

COLLOQUIUM

GOING AFTER POLITICAL TROLLS: THE CASE OF AKTROLLS

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His recent and current research topics include online information fact-checking and verification issues, digital web archiving and internet histories, and ethnography of cryptocurrency circles in Turkey

This presentation focuses on AKTrolls, pro-government political trolls in Turkey, drawing implications about political trolling in the country in general. It examines their methods and effects, and interrogates whether (and how) Turkish authorities have attempted to shape or counter politically motivated social media content production through trolling after the Gezi Park Protests of 2013. My findings are based on an ethnographic study that included participant observation and in-depth interviews in a setting that is under-studied and about which reliable sources are difficult to find. The study demonstrates political trolling activity in Turkey is more decentralized and less institutionalized than generally thought, and is based more on ad hoc decisions by a larger public. However, I argue here that AKTrolls do have an impact on reducing discourses on social media that are critical of the government by engaging in surveillance, among other practices. I also discuss how I combined mapping software along with more traditional ethnographic practices, leading me to think about archival issues about the web content. This, in turn, has led to a massive open access digital archive project on the Gezi Protests, The Gezi Archive.

