CHAPTER 12

DIGITAL CULTURAL CAPITAL AS A COUNTER-HEGEMONIC TOOL IN TURKEY

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Introduction

Turkey has been under the spotlight regarding its social media use since the 2010s. The country has 41 million Facebook users, which corresponds to a penetration rate of 52.8 per cent, 15 points higher than the European average[1]. According to a 2015 survey by the Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism,[2] among 18 developed nations, urban Turkey ranks first in using social media as a news source (67 per cent), using Facebook as a news source (69 per cent), and using Twitter as a news source (33 per cent) while it ranks last in trust of the media. Meanwhile, the Turkish government led by Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, following the 2013 Gezi Park protests (where the number of retweeted messages skyrocketed over 15 million)[3], caught the eyes of the international community with its repeated ban attempts and content removal requests on Twitter and Facebook, as well as lawsuits against social media users.

A very lively debate has ensued over whether social media sites such as Facebook or Twitter play a role in the new wave of social movements that began with Occupy Wall Street in the United States and spread to Europe and the Middle East. The new dissidents' preoccupations are typically based on precarious economic, social, and political conditions in localized spaces. Nevertheless, this is a worldwide wave linked to the globalized digital realm, or in the words of Castells, the global "network society".[4] The general debate is mirrored among scholars too. Techno-optimists glorify the use of new media tools in social movements and emphasize their democratizing capacity, whereas

techno-pessimists play down this role and even consider these tools as an extension of existing economically-driven class injustice.

The aim of this paper is not to pick sides in this debate. This is not because I do not have a point of view regarding the role of social media or new media tools in social movements. However, in the great scheme of things, the tools being overly discussed may be misleading in positioning the network society within social theory. The question that I feel compelled to ask is not *what* tools people use in social movements or *why*, but rather *how* they have made or failed to make these tools useful in their causes. In doing this, I introduce two important concepts to the discussion, one from media studies and one from sociology: the digital divide and (digital) cultural capital.

Digital divide used to be defined as "having access or not" to the new information technologies. Since the introduction of Web 2.0, which enabled users to become content creators, this definition has become obsolete. The digital divide, as I will elaborate a little later, may be now be defined as "being able or unable to create content and outreach". This requires a set of cultural and social capacities. To break them down, I will draw on Pierre Bourdieu, and his conception of different kinds of capital. Content creation is linked to cultural capital, as outreach is to social capital. The possession of these in different amounts results in different forms of new media use.

Turkey is an interesting case in this respect. The authoritarian shift, roughly between the modern secularists and the traditional Islamo-conservatives and outlined at length in other chapters of this book in a much more detailed way, has since 2010 become a matter of cultural hegemony. This hegemony has consolidated as the Islamo-conservative AKP, having recorded electoral victories thanks to its massive network of social relations, has started to impose its own codes to the cultural field (notably in media and education) and jettison those (such as alcohol consumption, abortion, LGBTI rights and scientific secular education) that are incompatible with them. This has caused an expectable concern among the secular, modern, urban, middle classes of the country who are the principal beneficiaries of nation's cultural capital and who are already being excluded from social and economic networks dominated by the AKP. The June 2013 Gezi protests were, to a significant extent, a response by these formerly dominant classes to rising AKP hegemony in the streets and online. While the protest in the streets were dispersed by an unprecedented wave of police violence costing many lives, the online dissent has since become a constant nuisance which Erdoğan and his party-state have not been able to handle, despite bans, restrictions, lawsuits and threatening statements.

This chapter will therefore seek to explain how this situation emerged in the context of Turkey's digital divide and unevenly distributed cultural capital. In so doing, I hope to offer a new insight into why social media has appeared to be so crucial in the wake of the authoritarian shift in Turkey.

The Digital Divide in Turkey

As a result of Turkey's aggressive neo-liberal trade policies, access to Information and Communication Technology (ICT) has dramatically improved over the last decade, as imports from countries like China or Taiwan, marketed under Turkish brands, have become progressively more affordable. At the same time, internet access is still quite expensive in Turkey, since the partly state-run Türk Telekom still constitutes a *de facto* monopoly. Most ISPs use Türk Telekom's telephone infrastructure to provide service to their clients. An exception is the cable company, Türksat, which is also state-owned. Nevertheless, the internet penetration rate in Turkey has been rising steadily, reaching 59.6 per cent as of December 2014.[5] According to a survey by the Pew Research Center,[6] the number of adults using the internet at least occasionally or reporting owning a smartphone in Turkey has increased by 31 points (from 41 to 72 per cent) in the last three years, making the country an exception even among other developing nations. The nation's overwhelming interest in ICTs can be explained by the culture of consumerism adopted by Turkey after the 1980 coup.

Until the 1980s, Turkish industrial policy privileged import substitution, leading to chronic current account deficits and unsustainable foreign debts, a condition exacerbated by the oil shocks and Turkey's isolation from the rest of the world following the invasion of Cyprus in 1974. Turkey's shift to neoliberalism commenced in early 1980 when then finance minister Turgut Özal announced a set of measures that opened the economy on a free-market model based. However, it was only after the 12 September 1980 coup that Özal was empowered to implement IMF and World Bank-backed reforms, under the sponsorship of the post-coup junta. The Turkish labor movement, which had been highly active through the 1970s, was immediately quashed in the wake of the military takeover, and the social movements of the 1970s were brought to heel, as were political parties, workers' political associations, the members of which were either murdered or ended up in torture chambers.

General Evren's junta appointed Özal as a super-minister to carry out the economic transformation plan. Özal later became the prime minister following semi-democratic elections in 1983, where only parties and candidates approved by the junta could run. Social movements and citizens' participation in politics were completely purged, replaced by a culture of consumerism in which the population was salved through the wholescale import of previously unavailable luxury products and entertainment such as television and football, both of which were actively financed by the government. Another objective of the Özal period was to restore national pride, wounded by Turkey's ostracism internationally after the illegal occupation Cyprus and the stain on the country's reputation in the wake of widespread human rights violations during the 1980–3 period of military rule.

127 Telecommunications somehow played a great part in doing that. Technol-
128 ogies like satellite television and telephony were introduced to restore Turkey's
129 "connection to the wider world," in a context in which the United States had
130 become the country's sole international backer. In the 1980s, VCRs and video
131 rental joints were the pioneers of this technological proto-globalization. In the
132 1990s, this nascent culture blossomed when the first satellite dishes and mobile
133 phones were introduced to Turkey. It was no surprise that the first private satellite
134 TV channel, *Star1*, had been clandestinely founded by Turgut Özal's son, mostly
135 using state equipment to broadcast football matches to millions in awe of this
136 novel form of entertainment. Turkish viewers also followed the first Gulf War
137 through satellite on *CNN International* and *Star1*'s rebroadcasts.
138 The internet was thus introduced to Turkish end-users in the mid 1990s,
139 with the basic telecommunications and entertainment-friendly consumerist
140 setting firmly in place. It is thus fair to argue that the recent sharp rise in access
141 to ICTs is the result of an increase in service capacity, rather than demand,
142 which as we have seen has been high for three decades. We may argue that
143 availability is a bigger concern in Turkey than affordability; even expensive
144 brands like Samsung and Apple, or the overpriced internet services, can easily
145 find a consumer base in the country. In sum, since the 1980s, every available
146 technology has been seized by Turkish consumers with relish, and increasing
147 access to and demand for ICTs in Turkey witnessed over the last decade is
148 mostly related to the widespread development of broadband internet
149 infrastructure and 3G–4G mobile networks over that period.
150 All of this points to the conclusion that the digital divide problem, in its
151 classic definition as an "access issue", seems to be more or less resolved in
152 Turkey. Nevertheless, we have yet to explain precisely how the ICT take up has
153 played such a major role in the "Kulturkampf" between Recep Tayyip Erdoğan's
154 regime and its dissidents, to the extent that the regime systematically blocks
155 access to the internet after any event that might generate a negative reaction
156 against it. To answer this, we need to first redefine the digital divide and see how
157 this applies directly within Turkey.
158
159
160 ## Digital Divide 1.0

161 The "digital divide", which can be roughly defined as the gap between "those
162 who have" and "those who do not" have access to ICTs, was introduced in the
163 mid 1990s to define the challenge (particularly of governments) of managing
164 the distribution of access in the emerging fully-networked global society. Once
165 exclusively a subject of governmental research, the "digital divide" has since
166 become a powerful tool for applying social theory to the (new) media studies,
167 as it indicates different dimenssions of inequality between different layers of
168 society, and what consequences these might bring for the society we live in.

However, treating the "digital divide" as a mere problem of access is gradually becoming obsolete as ICTs now also play an important sociocultural role in society as well as an economic function. One of the main arguments this chapter defends is the inevitable necessity of redefining the "digital divide" to avoid a misleading over-optimism regarding the resolution of the access issue. However, before discussing that, we should first present the "digital divide" in its original form, and establish whether or not it still exists.

The "digital divide" is an issue with several dimensions. Since networked society is a global phenomenon, the divide shows up in the first instance geographically. Even this geographical digital divide has multiple facets, as it exists both *between* different countries across the globe and *within* them, manifesting as regional divides, often with a distinct urban–rural colouring. At the cross-national level, the global digital divide maps neatly onto the traditional North–South division. Both internet penetration and ICT owner-ship and use in North America and Europe surpass those in Africa in a very visible manner. And even within Africa, access to these technologies varies dramatically – rates are much higher in Egypt and South Africa, for example, than the poorest African states, who possess very few resources and are dealing with multiple additional developmental challenges, such access to clean water or electricity. Even in South Africa and Egypt, it would be very optimistic to claim that all habitants have equal access to ICTs. A recent Pew study documented that the geographical divide among continents, countries, and regions remains severe. For these reasons, it is fair to argue that the "access problem" as a whole remains a distinct problem, with many impoverished nations struggling to meet basic access standards. At the same time, the Pew study also shows that most developing and emerging countries, led by Turkey, have realized tremendous gains in ICT and internet access over the last decade and are in fact rapidly catching up with the Western world regarding the "access issue."

This particularity of developing nations – especially of Turkey – calls for an urgent rethink of the core assumptions of the digital divide. To think of this idea as merely an "access" issue is to miss very importance aspects of the role of the new digital platforms in explaining sociopolitical developments in many developing nations in the last half decade, such as the Gezi protests in Turkey and the "Arab Spring" in the Middle East. Just as modernization theory wrongly argued that brute concepts like "education" and "literacy" would act as "natural" harbingers of democratization, the scholarly work and media attention on digital technology has assumed that use of ICTs by social movements in these countries carries the likelihood of "natural", even inevitable, democratizing impacts. Further, the argument has been that ICTs and the internet lie at the core of recent popular mobilizations and democratic protests in the developing world. However, as we know, the two poster children

of these developments, Turkey and Egypt, have in fact turned decidedly authoritarian after 2011, and we also know that large, often very digitally connected electorates, have been popular supporters of this authoritarian turn. Moreover, the aforementioned street movements have lost their impact on their countries' future. Much as modernization theory was beset by a profound "modernity-optimism", the recent scholarly and journalistic work on digital technology has suffered from a distinct "techno-optimism", deriving for the most part from an overly simplistic reading of the global digital divide as a basic issue of access. The Egyptian case is highly relevant in this regard and, while the scope of this book and this chapter are limited to the Turkish case, more comparative work on Turkey and Egypt regarding the use of ICTs in social movements would offer a major contribution to the literature in the field of media studies.

Digital Divide 2.0 and Digital Cultural Capital

After the introduction of the Web 2.0 technology in the late 1990s, which enabled regular users with little or no advanced technological knowledge to create content on the web, the aforementioned definition of the "digital divide" started to become insufficient. Users were no longer just people with access to content, but producers who would gradually drive content, thanks to end-user oriented content production tools such as blogs and micro-blogging sites. From then on, economic capacity was no longer exclusively essential to make use of the internet, as access alone was not necessarily equal to creating meaningful content that reach beyond the user's own personal network. To explain this transformation, we need to outline the different types of capital, a framework introduced by French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu to reinterpret the classical Marxist concept of capital.

According to Bourdieu,[7] "the universe of exchanges [cannot be reduced] to mercantile exchange", in realms called "fields" that consist "of a set of objective, historical relations between positions anchored in certain forms of power for capital".[8] Instead, Bourdieu's schema introduced a diverse set varieties of capital – economic, social, and cultural – that are convertible amongst each other. According to Bourdieu, social capital is "the aggregate of the actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of mutual acquaintance and recognition".[9] Cultural capital is a more complex concept, as Bourdieu elaborates in the following passage:

Cultural capital can exist in three forms: in the embodied state, i.e., in the form of long-lasting dispositions of the mind and body; in the objectified state, in the form of cultural goods (pictures, books,

dictionaries, instruments, machines, etc.), which are the trace or realization of theories or critiques of these theories, problematics, etc.; and in the institutionalized state, a form of objectification which must be set apart because, as will be seen in the case of educational qualifications, it confers entirely original properties on the cultural capital which it is presumed to guarantee.[10]

Cultural capital functions as a decoder of certain actions, appreciations, and tastes. Social and cultural capital are essential in a setting where users are content producers, because for a message to be successfully diffused, one needs to access to the necessary networks and the capacity to deploy the appropriate codes to pass messages through the public sphere.

Bourdieu's concept of different types of capital has found itself in the digital sociology literature. Bourdieu himself, even before the widespread use of the internet, made this distinction:

To possess the machines, he [mankind] only needs economic capital; to appropriate them and use them in accordance with their specific purpose (defined by the cultural capital, of scientific or technical type, incorporated in them); he must have access to embodied cultural capital, either in person or by proxy.[11]

Indeed, Bourdieu's reference, albeit being very accurate, refers exclusively to embodied cultural capital, since the technological use of his time was limited to scientific and technical purposes. Meanwhile, the use of technology today is an inseparable part of the cultural field, and therefore requires a great deal of cultural capital in its objectified state. Selwyn summarizes the objectified cultural capital in ICTs as: "Socialization into technology use and 'techno-culture' via technocultural goods."[12] Again, this statement, ahead of its time, was made before Twitter and Facebook existed, so the relationship between the ICTs and social life is made through "socialization into technology use", rather than "socialization via technology use".

On the other hand, Van Dijk and Hacker underline that "information is a positional good", and claim that social and cultural capital owners use their capacity to "the benefit of [their] position [...] in the network society."[13] According to Zillien and Hargittai, "'capital-enhancing' user routines [render] digital inequality as a phenomenon of social inequality".[14] This statement may be connected to two concepts that define the distinction between internet users per their skill sets. The "digital natives versus digital immigrants" conception of Prensky[15] and the idea of "virtuosi" of Meyen et al.[16] both refer to a group of people who predominantly and consistently accumulate social and cultural capital through the internet.

295 While it is widely accepted that the use of technology is a form of cultural
296 capital, generally this cultural capital is positioned by the scholar as of the
297 "autonomous pole [within a restricted sub-field]".[17] Such positioning of
298 cultural capital in the digital realm omits it from "the struggle among the
299 holders of different forms of power".[18] In the networked society setting, such a
300 restricted positioning would not suffice, as proven by the use of ICTs in social
301 movements for political purposes. No matter whether the cultural and social
302 capital originates online or not, they relate to an aggregate capital which goes
303 beyond the digital realm. While, as in the Gezi example, digital cultural and
304 social capital may be converted to online or offline political capital, elements
305 of offline cultural capital (such as being able to read and write in foreign
306 languages) also affect the cultural capital accumulated online. As in the Turkish
307 example where all other democratic channels are blocked by a repressive
308 regime, the owners of digital social and cultural capital may choose the online
309 world as a "safe space" to debate or to organize as a counter-hegemonic entity.

The Use of Digital Cultural Capital as a Counter-Hegemonic Tool

313 One of the unique features of today's Turkey is that the social and cultural
314 capital lie right at the core of the political crisis. As we mentioned, the Islamo-
315 conservatives operate over a giant network of informal and semi-formal
316 agencies which constitute the AKP's 8.5 million-strong membership base (more
317 than 80 per cent of total party membership in Turkey), which has been
318 gradually turning the country into a plebiscitary autocracy built around a party-
319 state. The only counter power that holds this unrivaled social capital from
320 becoming an utter hegemony is the cultural capital accumulated by the
321 modern, secular, urban middle classes whose dissent became collectively visible
322 in the Gezi protests. In the foundation of modern Turkey, the middle classes
323 were deemed to be the archetype of the "society without classes and privileges",
324 defending and serving the causes of the new republic. This layer of the society
325 was, as Göle notes, the cradle of the "Republican elite endowed with cultural
326 capital"[19] while economic capital was built upon a consensus between the state
327 elite and the emerging Anatolian bourgeoisie, which later broke away from the
328 single party and developed as a counter-hegemonic conservative movement
329 that would ultimately create the predecessors of the AKP.

330 Until the AKP reign, the modern minority with cultural capital was protected
331 against the conservative majority by the military and civil state elite. However,
332 especially after the 2010 referendum these agencies either lost their power or
333 were taken over by the government, which paved the way for the giant network
334 of social capital capture the entire state apparatus and the lion's share of finance
335 capital. While the causes and demands of the Gezi movement by no means
336 represented a "reaction" of the old order against the new, but rather was a new,

pluralist and democratic line of politics. Those who embraced the Republican "doxa" of the old regime gradually set the tone of the protests as the limited environmental campaign rapidly morphed into a massive protest movement of five million people. Even then, the Gezi movement preserved its plurality through park forums and Occupy Wall Street-style street gatherings in which various views could be freely expressed. The summer of 2013 for Turkey can be summarized as an avatar of two axes: "plurality versus majoritarianism" and "cultural capital versus social capital".

The Use of Social Media against the AKP Government Before, During, and After the Gezi Protests

In Turkey during the reign of the AKP, freedom of information has deteriorated dramatically. Since it came to power, the AKP in government has actively cultivated its own media to counter those channels that it has deemed harmful to its agenda. To reach this objective, the AKP has utilized a method that was introduced during the 2001 economic crisis to regulate the faltering banking system. The Savings Deposit Insurance Fund of Turkey (*Tasarruf Mevduatı Sigorta Fonu*, TMSF) was given the authority to seize the assets of holding companies that were dangerously exposed through their banking and finance arms. During the AKP period, this authority has been used as a method of hostile takeover, notably against media companies, which have traditionally been subsidiaries of major holding companies in Turkey.

This process began almost as soon as the AKP came to power. Cem Uzan, the owner of Rumeli Holdings, had campaigned in the 2002 elections as the chairman of populist right-wing Genç Party (competing for the same constituency as the AKP) and had won 7.5 per cent of the popular vote. After the elections, his newspaper *Star* (along with his other assets) were taken over by the TMSF and sold to a joint venture, which included Ethem Sancak, a businessman close to Erdoğan. Sancak later became an AKP official. In a similar vein, *Sabah*, one of the staples of the Turkish press, was seized in 2007 and sold in 2008 to Çalık Holdings, whose CEO at the time was Berat Albayrak, Tayyip Erdoğan's son-in-law. Albayrak is currently the minister for energy in the AKP government. *Akşam* newspaper was seized in 2013 and again sold to Ethem Sancak. In other cases, mainstream media was either punished heavily by tax penalties, as was Doğan Media Group, or were "encouraged" to take a pro-government editorial line. Given that most media owners have interests in other industries (such as energy and construction) that depend for their revenue on government concessions and contracts, there has been an intense pressure to do this. The cases of the Ciner, Doğuş, and Demirören groups, the owners of *Habertürk*, NTV, and *Milliyet*, respectively, are clear examples of corporate holding groups that have bent to the government's will in this way.

The pro-government media has also been fed by the state-run companies' advertising spending. Some 63 per cent of state advertising in 2014 was funneled towards pro-government media companies, while the anti-government media received just 2.2 per cent. Since 2015, there has also been a new trend of hostile media takeovers in Turkey. The government has started to appoint provisional boards to companies that it deems to be unstable. Unsurprisingly, these companies (mostly with media and banking activities) have often belonged to businesspeople close to Erdoğan's ally-turned-enemy Fethullah Gülen, a religious leader in self-exile in the United States. *Zaman*, *Today's Zaman*, Kanaltürk TV, *Bugün*, and *Samanyolu* media outlets were taken over by new boards through this method; most of the journalists working for them were subsequently sacked.[20]

Another new method of gagging the dissident media since 2015 has been to terminate their satellite contracts by Türksat, the state-run telecommunications company. Along with Gülenist Kanaltürk and Samanyolu TV channels, pro-Kurdish İMC TV was also ousted from the Türksat satellite. Another channel close to the Gülenist view, Can Erzincan TV was also given a notice of termination, while the socialist Hayat TV has had similar problems since 2013. These channels also receive heavy penalties from Higher Authority of Radio Television (RTÜK) for various reasons (mostly for not obeying the frequent gag orders imposed after important events that might generate anti-government feelings, such as bombings, police violence or mine accidents).[21]

Since 2014, the media in Turkey has been rated "not free" by Freedom House, a claim supported by other reports, like those of the US State Department, Human Rights Watch, the Committee for Protecting Journalists, Reporters without Borders, and the European Commission. In this context, the internet appears to be the only channel for the freedom of information and democratic debate in Turkey. Law No. 5651, known as the Internet Act, was enacted in May 2007 and gives permission to the government-controlled Telecommunication and Communication Directorate (TİB) to block access to websites without court warrant. Additionally, many courts release gag orders on political matters against websites at very short notice, often overnight.

Social media sites like Twitter – along with video sites such as YouTube and Vimeo, the blog sites Tumblr and Blogger, and even Google – have faced such bans since 2013. Additionally, unofficial throttling of these sites by TİB and the ISPs has become a routine practice after any event deemed likely to generate anti-government critique. However, many dissident internet users in Turkey have since discovered methods to surpass these restrictions, such as TOR or VPNs.[22] As the pro-government journalist Cemil Barlas lamented after the Atatürk Airport attack in June 2016: "When Twitter is throttled or blocked, it is only used by professional trolls, terrorists and insulters. Because they can all access it."[23] The AKP regime's frustration with social media, notably Twitter, continues.

Since it was introduced in 2007, Twitter has steadily become "the" anti-government debate platform in Turkey. This tool, unlike Facebook, has operated mostly through verbal communication (though it has switched to a more visual strategy in the recent years) but was slow in localization therefore mostly appealed to English-speaking users. It is, however, much more compatible with mobile communication and easy to use in smartphones. Also, again unlike Facebook (were users control the audience that can view their contents and mostly share with people they know), Twitter was built upon an "agora" setting that enables the formation of content-based networks, depending on retweets and hashtags, that can carry the message far beyond the user's own network. These features of Twitter make it popular among the new social movements, mostly formed by young, well-educated individuals placed in a precarious economic or sociopolitical position.

After the Occupy Wall Street movement, Twitter had its global breakthrough with the Iranian elections in 2009 and is now the tool of choice in many dissident movements. However, we should also note that the importance of Twitter in most cases are overemphasized, as in the Arab Spring case. In many countries where protests take place, the Twitter penetration rate is in fact strikingly low. The number of Twitter users in Turkey is also low compared to the number of Facebook users. Nevertheless, Twitter has produced enough volume in Turkey to be considered as a major communication channel, especially since 2013.

Recent research that I undertook with Onur Yazıcıoğlu[24] on over 250 political topics related to Turkey in 2011–12 shows that the overwhelming majority of Twitter users in the country are dissidents who need a channel to convey their criticism against the government. This may be because communication on Twitter is open to a vast public space. In Turkey, since the 1980 coup, which discouraged public participation to politics, engaging in political activities has been socially frowned upon. Right-wing politics has overcome this obstacle easily, since it has been built upon informal or semi-formal traditional networks, such as mosque congregations, village or town associations (*hemşehrilik*), craftsman guilds and the mobilization of conservative women isolated from social life in one way or another. The resilience of the AKP heavily depends on these, as it has succeeded in recruiting 8.5 million members from these traditional networks. However, this vast social capital is not coupled with sufficient cultural capital, leaving the AKP unable to produce a diverse discourse that could appeal to its critics, therefore constituting a cultural hegemony. Even the AKP's superior cadres lacked this capacity, so it had to form alliances with Gülenists and libertarian intellectuals whose anti-Kemalist views created a common ground with the Islamists.

These alliances collapsed gradually after the 2010 constitutional referendum, as the AKP no longer wished to share power with anyone and went on to

establish its own regime. Consequently, the party was blindsided by the Gezi protests in 2013 which gathered masses with higher cultural capital together, based on a popular, humorous and democratic discourse in line with the global trends. The AKP's response to the Gezi movement's compatibility with similar waves of social movements in the world was borderline paranoid, and it went public with the accusation that the protesters were individually paid by "hostile" countries that would otherwise have counted as among Turkey's biggest allies and partners, such as Germany.[25] In other words, AKP cadres were so devoid of cultural capital that they were simply unable to even perceive the role that cultural capital was playing in these protests.

The "standing man" protest is a striking example of this. After the Gezi park occupation was violently dispersed, an artist started a protest in Taksim Square standing and doing nothing else. Hundreds of people later joined this artist, some reading a book while standing. As a response, dozens of pro-government people with t-shirts bearing "standing men against the standing man" arrived in Taksim Square by taxi, stood up facing the protesters for half an hour and left the square with the same taxis. After this attempt massively failed, pro-government media claimed that the "standing man" protesters were actually trained by US agencies who were trying to promote coups all over the world.[26]

In another example, the pro-government media claimed that a woman with a headscarf (daughter-in-law of an AKP-backed mayor) and her child were attacked by Gezi protesters wearing nothing but leather pants and that some of them had urinated on her. This scenario quickly proved to be an utter fabrication, as was Erdoğan's personal claim that protesters who took shelter in a mosque during the protests had been drinking alcohol on the premises. Meanwhile, the protesters organized Ramadan meals in Taksim Square to counter the Islamic Kulturkampf incited by Erdoğan, which was also attacked by the police.

In all these events, social media – notably Twitter – played an important role, as even the mainstream media abstained from reporting the events from an anti-government perspective or even a neutral one. Some channels, such as CNN Türk (which famously aired a documentary on penguins instead of the protests), completely disregarded events until government officials commented on them (a very common practice in the Turkish media). Other outlets, such as NTV and Habertürk, openly took a pro-government stance. On 16 June 2013, eight newspapers had all the same headline, quoting Erdoğan's statement "We're all for democratic demands." In this setting, Twitter became a major source of accurate information, which led to a massive increase in people using this site in a couple of days. It also functioned as a political "safe space" for dissidents as people with alike minds shared their critiques. As Erdoğan himself openly declared, the AKP's first response to Twitter was to "eradicate it all". After a series of bans failed to reach this objective, the party hired 3,000 social

media users who were later labelled "AK trolls"[27] to promote the regime's causes against the protests. However, the AKP trolls and pro-government users encouraged to be active on Twitter against the protesters could not produce meaningful and diverse content. Their activities were mainly restricted to carrying the daily hashtag defined by the party to the trending topic list, which had practically no effect. Since these campaigns failed to counter the dissident content on Twitter, the AKP went back to blocking access and throttling, which has been very actively practised, as of the time this chapter was written.

Meanwhile, on the night of the 15 June coup attempt, President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan appeared on CNN Türk and NTV news channels via FaceTime, Apple's proprietary messaging application, to call his supporters to the streets against the putsch. This call was later rebroadcast by the vast majority of television channels in Turkey. This move was described in a hasty and sensationally farfetched manner by some scholars-cum-journalists as "the internet saved the President".[28] This claim does not reflect the facts in many ways. Firstly, while Erdoğan used FaceTime to address his supporters, it was the television channels, which retransmitted this message live on air, that allowed his call to reach the wider public. He probably opted for reaching his supporters via television; otherwise he could have used, for example, Periscope directly to broadcast his message on the internet. This is a very logical inference as television remains, by far, the most popular means of communication in Turkey.

Also, the heavy use of mosques to call people to the streets through *salah*s made a great impact on networking Erdoğan's mostly Islamist followers. Here, the role of Diyanet, the body regulating organized religion in Turkey, was critical. Diyanet has, during the AKP period, been frequently used as an ideological state apparatus.[29] It is also clear, as mentioned, that the private media is in the hands of the government. Therefore, it is highly unlikely that Erdoğan would choose such a problematic means as the internet, when Diyanet and the private media are so clearly under his control. Unver and Alasaad's diligent research also confirms, with online and offline data, that the anti-coup mobilization on June 15 was an offline-online hybrid in which mosques had a great effect on networking Erdoğan supporters.[30] Also, there are reports that the access to social media was throttled by the AKP government that night.[31] While we will not deny that the AKP camp may have improved their social media use since the Gezi events in 2013, where the online realm had been completely dominated by dissidents, it would be baseless and unscientific to claim that the coup was prevented by the use of social media and the internet.

Conclusion

The use of social media by dissidents in Turkey depends for the most part on both the lack of other democratic channels and sources of information and the

fact that social media networks create a channel of organization for people who are otherwise inexperienced regarding political action. These two factors have similarities with other emerging social movements, although with different foci. In Iran, Egypt, and other Middle Eastern countries the lack of democratic channels is clear and social media acts to fill the gap. As far as the Occupy movements in the Western world are concerned, democratic channels are open, but social media use has been taken up predominantly as a particularly useful mobilizing mechanism for the previously politically inexperienced or unorganized. In the former case, urgency and necessity are the issue in a context where the need to overcome the information barrier is paramount, while in the other social media exerts its force as political strategy. As noted by Haciyakupoglu and Zhang,[32] while providing an alternative to the traditional media, less-regulated social media also contains the risk of false information which is compensated by social trust (social identification among protesters) and system trust (the technological ability to distinguish correct from incorrect). In the Occupy-style protests, "the embodied, territorialized political praxis associated […] was indeed combined with the intensive and savvy use of social media."[33] In both cases, whether social media is used to overcome the information barrier or to develop strategies, digital cultural capital is needed to reach the sought objectives. What we can add to this debate is that the existence of this digital cultural capital *per se* may also be a reason why the social media, particularly Twitter, has become the centerpiece of all dissident activities in Turkey.

Notes

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