesters. It must be once again noted that countrywide data for the use of social media requires a further research, but the interviews also revealed that respondents from diversed age, skill and background use social media actively. In line with such arguments, the major hypotheses of the thesis argue the emergence of social media as a new public sphere during the resistance. Following the hypotheses, the thesis acknowledges the exceptions related to inclusivity criteria; but also claims that, during the resistance social media enabled an inclusive platform of politcizied and critical discourse, for its users.

The findings suggest that, during the protests common concerns are at best reflected and discussed through the social media. The rise of social media in this sense has influenced the society's ability to reason critically. According to Habermas' analysis, a public sphere functions most effectively when it has a certain level of independence from economical and governmental hegemony. As discussed previously, currently, the traditional media's major challenge lies in countering the hegemony of conglomerates and political associations. Still, it is not possible to claim that social

media has transformed traditional communication completely, but as witnessed during the Gezi Park events, the instantaneity of information flow through social media led to the formation of unexpected public discourses long before the mainstream media's paid attention to said issues. Moreover, the protests also showed that the debates led to widespread people mobilization. Accordingly, the thesis argues that social media emerged as a new public sphere during the Gezi Park resistance. Primarily, this new sphere was formed through the easy access to political–social information. Social media presented a free and mainly an inclusive platform; hence, all ideas, discussions, and reactions were shared and spread by its users. The resulting critical reasoning established common concerns, and it gave the resistance its own civil dynamic. As another hypothesis, the thesis also claims that the nationwide mobilization of people and opinions in relation to the Gezi Park events were enabled and achieved through this new public sphere.

The social media analysis of the thesis has put forth an important amount of data regarding the impact of social media. The riot police's unexpected dawn raid of the protesters in Gezi Park triggered the widespread reaction, and social media was the main information source for the resulting people mobilization. The first call was simply made via Twitter, and a user asked the people to assist the protestors in standing guard at Gezi Park against the demolition crew. Likewise, in the intervention's aftermath, Twitter and Facebook became the major platforms of mobilization calls. Statistical data suggests that especially during the initial days of the protests, the use of these social websites increased significantly. For instance the number of Twitter users increased by around 8.5 millions. The hashtag #direngeziparkı was used more than 2 million times. In Facebook, many social groups supporting the resistance with information and footage shares were established. As a third source, data from Eksi Sozluk revealed similar points as well. User-oriented organization and information sharing was enabled through these sources, and different debates with limitless inclusion were started. The Garanti Bank boycott is one of the most apparent examples of this dynamic sphere's potential. As for information flow, Konda's research once again proves the effect of social media because, overall, 69% of the interviewees stated that they were informed about the events through social media. Mainstream Turkish media's silence and lack of objectivity also increased social media's relevance, but based on the statistics, it can be said that Turkish society used divergent social media sources more than ever. The new

public sphere was developed by these sources, and they created a more diverse public discourse than the mainstream media. The mobility on social media was unavoidable, and as the protests began to spread, the mainstream media had no choice but to cover the events. Social media's contribution to people mobility was crucial, because the protesters used it to inform each other, organize, and, partially, superimpose their discourse on the broader public agenda. Tayyip Erdogan's denouncement of Twitter as "trouble" proves the impact of social media. Moreover, social media generated diversified and pluralist channels of communication. Citizen journalism constitutes a very important example of this fact, because such practices enable direct interaction with the public and increase the flow of information. All of these practices formed a process in which access to a variety of opinions and information was only a click away. The downside of the limitless platform was disinformation, because during the events, misinterpreted or intentionally manipulated information was also spread through social media.

The interviewees were asked three questions regarding the impact of social media. The first question asks whether the interviewees are active social media users to simply understand whether they were active social media users. All responses were positive. Hence, they were active users. Exceptionally, one of the interviewees stated that she did not use social media before the Gezi Park events, but after the protests, she created a Twitter account to follow the agenda (Interview 20; female 52, religious, housewife).

The next question investigated the general political impact of social media. There was agreement among the interviewees about social media's influence. The interviewees mostly stressed on the limitless network, instantaneity, and social media's importance for communication and information.

What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

I think the social media have an important influence, especially if the mainstream media is biased. Social media provide limitless communication and interaction. They are not owned by companies or capital powers. People own the social media. They are part of it. We can hear diversified voices through the social media. Political and social debates, hot topics influence public opinions. This may not be a direct influence, but there is a great potential (Interview 9; male 21, left, student).

The majority of the responses, both government-supportive and opposing, were similar. People of diverse backgrounds understood the potential of social media in creating public opinion. From this perspective, the political and social outcomes of social media use were apparent to the majority of the interviewees. Interestingly, a religious respondent, while accepting the political influence of social media, indicated that people were "messing with" the government every day via Twitter and Facebook. He additionally added that he was glad about the ban on Twitter in Turkey (Interview 15; male 50, religious, worker). Likewise, another interviewee responded with the Twitter ban example to the following question:

What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

Indeed there is an impact, otherwise it (Twitter) would have never banned in Turkey (Interview 16; male 21, none, assistant).

Apart from these examples, the interviewees' responses offer the following common insight. In general, social media influences public opinion both politically and socially because the information is much more accessible and reproachable. An interviewee expresses this influence with the example of the Arab Spring: "*People satisfied their need for the information through the social media without in need of the mainstream media.*" According to her, social media's effect in state policies has increased as well because today it is harder to run politics from behind closed doors (Interview 10; female 29, left, academic). Another interviewee emphasized the independence of social media and the politicized consciousness derived from various social media sources:

The world witnessed a boom of social movements; Turkish case was not the only one. All had one thing in common: the impact of social media. Because today social media provides a limitless communication platform. It is great to feel such independence. I can discuss what I like and with whom I like. There is an opportunity to develop social and political debates, and everyone can contribute to them. The resistance showed us that. We have basically communicated through the social media and were updated. Such inclusivity politicized us and we learnt to participate, and to stand for our rights (Interview 3; male 19, left and secular, student).

Responses to specific questions about social media's impact on the Gezi Park events reveal common grounds in the midst of diversified opinions, and the overall

outcomes prove the hypotheses. The interviewees along with their general responses to social media point to the development of people mobility through social media during the resistance. Mobility was the most used term. Almost all of them agreed upon the fact that social media transformed the protests into a widespread resistance. In addition, based on social media's potential, a majority of the interviewees emphasized the widespread public critique and information flow generated through social media. The mainstream media's lack of coverage and objectivity directed all supporters toward social media during the Gezi events. They were organized, informed mainly through Twitter and Facebook. In addition, instant shares of footage and news about the events developed a common discourse among all of them. The government-opposed sides, too, remarked about the information flow and named social media as the major communication platform during the protests. With a few exceptions, there is a common opinion about social media's positive influence on the development of the protests. Some of the interviewees, mainly those from the rightist side, emphasized the provocation and disinformation, but all of them accepted social media's effects on the organization and information flow. Below, a 52-year-old housewife who defines herself as religious interprets the specific impact of social media on the Gezi Park protests. Her points in fact are echoed by all supporters:

> **Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?**
>
> I saw the reality beneath Gezi resistance through the social media. My son showed me videos, blogs and lots of worrisome pictures, which we did not see on the mass media. What I saw was a shocking violence and at the same time, a direct communication network provided by the social media. People raised their voices through the social media especially because of mass media's blackout. They called for others in case of emergencies, they informed each other for dangerous locations, and daily debates were raised through trend topics. It was alive and it presented reality in every aspect. I did not actively join to the resistance, but I started to support through the social media, because the demonstrators were not different from us. In my view, it was a unique experience. First you have no idea of what social media or Twitter is, and then it becomes your one of the major sources for information and agenda (Interview 20).

Two of the oppositional interviewees evaluated social media's impact as aggravation and provocation. According to them, social media polarized society and

protestors even tried to bring about a civil war. Turkey's interests were damaged because of the violence. These responses peg the social media's impact to be negative:

> The media always have affected our people. Our people are acting ignorantly, because Turkey's interests should be our priority. They are trying to declare a civil war, they are polarizing the people. Media's effect is enormous. Social media in this sense aggravated the people during Gezi Park events (Interview 15; male 50, religious, worker).

> It clearly had an impact, but mainly it was a provocative impact. Fake news, disinformation agitated the people and things brutally spread as if we were on war (Interview 14; male 45, religious and anti-secular, technician).

Another respondent made similar points regarding the provocative effects but accepted social media's influence on communication, debates, and information flow during the protests (Interview 17; female 33, conservative, housewife). In addition, another interviewee emphasized the information flow and citizen journalism but mentioned the disinformation-related problems.

> Citizen journalism and reporting practices have quickly improved. Everyone shared information, photos and news instantly. People formed a wide communication network via social media. Blindness of mainstream media during the first days posed an important risk for disinformation and hence manipulation. Simply social media affected protests significantly and spread them; but disinformation was a serious issue of this communication network (Interview 13; female 53, religious and democrat, journalist).

Apart from these examples, the responses were similar. As mentioned, social media's effect on people mobilization during the protests was the most emphasized factor. In addition, the respondents mentioned the independent and inclusive structure of social media, which offered interactive communication platforms. User-oriented systems improved individual practices of information and news sharing. The flow of updated news and footage, even from conflict zones, were spread instantly and helped the protesters mobilize effectively. Social reactions such as boycott calls and sarcastic critique shaped the agenda, and as the previous data proves, social media use grew tremendously within a few days. The protesters created their own agendas, and a certain public critique was developed every day. The most emphasized downside was

disinformation, but the responses in general focused on the positives. The responses clarify the impact comprehensively:

> Well, social media's influence was great of course. People organized and mobilized through Twitter, Facebook and tracked the events through various blogs. Supportive and oppositional sides debated through the social media. Even sometimes political elites and groups were included to the discussions. Social media spread the events and informed them about the clashes or updated news. The problem is the disinformation potential. It is the downside of this independent platform. During Gezi we also saw examples of disinformation (Interview 18; female, 19, religious and liberal, student).

> Social media's impact was massive. People were mobilized and informed through the social media. They have seen and learnt the untold. They used every sources of the social media and collected evidences, stood against injustice, they protected each other, created assemblies, criticized, discussed and many more. Gezi Park resistance was achieved by the social media (Interview 11; male 53, left, pharmacist).

> Social media spread the events, gave a momentum. Without social media we wouldn't even be talking about the events. They were communicated and informed through the social media and mobilized. Mainstream media couldn't provide as wide coverage as the social media, because social media is everywhere. People shared, explained, and debated about the events, they informed one another, via Facebook, Twitter and other websites. In short social media had a major impact on the mobilization and evolvement of the Gezi events (Interview 19; male 27, religious and conservative, engineer).

> Social media was used as a tool to get organized during the Gezi protests. All the information that was shared on Facebook and Twitter influenced the way people looked at situations. They even changed the way people viewed things. A good example would be the video of the Turkish Prime Minister in which there are comments of his where he says exactly the opposite thing of what he said previously on a subject. The title was sarcastic; "one Prime Minister, two Erdogans" (Interview 8; male 30, left and secular, engineer).

As it can be seen through the responses of the different sides, there is an agreement upon social media's crucial effect on the Gezi Park protests. The main emphasis is on Twitter and Facebook because of the widespread use of these websites.

However, as remarked by the interviewees, alternative sources of information were also used, and they gained popularity during the protests. Simply put, the impact is first and foremost on organization and mobilization because news spread through social media instantly, and a collective reaction was developed either spontaneously or through mobilization calls. Second, based on the information flow, a similar collectivism was apparent, because the protesters revealed all kinds of news, information or footage and consciously informed each other of the organized action. The public discourse through social media was diverse and broad, in accordance with the dynamism of the protests. Social media had its own agendas, and most of them affected individual practices (Garanti Bank and other boycotts). The 18 interviewees agreed upon these findings, while a few emphasized disinformation as the downside. In chapter 4 the disinformation problem during the resistance was explained with examples. As some of respondents stressed, disinformation is one of the biggest challenges of social media. A conscious and educated use is required in order to prevent biased and false news share. It is not fully possible to control the content of social media, because of its dynamic and instant structure. As it was discussed in the former chapter, regulations in Turkey resulted in increasing state grip. The Twitter and Youtube ban on March 2014 is a worrisome example of this fact. Nevertheless, social media is still an important platform of limitless information share.

The hypotheses of the thesis were as follows: first, the emergence of social media as a new public sphere during the protests, and second, the impact of this sphere on the development of the protests. It is revealed that the interview responses along with the statistical data of the fourth part support the hypotheses. Habermas' public sphere is an area in which individuals regardless of their status freely discuss and debate societal and, eventually, political problems. It is an inclusive sphere, and all types of questions are open to informal discussion. There is an independent space for the development of a common discourse and formation of public opinion. The overall findings verify the hypotheses. Social media emerged as a new public sphere and altered the function of traditional media throughout the events. The impact and function of social media was analyzed specifically during the Gezi Park protests and it is revealed that social media affected the events, providing the suitable means for collective resistance. Along with such findings, two additional facts need to be stressed. Even though the impact of social media was acknowledged by all the respondents, overall, social media did not affect oppositional interviewees' approaches to the events. As majority of right-leaning

responses revealed, interviewees did not support or joined Gezi Park resistance. They stressed the impact of social media for the demonstrators and for the resistance, but their preferences remained the same. The outcome on the one hand demonstrates the polarization in Turkey and the effects of personal value judgments on the other; because today in Turkey, the distinction between pro-government and oppositional media institutions continues to increase. Objectivity criteria are replaced with apparent manipulation and simply, the overall view concretizes the divergence among different segments within Turkish society. This leads to the second fact; as the local elections on March 2014 proved, Gezi Park events and all the outcomes of the resistance did not engender a significant change in Turkey. The main improvement took place in people's political and communicational consciousness, because in Turkey social media continues to be the major platform for politicized discourses and information especially during unrests. In line with these arguments, the thesis demonstrated that during the Gezi process, social media provided protesters limitless platforms for communication as well as the necessary environment for the emergence of a new public sphere. The politicized discourses organized protesters and widened the events. Oppositional agendas were also apparent, but for the protesters the use of social media generated a conscious sphere for public critique and mobilization. Every user with any information contributed to the discourse, and collective opinions were formed. Political and social critique was widespread, and in fact, the events transformed into a nationwide resistance via social media. In addition to political and social critique, social media mobilized the protesters, leading to almost two months of resistance. As discussed above, these developments were the result of the mainstream media's ignorance. However, an unexpected and dynamic sphere was formed by means of social media. The interview responses also revealed the function of social media in the formation of a limitless and independent public sphere. As most of them indicated, social media shaped public opinions and agendas. It was the major source of information flow with broad activity. Additionally, citizen journalism contributed to the process because along with blogs, instant live footage uploaded by protesters influenced collective actions.

From a personal perspective, Habermas' public sphere theory presents a valuable insight for the analyses regarding communication and politics. Simply we cannot discuss or debate without information and as being a major source of information, the media have a significant effect in public agendas. The media present value systems, a direction in people's perceptions. For this reason the independence of the media is the

most important factor for enlightened critiques. The structural transformation of the media institutions and existing patronage systems affected the objectivity criteria negatively. Major outcome of this system revealed itself during the Gezi Park protests with media blackout and as a reaction; protesters began to use social media for required information and politicized discourses. Informal discussions and shares organized the movement, generated agendas with direct contributions and simply social media created the new public sphere of protesters. Even though direct political impacts remained limited, social media provided Turkish protesters and supporters the suitable platform for a unique experience of social mobility. Today, the politicized consciousness and awareness of the Gezi process continue to shape public critique through social media.

6. CONCLUSION

Turkey's Gezi Park mobilization, the media effect, and specifically social media's role in the emerging public sphere were the main departure points of this thesis. Concerning the unexpected nation-wide resistance during 2013 June and July, the thesis first of all aimed to analyze the cause and effect relations of the protests and then overall media impact. Jürgen Habermas' public sphere theory formed the theoretical basis of the study and to start with, his historical analysis of public sphere is explained and discussed. Habermas' designation of the bourgeois public sphere results from the structural transformation progressed within early modern capitalist societies and, is, in fact the decline of a limited form of public sphere. The emerging public sphere is required to give this arena a critical function. The growth in literacy and the press affected the formation of new public spheres. It is a sphere in which social and political critique, informal discussions and common concerns are generated regardless of status. The public sphere in this sense is inclusive and there is an ability to question the unquestionable. His historical comparison seeks a contrary approach to the modern capitalist system's threat to democracy, and his assumption points out that the way out is the new public sphere of rational-critical reasoning. Even though Habermas earlier saw the media as contributing the decay of critical discourses, he, in the last years stressed the role of the new media in evaluating public opinions. Based on Habermas' approaches, this thesis explored the function of social media as a new public sphere during the Gezi protests, because social media transformed the information flow and created a limitless platform for critical discourses. This process is related with media's increasing commercialization and interest based relations with different power sources. As a result the media today neglects the democratic communication roles between the public and authorities and instead, produces fabricated discourses. In line with these arguments, the thesis presented three hypotheses. (1) As being an important source for information and public critiques, the reliance to Turkish mainstream media is lost during the Gezi Park process. Existing ownership structures and government oppression are the major reasons behind manipulative and artificial agendas. (2) The Gezi Park process revealed the emerging public sphere of social media for the protesters. Social media provided suitable means for opposition, rational-critical reasoning and lead to collective action. It is a sphere in which limitless access to

political-social information and involvement were enabled through independent channels of social media. (3)Nation-wide mobility in the Gezi Park resistance was achieved through the new public sphere of social media.

Along with theoretical part, three chapters are designed for the analysis. The first chapter aimed to explore the atmosphere before the Gezi Park protests. The unexpected mobility is strongly related to the former regulations of the AKP government and in order to explain the problems first of all the conservative heritage of Turkish right and the AKP's political identity are discussed. It is revealed that, broadly, Turkish understanding of ideologies sometimes exclude the political content and produce ambiguities. The gaps in identities are often filled either with moral norms or with the requirements of political/social order. Strong leadership, morally right-leaning, politically centre-leaning, free-market policies and authentic understandings of ideologies are common characteristics of this heritage. The AKP followed a similar pragmatic path with the exception of consecutive victories in local and general electoral periods. 12 years of governance and growing success produced a keen transformation of the governance vision. The AKP was established under conservative-democracy identity, with a liberal party program. They aimed to distinguish themselves from political Islam, to become a strong centre-party and with a few exceptions they have succeeded in the early years; however especially after 2011 general elections the democratic and liberal norms of the party began to erode. The morality in politics was visible, yet the process produced a representation problem with a majoritarian structure. An authoritarian and separatist understanding dominated the party and the leadership effect grew. Tayyip Erdogan as being the party leader and the Prime Minister prominently acted in a "one-man" tendency. The militarist tutelage was abolished, but it was replaced with civil tutelage. Broadly, interference in private lives, one-sided representation, increasing paternalist manner, worrisome interventions in the judiciary power, lack of opposition channels harmed the democratic structure in Turkey and created tensions. Likewise, the media institutions began to produce increasing manipulation during the AKP era. Media patrons' ties with public tenders and their interest based relations neglected the democratic and independent communication principles. The AKP's oppression on the media institutions contributed to the problems. The chapter presented detailed examples of these problems and demonstrated that, anti-democratic acts of the state damaged the social cohesion in Turkey and even though the

Gezi Park mobilization was clearly unexpected; anti-government insight of the protests had a solid ground.

The following chapter analyzed the events and the media's role. The timeline of the Gezi Park protests are given with visual sources. Police interventions, violence, inhumanitarian acts, global discourses, and genuine experiences are explained. Turkish mainstream media especially during the first days of the protests with a grave mistake ignored the events and debates concerning the limited independence of media institutions began to shape the agenda. Social media was used as the major source for the flow of information, organization and action. Protesters contributed to the discourses directly. Social websites like Twitter and Facebook became the primary platforms of communication. Protesters developed the practices of citizen journalism and the Gezi Park resistance gained its own civil and politicized dynamic. Social media use and activity grew significantly and collective mobilization shaped Turkey's agenda for almost two months. In fact, social media evolved the protests into a nation-wide resistance and gave protesters a new kind of enlightenment. Political and public critiques, opinions and debates were widespread and protesters experienced a democratic communication through social media. Along with content analysis and media coverage, numerical data are used to verify the arguments and the thesis demonstrated that Turkish mainstream media face with serious challenges in terms of manipulation and oppression. Public discourses are fabricated for higher interests and hence the traditional public sphere is transformed undemocratically. Social media during the process created a new public sphere of questioning and debating. As a result social media provided the necessary means for the Gezi Park mobilization.

The final chapter of the thesis evaluated the findings with 20 interviews overall. The interviews are conducted in verbal form with the same set of questions and the aim was to explore the opinions of interviewees from different backgrounds. As the interviews clarified, Turkish media have lost reliance as an objective and independent source of information and public opinion. The interviewees from diverse political ideologies generally stressed the political impact of social media and specifically they acknowledged its effect on the Gezi Park events. Even though social media and the new public sphere did not shape right-leaning interviewees approaches to the events, there is a common agreement upon its critical function for the protesters and supporters. The most frequently cited characteristics were; limitless flow of information and

organization. Likewise, almost all of the interviewees remarked the widespread effects of social media for the evolvement of the protests.

This thesis, inspired by the occurrences during the Gezi Park protests, explored the emerging public sphere of social media. Although the new public sphere did not generate a direct political impact, the consciousness and politicization of Turkish society are both undeniable. The Gezi Park mobilization was one of the most significant social movements in Turkish history. It was a civil and unarmed eruption against the state authority. Social media provided the suitable platform for the unexpected sphere of social/political actions and reactions. In accordance with the Turkish media's silence and biased principles, social media became the new public sphere for informal discussions, public opinions, and critical reasoning during the protests. Such a public sphere was experienced by the protesters, but its impact on the resistance was acknowledged by all. The new public sphere was generated by social media and the limitless flow of information in this sphere spread the events countrywide. In this sense, the thesis clarified the hypotheses and revealed that social media today has the potential to create an independent and democratic communication, leading to the formation of new public spheres just like the one in the Gezi Park mobilization.

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INTERVIEW 1

Gender: Male

Age: 22

Educational Level: High School

Profession: Worker

Political Scale: Right

1.   Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?

No

2.   Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?

Yes, I did, because I was against the Topcu Barracks project. I wanted to protect the green.

3.   What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?

Media should inform the society objectively.

4.   Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?

They influence my opinions only if there is a righteous approach.

5.   What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?

I am not sure about it; they may influence some segments and vice-versa.

6.   How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?

Some of them were objective and some were biased, but the coverage was sufficient.

7.   How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

I disagree with them, the coverage was sufficient.

8.   Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?

No.

9.   Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?

Yes, I do.

10.   What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

They enable mobilization and organization. Social media created an important communication network.

11. Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?

Social media organized the protesters. The flow of information was limitless. Everyone could read and watch and share things. This was a very good aspect of the social media during Gezi events. Because of the social media the events were wide-spread.

INTERVIEW 2

Gender: Male

Age: 38

Educational Level: Master's Degree

Profession: Journalist

Political Scale: left, secular

1. Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?

Yes, I have supported and joined.

2. Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?

I have supported Gezi Park resistance, because; I did not support the construction plan for Gezi Park. I was worried about the future of Istanbul, because the vision that aimed to construct a shopping mall to Gezi Park; also threatened the future of the city. Besides, it was encouraging to see how Gezi Park resistance turned into a platform in which the common reaction of all kinds of unhappy people is shaped. It was valuable to observe a long time silent community's the first united reaction in so many years and hear people's voices.

3. What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?

To provide an objective information flow in political, social, cultural and artistic fields, so that the citizens could be able to designate preferences and interests in all fields; to help the people develop and shape their own opinions in a pluralist platform consisted of all kinds of ideologies and visions. Shortly, the media have to have a duty that acts in the benefit of the public through news and information flow.

4. Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?

Partially, yes; but this does not prevent me to ask: "what is the catch here, what is really happening?" and to obtain information from alternative resources.

5. What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?

In principal, the mass media posses a real power whenever all the sources have a monolithic perspective as if they are all synchronized, but this power may change depending on the issue and situation. At the end, whoever has the biggest influence in the financial lives also possesses the real power.

6. How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?

Turkish media had its own reality. There was a proportional relationship between the position of the patronage and the broadcasting principles. If the patronage is distant to the government, the media instituion supported the Gezi Park and presented a detailed broadcast. If the patronage do not desire to have conflicts with the government, the media institutions either just ignored the occurences, or presented a biased broadcasting. At the end none of the media institutions had a broadcast which in fact saw the reality of what has happened and why it has happened in the Gezi.

7. How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

In my opinion it is meaninlgess to criticize unless there is an ability to establish the alternative, the opposite of the criticism; because only such criticisms would be effective. Major boradcasting principles, which were impleneted by the global media during the first Gulf War and occupation of Iraq; have also been used by Turkish mainstream media during Gezi Park, against their own people.

8. Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?

Ofcourse there was a difference between the Turkish and foreign media during those times. An important part of the Turkish media applied self-cencorships. The foreign media had an important focus over the resistance with an idealistic news-making, interestingly while they neglected the former human and democratic rights' violations in Turkey. Its perspective in this sense was limited and often police violence, chappullers, and trees shaped their pespective.

9. Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?

Yes I do, Mostly I use Twitter.

10. What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

For Turkey, social media does not yet have the ability to change or shape social tendencies and preferences, but its contribution to the politicization of a specific subject is very high. Social media enables the public to be informed hastely about a matter and also it allows the informed ones to react instantly about the matter depending upon their political understanding.

11. Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?

Social media enabled an amazing coordination among the people who supported the Gezi resistane. In this way social media presented wide opportunities to the demonstrators in terms of communication and coordination and facilitated mutual and simultaneous acts of the people who shared similar ideas.

INTERVIEW 3

Gender: Male

Age: 19

Educational Level: Undergraduate

Profession: Student

Political Scale: Left, Secular

1. Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?

I only supported several protests before.

2. Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?

Yes, I joined to Gezi resistance. I was concerned about the urban transformation, because it destroyed cultural silhouette of Istanbul. What they planned to do to Gezi was another example of mass constructions. Istanbul has only a few green area left and Gezi Park is one of the central green areas. Shopping Mall construction to the park was a sign of their madness. Could U.S government do the same to Central Park? Ofcourse not, because that is madness. Besides, increasing authoritarian sentiments of government, especially Erdogan made me feel like I had to do something. Because Turkey is still a democratic republic, we have a secular state of law. Not any president or government can act or talk in an antidemocratic and totalitarian way, like they do.

3. What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?

Their function should be informing the public, without manipulation. They have to be independent and give us proper information about the events of our country and of the world. It should be nothing more.

4. Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?

Yes, in most cases news in different channels or newspapers affected my perceptions, but this was before Gezi. During Gezi I often thought: "Oh God we are trying to do something peaceful here, but the mass media just ignored us and even worse they reflected us as marginal. I wonder what happened to Kurdish people in the east all those years that we misinterpreted because of the mainstream media". Many people had similar thoughts; we truly understood the power of the media. After Gezi I mainly follow the agenda through social media or independent news channels and I was always skeptic to the news of the mainstream media.

5. What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?

I think that Turkish public opinion is mainly shaped through what they see on mainstream media. This is partially related with low levels of literacy and education. Other reason is the current structure of mainstream media in Turkey. Turkish media is manipulated by different sources, especially during AKP governance. You cannot see any critical comment or news about government in partisan media and partisan media today have strong institutions. For this reason people tend to pick facts based on their political beliefs and they believe what they see or read in these media channels or newspapers without questioning.

6. How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?

Gezi Park resistance was a test for Turkish media and unquestioningly I think they have failed. The coverage was biased and insufficient. We had to follow updates through social media. I believe none of the supporters really read or watch news of mainstream media during Gezi resistance. Social media, foreign media and independent news channels became the major source.

7. How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

I think those debates were very important and accurate. Because the role of mass media especially during a movement like Gezi is crucial. Turkish case showed us that. If mainstream media ignore or manipulate ocurrences, you may find yourself in a position that is terrorized. We were seen as threats for a democratic, well functioning system. This had nothing to do with the reality. But people of certain political beliefs hated us in the first place without understanding our cause. We tried to stress that Gezi movement was crucial for our democratic rights, it didn't really matter whether you are a conservative or liberal. Because what happened to us and still happening could easily happen to other beliefs or ideologies tomorrow. Turkish history showed us that. The political vision had to improve. However the result was increasing polarization. Today in Turkey nobody really loves anybody.

8. Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?

Yes, I have access to any foreign media sources through the internet. Yes the divergence was very clear. Foreign media like BBC, CNN international, Guardian, AL Jazeera or New York Times gave great attention to the resistance starting from the first day. They provided daily information and updates. They even created live blogs and enabled Gezi supporters' personal contributions. You could have always seen a foreign reporter or journalist in Gezi Park.

9. Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?

Yes, I have an Instagram, Twitter and Facebook account.

10. What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

The world witnessed a boom of social movements, Turkish case was not the only one. All had one thing in common: the impact of social media. Because today social media provides a limitless communication platform. It is great to feel such independence. I can discuss what I like and with whom I like. There is an opportunity to develop social and political debates, and everyone can contribute to them. The resistance showed us that. We have basically communicated through the social media and updated. Such inclusivity politicized us and we learnt to participate, and to stand for our rights.

11. Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?

Gezi owes a lot to social media, because without it probably we could have not organized and informed this much. Probably protests could have not turn into a resistance. Through social media we were connected and most importantly had the ability to be informed properly. Because the lack of press freedom keeps people in the dark. Without knowledge we are nothing but sheeps with a shepard. Manipulation and de-politicization is easy, but with social media Gezi resistance grew and protected its civil structure. Social media gave momentum to Gezi and we experienced something genuine. Because the mainstream media could never provide such solid grounds for communication and inclusion.

INTERVIEW 4

Gender: Female

Age: 21

Educational Level: Undergraduate Student

Profession: Student

Political Scale: Left

1. Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?

No I have not joined, I only supported a few.

2. Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?

Yes, because in my opinion Gezi Park plan was first of all a harmful project for our environment and second it was an act against the liberties of individuals. Gezi Park resistance was a unified act of a deliberative part of Turkish society against the state's impositions. During the process, many people felt part of something bigger and coordinated under a unified purpose; they stood up for the liberties.

3. What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?

The media should be objective and always should aim to present the truth.

4. Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?

I can't say that I have always been ignorant to mainstream broadcastings and analyses. Surely, they had some sort of influence upon my perceptions. Especially Turkish society has always been influenced by the media. However, Gezi resistance showed us how Turkish media were far from reliability. Honestly I didn't expect to see such manipulative and biased broadcasting. Now, they could never influence my perceptions. I always use diversified sources.

5. What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?

Turkish public opinion is mainly shaped through the mainstream media. People simply watch TV s and believe in them. For this reason I think media had and always will have an influence on the public opinion. But social media enabled a new environment for public debates. It broke the monolithic hegemony of mainstream broadcasting. Even political elites and organizations use social media today. It is unavoidable.

6. How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?

The coverage was poor, and clearly it was manipulated by the government.

7. How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

Criticisms were accurate. I also agree with them, because Turkish media was provocative and used auto-censorship.

8. Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?

Yes, I often followed foreign media news, and I am clearly glad that I did so. Unlike Turkish media, foreign media published the reality sufficiently. But I felt bad about our

image. World saw a dictator and how he ignored his people. I felt bad for Turkey's worldwide image.

9. Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?

Yes I am an active user.

10. What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

I think today, the social media has the function of what mainstream media had once. Information is provided through the social media; hence a political agenda is generated.

11. Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?

With social media people saw the reality, and coordinated quickly. Instant shares enabled debates and reconciliation. Social media was the source of information and mobilization.

INTERVIEW 5

Gender: Female

Age: 40

Educational Level: Graduate

Profession: Bank Manager

Political Scale: Social Democrat

1. Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?

Yes, I joined and supported.

2. Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?

Yes I supported Gezi Park. I was worried for increasing authoritarianism in Turkey, for the restrictions on individual and social liberties. I supported because we have to claim our rights for a democratic country. Faith in democracy and harmonizing environment of Gezi were my major motivations.

3. What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?

It should be objective and have a multilateral broadcasting principle; however in order to achieve such function, media institutions must be detached and freed from conglomerate ownerships. A conglomerate functionally seeks to maximize economical interests and profits and Turkish conglomerates generally have close relations with the state because of public tenders. Media institutions within this structure can hardly achieve objectivity.

4. Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?

I usually track the events through diversified media channels. Also I try to interpret the news with my knowledge and opinion, because the mainstream media in Turkey is not objective, hence they are not reliable.

5. What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?

I think the media have a strong influence on public opinion. However after Gezi Park resistance and 17 December operations, I started to believe that manufacturing public opinion and molding a public perception requires longer time.

6. How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?

Turkish media were far from objectivity. The news making was under government pressure and had a clear aim to influence public opinion. Both opposed and pro-government media had this intention. Very few had objective broadcasting.

7. How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

I agree with the criticisms, because media coverage was either biased or it was insufficient because of the patronage system and government pressure.

8. Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?

I started to track the news on foreign media with Gezi protests. They were clearly objective and news coverage was sufficient.

9. Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?

Yes I have accounts in both websites and I started to use them more actively after Gezi process.

10. What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

I think social media have a clear influence among the youth. Their political perceptions and opinions are shaped through the social media. Political actors also use the social media and follow the agenda. They in some cases shape their politics. For this reason, social media have a significant impact on political sphere, especially for the users, the youth.

11. Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?

Social media had an important effect during Gezi protests. Without the social media Gezi would never become a resistance with nation-wide support. Live footages, information flow supported the resistance and anti-democratic or unlawful occurrences were made public. People learnt and debated through the social media. People helped each other, assisted the ones in need. Social media's effect was crucial.

INTERVIEW 6

Gender: Female

Age: 25

Educational Level: Bachelor's Degree

Profession: Architect

Political Scale: Social democrat

1. Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?

Yes, but I mostly supported.

2. Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?

Yes, I supported and joined. Turkey began to witness a process in which individual liberties are restricted and judiciary values or norms are eroded. I just needed to do something and Gezi Park resistance was a reaction against such anti-democratic acts. For these reasons I supported from the beginning.

3. What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers ?

I think media should provide objective information.

4. Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?

Media institutions provide daily information. We don't have many alternatives. I think it is not quite possible to avoid their influence on our perceptions, unless we use a variety of sources for the information. I never believed what I saw on televisions entirely, but I think they had a minor influence on my perceptions. However after Gezi process, I fully understood that Turkish media are not reliable. Many people thought the same after the resistance. Now I always follow the agenda through different sources to acquire the objective truth.

5. What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?

I believe media influence on public opinion is significant. Especially televisions have an important influence, because in Turkey still very few read newspapers.

6. How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media ?

It was not objective and it was insufficient. We saw different pictures from different media sources. Opposed and pro-government media presented different coverages.

7. Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?

I don't, but I looked for foreign coverage during the events and I think they were more objective than our sources.

8. How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

Turkish media minimized the events, aimed to distract the public attention. For this reason I agree with the criticisms mostly.

9. Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?

Yes I do.

10. What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

With social media it is easier to follow the public agenda. Also people have the chance to influence the public agenda. Such influence may not always be political, but social media's social influence is very apparent.

11. Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?

Many people informed through the social media. Gezi Park resistance in this sense grew in numbers and supported by millions. People mobilized and gathered through the social media. Mainstream Turkish media's biased broadcasting also directed people to the sources of the social media. There were numerous diversified sources for limitless information. These sources helped people in many ways. There were no hidden agenda during Gezi resistance and this was achieved through the social media. However there was a downside related to disinformation. Mostly pro-government media used groundless news to support their manipulative efforts. They aggravated people. People who don't use social media in this way believed that Gezi protesters were vandals and terrorists acting against the government.

INTERVIEW 7

Gender: Female

Age: 48

Educational Level: Elementary School

Profession: Unemployed/Housewife

Political Scale: Left, Democrat

1. Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?

Yes I supported and joined.

2. Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?

Yes, I supported, because I am deeply concerned about our future in this country. Our youth's struggle for the environment and for the green gave me hope and basically it was my major motivation.

3. What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?

I think the media must provide objective information. They must have unbiased and fair news-making principles. Of course the media must be independent, because we cannot trust or rely on the media with limited independence.

4. Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?

Probably media had some influence on my opinions. They are still a major source for the information about local and global occurrences; however Turkish media are not objective and since I am very much aware of this fact, the news and commentaries cannot shape my perceptions entirely.

5. What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?

I think they have a great influence, especially the visual media. Majority of the people in Turkey still rely on the visual media than print media as the source of information; however Gezi Park events showed us that, alternative media changed the monolithic

impact of the media and it is another important spurce for public opinion. People used the social media for accurate information, because of mainstream media's manipulative discourses and the protests began.

6. How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?

I think they clearly have failed, because instead of covering a massive civil movement like Gezi resistance, they broadcasted penguin documents. Only a few channels presented proper coverage.

7. How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

People were angry to the Turkish mainstream media, because either they presented insufficient coverage or they became institutions of propaganda. Especially the partisan media only reflected a manipulated perspective. You cannot describe a political program informative, when all the guests are pro-government journalists. It was even impossible to hear them saying "yes, riot police's use of force is excessive", because no matter what, government is right. So simply I agree with the critical debates. Objective media and coverage is the primary requirement for social cohesion in Turkey.

8. Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?

No I don't, because I don't know English.

9. Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?

Yes, I have accounts in both websites.

10. What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

I believe the social media have an important impact on the new generations. They are the users of the social media and they create their own agendas through these alternative sources.

11. Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?

Especially the young protesters at the beginning mobilized and organized through the social media. The protests spread to the entire in time and turned into a resistance. Social media enabled this, because only with websites and blogs people informed about the brutal interventions and as a reaction they grew in numbers. This is also connected with the limited news-making of the mainstream media. The social media became the only source for communication and information. We all have seen this.

INTERVIEW 8

Gender: Male

Age: 30

Educational Level: Graduate

Profession: Engineer

Political Scale: Left, Secular

1. Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?

No.

2. Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?

Yes, I supported the Gezi Park Protests. I was determined to show the Turkish government that I was not happy with the way they handle the issues in Turkey and also that their motive to erase Ataturk from the Turkish history and bring their so-called Islamic democracy is not approved by everyone

3. What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?

They should reflect incidences without any bias or pressure from any outside entity. They should use information from reliable sources and inform the public with the correct(ed) information.

4. Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?

I stopped watching news on TV ever since the Gezi Protests. I read specific newspapers and follow news on the international media via internet

5. What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?

Mass media has a huge influence on public opinion especially on people with lower education levels. It is impossible to have an opinion about a situation if you don't receive accurate information.

6. How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?

During the Gezi protests, I followed what was going on from a few reliable TV channels such as Halk TV and Ulusal Kanal. They were the ones that were covering the events live. I also followed Facebook for all updated news from peers. Unfortunately, it was obvious that the Turkish mass media was trying to hide the events from the public.

7. How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

In the case of Gezi Protests, many people who were pro-government and didn't join the protests received information about the protests from government controlled newspapers and TV channels and hence were falsified most of the time.

8. Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?

Yes, I had access to foreign newspapers online and also TV channels. Foreign media covered the protests more openly than Turkish media who were obviously afraid of the Turkish prime minister.

9. Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?

I have been a Facebook user since 2005. I use it seldom for the past few years; however I was active on Facebook during the Gezi Protests. I don't use Twitter.

10. What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

Social media is an easy and quick way of communicating ideas across a broad range of user groups. I believe many people are influenced by their peers' opinions on political topics in social media.

11. Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?

Social media was used as a tool to get organized during the Gezi protests. All the information that was shared on Facebook and Twitter influenced the way people looked at situations. They even changed the way people viewed things. A good example would be the video of the Turkish Prime Minister in which there are comments of his where he says exactly the opposite thing of what he said previously on a subject. The title was sarcastic; "one Prime Minister, two Erdogans".

INTERVIEW 9

Gender: Male

Age: 21

Educational Level: Undergraduate Student

Profession: Student

Political Scale: Left

1. Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?

Yes, I joined and supported lots of them.

2. Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?

Yes, I supported, because our government's actions were authoritarian, discriminative and intolerable. Demolishing plan of Gezi Park was the last example of their irrespective acts.

3. What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?

To present objective news, but in Turkey there is no such thing.

4. Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?

No, because Turkish media are not objective.

5. What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?

They have a considerable amount of influence, because Turkish people believe what they see on the news. There are a variety of biased channels and people see what they want to see. A public perception is created everyday via mainstream Turkish channels and newspapers.

6. How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?

It was dreadful. Almost none of the media channels broadcasted the events. Media ownership in Turkey has strong relations with the government and simply the media

avoided the protests and violence. They realized their fault after some time, but it was just too late.

7. How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

After Gezi resistance I completely lost confidence in Turkish media. I was on the streets and in Gezi Park since the beginning. I witnessed violence and suffering, but Turkish media were blind. A news channel that hardly broadcast documentaries, had penguin documentaries. They only aimed to avoid the reality on the streets; they manipulated the events for the benefit of the government. So yes, I certainly agree with all of those debates.

8. Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?

Yes, I have access, but after Gezi resistance, I started to track the news on the foreign media daily. The coverage of the events was more objective and detailed.

9. Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?
Yes, I have an account in both websites.

10. What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?
I think the social media have an important influence, especially if the mainstream media is biased. Social media provide limitless communication and interaction. They are not owned by companies or capital powers. People own the social media. They are part of it. We can hear diversified voices through the social media. Political and social debates, hot topics influence public opinions. This may not be a direct influence, but there is a great potential.

11. Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?

We saw that we cannot rely on the mainstream media, for this reason I think Gezi would not even evolve into a massive movement without the social media. People communicated through the social media. They mobilized for the injuries, for the prosecutions, for the help and for the requirements. If the social media wouldn't have become an important source for public opinions, the government would not even try to ban it in Turkey. Even that shows us, how the social media matter.

 INTERVIEW 10

Gender: Female

Age: 29

Educational Level: PhD

Profession: Research Assistant

Political Scale: Left

1. Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?

Yes, rarely. I have supported and joined for the protest against the amendment of the animal rights' protection act last year.

2. Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?

Yes I have. Current government's regulations against the liberty of citizens and sentiments alike were my major motivations. Moreover, as a resident of Istanbul, I was deeply concerned about the outcomes of urban transformation, because today Istanbul is not livable anymore. For this reason my support for Gezi Park was motivated on the one hand for the green, specifically a resistance against the demolition of the park, and on the other hand it was something beyond protecting the green, a movement against the hegemony of the government.

3. What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?

I expect the traditional media to act independently, to refuse government hegemony and present objective and real news about internal and international events. Media has to be independent. It is not possible to expect critical and objective news from pro-government media and such understanding of the media cannot function.

4. Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?

There are differences in the matter of news coverage among various Turkish media sources. During the Gezi process it was explicitly observed that mainstream Turkish media are in government's control, since popular TV channels and newspapers intentionally avoided the coverage of Gezi incidents. Moreover existing news or information was mostly biased. As a free media channel -which does not have any notable capital investments, Halk TV was one of the few that presented the reality without censorship. For this reason I can admit that Halk TV had an effect on my perceptions and opinions. Because through this channel the unseen was seen and hence citizens were informed properly.

5. What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?

It is impossible to deny the influence of the media on public opinion. Because the media is the primary source of information and hence there is a possibility that media news could manipulate the people. In fact, during Gezi process there was a manipulated presentation of demonstrators which affected the overall perceptions of the people concerning the demonstrator profiles; because this image was made up of; marginal and aggressive people who cause vandalism, separatist people who attack women with head-scarf, and also disrespectful people who violate the sanctity of mosques. Such images of the media and government misguided most people and created false perceptions.

6. How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?

Turkish media were certainly biased and unreliable. Through the process I have seen either dismissal of real media workers who aimed to present the objective reality or resignation of them against the un-just and ill treatment of their media institutions. As a matter of fact, the hardest days of the resistance did not have any reflections in Turkish mainstream media. The process was broadcasted and published only by a few independent media channels.

7. How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

During Gezi process the media had a twofold nature. The first one included the majority of the popular media institutions and they are clearly under AKP hegemony. These are the ones that presented either biased news about Gezi resistance or intentionally ignored the incidents during the process. The second one included independent media which have lower shares of ratings and circulation. Moreover it was the media, which generally do not have capital accumulation behind and in fact not institutionalized. The free structure of the media can be observed through these independent media. In fact government institutions gave penalty fines to some of them during Gezi.

8. Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?

Yes, because while during the excessive police interventions Turkish channels broadcasted penguin documentaries, foreign media made live broadcastings. For a long time during the resistance I preferred foreign media instead of Turkish media for Gezi agenda. Also whereas foreign journalists broadcasted live interviews with demonstrators, in Turkey similar broadcastings were only seen in Halk TV and Ulusal Channel.

9. Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?

Yes, I have Facebook, Twitter and Instagram accounts.

10. What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

The political effects of the social media can be observed through the Arab Spring. People satisfied the need to get information through social media without in need of the mainstream media. In addition, even in the smallest occasion the social media provided the free means to organize and communicate. In this sense social media's effects also in state policies have increased. First and foremost the states aimed to control the social media through restrictive legislations; because social media influence the hegemony and political decisions of the government based on a clear openness. The transparency principle in politics is mostly enabled through the means and effects of the social media, because it is indeed harder to hide and do politics behind closed doors today.

11. Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?

People are organized through the social media during Gezi resistance. The places to be gathered, the concept of demonstrations, lists of requirements, and important subject as such are shared and spread through the social media. People are informed through the social media, especially the Turkish youth's active usage of the social media entirely showed that mainstream media and their components could not provide such inclusivity and present news with such openness. The effects of new internet era were clearly understood during Gezi process. If it wasn't the social media, and the usage of it actively; I think Gezi could never have such power or influence, neither Gezi spirit could spread in all over Turkey.

INTERVIEW 11

Gender: Male

Age: 39

Educational Level: Graduate

Profession: Pharmacist

Political Scale: Left

1. Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?

Yes I have.

2. Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?

Yes. My major motivation was increasing anti-democratic and authoritarian regulations of the government. These tendencies were also apparent during the first interventions to the environmentalist protest on the park. I clearly have problems with such governance and this was my major motivation.

3. What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?

The media should be objective and informative. This is very important for the development of our society, but unfortunately such function is clearly absent in Turkey.

4. Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?

Yes, they influence my opinions and perceptions.

5. What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?

The media have a significant effect, they are the social engineers.

6. How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?

Beyond any doubt they have failed.

7. How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

I certainly agree with those debates, Turkish mainstream media were blind while people were clashing and suffering on the streets across the country. It was an unforgettable mistake.

8. Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?

Yes I mainly read dailies like The Guardian and New York Times. The divergence was clear, because while Turkish media ignored the events, they have already started analyzing the background. We received news from the global media.

9. Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?

Yes, I do.

10. What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

Of course there is an impact, but in Turkey it is still limited, because not everyone is using the social media effectively.

11. Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?

Social media's impact was massive. People were mobilized and informed through the social media. They have seen and learnt the untold. They used every sources of the social media and collected evidences, stood against injustice, they protected each other, created assemblies, criticized, discussed and many more. Gezi Park resistance was achieved by the social media.

INTERVIEW 12

Gender: Male

Age: 48

Educational Level: Graduate

Profession: Writer

Political Scale: Conservative

1.   Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?

No, I didn't.

2.   Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?

No I didn't.

3.   What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?

Media have to inform the people about the occurrences inside the country.

4.   Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?

I watch news channels mostly and I mainly believe what I see in there. Sometimes I check opposed channels too, but Turkish media are divided completely, and for this reason it feels like as if there two different countries, depending on the channel. I simply choose to believe what I see on my news channels. Otherwise it would be chaotic to track the occurrences.

5.   What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?

Turkish media have an influence on public opinion, but today there are several public realms connected to the diversified media. Instead of pluralist approaches these realms produce manipulated agendas. They are mainly biased realms; hence it is hard to expect a wide-spread critique. For an improved society the media should provide the objective grounds for information and let the public to do the analysis or the critique, but we see experts and journalist embedding certain opinions and manipulating the uneducated minds

6.   How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?

I saw the events on television; however I think the coverage was poor, because there was a discussion about the media. The media at the beginning expressed that there was an environmentalist protest in Taksim and that the police interfered. We didn't see any live coverage. It seemed like an ordinary protest. After some time we realized that it

became a nation-wide, vandalistic uprising. For this reason Turkish media's coverage was poor at the beginning but later on it was sufficient.

7. How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

Turkish media are biased, those criticisms were true in different senses, because while some channels and newspapers ignored the events, some of them were openly supportive and the rest had an understanding close to the government.

8. Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?

No I don't.

9. Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?

Yes, I do.

10. What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

Social media enable a limitless environment of communication. I don't think they have a strong political influence, but important topics of discussions influence people and depending on the popularity of the topics, they have a potential for molding public opinion.

11. Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?

Social media widened the protests. People were mobilized through the social media. Also different debates were raised and people who supported the events and who didn't had a platform to debate. Sometimes politicians contributed to these debates. There was an intense critical agenda that we have not experienced before, not like this. Social media's inclusivity was crucial for the debates and information; however also there was the problem of disinformation from both sides. Social media is limitless and because there is not a basic control system, all kinds of manipulative information can spread easily. During Gezi events, both sides had produced disinformation, luckily nothing provocative happened; but polarization increased, because disinformation feeds anger and reaction.

INTERVIEW 13

Gender: Female

Age: 43

Educational Level: Master's Degree

Profession: Journalist

Political Scale: Religious, Democrat

1. Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?

Yes, many times.

2. Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?

I didn't join Gezi resistance. As a journalist I monitored the events carefully.

3. What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?

Information, objectivity and diversity

4. Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?

No, I usually monitor the media in a pluralist way. I have various sources for the information, including interviews and inter-disciplinary research. However perceptions of the mass media are inevitably related to actual events. For this reason, I analyze the coverage and the concept in the mainstream media.

5. What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?

Even though today the use of social media is widespread, mainstream media still have a significant influence on public opinion. However there is a clear diversity, for this reason we can see a variety of public agendas and opinions.

6. How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?

First days' silence and ignorance was an unforgettable mistake for the media. In fact, it is the reason behind increasing violence and disinformation. After a few days, there has been a variety of news and commentaries. But media's involvement is clear and thus we have to consider news and comments as a part of the protests.

7. How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

Like I said in the former question, Turkish mass media started with an unforgettable mistake and neglected the events. For this reason "penguin" criticisms have an accurate point.

8. Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?

Foreign media's approach was generally orientalist. Gezi protestors were defined as secular, modern and western. There were even comments like; "Gezi protestors are just like us". Political power on the other hand was often labeled as ignorant, authoritarian and accused of following Sharia. There was an attempt to create a Middle Eastern atmosphere. Foreign media was political during the protests and fell flat.

9. Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?

Yes, I have a Facebook and Twitter account.

10. What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

Due to instantaneity, diversity and diffusiveness social media have an influence on public opinion, consequently on politics; however because of disinformation problems, these effects are not reliable at all times.

11. Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?

Citizen journalism and reporting practices have quickly improved. Everyone shared information, photos and news instantly. People formed a wide communication network via social media. Blindness of mainstream media during the first days posed an important risk for disinformation and hence manipulation. Simply social media affected protests significantly and spread them; but disinformation was a serious issue of this communication network.

INTERVIEW 14

Gender: Male

Age: 45

Educational Level: Academy

Profession: Construction Technician

Political Scale: Religious, Anti-secular

1.   Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?

No, I didn't join, but I in some cases supported depending upon the humanitarian conditions.

2.   Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?

No, I didn't, because events lost the peaceful cause of protecting the green. The aim of Gezi shifted into something wider. They aimed to generate chaos, because you simply cannot protect the green with vandalism. If you don't have the respect for others, how can you respect the environment? People got hurt because of the clashes. Gezi events were not innocent.

3.   What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?

The media should educate and improve the society. Especially the media have an instructive function for housewives and for the new generations. I think the media in this sense is the reason behind our violent and vandal youth, because instead of educating them they provide destructive programs and shows. The media raise irresponsible and vandal generations.

4.   Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?

No, because analyses and perceptions in the Turkish media were never objective. I read and learn through different sources and make my own analyses.

5.   What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?

I think they have an influence. The media act depending upon the media owners and in this way they manipulate people.

6.   How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?

We saw some TV channels's 24 hours broadcasting, in fact the media were very active in that matter. They produced fake news and aggravated people. That was media's aim, they broadcasted 7 days 24 hours live and created an image of chaos. We understood

clearly, that there are many groups and individuals who desired chaos and destruction. This is our country, we must protect it, but instead of presenting solutions, the media and the real forces behind these events aggravated people, because if you try to protect the green, you simply don't generate destruction. This is how I see it; provocation.

7. How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

I disagree with "media ignored the events" debates, because in my opinion they should have neglected the events even more. To protect Turkey's dignity, they could have undisclosed the events. Why do we bring shame on our country, why do we ruin things? For instance international societies never reveal such events; we never watch the clashes in Europe live. During Gezi events police interventions also happened in Germany and in the U.K, I remember clearly, but they didn't broadcast it 24 hours live. Why should we?

8. Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?

No I didn't and I still can't because of the language.

9. Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?

I have accounts, but I mostly follow the agenda only.

10. What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

Certainly the social media have impacts on societies, socially and politically both.

11. Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?

It clearly had an impact, but mainly it was a provocative impact. Fake news, disinformation agitated the people and things brutally spread as if we were on war.

INTERVIEW 15

Gender: Male

Age: 50

Educational Level: Elementary School

Profession: Worker

Political Scale: Religious

1. Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?

No, I didn't. I am against such movements.

2. Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?

Absolutely not.

3. What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?

I think the media should serve to the national interests and to the country.

4. Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?

Media dominate and manipulate the people, especially the youth. But I they don't have any influence on my opinions, because I seek the truth. I watch evening news and sometimes read dailies. I used to watch STV (Samanyolu TV) every day, but I am also done with them. Also, I used to like "Hodja" (Fethullah Gulen) very much, but not anymore. All together are working against Turkey.

5. What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?

They had an influence, but not anymore. People have awakened. They saw media's true intentions after Gezi Park.

6. How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?

There were lots of fake and exaggerated news.

7. How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

Mainly they broadcasted false news, as if there was something chaotic going on in the country. I also criticized the media.

8. Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?

No, I am not interested.

9. Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?

Yes, mainly I use Facebook.

10. What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

Of course there is a political effect. People share debates and critical posts and mess with authorities from Twitter and Facebook every day. I am glad Twitter is banned.

11. Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?

The media always have affected our people. Our people are acting ignorantly, because Turkey's interests should be our priority. They are trying to declare a civil war, they are polarizing the people. Media's effect is enormous. Social media in this sense aggravated the people during Gezi Park events.

INTERVIEW 16

Gender: Male

Age: 21

Educational Level: Occupational Academy

Profession: Accounting Assistant

Political Scale: None, I only believe in the truth

1.   Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?

No, I supported but didn't join protests before.

2.   Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?

No, I did not, because I think Gezi events were nonsensical. If you want to stage a coup and if you think something is wrong about the country; you have to think bigger. They cannot achieve those aims with protests like Gezi Park.

3.   What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?

They should present true and objective information.

4.   Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?

I don't believe in the Turkish media, they all make false and biased news.

5.   What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?

Yes, they have an extreme influence.

6.   How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?

There were lots of false and fake news. There wasn't any significant event, but they created a perception as if an extraordinary thing was happening in Turkey. They even funded an ad for New York Times. Turkish news hardly find reflection in the global media, but they published and ad for Gezi protests.

7.   How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?

They made such scenes for a tree and a park. I am against with it. I agree with the debates about the media. They were supposed to present the reality with objectivity.

8.   Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?

No, I don't.

9.   Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?

Yes, I use Facebook and Twitter at most.

10.   What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?

Indeed there is an impact, otherwise it would have never banned in Turkey.

11. Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?

There is a social effect, because it helped people to organize themselves. Social media is the platform for mobilization.

INTERVIEW 17

Gender: Female

Age: 33

Educational Level: Elementary School

Profession: Unemployed/Housewife

Political Scale (left / right; secular/ religious; liberal/ conservative): Religious

1. **Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?**

   No, I have not.

2. **Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?**

   No, I did no, because the events were an uprising against the legitimized government. Even though they claimed to fight for democracy, they aimed to overthrow the government with an anti-democratic way.

3. **What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?**

   They should be objective and respect to the people's will. They should not try to manipulate the people.

4. **Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?**

   We watch often TV's in Turkey, I sometimes read dailies as well, but even though I think the media in Turkey is not independent, I do not have an alternative source for the information about our country. For this reason they have some sort of influence upon my thoughts, but after the events last year Gezi Park and 17 December operations, I began to lose reliability in the media. They only serve to the interests of the interest lobby and foreign powers.

5. **What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?**

   Certainly Turkish media influence public opinion, but today people are skeptic, hence that influence is not as effective as it was several years ago..

6. **How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?**

   The events were not innocent, hence the coverage was poor by the Turkish media and I am glad for that. Everyone should respect to the national will.

7. **How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?**

   Well, the coverage was poor and biased, especially at the beginning. After only a couple of days we watched the events properly. The criticisms are true, but I cannot say I supported live broadcasts and increasing coverage, because the events evolved into something violent, many people died. We all felt terrible about it. The media should not support such brutal clashes.

8. **Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?**

No, but I saw in our TV's how the global media covered the events. Foreign powers are interested in creating chaos in Turkey. For this reason from the beginning they aired live footages.

9. **Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?**

Yes, I am an active user.

10. **What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?**

Social media became an important source as an alternative communication platform. They have an influence. People interactively share and learn through the social media, but it is not always a beneficial influence.

11. **Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?**

Gezi Park events spread because of the social media. Protesters used every opportunity that social media provide. They communicated, debated, informed one another and most importantly they mobilized. Social media aggravated in most cases. There were many disinformations. Events grew and became violent because of the social media. That is why Twitter was banned in Turkey.

INTERVIEW 18

Gender: Female

Age: 19

Educational Level: Undergraduate Student

Profession: Student

Political Scale (left / right; secular/ religious; liberal/ conservative): Religious, liberal

1. **Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?**

No, I have not.

2. **Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?**

No I did not. I could have supported the environmentalist movement, but after some time events became violent and gained an anti-governmental structure.

3. **What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?**

The media should be nothing but objective.

4. **Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?**

It depends on the subject and analysis. They influence me in some ways, but I also look through different sources to acquire an objective perspective, because in the past years the influence was greater, but lately we heard and witnessed lots of scandals about biased news and disinformation. Today they can hardly influence me.

5. **What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?**

The media especially in Turkey have a strong influence on the public opinion. People watch the news and commentaries, they tend to believe them. Not every segment of this society is educated or literate. But I also believe that with Gezi Park events and 17 December operation that hegemony is eroded.

6. **How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?**

At the beginning it was poor, but in time it was sufficient, however the news-making was nor objective. There were opposed or supportive media; hence there were lots of disinformation in both sides.

7. **How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?**

People were quiet right about insufficient and biased coverage, because during the first days only a few Turkish channels aired the clashes.

8. **Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?**

Yes, sometimes. During the events I read comments and watched live footages from the global media, because at the beginning our media were mainly silent. There is a divergence, global media aired the events from the beginning, but I hardly find such attention honest and sincere. Out of a sudden it was all about how Turkish government is anti-democratic and how the secular people on the streets were suffering. They also polarized the community and became a side of the events.

9. **Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?**

Yes, I do.

10. **What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?**

I believe the social media have a great potential in molding opinion. This may be either political or social; nevertheless limitless structure enables an amazing communication network. Social media is the alternative to the mainstream media and break its dominance.

11. **Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?**

Well, social media's influence was great of course. People organized and mobilized through Twitter, Facebook and tracked the events through various blogs. Supportive and oppositional sides debated through the social media. Even sometimes political elites and groups were included to the discussions. Social media spread the events and informed them about the clashes or updated news. The problem is the disinformation potential. It is the downside of this independent platform. During Gezi we also saw examples of disinformation.

INTERVIEW 19

Gender: Male

Age: 27

Educational Level: Graduate

Profession: Civil Engineer

Political Scale: Religious, Conservative

1. **Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?**

   No, I didn't. I could only join protests whenever my land and my religion are endangered.

2. **Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?**

   On the one hand I supported, because the protests had a valid cause at the beginning. I would also protect the green, our environment. Besides, Topcu Barracks project is a disastrous project. Instead of protecting scarce green areas the government decides to construct a mall to Gezi Park. It is indeed a problematic investment and I am against such policies. On the other hand I was furious and I didn't support anything that happened afterwards. Because it was an uprising and naturally I reacted. I was worried about the sake of our nation. Turkey has a tragic past. For instance for a long time this country suffered from left-right conflicts. I was concerned that we were going to have a similar conflict at Gezi. Simply I supported at the beginning, but afterwards I was against it.

3. **What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?**

   I think primarily media should inform people. Important events of our developed societies can be acquired only through the media. Second, media should educate people. Finally media should be entertaining.

4. **Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?**

   I am mostly skeptical to the media and hence I always try to investigate the events through different sources. Then I evaluate them by myself. For this reason, no, my perceptions do not depend on the information of media sources.

5. **What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?**

   Mass media have a clear influence on public opinion. Especially in Turkey people are affected by the media. They mainly believe what they see on the media sources and they develop an understanding, a value system.

6. **How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?**

   I think the coverage was sufficient. It is hard to find objective media channels in Turkey. For this reason the coverage may be biased, but it was adequate. News about Gezi events were either supportive or they were opposed and this twofold nature of the news changed in accordance with the supportive and opposed media channels.

7. **How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?**

   I agree with them. Gezi Park was a significant civil movement, the people's movement at the beginning, but mainstream Turkish media simply ignored the events and instead aired penguin documentaries tried to manipulate the people. For this reason I also criticized media's ignorance. Later on the media changed attitudes and started broadcasting, but it was a bit late. In fact no one really has foreseen the potential of

Gezi. No one expected such a wide-spread mobilization. I am against both government's attitudes and protesters' acts in the following days. We have learnt many things, including the media; but it was too late.

8. **Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?**

No I don't, because I can't read in English; however I saw some news about global media's attention. They were curious about the events and broadcasted them live. I still don't think that their interest was honest. Before Gezi Park, global media's main approach to Turkey was full of appreciation. They praised the government and their reforms or regulations; however with a single event they started to talk about how Turkey was not democratic anymore. In their perspective instantly the democracy in Turkey has failed. I think this is not a fair approach.

9. **Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?**

Yes, I have a Twitter and Facebook account.

10. **What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?**

I don't think they have a political effect. They have an important function in communication and mobilization. In fact, it is social media's major effect.

11. **Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?**

Social media spread the events, gave a momentum. Without social media we wouldn't even be talking about the events. They were communicated and informed through the social media and mobilized. Mainstream media couldn't provide as wide coverage as the social media, because social media is everywhere. People shared, explained, and debated about the events, they informed one another, via Facebook, Twitter and other websites. In short social media had a major impact on the mobilization and evolvement of the Gezi events.

INTERVIEW 20

Gender: Female

Age: 52

Educational Level: High School

Profession: Unemployed/Housewife

Political Scale: Religious

1. **Have you ever joined and/or supported civil protests before?**

No, I did not.

2. **Did you support the Gezi Park resistance? If yes, Why? What kind of motivations do you have for this support?**

I did not support Gezi Park at the beginning; because I didn't understand its purpose, but increasing violence to our youth out on the streets and government's strict acts in the matter motivated me some time after the resistance and I passively started to support it.

3. **What do you think should be the function/ mission of traditional media like television and newspapers?**

I think media should provide objective information solely regardless of interests and ideologies.

4. **Do your perceptions depend on what you see in the mass Turkish media like television or widely circulating Turkish newspapers?**

I watch televisions to learn the hot topics of Turkish agenda. Sometimes I read newspapers. I do believe what I see and read mostly. I don't have any other source to obtain information. But after Gezi things about Turkish media got even more mixed up. Today it matters which TV you watch or newspaper you need based on the ideology and government effect.

5. **What is your view on the influence of mass media like televisions and widely circulating newspapers on public opinion?**

Like myself, many Turkish citizens watch televisions and generally believe what they see there. Simply the mass media has a certain influence on public opinion. During the 1990s I remember, RP and Necmettin Erbakan were targeted to a massive reaction by military dominated Turkish media. Even the news spots were harsh. I remember a spot on Hurriyet News: "Our 70 years heritage of republic is in danger!" Soon 28 February coup happened as if the media provided the necessary environment for it. Media are important for power and for the people.

6. **How do you view the coverage of the Gezi Park protests by Turkish media?**

We at first didn't understand what was going on. The only thing we saw was lots of people on streets are demonstrating something and tried to raid to presidency office in Besiktas, and Erdogan's harsh sentiments related to demonstrations. Turkish media could not pass this test, because after some time we understood what was really happening. They were not marginals, they were our children, our youth.

7. **How do you evaluate the critical debate on the role of mass media during the Gezi Park protest movement?**

The only critic I remember is about government's manipulation on the media and their biased news-making. I also feel the same. Regardless of the ideology the media should have gave us real information from the beginning. They even called the demonstrators vandals. Kurds-Turks, conservatives-liberals, and leftist-rightist; all the conflicted sides of Turkish community were on the streets, united and we were misguided by their intention. This was media's fault.

8. **Did you/ do you have access to foreign newspapers or to foreign television? If yes - do you perceive of any divergence between the coverage of the Gezi Park events by Turkish media on one hand; and foreign media on the other?**

No I do not.

9. **Do you; yourself; actively use social media like Facebook or Twitter?**

No, I do not. But I started to use Twitter after Gezi with my son's help. I follow the agenda through Twitter now in addition to mass media.

10. **What do you think about the general political impact of such social media?**

It is indeed surprising how social media emerged like this with such limitless structure. Like Turkey and like other movements in the world, social media with websites like

twitter and facebook; but also with lots of videos, blogs and direct contributers of citizens; generated an important field for communication, information and opposition. For this reason even I started using the social media. You cannot stay away from the agenda of it, neither the state can. For this reason they are now aimed to control the internet.

11. **Specifically; what do you see as the impact / the involvements of such social media on the occurrences in / around Gezi Park?**

I saw the reality beneath Gezi resistance through the social media. My son showed me videos, blogs and lots of worrisome pictures, which we did not see on the mass media. What I saw was a shocking violence and at the same time a direct communication network provided by the social media. People raised their voices through the social media especially because of mass media's blackout. They called for others in case of emergencies, they informed each other for dangerous locations, and daily debates were raised through trend topics. It was alive and it presented reality in every aspect. I did not actively join to the resistance, but I started to support through the social media, because the demonstrators were not different from us. In my view, it was a unique experience. First you have no idea of what social media or Twitter is, and then it becomes your one of the major sources for information and agenda.

Özlem CIHAN

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Education

Master's Degree (2009 to present)	**University of Vienna**
	Political Science
	Thesis: Gezi Park and the Media: Social Media as the New Public Sphere
Graduate (2004–2008)	**Yildiz Technical University**
	Political Science and International Relations
	Thesis: The Relations between the Power and Press in Turkey after 1980 **Grade**: 3,04 / 4
Secondary/High School (1997-2004)	**Cagribey Anatolian High School**) (English)
	Grade: 4,51 / 5

Work Experience

SkyTurk360 News Channel 2012 Sep-2013Feb Istanbul/Turkey	Assistant Editor and Producer
Cumhuriyet Newspaper 2008 (Feb-Jul) Istanbul/Turkey	Assistant Reporter
PO (Petrol Office) 2005-2006 (Part-Time)	Marketing and Sales
Metro Group 2005 (Part-Time)	Marketing

Voluntary Services

Mor Catı (Purple Roof) Women Solidarity Center 2007 (Oct-Dec)
Voluntary assistance in Children Shelter

Skills

Office Software	Word, Excel, Power Point
Edit Programs	Adobe Photoshop

Languages

English	Excellent written and spoken
German	Basic written and spoken

Personal Activities and Interests

Photography (semipro), Film, Music
Travelling, Swimming, Trekking