

**RUMOR IN SOCIAL MEDIA: ROLE OF AFFECT DURING
SOCIAL MOVEMENTS**



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İSTANBUL ŞEHİR UNIVERSITY

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RUMOR IN SOCIAL MEDIA: ROLE OF AFFECT DURING SOCIAL
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This is to certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion, it is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a thesis for the degree of Master of Arts in Cultural Studies.

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ABSTRACT

Rumor in Social Media: Role of Affect During Social Movements

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This thesis is a study on the role of rumor in the era of social media. Events that have an effect on a high amount of people's everyday lives always find a place in social media. However, the information that is spread in social media during such events is not always verified or confirmed by news reports. Rumors find a fertile ground in social media during such events. Gezi Resistance was that kind of an event where rumors had an important role in the social media.

Claiming that rumor is essentially a negative phenomenon is easy, however it is important to look further into the mechanisms that create and spread rumors. Galloway's concept of protocological control describes how distributed networks such as social media are governed and how an opportunity of resistance to the protocols can rise within the protocological field. This thesis shows how rumors can be effective agents to resist protocological control without defying their rules and how they can change the outcome of events through their dissemination within social media.

Keywords: rumor, social media, protocol, social movements, affect

ÖZ

Sosyal Medyada Dedikodu: Duygulanımın Sosyal Hareketlerdeki Rolü

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Bu tez, dedikodunun sosyal medya çağındaki rolü üzerine bir araştırmadır. Pek çok insanın gündelik hayatını yakından etkileyen olaylar günümüzde her zaman sosyal medyada kendilerine bir yer bulurlar. Ancak bu olaylar hakkında sosyal medyada yayılan bilgi her zaman için doğrulanmış ve teyit edilmiş haber niteliği taşımaz. Böylesi olaylarda sosyal medya dedikoduların yayılması için verimli bir zemin sağlar. Gezi Direnişi de sosyal medyanın ön planda olduğu, dedikodular için verimli bir olaydı.

Dedikodunun özünde kötü bir olgu olduğunu belirtip kestirip atmak kolaydır ancak dedikoduyu yaratan ve yayan mekanizmaları incelersek tam tersi bir sonuca varabiliriz. Alexander R. Galloway, sosyal medya gibi dağıtılmış ağlarda işleyen kontrol mekanizması olan protokolojik kontrol konsepti ve protokolojik kontrolün içinden doğan direniş olanaklarını anlatır. Bu tezde protokolojik kontrol ile yönetilen sosyal medyada dedikodunun protokolojik kontrol içinde nasıl etkili bir direniş aracı olduğu ve sosyal medyada yayılımı ile olayların neticesinde nasıl önemli bir rol oynadığı işlenmiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: dedikodu, sosyal medya, protokol, toplumsal hareketler, duygulanım

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In the summer of 2013, Turkey faced one of the most powerful social movements of its history. It was the time of Gezi Resistance. On 27 May, the İstanbul City Municipality's contracted workers demolished a wall in Taksim Gezi Park and cut down several trees. Although the municipality and governmental authorities declared that the demolition of the wall and cutting down of the trees were a part of the Taksim Square's pedestrianization project, there were also plans for a museum and shopping mall complex to be constructed on the site of Gezi Park, a project reminiscent of the historical Topçu Barracks which once stood where the park is now.

'Taksim Solidarity,' a collective nongovernmental organization formed by professional chambers, political parties, unions, and other nongovernmental organizations, was already campaigning against the plans to demolish Gezi Park and once the news of the demolished wall and cut down trees spread, they organized a night watch to block the continuation of the demolition.

On 28 May, as the bulldozers kept working, more people came to defend the Park. Among those new people was Sırrı Süreyya Önder, a member of parliament from BDP (Peace and Democracy Party at the time), stepped in front of the demolishment vehicles with others. Then a harsh police intervention came against the protestors with pepper sprays. Images of the police intervention spread through social media and one symbolic photograph 'The Woman in Red Dress' was taken that day.



Figure 1.1. The Woman in Red Dress (Örsal, 2013)

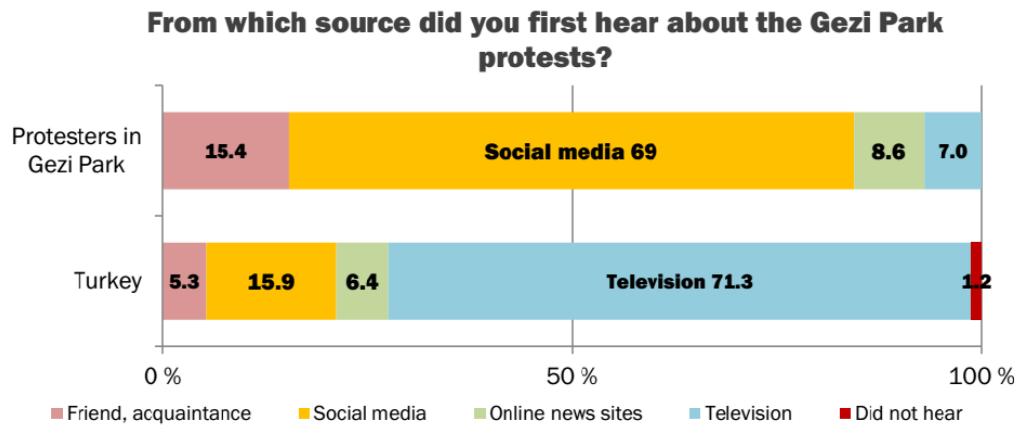
Police intervention and protests continued on May 29. In the early morning of May 30, around 5 AM, police once again intervened and burnt down the tents of the protestors. Although the mainstream media continued to ignore the events, the news spread very fast: 2 million tweets with the hashtag #direnceziparkı spread through Twitter that day, and more people came to protest. On May 31, protests spread all over the country and the Resistance truly began.

The summer of 2013 was also the time when I applied for my MA. I was planning to study the foreign social movements like the Occupy movements and the Arab Spring with a focus on the role of social media in such events. Gezi Resistance allowed me to experience that phenomenon first hand.

The role of social media and the importance of digital citizenship was discussed much during and after the Gezi Resistance. In their e-book *The Role of Digital Citizen in the Gezi Process*, Banko and Babaođlan show that with the Gezi Resistance the total number of Twitter accounts from Turkey rose from 1.8 million to 10 million. (Banko & Babaođlan, 2013, p. 17) KONDA's interview during the Resistance between 6 June and 8 June 2013

shows that 69% of those in the park heard the news of the event from social media (KONDA, 2014, p. 23).

Table 1.1. Source of Information¹

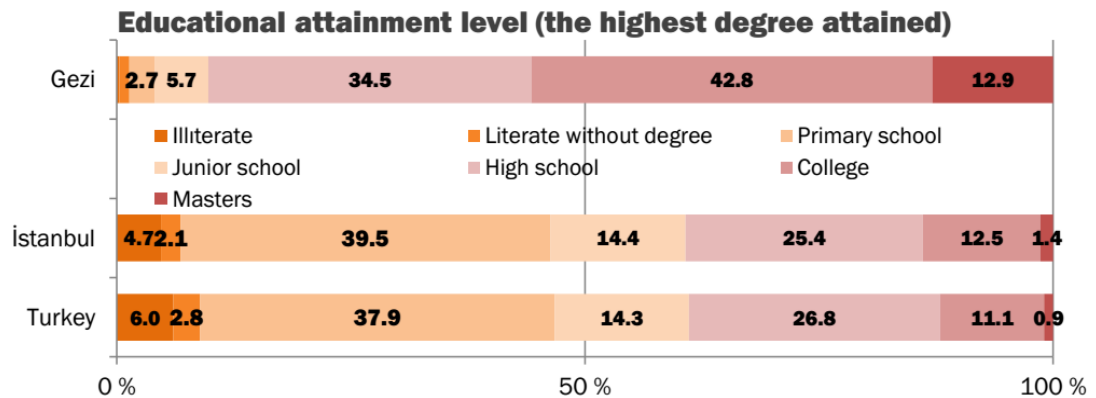


However, it is important to note that further countrywide studies from KONDA show that 71.3% of the country learned about the Resistance via TV (KONDA, 2014, p. 23). It is also interesting to note that according to the KONDA survey, the role of social media increases in direct proportion to the level of education and income, while it declines in older users (KONDA, 2014, p. 24).

KONDA's study during the Gezi Resistance also shows that 42.8% of the protestors in the park were university graduates, whereas the ratio of university graduates declined to 12.5% and 11.1% in İstanbul and Turkey. More than half of those in the park were employed and 36.6% were students, whereas the countrywide average was 40.3% for employment and 7.4% for studentship (KONDA, 2014, p. 10). KONDA's study also shows that 84.6% of those in the park had shared messages through social media about the Resistance whereas only 18.3% of people did the same countrywide (KONDA, 2014, p. 26).

¹ Retrieved from Gezi Report by KONDA, 2014, p.26

Table 1.2 Level of Education²



The statistical figures of protestors in Gezi Park and protestors countrywide show the important role of social media for the protestors. There were twenty hashtags from Twitter that made onto the Turkey Trends list and some of them made it to the World Trends list (Banko & Babaođlan, 2013, p. 20). Banko and Babaođlan’s study shows that there were three critical dates in the social media activities related to the Resistance.

The peak point of all social media activity related to the Resistance was on 31 May and 1 June when more than 5 million Twitter messages were shared. Even though the social media activity slowed down later, on 11 June with the police intervention social media activity rose once again. Finally, on 17 June the total messages shared rose above 1 million again with 73.6% of all messages having the hashtag #duranadam (Banko & Babaođlan, 2013, p. 21).

Banko and Babaođlan’s study also shows that 23.99 million tweets related to Gezi Resistance had an effect of more than 7 billion (Banko & Babaođlan, 2013, p. 22). Although the Minister of Transport, Maritime Affairs and Communications declared on 19 April 2014 that Turkey might as well quit “www” (World Wide Web) and create a made up “ttt”, no such thing has happened. (Babacan, 2014) Rather than the minister’s projection of an intranet, during the Gezi Resistance social media users were connected to

² Retrieved from Gezi Report by KONDA, 2014, p.9

the World Wide Web. The huge amount of social media activity and the way it was used during the Resistance made Gezi a global phenomenon. Several images and statements spread globally and raised awareness of the event throughout the world.

The Woman in Red Dress is a photograph taken by Reuters photojournalist Osman Örsal. This particular picture became a symbol of police brutality in the early days of the Resistance. It soon transcended national borders, spread and became a major symbol of the Resistance globally. (Fisher, 2013) Another symbol of the Resistance appeared when the Beşiktaş supporter group Çarşı captured an earthmover, and used it against police TOMAs (riot control vehicles). The captured vehicle was named as POMA (police incident intervention vehicle) and quickly became another important symbol of the Resistance.



Figure 1.2. Polisticons vs. Dirensformers

Social media became an important tactical tool during the Resistance and not only because its global dissemination of the event. The social media activity involved with the Resistance allowed protestors to communicate, respond, and produce. During police interventions or other kinds of emergency situations, social media allowed protestors to communicate and

organize their moves by sharing safe spots, dangerous spots, and even first-aid stations.

Social media also provided a major means of communication between those physically in the Resistance and those who were not. Live TV broadcasts over the Internet took the place of mainstream media and in some cases, even TV channels used protestors' broadcasts to show what was happening in the Resistance. Videos, images, and texts of the street events and protests were also able to reach the masses through social media and enabled the protestors to communicate.

Before Gezi Resistance, the role of social media during social movements had already become a great concern with the examples of the Occupy movements and Arab Spring. However, I was skeptical of the way social media was promoted at that time since the role given to social media was almost as the role of the creator for such events.

During Gezi Resistance I tried to follow the events through online news sites and social media sites that can be used without an account, such as Ekşi Sözlük, along with a few TV channels which attempted to include Gezi Resistance in their broadcast stream. I found my lack of presence on social media as an obstacle due to the lack of information I was able to receive from mainstream media.

With its bureaucratic sluggishness, mainstream media was inadequate when it came to giving voice to the protestors. Social media enabled its users to advertise and respond in a fast manner. On 3 June, the prime minister at the time of the Resistance "named" protestors "çapulcu" (looter). (Kesler, 2013) Even though he tried to insult and tarnish the protestors, using social media protestors responded to the prime minister's speech and embraced their new name.

As in the transformation of the definition of "çapulcu", social media was often used as a creative tool. Through the immediacy and communicative ease it provided for the protestors, social media enabled the reproduction of the Resistance. Things on social media found themselves a place on the streets, and like in the POMA example, events on the streets found a place

on social media. These creative processes with slogans, images, and videos created the language of resistance in and by the social media.

Social media activity involved with the Resistance sometimes moved ahead of the Resistance itself. The reasons behind the Resistance were often felt in background and social media were given a more important role. This raises questions on the role of social media. In many cases, new media technologies have been blamed as the cause of an event.

1.1. Power's Response to Social Media: Cause for Trouble?

The impeachment trial of Philippine President Joseph Estrada is a good example of how new means of communication are seen by those in power. During Estrada's trial, key evidence was not brought up in the court and the trial was aborted. Angered by the outcome, Philippine citizens organized a rally. The importance of this rally was the fact that cellphones and text messages were the main medium through which the rally was organized and communication about it took place. In the end, the reaction from the public caused legislators to use the evidence and Estrada fell from power. Estrada blamed "the text messaging generation for his downfall" (Shirky, 2011, p. 29).

Similarly, in Turkey during Gezi Resistance, Prime Minister Erdoğan defined Twitter as a menace and social media as a major social problem. In his statement on social media during Gezi Resistance, he further claimed that unmitigated lies and overblown information found place in social media to terrorize the society (Torun, 2013). Later in one of his party's rallies he explicitly said, "We now have a court order and we will wipe out all those Twitter, and the like. We do not care what the international community will say. We will show them all the power of the Republic of Turkey" (Hürriyet News, 2014).

I believe that the reactions from Estrada and Erdoğan are very similar. They were both faced with a new communication technology that was far-reaching and easier to use than their predecessors were and they both

blamed the technology rather than seeing the reasons why the technology was used in such ways.

Interestingly, two years later Erdoğan himself began to use Twitter actively. On 9 February 2015, which was World Anti-Smoking Day, Erdoğan tweeted: "Today is World Quit Smoking Day. Keep your resolve and #DontGiveIntoSmoking" (Erdoğan, 2015). The end of the Turkish version of the tweet he put his initials 'RTE' (Erdoğan, 2015), which is a sign that the tweet was written by Erdoğan himself (Hürriyet News, 2015).

Although Erdoğan's opinion on social media seems to have changed later, his speech in 2013 and Estrada's speech against the 'texting generation' stand as prime examples of an anti-social media attitude. Positions such as Erdoğan's or Estrada's might allow one to think that the medium (SMS, Twitter) used by the public to organize a rally is the cause of the incidents. This kind of approach establishes a cause-effect relationship between social media and resistance or protest. Is this really the case? Can we consider social media as a cause of popular resistance?

Interestingly, Turkish Prime Minister Erdoğan and his party AKP seem to have realized the importance of social media. AKP formed a social media army. (Anadolu News Agency, 2013) This major group of propagandists are used to increase the popularity of pro-government posts, government activities, and to denounce activities critical of the government in social media. An obvious example of the activity of AKP's social media army can be seen on the Internet Movie Database (IMDb).

On February 13, 2015, a movie titled *Code Name: K.O.Z.* was released. The short description of the movie is as follows on IMDb: "Political and social processes in recent and current Turkish political history." (IMDb page for Kod Adi K.O.Z., 2015) The movie is highly promoted by pro-government organizations and the government itself, while others accuse it of being a propaganda movie.



Figure 1.3. Code Name: K.O.Z. Movie Poster

IMDb allows its users to vote a movie from 1 to 10. As of 14 August 2016, 18,856 users have voted *Code Name K.O.Z.* Out of 18,856 votes, 15,310 are 1s and 3162 of them are 10s. Only 384 users have voted something different from 1 or 10. (IMDb page for Kod Adi K.O.Z., 2015) The distribution of the ratings shows the conflict between AKP's social media army and those who think that the movie is solely for propaganda.

Online conflicts like the one about *Code Name K.O.Z.* raise questions on how the users of social media act. There are people who use their real identities while using social media, and there are also fake accounts, or accounts with nicknames. Even though it is possible to gain prestige and credibility with an online profile by the contents of the posts and by time, there are many social media accounts whose main goal is to troll, spread disinformation and rumors. The popularity of an account, the amount of people that follow the account, is in most cases more important than the account's credibility or prestige on social media. This creates doubts about the validity of the information that spreads through social media.

Social media and the Internet both contain a lot of disinformation and it is often left to the users to decide if the information transmitted is true or false. Anyone can build up a website or join a website and start posting content and information. The reliability of the received data or information is a huge question mark. The example of the ratings for *Code Name K.O.Z.* movie shows that, rather than being objective and neutral, social media users can pursue subjective goals. Conspiracy theories, provocative contents, lies and rumors can easily spread through social media.

1.2. Information or Rumor? Rethinking Resistance and Social Media

Given all this, understanding the working mechanisms of the Internet becomes extremely important. In order to do so I will use Alexander R. Galloway's concept of "protocological control." Galloway's study is a substantial work to make sense out of the novelty of the Internet and its relation to power and resistance. In his book, *Protocol: How Control Exists after Decentralization*, Alexander Galloway defines protocological control as a control principle for distributed networks.

Distributed networks lack a central hierarchy and every agent in the network is both a transmitter and a receiver. The Internet is the most obvious example of a distributed network. Protocols are "certain pre-agreed 'scientific' rules of the system." (Galloway, 2004, p. 38) The certain pre-agreed and scientific rules of protocols make them accept any data that fit in with their rules without interpreting its contents. In this study, I will use protocol as the control mechanism of the Internet and social media.

During Gezi Resistance, one quote in a question form was quite popular among social media users. The quote was 'Is this information accurate?' This quote indicated that the veracity of the information that flowed through social media was a big concern. There were doubts on both the protestors' side and authorities' side about the accuracy of the information flow in social media. Thus, an attempt to verify the information became very popular for the actors using social media during the Resistance.

Rumors were an important part of the social media activity during the Resistance regardless of the attempts to verify them. Studies show that in every social movement rumors are extremely important. "Rumors arise in situations that are ambiguous or threatening in some way" (Allport & Postman, 1965, p. 34). In an event like Gezi Resistance, where the mainstream media was unable to inform the public, rumors began to spread easily and quickly.

Social media was the main communication tool throughout the Resistance and it also enabled rumors to spread. Oh, Agrawal and Rao state that "it is not surprising that unexpected social crises in recent years almost always involve high traffic in social media websites through various forms of information exchange, including online posting, linking, texting, tweeting, re-tweeting, etc." (Oh, Agrawal, & Rao, 2013, p. 409).

In his study *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, Ranajit Guha places great importance on the role of rumor in social movements. He claims that "in no country with a predominantly illiterate population has subaltern protest of any significant strength ever exploded without its charge being conducted over vast areas by rumor" (Guha, 1999, p. 252). Although during Gezi Resistance the protestors were not illiterate, rumor still had an important role in the widespread usage of social media.

"Rumor is spoken utterance *par excellence*, and speaking, as linguists say, differs from writing not merely in material, that is, by the fact of its acoustic rather than graphic realization, but in function" (Guha, 1999, p. 256). It is the "spoken" property of rumor that differentiated it during Gezi Resistance. Social media enables its users to share and re-share, and the user's subjectivity plays an important role in that process. It is not precisely the truth that flows through social media but rather a modified, personalized truth that is filtered and altered by the user.

It seems hard to distinguish information from rumor. A series of questions impose themselves. Is the news itself not an organized and supposedly tested form of rumor? During Gezi Resistance, a newspaper claimed that

in Kabataş the protestors harassed a mother, who turned out to be the bride of Bahçelievler Mayor, and her child.

In an interview with the *Star* newspaper, she said that around 70-100 shirtless men with leather gloves attacked her and her baby. (Çakır, 2013) Later the lawyer of the interviewer said the incident was fiction (Radikal, 2015). Another newspaper, *Yeni Şafak*, claimed that the protestors drank beer in Dolmabahçe Mosque where they took shelter (Yeni Şafak, 2013). Later, the muezzin of the mosque denied this and got transferred to another mosque (Anadolu News Agency, 2014). With these two examples, we can see that rumors can also be used as news when the media organization that is publishing the news is politicized.

Provocation, the big game that is played against our country, lobbies that try to stop us from developing... These are some widely used quotes in everyday politics from mainstream media to chatter on streets. One of the first attempts against Gezi Resistance by the government was to associate it with an interest lobby that runs an international conspiracy against Turkey's development.

It has become a tradition to associate separate events with conspiracies that reach far beyond. Media, social media and politicians themselves refer to such big unverified information to discredit an event, to create consent and to shape perception towards separate events. I believe it is important to see how such actions that we regularly experience might have an effect on people's perception of news. I think studying the effects of rumor in social media will be helpful in order to understand that.

Might rumor itself not give some sort of useful information? The role of rumor in social movements have been widely discussed by social psychologists, sociologists and historians. While, from a hegemonic point of view, it has been claimed that rumor is dangerous because it spreads false information and incites further disturbance, it has also been claimed from a critical point of view that rumor might have a positive dimension in enabling people to communicate and mobilize during a movement of resistance and protest.

I claim that rumors are not solely informational statements but they are also carriers of affects. With the rise of social media and with the huge amount of people that assemble through social media, the dissemination of subjective information has become a widespread phenomenon. Rumors find themselves a fertile ground to spread in this new environment where dissemination is the key. Social movements today are strongly affiliated with high social media activity. The relation between social media and social movements enables rumors to have an important role in social movements with their role as carriers and creators of affects.

Understanding the working mechanisms of the protocols that govern Internet and social media are important to understand the effects of rumor dissemination through online social networks. I will continue the study with a summary of Galloway's concept of protocological control and the opportunities of resistance towards protocological control.

CHAPTER 2

GALLOWAY'S CONCEPT OF PROTOCOL

A significant social event such as the Gezi Resistance shows that the new media seems to provide a new means of power and resistance, which causes a good deal of discussion and controversy. This new means of power and resistance find their place in a different context.

In order to understand the new means of power and resistance one needs to look further in detail to the new forms of organizational schemas, networks. Internet and new media are formed as distributed networks. Distributed network is a type of network that differs significantly from other two network schemas, which are centralized and decentralized networks.

2.1. Types of Networks

2.1.1. Centralized Networks

Centralized networks are formed in a hierarchical tree-like way. The central agent is single and it has an overarching authority on every node within the network. In centralized networks, "all activity travels from center to periphery. No peripheral node is connected to any other node" (Galloway, 2004, p. 30).

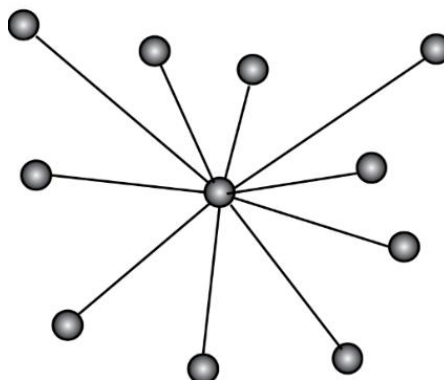


Figure 2.1. Centralized Network Schema

2.1.2. Decentralized Networks

A decentralized network contains more than one central hubs each with their dependent own nodes. There exists no hierarchy between different hubs but such as centralized networks, each hub has an authority over its nodes.

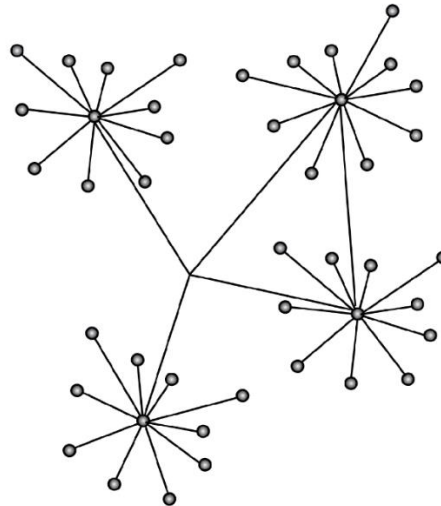


Figure 2.2. Decentralized Network Schema

2.1.3. Distributed Networks

Distributed network is a model of network where hierarchy does not exist. This means that there are no central hubs and peripheral nodes. Every agent in a distributed network is autonomous. In a distributed network, there are no prearranged paths for the actors to communicate, in every instance they can form new paths in order to reach from point A to point B.

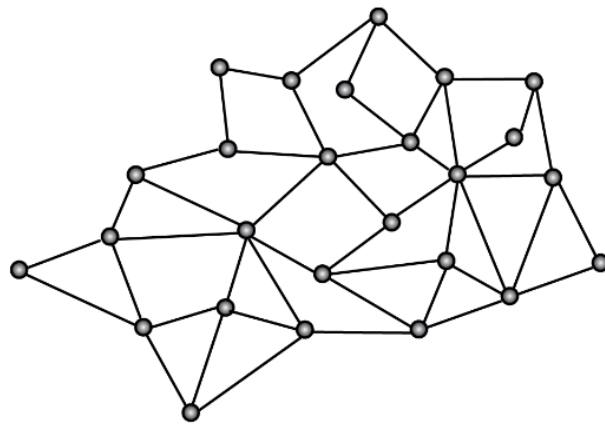


Figure 2.3. Distributed Network Schema

A discussion on Deleuze and Guattari's concept of *rhizome* is also important when we talk about distributed networks. Tree-like structures such as centralized networks and decentralized networks are called as *arborescent* schemas in Deleuze and Guattari's terms. In an arborescent schema:

The ordering is strictly hierarchical, from superior to subordinate, or transcendent to particular, such that the individual or particular element is conceived as less important, powerful, productive, creative or interesting than the transcendent. (Stagol, 2010, p. 14)

In an arborescent schema, there exists a strict hierarchy, every possible action within a network that is formed around arborescent principles is dependent to the superior agent.

Unlike arborescent structures, a rhizomatic model of network brings no authority. Like the metaphor of tree they used to describe an arborescent system, Deleuze and Guattari use grass to describe the rhizome. Rather than one root that lies as the foundation of an arborescent system, grass has pods and rather than a vertical structure, it grows horizontally. "There are no singular positions on the networked lines of a rhizome, only connected points which form connections between things" (Colman F. J., 2010, p. 233). Rhizome is formed horizontally without a center or a root that can be traced as its origin. "The rhizome is reducible neither to the One nor the multiple" (Deleuze & Guattari, 2005, p. 21) .

Young, Genosko and Watson point out:

It is important to note that in new-media theory, D[eleuze] & G[uattari] are sometimes treated as prophets of the internet; such theorists often point out that the internet functions like the rhizome because of its connective and non-hierarchical nature. (Young, Genosko, & Watson, 2013, pp. 262-263)

Comparing distributed networks such as Internet with Deleuze and Guattari's definition of rhizome, one can agree that distributed networks have some certain characteristics of rhizome like every agent being autonomous and the lack of a hierarchy between the participants of the network. However, Galloway's concept of *protocol* and *protocological control* shows us that even though there exists no hierarchy in distributed networks there still exists mechanisms of power, which differentiates distributed networks from rhizome.

2.2. What is a Protocol?

In distributed networks there exists no hierarchy however this lack of hierarchy does not dissolve power relations within the distributed networks. Alexander R. Galloway offers a new theoretical framework in order to explain the nature of this emergent form of power that arise with distributed networks.

I think that Galloway's approach is comprehensive and powerful especially because it can bring technical and social aspects together in the highly interesting concept of protocol. I will summarize Galloway's theory of protocol, and will show its usefulness in explaining the new form of control and in shedding a light on the role played by the social media in political resistance.

Protocols form a control mechanism under distributed networks. "A distributed network is a specific network architecture characterized by equity between nodes, bi-directional links, a high degree of redundancy and general lack of internal hierarchy" (Galloway, 2006, p. 317). Every agent in a distributed network is autonomous and there are no prearranged

paths for the actors to communicate; in every instance they can form new paths in order to reach from point A to point B. As Galloway puts it "distributed networks have no chain of command, only autonomous agents who operated according to certain pre-agreed 'scientific' rules of the system" (Galloway, 2004, p. 38).

These pre-agreed scientific rules of the system are called as protocols. According to Galloway, it is quite useful to think about a "protocological" system of organization and control with Foucault's concept of *biopower* and Deleuze's concept of *societies of control*.

Foucault's concept of biopower signals a shift from the era in the mechanisms of power where once power demonstrated itself via subtraction. "Power in this instance was essentially a right of seizure: of things, time, bodies, and ultimately life itself; it culminated in the privilege to seize hold of life in order to suppress it" (Foucault, 1978, p. 135). In the era of biopower however, power does not demonstrate itself by its ability to subtract.

Power over life now channeled through two directions. One mechanism acted on the human body as if it is a machine. "A body is docile that may be subjected, used, transformed and improved" (Foucault, 1995, p. 136). Disciplines are born in that era which molded the human body via institutions like school, army, and factory. Bodies were optimized on an individual level.

While acting on the level of individual body, power now also influenced the population as a whole with strict calculations "...one would have to speak of biopower to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life" (Foucault, 1978, p. 143). Rise of the new technologies like statistics allowed the mechanisms for keeping track of issues such as birthrate, migration and public health. The strict calculations on the level of population allowed power to shape the society in a new way. Deleuze's term, societies of control arise from the foundations of biopower.

In *Postscript on The Societies of Control*, Deleuze argues that “after the World War 2: a disciplinary society was what we already no longer were, what we ceased to be” (Deleuze, 1990, p. 3). Rather than environments of enclosure where bodies of individuals were the subjects of the power to mold, in societies of control power operates in a new manner. In societies of control rather than an enclosed environment by space and time, power manifests itself by its disguise in a free-floating control.

Deleuze claims that “Individuals have become ‘*dividuals*’, and masses, samples, data, markets or ‘*banks*’” (Deleuze, 1990, p. 5). Power with its ability to constantly calculate and transform, gave birth to societies of control. A society, which is constantly measured and defined accordingly with its measurement. These definitions however are not fixed but ever changing.

In the societies of control... what is important is no longer either a signature or a number, but a code: the code is a password... The numerical language of control is made of codes that mark access to information, or reject it. (Deleuze, 1990, p. 5)

Constant surveillance and tracking made upon the population now dispensed the need for disciplinary societies. Inclusion in different data banks presents different threats and opportunities. These data banks were created by turning individuals into dividuals. The dividual characteristics like age, occupation, income allowed the creation of the numerical language of control. Dividual’s ability to come across with the threats and opportunities within the data banks now relied on that code.

In distributed networks, protocol is similar to the numerical language of control described by Deleuze. Internet is the most obvious example of a distributed network. Computer and Internet protocols are very helpful for understanding how protocological control works. “Protocols are the common languages that all computers on the network speak” (Galloway, 2004, p. 39).

A computer protocol is a set of recommendations and rules for implementing a technical standard. The protocols that govern much

of the Internet are contained in what are called RFC (Request For Comments) documents...The RFCs are published by the Internet Engineering Task Force (IETF). They are freely available and used predominantly by engineers who wish to build hardware or software that meets common specifications. (Galloway, 2006, p. 319)

In order to become a part of the distributed network, a computer must be speaking the same language with other computers in the network and that language is the protocol. For the Internet, RFC defines four basic layers of protocols.

2.2.1. Application Layer

The content is the responsibility of the application layer. It is "a semantic layer, meaning that it is responsible for preserving the content of data within the network transaction" (Galloway, 2004, p. 40).

2.2.2. Transport Layer

It is the transport layer's responsibility to make sure that the content arrives at its destination correctly. "It is a social layer, meaning that it sits halfway between the content or meaning of the data being transferred and the raw act of transferring that data" (Galloway, 2004, p. 41).

2.2.3. Internet Layer

The actual movement of the data from point A to point B is the sole concern of Internet layer. "It has no interest in the content of that data (the application layer's responsibility) or whether parts of the data are lost in transit (the transport layer's responsibility)" (Galloway, 2004, p. 41).

2.2.4. Link Layer

Link layer is "the hardware-specific layer that must ultimately encapsulate any data transfer" (Galloway, 2004, p. 41).

According to Galloway, "the ultimate goal of the Internet protocols is totality. The virtues of the Internet are robustness, contingency, interoperability, flexibility, heterogeneity, and pantheism. Accept everything, no matter what source, sender, or destination" (Galloway, 2004, p. 42). As an example of a protocol, Galloway uses TCP, which is on the transport layer: "TCP creates a 'virtual circuit' between sender and recipient and uses that imaginary circuit to regulate the flow of information" (Galloway, 2004, p. 42).

It is the TCP's duty to see if the information sent through the network arrives its final destination without any loss. TCP's general principle of robustness is "Be conservative in what you do, be liberal in what you accept from others" (IETF, 2014). This principle enables TCP to accept any information from foreign devices, and to reject any information that is corrupted while asking for a fresh copy to be re-sent.

2.3. Control Mechanisms of Protocols

It is important to note that when we talk about protocols, we are not talking about a command and control mechanism in a traditional sense. In the command and control mechanism of protocols, the commanding agent is endogenous to what is commanded. This is done by the larger protocol's encapsulation of the smaller protocol. The data in the smaller protocol is not interpreted or manipulated; it is just rewritten within the larger protocol.

This method of command and control makes protocols indifferent to their contents. This means there cannot be found any implied, deep meanings within the protocols but there exists only a 'cluster of possibles', which fit into the specifications of protocols.

Galloway also argues that Internet offers some key characteristics of the *rhizome* such as: "the ability of any node to be connected to any other node, the rule of multiplicity, the ability to splinter off or graft on at any point, the rejection of a "deep structure," and so forth" (Galloway, 2004, p. 61). Although rhizome is formed like a distributed network and connects

any point to any point, with the existence of rigid protocols governing the Internet, the idea that Internet is rhizomatic fails.

Protocols are the agents of power within the distributed networks, they are the gatekeepers of the network and dissolve any idea that Internet has a rhizomatic schema.

Protocol is a system of management that only exists in a space populated by a multitude of independent, vital agents...because protocol is agent-specific, it must always be connected to the particular material milieu inhabited by those agents—their spaces and their own material bodies. (Galloway, 2004, p. 82)

One might refuse to use Internet, refuse to join any distributed network under protocological control but then one refuses to reach a wide array of possibilities. As Galloway emphasizes, “not to enter into the protocological community carries such a high price that to reject protocol would be foolish” (Galloway, 2004, p. 147). With a protocological control mechanism where only those who abide to protocols can have a place, it is possible to think that there cannot be any resistance.

To join a distributed network one needs to obey the protocol. As Galloway defines: “Opposing protocol is like opposing gravity—there is nothing that says it can’t be done, but such a pursuit is surely misguided and in the end hasn’t hurt gravity much” (Galloway, 2004, p. 147). Rather than an authority ensuring the control of the network, protocological control comes from its very nature. One needs to stay within the limits of the protocol if one wants to remain within the network. Galloway emphasizes that

Protocol is synonymous with possibility... Protocol outlines the playing field for what can happen, and where. If one chooses to ignore a certain protocol, then it becomes impossible to communicate on that particular channel. No protocol, no connection. (Galloway, 2004, p. 167)

Protocological control in social media makes it important to mention the role of algorithms. The term *sentiment analysis* is a recent and important

algorithmic part of social media . According to Powell "Sentiment analysis algorithms, trained on data that categorizes words into 'positive' and 'negative, are widely employed in the online advertising sphere to try to ascertain how people respond to brands" (Powell, 2016). An analysis of feelings is enabled by the sentiment analysis. However as Powell shows the example of sarcasm is a big difficulty for such algorithms since the negative/positive distinction between words cannot foresee the motives under sarcasm.

Algorithms are developed and tested constantly. They have to be trained in order to "ensure that the outcome occurs in the way that's expected" (Powell, 2016). Protocols are formed once the standard for the algorithm is set. However after their training negligence can rise by the algorithmic design since they are formed to "make assumptions about what is 'normal' in the world, from faces to risk taking behavior" (Powell, 2016). Since there can be inputs that are out of the norm new problems can rise. Protocols can block or neglect the inputs they find out of the norm.

2.4. Resistance under Protocological Control

The possibilities within the protocological field also allow resistance to protocological control. For Galloway, "the nature of resistance itself has changed within the protocological age" (Galloway, 2004, p. 150). In the age of protocological control, resistance actions should also come inside protocological sphere. You cannot fight with gravity but you can still build a rocket to beat it and leave its area of effect. Under protocological control, one way of building rockets is hacking.

By knowing protocol better than anyone else, hackers push protocol into a state of hypertrophy, hoping to come out the other side. So in a sense, hackers *are created* by protocol, but in another, hackers are protocological actors par excellence. (Galloway, 2004, p. 158)

Hacking and hackers have a bad name for themselves. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines hacker as "a person who secretly gets access to a computer system in order to get information, cause damage, etc."

(Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2015), and to hack as “to gain access to a computer illegally” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2015).

Today although hacking has a bad name in general, those who are familiar with the term define it different. Aslı Telli Aydemir and Hüsniye Çelebioğlu show that hackers are not criminals but they are creators of a free virtual world. According to Aydemir and Çelebioğlu, hackers aim to reach out of the given limitations by creating new opportunities where sharing opinions and information has a central role (Telli Aydemir & Çelebioğlu, 2012).

In an interview, Richard M. Stallman, a software freedom activist and computer programmer, defines hacker as “someone who enjoys playful cleverness, especially in programming but other media are also possible” (Stallman, 2002). On a blog post at his personal website, Stallman also tells that “Hackers typically had little respect for the silly rules that administrators like to impose, so they looked for ways around” (Stallman, 2002). Hackers as Stallman shows are not same foul-minded, evil beings. Hacking means reaching a goal with a new way that is not foreseen before. Hacking allows one to reach goals within a protocolological control in a way that is not foreseen by the protocols while staying within the network.

Galloway shows how hackers work as “Hacker’s exploits generally rely on logical force. That is, while physical hacks are often necessary, hackers generally focus on the bugs and loopholes of a machine’s logical code base” (Galloway, 2004, p. 168). In computer systems hackers use computer language, or code. As Galloway puts it, “code is a language, but a very special kind of language. *Code is the only language that is executable*” (Galloway, 2004, p. 165), and further “hackers know code better than anyone. They speak the language of computers as one does a mother tongue” (Galloway, 2004, p. 164). Computer languages and protocols themselves are indeed the very tools the hackers use. Hackers do their work by exploiting the vulnerabilities of the protocols, finding backdoors in the system or even simple nontechnical possibilities that are not foreseen within the protocols.

In his well-known work, *A Hacker Manifesto*, McKenzie Wark claims that: "Hackers create the possibility of new things entering the world. Not always great things, or even good things, but new things" (Wark, 2004, p. 2). Hackers constantly test the limits of the protocological control and by doing so they unfold new opportunities and threats constantly.

Again, Galloway puts it as follows

From the perspective of protocol, if you can do it, it can't be bad, because if it were bad, then it would have been outlawed years ago by protocol. Hackers don't care about rules, feelings, or opinions. They care about what is true and what is possible. And in the logical world of computers, if it is possible then it is real. *Can* you break into a computer, not *should* you or is it *right* to. (Galloway, 2004, p. 168)

Protocological control creates a playing field and makes it necessary for the actors to stay within that field if they want to remain in the system. Although it might seem as an overarching control mechanism, which limits the resistance, hackers provide an important field of resistance using the protocols themselves.

Protocological control improves as hackers find possibilities that can be interpreted as 'bad' by those who create the protocols. As Galloway shows, it is a pursuit of 'can I' rather than 'should I' for a hacker. Limits of protocols can expand and protocological control can become more overarching only by the help of the hackers who test the limits of 'can I'.

As I have discussed earlier, protocols create logical control mechanisms under scientific rules. They tend to be overarching and expand their field of control as new opportunities or 'threats' present themselves. Although this can be seen as an advantage for protocological control, it is also an exploitable vulnerability. The logical control mechanisms of protocols rely on the form of the input. This makes them blind to illogical relations, or implied meanings that can be found in language.

Even though natural languages are not executable like codes, in the online environment where social media exists they have an advantage. Since

protocols are blind to any underlined, signified meanings and accept everything that is formatted in the protocols, natural languages can be used as a way of hacking the protocological control.

A distributed network that is under protocological control can be resisted within the system without knowing or having any technical expertise on the form, logical relations and scientific rules of the distributed network and the protocols that control it. Protocols' ignorance of the inputs' implied meanings enables such opportunities.

Social media is a distributed network where the input from the user can take only several forms like images, videos, sound and text audio... The protocols governing social media are indifferent to the messages the input carries; they only look if they meet their requirements like the number of characters, extension of the file. The implied meanings found in the language can become a tool to hack here.

Protocological control is indifferent to the content of what is shared because the form of communication abides by its standards. This creates an opportunity for the social media users when they decide to pass information to each other in a situation of conflict where the media lacks in giving information. Because it is the users of social media that creates the content, the flow of information includes subjective information and affects, which are not comprehensible by the protocols. I find Michel de Certeau's distinction between *strategy* and *tactic* much more useful to understand this kind of unique social situation.

A strategy is formed by a subject with will and power. "[Strategy] postulates a place that can be delimited as its own and serve as the base from which relations with an exteriority composed of targets or threats ... can be managed" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 36). Protocols are agents of strategic actors in De Certeau's context, which define the limits of a distributed network where certain rules are applied in order to decide what can get in the network and what will be rejected.

As De Certeau puts it "[A tactic] takes advantage of 'opportunities' and depends on them, being without any base where it could stockpile its

winnings, build up its own position, and plan raids” (De Certeau, 1984, p. 37). Protocols by their nature accept every bit of information if the form is right. This is where social media users can use tactics in order to hack the protocological control.

[A tactic] must vigilantly make use of the cracks that particular conjunctions open in the surveillance of the proprietary powers. It poaches in them. It creates surprises in them. It can be where it is least expected. It is a guileful ruse. (De Certeau, 1984, p. 37)

One of those tactical tools is rumor. I would like to argue that the rumor could be used to hack the protocological control because of its internal properties. In the following chapter, I will give a summary on the theoretical work about rumor to show how and why rumors are created and what purpose they serve and will also discuss some recent phenomenon that arise with social media and can be associated with rumor dissemination.

CHAPTER 3

RUMOR THEORY

It is a common phrase, 'Did you hear the latest rumors?' So does rumor means news or is it something else? What is rumor? What differentiates it from gossips, urban legends and news? Merriam-Webster defines rumor as "talk or opinion widely disseminated with no discernible source, a statement or report current without known authority for its truth" (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary, 2015). Is a dictionary definition of rumor able to demonstrate the true meaning of rumor?

Gossips, urban legends and rumors can be seen as news once they find a place in mainstream media since news basically mean information that finds a place in the mainstream media. That is why verification has been an important issue for the news reporters. News media needs credibility when it comes to reporting information about events that concern people's everyday lives.

However, with the emergence of social media as a source of information and with changing mentalities within the news media, we find it harder to differentiate rumors from news. Verification can sometimes recede into background and rumors can spread via news institutions. People may also prefer to spread and believe in rumors despite what institutionalized news tell.

Unverified or not, rumors are powerful informational tools that can influence people's comprehension of events and in some cases they can become mobilizers for widespread movements. With the emergence of social media, there is now a more democratized environment to spread information. However, this does not mean that every bit of information that is shared via social media is true or accepted as true.

Rumors are a widespread phenomenon in social media and when it comes to big events like social movements, disasters, events that require fast and accurate information, people's efforts to make sense might lead them to

spread rumors. Does that mean that rumor is a negative phenomenon that needs to be eliminated?

In this chapter, I will summarize some of the most important work on rumor in order to show why rumors are created and disseminated and what purpose they serve. I will also show how rumor is associated with social media and recent concepts that arise with social media.

3.1. Predominant Work on Rumor

Scholarly work on rumor gathered momentum during and post-World War 2 era. Social psychologists, Gordon W. Allport and Leo Postman published their book *The Psychology of Rumor* in 1947 and Tamotsu Shibutani published *Improvised News: A Sociological Study of Rumor* in 1966.

According to Allport and Postman, there are two basic conditions for rumor: story's importance and ambiguity of the facts (Allport & Postman, 1965, p. 34). They formulate the circulation of rumor as follows: "The amount of rumor in circulation will vary with the importance of the subject to the individuals concerned times the ambiguity of the evidence pertaining to the topic" (Allport & Postman, 1965, p. 34).

A rumor's importance for the individuals related is created by a "motivational factor" in rumor. "We want to know the why, how, and wherefore of the world that surrounds us" (Allport & Postman, 1965, p. 37). Allport and Postman also notify that any of the human needs might provide the motive to rumor (Allport & Postman, 1965, p. 46).

Rumor circulates with the interest of those who are involved with it; it serves as a tool to rationalize an ambiguous situation. However Allport and Postman also note that: "In certain instances, the motivation may be quite special and bear no thematic relation to the story told" (Allport & Postman, 1965, p. 46). They give the example of mere attempt of seeking attention as a motivation.

Contents of a rumor are instrumentally relevant information and statements that are unverified. For the individual hearing the rumor, this

creates a chance to relate separate events. "In ordinary rumor we find a marked tendency for the agent to attribute causes to events, motives to characters, a *raison d'être* to the episode in question" (Allport & Postman, 1965, p. 121).

Rumor is a social phenomenon. Allport and Postman give the example of "delatores" (public rumor wardens of the Roman Empire) as an example (Allport & Postman, 1965, p. 159). Duty of the delatores was to report the issues public was talking about and launching counter rumors if necessary.

Although news pass through institutionalized procedures of verification, in the contemporary world rumors still exist. In the past when modern media of information was not available, there was a lot more room for rumor in society. Allport and Postman also note that it is possible for the press to serve rumor to public in countries that lack a free press (Allport & Postman, 1965, p. 186).

Particularly rumors are closely related with riots according to Allport and Postman. "In fact, the evidence at hand is so convincing that we may advance it as a law of social psychology that *no riot ever occurs without rumors to incite, accompany, and intensify the violence*" (Allport & Postman, 1965, p. 193). Although they lay riot and violence together as if violence is a necessary substance of a riot, their finding of rumor being an important substance of riots is important.

Their work also shows that there are three phenomenon in rumor dissemination. First of them is *leveling*, which means the loss of some details whilst rumor is in transition. Second term is *sharpening* which means to give more importance to some certain details of the rumor. Third is assimilation, which means to change some details of the rumor when transmitting it (Allport & Postman, 1965, pp. 75,86,115).

Allport and Postman regard rumor as an essentially negative social phenomenon. "The deceptive quality of rumor lies in the fact that, although it is evaluative and inciting in significance, it usually masquerades as the provider of objective information (Allport & Postman, 1965, p. 198).

I should underline here that Allport and Postman studied rumor in a laboratory environment therefore some of their assumptions might actually be doubtful. Further studies on rumor shows that it is not necessarily a negative phenomenon.

Tamotsu Shibutani's book, *Improvised News: A Sociological Study of Rumor* is another important work in the field of rumor. As a Japanese American experienced World War II, Shibutani was interested in the situation at wartime incarceration. His studies on the exclusion of those in incarceration looked into the effects of the lack of formal, verified information that is received and how rumor worked under these conditions.

Shibutani shows that rumor has been seen as false reports and its identifying character is the oral interchange (Shibutani, 1966, pp. 3,4). He describes the news as information about the unusual: "news is about unusual events, extraordinary happenings that have broken the normal routine of life... News is that more or less urgent information men need in making adjustments to changed circumstances..." (Shibutani, 1966, p. 40).

News are in demand when the importance of the events rises: "'Big News' affects a large public and is about matters that require some kind of instant adjustment" (Shibutani, 1966, p. 40). Even when the need for instant adjustment is less, not much can be done about the situation, "one gains some comfort from knowing what has happened and from being able to make preparations for what are to be reasonable eventualities" (Shibutani, 1966, p. 41).

Thus Shibutani claims that news is not only that which is new, it is "information that is timely" (Shibutani, 1966, p. 41). Distribution of the news is also important in this context. It is accepted that news are served via institutionalized structures, they can be traced back to a source. "In times of crisis, people turn first to these channels, and they serve as the standard against which all other reports are checked" (Shibutani, 1966, p. 42).

Despite the fact that the news from an institutionalized channel can be traced back to its source and can be seen as trustworthy, there are instances when the institutionalized news are not true. Shibutani brings a series of examples in which the news lose their truth-value, or objectivity and neutrality.

For instance, news agencies use 'slanting' as a common practice. According to Shibutani, this is not exactly fabrication; rather "an effort is made to create the desired impression through the omission of inconvenient items, the selection of details, and preferential placement—'featuring' some items and 'burying' the others" (Shibutani, 1966, p. 44).

For Shibutani, another instance where institutionalized news channels do not exactly tell the truth arises when the story is too good to ignore. "When the temptation to file a 'good story' becomes too great, unsubstantiated information may be used. Such items are carefully labeled: 'according to usually reliable sources... ', 'unconfirmed reports that... ', or 'it is rumored that...'" (Shibutani, 1966, p. 45).

What happens when the news agencies and institutionalized news channels fail to reach to public or ignore an event that is important for some? As Allport and Postman have shown before, rumors rise when the ambiguity of the situation is high. Shibutani also shows that rumors rise when the news is not sufficient, "if the demand for news in a public exceeds the supply made available through institutional channels, rumor construction is likely to occur" (Shibutani, 1966, p. 57).

It is also possible that the news institutions might turn out to be unreliable. "When institutional channels are discredited, the supply of reliable news is cut off" (Shibutani, 1966, p. 59). This also influences the creation and circulation of the rumors. A news media can become untrusted if the news it previously delivered are falsified later, if its neutrality image is damaged either because of the falsehood of its previous news or its relationship with those involved with the news.

The demand for news can reach to a certain point that institutionalized news media might no longer be able to serve a satisfactory level of

information. "Spectacular events with possible consequences for millions result in a sudden increase in demand for news that cannot be satisfied even by the most efficient press service" (Shibutani, 1966, p. 61).

Indeed, there might be situations in which some news media are seen as credible institutions for some and untrustworthy for others. Under these conditions, people reach the information from different sources. "When demand for news is diversified, when a public is divided into factions, some rely on rumors and others do not" (Shibutani, 1966, p. 61).

The demand for news and the credibility of the news are important for the creation and circulation of the rumors. "Far from being pathological, rumor is part and parcel of the efforts of men to come terms with the exigencies of life" (Shibutani, 1966, p. 62). Rumors are actually improvised news, information that is created and circulated for a certain course. They are created and circulated because of the demand for making sense out of a situation when the certain, verified information cannot be accessed or discredited.

Similar to the process by which some news institutions are discredited because of the unreliability of their news, the reliability of the rumor is also an issue for those who receive it. People do not always accept the rumor at face value, and usually check by various means (such as asking other people, or checking other sources) the reliability of the information they get by means of rumor.

"Information from all persons is not given equal consideration; acceptance depends upon each person's past performance and reputation" (Shibutani, 1966, p. 73). Rumor transmission does not automatically begin just because there is a lack of information or distrust on the information received.

In critical deliberation speakers are constantly confronted by skepticism. Many rumors acquire the appearance of increased authenticity in the course of construction through the efforts of supporters to justify their views. (Shibutani, 1966, p. 85)

Allport and Postman's concepts of leveling, sharpening and assimilation must be considered in this context. In these three phases, the rumor at hand is modified in a way that begins to reflect the perception of its messengers while also becoming believable for the receivers.

Rumors are bits of created information that are used to overcome ambiguous situations. Rumor as Shibutani concludes, "...an integral part of the process whereby men develop more adequate ways of coping with new circumstances (Shibutani, 1966, p. 183).

In their book, *Rumor Psychology: Social and Organizational Approaches*, Difonzo and Bordia also define rumor as "unverified and instrumentally relevant information statements in circulation that arise in contexts of ambiguity, danger, or potential threat and that function to help people make sense and manage risk" (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007, p. 32). Rather than only having no discernible source or an authority for its truth, they give certain reasons for rumor to appear and a function to it.

Difonzo and Bordia show four main characteristics of rumor:

- Rumors are informational statements
- Rumors are communicated information
- Rumors are instrumentally relevant
- Rumors are unverified (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007, pp. 16-18)

Rumors are unverified, their sources are mostly unknown or like in the context of social media where the source can be traced, they are ignored because of the exigency of the situation. They are informational statements meaning that they aim to offer an explanation to a situation. They are communicated information meaning that they circulate from individual to individual.

Rumors arise in situations that are ambiguous or threatening in some way. They are instrumentally relevant in situations containing ambiguity, danger, or potential threat. When people fall into situations in which they cannot receive relevant and accurate information, they try to make sense

of the situation. Rumors are created in such contexts and they help people to overcome the ambiguity, danger or the potential threat of the situation.

In great events where people expect to hear news from the mainstream media, if the mainstream media is slow off the mark or oblivious, rumor mills begin to turn. Gezi Resistance was that kind of an event where mainstream media was unable to inform the public timely. Thus, rumors began to spread easily and quickly.

Social media was the main informational tool for the Gezi Resistance and it also enabled rumors to spread. Oh, Agrawal and Rao show that:

...it is not surprising that unexpected social crises in recent years almost always involve high traffic in social media websites through various forms of information exchange, including online posting, linking, texting, tweeting, re-tweeting, etc. (Oh, Agrawal, & Rao, 2013, p. 409)

Rumor also functions to manage threat; "it is a response to the core human motivations to control one's environment or to protect one's self-image" (Fiske quoted in Difonzo and Bordia, p. 15). Rumor helps individuals to make sense of what is happening when there are no reliable information about what is going on.

Moments of crisis like natural disasters or protests create a demand for information in order to allow one to comprehend the situation. "In the face of such threats to welfare, rumors help groups to make sense of the situation and thereby prepare for or act effectively against the threat" (DiFonzo & Bordia, 2007, p. 15). Rumors typically rise when uncertainty is widespread in a group or community, they serve as collective problem solving processes for overcoming the situation by attributing meaning to the environment.

Jayson Harsin's concept of 'Rumor Bomb' is useful to understand the importance of rumor today. In his 2006 article *The Rumor Bomb: Theorizing the Convergence of New and Old Trends in Mediated US Politics*,

he shows the usage of rumor as a useful communication strategy in American politics.

Changing institutional news values, communication technologies, and political public relations (PR) strategies have converged to produce a profoundly vexing relationship between rumour and verification, which is exploited by politicians with anti-deliberative aims of managing belief. (Harsin, 2006, p. 84)

According to Harsin, three convergent factors explain the usage of rumor bombs (Harsin, 2006, p. 89). Changing news values and newsgathering practices influenced by new communication technologies and increasing concentration of news organization ownership made the news more about speed and profits rather than their trustiness. Rumor bombs are useful in that way since they are formed in a stimulating way to catch attention. This means more profits and without the need to prove they can be served fast.

Another factor Harsin shows is the increasing influence of Public Relations (PR) strategies on political communication, especially executive branch information and news management (Harsin, 2006, p. 89). The increased influence of PR strategies creates a denser control between news media and political actors. The strict control of information allows rumors a good environment to nurture with its ambiguity.

Final factor Harsin uses is the increased influence of war communication strategies in democratic political communication. The strategies of war are formed in order to produce consent and belief thus rather than the proved truth, rumors are widely used in peace time communications to nip any questioning of the actions by political actors in the bud (Harsin, 2006).

The concept of rumor bomb shows how rumors have increasingly become tools to influence audiences. During Gezi Resistance, we saw rumors claiming protestors attacked a woman in Kabataş, a claim that protestors have drunk beer in Dolmabahçe Mosque from the mainstream media. These rumors were used to tarnish Resistance's image in people's eyes and

to mobilize the masses who remained distant to the protests against those who were in the Resistance.

Rumor bombs bring the concern of rumor as an instrument of power. Governmental actors and those who are close to government used Dolmabahçe and Kabataş incidents intensely against Gezi Resistance to discredit it. *Star* newspaper's interview with Zehra Develioğlu was falsified later with the lawyer of the interviewer claiming the incident was fiction (Radikal, 2015). We can see that rumors can be used as news when the media organization that is publishing the news is politicized. The effects of Kabataş incident spread to streets and social media regardless of it being disproved later. It is still used as an example to discredit Gezi Resistance.

3.2. Critical Work on Rumor

To understand rumor's role in social movements, insurgencies, resistances and riots it is important to have a look at the history of rumors in such circumstances. Ranajit Guha's work *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India* shows how rumors were created and circulated in times of insurgencies. Guha claims that rumor is the "classical form of the anonymous speech" (Guha, 1999, p. 251).

Guha argues that "rumour is both a *universal* and *necessary* carrier of insurgency in any pre-industrial, pre-literate society" (Guha, 1999, p. 251). He further continues to describe the role of rumor as "For in no country with a predominantly illiterate population has subaltern protest of any significant strength ever exploded without its charge being conducted over vast areas by rumour (Guha, 1999, p. 252). His analysis on pre-industrial, illiterate colonial Indian societies further includes:

"...subaltern population depend almost exclusively on visual and non-graphic verbal signals for communication among themselves, and between these two again rather more on the latter because of the relatively greater degree of its versatility and comprehensibility." (Guha, 1999, p. 256)

Participants of Gezi Resistance were, unlike the pre-industrial, illiterate population of colonial India, which Guha wrote about. They were urban and well educated as KONDA's study shows. The type of communication protestors used is also different from Guha's claims in this kind of a population.

With the advancements in communication technologies back from when the Internet and mobile phones took their place in everyday practices, the pace and the ways of communication has changed a lot. With the capabilities of mobile devices and the opportunities that come with social media at our hands, any form that is accepted by the protocols can be used in a very fast and very overarching way. Protestors in Gezi Resistance girded on technological devices, they were active social media users. The communication method and the cultural products of Gezi Resistance used every format that is available via the devices that were available at that time.

Rather than an alarmist aspect of rumor that premises a destructive, harmful event, Guha talks about the positive aspects of rumor in insurgencies. "the anonymous verbal signal helped not merely to frighten those against whom a particular insurrection or jacquerie was directed, but above all, to spread the message of revolt among people" (Guha, 1999, pp. 254-255). Today with social media's overarching user base, it is faster and easier to spread the message of any social movement.

The role Internet and social media covered in our lives gave birth to new terms about communication such as the viral phenomenon. I will cover the subject of virality later more in detail. However, it is important to note that the capabilities of Internet and social media allowed such a phenomenon to rise. Viral is a term that is widely used by corporate marketing effort in ways like 'going viral', 'viral marketing', etc.

Viral takes its name by its contagion through social networks. The content that goes viral reaches a vast amount of people in a very short time like a virus outbreak. The message spreading role Guha gave to rumor in social

movements can be seen as an example of a content going viral which makes me think on the relationship between rumor and virality.

The message that is spread via the rumor carries as Guha shows, "hopes and fears, of visions of doomsdays and golden ages, of secular objectives and religious longings, all of which made up the stuff that fired the minds of men" (Guha, 1999, p. 256). This aspect of rumor according to Guha is the role of the trigger and mobilizer.

Guha's analysis of the rumor in insurgencies covers it as speech in a *different sense*. According to Guha: "Rumour is spoken utterance par excellence, and speaking, as linguists say, differs from writing not merely in material, that is, by the fact of its acoustic rather than graphic realization, but in function (Guha, 1999, p. 256). Rumor as speech the way Guha defines it should be seen in a different context, in the context of its function.

Gayatri Chakrovarty Spivak offers a discussion of Guha's approach in her essay titled *Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Histography*. Arguing against Guha's concept of rumor as spoken utterance, Spivak claims that: "it must be seen that its [rumor's] 'functional immediacy' is its non-belonging to any *one* voice-consciousness (Spivak, 2006, p. 213).

According to Spivak this non-belonging to any one voice-consciousness is the signal characteristics of writing. Rumor belongs to everyone that is concerned with it just as the text belongs to each reader. Spivak further argues that "rumor evokes comradeship because it belongs to every 'reader' or 'transmitter'" (Spivak, 2006, p. 213).

I think from both the term, spoken utterance par excellence by Guha and Spivak's words on rumor being writing gives the same functional property to rumor. As Allport and Postman showed, a rumor goes through several stages: leveling, sharpening and assimilation. Guha also indicates that:

The aperture which it [rumor] has built into by virtue of anonymity permits its message to be contaminated by the subjectivity of each

of its speakers and modified as any of them would want to embellish or amend it in the course of transmission. (Guha, 1999, p. 261)

This contamination or alteration of the message is a combination of leveling, sharpening and assimilation terms proposed by Allport and Postman. Guha uses the term 'plasticity' in place of them. Plasticity of the rumor enables it to vary in order to appeal to a varying range of people. This allows rumor to mobilize different sets of groups by addressing their sensitivities.

The trustworthiness of rumor may not be an urgent issue for the receiver if the topic of rumor has a strong concern for him or her, and if he or she feels strong about it. A good example of this is the cutting of trees at the Gezi park: people who have a particular ecological concern reacted strongly to the news spread in town that they are cutting the trees at Gezi.

Rumor's functional role is enabled by what Guha defines as plasticity. It carries the affects of people about rumor's topic and it can be modified in ways to influence more and more people.

In his well-known work *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts*, James C. Scott examines the role of rumor for the subordinate groups. In a footnote Scott claims:

The power to gossip is more democratically distributed than power, property, and income and, certainly, than the freedom to speak openly. I do not mean to imply that gossip cannot and is not used by superiors to control subordinates, only that resources on this particular field of struggle are relatively more favorable to subordinates. Some people's gossip is weightier than that of others, and, providing we do not confuse status with mere public deference, one would expect that those with high personal status would be the most effective gossipers. (Scott, 1990, p. 142)

Scott shows that the resources to gossip are more equally distributed. The differentiation he makes between personal status and public deference is about the division between general and private spaces. One can have a

higher personal status in his local space even though he belongs to a lower class, this is the personal status Scott mentions.

Rumors are created when the event is important and the situation regarding the event is ambiguous. Scott gives the examples about life threatening events: war, epidemic, famine, and riot as 'fertile social sites' for rumors to appear. Like the other scholarly work on rumor, Scott shows that "...one must expect rumors to take quite divergent forms depending on what class, strata, region, or occupation they are circulating in" (Scott, 1990, p. 145).

This democratic distribution of gossip is applicable for rumor too since it is the language that allows one to gossip or rumor. Today where social media is a widely used phenomenon that is available to everyone who has a connection to the Internet, we can say that ability to rumor is much more democratized than many other things.

3.3. Rumor on Social Media

A number of studies address the role of rumor in social media during crises. As the scholarly work on rumor shows, rumors tend to arise in the situations where the chance to reach credible information regarding the situation is low. Liu, Burton-Jones, and Xu's study on rumor transmission and retransmission on social media looks into the factors regarding rumormongering.

Their study shows that the most important factor on rumormongering is the sender's credibility followed by the attractiveness of the content (Liu et al., p. 11). The work of Oh, Agrawal and, Rao shows the factors leading to rumormongering on social media. Their findings show that "while content ambiguity does not contribute to rumormongering, source ambiguity does so very significantly." (Oh et al., 2013, p. 418)

Oh et al.'s study included posts on Twitter that were developed for content ambiguity. These posts were consisted of information-seeking efforts and doubts on several Twitter posts. Their findings show that "The tone of the messages signals that they were not persuasive statements intended to

make others believe and spread the received messages” (Oh et al., 2013, p. 418). They concluded that the content ambiguity related social media posts are an effort to make sense out of the situation and have no effect on rumor transmission.

Oh, et al.’s study also included posts on Twitter about source ambiguity. They define source ambiguity of a message as “messages [that] frequently resembled third-person situation reports without sources being attached” (Oh et al., 2013, p. 418). Since these posts looked like news reports, Oh et al. conclude that they might have an impact on rumormongering.

These studies show that the tone and aim of a message has a big impact on whether it will be circulated on social media or not. A message that is not formed in a persuasive tone and which does not look like a news text has a lower chance to spread whereas a message that is formed in the opposite way, which is formed as if it were a news report with a persuasive tone, has a higher chance to circulate in social media.

Erkan Saka shows that in crisis situations, storytelling is more effective than normative journalism because it involves witnessing (Saka, 2015). Similar to Oh, et al.’s findings, witness reports when they are formed like news can have higher chance of dissemination on social media.

Saka also notes that Twitter interface beclouds the attempts on verification when a message is overly retweeted or when its creators involvement with the content is high (Saka, 2015). Claiming to be a witness can create the impression of involvement and may result in increased rumor dissemination.

CHAPTER 4

RUMOR AND SOCIAL MEDIA

Networks of communication cover the spaces of everyday life without being noticed in most cases. After the failed coup attempt in Turkey on July 15, Jussi Parikka's article '*Earwitnesses of a Coup Night: The Many Media Infrastructures of Social Action*' shows the importance of another phenomenon which he calls as 'soundscape of the coup'.

Parikka shows the importance sound had during the failed attempt and how networks of sound became very significant once they were called upon. President Erdoğan's call to streets via Facetime (Reuters, 2016) on a TV broadcast triggered a chain of events which greatly influenced the outcome of the attempted coup d'état.

But there was more to the call than the ringtone of an individual smartphone. In other words, the chain of media triggers ranged from the corporate digital videotelephony to television broadcasting to the infrastructures of the mosques to people on the streets tweeting, filming, messaging and posting on social media. (Parikka, 2016)

Erdoğan's voice over Facetime on a TV broadcast ignited events wherein mosques all around the country began to use their minaret networks as means of broadcasting Erdoğan's call countrywide.

The thousands of Istanbul mosques became itself an explicit "sonic social network" where the average estimated reach (300 meters) of sound from the minarets is too important of a detail to neglect when one wants to understand architecture as solidifying social networks in contemporary Turkey. (Parikka, 2016)

Parikka's work show another important factor in the dissemination of information, which is earwitnessing. Networks of sound that surround us cannot always be noticeable. However, in situations that need immediate response such networks can suddenly become effective tools of information.

Social media are ever present with the mobile devices that sustain people's connection to Internet at all times. They became an integral part of everyday life and moved beyond being separate virtual spaces that demand an effort to access. Dahlgren shows that "the overall ubiquity of social media means that they are not just something people "visit" on occasion in order to seek something special, they form increasingly a central terrain of our daily lives" (Dahlgren, 2014, p. 196).

According to the data from September 2015, Facebook has 1,440,000,000 monthly active users (Statistic Brain, 2016) whereas according to the data from its corporate page, Twitter has 320,000,000 monthly active users. (Twitter, 2016) Social media now covers the place of the old ways of public forums where around 1 out of 5 people living on the planet assemble globally and have a chance to get in touch. There is an average of 500 million Tweets per day (Social Bakers, 2016). Whereas in Facebook in 2015 January, 1.3 million pieces of content is shared in every minute (Emge, 2015).

Social media are an important field for political participation and activism. Dahlgren claims that Internet, with its huge variety and amount of content on every scale of politics, makes a great improvement to the public sphere (Dahlgren, 2005). According to study by Banaji & Buckingham "The Internet emerged...as an important mobilization tool for young people who are already engaged in civic or political activities offline" (Banaji & Buckingham, 2013, p. 155). Their study also shows that Internet is seen as a cheap and efficient mean of communication to reach young people by political organizations (Banaji & Buckingham, 2013, p. 156).

Apart from being a mobilization tool for those who are involved with activism, social media enables an opportunity to reach others. According to Telli Aydemir in Twitter political hashtags tend to be more persistent than other types, which means that they are more likely to spread (Telli Aydemir, 2013). She further concludes that users of Twitter who at first do not prefer joining a conversation on a sensitive topic become more likely to join as they see more people becoming involved in the topic (Telli

Aydemir, 2013). Social media can be useful for activists when they wish to reach other people as the survey by Fuchs shows

69.5% of the survey respondents said that the big advantage of commercial social media such as Facebook, YouTube and Twitter is that activists can reach out to the public and everyday people. Typically, respondents argued that “all the activists are already there [on social media], but so are regular people. (Fuchs, 2014, p. 88)

Social media enable activists to reach other people because of the easiness to access. The ability to use social media is more democratically distributed than many other opportunities since everyone with an active Internet connection can join those networks. According to Dahlgren social media enables

[...] a capacity to facilitate horizontal communication: people and organizations can directly link up with each other for purposes of sharing information as well as affect, for providing mutual support, organizing, mobilizing, or solidifying collective identities. This feature makes them well-suited as civic media. (Dahlgren, 2012, p. 5)

Dahlgren further shows the importance of the discursive properties of social media. He claims that with social media covering a central terrain of our lives, “they offer possibilities that are harnessed and mobilised in varying ways, and thus impact on the strategies and tactics of everyday life and the frames of reference that provide them with meaning” (Dahlgren, 2014, p. 196).

Discursive properties of social media as Dahlgren further notes also operate in the realm of affect.

It is important to keep in mind that these discursive currents do not only operate as formal ideas, but also in the realm of affect, not least at the unconscious level. Fears, desires, anxieties, conflicts, denials, repressions—all these mechanisms can be present in the practices we enact in social media. (Dahlgren, 2014, p. 200)

In their book chapter on emotions and social movements Goodwin and Jasper claim that “some emotions form the raw materials for movement sympathy and recruitment. These may consist of cultural sensibilities such as compassion for different groups, or it may consist of individual personality dynamics—as well as an interaction between the two (Goodwin & Jasper, 2006, p. 618). They further argue that “shifts in emotions and their expression have created new vocabularies of motive, new subjects, and new targets of protest (Goodwin & Jasper, 2006, p. 618).

Emphasizing the distinction between affect and emotion is important. Goodwin & Jasper analyze the emotions as the raw materials social movements. However I think emotions lie between affects and movements, and they should be seen as mediators rather than raw materials of movement. On the other hand Shouse claims that affect “is a non-conscious experience of intensity; it is a moment of unformed and unstructured potential” (Shouse, 2005) whereas emotions are “the projection/display of a feeling” (Shouse, 2005)

Affects have become an important research topic nowadays. According to Colman “The Deleuzian sense of affect is to be distinguished as a philosophical concept that indicates the result of the interaction of bodies; an affective product” (Colman, 2010, p. 12) She further continues:

Within a Deleuzian framework, affect operates as a dynamic of desire within any assemblage to manipulate meaning and relations, inform and fabricate desire, and generate intensity – yielding different affects in any given situation or event. (Colman, 2010, p. 13)

Brian Massumi’s work on affect is one of the most known contributions to the study of affect. According to Massumi “Affects are virtual synesthetic perspectives anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing, particular things that embody them” (Massumi, 2002, p. 35). Affects are potentials that can turn cognition and perception yet for Massumi “formed, qualified, situated perceptions and cognitions fulfilling functions of actual

connection or blockage are the capture and closure of affect" (Massumi, 2002, p. 35).

Massumi further analyzes affect with the help of quantum physics and the undecidability in cognition and interpretation.

Each individual and collective human level has its own peculiar "quantum" mode; various forms of undecidability in logical and signifying systems are joined by emotion on the psychological level, resistance on the political level, the specter of crisis haunting capitalist economics, and so forth. These modes are fed back and fed forward into one another, echoes of each other one and all. (Massumi, 2002, p. 37)

In this thesis, my understanding of the affect is as potential. Affects have an important role in one's comprehension of the world. Rather than seeing a direct relationship between form and content, with the affective properties content can exceed its predicted definition in the semantics and can exceed in resulting illogical relations and unexpected outcomes.

4.1. Virality, Spreadability, and Rumor

Viral is a term that gained popularity with the rise of social networks. Going viral means that the content turns into a contagion within the network it is shared in. Viral has become the main term to describe how information, advertisements, and thoughts spread from person to person. Virus as the metaphor to describe how human interactions through social networks propagate has created the term viral.

Contents that go viral online can be seen in a wide range of categories. They can be in forms that are applicable to the protocols governing the web like text, image, video, sound, etc. The spread of viral contents' can seek goals like marketing, activism but they can also be only about entertainment. They are cultural reflections on the web that show how fast and wide ideas can spread.

Parikka shows that viral has another important role “viruses, then, are seen also as a kind of a memory of their environment and the ethology of their host. What they reveal are movements and connections” (Parikka, 2007, p. 289). If one looks on the history of the viral content on the web, one would find a summary from cultural artifacts to political discussions.

The term viral causes one to think that the content itself can spread in nurturing environments and the hosts that spread it have no role in its dissemination. In their work *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture*; Jenkins, Ford and Green opposes this idea. According to Jenkins, Ford and Green: “Viral metaphors do capture the speed with which new ideas circulate through the Internet.” (Jenkins, et al., 2013, p. 17)

Rather than describing the new situation with the metaphor of virus where one might think that the audience has no control over the dissemination of the content Jenkins, et al. prefers to use the term *spreadable*:

Audience members are using the media texts at their disposal to forge connections with each other, to mediate social relations and make meaning of the world around them. Both individually and collectively, they exert agency in the spreadability model. They are not merely impregnated with media messages, nor are they at the service of the brand; rather, they select material that matters to them from the much broader array of media content on offer (which now includes audience creations alongside industrially produced works). They do not simply pass along static texts; they transform the material through active production processes or through their own critiques and commentary, so that it better serves their own social and expressive needs. (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 294)

The processes of leveling, sharpening and assimilation or the term plasticity can be seen in the spreadability model. The content does not spread like a virus outbreak, it rather spreads with the conscious participation of the audiences where the content is changed and altered. An active participation of the audience means that whatever the goals one

might have while spreading a content, people will not accept it in face value they would rather critically deliberate it and might choose to spread it.

Content—in whole or through quotes—does not remain in fixed borders but rather circulates in unpredicted and often unpredictable directions, not the product of top-down design but rather the result of a multitude of local decisions made by autonomous agents negotiating their way through diverse cultural spaces. (Jenkins et al., 2013, p. 294)

Rumors are agents of language, which owe their existence to their spreadability. They need a public forum to come into existence. Like rumor, viral or spreadable contents exist only if they spread, they are named after their ability to spread. They both need the public forum in which they can nurture. This new place where people assemble is now the social media. Like viral and spreadable content, rumors must now find a place in social media in order to exist.

As the studies of rumor shows they are not accepted with their face value and go through critical deliberation of the audiences they aim to spread. Likewise, the spreadable media contents go through same processes. It can be said that virality or spreadability terms, which arose with the Internet and social media have their roots in the Colonial Indian bazaar or Turkish coffeehouse where rumors were born and disseminated, the public forums of history, rumor in many ways is the ancestor of these new terms.

I prefer to use the term spreadable rather than virality. Since as in "rumor", I believe human actors participating in a content's dissemination have an active role. Spreadable contents have their roots in the rumor more specifically in rumor's need of dissemination. Bazaar or coffee house was once the place of social interaction and word of mouth was the medium in which rumor spread. Whereas today the public forum is the social media and rumor has evolved. Spreadability is not a new phenomenon that came into existence with the rise of networks. It is the mechanisms of rumor that has evolved to adept in the new conditions of existence. Rumor's dissemination is now through social media.

4.2. How Rumors Spread Through Social Media

There are two parties in information transmission: the transmitter and the receiver. In terms of rumor, once the receiver becomes the transmitter rumor mills begins to turn. Spivak argues that rumor does not involve a voice-consciousness, which gives it the properties of writing. With a clever trick, she shows how the rumors begin to spread by telling "rumor evokes comradeship because it belongs to every 'reader' or 'transmitter'" (Spivak, 2006, p. 213). The sense of belonging that rise from being a 'reader' puts the passive receiver in an active position eventually turning him to a transmitter.

Rumors must disseminate in order to survive. As Guha puts it: "To describe rumour as 'the lies of the Bazaar' is to wrap up in a pejorative the truth about its other tendency which is to originate in places where people assemble in large numbers" (Guha, 1999, p. 258). In Colonial India, Bazaar was the place where people assembled in large numbers, a public forum where for Turkey kiraathane (the coffee house) covered the same role. Today however there is a new public forum, where people all around the globe assemble in millions.

The huge number of people using social media and the huge number of content that is shared via social media is not surprisingly about a huge number of topics. This creates an ecosystem with its own rules. With the information pollution that is created with the huge amount of content that is shared, users of social media need some criteria to avoid contents that are not worthy of their attention.

This makes credibility of a social media account an important phenomenon. Those who are already known by the public like celebrities, journalists, politicians, etc. are given a higher account while other people that do not have an image in the public's head outside social media need to work harder to gain more prestige. To reach more people with its social media account, one needs to differentiate itself from millions of other people. When the content they share is intriguing whether by its news value or just because it is interesting, the account acclaims popularity.

Popularity does not mean credibility yet it enables one's social media account to be seen by many people and have a wider range of effect. Popularity in the long run can help one to gain credibility. A popular social media account has connections in the web to many people each with their own connections. Since a popular social media account is always in sight, more and more people begin to follow it. In the end, the way how a popular account became popular might lose its meaning and become credible as new people begin to follow it.

During Gezi Resistance there were many rumors circulating on social media. The lack of information from mainstream media and the huge range of events created a fertile ground for rumors to grow and prosper. Social media took its place as the new medium in which rumor showed itself. As the public forum of the today's world, social media with its vulnerabilities that come from the protocological control has allowed many rumors to spread and had a large influence during the Resistance.

Liu et al.'s study shows us that the most important factor in rumor transmission is sender's credibility on social media (Liu et al., 2014, p. 11). Oh et al.'s study also shows us that if a message that is shared on social media looks like a news report, it is more likely to be accepted and shared (Oh et al., 2013, p. 418). Shibutani showed us that a rumor's acceptance relies on the reputation and past performance of the transmitter, and that receivers confront rumors with skepticism. (Shibutani, 1966, p. 73)

To show how rumors are formed in order to increase their level of acceptance, I will show three cases of how rumors spread in different ways via social media during Gezi Resistance.

4.2.1. Crediting the content to a known person, organization

It is possible for people to use fake names and images in their social media accounts. One can use recognized people's or organizations' name and logos easily. Since the credibility of a social media account is high when its owner is regarded as a known person or organization, the effects of what is shared via such an account can have higher influence.



Figure 4.1. A Screenshot of @ntv_sondakika Twitter account

The image above is from a Twitter account named @ntv_sondakika. Although this Twitter account has no connection to the NTV news organization, the profile of the account is formed in such a way that it implies it is owned by NTV. During Gezi Resistance many rumors spread through this account. These rumors included ones like the story that the İstanbul Police Commissioner had been taken from duty. (İnsan Haber, 2013)



Figure 4.2. A screenshot from @adaletmasasi Twitter account

The image above is a Tweet from the Twitter account @adaletmasasi., which is unreachable now. The tweet claims that municipal workers have found hundreds of used condoms in the tents on Gezi Park. The tweet dates back to 15 June 2013, the time of the Gezi Resistance. Although this account has no relation with the journalist Rasim Ozan Kütahyalı, his photograph was used and this created the sense among people that it was Rasim Ozan Kütahyalı who wrote the tweet.



Figure 4.3. Rasim Ozan Kütahyalı's tweet (Kütahyalı, 2013)

There were a lot of criticism of Rasim Ozan at that time and he later, in the image above, announced that he had no relation with whoever owned the Twitter account @adaletmasasi. This particular tweet shows that a rumor can spread via social media easily and be taken for granted when it is associated with someone that is known by the public. Rasim Ozan's picture in that tweet and his association with the accusation towards the protestors had a great effect as can be seen in the other picture below, which is from *Leman*, a popular humor magazine. (Demokrathaber, 2013)

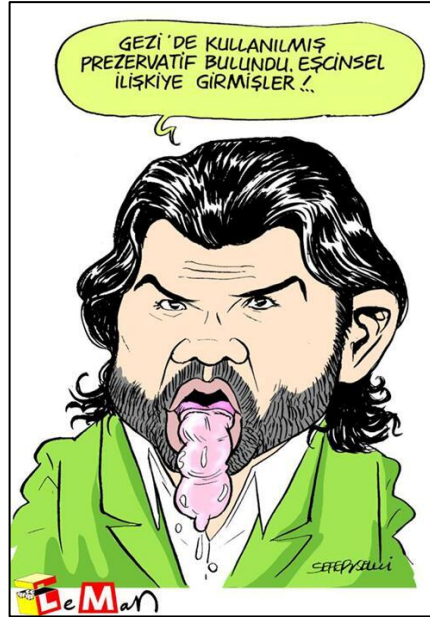


Figure 4.4 Leman's caricature

4.2.2. Using a content out of its intended context

The Internet archives everything that is put on it, it never forgets. Something that was put online years ago might resurface years later even when the person who put it online has forgotten its existence. Further, with the spreadability properties of the Internet that content might be stored on someone's hard disk and waiting to be put online again by someone with whom the content creator shares no connection except the fiber optic cables that circulate the globe.

To support the dissemination of a rumor such content can be very useful. The content might have no connection with the rumor's intention; however, the content in question can be recirculated in a new context, in a way that associates it with the entity or the person targeted by the rumor.



Figure 4.5. Boyner Holding's 2013 poster for International Woman's Day

The image above was in circulation through social media during Gezi Resistance. (Milliyet, 2013) That image included Boyner Holding's name and its brands along with a call to hit the streets. It was actually an old image from International Women's Day. However, during Gezi Resistance this image began to circulate again in order to target Boyner Holding and imply that the company supports the protestors and Gezi Resistance by calling them out on the streets.

Although the company later announced that the image was from their International Women's Day campaign, the rumors against Boyner Holding had already been disseminated through social media. The tweet below is from Cem Boyner, the owner of Boyner Group. Cem Boyner tries to warn people about the recirculation of the newspaper advertisement that was used for International Women's Day.



Figure 4.6 Cem Boyner's tweet (Boyner, 2013)

This rumor campaign against Boyner Holding shows how content can be used out of context regardless of the time it was first published. It also shows how it can turn into a tool aimed at changing people's perception in two ways: by depicting in a way unrelated to its original purpose and by manipulating its meaning to support rumormonger's cause.

4.2.3. Manipulating content

It is very easy for one to manipulate a document with the computer technologies at hand today. Even simple free software can successfully manipulate a media file, and more advanced software allow a vast range of manipulation. Take image manipulation for example. With advanced software, a photograph of a person can be used to put that person in very different places. Such technologies allow rumors a good opportunity to gain credibility. The ability to manipulate media files in such context allows rumormongers an important tool to support their efforts of rumor dissemination.



Figure 4.7. A manipulated image of Woman in Red Dress

Another instance of rumormongering through social media during Gezi Resistance was seen in an edited image that was circulated. The image above claimed that the photograph by Reuters photojournalist Osman Örsal was not taken in Gezi Resistance but was instead from a studio shoot. The text surrounding the image tells that the Woman in Red is actually an actor and call on Gezi protestors to recognize that they are on the wrong side. This example of a rumor created via content manipulation helped those who were against the Resistance by promoting the sense that the brutal police intervention was not real but staged.

4.3. Rumor under Protocological Control

As I previously summarized in the chapter about protocological control, protocols are "certain pre-agreed 'scientific' rules of the system" (Galloway, 2004, p. 38). Protocols are the main control mechanisms of distributed networks. Social media are also formed as distributed networks working under protocological control, where the input from users can take only several forms like images, videos, and text.

The protocols governing social media are indifferent to the messages input carries, they only look if they meet their requirements, they can put a limit on the amount of characters, size of the data, source of content, etc. They are logical agents that can operate only on the level of form. Their dependence on logical rules on the form makes protocols open for exploits.

One common practice social media users apply in order to beat protocological control can be seen when one shares links to other websites with Uniform Resource Locators (URL). A URL is the address for a specific website, it is what is shown in a web browser's address bar. When giving a URL to another website is forbidden by the protocols or a URL to a specific website is limited, there is an easy way to get rid of that limitation most social media users know of. It is done by leaving empty spaces between the characters of the URL that one wishes to share. Protocols understand such content as text and allow them to be shared, whereas users of social media can see a link to another website is shared and can fix it in order to visit that website.

This shows that logical control principle of protocols rely on the syntax. A link to another website might be banned by the protocological control but by putting spaces between the characters of URL, rather than being seen as a content in the form of a URL, the input is seen in the form of a text. The user who sees such a content can understand its semantics and can visit the given URL by deleting the empty spaces.

The ability to understand the illogical relations between the syntax and semantics allows social media users to beat the protocological control. Putting spaces between the characters of a URL is just a simple example. Texts, images and video content that is shared can also contain illogical relations, which can hack the control mechanisms of a social network.

Rumors are agents of language, they rise on communication and help to comprehend situations by binding explanations to them. The content that is shared on social media as its shown before can only take several forms all of which also offers some definition, explanation. Rumors find themselves an excellent environment to batten and disseminate in social

media. The anonymity of rumor is protected with the speed of communication on a virtual environment where efforts to trace the origin lack.

Today rumors spread through social media and they have an influence on the users of social media. Galloway's work showed that a resistance towards the protocols governing social media is available within the protocological control field. Rumors can in some cases become harmful informational agents but they can also be seen as resistive tools towards protocological control.

Shibutani described oral interchange as the signifying characteristic of rumors (Shibutani, 1966, pp. 3,4), and Guha has called it the classical form of anonymous speech (Guha, 1999, p. 251). In contrast, according to Spivak, with its belonging to every reader/receiver (Spivak, 2006, p. 213), rumors show the main characteristics of writing. I believe that with the protocological control the form of rumor, whether as speech or writing, becomes less significant, but that the function of rumor gains more importance. In the end, rumors are agents of language, which cannot be controlled by the protocols governing distributed networks because they are in acceptable forms.

The implied meanings within the language give rumors their functionality and they become tactical tools capable of hacking protocological control with the affective properties they carry. It is impossible to figure out the function and the semantics of rumor from accurate, verified information for the protocological control mechanisms of the distributed networks. This gave social media and rumor an important role in Gezi Resistance.

During Gezi Resistance there were doubts on the protestors' side about the accuracy of the information flow on social media. In the text messages and social media content they sent to each other, the protestors demanded verification about the information that was in circulation. Hence rumor was as much a concern to the protestors as it was to the governmental authorities.

This was because during the events, especially in the first couple of days, mainstream media failed to inform the public, and social media became a major source of information. Under such circumstances, it was quite natural for everyone to receive information through social media while at the same time demanding verification.

Eventually, it can be said that both supporters and dissidents were influenced by rumor during the Resistance. Rumor became an important instrument to avoid the ambiguity of the situation. The flow of unverified information through social media caused each side to adopt the information that fit into its understanding/expectation of the situation.

Rumors were created in a similar manner where one's own understanding or the expectation of the situation was used as a starting point for overcoming the ambiguity of the situation. This resulted in the creation of information without verified sources. Personal explanations and expectations were put in circulation resulting in new rumors, which encapsulated the understanding/expectation of their creators.

In the end, by adopting or by creating the most useful information that fit into their understanding of the situation, both dissidents and supporters of the Resistance used rumors in order to avoid ambiguity and spread those rumors in order to influence others.

Social media enables its users to share and re-share, and the user's participation becomes essential in the flow of information. Like in rumor, information is constantly filtered, modified and altered by the user. Once reliant on oral interchange in pre-industrial, illiterate populations, rumors now had a nurturing environment, which allowed them to spread with more speed thanks to the help of new communication technologies, namely social media. People who have access to these new communication technologies with their devices changed the nature of rumor.

Subjective information has become the prominent content throughout the network with the constantly filtered, modified, and altered information by the users of social media. The flow of subjective information involved the affects from their creators with their active role in information

dissemination. Rumors are also spread in a similar manner through social media enabling them to gain the important role they have in social movements of today.

Rumor has played the role of mobilizer and trigger in many uprisings, as Guha shown in his work (Guha, 1999, p. 254). With the change in nature of rumor, its role as mobilizer and trigger is more powerful than ever. Social media now plays the role played by rumor during the peasant uprisings in the past. With its ability to transmit information from anyone to anyone with great speed and in many forms, social media has made rumor more than an oral interchange or form of anonymous speech or writing. Rumor as an agent of language has now become a tool that can hack through protocols governing social media thus allowing social media to become an important tactical tool to any insurgency movement.

Rumor in most cases is seen as an instrument to disinform, it is presumed as a tool that is used to create false beliefs in the public's eyes and to provoke events that might have consequences. It is true that both rumor bombs via mainstream media and rumormongering through social media can be used to achieve such goals, however it is also true that rumors are created to overcome the ambiguity of a situation and can be useful to make sense about what is going on.

4.4. More than (Dis)Information

Do rumors serve only to spread information or disinformation? I argue that rumors are not solely informational agents. They are more like a medium that contain information in addition to other things. Rumors are unverified information, but they are also carrier of much else.

Rumor carries, as Guha argued "hopes and fears, of visions of doomsdays and golden ages, of secular objectives and religious longings, all of which made up the stuff that fired the minds of men" (Guha, 1999, p. 256). Allport and Postman have shown that with leveling, sharpening, and assimilation rumors go through processes that make them more effective (Allport & Postman, 1965, pp. 75,86,115). Slanting is another important

factor, which is used to create a certain impression by adding and removing certain details (Shibutani, 1966, p. 44).

All these at hand I believe that rumors are not just informational statements. Rumors, among their other properties, have affective properties, which make them so important. They are the carriers and creators of affects. Rumors work as medium that helps to spread and create affects and through that property they have an important role in society.

Rumors can be igniters of events or they can have important effects on ongoing events. Gezi Resistance was triggered by rumors about the park's demolition in order to build Topçu Barracks. Rumors continued to have an important role throughout the Resistance.

During the protests one particular rumor spread through social media and word of mouth is especially noteworthy. That rumor stated that the government would fall if the protests continued for another 48 hours. I believe this rumor is closely related to another social media activity, which was a call for the protestors to return their homes.

The campaign on social media that called on protestors to stop proved ineffective due to the rumors of the government's potential fall. Protestors who have been bothered with the campaign found a new source of hope and motivation with the rumors that the government would fall if they continued for 48 hours and stayed in the Resistance.

Another rumor was put in circulation repeatedly during the conflicts with the police. The rumor was about several thousand protestors marching from Gazi District to Taksim. During heavy conflicts such rumors had an effect on keeping the protestors on the streets behind their barricades and had been a source of motivation.

Recently we experienced how rumors have an effect on our everyday lives. The fear people experienced after the explosions in Ankara and İstanbul intensified with the rumors that spread through social media. Reports from intelligence agencies and embassies about expected bombings were

disseminated through social media. Such rumors reached the masses via social media and created a situation where people were afraid to go on to the streets and continue on with their everyday lives.

Does this make rumors a threat to organized everyday lives? Are rumors dangerous agents that might harm a society? I believe the question for that answer is both a yes and a no. Rumors can be dangerous but they can also prove useful in order to reach certain goals.

The relatively democratic distribution of the tools that enable communication through social media creates a flow of unverified information nowadays. Everyone can put some information online, whether true or false. Under such circumstances, it is an important effort to verify the level of truth in this information.

I believe a discussion on ethics is necessary under these circumstances. Andrew Keen's critical book *The Cult of the Amateur* gives some useful insights about the discussion of ethics. According to Keen "the most popular blogs are those that offer the seductive conspiracy theories and sensationalist antiestablishment platitudes that readers crave" (Keen, 2007, p. 54). In his work about citizen journalism, he uses the example of Hurricane Katrina's aftermath. He claims that the efforts of citizen journalists only helped to spread rumors, which were then falsified by the traditional news media (Keen, 2007, p. 48).

Another important point Keen makes is about a comparison of the consequences for the lack of accountability between citizen journalists and traditional news media. Keen argues:

Bloggers are very rarely sued or prosecuted because the government and corporations don't seem to really care what they write. As a result, they aren't held accountable for their work in the way that real reporters are. (Keen, 2007, p. 50)

Even though Keen's book was published as recently as 2007, nine years is still a lot of time especially when we talk about new media. For example the Turkish law no. 5651, which also has been effective since 2007, is

about online crimes and it involves citizen journalists as well. The number of libel suits involving President Erdoğan shows that Keen's claims are not valid anymore. (BIANET, 2016)

It is important to note that in 2016, citizen journalists are no longer bound to the blogs Keen describes. Although the blogs still exist, social media accounts cover a more significant part of information transmission today.

In a speech he gave at the Bruno Kreisky Prize ceremony, Jürgen Habermas shows another intriguing insight. He states that:

The price we pay for the growth in egalitarianism offered by the Internet is the decentralized access to unedited stories. In this medium, contributions by intellectuals lose their power to create a focus. (Habermas, 2006)

The preference of popularity against prestige is what Habermas signals. He shows that the influence of popular exceeds the influence of the prestigious in the decentralized social networks. The preference of the popular instead of credible allow rumors an important opportunity.

Rumors with information also carry affects, and that property of rumors have considerable effects. Rumormongers that seek to achieve a goal might be willing to take advantage of the affective properties of rumors. Verification of the information one finds on social media gains importance under these circumstances.

The verification of the information that flows through the Internet has gained great importance nowadays. Saka shows that with the involvement of citizens in news progress, information credibility and citizen journalism have become important topics (Saka, 2015). There have been several attempts to help people see if the information they receive is accurate. Many studies have been done to widen people's ability to check the accuracy of the information they receive and to make verification a habit when they seek information on the Internet.

*Verification Handbook*³ is a useful source, which has been translated to Turkish and other languages. It is a free eBook published with the contributions of many experts. The eBook aims to increase the accuracy of news reports in times of emergencies when social media fills up with rumors.

Also included in the team that translated the *Verification Handbook* to Turkish was pioneering activist Mehmet Atakan Foça, a Turkish journalist. He has a website⁴ where he verifies news and reports that flow through mainstream and social media in a crowdsourced manner, collaborating with other activists interested in content verification. He also uses his social media accounts for the same goal, allowing him to get in touch with those who are responsible for false reports. Recently he appeared as a guest in mainstream media (Foça, 2015), which I believe, is a great sign of how important a factor verification has become in the online environment.

The accuracy of information today has become very important, since with the high amount of content that flows through social media there is excessive information and too little credibility. But the verification of information is not the only concern one has when faced with rumors on social media.

Affects that can be aroused via rumor dissemination present themselves as another important ethical concern. When a rumor is designed to reach a goal by its affective properties, ethical concerns for its outcome can be disregarded. Thus, I believe that the efforts of verification are well intentioned yet once the rumor is spread it would be harder to diminish its consequences.

In the end, rumors should not be regarded only with their informational properties. They are natural and necessary agents. They carry people's hopes, dreams, and utopias and have important affective roles. The ethical concern of rumor spread is an important, yet the ethical concerns of one

³ <http://verificationhandbook.com/>

⁴ <http://matakanfoca.com/>

party might allow the opposing party a fertile ground for rumors that could ignite widespread outbreaks and social changes.

4.5. Affect in Social Media

The concept of protocological control shows that distributed networks do not lack an authority and control mechanism. On social media the governing protocols are the gatekeepers, which decide what can be taken inside the network and what will be rejected. They are the agents of authority and control.

In De Certeau's terms, protocols are strategic agents: "every 'strategic' rationalization seeks first of all to distinguish its 'own' place, that is, the place of its own power and will, from an 'environment'" (De Certeau, 1984, p. 36). Strategies define the space in which they operate and decide who can reach that space and what can be done inside their boundaries. Protocols work in the same manner and they control which content in what form and in what size can have a place inside the network.

Rumors in social media become tactical tools. Rumors, as I claimed earlier, do not only carry information. They include subjective properties, which turn them into affective agents. These affective properties allow rumors to take the role as tools that can hack protocological control.

Rumors historically played an important role in social events. They spread through the old public forums like the bazaar, or coffee house where people assembled in large numbers. Today social media take the role of such public forums, which are nurturing environments for rumors to prosper and spread.

Social media are the virtual space that people assemble in large numbers today. As Dahlgren shows, social media reinforce a horizontal communication where affect along with information can be shared (Dahlgren, 2012). A content put on social media can reach to masses very fast, social media allow it to access new people and increase its prominence.

Social media can be used easily around the globe with an active Internet connection. The democratized access to social media enables billions of people to have a chance of encountering, engaging, and creating. The content of social media comes from the users. Thus, the contents on social media carry subjective elements from their creators, they are also constantly filtered and altered by other subjectivities as they spread through the network from individual to individual.

The choice of words, the construction of a sentence, images used, the absence of some words, the tone of voice, the choice of emojis, and all other subjective choices become, which involve affects become semantically significant even though their significance cannot be understood by the protocols governing social media. Rumors gain their tactical role in social media similarly through protocol's ignorance of semantics.

Rumors are agents that carry affects, they involve understandings and expectations of those who take part in their dissemination. Affective properties of the rumor on social media can have huge effects on everyday practices because they are able to hack through protocological control and create affects on the individuals that take a role in their dissemination.

In events that concern many people the amount of ambiguity rises, and the sources of information become inadequate. Consequently, individuals using social media begin to create and disseminate rumors that not only carry information but also reflections of subjectivity from those who involve with their dissemination.

The main characteristic of rumor is its dissemination from individual to individual. Leveling, sharpening, assimilation, and plasticity phenomenon have important roles on rumor's ability to spread. Same phenomenon are also at play on turning rumors into affective agents. In every step of their dissemination, rumors keep changing and altering their details in a way to become more acceptable. They become more and more concentrated on affect arousal. Rumors become creator of affects by evolving through their

dissemination in a way where they directly address to the receivers' sensitivities.

Rumors with their affect creator roles on social media can have huge consequences. They can be the first steps for big events, like the rumor of Gezi Park's demolition, which created the sense 'enough of this!' and triggered the Resistance. They can have important effects after events, like the fear that reigned over everyday life after bombing incidents with rumors about potential terrorist attacks.

It is only natural to approach the content on social media with skepticism, and it is important to try and verify the information that is disseminated. However, like in rumor the content on social media goes through subjective filters of its users.

Affective properties of social media content become important resources that are helpful for understanding the concerns of public. To disregard such an important resource and to look down on them is a mistake just as how was rumor treated before. Rumor was never only unverified information. Alongside its informational properties, it carried hopes, fears, dreams, and nightmares. It was also a medium, which carried subjective elements from those involved with it. With such properties, rumors had an important role in society.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION

Social media today has a huge impact on our everyday lives. Everyone with an active internet connection has a chance to reach social media sites. The mobility of technological devices that have access to the Internet allows one to reach social media anywhere, anytime.

Social media has become the public forum of today where people assemble in large numbers. The huge number of people that have access to social media creates a great amount of content wherein one can find any kind of information shaped by varying intentions and formats.

Protocols that govern social media work as gatekeepers, which accept the content that fits in the format and syntax they define, and reject the others. As logical agents, protocols have an important weakness. They are indifferent to semantics, other meanings content might carry even though it fits the syntax defined by protocols.

The content that is shared in social media is mostly personal reports. They can be videos of cats, images of food, aphorisms after a breakup and many more. When it comes to big events, which is a concern for a large proportion of the population, like social movements, terrorist attacks, or coup attempts, the subjective properties of the content that is put on social media may become a concern.

Rumors in most cases are seen as unverified information. They arise in situations where ambiguity is high and personal involvement with the situation is high. They are attempts to make sense out of a situation where the supply of reliable information cannot meet the demand. They have also been an important factor in social movements, where not only the information they are carrying but the way they carry the information also matters.

The relatively democratic distribution of the ability to reach social media creates a nurturing environment for rumors to circulate. In big events that

have a consequence for large numbers of people, personal reports on social media can be seen as news reports and personal statements can turn into being catalysts and igniters for bigger events.

Rumors are mostly seen with their negative properties when they are solely seen as informational statements that aim to provoke events through either true or false reports. However, rumors are not solely informational agents formed as objective reports. They do not only carry some information regarding a situation. Rumors as agents of language are also carriers of affects that contain subjective properties within them.

Today, with the rise of social media and its easiness to reach the masses, rumors have evolved. They no longer use the medium of word of mouth in physical places. Rather than that, the virtual space of social media where people assemble in billions are now the birthplace of rumors. New phenomena that became apparent with the rise of social media like spreadability show how effective social media is when it comes to disseminating information through its network.

The social media content consists of personal reports that include affects with their subjective properties. In social media, such content has a potential to break through the protocological control mechanisms of distributed networks. Because of their affective properties, the subjective information on social media can cause events that cannot be foreseen.

The choice of words, the construction of a sentence, images used, the absence of some words, the tone of voice, and the choice of emojis are semantically significant even though they cannot be understood by the protocols governing distributed networks. Protocols are strategic agents that define the area they govern by accepting formats that fit into their understanding. The semantically significant variations within language can be used as tactical tools that can overcome the protocological control mechanism of the network with their affective properties.

I believe rumors have a big role when they are spread through social media during big events. They are designed and refined to carry affections through their dissemination within a network. They carry the dreams,

nightmares, expectations along with them. They contaminate mediators with affections, which can become the mobilizer and catalyst for bigger events.

In the end, rumors should not be seen as purely negative phenomena that aim to disinform or provoke further events but rather as agents of language, which can be used as tactical tools that are able to overcome strict protocological control mechanisms with their affective properties.

This study was intended to analyze the effects of rumor in social media during Gezi Resistance. However, by the time the study was conducted many other "big events" had happened. All those events have found themselves a place on social media and many rumors have been circulated about them.

The way rumor was used during these "big events" was not only through social media. Even mainstream media institutions, political actors, and journalists spread rumors in order to gain tactical advantage about developments regarding the "big event." The rumors were designed to create certain affects and they resulted in consequences through everyday life practices

The way institutions and individuals that have a certain prestige in people's minds use rumor as tactical tools in order to influence the perception of individuals is a good further research opportunity. I believe, especially after the recent coup d'état event, further study on social media phenomena like Fuat Avni and how they use both true and false information as a tactical tool can also be formulated into an extended research project.

I also find it important here to note that, although social media are under protocological control as well as the Internet, governmental agencies still have some hierarchical power in their jurisdiction, which eventually can be bypassed with some technical knowledge. Nevertheless, censorship is still a common practice in Turkish online sphere and stands as a problematic issue. A rather new practice by governmental agencies is throttling the bandwidth. This method is used mostly when the targeted sites are too popular. Further study on the effects of bandwidth throttle and

development of tools that are aimed overcome it will be necessary in the long run.

Finally, I find it necessary to note here that the power distribution within social media is also an important concern. Most of the popular social media platforms are profit oriented organizations. As a result, any movement that is organized and triggered with the opportunities presented by such social media platforms are constantly under threat.

The pursuit of profit is the primary goal of these platforms and the tolerance towards social movements can disappear in an instant once they become a threat for the pursuit of profit. I believe there will be an increasing need towards a non-profit driven social media platform, which can appeal to everyday users at some point. I believe researching the opportunities towards such a social media platform would serve a very important purpose and would be a necessary wrestle in the near future.

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