

Gulsen Bal

Open Systems

READER: Tomorrow is not Promised!

 **LAP**
LAMBERT
Academic Publishing

The Interpellated Subject Speaks: Articulating Dissent in an Era of Information Control

Berin Gölönü

The articles compiled here grapple with questions pertaining to spatial politics, the digital commons, non-representational politics, information inequality, and censorship. Placing these questions together in the journal offers an opportunity to examine the points where these topics start to intersect. Reading these nodes of convergence can shed light on the interconnectedness of systems of power, their abuses, and the limitations they place on the public's rights and freedoms. Restrictions on freedom of speech, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and freedom of information became openly apparent when the public started to push back against the systems of power operating within the state and the economy. Protests and uprisings such as the Occupy Movement, the Gezi Park resistance and the Ferguson unrest are just a few examples of recent protest movements around the world, but these are the events that some of the contributors to this issue witnessed in person or closely tracked on social media. Their participation in these events serves as a lens through which they examine the topics addressed in this issue.

Many of these articles highlight creative projects that articulate a language of dissent. Duygu Demir's text on Anita Di Bianco's publication "Corrections and Clarifications" pinpoints the climate of fear initiated by the September 11th attacks in the United States as the crucial moment in which Di Bianco launched her publication. It is also the moment when mechanisms of state surveillance across the world ramped up their efforts to more closely monitor and track our communications and movements. Media censorship certainly played a key role in controlling public access to information, or in prioritizing the information it wanted the public to receive, even while states were gathering more and more information about members of their publics. Some of the articles in this issue, such as the interview with the initiator of the project "Networks of Dispossession" (Mülksüzleştirme Ağları) and work by the activist group "Siyah Bant" ("Black Band") track the ways in which censorship operates within Turkey, and profiles grass roots efforts to gather and disseminate information to the public. While grass roots modes of gathering and communicating information online and through social media hold promise, there are also many entities that stand to profit from restricting such access or in exploiting Internet users' data rights. The texts by Betty Yu and Zeynep Tüfekçi focus on information inequality, particularly its relationship to economic and social inequality. Süreyya Evren's text on the range of political possibilities that were brought to light during the Gezi resistance highlights the public's right to difference, whether that's that is a difference of political opinion, differences in the way we act in urban space, or the myriad ways in which we attempt to make our urban spaces public, to try and counteract the homogenizing effects of a privatized development on of our environment.

Self-censorship may be one of the most chilling results of the curtailments of these liberties, while it is the only response effect that any one individual can directly change. Perhaps reading and thinking about different ways in which dissent is articulated can inspire us to recognize the systems of control that operate outside of us, without directly internalizing them.

Correcting and Clarifying

Duygu Demir

Anita Di Bianco's ongoing publishing project *Corrections and Clarifications*, often given the subtitle *Apologies and Amplifications, Denials and Distinctions, Retractions and Refusals* by the artist, is a counter flow—a timeline read in reverse chronology from right to left, a gesture of antagonism, and perhaps, *almost* literally, the verso. Produced since 2001, and published on the occasion of exhibitions in Banja Luka, Berlin, Derby, Istanbul, Leuven, Ljubljana, Nuremberg, and Zurich, *Corrections and Clarifications* borrows its format, and most of its content, from newspapers. The organizational principle of this irregular periodical is rather simple; the editor, in this case the artist, re-prints a selection of corrective declarations taken from newspapers. The only other recurring features are a brief, minimally altered editor's note on the second page of each volume and a list of sources toward the end of each publication. Anita Di Bianco re-presents this accumulation with the belief that "perhaps what is conveyed unintentionally, and by repetitious mistakes, is more revealing, more historically identifiable, and substantially less conciliatory than it is meant to be."

While there are subtle alterations in the graphic design from volume to volume, *Corrections and Clarifications* replicates the well-established, familiar graphic and tactile parameters of newspaper printing. Produced in either tabloid or broadsheet format, it is printed in black serif typeface on newsprint. The corrections are arranged in columns under the date, with certain selections accentuated by grey boxes, and Di Bianco replicates the comfortably familiar world order of bold and italics at her own will. Each edition of *Corrections and Clarifications*, printed in runs ranging from 500 to 5,000 copies, is either distributed gratis within the context of the exhibition for which it was printed, or available later at the price of one US dollar at Printed Matter in New York. As the project has progressed in the last decade, *Corrections and Clarifications* has not only expanded in its source material with a larger selection of newspapers and other sources such as Twitter, but also ventured out of the Anglophone world, with some issues available in bilingual editions, such as Slovenian, German, and most recently, a volume printed solely in Turkish.

The first issue of *Corrections and Clarifications* covers the period September 1, 2001 to July 4, 2002. [1] It comprises twenty-four broadsheet pages and includes corrections gathered from predominantly widely distributed English-language newspapers covering a diverse range of angles from *The New York Times* to *the Jakarta Post*. In her editorial, Di Bianco draws attention to the apparently arbitrary end date of the volume "... in the US, [4th of July] being that annual reminder of the original intention of the colonies to create a nation based on democratic principles." While this symbolic gesture of resurrecting the revolutionary aspirations of a national holiday is significant—and sets the tone for the political engagement and social bent that continues throughout the project—it is the start date of *Corrections and Clarifications* that is perhaps more revealing. Here I am using the same creative license to suggest that the artist must have intuitively (or alternatively, remarkably consciously) chosen a date range covering the before and after of September 11th, a moment of derailment that both marks the immense representative power of media and its seemingly inexhaustible potential for instrumentalization in shaping a narrative that justified a series of actions and events—most notably, the United States' invasion of Afghanistan and in 2003, Iraq. The social, political and economic ramifications of these events still shape our present day the world over. The artist reveals her motivations for the project in this first volume through a story that she will repeat in each of her minimally

altered editorials in the volumes to come:

"In defense of granting TV/entertainment producers access to US troops in Afghanistan for the production of a reality TV show, Admiral Craig Quigley told reporters: "There are a lot of other ways to convey information to the American people than through news organizations." (February 22, 2002). Ignoring for the moment what is at least a subtle threat. That one cannot argue with such doubletalk is obvious, and no less promising than simply reframing the contradictions this type of speech invariably produces, coerces, and demands. So this is a newspaper without headlines, allowing doubletalk to talk to itself."

The first iteration of the project embodies the motivations and interests of the artist more openly and visibly than subsequent issues. Starting on July 4th, 2002, with several entries under each consecutive date arranged in reverse historical order, Di Bianco stresses her own interest in these corrective announcements by italicizing certain parts. A sampling of these italicized portions quickly reveals her own motivations in political and social agents of economy, surveillance, representation or law in informing the selection process of chosen corrections; "changes in the way UN prices Iraqi oil," "the police initiative focused on CCTV," "images of the bombed Afghan bases," "an example of the way a nuclear war was avoided," or "there is no way to fool an audience that has remained loyal to the company for decades (not 'There is a way')." Di Bianco's inherent belief in the revelatory power of misprints, factual mistakes, slips (Freudian or not), editing errors, misstatements is evident, and her decision-making process emerges through these graphical accents of bold, italics or grey box frames. With the first volume of *Corrections and Clarifications*, this exercise takes the shape of a somewhat ethnographic look at mishaps and euphemisms, a presentation of alternative knowledge, and an exposé of undercurrents.

Ironically, in her editorial statement, Anita Di Bianco diverts all credit of authorship away from herself. She identifies four actors deserving of this credit; the creators of the statements she re-prints (writers, i.e. the correctors): "those who have provided the material for this publication by having seen fit to correct themselves, or having seen themselves fit to correct others"; the editors: "those seekers, processors, middle managers, and ultimate regulators of public information who take it upon themselves (or impose it upon others) to re-name, re-classify, disguise, de-fuse or be de-briefed..."; those whose misstatement caused the grounds for the correction "who, regardless of stated intentions, occasionally reveal something, piece by piece, through slips in language and naming systems"; and finally, the readers of *Corrections and Clarifications* "who regard these revisions and retractions with the same skepticism they have the originals." Anita Di Bianco's statement is rich in underlying currents of passionate criticism of this well-established filtering system and her clever appropriation is in fact revealing; however, by this reattribution of credit, Di Bianco tactfully disguises her own presence in *Corrections and Clarifications*. While highlighting certain patterns of speech and coverage through others' words, she is speaking through others in the same way newspapers speak through current events, bending them to their own agenda.

The volumes that follow the ambitious first edition stay loyal to the initial framework; however, the visibility of the artist's interests inherent in the selection process of each one of the included corrections fades noticeably with each volume. Italics and bold have disappeared from the volume which traces corrections dating from August 15, 2004 to January 1, 2005. As the editions continue, there are fewer grey boxes and alterations of bigger font sizes that highlight certain entries. In two instances, the artist's presence is reinstated; in her editorial for volume six, Di Bianco draws attention to an omission; "whose absence hints at their eventual admissibility as evidence," she states that there have been no market corrections to the massive rises in quarterly profits to oil companies, hinting at her expectation and interest in the significance of this information. Here, her

interest in the direct economic impact of political decision-making processes is evident. In the eleventh volume, *Corrections and Clarifications* adopts a new filter; it “specifically interrogates the frequency and repetitive nature of errors and limits in breadth and vision, either incidentally or directly, in news reporting on issues of gender and sexuality.” Another politically and socially charged cause revealing the personal politics and priorities of the artist is revealed openly.

The most recent volume of *Corrections and Clarifications*, which covers localized news reporting in Turkey from January 2, 2012, until July 27, 2014, is published solely in Turkish, with some alterations to the format.[2] This publication features not only corrective statements published in newspapers, but letters of correction sent to be collected and made public in the reports of a voluntary media watchdog organization active in Turkey, *Medya Tekzip Merkezi* (the media correction center) as well as expanding the range of publicly shared corrections to personal Twitter accounts, in line with the dominance of social media as the increasingly popular mode of receiving news—a key resort especially in a country where the level of freedom in popular printed media is extremely low. Perhaps unsurprisingly, this issue features many corrective statements denying any truth at all in what is deemed speculative reporting; letters of rebuttal came from the presidential office, members of parliament, municipalities, soccer players, and celebrities, and were often signed by their attorneys. There is an especially high concentration of pronouncements with reference to defamation of character in this Turkish volume. The underlying belief in the intentionality of misrepresentations, factual errors and a strong conviction thinly disguised in these rebuttals admit to the commonality of reporting with ulterior motives. In this case, the corrections act more as a barometer of the ethical standards in news reporting in Turkey, or lack thereof. When deployed by public figures such as politicians, officials and government offices, these corrections often function as allegations and intimidations. The phenomenon quickly morphs into a seismic measure of political undercurrents.

While *Corrections and Clarifications* is a conceptual exercise in public service, providing information that reveals complex bureaucratic, political, social, psychological and legalistic structures that regulate our perception of current events through journalism’s convoluted processes of knowledge production, the gradual disappearance of the hand of the artist illustrates an embodiment or repetition of some of the very news reporting schemes that Di Bianco sets out to reveal. The decision-making process of what makes it to print is invisible: the numerous conditions motivating the selections of the editor inaccessible by the reader, the reasons of selected sources are often not apparent and limitations of access via language or errors in translation come into play, as in the bilingual issues when the artist is dependent on other researchers, their motivations, and intricacies involved in translation. The obscured editorial mechanism, ironically but evidently, ends up repeating itself in *Corrections and Clarifications*. Anita Di Bianco says “perhaps what is conveyed unintentionally and by repetitious mistakes, is significantly more revealing, and more historically identifiable, than it is meant to be,” which begs the question: can you correct the corrections? And if so, and somewhat naively, who will do it? The artist’s final call for the necessity of doubt, her hope that “[the] readers who regard these revisions and retractions with the same skepticism they have the originals” is fulfilled within the means of her own production. An infinitely intriguing artistic exercise revealing different facets of societal complexity in different geographies, Di Bianco’s project produces the skeptic reader that it calls for.

Footnotes:

[1] This first issue of the publication was produced in conjunction with the Rijksakademie van Beeldende Kunsten, Amsterdam, and printed in Amsterdam.

[2] The most recent issue of Corrections of Clarifications, titled *Düzeltilmeler ve Açıklamalar* in Turkish, was produced in collaboration with the Istanbul non-profits collectorspace and BAS, and printed in Istanbul. It proceeded from the exhibition "Corrections and Clarifications from the BAS Collection" displayed at collectorspace (February 5 – March 22, 2014).

Discussion with Burak Arıkan about “Networks of Dispossession”

Berin Gölönü

The collectively produced project Networks of Dispossession (“Mülksüzleştirme Ağları”) formed during the initial days of the Gezi Park resistance in June 2013. New media artist Burak Arıkan who had joined the sit-in within Gezi Park, organized a “mapping dispossession workshop.” The workshop endeavored to map the relations between the Turkish state and the owners and bankrollers of the mega construction projects transforming the urban makeup of Istanbul. A collective grew out of the workshop, including Yaşar Adanalı, Ayça Aldatmaz, Esra Gürakar, Özgül Şen, Zeyno Üstün and Özlem Zingil. They work in a grass roots manner with other anonymous collaborators to collect research pertaining to the power relations driving flows of capital in Turkey. They then place the pertinent information into an interactive, online Graph Commons “network mapping” platform.

The maps show corporate entities, government organizations and media channels as nodes linked with one another through their investments and contracts in the most highly contested construction projects in Turkey. They also include information on non-Muslim minorities and foundations dispossessed of their lands since the formation of the Turkish Republic. The first three maps comprising “Networks of Dispossession” were on display in the Istanbul Biennial in September 2013. Concurrently unveiled online, 50,000 visitors accessed the maps the day that they went live. Open Systems met with Burak Arıkan to discuss the growth and future of the project, including a major update of their research database, and new interface features.

Open Systems (OS): The original structure of the project was organized around three maps. Now it includes nine maps. How has it grown?

Burak Arıkan (BA): The first version of the project, unveiled in September 2013, includes three original overarching maps. We recently unveiled Version II, which contains information on 393 construction projects, 433 corporations and 45 governmental institutions, along with thousands of connections between actors of dispossession. The large maps contain a lot of information about government and private sector partnerships. We thought this might be too much information for a visitor to process in one glance. So we pulled out smaller, tighter narratives from each of the overarching maps. These selected sub-maps narrate specific relationships, between say, TOKI buildings (government sponsored, mixed income housing high-rises) and their contracts with private building companies. Using this sub-map selection mechanism, anyone who visits these maps can capture their own narratives about these relationships and publish their own stories about these excerpts.

OS: Can you give an example of someone who has gone into the data and posted their own map?

BA: Yes, these narratives echo contemporary events. For example, right after the Soma coal mining disaster in May 2014, when 301 coal miners died due to unsafe working conditions within the mine, someone made a map of the board members of the mining company, and their connections. A more recent case was Kolin Holding’s illegal occupation of the land owned by Manisa’s Yırca Village and destruction of 6,000 olive trees in order to build yet another power plant. Right after the event, people stormed to the online maps, found Kolin Holding and its other contracts with the government, selected and shared them everywhere.

It went viral on social media. When users hear of a new catastrophe such as the death of a construction worker, they immediately use these maps to highlight the perpetrators of the crime—such as the owners of construction companies responsible for the unsafe working conditions of those laborers.

OS: So a repetitive pattern might emerge, where the user can see that the same companies (or their partners) responsible for these labor murders in the past are responsible for the continual reoccurrence of these crimes?

BA: Yes, with the recent update it became more useful for people to spot and point to any of those perpetrators quickly. Our goal is to generate a resource that people can tap into when they need it, one that can contribute to public knowledge about contemporary issues. In another example, when the corruption case against the AKP leadership erupted in December 2013, there was a lot of traffic on the website. All of the names mentioned in the corruption case, such as the Gengiz Holding Company, are included in these maps.

OS: What are these companies' relationships with the government?

BA: The corporations who get big construction and energy contracts from the government are also the holders of mainstream media companies. In exchange for these contracts, they publish what the government wants them to write. The partnerships that are established through legal concessions between media oligarchs and the governmental institutions render mainstream media a mere marketing tool and keep the public uninformed about processes that dispossess us of our air, our water, our soil and our public spaces.

OS: There are a lot of reporters who have been put out of work in the past year and half for writing articles sympathizing with the Gezi resistance. Have you collaborated with any journalists to collect some of your data?

BA: Our collective work group includes journalists, lawyers, sociologists, artists, and technologists. Lawyers bring an understanding of the judicial system, journalists bring in the voice with which to communicate this data to the public, academics bring in a scientific clarity, technologists and artists such as myself develop and design the platform and bring the work together. From the very beginning we have made the project open to any and everyone who wanted to participate. We even had government agents who wanted to work with us so they could spy on what we were doing.

One very positive development is that independent media channels within Turkey have started using our maps as a resource for their reporting.

OS: Can you talk about your process of working? I know you hold public workshops to share your system of working and to invite collaboration.

BA: We have a hybrid work process. We meet physically when we can and regularly chat online, do video meetings, work on shared data sheets, and map the networks using the Graph Commons online collaborative mapping platform that I have been developing since 2010. We do workshops and occasionally come together over dinner parties, adding a social element to our collective work. People also participate by sending us data over email. In project-to-project collaborations, we exchange data with groups like Diren Çevre ("Environmental Resistance"), a political ecology group based out of Boğaziçi University; they make maps charting ecological corruption across Turkey. We've also collaborated and shared data with groups such as Bir Umut Derneği ("Hope Association") and İşçi Güvenliği ("Worker Safety") who monitor labor crimes in Turkey. Through these collaborations we've added information on workers who were killed over the course of big

construction projects such as the new Marmaray high-speed metro line traversing the Bosphorus.

“Networks of Dispossession” is really a solidarity of different projects and public defense groups. This spirit of solidarity is also what sparked the Gezi resistance—individuals working on very specific goals came together with others who were busying themselves with likeminded projects to build a larger political resistance.

OS: It's difficult to make decisions when you work in a collective manner. How do decisions get made? For example, how did you decide upon the narratives highlighted in the sub-maps?

BA: Clearly, making decisions together and motivating each other for voluntary work are the most challenging issues of any collective work. By agreeing on some core principles, we make decisions faster. Motivations come from each individual's excitement and commitment to our cause.

We follow a spiral research methodology, which involves starting with knowledge gathered from your own surroundings and expanding from there. In the first workshop on June 6, 2013, we were at Gezi Park and we started mapping the construction companies contracted to illegally build upon that site, followed by the restoration of the neighboring Atatürk Cultural Center in Taksim Square, and the redesign of Taksim Square (dubbed the “Taksim Pedestrianization Project”). Then our research spread to the gentrification of the adjacent Tarlabası district. The Gap Construction Company, owned by Çalık Holding, is undertaking the urban renewal of the Tarlabası neighborhood. When we started to ask, “which other construction contracts has Çalık received from the government?” we realized that they run energy companies in other parts of Turkey too. Our methodology started expanding geographically, but when we tracked the relationships of the contracts, our research quickly spread across Turkey.

OS: You have mapped out an invasion of the country.

BA: Companies like Doğuş Holding and Doğan Holding who own the mainstream media channels, are also partnering to construct and run Hydro-Electric Power Plants (HEPPs) all over Turkey. These plants are tapping into all of Turkey's rivers and streams to extract energy, and denying local rural populations access to these water sources. People who are experts on these topics can easily make these connections, but it might be harder for the general public to draw these links. Farmers near the city of Trabzon, for example, might be protesting the building of a HEPP on their local stream, but it might not be apparent that the company building that HEPP also owns the newspaper that you read everyday. Needless to say, his protest doesn't get reported in their media outlets.

OS: There is one section of the map that deals with dispossessed entities and they are mostly non-Muslim minorities in Turkey. The lands belonging to these minorities were expropriated by the Turkish State in the early 20th century. What is the significance of this history today?

BA: These dispossessed non-Muslim minorities include Armenians, Greeks, Bulgarians, and Jews. Although there is never enough information about their dispossession in the public sphere, the Hrnt Dink Foundation in Istanbul conducted research on Armenian properties in Istanbul that were seized by the government. This expulsion and subsequent expropriation occurred several times in the Turkish Republic's history, first after the formation of the Republic in 1923, then after a tax law penalizing non-Muslim Turks in 1942, and also during the anti-Greek pogroms of September 1955. We started with the Hrnt Dink

foundation research data, showing properties previously owned by Armenian foundations that were expropriated by the Turkish government. Then, we expanded the research to properties of other non-Muslim minorities that were confiscated and indicated which government organizations own these properties now.

OS: Is the government using or selling these properties for its own profit?

BA: Much of the properties are being rented out for profit by the municipality of Istanbul or by other municipalities. For example, they operate a parking lot on a former Armenian cemetery, or have turned the building of a former school into a shopping mall. The treasury of the central government pockets the rental money from those properties. Take the big new shopping malls in Beyoğlu that are constructed inside historic Greek buildings dating from the 19th century—their construction is always contracted out to companies who support the AKP. We wanted to make these links between the land grab that is happening today and the land grab that occurred in the Turkish Republic's history, and we wanted to reference every single person, organization, and address implicated in this relationship, to allow users to make these connections.

OS: Tell me about the aesthetic choices you make in designing the maps.

BA: The action itself is an aesthetic choice. The data we choose to map, and the questions we raise are decisions that determine the aesthetic outcome. The mapping methodology is quite interesting because it allows us to interconnect separate fragments of information to visualize the larger picture. The network map is a self-organizing software simulation, where the names naturally find their position on the canvas through connecting forces, revealing the central actors, indirect links, organic clusters, structural holes, and outliers.

We hope the Graph Commons platform would enable people to trace the transfer of power in other fields that matter to them and to their community—relationships in the education sector for example, or the healthcare industry. We've already started seeing this happening in Brazil, where activist communities are mapping the relations between extraction companies in the Amazon and their support of political parties.

We don't think that any one entity is responsible for the consolidation of power; it's a network of relationships between government institutions and private companies. These maps could help us better strategize, so we can start to undo this concentration of power.

Siyah Bant

Pelin Başaran

Translated by Berin Gölönü

A documentary titled “Ali/The Free World of Our Dreams” was to be screened at a community center in Hatay, Turkey on the birthday of Ismail Ali Korkmaz, who died of head wounds sustained after a beating by plainclothes policemen during the Gezi Resistance. But the municipality of Hatay attempted to halt the screening under the premise that the film, produced by a group called the “Collective Film Association” was not registered with the Regional Cultural Council. Preventing the screening of this film was a clear case of censorship, as demanding registration for a non-commercial educational film screened for free and at a community organization is a breach of Turkish law. Eventually, the community center hosting the screening was able to show the film. Yet such efforts to curtail freedom of expression in Turkey demonstrate that the government is breaching Turkish constitutional laws as well as international human rights agreements. In comparison to the military coup of 1980 when the Turkish government openly engaged in censorship against its dissidents, today censorship is further enforced by business enterprises and economic groups who have financial ties to the government.

Our group Siyah Bant (Black Tape) has been researching, documenting and publicizing cases of censorship against the arts in an effort to help protect the rights of creative practitioners in Turkey. One of our aims is to also track the less overt ways in which censorship is augmented and self-censorship necessitated, whether through social pressure, scare tactics, othering, slander, or various other strategies of discouragement and hindrance. The idea of forming Siyah Bant came about while preparing a report titled “Censorship in Contemporary Art” during a workshop in honor of Hrant Dink convened by Banu Karaca at Sabancı University in 2010.[1] We realized that censorship was not something that was easily talked about among artists or even readily labeled as a human rights violation by activists. We thought about consulting with the public and with artists on how to label something a case of censorship. First we established a website and mentioned those cases which received media coverage. We met with over eighty arts organizations, artists and reporters based in nine different cities for a first hand account of their experiences. Our first publication grew out of this research, and addressed the broader the factors that promote censorship in Turkey, as well as including and an in-depth analysis of the better-known cases of censorship.

Our other goal was to create a network among artists who could come together to speak out against censorship. We realized that our first step towards this long-term goal was to inform artists about their legal rights. We collaborated with Bilgi University’s Center for Human Rights and Research to organize workshops sharing information about the legal frameworks against censorship pertaining to the visual arts, film, theater, literature and music. The research that came out of these workshops culminated in an essay penned by Dr. Ulaş Karan, assistant professor of law at Bilgi University and shaped the contents of our second publication.

Other articles and reports published in the past year highlight our recent research projects. Our research on cultural policy in Ankara, Turkey’s capital, aims to understand how the “peace process” brokered between the Turkish government and the PKK is affecting

freedom of expression in the region. A report of our findings was published on the website of the Index on Censorship. Our research on the relationship between censorship and the government's financial support of the film industry culminated in an article we penned for the Turkish film journal *Altyazi*. We also presented the Turkish parliament with a series of questions about the relationship between censorship and the government's financing of film and theater in Turkey. Our interview with artist *Iz Öztat* on the events leading up to the censorship of the exhibition "Here Together Now" exhibited at the Turkish Embassy in Madrid, was posted on the website of the Index on Censorship and the news site *Jadaliyya*.

In addition to publishing our research, our future goals are to provide informational kits to cultural producers on their legal rights to freedom of expression, to bring creative practitioners whose rights have been violated together with legal counsel to mount exemplary court cases, and to create a network of support in the arts to speak and act out against censorship. In these court cases we hope to highlight the relationship between freedom of creative expression and freedom of speech as a basic human right. Even though there are federal laws in place for protecting freedom of expression in Turkey, often times these laws are breached by the government or by security forces purportedly acting to protect public safety.

In December 2011, Turkey's former minister of Affairs, *Idris Naim Şahin*, gave a speech in which he named artists, universities and civil rights groups as the "backdoor" to terrorism. Şahin's speech created an atmosphere of fear and intimidation for artists and free thinkers, thereby setting the groundwork for stricter modes of self-censorship. This is an anti-intellectual system of power that silences its critics and opponents, heightens social tensions and marginalizes and criminalizes artists while rewarding lower level state bureaucrats with the authority and means to control and delimit freedom of creative expression.

Censorship is often legitimized on the part of state officials as a need to protect the rights of certain "sensitive citizens," or more accurately, certain "anonymous parties" aligned with the ruling party, who complain that their beliefs and values are offended by the artwork in question. Many of these instances of censorship are initiated as investigations into the alleged complaints of these sensitive citizens.

In some cases, rather than going through the legal channels of filing complaints, these "sensitive citizens" organize amongst themselves to threaten and attack artists or to directly remove works of art they find objectionable. In 2010, the Islamist press launched such a vocal objection to the theater production "Lick But Don't Swallow" written by *Özen Yula*, that the play's premiere had to be suspended. The municipality then closed and barricaded the theater in which the play was to take place on account of a licensing technicality. That same year, four galleries located in the *Tophane* neighborhood of *Istanbul* held openings on the same evening. The openings were stormed by a group armed with sticks and clubs, who objected to the consumption of alcohol on the street. The fact that the authorities did not attempt to identify and prosecute the attackers, and that *Ertuğrul Günay*, the director of the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in *Istanbul* justified the attacks by stating the need to be respectful of "societal sensitivities," strongly suggests that the government is collaborating with non-governmental agents in validating these types of bullying tactics.

The media also collaborates with this system in the name protecting "societal sensitivities." It uses a language of vilification to directly target artists and prevent the display of certain works. Yet the press is not legally responsible for the threats and actions of those who are affected by its charged language. For this reason, artists need to launch

organized efforts to hold the press accountable for language that incites its readers to violence, if not on a legal level, than at least on an ethical level.

The government has also taken direct action against the works of artists it finds objectionable. Illustrators and comic book artists such as Musa Kart, who publishes in the newspaper *Cumhuriyet*, and Sefer Selvi and Mehmet Çağcağ who publish in the comic magazine *Penguen*, have been sued by former Prime Minister Recep Tayyip Erdoğan on charges of defamation. A public sculpture created by Mehmet Aksoy and installed in the city of Kars, near the Armenian border was created as a gesture of reconciliation and a “Monument for Humanity” in light of the Armenian genocide. The removal of the sculpture was being debated in court upon objections to it voiced by Turkish nationalists when Erdoğan paid a visit to Kars. After referring to the sculpture as “freakish” he encouraged its demolition. Interestingly, when the European Court of Human Rights accused Erdoğan of defamation against the sculptor and his work, the former Prime Minister defended himself by saying that he was practicing his freedom of speech when he voiced his critique of the sculpture. It’s clear that definitions of criticism, defamation and provocation are mutable and change according to the opinions of those in power.

Sometimes it is not the laws and regulations themselves but the way they are administered that result in censorship. European regulations pertaining to freedom of expression are taken as an example on which the principles of democracy and transparency are based, but questions about how the criteria and laws indicated on these regulations are being administered and interpreted are repeatedly ignored. In the film industry, the way a film is rated can be utilized as a mode of censorship when films are deemed inappropriate for viewing by certain age groups, or are rated in such a way as to designate them “inappropriate for commercial distribution.” There is a government board for the support and sponsorship of film in Turkey, but the process through which board members earmark films for financial support is not very transparent. In one-on-one meetings between the board and film directors, political content becomes a point of discussion. This, coupled with the fact that the board never responds to questions about why certain films receive financial support over others suggests that these regulations are being administered in a way that can block creative freedom.

A new bill referred to by the acronym TÜSAK has been drafted to restructure how government funds are distributed to theater, dance, opera and ballet organizations in Turkey. An arts council will decide how to distribute government funds to various arts groups, but information on how the members of this council were chosen and the length of their terms has not been disclosed. This concerns theater groups in particular, because the council has made it mandatory for those groups receiving government support to sign agreements stating that they will stage productions “appropriate for public morals” and it has been suggested that the council will withhold funds from theater groups who have outwardly supported or taken part in the Gezi Resistance.

The Turkish ministry that promotes the display of creative projects abroad has tried to censor the projects it supports. In 2008, when the film “Gitmek” (“Going”) by Hüseyin Karabey was screened at the Culturescapes Festival in Switzerland, the ministry threatened to pull the 250,000 Euros that it had granted the film on the objection that the film showed “a Turkish girl falling in love with a Kurdish man.” The ministry also puts pressure on foreign organizations not to invite and mount projects from Turkey that address Kurdish rights, that use the Kurdish language, or that address the Armenian genocide, threatening to pull financial support if they do so.

The government has consistently exerted pressure on and threatened to silence Kurdish artists. A period of relative political stability and leniency in the early 2000s was replaced

by a renewed period of interrogation during the KCK (Association of Kurdistan Communities) arrests. The activities that Kurdish artists had engaged in during earlier periods of political stability were now cited as evidence of alleged crimes, indicating that they had always been under surveillance. Siyah Bant's research revealed that new court cases launched against Kurdish artists even during the "peace process" interpreted artistic expression as a political statement, moreover, an illegal political statement. The court cases described activities such as singing a Kurdish folk song or playing a Kurdish musical instrument as inciting uprisings and "supporting terrorist groups."

While this text focuses on censorship on the part of the government and its collaborators, it hasn't even touched upon the various pressures exerted on freedom of artistic expression by arts organizations, festivals and galleries, or the private sector. This topic deserves its own study. In order to fight censorship against the arts, artists need to organize and strengthen their own ability to push back and exert pressure against entities that are violating their freedom of expression; they need to demand accountability from the government agents who are threatening to censor them, and they need to be aware of their own rights, resorting to legal means, if necessary, to defend those rights. Lastly, more studies need to be conducted on legal deadlocks so that they can work in favor of protecting freedom of artistic expression rather than against it.

Footnote:

[1] Hrant Dink was a Turkish-Armenian journalist, the founder and editor of the Istanbul-based newspaper Agos, and defender of free speech in Turkey. He was shot and killed by a Turkish youth in front of the Agos newspaper offices on January 19, 2007.

A Nation Rising for Internet Freedom and Justice

Betty Yu

“The giant communication media: the great monsters of the television industry, the communication satellites, magazines, and newspapers seem determined to present a virtual world, created in the image of what the globalization process requires.”

- Subcomandante Marcos, Zapatista Army of National Liberation/EZLN (1997)

Many of us feel that simply “speaking” or “exposing” the truth is not enough. We need platforms like the Open Internet to counter corporate controlled media. Think about what it would be like if we didn’t have social media to point to the injustices of our time—police brutality, labor exploitation, war crimes, climate change, the attack on our public schools, to name a few. It was on social media that millions of us learned about the militarized police tactics that were used to suppress the uprising in #Ferguson after the police killing of Michael Brown, an unarmed African American teenager in Ferguson, Missouri. #HandsUpDontShoot wasn’t just a hashtag but demonstrated to a nation that people of color are building a powerful movement to confront institutional racism and demand an end to police state violence across the United States.

The “Arab Spring” Uprising of 2011 in Tunisia and Egypt didn’t start on social media, but it did unleash our imagination and inspired people to think globally about the use of the Internet to connect an international community across borders. It empowered activists and allowed them to coordinate and communicate to the world how governments were repressing democracy movements and more importantly, how people were standing up in revolt. But the evolution of our digital age and an open Internet has given these same tools to state regimes to suppress social movements by surveilling and insidiously undermining them. In the case of the now infamous US based Occupy Wall Street uprising, it was revealed that the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Department of Homeland Security, a “counter-terrorism” government body formed after 9/11, and the local police were in regular communication, spying, and deploying methods to disrupt it.

According to the New York Times, Mara Verheyden-Hilliard, executive director of the Partnership for Civil Justice Fund, said uncovered documents illustrated how the F.B.I. had stepped out of line and improperly aggregated information on individuals involved in lawful activities. “The collection of information on people’s free-speech actions is being entered into unregulated databases, a vast storehouse of information widely disseminated to a range of law-enforcement and, apparently, private entities,” states Verheyden-Hilliard. “This is precisely the threat—people do not know when or how it may be used and in what manner.”

In 2012, during the height of the Occupy Movement, Twitter was forced to relinquish Occupy Wall Street protesters’ tweets to a Manhattan Criminal Court after months of fighting a subpoena by the Manhattan District Attorney’s Office, which demanded that it hand over three months of data. Twitter did challenge the U.S. subpoena by defending the individual users and their data generated content. However, the courts shot down Twitter’s challenge.

The US government likes to point fingers at other governments for their use of tactics to suppress protests and uprisings, but in 2013, whistleblower Edward Snowden exposed the US's hypocrisy. His revelations exposed how the National Security Agency has been spying and tracking US citizens and residents through social media, Internet, and cell phone activity. It uncovered the tight relationship media and telecommunication corporations have with the government and police authorities to indiscriminately keep a rolling rolodex of millions of Americans' electronic data and conversations.

Digital surveillance may be new to some communities, but for the social movements and communities of color, government surveillance is not new and has been happening for decades. Since the unionizing and communists movements of the 1920s to the COINTEL PRO FBI program of the 1970s to suppress the Black Liberation movement, government authorities have used tactics like wiretapping phones, intercepting mail, and infiltrating groups to "divide and conquer". Today, immigrants and communities of color experience a heightened militarized police presence in their neighborhoods, which relies on digital surveillance to succeed. For example the Secure Communities (S-Comm) is a government program that allows local police to share information with US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) with the stated purpose of identifying and deporting undocumented immigrants convicted of serious crimes. This kind of joint surveillance has led to illegal widespread racial profiling and violation of people's civil liberties.

Today, activists, progressive technologists, media makers and cultural workers innovatively use social media to speak truth to power and rely on an Open Internet to spread their messages. Josh Begley created a phone application, "Drone+" which tracked every US drone strike and would send a push notification to users any time a drone dropped around the world. Apple rejected the application five times upon finally approving after Begley and activists' persistence. In order to get it approved Begley had to take "Drone" out of its name and renamed it "Metadata". The Open Internet has made it possible for Syrian activist, Abdulkader Hariri to tweet out and keep the global community abreast of the US air strikes on Syria in its "mission" against ISIS, the Islamist terrorist group. Michael Premo and Rachel Falcone who created the website Sandy Storyline provide a platform for victims as well as relief workers of Hurricane Sandy to upload and share their own stories of displacement and resilience, connecting it to the global climate change crisis.

But in the US our open and unfettered Internet is being challenged and can kill what we know as Network Neutrality. Right now the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) a government agency that was created to protect the public interest may be siding with corporations like Verizon and Comcast who want to further monetize the Internet and stifle our right to free expression. Currently, we have an Open Internet that prevents discrimination on-line. In other words, Open Systems' website travels at the same speed to an Internet user as the right wing Fox News. The Open Internet allows all of us to be creators and producers, not just passive consumers, regardless of whether we have millions of dollars to disseminate our information. If certain broadband providers and some of the government leaders they endorse had their way, they would interrupt our Open Internet and our ability to access our favorite websites and apps and instead leave it at the hands of Internet Service Providers and media corporations to determine what websites you are able to access.

This past summer, when advocates of Net Neutrality raised their voice in protest, the FCC opened up a Notice for Public Rulemaking Period. The public was in such an uproar, overloading FCC's website with comments that caused its website to shutdown for a few hours. More than 1 million Americans have filed comments slamming the FCC's proposal. Thousands of websites participated in Internet Slowdown Day on September 10, 2014,

demonstrating how slow their websites would load if Internet Service Providers had their way.

Now is the time to take action. Groups like the Media Action Grassroots Network (MAG-Net), a national multi-sector media justice network of over 175 grassroots organizations are organizing online and on the ground. They are demanding that FCC commissioners, especially Chairman Tom Wheeler, meet face to face with communities who will be most impacted by the proposal to shut down an Open Internet. Earlier this year they partnered with organizations to host town hall meetings in cities from Oakland, California to Albuquerque, New Mexico. Media justice groups like the Media Literacy Project were instrumental in bringing hundreds of youth organizers, activists and communities of color to public meeting in Albuquerque, where community members testified to the FCC Chair on why Internet Freedom is one of the most essential civil rights issue of our time.

Internet Freedom is also about Access

Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights upholds everyone's fundamental right to communicate freely. It reads, "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers." Yet today in the US, many disenfranchised communities face a multitude of barriers to achieving this right to free expression and the exchanging and receiving of ideas and information.

Despite being a first world nation, the digital divide in the United States is still a major problem. A 2013 recent Pew Research Center report shows that 30% of the people living in the US don't have access to "high speed broadband" connections, which roughly equals 19 million people. The report reveals the racial differences as well, with African Americans and Latinos less likely to have high-speed Internet access than whites. That same Pew study shows that a growing number of Blacks and Latinos have access to the Internet on their smartphones, which brings their "high-speed broadband" adoption numbers almost equal to whites. But this is deceptive. There is still an immense disparity among those with wired vs. wireless Internet access, and it is often divided along class and racial lines.

Communities living on fixed incomes are likely to pay for service on their mobile devices that on a wired connection at home. What does it mean for people of color who only have access to the Internet via their smartphones? Now more than ever, our lives are inextricably tied to having high-speed Internet access on both fixed and wireless devices. People of color need access to a wired Internet connection on a computer to carry out their daily lives and access essential information, such as applying for a job, filling out a college application, signing up for government assistance, contacting a doctor.

Broadband access is still a challenge in rural and Native-American communities who constitute the majority of Americans unable to access the Internet. According to the latest FCC Broadband Progress Report, wired Internet does not reach 19 million Americans. Of those underserved by fixed broadband networks, 14.5 million live in rural areas and nearly a third in tribal lands. Of course this digital divide translates into a material and economic divide that prevents rural communities from accessing better education and health care, job opportunities and fully participating in society as a whole.

Diversity in media ownership is virtually non-existent in the US. Accelerated media consolidation has narrowed the already limited access to the airwaves for women and communities of color. Women own less than 7% of all TV and radio station licenses despite being half of the US population. People of color make up over 36% of the population but

own just over 7% of radio licenses and 3% of TV licenses. Currently five media corporations control 90% of what we see, hear and watch. This is tied to historical marginalization, how some people's stories are not told. For many, media justice is not just about challenging how the issues that affect disenfranchised communities are portrayed in the media, or just creating their own alternative media, it is also about getting to the root cause and fighting to change the media policies that currently only benefit the 1%.

It is important to stay attuned to and active on all media justice issues. The digital divide, digital surveillance and the fight against corporate media mergers are connected to Internet Freedom. If we follow the big money behind the current Comcast and Time Warner Cable \$45 billion dollar merger proposal, we'll find powerful right-wing lobbying groups like American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) behind it. ALEC is the same group that has been pushing to take away workers' right to unionize, challenging African-Americans' voting rights in the South, and advocating "Stand Your Ground" laws that allowed for Trayvon Martin's murderer, George Zimmerman to be acquitted. This merger would mean the top two US cable companies would be a unified media company and control a massive television and Internet market of more than 30 million subscribers across the US's largest media markets.

Growing the Internet Freedom Movement

Right now, groups like Media Action Grassroots Network, Voices for Internet Freedom, Free Press , ColorofChange.org , Presente.org, Common Cause among others are putting pressure on FCC Chairman Wheeler to abandon his plan that would let Internet service providers like AT&T, Comcast and Verizon create a two-tiered Internet. It would create fast lanes for the very few who can afford to pay extra fees and a slow lane for the rest of us. Activists and organizing groups are demanding that the FCC not only throw out its proposal but to also reclassify The Internet as a Title II Service which would make it an essential service, like the telephone.

Underrepresented communities, immigrants, working people and people of color need an Open Internet. The Internet is an essential part of our everyday lives, allowing us to connect to jobs, housing, school, healthcare and to fully participate in a 21st century digital age. This Internet Freedom movement needs the leadership and involvement of racial justice, civil rights, and social change movements in order to win on this issue. These are the communities who understand how deeply it affects their lives, their organizing and their basic right to communicate. The Internet Freedom movement needs to engage and prioritize the leadership of those most impacted by Internet access—those of low-income, people of color, and immigrants. These are the people and communities who are the stakeholders and are on the frontlines of our fights. They know how to organize, and to win.

What Happens to #Ferguson Affects Ferguson: Net Neutrality, Algorithmic Filtering and Ferguson

Zeynep Tüfekçi

Ferguson is about many things, starting first with race and policing in America.

But it's also about internet, net neutrality and algorithmic filtering.¹

It's a clear example of why "saving the Internet", as it's often phrased, is not an abstract issue of concern only to nerds, Silicon Valley bosses, and a few NGOs. It's why "algorithmic filtering" is not a vague concern.

It's a clear example of why net neutrality is a human rights issue; a free speech issue; and an issue of the voiceless being heard, on their own terms.

I saw this play out in multiple countries—my home country of Turkey included—but on August 13, 2014, it became heartbreakingly apparent in the United States as well.

For me, the Ferguson "coverage" began when people started retweeting pictures of armored vehicles with heavily armored "robocops" on top of them, aiming their muzzles at the protesters, who seemed to number a few hundred.² It was August 13, 2014, the fourth night after an unarmed black man, Michael Brown, was shot by a—still unnamed—police officer after a "jaywalking" incident. Witnesses say he died hands in the air, saying "don't shoot."³

The first night Mike Brown was shot, a friend asked on Twitter whether this would ever make the national news. It deserved to be national news as multiple significant, ongoing crises intersect at Ferguson: the loss of jobs which hit these communities worst; the militarization of US police departments; race; chronic multi-generational poverty.

But those very factors often make it less likely such places make the news, except as trouble spots. Places to be ignored. Avoided. "We" hear it only through official statements, often dismissing local concerns, painting them as looters, thugs, trouble makers.

Yes Ferguson will make news, another friend tweeted, because... well, here you go: Twitter.

It seems like a world ago in which such places, and such incidents, would be buried in silence, though, of course, residents knew of their own ignored plight. Now, we expect documentation, live-feeds, streaming video, real time Tweets.

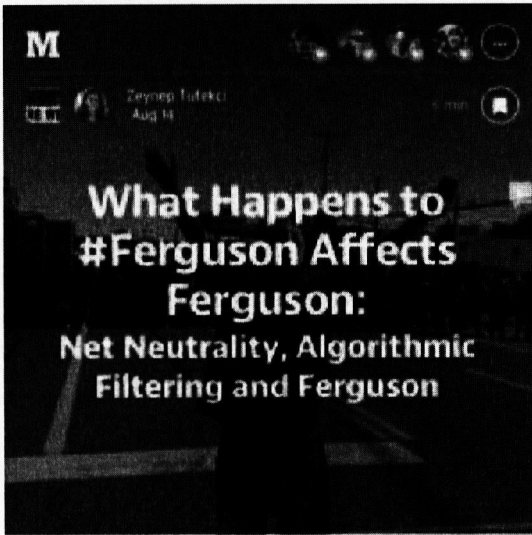
I watched this interaction online. When the local police department in Ferguson showed up with dogs at the first vigils for this young man, outrage spilled over to people who may not have been following it the first day. When night after night, reports of tear gas came in, more national journalists went to the area, as well as more residents turning on their cameras, deliberately. More and more people started talking about this.

National journalists were harassed, assaulted, arrested—without paperwork—while sitting quietly, recharging their phones at McDonald's—captured on video.⁴ Police positioned like snipers on top of armored, anti-mine vehicles kept their rifles—I have no idea what kind—

aimed at protesters within full view of national media, in broad daylight—pictured from multiple angles.

This unfolded in real time on my social media feed which was pretty soon taken over by the topic—and yes, it's a function of who I follow but I follow across the political spectrum, on purpose, and also globally. Egyptians and Turks were tweeting tear gas advice. Journalists with national profiles started going live on TV. And yes, there were people from the left and the right who expressed outrage.

I write and talk often about protest over-policing in multiple countries, so the topic was not a new one to me but I saw many people who I know don't necessarily follow this day-to-day (and don't condemn—not everyone can, or should follow every worthy issue) start talking about it.



Ferguson is about many things, starting first with race and policing in America.

But it's also about internet, net neutrality and algorithmic filtering.

And this is what happened to “Ferguson” on Twitter: <https://twitter.com/PatrickRuffini/status/499754709377642496/photo/1>

And then I switched to non net-neutral Internet to see what was up. I mostly have a similar composition of friends on Facebook as I do on Twitter.

Nada, zip, nada.

No Ferguson on Facebook the night of August 13, 2014. I scrolled. Refreshed.

I was not the only one who noticed this. Others remarked as well: <https://twitter.com/gmarkham/status/499754170094981120>

This morning, on August 14, my Facebook feed is also very heavily dominated by discussion of Ferguson. Many of those posts seem to have been written last night, but I didn't see them then. Overnight, "edgerank"—or whatever Facebook's filtering algorithm is called now—seems to have bubbled them up, probably as people engaged them more.

But I wonder: what if Ferguson had started to bubble, but there was no Twitter to catch on nationally? Would it ever make it through the algorithmic filtering on Facebook? Maybe, but with no transparency to the decisions, I cannot be sure.

Would Ferguson be buried in algorithmic censorship?

Would we even have a chance to see the photograph of this little girl: <https://twitter.com/LailaLalami/status/499751448545329152/photo/1>

This isn't about Facebook per se—maybe it will do a good job, maybe not—but the fact that algorithmic filtering, as a layer, controls what you see on the Internet. Net neutrality (or lack thereof) will be yet another layer determining this. This will come on top of existing inequalities in attention, coverage and control.

Twitter was also affected by algorithmic filtering. "Ferguson" did not trend in the US on Twitter but it did trend locally. [*I've since learned from @gilgul that it "briefly" trended but mostly trended at localities.*] So, there were fewer chances for people not already following the news to see it on their "trending" bar. Why? Almost certainly because there was already national, simmering discussion for many days and Twitter's trending algorithm (said to be based on a method called "term frequency inverse document frequency") rewards spikes...⁵ So, as people in localities who had not been talking a lot about Ferguson started to mention it, it trended there though the national build-up in the last five days *penalized* Ferguson.

Algorithms have consequences.

Mass media, typically, does not do very well covering chronic problems of unprivileged populations, poor urban blacks bear the brunt of this, but they are not alone. Rural mostly white America, too, is almost always ignored except for the occasional "meth labs everywhere" story. But on August 13, many outlets were trying, except police didn't let them. Chris Hayes says that police ordered satellite trucks off the area so that they could not go live from the area. Washington Post was only one outlet whose journalists were arrested—citizen journalists were targeted as well.

On the scrappy live feed kept up by frequently tear-gassed, coughing citizen journalists, I heard the announcements calling on them to "turn off their cameras."⁶

But maybe in the future, they don't have to bother to arrest journalists and force cameras off. In California, legislation is being considered for "kill switches" in phones—a feature I honestly cannot imagine a good use for in the United States.⁷

The citizen journalists held on, even as choked from the gas, some traditional media started going live from the region, and today, on August 14, it's on the front of many newspapers.

Maybe, just maybe, there can be a *national* conversation on these topics long-ignored outside these communities. That's not everything; it may be a first step, or it may get drowned out.

But at least, we are here.

But I'm not quite sure that without the neutral side of the Internet—the livestreams whose “packets” were fast as commercial, corporate and moneyed speech that travels on our networks, Twitter feeds which are not determined by opaque corporate algorithms but my own choices—we'd be having this conversation.

So I hope that in the coming days, there will be a lot written about race in America, about militarization of police departments, lack of living wage jobs in large geographic swaths of the country.

But keep in mind; Ferguson is also a net neutrality issue. It's also an algorithmic filtering issue. How the internet is run, governed and filtered is a human rights issue.

And despite a lot of dismal developments, this fight is far from over, and its enemy is cynicism and dismissal of this reality.

Don't let anyone tell you otherwise.

What happens to #Ferguson affects what happens to Ferguson.

This article was originally published on August 14, 2014 on Tüfekçi's blog Medium.com

FOR THOSE WHO TRY AND MONOPOLIZE FREEDOM – EMANCIPATION THROUGH FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Süreyyya Evren

Translated by Berin Gölönü

It is no secret that freedom of speech and freedom of expression is limited in Turkey, that such freedoms are increasingly stifled every day, and that the attempt to practice objective journalism has become an impossible task. There is much to write on this topic. What I wish to focus on is the fact that each and every one of the words of dissent voiced during the Gezi Park occupation and nation-wide protests have an emancipatory value. I would deem the Gezi protests to be the first grass roots uprising in Turkey that arose not from affiliates of certain political groups but from the masses. It is an uprising that sounded a death knell for the hierarchies of representative democracy within the political establishment, and did so with a great sense of urgency. It is worth considering the Gezi resistance in contrast to the establishment of the political left in Turkey to understand how it might be possible to defend freedom of speech and expression from those who wish to monopolize what freedom is. First, let me offer a sampling of the many voices of dissent that were heard over the course of the uprising.

POLITICAL DISOBEDIENCE

The diverse voices of civil disobedience taking part in the Gezi resistance not only left their marks on the cultural and political landscape of Turkey, but also displayed a powerful political disobedience. Political disobedience, according to political economist Bernard Harcourt, is the “rejection of ideologies that dominate our collective imaginary.”^[1] The Gezi protests weren’t led by charismatic leaders and this yielded two benefits. Firstly, there was no organized hierarchy within the resistance, and no ideologies being disseminated from the top down. Second, because there was no leader representing the movement who could be disparaged, the movement as a whole could not be disparaged. Gezi also rejected conventional partisan politics, its strategies and its rhetoric. A new language developed outside of this rhetoric, surprising not only the ruling party in Turkey, but also its adversaries. When I say its adversaries, I don’t just mean its main opposition party, the Republican People’s Party (Cumhuriyet Halk Partisi or CHP in Turkish), but all other socialist movements, labor unions and radical leftist groups in Turkey. Humor and curse words came together on graffiti slogans to create a new visual vocabulary that expressed this political disobedience. Wall graffiti that read: “survive and resist, iPhone battery” was another way of saying “I reject the impulse to write ‘We are right, we will win’ on this wall.” In the same manner, to write: “Damn *certain* things,” on the wall was another way of saying “I refuse to write ‘Damn the fascist government!’”.

THE FREEDOM TO NARRATE THE STORY OF THE UPRISING

Right after the emergence of the Gezi protests there also arose a power struggle to narrate the tale of the uprising. This is not a struggle between the ruling party and its main opposition parties, but one involving many other actors. It gives us as individuals the opportunity to show those political groups we feel the closest to, whose political perspectives we most agree with, our political disobedience. Actors who want to name and impose themselves as the agents of social change are claiming to be the representatives of

the new paradigm shift that emerged from the Gezi protests. They try to prove that the very same goals that they themselves had been trying to articulate for years was articulated by the participants of Gezi in a more youthful, upbeat and apolitical manner, even if these participants didn't exactly know what they were asking for at the time. As though the public can be taught just what it is that it was asking for by forming an allegiance with these political groups; as though it is going to relinquish its power to these groups so it can sit by and wait for instructions on what to do next.

GEZI AND POLITICAL DISOBEDIENCE

What made Gezi so unique was its resistance to a particular political rhetoric and its channels of representation. To say "Damn *certain* things" refused the declarative tone of a phrase such as "Damn the fascist government" and practiced a mode of political disobedience that countered even those political groups who posed themselves as the antidote to the authoritarian nature of Turkey's ruling regime. Dissenters are apolitical, not because they are not political but because they do not make a career out of politics. They do not instrumentalize their activities for political gain. Neither do they attempt to usurp or control the demands of others to meet their own political goals and needs. Even if they win, they don't make declarations. The chevalier makes declarations of power; the slave speaks up in rebellion.[2]

GOVERNMENT AND REVOLUTION

Anarchist theorist Gustav Landauer believed that the state was a condition, a certain relationship among human beings, a model of behavior. His belief was that there is only one way to overcome the power of the state, and it is not by taking it over, it is by changing the way we relate to one another in society, by behaving differently toward one another.

In their introduction to the anthology *What We Are Fighting For, A Radical Collective Manifesto*, editors Federico Campagna and Emanuele Campiglio write about the global nature of protests across the world in the 21st century: "Simply put, it is no longer a politics of flags, but one of direct action... What we are facing then, is a movement that attempts to escape the traps of identity, in favour of an approach based on practice." [3]

Let me frame my discussion with a little memory trigger from the first weeks of June 2013. Taksim Square has been barricaded off and designated an autonomous zone by the protestors who are occupying it. Overturned cars and municipal buses are everywhere. People are decorating the vehicles with all sorts of graffiti. Some have been strung with little pieces of paper and turned into a Yoko Ono type wish tree/art installation. Everyone is photographing everything like mad, and people are posing for one another's photos on top of these collaborative installations. Photographers affiliated with the well-known Atlas magazine are there too. A scene I want to focus on arises at that moment. In a photograph by Sinan Çakmak, a group of people are sitting inside a graffitied municipal bus, as though they are about to travel from point A to point B.[4] The bus is full. There are people looking out of the window as if in a state of reverie; some are drinking from their water bottles. People are sitting in a bus that is going nowhere. It has been turned away from its original path and set on a platform for experimentation. It is as though the people inside this bus are not trying to get from point A to point B, but are trying to imagine a way to arrive at a dream, an idea. It is as if they are undertaking an internal journey, coming together during the Gezi occupation to discover something new. Had those people sitting next to one another inside that bus already arrived at the place they wanted to be? Is that bus going anywhere now? If so, where? Or is this bus still immobile, the passengers inside still on their internal journeys?

The Gezi occupation measured the effectiveness of modes of thinking, working, being,

existing, that had, up until then, been considered marginal at best. Seemingly overnight, the anti-militarism of a small handful of people, standing behind slogans such as “we don’t want to kill, we don’t want to get killed,” and “we are not going to be anyone’s soldiers” was adopted by a large segment of the population. Whereas before, we thought that only those who were marginalized could think like us, we realized that these sentiments were starting to be embraced by a larger segment of society. In order for these types of seemingly insignificant values to emerge and become manifest, it is important for all marginal cultural forms and perspectives to continue and be kept alive. In another example, it may be as important to engage in a simple activity such as raising homegrown pink tomatoes, as it is to stage a series of protests for social change.

“TOGETHER AS ONE, LIKE TREES IN A FOREST”

For the first time, we were together as one, like trees in a forest. People used to use that expression “together as one, like trees in a forest” but no one told us that there was actually no central committee of trees in the forest or no tree with the title “Head of the Forest.” There was no sapling with the title “Head of Young Saplings.” We found out that mediators and representatives didn’t exist within the conditions of genuine equality and coexistence where you could feel “together as one, like trees in a forest”. Apparently, in a forest, every tree feels like a physical extension of the whole, and we felt that way at Gezi too. We found out that the head of the forestry department taught us the wrong rules about the forest—the forest doesn’t have a center, nor does it have a leader. The real rules of the forest are more just than what we encountered on the streets of the city, as we faced the police.

“SURVIVE AND RESIST, IPHONE BATTERY”

The meaning of the word “Diren” in Turkish can translate into two meanings in English, to “last” or “survive” as well as to “resist.” Graffiti that appeared during the Gezi protests writing “*Diren, iPhone Şarjı*,” or “Survive, iPhone Battery,” also took on the double meaning of “Survive and Resist... iPhone Battery”. It was an urgent need because to have one’s iPhone Battery die during the protests meant an end to the photos and videos you could post of your first-hand experiences on the streets. Within leftist movements and leftist rhetoric, the word “resist” as well as the word “resistance” had had a very special status up until then. They weren’t words to use jokingly. They had evolved out of painful, hard won struggles. So when we saw the words “Survive and Resist, iPhone Battery” scrawled on the wall, we were taken aback. Then we saw a protest-taking place outside of a steak restaurant with a group of people holding up signs that said “survive and resist, tenderloin.” But we couldn’t say to these people, “how dare you trivialize the struggles of those risking their lives on the streets,” because these were the same people who had written, “survive and resist, iPhone battery.” They were poking fun at themselves, making light of their own struggles to lift their spirits, so as to be able to “survive and resist” the authorities. The resistance had become a part of everyday life. The walls weren’t covered with pre-defined slogans written by pre-established political groups and parties, they expressed the thoughts, words and decisions of ordinary individuals who happened to be on the street right there, then.

The individual counts in this struggle and isn’t considered inferior to an organization or an institution. The affinity group, or the group of friends each individual happens to join spontaneously can be considered a unit within the greater mass; it doesn’t need to be a crowded unit. If there are five friends together in the protest, this group of five is a unit. Its decision making power doesn’t have to be inferior to that of a larger political group or organization. New channels for taking back our power and making a big impact have opened up, and we are going after them. Actually, in the beginning of the Gezi resistance,

our confusion about what exactly we wanted might have stemmed from the fact that we didn't know what to do with all of our new found freedom. What were we going to do with our newfound power? What were we going to devote our lives to? We have been trying to find answers to these questions since the beginning of the Gezi uprising. On the night of May 30, 2013, as musical acts replaced one another on stage, I heard one young woman ask her cohort: "how do we make the decisions here?" She had meant, "how do we decide which musical act gets the stage next?" But it's possible to deduct a much broader meaning out of her question.

THE NOTION THAT WE HAVE BEEN HERE FOR YEARS AND YOU ARE A NEWCOMER

It is an utopian moment. To use a metaphor of the cooperative farm, some leftist groups believed that people suddenly got interested in acquiring the rotting supplies left in the storage depot out back. In fact, there wasn't a new demand for old supplies. Rather, a new cooperative spirit and drive emerged from the arrival of need seeds at the farm. In other words, we haven't finally understood and agreed with what leftist groups had been saying for the past forty years. Instead, we finally understand how to approach the work that had been done wrong for the past forty years.

The generation of youth who sparked the Gezi resistance, who had been called "apolitical" up until the protests, hadn't decided, all of a sudden, to agree with what the preceding generations had been saying. On the contrary, they discovered new political tactics through their own means. For the first time, they played a part in imagining and constructing their own political reality. This was new and exciting, and it gave the underdogs a chance to make their voices heard. Being apolitical isn't about refusing to take a political stance; it's about rejecting preexisting systems of government and using tactics of political disobedience to express the desire to invent new definitions of politics. When anarchists in Turkey launched a new theory magazine years ago, they gave it the name *Apolitika*. It may be because the most essential thing that revolution brings about is a disruption of our pre-existent definitions of politics.[5]

The beauty of Gezi has to do with the fact that it did not develop out of a political election. Neither did it grow out of partisan politics. Gezi was not an occurrence that was generated by the elected party, by any of the opposition parties, by the left or by any entrenched socialist groups who are vying for the public's support. The more egalitarian, horizontally structured and network-based affiliations and groups that grew out of Gezi eclipsed the entire preexistent political ecology of Turkey, all of the parties and groups and the hierarchical structures of power that they inevitably adhere to and represent. Going back to the beginning of the essay, as much as freedom of speech thumbs its nose at power structures, it also stands as a reminder that we need to question those entities who try and present themselves as the agents of social change, who try and present themselves as the experts on revolution, as well as those who claim to be the agents of our freedom. The knowledge and experience we gained at Gezi in a grass roots manner, holds an emancipatory potential that our politicians, government institutions and the leftist establishment is trying to make us forget.

Footnotes:

[1] Bernard E. Harcourt, "Political Disobedience," *Occupy, Three Inquiries in Disobedience*, W.J.T Mitchell, Bernard E. Harcourt and Michael Taussig, eds., (University of Chicago Press, 2013).

[2] Here I am thinking about J. C. Scott's book *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

[3] Federico Campagna and Emanuele Campiglio, eds., *What We Are Fighting For, A Radical Collective Manifesto* (London: Pluto Press, 2012) 4.

[4] *Atlas*, no. 244 (July 2013) 48-49.

[5] David Graeber, *The Democracy Project: A History, A Crisis, A Movement* (Spiegel and Grau, 2013) 275.