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#OccupyGezi

On Twitter and affective news

On the dawn of May 31, 2013, Istanbul's riot police raided Gezi, a park recently occupied by activists standing against the threat of its destruction. On social media, pictures of the bloody police intervention went viral, sparking outrage and a political momentum that materialized throughout the country in the form of protests against the national government. Taking as a point of departure my personal experience of the events, this essay examines the use and effects of Twitter in the context of particular forms of civilian protests. In particular, I suggest that such tweets may contribute to the development of an affective environment that can foster a collective sense of belonging, association, and shared experience. First, I discuss media censorship of the initial protest in Istanbul. I then proceed with a discussion of the affective connotations of the messages and photographs shared on Twitter. In this regard, I also bring forward the cultural concept of "martyrdom" as a helpful analytical tool to explore these issues.

> *Oppression creates the need and demand for recognition.*

— Halverson, Ruston, & Trethewey (2013, p. 321)

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On the dawn of May 31, 2013 in Istanbul, the local riot police raided Gezi, a park recently occupied by activists standing against the threat of its destruction (Navaro-Yashin, 2013; Oncu, 2013). The imminent demolition of the public space was part of a colossal urban development project that sought to replace a popular park filled with trees and greeneries with a shopping mall and a mosque. Backed by the Turkish government, the controversial plan sought to refashion at large the neighbouring Taksim square, generally considered to be the centre of modern Istanbul and known for its variety of cultural and intellectual institutions frequented by artists, academics, and tourists alike.[1] The threat and underlying motivations of

this project left no one indifferent, however. It shocked the collective political imaginary of a considerable number of inhabitants of Istanbul, as I briefly describe below.

On that morning, the occupiers of the park were violently awakened by tear gas and jets of water. Almost immediately, word of the police intervention began to circulate on social media. Pictures of bloodied faces went viral, sparking local and international outrage (Yıldırım, 2013). Within hours and days, response protests began to erupt throughout Istanbul and Turkey, surprisingly regrouping a very diverse group of people (Navaro-Yashin, 2013; Oncu, 2013). From a relatively small-scale cultural and environmental resistance action emerged a spontaneous social movement uprising against the Turkish government and what was perceived as the Islamization of the state (Dagtas, 2013; Navaro-Yashin, 2013; Oncu, 2013; Yıldırım, 2013). The political demands made by protesters expanded beyond cultural and environmental concerns to critiques of the "arrogant" politics of Recep Tayyip Erdogan's Islamist Justice and Development Party.[2]

This essay offers a conceptually informed reflection on Twitter that suggests that tweets may contribute to the formation of an affective environment that holds the potential to foster a collective sense of belonging, association, and shared experience. It is inspired by my personal (limited) participation in the events, and more specifically by the time spent with a few locals in their offices, and following the events of the protest on social media as they happened down the street. On the afternoon of May 31, during my first visit to Istanbul, I stumbled onto a Taksim Square cluttered with debris and invaded by police. The air reeked of tear gas. At a certain distance, I had observed protesters in their cat-and-mouse chase with the police until a tear gas canister exploded at my feet. It was while escaping from the chemical cloud that I met Hakan and her co-workers. United by a shared traumatic experience of police repression, social boundaries usually set between strangers were brushed away within seconds.

After joining their impromptu medical support team, Hakan and her co-workers welcomed me into their office, where we exchanged stories and discussed the recent events and Turkey's political climate in an attempt to make sense of what was going on outside. Their workday was long over by then, but with rumours of police roadblocks and transit interruptions, they had yet to leave their office. Massed behind a desk, we were hypnotized by the spectacle unfolding before us on the two computer screens. The loud explosions of tear gas canisters down the road periodically drew our attention to the windows. On the left monitor, a live video stream displayed the events unfolding on a nearby street. On the right monitor, Hakan was scrolling through tweets marked with the hashtag #OccupyGezi. Some tweets were in Turkish, which she translated for me, adding her own political commentaries to the mix. Those with pictures spoke for themselves. The atmosphere was uncanny—hardly describable. We felt excited,

exhausted, angered (for different reasons), puzzled, and torn between joining the protest and leaving safely before it might be too late. We were unsure of what would happen next, but we shared this hopeful sense that Turkish history was in the making.

As an international tourist, I appreciated the protection from arbitrary mass arrests in Hakan's office, though I was initially taken aback by the particular dynamics at play. How was it that we relied on Twitter and live video streams to follow what was unfolding only a few hundred meters away? Was this a case of "slacktivism," a pejorative term used by some communications and social-movement scholars to refer to "feel-good" online actions—usually considered inefficient—taken from the comfort and intimacy of one's dwelling (Valenzuela, 2013)? This critical concept, I later realized, only makes sense if one immediately evaluates social media in terms of concrete effects and consequences offline. It enforces a single, normative possibility and timeline for political activity. As previously noted, Hakan and some of her co-workers had been actively engaged in providing medical support to protesters earlier in the day. At that time, however, they might not have felt the urge to commit to the movement as some of them did in the following days, when protests erupted throughout the country. They were also technically bound to their work and responsibilities. In the following pages, then, I seek to address the social dynamics at play during those moments in the office when we sought to stay informed about the situation through social media.

The role of social media in activism and political unrest—particularly in relation to the "Arab Spring"—has been the subject of countless public and scholarly debates (see, for example, Aday et al., 2013; Aman & Jayroe, 2013; Bruns, Highfield, & Burgess, 2013; Diriöz, 2013; Fattal, 2012; Halverson et al., 2013; Juris, 2012; Mabon, 2013; Markham, 2014; Robertson, 2013; Tufekci & Freelon, 2013; Valenzuela, 2013; Wolfsfeld, Segev, & Sheafer, 2013). Such discussions have largely focused on questions of logistical support, information diffusion, connectivity, differences with traditional media, and mobilization. Sweeping critiques from both scholars and protesters, however, have warned against the reification of concepts of "Internet revolution" and "Twitter revolution" and the overstatement of the role of social networking sites. While they do not deny the crucial role played by social media in altering politics and fostering change, they have sought to reposition these technologies and applications not as causes, but rather as amplifiers, "facilitator[s] of revolution" (Halverson et al., 2013, p. 313; see also Mabon, 2013; Markham, 2014; Tufekci & Freelon, 2013; Valenzuela, 2013; Wolfsfeld et al., 2013).

In light of this literature, this essay shares Valenzuela's (2013) and Tufekci and Freelon's (2013) opinion that research on digital technologies and political activity must move beyond simplistic questions about their interconnectedness. My aim, rather, is to explore how, and to what effect, Twitter may have been "alter[ing] the

information ecology" (Tufekci & Freelon, 2013, p. 844) at the time. After elaborating on my methodology, I will discuss media censorship of the protests in Turkey before focusing on the affective connotations of some of the messages and photographs shared on Twitter on and around May 31, 2013. Based on my experiences, I suggest that tweets may contribute to the formation of an affective environment that can foster a collective sense of belonging, association, and shared experience. In this sense, my essay expands beyond the thesis that Twitter is used to transmit organizational information for political protests, in order to dwell on the meanings, the intensities, and the potentialities that those messages convey. Following Boellstorff's (2008) argument that the online virtual world of Second Life should be taken seriously, I contend that tweets should be treated the same way— that is, as legitimate sites of cultural production. Considering tweets in and of themselves, I do not ask whether this energy translates into offline action. In fact, I share Tufekci and Freelon's (2013) perspective that the distinction between online as virtual and offline as real is fundamentally flawed and misguided. I am not concerned, moreover, by anxieties about distinguishing between rumours and truth, considering instead that the veracity of the information is of little importance if it is *believed to be true* at the moment of consumption. In an unrelated example, we can think of April Fool's Day in North America: people are tricked into believing a message, which, despite its false nature, can have real affective, emotional, and physical effects for those who accept at face value the information they are encountering.[3]

METHODOLOGY

Twitter is a social-networking digital platform that allows users to publish concise messages (tweets) of 140 characters or less with the possibility of incorporating hyperlinks and pictures. One may "favourite" and republish (re-tweet) the tweets of others, as well as "follow" particular accounts, which refers to the tracking of their future tweets. As a public forum, Twitter offers a variety of "means to collect, communicate, [and] share . . . information . . . on different levels of engagement" (Hermida, 2010, p. 301). Hashtagging, for example, flexibly mediates, puts in discussion, and gathers under a single rubric particular tweets sharing the same referent. This method, the result of a user-generated technological development, has grown into an influential cultural convention since its inception.[4] Gyori (2013) argues indeed that this practice, to the extent that it allows users to tap into hubs of interests and affinity, "has become a favored mode of communication, bonding, and self-expression" (p. 486) that connects individual comments to larger discussions. Hashtagged discussions are horizontal—denuded of overarching decision-makers. They unfold organically through a multitude of users that adopt the same referent in their own tweets. In other words, they are not controlled by a specific organization or users.

According to Bruns et al. (2013), hashtagging can form "ad hoc issue publics" (p. 873; see also Tufekci & Freelon, 2013, p. 846 on "hashtagged public space"). It also contributes to the "trending" and potential viral diffusion of certain discourses and narratives. In this essay, I highlight 22 tweets published on and around May 31, 2013 with the inscription "#occupygezi," the hashtag that we used in Hakan's office and that reached world-wide notoriety in the following hours and days. A number of the selected tweets included links to websites and blogs, photographs, live streams, and/or referred to other users. Due to copyright issues, however, I have resorted to short bracketed descriptions of images in lieu of their inclusion in this article. Even though all messages were public, I have also anonymized tweets by removing any links and identity markers given their highly political nature. All but one tweet I examined were published in English.

Some scholars have highlighted the difficulty of collecting data on Twitter (see, for example, Bruns et al., 2013). At the time of my research (early winter of 2014), the website was not particularly "archive-friendly." Although I later learned about the existence of some user-generated applications that can be used to produce inventories of tweets respecting particular conditions, I did not have access to such tools. That said, the aim of this essay is not to provide a comprehensive, archival review of all of the tweets identified with the hashtag "#occupygezi" published on and around the day of May 31, 2013. Instead, I seek to reflect on my partial experience in Istanbul and the questions it provokes. To this end, I embraced an experiential approach that simulated what I considered to be a typical experience on Twitter (it certainly was ours in that office in Istanbul) to provide complementary examples. That is, when users scroll down their feed, they are likely to read only particular tweets while skipping or missing out on a number of others. Just like our attention was grabbed by the photographs shared on the Twitter feed, I have particularly focused on visual depictions accompanied by a commentary.

Finally, I must emphasize again that I have purposively not verified the facticity of the information shared in the selected messages. More than 15 years ago, Hine (2000) discussed the difficulty of distinguishing between "the true" and "the false" on the Internet. Yet, as it will become clear later, anxieties pertaining to gossip and rumour mills barely matters in the context of this essay, not only because I am focusing on the live effects of these tweets, but also because these processes are integral to how Twitter has grown as a form of social media.

ON CENSORSHIP AND IMMEDIACY

In Turkey, the early days of the protests were marked by the silence of local news media, which stood in stark contrast to their international counterparts (Genç, 2013). Penguins notably became a potent satirical symbol of this presumed censorship following the reports on social media that the main news network had aired a documentary about the habits of this animal species while Takshim square

was a theatre of resistance (Dagtas, 2013). For Egin (2013) and Genç (2013), the biases, partisanship, and corruption of Turkish mainstream media could be explained by a feeling of intimidation in regards to the prospect of governmental retaliation. In this context, many protesters felt that most news media did not represent their interests, and they increasingly turned to Twitter for an alternative (Dirioz, 2013; Genç, 2013). Consider the following excerpt of tweets as an example of this turn to social media to comment on censorship and to evoke the protests:[5]

> #OccupyGezi protests, so big in scale yet ignored by the mainstream media. The only flow of information is online or foreign media.

> Istanbul's asking for your help.media censorship in Turkey!please spread the word #occupygezi [*Photograph of some protesters in a Taksim Square clouded with thick teargas.*]

> huh, #occupygezi is now the leading story in US edition of news.google.com, but not in the the turkish one...media blackout much?

> From now on I will tweet in English about Gezi Park resistance for foreign press. #occupygezi

Beyond accusations of censorship, it must be noted that Twitter thrives on the instantaneity and ever-changing momentum of "premediated situations"— unfolding events that cannot be immediately reported by print publications that generally operate on different temporal and methodological registers (Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2012, p. 267). In the context of crises and catastrophic events, Twitter can be thought of as a form of "electronic word of mouth" (p. 268), an interconnected and constantly evolving web of information that becomes a source of commentaries, user-generated "news," as well as a forum for journalists and pundits to share their observations and opinions (see Dirioz, 2013; Juris, 2012). In Turkey, social-media feeds provided real-time information about the events of Taksim Square through the work of "citizen journalists" (Genç, 2013) and journalists from non-mainstream media sources (Dirioz, 2013). Notably, this turn to Twitter as a news-reporting and discussion platform for local and internal audiences was not a unique moment in history. Social movements such as Occupy (Juris, 2012) and uprisings in Egypt (Aman & Jayroe, 2013; Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2012), Tunisia (Halverson et al., 2013), Libya (Bruns et al., 2013), and Iran (Dirioz, 2013; Gyori, 2013) have all resorted, to different extents, to social media to circumvent political and media censorship or partisanship.[6] These platforms offered an alternative "continuous stream of events" (Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2012, p.

266) and provided a forum for the expression of opinions. In Egypt, for example, blogs became prominent news sources at a time of restricted or blocked access to mainstream media (Aman & Jayroe, 2013; Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2012).[7]

In Turkey, tweets relating to the protests were not unanimously accepted or left un-critiqued, however. In a declaration, Prime Minister Erdogan, known for his ability to spin public discourse in his favour (Karaca, 2013), asserted that Twitter was the "worst menace to society" (Egin, 2013, p. 55).[8] Assessing the value of protesters' tweets on a religious scale, he stated that "their one million tweets are equal to one 'bismillah'" (Oncü, 2013, p. 22), the oft-repeated first word of the Quran. Yet, for Turkish protesters, tweets circumvented media censorship (or limited coverage) and offered a forum for them to express themselves relatively freely (Dirioz, 2013). In a sense, it suspended "the limits of the sayable" (Karaca, 2013; see also Dagtas, 2013) by providing a virtual space for protesters to actively resist attempts from the Turkish state to delegitimize them.

ON NON-TRADITIONAL "NEWS" OUTLETS, NEW FORMS OF EXPRESSION, AND MODERN-DAY MARTYRS

The use of Twitter, such as in the context of protests, has fostered new forms of expression, media consumption, and journalistic paradigms (Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2012). It resists the mass media monopoly that marked the twentieth century by acting, according to some, as a megaphone that has the potential to shift power relations of influence on the world's opinions (Aday et al., 2013). Gyori (2013) argues, however, that Twitter has "created blind spots and undermined traditional journalistic codes" (p. 485) by deemphasizing well-sourced empirical observations. For example, the author explains that Western media have often been unable to confirm the source and authenticity of photographs they use (Aday et al., 2013; see also Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2012). On Twitter, the rhythms of news production are simply temporally incompatible with traditional journalistic conventions (Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2012). Twitter journalism "capitalizes on rapid . . . dissemination of information, and collaborative . . . editorial processes" (Halverson et al., 2013) by participants. As instant updates become both the norm and the appeal of Twitter, offering exclusive stories and scoops becomes incommensurate with information processing and the verification of sources (Markham, 2014).

Though Genç (2013) argues that alternative forms of publications such as tweets are borne to accurate representations, for these users could otherwise lose their readership, we might ask what happens when the babblings of non-journalists, or "citizen journalists" (Genç, 2013), appear side-to-side with a journalist's messages on a Twitter feed. Nowadays, anyone can share news and stories describing their subjective experience of an event. As a result, credentialization is increasingly obsolete—or has transformed standards—and well-sourced news stories risk to be

mixed with other forms of (dis)information (Dirioz, 2013). Despite often taking the appearance of objective reports of events, tweets can indeed "blend emotion with opinion, and drama with fact, reflecting deeply subjective" descriptions and interpretations of events in the making (Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2012, p. 274; see also Markham, 2014).

Rather than attending to the question of validity and truth, however, I find it imperative to think about the effects of narratives and other processes on Twitter in and of themselves (Boellstorff, 2008). In other words, it is crucial to examine "why some audiences find acts of mediation that favor intuition over evidence highly persuasive" (Gyori, 2013, p. 482; see also Halverson et al., 2013; Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2012). Consider the following series of tweets as an example of what might have appeared on the Twitter feed in Hakan's office, inspiring in us diverse reactions and emotions:

> Brilliant pic of a woman standing resolutely against Turkish police #occupygezi [*A woman in a red dress is peppersprayed by a police officer.*]

> The pictures from #occupygezi are truly dystopian. Started with 100s, but turned into 1000s against govt troops

> Even some football fan clubs are now joining to protests at #occupygezi; this is spreading beyond political activists. That's important.

> Police open fire with plastic bullet to protestors #occupygezi #direngeziparki [*A kneeling police officer holds a fuming (plastic bullet? teargas canister?) gun.*]

> The police have thrown a gas bomb into the emergency room in the Taksim hospital. Fascism at its finest! #occupygezi

> this is madness #policeviolence #Turkey #occupyGezi #direngeziparki

> #Turkey's tear gas canisters WITH LOVE FROM USA! #OccupyGezi [*Image of a teargas canister with the inscription "made in U.S.A."*]

> erdogan's police uses unbalanced power against the people @ #taksim! #occupygezi #istanbul #dayangeziparki #Turkey [*A man lies on the ground, next to another standing protester with a scarf over her nose.*]

Gas en el lobby del #Taksim hotel [Gas in the lobby of #Taksim hotel] (my translation) #Estambul #direngezipark #occupygezi [*Image of the lobby of a building presumably clouded with teargas.*]

Chaos in Turkey as police use tear gas and water cannons on 10,000 protesters #occupygezi [*Some protesters are targeted by water cannons, while other run away, protecting themselves.*]

They'll use water cannons, teargas, and even shoot rubber pullets at your head. Your Mission is to be heard, you're being heard. #occupygezi

The Police are torturing masses of people in Gezi Parki at Taksim Square and in subway in Istanbul. #occupygezi [*In a clouded Taksim Square, a large mass of protesters are sprayed by water cannons.*]

gas INSIDE a CAR #occupygezi [*A man exits a truck filled with teargas.*]

Police firing tear gas shells near wounded people in today's protests at Gezi Park #direngeziparki #occupygezi

Crowds are calling for mayor's resignation in Istiklal street near Taksim Square in Istanbul #occupygezi [*Photograph of a street filled with protesters.*]

this is not a war zone? #occupytaksim #occupygezi #direngeziparki [*Three protesters drag a seemingly inert body through a cloud of teargas.*]

The tweets above achieve multiple things at once. They document (or pretend to document) events from first-hand experience, express opinions about politics and police brutality, and appeal to emotions and senses of solidarity, courage, and suffering. They are convincing, mostly written in a direct language of certainty.

Scannell's (2004) idea that media produce "effects of truth" (p. 582) can be applied to Twitter as well, where such effects can manifest themselves in various ways. Some users, for example, become celebrities through the exponential retweets of their messages (Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2012). Thanks to this function, they "[attain] visibility, and potentially, credibility" (pp. 275–277). Effects of truth may also emerge through the organic and "collaborative construction of events out of atomized stories" (pp. 267–269), an assemblage of tweets that, through space and time, becomes something larger than the sum of its parts (Halverson et al., 2013). Papacharissi and Oliveira (2012) have referred to such assemblages of tweets as a real-time, round-the-clock affective news environment.[9] According to them, the flow of information on Twitter "is characterized by mounting, emotive

anticipation" (p. 276). The "constant pace, frequency, and tone of tweets" (p. 276) posted in the midst of events set an ambiance, a political space in which people can "grapple with ideas, elaborate arguments, and reflect on the information acquired" (Valenzuela, 2013, p. 924). This ambiance is affective in the sense that it is premediated and anticipatory (Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2012). It involves an affective engagement (gestures or expressions) that both "inform[s] the shape an event will take" (p. 276) and is informed by the unfolding events. The anticipation and mutual constitution are not a prognosis of the future; they rather "communicate a predisposition to frame it" (p. 280).

For Papacharissi & Oliveira (2012), the synthesis of humour, opinion, emotion, and information is reminiscent of "the affective patterns of interpersonal conversations" (p. 278). On Twitter feeds, Robertson (2013) notes, "image, affect, experiential accounts, and emotive testimonies" leave a significant imprint (p. 329). Typically, such tweets have affective, rather than cognitive, effects, because the same news is constantly reiterated by several people with little or no new information, but a growing mix of emotional input. Many of the tweets cited above evoked or shared images of violence perpetrated against individuals or groups by state representatives. In this regard, the transcendental power of those images and texts (Juris, 2012; Wolfsfeld et al., 2013) must be analyzed in relation to affective news environments. I would like to suggest that their evocative power shares certain connections with that of modern-day martyrs.[10] A martyr can be understood as the victim of state violence: severe injuries or an unsettling death that may humiliate the state and force it to take a step back, thus leading to the betterment of the life of others who identify with the martyr's cause (Halverson et al., 2013). In the context of social movements and political upheavals, some images of violence may gain a symbolic value and evoke martyrdom if it is associated with a suffering individual struggling for a group or a cause. As such, those powerful photographs and their narrative constructions, continuously unfolding through social media, can have a galvanizing power on a population and become a catalyst for social movements (Halverson et al., 2013). For Halverson et al. (2013), the visual representation of martyrs "increases the potential for imagined solidarity" (p. 329). Twitter, which allows for the sharing of images, the circulation of ideas, and the development of conversations, has fostered a new form of participation and witnessing that can be mediated through social media rather than direct experience. People can emotionally connect and feel a form of communion, not necessarily between themselves and others, but between themselves and a movement, an idea, or an ideology.[11] In other words, affective attachments and environments are fostered, and a "logic of aggregation"—that is, the gathering of individuals sharing some common denominator (Juris, 2012, p. 266)—might emerge under a shared feeling of belonging, collectivity, and struggle.

CONCLUDING REMARKS, MOVING FORWARD

In this essay, I took as a point of departure my own experience of the events in Taksim Square, Istanbul. As complements to the argument, 22 tweets published with the hashtag #occupygezi on and around May 31, 2013 served as a window into the experience of Hakan, her co-workers, and me as we scrolled down the Twitter feed in their office while protests were happening down the street. Arguing that tweets should be studied in and of themselves, for they produce "effects of truth" (Scannell, 2004), I have examined conceptually the effects and possibilities of protesters' turn to Twitter to circumvent traditional media censorship. In particular, I suggested that social media feeds can organically develop into affective environments. By way of assemblages of coalesced stories, images, and martyr-like narratives, they can foster feelings of belonging, collectivity, and shared experience. As Markham (2014) notes, however, social media discourse is "multifarious, argumentative, wide-ranging, entertaining, contradictory," and that it cannot be abstracted from cultural and linguistic constraints (p. 91). To this end, affective and ambient news environments might be better conceptualized as alternatives to journalistic conventions, rather than mere substitutions or replacements (Papacharissi & Oliveira, 2012).[12]

The breadth of my research was undeniably limited, aiming more towards a reflection emerging from my own experiences in Istanbul than an all-encompassing review of Twitter activities on and around May 31, 2013. In the future, a long-term project could seek to evaluate further engagements with Twitter in times of political unrest, in an attempt "to move from broad brushstrokes to fine-grained analyses" (Tufekci & Freelon, 2013, p. 847). Such ethnographic work would "complicat[e] facile mappings of social media usage" (Fattal, 2012, p. 888; see also Yıldırım, 2013) and enrich public discussion about its politics. Affective potentialities are not "things" that can be easily understood through simple observation. As such, long-term fieldwork would allow for a greater sensitivity to such intensities, and thus a better understanding of the effects of stories on individuals. It would also be interesting to analyze how the narratives about the events have developed over the following weeks and months on Twitter, and in the personal lives and habits of Turkish people.

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[1] Navaro-Yashin (2013) asserts that the projected transformation of Taksim square had a strong nationalist flavour. In Prime Minister Tayyip Erdogan's imagination, the project would have "restored the grandeur of Istanbul" and also "emblematized . . . a return to the Ottoman Empire" (Navaro-Yashin, 2013).

[2] Despite some comparisons, however, Yıldırım (2013) argues that enthusiast homogenizing references to the so-called Arab Spring might be misleading, given Turkey's idiosyncratic history.

[3] Of course, this situation can always be complicated by doubts and skepticism, as reflected in real-time discussions and questions that are sometimes raised in regards to the validity of the information presented.

[4] According to Bruns et al. (2013), hashtags first really integrated the architecture of the social media in the aftermath of the 2007 wildfires in San Diego. At the time, they had been immensely useful in the coverage of the natural catastrophe.

[5] The original orthography, grammar, and style of the tweets has been preserved.

[6] While governments still attempted to manipulate public opinions circulating on social media, they quickly realized that the flow of information could hardly be controlled or censored (Aman & Jayroe, 2013). Not all instances were successful, as protesters found ways to get around the blockade through proxies and similar strategies. On Twitter, fears and rumours informed by past events in the Middle East were circulating, particularly in response to accounts of limited or inexistent internet connection in Taksim Square:

> protestors urge people/shops/cafes in beyoglu-taksim district to remove wifi passwords 2allow them internet access-3g slow/gone. #occupygezi

> We dont have internet connection here! Please help us to spread our voice! This is ISTANBUL! #occupygezi #direngezi

[7] Papacharissi and Oliveira (2012) point out, however, that traditional media networks such as Al Jazeera were nonetheless "central to conveying protesters' grievances to a global audience" (p. 266).

[8] This international Twitter discussion was a source of critiques by pro-government actors who decried an act of manipulation by foreign, non-Turkish forces attempting to Westernize domestic politics of Turkey and destabilize its economy (Dirioz, 2013).

[9] Papacharissi and Oliveira (2012) understand affect as "emotion that is subjectively experienced" (p. 276), particularly in relation to "processes of premediation, enabled by newer media, that frequently anticipate news or events prior to their occurrence" (p. 276). They argue that "anticipatory gestures afford emotive expression but also inform the shape an event will take, and of course are further shaped by ongoing events" (p. 276). In the context of this essay, affect refers to the indeterminate subjective and emotive potentialities of what is shared on Twitter in the immediacy and instantaneity of a moment, and in contrast to the slow-moving traditional media that congeal stories in an appearance of objectivity.

[10] See Gyori (2013, p. 483) for a discussion of the death of Neda Agha Soltan in Tehran, Iran. Within hours, the video of her death at the hands of paramilitary militia became internationally viral, making "a dramatic impact [and] triggering outrage around the world" (p. 483). Gyori argues that she effectively became a martyr. See also Halverson et al. (2013) for a discussion of the deaths of Mohamed Bouazizi by self-immolation in Tunisia, and Khaled Saeed, at the hands of police officers in Egypt. In all three cases, violence was arguably perpetrated by the state or state-related groups and effects. Because of its larger historical and political connotations, however, we should be cautious nonetheless with the metaphor of martyrs, and most importantly situate it within modern-day discourses and practices.

[11] See also Gyori (2013), which further argues that what matters is the effect of communion, rather than the question of whether there is a "real" basis to that feeling; and Juris (2012), who evokes a "sense of connectedness and copresence, potentially eliciting powerful feelings of solidarity as protesters read about distant and not-so-distant others engaged in the same or kindred actions and protests" (p. 267).

[12] Just like we should be skeptical of traditional media's claims of objectivity, we should not assume that they do not convey affective tones—quite the opposite.