

The Center for Middle East Studies presents

Quantifying Pluralism and Solidarity in Social Movements:

A Case Study of Gezi Park Uprising in Turkey

Ceren Budak (Microsoft Research New York)

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How pluralist are social movements and how do they impact the activists that take part in them? In this talk, I will address these questions in the context of the recent Gezi Park uprising in Turkey.

This project is informed and inspired by ethnographic studies which almost exclusively conclude that the Gezi uprising brought together an "unlikely body of people from all walks of life ... for the first time in recent memory", indicating the existence and importance of pluralism. In addition, the studies suggest that the diverse group of activists not only participated in the movement but also stuck together, forming a sense of solidarity. While ethnographic and other field-based studies can tell us a great deal about the lived experience of the Gezi uprising, they are concerned almost exclusively with the participants of the uprising, and therefore comparisons between participants and non-participants are difficult to make. In addition, because participants are contacted only after the event, before and after comparisons are difficult to make to estimate the true effect of the movement.

In this talk, I will present the findings from our work which is able to overcome the aforementioned difficulties. In this work, we identify a large panel of participants and non-participants of the Gezi uprising with different party affiliations on Twitter and model their behavior before, during, and after the movement to estimate the concepts of pluralism and solidarity.

Ceren Budak is a Postdoctoral Researcher at Microsoft Research New York. She received her PhD in Computer Science from University of California, Santa Barbara in 2012. Her research interests lie in the area of computational social science, a discipline at the intersection of computer science, statistics, and the social sciences. She is particularly interested in applying computational techniques such as machine learning, statistics and data analysis to study social and political problems.

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